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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade

Aka al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalion.

Description: Designated as a FTO on March 27, 2002, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB) is composed of small cells of Fatah-affiliated activists that emerged at the outset of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000. AAMB strives to drive the Israeli military and West Bank settlers from the West Bank to establish a Palestinian state loyal to Fatah.

Activities: During the 2000 Intifada, AAMB carried out primarily small-arms attacks against Israeli military personnel and settlers. By 2002, the group was striking Israeli civilians inside Israel. In January 2002, AAMB claimed responsibility for the first female suicide bombing in Israel. In 2010 and 2011, the group launched numerous rocket attacks on Israeli communities. In addition, in November 2012, AAMB claimed it had fired more than 500 rockets and missiles into Israel during an Israel Defense Forces operation in Gaza.

In 2015, AAMB declared an open war against Israel and asked Iran for funds to help it in its fight against Israel in a televised broadcast. In the same broadcast, an AAMB fighter displayed a new two-mile tunnel crossing the border beneath Gaza and Israel, which the leader claimed would be used in the next rounds of battle. Throughout 2015, AAMB continued attacking Israeli soldiers and civilians.

In March 2016, armed confrontation in Nablus between Palestinian youths and Palestinian security officials broke out following the arrest of an AAMB associate on charges of murder; seven youths and six Palestinian security officials were injured in the unrest. AAMB claimed responsibility for two rockets fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip in March 2017 and six rockets in June 2018, although the rockets did not cause any casualties.

Strength: The group is estimated to have a few hundred members.

Location/Area of Operation: Most of AAMB's operational activity is in Gaza, but it has also planned and conducted attacks inside Israel and the West Bank. AAMB has members in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Funding and External Aid: Iran has provided AAMB with funds and guidance, mostly through Hizballah facilitators.