



The Palestinian Security Services: Between Police and Army+

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PSS STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The General Security Service (GSS) was established in May 1994 with the signing by Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) of the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area (see Appendix II); the official title of the GSS is the Palestinian Directorate of Police Force, and in the Cairo agreement it is referred to simply as the "Palestinian Police." In actuality, this term is misleading. The GSS is the umbrella organization nominally responsible for coordinating and maintaining most of the Palestinian security bodies and services--it includes not only police but also intelligence organizations. The GSS has a director general, Nasr Yusef, but the supreme commander is the chairman of the PA, Yasir Arafat. There are two separate headquarters, for Gaza and the West Bank; each operates independently. The GSS coordinates nine administrative departments responsible for training, logistics, communication, finance and political guidance. On the operational level it coordinates ten services. The two additional services, the Special Security Force (SSF) and al-Amn al-Ri'asah (Presidential Security), operate directly under Arafat's guidance (see the organizational table). According to the Oslo Accords, however, the GSS should be the highest, and only, security authority under which all the other services would operate. Together, the GSS, SSF, and al-Amn al-Ri'asah constitute the Palestinian Security Services (PSS).

GSS Security Branches

The ten services that fall under the rubric of the GSS include the following:

-- National Security Force (Quwat al-Amn al-Watani). As the largest security service, with more than 14,000 officers, the National Security Force (NSF) is responsible for most of the missions along the borders of "Area A" (see map, p. 26) and inside the cities. Among these missions are the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Patrols (JPs), guarding checkpoints on the cities' outskirts, and participating in other general security-related missions. The NSF recruited most of its officers from the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) and gradually added increasing numbers of local recruits. Gen. Nasr Yusef formerly commanded the NSF; its current commander is Saeb Ajez. This branch was first officially included in the GSS (as "Public Security") in the May 1994 Cairo Agreement (see Appendix II).

-- Civil Police (al-Shurta Madaniyya). The Civil Police, also known as the Blue Police, is the main law enforcement tool in the PA. Like the NSF, it was one of the original branches of the GSS mentioned in the Cairo Agreement. The Civil Police handles ordinary police functions such as directing traffic, arresting common criminals, and keeping public order. Headed by Ghazi Jubali, it employs more than 10,000 police officers in the West Bank and Gaza. According to the September 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip-"Oslo II"-the Civil Police will also deploy in twenty-five selected villages throughout the West Bank commonly known as "Area B+." (Palestinians are generally not allowed to carry firearms in

Area B, but officers in these villages are allowed to patrol, to carry firearms within the village territory, and to maintain public order.) The Civil Police also spearheads a 700-officer rapid-deployment special police unit that is trained to handle complex crises, such as severe riots and counterterrorism operations. Commanders of the unit received training in the former Soviet Union, and one of their important roles is to train instructors for the other GSS units.(1) -- Preventive Security Force (al-Amn al-Wiqa'i). This plainclothes security force operates in the West Bank and Gaza with an estimated power of close to 5,000 agents and is known to be the largest of the PA's intelligence forces. The PSF was first officially included in the GSS as part of Oslo II. Headed by Col. Jibril Rajoub in the West Bank and Col. Muhammad Dahlan in Gaza, this body is involved in preventive actions against terrorist and opposition groups as well as information gathering in Israel. Some of the PSF activities are associated with violence, abduction of civilians, interrogations, torture, and other illegal actions; indeed, the PSF has achieved a reputation for human rights violations including the death of tortured detainees.(2)

-- General Intelligence (Mukhabbarat al-Amma). Headed by Maj. Gen. Amin al-Hindi, the Mukhabbarat is the official PA intelligence agency and was one of the original branches of the GSS, as delineated in the Cairo Agreement. With a current strength of about 3,000 officers, the Mukhabbarat is involved in intelligence gathering inside and outside the territories, counterespionage operations, and developing relations with other foreign intelligence bodies.

-- Military Intelligence (Istkhhabbarat al-Askariyya). A smaller intelligence body headed by Musa Arafat, the Istkhhabbarat is a preventive apparatus that deals mainly with

arrests and interrogations of opposition activists who might endanger the stability of the regime. This body also investigates some of the illegal actions of the PA's other intelligence and security bodies. The Istkhhabbarat is mentioned in neither the Cairo Agreement nor Oslo II and is one of the PSS's five unofficially recognized bodies.

-- Military Police. A subordinate body to the Istkhhabbarat, the Military Police specializes in riot control, arrests, protection of important people and important installations, prison maintenance, and enforcement of order and discipline among the security bodies. Like the Istkhhabbarat, this unit is not officially recognized in the Oslo Accords.

-- Coast Guard (Shurta Bahariyya). This elite unit deployed mainly in Gaza consists of about 1,000 officers. Its official objective is the protection of the PA's territorial water mainly against arms- and drug-smugglers from Egypt. It owns five motorboats equipped with machine guns. Most of the members are recruits from the Palestinian diaspora who used to belong to the overseas naval unit of Fatah, Arafat's inner circle within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Upon their arrival to the PA areas, they received special commando training, making the unit highly valuable and able to deal with dangerous challenges. The Coast Guard is one of the original units designated in the Cairo Agreement.

-- Aerial Police (Shurta al-Jawiya). A rudimentary aerial unit based on Force 14, Fatah's aviation unit, the Aerial Police is responsible for operating and maintaining the PA's five helicopters, which are used mainly for the transportation of Arafat and other Palestinian leaders. This unit is not, however, mentioned in any of the agreements.

-- Civil Defense (al-Difa'a al-Madani). Described officially in the Cairo Agreement as Emergency Services and Rescue (see Appendix II), Civil Defense consists of fire department and rescue services, which it coordinates in conjunction with other civilian services during emergencies. In normal times the body administers a massive program of first aid and rescue training for the civilian population.

-- County Guard (al-Amn al-Mahafza). This small force supplies security services to the county governors and their offices. The County Guard summons people for questioning and resolves local quarrels. It is not officially mentioned in any of the agreements to date.

