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REPORT ON THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IN PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY FIRST STRIKE PREPARATIONS IN YESHA:

*by Mordechai Sones
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**PUBLISHED IN HEBREW AS POLICY PAPER #107
by THE ARIEL CENTER FOR POLICY RESEARCH (ACPR)**



BRDM2 with Insignia of The Palestinian Authority. *The IDF continues to deny the existence of armored vehicles in Ramallah.*

REPORT ON THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IN PA FIRST STRIKE PREPARATIONS IN YESHA

Updated May 17, 1999 with new information reflecting facts shared by Israeli military officials after earlier draft was released on March 22, 1999

Ariel Center for Policy Research introduction to document:

“EDITOR’S NOTE: Prior to publication of this document an attempt was made to confirm the validity of the facts and analyses which appear therein. A query was directed to four bodies: **the IDF, the Defense Ministry, the Yesha Council, and the Prime Minister’s office.** Except for the Yesha Council, whose spokesman rejected the document absolutely and completely, the other bodies did not bother to answer the query. An attempt to verify the facts through private sources (mostly IDF officers serving in the area) drew various assessments, ranging between partial denial, confirmation, and the presentation of a much more critical picture by far.”

FIRST STRIKE: Surprise assault to which the victim is unable to mount counterattack because attacker has destroyed or pre-empted his retaliatory capacity.

SUMMARY: Two years ago, the author began work on an independent assessment of the PA military capability in Yesha. In the course of this study, reports began to surface that the PA military may be acquiring the specialized equipment, units, and training for an overnight first strike against the Jewish communities of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza (*Yesha*).

The three major sources of information indicating the possibility of a first strike have been as follows:

1. Eyewitness reports from a network of Yesha residents concerned about security;
2. Briefings, statements and leaks from IDF officials, the Yesha Council (*Moetzet Yesha*), and the Prime Minister’s office, dealing with reports of a first strike capability;
3. Independent assessment by a visiting military professional experienced in first strike operations.

Indicators of a first strike include 122 confirmed or suspected armored vehicles in PA hands, rehearsals for night attack near yishuvim, and gathering of specialized intelligence by Arab laborers on the yishuvim. The number of armored vehicles indicates a capability for an overnight first strike on about 40 yishuvim.

The actions and statements of the IDF may indicate an official willingness to conduct a sudden “humanitarian” evacuation of an additional thirty or forty yishuvim shortly after an Arab first strike. Thus in one quick blow, approximately 2/3 of the yishuvim could be taken off the map:

1) Arab Militia and Paramilitary Training in Judea and Samaria:

Recent Events & Actions by PA:

Starting in late 1997, widespread night fire around outlying yishuvim began. Later, in July through September of 1998, daytime fire also occurred. In October the firing tapered off to solely nighttime firing.

Senior PA officials announced that “we have succeeded in providing [military training to thousands](#)” for an attack against yishuvim.¹

Observations and Analysis of PA Gunfire by Visiting Military Advisor:

In November and December of 1998, a visiting military advisor travelling throughout Yesha analyzed the pattern of firing taking place in various locations. He noticed a burst of initial small arms fire from a number of weapons, followed by ten minutes of sporadic shooting. According to the advisor, this pattern of fire corresponds to the brief, intense burst of shooting that normally takes place during training for a final assault on an objective at night, followed by roughly ten minutes of sporadic gunfire while consolidating the objective. Although only the assault portion is audible, he added, this may actually be the final few minutes that would conclude two to six hours of silent approach to an objective under the cover of darkness.

Observations and Analysis of PA Training by Lt. Col. (res.) Yigal ben-David, Dec. 6, 1998:

“The invasion into Ariel yesterday, Shabbat, with the support of the Palestinian Authority, is without doubt part of a general plan to strike at the yishuvim, this time as a "dry-run" exercise. I have no doubt that these issues are known to you [Defense Minister Yitzchak Mordechai] and to the IDF.... Their "police" forces (the name which is still stubbornly used to describe their army) comprise several divisions which include a number of battalions which are training to conquer yishuvim in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.”

Report from Military Intelligence Source in Shechem Area:

Three 2,000 man Arab paramilitary brigades (6,000 troops) have been trained to initiate attacks on three yishuvim in the Shechem area.

Importance:

A simultaneous night or pre-dawn attack would present Yesha with a *fait accompli* of 40 fallen yishuvim by sunrise.

Official Response:

When yishuv residents throughout Yesha reported the widespread instances of PA weapons fire, the IDF claimed that these were Arab “weddings.”

¹ Marwan al-Barghuthi, Fatah head in Judea and Samaria; quoted in *Amman al-Dustur*, August 19, 1998. See also *HaAretz*, June 1, 1998, “[Palestinians Training Forces to Break into Settlements and Hold Positions](#)”, and *HaTzofeh*, October 23, 1998, “[Palestinian Police Training to Conquer Settlements](#)”.



Pictures from the Wedding: Eight-year-old girl training in assembly of Kalachnikov rifle.

2) Arab Commando Forces Already in Position:

Recent Events & Actions by PA:

There is confirmation of a 300 man Arab commando battalion in Shechem, a commando training camp in Jericho, and another commando unit at Arafat's headquarters in Gaza. Additionally, there is a credible report of a commando unit (Force 17) based in Hebron. There are also indicators of commando units in additional locations.

Importance:

Existing Arab commando units may spearhead much larger less trained PA armed militias in a surprise assault on Yishuvim.

Analysis:

The first overt military action taken as part of the Soviet first strikes on Prague ('68), Kabul ('79), and Vilna ('91) was Soviet commandos breaking down the door and taking over the control tower of the main airport at 11PM to open the way for troop entry and air landings of more commandos. In all three cases the Soviet commando mission included the seizure of key leaders and the rapid elimination of communications, striking at the nerve center to paralyze the targeted military structure.

Fatah, under the command of Yasir Arafat, has been trained in Soviet doctrine of conquering military and civilian targets by first strike, and intends to implement this doctrine in Yesha. There are indicators that such targets on yishuvim are being identified - see section #4 on Arab labor below.

The intelligence reports from Shechem may indicate the likely way that PA commando units would combine with Arab militias. Each of the three companies from the Shechem commando battalion could spearhead each of the three aforementioned Arab brigades.

The commando companies would lead the initial entry, shooting the gate guard and then taking out the communications, alarms, and key leaders. That would leave the followup brigade to deal with the rest of the population.

Official Response:

Utilizing information provided by the author, residents of a yishuv near Shechem in late November 1998 confronted IDF Shomron Area Brigade Commander Col. Yehuda Shaked with the existence of PA commando units and PA armored personnel carriers. The Brigade Commander, unprepared to be asked tough, informed questions in front of a town meeting, attempted to double talk his way out of admitting this threat (“But the BTR-152’s are just trucks....Yes, the PA has them, but not here - somewhere else...”). Rather than initially answering regarding the 300 commandos in Shechem, the Colonel was more interested in ascertaining the source who leaked the information. In the end, Shaked’s stammering unravelled for all to see, and he explicitly admitted the existence of the 300 man commando unit - letting the residents of that community understand that the IDF had been holding back information having life and death relevance to them.

3) PA Armored Vehicles:

Recent Events & Actions by PA:

The PA currently has acquired 14 mechanized BRDM2 platoons (42 BRDM2’s), 50 BTR-152 armored personnel carriers, and a platoon of 30 flatbed trucks which have been reported transporting tracked armored vehicles.

Twenty-five BTR-152’s with 12.7mm machine guns mounted on them arrived into the PA from Egypt in 1996, and 25 more were reported arriving in 1997.

Importance:

Because the IDF limits yishuv self defense to small arms, the growing armor vehicle capability of the PA would render the assault troops it carries invulnerable to yishuv defenders. The IDF gate guards do not have anything to stop these vehicles. The standard sliding gates for all yishuvim would buckle under the impact of such armored vehicles, and many yishuvim lack even this “obstacle” – such that the only thing separating between the attacker and the yishuv is a moving aluminum arm painted red and white.

Analysis:

The PA armored vehicle force is not capable of challenging the IDF, but would be unstoppable in a first strike on yishuvim. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that that is their purpose.

