

Newsletter Sunday November 11, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

| Print

PM defends payment to Hamas: Leadership comes with a price

Opposition MKs, cabinet ministers slam decision to allow \$15 million Qatari cash infusion into Gaza as "protection payment" to terrorist group • Netanyahu: I'm doing everything possible to restore calm to the border • PA: Hamas sold Palestinians' blood.

Ariel Kahana, Daniel Siryoti, News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu | Photo: Reuters

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday defended a recent decision to allow a \$15 million Qatari cash infusion into Gaza, earmarked for the salaries of Hamas public officials, saying his government is "doing everything possible to ensure calm is restored to Israel's Gaza-vicinity communities."

Mohammed Al-Emadi, who heads Qatar's Gaza Reconstruction Committee, personally delivered the funds, in three suitcases, to Gaza.

Qatar's official news agency said the funds would benefit over 60,000 public servants hired by Hamas since 2007.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah government has slashed Gaza budgets as part of efforts to wrest control of the enclave back from the Islamist terrorist group.

Palestinian sources said the Qatari payout was the first of a total of \$90 million that Doha has pledged to funnel into Gaza over the next six months, with Israeli approval.

Israeli officials stressed that the money would not end up with the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing.

Qatari observers were present at all 12 post offices across Gaza on Friday, to monitor the salary disbursements. Employees had to present their identity card and be finger-printed to receive the money.

AP

Palestinian Hamas government employees queue to receive 60% of their long-overdue salaries at the main Gaza Post Office, Friday

Opposition Leader Tzipi Livni (Zionist Union) criticized the move, saying, "Now Israel is allowing suitcases full of money into Gaza for Hamas? He [Netanyahu] has capitulated to their ultimatum and is trying to buy a temporary lull."

She was referring to a demand posed by Hamas military leader Yahya Sinwar, who said Israel must pay Gaza's rulers \$15 million in cash every month or face an escalation in border violence and arson terrorism.

Yesh Atid MK Haim Jelin also criticized the move, saying, "Is this how the government thinks to manage state security and the security of the Gaza-vicinity communities? They are selling our security in exchange for the ambiguous promise of a lull. This is outrageous."

Education minister Naftali Bennett (Habayit Hayehudi) also criticized the move, which he called "a protection payment."

"The way it was done, it's obvious this was a protection payment. You may buy some quiet in the short term, but in the long term, this sends a message to the other side that they can use violence to get what they want," Bennett said.

Bennett also criticized Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman for signing off on the move. This prompted the defense minister to tweet, "Either Bennett suffers from memory loss, or he's just a liar."

"I strongly opposed any arrangement with Hamas and especially the money transfer, while Bennett supported it from the get-go, and even suggested we grant 5,000 [Palestinian] workers permits to enter Israel," Lieberman wrote. "Bennett has consistently opposed launching any military action against Hamas, so he and his party are themselves responsible for the protection [payment]."

Lieberman further stressed that "at a meeting on this issue two weeks ago, I was the only cabinet member to opposed transferring the Qatari money to Hamas."

Netanyahu rejected the criticism.

Speaking with reporters before departing to Paris for a gathering of world leaders, the prime minister said, "I do everything I can, together with the cabinet and the defense establishment, to ensure calm is restored to Israel's Gaza-vicinity communities, while preventing a humanitarian crisis [in Gaza]."

"There are many issues that we have to deal with and we act responsibly on all of them," Netanyahu continued. "Every step, without exception, comes with a price. When you take steps of leadership, if you can't endure the cost, you can't lead. And I know how to endure the cost."

Environmental Protection Minister Zeev Elkin (Likud) also defended the move, saying, "This money is not going to Hamas, it's going toward the salaries of civil servants, in an orderly manner."

Elkin accused Abbas of cutting salaries to "inflare Gaza because he has not been successful on other fronts. The Qataris came along and said: 'We are willing to pay [salaries] instead of Abbas in order to calm the situation in Gaza.' What does it matter who pays?"

Palestinian officials in the West Bank were also critical of the move, accusing Hamas of "selling Palestinian blood" in return for \$15 million.

Reuters

Hamas military leader Yahya Sinwar, Friday

A statement by the Palestinian Authority said that the Qatari grant was a "small price that Hamas charged for the precious blood" of the Palestinians in Gaza.

