**Soccer ball rigged with explosives found attached to balloons near Gaza**

Times of Israel

January 24, 2020

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/soccer-ball-rigged-with-explosives-found-attached-to-balloons-near-gaza/>

Palestinian in the Gaza Strip apparently used balloons to float a soccer ball attached to an explosive device into Israel, as part of an uptick in arson balloon attacks in recent days.

Photos showed the bright orange ball, which was discovered in an open area of the Sha’ar Hanegev Regional Council on Thursday, with a device taped to it.

Soldiers from the IDF’s Engineering Corps were called to the scene and defused the device, according to the Ynet news site.

No was injured by the explosives-laden ball, which appeared to be another attempt to target children. Many of the attacks have been launched on brightly colored balloons and local children have been warned not to approach them.

On Friday another suspicious object apparently flown from Gaza with balloons was found in the Sha’ar Hanegev Regional Council

Police officers were dispatched to a field where the device landed.

There were no reports of injuries.

Terror groups in the Strip have continued to launch incendiary devices attached to balloons into Israel in recent days, undeterred by Israel’s threats to respond forcefully to Palestinian attempts to disrupt a major event in Jerusalem, the World Holocaust Forum, which was attended by many world leaders.

On Thursday evening, a rocket warning siren sounded in a community near the Gaza border. The army said it was triggered by an explosion inside Gaza, and not a rocket launch.

There was no immediate word on what caused the explosion in the northern part of Gaza, near the area of the border closest to the city of Sderot.

Israel’s missile defense system around Gaza tracks explosions believed to be caused by rocket launches.

The siren raised tensions in the south amid threats from Gaza’s Hamas rulers to escalate violence in order to pressure Israel during informal truce talks now underway via Egyptian mediation.

A number of suspicious balloons apparently launched from the Gaza Strip were found Thursday in southern Israel.

Police said that four balloons, three in Kiryat Gat and one in a community in the Shafir Regional Council, had suspicious objects attached to them. Sappers were dispatched to the areas.

“In one case the object exploded, with no injuries in the incident,” police said.

Hours earlier, a spokesperson for the Shaar Hanegev Regional Council said a suspicious bunch of balloons was found there. “Military forces immediately came to the scene and handled the situation successfully,” the spokesperson said.

The balloon launches came a day after Israeli television reported that Egypt is involved in “intense efforts” to get Hamas to end the arson balloon attacks on Israel from Gaza amid fears of a return to violence.

There was no official confirmation of the report from Egypt or Hamas.

A senior Hamas official said Tuesday that the recent spate of balloons was a signal to Israel to accelerate unofficial “understandings” meant to ease the blockade on the territory ruled by the terror group.

Speaking to journalists, Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya said the balloons had been launched by disgruntled individuals, not Hamas. But he said his group was “satisfied” with the launches and is ready to send more “if the occupation doesn’t pick up the message.”

The UN’s Mideast envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, called the renewed balloon launches “concerning and regrettable” in a briefing to the Security Council on Tuesday. “These actions are a risk to the civilian population,” he said.