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aka the Islamic Resistance Movement; Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya; Izz al-Din al Qassam Battalions; Izz al-Din al Qassam Brigades; Izz al-Din al Qassam Forces; Students of Ayyash; Student of the Engineer; Yahya Ayyash Units; Izz al-Din al-Qassim Brigades; Izz al-Din al-Qassim Forces; Izz al-Din al-Qassim Battalions

Description: Hamas was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on October 8, 1997. Hamas possesses military and political wings, and came into being in late 1987 at the onset of the first Palestinian uprising, or Intifada, as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The armed element, called the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, has conducted anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings against civilian targets inside Israel. Hamas also manages a broad, mostly Gaza-based network of "Dawa" or ministry activities that include charities, schools, clinics, youth camps, fundraising, and political activities. After winning Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006, Hamas gained control of significant Palestinian Authority (PA) ministries in Gaza, including the Ministry of Interior. In 2007, Hamas cadres took control of Gaza in a violent confrontation with Fatah, forcing Fatah forces to leave Gaza or go underground. Hamas retains control of Gaza. A Shura Council based in Damascus, Syria, set overall policy for many years, but the group abandoned its Damascus base in late 2011 following a disagreement with the Syrian government over its use of violence against protestors.

Activities: Prior to 2005, Hamas conducted numerous anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings, rocket launches, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, and shootings. Hamas has not directly targeted U.S. interests, although US citizens have died and been injured in the group's attacks against Israeli targets. The group curtailed terrorist attacks in February 2005 after agreeing to a temporary period of calm brokered by the PA, and ceased most violence after winning control of the PA legislature and cabinet in January 2006. In June 2007, after Hamas took control of Gaza from the PA and Fatah, the Gaza borders were closed and Hamas increased its use of tunnels to smuggle weapons into Gaza, using the Sinai and maritime routes. Hamas has since dedicated the majority of its activity in Gaza to solidifying its control, hardening its defenses, building its weapons caches, tightening security, and conducting limited operations against Israeli military forces.

Hamas fought a 23-day war with Israel from late December 2008 to January 2009. From November 14-21, 2012, Hamas fought another war with Israel during which it claims to have launched more than 1,400 rockets into Israel. Prior to the confrontation, approximately 750 rockets had been fired into Israel from Hamas-governed Gaza, including one that killed three civilians in Kiryat Malachi. Despite the Egypt-mediated ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in 2012, operatives from Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad coordinated and carried out a November bus bombing in Tel Aviv that wounded 29 people. In 2013, the Government of Israel continued to hold Hamas, as the dominant organization in effective control, responsible for the attacks emanating from Gaza; and Israeli officials point to these attacks as additional proof that Hamas has not abandoned terrorism.

Strength: Several thousand Gaza-based operatives with varying degrees of skills are in its armed wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, along with its reported 9,000-person Hamas-led paramilitary group known as the "Executive Force."

Location/Area of Operation: Since 2007, Hamas has controlled Gaza and also has a presence in the West Bank. The group retains a cadre of leaders and facilitators that conduct political, fundraising, and arms-smuggling activities throughout the region. Hamas also has a presence in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, probably with the goal of eclipsing Fatah's long-time dominance of the camps.

Funding and External Aid: Historically, Hamas has received funding, weapons, and training from Iran, but the relationship suffered after Hamas refused to follow Iran's lead in supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Asad. The group also raises funds in the Gulf countries and receives donations from Palestinian expatriates around the world through its charities, such as the umbrella fundraising organization, the Union of Good. However, recent efforts by the Egyptian military to destroy tunnels connecting Gaza with the Sinai have severely limited Hamas's access to weapons, smuggled goods, and construction materials.