Although it is possible to gain sudden entry into yishuvim by using commandos or even less prepared troops - as the examples of Ariel² and Ofra³ show - armored vehicles provide a rapid capability to do so that ground troops cannot match.

² December 5, 1998: “[Ariel Attack was Reason for Concern](#) (*IsraelWire-12/6-17:45-IST*) According to assessments by security officials, the brazenness of Arabs willing to enter into Jewish communities and carry out attacks is increasing rapidly.

“Over the weekend, attacks took place in Ariel, Ateret, Neve Tzuf, and Eli, on Thursday. The most serious of the attacks took place on Saturday, when about 150 Arabs tore through the security fence of the Samarian city of Ariel, burning electric polls, throwing stones and bottles at local residents, and beginning to destroy anything in their path. While shouting demands for the Israeli release of Arab terrorists in Israeli prisoners, they began throwing rocks at homes, smashing windows and causing damage.

Official Responses:

The most significant official response is the IDF refusal to provide anti-tank weapons for yishuv self defense. So far as we can tell, not a single anti-tank weapon has been provided to yishuv defenders or to any of the IDF gate guard contingents assigned to the yishuvim.

On December 9, 1998, the author contacted Moetzet Yesha for their assessment of the PA armored vehicle threat. They claimed to know nothing of PA armored vehicles, and referred the author to Michael Freund in Prime Minister Netanyahu's office who, according to Moetzet Yesha, is their contact for such issues. Mr. Freund also claimed to have no knowledge of PA armored vehicles, and would only discuss the illegal numbers of PA forces. Although Oslo allows the PA 42 BRDM2's, Moetzet Yesha and the Prime Minister's office still would not admit their existence.⁴ Apparently, Moetzet Yesha and the Prime Minister's office were either intent on suppressing information about PA armored vehicles or were so out of touch that they were not aware of the 42 light armored vehicles authorized by Oslo.⁵

IDF Response to Ma'ariv Report of Armored Vehicles:

About ten days later, [Ma'ariv ran an expose'](#) of the PA armored forces (Dec 18`98). The IDF Spokesman tried to downplay some of the vehicles identified in the article and denied the existence of others. But the IDF Spokesman did not even address the most serious alleged armored threat: the fifty BTR-152 armored vehicles. Yet according to the aforementioned IDF documents, the IDF knew about BTR-152 vehicles in PA hands since 1996.

“The city's emergency response unit, composed of army reservists, was activated and calls were placed for army and border police reinforcements. Security forces used rubber-coated bullets and teargas to drive back the attacking mob.

“Ariel Mayor Ron Nachman stated that if the government fails to treat the events with the appropriate response, the trend will continue and the level of security in the area will continue to deteriorate. The Director-General of the Council of Jewish Settlements of Judea, Samaria and Gaza (Yesha Council) Aaron Domb stated, ‘The day is not far away when Jewish residents of Yesha will have to use live ammunition to defend their homes.’”

³ November, 1997. About three hundred Arabs from Ein Yubrud were joined by tens of Arabs who arrived at the scene in busses, who entered Ofra after having cut the yishuv's barbed wire fence in tens of places.

⁴ The era during which Jewish settlement activity led by Moetzet Yesha in and of itself constituted an essential contribution to Israeli security ended with the establishment of an Arab army in Yesha. Under these new circumstances, it is urgent that the [simple steps needed to prevent an Arab first strike](#) be taken immediately in order to restore the yishuvim to their previous status of military assets to the State of Israel. It would therefore not be appropriate to sacrifice security concerns with the assumption that greater numbers of Jewish Yesha residents will somehow “make up” for the flaws in current official Israeli policy *vis-à-vis* the threat of Arab first strike capability. Moetzet Yesha, which has done valuable work in the areas of settlement activity and real estate development, has sometimes overlooked vital security problems in what may be an attempt to deflect embarrassment away from the government for the sake of protecting the *status quo*.

⁵ Questioned later by Yesha supporters about his downplaying of the PA military threat, a Moetzet Yesha official explained that he was concerned over the need to protect real estate values in Yesha. However, in this author's opinion, the best boost to real estate values in Yesha would be to expose and counter the threat, not to sweep it under the carpet.

Repeated IDF Denials of BRDM2 Armored Vehicles in Ramallah:

In [Ma'ariv of December 18, 1998](#), the IDF Spokesman, attempting to refute a report of BRDM2's in Ramallah: "As far as we know the Palestinians have 42 armored vehicles of the BRDM variety, all of which are stationed in Gaza."

In April, 1999, security officials from the Benjamin regional council requested a meeting with the IDF to discuss Arab first strike capability. The officials were told by the IDF area Brigade Commander Col. Gal Hirsch that the IDF is preparing for that very scenario, but that yishuvim in the Benjamin area face no danger, as the PA has no armored vehicles in Ramallah.

Although the IDF Brigade Commander of Benjamin in 1999 and the IDF spokesman in December 1998 would admit to 42 BRDM2's only in Gaza, IDF documents as far back as 1996 identified 6 BRDM2's in Ramallah.

Significantly, in November 1998, former IDF Brigade Commander of Benjamin region Col. Yossi Hayman explained in a briefing that the PA was completing the process of moving its power infrastructure from Gaza to Ramallah, as Arafat was trying to consolidate his control and wrest power from Arab extremist elements there. "Therefore," concluded Hayman, "Ramallah is becoming more and more qualified for hostile terrorist operations against Israeli targets in the Benjamin area."

The IDF explanation for why the PA needs armored vehicles according to Oslo is that Arafat needs them to protect his government from Arab extremist elements.⁶ This gives credibility to reports of PA armor in Ramallah despite IDF denials.

Analysis:

The IDF's repeated denials of Arab armored vehicles in Judea and Samaria appear to be intended to convince those residents that the Arab armor would only threaten to concentrate on yishuvim in Gaza. But evidence of first strike preparations against yishuvim of Judea and Samaria is growing. Thus, the IDF's recurrent attempts to convince some yishuvim to be less concerned because the first strike threat is directed against other yishuvim could represent an attempt to plant false hopes among some of them. Given the evidence of preparations against yishuvim of Judea and Samaria as well, the IDF recurrent attempts to divide yishuv security concerns from one another may reflect a fear of all the yishuvim [uniting behind a decision to stand together](#).

4) Arab Laborers on Yishuvim Detected Performing Intelligence Functions for Surprise First Strike:

Recent Events & Actions by PA:

Files in the Orient House and other locations contain topographical, logistic, military, and population information on every Jewish community in Yesha⁷. Arab laborers have been

⁶ The official explanation of the PA's need for armored vehicles is that they are intended to protect Arafat's forces from extremist elements. In this author's opinion, this blurs the distinction between enemy intentions and enemy capabilities. Whether the IDF's judgement of PA intentions for the armored vehicles is correct or not, the reality of a potential first strike capability against yishuvim in Yesha remains.

⁷ On March 26, 1998 *Yediot Ahronot* reported that the PA has been spying on 143 Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, assisted by officials in the US consulate in Jerusalem, Peace Now, and Arabs who work or shop in the communities. This includes data on security arrangements and on the personal

observed noting the homes of gun owners and potential leaders in each yishuv. Presumably, these reports are also going into the files of Orient House and would be the key documents used by the Arab commandos spearheading an assault.

Importance:

The above mentioned intelligence gathering procedures would give the Arab commandos the information they need to paralyze yishuv defenses within minutes of smashing



through the gates.

Training camp of Fatah Youth: Learning to take Jewish hostages.

Analysis:

Yishuv residents, concerned about the security of their families, frequently discuss the presence of numerous Arab laborers on yishuvim. Arab preparations to use laborers for a daytime first strike would be much different than the preparations required for a first strike at night. So the pattern of their preparations bears close observation as a way to determine what they may be planning:

Possible Arab Laborer Role in Day Assault:

During the day in several outlying, small yishuvim, most of the men who are armed are away at work and the Jewish population consists of women and children. Of those left behind during the day, few have weapons except for IDF guards with M16 rifles at the gate. Due to the flawed gate and perimeter security of yishuvim, Arab laborers would have no problem smuggling arms and ammunition inside. They could then easily overcome the two gate guards, take the arms room, and use the women and children as hostages. (Some yishuvim have banned Arab laborers, but the vast majority have not.)

