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Overview: Israel was a committed counterterrorism partner in 2015. Israel again faced terrorist threats from Palestinian violent extremists including Hamas, the Popular Resistance Committees, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), particularly from Gaza but also from the West Bank. Other threats included Hizballah in Lebanon and Syria; al-Qa'ida (AQ) and its affiliates, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its affiliates in the country and along its borders, such as ISIL Sinai Province (ISIL-SP) and al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade in the Golan Heights. In addition, since October 1, Israel has faced a wave of terrorist attacks committed by individuals with no clear organizational affiliation. Israeli officials argued that the spike in violence has its roots in part in Palestinian fears that the Government of Israel intends to alter the status quo at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and is fanned by incitement by senior figures in the Palestinian Authority, while representatives of the Palestinian Authority argued that the attackers were largely motivated by frustration over the occupation and the lack of a political horizon.

Gaza-based Palestinian terrorist organizations continued rocket and mortar attacks into Israeli territory, and multiple terrorist attacks were launched along Israel's security barrier with Gaza. Most of these were initiated by the Omar Hadid-Bayt Almaqdis Brigades, a Salafi organization based in Gaza and inspired by ISIL. Israel saw an increase in the number of launches in 2015, totaling 24 for the year, and a maximum of seven launches during the month of October. The Gaza-based Palestinian organization "Al-Sabirin", which is supported by Iran and identifies with Lebanese Hizballah, has claimed responsibility for launching rockets into Israel as well. Militants continued efforts to smuggle arms and dual-use materials through the Sinai into Gaza via tunnels. Israeli officials welcomed significant efforts by the Government of Egypt to prevent such smuggling.

Israeli counterterrorism officials said Hamas and other Gaza terrorists made quantitative and qualitative advances in their military capabilities. Israel assessed that Hamas and PIJ have regained most of the military capabilities that were severely damaged during operation "Protective Edge" (July 7 to August 26, 2014), and have, in some cases, expanded their capabilities, including by constructing new offensive tunnels and acquiring other advanced capabilities such as an arsenal of medium-to-long range rockets and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Hamas continued to develop its terrorist infrastructures and activities in the West Bank, specifically in order to attack Israelis. During 2015, Israel's Security Agency, IDF, and Police

exposed and foiled several cells of Hamas operating in the West Bank, which were planning to execute terrorist attacks in Israel.

Since October 2015, Israeli and Palestinian security services continued coordination to address a wave of terrorist attacks committed by individuals with no clear affiliation to terrorist organizations. These attacks consisted mostly of stabbings of soldiers and civilians, as well as shootings or rammings by vehicles. The attacks occurred in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and in Israeli cities.

Israeli officials estimated that the level of threat from global terrorist organizations such as ISIL and AQ and its affiliates increased in 2015. Attacks from ISIL-SP continued as the organization launched rockets toward Israel in July. In addition, ISIL released several audio and video recordings, in Arabic, English, and Hebrew, stating its ambition to attack and destroy Israel and the Jewish people. ISIL leader Abu-Bakr al-Baghdadi released an audio recording in late December (his first since being wounded in May), calling on Muslims to attack Israel. One group claiming affiliation with ISIL, the Al-Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, controlled areas inside Syria close to the Israel-Syria border. Israel was also concerned with potential attacks by terrorists against Israeli targets abroad. For example, in December, German media reported that two ISIL activists were arrested while trying to assemble an IED. The two planned to plant explosives at the Israeli Embassy in Berlin.

Israeli government officials estimated that about 55 Israeli citizens and residents left Israel to join the fighting in Syria and Iraq. Several of those have died in battle and seventeen have returned, of whom 11 were prosecuted and sentenced.

Israeli security officials and politicians remained concerned about the terrorist threat posed to Israel from Hizballah and Iran, highlighting that Iran, primarily through the efforts of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF), continued to transfer arms to Hizballah. Israeli experts believed that Iran has transferred to Hizballah advanced weapons systems such as anti-aircraft and anti-ship cruise missile systems, and was continuing to transfer long-range rockets into Lebanon. Also, Israeli officials were concerned about the proliferation of conventional and non-conventional weapons from Syria to terrorist organizations. According to the Government of Israel, Hizballah has stockpiled more than 100,000 rockets and missiles in Lebanon since the 2006 Lebanon War.

