

THE NEW PALESTINIAN TERROR ARMY: PLANNING THE NEXT OCTOBER 7TH MASSACRE

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Security and Foreign Affairs

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Executive Summary

- ✦ The Palestinian Authority's security forces have expanded substantially beyond the personnel, weapons, and operational limits established under the Oslo Accords.
- ✦ The security forces have evolved from a civilian policing body into a military-capable organization with offensive capabilities, supported by foreign training, funding, and equipment.
- ✦ The combination of military capabilities, close geographic proximity to Israel's population centers, and past cases of security personnel participating in terrorism creates the potential for a future large-scale attack.
- ✦ Current Israeli and international policies have enabled the continued growth and militarization of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus despite the original Oslo framework.
- ✦ Recommended policy measures include reducing the security forces to their original agreed size, ending military assistance and advanced training, increasing oversight, and strengthening Israel's defensive preparedness.

Foreword

During the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre, over 6,000 Gazan terrorists invaded Israel. Half were trained and armed operatives belonging to terrorist organizations (Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and others). The other half were additional terrorists who were Gaza residents, not necessarily members of those organizations. The terrorist squad that penetrated farthest reached the city of Ofakim, 22 kilometers (13.67 miles) from Gaza.

In breach of the Oslo Accords, Judea and Samaria (a.k.a. the West Bank) is now host to an armed force ten times larger than the total number of terrorists who invaded from Gaza. This force is simply awaiting orders to attack. It is a trained and prepared military body that holds tens of thousands of weapons. Many of its members have already participated in terrorism against Israel and its citizens, and it trains exclusively for one scenario: war against the State of Israel. This force consists of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) security apparatuses.

Unlike the area known as the "Gaza envelope,"¹ in which the population was limited, the regions adjacent to Judea and Samaria contain the country's largest population centers. In the narrow waist of the country, once described by former Foreign Minister Abba Eban as the "Auschwitz borders," the distance from Qalqilya in Samaria to the Mediterranean Sea is only 14 kilometers (9 miles). This area, which includes Kfar Saba, Ra'anana, Hod Hasharon, Herzliya, and many other population and industrial centers, lies just 14 kilometers from the 1949 Green Line to the sea. Within a 22-kilometer (13.67 mile) radius, similar to the distance reached by Hamas terrorists on October 7, millions of Israeli citizens live under direct threat.

During the terror war initiated by Yasser Arafat from September 2000 to 2005, hundreds of PA security personnel participated. Since then, as this study shows, the PA security forces in Judea and Samaria

alone have grown by 400 percent. They have transformed from a small policing force with limited weapons into a trained army equipped with tens of thousands of firearms, assault weapons, and numerous additional combat means.

In PA circles, Arafat's terror war was called the "Al-Aqsa Intifada." The name was chosen to mobilize the masses around the false claim that Israel or Jews were harming the Temple Mount and its mosques, which needed defending. Similarly, Hamas named the October 7 massacre "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood." The choice of a similar name is not coincidental. It reflects a deeper insight: there is no meaningful difference between the PA (controlled by Fatah) and Hamas. Both organizations embrace terrorism and both seek to destroy the State of Israel.

In the absence of urgent and significant action to neutralize the danger posed by the PA security forces and the "reversal of the rifles" scenario (in which PA security personnel turn their weapons against Israeli citizens, whether as an organized PA operation or through uncontrolled independent terror attacks) could once again end in horrific slaughter.

The Oslo Accords: What is the PA Police Force?

According to the agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the Oslo Accords,² the Palestinian Authority Police Force was supposed to be a small policing body responsible for maintaining local public order. It was to consist of police and intelligence components tasked with combating ordinary Palestinian crime on one hand and terrorist organizations such as Hamas, the Popular Front, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other terror groups on the other. For this purpose, the parties even agreed to arm them with a limited quantity of weapons.

As was typical of the PLO and the PA, what began with sincere intentions (at least on the Israeli side) quickly turned from a modest police force into an army of terrorists.

Originally, the PA police in Judea and Samaria, including all its components, was limited to 12,000 personnel equipped with 4,000 rifles, 4,000 pistols, 120 light and heavy machine guns, and 15 armored vehicles.

Over the years, the PA blatantly violated the Oslo Accords by transforming the small police force (whose members were called “policemen”) into large and branched bodies known collectively as the “PA security apparatuses,” whose members are called “soldiers.” From a small, limited force, these apparatuses now number approximately 70,000 soldiers. Instead of limited weapons, they possess tens of thousands of rifles and pistols. They undergo genuine military training and are equipped with dozens of armored vehicles. Some weapons were supplied with Israeli government approval, while others were smuggled into Judea and Samaria or produced locally.