Possible Arab Laborer Role in Night Assault:

The yishuv residents would be asleep. PA militia around the yishuvim can be mobilized under the cover of darkness to bring their manpower advantage to bear. Armored vehicles or commandos approaching the yishuvim would be harder to detect. The night-vision equipment in PA hands would allow the armored vehicles to approach the yishuvim without using headlights. The Arab laborers, knowledgeable of yishuv streets

lives and schedules of individual citizens. The dossiers are stored in Orient House, the PA's illegal Jerusalem headquarters, according to the report.

and buildings, would be attached to lead elements of the assault forces, directing them to vital targets in the yishuv. Vital targets include the arms room, alarm systems, buildings with communications equipment, and the homes of key leaders and gun owners.

Possible PA Decision for Night Assault Could Change in the Future:

Given the aforementioned PA night assault training and equipment, a decision for a night assault may be currently in effect. However, the ease with which a hidden Arab arms cache could be planted on a yishuv for use a short time later could make a day assault feasible.

Official Response:

IDF countermeasures on laborers are badly misdirected or nonexistent. Some yishuvim even have Arab guards “guarding” the Arab workers. In many yishuvim, the IDF relies on ineffective “window dressing” security measures to give an illusion of security when in reality there is none. The author [photographed](#) and videotaped dozens of illegal Arab laborers freely entering holes in fences of yishuvim from nearby Arab settlements under PA jurisdiction, while IDF guards put on a show of checking magnetic ID cards at the main gates.

Additionally, thousands of illegal Arab laborers daily circumvent IDF roadblocks utilizing dirt roads in places such as Kiryat Sefer, Bet Lechem, Tzurif, Kalkilya, Ramot, and tens of others. This way, weapons could be smuggled back and forth from Gaza to Judea and Samaria and also into Israel within the green line.

When confronted with this problem by the author, IDF Benjamin Area Brigade Commander Col. Yossi Hayman admitted that the State of Israel needs those illegal laborers because of a shortage of manpower. He then said that he considers the IDF roadblocks which the dirt roads circumvent to be “like doors without walls....”, and that “the IDF simply does not have the means to deal with the problem.”

Officials in charge of security frequently point out that their priority is to provide the local Jewish residents with the “feeling of security.” The creation of the “feeling of security” has replaced authentic security, which has apparently gone by the wayside.

Overall Analysis:

Lt. Col. (res.) [Yigal ben-David](#)'s Assessment of IDF Policy; Dec. 6, 1998:

“The current state of affairs spells out an abandonment of the yishuvim by the defense establishment and plays into the hands of the Palestinian Authority and its plans. I assume that you [Minister of Defense Yitzchak Mordechai] are aware of this dire situation.”

A Possible PA Approach:

Politically, the PA forces would probably be directed to hold back from a massacre of the Jewish residents. Their orders would likely be to hold the residents under gunpoint until “humanitarian” IDF truck convoys arrive to evacuate them after daylight. However, even assuming that such discipline could be imposed upon the PA army forces, the larger armed civilian militias may not heed such constraints.



7/7/99 ARABS & ISRAEL 4045: PA Assault On Yesha
by Richard Shulman
Middle East Commentator

Mordechai Sones warned that the PA planned to assault dozens of Yesha Jewish communities simultaneously. He found the communities unprepared even to consider their peril, the Army unconcerned.

His report was distributed privately. Three months later, the Yesha Council security coordinator replied. Even without Sones' rebuttal, one can see that the reply evades the issues. It fails to answer satisfactorily such matters as:

1. The PA having armored vehicles mounted with night-vision equipment and machine guns superior to the communities aged machine guns;
2. Yesha's lack of heavy weapons and shortage of ammunition;
3. Massive PA night training with live fire around numerous communities;
4. IDF attempts to pass off that training as noise from Arab weddings;
5. IDF ignorance of the full number of PA armored vehicles.

Why does the IDF dissemble about this grave threat to tens of thousands of Israelis? Mr. Sones supposes that the government has decided not to strive to hold on to Yesha but to claim surprise at the attack, evacuate surviving Jews, and conclude a "land for peace" charade without seeming to have done so voluntarily and contrary to the will of the people. It would be a great treachery but what other explanation is there?

With heavy weapons, the communities would become obstacles to war instead of burdens on defense. Perhaps the IDF is afraid to give them such weapons, lest they attack the PA army with it. That fear would be fantasy.

Why does the Yesha Council go along with the government pretense? Could they simply not imagine what a sacrifice the government, the B. Netanyahu government, intends them to make? Perhaps they never realized how entrenched the Left was, even in that regime...

NOTE: THE AUTHOR, RON SHECHNER, NOW (2005) SERVES AS DEFENSE MINISTER SHAUL MOFAZ'S "SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR SETTLEMENT AFFAIRS"...

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE SECURITY COMMANDER FOR THE COUNCIL OF JEWISH SETTLEMENTS OF JUDEA, SAMARIA & GAZA

Wednesday, June 16, 1999 12:30 PM

We are aware that Mordechai Sones, author of "[Understanding Arab First Strike Preparations in Yesha: The Threat, Analysis, and Ramifications of Official Response](#)" will be visiting the U.S. soon to solicit funds. While Mr. Sones may have had good intentions, his hyperbole and hysteria have in fact only generated unnecessary fear and panic among friends of Yesha. In my capacity as security coordinator of the Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza (Yesha Council) and as someone who works very closely with the army, I would like to set the record straight concerning the facts that Mr. Sones presents in his article and particularly concerning the conclusions he draws from them.

Mr. Sones' article is misleading. He twists facts, misinterprets evaluations and distorts meaning. The details that Mr. Sones cites in his article are not new to us and contain nothing that was not known to us previously. Nor are the Israeli Defense Forces unfamiliar with them.

All his reports, in fact, are based on information that has appeared in Hebrew and English press. Like anyone else, Mr. Sones is entitled to interpret the facts as he sees fit. But in the interest of truth, I would like to present the situation as we in Yesha see it.

The facts: In a very general sense, the facts that appear in the articles are correct. The Palestinian Authority indeed have large numbers of rifles that were given to them by the IDF as part of the Oslo agreements (to our chagrin). Some of the weapons came from other sources, such as from thefts, purchases and so on. The Palestinians have limited numbers of machine guns and a small number of outdated-armed vehicles of various types in accordance with the Oslo agreement.

It is known that they have a small number of additional arms, such as anti-tank weapons and mortars--in violation of the agreement. The PA trains its soldiers and this is no secret. Most of the training is on the individual level in small groups, no massive training exercises are held. All of these facts are known. The IDF coordinates its plans with the settlements with the Jewish communities of Judea and Samaria serving as the focus of its defense plans. Many members of the communities serve in the regional defense unit which is an integral part of the general defense program. They serve in this unit because they can be called up at short notice to defend the Jewish communities if needed.

Evaluation of the situation: The Palestinian Arabs are waiting for any opportunity to drive us out of our country. By they too realize that they do not have the military capability today to achieve this aim. That is why they have made a strategic decision to take the diplomatic course of the peace "process" in order to achieve in this way what they are unable at present time to attain by military means.

Never-the-less, the Oslo Agreements have armed the PA and supplied them with a military force. Consequently, it is clear that they are waiting for the opportunity to attack us and then relying on international pressure on us, to prevent any attack on them. This is an obvious and reasonable evaluation of the situation by anyone familiar with our neighbors and the history of the Israel-Arab conflict.

Significance: Because the IDF knows everything that has been stated here, it is preparing for all possible scenarios, including the worst-case scenario. The IDF receives orders from the government which decides how it should respond to various situation, but the IDF is training and preparing for any eventuality. I can state that the IDF is doing everything it can to protect the Jewish settlements and Jewish citizens in general in Yesha. The IDF is training and preparing to carry out any mission assigned to it in the future if the security situation between our neighbors and us should change. Sones' conclusions that the IDF has abandoned Israeli citizens and is not making provisions for difficult situations is absolutely false.