Hizballah continued to act against Israel and Israeli targets around the world. In January, Hizballah launched mortar shells toward Israeli cities in the north and fired anti-tank missiles at an IDF patrol, killing two Israeli soldiers and wounding several others. Hizballah also continued to operate proxy groups based in the Syrian Golan Heights against Israel. One of these groups was headed by Samir Kuntar who publicly announced that he was operating from the Golan Heights with support from Hizballah against Israel. Several attacks by Kuntar's group were foiled. In December 2015, Hizballah officials alleged that Kuntar had been killed in an airstrike in Syria, attributing this attack to the Israeli government.

Iran and Hizballah reportedly continued to prepare for attacks against Israeli targets outside the country. In late November, Kenyan security agencies announced that they had arrested two Iranian citizens, allegedly sent by the Iranian IRGC/Quds force to execute a terrorist attack against Israeli targets in Nairobi. In May, Cypriot police arrested a Lebanese-Canadian national, Hussain Abdallah, who later admitted he was working for Hizballah's External Security Organization. Abdallah possessed about 8.5 tons of chemicals used for manufacturing explosives. Abdallah acknowledged to Cypriot investigators that the explosive pre-cursors interrogation showed the explosives were supposed to be used against Israeli targets in Cyprus and other places in Europe.

Iran has stated publicly that it armed Hizballah with advanced long-range Iranian-manufactured missiles, in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) 1701 and 1747.

While Israel is not involved in the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, it shares information to help track and stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters through information exchanges on counterterrorism issues with numerous governments. In support of the UN 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qa'ida sanctions regime, Israel regularly updates the list of foreign terrorist organizations and individuals involved in terrorism to better align with UNSC sanctions lists. Additionally, in November 2015 the Israeli interagency team appointed by the Israeli government submitted its report about the need and methods of requiring and collecting advance passenger information and Passenger Name Record data from airlines operating in its territory, to achieve better safety measures and as part of Israel's implementation of UNSCR 2178.

Attacks by Jewish Israelis against Arab citizens of Israel – many of whom self-identify as Palestinian – and Palestinian residents, property, and places of worship in Israel, Jerusalem, and the West Bank continued. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin spoke out against extremist violence and "price tag" attacks (property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups in retaliation for activity they deemed to be anti-settlement) on multiple occasions, as did Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other elected officials.

2015 Terrorist Incidents: The Israel Security Agency (ISA) reported 22 rocket attacks from Gaza in 2015. On July 3, ISIL-SP claimed responsibility for launching two rockets towards Israeli communities in the northern Negev. There were no reported injuries or property damage from the attack.

Notable terrorist attacks from the northern border included:

- On January 28, in two incidents, Hizballah launched anti-tank missiles at an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) patrol on the Israel-Lebanon border, killing two soldiers and wounding seven.
- On April 26, Israel foiled an attempt by four terrorists from the Syrian Golan heights to plant IEDs along the Israeli-Syrian border. The four were members of a proxy terrorist cell of Hizballah, headed by Samir Kuntar.
- On December 20, the same day that Hizballah terrorist Samir Kuntar's death was announced, three rockets were fired at northern Israel from Lebanese territory near the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidiya. The rockets landed in unpopulated areas, causing no injuries.

Lone offender attacks included:

- On January 21, a Palestinian national who entered Israel illegally boarded a municipal bus in Tel Aviv and began stabbing other passengers with a sharp object, injuring 12, some seriously, before police apprehended him. Hamas praised this attack as a "bold and heroic act."
- On April 20, in the Tel Aviv suburb Herzliya, an Arab Israeli male was stabbed by a man who shouted "Death to Arabs" in a Russian accent before fleeing. Police treated this incident as a terrorist attack.
- In July, an Israeli ultra-Orthodox violent extremist stabbed to death one Israeli and injured six others during the Jerusalem LGBT Pride March. Israeli security forces apprehended the attacker.

