

NERI ZILBER AND GHAITH AL-OMARI

STATE WITH NO ARMY ARMY WITH NO STATE



*Evolution of the Palestinian Authority
Security Forces
1994–2018*

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Policy Focus 154
First publication: March 2018

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The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
1111 19th Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036

www.washingtoninstitute.org

Design: 1000colors

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A STUDY OF THIS SCALE would not have been possible without the support of the Institute leadership and our colleagues. Our thanks to Rob Satloff and Patrick Clawson for their guidance; David Makovsky, Mike Eisenstadt, Grant Rumley, and especially Ehud Yaari for their wise counsel on earlier iterations; Matt Levitt, Mike Herzog, Sarah Feuer, and P.J. Dermer for their unflagging encouragement; and Ronie Gazit, Gavi Barnhard, and Moritz Lutgerath for their research assistance.

We would particularly like to thank Adam Rasgon for his invaluable support and knowledge, and publications director Mary Kalbach Horan and editor Jason Warshof for their tireless efforts turning a manuscript into a polished work. Finally, Neri would like to thank Jacob and Ettie Zilber, his parents, and Ghaith would like to thank his family, for their unconditional love.

This work is dedicated to all those in Israel and Palestine, on both sides, working to keep the peace.

—*Neri Zilber & Ghaith al-Omari*

MARCH 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT in 1994, the Palestinian Authority (PA), envisioned as a temporary self-rule entity, has acquired many of the trappings of statehood. Some of these—like a central monetary authority—are effective; others—like unilateral declarations at international forums—are more a triumph of symbolism over substance. Yet no PA institution embodies, both practically and symbolically, the move toward Palestinian self-determination quite like the PA security forces (PASF). Indeed, no PA institution so combines the image of real independence—armed men in official uniforms—with the continued reality of occupation.

After all, a future state of Palestine is likely to be demilitarized. Yet the PASF is, if not an incipient army for this future state, then a security entity tasked with maintaining order and stability. Belying official Israeli claims that “in any agreement, and even without an agreement, we will maintain security control over the entire territory west of the Jordan River,” the reality of the last two decades is that Israel has relinquished security control over major pockets of West Bank land.¹ Whether Israel relinquishes more in the future as part of a functional peace process, and whether the PA can effectively control such territory, will at bottom depend on the capabilities and professionalism of the PASF.

The PASF was, in fact, the first PA institution created in the wake of the Oslo Accords. A collection of various gendarmerie, police,

intelligence, and civil defense services, the PASF has played a crucial role, for both good and ill, in every subsequent chapter of Israeli and Palestinian political life—influencing, and being influenced by, developments in what is often perceived as an eternal and unchanging conflict. Yet not much is known in the public sphere about this important PA institution, which today numbers roughly 30,000 men under arms—what it is, what it does, and how it functions in the shadow of Israel’s overall security control of the West Bank.

This report endeavors to bridge this knowledge gap, mapping the evolution of the PASF from 1994 until the present and, in so doing, mapping the evolution—and, in key moments, devolution—of Israeli-Palestinian security ties. Through this exercise, three distinct phases emerge, corresponding to the rise, fall, and revival of the PASF. Looking ahead, the report addresses the prospects for the PASF’s continued sustainability given the significant political stresses emanating from both internal Palestinian politics and the wider international diplomatic environment.

The first chapter corresponds to the Oslo Accords era (1994–2000), laying out the establishment of the PASF with the return from abroad of Yasser Arafat and elements of the Palestine Liberation Army to the occupied territories. Agreements signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) did allow for the creation of an armed internal security force in order to ensure law and order. Yet what was created in practice through Arafat’s personalized, ad hoc style diverged sharply from the letter of the agreements. Various competing security services proliferated, rejectionist terrorist groups like Hamas were never brought to heel, and, writ large, Arafat never established a monopoly on the means of violence. Most damaging for the peace process, close Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation was on several occasions undermined by armed clashes between the PASF and Israeli forces.

The second chapter corresponds to the second intifada period and its aftermath, including the fall of Gaza (2000–2007), laying out the loss of control evidenced after the eruption of mass hostilities between Israel and the PA. Arafat never truly relinquished the military option vis-à-vis Israel. The PASF, along with other Fatah elements, was directly implicated in the ensuing terrorism campaign; Israel responded directly, reoccupying the West Bank and bringing

about the PASF's effective collapse. In the wake of the second intifada, which ended around 2005, reform efforts focused on the security sector, yet they could not forestall the subsequent takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas. Not helping matters was Hamas's legislative victory in 2006, which forced the international community to bypass many official PA security organs. The various PASF services were, as ever, fatally divided among themselves. The fall of Gaza, while shocking due to the PA's numerical superiority over Hamas, was in many respects—or perhaps should have been—a story foretold, given the PASF's abject institutional and operational weaknesses of the time.

The third chapter corresponds to the reconstitution and professionalization of the PASF until the present day (2007–18), laying out the genuine reform campaigns undertaken by the PA under the premiership of Salam Fayyad and the assistance of the U.S. Security Coordinator mission in Jerusalem, among other international actors. This chapter also provides an overview of the force structure, functions, and leadership of each of the eight services—National Security Force, Civil Police, Presidential Guard, General Intelligence, Preventive Security, Military Intelligence, District Coordination Office, and Civil Defense—as well as the PASF's main areas of operation in the West Bank: reasserting the PA's central authority, improving law and order, removing gunmen from the streets (including from Fatah's ranks), and cracking down on Hamas. By all accounts, the PASF has exhibited success in these efforts over the past decade, becoming more cohesive, disciplined, and professional. Underpinning much of this success is the close security coordination between the PA and Israel—leaning, in contrast to Arafat, on President Mahmoud Abbas's policy of nonviolence. The catchall term “security coordination” is broken down into its constituent parts, showing the extent to which West Bank stability depends on the PASF in the realms of dialogue and intelligence sharing; counterterrorism; deconfliction during Israeli military raids into PA-controlled areas; the safe return of Israeli citizens; riot control; and civil defense.

The fourth chapter looks at the road ahead and policy choices facing the PA, Israel, and the international community with respect to the PASF. While prognostications of collapse for the PA—and PASF—have repeatedly been proven wrong, the question of PASF sustainability is critical given the political stressors emanating from

both within and without. Most prominent is the tension between the PASF's tactical and operational resilience, on the one hand, and the overall political stasis surrounding the moribund peace process, on the other. Security coordination, in particular, draws constant criticism in Palestinian society, with the PASF viewed as collaborators with an unending occupation. Israelis still live with the precedent of the Gaza disengagement paving the way for "Hamastan." Moreover, the politicization of the PASF, including the diminishment of political space in the PA, has undermined the institution's popular legitimacy. Concerns linger as well about the overall security sector reform agenda and the PASF's structural sustainability. In this, how the PASF responds to a post-Abbas political environment and possible succession struggle will be crucial.

More immediate perhaps is the recent tension between the Trump administration and the PA over the U.S. president's December 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The move, part of episodic policy differences between Washington and Ramallah, has raised the specter of U.S.-Palestinian ties actually being severed, a threat raised by both sides. It is difficult to assess what impact this diplomatic crisis will have on U.S. efforts in the Palestinian security realm. Yet it is important to stress that these efforts have aided the cause of stability in the West Bank, and not only benefit the PA and Israel but also very much serve the U.S. national interest. The U.S. role will therefore remain decisive in influencing—whether positively or negatively—all the just-noted security dilemmas.

The study concludes with a list of recommendations aimed to inform U.S. policymakers about what more should be done to preserve and build upon the very real achievements of recent years. Above all, developments on the high diplomacy track, including the quixotic goal of restarting Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, cannot be allowed to trickle down and adversely impact stability on the ground. Indeed, Israeli-Palestinian security coordination is, in many respects, the most successful facet of the entire peace process. The positive evolution of the PASF in recent years—admittedly just in the West Bank—is a major reason for this.

The peace process as a whole was built on a fairly straightforward wager: Israel would give land, Palestinians would give peace. But it has become clear that Palestinian statehood cannot be achieved

if Israel is not assured regarding its security interests—and, some would argue, vice versa, with Israel never truly being secure absent Palestinian statehood. Land and peace, security and statehood—the PASF stands at the nexus of all these elements. Much hinges, therefore, on whether the PASF remains professional, cohesive, and effective: countering terrorism (against Israel), providing law, order, and security (for Palestinians), and ensuring the stability of a functional, democratic Palestine.

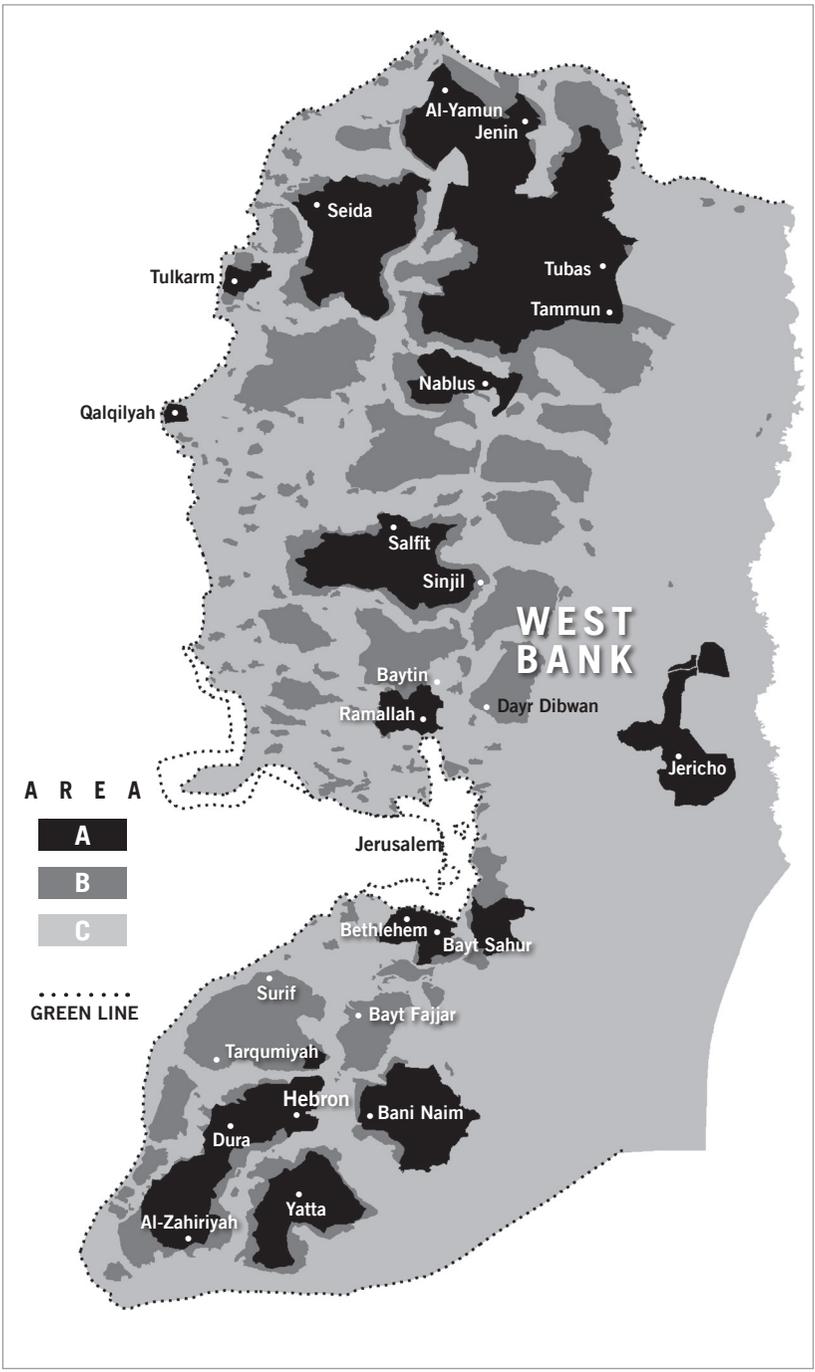
Just as it has since 1994, the PASF remains a key actor influencing whether the future state of Palestine will, or will not, come into being. Based on extensive research and interviews with officials on all sides and at all levels, this report strives to provide a thorough and realistic assessment of the PASF’s evolution throughout the years. A dispassionate, ground-level analysis of the security situation in the West Bank—security coordination in particular—may just provide the impetus to move from mere symbolism to substance in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

NOTES

1. Associated Press, “Netanyahu: Israel to Keep Security Control over West Bank,” Voice of America, June 5, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/netanyahu-says-israel-to-keep-control-over-west-bank-/3888560.html>.

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RETURN OF ARAFAT AND THE PLO

THE OSLO ACCORDS ERA 1994–2000

No one can intervene between me and my children.

—Yasser Arafat, referring to security force commanders

IN MID-MAY 1994, makeshift battalions of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) began flowing into Jericho and the Gaza Strip to take up internal security duties from vacating Israeli forces. Weeks prior, on May 4, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had signed the “Cairo Accords”—formally named the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area—beginning the first phase of Palestinian autonomy in the occupied territories.¹

The actual sight of returning, uniformed Palestinian soldiers was cause for much jubilation. Palestinian flags were draped from rooftops, locals greeted the personnel with hugs and tears, and as one senior Israeli officer on the scene remembered, several PLA soldiers had to be evacuated for medical treatment on account of overzealous celebrations.² In keeping with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat’s keen sense of the symbolic, the tableau was, in the words of one analyst, deliberately staged as a “liberation event,”³ the first step on the road to Palestinian national self-determination and, eventually, statehood.

The next six years would indeed see a proto-state established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Arafat, backstopped by some of these very military officers. The manner in which the fatigue-clad Arafat organized and deployed his security forces—and they were in a literal sense his—would come to define much of the Palestinian Authority’s (PA’s) emerging character, just as it had the PLO in exile. Relations

with the Palestinian public, the handling of armed rejectionist groups, primarily Hamas, and the interactions with Israel stemmed largely, either by commission or omission, from decisions made by Arafat in the security realm. For Arafat, and for many still today, the security forces were the most tangible outward manifestation of the Palestinian state-building project. They were also, in the Oslo Accords era, a harbinger of the damage to come.

THE PLA "RETURN"

The PLA was officially established in 1964 as the PLO's military wing, but the promise of large-scale Arab state support went unmet due to fears that such an autonomous force could both lead to an unwanted escalation with Israel and undermine internal (Arab) political stability.⁴ PLA elements did see some limited action in the June 1967 war, with battalions stationed in Gaza (under Egyptian command) performing valiant defensive actions and one PLA commando unit (under the umbrella of the Iraqi expeditionary force) briefly crossing the Jordan River; PLA forces in southwest Syria, for their part, did not join the fray.⁵ In the PLA's stead, Palestinian guerrilla groups, led most prominently by Fatah, initiated a torrent of cross-border attacks into Israel beginning in January 1965.⁶

The central staging ground during this period was Jordan, culminating in the Battle of Karameh in March 1968, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) assault against a major guerrilla sanctuary on the east bank of the Jordan River. Arrayed opposite the IDF were Fatah cadres, the PLA's guerrilla wing (the Popular Liberation Forces), and Jordanian infantry, tank, and artillery units. Due to the not-insignificant Israeli casualties endured, the battle was seen as a "resounding political and psychological victory in Arab eyes." The Jordanian army may have played the key role, Yezid Sayigh argues, "yet it was the guerrillas whose reputation soared." Arafat used the "victory" as a springboard for his election as PLO chairman the following year, effectively ushering in Fatah's dominance over the organization—and the PLA.⁷

With their public profile rising, Fatah and the other emboldened Palestinian guerrilla groups increasingly established a "state within a state" inside Jordan; heavy arms and recruits flowed into the Hashemite Kingdom, while attacks against Israel flowed out—drawing harsh

IDF reprisals against Jordan directly.⁸ Matters came to a head in 1970–71 with, effectively, a Jordanian civil war pitting loyal monarchist/government forces against the Palestinians, whose total estimated strength at the time was 10,000–20,000 fighters, of which 9,000 were guerrillas, the majority from Fatah. The Palestinians would ultimately lose, with an estimated total 3,000–5,000 combatants and civilians killed on both sides in September 1970 alone, drawing the sobriquet “Black September.”⁹

With his expulsion from Jordan, Arafat established himself in Syria and, increasingly, Lebanon. The October 1973 war would again see a modest Palestinian contribution: PLA commando units launched airborne assaults against Israeli positions in the Golan Heights, in addition to other support operations on behalf of the Syrian army, while PLA elements assisted the Egyptian army with small-scale engagements in the Sinai Peninsula. Indicatively, Fatah units helped open a limited “third front” against Israel from southern Lebanon via guerrilla attacks and artillery fire.¹⁰

Lebanon would, over the next decade, become the main Israeli-Palestinian battleground. Israel’s March 1978 Litani operation, a limited ground offensive into southern Lebanon, was followed by a two-week air campaign in July 1981 against PLO targets all across Lebanon. The major confrontation, however, came the next year with the massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon to smash the PLO’s newest “state within a state.”

Starting as early as 1971, Arafat had embarked on a “regularization” program for his forces termed *tajyish*, literally “turning into an army.”¹¹ On the eve of the 1982 war, therefore, the PLA/Fatah forces in Lebanon—and the lines between them were indeed blurred, with Fatah often the larger partner—numbered approximately 10,000–15,000 fighters. The bulk of the regular force was made up of three infantry brigades—Karameh, Qastal, and Yarmouk—replete with armor, artillery, and support units. The Palestinian forces did, as well, have some anti-aircraft and standoff fire capabilities, primarily Katyusha artillery rockets.¹² Despite Arafat’s best efforts, though, the “force [was] still in transition between a rough collection of guerrilla cadres and a regular army.”¹³ Indeed, the regular forces performed extremely poorly against the onrushing Israeli military tide, with senior commanders retreating as early as the second day of the war and heavy equipment left deserted on the battlefield.¹⁴ Palestinian irregulars and

guerrillas who were holed up in the cities and refugee camps, armed at most with hand grenades and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), put up a much stiffer fight. In the event, an internationally brokered ceasefire allowed Arafat and his men to evacuate Lebanon alive—first from Beirut and subsequently, for some, from Tripoli.¹⁵

From that point until the agreements with Israel a decade later, the Palestinian army-in-exile was scattered, and often left to stagnate, across some nine different states: Sudan, Jordan, Iraq, North and South Yemen, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria, and Egypt. Officially numbering 19,000 personnel, only approximately 14,000 were considered actual active duty on the eve of the 1994 Cairo Accords—and even these “were in serious need of retraining in order to fulfill their future tasks.”¹⁶ Although undoubtedly a function of the constraints the host states placed on Palestinian military activity,¹⁷ this decline can also be attributed to the increasing politicization of the PLA and Arafat’s role atop the PLO. By the end of 1991, Sayigh writes, “the concentration of Arafat’s power was virtually absolute.”¹⁸ Arafat elevated PLA officers into the highest ranks of the Fatah movement to counteract demoralization and ensure loyalty via job security; the entire PLA military apparatus was wholly dependent on Arafat, its commander-in-chief, for logistical and administrative functions, salaries, travel funds, and even passports.¹⁹

For its part, the official PLO military machine inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip—the so-called Western Sector—prior to 1994 was “pure fantasy” in terms of anything resembling a “‘popular army’ with companies, battalions, brigades, and field commands.”²⁰ In its stead were terrorist cells and popular resistance committees and, on the other side of the coin, local (unarmed) Palestinians serving in the Israeli Civil Administration as traffic police, clerks, and other highly localized officials tasked with mediating family disputes.²¹

CAIRO ACCORDS AND OSLO II

While discussions regarding Palestinian autonomy, including an indigenous police force, dated back to the 1978 Camp David Accords and the 1992 Washington talks,²² it was the September 1993 Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles that reaffirmed the need for “public order

and internal security for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip” via a “strong police force,” with Israel maintaining “responsibility for defending against external threats” as well as Israeli citizens’ overall security. The Cairo Accords fleshed out this force in both size and composition: 9,000 security personnel, with 7,000 from the returning PLA and 2,000 recruited locally. The initial structure of this force, termed in the agreement simply the “Palestinian Police,” was as “one integral unit under the control of the Palestinian Authority” composed of four branches: Civil Police; Public Security; Intelligence; and Emergency Services and Rescue. There was, in addition, a separate allowance for a Palestinian Coastal Police Unit. In each district the four security branches were to ostensibly fall under one central command. (*See appendix for texts of all documents referred to.*)

The subsequent Palestinian-Israeli Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—known as Oslo II and signed September 28, 1995—saw a concomitant expansion in the Palestinian security forces, with PA control encompassing larger swathes of the West Bank, in particular the seven “Area A” urban population centers and twenty-five “Area B+” rural villages.²³

Structurally, two more branches were added, Preventive Security and Presidential Guard, while compositionally agreement was reached to expand the force to 30,000 security personnel: 12,000 for the West Bank and 18,000 for Gaza, out of which 5,000 and 7,000, respectively, would be recruited from abroad. Oslo II went into specific detail about the type and quantity of weapons the force would be allowed to deploy—primarily, 15,000 light arms like pistols and rifles and 240 machine guns (0.3” or 0.5” caliber), with separate appendixes delving into their distribution on the level of districts and even police stations.

Israel, for its part, did impose conditions on the raising of this force, including background checks to weed out anyone “convicted of serious crimes, or...involved in terrorist activities subsequent to their recruitment.” In addition, ballistic tests were conducted on the weapons brought by the incoming PLA forces, resulting in a database that would be used for future reference to ensure their exclusive use by the PA.²⁴

AGREEMENTS VS. REALITY

While the long-negotiated and detailed agreements just outlined were one thing, the reality on the ground as it developed throughout the 1990s was quite another.

As Gal Luft makes clear, by late 1998 the PA security services, as they were then known, had in almost every regard violated the letter of the agreements reached with Israel. The number of security personnel in the Palestinian territories had ballooned to anywhere from 35,000 to 50,000, clearly above the numbers previously cited—indeed, an officer-to-resident ratio of 1:50, making the PA one of the most heavily policed territories in the world.²⁵ Israeli government officials were also aware that the PA was not submitting complete lists of these security personnel, to obfuscate the total number under arms and to bypass Israeli background checks for those with terrorist backgrounds.²⁶

Similarly, a proliferation of weapons was occurring, both in quantity and quality, well beyond that stipulated in Oslo II. By one estimate, there were at least 40,000 more weapons than allowed in the agreement, including RPGs, mortars, mines, grenade launchers, and sniper rifles; also being developed was a small-scale indigenous manufacturing capacity for hand grenades and other ammunition.²⁷

Structurally, the finely outlined contours of the PA security services—as mentioned, seven in number when including the Coastal Police—were abandoned, with new branches added and major overlaps instituted in their respective areas of responsibility. By 2000, twelve different security branches existed;²⁸ by 2004, by one count, the number was fifteen;²⁹ at a later point, seventeen.³⁰

The functions of the main security branches outlined in the official Israeli-PLO agreements were fairly straightforward (detailed in chapter 3 on the current PASF structure and functions). The proliferation of the various branches not mentioned in the agreements, on the whole, occurred in the intelligence sphere.³¹ By 1998, nearly 75 percent of the PA security sector was not assigned to any law enforcement duties as traditionally defined.³²

In this manner, Military Intelligence was established as yet another “preventive apparatus,” dealing with opposition activists as well as monitoring other PA security bodies, and thereby duplicating the role

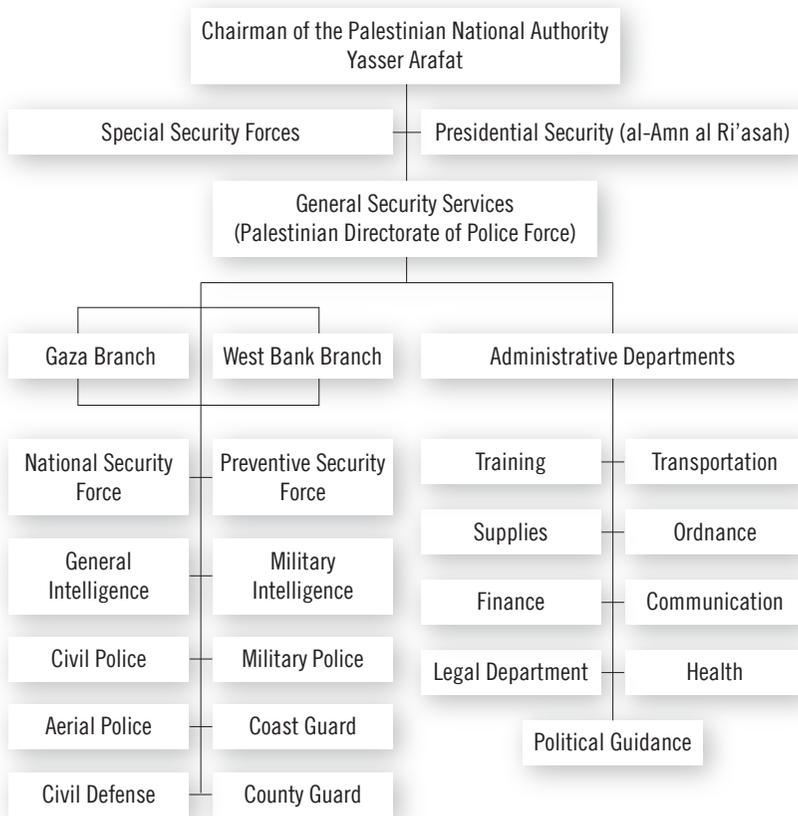


FIGURE 1 Formal structure of the Palestinian Security Services.

held by Preventive Security. Military Intelligence's subordinate unit, Military Police, was also tasked with enforcing discipline among the other security branches, safeguarding PA installations and officials (similar to the Presidential Guard), as well as handling riot control and arrests (similar to the National Security Force and Civil Police). The Provincial Guard, a small force assigned to district governors' offices, summoned people for arrest and mediated local disputes, a task that by definition blurred into the jurisdictions of the other security branches operating in a given region. Most indicative of all was the Special Security Force, which was created in 1995 and operated under Arafat's direct control. According to Luft, the official mission of this service was to gather intelligence on opposition groups in for-

eign countries (similar to General Intelligence); in reality, the service was likely set up as yet another tool to monitor the other security branches and PA officials.³³

As Ramadan Shallah, a leader in Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), put it in 1996: “Arafat has so many intelligence services in the self-rule areas that if you open your window, Preventive Security peeps in; if you open your door, the Presidential Security Service comes in; if you go out to your garden, you bump into Military Intelligence; and if you go out to the street, you come across General Intelligence.”³⁴

THE ARAFAT METHOD

For Arafat, as both PA president and commander-in-chief of the security forces, there was a method to the above chaos. Similar to his modus operandi in exile vis-à-vis the PLA, Arafat wanted to maintain his absolute power and “virtually unassailable” position.³⁵

The proliferation of the security services and, more to the point, the proliferation of service chiefs, enabled Arafat to be the sole arbitration point between them, ensuring not only his primacy but regime protection. As Luft articulates, “By keeping his security forces under the command of a heterogeneous group of generals who are often at odds with each other...[Arafat has] managed to prevent the formation of a cohesive general staff with excessive power, along the lines of those responsible for the overthrow of so many Arab regimes in the Middle East.”³⁶

The security chiefs were, indeed, a heterogeneous group, roughly comprising three distinct backgrounds: “outside” PLA veterans, “inside” grassroots Fatah activists, and “outside” Fatah operatives close to Arafat.

