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BOMBER DISGUISED AS ISRAELI SOLDIER KILLS 3 IN MARKET

By JAMES BENNET

NETANYA, Israel, Monday, May 20— A suicide bomber disguised as an Israeli soldier blew himself apart on Sunday in a cramped market aisle here, ending almost two weeks of relative quiet in Israel by killing 3 Israelis and wounding more than 50 with a shrapnel-packed bomb.

It was the first suicide bombing since Yasir Arafat ordered his Palestinian security forces on May 8 to prevent "all terror attacks against Israeli civilians," and it immediately overshadowed cautious political moves on both sides.

The bombing suggested that Palestinian militants were no more intimidated by Israel's threats than they were by Mr. Arafat's. A senior Israeli security official warned last week that Israel was likely to invade the Gaza Strip after the next terrorist attack in Israel. There were no signs of such action Sunday night.

The bombing, which spattered an aisle of cucumbers, cauliflower and green peppers with blood as the open-air market resounded with screams, followed a holiday weekend in which some Israelis returned to parks, shopping centers and cafes in the tentative hope that Israel's overwhelming West Bank offensive had forced a halt to suicide bombings.

But as her 6-year-old daughter, Linori, lay in a hospital bed here Sunday night beneath a "Sesame Street" mobile with her face and body lacerated by shrapnel, Simi Buskila said the military operation had not made her feel safer. "There's nothing that can guarantee that I can tell my children they can go outside and nothing bad will happen," she said.

The Palestinian leadership issued a statement declaring "full condemnation for the terror attack that targeted Israeli civilians." But Israeli officials called the bombing evidence that a "Palestinian terror campaign" continued unchecked.

Another suicide bomber blew himself up early today after he was stopped for a security check at a highway junction near the city of Afula in northern Israel, Israeli police said. Authorities were alerted to the man, a Palestinian reportedly from the Jenin area, by an Israeli bystander who said he looked suspicious. There were no other casualties.

In Washington, Vice President Dick Cheney said Mr. Arafat could not be expected to stop all such attacks. "On the other hand," he said on the NBC News program "Meet the Press," "there have in the past been bombings by elements of Palestinian organizations that come under his control, and there he clearly has the capacity to act."

It was not immediately certain who was behind Sunday's attack, but members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a secular group, claimed responsibility.

Israeli forces have continued moving freely through Palestinian-controlled territory in the West Bank, raiding towns and arresting and sometimes killing suspected militants in a rolling operation that Israel says is essential to its self-defense. The Bush administration says Israel should refrain from such incursions, but it has not emphasized that view.

The Israeli operation began after a suicide bomber from the militant group Hamas killed 29 other people at the start of Passover in the Park Hotel, about six blocks from Sunday's attack. Israel's coastal plain, including Netanya, just north of Tel Aviv, was under high alert this afternoon because security officials had warned of a planned attack about an hour before the bomber struck.

Superintendent Gil Kleiman, a police spokesman, said the bomber had worn an army uniform. The torn breast pocket of an olive uniform, soaked in blood, lay at the site of the bombing, amid scattered onions and cabbages and shrapnel nails. At least six of the wounded were said to be in serious condition.

Superintendent Kleiman noted that there had been a marked reduction in terrorist attacks and Israeli casualties since the end of March. "But it's not like we're going home," he added. "Our work is still cut out for us."

Around the corner from Sunday's attack, Shaul Navah, 50, said the Israeli operation had accomplished nothing significant. "There isn't a day or a place I feel safe anymore," said Mr. Navah, the owner of a fruit stand.

Calling Palestinians "an unforgiving people, full of vengeance," Mr. Navah said, "I'll feel safe and secure when we start behaving toward them the same way they behave toward us."

Mr. Navah's cousin, Amos Sofer, was just a few feet from the bomber. Mr. Sofer lay in the hospital Sunday night, his arms burned and cut. "I flew," he said, recalling the explosion. "I stood up and saw the terrorist. His head was cracked open, one leg was lying here, the other leg was lying over there. I just ran. I didn't even have time to say amen, and the ambulance picked me up."

Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser, said the attack underscored the need for the Palestinians to create "a unified security apparatus that can be accountable and can deal with issues of terrorism."

Speaking on the CNN program "Late Edition," Ms. Rice said, "People who do these sorts of things

clearly do not want the Palestinian people to achieve their dream of a Palestinian state, because Israel is not going to be able to live with a Palestinian state in an atmosphere of terror."

Mr. Arafat called last week for thorough reform of his Palestinian Authority, but he has yet to announce precise steps. He put off plans on Sunday to meet with the Palestinian election committee to advance the possibility of elections, citing a sudden visit by the Jordanian prime minister, Ali Abu Ragheb.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has demanded top-to-bottom changes in the Palestinian Authority before Israel will move forward with peace talks. The Bush administration has not adopted that condition but it has been pressing for change, particularly to the many overlapping security agencies.

President Bush has said he will send George J. Tenet, the director of central intelligence, to the Middle East to assist in such security reform. But Ms. Rice said there were still no plans for Mr. Tenet's trip. Senior Israeli officials have resisted the visit, arguing that no meaningful changes could be made while Mr. Arafat was in charge.

On the Israeli side, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres called over the weekend for urgent international diplomacy to consolidate the Palestinian security forces and promptly form a Palestinian state on the territory already controlled by the Palestinian Authority. The two sides would then begin talks on a final agreement.

Palestinian leaders have called this approach unacceptable, and it also conflicts with Mr. Sharon's stated views.

From the treeless shores of the Dead Sea to the verdant north, Israelis returned to their favorite escapes over the long weekend that began Thursday with the holiday of Shavuot. One tourism official told the daily newspaper Yediot Ahronot, in an article published on Sunday, "Finally, the people of Israel have succeeded in finding some tranquility."

At a mineral spa on the Dead Sea, the director, Ovadia Rappaport, 42, said "people are exploding out of their houses," believing that the Israeli operation had succeeded.

Until this weekend, he said, the local tourist trade was reeling. "What happened on Passover at Netanya killed us," he said. In 2000, there were 120,000 visitors to the spa, he said; in 2001, there were perhaps 20,000. But thousands visited over the weekend, he said.

On the northern coast, near the Lebanese border, beaches were also packed. Not a hotel room was available in the entire Galilee region, Yediot reported Sunday.

Sunday was the first day of the Israeli workweek, and Anatoli Chopenko, 33, came to the market here, as he did most days. As he went about buying potatoes and carrots, he was knocked down by the explosion. The right side of his body was burned and his clothes were shredded. "Only my

shoes remained intact," he said wryly, picking at a laceration on his right hand as he lay in a hospital.

Mr. Chopenko's cellphone was in his shirt pocket, over his heart, when the bomb exploded. A nail had been embedded up to its head in the back of the phone, which was still working.

Mr. Chopenko said he was not sure what he would do when he left the hospital. "Maybe a trip back to Ukraine," he mused. "It's quiet there."

Photos: An injured Israeli in Netanya after a suicide bomber blew himself up, shattering a returning sense of security. (Reuters)(pg. A1); Linori, a 6-year-old girl, lay in a hospital bed yesterday after her face and body were lacerated by shrapnel in the bombing at the open-air market.; A market in Netanya, Israel, where a suicide bomber blew himself up in the vegetable stands yesterday. Rescue teams of Orthodox Jews searched through the stands for body parts to bring to burial. (Photographs by Rina Castelnovo for The New York Times)(pg. A8) Map of Israel highlighting Netanya and the site of the bombing: Shoppers had flocked to the center of Netanya after a holiday. (pg. A8)