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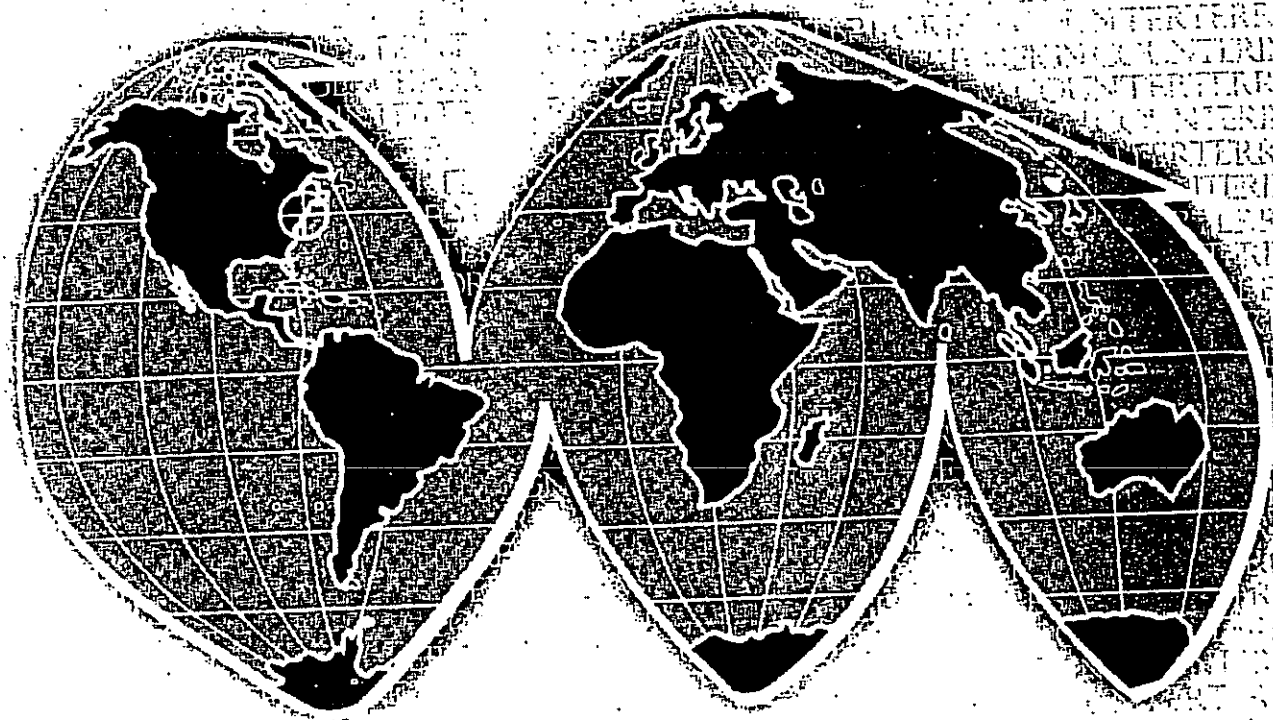
U.S. Department of Justice  
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# International Radical Fundamentalism

An Analytical Overview of Groups and Trends



Terrorist Research  
and Analytical Center

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**INTERNATIONAL RADICAL FUNDAMENTALISM:  
AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF GROUPS AND TRENDS**

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## HIZBALLAH (PARTY OF GOD)

### Group History

Hizballah was established in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and quickly became the most dangerous international terrorist threat to Western interests, particularly Israel and the United States. The group's goals include the establishment of an Islamic (Shiite) extremist state in Lebanon, modelled after the theocracy in Iran, and the elimination of Western influence from the Middle East.

### Group Presence

Hizballah has maintained a presence in the United States since at least 1987. There are five main Hizballah cells in the United States located in New York; Massachusetts; Michigan; Texas; and California. The group also has individual members residing in urban areas of the country, particularly along both coasts.

### Group Threat

The Hizballah leadership based in Beirut, Lebanon would be reluctant to jeopardize the relatively safe environment its members enjoy in the United States by committing a terrorist act within U.S. borders. However, such a decision could be initiated in reaction to a perceived threat from the United States or its allies against Hizballah interests. Should the decision be made to strike within U.S. borders, Hizballah has the infrastructure present to support or carry out a terrorist act. Certain Hizballah members in the United States have received paramilitary training, including explosives and firearms training.

Other functions carried out by Hizballah members in the United States include fund-raising, recruitment, identifying oppositionist elements residing in the United States, involvement in petty criminal activity, and avoiding the attention of U.S. law enforcement officers.

### Group Leadership

Hizballah does not maintain an official leadership roster for its U.S.-based membership. FBI source reporting indicates that an Iraqi-born Shia cleric, who is based in Texas, has positioned himself in a leadership role of Hizballah in the United States. This cleric has close ties to Iran.

Individual Hizballah cell leaders attain leadership position through charisma and personal contacts with other senior leaders, rather than through official "appointments." One or two high profile members in a cell will rise up and take charge of the group's activities, becoming de facto cell leaders. There does not appear to be any type of vote or election apparatus.

