

Hamas takes Fatah stronghold in Gaza

by UPI

GAZA - Palestinian faction Hamas claimed Thursday to have overtaken a Gaza City stronghold of rival faction Fatah.

Hamas made the claim after attacking the headquarters of the Fatah-aligned Preventive Security force, a group that has been a major target of Hamas since fighting between the groups resumed last week, the Financial Times reported Thursday.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the head of Fatah, and Hamas-aligned Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said during a phone meeting that they want the fighting to stop but there was no dip in violence.

Abbas is to make an announcement and it is speculated he might herald the withdrawal of Fatah ministers from the national unity government formed three months ago.

Hamas officials said Haniyeh, who is also serving as interior minister, is seeking full control of Palestinian security forces, a demand that was made part of the agreement to form the unity government in March.

Javier Solana, EU foreign policy chief, said Wednesday the union may consider joining a hypothetical peace force in Gaza while U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said "an international presence" is possible.

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