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Country Reports on Terrorism 2016 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB)

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aka al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalion

Description: Designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization 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 communities in Israel, including the city of Sederot and areas of the Negev desert. In November 2012, two men recruited by AAMB were arrested in connection with the stabbing of a student in Beersheba, Israel. That same year, AAMB claimed it had fired more than 500 rockets and missiles into Israel during Operation Pillar of Defense, the week-long Israel Defense Forces operation in Gaza.

In February 2015, AAMB declared an open war against Israel. In a television broadcast in June 2015, AAMB asked Iran for funds to help the group in its fight against Israel. 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. In October 2015, the group announced it had developed a new rocket, the K60, with a 40-mile firing range. Throughout 2015, AAMB continued attacking Israeli soldiers and civilians; the group was responsible for the October 2015 fatal shooting of husband and wife, Rabbi Eitam and Na'ama Henkin.

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.

Strength: Estimated at 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 although Hizballah facilitators.

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