GROWTH OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY'S SECURITY FORCES: OSLO ACCORDS VS. 2026 REALITY

Oslo Accords Model (Historical View)

FORCE NATURE



LIMITED CIVILIAN POLICE FORCE
(Maintaining Public Order, Combating Crime, Counter-Terrorism)

FORCE SIZE



12,000 PERSONNEL
(LIMITED FORCE)

APPROVED WEAPONS



8,000 APPROVED WEAPONS
(4,000 Pistols, 4,000 Assault Rifles)

ARMORED VEHICLES & HEAVY MACHINE GUNS



15 ARMORED VEHICLES,
120 HEAVY MACHINE GUNS

Palestinian Authority Security Force (2026 Reality)

FORCE NATURE



FULL-BLOWN MILITARY FORCE
(Trained Army, Multiple Apparatuses, Military Training Facilities)

FORCE SIZE



70,000 STRONG ARMY
(Over 500% Growth in West Bank Since Oslo)

WEAPONS IN POSSESSION



TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WEAPONS
(Small Arms & Machine Guns)

ARMORED VEHICLES & HEAVY WEAPONS



TENS OF ARMORED VEHICLES,
HUNDREDS OF HEAVY MACHINE GUNS,
RPGs, & MORE

TRANSFORMATION
OF THE PA
SECURITY
FORCES



TRAINING &
DEVELOPMENT

↑ Threat Radius from Judea and Samaria ↓ 22km

KEY TRENDS:
VIOLATION OF AGREEMENTS,
UN CONTROLLED MILITARIZATION,
TERROR ARMY FORMATION



INTEGRATION OF
TERROR OPERATIVES

The Palestine Liberation Army

According to data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the reported crime rate in the Palestinian Authority (excluding Gaza and eastern Jerusalem under Israeli control) stood at 1,335.6 criminal offenses per 100,000 residents in 2024.³ This rate is relatively low by international standards and indicates that Palestinian society does not suffer from unusually high crime levels that would justify establishing a large armed force for policing purposes.

Furthermore, a civilian police force does not require comprehensive military training that includes armored warfare, artillery, sniping, heavy machine guns, and parachuting. As will be shown later, the PA security apparatuses do not, in practice, act against active terrorist organizations in their territory.

All these facts and data lead to an inescapable conclusion: the entity that was established is not a police force but a full-fledged military array, the army of the Palestinian Authority, which in practice serves the goals of terrorism.

Similar to the conception through October 6, 2023, that led Israel to disaster, ignoring this terror army, which constitutes a real and tangible danger, will lead us to a foreseeable scenario. If Israel does not act to dismantle it, or at least significantly reduce it to the agreed-upon dimensions, millions of Israeli citizens will remain under threat and could once again fall victim to a massacre that may dwarf the horrors of October 7.

The Palestinian Police According to the Oslo Accords: Force Structure and Armament

Section IV of Annex I of the Interim Agreement defined, delineated, and restricted the PA's ability to establish a "Palestinian Police."⁴

According to those provisions, the police's roles were clearly of a policing nature:

a. maintaining internal security and public order;

- b. protecting the public and all other persons present in the areas, as well as protecting their property, and acting to provide a feeling of security, safety and stability;*
- c. adopting all measures necessary for preventing crime in accordance with the law;*
- d. protecting public installations, infrastructure and places of special importance;*
- e. preventing acts of harassment and retribution;*
- e. combating terrorism and violence, and preventing incitement to violence; and*
- f. performing any other normal police functions.*

The provisions also defined the six branches of the police,⁵ which included regular police forces, public security forces, preventive security forces, forces protecting the PA Chairman (the Presidential Guard), intelligence forces, and civil defense and rescue forces.

The total force was limited to 30,000 personnel, of whom 12,000 were to be deployed in Judea and Samaria and the rest in the Gaza Strip. The PA was required to submit all names of police candidates to Israel, and Israel held veto power over any recruitment. The original text states:

*The Palestinian side will notify Israel of any candidate for recruitment to the Palestinian Police. Should Israel object to the recruitment of any such candidate, that person shall not be recruited.*⁶

Regarding equipment and weapons, the agreement stipulated that in Judea and Samaria, police forces could be equipped with 4,000 assault rifles,⁷ 4,000 pistols, up to 120 machine guns, and up to 15 vehicles for use in riots.

Regrettably, it was also agreed that the quantity of weapons and equipment could be increased with mutual consent. A strange provision added that the term “weapons” in the article includes not only firearms and ammunition but also “explosives of all kinds” even though the agreement made no reference to the possession of explosives and therefore set no limits on their quantity.

For the city of Hebron, an additional section (VII of the Annex)

stipulated that after the withdrawal of IDF forces from Area H-1, the PA could establish police stations in the city manned by up to 400 policemen, equipped with 20 vehicles and 200 pistols.

