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Escalating to Nowhere: The Israeli-Palestinian War

***Rough Working Draft: Circulated for Comment and
Correction***

**The Actors in the Conflict:
The Palestinian Factions that
Challenge Peace and the Palestinian
Authority**

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Introduction

The reader should be aware that this is an initial rough draft. The text is being circulated for comment and will be extensively revised over time. It reflects the working views of the author and does not reflect final conclusions or the views of the CSIS.

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VIII. The Actors in the Conflict: The Palestinian Factions that Challenge Peace and the Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian movement is a house divided against itself, and Arafat's death could either ease or exacerbate these divisions—depending on the true level of Palestinian unity that emerges out of the January 2005 elections. The Palestinian terrorism that helped cause the collapse of the peace process was caused almost solely by radical anti-peace, anti-Palestinian Authority movements. Arafat and the PA may have had some ability to break up or control these movements, but Israel has almost certainly exaggerated what the PA could do both during the peace process and the war that has followed. The end result may be a set of impossible Israeli demands on Arafat and the PA that ends in strengthening extremist movements and one that offers little hope of either the possibility of a true ceasefire or a lasting peace.

In order to understand the forces at work, it is necessary to understand the other actors on the Palestinian side that challenged the peace process and now are a growing challenge to the Palestinian Authority. Arafat's decision in 1992 to engage in peace negotiations with Israel opened a significant rift within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). At least ten Palestinian organizations with military, paramilitary, or terrorist elements rejected the peace process at its inception. They declared themselves part of the "opposition front" at a meeting in Damascus in September 1992. These organizations have been listed earlier in Table VI.1 and their nominal pre-war strength is shown in Figure VII.1.

At the time, the list of rejectionist groups included a mix of Islamic and secular movements such as Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement), elements of the Palestine Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Revolutionary Communist Party, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), elements of the People's Liberation Front (PLF), al-Saiqa and, in 1999, Fatah-Intifada. It also involved movements with paramilitary forces, such as those belonging to the Fatah dissidents, Fatah Revolutionary Council/Abu Nidal Organization (FRC/ANO), Fatah Intifada (Abu Musa), Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), PFLP-GC (General Command), and PFLP-SC (Special Command). Some of these forces were based in Lebanon and/or Syria and under direct Syrian control.

The current military and paramilitary strength of these various factions is almost impossible to estimate. Table VI.1 and Figure VII.1 provide a rough estimate of their manpower strength when the war began in 2000. Although these figures indicate that many factions have significant manpower strength, it is important to note that most had little real conventional military capability when the fighting started and could not use most of the medium and heavy weapons that they possessed. Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian War, their capabilities have been generally limited to acts of terrorism, unconventional warfare, and low-intensity combat in built-up areas and mountainous terrain. Some of these factions have actually had little activity during the Israeli-Palestinian War, although no precise incident account is available. In fact, many factions are little more than political tools or ideological sinecures.¹

However, there are factions such as Hamas and the PIJ, that have shown all too clearly that they can sustain an asymmetric war using unconventional tactics such as suicide bombings. The military and paramilitary forces of such factions may be weak, but current estimates of their size and capabilities only serve as rough indicators of the types of forces that might become involved in a future escalation of the conflict. Furthermore, the key issue shaping this aspect of the Arab-Israeli military balance is not the current size and activity of Palestinian military and paramilitary forces. It is rather the ability of various groups to effectively use terrorism and violence.

The Role of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad

Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) have been active in suicide bombings and other terrorist attacks. Long before the Israeli-Palestinian War began, terrorist acts by these hard-line factions helped cause the collapse of the peace process, and they have since posed a constant threat to efforts to create a lasting cease-fire and the rebuilding of the peace process. In fact, their acts of terrorism alone, before September 2000 demonstrated that lightly armed insurgents inside the West Bank, Gaza and Israel could undermine a peace effort with acts of terrorism and extremism. It also illustrated that they could strike successfully against their fellow Palestinians and the West, as well as Israel.

Hamas

Hamas is a radical Islamic fundamentalist organization. Its name is an acronym for Harakat Al-Muqawwama Al-Islamia (Islamic Resistance Movement) and also means “zeal” or “courage and bravery.” Hamas’ foremost objective is a *jihad* (holy war) for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic Palestine “from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River.”² Hamas has stated that the transition to the stage of *jihad* “for the liberation of all of Palestine” is a personal religious duty incumbent upon every Muslim, and rejects any political arrangement that would relinquish any part of Palestine. Hamas’ ultimate goal is the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine.³

Hamas’ extreme views place the organization in direct conflict with the State of Israel and its supporters. It has advocated and employed violence in pursuit of its objectives, not only against Israeli armed forces, but against Israeli civilians as well. Its views also conflict with those Palestinian factions affiliated with Yasser Arafat and the PA, which advocate the creation of a secular Palestine through the resolution of negotiations with Israel.

To achieve its objectives, Hamas has employed a variety of unconventional tactics, ranging from mass demonstrations and graffiti to roadside murders and suicide bombings. Its gradual escalation of violence has influenced the course of the Israeli-Palestinian War. Hamas remains one of the most politically powerful Palestinian militant factions, affecting the decisions of both the Israeli government and the PA. An understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian War is incomplete without an understanding of the motivations and actions of Hamas.

Organization

Hamas first became active during the early stages of the Intifada. It was formed in early 1987, out of the religious-social Al-Majama Al-Islami association in Gaza. Many senior members of Al-Majama formed Hamas, and used the existing infrastructure of Al-Majama as a basis for semi-covert activity once the Intifada began. Hamas then expanded its activity into the West Bank with at least some cells in Israel proper, becoming the dominant Islamic fundamentalist organization in the West and Gaza.

Hamas evolved as a loosely structured organization, with some elements working clandestinely, while others worked openly through mosques and social service institutions to

recruit members, raise money, organize activities, and distribute propaganda. Its strength was concentrated in the Gaza Strip and a few areas of the West Bank, where it engaged in political activity, such as running candidates in the West Bank Chamber of Commerce elections.

During the period before the war, Hamas' operations in Gaza and the West Bank consisted of a combination of regional and functional organizations. It had several identical, parallel frameworks that operated in each region. One framework, called Dawa (literally "call" or "outreach"), engaged in recruitment, distribution of funds, and appointments. Another framework, called Amn ("security"), gathered information on suspected collaborators during the Intifada. This information was passed on to "shock committees," which interrogated and sometimes killed suspects. Amn became a key element in Hamas' rivalry with the Palestinian Authority and in intelligence-gathering operations.

Hamas had a well-organized fundraising apparatus in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan, as well as outside the region. According to the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) in Herzilya, it also received considerable financial support from unofficial Saudi Arabian channels, the Iranian government, and other Gulf States. ICT estimates Hamas' total yearly budget tens of millions of dollars. Such ample funding is one of the principal reasons for Hamas' primacy among the militant Palestinian factions.⁴

Military and Paramilitary Elements within Hamas

During the period between the Oslo Accords and September 2000, the paramilitary elements of Hamas played a major role in violent fundamentalist subversion and radical terrorist operations against both Israelis and Arabs. Its shock troops (Al-Suad Al-Ramaya – the "throwing arm") were responsible for popular violence during the Intifada, and continued to play a role in violent opposition to the peace process. Hamas also had two paramilitary organizations for more organized forms of violence. The first was the Palestinian Holy Fighters (Al-Majahidoun Al-Falestinioun) – a military apparatus that included the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades. The second was the Security Section (Jehaz-Amn).

The Al-Majihadoun Al-Falestinioun was established by Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the future spiritual leader of Hamas, in 1982. It procured arms and planned an armed struggle against both Palestinian rivals and Israel. This activity was uncovered in 1984, and Yassin was sentenced to

13 years in prison, but was released shortly afterwards as part of the Jibril prisoner exchange in May 1985.

Yassin then resumed his effort to set up a military apparatus. He began by focusing on the struggle against “heretics” and collaborators in accordance with the view of the Muslim Brotherhood that jihad should come only after the purging of rivals from within. At the same time, he prepared a military infrastructure, and stockpiled weapons for war against Israel. Shortly before the outbreak of the Intifada, operatives were recruited to execute the military jihad and regular terrorist attacks. The new military apparatus executed a large number of attacks of various kinds, including bombings and gunfire, mostly in the northern part of the Gaza District.

Hamas’ spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin retained considerable personal popularity among Palestinians.⁵ His ability to raise millions of dollars in funds for Hamas and his virulent anti-Israel stance led some to fear that he would eventually rival Arafat for power over the PA, despite his frail health and physical disabilities.⁶

The PA was careful to keep Yassin under close observation and scrutiny during the peace process. Following the signing of the Wye Accords, hundreds of Hamas activists were detained and Yassin was placed under house arrest in November 1998. This spurred an angry response from Hamas members and other Palestinians, who vowed violent retaliation against Arafat and the Palestinian Authority.⁷ Although Yassin was released in late December 1998, relations between Hamas and the PA have remained strained.

The main function of Hamas’ Security Section (*Jihaz Amn*), established in early 1983, was to conduct surveillance of suspected collaborators and other Palestinians who acted in a manner contrary to the principles of Islam, such as drug dealers and sellers of pornography. In early 1987, it began to set up hit squads, known as MAJD, an Arabic acronym for *Majmu’at Jihad wa-Dawa* (“Holy War and Sermonizing Group”). MAJD became the operational arm of the Security Section. Its purpose was to kill “heretics” and collaborators. Yassin instructed the leaders of these sections to kill anyone who admitted under interrogation to being a collaborator, and reinforced this instruction with a religious ruling.

After the outbreak of the Intifada, Hamas began to organize military actions against Israeli targets as well. The MAJD units then became part of the Al-Majahadoun network. At the same time, the military apparatus of Hamas underwent several changes as a result of preventive measures and exposure by the Israeli forces following major terrorist attacks. The military apparatus formed the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades, which were responsible for most of the serious attacks perpetrated by Hamas after January 1, 1992. These squads were formed out of dozens of proven personnel from Gaza who later also began to operate in the West Bank. Palestinians from the West Bank were recruited to carry out attacks inside the Green Line. Since the peace accords, these groups have been formed into cells that sometimes recruit young Palestinians, and form smaller cells to carry out attacks and suicide bombings.

