



Report of the State Comptroller of Israel |
December 2025

Systemic Issues

Preparedness for a Terrorist Incident on the Light Rail in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area



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Background

Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. (NTA) is the entity tasked with the establishment of all mass transit systems (MTS) within the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area. These systems encompass three light rail lines (light rail transit – LRT; light rail)¹ and three metro lines². Of the three light rail lines, the Red Line was inaugurated in August 2023, while the planning process for the other two lines – the Green and Purple Lines – is still ongoing. The Red Line connects Bat Yam with Petah Tikva. It extends over a distance of 24 kilometers, of which 12 kilometers are situated within an underground tunnel, and 45 trains operate along it. Each train comprises two connected electric cars measuring 70 meters in length, with a combined capacity of 450 passengers. The frequency of the trains varies according to peak hours, averaging once every six minutes. The trains employ automatic driving mechanisms in the underground sections and manual operation in the above-ground sections.

Public transportation systems worldwide are among the preferred attack targets of terrorist groups due to their accessibility, the difficulty posed in protecting them, and the large volume of people using them. The State of Israel has endured numerous attacks on buses, and a few attacks on the light rail, within Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area. In October 2024, a deadly attack was perpetrated in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area, when a terrorist squad opened fire on a light rail car at one of the Red Line stations in Yafo, subsequently targeting pedestrians. In this attack, seven individuals were murdered and sixteen injured.

Unlike Israel Railways, where passengers and their belongings undergo inspection at each station, access to the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area Light Rail, via both overhead and underground routes, is conducted in a manner akin to boarding a bus, and is subject to an overt and covert method of security and policing.

The organic security unit of the NTA and a special unit of the Israel Police are jointly responsible for the security of the Red Line during normal times and for providing immediate response in emergencies (in collaboration with teams from the "Tevel" company that operates the line). Routine security measures include the utilization of technological resources,

- 1 Light rail transit is generally intended for medium-capacity passenger transport and local traffic within a metropolis. From the Encyclopedia Britannica website on the Internet.
- 2 The metro is an MTS infrastructure project currently being built throughout the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area, which will facilitate future access to the Tel Aviv Metropolitan cities and the large employment centers in the country. It consists of three lines, 150 km long, and of 109 stations. From the NTA website – nta.co.il/metro/?utm_source.



alongside a continuous presence of security personnel at stations, as well as patrols by security guards and canine units.



Key Figures

24 km

The Red Line's track length – 12 km of which are underground, with the Red Line construction cost standing at NIS 18.8 billion

300,000 passengers per day

Passenger forecast according to NTA once the Red Line is fully operational

Approx. 800 terrorist attacks

claimed lives on public transportation in various countries around the world between 2010 and October 2019

45 trains

The Red Line includes 45 trains

5 years

have passed since the casualty scenario was determined by the National Emergency Management Authority. The Ministry of Transport disagreed with said scenario, but did not present alternative expert research on its behalf regarding this scenario

In several cases

there were fewer security guards than the standard

Challenges in evacuating casualties

Gaps were found in this area

0 portable radios are available to Magen David Adom teams

In their absence, it will be difficult for Magen David Adom (MDA) teams to communicate with each other in the event of a cell network collapse



Audit Actions

 From August 2024 to January 2025, the Office of the State Comptroller examined the preparations made for a terrorist event on the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area light rail transit. This audit was conducted at the Israel Police, the Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd., the Ministry of Defense, the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), the National Security Council (NSC), the Ministry of Transport, the National Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA), Magen David Adom (Israel's national Emergency Medical Service – MDA), the Privacy Protection Authority, and the Ministry of National Security. Additionally, site inspections were conducted along the route of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area light rail transit. Supplementary examinations were carried out at the Israel Security Agency (ISA). Preparedness for a terrorist event in the cyber domain are excluded from the purview of this report.

The Knesset State Audit Committee sub-committee decided not to bring this report in its entirety before the Knesset, but to publish only parts of it, for the protection of the state's security, in accordance with Section 17 of the State Comptroller's Law, 1958 [Consolidated Version].

