

FACT SHEET: Hizballah’s Global Terror Network and Illicit Activities in Europe



Hizballah is an Iranian-supported terrorist organization based in Lebanon, which perpetrates terror attacks around the globe and maintains a primary goal of eliminating the State of Israel.

Hizballah was designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization – in its entirety – in 1997.¹ Hizballah’s “military wing” was designated by the EU in 2013 after a deadly 2012 bomb attack on Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria – killing six civilians in Europe. The EU did not designate Hizballah’s “political wing” in an effort to continue “its dialogue on peace and security in the region with all the political parties in Lebanon.”

Hizballah itself maintains that there is no separation of “military” and “political wings” within its organization, with Naim Qassem, Hizballah’s second in command, stating “Hizballah has a single leadership... We don’t have a military wing and a political one; we don’t have Hizballah on one hand and the resistance party on the other.”²

Hizballah acts as an Iranian proxy to conduct terrorist plots, assassinations, and attacks around the globe. Since its inception as a terrorist organization, Hizballah has perpetrated attacks in Greece, France, Germany, Argentina, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Bulgaria. Since its successful Bulgaria attack, Hizballah terror plots and infrastructure have been disrupted in Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Cyprus, Guinea, Kuwait, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) uses complex money laundering schemes to finance Hizballah. These schemes were exposed by the United States Department of Treasury in a May, 2018 designation.³ Lebanese Hizballah receives a staggering \$700 million per year in support from the Iranian government – which accounts for the majority of the terrorist groups’ annual budget – in addition to training, weapons, and munitions.

However, Hizballah also receives hundreds of millions of dollars in financing per year through international fundraising, criminal networks, and sophisticated transnational money laundering schemes – many of which originate or transit Europe. European governments have uncovered numerous large-scale international criminal schemes tied to Hizballah, including a disruption of a major drug trafficking and money laundering enterprise in the summer of 2017. The European Union pointed to this trend in its 2018 *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*⁴ noting that “One major investigation focused on a large network of Lebanese nationals offering money laundering

¹ <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>

² <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/there-is-no-distinct-hezbollah-military-wing-so-why-ban-it>

³ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm0388>

⁴ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2018-tesat-2018>

services to organized crime groups in the EU and using a share of the profits to finance terrorism-related activities of the Lebanese Hizballah's military wing.”

In addition to the proceedings of criminal activities, Hizballah also raises funds in Europe through more traditional means. According to a 2017 German intelligence report published by the Bremen intelligence agency, the Al-Mustafa Community Centre Bremen in Germany is a major center for raising funds for Hizballah in Lebanon. The agency said there are roughly 60 Hizballah supporters in Al-Mustafa's organization and “the Arab-Shi'ite association functions as a point of contact for Shi'ite Muslims in Bremen, especially those from Lebanon.”⁵

In 2014, the German Interior Ministry announced a ban on Hizballah front organization “Waisenkinderprojekt,” which Hizballah had used to raise millions of dollars in support of its Shahid (Martyrs) Foundation ultimately to promote terrorism and build opposition to the right for the state of Israel to exist.

In Syria, Hizballah has repeatedly targeted civilians as part of its support for the Assad regime's vicious campaign against its own citizens, contributing to the vast flows of refugees who look to Europe to find refuge from the Assad regime's atrocities, indiscriminate bombing, and chemical weapon attacks.

Hizballah has achieved significant advancement in its military capabilities due primarily to Iran, which is supporting the development of missile production facilities inside Lebanon as well as precision guidance systems for the group's large missile stockpile. Hizballah is the world's most heavily armed non-state actor, and maintains a large stockpile of unguided artillery rockets, as well as ballistic, anti-aircraft, anti-tank, and anti-ship missiles.⁶ Hizballah hides its massive weapons stockpile among its civilian population, using civilians as human shields in direct contravention to international law.

Hizballah was founded with significant support from Iran by Lebanese supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini in the early 1980s.

Iranian Sponsored Attacks in Europe

June 14-30, 1985 – Athens, Greece: Lebanese Hizballah – with Iran's logistical support – hijacked TWA flight 847 and murdered a U.S. Navy diver.

December 1985-September 1986 – Paris, France: Lebanese Hizballah bombed a number of soft targets. Iran provided logistical support, and the attack resulted in 12 dead and at least 200 wounded.

July 13, 1989 – Vienna, Austria: Iranian operatives using diplomatic cover assassinated the head of an Iranian Kurdish dissident group and two others.

⁵ <https://www.verfassungsschutz.bremen.de/sixcms/media.php/13/VSB%202017.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hezbollahs-missiles-and-rockets>

August 6, 1991 – Suresnes, France: Iranian operatives assassinated the former Iranian Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar, who led an anti-Iranian regime movement. One operative was convicted, but two fled.

September 17, 1992 – Berlin, Germany: Lebanese Hizballah – with Iran’s logistical support – assassinated four Iranian Kurdish dissidents in a small-arms attack at a café. Four operatives were tried and convicted in 1997.

July 2012 – Sofia, Bulgaria: An IRGC-QF operative was arrested by Bulgarian authorities for surveilling a synagogue.

2012 – Turkey: Four IRGC-QF operatives entered Turkey to attack Israeli targets; the attack was disrupted by Turkish authorities.

2013 – Bosnia and Herzegovina: Two Iranian diplomats were discovered to be Iranian intelligence officers and expelled for espionage and connections to terrorism.

2015, 2017 – Netherlands: Iran orchestrates two assassinations of Iranian dissidents.

2016-2018 – Germany: German authorities searched the homes and offices of 10 suspected IRGC-QF operatives in early 2018. In 2016, German authorities convicted an IRGC-QF operative for spying on the ex-head of a German-Israeli group and people close to him.

2018 – Albanian authorities arrested two Iranian operatives on terrorism charges.

2018 – Belgium, France, Germany: Authorities in Belgium, France, and Germany arrested several Iranian operatives, including an Iranian government official, in a plot to plant a bomb to disrupt a political rally in Paris, France.

2018 – Denmark, Iran tries to assassinate an Arab separatist leader living in Denmark.