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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: Designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on October 8, 1997, Hamas was established in 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, 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. As of 2015, the group retained control of Gaza.

Activities: Prior to 2005, Hamas conducted numerous anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings, rocket launches, IED attacks, and shootings. Hamas has not directly targeted U.S. interests, although U.S. citizens have died and been injured in the group's attacks against Israeli targets. 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. Despite the Egypt-mediated ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in 2012, operatives from Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) coordinated and carried out a November bus bombing in Tel Aviv that wounded 29 people. On July 8, 2014, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in Gaza with the intent of preventing rocket fire into the country, which had increased following Israeli military operations after Hamas' kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers. In March 2015, Amnesty International released a report in which it accused Hamas of committing war crimes for launching rockets and mortars into civilian areas

in Israel during Operation Protective Edge. In May 2015, Amnesty International published another report declaring Hamas' abduction, torture, and killing of Palestinians during the 2014 Gaza war was further evidence the group had committed war crimes.

Throughout 2015, Hamas continued preparing for attacks against Israel. In July, Hamas announced on Iranian television that it had built a new tunnel into Israel to carry out attacks. A month later, the group released a video showing members conducting training exercises while moving through its newly reconstructed tunnels. In October, Hamas ordered members to conduct suicide attacks in Israel. In November, Hamas fired two rockets into the Mediterranean Sea as part of its ongoing missile tests in preparation for any future war with Israel.

Strength: Several thousand Gaza-based operatives.

Location/Area of Operation: Since 2007, Hamas has controlled Gaza and also has a presence in the West Bank. The group retains 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.

Funding and External Aid: Historically, Hamas has received funding, weapons, and training from Iran. The group also raises funds in the Gulf countries and receives donations from Palestinian expatriates around the world. Hamas also receives donations from its charity organizations. Hamas's supply lines have suffered since the crackdown on smuggling tunnels in the Sinai Peninsula by the Egyptian military.

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