Sones is not familiar with the IDF at all and he bases his conclusions solely on newspaper articles and reports, some of which have been written by known haters of Israel. I cannot understand what possible benefit he expects to achieve through his articles, and I say this as a resident of Yesha. Sones' conclusions are untrue and can only result in demoralization--which ultimately only benefits the interests of our enemies.

Signed: Ron Shechner
Security Coordinator, Council for the Jewish Communities of Judea,
Samaria and Gaza



**OPEN LETTER TO THE SECURITY COORDINATOR FOR THE COUNCIL OF JEWISH
SETTLEMENTS OF JUDEA, SAMARIA, AND GAZA (MOETZET YESHA), RON SHECHNER**

June 28, 1999

Dear Ron,

Thank you for your response to the First Strike report. I appreciate your willingness as the Security Coordinator of Moetzet Yesha to recognize the gravity of the charge that is understood throughout Yesha that Israeli officials may be suppressing the evidence of Arab preparations for a surprise assault against yishuvim.

Your "open letter" came on June 16, 1999, 86 days after the release of the First Strike report of March 22, 1999.

During those 86 days, the First Strike report has been widely distributed to Jews and friends of Israel in Yesha and abroad. Much of the impetus for the widespread distribution has been spontaneous. Dozens of Yesha residents have recognized its importance, copied it and distributed it to their neighbors. Since the report became public, security officers and Israeli officials have corroborated the information in the First Strike report. Based on the support that the First Strike report has generated so far, it is reasonable to assume that your alternative views may also draw some attention.

To clarify the contrast between your open letter and the First Strike report, several quotes from your letter follow, along with a specific response to each.

Your statement: “The Palestinians have limited numbers of machine guns and a small number of outdated-armed [sic.] vehicles...”

My response: You have not related to the fact that the reliable 12.7mm machine guns in Arab hands are superior to the unreliable 7.62mm WWII-vintage machine guns given to the Jewish communities in Yesha by the IDF. The claim of the ARMORED (not just “armed,” as you write) vehicles in Arab hands being “outdated” is irrelevant. The Arabs have them, they are operational and possess night-vision equipment. Yet the government does not allow the Yesha communities a single anti-tank weapon to defend themselves against them. You also do not attempt to explain why the yishuvim are provided with enough ammunition for several minutes of heavy combat only. In any case, you yourself admit in your open letter that the facts contained in the First Strike report are correct.

Your statement: “The PA trains its soldiers and this is no secret...no massive training exercises are held. All of these facts are known.”

My response: Your statement avoids the following key concerns about PA training that were broached in the First Strike report:

- 1) The live fire training occurring around numerous yishuvim is night attack training, preparing the civilian militias (not “soldiers”) for a first strike. The distinction between soldier training (which you admit) and militia training (which you avoid) is important because, unlike soldiers, thousands of civilian militia are prepositioned around each yishuv and it is they who are conducting the widespread night attack training.
- 2) Although you say the training is no secret, IDF officials did in fact attempt to keep the militia night attack training secret by claiming it is only “Arab weddings.” This has been the official IDF line to yishuvim all over Yesha.
- 3) Although you claim “no massive training exercises are held,” the live fire training was observed from scores of yishuvim around Yesha, as well as in the outskirts of Jerusalem. The First Strike report never labeled the training “massive,” but your labeling it as such seems appropriate given these facts.

Your statements: “The PA has a small number of outdated armored vehicles of various types...”

“The details that Mr. Sones cites in his article [First Strike Report] are not new to us [presumably referring to Moetzet Yesha] and contain nothing that was not known to us previously. Nor are the Israeli Defense Forces unfamiliar with them.”

My response: The number of PA armored vehicles may not be as small as you claim. During the preparation of the First Strike report, we uncovered evidence of 122 armored vehicles under PA control. Most of the evidence came from IDF sources.

The PA could organize the 122 vehicles into forty groups of three armored vehicles each to smash through forty yishuv gates in an overnight first strike assault.

After learning about the armored vehicles, I called Moetzet Yesha on December 9, 1998, to share my concerns. Moetzet Yesha officials claimed they did not know of any PA armored vehicles, but “the person that handles these issues for us is Michael Freund in the Prime Minister’s office.” I called Mr. Freund immediately to discuss the PA armored vehicles with him. He also claimed to have no knowledge of PA armored vehicles, but stated that they only knew about illegal numbers of PA policemen.

Your open letter implies that Moetzet Yesha already knew about the 122 armored vehicles under PA control, yet this did not stop Moetzet Yesha from telling Yesha residents on December 9th that they did not know of any armored vehicles in PA hands.

Moetzet Yesha’s Security Coordinator’s purported mission is to represent and protect the security interests of the people of Yesha. Your confirmation that the IDF is familiar with the facts detailed in the First Strike report is significant as it underscores the government’s knowledge of the Arab threat while denying its existence to the public. This allows the government to deny the yishuvim the training and equipment they need to stop the threat.

Your justification of this state of affairs indicates that Moetzet Yesha is assisting in covering up government intentions to sacrifice yishuvim several dozen at a time (in the guise of a “triage”) to implement the peace process. Please clarify for the record, Ron: Is the role of Moetzet Yesha to protect Yesha, or to stand as a docile conduit for government disinformation?

Your statement: “The IDF receives orders from the government which decides how it should respond to various situations, but the IDF is training and preparing for any eventuality.”

My response: One eventuality for which the government may be preparing the IDF is to apply the lessons learned from the forced evacuation of Yamit in the Sinai. To avoid the ignominy of facing 57 Yamits itself, certain elements in the government may plan to allow a PA first strike against several dozen yishuvim, to be followed by an IDF-led “humanitarian” evacuation of an additional thirty or forty yishuvim, thus eliminating a politically sensitive obstacle to the peace process overnight.

Your statement: “They [PA] have made a strategic decision to take the diplomatic course of the peace process...consequently, it is clear they [the PA] are waiting for the opportunity to attack us.”

My response: You can’t really have it both ways. They have either made a strategic decision to go with the peace process, or are making plans to “correct the error of history and dispense with the Zionist entity.” I regret to remind you that over 100 PA armored vehicles concealed from the people of Yesha, night attack rehearsals frequently occurring around the yishuvim, Arab laborers carrying out reconnaissance missions inside the yishuvim, and the organization of Arab commando units near key yishuvim indicate that the latter choice is the one that Arafat has made. The government is doing its part by denying the equipment and training the yishuvim would need to deter the attack. For Israel’s sake, Ron, please make this clear to your superiors at Moetzet Yesha.

Your statement: “The IDF is doing all it can...”

My response: Ron, I understand why you think this. Many Yesha residents also hope this is true. It is indeed difficult to face up to the government's systematic policy of stripping the yishuvim of their defenses, rendering them vulnerable to attack, and keeping them ignorant about the PA's armored vehicles and other first strike capabilities. After months of bringing this to the attention of the IDF, I can agree with you on one thing: the IDF has the information and knows what is going on. Unfortunately, the government is keeping the information from the people who are being endangered by this reality, and has been actively preventing the remedial steps necessary to ensure Yesha's survival.

According to Aharon Domb in Ma'ariv (December 18, 1998), you were hired only after my allegations went public. Your open letter suggests that you are being pressured to suppress the allegations, not to remedy them.

I am afraid that you are being drawn into a campaign to suppress the truth, and not to promote Yesha's security. Thousands of Jews and friends of Israel, including many Yesha residents, have read your open letter. What little I know of your record indicates that the agenda of abandoning Yesha is not the one you would really prefer to be associated with.

As a fellow Jew, Yesha resident, and combat soldier, I ask you to distance yourself from this suppression campaign before Yesha and precious Jewish lives are lost.

Many security officials in Yesha are distraught about this situation. Your courageous letter of resignation could inspire others to join you. This would do much to promote the truth at this fateful moment.

Such a principled stand taken by yourself could accomplish more to bring out the truth in one day than my own shoestring efforts of the past several months.