- On October 8 an off-duty uniformed IDF soldier and others were stabbed near the Israel Defense Headquarters in Tel Aviv. One victim was seriously wounded. The perpetrator was killed trying to flee the scene.
- On October 13 in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ra'anana, there were two separate stabbing attacks at public bus stops, leaving five wounded. Both perpetrators were apprehended.
- On October 18, an attack at the Be'er Sheva bus terminal resulted in one dead and 10 wounded. Police killed the perpetrator. This was followed by mob violence against an innocent Eritrean bystander who had been shot by security forces in the melee and mistakenly was thought by the mob to be a second attacker; he later succumbed to his wounds.
- On October 22, there was a stabbing and shooting incident in Beit Shemesh. This was followed by calls for a "Day of Rage" for the following day.
- On November 2, there were stabbing attacks in the Tel Aviv suburb of Rishon LeZion and in Netanya.
- On November 19, a stabbing attack in a synagogue in the Panorama Building in Tel Kabir (south of Tel Aviv and east of Jaffa) resulted in one dead and three injured.
- On December 19 in Ra'anana, a Palestinian man stabbed three individuals and severely injured one of them. He subsequently tried to enter a synagogue, but was caught by the police.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Israel has a robust legal framework to combat terrorism and promote international legal assistance in the investigation and prosecution of terrorists.

Israel regularly adopts the UNSC designations of the AQ-ISIL list in its list of terrorist entities and other sanction lists according to Israel's Prohibition of Terror Financing Law (2005), which allows the Israeli Security Cabinet to declare a foreign association to be a foreign terrorist organization on the basis of the relevant determination by a foreign country or by the UNSC.

On the law enforcement front, the ISA and Israel National Police (INP) continued to cooperate with U.S. law enforcement agencies on cases involving U.S. citizens killed in terrorist attacks, as well as other counterterrorism initiatives of mutual interest.

In recent years the ISA exposed and arrested several cells of Israeli nationals who vowed allegiance to ISIL or AQ and who were planning to execute a terrorist attack inside Israel. In June, several men, some of whom worked as high school teachers, were arrested in the Bedouin village of al-Hurra for recruiting support for ISIL and planning to travel to Syria and Iraq. In August, a cell of the organization was exposed in Yaff'a. Its members were planning to acquire weapons and attack Israeli soldiers or policemen. In November, two Israelis from the Nazareth area were arrested and accused of supporting the organization and planning an attack inside Israel.

Counterterrorism raids also targeted, among others, the alleged local Hamas commander, who worked to renew the organization's activity in the Qalqilya region and in surrounding villages. The activities included "preparing the ground for terrorist activities," the ISA said. Security forces seized more than NIS 35,000 (US \$8,950) during the operation.

The Israeli Ministry of Interior maintains a voluntary biometric passport control system at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion International Airport, which is available for Israeli passport holders over the

age of 18. The system facilitates both entry into and exit from Israel via an automatic kiosk for Israeli citizens who successfully pass a background check and provide a scan of the back of their hand.

Israel maintains a border fence along the length of its border with the Sinai Peninsula to stem the flow of illegal immigrants into Israel, augmented by cameras and sensors to similarly reduce the threat of terrorism.

Israel does not collect advance Passenger Name Records on commercial flights. However, an Israeli interagency team appointed by the Israeli government in 2014 submitted a report in November 2015 about the need and methods of requiring and collecting advance passenger information and Passenger Name Record data from airlines operating in its territory, to achieve better safety measures, and as part of Israel's implementation of UNSCR 2178.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Israel is a member of the Council of Europe's Select Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. The Israeli financial intelligence unit, the Israeli Money Laundering and Terror Finance Prohibition Authority (IMPA), is a member of the Egmont Group. In June 2014, the FATF decided to expand its membership and identified Israel as a candidate for FATF observer status, and in November 2015, a high-level delegation from the FATF visited Israel to review the state for possible observer status. Senior officials in the Israeli government (the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Finance, the State's Attorney, and the Governor of the Bank of Israel) reiterated Israel's commitment to becoming a member of the organization, as well as its efforts to advance standards regarding combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism to bring the country in line with international standards.

Israel's counterterrorism finance regime continued to be enhanced through enforcement operations and the inclusion of new groups under national terrorism finance laws. The well-regulated Israeli banking industry worked to address suspected terrorist activity. Israeli experts and officials continued to raise concerns about the issue of state-sponsored funding of Hamas. Hamas is reportedly funding terrorists in the West Bank preparing to perpetrate terrorist attacks against Israel, Israelis, or Israeli interests. For example, 24 Hamas-funded operatives were arrested throughout the West Bank on November 19 in a joint ISA, IDF, and INP operation.

Financing of Hamas through charitable organizations also remained a concern for Israeli authorities, as did the funding of Hizballah through charities and criminal organizations.

Israel regularly updates the list of foreign terrorist organizations and individuals involved in terrorism, in order to align with the UN sanctions lists. The UN sanctions lists are registered in the formal government registry. Every designation is published in three languages (Hebrew, Arabic, English), and run in three different newspapers, as required by law. In addition, designations are published on the website of the IMPA and distributed by email to the IMPA's mailing list, which includes banks, lawyers, and finance professionals.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/index.htm>.