Growth of the Force Over the Years

The deviation in the size of the Palestinian police began immediately with the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho Agreement in 1994.⁸ According to a U.S. State Department report from November 1995,⁹ even before the full establishment of the PA, the force already numbered 18,000 personnel, despite being limited at that stage to only 9,000.¹⁰

According to a 2021 report by the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA),¹¹ despite the Oslo limit of 30,000 total police personnel (12,000 in Judea and Samaria and 18,000 in Gaza), by 1997, after additional implementation stages of the Oslo II Accords and the transfer of major Arab cities in Judea and Samaria to PA jurisdiction and control, the police force had grown to approximately 32,000.¹²

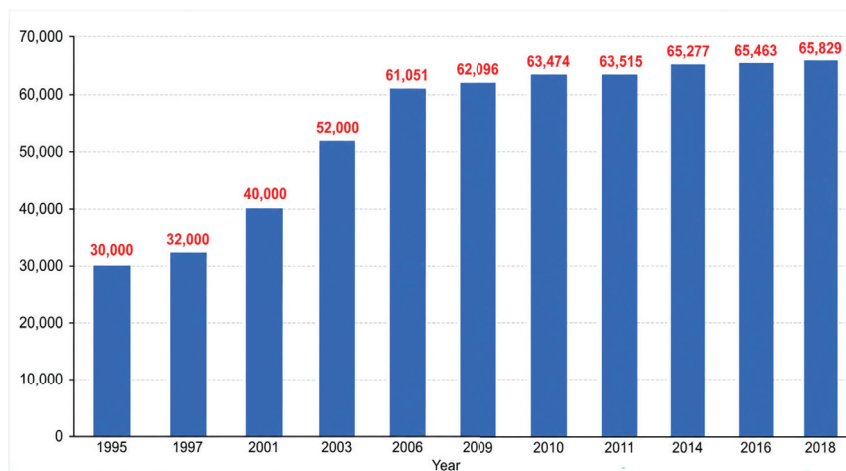
In 2001, the force was estimated at around 40,000.¹³ By 2003, it reached approximately 52,000.¹⁴ In 2006, it stood at 61,051 personnel.¹⁵

In 2007, a reorganization took place. The collection of forces received the official name “PA Security Apparatuses.”¹⁶ These included the Civil Police, National Security Forces, Preventive Security, General Intelligence, Military Intelligence, Civil Defense, and Customs Police.

By 2009, the force grew to 62,096. In 2010, it reached 63,474.¹⁷ In 2011, it stood at 63,515.¹⁸ By 2014, it had grown to 65,277. In 2016, the PA had 65,463 salary recipients in the security apparatuses.¹⁹ In 2018, the number reached approximately 65,829.²⁰ All these figures refer solely to PA security forces in the Judea and Samaria. Tens of thousands of additional Palestinian security forces affiliated to and working under the guidance and control of Hamas operated in Gaza.

In other words, by 2018, the size of the security apparatuses was already five and a half times (550 percent) larger than the agreed-upon limit.

Continued Growth of the PA's Terror Army



According to a report by the AMAN Institute, another Palestinian research body, the PA security forces grew even more than reported by PASSIA, from 64,491 in 2013 to 67,772 in 2017.

Hamas Takeover of Gaza: The Salary Test

In the summer of 2007, after Hamas's 2006 electoral victory and Mahmoud Abbas's refusal to accept the results, Hamas forces violently seized control of the Gaza Strip. Within about three days, they threw PA security personnel and opponents from rooftops and shot others in the knees. Some PA supporters fled toward the border fence seeking refuge in Israel and relocation to Judea and Samaria.

Following the Hamas takeover, the size of PA security forces in Gaza was frozen at 18,151 personnel.²¹ Those who remained continued to receive salaries without working. Consequently, all subsequent growth occurred only in the West Bank.

It has been claimed that some participants in the October 7 massacre held documentation showing affiliation with PA security forces.

However, it is unclear whether they belonged to the group of 18,151, and requires deeper examination beyond the scope of this study.

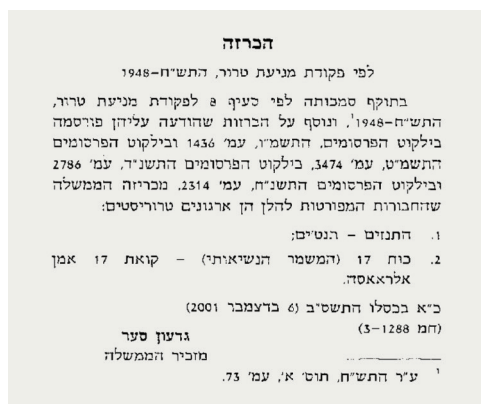
A relatively recent report by the DCAF organization claimed,²² based on information provided by the PA in April 2023, that PA security forces in the West Bank numbered only about 34,000. This figure, the lowest reported in 20 years, does not align with reality. Such a sharp decline (about 25 percent) would necessarily be reflected in a corresponding drop in the PA's salary expenditures for these forces. According to the PA Ministry of Finance's official budget performance reports, salary payments to security apparatuses through the Ministry of Interior amounted to 3.153 billion shekels in 2017 and 3.078 billion shekels in 2025. Therefore, the DCAF figures should be treated with great skepticism.