The statement accused Hamas of "exploiting the plight of the Palestinians to forge ahead with a sinister plan, which dovetails with the Zionist-American conspiracy to separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip."

"Hamas leaders are prepared to align themselves with the devil in order to remain in power and undermine the Palestinian national project," the statement said.

"President Abbas has repeatedly affirmed that this conspiracy will fail. There will be no [Palestinian] state without the Gaza Strip, and no state in the Gaza Strip," the statement concluded.

Palestinian Authority official Wasel Abu Youssef said, "arrangements made through Qatar and elsewhere prolong the crisis of Palestinian division."

Meanwhile, Hamas military leader Yahya Sinwar denied reports that Egypt's efforts to broker a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel have been successful, despite Friday's cash delivery.

"Anyone who says there is a deal or understandings with the occupation does not tell the truth," he declared as he attended a border protest Friday.

"There is no agreement with Israel. There are understandings with our Egyptian and Qatari brothers and with the United Nations to lift the siege imposed on Gaza, but unlike the leader in the Mukataa [Abbas], Hamas will never bow before the occupation," he exclaimed.

"The money to pay the salaries is a direct result of the uncompromising struggle of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the March of Return on the fence," Sinwar said, referring to the terrorist group's eight-month-long border riot campaign.

"This will continue until the siege the occupation has imposed on Gaza is completely lifted. Hamas is not negotiating with the Zionist enemy, nor will it do so in the future."

Newsletter Friday November 9, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend | Print |

Iranian regime will be held accountable

The pressure the U.S. wants to exert on Iran will take its toll in the long run, but Tehran is already feeling the crunch • As the economy tanks, the regime will have to explain why it is investing billions in global terrorism instead of at home.

Yoav Limor

Anti-government protests in Tehran, January 2018 | Photo: AP

Were it not for the U.S. midterm elections, the public and media's interest would likely have remained focused exclusively on the American sanctions that were reimposed on Iran this week. Both Washington and Tehran are still at the initial stage of trying to understand what this means, what changes will follow, and what impact these changes will have.

This uncertainty was evident in the Twitter blows Washington and Tehran exchanged this week, as the sanctions were about to come into force on Nov. 5.

U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted a meme with the caption "Sanctions are Coming" – playing off the catchphrase "Winter is Coming" from the popular TV show "Game of Thrones" and even using the same font used in the series – and Iran quickly responded, tweeting a meme of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force, the black-ops arm of the country's formidable Revolutionary Guard Corps, featuring the similar font, reading, "I will stand against you."

U.S. President Donald Trump's "Game of Thrones"-style meme

The sarcastic exchanges provided the desired social media buzz, but real life soon took over and winter has come to Iran. Those who follow Iranian media and its proxies could see a great deal of concern, at the very least, over what the future may bring, especially with respect to what the sanctions mean for ordinary Iranians, and in the larger sense, for Iran's regional interests.

Domestically, Iran has been under pressure for a long time. Hopes that the 2015 nuclear agreement would significantly improve the dire economic situation have long shattered, and present sanctions have and will only make things worse.

This has yet to be expressed in a mass revolt, but the Iranian regime has had to face alarming signs this year: mass demonstrations in almost every city and district, with

explicit social slogans that raise clear questions about the regime's priorities, such as "Iran for Iranians" and "Enough interfering in Syria and Lebanon."

Jerusalem and Washington's express hope, as explicitly stated by U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton, is that the sanctions will deepen this internal crisis to the point of actually threatening the ayatollahs' regime. That, however, is doubtful: the regime in Tehran is strong and over the past decade it has succeeded in crushing larger waves of resistance, using demonstrative and deliberate violence aimed at generating deterrence.

Still, the dilemma will present itself quickly enough, as a clash between President Hassan Rouhani and Soleimani is only a matter of time.

Iran's response to Trump's meme, featuring Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force

Ideologically, they two are not too far apart as even moderates like Rouhani are still radical and support Iran's aspirations to possess nuclear capabilities and expand its international influence. The difference is in their strategies: Rouhani believes that the regime needs to invest at home, bolster the foundations and venture outward only after the situation stabilizes, while Soleimani wants to continue as before, and as far as he is concerned, establishing Iran's overseas interests is more important than the suffering of the Iranian people.

