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Iran's Support for Terrorism

The radical regime in Iran has sponsored terrorism against the United States, Israel and the West for decades. The State Department has repeatedly designated Iran as the world's leading state sponsor of terror, noting its support for groups such as Hamas, Hizballah and Islamic Jihad. Recently, Tehran has also sponsored the insurgency in Iraq, supplied arms to the Taliban and hosted al-Qaeda terrorists. The Islamic Republic's long history of support for terrorism – not to mention its relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons – makes it a particularly implacable and lethal regime. Only a sustained, unified international effort to isolate and sanction Iran is likely to convince it to give up these dangerous activities.

A History of Terrorism

The Islamic Republic of Iran emerged in 1979 with the overthrow of the Shah, who was replaced by a theocratic government headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Terrorism against the West followed almost immediately: On November 4, 1979, Iranian students seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and held 52 U.S. diplomats as hostages for 444 days.

Since 1985, when the State Department began issuing annual reports designating terrorist states, it has repeatedly deemed Iran the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. According to the State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism for 2006, Iran's "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

and Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) were directly involved in the planning and support of terrorist acts and continued to exhort a variety of groups, especially Palestinian groups with leadership cadres in Syria and Lebanese Hizballah, to use terrorism in pursuit of their goals." The report also notes that Iran continues to provide safe haven for members of al-Qaeda and supports the ongoing insurgency in Iraq.

Indeed, Iran's support for terrorism extends far and wide. It has sponsored airplane hijackings, lethal attacks against U.S. soldiers stationed in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, kidnappings of Americans and Europeans, and even a restaurant bombing in Spain. In total, thanks to support from Tehran, the terrorist group Hizballah – which was created by Iran in 1982 as an offshoot of its military – has killed more Americans than any group other than al-Qaeda. Hizballah has openly expressed its fealty to Iran. Its 1985 platform states, "We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, those of our tutor and jurist who fulfills all the necessary conditions, [Ayatollah] Khomeini."



In 1996, the Iran-backed terrorist group Hizballah organized an attack on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 Americans.

Funding Hizballah's War Against Israel

After Israel withdrew unilaterally from Lebanon in May 2000, Hizballah initiated a massive arms buildup to prepare for further rounds of fighting against the Jewish state. The terrorist army's efforts culminated in the summer of 2006, when it killed eight Israeli soldiers and kidnapped two others, sparking a war that lasted nearly five weeks. During that time, Iran provided Hizballah with critical financial and military support and encouraged it to keep fighting.

Currently, Iran is working feverishly to replenish Hizballah's arms supply for yet another round of battle against Israel. Hizballah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah has boasted that the terrorist group "could launch between 1,000 and 3,000 rockets daily" at Israel. Hizballah continues to receive hundreds of millions of dollars from Iran each year. Nasrallah meets regularly with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to further bolster their relationship.

Supporting Palestinian Terrorism

Just as it supports Hizballah's war against Israel, Iran also provides critical aid to the terrorist group Hamas, which openly calls for Israel's destruction. After the 1993 signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo Accords, Hamas committed dozens of suicide bombings that killed hundreds of innocent Israeli men, women and children. Beyond sponsoring the attacks, Iran provided cash rewards to the families of the bombers.

Today, Iran is one of the few countries that still sponsor Hamas despite its illegal, violent takeover of Gaza last June. In January 2006, just after Hamas' election to lead the PA, Iran defied the international boycott of Hamas and was one of the first countries to announce its intention to fund the new terrorist leadership. Iran also provided military training to Hamas fighters for battle against Israel.

Both Hamas and Iran are quite open about their relationship. Mahmoud Zahar, a founder of Hamas, told the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* on June 22 that he had transferred large sums of money from Iran. "I personally once brought \$20 million from Iran to the Gaza Strip in a suitcase," he said. "No, actually twice – the second time it was \$22 million." In December 2006, then-PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas visited Tehran for meetings with Iran's leadership. In a discussion with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, Haniyeh candidly said, "Resistance is the only solution and the Palestinian government will never recognize Israel."

A Terrorist Regime

Even as Iran's illicit nuclear program continues to draw headlines, its support for terrorism also constitutes a potent threat to regional stability. The United States and its allies must further intensify their economic and political sanctions against Iran in order to compel the Islamic Republic to terminate its support for terrorism as well as its nuclear weapons program.