Key Findings



 **The Process of Approving the Casualty Scenario in a Terrorist Incident on the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area Light Rail** – In accordance with the extreme scenario for a terrorist incident, numerous casualties are anticipated. Despite the serious threats posed to the light rail, there exists no normative resolution concerning the entity vested with the authority to determine or endorse the casualty scenario in the context of a terrorist incident on the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area LRT. In practice, the National Emergency Management Authority established the scenario based on operational research conducted by both the Police and NTA. NEMA maintains that the Ministry of Transport should approve the casualty scenario, and the National Security Council believes that the Ministry of Transport should lead the strategic work concerning security related to transportation infrastructure projects. The audit revealed that the Ministry of Transport did not concur with the casualty scenario determined by NEMA in September 2019 for the light rail transit, on the grounds that the number of estimated casualties was too high. As of the audit end date in January 2025, five years after the establishment of the casualty scenario by NEMA, the Ministry of Transport had not presented an alternative expert assessment to justify its stance, notwithstanding its role as the body



responsible for the State of Israel's transportation infrastructure and for funding its capacity-building. It is pertinent to mention that the Israel Police informed the Office of the State Comptroller that post-October 7, it had reassessed the threat and general reference scenarios for terrorism based on threats and national reference scenarios, and had concluded that no adjustments were warranted.

- 📌 Police Standard for Securing Mass Transit Infrastructure and Tunnel Infrastructure** – There is no legal obligation or provision mandating adherence to the technical and operational requirements set forth by the Police during the planning, initiation, and publication of tenders for transportation infrastructure projects. This is so notwithstanding that the Police serve as a legally designated guiding entity on security matters, and their approval is requisite for the opening of businesses whose operation necessitates a license. Furthermore, the Police has yet to finalize the procedures for codifying its technical and operational requirements pertaining to the underground railway environment as binding norms, despite having commenced this process in early 2023 (two years prior).
- 📌 Preparedness for a Non-Conventional Terrorist Incident on the Red Line** – Despite the assignment of a specific unit within the defense system that bears the overall responsibility for handling incidents of chemical terrorism, and notwithstanding the real threats posed pertaining to non-conventional terror attacks, some of which have materialized in various countries, there is currently no formalized process for consulting with this designated unit in relation to preparedness for a chemical terror incident during the planning and tendering phases of public projects intended for mass use, including underground environments with enclosed spaces, such as train stations. It should be noted that adherence to the unit's recommendations is not obligatory.
- 📌 Staffing Gaps Among Security Personnel and the Decline in their Competency Levels** – Even prior to the onset of the Swords of Iron War, and more acutely following its commencement, there has been a gradual reduction in the number of security guards employed by NTA, when in several instances, the number of security guards on duty fell below the standard, and in two cases, it was less than the minimum threshold mandated. Furthermore, refresher training for maintaining their competency, including hand-to-hand combat training not conducted during reserve service, has diminished. This degradation in the security level of Israel's mass transportation system is liable to get worse, due to the future operation of two additional Tel Aviv Metropolitan light rail lines and the metro train, leading to an increased disparity between security needs and available resources.
- 📌 Advanced Technologies in the Red Line Security Routine** – Given that public transportation systems catering to mass transit deal with a substantial volume of passengers, the Police and NTA brought to the audit team's attention the need to explore the implementation of additional advanced technologies. While a team to evaluate the integration of such technologies was established within the metro project framework, no



corresponding team has been formed with respect to the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area light rail project.

-  **Challenges in the Evacuation of Casualties** – Gaps were found in this domain.
-  **Gaps in the Means of Communication among Magen David Adom Teams in the Underground Environment** – Despite the identification of this deficiency in prior reports issued by the Office of the State Comptroller, some of which date back nearly a decade, the MDA communication system remains incompatible with the communication systems utilized by the Police and the Fire and Rescue Authority. Consequently, in the event of an incident, MDA teams will have difficulty coordinating with other emergency and rescue agencies. Additionally, MDA teams operating in underground environments are not equipped with portable radios (such devices are available solely within ambulances), relying instead on cellular phones for communication. In the case of a cellular network failure, these teams will have no way of communicating with each other through technological means, necessitating reliance on physical presence or third-party intermediaries who possess communication technology (such as police officers or fire department personnel).
-  **Lack of a National Underground Training Facility for Emergency and Rescue Forces** – The initial response to a multi-casualty incident involving the light rail will be contingent upon the collaboration of rescue forces with Red Line security personnel and operators, including the Police, the Fire and Rescue Authority, and MDA. Notwithstanding the substantial importance of a national facility for training rescue forces in an underground environment, which would facilitate a simulation of all subterranean infrastructures and serve all the rescue entities, as well as the Light Rail Transit, the Home Front Command, the National Counter-Terrorism Unit (YAMAM) and others, the establishment of the facility was not advanced by all the entities recognizing its necessity, which engaged in discussions regarding the issue in 2016 in the subcommittee: the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Finance, the Police, and the Fire and Rescue Authority. As a result, from the time the issue was raised in 2016 and until the audit end date in 2025, no such facility was established, nor its construction even commenced.