International and Regional Cooperation: Israel continued its counterterrorism cooperation with a range of regional and international institutions, including the UN, the OAS, and the OSCE. From November 9-11, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted an international conference on "Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism: The Challenge of Terrorists Acting Alone or in Small Cells" with delegates from 42 countries and 10 international organizations. The conference was hosted in partnership with the Terrorism Prevention Branch of

the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the OSCE, and in consultation with the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate. The conference examined critical issues and challenges faced by many governments in their efforts to counter violent extremism, such as prevention, detection, and intervention; the use of the internet for incitement and radicalization; legal frameworks in the fight against terrorism; and rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders.

Israel continued to cooperate with numerous countries regarding efforts to thwart terrorist attacks and plots against Israelis or Israeli interests abroad. In July, Israel and the United States held an interagency counterterrorism dialogue to discuss the broad range of threats in the region and to determine areas of collaboration to address these challenges. Additionally, during 2015, Israel conducted talks on counterterrorism issues with several countries and organizations including Bulgaria, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Thailand, the UK, the EU, and NATO.

The West Bank and Gaza, and Jerusalem

The Palestinian Authority (PA) continued its counterterrorism efforts in the West Bank where Hamas, Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) remained present. The PA Security Forces (PASF) constrained those organizations' ability to conduct attacks, including the November and December arrests of PIJ members in the West Bank who were planning to carry out attacks against Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and other Israeli targets. The PA exercised varying degrees of authority over the West Bank due to the IDF's continuing presence in certain areas, per Oslo-era agreements. The IDF and ISA arrested members of suspected terrorist organizations operating in the West Bank, including the March arrest of Hamas members who were planning to carry out attacks against Israeli targets during the Jewish holiday of Purim. The PASF, IDF, and ISA thwarted scores of lone offender attacks, particularly during the period of heightened violence that began October 1.

Violent extremist Palestinians continued to conduct acts of violence in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Since early October and through December, the West Bank and Jerusalem witnessed the highest number of Palestinian attacks against Israelis since the Second Intifada, which resulted in the deaths of 16 Israelis, including two dual U.S.-Israeli citizens, and one U.S. citizen. Most attacks were lone offender stabbing attacks, while others were shooting and vehicular attacks. The majority of the perpetrators did not have any organizational affiliation.

Violent extremist Israelis, including settlers, continued to conduct acts of violence as well as "price tag" attacks (property crimes and violent acts by extremist Jewish individuals and groups in retaliation for activity they deemed to be anti-settlement) in the West Bank and Jerusalem. In the deadliest attack against Palestinians since the Second Intifada, in July, it is suspected that two settlers set fire to a home in the West Bank and killed two adults and one infant, and critically injured a five-year-old. In apparent "price tag" attacks in February, Israeli extremists wrote Hebrew graffiti "redemption of Zion" and set fire to a Greek orthodox seminary in Jerusalem, and in a separate incident, wrote Hebrew graffiti "we want the redemption of Zion" and set fire to a mosque in the West Bank. In October, a Jewish violent extremist attacked and injured the head of an Israeli human rights organization. The UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs reported 224 attacks in 2015 by violent extremist Israeli settlers that resulted in Palestinian injuries or property damage, compared to 324 in 2014.

Hamas continued to maintain control of security forces in Gaza. Several Gaza-based terrorist groups launched attacks against Israel from Gaza. The Government of Egypt's latest efforts to destroy smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza, including by pumping large volumes of sea water into that buffer zone to force the collapse of tunnels, further hampered the ability of Hamas and other armed groups to smuggle weapons, cash, and other contraband into Gaza.

Gaza remained a base of operations for several Salafist splinter groups, such as Jaysh al-Islam, and clan-based terrorist groups that engaged in or facilitated terrorist attacks. Membership in these groups reportedly increased and new groups emerged after the 2014 Israel-Hamas conflict, as disillusioned members of Hamas and other terrorist groups reportedly defected to more extremist elements. A new Salafist group called the Omar Hadid Brigades took responsibility for most of the rockets fired toward Israel since June 2015. Hamas confronted the growing Salafist threat in Gaza by arresting and detaining a number of Salafists this year, but has since released the majority of the detainees. Despite claims of responsibility from individuals purporting affiliation with the ISIL, there was no definitive link confirming membership on a large scale.