The first group, aging PLA officers brought in from outside the territories in 1994, was put in command of the larger and more formal services atop the PA security apparatus; this group included Nasr Yousef (overall commander of the security forces),³⁷ Abdul Razzaq al-Majaideh (National Security Force commander in Gaza), and Ziyad al-Atrash (PA security liaison with Israel).³⁸ To counterbalance this group—as well as defuse local anger at foreign returnees receiving all the plum posts—Arafat elevated prominent Fatah militia leaders from inside the territories into senior positions, the most

noteworthy cases being Jibril Rajoub and Mohammad Dahlan, who took command of Preventive Security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively. The final group, situated between the first two, consisted of long-serving Fatah military men from outside the territories considered Arafat loyalists, including Amin al-Hindi (General Intelligence),³⁹ Abu Yusuf al-Wahidi (Special Security Force), Musa Arafat (Military Intelligence),⁴⁰ and Ghazi Jabali (Civil Police).⁴¹

In addition to this “divide and rule” strategy, Arafat employed a widespread patronage system to ensure loyalty. The myriad new intelligence branches, with their plainclothes officers, were a means not only to monitor the other services and opposition activities but also to inflate the PA security rolls beyond that allowed in the agreements with Israel.⁴² Security chiefs arrived in Arafat’s office to receive bags of cash, which were then disbursed to pay salaries.⁴³ More than providing security, the sector appeared to be an elaborate jobs program run by Arafat for his associates, militia members, gunmen, and youth.

Such fragmentation inevitably came at the expense of both the capabilities and legitimacy of the security services. With blurred chains of command, competing fiefdoms, unclear functions, and a propensity for corruption, Arafat’s PA quickly came to resemble a police state—a point made as soon as August 1994 by one analyst.⁴⁴ Indeed, internecine tensions between the various PA security services themselves, as well as outright clashes between the PA and Fatah-affiliated militias, were not uncommon during this period.⁴⁵

Arafat was able to implement such a system, Hillel Frisch suggests, because of the weak external threat arrayed against the PA—especially relative to Arafat’s concern over domestic security. “Arafat could afford to duplicate and multiply his security forces at the expense of these forces’ offensive capabilities,” Frisch writes, “because both Israel and the PA were firmly linked to a United States-led peace process.”⁴⁶

ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The international role in the creation and evolution of the PA security forces during this period was in many respects limited—especially in comparison to subsequent efforts (detailed in later chap-

ters). To be sure, lavish international financial and budgetary support enabled the nascent PA to rapidly expand its bureaucracy, including the security sector, as just highlighted.⁴⁷ According to one calculation, \$500 million per year was being spent on the security services alone by the late 1990s.⁴⁸

Prior to the Cairo Accords, Jordan took the lead in retraining PLA elements residing in the kingdom in public security work, in what was known as the Badr Brigade. Fearing undue Jordanian influence, however, Arafat only authorized the transfer of some seven hundred of these officers into the Palestinian territories, out of more than three thousand trained.⁴⁹ Special interest was taken by several European states—in particular, the Netherlands and Britain—in training the “blue shirt” Civil Police and its Public Order and Rapid Intervention Unit, an elite SWAT-like entity.⁵⁰ Egypt and Japan also played a part in the security sphere, yet at least in the initial stages of PA formation the United States refrained from taking an active role, preferring to exert influence through the wider donor mechanism and providing small-scale funding and surplus (nonlethal) equipment. Politically, the United States continued to urge the PA to prioritize counterterrorism, often at the expense of institutionalization and rule of law.⁵¹

Direct U.S. engagement with the PASF began in earnest in 1996 after a spate of terrorist attacks against Israeli targets. Short-term objectives, primarily relating to counterterrorism efforts, again took precedence, with the U.S. government, via the Central Intelligence Agency, directing its attention to the smaller intelligence branches closer to Arafat. From this point on, U.S. budgetary support to the security sector reached a reported tens of millions of dollars per year.

Yet, as Jim Zanotti has written, this ad hoc international approach, wherein official channels and mechanisms were bypassed in favor of direct engagement with each government’s preferred PA security branches, “foster[ed] a fiefdom mentality among competing security chiefs...undermin[ing] [the international community’s] calls for a more consolidated PA security sector answerable to civilian control and the rule of law.”⁵² In many respects, this problem has persisted into the present day.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN SECURITY COOPERATION

In addition to promoting Palestinian counterterrorism efforts, this more active U.S. role was intended to buttress a central plank of both the Cairo Accords and Oslo II—and, later, the 1998 Wye River Memorandum: Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation.⁵³ From the earliest days of the PA, a Joint Security Committee (JSC) was established to coordinate PA security deployments and help resolve crises before they reached the political level. Led jointly by an IDF brigadier general and a PA general, and consisting of approximately seven representatives from the relevant security bodies on each side, the group would meet once or twice a week. The JSC, as the highest liaison apparatus, sat atop a coordination pyramid reaching down into two Regional Security Committees—one for the West Bank, the other for Gaza—which themselves presided over eight District Coordination Offices (DCOs) in the West Bank and two in Gaza. These DCOs were staffed by junior field officers, who on the Israeli side were fluent Arabic speakers, usually Druze.⁵⁴

The most high-profile manifestation of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination during this period was the joint patrols undertaken by IDF (primarily Border Police) and NSF forces in the “seam zones” between Israeli and Palestinian control. Led by company commanders, this operational venture had a decidedly mixed record—even before the eventual occurrence of outright attacks.⁵⁵ Mutual suspicion and violent incidents, including threats at gunpoint usually made by the Palestinian side, were common. As one senior IDF intelligence officer put it retrospectively, the joint patrols were a “colossal failure, with no operational reason” underpinning them. “There was no need to be out in the field,” he added, “all the issues could have been resolved in a DCO meeting or by an after-action visit.” Likely, political considerations in the context of the ongoing peace process were the motivating interest.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, daily contact between the IDF and PA security forces may, according to Luft, have had a positive operational influence on the National Security Force, including on weapons use, discipline, battle drills, and radio operations.⁵⁷

It is important to note that after the redeployments called for in

Oslo II, the IDF had no legal authority to enter the major population centers in the West Bank and Gaza (Area A) under full PA control. Israeli security incursions were permitted in cases of “hot pursuit” but were extremely rare, to the point of being nonexistent.⁵⁸ Rather, during this period, the PA security forces handled counterterrorism duties inside their territories. While Israel was aware of the violations highlighted earlier, it turned a blind eye in order to keep the peace process moving forward. When Israeli defense officials did bring these violations to the attention of the political echelon, whose members in turn raised them with their U.S. and Palestinian counterparts—e.g., regarding weapons proliferation inside the PA—no action followed.⁵⁹ Israel was seemingly willing to live with Arafat’s nascent Palestinian “police state” so long as it delivered on the security front vis-à-vis Hamas and the other rejectionist terrorist groups.⁶⁰

PASF VS. HAMAS

Tensions between Hamas and Fatah predated the PA’s creation, with some of the biggest clashes occurring in summer of 1992 amid Hamas fears that the PLO would strike an interim agreement with Israel; some 150 were wounded and one killed in the violence.⁶¹

These tensions only grew after Arafat’s return and the establishment of the PA security services. Playing the spoiler role, beginning in 1994 Hamas and PIJ launched increasingly deadly suicide bombing attacks against Israeli civilian targets in an effort to derail the peace process. Events reached a head on November 18, 1994, when the Civil Police fired on worshippers outside a Gaza City mosque, killing thirteen Hamas demonstrators. “Black Friday,” as it came to be known, would remain the most lethal—and nearly the sole—example of direct violence between the PA and Hamas during Arafat’s reign.

For Palestinian society, however, the deaths raised fears of internal strife. The specter of civil war, combined with the PA security services’ worries over being tainted as Israeli agents, moved Arafat to opt instead for a “delicate mix of pressure and accommodation, of suppression and persuasion,” vis-à-vis Hamas. Arafat, according to Barry Rubin, “alternatively arrested, intimidated, complimented and freed Hamas leaders. He also let them maintain their institu-

tions and even military networks.”⁶² Indeed, some Hamas militants, including those trained in Iran, were reportedly coopted into the PA security services;⁶³ Hamas members were in certain cases granted permits for their weapons;⁶⁴ and many suspected terrorists arrested in PA sweeps were promptly released in what became known as the “revolving door policy.”⁶⁵

International pressure and Israeli punitive measures following terrorist attacks—primarily suspension of access to the Israeli market for Palestinian laborers—as well as instances in which Arafat sensed direct challenges to his authority did at times prompt crackdowns on the rejectionist groups in his midst. As PA police chief Ghazi Jabali put it in 1998, “A man who drinks cannot break the glass.”⁶⁶ Leading these efforts were Preventive Security under the commands of Dahlan and Rajoub, as well as a system of military courts outside the formal legal channels established in August 1995.⁶⁷ In a telling example, Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin was placed under house arrest after the signing of the Wye River Memorandum in 1998, although he would later be released.⁶⁸

After the terrorism sprees of 1994–97, the PA security forces did appear to be starting to fulfill their end of the agreements, at least in terms of combating terrorism emanating from inside the Palestinian territories. Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak set forth the numbers in May 2000: “In 1992, there were 2,400 attacks in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]; in 1999, there were only 140.”⁶⁹ Yet the PA, by Arafat’s design, never established a monopoly on the means of violence inside its territory. Disarmament as laid out repeatedly in the Israeli-Palestinian agreements was never carried out.⁷⁰ Certain Palestinian officials during this period lamented the fact that the plethora of armed militias made the PA less a model state and more like Somalia, Afghanistan, or “the American West 200 years ago.”⁷¹

PASF CLASHES WITH THE IDF

Nearly as worrisome as the PA’s uneven handling of Hamas and the other rejectionist groups were the instances of outright clashes between the IDF and PA security forces. Belying the good working relationships—and, increasingly, close personal relationships—at the more senior levels of the IDF and PASF,⁷² in several instances dur-

ing this period events on the ground spiraled out of control. The first known occasion came in 1994 when an IDF patrol near Gaza's Erez crossing was fired on from a Palestinian security position, with the IDF returning fire and killing a number of PA officers.⁷³

The watershed moment, however, came in September 1996, during the Hasmonean Tunnel riots—so named after Israeli authorities opened a tourist tunnel near Jerusalem's Western Wall/al-Haram al-Sharif. Mass rioting and violent clashes broke out in East Jerusalem and Hebron, later spreading to the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During the three days of unrest, PA security officers, for the first time on a wide scale, used live fire against IDF troops. In the ensuing bloodshed, sixty-nine Palestinians and fourteen Israeli soldiers were killed; seven of the latter were officers, including one colonel, one major, and two captains. The IDF deputy commander for Gaza was wounded. To quell the violence and as a deterrence measure, the IDF for the first time since the PA's establishment introduced attack helicopters, tanks, and heavy armored vehicles into the Palestinian territories.

Analysts differed as to whether the events of 1996 were a guided campaign of violence or a spontaneous outpouring of Palestinian anger. Yet, as Luft writes, what was beyond question were "the rapid disintegration of the local command-and-control apparatus and the rise of arbitrary initiative-taking by [Palestinian security] officers who could not withstand the pressure of the raging masses. Some officers were seen removing their uniforms and joining the demonstrators; in other cases insurgents grabbed rifles from helpless officers and used them to open fire on the IDF."⁷⁴

The enduring internal conflict for PA security officers, then as now, was laid bare to a foreign reporter by one Gaza officer:

I had always been able to maintain a barrier between my feelings as an ordinary citizen against the peace process, which has brought us nothing, and my military orders to preserve it. But how am I supposed to follow orders when I see my cousin, my brother or my neighbor being wounded? At that moment the contradiction became too strong. My emotional reaction to take my gun and respond overcame my military reaction.⁷⁵

While September 1996 marked the low point of Israeli-Palestinian security relations during this period, it was not the last time the two

sides would clash directly. In May 2000, during mass demonstrations to mark Nakba Day, IDF forces and Palestinian security officers traded live fire again—primarily outside Ramallah in the central West Bank. Two Israeli soldiers were seriously injured and at least four Palestinian officers killed in the exchanges.⁷⁶ This would prove to be a dress rehearsal for events later that same year.

NOTES

1. Alaa Tartir, "The Evolution and Reform of Palestinian Security Forces, 1993–2013," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (Sept. 18, 2015): p. 2, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gi/>.
2. Former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, November 2016.
3. Hillel Frisch, *The Palestinian Military: Between Militias and Armies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 74–75.
4. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 102, 112–19.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 169; Frisch, p. 57.
6. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 107–8, 141. By Israel's count, between January 1965 and May 1967, 113 such "infiltration" attacks occurred, while Fatah claimed 300.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 176–79.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 181–83, 202–3.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 263–67.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 331–32.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 296.
12. Frisch, pp. 65–66; Zeev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), pp. 80–81, 135.
13. Schiff and Yaari, p. 135.
14. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 524–25. The most glaring example was Hajj Ismail Jabr, commander of the Qastal Brigade as well as all PLO forces in southern Lebanon.
15. Frisch, pp. 67–68.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.
18. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 654. This was not a foregone conclusion given the internecine fighting between PLA elements in the preceding years, including attempted coup attempts sponsored by various Arab patrons.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 633–34.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 635.
21. Senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016. See

also Yezid Sayigh, *Policing the People, Building the State: Authoritarian Transformation in the West Bank and Gaza*, Carnegie Papers (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), p. 17, http://carneгиеendowment.org/files/gaza_west_bank_security.pdf.

22. Frisch, p. 73.
23. Gal Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army*, Policy Focus 36 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 1998), p. 13, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-palestinian-security-services-between-police-and-army>.
24. Frisch, pp. 74–75; also former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016.
25. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 15–16. See also Tartir, p. 4, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gi/>; by 2003, the number had reached 53,000.
26. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 16. Attempts by Arafat to bring in to the Palestinian territories close terrorist associates date to the very beginning of the Oslo process and his return from exile in Tunisia, according to multiple sources, including a senior IDF officer on the ground at Gaza's Rafah crossing in July 1994.
27. Former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016; see also Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 16, and Gal Luft, "The Mirage of a Demilitarized Palestine," *Middle East Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Summer 2001), <http://www.meforum.org/112/the-mirage-of-a-demilitarized-palestine>. Additional fears held that the Palestinian force was smuggling even more advanced weapons during this period—Katyusha rockets and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS)—although in reality only a small number of single-launcher, short-range Katyushas are believed to have been infiltrated into Gaza.
28. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 4.
29. Tartir, p. 4, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gi/>.
30. *Squaring the Circle: Palestinian Security Sector Reform under Occupation*, Middle East Report 98 (International Crisis Group, 2010), p. 2. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
31. The one exception was the Aerial Police (*Shurta al-Jawiya*), a nascent unit responsible for the PA's small VIP helicopter fleet. See Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 5.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–7; see also Frisch, pp. 80–82.
34. Quoted in Tartir, p. 4, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gi/>.
35. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 633–34.
36. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 9.
37. After 1967, Yousef left the West Bank to join Fatah in Syria. He received training in China and later returned to Jordan. Yousef was subsequently a brigade commander in Lebanon in the 1980s, rising to the rank of PLA general by the end of the decade. See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 162, 567, 633.
38. Originally from a refugee camp in Lebanon, Atrash joined Fatah in 1963. A veteran infiltrator into Israel, he set up Fatah "strike groups" under Arafat's direct control

- and was later a senior Arafat aide post-1967, as part of the West Bank armed campaign. Atrash thereafter helped establish the PLO's Lebanon military apparatus. See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 104, 123, 162, 298.
39. Originally from Gaza, Hindi was a senior Fatah security officer by the late 1970s, rising to the rank of brigadier general by 1994. Hindi was also rumored to have been involved in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games terrorist attack. See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 462; Frisch, p. 82.
 40. Originally from Gaza and a cousin of Yasser Arafat, Musa Arafat after 1967 traveled to Syria and then China for training, ultimately returning to Jordan, where he became a senior Fatah combat officer. Musa Arafat assisted in establishing guerrilla bases outside Amman prior to the Jordanian civil war. See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, pp. 162, 222, 224.
 41. Frisch, pp. 80–82; Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, pp. 7–8.
 42. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 9.
 43. Tartir, p. 4, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gi/>.
 44. See, e.g., Frisch, p. 84; Barry Rubin, *The Transformation of Palestinian Politics: From Revolution to State-Building* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 47, 78–83; Tartir, p. 4: "All of these [corruption] dynamics were felt and seen by the public, which intensified the legitimacy gap between the PA forces and people," <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.gi/>; and Amos Perlmutter, "Arafat's Police State," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/palestinian-authority/1994-07-01/arafats-police-state>.
 45. Frisch, pp. 81, 85, 88; Rubin, pp. 101–12.
 46. Frisch, pp. 86–87.
 47. Frisch, p. 79.
 48. Rubin, pp. 108–13.
 49. Frisch, pp. 77–78.
 50. Frisch, p. 82; Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 9.
 51. See, e.g., "Israeli-Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip," Human Rights Watch, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/WR96/MIDEAST-06.htm>. According to this source, on March 24, 1995, U.S. vice president Al Gore, speaking in Jericho, praised Arafat's promise to establish "state security courts" that bypassed the regular legal process as "an important step forward in helping to build confidence in the peace process and in the effort by authorities on all sides to control violence and stop terrorism and defeat the enemies of the peace process."
 52. Jim Zanotti, *U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority* (Congressional Research Service, Jan. 8, 2010), pp. 5–6, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40664.pdf>.
 53. *Ibid.*
 54. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, pp. 11–12; former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016.
 55. For an in-depth analysis of the joint-patrol system and its failures, see Kobi Michael, *Israeli-Palestinian Joint Patrols in Gaza, 1994–1996: A Foregone Failure?* Gitelson Peace Publication 29 (Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Aug. 2004).
 56. Former Israeli security official, interview by author (Zilber), Modi'in, Nov. 2016.

57. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, p. 9.
58. Frisch, pp. 79, 89.
59. Former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016. By one telling, a high-ranking Israeli minister asked a senior IDF officer whether the smuggled weaponry formed an “existential threat” to Israel. “Of course not,” the senior officer replied. “But they’re violating agreements.”
60. As then prime minister Yitzhak Rabin infamously quipped on March 1, 1994, during a televised interview on Israel’s Channel 1, “The Palestinian Police will fight Hamas without B’Tselem, without the High Court, and without Mothers against Silence”—that is, more effectively without the restraints placed on Israel by its human rights NGOs and judicial system.
61. Frisch, p. 73.
62. Rubin, p. 13.
63. Frisch, p. 85.
64. Rubin, p. 117; Frisch, p. 83.
65. Rubin, pp. 133–34.
66. Quoted in Rubin, p. 195.
67. Rubin, pp. 110–11, 134. Dahlan, in particular, took a hard-nosed approach toward Hamas in Gaza, reportedly using excessive force on and cutting the beards of Islamist members in his custody. See, e.g., David Rose, “The Gaza Bombshell,” *Vanity Fair*, Apr. 2008, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/04/gaza200804>.
68. Rubin, p. 137.
69. Quoted in Rubin, p. 85.
70. Frisch, p. 83.
71. Quoted in Rubin, pp. 116–17, 131.
72. Former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016.
73. According to Israeli sources, a joint investigation was set up through the JSC that led back to an officially listed PA AK-47. The committee reached a “dead end” when the weapon was believed to be held in a safe in Arafat’s office. Former senior Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Nov. 2016.
74. Luft, *The Palestinian Security Services*, pp. 21–24.
75. Quoted in Neil MacFarquhar, “How Palestinian Policemen Were Drawn into the Conflict,” *New York Times*, Sept. 29, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/29/world/how-palestinian-policemen-were-drawn-into-the-conflict.html>.
76. “Violence Erupts in West Bank,” BBC News, May 15, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/748844.stm; “Deaths and Injuries in Day of West Bank Riots” (in Hebrew), Israel Channel 10, May 15, 2000, <http://news.nana10.co.il/Article/?ArticleID=9221>.

2

THE MILITARY OPTION

THE SECOND INTIFADA AND FALL OF GAZA 2000–2007

*[We] didn't find anyone to defeat us again,
so we defeated ourselves.*

—Mahmoud Darwish, 2007

THE 1996 AND 2000 clashes between the PA and Israel not only presaged the collapse to come during the second intifada, they also informed Arafat's calculus regarding events in the interim. In both years, Arafat observed that the clashes, far from exacting a diplomatic price, seemed to do the opposite. In 1997, soon after the Hasmonean Tunnel riots, the new Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, an opponent of the Oslo process, signed the Hebron Protocol, bringing about a partial withdrawal of Israeli troops from that West Bank city. The following year, he signed the Wye River Memorandum, which was aimed at resuming implementation of measures established by Oslo II. Nor did the Nakba Day clashes lead to the suspension of negotiations with Netanyahu's successor, Ehud Barak. To the contrary, two months later, Arafat was invited to Camp David for a summit with Barak and U.S. president Bill Clinton. From Arafat's perspective, the violence appeared to carry political benefits.

On September 28, 2000, amid the crisis generated by the failure of the Camp David summit, then Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon visited the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. This act sparked Palestinian-Israeli clashes that spread and later became what was known as the second intifada. During this roughly five-year period, the violence would claim the lives of more than a thousand Israelis and four thousand Palestinians. Whether the second intifada was planned by

the PA, as Israel states,¹ or a spontaneous uprising fueled by an excessive Israeli response to protests, as the PA maintains,² it is beyond doubt that, at the start, Arafat did nothing to stop it, seeing a potential negotiation benefit akin to that produced by the 1996 and 2000 clashes.³ As the intifada progressed, the PA security forces became increasingly involved, thus bearing the brunt of an Israeli response that would help precipitate the forces' effective collapse. Rebuilding the PASF became a central component of subsequent international initiatives to end the intifada.

PASF, TANZIM, AND AL-AQSA MARTYRS BRIGADES IN THE INTIFADA

The early PASF involvement in the intifada is exemplified by the first Israeli casualty, an IDF officer killed by his Palestinian counterpart during a joint patrol in Qalqilya on September 29, 2000.⁴ Direct PASF involvement in the violence, including terrorism, would only grow from there, coming to include leaders of the various services, most notably Force 17 (Arafat's personal guard) and General Intelligence,⁵ as well as senior Arafat aides⁶—with, as has been well documented, not only the knowledge of the *rais* but also his active financing.⁷ Often, uniformed PASF members “initiated or participated in firefights with Israeli forces and against settlements.”⁸ This breakdown was largely a function of the chaotic PASF structures created by Arafat and discussed in the previous chapter. As one Preventive Security commander in Gaza stated at the time, “Some of the blame for the situation falls on the PA, [the security agencies], and [the fact] that most of the security forces do not have discipline or control over their people. Each organization does what it wants and imposes its will on the PA, and no side can say it is in control.”⁹

This situation can best be illustrated by the relationship among the PASF, Fatah's Tanzim militia, and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (AAMB).

Based on the old Western Sector apparatus formalized in the 1970s by Abu Jihad (Khalil al-Wazir), and encompassing militant groups like the Fatah Hawks and Black Panthers by the 1980s, Arafat reactivated the Tanzim (lit. “Organization”) in 1995–97 as a Fatah tool

to counter Islamist factions such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.¹⁰ The Tanzim, particularly useful to Arafat in providing a measure of PA deniability, is known to have played a part in the Hasmonean Tunnel riots and Nakba Day confrontations.¹¹ Led by the charismatic first intifada activist Marwan Barghouti, the Tanzim's membership drew largely from "insiders," Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip who were not part of the "Tunisians," the PLO cadres that returned with Arafat after the PA's creation.¹² AAMB, for its part, emerged during the second intifada as a loose network of Fatah-affiliated militant groups that conducted shootings, rocket launches, and suicide bombings against Israel.¹³

The relationship among the PASF, Tanzim, and AAMB may have been murky, but the relationship undoubtedly existed. Arafat provided direct funding to the AAMB, including through official channels such as Fouad al-Shoubaki, chief of procurement and finance for the Palestinian security forces as a whole.¹⁴ Due to the overlap between Fatah and the PASF, many full-time and salaried PASF personnel were also leaders and members of the Tanzim and subsequently joined the AAMB.¹⁵

As the intifada gained steam, the PASF lost all semblance of discipline or cohesion. Clashes between the IDF and Palestinians occurred daily, with suicide bombings and shootings a regular feature of the conflict. Crucially, when PASF members were not participating in the escalating violence, they were unwilling or unable to stop it. This was true of services such as Preventive Security in the West Bank under Jibril Rajoub, which were in fact less involved in the violence but powerless to stop the escalating bloodshed.¹⁶

THE ISRAELI RESPONSE

As clashes and demonstrations broke out at the beginning of the intifada, Israel responded with progressively overwhelming force. Indeed, in just the first few days, the IDF reportedly used up 1.3 million 5.56 mm bullets, indicating the intensity of the response.¹⁷ By early October 2000, Israel deployed attack helicopters and tanks; by May 2001, in a first, Israel deployed warplanes against the PA.¹⁸

In the first year and a half, Israeli military action was primarily reactive, wherein daily engagement with the demonstrators and armed attackers in the West Bank and Gaza was punctuated by major

military action in reprisal for large-scale terrorist attacks.¹⁹ PASF installations were regularly targeted, beginning with limited strikes on PASF facilities, preceded by informal warnings, and escalating with time to attacks against more prominent targets such as PASF headquarters.²⁰ During this initial period, the IDF also conducted limited incursions into Palestinian cities but ultimately left the PA (and PASF) in control of Area A.

