

TERRORIST TEL AVIV ATTACK DETAILS

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- A Terrorist assault on the Tel Aviv beachfront left 20 dead, including seven of the eight terrorists, and at least 23 wounded.

Most of the fatalities occurred before dawn when Israeli troops stormed the small Savoy Hotel adjacent to the beach which the terrorists had seized shortly after midnight, taking hostages. Apart from the seven terrorists, three

Israeli soldiers were known to be dead. The other victims included Israeli civilians and foreign tourists.

Credit for the attack was claimed in Beirut by El Fatah, the largest terrorist group in the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

Following a three-hour Cabinet meeting in the wake of the murderous attack, the government declared that Israel will not be deterred or diverted from its dual purpose of "defending its citizens and making political effort to progress toward peace." The Cabinet saw the act as a deliberate terrorist attempt to sabotage the next round of peace negotiations only days before Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger was due to arrive in Israel. "The criminal act of these Fatah men in Tel Aviv underlines again the murderous aims and methods of the terror organizations and increases the vital need to continue the struggle against the terrorist organization wherever our hand can reach them," the Cabinet statement said.

The attack by the eight terrorists, who landed on the darkened beach in Tel Aviv from two rubber motorized rowboats, began after they

crept up 50 yards of beach onto the Esplanade, a waterfront promenade lined with shops, nightclubs, hotels and restaurants, and fired indiscriminately with automatic weapons and hurled hand grenades. Most of the wounded are believed to have been hit then, as pedestrians scattered for cover and motorists abandoned cars. Police engaged in a gunfight with the terrorists.

The terrorists continued firing from the top floor of the four-story hotel as hundreds of crack army troops surrounded the street and cordoned off the neighborhood. The terrorists demanded the release of 10 jailed Arabs and Greek Catholic Archbishop Hillarion Capucci, serving a 12-year prison term for smuggling arms to terrorists in Israel. Israeli officials ignored the demand and shortly before dawn a commando unit stormed the hotel. In the ensuing fierce battle, six terrorists and three soldiers were killed. Defense Minister Shimon Peres who was on the scene announced that all of the terrorists had been killed. Hours later shots were fired from the hotel and Israeli troops found two more terrorists, killing one and capturing the other.

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