

## Hizb Allah at War in Syria: Forces, Operations, Effects and Implications

By Jeffrey White

AS THE WAR IN SYRIA rages, the conflict has presented a major challenge to Lebanese Hizb Allah's military organization, command, and combat forces. Hizb Allah has embarked on sustained expeditionary warfare for the first time in its history and finds itself pitted against enemies it had neither sought nor prepared to fight, on unfamiliar territory, and in a cause different from its "resistance" *raison d'être*.

The war in Syria has not been easy for the group, and the conflict shines a light on Hizb Allah's combat performance and capabilities. Hizb Allah is gaining valuable knowledge of irregular warfare and actual combat experience, but this may have only limited relevance in a future conflict with Israel.

This article focuses on the military aspects of Hizb Allah's intervention in Syria. It examines Hizb Allah's known activities in Syria, evaluates its success in stabilizing the Bashar al-Assad regime, reveals the challenges the group faces in Syria, and identifies the implications of its involvement. It finds that the group is the most effective force on the Syrian battlefield and has been instrumental in the preservation of the al-Assad regime and in its offensive successes since the spring of 2013.

### **Hizb Allah's Known Activities in Syria**

Hizb Allah has made a significant commitment of forces to Syria, but determining the actual number of personnel involved is difficult.<sup>1</sup> The

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1 There are a number of issues affecting the ability to clearly identify and characterize Hizb Allah forces in Syria. First, there are Hizb Allah trained Alawite and Shi'a militia forces that employ Hizb Allah iconography. Second, Hizb Allah forces operate in a combination of roles with Iraqi Shi'a combat forces. Third, Hizb Allah units and personnel are working with regime regular and irregular forces to stiffen and advise them. Fourth, Hizb Allah is rotating forces in and out of Syria, increasing the difficulty of determining how many are present in any given period. Finally, Hizb Allah has become kind of a bogeyman, claimed to be "here, there, and everywhere" in opposition reporting.

high reported number of Hizb Allah forces estimated to have been committed to Syria is about 10,000,<sup>2</sup> but this likely reflects the total rotated through Syria, not the number present at any one time.<sup>3</sup> The French foreign minister provided a more reasonable estimate of 3,000-4,000 in May 2013 during the height of the battle in Qusayr.<sup>4</sup> In September 2013, Reuters cited “regional security officials” as providing an estimate of 2,000-4,000.<sup>5</sup> Types of units and troops sent to Syria include “elite and special forces,”<sup>6</sup> and “reservists.”<sup>7</sup> Given the scope of reported Hizb Allah activity in Syria, including types of missions and areas of operation, up to 4,000 fighters seems a reasonable estimate.<sup>8</sup>

Based on videos of purported<sup>9</sup> Hizb Allah combatants in Syria, they resemble regular soldiers. They are uniformed, have load bearing equipment, and in some cases wear protective vests.<sup>10</sup> Weapons and equipment also seen with purported Hizb Allah forces in Syria include standard light infantry weapons (assault rifles, general purpose machine

guns), anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), truck-mounted heavy machine guns (“Dushkas”), light mortars, and recoilless rifles.<sup>11</sup> Hizb Allah reportedly operated regime armored vehicles in the fighting in Qusayr,<sup>12</sup> but this was likely a situation in which Hizb Allah forces were operating with regime regular armored units.

The organization of Hizb Allah forces in Syria is unclear. One report, citing a “regional security source,” indicated that Hizb Allah functions with a command structure including Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Syrian Army personnel and has been given specific geographic areas of responsibility.<sup>13</sup> Based on the different geographic fronts where they are fighting, Hizb Allah forces are probably organized on a territorial basis with separate commands for forces in Damascus and its suburbs, Aleppo city and Aleppo Province, and Homs Province.<sup>14</sup>

Hizb Allah is one component of the diverse forces mobilized by the regime. These forces include: regime regulars from the army, air force, air defense force, and navy; irregular forces of the National Defense Force (NDF);<sup>15</sup> allied forces from Iraq;<sup>16</sup> and possibly some Iranian combat forces in small numbers.<sup>17</sup>

Hizb Allah has brought important capabilities to the war on the regime’s side. Its forces in Syria are essentially light infantry<sup>18</sup> that can be depended on to execute both offensive and defensive missions in areas important to the regime.<sup>19</sup> They have learned to cooperate with regime heavy forces including armor, artillery, and air units, and to work effectively with regime irregulars and allies.