This approach changed radically after a March 2002 Hamas terrorist attack killed thirty Israeli civilians holding a Passover Seder at the Park Hotel in Netanya. Concluding that the only way to defeat terrorism is “to seize control of the centers of terrorism...and later, to remain there and control the area,” Israel that month launched Operation Defensive Shield.²¹

Between March and May 2002, the IDF entered the majority of the West Bank Palestinian cities in Area A, remaining to conduct an extensive counter-terror campaign. During operations to take over the cities, the local Palestinian security installations and equipment were largely destroyed, with damage estimated in the tens of millions of dollars. Indeed, in the Ramallah governorate, nearly every PASF vehicle and computer was reportedly destroyed.²²

During this period, members of the PASF were detained en masse, most of them briefly, and disarmed.²³ Arafat was besieged in a small part of his Ramallah presidential headquarters, known as the Muqata, and isolated from his security forces. He was joined by a number of PASF officers and commanders wanted by Israel. When the IDF redeployed forces outside the cities—except the areas surrounding the Muqata, which remained surrounded—it maintained “closures” around West Bank towns and instituted a system of permits that severely restricted freedom of movement for Palestinians, including PASF personnel.²⁴

PASF AFTER DEFENSIVE SHIELD

Disarmed, lacking in infrastructure and equipment, and unable to move between Palestinian areas of the West Bank, the PASF was effectively decimated. Israel had directly taken over the mission to fight terrorism—mainly on the perimeter of Palestinian towns with occasional incursions. For all that, the PA continued to exert

a measure of power on the local level, albeit unevenly, including in cities such as Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jericho. Other regions such as Hebron, however, fell under the sway of local clans, while the cities of the northern West Bank in particular were controlled by various AAMB groups and other factional militias.²⁵ While the AAMB groups were themselves targeted and damaged in Operation Defensive Shield, they were not completely disarmed. Rather, bereft of resources from the PA and operating outside its control, these groups used their remaining arms to become the real power in many West Bank areas, creating extortion rackets but also imposing a degree of law and order in various cities.²⁶ Where the PA could claim some control, it did so through understandings and accommodations with local forces, not through the direct application of PASF authority. Unable to carry guns or move freely, PASF law enforcement was at best informal, symbolic, or, as one officer put it at the time, “hibernating.”²⁷

In Gaza, no real equivalent to Operation Defensive Shield was carried out, given that a fortified fence built in 2001 largely prevented suicide bombers from infiltrating into Israel.²⁸ But with Arafat besieged and much of the PA political leadership reeling from the effects of the intifada, dynamics that would later facilitate the Hamas takeover of Gaza began surfacing. Internal rivalries among PASF branches in Gaza intensified, with Preventive Security chief Mohammad Dahlan emerging as the main Fatah strongman, although in the process he gained the enmity of longer-serving and higher-ranking Arafat loyalists in the PASF. Most ominously, the years of violence and institutional collapse had taken a toll on the PASF’s public standing: by 2005, according to one poll, Palestinians had greater trust in the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and al-Quds Brigades—the Hamas and PIJ armed wings, respectively—than the Civil Police or Preventive Security.²⁹

DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSION

From the initial days of the intifada, the chaotic nature of the PASF that spurred its rapid breakdown caught the attention of the international community. As early as April 2001, the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee Report, known informally as the Mitchell Report,

stated that “the lack of control exercised by the PA over its own security personnel and armed elements affiliated with the PA leadership is very troubling. We urge the PA to take all necessary steps to establish a clear and unchallenged chain of command for armed personnel operating under its authority.”³⁰ In June 2002, U.S. president George W. Bush called for the creation of a Palestinian security system with “clear lines of authority and accountability and a unified chain of command.”³¹ The issue of reforming and rebuilding the Palestinian security sector became, arguably for the first time, a priority in international diplomacy.

Part of the focus was on shifting authority over the PASF from the PA president to the cabinet. Thus, in March 2003, international pressure led to an amendment to the Palestinian Basic Law—which serves as the PA constitution—to create the Office of the Prime Minister and grant the Council of Ministers responsibility “for maintaining public order and internal security.”³² This amendment was made partly in anticipation of the April 30, 2003, release by the Quartet (i.e., UN, EU, United States, and Russia) of the “Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” known as the Roadmap peace initiative. The Roadmap indeed called for the separation of the Office of the Prime Minister from that of the president and demanded that “all Palestinian security organizations [be] consolidated into three services reporting to an empowered Interior Minister.”³³

These legal and diplomatic changes set the stage for future reforms, and allowed, even at the time, for some partial measures to go forward. Most notably, international pressure enabled Salam Fayyad, then finance minister, to end the corruption-prone practice of making cash payments to security chiefs in favor of directly depositing salaries into PASF members’ bank accounts.³⁴

Yet despite his isolation, Arafat maintained enough power within the existing system to ensure that the PASF’s structure, loyalty, and performance remained—in reality—unchanged. He prevented Mahmoud Abbas, the first PA prime minister, from even appointing an interior minister and ensured that Abbas’s successor, Ahmed Qurei, ultimately appointed an Arafat loyalist to the position. The status and effectiveness of the PASF remained largely unchanged. Only Arafat’s death on November 11, 2004, made such change possible.

POST-ARAFAT ERA

The death of Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian president soon thereafter created a renewed sense of momentum for reforming and reconstituting the PASF. Abbas's public opposition to violence dated to the early days of the second intifada, and he was seen as a reformist prime minister, albeit an ineffectual one. His presidential campaign, moreover, promised to "end security chaos" and ensure the PA had only "one authority and one legitimate gun."³⁵

The United States, seeing an opportunity to advance Palestinian security reform, created the position of U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority, appointing Lt. Gen. William "Kip" Ward in March 2005 to serve as the first coordinator. Yet he and his successor, Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, who assumed the position in December 2005, lacked funding, severely limiting their effectiveness (as discussed further in chapter 3).³⁶

Shortly after being sworn in, Abbas embarked on multiple formal steps on the security front, compelling the retirement of a slew of Arafat-associated security chiefs and enacting several laws and regulations regarding the security sector. Most significant of these was the April 2005 Presidential Decree Concerning the Unification of Security Forces, which consolidated the PASF into three branches: internal, national, and intelligence.³⁷ The Ministry of Interior, renamed Ministry of Interior and National Security, was ostensibly given oversight not only of internal security branches (Preventive Security, Palestinian Civil Police, and Civil Defense), as mandated by the 2003 Basic Law, but also of the National Security Force and General Intelligence—though these latter two entities also continued to report to the president.

Abbas granted the interior minister job to Maj. Gen. Nasr Yousef, a PLA veteran, former NSF chief, and senior Fatah member who had refused the same post under Arafat because he would have lacked authority.³⁸ Yousef had a mandate to unify the PASF under the Ministry of Interior and its funding through the Ministry of Finance, and to begin controlling illegal weapons. Both mandates, however, faced resistance—the former from stronger security branches, particularly intelligence-oriented ones, the latter from certain AAMB leaders as well as Hamas, which demanded that the PA differentiate

between illegitimate “weapons of chaos” and legitimate “weapons of resistance.”³⁹

For all these steps, Abbas contended with a heavy legacy from the Arafat days: lawlessness driven by strong, independent armed factions on the ground; a decimated security sector; and resistance from various sources—including many within Abbas’s own Fatah movement—to his agenda.⁴⁰ Lacking the direct security muscle to impose this agenda, Abbas opted for more-subtle political means.⁴¹ In February 2005, Abbas and Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon met in Sharm al-Sheikh and declared a truce; Israel released nine hundred Palestinian prisoners and announced it would pull out of some Palestinian cities. The following month, Palestinian factions meeting in Cairo agreed to a period of calm and Abbas promised to proceed toward legislative elections.⁴²

While the calm largely held, the year 2005 did witness a number of terrorist attacks against Israel, along with Israeli attacks against militants.⁴³ Internally, law and order were sorely lacking as warlords, many of them AAMB leaders, continued to wield power—and precipitate chaos—on the local level.⁴⁴ In Gaza, while PASF forces endured less physical damage than those in the West Bank, they had to contend with internal rivalries, powerful armed clans, and a strengthening Hamas.⁴⁵ Indeed, at this time the head of Israel’s military intelligence assessed that Hamas had established a “‘parallel authority’ to the PA in Gaza.”⁴⁶

Overall, in the immediate aftermath of the second intifada, the security situation was improving but remained fragile, held together not by the PASF’s ability to impose the PA domestic and external agenda, but rather by the political calculations of the various factions. This fragile balance was to be severely tested with the quickly upcoming Gaza disengagement.

GAZA DISENGAGEMENT

On September 12, 2005, the last IDF soldier left the Gaza Strip as part of Israel’s plan to disengage from the territory. The disengagement itself saw some coordination, albeit limited, pursuant to an agreement between Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz and PA interior minister Nasr Yousef. This included the creation of joint operations centers and the deployment of PASF forces to prevent attacks on settlements.⁴⁷

Yet the PASF, weakened by the intifada and internal struggles among the various services, was not at a point where it could “gain hold over all the armed Palestinian organizations.”⁴⁸ This became obvious in the early hours after the Israeli withdrawal, when PASF forces failed to secure the evacuated settlements, including agricultural facilities slated for transfer to the Palestinians.⁴⁹ A United Nations report from the time stated that “the settlements are now under the control of Palestinian security forces, although tens of thousands of Palestinians have subsequently entered including armed militants.”⁵⁰ In a show of force, Hamas held prayers under guard of its own openly armed militias as PASF personnel stood by helplessly.⁵¹ The lack of PASF control was also evident in its inability to control rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel, with fire continuing in the days after the withdrawal.⁵²

Internally, PASF forces not only struggled without success to establish law and order,⁵³ they increasingly appeared unable even to defend themselves. This was perhaps most vividly illustrated by the murder of Musa Arafat, a cousin of President Arafat who had previously been head of Military Intelligence and was then serving as Abbas’s military advisor. In the early hours of September 7, 2005, a hundred heavily armed men stormed Musa Arafat’s home in Gaza, overcame his bodyguards, and murdered him in the street with daylight breaking. The attack, which lasted about thirty minutes, took place outside the offices of Preventive Security, whose members did not deign to intervene and assist Arafat.⁵⁴ While the identity of the assailants remains unknown, many theories abound among Palestinians, all pointing to internecine power struggles between different Fatah leaders.⁵⁵ These tensions paralyzed the PASF, presaging the lack of cohesion and solidarity that would surface—to devastating effect—when the PA-Hamas struggle intensified.

PASF UNDER HAMAS RULE

Amid this unrest, and at U.S. insistence, the PA held legislative elections in January 2006. Defying predictions, Hamas won, garnering a parliamentary majority and forming a PA government two months later. For international funding to continue, the Quartet stated, the PA would need to commit “to the principles of non-violence, recog-

dition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations."⁵⁶ The Hamas government refused.

These developments created a conundrum for the PASF. On the one hand, much of the Fatah-dominated PASF would be required, under the Basic Law and the Roadmap, to report to an interior minister from the rival Hamas movement. On the other hand, the forces would be denied international aid if they reported to a minister from a Hamas cabinet that did not recognize the Quartet conditions. This led to a chaotic period during which the PASF refused to report to the Hamas-led Interior Ministry⁵⁷ and Hamas began establishing its own parallel, uniformed security body, named the Executive Force, in Gaza.⁵⁸ Abbas took measures to shift PASF control from the Interior Ministry to the Office of the President, including through the appointment of Mohammad Dahlan as national security advisor, with authority over all the services.⁵⁹ The international community, for its part, suspended aid to the PA, rendering the Hamas government unable to pay the salaries of its employees—including the PASF. The U.S Security Coordinator broke off all contact with the government and restricted its interaction to the president's office, thus working primarily to coordinate international assistance to the Presidential Guard and for Gaza border control.⁶⁰

In this political maelstrom, clashes between Hamas and the PASF, aided by Fatah militias, intensified. Hamas targeted Fatah politicians, PASF security officers, and PA-oriented religious figures, and the PASF, primarily Preventive Security, responded in kind. Again, the PASF proved unable to protect its members, even during prolonged, publicized attacks on their homes or, in one particularly egregious incident, the funeral procession for a slain Preventive Security officer—slain, it should be mentioned, by Hamas.⁶¹ According to the prophetic assessment of a spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, a Gaza-based militant group, "Fatah leaders will not admit it, but they are in the midst of a war for survival against the new Hamas government and the street, which in the main supports it."⁶² The targeted attacks were punctuated with more-widespread violence and lawlessness. During 2006, 260 Palestinians were killed in such clashes, with the number rising above 400 in the first half of 2007.⁶³

Outwardly, too, attacks on Israel from Gaza—primarily rocket-fire and assaults on the border crossings—ticked upward, with Israel

retaliating via artillery strikes and targeted assassinations.⁶⁴ On June 25, 2006, Hamas abducted IDF corporal Gilad Shalit, prompting Israel to launch its first major ground operation into the territory since the disengagement.⁶⁵ The Gaza Strip was primed for an explosion.

THE FALL OF GAZA

On June 10, 2007, the spark was provided when Hamas militiamen threw a Presidential Guard officer to his death from the tallest building in Gaza City, and Fatah cadres retaliated in kind by assassinating the Hamas-affiliated imam of Gaza's largest mosque. Four days of clashes followed during which Hamas would effectively evict the PASF from Gaza and seize complete control over the territory, including all PASF installations and equipment.⁶⁶ The defeat was as shocking as it was comprehensive. Indeed, several thousand Hamas personnel and the Executive Force routed a much larger PASF/Fatah opponent with an estimated 20,000 fighters.⁶⁷

The reasons for the rout were varied, although in truth foretold. To begin with, on the eve of battle, the PASF in Gaza was virtually leaderless. In the violence that preceded the June takeover, Hamas killed a number of high-level PASF officers while prompting others to flee for their safety. Crucially, Dahlan and his top aides, Rashid Abu Shabak and Samir Mashharawi, were not in Gaza when the clashes broke out and were not exercising command and control.⁶⁸ Abbas himself only issued clear orders to his forces to strike back days late, on June 14.⁶⁹

As a result, PASF forces were disorganized and demoralized, with numerous accounts of officers suffering from lack of reinforcements and running out of ammunition.⁷⁰ Many simply exited the fight, surrendering to Hamas, their state best described by one rank-and-file officer: "If my role in life was to be a sacrificial lamb, God would have created me [as] a sheep. I have no intention of killing other Palestinians regardless of who they are, even less interest in being killed by them."⁷¹

The fragmented nature of the PASF, and the competing loyalties to various Fatah leaders, also precluded unified action. Hamas initially cast the fight as being directed not at the PA or PASF as a whole, but only at Dahlan's Preventive Security and General Intelligence. In fact, the first round of attacks targeted these two services, prompting other security chiefs as well as Fatah leaders to initially stay on the side-

lines—as they had, to their discredit, in prior Hamas-Fatah clashes over the preceding two years.⁷² Most tellingly, a Fatah faction led by Ahmad Hillis, a Dahlan rival who served as secretary-general of the movement in Gaza, refrained completely from entering the fray.⁷³

Numerous Hamas officials claimed that they, in truth, had no plan to take over Gaza, but were instead preempting plans for the PASF, particularly the Presidential Guard—groomed by the U.S. Security Coordinator and Dahlan—to forcibly overthrow its own government. Thus, in their minds, it was a coup to preempt a coup.⁷⁴ Despite such claims, ample evidence suggests that the Qassam Brigades, Hamas’s military wing, was preparing for a major showdown. Indeed, in taking over Gaza, Hamas launched attacks via tunnels dug underneath various PA security installations, indicating significant lead time for planning and building.⁷⁵ Irrespective of its ultimate intentions, Hamas was better led, trained, and armed by comparison, methodically deploying fighters hardened after years of battling the IDF.⁷⁶ Most important perhaps, Hamas since its legislative victory was being heavily funded, trained, and equipped by Iran and Qatar, which were, according to one alarmed U.S. government cable, effectively outspending the United States and its allies in their uneven attempts to bolster the PASF.⁷⁷ Illustrating the disparity, the PA had been unable to pay many of its personnel salaries in over a year.⁷⁸

As Dahlan lamented after the loss of the territory he had practically ruled for more than a decade, “It would be very easy for a few people who have a goal to succeed over a large army that does not have a goal and does not have proper weaponry.”⁷⁹ After the twin failures embodied in the second intifada and the Gaza putsch, the time had come for the PASF to begin reconstituting itself in earnest.

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 67. *Ibid.*, p. 170; *After Gaza*, Aug. 2, 2007, p. 14, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/after-gaza>. As one UN witness stated, according to the report, "During the fighting, Fatah's forces had no command and control, the leadership did not answer their phones, there was no hierarchy, so many armed men simply gave up." See also Tim McGirk, "A Fight to the Death in Gaza," *Time*, June 12, 2007, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1632089,00.html>. In the words of one Fatah officer, "There is a weakness of our leaders. Hamas is just taking over our positions. There are no orders."
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 76. Seth Frantzman, "Secret Cables Reveal U.S. Efforts to Prevent 2007 Hamas Takeover of West Bank," *Jerusalem Post*, Aug. 1, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arabi-Israeli-Conflict/Secret-US-cables-reveal-how-US-worked-to-prevent-Hamas-takeover>.

[over-of-West-Bank-ten-years-ago-501352](#). According to the 2007 U.S. government cable, Iran and Qatar together had provided Hamas "at least" \$550 million, as well as training and equipment.

77. Frisch, pp. 163, 180. Nothing quite illustrated this point like the September 2006 incident in which several hundred Fatah-affiliated police in Gaza City rioted for three straight days over unpaid salaries.
78. Quoted in Frisch, p. 178. For a comprehensive history of this time period, see Jonathan Schanzer, *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

3

RECONSTITUTION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

THE CONTEMPORARY PASF 2007–2018

*Security chaos and [establishment of] the state run along
two parallel lines that do not meet.*

—Salam Fayyad, 2007

THE FALL OF GAZA to Hamas, and with it the division of Palestinian territory, was a wakeup call for the PA leadership. Beginning in mid-2007, among a slew of political moves to shore up control in the West Bank, the newly installed emergency government of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad embarked—with heavy U.S. assistance—on a major security reform agenda. The primary function of the campaign was to reassert the PA’s central authority through improving personal security (i.e., law and order), removing gunmen from the streets (including, and especially, from Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades), and cracking down on Hamas activities both civilian and military. In short, the campaign was meant to undo the anarchy and damage of the previous seven years.

The broader context for these moves included recognition that Hamas represented a clear, present, and genuine threat to Fatah dominance. Also at play was the state-building project then being carried out by Fayyad. By reforming PA institutions, restoring security, and attempting to institute—finally—a monopoly over the means of violence, Fayyad intended to “regain the international community’s and Israel’s confidence, neutralize a key Israeli argument against statehood and thus pave the way for independence.”¹

Indeed, as one senior Israeli security official reflected, the PA has been remarkably successful over the past decade in achieving “sys-

temic order and stability in the West Bank.”² Even after Fayyad was pushed out in 2013, and the institution-building project was left to languish, the reformed PASF has remained cohesive, disciplined, and relatively professional (albeit with continued systemic concerns, as will be outlined in chapter 4). This is due to multiple factors, not least the support role played by the U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC), overall Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, and the two campaigns—one focused on internal law and order, the other on countering Hamas—that marked a sea change from the Arafat period. While Yasser Arafat never truly relinquished terrorism as an option even as he negotiated with Israel, Mahmoud Abbas has consistently eschewed violence as a political tool. The PASF was, and remains, at the vanguard of this new strategic approach.

INTERNAL PALESTINIAN SECURITY REFORM UNDER FAYYAD

On June 15, 2007, following the loss of Gaza and Abbas’s declaration of a state of emergency, Salam Fayyad was appointed prime minister with a mandate, *inter alia*, to rebuild the PASF and impose law and order in the West Bank. The PASF’s disastrous performance against Hamas had magnified the need to rebuild an effective security sector. For the first time since the second intifada started, the international focus on security was matched not only with Palestinian rhetorical support but also a sense of urgency that overcame the prevailing lethargy and concerns that the PASF was too politically powerful to be reformed. Here, Fayyad’s competence complemented Abbas’s political commitment to nonviolence, with the latter giving political cover to the former.

Fayyad was no stranger to the PASF. As finance minister under Arafat, he had, as mentioned previously, ended the practice of paying PASF personnel in cash—and the accompanying corruption—in favor of direct bank deposits. Yet upon assuming office, Fayyad inherited a security sector in tatters: decimated from the intifada, internationally isolated, its personnel predominantly unpaid during the Hamas and unity governments of 2006–2007 and reeling from the humiliating defeat in Gaza.³

Fayyad thus turned to the dual task of dismantling the Hamas

infrastructure and eliminating lawlessness in the West Bank. While Fatah leaders, Israel, and the international community in fact viewed the former as the top priority, PA domestic messaging centered on the latter. Such a focus was needed to maximize buy-in from a West Bank public that had long complained about the lack of personal security,⁴ and to avoid the casting of the PASF by Hamas as simply “collaborators” with the occupation.⁵ To achieve law and order, however, the PA had to first deal with its own: the AAMB.

Amid the deterioration of the PASF during the second intifada, as discussed in chapter 2, the AAMB filled the vacuum in many West Bank areas, simultaneously maintaining a measure of public order while engaging in unlawful activities.⁶ Any sincere PASF attempt to assert its monopoly on the means of violence—or, in Palestinian parlance, to ensure “one gun, one law, one authority”—would have to address the daunting challenge posed by the AAMB, which was armed, claimed significant popular legitimacy from its “resistance” during the intifada, and, unlike Fayyad himself, was affiliated with Fatah.⁷ Under these circumstances, an approach to the AAMB based purely on security would have been unrealistic. Instead, the PA took a political approach,⁸ negotiating an amnesty program with Israel whereby AAMB members wanted by the state could be pardoned if they laid down their arms, renounced terrorism, and underwent a probationary period. Many of the fighters, thus rehabilitated, were subsequently absorbed into the PASF.^{9,10} While the amnesty program faced some setbacks, by June 2010 some 469 AAMB members had been pardoned by Israel and the AAMB largely ceased to pose a systemic challenge.¹¹

With AAMB demobilization under way, Fayyad sought to establish governmental control over the PASF in accordance with the Basic Law, tackling the “fragmentation, rivalries, overlap and lack of coordination” that traditionally characterized the institution, wherein “different branches serv[ed] the interests of individual commanders.”¹² To this end, he embarked on a series of internal changes in PASF operations. In the first year, the government reduced the PASF payroll to 59,000—a cut of some 30,000 employees—through an early retirement program, thus freeing up slots for younger, internationally trained recruits.¹³ Nearly as important as the cost cutting, the move fulfilled Abbas’s political desire to rid the PASF of long-serving Arafat loyal-

ists. While this program faced some opposition initially, a combination of generous retirement packages and political pressure, particularly vis-à-vis the more senior officers, ultimately overcame the resistance.¹⁴

A stiffer task entailed limiting the autonomy of individual security chiefs and ensuring coordination through the Ministry of Interior in accordance with Abbas and Fayyad's instructions.¹⁵ At bottom, the security chiefs, many of whom were also well connected within Fatah, carried more institutional weight than the Interior Ministry. While Fayyad delegated some operational responsibilities to the ministry, this delegating was incomplete given that he himself maintained direct relations with the security chiefs on important issues, particularly budget-related ones.¹⁶ Fayyad also presided over regular meetings of the security chiefs intended to coordinate their efforts.¹⁷

While personal involvement by the prime minister may have been politically necessary, it in practice undermined the push to institutionalize security under the Interior Ministry. For their part, the security chiefs sought to develop (or uphold) direct relations with both Fayyad and Abbas, both of whom indulged this tendency.¹⁸ Additionally, strong leaders in Fatah were antagonized by Fayyad's growing influence within the PASF and sought to maintain their own channels and power.¹⁹ This arrangement worked while the relationship between Fayyad and Abbas remained strong, and the PASF chiefs deferred to the prime minister. But when the Abbas-Fayyad relationship frayed—with Fayyad eventually getting pushed out in 2013—the Interior Ministry lacked the institutional power to maintain a coordinating and supervisory role. The center of gravity ultimately reverted back to the president, where it remains until today.

Fayyad's most significant and lingering successes, however, were in presiding over the dual objectives of imposing law and order in West Bank cities and countering Hamas—both done through rebuilding the PASF under a new structure and doctrine. Fayyad, in partnership with the international community, set in motion a process that would transform the PASF from a chaotic and splintered amalgamation of quasi-militias into an increasingly cohesive and professional institution.

