The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv sent a cable to the State Department in May 2009 expressing little confidence in the Israel Police's ability to counter the growing wave of organized crime.

The cable, released on WikiLeaks, said the embassy was taking pains to prevent members of crime families from being issued visas to the United States.

The cable, under the headline "Israel, a promised land for organized crime?" notes that the U.S. Embassy was following Israeli crime families closely and considered them a serious threat to the United States. The embassy has set up a database on the subject with the help of Israeli and American law-enforcement agencies.

"Given the growing reach and lethal methods of Israeli OC [Organized Crime], blocking the travel of known OC figures to the United States is a matter of great concern," according to the cable, signed by James Cunningham, the U.S. ambassador to Israel.

The author, however, is probably the Tel Aviv consul responsible for granting visas to Israelis, or perhaps a U.S. law-enforcement attache.

The cable describes the violence among crime families that began in November 2008 with the murder of Yaakov Alperon. "Israeli crime boss Yaakov Alperon was assassinated in broad daylight in a gruesome attack on the streets of Tel Aviv, only about a mile away from the Embassy."

Also described is the shooting of an innocent bystander on a Bat Yam beach during an attempt on the life of Rami Amira. The assassinations of Abutbul family members in Netanya are also noted.

The authors point to leading Israeli crimes families such as the Alperons, Abergils, Abutbul, Rosensteins and Shirazis. They focus on gambling, extortion, trafficking in women, loan sharking and control over the recycling market.

Quoting a source, the authors note that "in recent years, however, the rules of the game have changed ... the old school of Israel OC is giving way to a new, more violent, breed of crime."

They note that "the new style of crime features knowledge of hi-tech explosives acquired from service in the Israeli Defense Forces, and a willingness to use indiscriminate violence, at least against rival gang leaders. New OC business also includes technology-related crimes, such as stock market and credit card fraud, and operates on a global scale."

The embassy informs the State Department about a new police unit, "called Lahav 433. The elite unit operates under the direct command of the police commissioner, and is charged specifically with infiltrating and eliminating Israel's major crime syndicates."

The embassy source, however, "expressed skepticism that recent arrests will bear fruit in the long term without a sustained commitment to enforcement. He noted that many of the crime leaders remain active while in prison and their operations are not hampered significantly even when they are convicted and jailed."

The cable notes that it is unclear how far the crime families have penetrated the government, but it mentions the 2004 arrest of former minister Gonen Segev, who tried to smuggle thousands of Ecstasy pills into Israel, and the election of Inbal Gavrieli to the Knesset in 2003.

"The election of Inbal Gavrieli to the Knesset in 2003 as a member of Likud raised concerns about OC influence in the party's Central Committee. Gavrieli is the daughter of a suspected crime boss, and she attempted to use her parliamentary immunity to block investigations into her father's business."