Israeli intelligence analysts are warning that unless smuggling is brought under control in the Gaza Strip, Hamas may have enough weaponry to start a confrontation with Israel by the summer of 2007. From the time Hamas was elected into the Palestinian Authority nearly nine months ago, the terrorist organization has amassed over 1300 tonnes of weapons into the Strip, including short and long range rockets, anti-tank explosives and thousands of rounds of ammunition. Earlier in the year, Hamas launched its own Palestinian Authority "security" force, against the wishes of President Abbas, which has boasts a membership of around 7,500 guerrilla fighters - a small army .

Quote: *"Intelligence sources estimated the army would reach operational capacity, and be capable of confronting the IDF as soon as the coming summer, if the flow of arms, military experts, and money into the Gaza Strip was not stopped. The army did not only have defensive capabilities against the IDF, but offensive capabilities that would allow it to launch long-range missiles towards settlements within the Green Line, and to infiltrate Israel through hidden tunnels.*

Last Sunday the Hamas terror army was deployed to deal with Fatah protesters demonstrating over wages. The fighting that ensued resulted in the deaths of around eight men, including two teenagers. President Abbas has called on the US to send Fatah more weapons in order to gain the upper hand on Hamas. In May of this year President Bush sent such a shipment of weapons to the Gaza Strip, with the approval of the Israeli government, to help equip Abbas' personal "security force" and protect him from assassination attempts. But according to a senior official in Fatah, these weapons ended up being used in terrorist attacks against Israelis.

Quote: *"Abu Yousuf told WND the US and Israel facilitated the May transfer of weapons to his Force 17 unit "for its own political purposes. We are not concerned with the reasons. The weapons will not be used against our brothers, only (against) Israelis." Sources close to the Al Aqsa Brigades told WND the American assault rifles were used in three separate anti-Israel shooting attacks in June. One attack killed a 35-year-old Israeli Arab on a major West Bank highway on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Israeli security officials say the shooters likely mistook the victim for a Jew. The second attack, which occurred June 13 on the same highway, lightly wounded an Israeli. In the third attack, the Al Aqsa Brigades on June 19 on a West Bank highway ambushed a bus carrying Israeli school girls. The bus was armored. The school girls escaped unharmed.*

Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh warned Abbas today that unless an agreement is reached over the Palestinian unity government soon, they would pursue other " options "...

Quote: *""We remind the president that we have open options to deal with the ongoing crisis, but we prefer the national option, which is in harmony with our national unity," Hamas said. The group also accused Abbas of "dictating" new conditions that have sabotaged efforts to reach a deal.*

Source YNet News , YNet News , Jerusalem Post