Additional Security

Despite the Cairo Agreement's definition of the GSS as the highest and only security authority, Arafat also created two additional apparati outside GSS control and accountable only to the PA chairman himself. These units are the SSF and al-Amn al-Ri'asah.

-- Special Security Force (al-Amn al-Khass). The Special Security Force (SSF) is headed by Gen. Abu Yusuf al-Wahidi. It is the newest of the services (established January 1995) and probably the smallest. Its importance is great, however, as it works under Arafat's direct supervision. Although officially its main objective is to gather information about the activities of opposition groups in foreign countries, especially Arab ones, its actual function may be to gather information on the PA's other security services.⁽³⁾ The SSF also supplies Arafat with information about any corruption and illegal actions by PA officials. Technically, however, the SSF is not mentioned in any of the agreements.

-- Presidential Security (al-Amn al-Ri'asah). Al-Amn al-Ri'asah is a high-quality security force commanded by Faisal Abu Sharah and estimated at 3,000 officers, a majority of whom were once members of Force 17, Arafat's security guard while he led the PLO in the diaspora. It is responsible for Arafat's personal security and operates under his direction, although, as originally defined in Oslo II, the unit was to be part of the GSS. The protection of the chairman, as well as other political personalities and important installations, is the main objective of al-Amn al-Ri'asah, but in addition it handles counterterrorism and is responsible for arresting opposition activists and suspects of collaboration with Israel. Two subsidiary bodies of al-Amn al-Ri'asah are the Intelligence Unit, whose main mission is information gathering about the activities of the opposition movements and other domestic threats, and the Presidential Guard, Arafat's most loyal and trusted inner circle. This latter unit provides the tight security around him, preventing any assassination attempts. Although officially Force 17 disbanded when Arafat returned to Gaza, the background of most of the officers in al-Amn al Ri'asah leads most Palestinians to refer to this branch simply as Force 17.

Prominent Features and Personalities

The most prominent features of the PSS are the proliferation of its units and the difficulty of defining their different functions. There are, for example, eight different bodies dealing with intelligence and anti-opposition related activities. Their overlapping responsibilities often lead to street clashes, confusion, inefficient work, and-in more extreme cases-battles over blurred jurisdictions.⁽⁴⁾ Coordinating the services to prevent such unfortunate events is complicated because Arafat built the forces in such a manner that only the PA chairman could arbitrate between them,

following the famous strategy of "divide and rule."

Three distinct groups of generals are represented in the security establishment. The first consists of PLA veterans who arrived in the territories in 1994 as part of the Oslo Accords and were soon appointed to some of the most senior positions; these men include Nasr Yusef, commander of the GSS; Abdel al-Razzak Majaideh, commander of the GSS's Gaza units; and Ziad al-Atrash, representative to the Liaison Security Committee with the Israelis. These generals, all PLA leaders, brought with them varying levels of military experience, but the fact that they were "outsiders" who did not actively participate in the Palestinian intifada (uprising) affected their credibility and status in Palestinian society.

Strong popular support was given to the second group of leaders, including Jibril Rajoub and Muhammad Dahlan, who represent the heritage of the Palestinian struggle for independence during the intifada. Rajoub, who spent a total of sixteen years in Israeli prisons, was one of the original leaders of Fatah in the West Bank wing of the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU). Dahlan was arrested eleven times by the Israeli security forces when he was the Gaza leader of the Fatah Shabiba (youth) movement. Both Rajoub and Dahlan were deported in 1988 and their life stories are resplendent with Palestinian heroism and struggle. A wave of popular support, which surpassed by far the support for the PLA generals, accompanied their 1994 return to the territories. Support for these two leaders has been diminishing lately since the PSF, which they command, has been associated with many cases of human rights violations, violence, and intimidation; among other incidents, Rajoub apparently ordered the PSF to harass Palestinian politicians through violent means.⁽⁵⁾ Yet, his controversial image evokes a mixture of awe and admiration, and

he has even been mentioned as a possible successor to Arafat.

In his effort to maneuver between the two schools of commanders, Arafat gradually introduced a third group of officers, who were brought to the territories from abroad to command the more sensitive security bodies. The main figure in this category is Brig. Gen. Amin al-Hindi, head of the Mukhabbarat, who had "disappeared" after his involvement in the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes in the Munich Olympics. Other commanders in this third category are Abu Yusuf al-Wahidi, commander of the SSF; Faisal Abu Sharah, who commands al-Amn al-Ri'asah; and Ghazi Jubali, commander of the Civil Police in Gaza. All of the above officers are known to be extremely loyal to Arafat, and this could explain why he entrusted to them his most important security bodies.

Looking again at the whole picture, it seems that Arafat, by keeping his security forces under the command of a heterogeneous group of generals who are often at odds with each other, 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.

One can discern two primary reasons for the abundance of intelligence-related services—one that answers "why" and the other "how." As to why, the PA must constantly monitor and be wary of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to diminish the political threat they pose. The intelligence services therefore represent Arafat's emphasis on counteropposition and counterterrorist activities and his attempt to weaken Islamist activists as much as he can. More important, and in answer to how Arafat has increased the size of his force, intelligence officers are mostly plainclothes agents who look and dress like regular civilians. The PA can thus greatly inflate the

number of security personnel without apparently violating the interim agreement quotas on employing police officers.

As for training, each of the security services recruits and trains its own men. It started as a training system in which, according to GSS commander General Yusef, "every unit is improvising."⁽⁶⁾ In time, however, it turned into a continuously improving system with several training bases in Gaza and the West Bank. Although Britain, Austria, the Netherlands, Egypt, and Scandinavian nations have all helped to train some of the men, the PSS as a whole still lacks the resources for an extensive program. Training usually runs from ten days to one month of intensive courses. For more elite units like al-Amn al-Ri'asah, the training is three months.⁽⁷⁾ Daily contact with the IDF has also had a positive influence on the quality of the Palestinian forces. Although Israel was never directly involved in the instruction of Palestinian forces, it was only natural that the NSF, for example, simply by operating alongside a well-equipped standing army like the IDF, would soon be tempted to emulate and adopt many of the Israelis' drills and techniques. These included new disciplinary measures, battle drills, ways to operate radio equipment, and regulations for handling weapons. This constant improvement-by-emulation had a positive effect on the improved operational capabilities of the PSS....