2015 Terrorist Incidents:

- In June, a Palestinian assailant shot and killed one Israeli civilian and injured another while they were driving near the West Bank settlement of Dolev. Israeli security forces apprehended the attacker and four suspected accomplices.
- In July, suspected settlers attacked and destroyed by fire two homes in the Palestinian village of Douma in the West Bank, killing an 18-month-old infant, the two parents, and critically injuring a five-year-old. Israeli authorities found Hebrew graffiti with the words "Revenge" and "Long Live King Messiah" painted on the homes. Israeli authorities indicted two Jewish Israelis for the attack on January 3, 2016.
- In October, Palestinian members of a Hamas cell shot and killed two Israeli civilians, one of whom was an American citizen, while they were driving near the West Bank settlement of Itamar. Israeli security forces arrested the individuals responsible.
- In October, two Palestinian assailants stabbed and shot Israelis aboard a bus in Jerusalem, killing two Israelis, mortally wounding an Israeli-American who died two weeks later, and injuring at least 15. Israeli security forces shot and killed one attacker and arrested the other.
- In November, a Palestinian assailant shot and killed two Israelis and injured at least five others, including minors, while they were driving in the West Bank.

The United States continued to assist the PA's counterterrorism efforts through programs that strengthened the capacity of the PASF, primarily through training, equipping, and the provision of infrastructure to PASF personnel in the West Bank. The United States is also assisting the PASF to institutionalize the security gains of the previous decade by helping it to become self-sustaining. U.S.-funded training of PASF primarily took place at the Jordan International Police Training Center, the Academy for Civil Protection, the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center, and the PA's Central Training Institute in Jericho. Concurrently, the United States continued to assist the larger PA criminal justice system to conduct more thorough investigations and prosecutions of terrorist-related activity, among other criminal acts, and to ensure safe incarceration of those held for trial or after conviction of such crimes.

PA President Mahmoud Abbas reiterated his commitment to nonviolence and recognition of the State of Israel. He also continued to express his commitment to pursue an independent Palestinian state through peaceful means. Abbas continued to support a security program involving disarmament of fugitive terrorists, arresting members of terrorist organizations, and gradually dismantling armed groups in the West Bank. The PASF arrested members of Hamas, PIJ, and PFLP when it suspected them of involvement in terrorist or other criminal acts. For example, the PASF arrested five members of a Hamas cell in Hebron in May that was planning terrorist attacks in Israel, according to media. In mid-October, the PASF arrested 19 Hamas members and other individuals suspected of planning stabbing attacks.

Israeli authorities, among others, continued to note improvements in the capacity and performance of PASF as a leading contributor to the improved security environment in the West Bank. Most notable was the relative lack of organized or large-scale disturbances in the West Bank since the heightened period of violence began in early October.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The PA continued to lack legislation specifically tailored to counterterrorism, although existing Palestinian laws criminalize actions that constitute terrorist acts.

The PA continued to arrest terrorists in the West Bank, and the PASF and public prosecutors received training to enable better investigations of terrorism-related crimes. Despite on-again, off-again factional reconciliation talks between Hamas and Fatah, PASF personnel continued to conduct operations against and detain Hamas elements, which Hamas officials protested. The PA continued to develop its civilian justice institutions (e.g. judiciary, police, prosecutors) to improve both investigative and prosecutorial functions. The United States and other donors provided material and developmental assistance to enable the PA to reduce case backlogs, improve warrant executions, and upgrade forensic services.

The key PA institution by mandate and law that works to prevent internal terrorist events and investigate security-related criminal conduct is the Preventive Security Organization (PSO). In practice, the General Intelligence Organization and the Military Intelligence Organization also play a critical role in this effort. The PSO conducts investigations in coordination with public prosecutors, but this cooperation could improve, especially in terms of the PSO's ability to conduct criminal investigations and gather admissible evidence. During 2015, the United States continued assistance to the PSO, as well as the Security Justice Commission, to help the PA move the prosecution of all civilian cases, including those involving terrorism and security-related offenses, to the exclusive jurisdiction of the civilian courts, and enhance cooperation between security service investigators and civilian prosecutors. The PA Security Forces have a mixed although improving record of accountability and respect for human rights.

Per the Oslo-era Accords, Israel controls border security in the West Bank.