From Ganim to Drom Har Hevron, the people of Yesha await your decision.

Sincerely,

Mordechai Sones
Nachliel, Israel

YESHA COUNCIL: SHEER INCOMPETENCE – OR DELIBERATE POLICY?

The Yesha Council, One Israel Fund, and other interested officials have long been aware that the Israeli government intends to abandon parts of Yesha, yet have made concealing this information a cornerstone of their political efforts.

For example, former Yesha Council Executive Director Aharon Domb⁸ finally admitted in a newspaper interview that the Yesha Council leadership was “...afraid that if we presented the true security situation in all its aspects, people wouldn’t want to move to Yesha...” **NOTE: Aharon Domb was recently handed a multi-count criminal indictment including extortion, threatening a witness, and fraud⁹.**

But most Yeshans do not yet know the extent and the details of the Yesha Council’s disinformation campaign of which the residents of Yesha were the primary targets. Additionally, the disinformation also helped divert donations to Yesha from around the world into projects that were not directed against the major threats that Yesha faces.

What information did the Yesha Council suppress and when did they suppress it?

CHRONOLOGY OF EFFORTS THAT PREVENTED PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY FIRST STRIKE ATTACK AGAINST YISHUVIM IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA:

*by Mordechai Sones
Nachaliel, Israel*

Widespread, coordinated training represents a strategic commitment of resources to the first strike option, and is therefore a key indicator of readiness for an attack.

The extensive training needed to keep attack units combat ready for a multiple first strike has a short shelf life. The effect of training lasts two to six months and then it must be repeated. This is the most observable indicator we have.

The following chronology shows how the shooting/training around yishuvim in Judea and Samaria stopped within weeks after publication of the *Report on the Acquiescence of the Israeli Government in Palestinian Authority First Strike Preparations in Yesha*.

PREPARATIONS FOR EVICTION OF YESHA, AND SONES RESPONSES:	RESPONSE BY YESHA COUNCIL:
<p>28 September 1995: According to the Oslo Accords¹⁰, “The Palestinian police will possess...up to 45 wheeled armored vehicles of a type to be agreed between the two sides (Israel and PA) and of which 22 will be deployed in protecting council installations...The use of wheeled armored vehicles...in the vicinity of the Settlements shall be approved through the relevant DCO.”¹¹</p>	<p>No Yesha Council official or spokesman reacted to Israel’s agreement to the “use of wheeled armored vehicles...in the vicinity of the settlements.”</p> <p>Brig. Gen. (res.) Yossi Koller, the Security Coordinator of the Yesha Council (1988-1997) ignores the Israeli government’s insertion of armored vehicles for the PA in Yesha. He conducts a number of activities such as “changing all the windows in school busses and private cars to shatter proof glass” and “medical equipment such as ultrasound units,” and “mobile intensive-care units.”</p> <p>The Yesha Council’s silence on PA armored vehicles in Yesha remained in place until</p>

Annex I, Article III, para. 5a3¹⁰

There has been no application for armored personnel carriers in protecting PA installations.¹¹

	<p>December 9, 1998, when they denied knowing anything about any PA armored vehicles, although Oslo had placed 60 PA armored vehicles in Yesha five years previously, plus reportedly scores of others in violation of Oslo.</p> <p>Armored vehicle reports starting in 1996 in IDF documents both for active duty and reserve units, prominently featured PA BTR-152's and BRDM's in Yesha and would have required a particular effort by a Brig. Gen. in the reserves to ignore.</p>
<p><u>August 1996 – March 1997:</u> Arab militias initiate and gradually escalate small arms fire within earshot of approximately 40 outlying yishuvim in Yesha. The patterns of the shooting indicate training. Yesha residents begin to note the apparent preparations for attack around them. They also begin reporting these incidents to the local Israeli government officials. Because the residents reasonably expected the officials to deal with the new PA threat, they did not begin alerting each other. They had not yet realized that the PA was coordinating training all over Yesha.</p>	<p>The Security Coordinator of the Yesha Council makes no known investigation or report to anyone about the apparent training activity happening throughout Yesha for six months.</p>
<p><u>March 1997 – June 1998:</u> Gunfire around yishuvim escalates. Daytime gunfire is added. Yesha residents intensify their reports. Residents of Tapuach, Nachaliel, Efrat, Kiryat Arba, Psagot, and others report this to their local officials. Meeting each other months later, these residents were surprised to learn they had been getting the same peculiar official answer, that Arab “weddings” caused the gunfire.</p>	<p>Despite two years of gunfire around dozens of outlying yishuvim, the Yesha Council was still unwilling or unable to investigate the reports or alert Yesha, the media, the Israeli public, or the Diaspora.</p> <p>The Yesha Council, which had maintained a Security Coordinator since the first Intifada in February 1988, decides to retire the official in March, 1997 and lets the position lapse for the next 21 months.</p>
<p><u>1 June 1998:</u> Mainstream media becomes the first to figure out that it wasn't weddings, after all: Ironically, it was <i>HaAretz</i> that broke the story happening inside Yesha which Yesha Council officials had ignored for two years: <i>“Palestinians Training Forces to Break into Settlements and Hold Positions”</i>.</p>	<p>Yesha Council maintains silence.</p>

July 30, 1998: After confirming the existence of massive live ammunition military training in all places of Arab settlement throughout Yesha with network of observers, Mordechai Sones alerts Rabbis, Jewish leaders, and

**journalists worldwide of Israel's official explanation of attack training:
"weddings" caused the gunfire:**

B"H

July 30, 1998
6 MenachemAv, 5758

To the Rabbis of the Jewish people in every place
re: Danger to Life

Peace and Blessings.

We send you this special message to inform you that the local Arabs surrounding us have for months been performing military training exercises with live fire and cannons, preparing for their attack on us, the Jewish communities. The situation is unbearable, and we are pleading with you to relate to our situation.

This activity is separate from the war preparations being conducted by the "Palestinian Police." We are discussing here the local Arabs training with the tens of thousands of automatic weapons which they have acquired since the forming of the Autonomy. We hear the shooting here in Nachaliel, and it is also heard in Neve Tzuf, Ateret, and in Nili, Talmon and in Dolev. The shooting is also heard in the Shechem area - in Yitzhar, Alon Moreh, and Itamar (where there was a shooting attack on a Jewish family this past Friday). Not only in the Shomron - I also have reports from Jews who live in the Judea area - Hevron, Kiryat Arba, and the area. I almost could not find an area in the whole Judea-Samaria where this phenomena has **not** been observed to be snowballing in a frightening way in the past months.

We see this taking place outside our windows, and hear it day and night in our homes. At times we hear ourselves surrounded on three sides by cannon and automatic weapons fire, and we see - even without aid of binoculars - how the Arabs are practicing with their machine guns, running and shooting, running and shooting, training carefully and well. All of the Jewish residents here are under great stress and anxiety because of this state of affairs, and we constantly report to the IDF how we see with our own eyes that the Arabs are preparing literally day and night to overrun and **kill** slaughter the Jewish communities here. The cruel and cynical answer of the army is that there is nothing to worry about, for the shooting that we hear is only Arab wedding celebrations. This is the outcome of IDF's do-nothing policy which seeks to keep the Jews as subdued as possible, even as the Arabs continue to plan and practice our slaughter.

I learned recently from the Area Brigade Commander Col. "Y." that according to the most current army information, there is "high probability" that the Arabs plan in the next confrontation with Israel to conduct an all-inclusive assault, such that if the Palestinian Police and local armed population attack in Israel's interior, Syria and Egypt will threaten and even attack our borders. In such a scenario, the Yishuvim will have to fend for themselves as the regular army rushes to the front lines. We will only be able to expect reinforcements later. Drawing on our experience from the Sukkos riots two years ago, the army is incapable of protecting all the Yishuvim simultaneously.

Our equipment is sorely inadequate compared to the vast weapons stores found in every single Arab village. Any attempt to reply adequately to the heavy volume of Arab fire will be out of the question. The situation is similar in all the yishuvim.

We beg you to raise a bitter and desperate outcry which will be heard over all the radios and read in all the newspapers - that Israel must take the situation into hand immediately, for the danger to life is very great now. Has the time not come to awaken Israel to the situation?

