



## Israeli Security Agency

Hamas Strengthening and Force Buildup

# Hamas Strengthening and Force Buildup

(as for November 30, 2008)

Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip (June 16, 2007), it has exerted itself to establish its regime in the Gaza Strip and strengthen its military power. De facto, there is a significant increase in the number of Gaza Strip-based attacks.

### Establishing a Hamas army

Hamas used the complete freedom of action it has gained to establish itself as an independent, "semi-political" entity. One of the measures it has taken includes setting a new security apparatus employing Hamas military wing activists. This apparatus used to be a civilian security apparatus; nowadays it is a well-formed military organization, divided into a typical military hierarchy (brigades, regiments, companies, and platoons). Hamas has also formed some specially designated units, such as Hamas Coast Guard. Hamas has also made sure to conduct routine trainings in various areas (including advanced combat, charging and capturing a post, sniper shooting etc.), and "routine security" tasks.

Hamas has also upgraded Intelligence gathering abilities and trailing of IDF in the area around the Gaza Strip. The Intelligence gathered was used to direct launchings and execute attacks (sniper shootings, explosive devices, and infiltration attacks) causing Israeli casualties. Due to the takeover, Hamas was able to seize large amounts of weaponry, equipment, and instruments that belonged to the Palestinian security apparatuses (including monitoring and radio communication equipment), thus, sky-rocketing Hamas' power in this area.

### Weaponry smuggling and force buildup

After the takeover, Hamas postulated to safeguard its rule in the Gaza Strip and hopefully expand it in the future to the West Bank. Hamas



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seniors and spokesmen announced that "the day when Hamas takes over the West Bank is footsteps away". Hamas is diligent about improving its military capabilities, strengthening itself, and building its force to produce a reasonable military force vis à vis Israel.

These measures are meant to assist Hamas in a possible confrontation with IDF in the Gaza Strip and maintain Hamas' ability to carry out terror attacks.

Hamas takes advantage of the fact that it has established sovereignty over the Gaza Strip-Egypt border line to fulfill its goals. Using the network of tunnels or a border breach (as occurred in January 2008), it is able to smuggle weaponry, especially standard quality weaponry, such as Grad rockets that are launched towards Ashkelon (about 30 rockets were launched in the first quarterly of 2008). Moreover, activists are sent via the tunnels to be trained abroad, especially in Syria and Iran; experts in warfare, trainers, and "engineers" arrive to the Gaza Strip to disseminate their knowledge in the various fields, and activists who graduated from military camps abroad are received with open arms.

Weaponry smuggling focuses on the smuggling of thousands of kilos of explosives destined to be put in rockets, explosive devices, bombs and AT rocket launchers against IDF in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip. Moreover, the smuggled explosives are used in standard weaponry, such as Grad rockets that are launched towards Ashkelon (on May 14, 2008, a Grad hit a shopping center in Ashkelon, resulting in 30 casualties) and Netivot.

### "The Military Industry"

Whilst efforts are being made to increase standard weaponry smuggling into the Gaza Strip, Hamas strives to set up its own "military industry", with emphasis on improving its self-made rockets to increase range, raise precision and combat power, and increase their "shelf life" (in order to amass rocket stocks).



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Currently, Hamas possesses short-ranged (2.5-6km) and medium-ranged (8-9km) self-made Qassam rockets, as well as long-ranged improved Qassam rockets (about 12-13km). Throughout the second half of 2007, Ashkelon was bombarded by Hamas' long-ranged improved rockets reaching this range.

Hamas' production network aspires to extend the range to 18-20km and beyond, in order to intensify the threat of rockets on southern Israel. Hamas' effort to upgrade its military capabilities (and standard weaponry smuggling) is also prevalent among other Gaza Strip-based terror organizations. These organizations benefit from Hamas' tail wind in its support of terrorism against Israel and lack of restraints.