The primary limitation on PA counterterrorism efforts in Gaza remained Hamas' control of the area and the resulting inability of PASF to operate there. Limitations on PA counterterrorism efforts in the West Bank included restrictions on the movement and activities of PASF in and through areas of the West Bank for which the Israeli government retained responsibility for security under the terms of Oslo-era agreements.

While the PA continued to lack modern forensic capability, the multi-year assistance efforts that the Canadian International Development Agency started in late 2012 through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime continued. The forensic science laboratory is fully equipped and training in firearm and tool mark evidence, document examination, and drug analysis was ongoing. The PA already has a basic ability to examine and compare unknown prints to known prints.

PA justice and security leaders continued to participate in regional conferences and meetings to counter terrorism. PASF personnel attended a variety of international counterterrorism training courses at training facilities in Jordan, Europe, and the United States.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: In 2015, the PA became a full member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body, and later the same year became a member of the MENAFATF's mutual evaluation working group. Effective December 30, 2015, President Abbas issued Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Decree #20. Among the many improvements it made over the inadequate 2007 AML law (the Anti-Money Laundering Decree Law #9) was to make terrorism financing a

criminal offense and to define terrorists, terrorist acts, terrorist organizations, foreign terrorist fighters, and terrorism financing. It also makes terrorism and terrorist acts predicate money laundering offenses, although the decree does not fully meet international standards as it does not criminalize all forms of material support or the financing of an individual terrorist in the absence of a link to a specific terrorist act. The legislature has not convened since 2007 and prospects are dim that one will be seated in the foreseeable future. Consequently, the PA remained unable to make legislative improvements (without decree) that were required to bring it up to international standards.

The Palestinian Financial Follow-Up Unit (FFU) is a fully functional financial intelligence unit with 12 employees and a computer system linking it with all 16 banks licensed to operate in the West Bank. Seven banks are local and nine are foreign, operating through a network of 274 branches in the West Bank and Gaza. There are also 306 money changers. The banks file both suspicious transaction reports (STRs) and currency transaction reports electronically through this system. In 2015, banks filed 108 STRs, compared to 54 in 2014. Although the FFU has adequate staffing, authority, and equipment, it has been unable to realize its full operational effectiveness due, in part, to restrictions in the law. The 2007 law restricted information sharing between the FFU and any law enforcement agency, with the exception of the Attorney General's Office (AGO). While the FFU may pass information, including analysis, to any requesting competent authority according to the 2015 Decree, the AGO is still the recipient for case dissemination. Moreover, the PA has no effective control outside of Area A in the West Bank. The absence of PA law enforcement and regulatory power in Areas B and C increased vulnerability.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*: <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2014/index.htm>.

Countering Violent Extremism: The PA has taken significant steps to ensure that official institutions in the West Bank that fall under its control do not create or disseminate content that incites violence. While some PA leaders have made provocative and inflammatory comments, the PA has made progress in reducing official rhetoric that could be considered incitement to violence. There has been a noteworthy decline in the worst forms of PA official or media incitement to violence for most of President Abbas' tenure (2005 to date), as compared with the previous period under President Arafat, leading up to and through the Second Intifada (1999-2004). Explicit calls for violence against Israelis, direct exhortations against Jews, and categorical denials by the PA of the possibility of peace with Israel are rare and are generally not tolerated by the leadership. For example, in July 2015, President Abbas instructed Foreign Minister Riad Malki to recall Palestinian Ambassador to Chile, Imad Jamil Jadaa, for making anti-Semitic comments at a conference, quoting from the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." According to the PA's Palestinian Broadcasting Company's code of conduct, no programming is allowed that encourages "violence against any person or institution on the basis of race, religion, political beliefs, or sex." In practice, this code of conduct is not always observed, with some instances of incitement taking place via official media.

The PA maintains control over the content of Friday sermons delivered in more than 1800 West Bank mosques to ensure that they do not endorse incitement to violence. Weekly, the PA Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs distributes approved themes and prohibits incitement to violence. The PA's ability to enforce these guidelines varies depending upon its location, and it has limited authority to control the context of sermons in Israeli-controlled Area C. While the PA also monitored official social media websites to ensure that no inciting materials were present, there have been instances where inciting materials have appeared, including the posting of political cartoons glorifying stabbing attacks on one of the official Fatah Facebook pages in October. As part of a policy codified in 2003, the PA provided significant financial packages to Palestinian

security prisoners released from Israeli prisons in 2014 in an effort to reintegrate them into society and prevent recruitment by hostile political factions.

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