Hezbollah

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Since its emergence in 1982, Hezbollah has waged an anti-Israel campaign and guerrilla war against Israeli forces. The Lebanese-based U.S.-designated terrorist organization, which seeks to establish a Shiite Islamic state that encompasses both Lebanon and Israel, has been implicated in numerous terrorist attacks against Israeli and Western targets.

Most recently, members of Hezbollah were implicated by Bulgaria in the July 2012 bombing of a bus of Israeli tourists in the resort city of Burgas. Hezbollah and its main international sponsor, Iran, have also been linked to a spate of attacks and attempted attacks on Israeli diplomats and other targets abroad in 2012.

Hezbollah’s ongoing campaign against Israel erupted in July 2006 when Hezbollah operatives killed eight Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two others stationed in Israeli sovereign territory. In response to the attack, Israeli forces launched a series of strikes intended to remove the Hezbollah threat from its border and cripple the military capabilities of the terrorist organization.

Prior to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Hezbollah, backed by Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, was responsible for the deaths of more Americans around the world than any other terrorist organization. An April 1983 suicide bombing at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut killed more than 60 people, including 17 Americans. The following October, a Hezbollah truck bombing killed 241 American marines at the multinational force barracks in Beirut. Hezbollah is also responsible for the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, during which a U.S. Navy
diver was killed, and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 American servicemen.

In addition to its activity against American interests abroad, Hezbollah maintains a network of cells in the U.S. and Europe. The American-based cells use funds raised in the U.S. through criminal activities to help finance the organization's terrorist activities abroad. Hezbollah uses Europe as an operational launching pad for its members to enter Israel in order to assist other operatives, conduct surveillance on Israeli targets and carry out attacks, such as the 2012 bombing in Bulgaria.

Hezbollah has also been tied to various Muslim extremist groups in Latin America that have proven threatening to both American and Israeli institutions and civilians throughout the region. A March 1992 Hezbollah suicide bombing at the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires killed 29 people and injured more than 240 others. In July two years later, a suicide bomber reportedly linked to Hezbollah detonated a bomb on a commuter plane in Colón, Panama, killing all 21 people aboard, including 12 Jewish businessmen, at least four of whom were Israeli, and three U.S. citizens. A day before the Panama attack, Hezbollah affiliates bombed the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires, killing 85 people and injuring approximately 300 others. Hezbollah also maintains an extensive support operation in Latin America that helps fund its terrorist activities both in Lebanon and abroad through the drug trade and other criminal activity.