PIJ is the prominent organization benefiting from Hamas' policy regarding other Gaza Strip-based terror organizations. PIJ is the leading organization in terms of the number of rockets launched towards Israel and is also submerged in developing its rocket capabilities. In February 2008, it has managed to launch a self-made rocket from southern Gaza Strip to Netivot that reached a range of approximately 18km. PIJ spokesmen claimed responsibility for the launching and stated the range extended above 20km.

### Analysis of terror data since the take over

It is possible to say that the number of Gaza Strip-based attacks has risen since Hamas gained power. However, this increment is especially prominent compared to the period before the takeover and the period after the takeover.

A comparison between the numbers of Gaza Strip-based attacks in 2005-2007 suggests that the increment in the number of attacks in 2005 and 2006 (the year in which Hamas won the elections for the Legislative Council) was approx. 17% (1,831 attacks in 2005 as opposed to 2,137 attacks in 2006). Whereas, 2006-2007 show an increment of more than



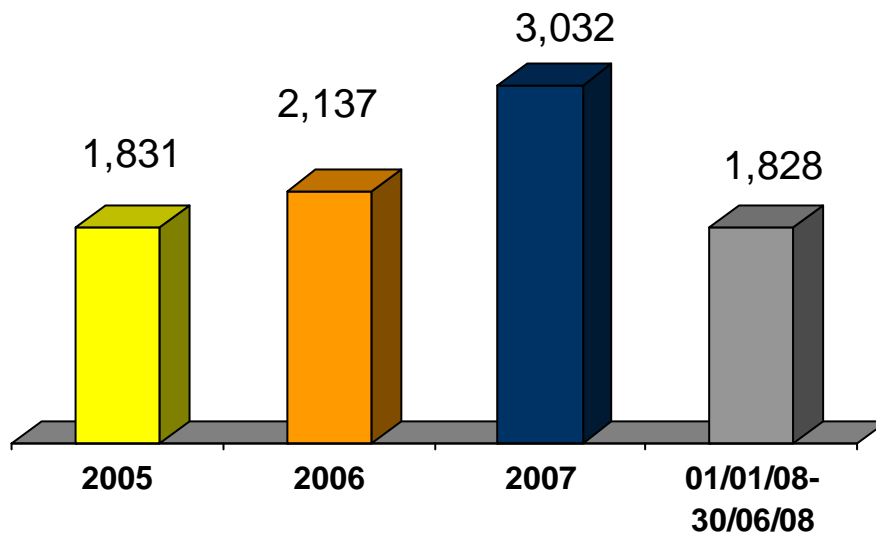
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41% in the number of Gaza Strip-based attacks (2,137 attacks in 2006 and 3,032 attacks in 2007).

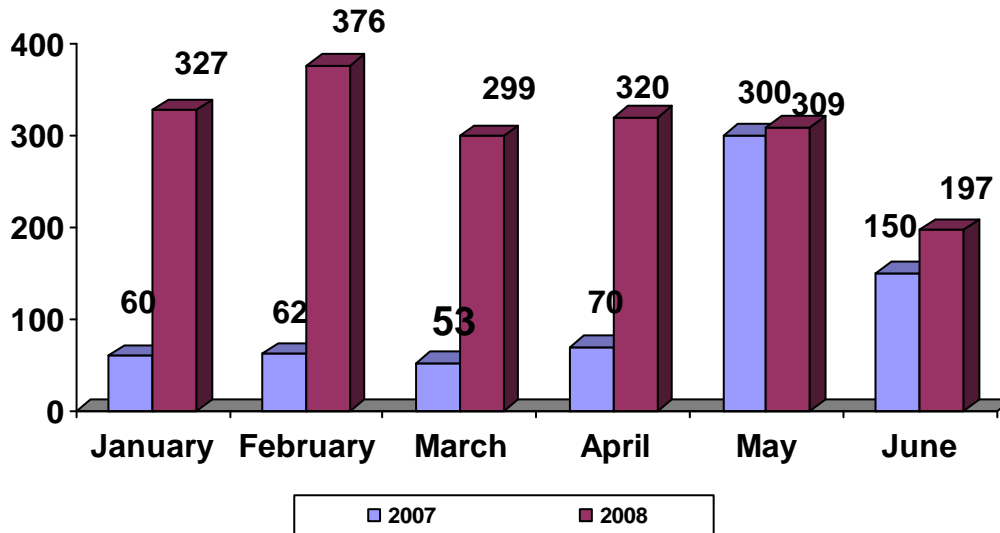
2008 also demonstrated a high level of Gaza Strip-based attacks. During the first six months of 2008, 1,828 attacks were executed, constituting about 60% of the general number of attacks in 2007. Since the Lull was carried into effect (June 19), the number of Gaza Strip-based attacks dropped drastically, but since November there had been a renewed rise in numbers. Up to November 30, 2,019 Gaza Strip-based attacks were executed, constituting 67% of all attacks in 2007.