Dear Rabbis! If you don't believe us, we invite you send an emissary to come and spend two days here with us. He will see and hear everything. Let one of the Rabbis come and see for himself our grave situation.

May the self sacrifice of our fathers, sages, and holy men provide you strength to make decisions to take immediate action to save Jewish lives.

Thank you,

Mordechai Sones / Yishuv Nachaliel, Eretz HaKodesh

<p align="center">PREPARATIONS FOR EVICTION OF YESHA, AND SONES RESPONSES:</p>	<p align="center">RESPONSE BY YESHA COUNCIL:</p>
<p>24 August 1998: Sones Reports to Knesset: Mordechai Sones briefs meeting of Knesset Land of Israel Front and eight Yesha leaders about the new Arab attack preparations. Representing the Yesha Council were Chairman Pinchas Wallerstein and Executive Director Aharon Domb.</p> <p>The thrust of the briefing is: “If the IDF cannot put a stop to the training, how will they stop the actual attack?” MK Moshe Peled responds, “Its time to re-establish HaShomer!”</p> <p>Others present nod their agreement as a consensus to take organized concrete steps for Yesha’s self defense appeared to be forming among Members of Knesset and Yesha leaders present, except for the two Yesha Council representatives.</p>	<p>Both Chairman and Executive Director of the Yesha Council had remained passive throughout the meeting until the suggestion to re-establish HaShomer. At that moment, both spoke out in simultaneous opposition. “That’s the IDF’s job...”, neutralizing the emerging consensus for coordinated action to improve the self defense of Yesha residents.</p>

August 24 1998: Mordechai Sones, together with the Secretary of his yishuv, Ephraim DeHaas, visit Chairman of Knesset Foreign Relations and Security Committee, MK Uzi Landau, to inform him of the Arab attack training taking place throughout Judea and Samaria. Landau tells Sones: “The Shabak says there is no Arab gunfire going on in Judea and Samaria.” When confronted by Sones, “We know that a Shabak team set up an observation post days ago in Mattityahu to monitor this very shooting emanating from Dir Qaddis and Na’alin,” Landau turned to three younger men seen sitting in the inner office and instructed them to “Look into it.”

August 28, 1998: Mordechai Sones receives report from reservists finishing their month in the “*moked*”, the army radio room which acts as a liaison between civilians and the IDF, that they received hundreds of reports every night from yishuvim of the constant Arab shooting.

August 28, 1998: Yesha Officials: “Weddings” Caused the Gunfire

Arutz 7 News, 28 August 1998:

WEDDING-SHOTS UNNERVE YESHA RESIDENTS

Amidst reports that “Palestinian security forces have recently accelerated and intensified their [military] training” [Amos Harel Haaretz] residents in Judea and Samaria have expressed great apprehension at what they see as concrete signs that their security is being increasingly endangered. A widely-distributed letter by residents of Yesha communities [by Mordechai Sones] to rabbis and military figures details “war preparations being conducted by the Palestinian Police.” The letter states, “We hear the shooting here in [several different Yesha communities...] I almost could not find an area in the whole Judea-Samaria where this phenomenon has not been observed to be snowballing in a frightening way in the past months.”

<p style="text-align: center;">PREPARATIONS FOR EVICTION OF YESHA, AND SONES RESPONSES:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RESPONSE BY YESHA COUNCIL:</p>
<p><u>Sept-Nov 1998:</u> Mordechai Sones and his supporters in the US organize a visit by an independent military observer to interpret Arab military preparations in Yesha and the peculiar Israeli official response. The visiting expert works with Yesha activists uncovering evidence of 122 Arab armored vehicles, commando units, and Arab reconnaissance within yishuvim. Analysis of the nighttime <u>gunfire patterns indicated attack preparations, not weddings.</u> Of particular concern were the reports of the capability to smash through any yishuv gate and seize the arms room, leaders, and communications. Compounding this danger, not a single yishuv was found to have a single anti-tank weapon to protect its gate against such a threat.</p>	<p>Responsible officials were evasive when confronted with the reports about Arab first strike capabilities.</p> <p>At the same time period of research, no Yesha Council comment, report, or complaint, notice, or admission of any of these Arab attack capabilities was detected.</p>



Mordechai Sones (right), with Andrew Eiva, Former US Army Green Beret Officer and West Point graduate who specialized in guerrilla warfare. Track record in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Mozambique, and Lithuania. In Afghanistan, he headed a project to protect Soviet soldiers who fell alive into guerrilla hands to facilitate further desertions and defections. Later, he helped the anti-Soviet mujaheddin acquire effective air defense weapons. During the Soviet coup attempt in Lithuania in January of 1991, he helped the Landsbergis government develop an effective military deterrent to back up its non-violent strategy. Currently Executive Director of Washington Office for Yesha.

December 5, 1998: Mordechai Sones addresses Efrat Action Committee sponsored by Nadia Matar's Women in Green

<p>PREPARATIONS FOR EVICTION OF YESHA, AND SONES RESPONSES:</p>	<p>RESPONSE BY YESHA COUNCIL:</p>
<p>5 December 1998: Efrat Action Committee Meeting sponsored by Nadia Matar's Women in Green: Approx 150 concerned Yesha residents met at the Rav Tachliti Rimon Hall in Efrat to discuss information freshly uncovered about Arab first strike equipment and preparations. Of particular interest during the discussions were the reports of armor vehicles, commando units, and the official Israeli withholding of ammunition and appropriate weapons to yishuv self defense.</p> <p>One of the most startling discoveries was that people from Tekoa, Kiryat Arba, and other communities discovered that not only their own local IDF officials had claimed Arab "weddings" to be the cause of the shooting campaign, but citizens from other areas in Yesha had been told the identical claim from their own local IDF officials. This discovery of the same IDF "explanation" of Arab gunfire around various Yesha communities led some residents to suspect that they were facing a coordinated official "interpretation" of Arab gunfire.</p> <p><u>Elyakim HaEtzni</u>: "Arafat has indeed set up special commando units that are already training in the field, to 'deal' with the settlements."</p>	<p>The ranking Yesha Council official and Mayor of Efrat Yinon Achiman also spoke at the same meeting. He did not address any of the concrete dangers, other than describing the further withdrawals from land turned over the the PA, and why that should be no cause for worry because of "the local armed forces available in Efrat in case of emergency, in addition to the paid security guards on duty now," and added that he "relies on the IDF in case of attack."</p>



*Left: David Wilder, Spokesman of Hevron Jewish Community, explains Hevron's unique position of vulnerability to Eiva;
Right: Eiva in security briefing with Noam Arnon and Committee of Hevron Community*

December 6, 1998: IDF Military Professional Present at Sones' talk in Efrat Warns of First Strike. This letter is the first publicly known warning of PA first strike capability by an IDF military professional. It was sent to the former Minister of Defense, Yitzchak Mordechai, by IDF Lieutenant Colonel (mil.) Yigal ben David, once a commanding officer of Mordechai's in the IDF Armored Corps

Yigal ben-David
P.O.B. 57560,
Jerusalem 91570
tel. 02-5384871

BS"D

17 Kislev, 5759
(6 December 1998)
The Honorable
General Yitzchak Mordechai
Minister of Defense
Ministry of Defense
Jerusalem

Honorable Minister,

re: dry-run exercise in conquering yishuvim in Judea and Samaria - warning

The invasion into Ariel yesterday, Shabbat, with the support of the Palestinian Authority, is without doubt part of a general plan to strike at the yishuvim, this time as a "dry-run" exercise. I have no doubt that these issues are known to you and to the IDF.

Inspections performed by yishuv residents and other personnel have revealed that the Palestinian Authority possesses, among other things, armored personnel carriers of the BTR-152 variety and old half-tracks which were passed to the Palestinian Authority by the IDF. Their "police" forces (the name which is still stubbornly used to describe their army) comprise several divisions that include a number of battalions training to conquer yishuvim in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. According to eyewitness sources they are training and preparing to overrun yishuvim in Yesha also with live fire. It is known that in Gaza, Shechem, and in Ramallah (and possibly in additional locations), already today there are to be found weapons heavier than automatic rifles, and Katyusha rockets. It may be assumed that they are planning the surrounding of yishuvim for the days when the Arab armies will rally in an all-out war, and the IDF will be stationed along the borders. At such a stage, the yishuvim will be left only with the local forces of the Regional Defense. This is also well known to the Brigade Commanders in Yesha.

