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COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM 2018 -

CHAPTER 5 - PALESTINIAN LIBERATION

FRONT-ABU ABBAS FACTION

Aka PLF; PLF-Abu Abbas; Palestine Liberation Front.

Description: The Palestinian Liberation Front-Abu Abbas Faction (PLF) was designated as a FTO on October 8, 1997. In the late 1970s, the PLF splintered from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. It later split into pro-Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), pro-Syrian, and pro-Libyan factions. The pro-PLO faction was led by Muhammad Zaydan (aka Abu Abbas) and was based in Baghdad before Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Activities: The PLF was responsible for the 1985 attack on the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* and the murder of U.S. citizen Leon Klinghoffer. The PLF was suspected of supporting terrorism against Israel by other Palestinian groups into the 1990s. In April 2004, Abu Abbas died of natural causes while in U.S. custody in Iraq. After not claiming an attack for 16 years, the PLF claimed responsibility for the March 14, 2008, assault against an Israeli military bus in Huwarah, Israel, and the shooting of an Israeli settler. On February 18, 2010, the PLF claimed responsibility for an IED attack against an Israel Defense Forces patrol, which caused minor injuries to a soldier; another IED was discovered during a search of the area. The group has not publicly claimed any attacks since 2016, but it continues to maintain a strong presence in many refugee camps in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria.

Strength: Estimates have placed membership between 50 and 500.

Location/Area of Operation: PLF leadership and members are based in Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank.

Funding and External Aid: PLF's sources of support are unknown.