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Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Palestinian Liberation Front - Abu Abbas Faction

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aka PLF; PLF-Abu Abbas; Palestine Liberation Front

Description: The Palestinian Liberation Front – Abu Abbas Faction (PLF) was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on October 8, 1997. In the late 1970s, the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) splintered from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), and then later split into pro-Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), pro-Syrian, and pro-Libyan factions. The pro-PLO faction was led by Muhammad Zaydan (a.k.a. Abu Abbas) and was based in Baghdad prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Activities: Abbas's group was responsible for the 1985 attack on the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro and the murder of U.S. citizen Leon Klinghoffer. The PLF was suspected of supporting terrorism against Israel by other Palestinian groups into the 1990s. In April 2004, Abu Abbas died of natural causes while in U.S. custody in Iraq. The PLF took part in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections but did not win a seat. In 2008, as part of a prisoner exchange between Israel and Hizballah, Samir Kantar, a PLF member – and purportedly the longest serving Arab prisoner in Israeli custody – was released from an Israeli prison.

After approximately 16 years without claiming responsibility for an attack, the PLF claimed responsibility for two attacks against Israeli targets on March 14, 2008. One attack was against an Israeli military bus in Huwarah, Israel, and the other involved a PLF brigade firing at an Israeli settler south of the Hebron Mountain, seriously wounding him. On March 28, 2008, shortly after the attacks, a PLF Central Committee member reaffirmed PLF's commitment to using "all possible means to restore" its previous glory and to adhering to its role in the Palestinian "struggle" and "resistance," through its military. There were no known PLF attacks in 2013.

Strength: Estimates have placed membership between 50 and 500.

Location/Area of Operation: PLF leadership and membership are based in Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza.

Funding and External Aid: Unknown

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