In the meantime, Iran is trying to have it both ways, postponing what is an inevitable decision. The pressure is felt not only on the Iranian street but also by its proxies, namely in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. Lebanon's Hezbollah, for example, has had to enact something of a "crisis economy" in recent months over the Iranian cuts to its budget. Hamas in Gaza, which is always in dire economic straits, also fears that the little Iranian aid it receives will soon dry up.

Soleimani is the one facing this external pressure and he is finding it increasingly more difficult to dispel the concerns expressed by Iran's proxies. Domestically, he will soon have to explain not only where the money is going, but also what are the returns on Iran's sizeable investments.

The Islamic republic has poured billions into its attempts to establish itself militarily in Syria and in arming Hezbollah, to partial success at best. Israel's strategy in Syria has painted Iran into a corner that is very different from where it hoped to be at this point, and in an age of economic crunch, the logic of continuing to invest in expensive weapons shipments that time and again fail to reach their destination is bound to be questioned.

This does not mean that Iran will cease exporting hostilities and terrorism – that goes against its rationale and against the current domestic balance of power. The moderates may have the public's ear, but they wield little political power, especially compared to Soleimani, who is ideologically and personally close to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali

Khamenei. Nevertheless, Soleimani will also have to rethink his steps, even if only tactically, until such time as things improve.

These processes will take time and nothing will happen tomorrow morning. All parties will try to understand and prepare for what will happen next. The American sanctions in their final form are different than first estimated and are more far-reaching on some issues than on others. Iran still hopes that a mechanism can be devised to circumvent them, but that is doubtful given the speed in which Western companies doubled back on their desire to do business with Tehran so as not to lose their business with the U.S. If anything, this proved what we have always known – when money talks, bullshit walks.

Anyone who wants to know what will happen in the next systems needs to follow the money. Iran, which understands this, is searching for detours. For example, to have Russia sell its oil and transfer the proceeds to Tehran in cash. The main benefit here will be declarative, in the sense of defying the U.S. administration, even if it is not as pragmatic, as it is doubtful whether this money will save the Iranian economy. After all, Iran will need more than the support of China, Russia and Western European countries to weather the storm.

This means that sooner or later Iran will seek a solution. One option, which is not so subtly being hinted at is that Tehran will decide to go for broke and make a mad dash for nuclear weapons or launch a war against Israel in the north. The odds of these scenarios are very low, simply because the regime in Tehran may be radical, but it is not suicidal. The ayatollahs know that such moves would legitimize a stronger strike against them, both militarily and economically, and that they will alienate the few supporters Iran has.

It is more likely that Iran will try to be flexible and pursue some sort of negotiations with the United States, in hope of reaching a new agreement. In fact, rumors of such informal talks have been swirling for quite some time.

In such a case, Iran will have to compromise, accept additional restrictions on its nuclear and ballistic missiles program, as well as on its export of terrorism, in the hope that at some point in the future, this, too, shall pass.

For Israel, every alternative is good news, because it pushes Iran further away from going nuclear, even if only temporarily, all while diminishing the threat it poses from Syria and Lebanon, which in turn spells lower chances of a war in the northern sector.

Newsletter Thursday November 8, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

| Print

| Report: PA President Abbas signs off on Israel-Hamas truce

Abbas, who has been thwarting Egyptian efforts to broker a truce between Israel and Hamas for months, learns details and comes around • Deal reportedly includes Hamas halting border riots, Egypt easing border restrictions, expansion of Gaza fishing zone.

News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Sharm el-Sheikh, Saturday | Photo: EPA

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has been able to convince Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to sign off on a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas, the London-based Arabic-language newspaper Al-Hayat reported Thursday.

Cairo has been trying to mediate a truce between Israel and Hamas, the terrorist group that controls the Gaza Strip, for the past several months, in an effort to prevent a series of escalating border flare-ups from devolving into a full-fledged war.

Abbas recently admitted that Ramallah has been actively trying to torpedo these efforts, which also seek to outline an agreement that would pave the way for Gaza's economic rehabilitation. Abbas explained that Hamas, which ousted Abbas' Fatah-led government from the Gaza Strip in a military coup in 2007, doesn't have the authority to hold any kind of talks with Israel.

