

Militancy/Terrorism



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Israel & Palestinian Territories Analysis: Police on August 19 confirms IED explosion in Tel Aviv on August 18 was terror-related; highlights elevated threat of militancy

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Executive Summary:

- During the evening of August 18, a powerful IED carried in a backpack by a Palestinian resident of Nablus exploded in a likely premature detonation on southern Tel Aviv's Lehi Street, killing the assailant and wounding an Israeli civilian.
- Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed joint responsibility, and Hamas threatened to execute further "suicide bombings" in Israel.
- It is likely that a major terror attack was averted due to the bomb exploding prematurely. The terrorist was likely seeking a crowded target in southern Tel Aviv or other parts of the city.
- It is possible that the terrorist exploited breaches in the West Bank's security barrier, which continues to be a challenge for Israel's security establishment. He also carried the IED in a backpack, which likely further enabled him not to arouse suspicion.
- The perpetrators' success in reaching Tel Aviv with a live bomb without being detected highlights that Israel remains vulnerable to large-scale terror attacks despite a prolonged and extensive counter-terror campaign and its elevated intelligence-gathering capabilities.
- It contrasts multiple incidents over the past year in which Israel's security forces thwarted attacks

of similar nature.

- **Remain vigilant in crowded commercial areas or public transport hubs. Be vigilant of and alert authorities to any unattended packages or suspicious individuals in these areas.**

Current Situation:

- Reports indicate that the police on August 19 determined that the IED explosion on Tel Aviv's Lehi Street was terror-related. The assailant, who died in the attack, is a Palestinian man from the West Bank's Nablus area.
- The sappers who investigated the IED characterized it as a "powerful" device of several kg of explosive material.
- During the evening hours of August 18, the IED exploded while the terrorist was carrying it in a bag on his back, walking on Tel Aviv's Lehi Street.
- One passerby, who was riding on a scooter nearby at the time of the explosion, sustained light injuries from the IED's shrapnel.
- Given the location and timing of the IED explosion, the current assumption is that it was a premature detonation caused by a malfunction.
- Police forces have reportedly raised their level of alertness and have initiated security operations in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan area. It called on Israeli citizens to be vigilant and notify the Israel Police of any suspicious persons/objects.
- On August 19, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) reportedly claimed joint responsibility for the attempted attack. Hamas stated that "suicide attacks in Israel will recur as long as Israel continues the massacre, expulsion of residents, and policy of assassinations [in Gaza]."



CCTV FOOTAGE DEPICTING THE TERRORIST



Assessments & Forecast:

1. The incident is highly notable given that bombing attacks within Israel's Green Line have been extremely rare in recent years and did not occur in Tel Aviv. The indications that the IED was relatively powerful suggest that a major terror attack with potentially a high casualty toll nearly materialized. The circumstances of the explosion, namely occurring in the absence of a large crowd of passersby, lend credence to the notion that the IED detonated prematurely due to a malfunction. Considering that, the terrorist was likely en route to a specific target in Tel Aviv with a high density of people. This could include restaurants or bars, or even venues such as Jaffa's Bloomfield Stadium or the Menora Mivtachim Arena, both of which were crowded during the evening hours of August 18 due to a sporting event and a concert.
2. The assailant's possession of a powerful IED points to the involvement of a larger terrorist cell/militant infrastructure that possessed know-how, as well as relatively robust IED manufacturing capabilities. This lends credence to Hamas' and PIJ's claim of responsibility, highlighting the hardline militant groups' constant efforts to orchestrate militant attacks within Israel and also their growing collaboration in recent years.
3. Over the past year, the Israeli security establishment has gathered intelligence on [increased efforts by West Bank-based terrorist groups to use IEDs in terror attacks against Israelis](#) and has intensified efforts to destroy such groups' explosive-manufacturing labs in known militant strongholds in the West Bank. Against this background, the current incident further underscores that West Bank-based terror groups are dedicating concerted efforts to establish and use IED capabilities, with the Nablus and Jenin areas constituting specific flashpoints for these efforts. For instance, on [March 11](#), Israeli security forces killed a Palestinian resident of Jenin's area in West Bank's Zeita, adjacent to the security barrier, who possessed an IED and was attempting to infiltrate Israel and conduct a "sacrifice" attack in Tel Aviv.
4. The fact that the current perpetrator managed to actually reach Tel Aviv in possession of an IED without being intercepted by Israel's security apparatus indicates that the plotters of the current attempted attack were able to circumvent Israel's tight intelligence-gathering and monitoring efforts. This is despite the latter's prowess and prolonged counter-terror efforts in the West Bank, which have led to the arrest of thousands of terror suspects since October 7. A known and long-standing weakness remains the Israeli authorities' difficulty in mitigating breaches of the security barrier separating the West Bank from Israel's Green Line, which may have been the gap exploited by the latest assailant. Furthermore, CCTV footage indicated that the assailant did not have a suspicious appearance per se, especially as he was carrying the IED in a regular backpack. This has likely partially enabled him to move freely within Israel without arousing suspicion by security forces.
5. In any case, **the event shows that the extensive Israeli counter-militancy campaign has**

not eliminated Israel's vulnerability to successful terror attacks. Overall, the development highlights the risk that West Bank-based terrorist networks will continue to attempt to exploit existing gaps in the Israeli counter-militancy protocols by plotting further bombing attacks within Israeli territory, including in central Israel's Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area. The partial success in the latest instance will increase the motivation to plot such attacks, with Tel Aviv being a famous, symbolic, and very appealing target for militants.

- 6. FORECAST:** In the immediate term, it cannot be ruled out that further such efforts will be orchestrated by the same militant infrastructure involved in the latest incident.
- 7. FORECAST:** Israel's security agencies will work to review their intelligence-gathering procedures to identify possible shortcomings and intensify their efforts further to clamp down on militant infrastructures, especially in the Nablus area. This will include a concerted effort to unearth the cell responsible for the latest attempted attack.
- 8. FORECAST:** Meanwhile, Israeli security forces will step up security protocols within Israeli cities, particularly in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area and around crowded venues, and request the public to be vigilant and suspicious. This will include a heightened presence of police forces in public areas.
- 9. FORECAST:** In the coming days, security forces will also likely intensify search operations for Palestinians who are illegally residing in Israel, as well as enforce more forceful measures to deter illegal Palestinian residents from crossing into Israel from the West Bank illegally.

Recommendations:

For travelers/residents/expats

1. Those operating or residing in Israel are advised to remain extra vigilant due to the potential for additional attempted attacks materializing.
2. Remain vigilant in crowded commercial areas or public transport hubs, as these locations have been targeted by militants in the past. Be vigilant of and alert authorities to any unattended packages or suspicious individuals in these areas.
3. In outdoor leisure activities at night, favor sitting in restaurants and bars' inner area rather than the open-air section, which are more vulnerable to attacks. Refrain from large gatherings outside major nightlife venues.
4. If an attack unfolds within your vicinity, immediately seek cover, and try to safely disengage from the area as quickly as possible. This is given the risk of secondary attacks and shooting towards assailants by security forces and armed civilians, which could cause collateral damage.

For security managers

1. Consider providing situational awareness training for employees, providing them with best practices and procedures relevant for periods of elevated militancy threats.
- 2. Please contact us for further information and support.**