

Beat: News

Israeli airstrike in Gaza kills top militant from al-Qaeda-influenced group

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USPA News - A top militant from a shadowy hard-line Muslim group was killed Tuesday when Israeli forces carried out an airstrike in the northern Gaza Strip, Israeli and Hamas officials said. It happened as an Israeli settler in the West Bank was shot to death by a Palestinian.

The airstrike happened when an Israeli Air Force aircraft fired at a motorcycle northwest of Gaza City, killing the driver and wounding a passenger and a bystander. It marked the first deadly airstrike in the Gaza Strip since an Egyptian-brokered truce was reached with Palestinian militants in November 2012. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it targeted 24-year-old Hithem Ziad Ibrahim Masshal who was allegedly a top militant in the al-Qaeda-influenced group the "Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem." The group recently claimed responsibility for two rocket attacks in the southern Israeli city of Eilat, causing damage but no casualties. "He acted in different Jihad Salafi terror organizations and over the past few years has been a key terror figure, specializing in weapons and working with all of the terror organizations in the Gaza Strip," an IDF spokesperson said in a statement. "Masshal manufactured, improved and traded different types of ammunition. He specialized in rockets and explosive devices, which he sold to terror organizations." Tuesday's airstrike came hours after an Israeli settler in the West Bank was shot to death by a Palestinian. The incident happened at around 8:30 a.m. local time at Tapuah Junction near the community of Ariel when a Palestinian man stole a gun from the victim and used it to shoot him. The victim, identified as Evyatar Borovsky from the community of Yitzhar, was pronounced dead at the scene. The suspected murderer, described by the Israeli military as a Palestinian terrorist, was later found by Border Police forces and shot. He was taken to an Israeli hospital for treatment. "The activity of the force was professional and fast. The incident is currently being investigated. We will know how to learn the lessons and we will hope for a better reality," said Judea and Samaria Division Commander Brig. Gen. Tamir Yadaï. "This incident proves that even with the conditions that exist today, of relative quiet and security stability, under the surface there are many terrorists whom the IDF strikes day and night in order to defeat them."

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