



HIZBALLAH

Background

- Hizballah (“Party of God” in Arabic) is an Iranian-backed Shiite Islamist organization based in Lebanon. The group is comprised of political, social services, and military divisions and currently holds 13 seats in the Lebanese parliament. It maintains a regional military force and an external attack-planning component known as the Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO). Hassan Nasrallah has led the group since 1992. The United States designated Hizballah a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.
- The group formed between 1982 and 1985 during Lebanon’s 15-year civil war, with financial and technical support from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). During the war, Hizballah conducted attacks against US locations in Beirut, including the US Embassy bombing that killed 17 Americans in April 1983 and the US Marine barracks bombing that killed 241 Americans in October 1983. In 1985, the group released its first manifesto that called for the removal of Western powers from Lebanon and the destruction of Israel, as well as a pledge of allegiance to Iran’s Ayatollah.
- Iran provides Hizballah with approximately \$700 million per year in addition to weapons and other technical support. The group also generates \$300 million in revenue through criminal activity, including narcotics trafficking, smuggling operations, and extortion. Over the past several years, the United States has targeted Hizballah’s finances through sanctions against banks and institutions that work with the group.
- Since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, Hizballah has focused on preventing the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad’s regime, dispatching as many as 8,000 fighters to Syria at a time. While supporting Syria, Hizballah also gained urban warfare capabilities and battlefield expertise and collaborated with Iranian allies to expand its network of supporters.

Threat to New Jersey: Low

The terror threat from Hizballah to New Jersey is low because the group’s resources and efforts are focused on regional conflicts in the Middle East, including supporting the Assad regime in Syria. While US authorities have arrested operatives and supporters in the region for material support and criminal activity, Hizballah has never conducted an attack on US soil.

- In December, Ali Kourani was sentenced to 40 years in prison on terrorism charges, along with sanctions and immigration offenses, for his role within the IJO. The IJO recruited Kourani in 2008 and tasked him with working as a communications handler. He was also provided training in tradecraft, weapons, and tactics. Kourani’s actions supported preparations for potential Hizballah attacks against the United States.
- In July, Alexei Saab of Morristown (Morris County) was indicted on multiple terrorism charges. Saab, a naturalized American citizen from Lebanon, allegedly acted as a scout for the IJO. While living in the United States, Saab conducted detailed pre-operational surveillance for potential future target locations, including the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty, among other high-profile targets in surrounding states.



Flag of Hizballah

Additional Resources

[2020 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)

[US Military Kills IRGC General in Iraq](#)

[US Sanctions on Iran Hamper Hizballah Operations](#)

[Hizballah Sleeper Agent Convicted in Manhattan Federal Court](#)

US Nexus

In retaliation for the death of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, Hizballah has publicly called for members to target US forces in the Middle East rather than attack the United States directly. Prior to his killing, Soleimani developed plans to attack American diplomats and service members in Iraq and the region.

- On January 2, the US military killed Soleimani, who led the IRGC Quds Force, in an airstrike in Baghdad. Nasrallah declared that retribution for Soleimani’s death should focus on the US military presence in the Middle East, targeting “all the US military bases in the region, their warships, every single general and soldier in our lands.”

Recent US Department of Justice prosecutions indicate that Hizballah continues to support global criminal networks to fund terrorist activities.

- In August, Rami Najm Asad-Ghanem, a naturalized US citizen, was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison after he was found guilty of conspiring to use and to transfer missile systems designed to destroy aircrafts. Ghanem colluded to transfer a wide array of surface-to-air missile systems to those around the world, which included Hizballah leadership. Ghanem engaged in conversations with an undercover federal agent where he affirmed the transactions were being conducted illegally and had to be “under the table.” Additionally, he stated that he had relationships with Hizballah in Iraq.
- In December 2018, Kassim Tajideen, a Lebanese businessman tied to Hizballah, pleaded guilty to money laundering in furtherance of violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. The US Department of Treasury designated Tajideen as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in 2009 stemming from his financial support to Hizballah, prohibiting him from being involved in or benefiting from transactions involving Americans or US companies without a license.