Public Support for Hamas before the War

Hamas has long used its overt political operations to recruit members into the units that engaged in riots and popular violence. Those who distinguished themselves were then recruited into the military apparatus, which carried out attacks against Israelis and other Palestinians. There is no way to know exactly how many Arabs that Hamas killed in the years following the signing of the Oslo Declaration of Principles in September 1993. The Israeli government estimates that Hamas killed 20 Israelis and one Jewish tourist from the beginning of the Intifada (December 9, 1987) until December 1992, and assassinated close to 100 Palestinians.

This violence caused a considerable backlash within the Palestinian community during the time when the peace process still seemed likely to be successful, and led Hamas to limit its more violent actions. A combination of the Palestinian desire for peace, and the loss of jobs and income as a result of Israeli economic retaliation, led to a steady drop in Hamas' public support. Public opinion polls showed that support dropped from nearly 40% in 1993, to 18% in June 1995, and 11% in October 1995. As a result, Hamas began to conduct talks with the PA in the summer of 1995.⁸ The outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War, however, reversed this trend. By late May 2001, Palestinian support for Hamas, which was responsible for the majority of suicide attacks on Israelis, rose to 18.5%.⁹

Similar to Hizbollah in Lebanon, Hamas maintained a distinction between the overt and covert aspects of activities of its various divisions. This compartmentalizing was principally for

the purposes of secrecy and security, which was further achieved by limiting internal communication to encoded messages. These measures resulted in an internal structure that still remains unclear to outside analysts while debate continues among experts over the degree of overlap between Hamas' social and militant elements. It is clear that Hamas has strong civil elements that perform charitable roles and have little or no direct connection to violence. At the same time, it seems to have used its charity committees—and the ideological instruction, propaganda and incitement it delivers in mosques and other institutions—as a recruiting base for violence and terrorism. Moreover, parts of its religious and social network almost certainly provide moral and financial support for its militant operatives¹⁰

Hamas and the Onset of War

The escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian War can be attributed, in no small part, to the actions of Hamas. As early as October 2000, Hamas leaders called for an escalation of the violence. On November 14, Sheikh Yassin urged Palestinians to “transform the Intifada into an armed struggle against the Israeli conquest.”¹¹ This statement preceded Hamas' first car bomb of the war by only eight days.

In October 2000, the PA released Hamas activists who had been imprisoned during the peace process, in order to placate Hamas and its growing number of supporters and increase pressure on Israel in order to gain greater concessions.¹² This had a significant impact on the fighting. Some of these militants later participated in orchestrated violence against Israel. Their release deepened Israeli suspicions that Arafat was at least a tacit supporter of terrorism and extremism.

Shortly after the activists' release, Hamas organized its first “day of rage” against Israel in the West Bank and Gaza. The “days of rage” appeared to increase Hamas support in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of supporters marched in protests shouting militant slogans.¹³ In addition to building unity among ordinary Palestinians, Hamas also encouraged solidarity among the other extremist factions. On October 7, the Washington Post noted that Hamas, the Revolutionary Communist Party and even Fatah supporters were appearing at rallies together.¹⁴

In addition, there is evidence of cooperation between the PA and Hamas during the early weeks of the war. On October 12, Arab mobs overran a Palestinian police station in Ramallah,

where two Israeli soldiers were detained, ostensibly for their own protection. The mobs seized them, beat them to death, and dragged their bodies through the streets. Israel responded with an attack on PA security facilities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Shortly before the Israeli attack, the PA announced that at least 85 Hamas and PIJ militants had been released from jails. Some conflicting reports stated that it was intentional, because the PA was unable to guarantee their safety, and others stated that they escaped. Among those released were Mohammed Deif and Ibrahim Makadmeh, leaders of the Izzedin al-Qassam.¹⁵

Hamas' role in organizing demonstrations became official by the end of the month. On October 25, 2000, the Washington Post reported that Arafat had allocated seats on a decision-making committee called the High Committee Follow-Up Intifada Nationalist Islamic Organizations to Hamas, PIJ and Fatah representatives.¹⁶ A day later, Mahmoud Zahar confirmed this, stating that Hamas was designating times and places for street marches.¹⁷ It is likely that this represented an attempt on Arafat's part to placate Hamas and its supporters. However, it also contributed to the spread of Hamas' brand of extremism from Gaza to the West Bank.

Evolving Tactics

Hamas' tactics have changed over the course of the conflict. In the first weeks of the war, Hamas' activities consisted primarily of demonstrations and rallies, confined for the most part to the Gaza Strip. The largest of these initial rallies was in the Gaza refugee camp of Jebaliya on October 27, 2000. An estimated 10,000 Hamas supporters attended, reportedly led by masked men wearing white t-shirts reading "The martyrs of al-Qassam."¹⁸

Hamas became more active in November 2000, with the first of a series of car and roadside bombs. On November 22, a powerful car bomb detonated in the northern Israeli town of Hadera, killing one and wounding 20. Though Hamas did not directly claim responsibility, it distributed a leaflet reading, "If Israel tries to kill any of the Islamic or national Palestinian figures, militants or leaders, the gates of hell [sp] would be opened for Israel and the price would be so high."¹⁹ Not surprisingly, Israel responded a day later, with a car bomb that killed Ibrahim Beni Ouda, a leader of the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades, on furlough from prison.²⁰

Israel created its policy of "targeted killings" of Palestinian militants in response to such extremist Palestinian violence. Although other groups like the PIJ and Al-Aqsa Martyrs have also

been targeted regularly by Israel, Hamas has borne the brunt of its attacks. Of the 52 Israeli targeted killings of senior Palestinian militants between November 2000 and the June 2003 hudna (cease-fire), 50% were successfully directed at Hamas activists. After the cease-fire dissolved in late August 2003, Israel continued to have success in thinning the leadership ranks of Hamas through “targeted” killings—including most prominently the assassinations of Sheik Yassin on March 22, 2004 and Abdel Aziz Rantisi on April 17, 2004.²¹

Through early 2004, Hamas had typically responded to IDF assassinations of its members with deadly retaliatory attacks. As previously stated, Hamas had employed suicide bombings throughout the Oslo-Wye peace process. On March 4, 2001, Hamas unleashed its first suicide bomber since the start of the war in Netanya, where a member’s self-detonation killed three Israelis, and injured dozens of others. Hamas’ use of suicide bombings has since become one of the defining characteristics of the war. This is shown by the following chronology of Hamas suicide bombings throughout the war.

- ? March 4, 2001 – Suicide bomber detonates explosives in Netanya, killing himself and three Israelis and injuring dozens of others. A statement by the Izzedin al-Qassam said that he was the first of ten suicide bombers trained by Hamas following the election of Sharon.
- ? March 27, 2001 – Suicide bombing is directed against a northbound No. 6 bus at the French Hill junction in Jerusalem, injuring 28 people.
- ? March 28, 2001 – Suicide bomber detonates explosives at a gas station east of Kfar Saba, killing two and injuring four.
- ? April 22, 2001 – Suicide bomber at a bus stop in Jerusalem, killing one and injuring 39.
- ? May 18, 2001 – Suicide bomber blows himself up outside a Netanya shopping mall, killing five and wounding over 100.
- ? May 25, 2001 – Hamas militant explodes his truck outside an Israeli army post in the Gaza Strip, killing himself; no one else was injured.
- ? June 1, 2001 – Suicide bomber outside the Tel Aviv discotheque “Pascha”; 21 are killed, 120 are wounded; Hamas and the PIJ both claim responsibility.
- ? June 22, 2001 – Suicide bombing in the Gaza Strip kills two Israeli soldiers, plus the bomber.
- ? August 9, 2001 – Fifteen people are killed and 88 are wounded in a suicide bombing attack on a pizzeria in central Jerusalem; Hamas and the PIJ both claim responsibility.
- ? September 9, 2001 – Hamas, the PIJ and Hizbollah claim responsibility for a suicide bombing in Nahariya that kills three and injures 31.
- ? December 1, 2001 – Back to back suicide bombings in west Jerusalem kill 10 people and wound around 170.
- ? December 2, 2001 – Sixteen people are killed and 40 are wounded in Haifa by a suicide bomber.

- ? March 9, 2002 – Suicide bomber blows himself up, killing 11 Israelis and injuring an estimated 54 at Jerusalem’s “Café Moment”.
- ? March 27, 2002 – The so-called “Passover massacre”: Hamas suicide bomber blows himself up, as guests sat down to a Seder in a hotel lobby in Netanya. 29 Israelis were killed and as many as 170 were injured.
- ? March 31, 2002 – Suicide bomber blows himself up in Haifa, killing at least 15 and injuring more than 35; both Hamas and the PIJ claim responsibility.
- ? April 10, 2002 – Eight people are killed and 22 are injured as a Hamas suicide bomber attacks a bus near Haifa.
- ? May 7, 2002 – Sixteen Israelis are killed and at least 57 others are injured in a suicide bombing attack in a crowded hall south of Tel Aviv, in Rishon Lezion.
- ? May 19, 2002 – Disguised as a soldier, a suicide bomber blows himself up in a market in Netanya, killing three people and injuring 59.
- ? June 18, 2002 – At rush hour, a suicide bomber blows himself up aboard a bus in Jerusalem, killing 19 people and injuring 74.
- ? July 30, 2002 – Hamas suicide bomber detonates himself outside a falafel stand in Jerusalem, killing two.
- ? September 19, 2002 – Both Hamas and the PIJ accept responsibility for a suicide bombing aboard a Tel Aviv bus, killing five and wounding over 60.
- ? November 21, 2002 – Hamas suicide bomber detonates himself on a crowded Egged bus No. 20 traveling through the Kiryat Menachem neighborhood in Jerusalem. Eleven people are killed and some 50 are injured.
- ? January 5, 2003 – PIJ and Hamas claim responsibility for double suicide bombings in Tel Aviv’s Central Bus Station, killing 20 and wounding 100.
- ? April 29, 2003 – Hamas suicide bombing at the Tel Aviv seaside restaurant Mike’s Place kills three Israelis and the bomber, who held a British passport, and wounds 46 others.
- ? May 18, 2003 – Nineteen-year-old Hamas operative straps explosives to the back of his bicycle and detonates them near an Israeli army jeep in the Gaza Strip, killing himself and injuring three soldiers.
- ? June 11, 2003 – Hamas militant dressed as an ultra-Orthodox Jew detonates a bomb on a bus in central Jerusalem, killing himself and 16 others, and wounding 70.
- ? August 12, 2003 – Hamas activist detonates a suicide bomb in Ariel in the West Bank, killing one person and injuring two.
- ? August 19, 2003 – Hamas suicide bombing aboard a crowded bus in Jerusalem kills 18 and wounds more than 100.
- ? September 9, 2003—Hamas suicide bomber detonates himself at a bus stop outside an IDF base in Rishon Letzion, Israel. 8 IDF soldiers are killed and 13 wounded in the attack.
- ? September 9, 2003—Hamas suicide bomber self-detonates outside a café in Jerusalem, killing 6 Israelis and an Arab bus boy, and wounding over 30.
- ? January 14, 2004—Female Hamas suicide bomber self-detonates at the Erzez crossing, killing 3 IDF soldiers and an Israeli security officer.
- ? January 29, 2004—Suicide bomber kills himself along with 10 Israelis and wounds 44 when he self-detonates on a bus in West Jerusalem. Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade each separately claim responsibility.