POLICE OR RUDIMENTARY ARMY?

In assessing whether the Palestinian Security Services (PSS) constitute a police force or a rudimentary army, one should specify the standards and definitions according to which the issue will be addressed. A police force is generally defined as "an organized civil force for maintaining order, preventing and detecting crime, and enforcing the law."⁽⁸⁾ But a

military force differs from a police force. It refers to an armed body with the objective of protecting territorial borders, skies, and coasts of the state from external threats, and in many cases also against domestic threats. Although both police and military forces are armed establishments, they also have some major structural differences. Military organizations employ armed personnel organized in formations of varying sizes, starting from small platoons and companies, continuing through the intermediate level of battalions and regiments, and culminating in formations with thousands of men at the levels of division and corps. All military bodies are managed by means of a general staff that coordinates the work of the different units. The general staff is responsible for the deployment and operations of the forces during times of war and peace. Its mandate is to direct military operations according to the instructions and directives of the political leadership. Apart from the combat units, the general staff directs the work of the professional corps such as signal, surgeon, logistic, and personnel branches. Finally, a military force is characterized by a well-developed officer corps-the backbone of the military organization-which is responsible for recruiting and training soldiers for the military units. In light of the above differentiation-rather than in terms of weaponization⁽⁹⁾ or military goals-this chapter will consider which definition best describes the PSS in its present form: police, or rudimentary army?

A Police Force?

The Cairo Agreement first allowed the Palestinian Authority (PA) to establish a state security apparatus that includes police and internal security forces (see Appendix II). The goal of this police force, according to Article III of the security arrangement protocol, was to create an atmosphere of public order and internal security during the

interim period. The agreement also limited to 9,000 the number of Palestinians to be employed by the security services. The agreed-upon number rose to 30,000 by December 1995 as a result of the Oslo II Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Yet, many analysts assert that the PSS is not complying with these quantitative limitations and that the actual number of security personnel employed in the different branches varies from 35,000-according to more cautious estimates-up to 50,000.(10) If true, the PA has anywhere from 5,000 to 20,000 more officers deployed than the accords allow. In fact, a June 1998 intelligence report submitted to the Israeli government, detailing alleged Palestinian breaches of the Oslo Accords, included as one of the main issues a list of the names of PSS officers, which the PA submitted to the Israeli government. The PA did not submit a complete list, but instead named only 18,600, for two reasons: It does not want Israel to know the real number of officers employed, and it does not want Israel to know their identities, as some are former terrorists who are wanted in Israel.(11) According to Oslo II, Israel has the right to veto the employment of anyone who is suspected of being a security threat.

Analysts also think the PA is not complying with its quantitative limitations on firearms. Oslo II raised the Cairo Agreement's initial quantitative restriction to 15,000 weapons, of which 8,000 would be in the West Bank and 7,000 in Gaza. Yet, by one estimate, the PSS and the Palestinian population as a whole own approximately 40,000 additional weapons than are allowed by Oslo II.(12) In addition, the PSS has managed to develop small manufacturing workshops for the production of hand grenades and other ammunition.(13) These assertions have led observers to wonder as to the true *raison d'être* of the PSS: Is it designed simply to ensure public order in the territories, or is it a rudimentary army

under development, camouflaged as a simple law enforcement body?

Although PA representatives such as Palestinian Legislative Council speaker Ahmed Qurie (Abu Ala), for example, insist that "the PSS is a police, not an army,"(14) the figures enumerated above seem to indicate otherwise.(15) The PA has become the most heavily policed territory in the world, with an officer-to-resident ratio of 1:50; the U.S. ratio for police officers and sheriff's deputies, in contrast, is 1:400. Presumably, the difference in these ratios exists not because corruption and crime rates are that much higher in the PA. In fact, activities related to the preservation of public order in the Palestinian cities and in the 25 police-stationed villages commonly known as "Area B+" (see Appendix III) involve only 25 percent of the actual PSS personnel. Although Oslo II instructed that all the Palestinians recruited to the police forces had to be duly trained to perform police functions (see Appendix III), the agreement never really determined the nature and the quality of the training required for the practice of law enforcement. The issue remained open for Palestinian interpretation and the result was that, apart from the Civil Police, the main branches of the PSS have never been properly trained in police work. Moreover, most PSS employees lack the necessary equipment-such as shields, clubs, and tear gas-needed for riot control and other equipment needed to perform police duties. The reason for this is simple: Almost 75 percent of the total force is not assigned to any law enforcement duties. Therefore, although the PSS is commonly referred to as "Palestinian Police," three-fourths of its officers are not technically police officers. Rather, they are assigned duties relating to the important missions of regime preservation and preventive action against the PA's Islamist opposition, as well as the protection of "Area A" borders and cooperative work with

the IDF under the definitions of the Oslo Accords. With the PSS's status as "more than a police force" thus clearly defined, it is time to consider whether the PSS is developing into a Palestinian army-to-be, and whether the Palestinians want it to do so.

Palestinian Attitudes Toward Militarization

The topic of national security has rarely been debated within the Palestinian community, and therefore there is no agreed-upon definition of Palestinian security needs.(16) The few Palestinian scholars who have written about the issue are at odds with each other concerning the preferred means of achieving security. Yazid Sayigh, for example, believes that only after the Palestinians achieve sovereignty will they be able to achieve security. He rejects the idea of establishing a massive Palestinian army, saying that "for the Palestinians to seek a peace agreement permitting them to maintain sizable armed forces would be self-defeating, since their resultant defenses would in any case be inadequate to defeat an all-out attack."(17) He therefore advocates creating a single formation, such as a National Guard, responsible for both border security and public law and order.(18) Faisal al-Husayni, the PA's minister for Jerusalem affairs, has conveyed a similar idea, saying the PA should invest its money in schools and high technology enterprises rather than in arms, because the PA's army could never be as strong as the IDF.(19) Contrary to Sayigh's and al-Husayni's views, another school believes that the capacity for self-defense is an essential component of the Palestinian national security doctrine and therefore advocates the creation of a Palestinian army once a state is established.(20)

It seems that the Palestinians have, for the time being, reluctantly chosen the first model of a multipurpose security force-"reluctantly," because given the limitations

of Oslo II and the PA's existing economic constraints, a multipurpose security force is the maximum they could achieve. The PA is under permanent scrutiny, lacks the capacity to procure and manufacture arms openly, and is economically dependent on international donors. Despite these severe constraints, however, if the PA were interested in developing the PSS into a rudimentary army-in-waiting, it could take some preliminary steps during the interim period to prepare for a time when the security forces could be transformed into a proper military.