U.S. SECURITY COORDINATOR AND INTERNATIONAL ROLE

To buttress the internal efforts just highlighted, the international community during this period increased its own direct involvement in PASF reform. To be sure, security reform was a major international focal point dating back to the second intifada, under U.S. envoys or monitors including George Mitchell, George Tenet, and Anthony Zinni. The death of Yasser Arafat in late 2004, however, spurred the Bush administration to elevate the issue, leading to the creation of the office of the USSC in March 2005 and appointment of Lt. Gen. William “Kip” Ward as its first commander. The small team began its work primarily focused on coordinating Israel’s impending withdrawal from Gaza and the handover of security responsibilities to the PA. The immediacy of this objective affected the USSC in its initial months, as did the complete lack of budgetary support provided to the nascent mission.²⁰

Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton succeeded Ward in December 2005, just one month before Hamas’s victory in parliamentary elections. The subsequent Hamas-led governments, lasting from March 2006 to June 2007, had a compromised Ministry of Interior, proving a major obstacle for international reform efforts—Hamas being a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. As a result, the USSC work during this period was channeled through the Palestinian presidency and focused on advising and supporting the Presidential Guard (PG), which remained under the direct control of President Abbas. The PG was, moreover, the force responsible for the Rafah border crossing, between Egypt and Gaza, as stipulated in the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) signed after the Gaza disengagement,²¹ as well as the Karni crossing, between Israel and Gaza. Indeed, several hundred “special” PG officers were trained in Egypt and returned to Gaza for this mission.²²

Similar to the Fayyad government’s efforts, the June 2007 fall of Gaza focused international minds on consolidating PA control in the West Bank. It was then, under Dayton’s leadership, that the USSC appropriated the role, size and, crucially, budget it would take forward into subsequent years.

Structure and Budget

Although led by a U.S. three-star general/flag officer, the USSC is, in reality, a multinational mission that works within the State Depart-

ment and is headquartered at the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem; some non-U.S.-government personnel are, in addition, based in Ramallah. According to the most recent data, the mission totals approximately forty-eight core staff, with sixteen active-duty U.S. military personnel seconded to the State Department as well as officers from Canada (including a brigadier-general), Britain (including a brigadier), the Netherlands, Turkey, and Italy.²³ As outlined in its charter, the USSC reports directly to the secretary of state with Defense Department coordination (although the reality of this chain of command will be addressed in chapter 4).

Unlike past international security envoys who operated through repeated visits to the region, the in-country USSC mission allows for dedicated daily attention to the issues in question.²⁴ Personnel usually serve six-month to one-year terms, although the coordinators themselves serve for longer periods: Dayton served for five years (2005–10) and was succeeded by Lt. Gen. Michael Moeller (2010–12), Vice Adm. Paul Bushong (2012–14), and Lt. Gen. Frederick Rudesheim (2015–17). Lt. Gen. Eric Wendt currently holds the position, having assumed it in November 2017.

Budgetary support for the USSC is allocated from the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). From 2007 until 2013, the annual amount totaled, on average, \$100 million; in recent years, the support has been decreased steadily and currently stands at less than \$50 million per year.²⁵

Mission and Operations

At its core, the USSC mission is to “[assist] the Palestinian Authority to transform and professionalize its security sector; [engage] with the Israelis and Palestinians on security initiatives that build trust and confidence; and [support] whole-of-government efforts that set the conditions for a negotiated two-state solution.”²⁶ In practical terms, this means working primarily with the National Security Force, Presidential Guard, and, to a lesser extent, Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) along three interrelated lines of operation:

1. *The USSC seeks to “train and equip” newly (re)formed PASF battalions as they rebuilt from the Arafat era, second intifada, and fall of Gaza.*

In Dayton's words: "to help the Palestinian Authority to right-size its force and advise them on the restructuring and training necessary to improve their ability."²⁷ Training and equipping takes place, on the whole, at the Jordan International Police Training Center (JIPTC) outside Amman. Under USSC and INL supervision, mobile training teams (MTTs), made up of contractors from DynCorp International as well as local Jordanian security officers, put recruits, most often from the NSF, through nineteen weeks of gendarmerie training.²⁸ In addition to unit cohesion and leadership, the curriculum reportedly includes the proper use of force, human rights, as well as riot control and other civil disturbance management tactics. The Jordanian locale affords two particular benefits: the liberal use of live ammunition and light weapons—which in the West Bank are strictly limited by Israel²⁹—and, moreover, a place separate from familial, clan, and other local political ties.³⁰ In addition, the use of Jordanian trainers helps overcome some cultural barriers with the trainees.

As Dayton stated with some degree of controversy in 2009, "What we have created—and I say this in humility—...are new men. The average age of the graduates is twenty to twenty-two years, and these young men, when they graduate, and their officers, believe that their mission is to build a Palestinian state." Back in the West Bank, meanwhile, U.S.-funded training includes follow-up leadership courses for all PASF officer levels and services, from basic (officer) training to a nine-month course at the recently opened Palestinian Officers Academy, part of the Centralized Training Institute (CTI) in Jericho.³¹ In more recent years, the non-security Civil Defense has also received training and equipping help from the USSC.³²

As of 2017, after a decade and nearly 19,000 PASF personnel trained in Jordan—alongside an additional 10,000 trained since 2012 at the Jericho hub—U.S. officials often state that the training component of the USSC mission is nearing completion. Tentative plans, moreover, suggest moving all training from Jordan into the West Bank by 2020, a decision that will require a significant Israeli political decision.³³

A further use of USSC funds has been to support infrastructure repair and construction, especially in light of the heavy damage

wreaked on PASF facilities during the second intifada. “Not fit for human habitation,” is how Dayton described the PASF infrastructural base in 2009 as this component of the project began. Under USSC and PA supervision, 135 facilities across the PASF—including training facilities, barracks, and operational centers—were constructed by Palestinian contractors, making up approximately one-third of the total PASF infrastructure in the West Bank.³⁴

2. *The USSC, along with its INL partners, has endeavored to support the additional “softer” facets of Palestinian security sector reform, termed “advise and assist.”*

This consists, namely, of human resources; chain-of-command and logistical reform emanating from the Interior Ministry; rule-of-law initiatives emanating from the judiciary; and overall strategic planning. As Dayton put it, these steps are intended “to enforce the rule of law, and make [the PASF] accountable to the leadership of the Palestinian people whom they serve.”³⁵ So far, however, progress on this front has been less even than the train-and-equip component and faced political pushback. Nevertheless, USSC support is expected to focus on this facet of its operations in the years ahead (as addressed further in chapter 4).

3. *The USSC plays a role in mutually engaging Israeli and Palestinian stakeholders.*

Pertinent here is the “coordinator” element of the mission’s name, as well as its official jurisdiction over Israel and the Palestinian territories. Indeed, garnering the respect of, and cultivating personal relationships with, senior security officers on both sides was central to the selection of a U.S. general or flag officer for the position.³⁶ Two USSC veterans, Steven White and P. J. Dermer, put it succinctly:

Given Israel’s neuralgia with the concept of armed and organized Palestinian groups in the wake of the Second Intifada and the Palestinians’ anxiety about lacking a security patron, the organization was meant to give the Israeli political and defense establishment confidence that an individual was in place who would do nothing to jeopardize Israel’s security, while simultaneously giving the Palestinians someone they could point to as their “big brother” within the whole of the

process. The USSC was thus never just about “training and equipping” the Palestinian security forces, nor achieving institution-building goals. It was, first and foremost, a U.S. confidence-building measure between both parties.³⁷

Taking into account the varying personal styles and commitments of past coordinators, this plank of the USSC mission has indeed yielded increased confidence on the professional level of both parties. For Israel, the prevailing view is that contact with the USSC in particular, and the international community in general, is a stabilizing and moderating force on the PASF.³⁸ One former Israeli official went further, stating that the “nonmilitary aspect of the U.S. role is more important than pure military technical abilities—psychologically, organizationally, and [symbolically] important.”³⁹

While having a high-level, and sometimes publicly visible, USSC remains indispensable for the success of the mission, it inevitably created occasional tension with the PA regarding the political ownership of the security rebuilding and reform efforts. Toward the end of his term, Dayton’s relations with Fayyad were reportedly strained on this account.⁴⁰ Indeed, the prominent U.S. role in transforming and modernizing the PASF allowed Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other opposition activists to tar these forces as the “Dayton Battalions”⁴¹—that is, “agents of the West” who were not genuinely Palestinian.⁴²

Moreover, some analysts contend that the increased international role, led by the USSC, in fact constitutes a negative influence on Palestinian security reform. As Sayigh writes, “The large level of outside support has hindered rather than helped the West Bank security sector” due to the lack of real “ownership” over such areas as planning, budgeting, and training. Foreign patronage, in other words, has inoculated the PASF from having to make the difficult decisions necessary for genuine reform to take root.⁴³ U.S. officials dispute this characterization, stating repeatedly that all initiatives are Palestinian-led, with an emphasis on organizational and operational decisions.⁴⁴ Additionally, as indicated by the history of the PASF until the creation and empowerment of the USSC, the PA leadership is unlikely to take such “difficult decisions” without real international support and, when necessary, pressure.

Additional International Assistance

THE EU COORDINATING OFFICE FOR PALESTINIAN POLICE SUPPORT is the sister organization of the USSC, in broad terms responsible for reform in the PA Civil Police and criminal justice sector. Supported by twenty European Union member states as well as Canada, Turkey, and Norway, EUPOL COPPS was established in January 2006 and is headquartered in Ramallah. The mission has expanded over the years, and now employs sixty-nine international staffers, usually on one-year deployments, as well as forty-five locals. The budget, however, still stands at a modest €10 million per year, as of mid-2017.⁴⁵

Operationally, EUPOL COPPS provides strategic advice, training, technical support, and capacity building in two areas: police reform (Civil Police, Interior Ministry) and rule of law (Justice Ministry, High Judicial Council, Attorney General's Office, Palestinian Bar Association). The overall goal is to boost professionalization in these areas of the Palestinian security and judicial sectors, bringing them up to international standards.

In terms of police reform, EUPOL COPPS advisors provide overall guidance and equipment to their Palestinian counterparts in developing a training program, from "basic training" (in Jericho) to "ongoing training" (part-time on the district level), to more advanced "scenario training" in the field.⁴⁶ According to official figures, some six hundred officers go through the various mission-assisted training programs yearly. A significant part of the mission's work involves bringing PCP officers to Europe for continuing education workshops with local police forces.⁴⁷ Even critics admit that EUPOL COPPS efforts have helped the PCP become more technically adept and professional over the past decade.⁴⁸

While more amorphous, rule of law efforts have in recent years focused on issues such as improving police-prosecution cooperation, legislation to protect families from violence, and upholding international standards in the areas of human rights and gender.⁴⁹ Success in this segment of the mission has, admittedly, been more limited.

Local ownership is deemed crucial to the success of the mission. Here, EUPOL COPPS officials emphasize that they hold a support role, "showing presence and interest" and troubleshooting when required.⁵⁰ Indeed, EUPOL COPPS acts as a coordinator for external donor assistance, including for infrastructure improvements,

to the PCP.⁵¹ A very close working relationship prevails between the USSC and EUPOL COPPS, especially at the missions' more senior levels.

INTELLIGENCE SERVICES from several Western states, but primarily the Central Intelligence Agency, provide support to the General Intelligence and Preventive Security organs of the PASF.⁵² Although the exact operational details of the CIA's relationship with the PASF are shrouded in secrecy, its existence is not in question. As then PA interior minister Said Abu Ali put it cryptically in 2009, "There is a connection, but there is no supervision by the Americans. It is solely a Palestinian affair. But the Americans help us."⁵³ According to Sayigh, until 2006 the intelligence services "received the lion's share of donor assistance," more often than not off-the-books and geared toward counterterrorism.⁵⁴ More recently, in early 2018, several high-ranking Palestinian officials accused the PASF intelligence services of collaborating with the CIA in a wide-ranging wiretapping plot against both political allies and foes of Abbas.⁵⁵ As was made clear in chapter 1, this relationship has its roots in the PA's earliest days in the mid-1990s. Here, it is important to emphasize that General Intelligence and Preventive Security do not fall under the purview of the USSC or EUPOL COPPS. Moreover, in the past, turf wars erupted behind the scenes due to the lack of overall coordination between the various international missions involved in the Palestinian security sector.⁵⁶

MISCELLANEOUS FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, in years past, from several other (non-Western) states also figured in the reconstitution of the PASF—although modestly and intermittently relative to U.S. and Western efforts, and serving largely symbolic or political purposes. As such, Russia reportedly provided the PASF with several dozen armored personnel carriers in 2007–2009.⁵⁷ Moreover, according to Zanotti, as recently as 2008, elements within the PASF had "active training programs with Yemen, Pakistan, Algeria, Jordan and Egypt,"⁵⁸ likely overseas schoolhouse (rather than field-based) courses. As of 2018, according to President Abbas, the PA was "party to 83 security agreements with states around the world," including the United States, Russia, and Europe.⁵⁹

CONTEMPORARY PASF FORCE STRUCTURE

As part of the domestic and international reform efforts just outlined, the contemporary PASF has been consolidated into seven branches, not including Civil Defense, a far cry from the unchecked proliferation of the Arafat period.

National Security Force

The backbone of the PASF, the NSF is the largest Palestinian security branch, serving as a national gendarmerie and uniformed generic service in support of the other PASF—in particular, for law-and-order operations beyond the capacity of the Civil Police. The NSF is also responsible for manning and patrolling the borders of Area A, the designation for the major West Bank population centers. The NSF, however, lacks arrest powers. All told, the NSF comprises approximately 10,500 personnel, including nine special battalions—roughly corresponding to most of the ten PA-controlled West Bank governorates—an elite rapid response battalion (RRB), headquarters forces, and other support staff. By one estimate, only 4,500–5,000 personnel are operational/mobile troopers. The RRB in particular is tasked with high-risk arrest operations and hostage rescues in densely populated areas such as refugee camps. By dint of its size and mission, the NSF is the main beneficiary of USSC train-and-equip efforts. The NSF reports to the president.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Nidal Abu Dukhan. Born in Algeria, Abu Dukhan, 49, holds a degree in military sciences from Algeria's Cherchell Military Academy and has undergone various specialized military training programs in the United States, France, and Switzerland, as well as Algeria. Abu Dukhan joined Arafat's personal guard while in Algeria, subsequently moving to Gaza in 1994 after the establishment of the PA. Abu Dukhan made a career in the PASF, including in Preventive Security, as head of Military Intelligence, and as head of special operations for the PG. Abu Dukhan assumed his current position in December 2011. He is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.⁶⁰

Palestinian Civil Police

The PA's main law enforcement body, the PCP, or "Blue Police," is responsible for normal police functions, including combating crime,

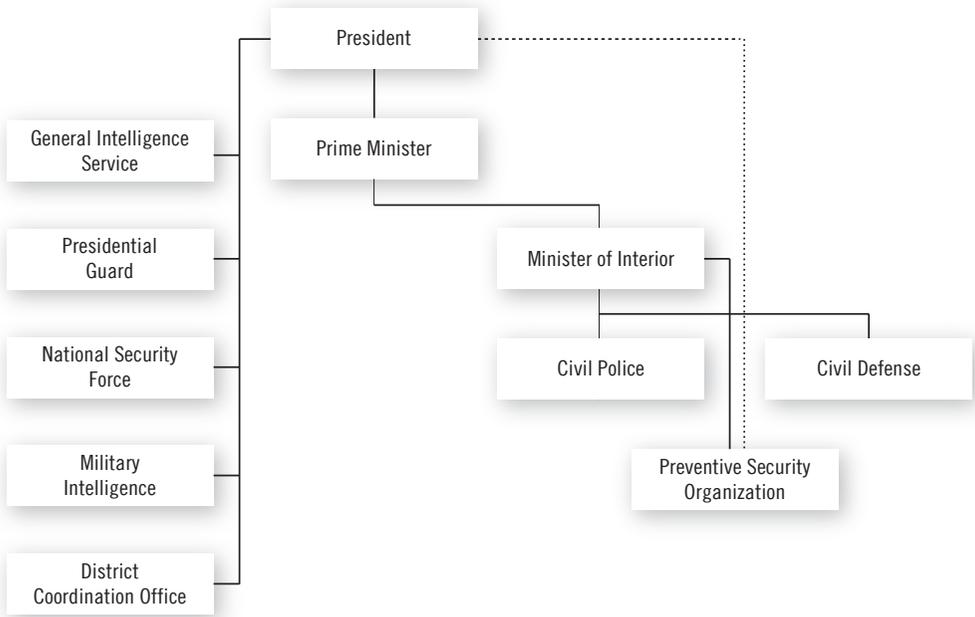


FIGURE 2 PA security organizations and formal command structure.

enforcing public order, and engaging in traffic control. In addition, the PCP runs the official penal system, which consists of seven prisons and one detention facility, and is the first service responsible for riot control, through the Special Police Force unit. The PCP consists of approximately 8,000 uniformed personnel across all ten PA-controlled governorates. Arguably the least political of the security services, save perhaps Civil Defense, the PCP thereby enjoys enhanced professionalism and public standing. The PCP's responsiveness to criminal complaints and public-order disturbances, however, is greatly affected by limitations placed on access to Palestinian civilians living in or near Area B (comprising mainly Palestinian villages) and Area C (comprising land under direct Israeli security control). EUPOL COPPS is the main international body tasked with assisting the PCP, although the USSC does provide strategic support and equipment. The PCP reports to the interior minister.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Hazem Atallah. Born in Jerusalem, Atallah, 58, joined Fatah while a student at the American University of Beirut, and served briefly in Arafat's personal guard in the mid-1980s. He holds degrees from a Bulgarian military college as well

as the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. From 1986 to 1995, Atallah was based in Jordan, thereafter moving to the West Bank at Arafat's request. He has spent most of his career in Preventive Security, commanding the Jenin district and then the Department of International and External Relations. Atallah has held his current position since March 2008. He is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.

Presidential Guard

Considered the elite service of the PASF and reporting directly to the Palestinian president's office, the PG is responsible for protecting the president and other senior officials as well as the Muqata presidential compound and other critical PA infrastructure and institutions. In addition, the PG is tasked with guarding visiting foreign dignitaries and, on occasion, high-risk counterterrorism and arrest operations. The PG consists of approximately 2,700 uniformed personnel, divided into four battalions, headquarters staff, and two specialized units (Security and Protection, Security Intelligence) deployed primarily in Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jericho. Recruitment and training for the PG is considered the most intensive of all the PASF branches—three to six months, often with no pay. The PG is also a beneficiary of USSC train-and-equip efforts.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Munir al-Zuabi. Originally from the al-Arroub refugee camp near Hebron, Zuabi, 61, moved to Jordan after 1967, subsequently joining the PLO security forces and Fatah military wing in 1974. He is believed around this time to have graduated from a Syrian university. In 1979, Zuabi was recruited into Force 17, Arafat's personal guard and the PG precursor, in which he served until the Oslo Accords and his return to the Palestinian territories. He is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.

General Intelligence

GI is the main intelligence branch of the PASF, reporting directly to the president's office and responsible for PA external intelligence operations, including counterespionage and contacts with foreign intelligence agencies. GI is known to work from Palestinian embassies and refugee camps worldwide, as well as covertly in Areas

B and C of the West Bank, in East Jerusalem, and even, in certain instances, in Israel itself. GI operatives reportedly sometimes conduct arrest operations in Israeli-controlled parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, extracting suspects back to Area A for interrogation.⁶¹ Despite its mandate to conduct external operations, GI also runs domestic intelligence-gathering and countersubversion operations inside the PA. GI is believed to consist of approximately 3,200 plainclothes officers, working out of unmarked residential buildings across the various PA governorates. GI is further known to have close ties to many Arab and Western intelligence services, in particular the CIA.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Majid Faraj. Born in Bethlehem's Dheisheh refugee camp, Faraj, 55, joined Fatah's militia at age sixteen, later spending several years in Israeli prisons. The holder of a bachelor's degree from al-Quds Open University, Faraj began his PASF career in Preventive Security in the 1990s, rising through the ranks to become head of the Bethlehem district. In 2003, he began serving as an advisor to the interior minister, and from 2007 to 2009, he was commander of Military Intelligence. Faraj has held his current position as GI chief since 2009, becoming in the process a close confidant of President Abbas and a senior advisor on diplomatic affairs. This latter role has included service as the Palestinian point person for U.S. Gen. John Allen's security plan, a negotiator in Israeli-Palestinian final-status talks during former secretary of state John Kerry's peace initiative (2013–14), and, into the present, a key interlocutor with the Trump administration, Hamas, and various Arab capitals. Unlike the other PASF chiefs, Faraj is involved in domestic politics and has lately worked to increase his public profile. Indeed, he has been mooted for a presidentially appointed seat on Fatah's Central Committee. He is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.

Preventive Security

The PASF branch tasked with internal intelligence and security, Preventive Security's roles include thwarting crimes against the PA (e.g., through corruption and illegal militias) and counterespionage operations. The service's main area of responsibility, however, is

counterterrorism: tracking, infiltrating, and generally weakening Hamas and PIJ in the West Bank. For this reason, the service is often referred to by foreign sources as “the Hamas hunters.” The service has approximately 3,400 plainclothes personnel who hold judicial powers of arrest and investigation. Preventive Security also runs its own detention centers—reportedly eleven across the PA—and has often been accused of using torture and other extrajudicial interrogation methods on detainees.⁶² Western intelligence services are known to support the work of Preventive Security, primarily in the counterterrorism sphere. The service officially reports to the interior minister.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Ziad Hab al-Rih. Originally from Jenin, Hab al-Rih, 57, is a longtime Fatah activist who spent several years in Israeli prisons in the 1980s. Hab al-Rih earned a political science degree from An-Najah National University in Nablus, and joined Preventive Security shortly after the PA’s creation, rising to second-in-command in the West Bank. He is one of the longer-serving PASF chiefs, having been appointed head of the West Bank branch in 2003/2004 and to his current position in 2007. Hab al-Rih is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.

Military Intelligence

MI is the smallest intelligence branch in the PASF, responsible at large for upholding security within the security services themselves, thus serving as a kind of PASF “internal affairs.” MI’s mission includes vetting PASF personnel for terrorism ties, serious crimes, collaboration with Israel, and other disciplinary violations. According to one foreign source, an estimated two to three hundred PASF personnel are expunged each year for such reasons. Additional MI functions include providing investigative support to the military judicial system, internal security to other PASF branches when requested, as well as guard duty and general security for some PASF headquarters and MI detention centers (in each governorate) and prisons (Jericho and Nablus). MI has approximately 1,700 personnel, usually plain-clothed for general operations while uniformed for ceremonial occasions and headquarters or support staff. MI reports to the president.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Zakaria Musleh. Originally from al-Bireh, near Ramallah, Musleh, 52, is a longtime Fatah activist dating back to his time at Birzeit University, where he obtained both a bachelor's and master's degree in business. Previously a senior commander in Preventive Security, Musleh was appointed to his MI post in 2015. He is viewed as a PA/Fatah loyalist who for the most part has eschewed any public profile. Musleh is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.

District Coordination Office

The DCO is the PASF service branch dedicated entirely to facilitating Israeli-Palestinian security coordination on both the tactical and operational levels. Eight area DCOs correspond roughly to the ten PA-controlled governorates, with Qalqilya-Salfit, Jenin-Tubas, and Ramallah-Jerusalem the only paired exceptions. Each area DCO has roughly 30 personnel commanded by a PASF major or lieutenant colonel, with the entire service totaling approximately 260 personnel. The DCOs work opposite the IDF District and Coordination Liaison (DCL) representatives, usually major in rank, who are officially part of the Civil Administration but are situated within the various West Bank Regional Brigades (see later subsection in this chapter, "Security Coordination with Israel," for more details).⁶³ The DCO is the PASF body that facilitates the return of Israeli civilians—and stolen automobiles—from PA territory, coordinates PASF movement outside Area A, notifies Israeli authorities about "price tag" attacks on Palestinian residents, and handles advanced warnings from the IDF with respect to incursions into Area A.⁶⁴ The DCO also fulfills many nonsecurity (i.e., civilian) coordination functions opposite the Civil Administration for Palestinians living in Areas B and C. The service reports to the president.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Jihad al-Aaraj. Hailing from Halhul, near Hebron, Aaraj, 59, was appointed to his current position in 2017 after serving as DCO deputy chief at least since 2012.

Civil Defense

The emergency services branch of the PASF, CD is responsible for first responses, handling of routine emergencies, and remediation of natural and man-made disasters. In practice, this translates into firefighting, arson investigation, and search and rescue. CD

has approximately 1,100–1,200 active personnel, with another 3,000 reserves, spread out across all West Bank governorates and reportedly including a presence in East Jerusalem schools.⁶⁵ CD has been a beneficiary of USSC support, in particular facilities infrastructure, equipment, and vehicles. Due to the civilian and humanitarian, as opposed to security, nature of its mission, CD is the most open PASF service with respect to cooperation with its Israeli counterparts. Indeed, CD has trained with Israeli emergency services,⁶⁶ and has sent firefighting teams to help with conflagrations inside Israel—most notably in December 2010 and November 2016.⁶⁷ CD reports to the interior minister.

COMMANDER: Maj. Gen. Youssef Nassar. Born in Yatta, south of Hebron, Nassar, 58, earned a bachelor's degree in military science in 1985 at the air force academy in Yugoslavia. He has completed several specialized training courses in aviation, civilian and military responses to terrorism, and leadership in Iraq, Libya, and the United States, among other countries. Following the establishment of the PA, Nassar served as an officer in the PG. In 2014, he was appointed CD deputy chief, and two years later named to his current post after his predecessor died from medical complications. He is a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council.

