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Iran is the culprit behind Tuesday's Gaza rocket barrage, Israel says

May 31, 2018 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Israel is pointing a finger at Iran for being behind the most serious escalation on its southern front in four years."

Less than a month after Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps fired 32 rockets toward Israel's northern Golan Heights, the Iranian-funded Islamic Jihad along with Hamas fired some 180 Iranian-made 120-mm. mortar shells and 107-mm. rockets toward communities in southern Israel.

It was the largest salvo fired from the Gaza Strip since the end of Operation Protective Edge in 2014. In response, Israel carried out the most extensive retaliation since 2014, striking 65 Hamas targets across the entire Gaza Strip, including a dual-purpose tunnel dug one kilometer into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and then 900 meters into Israeli territory.

According to IDF Spokesman Brig.-Gen. Ronen Manelis, the tunnel was meant not only to carry out attacks against Israel but also to smuggle weaponry into the blockaded coastal enclave.

Despite Israel's intelligence superiority and blockades imposed by the IDF and Egypt, Hamas and other terrorist groups in the Strip have restocked their supplies of weapons in the four years since the last round of fighting between Israel and Hamas. The mass-produced Iranian mortar shells used in Tuesday's salvos were also used by Islamic Jihad in an attack in January and in a barrage 12 mortar shells fired toward an army outpost in November..."

In nod to India, US military renames its Pacific Command

May 30, 2018 spacedaily.com reported: "The Pentagon is renaming its oldest and largest military command to reflect the growing importance of the Indian Ocean in US strategic thinking, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Wednesday. From now on, the storied US Pacific Command, or PACOM, which was formed after World War II, will be known as the Indo-Pacific Command."

The name change is largely symbolic for now, and won't immediately result in any shifts in the command's boundaries or assets across the vast area stretching from the western part of India to America's Pacific coastline.

"In recognition of the increasing connectivity between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, today we rename the US Pacific Command to US Indo-Pacific Command," Mattis said in Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

"Over many decades this command has repeatedly adapted to changing circumstance and today carries that legacy forward as America focuses west."

The name change is part of Washington's efforts to counter China's growing influence across the Asia-Pacific domain, even though critics say President Donald Trump has ceded considerable regional leadership."..."

Russia tells Iran to immediately remove militias from Syrian-Israel border

May 30, 2018 timesofisrael.com reported: "Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday said foreign militias should leave southwestern Syria as soon as possible, state media outlet TASS reported."

Lavrov echoed comments he made earlier in the week when he said that only Syrian troops should be stationed in rebel-held Daraa province, a region adjacent to the Israeli border that has emerged as a flashpoint in a wider standoff between the Jewish state and Iran.

Israel has warned that Iran is trying to establish a presence near the border, and last month accused the Islamic Republic of firing a salvo of rockets at Israel from there. On Wednesday evening, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman is scheduled to travel to Moscow for talks expected to focus on Iran and its forces in Syria.

On Monday, Lavrov told reporters that only Syrian troops should be near the country's southern border with Jordan and Israel, indicating that Russia is receptive to Jerusalem's demands that Iranian forces should be kept far from its borders.

"Of course, the withdrawal of all non-Syrian forces must be carried out on a mutual basis, this should be a two-way street," Lavrov said at a press conference in Moscow. "The result of this work which should continue and is continuing should be a situation when representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic's army stand at Syria's border with Israel."

On Monday, the Haaretz daily reported that Russia was considering trying to keep Iranian forces and their allies from Israel's northern border, fearing that repeated Israeli strikes may undermine Syrian President Bashar Assad's grip on the country..."

Gaza mortar barrage fired at Israel heaviest in years

May 29, 2018 BBC.com reported: BBC News reports: "Palestinian militants in Gaza have fired dozens of mortars at Israel in the heaviest such barrage in years. Some 28 shells were launched. Most were intercepted by Israel's missile defence shield. One landed in a kindergarten, slightly wounding a worker."

Palestinian media reported Israeli artillery fire on Gaza afterwards. There are no other reports of injuries. The latest flare-up follows weeks of Israel-Gaza violence which has seen more than 100 Palestinians killed. They were shot dead by Israeli snipers amid protests which saw thousands of Palestinians mass on the Gaza-Israel border in support of their refugee population.