Who Are the PA Security Personnel?

As explicitly agreed in the Oslo Accords, Israel was supposed to have veto power over the recruitment of every individual into the PA security forces.²³ Even if this arrangement functioned at the beginning, the boundaries were later completely blurred.

This blurring manifested in various ways. For example, one of the branches defined in the Oslo Accords was the Presidential Guard. However, due to the deep and systematic involvement of Arafat's Presidential Guard in the terror war he initiated in late September 2000, in December 2001, Israel designated as terrorist organizations the Presidential Guard, known as "Force 17," and the Tanzim.²⁴

The term "Tanzim" means "the organization" and was intended to highlight its centrality within Fatah. Tanzim operatives led terror attacks even before Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front, and other groups joined the fray. From the Tanzim, an organic and inseparable part of Fatah, grew the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, which served openly as the movement's terror arm.



Declaration designating the "Tanzim" and "Force 17" as terrorist organizations.

Systematic Violation of Agreements

Upon Yasser Arafat's entry into the Gaza Strip in July 1994, a fundamental violation of the security agreements occurred. Under the protection of his official motorcade's immunity, senior wanted terrorists were smuggled in, hidden in the convoy vehicles. The most prominent terrorist smuggled was Jihad Amarin, who rose through the ranks of the Tanzim. Amarin went on to found and command the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Gaza, using his official position in the security apparatuses to direct dozens of deadly shooting and bombing attacks until his targeted elimination in 2002.

The violation of security agreements with Israel deepened with the institutionalized integration of terror operatives into the PA security forces. Senior PLO and PA officials have even boasted about the high rate of involvement of security personnel in terrorist attacks against Israelis and the large number of security prisoners originating from these apparatuses.

For example, senior PLO figure and terrorist Jibril Rajoub once boasted that no fewer than 12 percent of the terrorists imprisoned in Israeli jails belonged to the PA security forces.²⁵

The Abbas Era: Same Lady, Different Dress

Arafat's death in November 2004 and Mahmoud Abbas's rise did not improve the situation. On the contrary, Abbas significantly expanded the security apparatuses and their training. He continued and deepened the policy of integrating terrorists into these forces.

Abbas presented and branded himself as a moderate whose path differed from Arafat's. He had the fortune of being in the right place at the right time, as Arafat's terror war had exhausted itself. What began with Operation Defensive Shield in March 2002 continued with the IDF's recapture of major cities in Judea and Samaria and the uprooting of the PA and Hamas terror infrastructures through extensive IDF and Shin Bet operations.

In the positive atmosphere that emerged, and in his role as a "reformer," under heavy pressure from the United States and the Quartet, Abbas pushed for general elections in the PA in early 2006 that would include all "Palestinian factions," a Palestinian code for including Hamas and other terror organizations.

Abbas promised the American administration a guaranteed victory for his Fatah party. Despite receiving millions of dollars from the U.S. administration for this purpose, Abbas failed, and Hamas took control of the PA through the ballot box. This outcome pleased no one. The Americans, Europeans, and others halted their funding to the PA. After a prolonged period, Abbas was forced to dismiss the elected Hamas government. This dismissal created a clear split in the Palestinian camp: between Abbas-Fatah forces controlling PA areas in Judea and Samaria and Ismail Haniyeh-Hamas forces controlling Gaza.

The split was not ideological. Both Fatah and Hamas continued to adhere to the vision of destroying the State of Israel. Their dispute was only about the method, the intensity of the use of terrorism as a tool to achieve that vision, and who would control the billions of shekels the PA handled annually, whether from international donations or tax revenues collected and transferred by Israel.²⁶

Thus, in mid-2007, Israel and Abbas found themselves facing a common enemy: Hamas. To concentrate forces against this shared foe,

then-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert agreed to the “Wanted Terrorists Agreement.”

As noted earlier, during the Palestinian terror war from September 2000 to 2005, hundreds of Fatah operatives participated. The Olmert government, which preferred to advance talks and arrangements with Abbas and the PA, decided it was better to cease pursuing those murderous terrorists and instead cooperate with them against the common enemy. Under the July 2007 Wanted Terrorists Agreement, Israel agreed not to arrest those terrorists as long as they refrained from further terrorist activity.

Abbas exploited the opportunity not only to market the major achievement he extracted from Olmert but also to integrate some of those terrorists into the security apparatuses.²⁷ In one stroke, the murderous terrorists who had fought against Israel became central figures in the PA security forces.

This case is not isolated but part of a consistent policy of integrating terrorists into the PA security apparatuses. A prominent example occurred in 2020, when, as part of efforts to conceal payments to terrorists (due to international pressure and Israel’s “Pay for Slay” deduction law), Abbas approved the direct embedding of released terrorists into the security forces.²⁸

This move, which converted “terrorist salaries” into official military wages, created an absurd situation in which the operational mission of thwarting terror and arresting Hamas operatives was entrusted to Fatah activists with rich terrorist backgrounds. In effect, Abbas literally appointed the cat to guard the cream, granting released terrorists enforcement powers and weapons under legal cover.