Cooperation between Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. (NTA) and the Police in Addressing Challenges to the Security Routine – The productive collaboration between NTA and the Police in their manner of addressing challenges to the security routine, including joint training initiatives, should be commended. These challenges have accompanied the LRT since the commencement of operations on the Red Line, and especially since the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War on October 7, 2023.



The Training and Exercise Facility where Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. (NTA) Trains Security Personnel – In the event of a terrorist incident on the Red Line and prior to the arrival of rescue forces to the area, the immediate response will be based upon the personnel available and stationed along the line. The audit team conducted a visit to the training and exercise facility operated by NTA, where Red Line security guards undergo training to maintain their competency, located in Moshav Tal Shazar. The team was favorably impressed by the training and exercise programs, as well as the advanced infrastructure that enable the provision of high-quality exercises and training. Among its features is a dedicated train car designed for practicing incident response within the light rail system. It should be emphasized that this facility is not an underground training facility nor is it a national resource intended to support all rescue services; it is a ground facility designated for the training of NTA security personnel only, who are expected to deliver an immediate response to an incident occurring on the Red Line.

Key Recommendations

- 💡 The Ministry of Transport, which holds responsibility for the transportation infrastructure within the State of Israel and funds its capacity-building, must convene the parties involved in formulating the scenario for which preparations are currently underway, examine the research that informed its formulation and seek clarifications where necessary.
- 💡 Should the Ministry of Transport find the research submitted to it inadequate for establishing the reference scenario, it should initiate research efforts by its own experts on the same topic. Upon completion of this process, the Ministry should determine a casualty scenario that it is prepared to endorse and fund. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Counterterrorism and Home Front Division of the National Security Council – whose functions include serving as a regulatory and coordinative entity among all the organizations vis-à-vis the improvement of responses to terrorist threats – assist in coordinating between the Ministry of Transport, the Police, and the National Emergency Management Authority, in order to advance the ratification of a casualty scenario for the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area Light Rail that is financially supported. The necessity of the Ministry of Transport's confirmation of the casualty scenario has gained particular significance following the October 7 attack and the subsequent intensification of security threats in the nation. It is also advised that the Police engage in regular and frequent reviews of the reference scenario, in light of the elevated security threats since October 7, and adapt its preparations accordingly. Additionally, NTA should update its preparedness in alignment with the revisions of the reference scenario established by the Police.
- 💡 To facilitate the institutionalization of the Police's technical and operational requirements document as a binding standard, it is recommended that the Police fully address the matter with the Ministry of Transport, which oversees transportation infrastructure in Israel, and



the Ministry of National Security, which oversees the Police. This should be done in order to embed these requirements as obligatory across all mass transportation projects, similar to the mandatory standard instituted for firefighting and rescue unit.



It is advisable for the defense establishment to regulate a process concerning consultations with the designated unit regarding preparations for a chemical terrorism incident as early as the planning stages and the preparation of contractor tenders for national infrastructure projects (exhibiting characteristics similar to those of the light rail system). The defense establishment should also strive for a comprehensive framework that delineates which bodies will have the requisite authority to enforce recommendations of the bodies concerning this matter.



The relevant stakeholders – the Police, the Ministry of National Security (which oversees the Police), and other pertinent ministries, predominantly the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Finance – should fully address the issue of inadequate security personnel, which poses a national challenge necessitating immediate action, and subsequently work to close the gap.