Despite this information, inspections find that Regional Defense possesses only outdated weapons, in small quantities, like the Browning .30 which is very prone to mishaps. The ammunition existing in yishuvim is enough for only an hour or two of fighting (20 minutes of intensive combat). The current state of affairs spells out an abandonment of the yishuvim by the defense establishment and plays into the hands of the Palestinian Authority and its plans. I assume that you are aware of this dire situation.

I am hereby turning to you with the request that you immediately see to improving this situation in a significant fashion, as it seems that time is short and disaster looms, G-d forbid, at our doorstep.

I would therefore be very grateful if you would order an inspection of the weapon and ammunition stores of all of the yishuvim in Yesha and see to arming the yishuvim and providing training for the residents in accordance with their new needs, to our great regret.

With much respect,
/sig./
Yigal ben-David
Lieutenant Colonel (mil.)

cc: the Prime Minister, Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu
Chairman of Yesha Council, Mr. Pinchas Wallerstein
news editor of Arutz 7, Mr. Chaggai Segal
members of the government

<p align="center">PREPARATIONS FOR EVICTION OF YESHA, AND SONES RESPONSES:</p>	<p align="center">RESPONSE BY YESHA COUNCIL:</p>
<p><u>10-17 December 1998:</u> Frustrated by the Yesha Council’s record of indifference and unwillingness to consider Arab first strike preparations in Yesha, an audience member present in the Efrat Action Committee meeting contacted Ma’ariv reporter Boaz Gaon, who went on to publish the charges concerning Arab armored vehicles as well as an IDF confirmation of their existence.</p>	<p><u>Yesha Council Director General Aharon Domb to Maariv, 18 December 1998:</u> “The whole thing seems strange to me...If before he runs to the press he would give the information to the authorities, that's one thing. The fact that they are running to the press gives me the initial impression that this is, I don't know, a group which has foreign interests.”</p> <p><u>Ma’ariv to Domb:</u> “Would you like to relate to the charges themselves?”</p> <p><u>Domb:</u> “As far as I'm concerned, there is the IDF, there is the Israeli government, there are all the official institutions, who are responsible. Also we (in Moetzet Yesha - B.G.) are taking care of things, criticizing, and speaking up.”</p>
<p><u>Visiting Military Observer to Ma’ariv:</u> “One of the things we revealed is that the Palestinian Authority has 86 armored vehicles in its possession, to some of which they do not admit. They only admit six vehicles. These vehicles are capable of breaking into and entering yishuvim, overpowering the IDF soldiers stationed there at two in the morning, breaking into the armory and taking the weapons. Additional Palestinian forces could arrive. The weapons in the yishuvim are enough for only 15-20 minutes of self defense.”</p>	<p><u>Domb in response:</u> “I don't think we need to bring some foreign force of guerrilla warfare from anywhere in the world so they can express their opinions... As a matter of fact, you are speaking to me just today as I am bringing in a Security Officer for Yesha - a brigade commander in the reserves.”</p> <p>This officer, Ron Shechner, thereupon became the Yesha Council’s own expert and spokesman on Arab first strike preparations.</p>

January 1999: Mordechai Sones Invited for “Interview” by Office of Defense Minister Yitzchak Mordechai. Inspector Yannai Dan tells Sones the purpose of the meeting is “to find out from Sones information on Palestinian military capabilities”.

January 23, 1999: Defense Minister Yitzchak Mordechai quits PM Netanyahu’s government to take over number-one slot in new “Centrist Party”. Meeting postponed indefinitely.

PREPARATIONS FOR EVICTION OF YESHA, AND SONES RESPONSES:	RESPONSE BY YESHA COUNCIL:
<p>17 March 1999: Mordechai Sones gives preview briefing and hands advance release of the <i>Report on the Acquiescence of the Israeli Government in Palestinian Authority First Strike Preparations in Yesha</i>¹² to senior One Israel Fund official from North America.</p>	<p>The official reports to Sones that he discussed first strike concerns with Yesha Council’s Uri Ariel. Ariel expressed no surprise and did not contradict the first strike information. According to Ariel, the only reason the Yesha Council downplays these dangers is because the fear that such publicity would negatively affect Yesha real estate prices.</p>
<p>Aharon Domb in <i>HaAretz</i> 7/14/02 said the Yesha Council leadership was “...afraid that if we presented the true security situation in all its aspects, people wouldn’t want to move to Yesha.”</p>	<p>Although some were still willing to believe that the Yesha Council may have ignored these indications due to sheer incompetence, Domb’s remark underlines the deliberate nature of their disinformation.</p>

Ariel Center for Policy Research’s introduction to the *Report on the Acquiescence of the Israeli Government in Palestinian Authority First Strike Preparations in Yesha*:

“EDITOR’S NOTE: Prior to publication of this document an attempt was made to confirm the validity of the facts and analyses which appear therein. A query was directed to four bodies: **the IDF, the Defense Ministry, the Yesha Council, and the Prime Minister’s office.** Except for the Yesha Council, whose spokesman rejected the document absolutely and completely, the other bodies did not bother to answer the query. An attempt to verify the facts through private sources (mostly IDF officers serving in the area) drew various assessments, ranging between partial denial, confirmation, and the presentation of a much more critical picture by far.”

When the Ariel Center for Policy Research corroborated the facts contained in the *Report on the Acquiescence of the Israeli Government in Palestinian Authority First Strike Preparations in Yesha*, their Executive Director, Aryeh Stav, was contacted by Yesha Council official Pinchas Wallerstein and the IDF military censor, threatening closure of the Ariel Center should they go ahead with publication of the report. Nevertheless, Mr. Stav did not abandon his principled decision not to buckle under pressure.

¹²See Appended *Report on the Acquiescence of the Israeli Government in Palestinian Authority First Strike Preparations in Yesha*, and related documents.

Within one month of the Ariel Center's publication of the *First Strike Report*, all Arab marksmanship training in the entire Judea and Samaria abruptly stopped - as though a giant faucet throughout the land had been suddenly and tightly shut.

November 3, 1999: It Wasn't Weddings, After All

Arutz-7, November 3, 1999 - Cheshvan 24, 5760

6. DANGEROUS NOISE

Residents of Judea and Samaria continue to complain of noisy and frequent fireworks, weapon fire, and explosions near their Yesha communities. Binyamin Region security chief Avigdor Shatz told Arutz-7 today that the intensity of the phenomenon varies with the "wedding season," when local Palestinians celebrate outdoor weddings. "Some of the wealthier Arabs in Yesha spend upwards of 50,000 shekels for fireworks," Shatz noted. "But some of the noises are indeed weapon practice by Arabs. What is especially worrisome, though, is that it has become so commonplace that when someone hears actual weapons fire, he may ignore it, passing it off as another wedding celebration." Concerns have also been expressed by residents that the phenomenon may signal danger for the Israeli towns if a violent conflagration erupts in the future.

Shatz explained that the IDF is permitted to enter the areas from which the explosions emanate, but "in practice, we rely on the Palestinian paramilitary police to take care of it. They have an interest in stopping this, too...I think we have a greater interest in controlling the situation - so that the ammunition will not be used against us."

Sones Comment: Shatz is putting forth additional evidence not previously released by IDF explaining how Arab "weddings" caused the gunfire, while at same time recognizing that if he persisted in claiming that this was solely or primarily weddings, he could be laughed out of Yesha. Therefore, he is finally forced to grudgingly admit (after three years of gunfire) that some training is taking place, but continued to do his best to downplay the threat by mixing it in and confusing it with freshly minted details about Arab weddings.

May 28, 2000: Yeshan Ammunition Request Rebuffed by IDF

B”H

Yishuv Nachaliel
23 Iyar, 5760
28 May 2000

Mifaked Chativat Binyamin
Col.. Gal Hirsch

Shalom rav.