U.S. Hizballah members receive direction from the Beirut Hizballah leadership. Instructions are provided to the cell leaders, who in turn pass the information on to the other cell members.

### Hizballah Activities in the United States

#### o Domestic IRF Connections

Connections between Hizballah and other terrorist groups in the United States appear to be limited. It is known that Hizballah has approached black American Muslims in order to discuss mutual cooperation. These approaches are believed to be initial contacts.

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Hizballah members in the United States have been in contact with overseas members of HAMAS and the Al-Jamah Al-Islamiyyah, or Islamic Grouping, a small Sunni fundamentalist group in Lebanon. The purpose of these contacts is reportedly to cement agreements between the groups declaring that they will carry out joint attacks against the United States or Israel should Islamic interests be threatened.

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A Hizballah member also may be in contact with the U.S.-based leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad-Shaqaqi Faction. Hizballah also is known to be in contact with the Anjoman Islamic, an Iranian student association active in the United States.

o Domestic Funding

Funding for Hizballah's U.S. activities comes primarily from indigenous fund raising efforts and petty criminal activity. Couriers have also been used to transport money to U.S. Hizballah members.

Fund-raising is a major role of Hizballah members in North America. Wealthy donors and sympathetic Lebanese merchants are solicited for funds. Individual Hizballah members are also known to engage in criminal enterprises. The profits from these endeavors are, for the most part, for personal gain; however, an unknown percentage appears earmarked for Hizballah activities.

o Domestic Criminal Activity

Individual Hizballah members are involved in a number of criminal enterprises. Criminal activities include insurance fraud, credit card fraud, narcotics trafficking, and counterfeiting. While the impetus for these activities appears to be personal gain, an unknown percentage of the profits is specified for Hizballah coffers. At least some criminal activity is condoned by the Hizballah leadership. [REDACTED] Hizballah's spiritual leader, has stated that narcotics trafficking is morally acceptable if the drugs are sold to Western infidels as part of the war against the enemies of Islam.

o Domestic Training

Hizballah members do not conduct formal training in the United States. Some members are reported to have received training in the Middle East prior to arriving in the United States, while others travel to the Middle East for training subsequent to their arrival in this country.

o Domestic Weapons Procurement

Hizballah leaders in Lebanon have shown interest in acquiring night vision and laser sighting equipment from the United States. A New York Hizballah member is reportedly involved in sending this type of equipment out of the United States and into Lebanon. Hizballah's interest in this type of equipment is unknown; however, it is logical to assume that this equipment may be utilized in the group's military actions against the Israeli armed forces.

o Domestic Recruitment

Although the majority of the U.S. Hizballah membership appears to be comprised of existing members from the Middle East, recruitment is a major activity of the U.S.-based members. Lebanese nationals are a primary target for recruitment in the United States. Shiite clerics are known to solicit recruits during Friday prayer services at certain U.S. mosques. Recruits from the United States are sometimes sent to Lebanon to receive unspecified training.

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o Other Domestic and "Nontraditional" Activities

Directives from the Beirut leadership illustrate how security-conscious Hizballah has become, particularly with communication. The New York Hizballah cell was instructed to divide into "teams." Teams were not to discuss Hizballah matters outside of their team. Secret communications could no longer be carried by courier, and letters could not contain details such as the names of members. Also, New York Hizballah cell members were instructed to increase their efforts in identifying Lebanese nationals, within their community, who were providing information about their membership and activities to law enforcement.

In at least one instance, Hizballah members have attempted to wrest control of a mosque through intimidation and threats of violence. Members of the mosque were told that if they did not embrace the beliefs of Hizballah, they would be forcibly prevented from admittance.

Lebanese immigrants to the United States give direct and indirect assistance to Hizballah. Many Lebanese run small shops and stores in the United States. In some areas, these businesses have evolved into small Lebanese enclaves, sometimes stretching for blocks. Business owners in these enclaves are continually solicited for donations by Hizballah members. Donations are for the most part freely given; however, most Lebanese nationals in the United States have family members still living in Lebanon, thus availing themselves to extortion.

The Lebanese enclaves themselves provide an unintentional protection for Hizballah members. In such a neighborhood, FBI Agents and other law enforcement officials stand out and are easily identified, and successful interviews of the residents, in full view of wary neighbors, are a low possibility. Members of one West Coast cell have reportedly initiated a "neighborhood watch program" in order to alert cell members of an FBI presence.

**Hizballah Activities Overseas**

o Hizballah Threat to the  
Israeli and Lebanese Governments

Hizballah's chief military opposition comes from Israel. Like most Islamic fundamentalist groups in the Middle East, Hizballah has the elimination of the State of Israel as one of its primary goals. Hizballah routinely carries out rocket attacks against northern Israel and the ten-mile wide security zone established in Lebanon. (As part of the agreement reached after Israel's July 1993 air strikes into Lebanon, Hizballah agreed not to strike targets in northern Israel.)

