

Israel Says Gazan Suspect Studied Missiles in Ukraine

April 05, 2011

The  **Moscow Times**

BEERSHEBA, Israel — A Palestinian engineer captured in Ukraine was indicted by an Israeli court Monday on charges that he was a senior Hamas operative who developed sophisticated rockets for the Islamic militant group.

Israeli officials have said they believe that Dirar Abu Sisi worked for Hamas, but the indictment provided the first details of the role the 42-year-old engineer is accused of playing before he disappeared from a train in Ukraine in February. He resurfaced days later in an Israeli prison, and his family claims he was captured by the Mossad spy agency.

The family says Abu Sisi has no connections to Hamas and that he was in Ukraine, his wife's homeland, to apply for residency. The indictment said he had received training about Grad-style Katyusha rockets at a military engineering academy in Kharkov.

Over the years, Hamas has vastly improved its arsenal of Qassam rockets, transforming them from primitive weapons with extremely limited ranges into more powerful projectiles that can strike deep inside Israel.

"Abu Sisi's ongoing and significant activities in Hamas' service over the past decade, with an emphasis on strengthening and improving the capabilities of Qassam rockets, allowed Hamas to create a growing threat to the Israeli home front, resulting in the death and wounding of many Israeli civilians," a summary of the indictment released by Israel's Shin Bet security agency said.

After the hearing, Abu Sisi's lawyer, Smadar Ben-Natan, said he denied all charges.

In Ukraine, his wife, Veronika, said Abu Sisi was a victim of slander. "There isn't a grain of truth in that," she said. "My husband has never been involved in those horrors."

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