Hizb Allah has conducted four types of military missions in Syria:

- A training mission for regime regular<sup>20</sup> and irregular<sup>21</sup> forces in urban and counterinsurgency operations;
- A combat advisory role with regime regulars and irregulars;<sup>22</sup>
- “Corseting”<sup>23</sup> operations, providing a key reinforcing component of allied Iraqi/Shi`a forces, such as in the Damascus suburbs;<sup>24</sup>

2 See “More than 10,000 Hezbollah Members Fighting in Syria Source Says,” Now, August 25, 2013; Tony Badran, “Hezbollah and the Army of 12,000,” Now, July 24, 2013.

3 According to Phillip Smyth: “Hezbollah has rotated its fighters in and out of Syria for different intervals... It is important to remember that Hezbollah has rarely truly utilized heavy deployments inside Syria. Instead, the group has primarily functioned as a ‘core-force’ of extremely well-trained, equipped and motivated fighters who could act as the sharp tip of a pro-Assad spear.” See Phillip Smyth, “Does Hezbollah’s Partial Exit from Syria Mean Anything?” *The National*, October 30, 2013.

4 “France Says 3,000-4,000 Hezbollah are Fighting in Syria,” Reuters, May 29, 2013.

5 “Special Report: Hezbollah Gambles All in Syria,” Reuters, September 26, 2013.

6 Mona Alami, “Another Border War?” Now, October 22, 2013.

7 “Special Report: Hezbollah Gambles All in Syria.”

8 The reported mobilization of Hizb Allah reserves to back-fill in Lebanon for forces sent to Syria supports the idea of a significant force commitment in Syria. See “Hezbollah Mobilizes on the Ground and Calls for Reservists,” *Beirut Observer*, June 6, 2013.

9 It can be difficult to distinguish on videos among Hizb Allah, regular Syrian, and Iraqi elements fighting in Syria as they work closely together.

10 See, for example, “Unseen Footage of Hezbollah Operations in Syria,” Islamic TV Channel, December 1, 2013, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgoHOKOvOG0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgoHOKOvOG0).

11 See, for example, “Unseen Footage of Hezbollah in Operation Against Al Nusrah,” Islamic TV Channel, November 30, 2013, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T47pyAoSMk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T47pyAoSMk).

12 Amos Harel, “Hardened in Syria War, Hezbollah Presents New Set of Threats,” *Haaretz*, November 13, 2013.

13 “Special Report: Hezbollah Gambles All in Syria.”

14 This would be in keeping with Hizb Allah’s practice of organizing its forces in southern Lebanon into geographically based formations. By 2010, three geographic commands—the Northern, Western and Central Units—had been organized in the south. See “Intelligence Maps: How Hezbollah Uses Lebanese Villages as Military Bases,” Office of the Israel Defense Force Spokesperson, July 7, 2010.

15 “Insight: Battered by War, Syrian Army Creates its Own Replacement,” Reuters, April 21, 2013.

16 Omar al-Jaffal, “Iraqi Shiites Join Syrian War,” *al-Monitor*, October 29, 2013.

17 See, for example, “Video Shows Iran Aiding Syrian Regime’s Fight Against Rebels,” CBS, October 31, 2013; Phillip Smyth, “Hezbollah Cavalcade: Iran’s Losses in the 35<sup>th</sup> Province (Syria), Part 1,” *Jihadology.net*, June 13, 2013.

18 Light infantry are typically infantry without heavy weapons such as tanks, APCs and field artillery. They may have mortars for fire support and trucks for mobility.