Further, establishing a Shiite Islamic theocracy as the Government of Lebanon remains Hizballah's primary goal. A Hizballah-designed government in Lebanon would be modelled after the Khomeini regime in Iran. The potential for this goal becoming reality was higher during the anarchy of the Lebanese civil war during 1975-1990. Presently, the Lebanese Government, with Syrian assistance, is slowly reestablishing authority in Lebanon. A strong national government will make it more difficult for Hizballah to operate in Lebanon. Realizing that the goal of governing Lebanon is becoming unrealistic, Hizballah leaders are becoming more pragmatic and are looking to ensure that the group's beliefs and influence are impacted as strongly as possible on Lebanon's future.

Hizballah also is providing assistance to IRF groups looking to overthrow their respective governments in order to install Islamic fundamentalist regimes. These countries include Egypt and Algeria.

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Iran, via its Hizballah surrogates, continually is looking to spread the Islamic revolution in the Muslim world. In deciding where to locate its resources, Hizballah looks for a country with a large Muslim population, lax security, and an environment of dissatisfaction with the government due to political or economic reasons. Currently, Hizballah is searching for supporters in Africa, Latin America, and former Soviet republics with large Muslim populations.

**o Targeting of Americans and Westerners**

Hizballah has a notorious history of taking Western hostages during Beirut's civil war. Between 1982 and 1991, Hizballah abducted and held at least 44 Western hostages, including 17 U.S. persons, three of whom died while in captivity. Hizballah leaders now believe that taking Western hostages is counterproductive, although certain elements within the group continue to argue for the resumption of the kidnappings.

Western facilities located in Lebanon also have been the targets of Hizballah bombings, sometimes resulting in massive casualties. The list of these acts includes the 1983 truck bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 49 people; the 1983 truck bombings of the U.S. Marine and French military barracks in Beirut, killing 241 U.S. and 56 French; and the 1985 hijacking of Trans World Airlines Flight 847 en route to Rome, Italy, from Athens, Greece, during which U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem was killed.

Beginning in the summer of 1993, a number of reports from various sources indicated that Hizballah was planning some sort of spectacular act against Western interests, probably Israeli but perhaps against the United States. From May 1994 to July 1994, Israeli forces conducted an air raid against a Hizballah training camp in Lebanon and abducted Hizballah leader [redacted]. These events resulted in Hizballah's worst military loss ever and may provoke a Hizballah terrorist response. Historically, Hizballah has carried out a reprisal act of some form in response to acts against them by Israel.

On July 18, 1994, a Jewish center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was destroyed by a truck bomb, killing at least 100 people. The act was claimed by a group calling itself the "Partisans of God" or "Followers of God." Initial speculation pointed to Hizballah involvement, although the investigation to date has not been conclusive. This bombing was followed by several more terrorist incidents apparently directed at Jewish targets. They are as follows: on July 19, 1994, a Panamanian commuter airline flight exploded shortly after takeoff, killing all 21 crew members and passengers, including 12 Jewish businessmen; on July 26, 1994, an explosion occurred near the Israeli Consulate in London, England, injuring 13; on July 27, 1994, another bomb exploded in London, less than 10 miles from the site of the previous day's blast. Israeli interests were again targeted, with five injuries. At this time, each is highly suspected of being perpetrated by Hizballah.

**o International IRF Connections**

Direct contacts between U.S.-based Hizballah members and other international terrorist group members appears to be infrequent, due perhaps to the fact that contacts are initiated by the Lebanon-based members.

**o International Presence**

Hizballah members are located throughout North and South America, Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East.

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o **International Training**

Most Hizballah training is conducted in Lebanon and Iran. Hizballah training camps are frequently shared with other terrorist organizations. Several PLO member or rejectionist groups, and other Middle East terrorist organizations, are known to share training facilities with Hizballah. Hizballah members are frequently the trainers at these camps, since the group has extensive expertise in terrorist and military operations. The exchange of information can be bilateral, and each group's particular expertise can be shared with the other organizations.

o **International Funding**

The Iranian Government remains Hizballah's primary sponsor, providing financial assistance as well as military supplies to the group. Estimates of this financial assistance vary widely, with reports of up to \$50 million per year. Lebanese merchants located in various areas of the world also are solicited frequently for donations to Hizballah.

o **International Weapons Procurement**

Iran, as Hizballah's primary sponsor, provides most of the groups funding and weaponry.

o **International Recruitment**

There is little intelligence or evidence concerning Hizballah's international recruitment efforts. However, Hizballah membership is not exclusively made up of Lebanese nationals. Members come from a number of other countries, particularly Iran and Iraq. Hizballah is particularly interested in recruiting non-Lebanese Shiites, since they do not fit the normal Hizballah profile and are less prone to surveillance and detection.

o **International Criminal Activity**

In an ongoing effort to bring more members into the United States, Hizballah also alters or steals travel documents, passports and visas. In one such operation, Hizballah members presented photo-substituted passports and fraudulent visa applications at a U.S. Embassy. Eighteen individuals successfully obtained passports in this manner.

Hizballah also has been involved in narcotics trafficking. The group procures heroin from the Beka valley in Lebanon. From there, it is smuggled into Europe and North America. However, the full extent of Hizballah's involvement in drug trafficking is unclear at this time.