### Distribution of Gaza Strip-based attacks according to years



On average, we are speaking of over 300 attacks per month in 2008 compared to the first six months in 2007. During the first trimester of 2007, about 61 attacks were executed on a monthly average – a 500% increase.

**Distribution of Gaza Strip-based attacks – a comparison between the first trimesters of 2007 and 2008**



If we examine the 2007 monthly data, we will see there is a difference between the levels of Gaza Strip-based terrorism before and after the takeover. Throughout January until May 2007, the monthly average of Gaza Strip-based attacks was approximately 60.

In May, the Gaza Strip experienced an outbreak of violence between Hamas and Fatah. The end result was in mid-June when Hamas gained control over the Gaza Strip which led to a flare-up in the number of attacks, especially rocket launchings, mostly by Hamas. Hamas military wing sent a clear message – it did not waive the armed conflict against Israel and it was a strategy to draw the attention on terrorizing Israel instead of casting aspersions on Hamas regarding its part in the inner-Palestinian conflict.

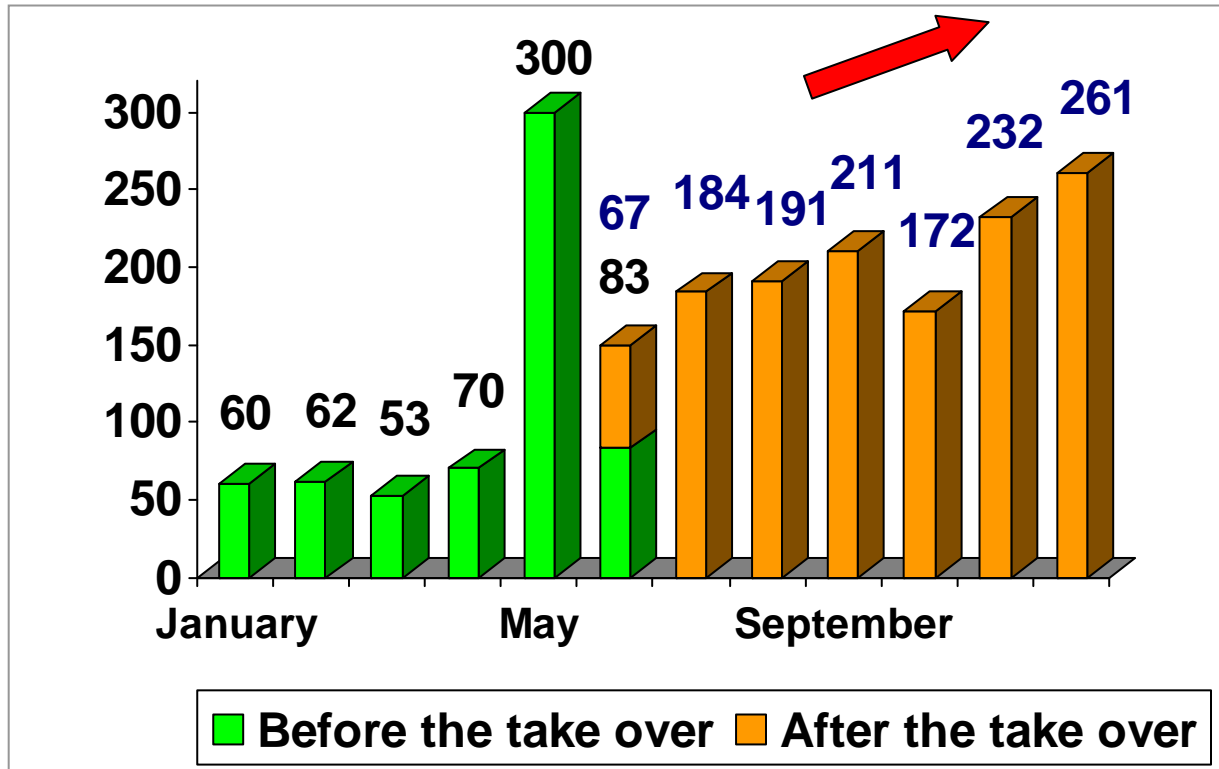
Throughout May 2007, a total of 300 attacks were noted constituting an unusual number of attacks (specifically for that period) and 150 attacks were executed in June. After Hamas took over, the monthly average was