According to Al-Hayat, el-Sissi and Abbas met in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh on Saturday, where the Egyptian leader explained in detail the nature of the understandings that were reached.

Upon learning all the details, Abbas signed off on the plan, agreeing to "allow Gazans some breathing room," the report said.

The report further said that as part of the deal, Israel agreed to permit Qatar to transfer \$90 million to Gaza, to be used to pay the wages of Hamas functionaries. However, Israel conditioned the transfer on the logistics being overseen by the U.N.

The funds are expected to be transferred by the end of next week.

For the first time in years, Israel also agreed to allow increased produce exports from the Gaza Strip, the paper said.

Lebanon's al-Akhbar newspaper recently published a draft of the Egyptian-brokered deal, detailing several steps toward reaching a long-term cease-fire agreement. The steps, which are contingent on each other, include Hamas' agreement to halt the eight-month border riot campaign, an Egyptian agreement to gradually ease its border restrictions on Gaza and an Israeli agreement to expand the fishing zone off Gaza's coast from its current maximum of 9 nautical miles to 14 miles.

Palestinian media reports on the meeting between Abbas and el-Sissi were vague, with most saying only that the two leaders discussed the Palestinian issue and "common interests."

Newsletter Thursday November 8, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

Print

Canada apologizes for 1939 refusal of Jewish refugee ship

German liner MS St. Louis, carrying 907 Jews fleeing Nazi Germany, was also rejected by Cuba and the U.S. and forced to return to Europe • Canadian PM Trudeau: To harbor such indifference toward refugees was to share moral responsibility for their deaths.

Dan Lavie, Eli Leon, News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff

Canadian PM Justin Trudeau delivers a formal apology over the fate of the MS St. Louis and its passengers, Wednesday | Photo: Reuters

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau formally apologized Wednesday on behalf of his nation for turning away a ship full of Jewish refugees trying to flee Nazi Germany in 1939.

The German liner MS St. Louis was carrying 907 German Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, and it also had been rejected by Cuba and the United States. The passengers were forced to return to Europe and more than 250 later died in the Holocaust.

Trudeau called the apology long overdue.

Hitler "watched on as we refused their visas, ignored their letters and denied them entry," Trudeau said in Parliament.

Video: Reuters

"There is little doubt that our silence permitted the Nazis to come up with their own Final Solution to the so-called Jewish problem."

He said lawmakers at the time used Canadian laws to mask anti-Semitism. "We let anti-Semitism take hold in our communities and become our official policy," Trudeau said.

"To harbor such hatred and indifference toward the refugees was to share in the moral responsibility for their deaths."

In the run-up to World War II and the ensuing Holocaust, the government heeded anti-Semitic sentiment and severely restricted Jewish immigration. From 1933 to 1945, only about 5,000 Jewish refugees were accepted.

The ship arrived in Canada more than six months after the Nazis in Germany attacked Jewish homes and businesses, burned 250 synagogues and killed at least 91 people, on a night which came to be known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass.

Before the apology, Trudeau met with Ana Maria Gordon, a St. Louis passenger who lives in Canada, to talk about how the country could fight anti-Semitism.

Newsletter Wednesday November 7, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

Print

The midterm elections: A celebration of democracy

The midterm elections were so emotional that they almost took on the dimension of a religious ritual – very personal • Americans waited in endless lines to exercise their right to vote but the sense was clear: We're voting in 2018 but looking to 2020.

Boaz Bismuth

A voter in the U.S. midterm elections, Tuesday | Photo: AP

Two American couples, not very young, sit down for a late lunch at the McDonald's off Exit 121 on the highway from Miami to Cocoa Beach in Florida. "We've seen a lot of elections," Jason says. "I remember how they made fun of Ronald Reagan and he turned out to be one of the greatest presidents we've had. It's the same with the Democrats who love to laugh at [President Donald] Trump. But look at him, he's like a boy – he's 72 and look at that energy."

"It's not easy," he adds. "Look at my wife, and our friends – they voted Democrat because they have a labor union mentality."