Is the PSS Building a Military Infrastructure?

Militarism is one of the means to create a supportive atmosphere for future conscription, legislation, and public participation in national security efforts. The PA tends to emphasize values such as aggressive patriotism, the use of force by jihad (holy war) and struggle, and the dependency of the political system on the security apparatus. PA chairman Yasir Arafat himself is always seen wearing military uniforms and surrounded by his military aides-even in private moments, such as while praying in a mosque. Full military ceremonies take place on his arrival in and departure from Gaza, even if his trip is no more than a one-day deliberation in Cairo. Daily street parades, military commemoration days, and the extreme proliferation of different types and colors of uniforms are some of the elements of a "uniform culture" that has been forged in the territories.(21) The most ominous sign of the domination of this culture is the infiltration of military values into Palestinian youth movements such as scout groups and Shabiba, the youth wing of Arafat's Fatah organization. During the summer of 1998, Fatah inaugurated in Gaza a series of military camps that trained young Palestinians in martial arts, handling light

weapons, and other military drills. The training staff of these camps belonged to the Istkhabbarat al-Askariyya, the military intelligence branch of the PSS, thus making it likely that these camps had the PA's approval.(22) Intensive militaristic activity among youth movements and student bodies could create the base for a future ultramilitant Palestinian society.

Additionally, a PSS intent on militarization would have to lay a proper infrastructure to ease the transformation from the existing paramilitary structure into a fully mobilized army. Components of this infrastructure would include an embryonic training-and-recruitment system; a well-defined echelon of command; and rudimentary military-related industries for the local manufacture of uniforms, ammunition, and small firearms. All of these components can in fact be found to some extent in the PA. Yet, the PSS seems to have severe problems with at least one crucial part of this infrastructure—it lacks a cadre of commander-quality recruits currently serving as regular officers, who could assume command over newly recruited platoons and companies once the transformation to a standing army occurs. The German Army of the 1920s successfully implemented this "accordion-like" mechanism when the Versailles Treaty limited it to only 100,000 soldiers. The Germans introduced a highly competitive selection process so not only the commanders but even each of the privates would be qualified, once the monitoring regime was over, to become a field commander.(23) The PA, on the other hand, has failed to adopt this method, and the current selection of PSS recruits is undefined and based largely on political affiliation and loyalty to the regime rather than on intellectual and leadership qualities. The low wage the PA pays officers—compensation has decreased by 50 percent over the last three years, such that the

current monthly salary is about \$200 (24)—discourages young Palestinian elites from joining the PSS and helping to develop a command-quality cadre. One PSS colonel, Abu Salah, who runs the training programs for new recruits, describes the profile of the generation that grew up during the intifada and is now joining the PSS:

They did not go to school, they are illiterate, they smoke, many of them forget about helping their parents, they spend money on immoral things and they have no sense of responsibility. That is the raw material that Israel left us with here.(25)

The previously mentioned summer military camps marked a change of the above trend. The students who were admitted to the camps were selected according to their leadership qualities and their potential to become future commanders.(26) Although too early to determine, this could be the first indicator that the PSS has adopted an "accordion-like" mechanism.

If the PSS were intent on militarizing, it could also make overtures to the 350,000 refugees living in Lebanon who could serve as a potential reservoir of military power for a future Palestinian army. Once statehood is attained, a Palestinian port or airfield in Gaza or the West Bank could be a route for smuggling heavy weapons and additional troops from Lebanon's refugee camps. These camps, which have turned into lawless havens for terrorists criminals and arms-dealers, could also provide the PA with a crucial component required for a military buildup: training grounds. Indeed, Lebanon is the only place where Palestinian soldiers can develop skills in special weapons, such as the launching of anti-tank and antiaircraft missiles. Such skills would be necessary in a future confrontation with Israel. If it is intent on militarizing the PSS, the PA would therefore have some strong incentives to cultivate its relations with the Lebanese factions with the intention of

mobilizing them in the future. In fact, great efforts are being made to settle the internal disputes between the PA and Fatah's faction in Lebanon, so that if the peace process breaks down and is replaced by total conflict, the PLO fighters in Lebanon will be ready to join in. Arafat has pledged to support the Palestinian dissident groups financially, and-according to different sources-millions of dollars designated for humanitarian projects in the West Bank and Gaza have been diverted to Lebanon to fulfill the pledge.(27)

A Hybrid

To summarize, the PSS is at this point more than a police force yet less than a rudimentary army. In its present framework, it hardly resembles a typical police force: Apart from the Civil Police, the main units of the PSS have never been trained in police work, and they lack the necessary equipment for riot control. On the other hand, some fundamental components that ought to exist in any military establishment are also missing in the PSS. Among them are a well-defined and organized officers' corps; a general staff apparatus; training of military formations comprising the intermediate and high levels of command (battalions and regiments); and the infrastructure of a professional corps such as armor, artillery, signal, and surgeon corps. Despite some minor steps described above taken by the PA to promote the formation of such an infrastructure, there is no evidence of the existence of a plan to build a full-fledged army. The PSS can thus best be described as a hybrid, too complex and overstaffed to be the police force required for the size of the Palestinian population and yet too underdeveloped both organizationally and militarily to be considered a rudimentary army....