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over 200 attacks per month. Taking into consideration January to June, except May, we see a 340% increase in Gaza Strip-based attacks.

### A monthly distribution of Gaza Strip-based attacks in 2007



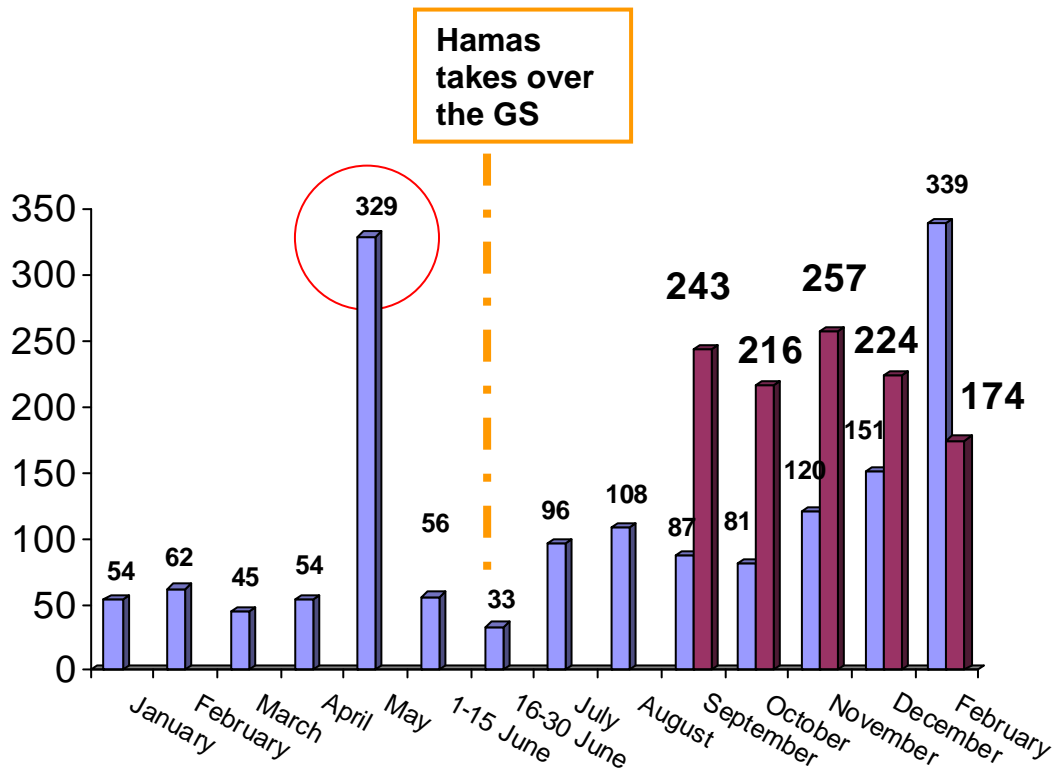
The most prominent form of attack and one which contributed to the massive increase in Gaza Strip-based terrorism was the high-trajectory launching (of rockets and mortar shells) towards Israel.

