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WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

Anti-Israeli Arab Terrorist Organizations

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Anti-Israeli Arab Terrorist Organizations

Incidents both within Israel and along its borders have focused attention on the various Arab terrorist organizations. Although the activities of these groups have resulted in only slight material damage and loss of life, they have caused the Israelis to take strong reprisal actions against the bases in Jordan from which most of the terrorists operate. These counterraids have, in turn, brought serious internal political problems for Jordan's King Husayn.

If these terrorist organizations—which include Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—were ever able to unify or coordinate their activities as the first two seem to be planning, they could possibly create serious problems for Tel Aviv. As it is, however, the terrorists serve mainly to irritate the Israelis and to keep the Palestine problem a continuing one—seemingly defying solution.

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The Tradition of Terrorism

Terrorism as a way of life in Arab-Israeli relations dates back to the 1920s and '30s, when it was the principal weapon used by both Jews and Arabs in harassing each other and also the British mandate authorities in Palestine. During the late 1950s, numerous paramilitary commando groups--fedayeen--were organized among the unemployed and dispossessed Palestinians by the Arab governments and by the Palestinians themselves, largely as an outgrowth of frustration over the lack of aggressive action by the Arab states after the Sinai war in 1956.

In 1964, pressure from many of these groups to form a unified organization to coordinate their activities resulted in the Arab League's creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Within a short time, however, many Palestinians became disillusioned by the propensity of PLO leaders to engage in polemics rather than in action, and the PLO became virtually moribund.

The war of June 1967 smashed most of the Arab armies that had fought against Israel. Withdrawing behind their cease-fire lines, these battered forces began the long and laborious process of attempting to rebuild their strength and effectiveness. Meanwhile, well-educated, dedicated Arab students--believing that there was no other way to prevent a de facto acquiescence in Israel's retention of the West Bank area--began to join the various Palestinian terrorist groups.

Frequent and well-publicized raids into the area started in November 1967, and the terrorists' audacity soon won them the admiration of Arabs in the surrounding countries. New volunteers swelled the ranks and additional financial support from both governments and individuals became available--especially to Fatah, the most active of the groups. Younger officers in Jordanian military units, under orders to curtail and suppress the activities of the terrorists, instead began actively to support them as did the Iraqi Army detachments in Jordan. The terrorists were soon operating openly from a number of sites on the East Bank near the Jordan River.

Although these activities were causing no damage of any real consequence, the death of some Israeli civilians set off a strong public outcry that soon forced Tel Aviv into a harsh reaction. In early 1968, under a newly initiated policy of large-scale retaliation, the Israelis launched an attack on Karama, a major terrorist base in Jordan. Similar large-scale reprisals have followed at irregular intervals, the most recent in August against the Jordanian town of As Salt.

On the Arab side, popular pressure was again calling for another consolidation of the various terrorist groups into a unified political and military organization. In response, representatives of the three major

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groups--the PLO, Fatah, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)--finally met in Cairo in the summer of 1968 and agreed to select a 100-man Palestine National Assembly. The PLO and its associated groups were given 50 seats, Fatah 38, the PFLP 10, and two seats were reserved for various minor organizations. Even this show of unity may be rather short lived, however, because Fatah and the PFLP are reportedly already dissatisfied with their assigned role in the new organization.

Fatah

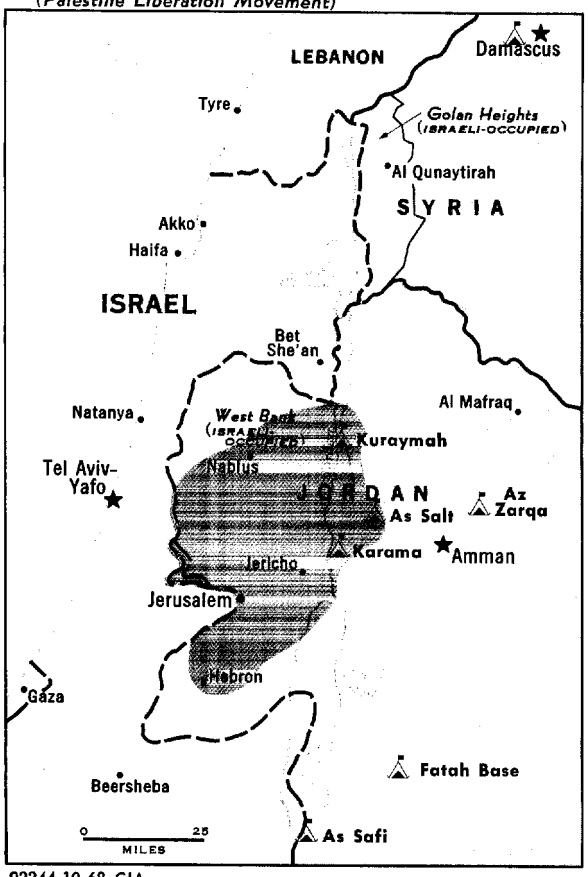
The most important of the terrorist groups at present is Fatah, a title derived from an Arabic acronym for the Palestine Liberation Movement. Also known by the name of its military arm, al-Asifah (the Storm), Fatah has its origin in a group founded in the 1950s, but has become prominent only since January 1965 when a number of PLO dissidents proclaimed its revival. By 1967, Fatah had spread throughout the Arab world, with branches reportedly existing in Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Kuwait, Syria, and the Gaza Strip.