19 Jeff Neumann, “Hezbollah’s Military Prowess Gives Boost to Syrian Troops,” *Alaska Dispatch*, June 17, 2013.

20 “Hezbollah Involvement in the Syrian Civil War,” Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, June 17, 2013, p. 16.

21 “Source: Hezbollah Training Shiite Fighters in Syria,” *Asbarq al-Awsat*, January 10, 2013.

22 Syrian opposition sources often report Hizb Allah “officers” with regime forces in combat. See, for example, a November 27, 2013, report by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) on the presence of Hizb Allah “officers” with regime regular troops in combat in the Damascus area, available at [www.facebook.com/syriahro](http://www.facebook.com/syriahro). Hizb Allah forces are closely associated with the Iraqi irregulars fighting for the regime in Syria. See, for example, an SOHR report of November 23, 2013, on Hizb Allah forces cooperating with the Abu Fadl al-Abbas Brigade in the Otaiba area of rural Damascus, available at [www.facebook.com/syriahro](http://www.facebook.com/syriahro).

23 Corseting operations are military actions in which high quality troops or forces are deployed with lower quality units to improve their combat capabilities. The term derives from the assignment of German Afrika Korps units to bolster Italian units in the North Africa campaign. See Bryn Hammond, *El Alamein: The Battle that Turned the Tide of the Second World War* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2012).

24 Smyth, “Does Hezbollah’s Partial Exit from Syria Mean Anything?”

- Direct combat operations on key battlefields, as seen in Qusayr.<sup>25</sup>

All of these roles have been important to regime successes since at least June 2013. Hizb Allah has been involved in both joint<sup>26</sup> and combined<sup>27</sup> offensive and defensive operations. It participates in joint operations with regime heavy forces (armor and artillery), air force units, and surface-to-surface missile units.<sup>28</sup> Joint and combined operations are a standard approach; in combat operations, Hizb Allah forces are frequently seen and reported working with regime and allied forces.<sup>29</sup>

Based largely on opposition reporting, Hizb Allah has been involved in direct combat and corseting operations in eight areas within Syria,<sup>30</sup> and in corseting and advisory operations in three more.<sup>31</sup> Reports posted by Syrian opposition elements reveal more than 80 specific locations where Hizb Allah is said to have been involved in military actions.<sup>32</sup>

25 Nicholas Blanford, "The Battle for Qusayr: How the Syrian Regime and Hizb Allah Tipped the Balance," *CTC Sentinel* 6:8 (2013).

26 Joint operations are those conducted by a combination of various armed services, including air, ground, and naval.

27 Combined operations are those conducted with the services of another, allied, country.

28 For example, as seen during the Qusayr campaign. See, for example, "Activists: Syrian Regime Provides Hezbollah Aerial Shield in Qusayr," *al-Arabiya*, April 21, 2013.

29 As seen during the fighting in the Qalamoun area. See, for example, Nicholas Blanford, "Slow Drip Offensive Underway in Qalamoun," *Daily Star*, October 25, 2013; Alex Simon and Mohammed Rabie, "Cross Border Sectarian Showdown: The Battle for Qalamoun," *Syria Direct*, November 26, 2013.

30 Specifically: the Qusayr campaign, the battle for Homs city, the battle for Tal Kalakah, fighting in the Aleppo city area and the Aleppo countryside, offensive and defensive operations in Damascus and its suburbs, and the Qalamoun operation.

31 Hizb Allah appeared to conduct corseting and advisory operations in Latakia, Deraa, and Idlib provinces.

32 Sources include the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and the Syrian Local Coordinating Committees (LCC) Facebook pages ([www.facebook.com/syriahro](http://www.facebook.com/syriahro) and [www.facebook.com/LCCSy](http://www.facebook.com/LCCSy)), and individual postings on the Yalla Souriya blog located at [www.yal-lasouriya.wordpress.com](http://www.yal-lasouriya.wordpress.com).