If we analyze every form of attack separately, we will be able to see that the increase in the number of attacks after the take over can also be noted in the distribution of forms of attacks.

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Following are diagrams to demonstrate the latter:



**\*\*Rocket launchings – note that the figures are the number of launchings, not the number of attacks. Every rocket or mortar shell attack may include several launchings. For example, one attack had seven rockets launched. Therefore, one attack = seven launchings.**

From the outset of 2007 until the take over, except for the irregularity in May, the monthly average of launchings was approximately 54 per month. Following the take over, we see an increase of about 200% in the monthly number of launchings that took place, 107 launchings on average.

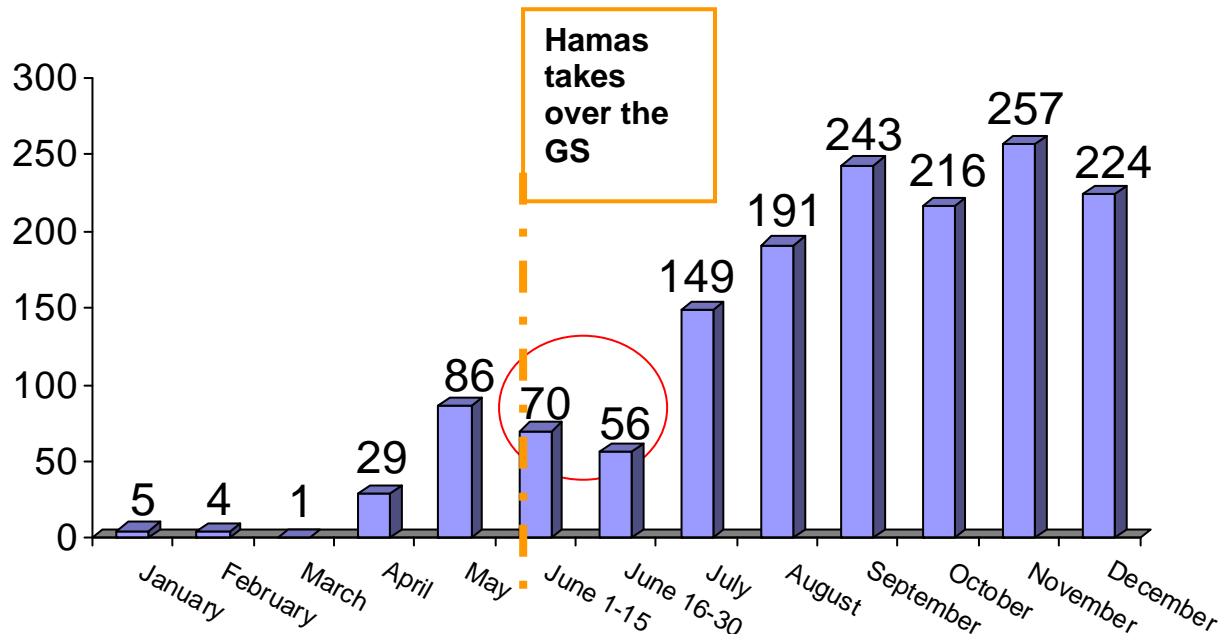
This growing tendency in the number of attacks is even more salient if we examine the distribution of mortar shell launchings. After the take over, the monthly average was over 200 rocket launchings per month, and about 235 launchings per month during the last trimester of 2007. In the first trimester of 2007, only a handful of launchings was executed (1-

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5 launchings per month), and an average of approximately 62 launchings per month during the second trimester of 2007, until Hamas took over (April, May, and partly June).

