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November 24, 2001 Posted: 3:21 PM EST (2021 GMT)

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NABLUS, West Bank (CNN) -- The militant group Hamas has vowed to avenge the death of the leader of its military wing.

Mahmoud Abu Hunud died along with another Hamas member and a third Palestinian when the taxi they were traveling in was attacked by an Israeli helicopter near Nablus.

Israel has confirmed it carried out the helicopter attack which one Palestinian security source called an "assassination."



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Palestinians search the wreckage of the

van which had been carrying Hunud

At a Hamas rally in Gaza Saturday, protesters demanded revenge Political

leaders of the Palestinian group suggested actions by its military wing were inevitable -- but said Israel did not bear all the responsibility.

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"They assassinated Palestinians under the umbrella of the alliance with the United States of America," said Hamas spokesman Abdel Aziz Rantissi. "So the support, the supporters of Israeli terror is the United States of America."

At least four other Palestinians were also killed on Friday in a spate of Mideast

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A Palestinian security source said an Israeli Apache helicopter fired two missiles at the taxi carrying Hunud. One body was found outside the taxi; the other two were inside the car.

violence. Two other Palestinians were reported brain dead.

A spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon confirmed Saturday that two helicopters fired a number of missiles on the car.

The Palestinian source said Israeli tanks were firing around the car for 15 minutes after the

missile attack, preventing ambulances from

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CNN's Jerrold Kessel has more on the latest violence in the turbulent Mideast (November 24)

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The two men found in the car were identified by the Palestinian source as brothers. One of the men was identified as Maamun Hashaikeh. The name of the second man in the car was not immediately available.

The Israeli army declined comment.

approaching the scene.

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The Sharon spokesman said Hunud had been involved in terrorist activities dating back to 1997, including deadly attacks on a Tel Aviv discotheque in June and a Jerusalem pizzeria in August.

Hunud's name is on a list of Israel's most wanted men.

Asked about the timing of the helicopter attack just a few days before U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell sends two top envoys to the region, Sharon spokesman Ra'anan Gissin said there is no such thing as good and bad timing in fighting terrorism.

In nearby Beit Iba, two Palestinians were killed in an explosion. And hospital sources in Gaza said a teenager died in a shooting incident at Khan Younis in clashes with the Israeli army after funerals for five boys who were killed Thursday when they kicked an unexploded tank shell.

In another incident, the Palestine Red Crescent said the Israeli army opened fire on a car in southern Gaza, killing one Palestinian man and leaving two others -a man and a woman -- clinically dead. Another woman sustained moderate wounds, the Red Crescent said.

The Israeli army said soldiers fired warning shots into the air as the car drove toward and away from the Rafah border crossing several times. As the vehicle approached another time, they open fired.

The army said it was on high alert after intelligence revealed the threat of a car bomb at the border crossing. Palestinian security sources said the people were lost on their way to the crossing.

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