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Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command

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aka PFLP-GC

Description: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on October 8, 1997. The PFLP-GC split from the PFLP in 1968, claiming it wanted to focus more on resistance and less on politics. Originally, the group was violently opposed to the Arafat-led Palestinian Liberation Organization. Ahmad Jibril, a former captain in the Syrian Army, has led the PFLP-GC since its founding. The PFLP-GC is closely tied to both Syria and Iran.

Activities: The PFLP-GC carried out dozens of attacks in Europe and the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. The organization was known for cross-border terrorist attacks into Israel using unusual means, such as hot-air balloons and motorized hang gliders. The group's primary recent focus was supporting Hizballah's attacks against Israel, training members of other Palestinian terrorist groups, and smuggling weapons. The PFLP-GC maintained an armed presence in several Palestinian refugee camps and at its own military bases in Lebanon and along the Lebanon-Syria border. In recent years, the PFLP-GC was implicated by Lebanese security officials in several rocket attacks against Israel. In May 2008, the PFLP-GC claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on a shopping center in Ashqelon that wounded at least 10 people. In 2009, the group was responsible for wounding two civilians in an armed attack in Nahariyya, Northern District, Israel. In 2011, the PFLP-GC targeted Israeli communities in a March 20 rocket attack by its Jihad Jibril Brigades in the city of Eshkolot, Southern District, Israel. The attack caused no injuries or damage.

In November 2012, PFLP-GC claimed responsibility for a bus bombing in Tel Aviv that injured 29 people, although four Palestine Islamic Jihad and Hamas operatives were later arrested for being behind the attack. In 2013, the PFLP-GC issued statements in support of the Syrian government, Hizballah, and Iran. The group was accused of participating, along with Syrian

regime forces, in a battle at the al-Yarmouk refugee camp in July, using a rocket to target and kill civilians in the camp.

Strength: Several hundred.

Location/Area of Operation: Political leadership is headquartered in Damascus, with bases in southern Lebanon and a presence in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria. The group also maintains a small presence in Gaza.

Funding and External Aid: Received safe haven and logistical and military support from Syria and financial support from Iran.

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