### Evaluating Hizb Allah's Success

Hizb Allah's combat performance in Syria has been at least fair. Its forces have the training and experience to conduct attacks and defensive actions with skill, and they have demonstrated a willingness to accept the casualties necessary to achieve their objectives.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, Hizb Allah's forces have not always proved successful in offensive actions, suffering some tactical setbacks in the fighting for Qusayr,<sup>34</sup> and may have failed in some defensive actions in the eastern Damascus suburbs during heavy fighting there in late November 2013.<sup>35</sup>

The 2013 Qusayr campaign is a case in point. The Syrian regime's and Hizb Allah's operation to retake control of Qusayr began in April 2013,<sup>36</sup> and the assault on the city, which began on May 19, lasted 17 days,<sup>37</sup> even with regime and Hizb Allah forces having the advantage of firepower and the ability to isolate the city. Hizb Allah was apparently surprised by the level of resistance offered by the rebels,<sup>38</sup> the rebels' extensive use of mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs),<sup>39</sup> and was unfamiliar with the area of operations.<sup>40</sup>

The protracted nature of Hizb Allah's offensive operations, not only at Qusayr but also in the Damascus and Aleppo areas, may reflect concern about casualties, as well as interoperability issues<sup>41</sup> involved in cooperating with regular and irregular regime and allied forces. Hizb Allah took significant

33 This assessment is based on their performance in the fighting at Qusayr in the spring and more recently in Qalamoun.

34 Blanford, "The Battle for Qusayr: How the Syrian Regime and Hizb Allah Tipped the Balance."

35 See, for example, "Eastern Al Ghota, 40 Hezbollah Mercenaries Have Surrendered to the Rebels Due to the Siege and the Shortage of Ammunitions," *Yalla Souriya* blog, November 24, 2013.

36 Blanford, "The Battle for Qusayr: How the Syrian Regime and Hizb Allah Tipped the Balance."

37 *Ibid.*

38 Jamie Dettmer, "Hezbollah Has Edge on Syrian Battlefield," *Voice of America*, June 25, 2013.

39 Tony Badran, "Hezbollah Slips in Qusayr," *Now*, May 23, 2013.

40 Nicholas Blanford, "Hezbollah Applies New Training in Syria," *Daily Star*, June 8, 2013.

41 Such as incompatible communications systems, different standards of training, different rules-of-engagement, different doctrine.

casualties in the Qusayr<sup>42</sup> campaign and appeared to be suffering rising casualties in the fighting in the Damascus (southern and eastern Damascus, Qalamoun) region in November.<sup>43</sup> Hizb Allah is also losing combat leaders in the fighting, as would be expected in close quarters and urban combat.<sup>44</sup> Overall, Hizb Allah has probably suffered some hundreds killed in action<sup>45</sup> in Syria and, in a rough estimate, perhaps 1,000 wounded in action,<sup>46</sup> but losses could be greater. Nevertheless, these numbers seem manageable for Hizb Allah from a military perspective.<sup>47</sup> Syrian opposition sources claim the rebels are inflicting large casualties on Hizb Allah forces, but these claims need to be heavily discounted.<sup>48</sup>

Not to be overlooked is Hizb Allah's train and assist mission that began in 2012.<sup>49</sup> In the training role, Hizb Allah has focused on small unit and counterinsurgency tactics for the

42 "Hezbollah Operatives Killed in Syria - Update," Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, June 27, 2013.

43 Nicholas Blanford, "Battlefield Lessons in Syria Strengthen Hezbollah's Fighting Force," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 3, 2013. See also "19 Fighters Killed in 17 Days," available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2-dJcgO-Fg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2-dJcgO-Fg).

44 Blanford, "Battlefield Lessons in Syria Strengthen Hezbollah's Fighting Force"; "Hezbollah Operatives Killed in Syria - Updated to the End of July 2013," Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, August 3, 2013.

