HEZBOLLAH

Hezbollah—an Iranian-backed terrorist group—poses an imminent threat to Israel. Situated over Israel’s northern border in southern Lebanon and Beirut’s suburbs, Hezbollah maintains an advanced military arsenal larger than many national armies. With an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles and up to 40,000 fighters, Hezbollah is positioned to inflict significant casualties and damage throughout Israel. Israeli security planners consider Hezbollah to be one of the greatest threats facing Israel today.

Hezbollah calls for the destruction of Israel.

Led by Shia clerics, Hezbollah follows the doctrines of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—leader of Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran—and calls for the destruction of the State of Israel. The group’s chief, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, often refers to Israel as a “cancerous growth” and states, “The only solution is to destroy it without giving it the opportunity to surrender.”

Hezbollah possesses an advanced rocket and missile arsenal.

In 2006, Hezbollah provoked a 34-day war with Israel during which it launched thousands of rockets into densely populated areas of northern Israel. Today, Hezbollah’s bigger and more destructive weapons stockpile includes an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles. Several thousand medium- and long-range munitions are equipped with sophisticated guidance systems that support pinpoint targeting—every Israeli city, town and military installation is within reach. Hezbollah could launch thousands of rockets per day in a future conflict, compared to the 2006 rate of 120 per day.

Hezbollah threatens Israel from the air and underground.

Hezbollah can attack Israeli military and civilian aircraft flying deep within Israeli airspace with its advanced surface-to-air missile systems, including Russian-designed shoulder-mounted SA-7 and SA-17 mobile platforms. Hezbollah can also employ drones for intelligence collection and direct attacks, as well as advanced Yakhont cruise missiles capable of striking Israel’s offshore gas platforms and naval vessels. It is also believed that Hezbollah is constructing offensive infiltration tunnels into Israel, similar to Hamas’ terror tunnels that originate in the Gaza Strip.
Hezbollah is a terrorist group and an Iranian proxy.
Hezbollah (“Party of God”) is an Iranian-founded Shia Islamist terrorist organization. In 1995, the United States designated it a Foreign Terrorist Organization. It 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. Within Lebanon, it operates as a “state within a state” and dominates the Lebanese political system.

Hezbollah’s ranks are now battle-tested from fighting in Syria.
Following the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Hezbollah deployed 6,000-8,000 of its fighters to fight alongside Iran’s IRGC-Quds Force and prop up the brutal regime of President Bashar al-Assad. These troops have gained significant battlefield experience and expertise that could be applied in a future offensive against Israel. The group has 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 continues to place Lebanese civilians at extreme risk in any future conflict by embedding its forces, missiles and weapons caches in civilian areas. Local inhabitants—men, women and children alike—are exploited as human shields by the terrorist group, which positions its weaponry within mosques, homes, hospitals and schools. Today, virtually all of southern Lebanon is a Hezbollah fortress of underground bunkers, rocket-launch sites and interconnecting tunnels. According to an Israeli defense official, “The [Lebanese] civilians are living in a military compound.”

THE WAY FORWARD

The United States must exert additional pressure on Hezbollah, while supporting Israel’s right and ability to defend itself from this threat. America must encourage a far more effective international campaign against the group, to include urging the European Union to designate Hezbollah—in its entirety—as a terrorist organization. In addition, the administration must increase enforcement of existing sanctions, including full implementation of the Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015 (HIFPA). Further, Congress must continue to support funding for Israel’s vital missile and rocket defense programs—including Arrow, David’s Sling and Iron Dome—and advance new legislative measures to counter the threat that Hezbollah and its supporters pose to Lebanese and Israeli civilians.