U.S. Training of PA Security Forces

After Abbas’s election as PA Chairman in January 2005, he complained to Israel and the United States that the security apparatuses he inherited from Arafat were not sufficiently skilled or equipped to fight the vari-

ous terrorist organizations. At the time, Abbas still managed to brand himself as a leader different from Arafat who did not support terrorism.

To address Abbas's complaints, and after various parties fell for his deceptions, the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) mechanism for Israel and the PA was established.²⁹

Following Hamas's electoral victory in the PA in 2006 and the resulting crisis, the United States began funding and training PA security forces in Judea and Samaria. The claim was that Hamas, Israel's enemy, had also become the enemy of the Fatah-controlled PA. This created the false impression that building a stronger PA force would enable it to fight the common enemy.



GMTC Training. (*Website of the PA General Military Training Commission*)

According to a report by the Office of Accountability,³⁰ between 2007 and May 2010 the United States contributed \$392 million to the PA for security purposes.³¹ Of this, \$160 million went to training, \$89 million to non-lethal equipment procurement, \$99 million to camp renovation and construction, and \$22 million to capacity building in the PA Ministry of Interior.³² The report noted that although the different actors claimed improved security coordination capabilities, no quanti-

fiable metrics were established by the USSC, so it was unclear how the initiative achieved its goals.

U.S. security assistance to the PA continues to this day, including as an exception to the Taylor Force Act.

The Taylor Force Act, enacted in March 2018, conditions most direct U.S. economic aid to the PA on a complete cessation of the policy of paying terrorists (Pay for Slay). However, security assistance to the PA was exempted. Out of a total United States commitment of approximately \$1.319 billion over the years to support the PA security apparatus, slightly less than one billion dollars was actually disbursed.³³ The continued provision of this aid creates a situation in which the United States continues to maintain PA apparatuses despite the PA's stubborn refusal to stop direct funding and payments to terrorists and their families.

Training of Palestinian Security Forces by Others

As part of the general trend of professionalizing the PA security forces, over the past twenty years (mainly since 2005) these forces have undergone training in various frameworks. One major framework is EUPOL COPPS, led by the European Union.³⁴

Officially, the program aims to support reform and development of the "civilian police" and strengthen law enforcement. Despite investments of tens of millions of euros over the years, the Palestinian public does not feel the changes, according to periodic surveys by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR). Beyond public sentiment, every discussion of the PA's endless reform programs focuses heavily on the law enforcement system.

Transformation of PA Security Apparatuses into a Military Force

The PA itself does not hide the fact that it has effectively established a military force. On television and in other publications, the PA even

takes pride in this and displays the activities of the “Palestine Army.”³⁵ In one video, a senior official was interviewed in front of a sign reading “General Military Training Institution.”



In this context, the final exercise of the latest officers’ course included long marches and even a scenario of stopping a vehicle and removing its occupants by PA soldiers, similar to images of the abduction of Israelis on October 7.³⁶

In addition to the military training conducted by PA security personnel in their own facilities, some undergo training by other hostile parties.

For example, in May 2024, the “Jewish Voice” website revealed that many PA security officers had undergone full military training at the military academy in Pakistan. The training included armored warfare, artillery, shoulder-fired missiles, heavy machine guns, sniping, parachuting, and more.³⁷

In January 2025, no fewer than 49 cadets from the PA terror army were participating in such training.³⁸ One participant stated that the training transformed him from a civilian into a soldier.³⁹ Another said that after completing the training and returning to the West Bank, he would share the acquired knowledge with “the forces at home.”⁴⁰ A third noted that he received “motivation to return to his country, defend his people, and serve the state.”⁴¹



Above and top right: Palestinian forces training with the Pakistani army. (Arab News Pakistan/YouTube Screenshots)



A Palestinian cadet undergoes RPG training with the Pakistani army. (*TikTok Screenshot*)

It was further revealed by the Regavim organization that one PA security member who participated in the Pakistan training, Ahmed Alawna, had himself taken part in numerous terrorist attacks.⁴² According to reports, Alawna was eliminated by IDF forces during a counter-terror operation in Jenin in September 2022.⁴³ It is important to note that Hamas forces also underwent training by the Pakistani army, which even established a training camp in the Gaza Strip.⁴⁴



Hamas terrorists after training in Pakistan. (*News Bharati*)

Arming of the PA Army with Israeli Government Approval

The PA's fundamental lack of reliability has been proven time and again by its consistent failure to fulfill its core obligation to fight terrorism. The PA has chosen to act decisively only against elements that threatened its own political stability and Fatah rule, while demonstrating deliberate leniency toward other terror infrastructures. Despite this, successive Israeli governments continued to approve the strengthening of PA security apparatuses, including the supply of combat means and modern armored vehicles.