45 Through July 2013, Hizb Allah is estimated to have lost 200 killed in Syria and several hundred wounded, mostly in the Qusayr campaign. See "Hezbollah Operatives Killed in Syria - Updated to the End of July 2013." Since July 2013, Hizb Allah has continued to suffer casualties in Syria.

46 This estimate is based on a standard factor of four WIA for every KIA. Also see Amos Harel, "Hardened in Syria War, Hezbollah Presents New Set of Threats," *Haaretz*, November 13, 2013.

47 Politically is another matter. See, for example, Zaid Bin Kami, "Hezbollah Fighters' Families Unhappy About Syria Involvement," *Asharq al-Awsat*, July 7, 2013; Ariel Ben Solomon, "Dissent within Hezbollah over Involvement in Syria," *Jerusalem Post*, April 18, 2013.

48 See, for example, Stuart Winer, "250 Hezbollah Fighters Slain in Damascus, Rebels Claim," *Times of Israel*, November 28, 2013.

49 "Hezbollah Involvement in the Syrian Civil War," Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, June 17, 2013, pp. 14-15.

Syrian regular army.<sup>50</sup> By the spring of 2013, Hizb Allah had helped train 50,000 members of the regime's irregular forces, according to an Israeli estimate.<sup>51</sup> Hizb Allah has made the regime's regulars more effective, and made the irregulars useful, even crucial, for regime survival by helping to compensate for attrition of regular forces. In April 2013, according to a Lebanese newspaper, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad recognized Hizb Allah's contribution to the preservation of the regime, reportedly expressing his "confidence, satisfaction and great gratitude towards Hezbollah."<sup>52</sup>

Hizb Allah is making a difference in Syria, but not everywhere and not yet decisively. Its forces have become the regime's "fire brigade," employed in critical areas and actions. It has helped to keep the regime in the war, and arguably it has helped reverse the course of the conflict. It has restored the regime's ability to conduct significant offensive operations, and has been instrumental to regime successes in Homs Province, Aleppo Province and Damascus and its suburbs.

#### Military Challenges of the Syrian War

The military environment in Syria presents serious challenges to Hizb Allah. One of the group's strengths in southern Lebanon has always been its intimate understanding of the terrain. Hizb Allah personnel may have had some familiarity with the terrain on the Syrian side of the border, but beyond a few miles they would have had little knowledge, and in the depth of Syria, where they now find themselves operating, they have effectively no knowledge. Although they are now gaining familiarity in the areas in which they are deployed, this process takes time, and each movement into a new area requires learning. The terrain in Syria is also militarily undeveloped, unlike southern Lebanon where Hizb Allah has created an elaborate military infrastructure of fortifications, obstacles, demolitions, command

facilities, observation posts, storage facilities, and barracks, comprising hundreds of positions.<sup>53</sup>

Hizb Allah personnel are involved in both urban and rural fighting over long distances and on multiple fronts. The distances involved and the size and complexity of the urban environments in Syria are unprecedented for the organization. Hizb Allah's previous major ground combat experience was limited mostly to a relatively small area of southern Lebanon adjacent to the Israeli border. It is now fighting on three or four different fronts separated by tens, and, in the case of the Aleppo front, hundreds of miles. Its urban combat experience was largely limited to the towns and villages of southern Lebanon, while in Syria it is involved in close combat in the sprawling neighborhoods of major cities such as Damascus, Homs and Aleppo.

The human terrain, or the sectarian map, of the Syrian theater is more complex than Hizb Allah faces in southern Lebanon, the latter of which has a strong Shi'a majority. Unlike in its previous conflicts with Israel, Hizb Allah is operating in some areas that have a hostile Sunni population that supports its opponents. In these areas, Hizb Allah is the "occupier" and faces armed "resistance."

Moreover, the Sunni rebels in Syria are not the enemy who Hizb Allah planned to fight. Hizb Allah's careful study of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and meticulous preparation for fighting it avail Hizb Allah little against the rebels in Syria. These opponents are diverse irregulars with little in the way of formal organization, heavy forces, and established doctrine. In some ways, they are like Hizb Allah itself, with a strong ideological foundation and a deep commitment to their mission.