ADDITIONAL COMMANDER: Assistant to the Commander-in-Chief of the PASF Maj. Gen. Ismail Jabr. Born in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, Jabr (aka Hajj Ismail), 74, joined Fatah in Syria after 1967, traveling to China for training and then returning to Jordan to help establish guerrilla bases. Jabr was subsequently a senior PLA officer in southern Lebanon in the 1970s and early 1980s—rising to command all forces in the region—and in Iraq between 1984 and 1994. After the creation of the PA, he was appointed NSF chief in the West Bank, a role he held between 1994 and 2005. In 2006, President Abbas pulled Jabr out of retirement, appointing him to his current position as assistant to the commander-in-chief of the PASF—effectively a national security advisor to the president. In 2010, Jabr was appointed presidential advisor for provincial affairs, a position he still holds in addition to his security portfolio. At the Seventh Fatah Congress in late 2016, Jabr was elected to the party's Central Committee.

Additional Commander: PASF spokesman Maj. Gen. Adnan al-Dumeiri. Originally from the Tulkarem refugee camp, Dumeiri, 63, is a graduate of An-Najah University, where he earned a degree in political science and media. Dumeiri was student union president representing Fatah, and he spent a total of ten years in the 1970s and 1980s in Israeli prisons. He subsequently worked in the Arab media and cofounded the Arab Writers and Journalists Association in Jerusalem. After the creation of the PA, he began his career in the West Bank branch of Preventive Security, ultimately becoming spokesman for the police and Interior Ministry before assuming his current position in 2009. Dumeiri ran unsuccessfully for a seat on the Fatah Central Committee in December 2016.

THREE CENTRAL PLANKS OF CONTEMPORARY PASF OPERATIONS

The three major areas of PASF operations to be discussed here are countering armed militias, opposing Hamas in the West Bank, and engaging in security coordination with Israel.

Whither the Armed Militias?

As it would be for any governing entity, returning law and order to West Bank cities was a major priority for the PA, especially after the anarchy of the second intifada. Beginning in Nablus in late 2007 and continuing through 2008 in Jenin, Hebron, Qalqilya, and Bethlehem, PASF battalions—including recently trained PG, NSF, and PCP personnel—embarked on major campaigns to reassert PA primacy and eliminate what was referred to as the “security chaos.”⁶⁸ The various operations aimed to provide a renewed sense of personal safety to civilians through the reintroduction of a visible PA security and police presence, while targeting illegal gangs and weapons. By most accounts, the campaigns were a success: armed men who previously roamed freely even in the center of Palestinian cities disappeared, crime fell, and business confidence returned.⁶⁹

To be sure, the PA has not completely eliminated all vestiges of illegality, criminality, and armed militias in territory under its control—far from it. The PASF is still hesitant, for operational and political reasons, to fully establish order in many of the West Bank’s refugee camps and inner cities, often described as extraterritorial “no-go

zones” and “soft spots” for PA rule. Particular camps of note include Balata (Nablus), Qalandiya (outside Ramallah), Jenin, and Dheisheh (Bethlehem). It is in these areas where racketeering, drug smuggling, and weapons trafficking flourish.

Some foreign and Palestinian officials maintain that the earlier-noted hesitancy derives from lack of capacity due to overly stringent Israeli restrictions—in particular, regarding armored vehicles, body armor, and advanced weapons. Israeli officials, in response, maintain that the question is one of political will, given that many of the existing gangs are affiliated with the Tanzim and include retired or dormant members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The Tanzim is still viewed as Fatah’s “strategic reserve” in any armed or popular struggle, whether against other Palestinian factions or Israel.⁷⁰ As such, “rules of the game” exist with respect to the grassroots militia’s relationship with the formalized PASF: the weapons may be necessary to maintain Fatah’s elite status, but they cannot be turned on the PA or precipitate too much anarchy.⁷¹ This latent tension is most often resolved through a mix of persuasion and coercion by the PA; over the past decade, the Tanzim, on the whole, has been kept in check and left to its small fiefdoms.⁷²

Yet direct clashes between PASF and Tanzim elements do occur, especially in Nablus in recent years. The events of mid-2016 illustrate the fluid mixture of criminality, security, and politics that characterizes the PA’s relationship to the militias. During this period, an escalation of localized clashes between Fatah-affiliated gunmen and PASF officers in Nablus’s Old City ended with fatalities on both sides—including that of a former senior AAMB member who doubled as a PASF police officer. His death occurred after he was beaten while detained for his apparently prominent role in actions against the PASF.⁷³

The official PA line was that, in an effort to enhance law and order, the PASF was targeting a criminal gang involved in the illegal weapons trade. The campaign also lined up with the PA’s “regional commitments”—code for Israel’s own campaign against the West Bank weapons trade. Yet the real motivation was likely political: the individuals in question, along with others based in the Balata refugee camp, were believed to be close to exiled Fatah leader Mohammad Dahlan. Nablus governor Akram Rajoub drew a direct comparison between the PA’s lax policy pre-2007 against Hamas’s “political weapons,” which

led to the Gaza takeover, and the perceived growing threat from this segment of the Fatah movement. Ultimately, as Rajoub put it, the PA had to respond to the challenge, if only to uphold “the strength and image of the [PA] in the eyes of the people.”⁷⁴

Both anecdotally and empirically, public support appears to be high for a strong PA hand, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly greater perceptions of security and safety in Area A than in other parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem—provided it is done within the law.⁷⁵ The extrajudicial killing of a detained suspect by PASF officers just highlighted sparked a public uproar. As one prominent activist in Balata put it, “We might have gangs, but we don’t appreciate the PA acting in a gang-like manner.”⁷⁶

Anti-Hamas Campaign in the West Bank

After the indulgences of the Arafat era, armed collaboration during the second intifada, and eventual loss of Gaza, the PA beginning in 2007 took a decidedly, and understandably, different approach toward Hamas. Self-preservation in the West Bank was then, and remains today, paramount. As Nablus governor Akram Rajoub put it, “Before the ‘state of divide’ [in June 2007, the PA was] aware of Hamas’s weapons but wasn’t strict. Hamas weapons were a political tool used viciously against Fatah...We can see the difference in how they were dealt with before and after the coup.”⁷⁷ The anti-Hamas campaign of the last decade, moreover, while “not part of security reform per se..., set the stage for what was to come and, in many respects, was the benchmark against which Israel and much of the West assessed the [PA security] sector’s performance.”⁷⁸

Helped initially by the AAMB, in just the four months after the June 2007 Gaza coup, the PASF by one count arrested 1,500 Hamas personnel in the West Bank. Hamas members were removed from PA government positions and those suspected of Islamist ties purged from the PASF.⁷⁹ The presidential decree issued by Mahmoud Abbas in 2007 declared all militias and armed groups illegal,⁸⁰ yet in practice it overwhelmingly applied only to Hamas (as evidenced in the earlier section “Wither the Armed Militias?”). Indeed, Salam Fayyad’s subsequent crackdown on illegal weapons in 2008–2009 “did not,” as one senior Hamas-affiliated official observed, “collect them from Fatah, only Hamas.”⁸¹ Lethal clashes between armed Hamas elements

and the PASF were more commonplace in the early years of the campaign; a particularly noteworthy incident, in Qalqilya in May 2009, which left six dead, came just days after Abbas visited Washington and reaffirmed the PA's security commitments.⁸²

In recent years, the PASF—in addition to, of course, Israeli security forces—has targeted Hamas cells, activists, student groups, charities, media outlets, and financial institutions. Arrests and detentions, if not always trials and convictions, have been the preferred approach. Especially after the collapse of the 2014 Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement and the murder of three Israeli teenagers by a Hebron-based Hamas cell, the PA crackdown intensified, continuing up to the present day.⁸³ Not helping matters was the arrest by Israel's Shin Bet in May–June 2014 of ninety-three Hamas operatives who were reportedly plotting to assassinate Abbas and launch what was in the press commonly described as a “coup” in the West Bank.⁸⁴

The rumored coup was in many respects an outlier. Both Israeli and Palestinian security officials state that Hamas's military strength in the West Bank has been severely degraded over the past decade. “Hamas received several blows since the 2007 coup in Gaza,” observed one senior Palestinian security officer. “[The security campaign] affected the structural setup of Hamas, and weakened it on an institutional level—including the disruption of financial channels and the military power which they enjoyed before.” Indeed, this officer, speaking in late 2014, stated that more than a hundred Hamas NGOs had been shuttered, with the PASF continuing to confiscate Hamas weapons and arrest its operatives.⁸⁵

Israeli officials are more circumspect but on the whole complimentary regarding PA, and Fatah, accomplishments against Hamas in the West Bank. Fatah, in its various forms, continues to control the refugee camps; Hamas's organized strength lies, these days, primarily in its traditional West Bank strongholds of Nablus, Hebron, Silwad, and, to a lesser degree, Jenin.⁸⁶ Launching suicide attacks from the West Bank—operations that require a terrorist infrastructure and bomb-making expertise—has proven difficult for Hamas.⁸⁷ As one senior Israeli security official stated, “For Hamas, the situation in the West Bank is not how they would like it—but it's not zero either.”⁸⁸ Hamas dawa (religious outreach) networks are still a concern, as are media-driven incitement efforts emanating from Gaza. Hamas has also not

relented in its attempts to set up localized West Bank cells, with funding and direction coming from the group's Gaza and foreign-based military apparatus.⁸⁹

For all this, talk by certain Israeli politicians of a " Hamas takeover " of the West Bank appears far-fetched given improved PASF capabilities and, of course, Israel's continued military presence. The greatest threat to the PA from Hamas in the West Bank is not, therefore, military, but political and ideological. In the words of one senior Israeli security official, " There is no way for Hamas to take over the West Bank in one day, armed with weapons. The way is through hearts and minds—dawa, universities, foundations. " ⁹⁰

Security Coordination with Israel

As the campaigns to root out illegal weapons and counter Hamas make clear, the PASF operates within a larger framework of security coordination with Israel. The close security ties between Israel and the PA underpin stability in the West Bank; many observers argue that it is the most successful facet of the entire bilateral relationship and, indeed, the peace process.

In point of fact, " security coordination " is a nebulous catchall term that holds within it several operational components within the Israeli-Palestinian context: dialogue and intelligence sharing; counterterrorism; deconfliction during IDF raids into Area A; safe return of Israeli citizens; riot control; and civil defense response.⁹¹ Above it all stands the Palestinian strategic decision championed by Abbas of nonviolence and, stemming from that, security coordination with Israel—a policy he has, on multiple occasions, termed " sacred. " ⁹²

With respect to DIALOGUE AND INTELLIGENCE SHARING, Israeli and Palestinian security officers are in constant contact—" daily and weekly, " per one Palestinian official—from the security chiefs level (strategic) down to, in some cases, the battalion level (operational/tactical).⁹³ Most of the face-to-face meetings come at the regional or district level, between IDF regional brigade commanders and their PASF district equivalents from the various services.⁹⁴ According to the Palestinian official, " From a security perspective, there is not much difference of opinion with the Israelis...we share the same interests... Discussions center on security hazards and changes that impact the stable security situation on both sides. " ⁹⁵

Such intelligence sharing is, to be sure, primarily directed toward the joint COUNTERTERRORISM campaign against Hamas and PIJ. The Hamas “coup” cell arrested by Israeli forces in 2014, mentioned before, is one example, as was the comprehensive IDF intelligence assessment on Islamist activity in the West Bank physically transferred to the PA after June 2007.⁹⁶ From the Palestinian side, to take two cases, intelligence was shared with Israeli forces tracking down the Hamas cell responsible for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in the southern West Bank in June 2014,⁹⁷ as well as, reportedly, the Hamas cell arrested in Nablus in October 2015 for the murder of two Israeli civilians.⁹⁸ More recently, in early 2018, the PASF reportedly assisted Israel in locating another Hamas cell in Jenin responsible for the murder of an Israeli civilian.⁹⁹

Since October 2015 and the *haba* (eruption) of “lone wolf” terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers by, overwhelmingly, Palestinian youths, the counterterrorism campaign has come to include the monitoring of Palestinian schools and social media—by both the IDF and PASF.¹⁰⁰ Advanced Israeli technological alerts are relayed to forces in the field tasked with making arrests, although in some cases the intelligence is given to the PASF, whose personnel bring in the suspect for a “cautionary talk.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, beginning in 2016, the PASF was dispatched to Palestinian schools to search for knives in students’ backpacks, and educators were told to issue alerts regarding any truant students.¹⁰² According to Ehud Yaari, “PA security officers liaised with village leaders, clergymen, and education officials to urge them to deter local youth from joining the attacks.”¹⁰³ In Hebron, PASF retirees interdicted Palestinian youth suspected to be on their way to conduct attacks.¹⁰⁴ For their part, Tanzim militia elements threatening violence remained out of the fray due to a mix of coercion and persuasion emanating from the highest reaches of the PA/Fatah.¹⁰⁵ Israeli measures, including cooperation with the PASF, successfully reduced lone wolf attacks by 90 percent;¹⁰⁶ by the end of 2016, the PASF was reportedly responsible for a third of all terrorism suspect arrests.¹⁰⁷ PA General Intelligence chief Majid Faraj stated that between October 2015 and January 2016 alone, the PASF foiled two hundred terrorist attacks against Israeli targets.¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, Israel still maintains freedom of operation, overwhelmingly through nighttime incursions into Area A, when it

deems this in its security interest. Such activity is in itself a major change from the 1990s (when Israel on the whole refrained from entering Area A) and a lingering effect of the second intifada. Generally, three criteria are followed for embarking on such raids: hot pursuit of terrorism suspects, an imminent terrorism threat, or lack of responsiveness by PASF in a reasonable timeframe.¹⁰⁹ There are often, as well, instances when Israel deems the intelligence too sensitive to share with its Palestinian counterparts. Still, according to one former Israeli security officer, less immediate operational considerations sometimes explain the extent of the raids, including maintaining high operational readiness among IDF forces in the field, keeping arrests at a certain threshold (i.e., “mowing the lawn” doctrine), as well as upholding the element of surprise.¹¹⁰

The decision to embark on a raid emanates from the IDF regional brigade commanders, in conversation with their superiors in the Judea and Samaria Division and Central Command, with input from Shin Bet.¹¹¹ The IDF is ultimately the body to decide.¹¹² In procedural terms, the IDF regional brigade commander orders the DCL officer to contact his counterparts in the Palestinian DCO, who then contact the PASF district commander to ensure DECONFLICTION on the streets between the forces (e.g., “don’t go outside”).¹¹³

According to Israeli estimates, the IDF arrests between two and four thousand Palestinians in the West Bank every year.¹¹⁴ While the prevalence and tempo of raids have decreased over the last two years, the raids remain the main point of contention between Israel and the PASF, adversely affecting the stature of the PASF inside Palestinian society (an issue to be explored in chapter 4). Yet high-level conversations between Israeli and Palestinian security officials begun in early 2016 have, as of this writing, failed to yield a revamped plan for further minimizing IDF raids into Area A.¹¹⁵

On the Palestinian side, ACCESS AND MOVEMENT between the various islands of PA control in the West Bank are also handled via the DCOs. During the summer 2015 operation in Nablus highlighted earlier, Israel facilitated the movement of outside Palestinian forces into the city.¹¹⁶ Indeed, PASF personnel, especially PCP forces tasked with upholding law and order, are allowed access—after prior coordination with the IDF—into many parts of Area B of the West Bank where Palestinian civilians reside.¹¹⁷ However, uniform mechanisms

for increased Palestinian access to Area B are still beholden to ongoing negotiations and political considerations. As of now, the coordination process consists of approximately eleven different mechanisms (via phone or fax, with or without weapons, etc.)¹¹⁸ and is often inefficient and time consuming.¹¹⁹

The DCOs also fulfill an important function in the SAFE RETURN of Israeli Jewish citizens who stray, whether by accident or for business or criminal reasons, into Palestinian villages and cities. According to Israeli authorities, an estimated three hundred Israelis were returned in 2016 alone,¹²⁰ while Palestinian officials tout more than five hundred in 2017—detained by local PASF forces who then contact the DCL/Civil Administration for their safe return. Indeed, during two separate incidents in February 2018, the PASF forcibly defended an Israeli civilian (in Abu Dis) and two uniformed IDF personnel (in Jenin) from hundreds of rioting locals; all three were safely extracted.¹²¹ As one Palestinian security official explained after the Jenin incident: “First, we intervened because we do not want anyone to die, regardless of their background. We believe that protecting the soldiers was a humanitarian issue. Second, we want to protect our people. If the soldiers were, God forbid, killed, the Israeli army would wreak havoc in Jenin. We have no interest in returning to the days of the second intifada.”¹²² The precedent of the October 2000 Ramallah lynching of two IDF reservists, who were in fact detained in a PA police station, is instructive. Every such incident holds within it the potential to turn fatal and into a major strategic event.

RIOT CONTROL is the final facet of security coordination and arguably the most important for West Bank stability writ large during periods of heightened tensions. By both commission and omission, the PA has over the past decade worked to contain large-scale demonstrations before they coalesce and escalate. This is true for protests inside the PA as well as in the sensitive seam zones between Israeli and Palestinian control leading up to checkpoints, highways, and settlements.¹²³ At the forefront in operational terms stands the PCP riot control unit—the Special Police Force—which is augmented when needed by other PCP and NSF units. The PG is also equipped to handle small-scale rioting; Preventive Security and General Intelligence, meanwhile, often situate plainclothes

officers on both sides of demonstration lines to maintain order and interdict armed rioters.¹²⁴ In particular, the PA was lauded for maintaining relative quiet in the West Bank during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, from December 2008 to January 2009,¹²⁵ a feat reprised during subsequent Gaza wars (2012, 2014) and other periods of heightened unrest—notably, the earlier-discussed *haba* beginning October 2015.

In addition to these active measures, the PA/Fatah has worked passively to prevent demonstrations—namely, by not mobilizing the public to take to the streets.¹²⁶ It is no coincidence that perhaps the largest West Bank demonstration since the second intifada occurred in July 2014, at the height of Operation Protective Edge. An estimated 10,000 to 25,000 Palestinians marched on the Qalandiya checkpoint connecting Ramallah to Jerusalem; stones, fireworks, and, most ominously, live fire by AAMB cadres were directed at Israeli forces on the scene. In point of fact, the demonstration was organized and led by Fatah, and authorized by Abbas himself.¹²⁷ According to one Palestinian security official, the goal was to allow people to “vent out,” directing their anger against Israel and not the PA, which wanted to be seen as “supporting the people” while “maintaining a sense of control.”¹²⁸

Strikingly, there were no follow-up protests of comparable size or intensity. Indeed, the PA has not organized a demonstration similar to Qalandiya since.¹²⁹ More recently, in the three months since U.S. president Donald Trump’s December 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the level of unrest in the West Bank has been tepid. The PASF has reportedly worked to stop armed protestors from reaching the frontlines of demonstrations, and the PA writ large has not mobilized its people to take to the streets.¹³⁰ The specter of losing control and undoing the hard-won stability of the past decade is a major Palestinian concern, and security coordination with Israel is pivotal to avoiding such a scenario. As Abbas himself stated:

I hold on to security cooperation because if we give up on it, there will be chaos here. There will be rifles, there will be explosives, there will be gunmen who will pop up everywhere and want to enter Israel. I put my hands on them and deny them...Without security cooperation a blood-drenched intifada would break out.¹³¹

Such cooperation, Palestinian officials consistently make clear, is not an end unto itself or a favor to Israel. Rather, it is viewed as a means to the ultimate goal: an exit from occupation and the achievement of statehood. As Majid Faraj put it, “We fought for many decades in a different way; and now we are fighting for peace...So I will continue fighting to keep this bridge against radicalization and violence that should lead us to our independence.”¹³² As it has from the PA’s earliest days, the question remains whether the policy of security coordination and indeed the PASF itself will prove sustainable absent the fulfillment of this long-sought objective.

NOTES

1. *Squaring the Circle*, pp. 4–5, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/98-squaring-the-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation.pdf>.
2. Israeli security official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Oct. 2016.
3. *Ruling Palestine II: The West Bank Model?* Middle East Report 79 (International Crisis Group, July 17, 2008), p. 2, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/ruling-palestine-ii-west-bank-model>.
4. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, “Poll Number (24),” June 14–20, 2007, <http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/p24e.pdf>.
5. Thrall, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2010/10/14/our-man-palestine/>.
6. Mohammad Najib and Roland Friedrich, “Non-Statutory Armed Groups and Security Sector Governance,” in *Entry Points to Palestinian Security Sector Reform*, p. 117, <https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Entry-Points%28EN%29.pdf>.
7. “Poll Number (24),” <http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/p24e.pdf>. Indeed, in this poll the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (50 percent) were second only to the Palestinian Civil Police in public confidence out of all the Palestinian armed groups and security services.
8. *Ruling Palestine II*, pp. 6–7, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/ruling-palestine-ii-west-bank-model>.
9. Karin Laub, “Palestinian Gunmen Agree to Amnesty Deal,” Associated Press, July 15, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/15/AR2007071500183.html>.
10. Frisch, p. 179. There was, in addition, a significant outlay of money to tempt the AAMB fighters back: as part of the decommissioning program, the PA reportedly offered \$3,000 for an AK-47 and \$9,000 for an M-16.
11. *Squaring the Circle*, pp. 6–7, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
12. *Ruling Palestine II*, p. 11, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/ruling-palestine-ii-west-bank-model>.

13. Yezid Sayigh, *Fixing Broken Windows: Security Sector Reform in Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen*, Carnegie Paper 17 (Washington DC: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2009), p. 3, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/security_sector_reform.pdf.
14. *Ruling Palestine II*, p. 12, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/ruling-palestine-ii-west-bank-model>.
15. *Squaring the Circle*, p. 14–15, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Sayigh, *Policing the People*, p. 12, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/gaza_west_bank_security.pdf.
18. *Squaring the Circle*, pp. 14–15, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
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20. *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
21. *Ibid.*
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26. U.S. government document provided to the authors, 2014.

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86. Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Jerusalem, July 2016.
87. Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Feb. 2016.
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gest exceptions are areas deemed too close to Israeli settlements, where armed PASF elements are not permitted.

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4

THE ROAD AHEAD AND POLICY CHOICES

IS THE PASF SUSTAINABLE?

Give me responsibility. Try me for a week—if I don't meet my responsibilities, then come back.... You want me to be your employee, your agent. I don't accept this. I want to do it myself.

—Mahmoud Abbas, March 2016

PREDICTIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY'S collapse—whether preceded or succeeded by the collapse of the PASF—have been a constant refrain since, seemingly, the very beginning of Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories. In December 2015, then secretary of state John Kerry expressed his own worries on the subject: “There are valid questions as to how long the PA will survive if the current situation continues. Mark my words: The chances that it will collapse increase every day.” Other international officials have echoed such views.¹ And certain Israeli officials have also taken to forecasting the demise of the PA.² Palestinian leaders, for their part, sporadically threaten to dismantle the PA and “hand the keys back” to Israel, effectively dumping the governing burden on the occupying power.³ In terms of security, doom-filled prognostications of a third intifada heard over the last decade have repeatedly proven premature.⁴

The PA overall, and PASF in particular, has been more resilient than the rhetoric of its doubters would suggest. And yet, while the West Bank gains over the past decade are real, as outlined in the previous chapter, they are also under constant and varied stresses. Most prominent is the tension between the PASF's tactical and operational resilience and the overall political stasis surrounding the peace process. As the most important pillar upholding stability—and by implication the status quo—Israeli-Palestinian security coordination comes in for

constant political criticism in Palestinian society, explaining why both Israeli and Palestinian officials are loath to discuss it openly. In recent years, the politicization of the PASF, including reported excesses or abuses, and the diminishment of political space in the PA, has also undermined the institution's popularity and legitimacy. Moreover, despite the sincere efforts of the past decade, concerns linger about the overall security sector reform agenda and the PASF's structural sustainability in terms of budget, interservice operability, and political oversight. In this, the PASF response to a post-Abbas political environment and possible succession struggle will be crucial.

Peace process "fatigue" may, for some, be a reason to curtail U.S. engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but Washington's role could prove decisive in helping manage all the security dilemmas discussed here. The U.S.-PA relationship can be expected to fluctuate, as it has in the past, due to a variety of factors, including the status of the peace process, decisions about U.S. donor support, and other policy vicissitudes. Such instability was demonstrated most vividly in President Donald Trump's December 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the ensuing friction. Yet despite uncompromising rhetoric from both sides, the hope is that the overall "Oslo system"—to say nothing of the achievements on the ground over the past decade—is insulated from such high diplomatic machinations, especially the quixotic quest to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.⁵

TACTICAL AND OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE VS. POLITICAL STASIS

Understanding the influence that the overall political impasse has on the PASF's tactical and operational resilience helps elucidate those steps that are still possible to bolster the PASF. In all this, ensuring the continuity of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination remains paramount.

Political Stresses

The PASF does not operate in a vacuum. With peace talks stalled and no genuine political horizon visible, many Palestinians simply do not buy the claim by General Intelligence head Majid Faraj (referenced in chapter 3) that the PASF is a force for stability "that should lead us to our independence." Continued Israeli settlement construction, Area

A arrest operations, and so-called price tag attacks by radical Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians exacerbate the situation. As one Fatah party dissident stated, Mahmoud Abbas “has consolidated the concept of coexistence with the occupation. He lets Israel do whatever it wants.”⁶ As a result, the PASF is often viewed by critics as treasonous “collaborators” or “subcontractors for the occupation,” or, more starkly, tarred as *kilab al-yahud* (“dogs of the Jews”) or an Israeli “Black-water Corporation,” referring to the private U.S. military contractor.⁷

For this reason, security coordination in particular elicits special public opprobrium, a fact not lost on Israeli officials, who refrain from discussing the policy too overtly to avoid embarrassing their Palestinian counterparts.⁸ On the Palestinian side, the recognition may well be dawning that security coordination offers an encouraging story for them vis-à-vis the international community, and indeed the Israeli public, but comes with many domestic pitfalls—requiring a very fine line to be walked.⁹ One of the policy’s main backers, Faraj himself, put this dilemma into fine relief when discussing a November 2015 Israeli operation in Hebron: “When our security forces are outside the hospital, and they are forced to withdraw [due to an Israeli operation], it is very bad for the Palestinian public. Any Israeli action with Palestinians creates serious problems for us; it’s really as if they are attacking the [Preventive Security].”¹⁰

Bolstering the PASF

Given the political pressures just discussed, and absent more far-ranging diplomatic progress with Israel, relevant actors have attempted to bolster the PASF through other means. In general, this has meant increasing the authority and capability of the PASF in the West Bank both as a signal of Palestinian sovereignty and to provide a tangible “deliverable” to the Palestinian population.