- ? March 14, 2004— Hamas member and an Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade member from the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza carry out a double suicide bombing inside the Israeli port of Ashdod, killing 11 Israelis and wounding 20.
- ? April 28— Hamas militant detonates an explosive laden jeep disguised as an Israeli civilian vehicle outside of the Kefar Daron settlement in Gaza, wounding 4 IDF soldiers.

According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the beginning of the war in September 2000 through March 22, 2004, Hamas perpetrated a total of 425 terrorist attacks of various kinds which in total killed 377 Israelis and wounded 2,076 civilians and IDF personnel—including 52 suicide attacks that produced 288 of the deaths and 1,646 of the injured.²² Thus, while suicide bombings have remained Hamas' deadliest tactic, the group has employed other tactics as well. On April 17, 2001, the Izzedin al-Qassam launched five mortar shells at the Israeli town of Sderot, near the Gaza Strip. The attack was allegedly in retaliation for recent targeted killings of Hamas leaders. The Sharon government believed the mortar assaults represented a serious and unexpected escalation. Sharon called the act a "major provocation," and seized Palestinian-controlled areas in the Gaza Strip for the first time during the conflict. The Israelis also rocketed PA security bases and divided Gaza into three parts, barring north-south traffic, a move that U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell deemed "excessive and disproportionate."²³

Despite Israel's strong response, Hamas launched five more mortars at the farming village of Nir Oz on April 19, 2001 and fired shells onto a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem three months later on July 17. The mortar attacks were carefully orchestrated moves, designed to force Israel to take measures that would further inflame Palestinians and encourage them to strike at the PA, thus weakening Hamas' major rivals for control over the Palestinian populace. Israel again targeted at the PA due to Hamas' actions on May 18, after the Netanya shopping mall suicide bombing. Israeli F-16 warplanes used for the first time since the onset of the war, attacked PA facilities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.²⁴

Hamas' tactics changed again in early 2002. On January 24, Hamas spokesman Moussa Abu Marzook acknowledged that the group was developing a rocket (Qassam-3) with a range long enough to hit targets in the Jewish districts of Jerusalem from inside the West Bank. The Qassam-3 rockets were expected to have an eight-mile range, much longer than the .5 mile range of the

Qassam-1 and the 1.8 mile range of the Qassam-2.²⁵ On February 16, Hamas militants fired a Qassam-2 model into an open field near Kfar Azza. Though no one was injured, it represented an ominous new addition to Hamas' repertoire. On May 9, 2003 six more crude rockets, though apparently not the Qassam-3, landed in the vicinity of Sedrot in the Negev Desert, wounding a 10-year-old girl.²⁶

At the same time, Hamas was able to build-up public support through its support of Islamic charities and social services. The PA had to slowly reduce its social services over the course of the war, due to an ever-shrinking budget, a weakening infrastructure, corruption, and poor leadership. Hamas, however, proved able to increase some of its activities and maintain most others. On March 2, 2001 the Associated Press reported that Hamas was believed to support several Islamic charity organizations in the West Bank and Gaza, including the Islamic Charity Organization in Hebron, which distributes food packages to destitute Palestinian families in the West Bank. Islamic charities continue to fill a growing need due to rampant poverty and widespread unemployment. In addition, Hamas also operates health clinics and kindergartens.²⁷

Hamas and the Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian Authority has long conducted a delicate balancing act between satisfying Israeli demands and placating Hamas. For example, while the PA released Hamas militants from jail on October 12, 2000, it began re-arresting them just four days later. At the same time, the PA has never accepted Hamas, and despite their mutual dislike of Israel, Hamas and the PA are very different groups. The PA is secular, advocates a nominally democratic government in an independent Palestine, and for the most part, has been willing to negotiate with Israel to achieve its objectives. Hamas, however, is an Islamic fundamentalist movement. It supports the creation of an Islamic theocratic government in Palestine, and is unwilling to accept any long-term cease-fires or treaties that recognize Israel as a state deserving of land in Palestine.²⁸

Both groups wish to exercise authority over the Palestinian people, but Hamas' ability to attract popular support has fluctuated with time. Its public support decreased dramatically during the Oslo-Wye period, but experienced a resurgence in popularity at the outbreak of the Israeli-Palestinian War, while the PA's support diminished. This was due in part to Hamas' charitable social services, but also to the fact that it rejected negotiations, while Arafat was seen as placating

Israel. An opinion poll by the West Bank's Birzeit University showed that support for Hamas and other Islamic fundamentalist groups by Palestinians rose from 23 to 26% between October 2000 and February 2001, while Arafat's Fatah dropped from 33 to 26% (margin of error 3%).

On June 16, 2001, Palestinian political analyst Ghassan Khatib said that Hamas had become part of the political mainstream, with 17 to 19% of Palestinians "hav[ing] confidence" in the group, compared to 10% during the Oslo period.²⁹ A May 2002 poll indicated that Hamas' approval ratings had increased to 25%, drawing ever closer to Fatah's 32%. Sheikh Yassin was ranked as the third most popular Palestinian leader,³⁰ reinforcing some pre-war fears that he might one day surpass Arafat in popularity. A Palestinian public-opinion poll conducted in early 2004 indicated that support for Hamas had increased to 30 % of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and thus "is increasingly seen as a rival to Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement."³¹

Animosity between Hamas and the PA has grown during the course of the war, due in large part to Hamas' unwillingness to cooperate with the PA's efforts to secure a lasting cease-fire with Israel, ease the IDF's pressure on the PA, and move back towards negotiations. On June 2, 2001, the day after a Hamas/ PIJ attack on a Tel Aviv discotheque, Arafat announced that he would encourage a cease-fire with the Palestinian militant groups. At least initially, Hamas seemed to agree to the cease-fire. However, later that same day, the group publicly renounced it. Sheikh Yassin said, "When we are talking about the so-called cease-fire, this means between two armies. We are not an army. We are people who defend themselves and work against the aggression."³²

The negative impact of Hamas on the PA, the refusal of Hamas to cooperate with the cease-fire, and Arafat's continued arrests of Hamas personnel following the June 1 discotheque attack led to new tension between Arafat's Fatah and the PA forces, and Hamas and its supporters. On August 23, 2001, Fatah and Hamas activists engaged in a shootout at a funeral in Gaza, leaving three Palestinians dead.³³ On October 10, 2001, the PA police force, conscious of the negative effect a rally in favor of Osama bin Laden could have on world opinion, used clubs, guns and tear gas to battle hundreds of pro-bin Laden protestors in Gaza City. Most of these protestors were supporters of Hamas. At least three Palestinians were killed and many more were wounded.

The irony of the situation was that the PA became more active against Hamas, while Israel became more active against Arafat's PA. Fearing repercussions from the murder of right-wing Israeli Tourism Minister Rahavem Zeevi by the PFLP in late October, Arafat chose to ban the armed wings of Hamas, the DFLP, the PFLP and the PIJ. A high-ranking PA official said that the decision was made after it became obvious that the groups were giving Israel an excuse to destroy the PA.³⁴ Each time Hamas and other factions committed attacks on Israelis, the PA suffered. Following the rash of Hamas suicide bombings on December 1 and 2, 2001, Ariel Sharon declared the PA a "terror-supporting entity" and launched three missiles at a PA security installation in Arafat's West Bank compound. F-16s flattened the offices of the Preventive Security Services, though Hamas was not attacked.³⁵

The PA responded by arresting more militants. Sheikh Yassin himself was placed under house arrest. In a series of demonstrations, Hamas marchers demanded that the PA stop arresting their leaders. Riots broke out in Gaza City, leading to clashes between PA/ Fatah supporters and Hamas activists.³⁶ On December 13, Arafat ordered all Hamas and PIJ offices in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to be shut down.³⁷ When PA agents attempted to arrest Abdel Rantisi, PA and Hamas forces clashed once more, resulting in the deaths of six Palestinians. In order to "preserve Palestinian unity," Hamas announced a self-imposed cease-fire.³⁸ On January 9, 2002, two Hamas militants broke the cease-fire, when they killed four Israeli soldiers in a village near Gaza. Israeli Special Forces responded by killing four Hamas militants in Nablus. Hamas vowed "all-out war" against Israel on January 23, and Hamas supporters tried to storm PA jails in order to free Hamas militants. This led to even further clashes with PA security forces.³⁹

Hamas, the PA, and Israel's Attacks on Arafat

It is another irony of the war that Hamas has sometimes joined Israel in trying to remove Arafat from power. In May 2002, Hamas leaders claimed that Arafat could no longer lead the resistance against Israel because he was not capable of defending himself against U.S. and Israeli pressure. On June 3, in an attempt to rein in Hamas, Arafat offered the group positions in a new Palestinian Cabinet. Hamas promptly rejected the new Cabinet, saying it would not serve their goals.⁴⁰

On June 18, 2002, at rush hour, a Hamas suicide bomber blew himself up aboard a bus in Jerusalem, killing 19 people and injuring 74. As a result, on June 19, Israel said it would reoccupy the West Bank. In a leaflet, Hamas said it would wage a “war on the buses.”⁴¹ Fearing Hamas’ actions, Arafat placed Yassin under house arrest once more.⁴² Hamas accused the PA of serving the interest of the Israeli occupation and bowing to “Zionist-U.S. pressures.” Between August 12 and 15, Arafat again made overtures to Hamas and other militant organizations to participate in the PA government. It was an attempt to prevent more suicide bombings. Hamas refused and rejected a cease-fire.

