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NJOHSP

INTELLIGENCE NOTE

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Hizballah: Exploiting Outbound Cargo Vulnerabilities

Hizballah continues to launder narcotics proceeds through US maritime ports by leveraging the inundated outbound cargo shipment process and concealing contraband in otherwise legal outbound vehicle shipments. Since October 2015, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in the Port of New York and New Jersey has processed more than 25,000 export vehicle titles per month in accordance with current regulations and performed, on average, more than 500 physical vehicle examinations per month.

- This year, the Drug Enforcement Administration's Project Cassandra targeted a Hizballah network selling narcotics in the United States and Europe and laundering the proceeds through the acquisition and sale of high-valued vehicles, sometimes concealing money inside vehicles shipped internationally.
- In 2011, US authorities filed a civil money-laundering suit against three Lebanese financial organizations and two Beirut-based money exchange houses, accusing them of wiring at least \$329 million in drug proceeds to 30 used car dealerships in the United States—one located in North Arlington (Bergen County).
- In 2010, the FBI disrupted two Hizballah-linked schemes—one in Virginia where money was hidden in tires of used vehicles being shipped via maritime vessels to Lebanon, and another in Ohio where authorities arrested a couple for attempting to conceal \$200,000 in a vehicle they planned to ship to Lebanon.

The Port of New York and New Jersey has implemented mitigation strategies to stop the movement of contraband through outbound cargo in New Jersey. For example, in 2005, CBP, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, and other federal, state, local, and international law enforcement agencies created the Border Enforcement Security Task Force—more commonly known as BEST—to coordinate information sharing between agencies. In addition, CBP's Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism encourages private-sector companies to provide information about suspicious activity related to cargo shipments.

Contact Information

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