Fatah has become more militant since the war of June 1967, a course dictated in part by the circumstance that the Arab states most actively aiding it are the radicals--Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Algeria. Jordan and Lebanon are prevented by domestic pressure from openly and actively suppressing Fatah activities within their borders, but they have tried to place as many obstacles in its path as they can.

The Fatah general command reportedly consists of nine men, of whom Yasir Arafat is the supreme commander and official spokesman. Members of the top command were elected by the chairmen of the organization's various committees on the national branch level, and they in turn elected Arafat and his deputy.

Little is known about Fatah's organizational structure. It

General Operating Area of Fatah
(Palestine Liberation Movement)



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is believed to be set up on pyramidal lines, with the smallest unit being a cell of three members. Cells are combined into groups, which in turn are formed into national branches. Fatah's membership is reported to range from a few hundred to several thousand, but is probably from 3,000 to 5,000. It is not clear how al-Asifah, the military arm, fits into Fatah's structure.

Operating from forward bases in Jordan at Karama, As Safi, As Salt, and Kuraymah, Fatah sends out small groups of less than ten men, one of whom is probably a local inhabitant, to sabotage a specific target. The group carries its own equipment, and because of the risk of retaliation on the villages, no attempt is made to get logistical support from the Arabs living in the occupied area.

There are some reports that Fatah is an instrument of the Syrian Government in the same way that the PLO is controlled by Cairo. Damascus has been able to channel Fatah's activities somewhat by providing the organization with training bases, logistical support, and an outlet for propaganda. Moreover, to ward off possible Israeli retaliation, Syria has apparently been able to stop Fatah from carrying out raids into the Golan Heights area and has seen to it that forward operating bases are in Jordanian territory, not Syrian. Recent events--such as Egypt's granting radio time to a Cairo-based "Voice of Asifah," the moving of some Fatah political leaders to Cairo, and propaganda attacks upon the Syrian Government--suggest however, that Fatah may be ending its relationship with Damascus and establishing a new arrangement with Cairo.

Financial support for Fatah comes from a number of sources, but the greatest amount flows in from rich Palestinians living in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Contributions are also sought from wealthy non-Palestinians in the surrounding Arab countries. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have official policies of financial support for Fatah and the other Palestinian organizations. To raise these funds, the Saudis levy a five percent income tax on all Palestinians employed by the government; the Kuwaitis impose a two percent tax on gasoline sales and theater tickets.

Military support from within the Arab bloc has consisted of training facilities in Syria at Homs (90 miles north of Damascus), Harasta (on the outskirts of Damascus), and at various army bases. Recent reports suggest that Fatah may be phasing out its use of these facilities and moving all of its training down to Az Zarqa and Umm Qays in Jordan. Through its military units in Jordan, especially those stationed at Az Zarqa, Iraq has provided vehicles, communications equipment, medical supplies, arms, money, and military training by Iraqi Army units. A considerable amount of small arms has been shipped from Algeria to Syria for use by Fatah. It is not clear, however, whether this material has been donated by the Algerians or whether they are merely acting

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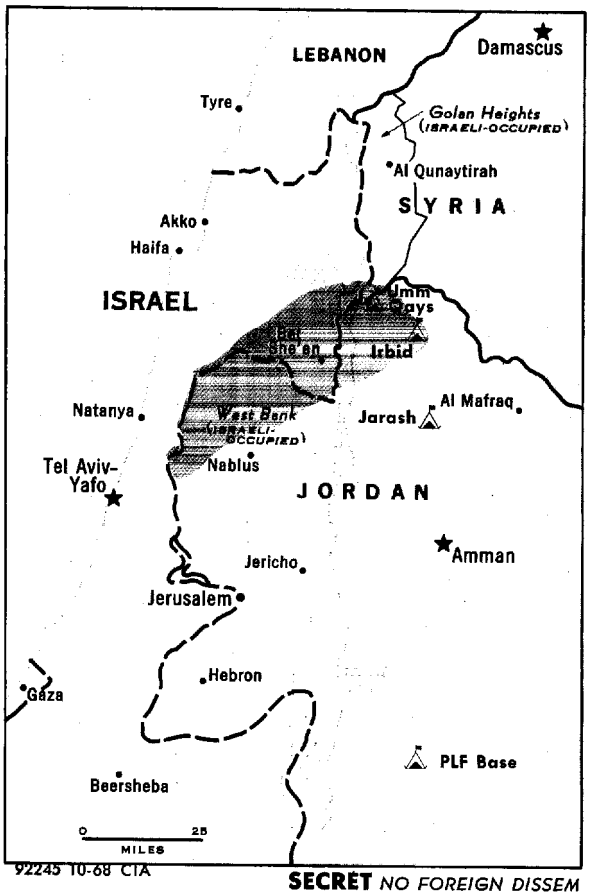
as intermediaries for a third country.