The tension between the PA and Hamas reached a new boiling point on October 7, 2002. In the Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, a PA police colonel, Rajeh Abu Lehiya, was ambushed and killed by Hamas member Emad Akel, who was seeking vengeance for the death of his brother at the hands of PA riot police a year ago. Hamas sent in large numbers of militants to the camp to prevent PA police from taking action. Street fights broke out between Hamas militants and PA troops that lasted all day and resulted in the deaths of five Palestinians. Other Hamas members assisted in the killing and then protected Akel afterwards. Abu Shanab said, “He practiced the justice that was lost by the Palestinian Authority.”⁴³

On February 7, 2003, Hamas discussed succeeding Arafat’s government. Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahar said that Hamas was in position to take over from the PA, “politically, financially, socially.” Interestingly, he said that Hamas would take over by elections, not by force.⁴⁴ Though Hamas and the PA have continued to abide each other’s presence, their shared animosity and differing objectives do not bode well for future Palestinian unity.

Hamas and the Abbas Government’s Cease-Fire Efforts

Removing Arafat, however, is only a prelude to achieving broader goals. For example, in November 2002, Palestinians showed signs that they were becoming exhausted by the war and were becoming more receptive to a cease-fire. The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research released polls indicating that 76% supported efforts to reach a mutual cease-fire, up from 48% only three months prior. Mahmoud Abbas believed there was no reason why the PA could not stop militants from attacking Israel.⁴⁵

When Arafat reluctantly appointed Abbas as his prime minister on March 19, 2003, Hamas said it would not cooperate with him. Hamas also responded negatively to the unveiling of the United States “road map for peace” one month later on April 30. Hamas and other militant groups said they would not disarm, as required by the document, and would not honor a cease-fire. However, the Abbas government announced that it would use persuasion, not force, to disarm the militants.⁴⁶

By the beginning of May 2003, however, the U.S.-led coalition’s victory in the Iraq War reflected an international environment that had become increasingly hostile to militant extremism and terrorism. At the same time, the U.S. and its allies applied significant pressure to countries known to support terrorism, such as Syria, and demanded that they cease their support.

Public support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip seemed to diminish in response. On May 21, 2003, an estimated 600 Palestinians in the town of Beit Hanoun demonstrated against Hamas and other militant factions whom they felt caused Israeli incursions into their homes. On May 22, Abbas began conducting cease-fire talks with Hamas leaders. Eight days later, Sharon announced that he would ease Israeli restrictions on the West Bank and Gaza Strip if Abbas would crack down on militia groups. In doing so, Sharon placed Hamas in a position where it had to accept a cease-fire or be directly responsible for further violence against the Palestinian people. Moreover, Israel was successful in assassinating senior Hamas militants at an average rate of one a month during the first six months of 2003.

These pressures led Hamas and the PIJ to agree to a three-month cease-fire on June 29. They declared, however, that their observance of the cease-fire was contingent upon Israel abiding by two conditions. First, Israel had to halt all aggression against Palestinians, including demolitions, village closures, sieges, assassinations, arrests and deportations. Second, Israel was required to release all Palestinian and Arab detainees from prisons and return them to their homes. If Israel did not act in accordance with the conditions, then the cease-fire was officially over, and the militant groups would “...hold the enemy responsible for the consequences.”⁴⁷

There are several reasons that can explain why Hamas agreed to the cease-fire. In a standard Hamas position, Rantisi said they agreed to do it “to prevent internal conflict.”⁴⁸ However, participation allowed Hamas not only to challenge the PA’s role as the sole architect

of Palestinian diplomacy, but also to craft a document that served its own purposes. The three-month cease-fire gave Hamas an opportunity to regroup and recuperate from the constant Israeli retaliation of recent months. Furthermore, it could allow Hamas to portray Israel as the belligerent in the future. Any Israeli act that could be construed as aggressive could lead to a renewal of hostilities, which Hamas could portray as Israel's responsibility.

In any case, the ceasefire was limited in scope. On July 13, the PA began a campaign to disarm the militant groups. Hamas and the PIJ responded in a joint declaration, stating they would not surrender their weapons and warned Israel that attempts to do so could jeopardize the delicate truce. In addition, Israel continued its policy of targeting militant leaders throughout the cease-fire. And then on August 19, a Hamas suicide bomber detonated a device aboard a crowded Jerusalem bus, killing 18 people and wounding more than 100. The attack was publicly alleged to be in response to the recent Israeli targeted killings; however, a videotaped statement by the suicide bomber indicated that the bombing was actually in response to an Israeli assassination that occurred in June—long before the cease-fire began. Israel responded to the bombing two days later with the assassination of senior Hamas political activist Abu Shanab. The renewed violence crippled the cease-fire, and Hamas announced shortly afterwards that they would no longer honor the agreement. Hamas blamed Israel for “the assassination of the cease-fire.”⁴⁹

Hamas and Palestinian Elections

Hamas remains a major problem in terms of creating a new peace process, although its participation in such a process is at least possible. Hamas publicly appealed to its members to boycott the PA Presidential election in January 2005, citing the group's opposition to what they consider the “illegal” 1993 Oslo Accords that created the Palestinian Authority. Some sources have also claimed that the group secretly encouraged its members to support Abbas' opposing candidates to lessen the extent of his victory. Such allegations have yet to be confirmed.

Hamas did choose to participate in local municipal elections in the West Bank in December 2004 and in Gaza in January 2005. Candidates associated with Hamas but campaigning under different affiliations ran for office in 26 communities in the West Bank, and won approximately 35% of 306 races. According to Ghazi Hamad, the Editor of Hamas' weekly newspaper, *Ara Salah* “It

was a very big percentage. . . . No one expected Hamas to take that percentage.”⁵⁰ Such results reflect a voting population that is “disenfranchised by their leaders, frustrated by years of corruption and worn down by conflict with Israel.”⁵¹ According to Birzeit University political scientist Ali Jerbawi “People wanted change...They were tired of 10 years of negotiations [with Israel] that went nowhere. . . . Hamas was the political opposition, and people identified with the opposition, if not with the Hamas ideology itself.”⁵²

Hamas also participated in the first-ever Gazan local elections at the end of January 2005—marking the first time Hamas openly campaigned for positions in Palestinian elections. The group obtained overwhelming support in Gaza where they secured 75 of the 118 council seats, while Abbas’ Fatah and its allies won 39. Although the election was for less than half of the councils in Gaza, the results indicate the widespread support and clout Hamas has continued to maintain in Gaza.

While Hamas’ victories in the first stages of local elections in the West Bank and Gaza astounded most observers, the real test of Hamas’ influence will come in April and July 2005, when the second and third stages of local elections will take place. Hamas also must now meet the test of both being part of elected governments and offering a much clearer program for action than in the past. Key uncertainties now arise as to (a) whether Hamas will accept some form of ceasefire acceptable to Israel; (b) can and will move beyond active armed struggle with Israel to participating in a peace process, (c) can actually play a constructive role in local government, (d) can work out some modus vivendi with the Palestinian Authority and Israel security forces, and (e) will emerge as a cohesive major political party at the “national” level. These questions are ones that only time can answer.

Hamas and Foreign Support

In the past, Hamas has enjoyed considerable foreign support, particularly from Iran and Syria. The ties between Hamas and Iran developed gradually. Initially, the Sunni Hamas ignored or rejected the Iranian revolution as Shi’ite – although a few leaders of Al-Majama quoted leading Iranian revolutionaries – and focused almost exclusively on Sunni groups and issues. It also took a relatively ambiguous position on the 1991 Gulf War because of its dependence on rich Gulf donors and its rivalry with the PLO.

Iran actively courted Hamas after the 1991 Gulf War, and meetings took place between a Hamas delegation and Iran's foreign minister in October 1992. While it is unclear just how much Iranian support Hamas obtained, Hamas did set up a small office in Iran and its leaders visited there regularly. The leaders of Hamas also met regularly with the leaders of the Hizbollah in Lebanon.

Iran seems to have provided Hamas with up to several million dollars a year from 1993 onwards, and some Israeli estimates reach as high as \$20 to \$30 million. In early 1999 Palestinian police reported that Hamas might have already received \$35 million to carry out sabotage operations against Israelis in the Gaza Strip.⁵³ However, it is doubtful that Iran was able to provide such large amounts of arms and military training, and that the assistance and support it provided had costs this high. It is also doubtful that extensive cooperation between Hamas and Hizbollah existed in training or operations, although there certainly has been some coordination.⁵⁴

Cooperation between Hamas and the Hizbollah has increased as the Israeli-Palestinian War continued. Iran has played a pivotal role in trying to unite Islamic forces in the struggle against the Jewish state. In late April 2001, "The International Conference on the Palestinian Intifada" was convened in Tehran, and was attended by Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah of Hizbollah, Khalid Meshal of Hamas, and the PIJ's Ramadan Shalah. At the conference, Meshal stressed the linkage of the brotherhood between the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements.

Some of the best sources on this cooperation are Israeli, and they seem relatively free from bias. A 1999 report by the ICT on Iran's role in terrorism noted that while it gave priority to supporting the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it steadily increased its ties to Hamas:⁵⁵

"Since 1992, Iran has drawn closer to Hamas, which it perceives as the leading Islamic movement in the Territories. At the foundation of their relationship lies their common interest in the disruption of the political process, and their efforts to undermine the PLO. These common goals transcend the ideological variance between them due to religious differences between the Sunni Hamas and the Shi'ite Iran. These ties manifest themselves in frequent high-level meetings between the two sides, and the relative importance of the Hamas representative in Tehran. For example, a Hamas delegation headed by two top activists, 'Imad 'Alami (Chairman of the Internal Committee) and Mustafa Qanu' (the representative in Syria) visited Iran in October 1995 and met with high-ranking Iranian officials.

