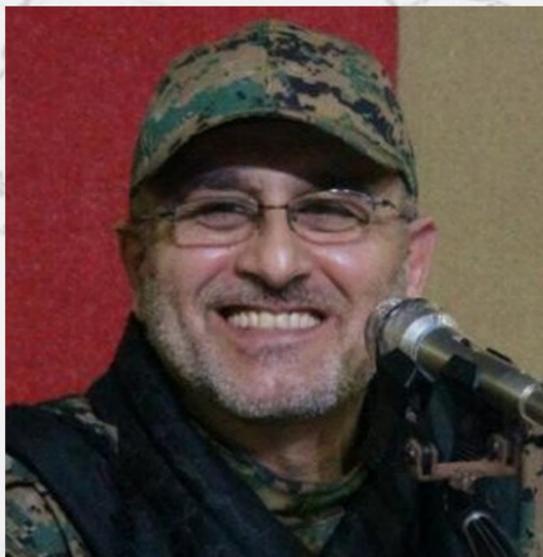




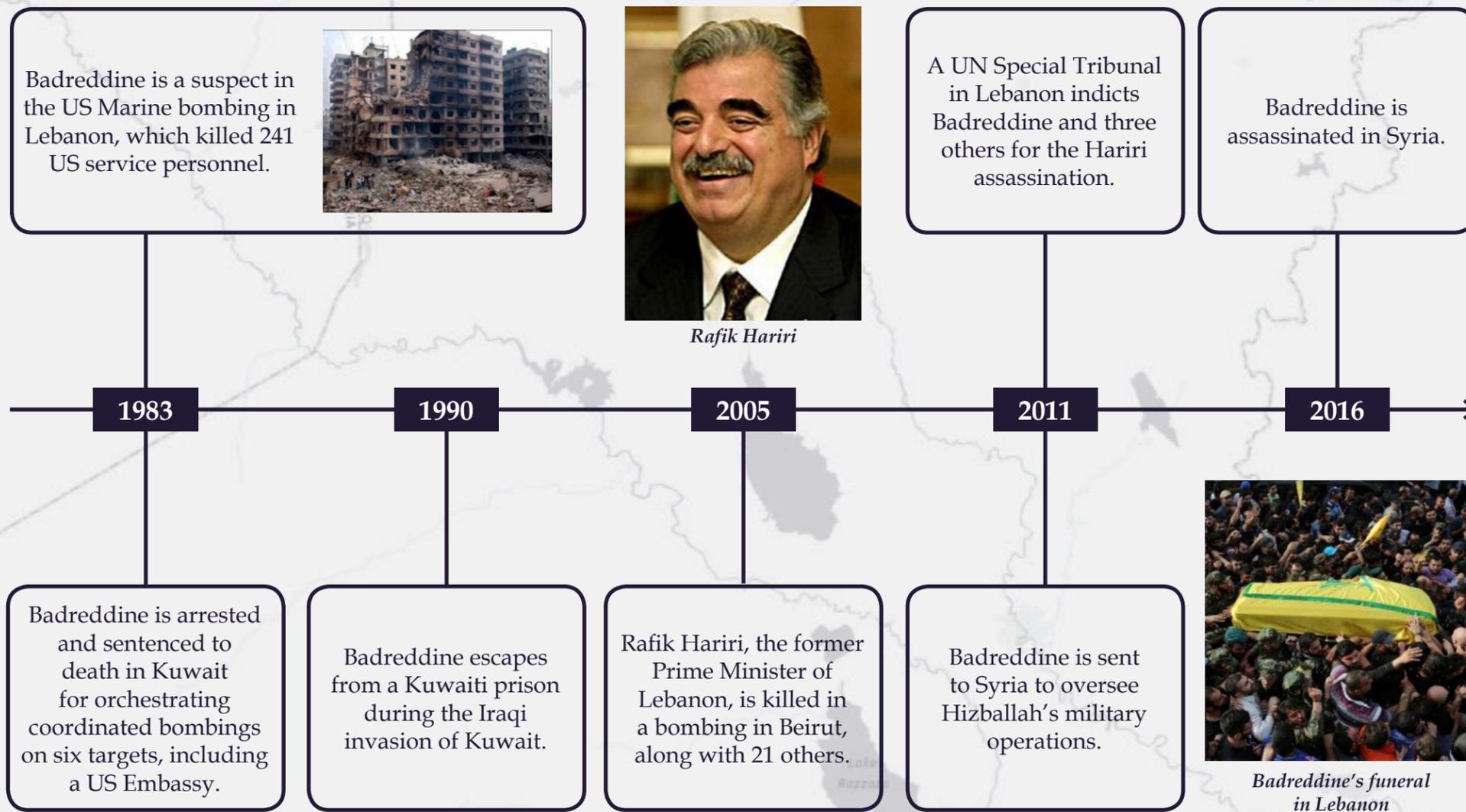
HIZBALLAH: IMPLICATIONS OF BADREDDINE'S DEATH



Mustafa Badreddine

The assassination on May 13 of Mustafa Badreddine – a Hizballah commander in Syria and head of the group's External Security Organization – will not dissuade Hizballah from supporting the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. According to Hizballah, an unspecified Sunni rebel group conducted the assassination; however, no group has claimed responsibility. Badreddine had been a member of Hizballah since its inception in 1982 and took part in a majority of its operations. According to Western media, he commanded 5,000 to 6,000 Hizballah fighters as of 2011.

- Although Hizballah has not publicly named Badreddine's replacement in Syria, the organization is hierarchical, and another commander with similar experience will likely fill Badreddine's position. According to a Lebanese newspaper, Badreddine's responsibilities will likely be divided among several commanders. A US think tank named two members of the Jihad Council – Hizballah's highest military body – Ibrahim Aqil and Fuad Shukr as potential replacements because of their military experience and involvement in Syria.
- Hizballah's statements following the assassination indicate the group will use Badreddine's death as motivation for further involvement in Syria. The leader of Hizballah, Hassan Nasrallah, stated, "No death of any of our leaders will drive us from the battle. This precious blood will push us to a larger, stronger, and more sophisticated presence."
- Hizballah views Syria and Assad as essential to preserving key land and air corridors for weapons transport from Iran to Lebanon. Western media estimate 8,000 fighters, or roughly one-quarter of Hizballah's fighting force, is in Syria, demonstrating the group's commitment to the civil war there.



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