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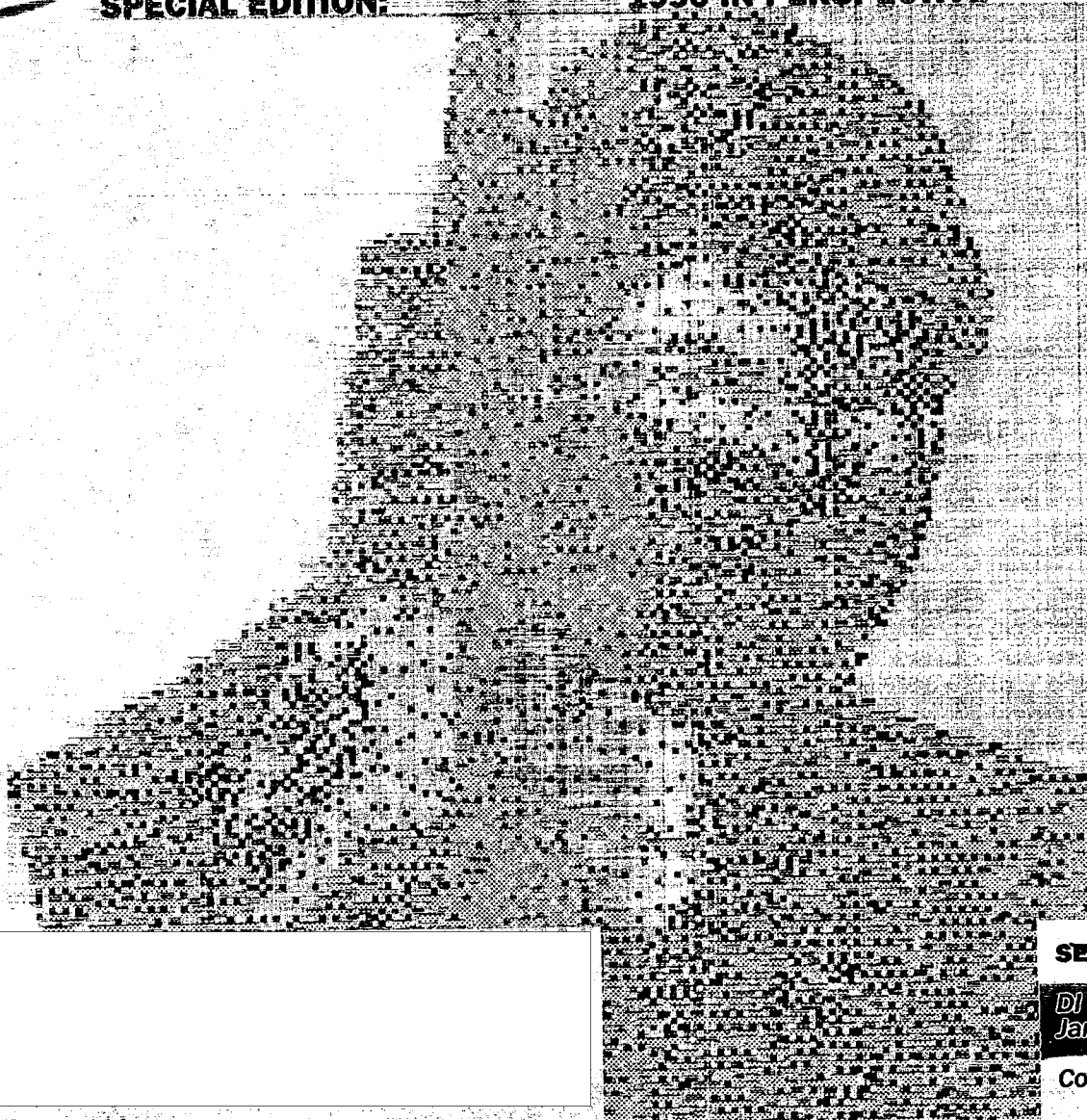


DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

COUNTERTERRORIST CENTER

TERRORISM REVIEW

SPECIAL EDITION: 1996 IN PERSPECTIVE



CIADI TR 97-001



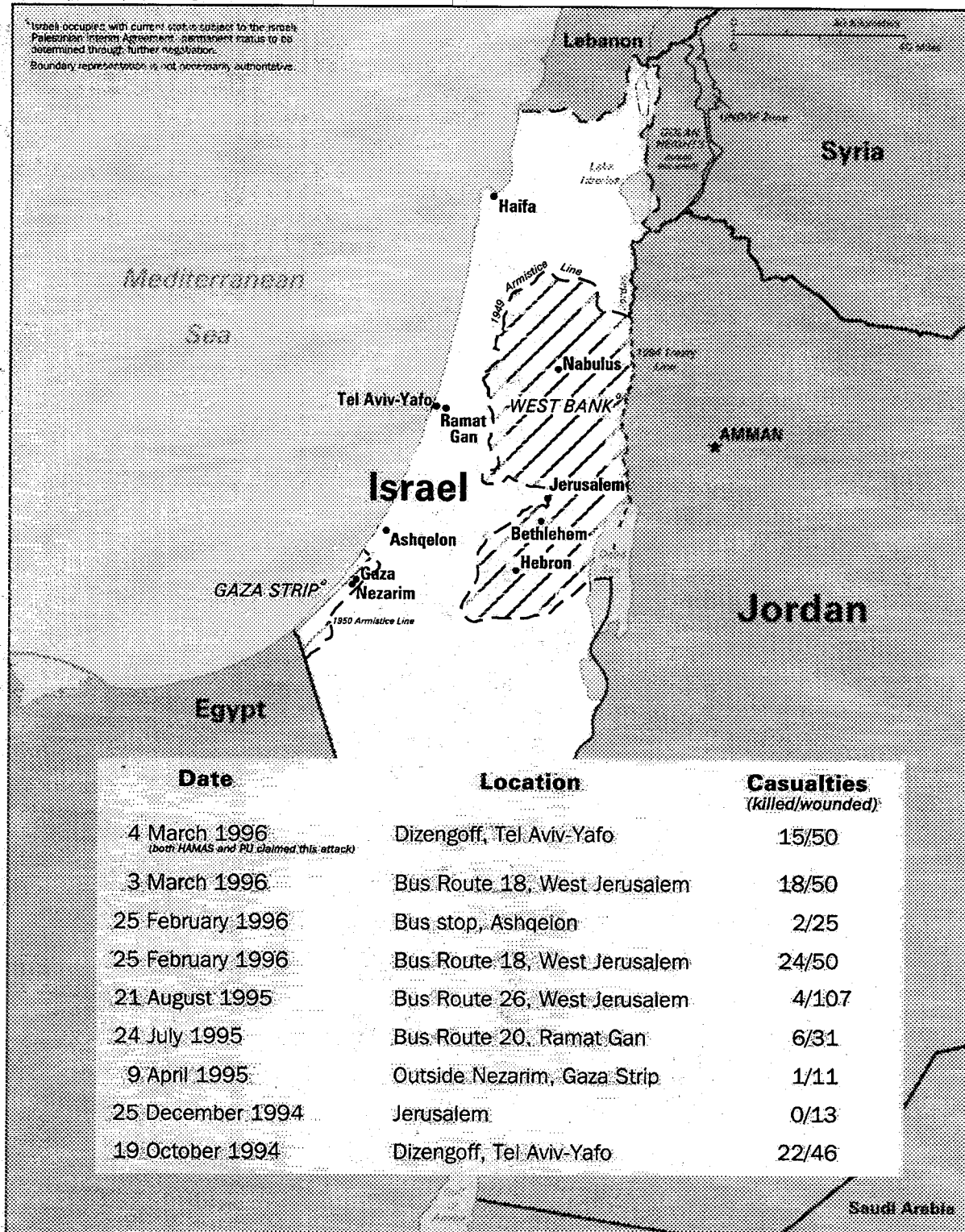
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January 1997

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HAMAS Bombings, 1994-96

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HAMAS: Renewing Terrorist Threats [redacted]

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The Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) is again threatening to attack Israeli targets, despite the effective Israeli and Palestinian Authority (PA) security sweeps following the bombings in February and March 1996. Although the group's militant cells and infrastructure were unable to conduct operations during the last nine months of 1996 because of the heightened security, its terrorist infrastructure probably survived the sweeps. The group also can draw on its cadres outside the territories to augment its terrorist cells, as well as those HAMAS members recently released from Palestinian detention. The recent agreement on redeployment from Hebron may cause the group to put attack plans on hold, but HAMAS probably calculates that renewed Israeli stonewalling on the peace process will prompt the Palestinian public to support new attacks. [redacted]

Ready To Strike Despite Continuing Police Pressure [redacted]

The PA and Israel have cooperated closely to disrupt the HAMAS terrorist infrastructure since the February and March bombings, arresting more than 1,000 suspected HAMAS supporters. [redacted]

[redacted] Nevertheless, HAMAS's terrorist capability has survived the police actions. [redacted]



In the past, HAMAS has withstood similar security sweeps because some of its leading militants avoided capture and because the group was able to draw on its

Targets for HAMAS Attacks [redacted]