This slippery slope of security assistance is not new. It began years

ago, with clear signs in past decisions. Here are several prominent examples:

- ✦ In July 2007, alongside the false presentation of Abbas as wanting to fight Hamas and alongside the Wanted Terrorist Agreement mentioned above, the Olmert government approved the transfer of 1,000 rifles from Jordan to the PA.⁴⁵
- ✦ In May 2008, alongside Olmert's proposal to establish a Palestinian state on territory larger than the pre-1967 Judea, Samaria, and Gaza,⁴⁶ Olmert approved the transfer of another 1,000 Kalashnikov rifles and tens of thousands of rounds to the PA.⁴⁷
- ✦ In December 2016, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman approved the transfer of five additional armored vehicles to the PA.⁴⁸
- ✦ In May 2019, the government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu approved the transfer of another ten armored vehicles to the PA.⁴⁹



Armored vehicles that were transferred to the Palestinian Authority. (*Maan News*)

- ✦ In September 2023, just days before the October 7 massacre, while the country was still deeply entrenched in the conception that Hamas was deterred and that cooperation with the PA was possible, it was

reported that the PA received 1,500 weapons and eight additional armored vehicles donated by the U.S. administration.⁵⁰



PA forces with weapons and new armored vehicle. (Ariel Oseran/@ariel_oseran/X)

It should be noted that after the report's publication, Prime Minister Netanyahu denied that new weapons had been transferred to the PA and clarified that the armored vehicles were transferred to fulfill a commitment given by the previous government.⁵¹

Obtaining exact information on the number of approvals granted by Israel for arming the PA and the quantities involved is difficult because Israeli security agencies are not eager to disclose it.

For example, a freedom-of-information request by the Lavi organization to the Defense Ministry, the IDF, and other bodies regarding the number of approvals and weapons transferred received no substantive response. The responses bounced between agencies without providing answers. The most positive interpretation of the failure to provide the information is a mere recording error. The most negative, is that the information exists but its disclosure would cause embarrassment

to security officials. Notably, at no stage did the responders claim the information was classified; their silence was deafening.⁵²

Security Coordination

Many parties, including sometimes Israeli security officials, emphasize the importance of security coordination between Israel and the PA. This coordination is based on cooperation with and by the PA security apparatuses.

Praise is one thing; reality is another.

Despite the encouraging words, reality shows that the PA security apparatuses assist Israeli security agencies only to eliminate their own political rivals. Fatah, led by Mahmoud Abbas, which controls the PA (at least in Judea and Samaria), is happy to cooperate in arresting Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives but refrains from cooperating regarding terrorists from Fatah, the Popular Front, and other PLO-affiliated organizations.

For Fatah and the PA, “security coordination” allows them to present an appearance of sincere intent in the fight against terrorism, but only when Israel carries out the actual arrests. In this way, the PA evades its real obligations, avoids friction with the Palestinian population, and simultaneously vilifies Israel for arresting terrorists. This cover also enables the receipt of funds from foreign donors.

The weakness, or rather the false presentation, of security coordination has been exposed many times when the PA decided to freeze it. For example, in May 2020, in response to the advancement of President Trump’s “Deal of the Century,” Abbas froze security coordination. Although the freeze lasted many months, it did not lead to an increase in terrorism.

In contrast, in 2022, when coordination was renewed and operated at full capacity, 31 Israelis were murdered by Palestinian terrorists. This made 2022 the deadliest year since 2014-2015. Even then, the wave of ramming and stabbing attacks that killed dozens of Israelis was not prevented by security coordination, which was supposedly at its best.

Preparation for the “Reversal of the Rifles” Scenario

The nightmare scenario in which PA security forces, including the body they call the “Palestine Army,” shed the pretense of cooperation and turn their weapons against Israel is known in the Israeli security system as the “reversal of the rifles” scenario.

This is not a purely theoretical concern but a scenario based on painful historical precedent: the terror war (Second Intifada) initiated by Arafat, in which PA security apparatus operatives formed the spearhead of attacks that led to the murder of over a thousand Israelis.

The term “reversal of the rifles” itself reflects a fundamentally flawed perception regarding the PA security forces. It assumes as a baseline, that these weapons are currently directed against Palestinian terrorists and serve as a shield for Israel, and that any deviation would require a deliberate “reversal.” Reality is entirely different.

Although the PA is obligated to fight Palestinian terrorist elements and has received all necessary means to do so, except for isolated cases it has never done so. From the PA’s perspective, since its establishment, the “Palestinian Police” agreed upon in the Oslo Accords was nothing but a “Trojan horse,” as Faisal Husseini admitted, to build the army of the emerging Palestinian state.

Nevertheless, from time to time, discussions related to the “reversal of the rifles” scenario arise, usually in Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings.