Among the Communist countries, China reportedly has shipped small arms and munitions to Syria for Fatah's use, and Peking could be the source of the weapons that have been shipped from Algeria. An unknown number of Fatah members as well as men from the other terrorist groups have gone to China for training. Some Fatah members have been trained by Chinese instructors at sites within Syria. On 6 September, Damascus announced that a delegation of Fatah leaders was visiting Peking. A number of Fatah members, including Supreme Commander Arafat, reportedly received training in North Vietnam.

During the summer of 1968, Arafat and other Fatah political leaders were reported to be negotiating with Soviet leaders in Moscow. The USSR is not known to have aided Fatah so far, but some assistance might be forthcoming as a result of these negotiations.

General Operating Area of PLF
(Palestine Liberation Force)



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The Popular Liberation Force

The parent group of the Popular Liberation Force is the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was formed after Arab leaders at the Arab League's summit conference in May 1964 agreed to foster the formation of an official group representative of the Palestinian people. Shortly after the conference, delegates met in Jerusalem to establish the organization and to draw up a constitution which, among other provisions, allowed for the creation of an army.

This new army was called the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) and was to be organized as a commando force recruited from Palestinian refugees living in Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, and Iraq. Funds to set up its army and operate it came from a $28-million grant by the various members of the Arab League. By 1967, the PLA had 15,000 men, and units were organized in the Gaza Strip (administered by Egypt), Syria,

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and Iraq. These units did not form the independent commando force originally envisioned, however, but were integral military units of the armies of the respective host countries.

The loss of the war in 1967 brought a sharp drop in its prestige. Following this debacle, the PLO eventually established the terrorist group now referred to as the Popular (or People's) Liberation Force (PLF). The PLF, however, now operates independently of both the PLO and PLA commands. It presently numbers 200 to 250 men who are apparently non-political and seem to concentrate solely on terrorist activities. Reportedly operating from forward bases at Jarash, Irbid, and Umm Qays in Jordan, the PLF's activities have tended to center in the northern Jordan Valley. The group's tactics probably parallel those of Fatah, with which it has been coordinating its activities. On 13 September 1968, a merger of the PLF and Fatah was announced, but how this will be implemented remains to be seen.

Military support for the PLF commando group has come from the PLA units attached to the Iraqi Army detachments at Jarash and Irbid and probably involves the same type of aid that Fatah has been receiving. The only known aid from the Communist countries is that Peking has trained a number of PLF members in China, but the number of men involved and the location or type of training are not known.

As for the PLO, it has served over the years as little more than a propaganda vehicle for its various leaders. Although initially free from involvement in inter-Arab squabbles, Cairo's financial and logistical support soon turned it into an Egyptian instrument. Having been on terms of mutual distrust with King Husayn from the beginning, the PLO through its Cairo-based "Voice of Palestine" radio program echoed Egyptian propaganda attacks on Jordan and, later, on Saudi Arabia. Other Arab states, while not subject to the same verbal abuse, nevertheless probably sensed a threat to their regimes and stayed on cool terms with the PLO. The organization is now rent by conflict between its political and military leadership, and it is unlikely that the Arab states, aside from Egypt, will consider it very important in the near future.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) is the terrorist arm of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), a radical Arab political organization with adherents in most of the eastern Arab world.

