

ISRAEL-TUNISIA-PLO  
ISRAELI AIR STRIKE AT HAMAM ASH-SHAAT, NEAR TUNIS\*

On 1 October 1985 the Israel Air Force (IAF) attacked the headquarters of the PLO and facilities belonging to Force 17 at Hamam ash-Shaat, some 12 miles southeast of the Tunisian capital, Tunis, and about 1,300 miles west of Israel. All of the Israeli aircraft returned safely to their home base, and the pilots reported highly accurate hits. A maximum effort was made to avoid civilian casualties. The Israeli air strike was carried out in response to a number of terrorist actions perpetrated recently against Israel under Arafat's orders.

Background

PLO headquarters was transferred to Tunisia following the expulsion of the terrorists from Lebanon in September 1982. It was re-inforced after the evacuation of PLO forces from Tripoli in December 1983. The headquarters was established under the auspices of the Tunisian authorities and with their encouragement, and the area is now, in effect, an extra-territorial enclave under the total control of the PLO.

It is a known fact that the PLO, headed by Arafat, has been behind a substantial part of the terrorist actions committed or planned against Israelis and Israeli population centres. Among these, we may mention the following:

- the attempted strike at the Tel Aviv Kirya from the sea (April 1985);
- the planting of a car-bomb in downtown Jerusalem (August 1985);
- the murder of the three Israelis in Larnaca, Cyprus (September 1985);
- the planting of explosive devices at bus-stops and other public places throughout Israel.

List of Targets

Force 17, whose facilities were among the IAF's targets, is responsible for the planning and perpetration of many terrorist strikes in Israel, as well as for the murder of the three Israelis in Larnaca.

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\*[This document based on a statement by the spokesman for the Israeli Defence Force, was provided by the Israeli Embassy, Canberra.]

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Among the prominent offices, at Hamam ash-Shaat, that are engaged in the planning and execution of terrorist actions and of auxiliary services in this context are the following:

1. Arafat's Headquarters - composed of several central buildings housing the offices of Yasser Arafat and his senior aides, the headquarters archives, the administration, offices of the security forces and a conference room.
2. Force 17 Offices - presided over by Abu Taieb.
3. Office of the Head of the Operations Department, Force 17  
(Abu al-Moatassem) - responsible for the armed activities of the organization and its infrastructure in Lebanon, as well as for the planning and execution of terrorist activities.
4. Communications and Operations Centre - of the Arafat wing of Fatah.
5. Military Administration Office - of Fatah, headed by Haj Mutalek. The building also houses the Central Archives of the PLO.

The IDF Spokesman emphasized that Israel will strike at the PLO terrorists wherever and whenever appropriate. Immunity will not be granted even to the most distant facilities.