For the benefit of anyone who may have forgotten, when Reagan announced his candidacy in 1979, he was viewed as a joke. Everyone wondered how a second-rate actor, and not a very good one, could possibly become the leader of the free world at the height of an arms race with the Soviet Union. But Reagan won over the hearts of the American

voters, who wanted a president who was proud of America rather than one who groveled to America's enemies. They wanted a president who would stand up and speak his mind.

Reagan won the presidential election in 1980 and again in 1984. He also won the Cold War.

Jason's and his friends' openness comes in stark contrast with the discreet politeness that dominated the two voting stations I visited in northern Miami the day before. There, when I approached the voters in the long lines outside the polls, I was met with nothing but perfect decorum until I asked whom they voted for.

This year, the U.S. midterm elections have been so emotional that they have taken on the characteristics of a religious ritual – extremely personal. After all, politics are everywhere. Trump is everywhere and he speaks all the time. So this sacred experience that people are desperate to keep to themselves is actually happening at a time when the public is supremely and openly polarized.

Trump was banking on that. He hoped that what people were saying didn't accurately reflect what they really thought. He hoped that when it came time to put the ballot in the box, they would go with their hearts and vote for the booming economy he had given them. He hoped that they would vote in support of his ideas (even if they dislike his blunt manner of speaking). He hoped that they would instinctively recoil from Democrats who have failed to present any real solutions to the issues (like immigration, taxation, and law and order) that Trump was confronting, other than to raise taxes.

In reality, it is likely that many voters split their votes – voting for a Republican for Senate to retain the Republican majority and a Democrat for the House of Representatives to rein Trump in. The idea of a divided government is an inextricable part of the American experience, and it dovetails nicely with the spirit of the Constitution, which sought to decentralize federal power to give more independence to the individual states and prevent the administration from making any rash decisions.

I found that Democrats are generally much more willing to reveal how they voted than Republicans, and the way I see it, Republicans are generally more discreet. It seems as though they are ashamed of disagreeing with the overarching media narrative. This bodes well for the president, particularly in Florida – a crucial state. The daily attacks on Trump in all the major media outlets, with the exception of Fox News, are precisely what prompts Republicans to keep mum.

"Listen," says Gabriel, an 85-year-old Jewish pensioner, "I think he's a great president and so good for Israel but all my friends voted for Democrats. I can't recall any midterm election with so much tension and hostility between the camps. This isn't healthy for America."

Trump's son, Eric, was a guest on Fox News on the morning of the election, to campaign for his father and the Republican Party. In fact, the Trump family appeared to dominate

the public discourse. While President Trump, who has given the American people excellent economic improvements, was impressing crowds at an election rally in Missouri, his son was invited to provide commentary. "My father needs to be given an opportunity to continue bringing success to America," Eric said. At the same time, the president said at the rally that if the Democrats win, they will launch a socialist revolution and triple the public's taxes.

Other campaign events highlighted appearances and declarations made by former President Barack Obama, who appeared out of nowhere to try to spur Democrats to go out and vote. Obama turned this election cycle into something very personal for him, jumping on the "anyone but Trump" bandwagon. This was a surprising move for a former president who wasn't vying for any public position. The Democrats managed to frame the election as a battle for the character of America but failed to offer any alternative. Paradoxical, I would say.

The voting station at Indian River State College in St. Lucie County, Florida, was overflowing with voters. "I am a Democrat," Auror told me. "It is important for me that the Democrats win so that balance will be restored in America."

Her friend, Rose, disagreed with the media claim that the election revolved exclusively around Trump. "There are so much important legislation to pass here in Florida. Let's not lose sight of the fact that there are also domestic issues in our state."

History teaches us that U.S. presidents tend to take a hit in midterm elections, not because of anything they did or didn't do, but because the voters like to give presidents a hard time. And the fact is that this trend has yielded many achievements. In retrospect, it is safe to say that then-President Bill Clinton's painful defeat in the 1994 midterms, in which Republicans took control of both houses with impressive seat gains, essentially saved his administration. He was forced to align himself with Newt Gingrich's and the GOP's message and cut government spending, address the deficit and back initiatives that weren't necessarily what liberals would support. The result was immense economic growth and a second term for Clinton. Obama also continued on to win a second term after the difficult defeat in 2010.