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[redacted] (b)(1)
[redacted] the group has focused on buses and b, (b)(3)
stops since October 1994. HAMAS has used disguised suicide bombers who have carried bombs in briefcases or duffel bags, or who have driven car bombs into buses or vehicle convoys. Security measures—guards on buses, rolling checkpoints—instituted since the bombings in early 1996 may, however, force HAMAS to try new tactics and/or new targets to avoid the police and security nets. [redacted] (b)(3)

cadres outside the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, who returned to the territories and established new networks of terrorists: (b)(3)

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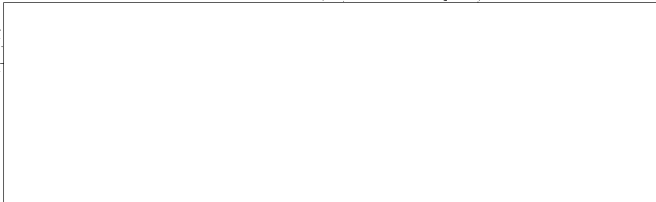
- HAMAS probably has been able to build some new cells on the strength of the dozens of HAMAS (b)(1) porters—including some leading militants—wh (b)(3) had been arrested during the security sweeps last spring but were recently released from PA detention. [redacted] (b)(3)

HAMAS cadres in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have the training and probably the materials to conduct ambushes, street shootings, and suicide bombings, despite the crackdown by the PA and Israel.

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DI TR 97-001
January 1997



HAMAS bombing of bus along the Jaffa Road in Jerusalem on 25 February. [redacted]



The Volcano Is Rumbling [redacted]

By December 1996, HAMAS militants were threatening publicly to renew attacks against Israel:

- On 13 December, Izz el-Din el-Qassam released a statement to an international news service that declared it was preparing for military operations to mark the anniversary of the murder of the group's bombmaker, Yahyah Ayyash, who was killed on 5 January 1996. HAMAS blames the Israelis for his assassination (see page 29).

- In early December, HAMAS political leader Khalid Mish'al claimed in a press interview that the Izz el-Din el-Qassam had not attacked since March because of the strong Israeli and Palestinian security operations against them but that the police could only hamper operations, not stop them. [redacted]

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Other information suggests that, in fact, HAMAS has been planning at least one terrorist operation:

- On 18 December, Israeli undercover border police arrested five HAMAS militants who were on their way to conduct an attack. [redacted] The five lived in Bethlehem and were arrested near that city.
- During the week of 22 December, the Israeli and PA services arrested a newly identified HAMAS cell that was planning an operation for early January to commemorate Ayyash's murder.

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Timing Is Everything [redacted]

HAMAS militants may believe that the Palestinian populace would approve of attacks at this time because of its growing frustration with the current Israeli Government. The Palestinians are angry about Prime Minister Netanyahu's policies of expanding settlements, the long delay in implementing the Hebron withdrawal, and the Israeli supreme court decision to allow the use of physical force during questioning of suspects. During his interview, Khalid Mish'al cited those factors as proof of continued Israeli antipathy toward Palestinians, saying "we believe that this aggressive nature can only be curbed by more resistance and jihad."

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- Leading Palestinian officials have denounced Israel's policies, and the PA's official spokesman has referred to the Israeli Government's recent decision

to provide financial incentives for settlers as a "direct call for violence" and a "declaration of war."

- HAMAS officials have announced that the Hebron withdrawal agreement that the PA concluded with the Israeli Government in January is unacceptable and "divides Hebron between Jews and the Palestinians for the first time in the history of the city; keeps the Ibrahimi mosque under the full control of the occupation soldiers . . . and places most of the old city of Hebron and more than 20,000 Palestinians under the mercy of the Zionists." [redacted]

HAMAS appears to be regaining among Palestinians support that had waned when the peace process was moving forward under the previous Israeli Government:

- HAMAS candidates won control of the student government of Al Najah University in Nabulus recently. [redacted] Arafat's supporters say they lost the elections because of widespread dissatisfaction with the peace process.

- The PA sanctioned a large HAMAS rally in Gaza in late December and another in Nabulus in January to mark the anniversary of the founding of the group, [redacted] (b)(3)

In the wake of the 15 January Hebron agreement, HAMAS militants may decide to wait for another provocation by the Netanyahu government before launching attacks in order to avoid angering the Palestinian public the way last winter's operations did. On 20 January a HAMAS member in Hebron told a journalist that the group would suspend the use of violence—particularly against settlers—in Hebron and would not confront the Palestinian Authority in that city. [redacted] (b)(3)

This article is [redacted] (b)(3)

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