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Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 5 - Hizballah

Aka the 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 Hizballah

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 U.S. 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 January 2007, attacked the Karbala Provincial Joint Coordination Center, killing five American soldiers.

In July 2012, a suspected Hizballah operative was detained by Cypriot authorities for allegedly helping plan an attack against Israeli tourists on the island. On March 21, 2013, a Cyprus court found the operative guilty of charges based on his surveillance activities of Israeli tourists. The group was also responsible for the July 2012 attack on a passenger bus carrying 42 Israeli tourists at the Sarafovo Airport in Bulgaria, near the city of Burgas. The explosion killed five Israelis and one Bulgarian, and injured 32 others.

In May 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 2019.

In May 2013, Nigerian authorities arrested three Hizballah operatives who had stored weapons and a large quantity of ammunition and explosives. In October 2014, Peruvian authorities arrested a Hizballah operative who had been planning to carry out attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets. In May 2015, Cypriot authorities arrested and convicted a Hizballah member after finding 8.2 tons of liquid ammonium nitrate in the basement of a residence in Larnaca. In August 2015, Kuwaiti authorities arrested three Hizballah operatives who had stored weapons and explosives under a residential house.

In June 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 from 2011-2012. Another operative arrested in New York had surveilled U.S. military and law enforcement facilities from 2003-2017.

In September 2018, Brazil arrested a Hizballah financier, and in December 2018, tunnels reportedly built by the group were discovered on Israeli territory along the boundary with Lebanon. In September 2019, Hizballah launched attacks directly on the Israeli military, firing anti-tank missiles targeting an army base and vehicles near the border.

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 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 2019)



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Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telephone) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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F.A.Q.
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