#### Distribution of mortar shell launchings\*\* in 2007 according to a monthly profile



**Mortar shell launchings\*** - note that the data reflects the number of launchings, not the number of attacks. Every mortar shell or rocket launching may include several launchings. For example, one attack consisted of five mortar shells launched. One mortar shell launched = five launchings.

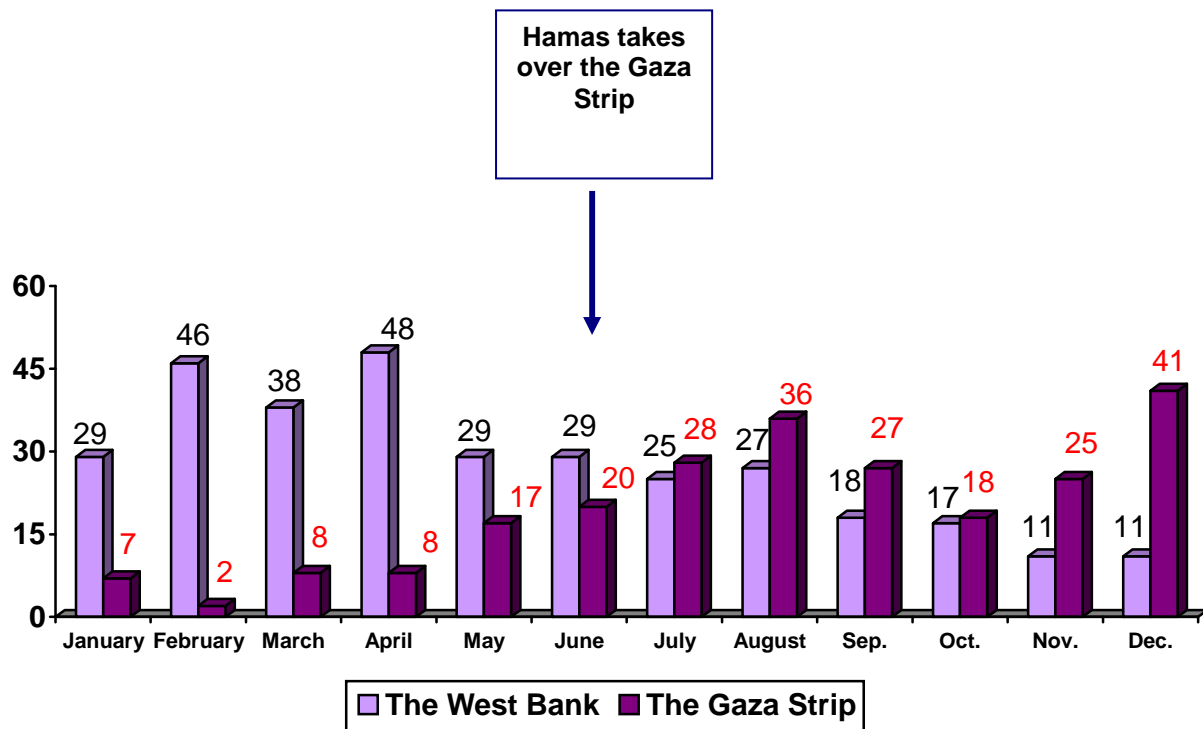
One could also note the boost in Gaza Strip-based light arms shootings. In the diagram below, the first trimester of 2007 shows that the monthly average of Gaza Strip-based shooting attacks was 5.6. In the second trimester the number climbed to 15 attacks on a monthly average. However, due to the take over, the monthly average of Gaza Strip-based shooting attacks was 30.3 in the third trimester, and 28 on a monthly average in the last trimester.

