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aka al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalion

Description: Designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on March 27, 2002, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB) is composed of small cells of Fatah-affiliated activists that emerged at the outset of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000. AAMB strives to drive the Israeli military and West Bank settlers from the West Bank in order to establish a Palestinian state loyal to the Fatah.

Activities: AAMB employed primarily small-arms attacks against Israeli military personnel and settlers as the intifada spread in 2000, but by 2002 turned increasingly to attacks against Israeli civilians inside Israel. In January 2002, the group claimed responsibility for the first female suicide bombing in Israel. In 2010 and 2011, AAMB launched numerous rocket attacks on communities in Israel, including the city of Sederot and areas of the Negev desert. In November 2012, two men recruited by AAMB were arrested in connection with the stabbing of a student in Beersheba, Israel. That same year, AAMB claimed it had fired more than 500 rockets and missiles into Israel during Operation Pillar of Defense, the week-long Israeli Defense Force operation in Gaza.

In February 2015, AAMB declared an open war against Israel. In a TV broadcast in June 2015, AAMB asked Iran for funds to help the group in its fight against Israel. In the same broadcast, an AAMB fighter displayed a new two-mile tunnel crossing the border beneath Gaza and Israel, which the leader claimed would be used in the next rounds of battle. In October 2015, the group announced it had developed a new rocket, the K60, with a 40-mile firing range.

In addition to threatening and preparing for future attacks, AAMB continued attacking Israeli soldiers and civilians. In November 2015, the group claimed responsibility for a series of shootings against Israeli soldiers and civilians, including the October fatal shooting of husband and wife, Rabbi Eitam and Na'ama Henkin, in front of their four children.

Strength: Estimated at a few hundred members.

Location/Area of Operation: Most of AAMB's operational activity is in Gaza but it has also planned and conducted attacks inside Israel and the West Bank. AAMB also has members in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Funding and External Aid: Iran has exploited AAMB's lack of resources and formal leadership by providing funds and guidance, mostly through Hizballah facilitators.

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