It is recommended that the Police and NTA, with the assistance of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of National Security, broaden the initiatives of the technology team established at the National Security Council, so that the work encompasses references to all mass transit projects, including the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area light rail. They should also examine measures for enhancing responses to large-scale passenger security, such as the regulation of additional advanced technologies, while maintaining an appropriate balance between privacy protection and the public interest in ensuring safety. Given that discussions on this topic are taking place in the context of the National Security Council's preparations for the metro project – anticipated to materialize only some ten years from now – it is advisable not to wait but to commence discussions at this juncture, involving the Privacy Protection Authority in the discussions concerning legal issues, thereby enabling the expedited arrangement of an additional advanced technological solution applicable to the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area light rail system.



The Police should tackle the challenges associated with the evacuation of casualties.

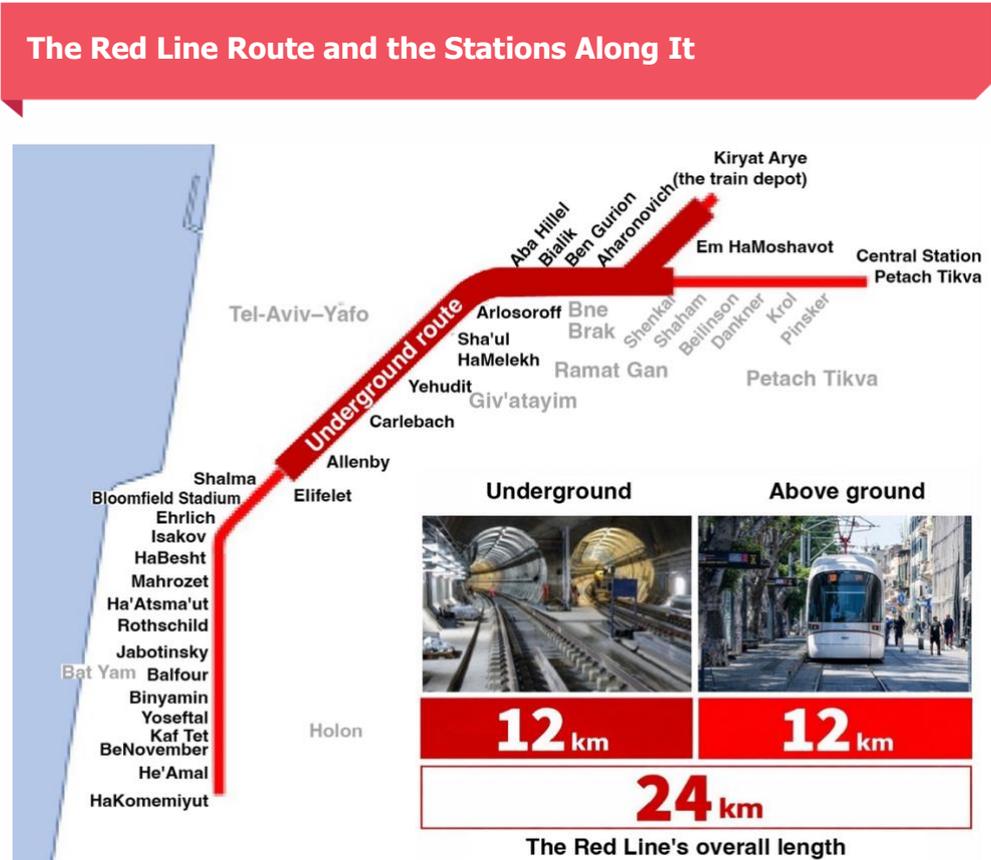


The Ministry of Health, in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance, should act promptly to equip Magen David Adom with a communications system that enables effective communication among MDA teams and other rescue entities, including the Police and the Fire and Rescue Authority. MDA must ensure that its personnel are equipped with portable radios, in accordance with its multiple casualty incident doctrine, to enable communication in the underground environment of the light rail.



It is recommended that the National Security Council, as the coordinator of the team designated with establishing a training facility for the metro project, ensure that the measures taken for conducting training are expanded to accommodate all transportation infrastructures within Israel's underground environment. This follows an identified need

dating back to 2016 and not yet addressed, to enable all emergency services in Israel to conduct simultaneous joint training exercises, underground, under field conditions approximating as far as possible those of an actual event, while ensuring resource efficiency. Additionally, it is recommended that the National Security Council expedite the characterization and establishment of this training facility for underground operations without awaiting the long-term metro project's development, as the current inability to train in such conditions may jeopardize the safety of users of the existing infrastructure. This process should be pursued in collaboration with essential stakeholders – the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Transport, the Police, and the Fire and Rescue Authority.