Thus, starting in the latter part of the second intifada, the PASF’s area of operations has, with Israeli acquiescence, been gradually increased—or, rather, restored toward its levels in the 1990s. Working from the center of Palestinian cities in Area A, with initially just the Palestinian Civil Police during set daytime hours, the PASF has in recent years expanded its remit outward to the villages of Area B.¹¹ Indeed, the PASF has now quietly reestablished a presence in many of the approximately twenty-five Oslo-era police “hubs” in Area B—

termed, as mentioned in chapter 1, “Area B+,” connoting PA civil as well as partial security responsibility.¹²

More telling was the establishment of PA police stations in three Palestinian neighborhoods near Jerusalem in April 2015: al-Ram, Abu Dis, and Biddu.¹³ This was followed up in 2016 by a major PA security operation in other villages both north and south of Jerusalem, formally under full Israeli security control—either Area B or C or part of the Jerusalem municipality on the “West Bank side” of the separation barrier. These areas were long neglected with respect to policing and law enforcement, the usual Israeli interest being often strictly limited to counterterrorism.¹⁴ Such no-man’s-lands between Israeli and PA control had become havens for criminal activity, replete with drug dealers, arms merchants, car thieves, and prostitution rings. The economic prospects and quality of life in these areas had suffered as a direct result.¹⁵ Anecdotal reports indicate that in cases where a PA security presence has been introduced, it has had a positive overall impact for the local population.¹⁶ The Palestinian public, further, appears to need and want more such support; indeed, a 2017 poll indicated that more than 63 percent of the public had confidence in the PCP “to a great or somewhat high extent.”¹⁷

Major gaps, however, remain in PASF coverage, particularly in areas adjoining West Bank Israeli settlements and military installations, as well as other villages north of Jerusalem such as Kafr Aqab and Qalandiya.¹⁸ The problem remains the lack of permanent, well-staffed police stations—with expanded freedom of movement—in many of these Palestinian population centers outside Area A.¹⁹ To take just one example, the town of al-Ram is allowed through agreement with Israel only 30 police officers, 5 Kalashnikov rifles, 5 handguns, and 650 bullets.²⁰ Yet the trend toward Palestinian self-policing, particularly in Jerusalem’s environs, is encouraging in both political and practical terms.

Relatedly, PASF access and movement between the various islands of PA control in the West Bank, coordinated with Israel, has also improved since 2015—due in large part to the efforts of the Office of the Quartet for Middle East peace, which mapped inefficiencies in the existing regime.²¹ Similar to the Area B expansions just highlighted, the exact details of this plan are deliberately shrouded in secrecy. Yet significant inefficiencies remain.²² As one Palestinian security official

in Qalqilya explained, when trying to address cases of criminality in his jurisdiction, he and his colleagues are impeded by long wait times for coordination with Israeli authorities via Area C roadways. As a work-around, they often take longer circuitous routes or resort to dispatching unarmed plainclothes officers.²³

Identifying a problem, however, does not signify its resolution. Stressors emerge not only from Palestinian society but also from inside Israel, where right-wing ministers are reluctant to cede—or be seen as ceding—additional West Bank land to the PA. Such sensitivities regarding augmented PASF authority are thus part of the overarching political framework within which both Israeli and Palestinian security professionals operate. As a source close to Israeli education minister Naftali Bennett stated, “The transfer of security authority over Areas A and B amounts to outsourcing the security of Israeli citizens to the Palestinian Authority...we will fight against it with all our might. Only the IDF will defend Israeli citizens.”²⁴

The prospect of increased PASF operational capabilities only compounds this sensitivity.²⁵ For instance, the PASF has requested additional, modern equipment—armored personnel carriers, ammunition, along with bulletproof helmets and vests—to better address gaps in its coverage, primarily in the refugee camps and inner cities. Israel, for its part, did allow the transfer of six light armored vehicles to the PASF in December 2016, a rare occurrence.²⁶ Perhaps most pressing for the PA, however, is the consistent demand to end the friction-filled Israeli raids into Area A (as the Abbas quote to start the chapter makes clear).

Since at least 2015, negotiations on the issues just enumerated—Area B authority, access and movement, equipment, and Area A raids—are known to have taken place between PA security officials and senior officers from the IDF’s Central Command and the unit known as Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT). Shifting these discussions from the political to the ostensibly technical or professional echelon was meant to insulate them from the usual zero-sum brinkmanship of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy, thus improving the chances of success. Moreover, the Israeli security establishment is believed to be more amenable to Palestinian requests for greater authority and resources than is the political class.²⁷

Despite the earlier-noted successes, calculated leaks to the press,

usually Israeli, often scuttled more far-reaching plans. In other instances—such as agreement on minimizing Area A raids—the inherently politicized relationship between the two parties foreclosed the possibility of agreement: the Palestinians could not be seen as acquiescing to *any* IDF raids, while the Israelis could not be seen as *completely* outsourcing security to the Palestinians.²⁸

Yet officials familiar with the discussions remain optimistic that bolstering the PASF along these lines of effort is still possible, so long as three criteria are met: (1) keeping discussions at the technical/professional echelon; (2) keeping agreements out of the public realm and, if need be, unofficial or unstated; and (3) maintaining the high level of trust between the two security forces—i.e., upholding security coordination.

Future of Israeli-Palestinian Security Coordination

For all the internal and external political stresses, the PASF has overwhelmingly maintained its cohesion, discipline, and professionalism—a point not just Palestinian analysts but international and Israeli security professionals at every level state repeatedly. Even the severest security challenge faced by the PA since the fall of Gaza—the grassroots *haba* beginning in October 2015—was, after a period of uncertainty, weathered safely. As one Israeli security official put it after the fact, “[Abbas] and the PASF were stronger than even we expected. We thought it was too big for them.”²⁹ During this event, decisions made in Ramallah were conveyed to the various security chiefs and then on down to the district and battalion levels; orders were indeed followed. Moreover, the incidents of PASF personnel actively engaged in terrorism in the 2015–17 timeframe—approximately thirteen in number, including a few lethal shooting attacks—were, according to the IDF, isolated cases having more to do with personal or economic rather than political motivations.³⁰ No mass breakdown in discipline unfolded, as witnessed in 1996 and 2000.

Underpinning much of this progress have been the strategic choices made by Abbas, first and foremost the commitment to uphold security coordination with Israel. As Yasser Arafat’s decisionmaking in the 1990s and into the second intifada makes clear, this is by no means a given. Today as well, the demand to sever security coordination is made repeatedly, not just among the Palestinian public but

also by certain senior Palestinian officials. Indeed, in March 2015, the PLO Central Council voted to suspend security coordination due to “Israel’s systematic and ongoing noncompliance with its obligations under signed agreements, including its daily military raids throughout the State of Palestine.”³¹ Often viewed as an empty threat and a tool for securing leverage in negotiations with Israel, the decision was not implemented by Abbas at the time—making his eventual suspension of security coordination in July 2017, following renewed tensions surrounding Jerusalem’s al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, that much more unprecedented.³²

In point of fact, coordination remained intact at the lower technical echelons, with the DCOs and DCLs continuing their work, and counterterrorism operations unaffected. However, at the higher strategic levels, from the regional brigade/district commanders up to the security chiefs, dialogue was indeed officially suspended.³³ Most worrisome was Abbas’s mobilization of the Tanzim and his declaration of support for mass demonstrations.³⁴ The Israeli government’s decision to meet all Palestinian demands surrounding security arrangements at al-Aqsa on the eve of these planned demonstrations thus was not likely a coincidence.³⁵ The specter of major unrest erupting in the West Bank, this time with PA/Fatah backing, represented a significant concern for the IDF.³⁶

Tellingly, upon Abbas’s suspension of security coordination, a verbal war erupted between him and Israeli defense minister Avigdor Liberman over which side stood to lose more. Highlighting the Israeli belief that the IDF safeguards the existence of the PA from Hamas, Liberman argued that suspending coordination was “[the PA’s] decision. It’s not like the security coordination is an Israeli need. It’s a Palestinian need first and foremost. If they want it, they’ll continue (coordination), if not they won’t...We’ll manage either way.” For his part, Abbas stated that “the Israelis need to understand that they lose from this, since we have an extremely significant obligation to guard our security and theirs.”³⁷

As the previous chapter made clear, security coordination is unmistakably in the strategic interest—and a strategic need—of *both* parties. The relative stability of the past decade, a sea change from the thirteen years that preceded it, has been built on this mutually beneficial security relationship. Yet the PA clearly pays a higher political

price for maintaining such close ties with the occupying force; hence, the security relationship, from its point of view, is more beholden to political exigencies, à la the July 2017 al-Aqsa crisis. According to subsequent reports, Abbas laid out two major conditions for a resumption of full security ties: an end to Area A raids and a PASF presence at the Allenby Bridge crossing between the West Bank and Jordan.³⁸

For Israel, maintaining the security relationship with the PA comes at a lower political and military price, literally speaking. As former IDF chief of staff Gabi Ashkenazi has stated, “The more the Palestinian security forces do, the less we have to.”³⁹ More recently, during the unrest of October 2015, then Israeli defense minister Moshe “Bogie” Yaalon observed: “Once we needed a division to enter Jenin. Two days ago, we did it with a small force.”⁴⁰ The PA could, as Liberman alluded, endanger its very existence if violence were to erupt once more.⁴¹ But for that very reason, Israel may actually have more to lose.

Given this context, Abbas’s July 2017 decision was a watershed signal that security coordination was not, whatever his own previous position, as “sacred” and immune to political calculation as many believed. It also suggested that the Palestinian leader who succeeds Abbas may choose to adopt a different position—i.e., more Arafat than Abbas—further widening this crack in the Israeli-Palestinian security edifice.⁴² Indicatively, in January 2018, the PLO Central Council reaffirmed its decision to suspend security coordination, among a slew of steps to protest the Trump administration’s recognition of Jerusalem.⁴³ Yet the PA has in fact done the opposite, with security ties growing closer during this period—a clear sign, for now, of Abbas’s policy preference.⁴⁴

POLITICIZED PASF AS A TOOL AGAINST INTERNAL ENEMIES

An additional aspect that degrades the PASF’s popular legitimacy is the PA’s growing authoritarian streak. To be sure, claims of excesses and abuses by the security services are not new, dating back to the PA’s earliest days under Yasser Arafat.⁴⁵ Even at the start of the Oslo period, local activists deemed troublesome to Arafat’s national project—not just Islamists, either—were detained.⁴⁶ Reports of torture in PA detention centers were not uncommon,⁴⁷ especially from Hamas members held by Mohammad Dahlan’s Preventive Security in

Gaza.⁴⁸ Moreover, during periods of political tensions, the local press in particular was targeted, harried, and suppressed, usually in an attempt to control coverage. However, according to Barry Rubin, Arafat's attempts to ensure loyalty among the PASF ranks—leading to the institution's general indiscipline—was a "bigger cause of human rights violations than any design to suppress dissent."⁴⁹ The 1990s are thus viewed in retrospect as a more open time in Palestinian political life, with public debate and criticisms on the whole indulged—typically as long as Arafat himself was not the direct target.

For the past decade, Mahmoud Abbas has overseen the systemic stifling of political space in the PA. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) has not met since 2007, and elections have not been held for either the presidency or parliament in more than a decade. Absent parliamentary oversight or electoral accountability, the security sector and judicial system are beholden entirely to the executive branch and rule by presidential decree. As a result, the PASF has increasingly been deployed as a tool against Abbas's internal enemies, whether real or imagined. Even members of Abbas's own political movement and Palestinian parliamentarians are not immune.

During the 2009 Fatah General Congress in Bethlehem, the first held under Abbas's leadership, reports indicated the attendance of Presidential Guard officers who looked over shoulders and identified candidates on the ballot who were "the president's man."⁵⁰ In recent years, in turn, authorities have targeted numerous critics of the PA government. For instance, in February 2016, Najat Abu Bakr, a Fatah parliamentarian and outspoken critic of official graft, fled an arrest warrant and the security forces, finding sanctuary for several days inside the PLC building in Ramallah;⁵¹ as of 2017, she was barred by the PA from traveling abroad.⁵²

In November 2015, the head of the Fatah-affiliated Palestinian Public Sector Union, Bassam Zakarneh, along with his deputy, was arrested by Preventive Security after starting a campaign against the PA for its unmet promises to civil servants. After a visit to the hospital under mysterious circumstances, the two were released on bail; Zakarneh later issued a letter of apology to Abbas.⁵³ A few weeks thereafter, a contingent of PASF personnel surrounded the PLC building, denying access to the parliament's secretary-general, Ibrahim Khreisha, a senior Fatah official, due to his support for Zakarneh and the other union-

ists.⁵⁴ A warrant previously issued for Khreisha's own arrest was ultimately canceled by Abbas.⁵⁵ Similarly, a large-scale teachers' strike in early 2016 saw the PASF arrest nearly two dozen striking teachers, with some demonstrators on their way to Ramallah reportedly pulled from cars at Palestinian checkpoints and denied access to the city.⁵⁶

Civil society has not been spared either. Abbas, in late 2014, ordered a wholesale review of 2,800 NGOs operating in the PA.⁵⁷ Indicatively, the following year authorities targeted two NGOs connected to two prominent independent politicians, former prime minister Salam Fayyad and former PLO secretary-general Yasser Abed Rabbo. In the case of Fayyad's NGO, staff were reportedly questioned by Preventive Security officers about their political activities and some funds were temporarily frozen;⁵⁸ in the case of Abed Rabbo, his NGO was actually shuttered, until European pressure forced Abbas to reverse the decision.⁵⁹ More recently, the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, headed by Khalil Shikaki, has come under threat of closure for not complying with draconian new NGO regulations requiring prior government approval of all funding sources.⁶⁰

Overall, freedom of speech, including press freedom, has come under severe strain, whether by pinpoint harassment or judicial fiat. Individuals who have criticized PA officials, especially Abbas, on social media platforms have been detained and questioned by security personnel.⁶¹ Websites deemed close to either Mohammad Dahlan or Hamas have been shuttered;⁶² several journalists linked to the latter were arrested in the West Bank in August 2017, leading to international attention and their eventual release.⁶³ In this context, a controversial "cybercrimes law," passed in mid-2017, gives the PA sweeping powers to arrest journalists, effectively "destroying the freedom of journalism work in Palestine," according to one civil society activist.⁶⁴

In addition to targeted harassments, detentions, and arrests, PASF personnel have been criticized for employing excessive force in breaking up public demonstrations. The most prominent recent example occurred in March 2017 outside a courthouse in central Ramallah. Officers from the intelligence services and the anti-riot Special Police Force (SPF) clubbed protestors with batons, fired tear gas, and smashed journalists' equipment.⁶⁵ The event was captured on video and widely disseminated on social media, leading to a public outcry and the establishment by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah of an independent

commission of inquiry.⁶⁶ To the authorities' credit, the commission finished its work quickly, finding that the use of force in dispersing the demonstration violated the law. The commission recommended, *inter alia*, that several officers including the PCP chief for Ramallah/al-Bireh, the SPF commander on the ground, and a plainclothes intelligence officer face disciplinary action; that members of the press who were assaulted be compensated; and that PASF personnel undergo additional training in crowd control, public order, and media safety.⁶⁷

Most troubling are the continued reports of torture of detainees in PASF facilities. The Nablus events of August 2016 outlined in the previous chapter, wherein a detainee—a former chief in the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades as well as a PASF officer—was beaten to death while in custody, caused major embarrassment to the PA. Thereafter, a fact-finding committee set up by Hamdallah took nearly six months to issue a set of vague recommendations, with commitments—so far likely unmet—to bring to justice those officers responsible for the murder.⁶⁸

The Nablus affair was not, according to Palestinian civil rights NGOs, an isolated incident. In 2015 alone, the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights reported receiving 292 complaints of poor treatment in PA-controlled detention centers, approximately matching the number for the year prior, including “lashing, cursing, blasphemy, sleep deprivation, foot whipping, and tying detainees in one position for several hours.”⁶⁹ Hamas members in the West Bank appear to have borne the brunt of the alleged abuses.⁷⁰ As one senior Hamas leader in Ramallah targeted by the PASF stated flatly, “The behavior of the [PA] security agencies is an obstacle to [national] reconciliation.”⁷¹

In its official responses, the PASF often links such incidents to “extra-judicial individual practices” that go against both Palestinian law and the orders of the security leadership; investigations would, of course, be conducted and those responsible held to account.⁷² Sometimes, as after the March 2017 Ramallah courthouse demonstration, credible investigations do occur and officers are held to account; more often than not, however, such cases are whitewashed and forgotten. Indicatively, the PA's responsiveness to this particular event likely owed to a combination of intense media attention, public pressure, and international diplomatic involvement. Indeed, European officials in Ramallah and Jerusalem closely monitored the PA's response to the incident.⁷³

The increased law and order evidenced on the streets of the West Bank, alongside the continued crackdown on Hamas, was a necessity, even as it sometimes skirted recognized democratic norms and due process.⁷⁴ Yet the excesses just outlined, in particular toward the media, civil society, and dissident politicians, are not only legally suspect—clearly in violation of Palestinian law—but politically counterproductive, harming both the PA’s already brittle popular legitimacy as well as the PASF’s professional standing. Political space, as noted, has narrowed significantly in recent years, with the PA rushing down the well-trodden, dead-end path of Arab autocracy.⁷⁵ The answer, at least in part, must be a renewed commitment to security sector reform.

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AGENDA

The eclipse of Arafat over a decade ago, and the rise of Abbas, initially as prime minister, was primarily intended as a reform initiative aimed at lessening the powers of the presidency over the security forces and instilling a measure of discipline and professionalism in a sector that had been wholly personalized under the figure of the *rais*. While the previous chapter highlighted the many successes of the effort, significant gaps remain regarding the overall legal and institutional frameworks within which the PASF operates.

Legal Framework Inadequacies

Throughout the 1990s, in keeping with Arafat’s approach to security sector governance, the PASF largely operated without a legal framework and amid a chaotic atmosphere that fostered overlapping jurisdictions and rivalries.⁷⁶ The first step toward remedying this situation and creating a proper legal framework began in 2002 with the enactment of the Basic Law, whose Article 55 designated the president as commander-in-chief and whose Article 75 mandated that “Security Forces and the Police shall be regulated by law.” Domestic and international calls for additional, and true, reform—primarily the devolution of some of the president’s powers—begat, as mentioned in chapter 2, a 2003 amendment to the Basic Law, through Article 69, that gave responsibility for “public order and internal security” to the cabinet.⁷⁷ To this day, this remains the constitutional framework governing the PASF.

Subsequently, specific laws and regulations were enacted to operationalize the Basic Law. In 2002, Arafat issued Presidential Decree No. 12, attaching the Palestinian Civil Police, Preventive Security, and Civil Defense to the Ministry of Interior. After Abbas assumed the presidency in 2005, the PA enacted a number of additional laws and regulations. Most notably, the 2005 Law of Service in the Palestinian Security Forces No. 8 and Presidential Decree Concerning the Unification of Security Forces divided the services into three groups: internal, national, and intelligence. Also in 2005, General Intelligence Law No. 17, regulating the GI, was enacted. These were followed up by a slew of decrees and regulations that attempted to address specific components of the PASF.⁷⁸

Despite these efforts, the piecemeal nature of the new regulations left several gaps. Aspects of the mission of key services, such as the PCP and NSF, remain undefined.⁷⁹ The responsibilities of intelligence-oriented services—namely Preventive Security, GI, and MI—still contain significant overlaps.⁸⁰ While draft laws were developed to create a comprehensive legal framework for the security sector,⁸¹ the Palestinian legislative process was halted in 2007 once Hamas took over Gaza. Since then, the PLC has, as mentioned, neither met nor functioned. In the PLC's absence, Abbas has filled the void with presidential decrees.⁸² While legislating by decree raises serious questions of legitimacy and legality, especially since Abbas's term expired several years ago, it remains—given the unlikelihood of a foreseeable PLC reconvening—the only available avenue for creating the legal tools needed to fill out and harmonize existing security sector legislation.

Lack of Civilian or Executive Branch Oversight

While Arafat continued to exercise effective paramount control over the PASF until his death in 2004,⁸³ the dynamic began to change once Abbas assumed the presidency, and particularly once Salam Fayyad was appointed prime minister. Fayyad's premiership saw a marked, yet far from complete, assertion of governmental oversight of the PASF, manifested by Fayyad's personal management of relations with PASF chiefs. During this period, security chiefs maintained ties with both the president and prime minister, despite the presidency continuing to play a "strong behind-the-scenes role in managing

the PASF.”⁸⁴ While direct involvement by the prime minister might have been necessary at the time, it hindered the ability of the Interior Ministry—the ministry mandated by law to oversee the PASF—from asserting its own power.

During this period, a number of initiatives led by the U.S. Security Coordinator were introduced to fortify the Interior Ministry, including the creation of a Strategic Planning Department intended to “provide long-term, central planning to develop human and other resources for the security sector as a whole.”⁸⁵ While technically sound, this and similar initiatives failed to truly empower the Interior Ministry,⁸⁶ as security chiefs maintained their direct relationships with the prime minister and president, bypassing the ministry.⁸⁷

Upon Fayyad’s resignation in 2013, the Interior Ministry still lacked the ability to exercise oversight of the security forces, and Rami Hamdallah, the newly appointed prime minister—who doubled as interior minister—lacked the clout, or political backing from Abbas, to exert such oversight. While Hamdallah has progressively carved out a security role for himself, reportedly holding weekly sector-wide meetings with the chiefs, PASF commanders retain “nearly unfetter[ed] communication directly to President Abbas,”⁸⁸ a link they are unlikely to relinquish. Despite the legal changes brought about in the 2003 Basic Law and some of the advances during Fayyad’s premiership, control over the PASF is once again concentrated in the Muqata presidential compound,⁸⁹ in a manner growing to resemble the Arafat era.

Stemming from this, the PASF still struggles to coordinate its activities and operate jointly.⁹⁰ While multiple PASF services sometimes cooperate on specific operations—most recently the 2016 Nablus campaign highlighted in chapter 3, overseen by NSF commander Nidal Abu Dukhan—these are the exception, not the rule. Instead, the lack of clear legal frameworks and effective Interior Ministry coordination mechanisms allow individual PASF service chiefs “significant bureaucratic latitude” to chart their own course, and to cooperate only when in their self-interest.⁹¹ Not helping matters is the individual logistical systems retained by most services (e.g., acquisitions, maintenance, communications, administration), compounded by the individual foreign donor channels (primarily USSC vs. CIA vs. Europe) that feed them and often go uncoordinated.

Lack of Legislative or Judicial Oversight

No mechanism currently exists for exercising parliamentary or judicial oversight of the PASF.⁹² For its part, the PLC's oversight authority is based on the 2003 Amended Basic Law Article 74 (which makes the government accountable to the PLC)⁹³ and Article 56 (which establishes inquiries, interpellations, and hearings as the instruments by which PLC members can exercise oversight).⁹⁴ These powers were indeed used occasionally, particularly after Abbas's election to the presidency,⁹⁵ but the PLC's inactivity since 2007 has rendered it unable to fulfill this oversight role.

As for the judiciary, particularly the High Court, a number of laws enable oversight of the security forces, and even annulment of unlawful administrative acts by the PASF.⁹⁶ These prerogatives, though, have seldom been exercised, given interference from the executive branch, including directly by PASF chiefs; in cases when the judiciary has sought to wield its powers, it has often failed to compel implementation by the executive.⁹⁷ A particularly egregious scenario relates to claims by former Palestinian chief justice Sami Sarsour that he was forced by a senior PASF chief to sign an undated resignation letter prior to his appointment, which was indeed activated following public disagreement between Sarsour and Fatah Central Committee member, and former GI chief, Tawfiq al-Tirawi.⁹⁸

In addition to its distinct lack of independence, the Palestinian court system continues to lag behind the PASF in professionalism and capacity, failing to keep pace with the reform efforts of recent years.⁹⁹ A number of international actors support the Palestinian rule-of-law sector, including the EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support,¹⁰⁰ Office of the Quartet,¹⁰¹ U.S. Agency for International Development,¹⁰² and the Netherlands government.¹⁰³ Still, justice sector institutional capacity—in terms of judges, prosecutors, and judicial enforcement staff—remains underdeveloped and understaffed relative to the rest of the region.¹⁰⁴ In 2011, each prosecutor handled an average of 400 cases,¹⁰⁵ courts had a backlog of around 38,000 cases,¹⁰⁶ and the enforcement department of the High Judicial Council had a backlog of almost 65,000 unenforced court rulings.¹⁰⁷ This judicial weakness is even more pronounced when it comes to sensitive counterterrorism cases, by nature often shrouded in secrecy. A longstanding criticism heard often from the Israeli security establishment and

U.S. officials involves the lingering inability of the PA law and justice system to “close the targeting cycle”—i.e., the move from intelligence collection to arrest to justice to imprisonment. The difficulty translating intelligence to evidence undermines due process, often resulting in the release of suspects.¹⁰⁸

Recognizing this breach, the PASF has in recent years, to its credit, attempted to improve its human rights training—whether through Palestinian NGOs or EUPOL COPPS-sponsored training courses.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the PASF has begun to appreciate that in the absence of civilian oversight, and to mitigate the perception of institutional excesses, it must engage in better public outreach.¹¹⁰ Although small-scale, an encouraging sign was perceivable in the image of GI chief Majid Faraj disbursing donations in Nablus, in mid-2017, directly from the president to various local charities. An additional positive indication was the establishment of a mobile policing station in two villages outside Nablus, in January 2018. Other such trust-building gestures between the security forces and the populace are much in need.¹¹¹

Persistent Budgetary and Human Resource Issues

The long-term sustainability of the PASF will be tested by the related issues of budget and manpower. Notably, the Interior Ministry accounted for 27 percent of the 2016 budget,¹¹² placing the PA above the 90th percentile globally in terms of security sector expenditure.¹¹³ Indeed, by one count the PASF alone cost \$1 billion annually, with half of all PA civil servants employed in the security sector.¹¹⁴ Not surprisingly, therefore, 80 percent of this budget is estimated to be spent on salaries, leaving little for operational expenses.¹¹⁵ Despite this outlay, however, many PASF personnel are still believed to be “moonlighting” in second jobs to make ends meet, a practice that can undermine professionalism. The PA in early 2017 took steps to outlaw the phenomenon, with unclear results at present.¹¹⁶ Tentative ideas to add battalions and expand the PASF, including possibly into Gaza as part of a renewed PA presence in the breakaway territory, would inevitably run up against the PA’s financial realities—and would require significant new foreign funding.¹¹⁷

The funding problem is exacerbated by the fact that the PASF does not operate on an “up or out” promotion system. As a result, a disproportionate number of older and higher-ranking officers remain in

the service. For example, a reported 232 brigadier generals currently serve in the PASF—an extremely high number compared to forces of similar or even larger size.¹¹⁸ While early retirements have, on occasion, been enforced in the past, such measures run the risk of generating political pushback and do not constitute a systematic approach to the “inverted pyramid”—i.e., top heavy—problem facing the PASF.¹¹⁹ In 2017, however, the PA did attempt to inject new blood into the security sector via a major public recruitment drive.¹²⁰ Anecdotal evidence suggests the effort has been successful, with more applicants than available positions. The need, as mentioned, is particularly acute in order to staff the PCP stations in the outlying areas of PA control. Whether due to the promise of steady employment or patriotism, or some combination of both, the PASF remains, for many, a compelling proposition—notwithstanding tenuous legalities, inchoate reform efforts, and overall sustainability.

