

MOUNTING THREATS TO ISRAEL



HEZBOLLAH

Hezbollah is an imminent threat to Israel. Situated along Israel’s northern border, in Beirut’s suburbs, and throughout the Bekaa Valley, Hezbollah supports Palestinian terrorists and maintains an advanced military arsenal exceeding that of many national armies. With an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles, Hezbollah is positioned to inflict significant casualties and damage throughout Israel. Israeli security planners consider Hezbollah and its arsenal of rockets to be one of the greatest threats facing Israel today.

Hezbollah is a terrorist organization.

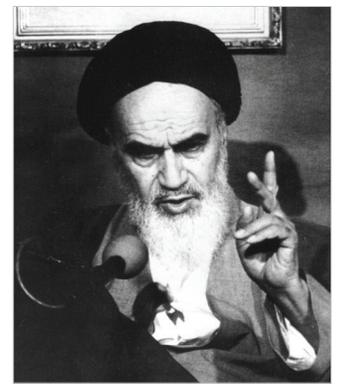
Hezbollah (“Party of God”) is an Iranian-founded, Lebanon-based Shia Islamist terrorist organization. Hezbollah has killed more Americans than any other terrorist group except al-Qaida, including 241 U.S. servicemen in the October 1983 U.S. Marine Corps barracks bombing in Beirut. In 1995, the United States designated it a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Hezbollah operates as a “state within a state,” and dominates the Lebanese political system. Led by Shia clerics, it follows the doctrines of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution of 1979 and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hezbollah is an Iranian proxy.

Hezbollah acts as a de facto arm of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and receives political, economic, and diplomatic backing from Iran, in addition to sophisticated weaponry and military training. Iran has increased this support since economic sanctions against it lifted as a result of the 2015 nuclear deal. Hezbollah operatives train and fight alongside IRGC troops in Lebanon and Syria, and IRGC officers serve within Hezbollah’s command ranks. Based on this success, Iran has extended this model to Iraq, where tens of thousands of Shia militia now answer to IRGC and Hezbollah-trained officers.

Hezbollah possesses an advanced rocket and missile arsenal.

In 2006, Hezbollah provoked a war with Israel during which it launched thousands of rockets into densely populated areas of northern Israel. Today, Hezbollah’s extensive arsenal includes several thousand long-range, high-precision, heavy rockets and missiles capable of reaching all of Israel. Military planners estimate that Hezbollah will be able to launch thousands of rockets per day in a future conflict, compared to the 2006 rate of one hundred per day.



Hezbollah is motivated by the political and religious ideology of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—leader of Iran’s Islamic Revolution of 1979 and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hezbollah is challenging Israel's air superiority and threatening it from underground.

Hezbollah can threaten Israeli military and civilian aircraft flying deep within Israel's airspace with its advanced surface-to-air missile systems, including Russian-designed, shoulder-mounted SA-7s and SA-17s. The SA-17 system can engage up to 24 targets simultaneously at high altitudes at a distance of up to 30 miles—far into northern Israel. Hezbollah's Yakhont cruise missiles can strike Israel's offshore gas platforms and naval vessels. Hezbollah also uses Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to collect intelligence; these drones can be weaponized to launch rockets or serve as directed bombs. It is also believed that Hezbollah is constructing offensive infiltration tunnels into Israel, similar to Hamas' tunnels in Gaza.

Hezbollah fights for the Assad regime in Syria.

Hezbollah has gained significant battlefield experience and expertise from fighting alongside the Iranian Quds Force and Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's army against the Syrian rebels and ISIS. Now entering its sixth year of heavy fighting, Hezbollah's 6,000-8,000 troops deployed in Syria have become so crucial to Assad's war effort that it often spearheads and organizes joint military attacks, and many Syrian units reportedly will not fight without Hezbollah forces in the lead.

Hezbollah uses human shields.

Hezbollah has placed Lebanese civilians at extreme risk in any future conflict by implanting its forces, missiles, and weapons caches in civilian areas. Local inhabitants—including men, women and children—are exploited as human shields by the terrorist group positioning its weaponry within homes, mosques and schools. Today, virtually all of southern Lebanon is a Hezbollah fortress of underground bunkers, rocket launch sites and interconnecting tunnels.

THE WAY FORWARD

The United States has long defined Israel's survival and security as important to its national interests. Accordingly, America provides Israel with annual security assistance to help it defend itself, by itself, against mounting threats across the region. Security assistance is currently provided at levels established by 10-year Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the allies. In 2016, the United States and Israel signed a new 10-year MOU that commits America to providing Israel \$38 billion beginning in 2019, \$5 billion of which will be set aside for joint missile defense. Each year, Congress appropriates security assistance funds for Israel, and AIPAC works with Congress to ensure full funding levels set out in each MOU are met. America must continue to ensure that Israel has the resources needed to respond decisively to threats ranging from Hezbollah to a potentially nuclear armed Iran.



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