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Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade

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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 an unknown number of small cells of Fatah-affiliated activists that emerged at the outset of the al-Aqsa Intifada, in September 2000. AAMB's goal is 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 inside Israel. In 2010, AAMB launched numerous rocket attacks on communities in Israel, including the city of Sederot and areas of the Negev desert. Again in December 2011, AAMB launched rockets aimed at communities in the Negev. The attack caused no injuries or damage. In November 2012, two men recruited by AAMB were arrested in connection with stabbing a student in the Israeli city of Beersheba. Also in November 2012, AAMB claimed that they 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 2013, AAMB claimed responsibility for a rocket attack in southern Israel, which landed outside of the city of Ashkelon.

Strength: A few hundred members

Location/Area of Operation: Most of AAMB's operational activity is in Gaza but the group also planned and conducted attacks inside Israel and the West Bank. The group 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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