

Inside a Gaza bedroom, soldiers searching for tunnels find how low Hamas can go

OUTSIDE GAZA CITY – Moments after [The Times of Israel](#) arrived in an area deep in the northern Gaza Strip this week, troops of the Israel Defense Forces' Combat Engineering Corps found an opening to yet another tunnel belonging to the Hamas terror group – the 91st found in the area since Israel's ground operation began.

[In terms of its size](#), where it led and what it was intended for, the tunnel was much like the other 90 found in the area.

What set it apart, though, was its location. The shaft had been uncovered by soldiers of the Combat Engineering Corps' 614th Battalion as they carried out a second round of sweeps in a single-family home – with an outdoor swimming pool – in an upscale beachside neighborhood. Inside a bedroom scattered with brightly colored clothes, underneath one of three child-sized beds, soldiers had found a portal to where monsters were hiding.

“It's not ethical, the way that Hamas works,” said a reservist engineering officer – whose identity is censored from publication – while showing *The Times of Israel* and another journalist the tunnel.

“They use a children's room to hide a tunnel, below a child's bed... This is the reality,” he said.

Being careful not to fall down the shaft, *The Times of Israel* was given a view of the tunnel, which had two branches – one heading west toward the coast, and the other southeast toward

Gaza City, where Hamas's main tunnel network is believed to be.

The IDF has indicated it does not have plans to engage in tunnel warfare, as the passages are likely to be booby-trapped. Instead, it is demolishing the tunnels as they are being found.

The Combat Engineering Corps has been tasked with clearing routes – using armored D9 bulldozers – for ground forces to maneuver in the Gaza Strip, as well as locating and destroying Hamas infrastructure, including tunnels, rocket launchers, and other sites not struck by the Air Force.

The officer said the combat engineering forces have been double-checking each building for tunnels and weaponry, as the military progresses into Gaza City at a slow, methodical pace. “We know that first search, sometimes it's a very quick search, and the second one is like surgery. We are going corner to corner until we find everything,” the reservist engineering officer said.

The commander of the 614th Combat Engineering Battalion, told The Times of Israel that most of the tunnels and rockets they had found were deep within civilian sites.

“We encounter a lot of weapons, a lot of tunnels. Here you saw one under a children's room. We found them in playgrounds, we found them in kindergartens, and in mosques. Tomorrow morning someone will say ‘Why did they attack a mosque?’ This is why,”



An Israeli soldier in a damaged bedroom above a workshop used for weapon production | CREDIT: RONEN ZVULUN/REUTERS

The home where the tunnel had been found was still relatively upright but soon would be just rubble. Soldiers fished a Hamas flag and a camouflage jacket out of the tunnel entrance that had been found in the bedroom, and then planted a large amount of explosives inside.

While combat engineers rigged up the tunnel to be destroyed, The Times of Israel and other troops moved to a safe distance – about 200 meters away. . . With the tunnel destroyed, the combat engineering troops began to search for additional hidden entrances that may have been forced open by the blast.

“The goal is that when we leave here, there won’t be a single tunnel” left in Gaza, he said. He could not be fully sure, *(there wasn’t more hiding underground in each place they examine, once they advance onward?)* but troops are being as exhaustive as they can. “It is also a matter of pace. As long as the pace of progress is orderly and on our timeline, then it will be thorough,” he said. “Right now, we are working

thoroughly.”