

HEZBOLLAH (Party of Allah)



Hezbollah Emblem with inscription from the Koran: "Only Allah's congregation will be victorious"

History

In 1979, Musa al-Sadr the leader of the Lebanese Shiites disappeared while on a trip to Sudan. Iran had just undergone the Islamic Revolution and Ayatollah Khomeini sought to export his ideas and broaden his sphere of influence. The Lebanese Shiites were underrepresented in the Lebanese government and now without a leader were a prime target for Khomeini. Khomeini sent clerics and members of the Revolutionary Guard to Lebanon to create Hezbollah. In 1982 the group carried out its first attack. Since then, Hezbollah transformed from a powerful political party in Lebanon to a deadly terrorist organization, carrying out attacks and training terrorist organizations throughout the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

Ideology

Since its inception, Hezbollah (Party of God) has conducted a terrorist campaign aimed at promoting the radical Shiite-Islamic doctrine conceived by Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The basic principles of this doctrine include:

- 1) The need for, and obligation to create, an Islamic order *wilayat al-faqih*, or Islamic Jurist Governance. It is a political, legal and religious ideology, which creates a government based in not just Islamic, but Shiite values, beliefs and practices. The cleric is the political leader in this form of government. The head of the government is the *wali al-faqih* or Supreme Leader.
- 2) The Islamic Order specifically includes the liberation of Jerusalem as a key component.
- 3) The Holy Struggle or Jihad
 - Greater Jihad is the struggle within oneself where one submits his life to Allah.
 - Defensive Jihad: All adults must react against oppression, persecution or unjust actions as well as aggression toward one's life, country or the Islamic Order. If there is no Islamic Order then a Defensive Jihad is warranted, and according to Hezbollah's ideology, all adults, regardless of age or gender, have to take action in order to create an Islamic Order. This includes taking action against anything perceived as blocking the creation of an Islamic order, such as the U.S. or Israel.
 - The combination of the Greater and Defensive Jihad gives birth to the suicide attack. Hezbollah was the first terrorist organization to use the suicide bomber.

Leadership

Hassan Nasrallah is Hezbollah's senior political leader. Nasrallah was originally a military commander but his military and religious credentials—he studied in centers of Shiite theology in Iran and Iraq—quickly elevated him to leadership within the group. Nasrallah took advantage of rivalries within Hezbollah and the favor of the head of Iran's theocratic government, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to become the group's secretary general in 1992.

Iranian Support

Clerics originally sent to Lebanon by Khomeini as well as members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard were responsible for the creation of Hezbollah. Iran, which regards Hezbollah as a means of achieving its own ideological and strategic goals, is a large-scale provider of military, financial and spiritual support to Hezbollah. Iran supplies Hezbollah with a variety of military hardware and support including, anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, missile launchers and land to land missiles, as well as military training, logistic support, and financial assistance estimated to be \$200 million (U.S.) annually.

Syrian Support

Syria acts as a major source of military support to Hezbollah, alongside Iran, providing the organization with long-range Syrian-made missiles. Syria also serves as a conduit for Iran to reach Hezbollah, and provides Hezbollah with resources and guidance. Syria backs Hezbollah's policy of terrorist attacks in southern Lebanon. It guarantees Hezbollah's freedom of operation, while preventing the Lebanese government from enforcing its authority in the region in accordance with Resolution 425 of the UN Security Council.

Areas of Operation

Lebanon

Hezbollah, once a clandestine Iranian proxy, now plays a major role in the Lebanese government. Hezbollah, a strong political party, has defeated other parties to represent the majority of the Shiite presence in the Lebanese government. Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon on May 24, 2000 and the UN Security Council's statement that Israel completed its withdrawal according to Resolution 425 allowed Hezbollah to seize power. Hezbollah took the place of the weaker central Lebanese administration and assumed the bulk of power in the region, similar to the state-within-a-state known as "Fatahland" created by the Palestinian terrorist organizations in southern Lebanon prior to 1982. Since the Israeli withdrawal, Hezbollah exerted continuous pressure on Israel by means of terrorist attacks against military and civilian targets along the northern border. At the same time, it built up a military apparatus in Beirut and Lebanon's Bekaa region, keeping its strategic offensive system operation-ready. In response to the call for its disarmament in UN Security Council Resolution 1559, Hezbollah made tactical political alliances to shift discussion away from disarmament.

In 2006 Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers, starting a two month long war that decimated parts of Lebanon. On July 12, 2006 Hezbollah illegally crossed into Israel and kidnapped 2 Israeli soldiers. In response Israel attacked Hezbollah's infrastructure in Lebanon to weaken it and attempt to free its soldiers. During the conflict (that lasted until August 14, 2006) Hezbollah launched over 4000 rockets into Northern Israel, killing 44 civilians and wounding hundreds of others. Since the end of the war in 2006, Hezbollah has rebuilt its rocket supply and retrained militants. Hezbollah still enjoys great popularity in Southern Lebanon among the Shiites. Hezbollah's political standing was bolstered after a wave of violence between Lebanese pro-government forces and Hezbollah in May 2008. This prompted Lebanon's lawmakers to compromise with the militant group. In August 2008, the country's parliament approved a national unity cabinet, giving Hezbollah and its allies veto power with eleven of thirty cabinet seats. Hezbollah's political party, the March 8th faction, lost to the more moderate "pro-western" and "anti-Syrian" March 14th faction in the 2009 Lebanese election. Despite being in the minority, Hezbollah continues to have influence and attempts by the Lebanese government to disarm them have failed.

The Palestinian Arena

Hezbollah works to enhance the operational abilities of many Palestinian terrorist organizations, and encourages them to pursue their armed struggle against Israel. Their assistance includes: supply of weapons, military training, financial support, information, and propaganda, as well as the creation of Hezbollah's own terrorist apparatus within Israel and the Palestinian territories, as well as Palestinian refugee camps in Southern Lebanon.

The Global Arena

Hezbollah pursues a policy of global terrorism directed mainly against Israeli, American and British targets. This terrorism relies on a broad international network of collaborators recruited primarily from Shiite-Muslim communities worldwide, including the United States, Europe, and South America. This network is meant to serve a number of purposes, including:

- Gathering operational intelligence on targets
- Maintaining "latent cells" that can be activated in time of need
- Raising funds in order to supplement the massive financing provided to it by Iran
 - For example, the Islamic Resistance Support Organization is a "charity" that operates globally, including in the United States. US Executive Order 13224 freezes IRSO assets in US jurisdiction

During the 1980s, Hezbollah attacks targeted Western objectives, mostly on Lebanese soil: bombing military and civilian compounds, hostage-takings, and hijackings. Many believe that the 1983 bombing of the US Marine Barracks in Beirut which resulted in the deaths of 229 French and American soldiers was carried out by a proto-Hezbollah organization. In the 1990s, Hezbollah adopted a more selective approach, focusing mainly on "high-quality attacks" such as the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in March 1992, the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires in July 1994, and the active involvement in the bombing of a military base housing US troops in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in June 1996. Israeli citizen, Elhanan Tannenbaum, was kidnapped by Hezbollah in Europe in October 2000.