THE NEXT ROUND

The array of tensions during the last couple of years caused by the impasse in the peace process has occasionally led analysts to speculate that Palestinians may carry out what they call the "military option." (28) Many statements made by Palestinian officials in the context of political crises, such as the building of Jewish housing in the areas of Har Homa and Ras el-Amud in eastern Jerusalem, were provocative and belligerent.(29) References to the military option received new meaning after the September 1996 Hasmonian Tunnel riots. It was no longer necessarily the resumption of the massive, civil uprising of the Palestinian intifada (uprising) but rather a large-scale use of armed forces supported by the unarmed Palestinian masses. The Palestinians' "victory" in the clashes made them believe that armed confrontation, even if not very desirable, is a viable option for which they should be prepared.

The prevailing view in the Israeli security establishment is that if the peace process reaches a standstill, violence and the use of force will be certain.(30) When "war-gaming" the next confrontation, some major trends are visible, all of them recent developments stemming from the lessons of September 1996.

First, one can assume that a future confrontation between the Palestinian Security Services (PSS) and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will originate in the same areas of friction where the riots erupted in September 1996: the outskirts of the Palestinian cities ("Area A"), especially where IDF and PSS checkpoints are in close proximity. The several hundred feet separating the two sides would become a convenient ground for an exchange of fire. Such was the case in the northern outskirts of Jenin, the northern outskirts of Ramallah and the Arak checkpoint in its southern outskirts, and the western entrance to the city of Tulkarem in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, the problematic points are the

main junctions that lead to the isolated Jewish settlements: Netzarim junction, Kfar Darom junction and Morag junction. Other potential friction would probably arise around the Jewish enclaves, such as Joseph's Tomb in Nablus and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. The most problematic point would most likely be the Jewish settlement in Hebron; this city was under complete Israeli control in September 1996. The new situation resulting from the deployment of the PSS in most of the city's territory, because of the Hebron Accord, will make defense of the Jewish enclaves in the city one of the IDF's most challenging undertakings.

The second trend is related to the Israeli introduction of heavy weapons during the crisis. Tanks, armored personnel carriers, and attack helicopters, all put into action during the last clash, will have to deal next time with a new array of Palestinian threats. The general assessment is that the Palestinians are amassing stocks of light anti-armor weapons, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank missiles, and SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles, all of which are forbidden under the Oslo Accords.⁽³¹⁾ Reports about such stockpiling differ with respect to the types and quantities of the weapons, but the Palestinian ability to launch anti-tank weapons is almost certain.⁽³²⁾ The PSS has succeeded in accumulating weapons mainly by smuggling them into the Palestinian Authority (PA) across the Dead Sea and into the West Bank, or across the Mediterranean Sea into Gaza.⁽³³⁾ Another channel of smuggling is from Egypt by means of secret underground tunnels that connect Egypt to Rafah in the Gaza Strip; despite the IDF's extensive efforts to locate and destroy these tunnels, all of them dug underneath the Israeli controlled borderline, the underground channels remain very active.⁽³⁴⁾ The Palestinians have also acquired weapons through continuous efforts to steal them by

breaking into Israeli military installations. Some of these efforts have been very fruitful, and dozens of anti-tank missiles, as well as rifles and ammunition, were thus transferred into PA territory. Efforts to acquire anti-aircraft shoulder-fired missiles were made public in February 1997, when a former IDF scout was arrested for stealing a military patrol vehicle loaded with weapons and ammunition. In the investigation he admitted that the weapons were ordered by the PSS through a Palestinian who served as a contact with the suspect.⁽³⁵⁾

Another precaution the Palestinians have taken against future IDF use of tanks is by digging anti-tank tunnels and trap-holes under central roads in the West Bank and Gaza. These holes can be filled with explosives to block the advancing armored vehicles. News about explosives stolen from quarries in Israel emphasizes the existence of such a technique.⁽³⁶⁾ PSS efforts to upgrade its military performance by achieving anti-tank and anti-aircraft abilities are not mere defensive measures against a future contingency in which the IDF carries out Operation Field of Thorns (see chapter 5) and reenters the Palestinian cities. Behind these new abilities hides also a psychological statement emphasizing that the PA is not as feeble an opponent as it may seem. Attacking and destroying a state-of-the-art weapon system such as a Cobra helicopter or a Merkava III tank would give an enormous boost to the Palestinians' esprit de corps. In a future confrontation, the picture of a burning Israeli tank on the outskirts of Nablus, for example, would become a much-sought commodity in the world media, symbolizing the brave Palestinian "David" taking a stand against the Zionist "Goliath," similar to the image of the Chinese student standing in front of a tank in Tiananmen Square.

The PSS's performance during the September riots, as discussed previously, certainly raised the Palestinian officers' self-

esteem, especially because of their ability to kill and wound a relatively high number of senior Israeli commanders. The PSS would probably adopt a similar sniper-style mode of operation to inflict even more casualties in a future confrontation. Indeed, sniper units have become among the most prestigious postings in the PSS. To recruit a large group of snipers, the PSS acquired considerable numbers of telescopic sights for their M-16s and AK-47s.(37)

Militarily, the PSS's preparations for confrontation are reflected in a distinct change in the mode of operation and methods of training. The security bodies are adopting a more professional approach, through training in the use of formations of teams and squads for defined missions like gaining control of an area of land, holding down a post, and attacking an IDF post or settlement.(38) But the preparations for the next round are not restricted to the military level. The participation of the unarmed civilian population in a future conflict is a key factor in Palestinian preparation. The PA, for example, holds self-defense courses for civilians. The training includes lessons in shooting, hand-to-hand combat, and ceremonial drills.(39) The civil defense apparatus is constantly improving by conducting a massive program of first aid courses for PA residents and preparing water reservoirs and an alternative electricity supply. The health system undertook a face lift of its own by renovating emergency rooms in major hospitals to be able to handle large numbers of wounded people.(40)

To achieve a strong result-that is, winning the international community's support in a future conflict with Israel-PA chairman Yasir Arafat will probably try to create an image of a popular uprising supported by a marginal, armed backup of the PSS. To coordinate the masses' participation, the PA will have to use its electronic media, namely Palestinian TV and the Voice of Palestine radio station, in the

same way they were utilized during the 1996 Tunnel riots. The frequent televised images of Palestinian casualties and PSS officers exchanging fire with the IDF were used to incite the masses, thus encouraging them to take active part in the insurgency.(41) This is likely to recur in a future clash....

