



Fact Sheet

Hezbollah – 'The Party of God'

Hezbollah also known as 'The Party of God,' is a radical Shi'a Muslim group fighting against Israel and "western imperialism" in Lebanon. The group does not recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel and it has been labeled as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) by the U.S. State Department since October 1997.

Hezbollah refers to itself with multiple titles including the "Organization of the Oppressed on Earth" and the "Revolutionary Justice Organization." Its main goal is the establishment of an Islamic government across the Arab world that will "liberate" Jerusalem and the entire area of the present-day State of Israel.

Founding & First Lebanon War (1982-2000)

Hezbollah's origins and ideology stem from the Iranian Revolution. The revolution called for a religious Muslim government that would represent the oppressed and downtrodden. According to Hezbollah, the United States was to blame for many of the country's problems. Israel was seen as an extension of the United States and a foreign power in Lebanon. The organization itself started in 1982 as part of the Iranian government's Revolutionary Guard Corps. Led by religious clerics, the organization wanted to adopt an Iranian doctrine as a solution to Lebanese political malaise. This doctrine included the use of terror as a means of attaining political objectives.

Toward the end of 1982, Iran sent fighters to assist in the establishment of a revolutionary Islamic movement in Lebanon. Iran's hope was that the new members would participate in the *Jihad*, or Holy War, against Israel. These forces, which were located in the area of Ba'albek in the northern Beqa'a valley, brought Iranian-Islamic influence to the area and constituted the core of the Hezbollah organization in Lebanon. As the organizational infrastructure developed, Hezbollah, with Iranian and Syrian assistance, began to establish an extensive military network in the Ba'albek area. Its militias have since spread into the Shi'ite neighborhoods in southern and western Beirut as well as into southern Lebanon.

Thousands of Hezbollah activists and members are located in the Beqa'a valley, Beirut and southern Lebanon. These areas also offer a base for the recruitment of additional activists and fighters among the local Shi'ite populations.

After Israel's war in Lebanon, the organization gained strength as it fought against the presence of French and American peacekeepers who remained in Lebanon after Israeli forces withdrew from Beirut. In 1985, the IDF withdrew from Lebanon, with the exception of a security zone created to protect Israel's northern border. For the next five years Israeli troops worked with the South Lebanese Army to defend the border. Meanwhile, Hezbollah stockpiled weapons and recruited many new members, all with the goal of driving the Israelis out of Lebanon. To gain support from the local population in South Lebanon, Hezbollah donated money, equipment, and medical supplies. In October 1997, the U.S. State Department added Hezbollah to its list of terrorist organizations.

Following Israel's unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah continued to mount terrorist operations against Israel. It accused Israel of continuing to hold Shaba'a Farm lands (which Israel and the UN agree are not part of Lebanon) and refusing to release Lebanese prisoners in Israeli jails.

In response, Hezbollah, with the help of a UN peacekeeping force, kidnapped three IDF soldiers. A prisoner swap was not agreed upon until 2004, four years after the kidnapping.

Building its Arsenal (2000-2005)

The "Al-Aqsa intifada" in Israel created additional opportunities for Hezbollah to perform acts of violence against the Jewish state. The organization funded the Palestinian Authority (PA) and collaborated with other terrorist organizations, including Hamas, to systematize attacks on Israel. It stepped up its recruitment in order to more efficiently infiltrate Israel's international borders. It also continued to smuggle arms and advanced weapons into Lebanon from Syria and Iran and the PA.

In 2002, the IDF intercepted a Palestinian Authority-owned ship, the *Karine-A*, carrying 50 tons of weapons, including anti-tank missiles, Katyusha rockets, and long range mortar bombs. Many of the weapons were made in Iran. A senior Hezbollah member was responsible for loading the weapons onto the ship. During this time, Iran and Syria both financially supported Hezbollah, facilitating its military growth to help enable it to fight Israel with more precision and lethality.

Second Lebanon War & Aftermath

On July 12, 2006, the military and financial support that Hezbollah had been receiving from Iran and Syria was put to the test when its guerrilla's perfidiously attacked an IDF patrol on the Israel-Lebanon border and abducted two soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Simultaneously, Hezbollah units inside Lebanon began firing katyusha rockets to pound northern Israel and create panic and fear. After more than a weeklong campaign of artillery and air fire to suppress Hezbollah targets, the IDF invaded southern Lebanon at the end of July with the mission to destroy Hezbollah's military capability and kill as many of its terrorists and fighters as possible. Though the war is widely considered to have ended in a stale-mate, with neither side producing a decisive victory, Israel maintains that it killed nearly 600 Hezbollah guerrilla's and destroyed tons of their illegal weaponry.

In the aftermath of the month-long war in 2006, the United Nations was tasked with maintaining a UNIFIL force both on Israel's border with Lebanon to prevent future skirmishes, but also on Lebanon's border with Syria to prevent further arms smuggling into the Hezbollah stronghold areas. Unfortunately, UNIFIL's mission has been compromised either by a lack of desire on the part of its soldiers to interfere or a lack of ability to stop the smuggling.

