

The Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis Terrorist Attack on the Israel-Egypt Border (2011)

Introduction

On August 18, 2011 a terrorist attack was carried out on the Israel-Egypt border in which several Israeli vehicles were attacked on Highway 12 and clashes broke out with IDF forces. Eight people were killed in the attack and 40 others were injured. Two years later, on July 17, 2014, the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis terrorist organization published a video titled, “Al-Furqan Battle”, in which it claimed responsibility for the attack, explained the ideological background behind the attack, and detailed the preparations for the attack as well as its modus operandi.¹

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (“Supporters of Jerusalem”) first burst into public awareness on July 24, 2012 when it claimed responsibility for a series of explosions that its members had carried out since 2011 against the Egyptian gas pipeline in the Sinai Peninsula, which supplied gas to Israeli and Jordanian territory.²



The video banner

Ideology

The video opened with a dedication to the residents of the Gaza Strip, prisoners in Israeli jails and the mujahideen. After displaying several images from Israeli attacks on Gaza during Operation “Protective Edge” (2014), the video presented a long explanation about the regimes of Arab states, referring to them as infidels and collaborators with the West and the Jews.

Information in the video was presented by a narrator, an unidentified spokesman for the

¹ <http://www.hanein.info/vb>

² <http://shamikh1.info/vb>

organization whose face was blurred, and a militant from the third cell that took part in the attack named Abu Mus'ab. The unidentified spokesman explained that the video's late publication stemmed from security considerations and that the decision to carry out an attack against Israel had been made even before the revolution in Egypt took place.

Preparations for the operation

Intelligence gathering: For information-gathering purposes, a group of militants was sent to scour the border between Israel and Egypt for several days in order to select a suitable target for the attack. During the intelligence gathering operation, the militants photographed targets and breaches in the border area, and monitored the movements of Israeli vehicles on the road as well as Egyptian army assembly areas.



A photograph of Israeli forces near the border during the intelligence-gathering operation

Training: Several suicide terrorists were trained to carry out the attack, with emphasis placed on physical fitness in light of the rugged and steep nature of the attack site.



A photograph of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis militants training

Division of militants into cells: Ten militants were recruited to take part in the attack and were

divided into three different cells.

Cell (1) – Four militants:

Three “inghimasi”³ armed with light and medium weapons and carrying explosive belts.

- Abu Ubayda Islam Ashraf Tulba Taha
- Abu Sulayman Abdullah Muhammad Mukhtar al-Arabi
- Abu Hurayra al-Tahir al-Tayyib

A fourth militant, armed with the above, who was positioned on a mountain in order to hold back an aerial attack.

- Abu al-Walid Usama Ali Muhammad Ali



Cell (1)

Cell (2) – Three militants:

The cell that was supposed to initiate the attack, according to the plan. The group was positioned on a high area 200 meters from the attack site and its members were armed with light and medium weapons.

- Abu Abdullah (cell commander)
- Abu Muhammad (survived the operation)
- Abu Yusuf Ibrahim Uwayda

³ The term “inghimasi” refers to a militant who rushes to the battlefield in order to carry out an attack in which his chances of survival are very low.



Cell (2)

Cell (3) – Three militants:

The cell that was supposed to provide coverage and was positioned 200 meters from Cell (2).

- Abu Ali Ahmad Nusayr
- Abu Jabir Hussein al-Tihi
- Abu Mus'ab (survived the operation)



Cell (3)

Modus Operandi

The militants arrived at the border site at sunrise on August 17, 2011. After waiting several hours, during which they were unable find a suitable target for the attack, the militants decided to sleep overnight in the field and wait until the next day. Upon receiving the order from the commander of cell (2), Abu Abdullah, the militants advanced to Highway 12, disguised in Egyptian military uniforms.



Advancement of the militants towards the border, disguised as Egyptian soldiers

Stages of the Operation:

1. Cell (2), under the command of Abu Abdullah, initiated a heavy barrage of fire at an Israeli bus and other vehicles that passed by.
2. Cell (1) advanced to the highway in order to block the passage of vehicles, using explosive belts.
3. Cell (2), under the command of Abu Abdullah, retreated from the scene under coverage by Cell (3). Cell (1) also retreated from a different direction.
4. Abu al-Walid, the fourth militants in Cell (1), launched an anti-aircraft missile at a helicopter and pushed it back from the scene of the attack. Abu-Alwalid remained on the mountain the next day and was killed in an exchange of gunfire with Egyptian army forces.

Results

Despite the announcement that eight people were killed in the terrorist attack, the unidentified spokesman who appeared in the video claimed that the Israeli media did not report the true number of losses. According to him, internal sources indicated that 40-50 people had been killed in the attack. In addition, the spokesman noted that among those killed were several members of “Yamam” (the counter-terrorism unit of the Israel police), including Pascal Avrahami, who was described as “a legendary Israeli sniper”.

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