

The Israel Project

Exclusive Briefing with Mickey Rosenfeld

**Welcome and Moderator:
Lauren Appelbaum,
Media and Special Projects Coordinator,
The Israel Project**

**Speaker:
Mickey Rosenfeld,
Foreign Press Spokesman,
Israel Police**

Washington, D.C.

**11:00 a.m.
Friday, July 8, 2011**

*Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

LAUREN APPELBAUM: Hello and welcome. My name is Lauren Appelbaum and I am the director of U.S. communications for The Israel Project. On behalf of our entire team, I am very pleased you could join us today to hear from Mickey Rosenfeld, Israel's superintendent police foreign press spokesman. Today's conversation is on the record.

Pro-Palestinian activists have publicized plans to fly into Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport today. It was the stated goal of these efforts to provoke confrontation by openly declaring intentions to travel to Palestinian territories.

Now, The Israel Project is an international, non-profit organization that provides journalists and leaders accurate information about the Middle East. The Israel Project is not related to any government or government agency.

Today we are pleased to present Superintendent Rosenfeld to offer a short briefing on the current situation. Superintendent Rosenfeld is the foreign press spokesman for the Israel Police. In 2005, he was appointed as the police spokesman, with the rank of Inspector, after having served for eight years as a combat officer in the Yamam counterterrorism unit. He was promoted to the rank of chief inspector in 2008, and received the rank of superintendent in 2011.

Superintendent Rosenfeld?

MICKEY ROSENFELD: Hi, good afternoon to you and all your listeners from wherever you are listening in from. Thank you very much for being on the line with me. I'd like to give a short and precise briefing of what took place throughout the last 24 hours in Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport.

First of all, police preparations were implemented after assessments were made over the last 48 hours, taking into consideration that it could be a large number of activists, in between 500 to 800, that would try and cause disruptions and disturbances inside the airport. Therefore, we had over 500 police officers, different units that are capable of dealing with these types of incidents, that were on standby and patrolled the airport. Throughout the day on – today, we had more than 60,000 people flying in and out – both leaving and entering the international airport. And what I can confirm is that there were no disruptions whatsoever in terms of flights and all together things have been going according to schedule.

I'd to mention a few points that are relevant and interesting in terms of security. We dealt with two flights that came in that had to be diverted from one of the main areas – (audio break) – separate area. And this was done in order so that we could make sure that those potential individuals who could have caused sporadic incidences inside the airport itself would be taken to a different area and they would go through security checks just like in any other international airport in a safe zone and a safe area.

This was done by our police officers as well as undercover units maneuvering around the airport very quickly, within 20 minutes, understanding that we have to make sure to prevent any situation from developing. And this was carried out very quickly and very swiftly. And on that

flight itself, specifically, we had a potential for activists that had to be sent back overseas from where they initially came from.

All together in terms of numbers and statistics, what we have at the moment and in terms of different nationalities, we have a total of 25 people who we're sending back to their countries because we know that they are activists who were planning from here, both at the airport as well as making their way into the different areas inside Israel, and you know – (inaudible) – that they are in fact nationals from Belgium, from – (inaudible) – states, Germany. And that was more or less the situation that was taking place where I am at the moment, at the international airport.

In general, there's been no danger to anyone, any members of the public, and the international airport has continued to function throughout the day. And this was our main aim based on the security assessments that were implemented throughout the day.

MS. APPELBAUM: Thank you. We have a bunch of questions that were submitted online. The first one is, did Israeli police coordinate with police in any other countries?

MR. ROSENFELD: In terms of coordination I can confirm that the Israeli police worked specifically on their own in terms of the international cooperation, in terms of the information. We worked specifically on what we know, specifically on the statistics we had, specifically on a name list that we have. OK. That's in terms of the Israeli police.

But what we did, is we transferred the list, which was relevant, to those different airlines. It was transferred overseas, for example, transferred to a French airline that was planning on bringing in 200 activists that we know of. And what took place overseas in Paris is that they weren't allowed to come onto the plane, because they knew that they would be flying back on the same plane and therefore financially the company's not interested.

And the therefore the incidents that took place, or could have potentially taken place here in the international airport, took place in Paris, which just goes to prove to us that our assessments and the information intelligence that we had was exact and correct because in fact throughout the day in Paris there were disturbances that broke out there instead of breaking out here in Israel.

Apart from that, I can also confirm there's full coordination with different – in between different security services here in Israel, and specifically with inside our offices – meaning the Israeli police, the prime minister's office, the Ministry of Foreign affairs – and that was the main emphasis in making sure that things would go according to plan, and in a quiet manner.

MS. APPELBAUM: We have two questions that are similar. One person asked, why it was so important to stop this before it came to pass? And another person asked, what would have been the danger to Israel if the activists had not been stopped before they arrived?

MR. ROSENFELD: (Inaudible) – it's very important that – there's one international airport here in Israel. And to disrupt the hundreds of people that would have been coming in by any incident – it would have been a large-scale incident, not a small-scale incident. It's not that

we could have closed down the international airport and transferred flights elsewhere. Here in Israel there's only one major airport, that's – (inaudible) – consent both the leave, to come and 60,000 people come in every day. So it's very important for us to make sure that there's no damage or any change in terms of plans and those flights.

Apart from that, if the activists, from what we know – if they would have come in and come into the airport itself and made their way in, they would have – there were a number of different scenarios that we dealt with. The possibilities that they would have seen an Israeli police officer and that's something that they could have immediately have taken advantage of – meaning that they would see an Israeli symbol and they would attack that symbol. Or there could have been another scenario, the possibility of problems taking place when those tourists or those activists would have arrived at the passport control and they would have disagreed to have their passport stamped.

And therefore, there could have been a serious incident there as well, on all different levels. So these are the dangers and the different scenarios that we had to deal with. But unfortunately what we understand is that those individuals are not peace activists, so they're looking here to make provocative incidents and they are looking to delegitimize Israel in any way whatsoever.

MS. APPELBAUM: Has Israel ever had to deal with something like this via air before?

MR. ROSENFELD: On one day, with such a large number activists coming into Ben Gurion airport in a specific manner? No, we haven't dealt with before. But we're – the Israeli police as well as the other security organizations and government offices, are fully capable of coordinating and dealing with any type of incident, both from a small scale as well as a large scale, both in the north and in the south.

But I can just confirm that – I would say that we are experienced enough. I mean, we deal with a lot of other issues on a day-to-day basis here in Israel. And for us this is a general operation that was analyzed, assessed and carried out within a short space of time.

MS. APPELBAUM: Another person asks, have you ever heard of any other country that has to deal with something like this, and did you learn any lessons from that?

MR. ROSENFELD: I can only confirm what takes place in terms of the Israeli police on a ground level. We're capable of dealing with these types of incidents. We use our experience; we use our officers that are capable from the different units. You know, dealing with these types of incidents, the possibility of disturbances – this is something that we deal with all day long in different areas around the country.

I mean, we also have a large number of gatherings that take place from all the different members of the communities – different communities – public that we deal with almost every day. And those types of gatherings pass without any major, major difficulties. And this is the policy that's implemented and we'll continue to do so in the near future.

MS. APPELBAUM: Well, I want to thank you very much for giving – taking some time out of this busy day to give everyone a briefing.

As always, if there's anything that The Israel Project can do to help anyone get the facts and sources you need to cover Israel, please do not hesitate to contact us. Be sure to visit us at the theisraelproject.org, follow us on Twitter @israelproject; and on Facebook, you can search for us: The Israel Project.

Thank you very much, Superintendent Rosenfeld.

MR. ROSENFELD: Thank you very much.

(END)