CONCLUSION

Rarely in modern history has a nation, struggling for its independence, been granted permission by its own military occupier to establish a quasimilitary armed force and to handle its own security matters independently. The Arab-Israeli conflict, known for creating some unique events in the past, provided such a precedent in Oslo on September 13, 1993, when the government of Israel-by signing a declaration of principles for negotiating peace with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)-thus agreed to the formation of an armed Palestinian police force in the West Bank and Gaza (see Appendix I). The decision aroused the fierce opposition of Israeli right-wing groups, which chanted the slogan, "Don't hand them guns!" Many less-conservative individuals similarly doubted the Palestinians' ability to ensure the maintenance of law and order during the interim negotiation period.

Nearly five years after the deployment of the Palestinian Security Services (PSS), its performance shows a lop-sided balance-sheet. On the positive side, it seems that the efforts of the PSS to ensure and preserve Arafat's regime and to restrain the opposition movements have been successful. Arafat's regime is sound, much to the credit of the Preventive Security Force, the Mukhabbarat (General Intelligence), and the Special Security Force. These PSS units have suppressed some of the most radical factors in the opposition and succeeded in minimizing the domestic threats to the present regime,

enabling it to proceed on the peace track. But this achievement has been eclipsed by some negative developments that can be detected in the PSS and its relations with the civilian population. The force that was established with the aim of "protecting the public and its property and acting to provide the feeling of security and safety" (see Appendix II) is gradually becoming a public menace. The low salaries of PSS officers and their high tolerance for human rights violations have created a situation in which the involvement of officers in illegal activities, corruption, and the abuse of power are quite common. One should also include on the negative side of the balance sheet the two major armed clashes in which the PSS were involved during the turbulent interim period: Black Friday and the Tunnel Riots. Both were seminal events that changed the identity and the strategic status of the Palestinian Authority (PA). On Black Friday, the PSS broke the taboo of firing live ammunition at civilians, thus adding the PA to the club of human rights-violating regimes. In September 1996 the action of Palestinian troops against the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) placed the PSS high on Israel's list of potential threats and adversaries, causing the IDF to revise its military doctrine of low intensity conflict.

The PSS has therefore become a key player in the Israeli-Palestinian arena with a large role in a possible future Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Promises from PA officials that Palestinians "are not stupid enough to think of war with Israel, and [that] a military confrontation is not even a consideration for us,"(42) are overshadowed by internal instructions circulated within the PSS urging commanders to "be ready and well-armed with all weapons and means in anticipation of the worst possibilities."(43) These instructions show that, although the PA would prefer not to engage itself in a military confrontation with Israel, the PSS has widely discussed and prepared for such

a development. The PSS's basic assumption is that if a major breakdown occurs, "the Israeli army will not come back" to the cities; as one senior PSS officer said, "They [Israelis] know the Palestinians will fight with their lives and many [Israelis] would die."(44) This assessment is probably correct, especially owing to the IDF's sensitivity to urban warfare, with its high casualty rate.(45) In a future confrontation, then, the most likely lines of engagement between the IDF and PSS would be in rural areas and on the outskirts of the main Palestinian cities, especially around the checkpoints at city entrances. Such combat would hardly be decisive and would probably lead to the development of a long war of attrition in the territories in which tactics used by the IDF and Hizballah in southern Lebanon would likely be adopted. The IDF might find itself facing threats like roadside bombs, anti-tank missiles, and ambushes along the main transit routes of the West Bank and Gaza. The PSS has studied the techniques used by Hizballah in Lebanon and may want to apply some of the more useful ones against the IDF, as the terrain in the West Bank is similar to that in Lebanon. The "Lebanonization" of the West Bank would be intolerable to the Israeli government mainly because so many Israeli civilians are trapped in the middle of this potential warzone. Regardless of the political implications of a future confrontation with the PSS, on the military side alone the PSS has the ability both to inflict upon the IDF a considerable number of casualties and to deflate Israel's national morale.

The imminence of a confrontation between the IDF and the PSS will not necessarily be determined by the proximity to May 4, 1999. The sensitivity of the political situation supplies almost daily a new excuse for lighting the powder keg. If, however, the five-year deadline for the final status negotiations involves the unilateral

declaration of a Palestinian state and, thus, the breakdown of the Oslo framework of negotiations, then Israel might end up facing a different opponent than the one described in this paper. Dissolving the Oslo Accords would mean that the various limitations on the size, structure, and armaments of the PSS would cease to exist. As a sovereign nation, the Palestinians would be able to legislate mandatory conscription as one of the first steps in the buildup of a standing army. The Palestinian population is one of the youngest in the world; 73 percent of Palestinians in the territories are younger than 35 years old. Legislation mandating conscription could thus immediately yield more than 100,000 new recruits.(46)

Indeed, the Palestinian Legislative Council has already proposed a National Service Law, which would have drafted all high school graduates for one year of work in Palestinian public projects, including the police. The initiative was eventually withdrawn because of Israeli objections.(47) Mandatory service legislation would likely also be economically lucrative. Currently, the PSS employs only paid, professional officers, at an annual cost of more than \$500 million. Introducing mandatory service would enable the new Palestinian state to draft a much less expensive-if not entirely unpaid-pool of conscripts into the ranks of the PSS. The millions of dollars once spent on police salaries could then be diverted toward procurement and training to promote the strengthening of the forces.

Whether the PA establishes such an army following a declaration of independence depends on both intentions and means. Strong motivations for building up a military force more competent than the current one do in fact exist. This can be surmised from the militaristic nature of Palestinian society, which tends to embrace the "uniform culture." Another sign of a strong desire or intention to create a Palestinian army is the fact that the PA has

thus far seized every opportunity to adopt the indicators of nationhood, including postage stamps, a flag, legislative bodies, courts, a stock market, and even an Olympic committee. The most important national indicator would be a formidable military force, and it is hard to believe that the Palestinians would waive their right to such a force once a state is declared.