Israel said its snipers had opened fire on attackers or people attempting to infiltrate under cover of protests, but UN and human right officials have accused Israel of using disproportionate force.



Israeli fighter jets struck seven sites across the Gaza Strip, hitting what the Israeli military said were "six military compounds, munition storage warehouses, naval targets, and terror headquarters".

Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman said: "Hamas and Islamic Jihad have already paid a heavy price and the bill has just been presented to them."..."

Trump, Abe say 'imperative' to dismantle N. Korean weapons

May 28, 2018 spacedaily.com reported: "President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed Monday that it is "imperative" to completely dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program, the White House said.

The US and Japanese leaders will meet ahead of a much anticipated summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un back on schedule for June 12 in Singapore just days after Trump announced he was canceling it.

The American president said the summit could go ahead as planned following a more appeasing statement from Pyongyang and productive talks with North Korean officials.

Japan, which has by far the hardest line compared to neighbors China and South Korea, has been left uneasy by the pace of events, and by what it sees as an unwarranted softening toward an untrustworthy Pyongyang. Abe and Trump spoke by telephone a day after American and North Korean officials met at a border truce village to prepare for the summit."..."

Beijing protests US warship operation in South China Sea

May 28, 2018 spacedaily.com reported: "China has voiced "strong dissatisfaction" after two US warships sailed by an island claimed by Beijing in the disputed South China Sea, adding to simmering tensions in the strategic waterway. The foreign ministry issued a statement expressing "resolute opposition" to the US sail-by of the territory in the disputed Paracel Island chain on Sunday.



The US military conducts what it calls "freedom of navigation" voyages in the South China Sea to contest Beijing's assertion of territorial rights in the area, although the US has no claims of its own in the disputed region.

The US Navy's Higgins and Antietam warships, a destroyer and cruiser respectively, entered China's territorial waters without permission and were met by the Chinese Navy, which "conducted verification and identification of US ships according to law and warned them to leave," the ministry said.

State-run news agency Xinhua said the two vessels were "expelled" from the waters. The operation was conducted just over a week after Beijing flew nuclear-capable bombers to a disputed island in a bold powerplay to show its military might and boost its territorial claims in the area."..."

China to host Iranian president amid nuclear deal doubt

May 28, 2018 The Jerusalem Post reported: "China will host Iranian President Hassan Rouhani next month at a regional summit aimed at avoiding disruption of joint projects, its foreign ministry said on Monday, as major powers scramble to save Iran's nuclear deal after the United States pulled out. Rouhani will pay a working visit to China and attend the summit of the China and Russia-led security bloc the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the ministry said.

It did not give exact dates for his visit, but the summit is scheduled to be held on the second weekend of June in the northern Chinese city of Qingdao. Iran is currently an observer member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, though it has long sought full membership.

'Our hope is that China and Iran will have close consultation on the basis of observing the deal and push forward development of bilateral cooperation,' Chinese deputy foreign minister Zhang Hanhui said at a briefing.

'We should together look into how to avoid major disruption of joint projects between the two sides,' he added.

Russia has previously argued that with Western sanctions against Tehran lifted, it could finally become a member of the bloc which also includes four ex-Soviet Central Asian republics, Pakistan and India..."

Hamas demonstration on Temple Mount

May 27, 2028 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "A pro-Hamas demonstration was held on the Temple Mount this past Friday. Thousands of Arabs participated in the demonstration, which featured the flying of Hamas flags. Demonstrators chanted: 'With strength and blood we will redeem you, al Aqsa' and pro-Hamas slogans.

Arutz Sheva spoke to Or Zemach, the chairman of the Lach Yerushalayim movement, about the demonstration in support of the Hamas terrorist organization which took place on the Temple Mount.

'This is the second Friday of Ramadan and prayers were attended by close to two hundred thousand Muslim worshipers,' Zemach said. 'Most of them came from outside Jerusalem through the Qalandiya Crossing and the Rachel crossing, and the Jerusalemites felt it well in the traffic jams and the closing of the roads on the way to the Temple Mount.'

'At the end of the prayers, a very unusual event took place in front of our eyes, since we are accustomed to large crowds on the Temple Mount and Hamas has not been seen there for some time. The last such event was about one and a half to two years ago.

We saw large flags with the Hamas logo and calls for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades to take revenge on Israel for the deaths of the terrorists in Gaza,' he added..."