A number of voters said to me that Trump would actually benefit from losing the House. If Democrats insist on torpedoing all his initiatives and refuse to cooperate with the reforms he is planning, he could use that to batter the Democrats in 2020, all but securing a second presidential term. Let's keep in mind that Trump isn't perceived as a radical politician – he's seen as an independent who isn't beholden to either party's agenda.

That is why he didn't go after every component of Obama's health care reform; that's why his stated views on the need to invest in American infrastructure sound very similar to the Democrats'; and, considering Trump's love of winning, he will make huge deals with the Democrats if he can take credit for the consequent triumph. He has done so much already for his right-wing base that he can afford such moves.

Trump is the kind of person who will give any campaign his all. Even if he was running for president of the PTA. The real winner in this midterm election was democracy, regardless of the outcome. Candidates were fighting for every vote up until the very last minute. In Arizona, the turnout record was shockingly broken in early voting before the polls even opened. In Florida, a bitter battle was waged, almost as if the state went back to its status of deciding state in 2000. Then, it was unclear who had won Florida for a month before George W. Bush claimed a razor-thin victory (by a majority of 537 votes) and became president.

A month from now, no one will be talking about the midterm elections. The only topic of interest will be the 2020 election. That's why Trump made a point of declaring his candidacy in every campaign rally, even if it wasn't officially. He concluded his last event, in Missouri, with a call for unity: "We are one people, one family and one glorious nation under God. And together with love in our hearts and hope in our souls we will make America wealthy again. We will make America strong again. We will make America safe again. And we will make America great again." Perhaps that message was directed at the Democrats.

Along the freeway, at the exit from Miami, I saw a truck driver stop and pull a lawn sign with the word "Vote" on it out of the grass. "Why?" I asked him.

"This will be a collectors' item," he told me. "Anything having to do with the Trump era will be worth a lot of money. I'm saving this for my grandkids."

Newsletter Tuesday November 6, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

Print

Security agency chief warns of deceptive calm: We foiled 480 major terror attacks this year

As well as 480 major attacks, Shin Bet also thwarted 590 lone-wolf attacks and arrested 219 Hamas cells, while combating cyberattacks and espionage plots, agency director says

- Hamas is constantly trying to stage attacks in Judea and Samaria, he warns.

Gideon Allon and Israel Hayom Staff

Shin Bet security agency Director Nadav Argaman | Photo: Dudi Vaaknin

The Shin Bet security agency has thwarted 480 Palestinian terrorist attacks so far in 2018, agency Director Nadav Argaman told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday.

The Shin Bet's efforts were a major factor in the defense establishment's ability to maintain the fragile calm between Israel and the Palestinians, especially in Judea and Samaria, Argaman said.

"The situation in the Palestinian arena has been very unstable this year. In the Gaza Strip, we are somewhere between a potential [military] campaign and efforts to stabilize the humanitarian situation," he told the committee.

"In Judea and Samaria the situation is very complex as well. Things on the ground are relatively calm, but this calm is deceptive. The situation is actually highly combustible."

Argaman continued, " Hamas is constantly trying to launch terrorist attacks in and from Judea and Samaria.

"We were able to prevent 480 major terrorist attacks, stop 590 lone-wolf terrorists and arrest 219 Hamas cells. This indicates that there is a large, clandestine terrorist infrastructure there."

Hamas leaders in Gaza and Turkey are sparing no effort to mastermind terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria, and similar efforts are being made from Lebanon by the Hezbollah terrorist group, Argaman said.

He said the Shin Bet uses a variety of methods to track down lone terrorists, including monitoring Palestinians' social media accounts and general online activity, using confidential informants, and implementing a complex profiling algorithm.

The agency "has also been able to foil multiple cyberattacks and espionage plots against Israel. The current reality is the result of intensive efforts by all branches of the defense establishment – the IDF, Shin Bet and the Israel Police – that enable Israelis to live their daily lives peacefully," he said.

Shin Bet data indicates that in 2017, the agency thwarted over 400 terrorist attacks, including 13 suicide attacks and eight abductions, as well as 1,100 potential lone-wolf attacks.

In 2016, the Shin Bet prevented 344 major terrorist attacks.