PASF PROSPECTS AND RISKS IN PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

The greatest near-term threat to PA stability is the period after Abbas leaves the presidency, whether brought about by the leader’s own political decision or his death. In order to maintain his preeminence, Abbas has, in recent years, intentionally refrained from grooming a clear successor, and the related uncertainty has been a major preoccupation for the political class in Ramallah as well as Palestine watchers in Israel and internationally.¹²¹ While a comprehensive look at the succession process is beyond the scope of this study, the PASF role therein will likely prove critical. As with the broader post-Abbas PA, the trajectory of the security forces could play out according to various scenarios—and, crucially, varying degrees of political involvement. Specifically, the scenarios to follow envision the PASF serving as either patriots, kingmakers, or warlords.

Palestinian Patriots

Here, both during and after a presidential transition, the PASF would stay outside politics—professional, cohesive, and accepting of decisions emanating from Ramallah by whoever emerges (or emerge) from the Fatah Central Committee. This scenario would provide the most continuity from the current situation, as well as the greatest

chance for overall stability. The individuals occupying the Muqata may change, but the various PASF commanders, as true Palestinian patriots—and, perhaps no less important, loyal Fatah members—would follow orders from the political echelon. This is the scenario, moreover, overwhelmingly cited in official PA circles whenever the question of the PASF role in succession is raised. Not inconsequentially, the PA as an institution, led by the Office of the President, is the executive branch of a proto-state responsible for disbursing a multibillion-dollar budget and other benefits—in contrast to, say, other institutions such as the PLO, Fatah, as well as clans and gangs. In addition to patriotism and professionalism, this scenario holds no small amount of self-interest for the security chiefs individually as well as the PASF as a whole.

Palestinian Kingmakers

Due to either a muddled or fractured succession process within the Fatah Central Committee or an outcome viewed unfavorably, the PASF chiefs could choose to insert themselves into the political process. The most likely such security commanders are those from the intelligence services, more political by design, as opposed to those from the NSF and PCP—although the need for actual “muscle” may necessitate forming alliances with other services or key unit commanders. Such a scenario would see the PASF chiefs side with one faction or another—e.g., Jibril Rajoub, the former Preventive Security chief for the West Bank, against Mahmoud al-Aloul, a longtime head of Fatah’s Mobilization Committee, i.e., Tanzim. An internecine political struggle atop the PA/Fatah hierarchy could escalate into actual conflict: from live fire at opposing political figures—an intimidation tactic long used in the Palestinian territories—to raids on opposition offices and, in extremis, politicized arrests. In an expanded such scenario, similar to that witnessed in Nablus in recent years, former AAMB members thought to be associated with Mohammad Dahlan could clash openly with the PASF, marking a return to the *fauda* period of over a decade ago.

Also important to note here is that the current serving PASF chiefs are Abbas appointees deemed loyal both to him personally and to his overall strategic direction. The dismissal of security commanders in the wake of Abbas’s exit might stir resentment, including pos-

sible resistance to the dismissal orders themselves; even a shift in policy—e.g., to more-open confrontation with Israel—may engender pushback from PASF commanders who previously hewed closer to Abbas’s conception of the Palestinian national interest. In reality, though, the threat of a proper PASF coup d’état against the Fatah political class is unlikely. Due to Israeli restrictions on PASF movement in the West Bank, PASF commanders, whether individually or in some combination, would find it difficult to mobilize enough forces to capture the center of Palestinian political life—Ramallah—and overwhelm the other services. But a more active role in politics cannot be discounted for an institution still quite young, working inside a system with no deep-rooted democratic tradition.

Incipient Warlords

In a scenario that might meld with the “kingmakers” path, a protracted succession process in the Fatah Central Committee could seep into the rest of the PA, leading to paralysis, fragmentation, and possible collapse. Either due to the fragmentation itself or Israeli measures to contain the unrest, West Bank cities would be isolated from one another, leading—as during the second intifada—to localized armed factions seizing effective control. In this scenario, PASF commanders would rise to prominence, motivated by a desire to maintain public order or, alternatively, for personal economic and political gain. The main impediment to such a scenario would involve safeguarding the loyalty of subordinate officers in the event PA funds are withheld. The most likely outcome, therefore, is some kind of partnership between the PASF and local armed gangs (Tanzim, criminal, clan, or some combination thereof)—in effect, warlordism in the context of a shattered PA. Under this scenario, the PASF as it has come to be known would unravel right alongside the PA as a whole.

USSC ROLE AND U.S. POLICY

Just as West Bank security has, however tentatively and improbably, warranted optimism over the past decade, the USSC has undoubtedly offered a rare bright spot for U.S. policy in an otherwise bleak Israeli-Palestinian political landscape. Yet the mission has not been without its share of challenges, some of which linger. Moreover, an additional set of challenges will likely present itself as the emphasis

of the USSC's mission evolves. With the bulk of the train-and-equip objective, as mentioned, largely met, the focus will begin shifting to the "advise and assist" phase, geared toward supporting institution building in the Palestinian security sector.

In this new stage, the USSC will need to help the PA address some of the security sector reform deficiencies just identified. Central among them would be empowering the Interior Ministry in its role to create a more "jointly operational" PASF as well as in exercising real oversight of PASF branches under its mandate—namely, NSF, PCP, and Preventive Security—in accordance with Palestinian law and requirements from the 2003 Roadmap.¹²² This will inevitably meet with political pushback from individual security chiefs, particularly in the intelligence realm, who have traditionally resisted coordination, as well as from the Palestinian president, who has in recent years exerted direct control over the entire PASF. In this sense, the current and future USSC can expect to face similar political challenges to those encountered by its predecessors. As the various potential post-Abbas succession struggles make clear, the need is great to ensure the PASF remains professional and cohesive even if instability prevails atop the PA/Fatah hierarchy.

Lingering Challenges

Since its establishment, the USSC has had to contend with a fragmented international security assistance landscape, as described in the previous chapter. Achieving PASF-wide reform will require coordination among various international donors and among various U.S. agencies. Besides the USSC, the most significant international assistance program is EUPOL COPPS, which, as discussed, assists the PCP. Since the PCP is just lightly supported by the United States, the USSC's ability to coordinate can only be exercised through consensual donor-coordination mechanisms such as the Security Sector Working Group of the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat, set up under the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee—the overarching international body tasked with PA donor aid—on which the USSC and EUPOL COPPS share a role as technical advisors.¹²³ Additionally, the two missions coordinate through liaison officers and in numerous ad hoc instances, especially at the highest levels.¹²⁴

More problematic is international assistance to the various Pales-

tinian intelligence agencies. From the outset, the USSC lacked a mandate to support Preventive Security and GI,¹²⁵ with assistance instead provided by the CIA, as it had been since the 1990s. The CIA, for its part, resisted efforts to bring its assistance under the Interior Ministry purview, opting instead to maintain its own direct channels to the intelligence services.¹²⁶ This presented a particular problem regarding Preventive Security, which, by Palestinian law, falls under the Interior Ministry. While the intelligence agencies present their own unique set of sensitivities, their location outside the USSC mandate disempowers the U.S. coordinator mission—by curtailing its influence among Palestinian officials—and limits its ability to institute needed reforms across the PASF. At bottom, such fragmentation complicates the development of effective long-term strategic planning and of clear objectives, undermining the PASF's overall institutional resilience.¹²⁷

In addition to the donor coordination challenges outlined here, the USSC could benefit from its own internal reforms, especially regarding its version of the “inverted pyramid” challenge. While the three-star general/flag officer coordinators serve a minimum two-year tour—five in the case of Lieutenant General Dayton and three for Lieutenant General Rudesheim—their staff serve only six-month to one-year assignments, and often have minimal experience in the Palestinian-Israeli arena.¹²⁸ This simple bureaucratic reality limits continuity, depriving new coordinators of in-house institutional memory and forcing long-serving coordinators to educate their staff, as opposed to the other way around.¹²⁹ Moreover, in a cultural environment where personal relationships are crucial, these brief assignments prevent USSC staff from developing the kinds of intimate associations with their Palestinian and Israeli counterparts that are important in achieving results.

While addressing these mainly technical challenges will help the USSC better fulfill its mandate, the mission has, in the past, operated successfully in spite of them—and will likely continue to do so. The real new challenges, as already described, are political. Inevitably, direct political support from Washington will be required.

Support from Washington

While military bona fides furnish the coordinator with significant credibility when engaging PASF chiefs on security matters, past

coordinators' ability to influence Palestinian political decisions independently has always depended on the amount of political support—and occasional direct intervention—they can muster from Washington.

Former secretary of state Condoleezza Rice, an effective champion for the USSC, describes this dynamic in her memoirs: "When Keith [Dayton] could go no further, he called me. I would then call Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Salam Fayyad, or Mahmoud Abbas and fuss about the lack of progress...The painstaking work rarely made headlines, but it made a difference."¹³⁰ For his part, Dayton during his tenure actively and visibly engaged Congress and the wider Washington policy community, increasing support—and funding—for his mission and the broader Palestinian security sector.¹³¹

An approach such as Dayton's was not without its drawbacks. Indeed, his high visibility and proactive mode of operation created some tension with Ramallah and Washington.¹³² Once Secretary Rice left office, the USSC's direct and robust relationship with the secretary of state ceased to exist. In 2009, the president's Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, former senator George Mitchell, named the USSC as his deputy. Officially, though, the USSC formally reports through the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and has been left to languish on the margins of the peace process policy program.¹³³ Likely due to Dayton's experience, his successors have either had their public profile diminished or themselves chosen to diminish it.¹³⁴ As a result, subsequent coordinators have had to rely on their own initiative and persuasive powers when faced with political obstacles on the ground, with varying degrees of success.

As the USSC enters a new phase, it will need clear support and occasional direct intervention from principals in Washington in order to nudge Palestinian leaders at the highest levels, including the president, to make and sustain the necessary political decisions to enable genuine reform. This will, of course, have to be balanced against some of the lessons learned from sensitivities exposed in the earlier years of the USSC's operation. But absent such intervention from Washington, Palestinian leaders are unlikely to be motivated to make the necessary decisions.¹³⁵

U.S. Policy Trickle-Down Effect

All parties—the PA, Israel, and the United States—stand to benefit from the continuation of the Oslo-based security paradigm and the role the USSC plays in managing this regime. To this end, the USSC must be shielded from the inevitable vacillations in this complex three-sided relationship. The United States needs to emphasize that security in general, and the USSC in particular, must be buffered from the vagaries of the peace process. Washington must, in turn, refrain—and make clear to the parties that they themselves refrain—from using security as a lever in restarting peace talks or influencing their course.

Moreover, budgetary support to the PASF, and USSC, must remain apart from the turbulence that has long characterized U.S. aid dispensation to the Palestinians. Here one must note, however, that severing other forms of U.S. financial support—e.g., civilian, development, or humanitarian—may limit the PA’s willingness, or political ability, to continue receiving security assistance from the United States, especially if it is seen simply as a tool to extract policy concessions from the Palestinian side.¹³⁶

Ultimately, the USSC operates in the context of wider U.S.-PA relations and the broader “Oslo system.” In an extreme case, a breakdown in these relations—as threatened, for instance, by both Ramallah and Washington in the wake of President Trump’s December 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital—would put an end to the USSC’s mission and the U.S. ability to influence the development and performance of the PASF. The overall stability of the West Bank would undoubtedly be shaken by such a negative development, to the detriment of all parties.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Aaron David Miller, “A History of Sustainable Violence,” *Foreign Policy*, May 19, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/19/a-history-of-sustainable-violence-israel-palestinian-authority-john-kerry-peace/>.
2. See, e.g., Barak Ravid, “Israeli Minister: Palestinian Authority Will Collapse, the Only Question Is When,” *Haaretz*, Feb. 29, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.706064>; in the article, Ze’ev Elkin, minister of immigrant absorption and Jerusalem affairs, is quoted as saying, “The question is not if the PA collapses but when it is going to collapse. It can happen in a month or two or a year or two tops.”
3. See, e.g., Isabel Kershner, “Abbas Renews Threat to Dissolve Palestinian Authority if Peace Talks Fail,” *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/23/world/middleeast/abbas-palestinian-authority.html>. Indeed,

Abbas reportedly made similar threats in 2010, 2013, and August 2017; see also Elad Benari, "Erekat Threatens: We'll Dismantle the Palestinian Authority," Arutz Sheva, Jan. 5, 2015, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/189514>: "Next week or next month there will not be a Palestinian Authority. Israel will find itself responsible from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean, and you will find our kids running after your kids in the refugee camps, as you did in 1992."

4. See, e.g., Zilber "Fatah's Civil War," <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/palestinian-authority/2016-09-29/fatahs-civil-war>, and Zilber, "Not Another Intifada," <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/10/jerusalem-violence-intifada-213283>; also Adam Chandler, "Is This How the Third Intifada Begins?" *Atlantic*, Oct. 30, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/10/is-this-how-the-third-intifada-begins/382147/>.
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6. Fatah official, interview by author (Zilber), Nablus, Nov. 2014.
7. See, e.g., Sabrien Amrov and Alaa Tartir, "Subcontracting Repression in the West Bank and Gaza," *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/27/opinion/subcontracting-repression-in-the-west-bank-and-gaza.html>; Palestinian civil society leader, interview by author (Zilber), Ramallah, Feb. 2014; Hamas-affiliated family, interview by author (Zilber), Hebron, June 2014.
8. A typical Israeli response to questions regarding security coordination is a laconic "it exists, it is going well, it is based on mutual interests." Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), West Bank, Oct. 2016.
9. Senior Palestinian official, interview by author (Zilber), Ramallah, Mar. 2017.
10. Quoted in Opall-Rome, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2016/01/18/keeping-isis-out-of-palestine/>.
11. *Squaring the Circle*, p. 2, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israel-palestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
12. U.S. government official, interview by author (Zilber), Jerusalem, Aug. 2017.
13. Agence France-Presse, "Palestinian Police Deploy near Jerusalem for First Time," Yahoo! Apr. 9, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/palestinian-police-deploy-near-jerusalem-first-time-201949093.html>; Ghaiath al-Omari, "Preserving Israeli-Palestinian Security Cooperation," Policy Alert (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Apr. 10, 2015), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/preserving-israeli-palestinian-security-cooperation>.
14. Avi Issacharoff, "With Israel's Okay, Palestinian Cops Step Up Operations near Jerusalem," *Times of Israel*, May 10, 2016, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/with-israels-okay-palestinian-cops-step-up-operations-near-jerusalem/>.
15. Khalil Shikaki, "Who Needs Security?" final report—executive summary (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, Aug. 2017), <http://www.pcpsr.org/sites/default/files/Executive%20summary%20of%20final%20report%20E.pdf>.
16. Khalil Shikaki, interview by author (Zilber), Ramallah, Jan. 2017.
17. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, "Poll No. 90—Trump, the Peace

- Process and Elections," Sept. 6, 2017, <http://www.jmcc.org/documentsandmaps.aspx?id=875>.
18. Khalil Shikaki, interview by author (Zilber), Ramallah, Jan. 2017. Also see Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Hebron, Aug. 2017. Referring to one Palestinian neighborhood near the Kiryat Arba settlement in Hebron's H2 (Israeli security control) area, the official stated that there was "anarchy" and "gunfire every night" due to the lack of a "day-to-day PA police presence" and the fact that the "Israeli police don't go in."
 19. Shikaki, "Who Needs Security?" <http://washin.st/2HwZ1Bo>.
 20. Adam Rasgon, "PA Struggles to Impose Order in No Man's Land North of Jerusalem," *Jerusalem Post*, Oct. 1, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/PA-struggles-to-impose-order-in-no-mans-land-north-of-Jerusalem-506427>. Despite thirty police officers being permitted, only nineteen have been deployed to al-Ram owing to "a major shortage of police cadres."
 21. See, e.g., Office of the Quartet, "Report on the Activities of the Office: January 2016–June 2017," July 19, 2017, pp. 7–8, <http://www.quartetoffice.org/files/Annual%20report%202017.pdf>.
 22. Shikaki, "Who Needs Security?" <http://washin.st/2HwZ1Bo>.
 23. Palestinian security official, interview by author, Qalqilya (Zilber), Aug. 2017.
 24. Barak Ravid, "Israeli Minister: Security Cabinet Kept in Dark about Talks with Palestinians," *Haaretz*, Mar. 14, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.708804>.
 25. Gen. Avi Mizrahi, the former head of the IDF's Central Command, gave voice to this concern in 2010: "This is a trained, equipped, American-educated force. This means that at the beginning of a battle, we'll pay a higher price. A force like that can shut down an urban area with four snipers. It's not the Jenin militants anymore—it's a proper infantry force facing us, and we need to take that into account." *Squaring the Circle*, p. 13, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
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 27. Barak Ravid and Jack Khoury, "Israel, Palestinians Make Progress in Talks to Limit Military Activity in West Bank Cities," *Haaretz*, Apr. 6, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.712978?v=336D22DBD48A4A3F0D361C48B66385CD>.
 28. *Ibid.* The plan reportedly in discussion called for a "Ramallah and Jericho first" model, which was rejected by the PA.
 29. Israeli security official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, Sept. 2016. Yet this official also made clear that the PASF would likely not be able to contain real mass demonstrations. In his words, "There is no way they could put down a "Palestinian Spring." See also Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), West Bank, May 2017.

30. Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), West Bank, May 2017.
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33. Based on the following author interviews (Zilber): senior Israeli defense official, Tel Aviv, Aug. 2017; U.S. government official, Jerusalem, Aug. 2017; European diplomat, Ramallah, Aug. 2017; Palestinian security official, Qalqilya, Aug. 2017; Israeli defense official, West Bank, Aug. 2017. See also Avi Issacharoff, "Abbas Issues New Demands of Israel, but Is Still Quietly Arresting Terror Suspects," *Times of Israel*, Aug. 8, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-issues-new-demands-of-israel-but-is-quietly-still-arresting-terror-suspects/>.
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35. Elior Levy, " Hamas, PA Laud 'Historic,' 'Huge' Victory in Temple Mount Crisis," *Ynetnews.com*, July 27, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4995066,00.html>.
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37. Elior Levy, "Abbas: Israel Most to Lose in Termination of Security Ties," *Ynetnews.com*, July 23, 2017, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4993311,00.html>.
38. Maan News Agency, "PA Says Won't Resume Security Coordination with Israel unless Demands Are Met," Aug. 8, 2017, <http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=778586>. The piece quoted a source close to Abbas as follows: "Palestinian leadership will reject any security coordination Israel asks for as long as Israel does not stop daily assaults, shootings, undercover raids, abductions of Palestinian lawmakers, officials, and children in Palestinian cities and refugee camps in the PA-controlled territories."
39. Quoted in *Squaring the Circle*, p. 16–17, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/israelpalestine/squaring-circle-palestinian-security-reform-under-occupation>.
40. Quoted in Zilber, "Not Another Intifada," <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/10/jerusalem-violence-intifada-213283>.
41. "Our Ambassador in Cairo: Stopping Security Coordination Means the Collapse of the Authority" (in Arabic), *Safa*, Jan. 6, 2015, <http://washin.st/2p80mbk>. According to the article, the Palestinian ambassador to Cairo stated as follows in January 2015: "Stopping security coordination means that Israel will enter the towns and villages classified as A, because they will not accept a security vacuum, and therefore this will eliminate [the PA]." Also see Israeli defense official, interview by author (Zilber), Tel Aviv, June 2014. As this official stated, Abbas "isn't a Zionist all of a sudden. [Security coordination] is in his interest. It internally strengthens the PASF, and he knows that without it the IDF will simply go in. [He] knows that they need to retain stability so the Israelis don't go crazy."
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- dination," *Arutz Sheva*, Oct. 27, 2017, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/237315>. See also Adam Rasgon, "PA Police Chief Confirms Security Coordination with Israel Back on Track," *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 8, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/PA-police-chief-confirms-security-cooperation-with-Israel-back-on-track-513697>.
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 45. See, e.g., Amos Perlmutter, "Arafat's Police State," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/palestinian-authority/1994-07-01/arafats-police-state>.
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 47. Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Palestinians Reveal PA Torture to *JPost*, Seek Justice in Israeli Courts," *Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 13, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Palestinians-tell-Post-about-PA-torture-seek-justice-in-Israeli-courts-504957>. In a July 2017 milestone ruling, Israel's Jerusalem District Court found the PA responsible for torturing more than fifty Palestinians accused of "collaboration" with Israel in the 1990s and early 2000s. See also Netael Bandel, "Court: The Palestinian Authority Tortured Tens of Collaborators" (in Hebrew), *nrg360*, July 19, 2017, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/887/341.html>. Lurid descriptions of extreme physical abuse outlined in the case included the use of boiling water, lit cigarettes, and rubber hoses against suspects held in indefinite detention.
 48. See, e.g., Rose, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/04/gaza200804>.
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 50. *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah*, Middle East Report 91 (International Crisis Group, Nov. 12, 2009), p. 13, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/91-palestine-salvaging-fatah.pdf>.
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 94. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
 95. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
 96. *Ibid.*, pp. 80.
 97. *Ibid.*, pp. 81.
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5

RECOMMENDATIONS

We must continue to build our partnership with the Palestinian Authority security forces to counter and defeat terrorism. I also applaud the Palestinian Authority's continued security coordination with Israel....They work together beautifully.

—Donald Trump, May 2017

THE FOREGOING ANALYSIS has endeavored to chart the evolution of the PASF from its beginnings with the PA's inception in 1994, through the Oslo Accords era, into the collapse of the second intifada and fall of Gaza, and up until the reconstitution efforts of the past decade in the West Bank. Belying the image of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as eternal and unchanging, the different eras have corresponded to different levels of trust and antagonism, and likewise close cooperation and outright violence, between Israeli forces and the PASF. More to the point, the PASF as an institution and PA security policy writ large have changed significantly in the ensuing twenty-four years.

The personalized system instituted by Yasser Arafat, with the proliferation of competing and overlapping security services beholden directly to him, undermined the PASF's professionalism and effectiveness. "My children," as Arafat referred to the security chiefs, squabbled amongst themselves, harming internal law and order and the political legitimacy of the fledgling PA. Worse still, Arafat never truly relinquished the military option as a viable strategy for obtaining leverage over Israel. To this end, he never fully cracked down on the rejectionist groups, such as Hamas, in his midst. Fears of civil war outweighed, for him, the need to establish a monopoly on the means of violence. Arafat, whether explicitly or implicitly, on several occasions also allowed clashes to erupt between the PASF and Israeli

forces. As Yezid Sayigh writes when discussing the history of the Palestinian national movement, the PLO's military performance could not be measured in conventional terms. Rather,

Armed struggle served other primary functions...provid[ing] the central theme and practice around which Palestinian nation-building took place, and laid the basis for state-building by driving elite formation and militarization and allowing political legitimation.¹

So it continued to be for the fatigue-clad Arafat as he built up the PA in the occupied territories. This approach came to a disastrous head with the outbreak in 2000 of the second intifada and the direct involvement of PASF officers and other Fatah elements in terrorist attacks. The ensuing Israeli military campaign and reoccupation of Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank led to the PASF's effective collapse. In many respects, all the efforts since—internal Palestinian reform, international security assistance, close Israeli-Palestinian security coordination, rebuilding of Israeli-Palestinian public trust—have been attempts to repair this longstanding damage, a legacy of Arafat's rule.

Compounding the errors on the Palestinian side, the 2005 Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip was likely conducted without due consideration for the depleted state of the PASF, coming so soon after the unwinding of the second intifada and before the newly elected Mahmoud Abbas could consolidate his power. International reform efforts, including particular attention to the security sector, were not granted either the requisite time or resources. The Hamas legislative victory in 2006 further complicated such reform efforts, requiring a diversion of resources from many of the official PA security organs. In 2007, the violent Hamas takeover of Gaza perhaps should have been foreseen given the divided and demoralized state of the PASF at the time. The loss of Gaza is a legacy, too, with which the PA, Israel, and the larger peace process are still contending.

