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Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 1 - Lebanon

Overview: In 2022 the United States provided security assistance and training to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and worked with law enforcement organizations, such as the Internal Security Forces (ISF), to enhance their ability to conduct counterterrorism (CT) operations and to investigate and prosecute local terrorism cases. Terrorist groups operating in Lebanon included U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) such as Hizballah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and ISIS. The primary method of U.S. assistance in building CT capacity is funded through CT Bureau Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) funds. In 2022, ATA spent more than \$6 million providing training and equipment to the ISF and LAF, focusing on counter-IED, protection of national leadership, response to terrorist activities, and cyber-based investigations with digital forensics.

As ISIS and other Violent Extremist Organizations seized on Lebanon's economic collapse to attempt their resurgence in the country, the LAF drew on U.S. training to counter terrorist plots and increased coordination with U.S. and other like-minded partners to mitigate terrorist threats and interdict terrorist travel. In February, Lebanese security forces used ATA-provided training to detect and disrupt an ISIS terrorist plot percolating in a Palestinian refugee camp. In an October operation, the LAF arrested an ISIS combatant who had returned from fighting in Syria to recruit individuals within Lebanon and plan attacks.

Despite the Lebanese government's official policy of disassociation from regional conflicts, Hizballah continued its militant role in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen in collaboration with the Iranian regime. Separately, Lebanon's 12 Palestinian refugee camps remained largely outside the control of

Lebanese security forces and posed a security threat because of the potential for militant recruitment and terrorist infiltration. Terrorist groups, including ISIS, continued efforts to recruit Lebanese to fight in Iraq and Syria. Several individuals on the FBI's most wanted list and the Department of State's Rewards for Justice list reportedly remained in Lebanon.

2022 Terrorist Incidents: On April 27 the LAF announced that an individual attempted to run over Lebanese soldiers in the Wadi Khaled region of northeast Lebanon. LAF intelligence stated that the individual was involved in procuring arms and explosive material for ISIS.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Lebanon does not have a comprehensive counterterrorism law, but several articles of Lebanon's criminal code are used effectively to prosecute acts of terrorism. No new laws related to terrorism were passed in 2022. The LAF, the ISF, the Directorate of General Security (DGS), and the General Directorate of State Security were the primary government agencies responsible for counterterrorism. Although cooperation among the services was inconsistent, they took steps to improve information sharing. Structural limitations in the justice system and judicial strikes created barriers to the timely conduct of terrorism-related trials. Because of these trial delays, some individuals suspected of terrorism were held in pretrial detention for extended periods. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) funded programs to train judges and prosecutors on the skills needed to adjudicate cases. In 2022, INL completed a program to provide virtual courtroom equipment in 23 courtrooms across Lebanon to more effectively and efficiently adjudicate cases.

The LAF held primary responsibility for securing Lebanon's land and maritime borders, while DGS and Customs were responsible for official points of entry. The LAF improved its ability to monitor Lebanon's land border with Syria through the Land Border Security Project funded by the United States, the UK, and Canada. U.S.-funded advanced observation capabilities, interdiction training, and physical infrastructure enhanced the LAF's ability to interdict terrorist and criminal travel.

Lebanon made efforts to implement UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) 2396 and 2309 by collecting biographic data for travelers at the Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport, passenger name record data for commercial flights, and Advanced Passenger Information. DGS regularly updated INTERPOL watchlist information at border security terminals at Beirut airport. DGS routinely shared information about falsified travel documents with foreign embassies in Lebanon. Because of Government of Lebanon (GOL) budget shortfalls, the ISF did not make significant progress on completion of an INL-funded project to increase the ISF's biometric collection and storage capabilities in 2022. In 2022, Lebanese

security services coordinated with the United States on numerous instances to investigate individuals involved in terrorism.

LAF and ISF units, including those receiving U.S. capacity building assistance, undertook enforcement actions against suspected terrorists in 2022. While the GOL did not repatriate FTFs from Syria in 2022, security agencies prioritized investigation and arrest of FTFs who had entered Lebanon. From July to October, the ISF carried out arrests of 30 individuals from eight terrorist cells in multiple regions of Lebanon. According to ISF statements, the cells were affiliated with ISIS and were planning to carry out operations targeting military and security centers and various religious and civil gatherings. Most of the individuals arrested were Lebanese, although the group included Syrians, Palestinians, and an Egyptian national.

The participation of Hizballah in the Lebanese government continued to impede effective host government action against terrorist incidents associated with Hizballah. Investigations into politically sensitive murders, including the suspected assassination by Hizballah of civil society activist Lokman Slim in 2021 and the killing of an Irish UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Peacekeeper in December, suffer from political obstruction. Two years after Slim's murder, UN Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions, criticized the Lebanese government for the lack of progress and insufficient speed in its investigation. The GOL continued to investigate the shooting of the Irish UNIFIL Peacekeeper, having made one arrest and issued six *in absentia* indictments. Despite repeated attempts by UNIFIL to gain access to sites within its area of responsibility where Hizballah is suspected of having stored or used weapons, Lebanese authorities continued to deny UNIFIL permission to enter these areas in many instances. Some Lebanese security forces personnel may interact with Hizballah as part of official duties, but they are not beholden to the terrorist group and are not permitted to be Hizballah members. The LAF screens personnel for, and removes those found to have, Hizballah affiliation.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) is a tribunal of international character with jurisdiction over persons responsible for the 2005 attack that killed former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and 21 other victims, as well as certain other connected attacks. In June the Appeals Chamber unanimously sentenced Hassan Habib Merhi and Hussein Hassan Oneissi *in absentia* to five concurrent sentences of life imprisonment. In July the tribunal entered a residual phase. The GOL and the United States and other international donors provided financial support to the STL.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Lebanon is a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, and its FIU, the Special Investigation Commission (SIC), is a member of the Egmont Group. In 2022 the SIC received 32 terrorism and terrorism-financing cases. The

SIC reported that there were 27 individuals and one entity on Lebanon's national terrorism-financing list as of year's end.

Countering Violent Extremism: Lebanon in 2019 passed a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) to implement UNSCR 1325. The WPS National Action Plan prioritized the establishment of women-led mediation groups to constitute an early warning and conflict prevention network.

International and Regional Cooperation: Lebanon supported counterterrorism efforts in regional organizations and participated in CT finance programs. Lebanese municipalities continued to engage in activities organized by the Strong Cities Network.

Associated documents

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Lebanon

Brief description of the Abdallah Azzam Brigades (AAB) (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Abdallah Azzam Brigades \(AAB\)](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Lebanon, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic

Brief description of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Israel, Lebanon, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic

Brief description of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Lebanon, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic

Brief description of the Palestine Liberation Front - Abu Abbas Faction (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Palestine Liberation Front-Abu Abbas Faction](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Lebanon

Brief description of the Asbat al-Ansar (AAA) (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Asbat al-Ansar \(AAA\)](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic

Brief description of the Hezbollah (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Hizballah](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Lebanon, State of Palestine

Brief description of the Hamas (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Hamas](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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