"In addition to political ties, Iran also provides Hamas with military assistance. The movement's activists train on a regular basis at the camps of Hizbollah and the Guardians of the Revolution in Lebanon, as well as in Iran. This includes training for suicide attacks. Several Iranian-trained militants succeeded in

infiltrating back into the Territories under Palestinian Authority control. Israel has arrested Hamas activists who admitted that they were trained by Iranian instructors in the Beka'a Valley, in Lebanon, and in Iran. The training included the use of light weapons, photography and sabotage. Iran also gives Hamas financial assistance...including money originating from the Iranian 'Fund for the Martyrs', which grants assistance to victims of the 'Palestinian Uprising'."

Hamas enjoyed considerable support from Syria, which included allowing Hamas to train and operate in Lebanon and providing it with logistical support and safe-havens. A 1999 report on Syria's relationship with Hamas by Dr. Reuven Ehrlich (Avi-Ran) of the ICT notes that,⁵⁶

"The 'Islamic Jihad' and Hamas maintain a propaganda and political presence in Lebanon alongside of which they also carry out military activities. The founding of these organizations in Lebanon, while cooperating with the Iranians and the Hizbollah, was made possible by the approval of Syria, which controls what takes place in Lebanon. It is our opinion that the Syrians view the activity of these organizations in Lebanon to be advantageous as it blurs the Syrian connection with these organizations [and] somewhat 'diverts evidence' from Syria. We believe that this will be an even greater consideration as political pressures on Syria increase to terminate the presence and activity of these terror organizations on its soil. One may assume that the Palestinian Muslim organizations reciprocate on the operational level by assisting the Hizbollah in its operations in Israel through the infrastructure which exist in the Palestinian population in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

"Lebanon is an important arena for these organizations. They perceive Lebanon as an additional important arena from which operational activities in Israel and the 'territories' can be conducted, with the assistance of friendly organizations, mainly the Hizbollah. The presence of a large population of Palestinian refugees, the position of Lebanon as an important communication and financial center in the Arab world and the freedom prevailing there (in comparison to Syria) make it also a more convenient political, organizational and propaganda center for these organizations."

The status of Hamas' relationship with Syria has become less clear, partly because of the Syrian reaction to pressure from the United States. On May 3, 2003, Syrian President Bashar Assad ordered the closures of the offices of Hamas, the PIJ, and other Palestinian militant groups in Syria. The move was in response to pressure from the U.S. State Department, which threatened economic or diplomatic penalties against Syria if the Assad government did not act.⁵⁷ However, it is not apparent that the closures ended Syria's role in Hamas activity. A Western diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told the New York Times on July 14 that, "While there has certainly been a diminution of activity, there is still evidence that operational activity is continuing of a terrorist nature...As long as some of these leaders have a cell phone and a laptop, they will be able to operate."⁵⁸

Islamic Jihad

Hamas is not the only Palestinian group to reject both peace and efforts at a long-term cease-fire. Others, such as the Islamic Jihad, have been equally reluctant to follow the Palestinian

Authority's lead and have also employed unconventional tactics in the war against Israel. The PIJ, however, is more secretive than Hamas, and does not play the high-profile charitable and social role in Palestinian society that Hamas does. It does not operate schools, hospitals or health clinics, although it does give money to the families of militants killed in action.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad share several similarities. Similar to Hamas, the Islamic Jihad's objective is to drive the State of Israel from land which it considers to be Palestinian territory. Both movements ultimately hope to construct an Islamic theocracy in Palestine, and both are committed to violence in order to achieve their objectives. Like Hamas, the Islamic Jihad's struggle is directed against both non-Muslims and Arab regimes that have "deviated" from Islam and which have attacked or suppressed the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁹ Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian War, the Islamic Jihad and Hamas have been allies and, on some occasions, collaborators in their conflicts with both Israel and the PA.

Organization

The Islamic Jihad began as a radical, ideological offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, the original Sunni pan-Arab Islamist movement, and was formed in reaction to the Brotherhood's growing rejection of militancy. Unlike Hamas, however, Islamic Jihad is not simply a Palestinian group. Elements of the Islamic Jihad have appeared in almost all the Arab states and in some parts of the non-Arab Islamic world under various names. These groups have been influenced by the success of the revolution in Iran, and by the growth of Islamic militancy in Lebanon and Egypt. According to Israeli sources, the Palestinian factions of the Islamic Jihad are part of the Islamic Jihad movements that appeared in the Sunni Arab world in the 1970s. These movements are characterized by a rejection of the Brotherhood's "truce" with most of the existing regimes in the Arab world. They perceive violence as a legitimate tool in changing the face of Arab societies and regimes.

Unlike the Islamic Jihad movements in Arab countries, the Palestinian factions of the Islamic Jihad (known collectively as the PIJ) see the "Zionist Jewish entity" embodied in the State of Israel as their foremost enemy and primary target. They see "Palestine" as an integral and fundamental part of the Arab and Muslim world where Muslims are "subjected" to foreign rule. The fact that Israel is perceived as foreign and non-Muslim allows the Islamic Jihad to use

different methods of resistance than those adopted by similar groups operating against Muslim and Arab regimes. The PIJ calls for armed struggle against Israel through guerrilla groups composed of the revolutionary vanguard. These groups carry out terrorist attacks aimed at weakening Israel and “its desire to continue its occupation”. These attacks lay the groundwork for the moment when an Islamic army will be able to destroy Israel in a military confrontation.

The PIJ movement has always been divided into factions. The element that has become dominant since the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO was originally named “Shekaki/Ouda,” after its co-founders Dr. Fathi Shekaki and Abed el-Aziz Ouda. Ouda also served as the organization’s spiritual leader. Shekaki and Ouda were both from Gaza, and founded their faction based on their exposure to similar political groups in Egyptian universities. They coordinated various groups in Gaza when they returned from their studies, and may have had some responsibility for a grenade attack on an Israeli army induction ceremony at the Western Wall in October 1986, that killed one person and wounded 69.

Both Shekaki and Ouda were deported from Gaza to Lebanon in 1988. They then reorganized their faction to establish a military unit to carry out attacks against Israeli targets, alongside the existing political unit. This unit seems to have played a role in an assault on an Israeli tourist bus in Egypt in February 1990 that killed nine Israelis and two Egyptians, and wounded 19. There is also evidence that they were responsible for killing two people and wounding eight in a knifing attack in Tel Aviv in March 1993. Around the time of the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO in September 1993, Shekaki used his close ideological and political ties with Iran to gradually push aside Ouda. He soon became recognized as the sole head of the group. He renamed the Syrian-based organization the Shekaki Faction and remained in Damascus serving as its undisputed leader until alleged Mossad agents assassinated him in Sliema, Malta on October 26, 1995.⁶⁰

The PIJ during the Peace Process

The PIJ made no secret of its commitment to violence after the Oslo peace accords or about its ties to Iran.⁶¹ It distributed anti-peace propaganda, material and tapes, and used the mosques as centers for anti-peace activity. It also established a newspaper called Al-Istiqlal, which appears in the area under the jurisdiction of the PA and is edited by Ala Siftawi. Shekaki

often boasted of his ties with Iran — which, he said, were strengthened following his first visit to Tehran in December 1988. Unlike Hamas, his faction had close ties to the Hizbollah from the start.⁶² Shekaki praised the Islamic Republic and its political and spiritual support of the Palestinian people's efforts to continue the jihad and to achieve independence. In 1994, however, he claimed that the PIJ did not receive Iranian military aid and did not have a base in Iran, yet he claimed that Iranian support for his organization and Hamas amounted to \$20 million a year.⁶³

The PIJ intensified the tone of its anti-Israeli statements after the murder of PIJ activist Hani Abed in Gaza on February 11, 1994. Shekaki said, “The continuation of the jihad against the Zionist occupation is our primary concern and the center of our lives,” and

“We shall raise arms against the criminal Israelis wherever they may be in the autonomous territory and outside it. We have a new reason which justifies the continuation of our struggle.” In another statement, he announced the establishment of a group of seventy people prepared to commit suicide “in order to carry out attacks against the occupation forces in the self-governing areas. Such attacks in the Gaza Strip will cease only when the Israeli settlements in the area will be disbanded... If this will occur, the suicide attacks will be transferred to other areas, because our fight against the occupation will continue.”⁶⁴

The Shekaki faction of the PIJ killed at least 30 Israelis in the mid-1990s. It claimed responsibility for the killing of two Israelis at a bus stop in Ashdod in April 1994 and for 17 other attacks on Israelis. These included killing an Israeli soldier on foot patrol in Gaza on September 4, 1994, killing three Israeli officers in a suicide bombing at the Netzarim junction in Gaza on November 11, 1994, and a bombing that killed twenty Israeli soldiers and a civilian at a bus stop in Beit Lid near Netanya in central Israel on January 22, 1995. Both the PIJ and Hamas claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on April 9, 1995, where two Palestinians blew themselves up on buses near Kfar Darom, a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. Seven Israeli soldiers and an American student were killed, and 40 other Israelis were wounded. Eleven other Israelis were hurt in two suicide bombings on November 1, 1995, that were conducted as revenge for Shekaki's assassination.

The PIJ was less successful between late 1995 and the outbreak of war in September 2000, but it scarcely abandoned violence. Similar to Hamas, the PIJ also changed the character of its operations, focusing heavily on suicide bombers. Whereas Hamas began its campaign against Israel with organized demonstrations and car bombs, and later escalated to suicide bombings, an emphasis on the use of suicide bombings characterized the PIJ's operations from the beginning of the war.

Tactics during the Israeli-Palestinian War

Nearly one month after the war began, on October 26, 2000, the PIJ claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in the Kisufim settlement in Gaza that injured one Israeli soldier. The bombing marked the fifth anniversary of the death of Shekaki and was the first

suicide bombing of the war. PIJ leader Ramadan Abdallah Shallah, a former professor from the University of South Florida, suggested that the bombing was “a new opening for suicide action...” and would “...be the beginning for more operations against Israeli soldiers.”⁶⁵

On November 2, 2000, the PIJ demonstrated what was to become its secondary tactic of the war. A car bomb exploded in a Jerusalem marketplace killing, *inter alia*, the daughter of National Religious Party leader Rabbi Yitzhak Levy and wounding ten Israelis. Between November 2, 2000, and early October 2001, the PIJ claimed responsibility for at least five additional car bomb attacks in which two Israelis were killed and at least 110 were injured.⁶⁶ These attacks included a car bomb that exploded in Jerusalem’s Talpiot area (the city’s “industrial” zone where there are many nightclubs and dance bars) on March 27, 2000, a car bomb that exploded at the central bus station of Hadera on May 25, one that exploded outside of a Netanya school on May 30, and one that exploded in a residential area of Jerusalem on October 1, but caused no serious injuries.