Last week, Arabs attacked us on the roads to Nachaliel with rocks, firebombs, and roadblock ambushes. Our families were surrounded by danger. The IDF was not able to arrive in time. We needed to open the roads ourselves.

Fortunately, the Arabs did not yet conduct the major attack for which we have heard and watched them train since 1997.

The possibility of such an attack appears to be increasing. Last week, Faisal Hussein threatened to cut off and attack yishuvim this coming September. If such an attack were to occur, Nachaliel has the ammunition on hand to resist it for no more than 7 minutes. (See chart: **Nachaliel Has 7 Minutes of Ammunition to Defend Against PA Attack**.)

A whole day may pass before any reinforcements arrive, and even these will not be the IDF's best forces.

The arrival of the reinforcements could prove a dangerous task. On the way here, they may face physical barriers and live fire. If they have to fight their way through, reinforcements may not arrive at all.

With all due respect and appreciation for the IDF, while the PA is able to concentrate hundreds of armed attacking forces against every one of the more than 200 yishuvim and army installations in Yesha, there is a real danger that the IDF will not be able to simultaneously send defending or supply forces to all yishuvim - even assuming that the roads will not be closed by Arab snipers and roadblock ambushes.

NACHALIEL HAS 7 MINUTES OF AMMUNITION TO DEFEND AGAINST PA ATTACK

<u>Weapon type</u>	<u>Available emergency ammunition</u>	<u>Number of gun holders</u>	<u>Bullets per person</u>	<u>Approximate minutes of heavy combat time per person</u>
M-16				@ rounds per min: 7 minutes
Browning 0.3				@ rounds per min: 8 minutes
Uzi				@ rounds per min: 4 minutes

The IDF has invested security features in the yishuvim, such as the sliding gate, the patrol path, the loudspeaker system, and the lighting. These have almost no significance in a situation of scores or hundreds of armed attackers overrunning a yishuv.

As with ammunition, we have a severe shortage of everything connected with defending a yishuv.

We therefore respectfully but urgently request 250,000 rounds of ammunition to enable Nachaliel to withstand a siege of several days. We also request that our radio network be upgraded to allow early warning and coordination in case of enemy attack.

These are the absolute minimum requirements for Nachaliel to withstand the type of siege which our neighbors are preparing for us.

In the past, the IDF guaranteed the safety of the yishuvim. Regrettably, the IDF's guarantee no longer appears credible. The threat to our families grows daily.

You are the officer with the responsibility, ability, and authority to provide the ammunition we need for self defense.

Therefore, we request your immediate and expeditious approval and implementation of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

The undersigned residents of Nachaliel

cc.:

HaRamatkal Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz
Ktzin HaGmar Pikud Lt. Col. Shlomo Vaknin
Ktzin HaGmar Ayosh Lt. Col. Moshe Rom
Aluf Pikud HaOref
Ravshatz Nachaliel Ilan ben-Shabbat

/signatures in Hebrew document/

Eliezer Breuer
Shai Lusky
Nisim and Leah Ochana
Menachem Pash
Reuel Haddad
Mori Sa'adia Meoudah
Rachamim Chasson
HaAri Shushan
Eliyahu Shma'aya
Uri and Chagit Mendelson
Shmuel Cytryn
Doron and Sigal Shvartz
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May 31, 2000: Yesha Official: "Organized and Ready to Deal With" First Strike

Arutz Sheva News Service
Wednesday, May 31, 2000 / Iyar 26, 5760

1. CIVIL CONQUEST OF YESHA PLANNED

Thousands of Palestinians will attempt to "conquer" Jewish Yesha communities upon the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state on September 13. So claims a Saudi Arabian newspaper, quoting a "Plan for Liberation of Lands" authorized by the Palestinian Authority. This report jibes with a statement made recently by leading PLO official Feisal Hussein, who said that on the day after the declaration of a Palestinian state "on all its lands," the Palestinians living in refugee camps will "march" towards Israeli cities and villages. Hussein acknowledged that violence during such a march would be likely, and that it could lead to a Palestinian conquest of Jewish towns in Yesha.

Residents of the Binyamin community of Nachaliel sent an urgent letter to IDF Binyamin area commander Col. Gal Hirsch this week, warning that the IDF will be unable to reach Yesha towns in the event that the Palestinians carry through with their threats to overtake the communities.

Beit El Mayor Uri Ariel related to these threats today, and said, "We have raised these issues with the army and government, who are responsible for these matters. They are aware of the issue and are organized to deal with it." Ariel also said that the towns already have weapons that, in the opinion of the army, are sufficient to deal with external threats.

Arutz-7 correspondent Haggai Huberman related to the above-reported threat of the Palestinian conquest of Yesha communities: "The plan to have Palestinian civilians march towards and penetrate Yesha towns will pose a serious dilemma for Israel's security forces, in terms of firing on civilians," he explained. "The Palestinians would like to emulate the tactic they saw in southern Lebanon... The IDF officially says that it is prepared for all possible scenarios, but Yesha residents aren't convinced. In the letter sent to IDF officials from Nachaliel, the residents note that a full day may pass before reinforcements arrive to defend the yishuvim. 'With no offense intended to the IDF,' wrote the residents, 'the PA could dispatch hundreds of skilled, armed Palestinians before the IDF has a chance to respond.' Thus, a danger would exist even if roads to the settlements are not blocked by Arab snipers and ambushes..."

Nachaliel received an answer to their letter, of sorts. The army sent Nachaliel's Ravshatz a letter expressing displeasure regarding the publicity the letter has achieved. The army's letter ended off by stating, "If you really care about security and wish to protect your yishuv, you will see to it that such things do not appear in the press in the future."

June 10, 2002: IDF Chief of Staff and Yesha Council: Not So Organized to Deal With It...

Arutz-7 News Service, June 10, 2002

DANGER IN YESHA

“The Jewish communities in Yesha (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) now face a new and dangerous threat, one that must be dealt with forthrightly and in a fundamental manner.” So said Yesha Council Secretary-General Adi Mintz to IDF Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz yesterday, in light of the recent fatal attacks against Yesha towns. His remarks recalled a paper published last August by the Ariel Center for Policy Research entitled, “Report on the Acquiescence of the Israeli Government to Palestinian Authority First Strike Preparations in Yesha.” Written by Mordechai Sones and first issued in March 1999, the paper notes, “Indicators of [first-strike capabilities by the PA] include 122 confirmed or suspected armored vehicles in PA hands, rehearsals for night attacks near yishuvim [Jewish communities], and gathering of specialized intelligence by Arab laborers on the yishuvim.”

Noting that the present IDF deployment in Yesha is notably lacking in qualitative and quantitative manpower, as well as many more strategic components such as patrols, fences, towers, and the like, Mintz told Arutz-7 this morning, “We have to realize that the threat we face today is different, and requires a different approach.”

CONCLUSION

Had the Arabs not been planning an actual attack on the yishuvim, as they admitted they were, it is inconceivable that they would have wasted so much money and ammunition to train an entire population in military skills – an effort that continued unchecked for four years. This is logical even without the reports from both Israeli and Palestinian official sources stating “We have succeeded in training thousands for attack against settlements...”

But Sones’ public exposé efforts made the Israeli / Palestinian cooperation too embarrassing to continue and they were faced with a decision: Either cover the operation up more effectively, or call the attack off altogether. They initially tried the first option with a shabby attempt at a cover up that only drew laughter from Yesha residents who heard the volume, frequency, and patterns of the gunfire every day and every night. When they saw the weddings story wouldn’t be accepted and public pressure was intensifying, they were forced to stop the training and hence also the attack.

Since then, there have been more instances of such Arab training. But they can no longer be nearly as comfortable or open about conducting blatant Yesha-wide military training, thus tilting the strategic equation in our favor, however minutely, thus delaying or preventing altogether a mass simultaneous overrunning of the yishuvim. As the possibility of further evictions in Judea and Samaria draw nearer, more actions could be taken by the yishuvim to further tilt the odds in our favor to secure the future of Judea and Samaria indefinitely.