One such discussion took place in December 2023 during the Iron Swords War, which followed the October 7 massacre. It was reported that the Prime Minister said that “the Oslo Accords were the mother of all sins. The difference between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority is only that Hamas wants to destroy us here and now, while the Authority wants to do it in stages. We cooperate with them against Hamas when it serves their interests and ours, up to a certain limit. We decided a few months ago that we do not want them to collapse so that Hamas does not rise in Judea and Samaria as well.”⁵³ Prime Minister Netanyahu added that “the reversal of the rifles scenario is known to us and is on the table. We are discussing it.”

No operational steps were reported following that discussion.

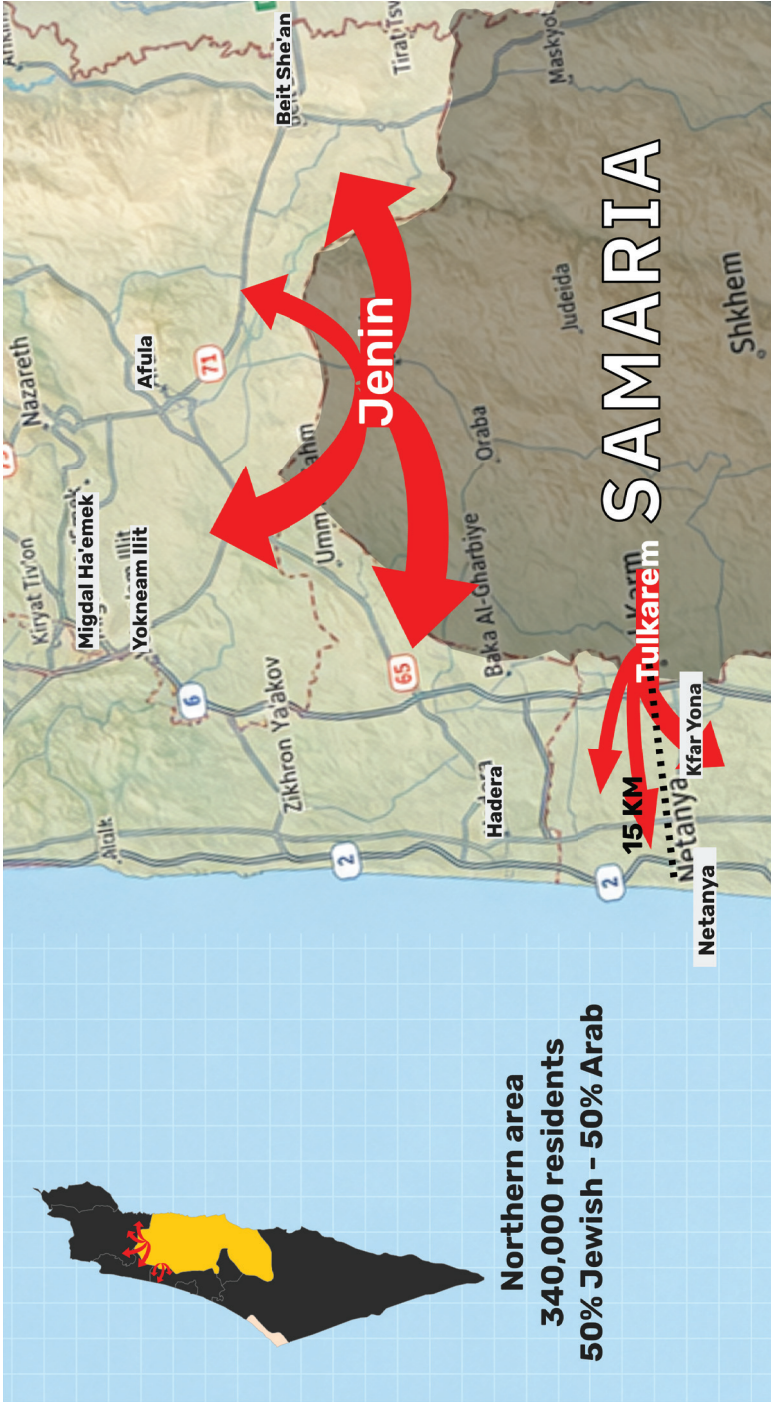
Another discussion in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee took place in December 2024,⁵⁴ after PA army soldiers were documented holding RPGs.⁵⁵ Again, no operational steps by the government or security agencies were reported.



The Scope of the Danger: 22 Kilometers (13.67 miles)

As noted above, during the October 7 massacre, the terrorist squad that advanced farthest reached Ofakim, 22 kilometers (13.67 miles) from the Gaza Strip. While the population in the Gaza envelope was relatively small, within a 22-kilometer radius around Judea and Samaria to the north, west, and south live millions of Israeli citizens.





For example, a breakthrough northward from Jenin in northern Samaria endangers the residents of Afula, Yokne'am, and other cities, putting approximately 340,000 people at risk.



A breakthrough westward from Tulkarm, in central Samaria, would allow attacks on both seam-line communities and major cities, endangering around 500,000 citizens.



