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Country Report on Terrorism 2020 - Chapter 5 - Hizballah

Hizballah

Aka Party of God; Islamic Jihad; Islamic Jihad Organization; Revolutionary Justice Organization; Organization of the Oppressed on Earth; Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine; Organization of Right Against Wrong; Ansar Allah; Followers of the Prophet Muhammed; Lebanese Hizballah; Lebanese Hezbollah; LH; Foreign Relations Department; FRD; External Security Organization; ESO; Foreign Action Unit; Hizballah ESO: Hizballah International; Special Operations Branch; External Services Organization; External Security Organization of Hezbollah

Description: Hizballah was designated as an FTO on October 8, 1997. Formed in 1982 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Lebanon-based radical Shia group takes its ideological inspiration from the Iranian revolution and the teachings of the late Ayatollah Khomeini. The group generally follows the religious guidance of the Iranian supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. Hizballah is closely allied with Iran, and the two often work together on shared initiatives, although Hizballah also occasionally acts independently. Hizballah shares a close relationship with the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad, and like Iran provides assistance — including fighters — to Syrian regime forces in the Syrian conflict.

Activities: Hizballah is responsible for multiple large-scale terrorist attacks, including the 1983 suicide truck bombings of Embassy Beirut and the U.S. Marine barracks; the 1984 attack on the U.S. Embassy Beirut annex; and the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, during which U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem was murdered. Hizballah was also implicated, along with Iran, in the 1992 attacks on the Israeli embassy in Argentina and the 1994 bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association in Buenos Aires.

Hizballah assisted Iraq Shia militant and terrorist groups in Iraq and in 2007 attacked the Karbala Provincial Joint Coordination Center, killing five American soldiers.

In 2012, a suspected Hizballah operative was detained and later found guilty by Cypriot authorities for allegedly helping to plan an attack against Israeli tourists on the island. The group was also responsible for the July 2012 attack on a passenger bus carrying 42 Israeli tourists at the Burgas Airport in Bulgaria. The explosion killed 5 Israelis, 1 Bulgarian, and injured 32 others.

In 2013, Hizballah publicly admitted to playing a significant role in the ongoing conflict in Syria, rallying support for the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad. Hizballah's support for Syria's Assad regime continued into 2020.

During 2013 through 2017, Hizballah operatives planning attacks or storing weapons and explosive materials were arrested in Bolivia, Cyprus, Kuwait, Nigeria, and Peru.

In 2017, two Hizballah operatives were arrested in the United States. One operative arrested in Michigan had identified the availability of explosives precursors in Panama in 2011 and surveilled U.S. and Israeli targets in Panama as well as the Panama Canal during 2011-12. Another operative arrested in New York had surveilled U.S. military and law enforcement facilities from 2003 to 2017.

In 2018, Brazil arrested a Hizballah financier and extradited him to Paraguay for prosecution in 2020. In 2019, Hizballah launched attacks directly on the Israeli military, firing antitank missiles targeting an army base and vehicles near the border.

In August, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed that Hizballah fighters fired toward an IDF position in the Israeli town of Manara. In December, Hizballah leader Hassan Nasrallah claimed the terrorist group had doubled the size of its Precision Guided Missiles arsenal in 2020. Also in December, judges at the Netherlands-based Special Tribunal for Lebanon found Hizballah member Salim Ayyash guilty for his central role in the bomb attack in Beirut in 2005 that killed the former Prime Minister of Lebanon Rafic Hariri.

Strength: Hizballah has tens of thousands of supporters and members worldwide.

Location/Area of Operation: Lebanon and Syria

Funding and External Aid: Iran continues to provide Hizballah with most of its funding, training, weapons, and explosives, as well as political, diplomatic, monetary, and organizational aid. Iran’s annual financial backing to Hizballah — which in recent years has been estimated at \$700 million — accounts for the overwhelming majority of the group’s annual budget. The Assad regime in Syria has provided training, weapons, and diplomatic and political support. Hizballah also receives funding in the form of private donations from some Lebanese Shia diaspora communities worldwide, including profits from legal and illegal businesses. These include smuggling contraband goods, passport falsification, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, and credit card, immigration, and bank fraud.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the
Hizballah (Excerpt of chapter 5 of
the country report on terrorism
2020)

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