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It is an average increase of 300% from the first half to the second half of 2007. This trend is especially salient if one compares the number of attacks between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip before and after the take over. In 2007, the West Bank demonstrated a drop of about 200% in the number of shooting attacks (a monthly average of 36.5 attacks during the first half of 2007 as opposed to a monthly average of 18.1 attacks during the second half), as opposed to a 300% increase in the Gaza Strip.

#### A distribution of shooting attacks in 2007 according to a monthly profile – a comparison between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank



2008 – The main reason for the increase in the number of Gaza Strip-based attacks derives from intensive high-trajectory launchings towards Israel.

While Hamas was allegedly sending signals for a Lull, its activists continued to plot and execute attacks, and increased rocket launchings towards Israeli towns and villages in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip and the Western Negev. In fact, from the outset of 2008 (until

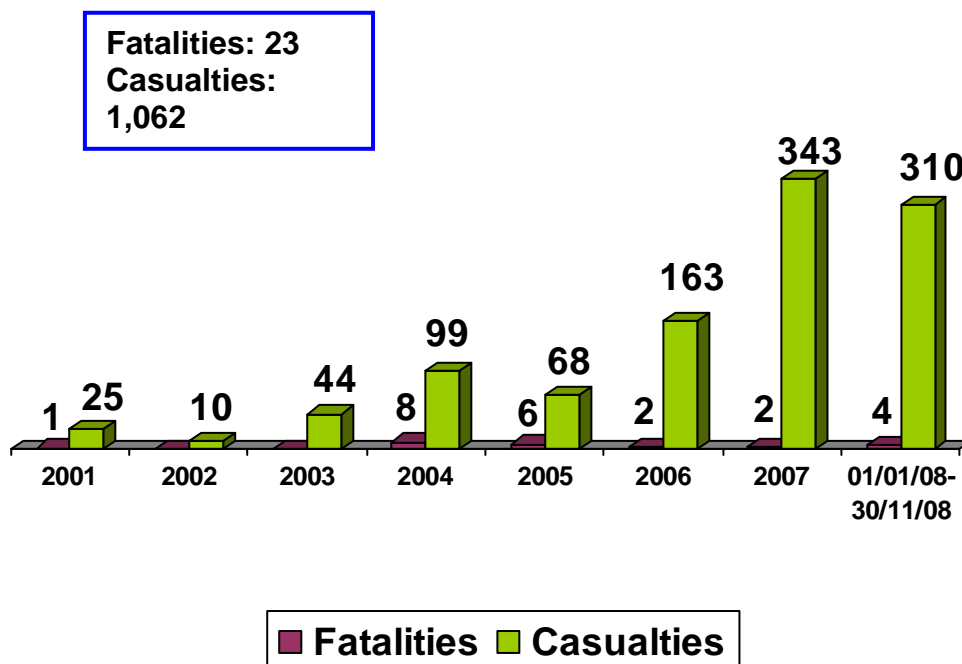
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November 30), more than 1,600 rockets and over 700 mortar shells were launched towards Israel. This is a monthly average of about 265 rockets per month and about 100 mortar shells, except for July until October, in which Lull was kept.

Four Israelis were killed in 2008 as a result from the intensive launchings (one Israeli was killed in February at Sapir College in Ashkelon; two were killed in May – a man at Kfar Aza (May 9), and a woman in Yesha (May 12); another Israeli was killed in June at Nir Oz) and 310 people were injured (as for November 30).

### A distribution of fatalities and casualties as a result of high-trajectory launchings in 2001-2008



In summary, it is possible to say that due to Hamas take over of the Gaza Strip and its becoming an independent, "semi-political" entity that enjoys unlimited freedom of action, building its military force through weaponry smuggling, and improving its "military industry", the extent of Gaza Strip-based attacks grew and with it, the scope of threat on Israel.