Many of the leaders of the ANM are themselves Palestinian refugees and, after the founding of Israel, they had led one or another of the multitude of terrorist organizations that came into existence. These various terrorist groups were left in

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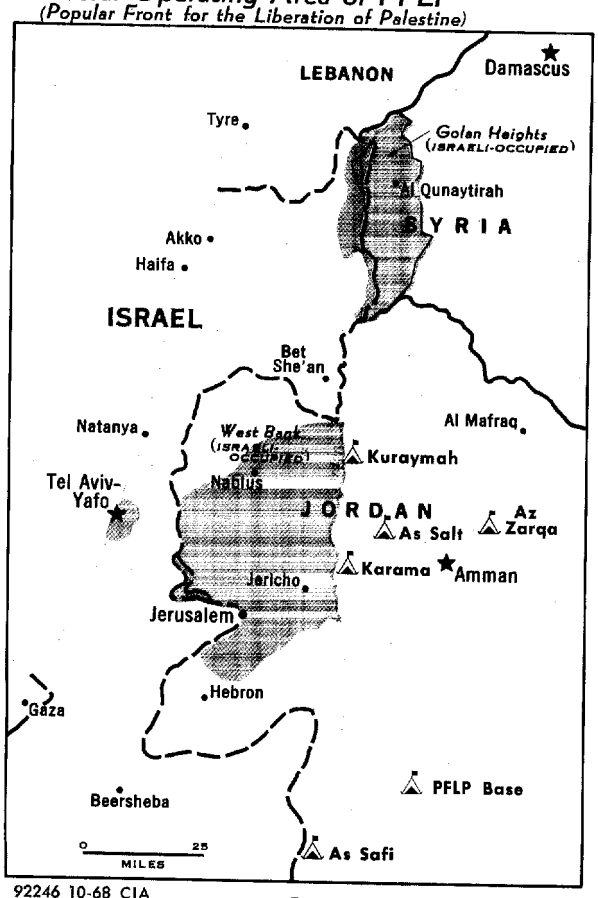
shambles by the war of June 1967, and the ANM Supreme Command in Beirut, therefore, decided in October 1967 to establish a new, 500-man group that came to be known as the PFLP. The relationship between the ANM and PFLP commands is not known, although George Habbash, the leader of the ANM, and other members of the ANM Supreme Command have been reported as the political leaders of the PFLP.

The PFLP terrorists reportedly trained with Fatah members

General Operating Area of PFLP
(Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine)



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at Harasta in Syria until March 1968, when George Habbash and other PFLP/ANM leaders were arrested by the Syrian Government on charges of plotting to overthrow the regime. Since then, training has been moved to Fatah sites in Jordan.

Operations are still being mounted from Syria, however, using a no-man's-land area between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and the Syrian Army defense lines. The Syrians are increasingly uneasy that these activities may provoke Israel into a reprisal attack.

Within the Israeli-occupied West Bank area, reports indicate that PFLP groups are operating from Nablus. The PFLP also claimed credit for hijacking the El-Al Israel aircraft in July 1968, an indication of the group's willingness to engage in all types of clandestine activities.

For most of its existence, the ANM has been considered an instrument of Egyptian intelligence; most of the group's leaders in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon were paid agents of Cairo, for example. The ties between the two became strained in the wake of the June war, however, and it is not yet clear whether they have been renewed. In any event, the ANM has recently been supporting the PFLP by itself, soliciting funds from ANM members in Lebanon and Kuwait, the major centers of Palestinian refugees.

Military aid from the Communist world has reportedly come

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from two sources, Czechoslovakia and China. Prague has supposedly supplied the PFLP with its automatic weapons, while Peking has provided military training in China.

Other Groups

The Syrian Government, unable to subvert Fatah for use as a political weapon, recently organized a group known as the Vanguard of the People's Liberation War. Inasmuch as the prime purpose of the Vanguard is to penetrate and seek control of the various other terrorist groups, it can be assumed that its training, logistical support, and financing will come from Damascus.

About 150 men of the Vanguard have been sent to Jordan, where they reportedly share the bases used by Fatah and the PFLP. Unlike the other organizations, the Vanguard has not shied away from open confrontations with the Jordanian Government. In late May 1968, for example, Vanguard members attacked the main police station in Amman which was rumored to be holding a member of the group, killing a number of officers.

There are at least three other terrorist groups, but little is known of them other than their names: Men of the United Arab Resistance for the Liberation of Palestine, reputed to be operating in Gaza and Sinai; the Way of the Return; and the United Fedayeen Liberation Organization.

Outlook

If the purpose of the terrorists had ever been to drive Israel from the territory it occupies or to inflict significant damage upon it, there could be no question but that they have failed. The damage inflicted by the raids has been relatively minor, and the Israelis will certainly not withdraw because of the raids. Moreover, Tel Aviv now has established an anti-infiltration system--fences, mines, infrared and sonic devices, and land and air patrols--that not only prevents a large-scale penetration of Israel or Israeli-controlled territory but will make even minor forays increasingly difficult.

What seems more likely, however, is that the terrorists' purpose has been to irritate the Israelis and to keep alive the issue of the Israeli occupation. In this, the terrorists have succeeded, and the raids will therefore probably continue as long as the terrorists are able to mount them. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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