Nevertheless, desires and intentions are not always sufficient. In terms of the PA's means to create an army, the situation is much more complex. The PA currently lacks the funds required to finance the buildup of large military formations. The annual budget for the PA's present 30,000-strong police force-including salaries, training, supplies and living expenses-is approximately \$500 million, according to various financial estimates. Given that its gross domestic product in 1996 was a mere \$3.3 billion, the PA will not be able to maintain such a large force for very long unless it receives generous financial assistance from the donor community. Yet, most of the countries that have already pledged to assist the Palestinians have tied their pledges to civilian development projects and are reluctant to donate money for police purposes. The Johan Jorgan Holst Trust Fund, which the World Bank established in 1994 to help finance the PA's budget, has exhausted almost all of its funds after transferring more than \$260 million to the PA in 1994-1996. As a result, the PA has been forced to carry most of the economic burden of its security forces on its own. It is therefore unlikely to make much progress in the area of increasing its forces until it reaches economic independence. All of this will leave the Palestinians in the near future with a quasimilitary force that is much smaller and more feeble than they would like it to be, yet at the same time too big and much more costly than they themselves can afford to finance. Moreover, if the Palestinians unilaterally declare a state,

some donor countries may rescind the aid they currently have earmarked for the PSS, thus forcing the Palestinians to fund their own military. Constrained by economic limitations, the PA-or the newly declared Palestinian state-might try to look to sign mutual defense treaties with other Arab countries. Even if the Palestinians fail to achieve such pacts, however, the PSS will still pose a fundamentally new type of military challenge to Israel in the coming years.

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NOTES

1. The only unclassified information about this unit was aired by Russian television in May 1998 after the PSS had sent to Russia a request for assistance in supplying special-purpose equipment for the unit. "Palestinian Special Purpose Police Want Russian Equipment," Moscow NTV, May 28, 1998, in FBIS-NES-98-150 (Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Near East and South Asia, daily report online), June 2, 1998.

2. See a report from the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, 'Neither Law nor Justice': Report on the Palestinian Preventive Security Service (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, August 1995). Also, Amnesty International Report 1997: Palestinian Authority (online at www.amnesty.org/ailib/aireport/ar97/

MDE21.htm), specifying, "At least 1,200 people were arrested on security grounds. . . Torture of detainees was widespread. Four people died in detention, including three who died after torture. At least 10 people were killed by members of the Palestinian security services. . .

3. Graham Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 2 (Winter 1996), p. 24.

4. Such a battle led to the killing of an al-Amn al-Ri'asah member by the PSF after both forces interfered in a local family feud. Louise Lief and David Makovsky, "Mourning Without End?" *U.S. News & World Report*, February 6, 1995, p. 46.

5. Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council were physically attacked in Ramallah by PSF agents on August 25, 1998. According to their testimony, the attack came as a direct order from Jibril Rajoub and they demanded that Arafat put Rajoub on trial and fire him. See Mona Eltahawy, "Arafat Orders Inquiry on Attacks on Lawmakers," *Reuters* (online), August 27, 1998.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Interview with GSS Commander Gen. Nasr Yusef in Niel MacFarquhar, "How Palestinian Policemen Were Drawn into the Conflict," *New York Times*, September 29, 1996, p. 1.

8. See Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English language (New York: Gramercy Books, 1989), s.v. "police," p. 1113.

9. A military force, unlike a police force, employs a large variety of weapons systems for the destruction and deterrence of foreign military forces. It usually has an air force and a navy to defend the skies and the shores of the country. Some of the weapons employed by the military have highly destructive capabilities-much more so than police forces, which employ only light weapons for law enforcement and riot

control. Although it is true that the PSS is advancing its weaponization, as will be seen in future chapters, this chapter focuses primarily on the organizational structure of the PSS.

10. David Hirst, "The New Oppressor of the Palestinians," *Guardian* (London), July 6, 1996, reprinted in *World Press Review*, October 1996, p. 11. Hirst suggests that there are 40,000-50,000 security officers. For Israeli press reports about there being 40,000 officers, see Steve Rodan, "Gov't: PA Has 16,000 More Policemen than Permitted by Oslo," *Jerusalem Post* (international edition), May 2, 1998, p. 3. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Israeli defense sources said in September 1996 that the number of armed men in the PA had risen to 80,000. See Steve Rodan, "Palestinians Have 80,000 Armed Fighters," *Jerusalem Post*, September 27, 1996, p. 5.

11. Nadav Shragai, "Illegal Weapons Are Rampant in PA," *Ha'aretz* (internet edition), July 7, 1998.

12. Joseph Conteras, "Locked in a Box," *Newsweek*, October 14, 1996, p. 46.

13. Alex Fishman, "Interview with Maj. Gen. Shlomo Yanai," *Yediot Ahronot* weekend supplement (in Hebrew), May 9, 1997, pp 6, 8. See also report about the manufacturing of ammunition and hand grenades, in *Yediot Ahronot* (in Hebrew), April 15, 1997. IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan also confirmed that such a manufacturing workshop existed in Gaza; see Alex Fishman, "The Palestinians Are Preparing for War," *Yediot Ahronot* weekend supplement (in Hebrew), June 26, 1998, pp. 14-15.

14. Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Ahmed Qurie (Abu Ala), speaking at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Soref Symposium, in Washington, D.C., May 7, 1998.

15. The PA tries to justify its exceeding the Oslo II quotas by stating that service in the PSS is a way to ease high unemployment in

the territories. Indeed, by absorbing thousands of people into its ranks, the PSS has become the largest employer in the PA. *Ibid.*

16. Naomi Weinberger, "The Palestinian National Security Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1995), p. 16.

17. Yazid Sayigh, "Reading the Basics: Sovereignty and Security of the Palestinian State," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1995), p. 10.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Isabel Kershner, "Palestine Rising," *Jerusalem Report*, July 6, 1998, pp. 22-27.

20. One of the advocates of army establishment is Ahmad Khalidi; see Weinberger, "The Palestinian National Security Debate," pp. 17-18.

