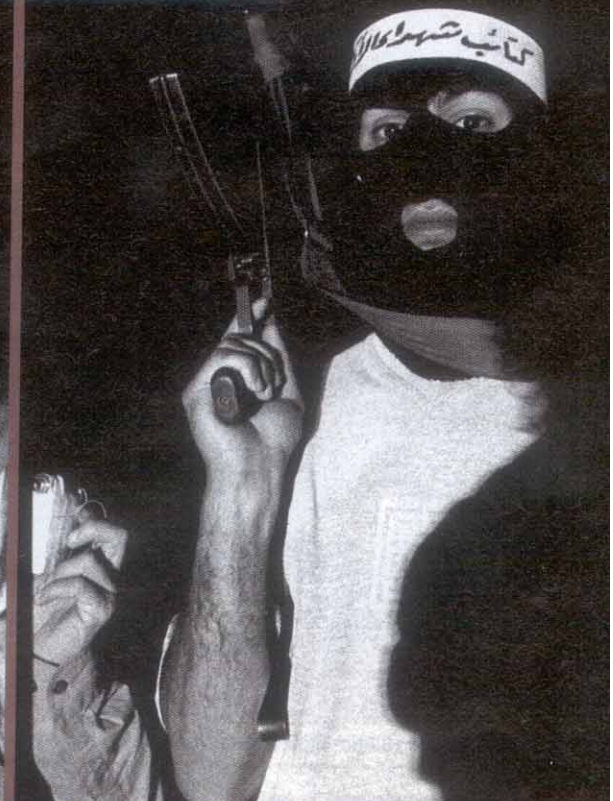
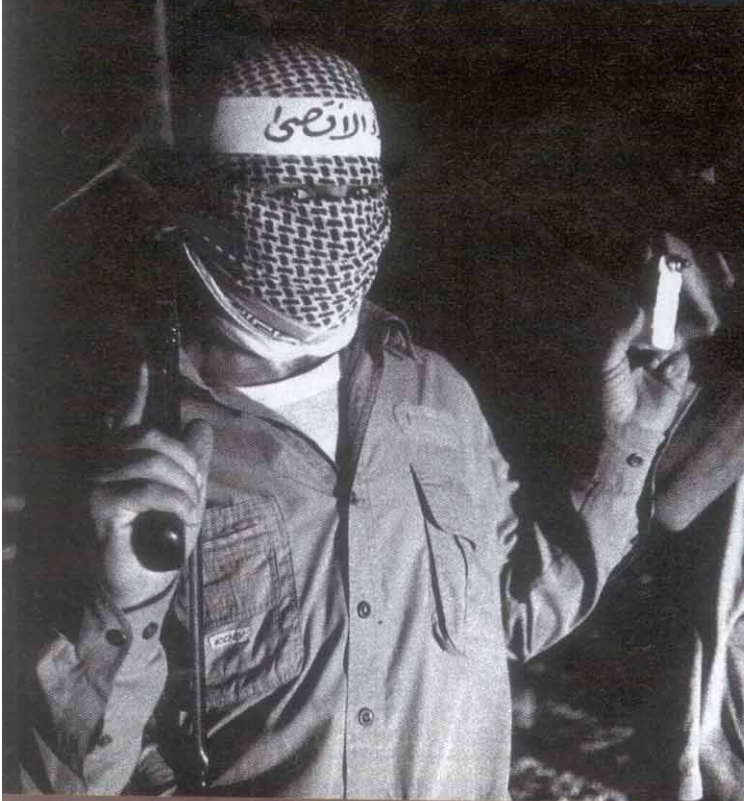


GUERRILLAS

Palestinian fighters say they're ready if Israel invades Gaza

# Path of Most Resistance



**GUARDIANS IN THE DARKNESS:** Members of a patrol from the Jabalia refugee camp conducting a routine reconnaissance mission on the

**BY JOSHUA HAMMER**

**O**n the outskirts of Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp, in the darkness of an Israeli-imposed blackout, a dozen masked Palestinians are waiting for trouble. One brandishes a cluster of grenades, another a rocket tube with a range of 500 meters. "Ask yourself why young men like us leave our families, our normal lives, to do this," says one of the fighters, a 35-year-old construction worker known as Munthaser.

"We're not terrorists. But our dignity forces us to defend ourselves."  
He and his cohorts belong to the Popular Resistance Committee.

Formed in the name of Gazan self-defense shortly after the latest intifada began 21 months ago, the committee is an umbrella group of armed Palestinian factions, modeled on the Hizbullah guerrilla movement in southern Lebanon. The committee's attacks have killed or injured 100 Jewish settlers and soldiers in the Gaza Strip since late in 2000. This year the group blew up two Israeli tanks, killing a total of six soldiers. Now its members are bracing for more action. Last week the Israeli government responded to a pair of suicide bombings in Jerusalem by launching airstrikes against suspected illicit explosives factories

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAOLO PELLEGRIN—MAGNUM FOR NEWSWEEK