In addition to suicide attacks and car bombs, the PIJ carried out other forms of attack. On May 27, a bomb exploded in central Jerusalem, containing several mortar shells, some of which were propelled hundreds of meters from the site of the explosion. The Israeli police conducted extensive searches for the shells, and found six mortars intact in a 300-meter radius. The Israeli police expressed grave concern, emphasizing the likelihood that such an attack could only have been possible had mortars been smuggled into the West Bank and Gaza from areas outside of Israel.⁶⁷

Beginning in June 2001, the PIJ returned to the use of suicide bombings against Israel. The following is a chronology of PIJ suicide bombings from October 2000 to June 2004:

- ? October 26, 2000 – In the first suicide bombing of the war, a PIJ militant blows himself up near the Kisufim settlement in the Gaza Strip. No Israelis are seriously injured.
- ? June 1, 2001 – Suicide bomber blows himself up at a Tel Aviv discotheque, killing 21 and wounding 120. Both Hamas and the PIJ claim responsibility.
- ? July 16, 2001 – PIJ suicide bomber kills himself and two Israeli settlers at a bus stop north of Tel Aviv. A second bomber blows himself up at a train station in Binyamina, killing himself and an Israeli woman, and injuring five others.

- ? August 9, 2001 – Suicide bombing at a crowded Jerusalem pizzeria, killing 15 and wounding almost 90. Both Hamas and the PIJ claim responsibility.
- ? August 12, 2001 – PIJ suicide bomber blows himself up at a restaurant near Haifa, killing himself and wounding up to 20 people.
- ? October 7, 2001 – PIJ suicide bomber kills himself and one Israeli in Beit Shean.
- ? October 8, 2001 – PIJ militant blows himself up near the Kibbutz Shluhot in northern Israel.
- ? September 9, 2001 – PIJ, Hamas and Hizbollah claim responsibility for a suicide bombing in Nahariya that kills three and injures 31.
- ? November 29, 2001 – PIJ suicide bomber leaves three Israelis dead and six wounded on a passenger bus in northern Israel.
- ? January 25, 2002 – PIJ suicide bomber detonates nail-packed explosives in a Tel Aviv mall, killing himself and wounding 24 bystanders.
- ? March 5, 2002 – PIJ suicide bomber blows himself up on a bus in Afula, killing himself and an Israeli passenger and wounding 11 people.
- ? March 20, 2002 – Seven Israelis are killed and 29 injured when a PIJ suicide bomber detonates near the town of Um-al-Fahm.
- ? April 19, 2002 – PIJ claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at the Israeli checkpoint at Kisufim; the bomber is killed and two soldiers are lightly wounded.
- ? June 5, 2002 – PIJ suicide bomber drives a truck filled with explosives into an Israeli Egged commuter bus at the Megiddo Junction near Afula; he and 17 Israelis are killed
- ? July 17, 2002 – Two PIJ suicide bombers set off explosions in Tel Aviv, killing at least three and wounding about 40 people.
- ? September 19, 2002 – Both Hamas and the PIJ accept responsibility for a suicide bombing aboard a Tel Aviv bus, killing five and wounding over 60.
- ? October 21, 2002 – PIJ militant rams a jeep packed with up to 100 kilograms of explosives into a commuter bus as it is waiting at a bus stop east of Hadera, in northern Israel. Fourteen Israelis and the bomber are killed, 47 people are injured.
- ? November 4, 2002 – PIJ suicide bomber blows himself up at a shopping mall in Kfar Saba, killing two people and wounding more than 30.
- ? January 5, 2003 – PIJ and Hamas claim responsibility for double suicide bombings in Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station, killing 20 and wounding 100.
- ? March 30, 2003 – PIJ militant blows himself up at a mall in Netanya, killing himself and wounding between 30 and 50 people.
- ? May 19, 2003 – In a surprising new tactic, the first PIJ female bomber blows herself up at a shopping mall in Afula, killing three people and wounding dozens more.
- ? June 19, 2003 – PIJ suicide bomber blows himself up at a grocery store in Sdeh Trumot near the West Bank, killing himself and the storeowner.
- ? August 19, 2003—Both Islamic Jihad and Hamas accept responsibility for a suicide bombing committed by a member of Hamas on a crowded bus in West Jerusalem that kills more than 20 and wounds over 100 people.

- ? October 4, 2003—A female Islamic Jihad suicide bomber self-detonates inside a restaurant in Haifa. 14 Israeli Jews and 5 Israeli Arabs are killed; around 50 are wounded—one mortally—in the attack.

The PIJ reportedly had little difficulty finding recruits for suicide bombings.⁶⁸ Indeed, by 2003, a number of recruits had allegedly defected from Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. On January 26, 2003, Knight-Ridder reported that the new recruits could number from several dozens to several hundreds. According to Israeli officials, the increase in membership began after the Megiddo Junction attack on June 5, 2002, and resulted from the fact that the PIJ will not make long-term peace with Israel, but is less strict than Hamas. Another attraction was that the PIJ reportedly paid US \$5,000 to the surviving family members of suicide bombers, which on average was \$2,000 more than Hamas typically paid during 2002.⁶⁹

Despite Islamic religious constraints, PIJ suicide bombers have come to involve women, as well as men. On May 19, 2003, a 19-year-old woman, Hiba Daraghmeh, detonated a bomb at a shopping mall in the northern Israeli town of Afula. Three people died and dozens more were wounded. This was the PIJ's first use of a female suicide bomber, which was particularly surprising due to the group's radical fundamentalist Islamic beliefs. After the attack, the PIJ distributed newsletters to universities throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, praising its female fighters.⁷⁰ One PIJ trainer reportedly said, "Our women are no longer the type of women who cry or weep. We have martyrdom women now."⁷¹ The PIJ adopted the tactic because of its element of surprise, and its use marked a clear distinction from Hamas, which has long opposed the use of female suicide bombers.

The success of the PIJ's suicide attacks is another example of the impact of asymmetric warfare on the conventional balance of military forces. A quarter of a century of military and paramilitary training and "terrorist" training camps have had a limited impact on Israel. Untrained youths, however, had a major impact during the first Intifada. Since that time, the PIJ and Hamas have found that using Islamic organizations to locate idealistic "true believers," giving them a short indoctrination for preparation, and then sending them out on suicide missions, gives the Palestinian Authority and Israel far less warning than using trained personnel, and produces far more casualties and has a greater political impact.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of war has given the PIJ and Hamas more freedom to plan the time of their attacks and to carefully and strategically choose their targets. Moreover, their loose, decentralized, and compartmentalized organization lack the transparency of the hierarchical structures of military and paramilitary groups and thus make it more difficult for Israeli anti-terror units and the Palestinian security services to detect and penetrate those cells.⁷²

The PIJ and the Palestinian Authority

Like Hamas, the PIJ had a largely adversarial relationship with the PA. As mentioned previously, in the first few months of the war, Yasser Arafat attempted to placate the militant factions and encourage anti-Israeli demonstrations by releasing Hamas and PIJ militants from PA jails.⁷³ In October 2000, PIJ activists were granted representation in the PA High Committee Follow-Up Intifada Nationalist Islamic Organizations, which planned rallies in the West Bank and Gaza.⁷⁴

The Tel Aviv discotheque bombing on June 1, 2001, marked the first time that the PIJ not only had a dramatic impact on the war, but also on the PA. As a result of the deaths, injuries, and sheer terror of the incident, Arafat announced that he would attempt to enforce a cease-fire among the militant factions. While he had previously ignored Sharon's calls for a truce, the PA now began to arrest PIJ and Hamas supporters. On June 23, PA security forces arrested Sheikh Abdullah Shami, the PIJ's spiritual leader. PIJ supporters formed a human wall around Shami's house, delaying the arrest.⁷⁵

On November 4, 2001, the PA arrested PIJ militant Mahmoud Tawalbi in Jenin. The arrest set off protests by 3,000 Palestinians, who fired guns, threw grenades, and burned cars. The PA was forced to fight against its own people, who were encouraged by Hamas.⁷⁶ Throughout November and December 2001, the PA arrested Hamas and PIJ militants and the two sides clashed on several occasions.

The PIJ's relationship with Arafat's government worsened in 2002. This was caused in part by Israeli retaliation against the PA for PIJ actions. For example, on June 5, following the Megiddo Junction suicide bombing, Israeli troops stormed Arafat's Ramallah compound and destroyed PA buildings.⁷⁷ Four days later, PA security personnel again arrested al Shami, allegedly for criticizing Arafat in Palestinian newspapers.⁷⁸

The PIJ has expressed the desire to replace the Arafat regime. On January 24 – 28, 2003, PIJ representatives met with delegates from 11 other Palestinian factions in Cairo to discuss inter-group cooperation and a possible cease-fire. They were unable to agree on the cease-fire but did agree to form a coalition, which could ultimately take over the Palestinian Authority.⁷⁹

The PIJ and the Abbas Government's Cease-Fire Efforts

On March 11, 2003, the PIJ dismissed the notion of a Palestinian Authority prime minister, saying it could never accept a post created under pressure from the U.S. and Israel.⁸⁰ Following the introduction of the U.S.-drafted “road map” for peace on April 29, the PIJ also rejected cease-fire efforts. However, surprisingly, on June 19, PIJ and Hamas leaders met with Abbas to discuss a halt in the violence.

On June 25, senior PIJ militant Mohammed al-Hindi reported that Hamas had asked the PIJ to issue “a joint declaration which is based on a comprehensive three-month cease-fire.”⁸¹ On June 29, both Hamas and the PIJ agreed to the temporary cease-fire, though both parties refused to surrender their weapons to the Abbas government on July 13.

