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From: OpsNewsTicker
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Subject: Israel moves to ease strains with Egypt (Reuters)

JERUSALEM, Aug 25 (Reuters) - Israel offered on Thursday to investigate jointly with Egypt the killing of five Egyptian security personnel during an Israeli operation against cross-border raiders a week ago, violence that has strained relations with Cairo's new rulers.

"Israel is ready to hold a joint investigation with the Egyptians into the difficult event," a statement issued by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office quoted his national security adviser, Yaakov Amidror, as saying.

Amidror said the terms of such a probe "would be set by the armies of both sides", going a step beyond Defence Minister Ehud Barak's earlier pledge to hold an investigation and share its findings with Egypt, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

While Israel moved to ease tensions with Egypt, it mounted further attacks against Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, where more than 20 rockets have been launched at southern Israel since Wednesday despite a truce announced on Monday.

Five Palestinians, including a local commander of the Islamic Jihad group in the Gaza Strip, have been killed in the latest bloodshed.

The surge of violence began on Aug. 18 when gunmen who Israel said had infiltrated from the Gaza Strip via Egypt's neighbouring Sinai desert killed eight Israelis on a desert border road.

Seven of the attackers were killed by Israeli forces and Egypt said five of its men died in the crossfire. The incident triggered the most serious diplomatic row with Egypt since a popular revolt overthrew Hosni Mubarak in February.

The violence between Israel and militants in the Gaza Strip threatens to unravel the shaky truce mediated by Egypt and the United Nations.

U.N. Middle East envoy Robert Serry, in a written statement, expressed his "deep concern" and called on all sides "to immediately take steps to prevent any further escalation".

Taher al-Nono, a Hamas spokesman, said any "understanding for calm must be mutual and we will not accept that Israel continues its killing of our people".

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