

# An arms cache, and the Palestinian state of terror

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Jamel al-Jamal was the Palestinian “ambassador” to the Czech Republic, until he was killed by an explosion in his official residence in Prague on Jan. 2. The stories concocted to explain his death followed quickly: Palestinian officials blamed a safe that had been locked for 20 years in the old PLO offices, and then moved to a new location and opened. Riad Malki, known as the Palestinian foreign minister, was quoted as saying that the ambassador “decided to open it. After he opened it, apparently something happened inside [the safe] and went off”.



An old exploding safe would be, in itself, a strange item, given the history of Palestinian terror, including (or particularly) in Europe. In addition, the hastily invented cover-up quickly unravelled, and the PLO’s embassy spokesperson told Czech radio that the safe was “used on a daily basis at the embassy and it was opened and closed almost every day.” As the comedic bungling continued, Palestinian officials invented new fictions, telling journalists the weapons were recently retrieved from an old sack, untouched for decades, and that the mission’s staff had informed the Czech authorities. But according to Prague Police Chief Martin Vondrasek, the deadly terror arsenal has “not gone through a registration process in the Czech Republic.”

Czech officials, to their credit, began a real investigation, and found that al-Jamal (a member of Arafat’s Fatah wing of the PLO since 1975) had enough weapons stored in his residence to arm a terror group of at least 10 people. One report referred to 70 weapons, including submachine guns. And if these weapons were stored in one PLO location, it’s likely that similar caches are stored throughout Europe. (One has to wonder whether other governments would have had the backbone of the Czechs – the past 50 years provide many examples of the European practice of avoiding uncomfortable confrontation with Palestinian and other terrorists.)

This deadly explosion (a “work accident”) serves as a critical reminder showing that although almost 10 years have passed since the death of Yasser Arafat, who shaped the PLO as a terror organization, not much has changed. The Prague arsenal is today’s equivalent of the Karine-A – the ship carrying 50 tons of weapons, including short-range Katyusha rockets, anti-tank missiles, and high explosives – that Arafat had organized in

2002. Had he succeeded and had the Karine-A not been detected, boarded and seized by the Israeli navy, thousands of Israelis would have been killed.

Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas, looks, dresses and talks differently, and the façade of diplomacy has been nurtured, but the role of terror remains under the surface. The PLO of 2014 also benefits from additional pseudo-diplomatic immunity provided by the UN General Assembly's vote to recognize a Palestinian state, offering the opportunity to expand the network of PLO operatives and terrorists in European and other cities. Whether the PLO uses the weapons and explosives smuggled overseas in its own attacks, or provides them to other groups, the results are the same.

Most Israelis don't need exploding safes, mysterious deaths, and weapons arsenals to remind them of the unchanging violence at the core of the PLO's agenda – they see the ongoing terror attacks and incitement continuously. Recently, Palestinians based in Bethlehem used pressure-cooker bombs like the ones used by the Boston Marathon terrorists to blow up a bus in the city of Bat Yam. Thankfully, the bombs were discovered in time, and no one was hurt. As a result, Israelis are understandably less than enthusiastic about a Palestinian terror-state a short distance from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, ready to launch rockets and infiltrate murderers. No foreign police force in the strategic Jordan Valley or elsewhere is going to protect Israeli lives.

For the U.S. government officials such as Secretary of State John Kerry, European enthusiasts, and others working intensively to create just such a Palestinian state, the Prague explosion and arsenal is a reminder of the differences between well-intentioned theories and practical realities. Negotiations, treaty drafts, peace conferences, maps and borders, and the rest remain irrelevant as long as terror continues. Peace, in any meaningful sense, requires an end to violence. And our Palestinian partners, whether in Europe or next door, are not there yet.