Publicly, the PIJ stated that it agreed to the cease-fire because of Hamas' requests.⁸² However, at least three other factors seem to have influenced the group. First, a number of countries had become actively hostile to militant extremism and terrorist activity in the preceding months. This was reflected in both the U.S.-led coalition's removal of the Saddam Hussein regime from power in Iraq and increasing U.S. pressure on countries known to support terrorism, such as Syria. Second, anti-militant protests broke out in the Palestinian village of Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip in May, following repeated Israeli incursions. The villagers blamed Hamas and the PIJ for the Israeli operation. This indicated a possible decline in the PIJ's public support. Finally, both the PIJ and Hamas likely required a three-month period to recuperate from recent Israeli retaliation.

The PIJ initially adhered to the cease-fire agreement despite the Israeli assassination of the PIJ militant Muhammed Sider in Hebron on August 14. However, the PIJ followed Hamas' lead, and withdrew from the truce on August 22, following the Israeli targeted killing of the Hamas senior activist Abu Shanab a day earlier.

The PIJ and Foreign Support

Similar to Hamas, the PIJ has benefited from continued foreign support. Iran is often perceived as its key foreign sponsor. Indeed, on April 24, 2001, representatives from Hamas, Hizbollah and the PIJ met in Tehran in a gesture of solidarity. According to the Associated Press, they issued a joint message to Israel: Expect combat, not dialogue.⁸³ On July 18, 2002, the American Jewish Committee released a new report, stating that the PIJ was responsible for “Islamicizing” Palestinians and establishing a deadly relationship between Palestinians and Iran.⁸⁴

Syria has also been a major supporter. When the PIJ joined in the protests of a Jordanian crackdown against Hamas in September 1999, it did so out of its office in Damascus and in cooperation with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah Intifada.⁸⁵

A 1999 report on Syria’s role in terrorism by Dr. Reuven Ehrlich (Avi-Ran) of the ICT in Israel described Syria’s relationship with the PIJ before the war.⁸⁶

“...Islamic Jihad” began operating in Syria upon the arrival of Fathi Shkaki in 1989 and the establishment of his headquarters in Damascus. Permitting Shkaki to operate from Syrian territory marked Damascus’ transformation into the center of Palestinian-Islamic activity in the 90’s, as it was the center for Palestinian left-wing organizations in the 70’s and 80’s. Unlike Hamas, which has military and political infrastructure in various countries, the “Islamic Jihad’s” infrastructure outside Judea, Samaria and Gaza is concentrated mostly in the area of Damascus, from where operational activity is being directed.

“In this framework, Dr. Ramadan Shalah, Secretary-General of the organization, currently resides in Damascus. Also in Syria is the operational leadership of the organization. Outstanding among the organization’s leadership are Ziad Nehaleh, Shalah’s deputy, responsible for the “Lebanon arena” and Ibrahim Shehadeh, a senior figure responsible for operations in the organization. These operational activists initiate, plan and carry out terror attacks in Israel and Judea, Samaria and Gaza, an activity that found its expression in five lethal suicide bombings of the last three years. In addition to directing the operational activity, the organization’s leadership in Syria maintains contact with other terrorist organizations (mainly the Hizbollah and the PFLP-GC).

“The interrogation of “Islamic Jihad” recruits arrested in Judea, Samaria and Gaza in recent years revealed that most of them maintain some direct or indirect link to Islamic Jihad operational headquarters in Damascus. Some of them confessed to having been recruited in Syria, from where they were sent for training in Iran or Lebanon. Further, specific guidelines govern communications between these recruits and headquarters in Syria. Upon returning to the territories, these men regularly received operational orders from Damascus.

On May 3, 2003, Syrian President Bashar Assad ordered the closures of Hamas, PIJ, PFLP-General Command, and other militant factions’ offices in Damascus. However, Western

diplomats believe that the groups are still using Syria as a base for planning future terrorist activity.

The Role of Other Militant Opposition Factions

Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad are the largest, most active, and most popular Palestinian factions that oppose Arafat, peace and the Palestinian Authority. However, there are other extremist movements that also represent threats to Arafat, the PA and peacemaking efforts. These factions tend to be relatively small and are much less active than Hamas and the PIJ. Yet, some have been able to influence the course of the war on several occasions.

Many of these smaller opposition groups are based in Lebanon and Syria. In recent years, Syria has pressured the Lebanese government to confine the Palestinian militant groups to the refugee camps, which has helped to constrain their actions. Dr. Reuven Ehrlich (Avi-Ran) analyzed Palestinian activity in Lebanon in 1999. Dr. Ehrlich described the role of each organization as follows:⁸⁷

- ? “Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command – Of all the left-wing organizations in Lebanon, this has the most highly developed infrastructure. It has several hundred active members in Lebanon, among them more than one hundred fighters. The organization has bases, camps, and offices in Lebanon from which it carries out terror activities against the IDF in Southern Lebanon (in close cooperation with the Hizbollah and with other Palestinian terror organizations). It has training camps and arsenals containing both light and heavy weaponry. In addition, the organization has a marine unit in Lebanon.
- ? Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine/ Na’if Hawatmeh – The Democratic Front has been operating in Lebanon since the 1970s. In the 1990s there has been a gradual decline in the organization’s scope of activities in Lebanon as a result of the general weakening of the left-wing organizations among the Palestinian public, restrictions placed on it by the Lebanese Army, the organization’s financial difficulties, and repeated failed attempts at acts of terror. Today, the organization has several hundred active members in Lebanon, several dozen of which are “fighters” and the rest involved in the political-propaganda and logistic-organizational fields. A number of bases and offices serve as arsenals and launching points for the organization’s operational activities. Because of reduced operational capability, members are often assisted by their counterparts, particularly the Hizbollah and Habash’s “PFLP.”
- ? Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/ George Habash – This organization has a few dozen military activists and other members involved in the areas of politics, propaganda, and logistics. The organization has offices and bases in Lebanon, including arsenals, training camps, and operations bases.
- ? Fatah-Revolutionary Council / Abu Nidal - Since the beginning of the 1980s, Abu Nidal’s organization has had an operational infrastructure in Lebanon (originally secretively and later openly). In the ‘80s the organization’s ranks numbered several hundred operatives, with camps and bases at its disposal in Beirut, Beka’a, and Northern and Southern Lebanon. In the 1990’s the organizations infrastructure in Lebanon was damaged and weakened because of loss of prestige with the Syrians and various additional reasons: internal disputes, violent conflict with Fatah/Arafat, and vigorous efforts against it by the Lebanese army and the Lebanese intelligence agencies (particularly after the 1994 murder of the First Secretary of the Jordanian

Embassy in Lebanon, which was ascribed to the organization). The organization continues to maintain an operational infrastructure in Beirut and in refugee camps throughout Lebanon, however, in the past few years it has kept a low profile and conducted its activities in utmost secrecy. According to the annual U.S. State Department report (as of April 1998), the organization has refrained from attacking Western targets since the end of the 1970s.

- ? Fatah/ Abu Mussa faction - The organization numbers a few dozen military activists in Lebanon, and has several offices and bases in Lebanon including weapons arsenals and training camps.”

All of these organizations opposed Arafat and the PLO’s decision to participate in the peace process with Israel in 1992. Two Marxist-oriented groups within the PLO, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), ceased participation in the organization in protest of the Oslo Accords. In 1999 the PFLP and DFLP again became active in the PLO.

Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian War, these factions publicly expressed their opposition to Israel and peacemaking efforts. However, with the exception of a suspected suicide bombing orchestrated by the PFLP-GC in June 2003, only the PFLP and the DFLP have participated in significant armed violence against Israelis. The DFLP’s participation in the conflict has been relatively minor. Only three incidents of DFLP violence have been reported during the war. These include a shooting incident in August 2001 that killed three IDF soldiers and two further shooting attacks in June and July 2002, resulting in injuries to four soldiers and the deaths of eight settlers. Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade also claimed responsibility for the July 2002 attack. While the DFLP accepted Mahmoud Abbas’ cease-fire in June 2003, the PFLP did not. Among the smaller extremist factions, the PFLP has been the most violent.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

The Greek Orthodox Christian Palestinian George Habash formed the PFLP’s precursor, the Arab Nationalist Movement, in 1952. He was influenced by the policies of the pan-Arab nationalist Gamal Abdel Nasser. Following the Six-Day War in 1967, the group adopted a Marxist-Leninist orientation and changed its name to the PFLP. It subsequently became one of the founding groups of the PLO.⁸⁸ The PFLP claims to represent the Palestinian working class, and its objective is to “liberate” all of Palestine in order to establish a democratic socialist Palestinian state.⁸⁹

The PFLP opposed the Oslo peace process. As the PA and Arafat's Fatah gained strength, the PFLP became increasingly marginalized. At the same time, it was forced to reduce the number of violent attacks it committed against Israel, largely because the Syrian government tightened its control over the group.⁹⁰ The PFLP was reunited with the PLO in 1999, though PFLP and Fatah leaders continued to experience animosity toward one another. The PFLP remains the second largest faction in the PLO after Fatah.

The PFLP initially refrained from violent acts when the Israeli-Palestinian War began in September 2000. However, the group became active in March 2001, when PFLP militants shot and killed an Israeli civilian driving to work in Jerusalem from his home in Gush Etzion. The incident reflected the PFLP's tactics throughout the first year of the war. The group participated in several shootings of Israelis, as well as three separate car bombs on May 27 and July 2, 2001.

Israel responded to the PFLP's violence on August 27. Israeli forces assassinated the PFLP's leader, George Habash's successor Mustafa Zibri, in a Ramallah suburb. He was the highest-ranking Palestinian leader killed at that time. The incident ignited immediate protests. The U.S. State Department argued that Israel's "targeted killings" policy diminished the chances of restoring calm.⁹¹ Palestinians demonstrated in the streets and engaged in more shooting attacks on Israeli soldiers. In response, Israeli forces moved into the West Bank town of Beit Jalah and demolished eight buildings in Rafah in the Gaza Strip.

