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UNCLASSIFIED**Asbat al Ansar (AAA)**

(Also known as: League of Partisans; Band of Partisans, Band of Helpers, League of the Followers, Partisans' League, Usbat al-Ansar, Usbat ul-Ansar, Osbat al-Ansar, Isbat al-Ansar, Esbat al-Ansar).

The following information is based on publicly available details about Asbat al-Ansar (AAA). These details have been corroborated by material from intelligence investigations into the activities of the Asbat al-Ansar and by official reporting. ASIO assesses that the details set out below are accurate and reliable.

AAA is listed in the United Nation's 1267 Committee's consolidated list and as a proscribed terrorist organisation by the governments of Canada, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Current status of AAA

AAA is a Sunni Muslim extremist group, largely based in the Ayn al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon in southern Lebanon. The group has a smaller presence in the Nahr al-Bared camp outside Tripoli in northern Lebanon, and is also active in Sidon, Beirut and the Dinniyeh plateau in northern Lebanon.

AAA's origins can be traced back to the late 1980s. The group became more widely known in the early 1990s following a series of attacks on nightclubs, theatres and liquor stores.

Initially, AAA limited its operations to Lebanon and engaged in a number of low-level attacks against 'un-Islamic' targets. These have included bombings against churches, bars, theatres and casinos, as well Lebanese forces, elements of the Lebanese government and foreign nationals. AAA has widened its operations to conduct attacks against foreign interests in Lebanon and assassinations of significant religious leaders. AAA's attack methods include rocket-propelled grenades, explosive charges, rockets and car bombs.

AAA maintains links to a number of terrorist organisations, including al-Qa'ida and Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al Rafidayn (TQJBR). There is a view that AAA subscribes to bin Laden's ideal of global jihad and is planning to extend its operations into Syria and Israel.

AAA remains active and has shifted its focus to Iraq, sending fighters in support of the insurgency in collaboration with al-Qa'ida. In 2005 and 2006, AAA announced the death or martyrdom of AAA members fighting the 'crusader' forces in Iraq. Due to the activities of AAA and like-minded groups, Lebanon has increasingly become a known transport node and recruitment hub for extremists travelling to Iraq.

AAA leadership continues to make statements supporting attacks conducted by other groups and advocating violent jihad against the West, such as the April 2004 announcement urging Iraqi insurgents to kill Western hostages to avenge the death of Hamas leaders Abdul Aziz Rantisi and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and the February 2006 statement praising attacks by angry mobs against the Danish consulates in Beirut and Damascus in response to the Danish cartoons controversy.

AAA primarily receives funding from other terrorist organisations, such as al-Qa'ida.

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UNCLASSIFIED**Objectives**

AAA's objectives are to establish a Sunni Islamic state in Lebanon by overthrowing the Lebanese government, eliminating Israel and thwarting anti-Islamic and pro-Western influences in Lebanon.

Leadership and Membership

AAA is led by Abu Muhjin (aka Ahmed Abd al-Karim al-Saadi). Abu Muhjin allegedly fled Lebanon in 1999 to continue his activities in secret after being sentenced to death for the 1994 assassination of Sheikh Nizar al-Halabi, the leader of a rival Islamic extremist group. In his absence, Abu Muhjin's brother, Haytham 'Abd Al-Karim Al Sa'di (aka Abu Tariq), has been nominally leading the group.

AAA membership is primarily Palestinian. AAA's membership is estimated to be 100-300 members. AAA members have previously fought in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir and the Balkans.

AAA engagement in terrorist activities

AAA continues to undertake attacks but is also assisting the doing of terrorist acts. On the basis of available information it is assessed AAA operatives are active in Lebanon and it is likely AAA will undertake attacks if and when the opportunity arises. The group's close association with al-Qa'ida means it could draw on significant resources for future activities.

Terrorist attacks and activities which have been claimed by or reliably attributed to AAA include:

- March 2004: two members of AAA were jailed in a Lebanese military court for membership of AAA. One of the men was also found responsible for a 1999 grenade attack on a vegetable market in Ayn al-Hilwah;
- September 2004: AAA operatives were linked to a planned terrorist operation targeting the Italian Embassy, Ukrainian Consulate General and Lebanese Government offices. The plot was disrupted by Italian, Lebanese and Syrian authorities;
- July 2005: AAA announced one of its members was a martyr in Iraq facing the 'crusaders' forces'; and
- March 2006: AAA announced fighters from South Lebanon were killed during recent al-Qa'ida operations in Iraq.

Conclusion

The Criminal Code provides that for an organisation to be listed as a terrorist organisation, the Attorney-General must be satisfied that:

- (i) the organisation is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur); or
- (ii) the organisation advocates the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur).

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On the basis of the above information, ASIO assesses that AAA is directly engaged in preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of terrorist acts. It is considered that the acts attributable to AAA are terrorist acts as they:

- (i) are done with the intention of advancing a political cause, namely, the establishment of a radical Sunni Islamic state in Lebanon;
- (ii) are intended to coerce or influence by intimidation the governments of a foreign countries, including Lebanon, and/or intimidate sections of the public; and
- (iii) constitute acts which cause serious physical harm to persons, including death, as well as serious damage to property.

This assessment is corroborated by information provided by reliable and credible intelligence sources.

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