**Gazan balloons bearing bombs barrage border area, no injuries**

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At least nine balloons suspected of carrying explosives and incendiary devices from the Gaza Strip were found Monday in Israeli communities near the restive frontier.

The area has seen a marked increase in violence over the last several days, with near daily rocket fire and launches of suspected balloon borne bombs, drawing retaliatory airstrikes and puntive measures.

Local officials said three balloons were found in the Eshkol Regional Council, one of which apparently exploded without causing injuries or damage. The other two were removed by security forces.

Trains in the area of Netivot were briefly interrupted due to concerns about more explosives attached to balloons, the Ynet website reported.

Another balloon with a suspicious package attached was found in the Merhavim Regional Council. Police sappers were called to deal with the device.

More balloons were found around the town of Sderot and some were reportedly spotted as far from the border as Kiryat Gat, some 10 kilometers from Gaza.

Route 6, a major north-south toll highway was briefly closed where it passes by Kiryat Gat as security forces dealt with the incidents, Hebrew media reported.

One balloon-borne explosive exploded near a house in Kfar Aza without causing injuries. Another balloon turned up in Sha’ar Hanegev Regional Council

Explosive devices and incendiary devices tied to balloons have increasingly been floating over the border from Gaza in recent weeks.

Tensions between Israel and Gaza have been steadily rising over the past two weeks, after several months of relative calm. Fears have mounted in recent days of an escalation of violence in Gaza and the West Bank following the release of the US peace plan that is seen as heavily favoring Israel.

On Sunday, the Defense Ministry announced it was freezing cement imports and cutting commercial entry permits from Gaza in response to the recent near daily attacks from the Strip.

Hamas said Israel’s “aggression” would not deter the terror organization from carrying out further attacks.

Late last month a senior Hamas official said the recent string of balloons was a signal to Israel to accelerate unofficial “understandings” meant to ease the blockade on the territory ruled by the terror group.

Hamas is a terror group committed to Israel’s destruction, and it has ruled Gaza since taking over the territory from the Palestinian Authority in a bloody coup in 2007. It has since fired tens of thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians and fought three wars with Israel.