The PFLP's tactics escalated following Zibri's assassination. On September 3, 2001, four PFLP pipe bombs exploded in the French Hill and Gilo neighborhoods of Jerusalem. Six people were injured. On October 17, the PFLP executed one of the most unexpected attacks of the war. In revenge for Zibri's killing, PFLP militants ambushed and murdered right-wing Israeli Tourism Minister Rahavem Zeevi at the Jerusalem Hyatt Hotel. Subsequently, the Palestinian Authority initiated a crackdown on the PFLP, arresting 20 of its members in the West Bank and 13 in Gaza. Israel responded with an extensive military operation, deploying forces in and around Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and four other Palestinian cities. Zeevi's assassination drove a deeper wedge between the PFLP and Arafat, and further scarred relations between Israel and the PA. The Sharon government did not allow Arafat to attend Christmas mass in Bethlehem when the PA proved unable or unwilling to arrest the actual perpetrators.

In 2002, the PFLP adopted the use of suicide bombings. The first attack occurred on February 16 in a shopping mall in the West Bank settlement of Karnei Shomron. Three Israelis were killed and 27 were wounded. Suicide bombings continued in March and May. The PFLP also continued to utilize shootings and car bombs as well.

The PFLP cooperated with other militant factions in committing terrorist attacks in 2003. There were also competing claims of responsibility between the PFLP and other extremist groups. PFLP and Tanzim militants killed two IDF soldiers and wounded two others on February 6. Then on February 11, the PFLP and the PIJ both claimed responsibility for a bombing that killed an IDF officer near the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and the PFLP cooperated in two separate incidents in April – a shooting on April 10 that killed two IDF soldiers and a suicide bombing on April 24 that killed a security guard and wounded many others. For a more detailed discussion of the growing level of cooperation between various militant groups in conducting terrorist attacks, please see Chapter XVI.

The PFLP was highly critical of PA Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and his cease-fire efforts in June. On June 30, 2003, a day after Hamas and other factions declared a cease-fire, PFLP leaders said they would not sign the declaration. However, they said they would not violate it either.⁹² The PFLP remained opposed to Arafat and the PA. On July 1, PFLP leader Maher Taher said that his group opposed the PA's "monopoly" over decision-making and stated that all Palestinian militant factions should have been consulted in the crafting of the truce.⁹³

Despite Syrian President Bashar Assad's May 2003 order for all Palestinian militant bases in Syrian controlled territory to be closed, the PFLP has remained active in Syria and Lebanon. . In July 2003, the PFLP office in Syria appeared to be open, though the young men inside claimed that the office was actually a sports club.⁹⁴ And on June 7, 2004, Israeli warplanes attacked an alleged active PFLP General Command base in the Naameh hills outside of Beirut.⁹⁵

During the rest of 2003 and the first half of 2004, the PFLP continued to carry out terrorist attacks against Israeli targets both unilaterally and in conjunction with other militant groups. For example, on December 25, 2003 a PFLP suicide bomber blew himself up at a bus stop in Petah Tikva, killing four Israelis and injuring 20. Then on February 27, 2004, in a joint

attack with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, PFLP and Brigade gunmen ambushed and killed two Israeli settlers as they were driving near the Green Line between Eshkolot and Sansana. Lastly, on May 22, 2004, the PFLP claimed credit for a failed suicide bombing near the Bekaot Valley checkpoint in the Jordan Valley that injured one IDF soldier and five Palestinians.⁹⁶

Table VIII.1

Military and Paramilitary Strength of Key Palestinian Factions and The Hizbollah

Palestinian Authority

- ? 35,000 Security and paramilitary pro-PLO forces enforcing security in Gaza and Jericho, including:
 - o Public Security (14,000) – 6,000 in Gaza and 8,000 in West Bank
 - o Civil police (10,000) – 4,000 in Gaza and 6,000 in West Bank
 - o Preventive Security (3,000) – 1,200 in Gaza and 1,800 in West Bank
 - o General Intelligence (3,000),
 - o Presidential Security (3,000),
 - o Military Intelligence (500), and
 - o Additional forces in Coastal Police, Air Force, Customs and Excise Police Force, University Security Service, and Civil Defense.
- ? Equipment includes 45 APCs, 1 Lockheed Jetstar, 2 Mi-8s, 2 Mi-17s, and roughly 40,000 small arms. These include automatic weapons and light machine guns. Israeli claims they include heavy automatic weapons, rocket launchers, anti-tank rocket launchers and guided weapons, and manportable anti-air missiles.
- ? The PA wants 12,000 more security forces after further withdrawals. Israel has proposed some 2,000.

Pro-PLO

- ? Palestinian National Liberation Army (PNLA)/Al Fatah - 5,000-8,000 active and semi-active reserves that make up main pro-Arafat force, based in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen under the tight control of the host government.
- ? Fatah Tanzim - Claims to have tens of thousands of members, aged 20-35, most of them residents of Palestinian autonomous territories, and recruited in Universities, established in 1995 and led by Chairman Yasser Arafat.
- ? Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) - Abu Abbas Faction - 300-400 men led by Abu Abbas, based in Iraq.
- ? Arab Liberation Front (ALF) - 300-400 men based in Lebanon and Iraq.
- ? Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) - 400-600 men led by Naif Hawatmeh, which claims eight battalions, and is based in Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere.
- ? Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) - 800 men led by George Habash, based in Syria, Lebanon, West Bank, and Gaza.
- ? Palestine Popular Struggle Front (PSF) - 600-700 men led by Samir Ghawsha and Bahjat Abu Gharbiyah, based in Syria.

Anti-PLO

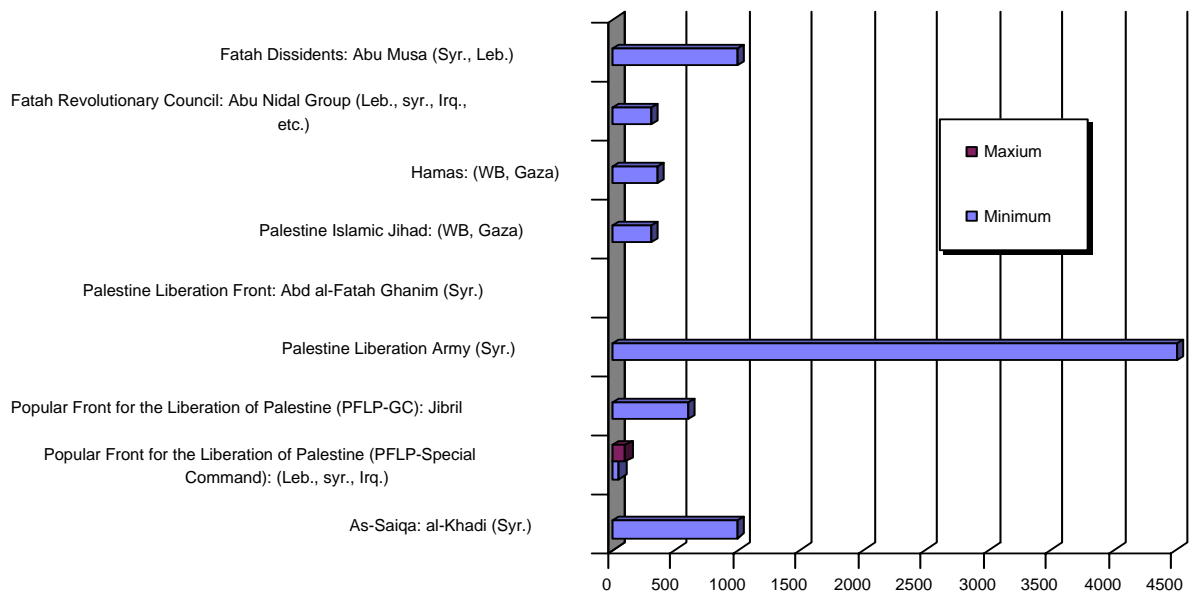
- ? Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) - 350 men in various factions, led by Assad Bayud al-Tamimi, Fathi Shakaki, Ibrahim Odeh, Ahmad Muhana, and others, based in the West Bank and Gaza.
- ? Hamas - military wing of about 300 men, based in the West Bank and Gaza.
 - o Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Battalions – set up by Zaccaria Walid Akel in 1991, as terrorist squads assigned to kidnapping and executing people, and also gathering intelligence.
- ? As-Saiqa - 600-1,000 men in pro-Syrian force under Issam al-Qadi, based in Syria.
- ? Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC)/Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) - 400 men plus dozens of militia men in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon led by Abu Nidal (Sabri al-Bana), based in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.
- ? Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC) - 600 men led by Ahmad Jibril, a former captain in the Syrian Army, headquartered in Damascus with bases in Lebanon.
- ? Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - Special Command (PFLP-SC) - 50-100 men led by Abu Muhammad (Salim Abu Salem).
- ? Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) - 4,500 men, based in Syria.
- ? Fatah Intifada – 400-1,000 men led by Said Musa Muragha (Abu Musa). Based in Syria and Lebanon.

Hizbollah (Party of God),

- ? Several hundred actives with several thousand men in support, Shi'ite fundamentalist, APCs, artillery, MRLs. ATGMs, rocket launchers, AA guns, SA-7s, AT-3 Saggars.

Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1998." Washington, GPO, April 1999; "Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000," Washington, GPO, April 2001; IISS, Military Balance, 1998-1999 and 1999-2000.

Figure VIII.1
Anti-PLO/Palestinian Authority Palestinian Paramilitary Forces in 2000



| | As-Saiqa: al-Khadi (Syr.) | Popular Front for the Liberation | Popular Front for the Liberation | Palestine Liberation Army (Syr.) | Palestine Liberation Front: Abd al-Fatah | Palestine Islamic Jihad: (WB, Gaza) | Hamas: (WB, Gaza) | Fatah Revolutionary Council: Abu Nidal | Fatah Dissidents: Abu Musa (Syr., Leb.) |
|-----------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--|---|
| ■ Maxium | | 100 | | | | | | | |
| ■ Minimum | 1000 | 50 | 600 | 4,500 | | 300 | 350 | 300 | 1,000 |

Source: Prepared by Anthony H. Cordesman, based upon the IISS [Military Balance](#) and discussions with U.S. and regional experts

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- ⁶ Reuters, June 25, 1998.
- ⁷ Washington Post, November 2, 1998, p. A-1.
- ⁸ Washington Post, October 17, 1995, p. A-1; Washington Times, September 4, 1995, p. A-9..
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