Source: The Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. (NTA) website.



Summary

The Red Line of the light rail system was designed to accommodate approximately 300,000 passengers daily and is recognized as one of Israel's mass transit systems with an anticipated significant increase in usage due to the forthcoming addition of two additional light rail lines and a metro system. The Red Line, which features both underground and elevated routes and incorporates an overt and covert method of security and policing, is a potential target for terrorist activities. The threat of terrorism within the State of Israel escalated notably following the unexpected attack on 7 October 2023, and was manifested during the attack at the light rail station in Yafo in October 2024, which resulted in the loss of seven lives. Therefore, it is very important that government ministries, along with emergency and rescue forces, prioritize optimal early preparation for the possibility of such incidents, to safeguard human life and mitigate damage to life and property.

The audit revealed that, in contrast to the technical and operational requirements of the Fire and Rescue Authority, which are anchored in a binding standard, there exists no legal obligation or directive mandating compliance with the technical and operational requirements of the Police during the planning, initiation, and publication of tenders for transportation infrastructure projects. Additionally, there is no established regulated process for consulting with the designated unit regarding preparations for a chemical terrorism event during the planning and publishing of tenders for large-scale public projects, such as a train station. Furthermore, the Ministry of Transport did not concur with the casualty scenario set forth by the National Emergency Management Authority in September 2019 concerning the light rail, as it deemed the projected number of casualties to be excessive, while failing to present alternative expert analyses regarding this scenario. The audit further identified a persistent shortage of security personnel for the Red Line. It was also found, among other things, that challenges exist in evacuating casualties; that MDA teams in this environment lack portable radios, with the potential to impede the timely formation of a casualty overview and subsequent evacuation efforts; that the radios used by MDA teams are not connected to the communication systems of other rescue units; and that a national training facility for training all rescue personnel in underground environments has yet to be established, despite the high importance of establishing a facility of this kind.

To promote the establishment of its technical and operational requirements document as a binding standard, it is advised that the Police fully address the matter with the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of National Security. It is recommended that the defense agencies regulate the obligation to consult with the designated unit vis-à-vis preparations for a chemical terrorism event during the planning stages of large-scale public projects, such as train stations. It is also advised that the defense agencies comprehensively regulate the entities endowed with the requisite authority for enforcing the bodies' recommendations on this issue. In the absence of a normative determination regarding the body with the authority to determine or approve casualty scenarios for terrorist events in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area



light rail, the Ministry of Transport should convene the entities responsible for formulating the relevant scenario, study the research relied upon in its formulation, and request clarifications as necessary. If warranted, the Ministry should initiate expert research and ultimately decide on a casualty scenario that it is prepared to fund. The Police, along with the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Transport, and the Ministry of Finance, should address in depth the shortage of security personnel, which presents a national challenge requiring immediate attention. Subsequently, they should take action to close this gap. Additionally, it is recommended that the Police and NTA, with the assistance of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of National Security, broaden the discussion of the team established within the National Security Council as part of the metro project on the topic of advanced technologies, to encompass all mass transit projects and expedite its efforts. The Police should deal with challenges associated with evacuating casualties. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, should urgently equip MDA with a communication system enabling MDA teams to communicate with other rescue forces operating underground, including the Israel Police and the Fire and Rescue Authority. It is recommended that the National Security Council, as coordinator of the team designated for establishing a training facility for the metro project, ensure that the response provided for executing training is tailored to all underground transportation infrastructures within the State of Israel. It should also work to expedite the characterization and establishment of this training facility without waiting for the development of the long-term metro project, and in partnership with the stakeholders necessary for advancing the project – the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of National Security, and the Ministry of Transport, as well as the Police and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Accelerating the construction of the training facility will facilitate its effective utilization in conjunction with the existing light rail line and the lines that are currently under short-term development, for the training and maintenance of competencies of the rescue forces, while enhancing their ability to operate together in real time and in an optimal manner.

The audit team deems it pertinent to document its observations regarding the productive collaboration between NTA and the Police in addressing the challenges associated with security operations that have arisen since the commencement of the Red Line light rail system, especially since the outbreak of the Swords of Iron War on October 7, 2023.