Israeli intelligence now believes that Hezbollah has completely rearmed itself from the 2006 war and has even enhanced its weapons stock further, despite UNIFIL's presence. It is believed that Hezbollah's weapons stores hold at least 10,000 katyusha and other short to medium-range rockets. In January 2012, the IDF further updated its operational assessment of Hezbollah to say that it believed the terrorist organization now had long-range surface-to-air missile systems imported from Syria that can match Israel's aerial dominance. The upheaval in Syria during the winter of 2011/2012 enabled Hezbollah to obtain the weapons systems in addition to other various Russian-made air-defense units. While Hezbollah is known to have a large quantity of shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, the IDF now assumes that the Lebanese Islamist group has received the SA-8, a truck-mounted Russian tactical surface-to-air missile system reported to have a range of 30 kilometers. In addition to the possible transfer of air-defense systems, Hezbollah is also believed to have received several dozen more M600 long-range missiles, as well as additional 302 mm. Khaibar-1 rockets, which have a range of about 100 kilometers.

In November 2013, security officials learned that Hezbollah had close to 200 Iranian-made unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), including those that can track movement from high altitude and "kamikazes" that can avoid capture by radar and fire or drop munitions from low altitudes.

On October 7, 2014 an explosive device was detonated on the Israel controlled side of the Israeli-Lebanon border. Hezbollah immediately took responsibility for the attack less than 4 hours after it happened, which is surprising considering their record of denying any attacks against Israel that they have been accused of. This marks the first time that Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for an attack against Israel since the Second Lebanon War in 2006. The explosive device was detonated in the area of Sheeba Farms, an area that Lebanon believes is unrightfully occupied by Israel, and that Syria also claims the rights to. The explosion seriously injured 2 Israeli soldiers and was supposedly a retaliatory attack in response to an incident on Sunday in which IDF soldiers witnessed individuals attempting to illegally cross from Lebanon into Israel. The IDF soldiers opened fire at these individuals and caused them to retreat back to Lebanese territory. According to Lebanese sources this is not how the confrontation proceeded, and they claim that Israeli soldiers fired on their military positions, injuring one soldier. According to IDF spokesman Lt Colonel Peter Lerner, this attack was a "blatant breach of Israel's sovereignty". In response to this attack, the Israeli military fired artillery at two Hezbollah positions in Southern Lebanon, no injuries were reported.

In a rare televised appearance on November 4, 2014, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah warned of a third Lebanon war and stated that Israel should close "all of your airports and your ports" in the event of a third Lebanon war. Nasrallah threatened Israel and claimed that "there is no place on the land of occupied Palestine that the resistance's rockets cannot reach".

Israeli warplanes struck multiple positions in Damascus on Sunday December 7, 2014, in an attempt to thwart weapons transfers to Hezbollah in Lebanon. These strikes hit a storage facility that was housing anti-aircraft missiles and drone fighters that were going to be sold to Hezbollah.

Operations

Hezbollah's main tactic is the use of suicide bombers. Hezbollah uses these human weapons to create mental and physical suffering for the Israelis and to force the Israelis to retreat out of "Islamic land."

Shi'a Islam international bases are used to buy and sell weapons for organized attacks. Asia is a key target for Hezbollah, and Hezbollah has been pulling Malaysians and Indonesians into the organization to expand operations and terrorist attacks around the world. Hezbollah extended its operations across the globe throughout the 1980s, kidnapping individuals in an attempt to gain political leverage. Hezbollah operates a satellite television station from Lebanon, *Al-Manar TV* ("the Lighthouse") as well as a radio station, *al-Nour* ("the light"). *Qubth Ut Alla* ("The Fist of God") is the monthly magazine of Hezbollah's paramilitary wing. They are widely viewed by West Bank and Gazan Palestinians as well as some Lebanese.

Leadership

The spiritual father of the movement in Lebanon is Sheikh Muhammed Hussein Fadlallah who acts as chief Mujtahid (arbiter of Islamic law) of the Shi'ite community in Lebanon. The current Secretary General of Hezbollah is Hassan Nasrallah.

Ideology & Support

The organization views an Islamic republic, modeled after Iran, to be the ideal form of a state. Lebanon remains a religiously and ideologically heterogeneous society. According to their published political platform in 2003, Hezbollah claims to favor the introduction of an Islamic government in Lebanon by peaceful democratic means. According to the United States Department of State and reports submitted to Defense Technical Information Center, the organization is seeking to create an fundamentalist Iranian-style Islamic republic and removal of all non-Islamic influences.

Hezbollah supports the destruction of the state of Israel and co-operates with other militant Islamic organizations such as Hamas in order to promote this goal. Hamas actually maintains its own "embassy" in Tehran. In 1992, Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas signed an official agreement of cooperation. As recently as 2002, it has been known that Iran was directly involved in numerous attempts to launch rockets into Israel through members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad who were trained by Hezbollah in Iranian camps. A relationship has also developed between Hezbollah and Al-Qa'ida, according to a former Al-Qa'ida member who was captured and convicted of bombing U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Ali Muhammad said that "Hezbollah provided explosives training for Al-Qa'ida," and that he personally arranged a meeting between Hezbollah's chief and Osama bin Laden in Sudan. In 2002, leaders of Hezbollah, Al-Qa'ida, and Hamas met formally in Lebanon to discuss future joint terrorist attacks against America, Britain, and Israel.

Syria backs Hezbollah morally and has also supplied it with money and arms. In return, Hezbollah protects Syria's political and military interests in Lebanon. Hezbollah also receives financial aid, training, weapons, and explosives from Iran. Iran also contributes political, diplomatic, and organizational aid. According to Iran's official budget, Iran gave \$500 million in support of radical Islamic organizations around the world in the 1990s. Of that money, Hezbollah was reported to receive at least \$250 million.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Terrorism/hezbollah.html/http://www.ict.org.il/http://www.idfblog.com/mini-sites>

This information is current as of 2015.