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Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Asbat al-Ansar

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aka Asbat al-Ansar; Band of Helpers; Band of Partisans; League of Partisans; League of the Followers; God's Partisans; Gathering of Supporters; Partisan's League; AAA; Esbat al-Ansar; Isbat al-Ansar; Osbat al-Ansar; Usbat al-Ansar; Usbat ul-Ansar

Description: Designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on March 27, 2002, Asbat al-Ansar is a Lebanon-based violent Sunni extremist group composed primarily of Palestinians with links to al-Qa'ida (AQ) and other Sunni violent extremist groups. Some of the group's stated goals include thwarting perceived anti-Islamic and pro-Western influences in the country, although the group remains largely confined to Lebanon's refugee camps.

Activities: Asbat al-Ansar first emerged in the early 1990s. In the mid-1990s, the group assassinated Lebanese religious leaders and bombed nightclubs, theaters, and liquor stores. The group has also plotted against foreign diplomatic targets. In October 2004, Mahir al-Sa'di, a member of Asbat al-Ansar, was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for his 2000 plot to assassinate then-U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon David Satterfield. Asbat al-Ansar has no formal ties to the AQ network, but the group shares AQ's ideology and has publicly proclaimed its support for al-Qa'ida in Iraq. Members of the group have traveled to Iraq between 2005 and 2011 to fight Coalition Forces. Asbat al-Ansar has been reluctant to involve itself in operations in Lebanon due in part to concerns over losing its safe haven in the Ain al-Hilwah refugee camp. AAA did not stage any known attacks in 2013.

Strength: The group has fewer than 2,000 members.

Location/Area of Operation: The group's primary base of operations is the Ain al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon in southern Lebanon.

Funding and External Aid: It is likely that the group receives money through international Sunni extremist networks.

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