21. Beverly Milton-Edwards, "Palestinian State-Building: Police and Citizens as Test of Democracy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no. 1 (May 1998). More reflections on the militarization of the Palestinian society were delivered in a speech by the director of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Raji Sourani, at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 10, 1998. In his remarks he asserted that the PA is militarizing Palestinian society by employing huge numbers of security personnel.

22. Isabel Kershner, "Summer in Gaza: Guns & Games," *Jerusalem Report*, August 3, 1998, pp. 22-24.

23. The most detailed account of the nature of the 100,000-man army would probably be in Barton Whaley, *Covert German Rearmament 1919-1939: Deception and Misperception*, (Frederick, Md.: University Publications, 1984).

24. Hirst, "The New Oppressor of the Palestinians."

25. Niel MacFarquhar, "How Palestinian Policemen Were Drawn into the Conflict," *New York Times*, September 29, 1996, p. 1.

26. Kershner, "Summer in Gaza: Guns & Games," p. 22.
27. Jerusalem Post, March 25, 1995; also, "Palestinians Unite in Lebanon," Foreign Report, August 21, 1997.
28. PA Minister for Jerusalem Affairs Faisal al-Husayni in an interview with the Egyptian weekly al-Watan al-Arabi: "If Israel continues to undermine the path to peace there will be no other alternative but that called for by the Islamist Palestinian opposition-the military option." Cited by Agence France Presse, May 1, 1995, and reprinted by the Israel Government Press Office (online at www.pmo.gov.il/english/policy/pp-21-1995.htm1).
29. Minister Husayni said, "If Prime Minister Netanyahu decides to build in Har Homa, this will be a declaration of war on the Palestinians." Quoted in Yediot Ahronot (in Hebrew), February 18, 1997, and reprinted by the Israel Government Press Office (online at www.pmo.gov.il/english/policy/pp-211997.htm1).
30. Israeli defense minister Yitzhak Mordechai in Amos Harel, "PA Forces Said Training Hard to Take On IDF," Ha'aretz (internet edition), June 1, 1998. The IDF's former chief of military intelligence, Yehoshua Sagi, described the next confrontation as an enhanced intifada by means of weapons, hand grenades, and Molotov cocktails; see Abraham Rabinovitch, "An Intifada with Guns," Jerusalem Post (international edition), September 27, 1997, p. 8.
31. The Palestinian security officials vehemently deny having these weapons and also deny the accusations about smuggling weapons across the borders to the PA territories. See interview with Muhammad Dahlan, "Security Chief on Security Coordination," al-Sharq al-Awsat, September 21, 1997, in FBIS-NES-267 (Foreign Broadcast Information Service-
Near East and South Asia, daily report online), September 26, 1997.
32. See Nadav Shragai, "Illegal Weapons Are Rampant in PA," Ha'aretz (internet edition), July 7, 1998. See further reports about anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons in Harel, "PA Forces Said Training Hard to Take On IDF"; Lisa Beyer and Aharon Klein, "Deadlier Next Time?" Time (internet edition), December 16, 1996; Laurie Copans, "Palestinians Deny Try for Anti-Tank Missiles," Washington Times, December 10, 1996, p. A 15.
33. The IDF foiled a Palestinian attempt to smuggle dozens of weapons via the Dead Sea; see Yoav Limor, Hanan Shlein, and Uri Binder, "Weapons Were Smuggled for the Palestinian Authority," Ma'ariv (in Hebrew), March 1, 1998.
34. It is estimated that there are six underground tunnels connecting the Sinai to the PA-controlled Gaza Strip. Steve Rodan and Arieh O' Sullivan, "PA Smuggles Arms Via Sinai Tunnels," Jerusalem Post (international edition), June 6, 1998, p. 32.
35. Lior El-Hai, "Palestinian Intelligence Sent an Israeli to Steal Shoulder-Fired Missiles," Yediot Ahronot (in Hebrew), March 25, 1998.
36. Alex Fishman, "Mines, Rockets and Tunnels-That's How the Palestinians Are Deploying for the Israeli Invasion," Yediot Ahronot (in Hebrew), January 16, 1998, p. 3.
37. Harel, "PA Forces Said Training Hard to Take On IDF."
38. High ranking IDF officer. Ibid. See also Ron Ben Yishai, "The Probability for War Next Year Has Increased," Yediot Ahronot weekend supplement (in Hebrew), July 10, 1998, p. 6.
39. Harel, "PA Forces Said Training Hard to Take On IDF."
40. Roni Shaked, "Arm with All Weapons, for the Worst Possible Eventuality," Yediot Ahronot (in Hebrew), December 20, 1996, p. I 1 .

41. Steve Rodan, "Palestinians Have 80,000 Armed Fighters," *Jerusalem Post*, September 27, 1996, p. 5.

42. Palestinian Legislative Council member Ziyad Abu Ziyad in an interview to Israeli radio, cited by Laurie Copans, "Palestinians Deny Try for Anti-Tank Missiles," *Washington Times*, December 10, 1996, p. A 15.

43. Order of the Day, circulated by Arafat's political guidance aide, Othman Abu Garbiya, to all PSS officers. See Roni Shaked, "Arm with All Weapons, for the Worst Possible Eventuality," *Yediot Ahronot* (in Hebrew), December 20, 1996, p. 11.

44. Chief of the Civil Police in Hebron, Col. Tariq Zaid, in Julian Borger, "Human Cost Rules Out Israeli Invasion," *Guardian* (London), July 21, 1997, p. 12.

45. The IDF was seriously engaged in urban area warfare during the Lebanese War in 1982. The high casualty rate anticipated by the IDF's commanders led to insubordination by one of the brigade commanders, Col. Eli Geva, who was ordered to enter West Beirut with his brigade. His refusal to perform the mission raised a public debate in Israel and emphasized again the problem of urban warfare.

46. Palestinian conscription potential: men in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1997/1998*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 137-138.

47. Jon Immanuel, "PA National Service Plan Camouflage for Draft," *Jerusalem Post* (international edition), August 16, 1997, p. 3.

Age	Gaza	West Bank	Total
13-17	48,000	69,000	117,000
18-22	40,000	62,000	102,000
23-32	62,000	106,000	168,000