The Gaza tragedy focused minds on the task of genuine Palestinian security reform: domestically via Salam Fayyad's state-building project, and internationally via an empowered U.S. Security Coordinator mission. Fayyad continued the work of consolidating and professionalizing the various PASF branches into a more coherent sys-

tem—including increased political oversight—while the USSC under Keith Dayton began the PASF's retraining and reequipping, helping raise new battalions out of the Jordan-based program. A slowly reconstituting PASF began, in 2007, a new security campaign in the West Bank meant to reassert central PA control, remove gunmen from the streets—including those affiliated with Fatah—and restore basic law and order. Another major component of the campaign was a crackdown on Hamas activities and infrastructure, both military and civilian, in a way seldom seen under Arafat. In all this, close security coordination between Israel and the PASF was crucial, underpinned as it was by Abbas's staunch commitment to a policy of nonviolence.

By all accounts, the PASF over the past decade has become more cohesive, professional, and effective. They, and by extension the PA, have weathered numerous storms in recent years—including terrorist attacks against Israelis, high-profile Palestinian deaths at the hands of Israeli forces or settlers, multiple Gaza wars, and the 2015–16 *haba*—that prior to 2007 might have led to a wider loss of control or escalated into greater violence.

Despite these very real successes, concerns remain with respect to the PASF's overall resilience and sustainability. The political stasis surrounding the peace process seeps into the PASF's work, Israeli-Palestinian security coordination above all else. Israeli raids into Area A, attacks by settlers on Palestinian civilians, and the failure to grant the PA greater authority over West Bank territory—especially Palestinian population centers—raise the question, in many Palestinian minds, of whether the PASF is simply a “subcontractor” for a perpetual occupation. In fighting back against such perceptions, the PA leadership voices the constant refrain that the PASF in general, and security coordination in particular, serves the Palestinian national interest and is the best means to end the occupation.

Compounding matters, however, is the PASF's politicization in recent years, whereby it has increasingly become a tool deployed by Abbas against political opponents and critics, whether real or imagined. This trend has the potential to undermine not only the PA's democratic norms but the PASF's public legitimacy as well. Moreover, institutional reforms, primarily relating to efficient and transparent judicial processes, interservice logistics, and human resources, have proven more difficult to implement.

Finally, the tension between the Trump administration and the PA over the U.S. president's December 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital has demonstrated how political disputes can raise the specter of an actual severing of U.S.-Palestinian ties—a threat raised by both sides. It is difficult to assess what impact this diplomatic crisis will have on U.S. efforts in the Palestinian security realm. Yet if this report has endeavored to highlight one main theme, it is that these efforts are beneficial not only for the PA and Israel but also very much in the U.S. national interest—as President Trump's quote at the outset of this chapter illustrates.



Taken as a whole, recommendations for U.S. policymakers engaged on these issues are the following:

- **BUFFER SECURITY FROM THE POLITICAL ARENA.** Given the importance of security and stability to the overall peace process effort—a sine que non, in many respects—as well as the success of Israeli-Palestinian security coordination in particular, U.S. officials must urge both parties to not allow political considerations to adversely affect the security realm. This guidance applies in two areas. The first involves keeping any proposed security initiatives—oftentimes coordinated via the USSC—secret and negotiated at the professional/technical echelons. (Previous efforts are known to have been undermined by Israeli leaks to the media by partisan political players.) This requires senior U.S. officials to make clear to their Palestinian and Israeli counterparts that keeping such initiatives depoliticized is an American priority. The second consideration involves making clear to both parties that security—in particular, the mutually beneficial coordination—must not be used as a tool during political crises, as the PA did in partially suspending coordination after the July 2017 al-Aqsa crisis erupted. U.S. officials would do well to heed this advice in terms of their own policy choices: developments on the high diplomacy track, including the quixotic goal of restarting Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, cannot be allowed to trickle down and adversely impact stability on the ground.

- **PROVIDE ADDITIONAL BUDGETARY SUPPORT AND INVESTMENT.** U.S. budgetary support for the PASF, channeled primarily through the USSC/INL, should be increased to levels more closely resembling previous years. Even without a train-and-equip component, the PASF requires additional investment in infrastructure, equipment, and institutional capacity building. Moreover, periodic attempts to curtail U.S. aid to the PA should leave funding to the PASF fully intact. It is encouraging that recently proposed congressional legislation threatening such a curtailment explicitly states that it will have no impact on security-related funding. The United States also needs to ensure that any move to decrease aid to the Palestinian territories spares the security sector. It should be stressed, however, that any substantial funding cutoff will likely prove politically challenging for the PASF, both in terms of continuing to receive U.S. funds while such aid is suspended to other parts of the PA as well as containing the unrest that such a move would likely precipitate.
- **ENGAGE ON THE ENVOY AND PRINCIPALS LEVEL.** U.S. administrations have varied in their attention to the Israeli-Palestinian security agenda and the political support proffered to the USSC—the immediate U.S. representative on the ground. In such a sensitive political environment with oftentimes international ramifications, high-level U.S. engagement precisely on matters of security is required to adequately hold both sides accountable and champion relevant policy decisions through the Washington bureaucracy—providing, when needed, political support to the USSC.
- **MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN THE USSC.** The continued existence of the USSC mission, in recent years, has not been a given. Even as the train-and-equip facet of the mission is likely to be soon concluded, the need will persist for a senior U.S. military officer to advise and assist the PASF and security sector reform process, coordinate between the two parties, and serve as the focal point for wider international security assistance efforts to the PA. There is no substitute for constant on-the-ground contact with the relevant Israeli and Palestinian officials, including dedicated relationship building. For such a mission, the three-star

officer requirement—ideally with ground combat experience—must be maintained to provide the necessary gravitas and credibility for engaging the two parties. Thought should also be given to lengthening the deployment periods for other USSC personnel, in an effort to maintain institutional expertise and memory and to optimize the coordinator’s time.

■ **INCREASE PASF ACCESS/MOVEMENT, AUTHORITY, AND CAPACITY.**

To build on the successes of recent years and bolster the PASF’s standing, the forces need to be seen as delivering increased security to their citizenry. U.S. officials should engage their Israeli counterparts—since Israel is the ultimate arbiter on such matters—and push for positive movement on three related issues. First is improving access and movement for PASF personnel, in particular through Area C, cutting down on superfluous coordination mechanisms and onerous response times. The plan recently championed by the Office of the Quartet—based on mapping inefficiencies in PASF access and movement in the West Bank—needs to be more fully implemented. The second issue involves increasing PASF authority overall, especially in Palestinian population centers located in Area B (and certain parts of Area C near Jerusalem) with a limited-to-nonexistent police presence. Criminal havens and no-man’s-lands harm social and economic development, ultimately serving neither Palestinian nor Israeli interests. The third and final matter entails increasing PASF capacity through the provision of additional equipment—primarily armored vehicles, body armor, and communications gear—to better facilitate PASF operations in dense urban areas such as refugee camps. To be clear, the provision of such equipment should not compromise Israeli security and will—like the earlier issues—require Israeli approval.

■ **URGE REDUCED IDF RAIDS INTO AREA A.** IDF nighttime raids into Area A constitute a main source of friction with the Palestinian public and of illegitimacy for the PASF. Thus, U.S. officials should engage their Israeli counterparts toward minimizing such raids. The recent downward trend should be sustained, and efforts to reach understandings on specific arrangements or

modalities—overseen by the USSC—should be revived (e.g., the “Ramallah and Jericho first” plan). Such efforts were previously undone by political considerations on both sides, as outlined in recommendation 1. Palestinian entreaties for more authority over their own security should be put to the test.

- **REVIVE THE SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AGENDA.** U.S. officials should engage their Palestinian counterparts on reviving the security sector reform agenda, which has, in many respects, lagged behind other PASF professionalization initiatives. The original effort to empower the Interior Ministry, including cabinet oversight of the security forces, must be returned to the fore. Especially given the continued dormancy of the Palestinian Legislative Council, more oversight of the PASF’s work is required to counteract the growing politicization of the security sector. On the technical level, increased emphasis should be given to harmonizing the PASF’s logistical supply chain. In addition to cutting costs, such a step would increase interservice cooperation and operability. Moreover, additional effort should be given to scaling back the still top-heavy PASF personnel structure. Here, retirement programs for older senior officers coupled with new recruitment drives could help right-size the force, thereby improving capabilities and trimming costs. Finally, security-judicial reform is needed, especially on the issue of evidence collection and investigative best practices: a long-running Israeli criticism holds that suspects apprehended by the PASF are ultimately released by the courts owing to lack of due process.
- **RECKON WITH THE QUESTION OF GAZA SECURITY.** While highly contingent and likely to fail, as did all former such efforts, Hamas and Fatah are, as of this writing, engaged in a new reconciliation process, centered primarily on the PA reasserting control over Gaza. Effective security authority is, and will remain, the main issue of contention. On this front, U.S. officials are best positioned to mediate among the many players involved—Israeli, Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, and European—coordinating the contours of a renewed PA security presence in the coastal territory in terms of the force deployment as well as future deconfliction

mechanisms. The United States, through the USSC, needs to assist the PA in raising a substantial new PASF presence from inside Gaza: vetting, (re)training, equipping, and helping pay for this new force. Jordan and Egypt are, indeed, the likeliest locales for training what should be several battalions and also attempting a necessary rapprochement between Gaza's two Fatah branches, loyal to Dahlan and Abbas, respectively.² Critically, such a force cannot be tainted by personnel tied to an internationally designated terrorist organization like Hamas. Moreover, the U.S.-brokered 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access will reportedly be revived, and with it the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah crossing. Given the history of the mission, technological innovations in the intervening years, and political changes on the ground, the entire arrangement may require updating. Finally, even once this new PASF contingent is situated, the United States will need to bring both parties together to reach understandings—ahead of time—about the response should Hamas or other terrorist groups launch attacks in future.



Ultimately, the successes of the past decade in reconstituting the PASF, renewing close Israeli-Palestinian security ties, and stabilizing the West Bank cannot be taken for granted. As this study has endeavored to show, alongside these many positive developments lurks a wider political program—the peace process—that has not only stalled but is in fact regressing. Since its inception in 1994, the PASF has both influenced and been influenced by such political dynamics. The cohesion, resilience, and professionalism of the PASF are contingent, to a great extent, on the leadership emanating from the Muqata presidential compound. This was true under Arafat as well as Abbas. If Abbas were to shift policies, curtailing certain aspects of Israeli-Palestinian coordination—or, more likely, if such policies were shifted by his eventual successor—then the reality on the ground would look very different.

The fundamental wager of the peace process remains in place, unresolved: land for peace, security for statehood. Even prominent right-wing critics of a two-state solution admit that the PASF is, in

fact, “doing a good job and can be trusted.” But, as this particular critic went on to add, “How much of our sovereignty do we put in foreign hands?”³ This remains the dilemma—politically and militarily—for many Israelis.

For Palestinians, the question remains this: absent a realistic political horizon for statehood, what is the purpose of the PASF, and how long can it be sustained? “I joined the police out of a sense of belonging to the homeland,” one young Palestinian recruit in Qalqilya recently said.⁴ The PASF is the supposed tool by which this homeland achieves its freedom and independence: a security force that is less than an army for a political entity that is—still—less than a state.

NOTES

1. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, p. 665.
2. Given limited spare PASF personnel in the West Bank, few can be sent directly to Gaza—and definitely not in the numbers required to effect a change in the territory’s overall security environment. Moreover, an “expeditionary” PASF force from the West Bank would require additional logistical/housing support and run the risk of being viewed as a “foreign” entity. Resentment may indeed grow at West Bankers policing unemployed Gazans, some of whom may have previously been part of the security apparatus—whether from the PA or Hamas. This is why a rapprochement between Dahlan and Abbas is crucial: to forge a unified front in the territory so as to raise an effective Fatah-controlled force. Officers from the West Bank, however, may be considered as candidates to command the force, in line with PASF protocol elsewhere that discourages the practice of officers serving in their home district.
3. Maj. Gen. (Res.) Gershon Hacoheh, IDF, speech at Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv, June 2016. IDF battalion commander, interview by author (Zilber), West Bank, Feb. 2016. A veteran of the second intifada, this officer now states of the PASF: “I don’t feel there isn’t someone to trust on the other side.”
4. Palestinian Civil Police recruit, interview by author (Zilber), Qalqilya, Aug. 2017.

APPENDIX

EXCERPTS FROM CITED AGREEMENTS

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Excerpt from the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, September 13, 1993

Article VII¹

Public Order and Security

In order to guarantee public order and internal security for the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Council will establish a strong police force, while Israel will continue to carry the responsibility for defending against external threats, as well as the responsibility for overall security of Israelis for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order.

THE CAIRO AGREEMENT

Excerpts from the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, May 4, 1994

Cairo ► Article IX²

The Palestinian Directorate of Police Force

1. The Palestinian Authority shall establish a strong police force, the Palestinian Directorate of Police Force (hereinafter "the Palestinian Police"). The duties, functions, structure, deployment and composition of the Palestinian Police, together with provisions regarding its equipment and operation, are set out in Annex I, Article III. Rules of conduct governing the activities of the Palestinian Police are set out in Annex I, Article VIII.
2. Except for the Palestinian Police referred to in this Article and the Israeli military forces, no other armed forces shall be established or operate in the Gaza Strip or the Jericho Area.
3. Except for the arms, ammunition and equipment of the Palestinian Police described in Annex I, Article III, and those of the Israeli military forces, no organization or individual in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area shall manufacture, sell, acquire, possess, import or otherwise introduce into the Gaza Strip or the Jericho Area any firearms, ammunition, weapons, explosives, gunpowder or any related equipment, unless otherwise provided for in Annex I.

Excerpts from Annex I: Protocol Concerning Withdrawal of Israeli Military Forces and Security Arrangements³

Cairo ► Annex I ► Article III³

The Palestinian Directorate of Police Force

1. General

The Palestinian Directorate of Police Force (hereinafter "the Palestinian Police") shall function in accordance with the following principles:

- a. It will be responsible for public order and internal security within the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority in accordance with Article V of the Agreement.
- b. Movement of Palestinian policemen between the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area will be conducted in accordance with Article IX of this Annex.

2. Duties and Functions

Subject to the provisions of this Agreement, in the areas under Palestinian jurisdiction the duties of the Palestinian Police shall be as follows:

- a. performing normal police functions, including maintaining internal security and public order;
- b. protecting the public and its property and acting to provide a feeling of security and safety;
- c. adopting all measures necessary for preventing crime in accordance with the law; and
- d. protecting public installations and places of special importance.

3. Structure and Composition

- a. The Palestinian Police shall consist of one integral unit under the control of the Palestinian Authority. It shall be composed of four branches:

- i. Civil Police (Al Shurta);
- ii. Public Security;
- iii. Intelligence; and
- iv. Emergency Services and Rescue (Al Difa'a Al Madani).

In each district, all members of the four Police branches shall be subordinate to one central command.

- b. The Palestinian Police will establish a Palestinian Coastal Police unit (hereinafter the "Palestinian Coastal Police") in accordance with Article XI of this Annex.
- c. The Palestinian Police will be comprised of up to 9,000 policemen in all its branches.

4. Recruitment

- a. The Palestinian Police shall consist of policemen recruited locally, and from abroad (from among individuals holding Jordanian passports or Palestinian documents issued by Egypt). The number of Palestinian recruits from abroad shall not exceed 7,000, of whom 1,000 will arrive three months after the signing of the Agreement.
- b. Palestinians recruited from abroad should be trained as policemen. The employment of policemen who have been convicted of serious crimes or have been found to be actively involved in terrorist activities subsequent to their employment will be immediately terminated. The list of Palestinians recruited, whether locally or from abroad, shall be agreed on by both sides.
- c. Palestinian policemen coming from abroad may be accompanied by spouse and children.

5. Arms, Ammunition and Equipment

- a. Uniformed policemen, as well as other policemen on duty who hold special accreditation, may carry arms.
- b. The Palestinian Police will possess the following arms and equipment:
 - i. 7,000 light personal weapons.
 - ii. Up to 120 machine guns of 0.3" or 0.5" caliber.
 - iii. Up to 45 wheeled armored vehicles of a type to be agreed on between the two sides, and of which 22 will be deployed in protecting Palestinian Authority installations. The use of wheeled armored vehicles in the Security Perimeter, on the Lateral Roads and on their adjacent sides, or in the vicinity of the Settlements shall be approved through the relevant DCO. Movement of such vehicles along the central North-South road (Road No. 4) in the Gaza Strip may take place only after providing notification to the relevant DCO.
 - iv. Communication systems, subject to Article II of Annex II of this Agreement.
 - v. Distinctive uniforms, identification badges and vehicle markings.
- c. Relevant police equipment and infrastructure funded from the budget of the Civil Administration shall be transferred to the Palestinian Police.

6. Introduction of Arms and Equipment and Foreign Assistance

- a. All foreign contributions and other forms of assistance to the Palestinian Police must comply with the provisions of this Agreement.
- b. The introduction into the Gaza Strip or the Jericho Area of arms, ammunition or equipment for the Palestinian Police, from all sources, shall be coordinated through the JSC.

7. Deployment

The Palestinian Police shall be initially deployed in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area as shown on attached maps Nos. 4 and 5. Any changes to this deployment will be agreed on in the JSC.

OSLO II⁴

Excerpts from The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

Oslo II ► Annex I ► Article IV The Palestinian Police

1. Duties and Functions

As detailed in the Palestinian law, the Palestinian Police shall carry out its duties and functions in accordance with this Agreement as follows:

- a. maintaining internal security and public order;
- b. protecting the public and all other persons present in the areas, as well as protecting their property, and acting to provide a feeling of security, safety and stability;
- c. adopting all measures necessary for preventing crime in accordance with the law;
- d. protecting public installations, infrastructure and places of special importance;
- e. preventing acts of harassment and retribution;
- f. combating terrorism and violence, and preventing incitement to violence; and
- g. performing any other normal police functions.

2. Structure and Composition

- a. The Palestinian Police shall consist of one integral unit under the control of the Council. It shall be composed of six branches:
 - i. Civil Police (Al Shurta);
 - ii. Public Security;
 - iii. Preventive Security;
 - iv. Amn Al Ri'asah;
 - v. Intelligence; and
 - vi. Emergency Services and Rescue (Al Difa'a Al Madani). In each district, all members of the six Police branches shall be subordinate to one central command.
- b. The Palestinian Police shall have a Palestinian Coastal Police unit in accordance with Article XIV of this Annex.

3. Deployment

- a. During the interim period, the total number of policemen of the Palestinian Police in all its branches in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will be no more than 30,000 out of which up to 12,000 policemen may be deployed in the West Bank and up to 18,000 policemen in the Gaza Strip. These numbers may be changed by agreement, if necessary. The Palestinian side will notify Israel of the names of the policemen recruited to the Palestinian Police in the Gaza Strip.
- b. In accordance with the stages of the first phase of redeployment of Israeli forces in the West Bank, up to 6,000 of the above-mentioned 12,000 Palestinian policemen may be deployed in the West Bank in Area A and, as set out in paragraph 3 of Article V, in Area B, as detailed in Appendix 2.
- c. The remaining 6,000 Palestinian policemen will be deployed in the West Bank according to the phases of the further redeployments or as needed, as agreed upon by the two Parties.
- d. The Palestinian Police shall be deployed as shown on attached map Nos. 3 and 5.

4. Recruitment

- a. The Palestinian Police shall consist of policemen recruited locally, and from abroad (from among individuals holding Jordanian passports or Palestinian documents issued by Egypt). The number of Palestinian recruits from abroad shall not exceed 5,000 in the West Bank and 7,000 in the Gaza Strip.
- b. Palestinian policemen coming from abroad may be accompanied by their spouse and sons and daughters.
- c. The Palestinian policemen to be recruited pursuant to this Agreement shall be West Bank or Gaza Strip residents who will be duly trained to perform police functions.
- d. The Palestinian side will notify Israel of any candidate for recruitment to the Palestinian Police. Should Israel object to the recruitment of any such candidate, that person shall not be recruited.
- e. In accordance with Palestinian law, the employment of policemen who have been convicted of serious crimes, or have been found to be actively involved in terrorist activities subsequent to their recruitment, will be immediately terminated, and their weapons and police identification documentation will be confiscated.

5. Arms, Ammunition and Equipment

- a. In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, uniformed policemen may carry arms, and plainclothes policemen on duty who hold special accreditation may carry personal light arms concealed in their clothing, in accordance with this Agreement.

- b. In the West Bank, the Palestinian Police will possess the following arms and equipment:
 - i. up to 4,000 rifles;
 - ii. up to 4,000 pistols;
 - iii. up to 120 machine guns of 0.3" or 0.5" caliber; and
 - iv. up to 15 light, unarmed riot vehicles of a type to be agreed on between the two sides in the JSC.
- c. In the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Police will possess the following arms and equipment:
 - i. 7,000 light personal weapons;
 - ii. up to 120 machine guns of 0.3" or 0.5" caliber; and
 - iii. up to 45 wheeled armored vehicles of a type to be agreed on between the two sides, and of which 22 will be deployed in protecting Council installations. The use of wheeled armored vehicles in the Security Perimeter, on the Lateral Roads and on their adjacent sides, or in the vicinity of the Settlements shall be approved through the relevant DCO. Movement of such vehicles along the central North-South road (Road No. 4) in the Gaza Strip may take place only after providing notification to the relevant DCO.
- d. The number of arms or items of equipment specified in subparagraphs b. and c. above may be increased subject to the agreement of both sides.
- e. The Palestinian Police will maintain an updated register of all weapons held by its personnel.
- f. The Palestinian Police may possess communication systems, subject to Article 36 of Annex III, and distinctive uniforms, identification badges and vehicle markings.
- g. In this Annex, the term "weapons" includes firearms, ammunition and explosives of all kinds.

6. Introduction of Arms, Equipment and Foreign Assistance

- a. All foreign contributions and other forms of assistance to the Palestinian Police must comply with the provisions of this Agreement.
- b. The introduction of arms, ammunition or equipment intended for the Palestinian Police shall be coordinated through the JSC, in accordance with its established practices.

7. Movement

Movement of Palestinian policemen between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will be conducted in accordance with Article X of this Annex.

Oslo II ► Annex I ► Appendix 2
Deployment of Palestinian Policemen

1. Pursuant to paragraph 3 b of Article IV of this Annex, the details of the deployment of the 6,000 Palestinian policemen in Areas A and B will be as follows:
 - a. in the Jenin District: 1,000 policemen;
 - b. in the Tulkarm District: 400 policemen;
 - c. in the Qalqilia District: 400 policemen;
 - d. in the Nablus District: 1,200 policemen;
 - e. in the Ramallah District: 1,200 policemen;
 - f. in the Bethlehem District: 850 policemen;
 - g. in the Hebron District: 950 policemen including 400 policemen in the City of Hebron; and
 - h. in the Jericho District: 600 policemen that will be considered part of the number of policemen allocated to the Gaza Strip in accordance with Article IV of this Annex.
2. Changes in the numbers of policemen in each district during the further redeployment phases, when the number of policemen in the West Bank will increase to 12,000, will be agreed upon in the West Bank RSC.

Oslo II ► Annex I ► Appendix 3
Police Stations and Posts in Area B

1. The Palestinian Police shall establish 25 Civil Police (Al Shurta) police stations and posts in the towns, villages and other places listed below and shown on map No. 3, with personnel and equipment as follows:
 - a. Jenin District
 - i. El-Yamun: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols;
 - ii. Meithalun: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols;
 - iii. Kafr Rai: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols;
 - iv. Jalqamus: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols; and
 - v. Burqin: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols.
 - b. Nablus District
 - i. Asiraat A-Shumaliyya: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols;
 - ii. Talouza: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols;
 - iii. Tell: 30 policemen, 2 vehicles, 5 rifles, 10 pistols;
 - iv. Talfit: 60 policemen, 2 vehicles, 12 rifles, 20 pistols;
 - v. Tamun: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols; and
 - vi. Aqraba: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols.

- c. Tulkarm and Qalqilya District
 - i. Shuweika: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols;
 - ii. Kafr Zibad: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols;
 - iii. Anabta: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols; and
 - iv. Illar: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols.
 - d. Ramallah District
 - i. Arura: 50 policemen, 2 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols;
 - ii. Deir Ghassana: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols;
 - iii. Khirbat Abu Falah: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols; and
 - iv. Bir Zeit: 70 policemen, 3 vehicles, 14 rifles, 23 pistols;
 - e. Bethlehem District
 - i. Tuquqa: 50 policemen, 3 vehicles, 9 rifles, 17 pistols.
 - f. Hebron District
 - i. Yata: 80 policemen, 3 vehicles, 15 rifles, 27 pistols;
 - ii. Dhahiriya: 70 policemen, 3 vehicles, 14 rifles, 23 pistols;
 - iii. Nuba: 45 policemen, 2 vehicles, 8 rifles, 15 pistols;
 - iv. Dura: 70 policemen, 3 vehicles, 14 rifles, 23 pistols; and
 - v. Bani-Naiem: 45 policemen, 3 vehicles, 8 rifles, 17 pistols.
2. The rifles in each of these police stations will be used only for the purpose of guarding the police station. In special cases, where the use of rifles outside the police station is required for the exercise of public order responsibility, prior notification shall be given to the DCO.

NOTES

1. <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Declaration%20of%20Principles.aspx>
2. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/agreement%20on%20gaza%20strip%20and%20jericho%20area.aspx>
3. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Gaza-Jericho%20Agreement%20Annex%20I.aspx>
4. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/the%20israeli-palestinian%20interim%20agreement%20-%20annex%20i.aspx>

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