A breakthrough westward from Qalqilya, also in central Samaria, could completely paralyze Highway 6 and its passengers during rush hours, with numbers potentially reaching tens of thousands. Such a breakthrough could endanger over two and a half million citizens.



A breakthrough from the central and southern areas of Judea and Samaria endangers, among others, residents of Jerusalem, Modi'in, Beit Shemesh, Kiryat Gat, Be'er Sheva, and many other communities housing approximately two million citizens.

It is important to emphasize that the scenario presented in this report does not account for operations directed inward within Judea and Samaria, which could endanger many additional hundreds of thousands traveling on roads or living in various communities. The focus is on breakthroughs beyond the “Green Line” as a possible and reasonable course of action.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

From Violation of Agreements to Building a Terror Army

The data presented in this study paints a clear picture of the total collapse of Israeli security oversight over the PA. What was defined in the Oslo Accords as a limited “police force” (30,000 personnel at most) has become a military monster currently numbering approximately 70,000 armed personnel, an excess of 133 percent over the overall original force structure and more than 50,000 armed personnel in Judea and Samaria alone (over 400 percent larger than the 12,000 policemen agreed upon for Judea and Samaria).

In the field of armament as well, reality is far removed from the agreements: instead of 4,000 rifles in Judea and Samaria, the apparatuses now possess tens of thousands of weapons, armored vehicles, and heavy military means (including documented RPGs and shoulder-fired missiles) intended for urban warfare and combat against a regular army, not civilian policing missions.

As in the past, the terror army built by the PA is destined to turn its weapons against Israeli citizens. Due to the nature, size, and capabilities of this force, a northward, westward, and southward invasion by this terror army will endanger millions of citizens. The scale of destruction and killing within communities inside the “Green Line” could be significantly greater, even in comparison to the horrors of the October 7 massacre.

As we learned painfully from the events of October 7, reassuring statements by security officials and optimistic intelligence assessments guarantee nothing. A basic rule in both counter-terrorism and warfare is that the enemy places special emphasis on the element of surprise, and no attack can be entirely prevented.

Operational Conclusions

- ✦ Failure of Israeli oversight: The fact that Israeli security agencies are unable (or unwilling) to provide data on the quantity of weapons approved for transfer to the PA indicates a loss of control and a policy of deliberate “eyes wide shut.”
- ✦ The security coordination conception: Israel is captive to the conception that strengthening the PA security apparatuses serves Israeli interests in fighting Hamas. In practice, the apparatuses serve as a “hothouse” for terrorists (as evidenced by 12 percent of security prisoners originating from their ranks) and train for the “reversal of the rifles” scenario, a combined attack on central Israel and the communities in Judea and Samaria.
- ✦ The 22-kilometer (13.67 mile) threat: The tiny distance between Israel’s population centers and the bases of the PA terror army (14-22 kilometers/9-13 miles) turns any potential flare-up into an immediate existential threat to millions of citizens, on a scale and lethality exceeding that of the October 7 massacre.

Recommendations to Decision-Makers

Given the severity of the threat, the Israeli government must adopt a strategy of “dismantling and demilitarization” instead of “containment and arming”:

- ✦ Immediate neutralization of offensive armament: Halt all approvals for the transfer of weapons, ammunition, or armored vehicles to the PA. Demand the immediate return of any armament exceeding Oslo limits (such as heavy machine guns, RPGs, and explosive devices).
- ✦ Reduction of personnel: Condition all economic or civilian aid to the PA on reducing the size of the security apparatuses to the original agreed level (12,000 in Judea and Samaria).
- ✦ Oversight and transparency: Establish an independent Israeli oversight mechanism (not through the PA) for surprise inspections of

weapons depots and training bases. Publicly disclose to the Israeli public and the Knesset all historical data regarding approvals for weapons transfers to the PA.

- ✦ Closure of terror army training bases: Demand that the PA immediately close all facilities, training bases, or institutions whose purpose is to provide “military training.”
- ✦ Change in defense concept in Judea and Samaria and seam line: Prepare the IDF operationally for the “reversal of the rifles” scenario not as a theoretical concern but as the central threat. Construct physical barriers and add significant forces along the seam line, under the assumption that on the day of reckoning the PA apparatuses will be the first enemy to open fire.
- ✦ Cessation of foreign training: On one hand, issue a firm diplomatic demand to the United States and the European Union to condition the training they fund and conduct for PA security forces on the PA reducing the size of these forces to the levels agreed in the Oslo Accords. On the other hand, pursue legal action and full severity of punishment against any PA security personnel undergoing military training abroad, including in Pakistan.

In conclusion, continuing to ignore the growth of the “PA Terror Army” is a dangerous gamble with the lives of millions of Israelis. The writing is on the wall, at a distance of less than 22 kilometers (13.67 miles) from the heart of the country. The danger is real and highly probable. To prevent a disaster far greater than the October 7 massacre, Israel must take initiative and apply the remedy before the next count of victims.

Notes

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