Additionally, unlike Lebanon, Hizb Allah in Syria is involved in complex coalition warfare including joint and combined operations. The nature of the war being fought by the regime demands that Hizb Allah work with forces as different as those of the

regime's air force and the irregular Iraqi volunteers such as the Abu Fadl al-Abbas Brigade.<sup>54</sup>

In terms of challenges in Syria, Hizb Allah is conducting operations (including offensive ones), and not just fighting tactical battles.<sup>55</sup> This is warfare of a different kind than it has waged against the IDF, involving larger formations, longer periods of time, in more complex maneuvers, and placing more demands—in terms of planning and command and control—on the combat forces and on supporting elements (especially intelligence and logistics). All of this is certainly a challenge to Hizb Allah's command and control capabilities, which were built for an almost "set-piece" battle with the well-understood IDF.<sup>56</sup>

#### Implications

Hizb Allah is a learning organization. It studies its opponents and draws conclusions from its combat operations.<sup>57</sup> Lessons it may have learned, re-learned, or had emphasized in the Syrian conflict likely involve:

- The role of firepower in offensive and defensive operations, including its application, coordination, and effects;
- The requirements of conducting sustained combat operations over a broad area in terms of planning, command and control, logistics, rotation of forces and personnel;

54 The Syrian air force provided air support to operations in which Hizb Allah was involved at Qusayr, Damascus, and Aleppo, and Hizb Allah forces have been closely associated with the operations and actions of the Abu Fadal al-Abbas Brigade. On the latter point, see Phillip Smyth, "Hizballah Cavalcade: What is the Liwa'a Abu Fadl al-Abbas (LAFa)?" Jihadology.net, May 15, 2013.

55 The operational level of war is the level between strategy and tactics. It involves the use of maneuver and battle to achieve strategic goals in a theater or sub-theater of war. Operations implement strategy. The fighting in the Qusayr area of Syria that began in April 2013 and culminated with the capture of Qusayr city in early June was an operation involving multiple battles. Battles are the realm of tactics.

56 For a discussion of Hizb Allah's preparations for war with Israel, see Jeffrey White, "If War Comes: Israel vs. Hizballah and Its Allies," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2010.

57 Anthony Cordesman, "Lessons of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah War," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007, p. 32.

50 Ibid., p. 1.

51 Julian Borger, "Iran and Hezbollah 'Have Built 50,000-Strong Force to Help Syrian Regime,'" *Guardian*, March 14, 2013.

52 "Assad Says Hezbollah a Model for Syria," *Now*, May 9, 2013.

53 "Hizballah Located in 1,000 Facilities in Southern Lebanon," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 31, 2011.

- The complexities and challenges of working with allied regular and irregular forces;
- The high cost of offensive operations in manpower and resources;
- The conduct of company/battalion size offensive operations;
- The planning and conduct of complex operations.

Hizb Allah is gaining command and control experience at the operational and tactical levels. It is raising a new crop of fighters and leaders with combat experience.<sup>58</sup> It is hardening its personnel and units for the rigors of combat, likely increasing their cohesion and resilience. It is improving individual and small unit weapons and tactical skills. It is gaining experience in the collection and use of tactical and operational intelligence.<sup>59</sup> As a result of its involvement in Syria, Hizb Allah will be better prepared to fight in Lebanon. With an improved understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Sunni irregular forces and increased experience in combat, its superiority over potential opponents in Lebanon, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, will be enhanced.

Nevertheless, Hizb Allah is also incurring costs from its Syria intervention. In addition to casualties, it has become the target of Sunni elements operating in Lebanon, which have penetrated to the very heart of the organization in southern Beirut.<sup>60</sup> Its participation in the conflict has contributed to rising Sunni-Shi'a tensions in Lebanon.<sup>61</sup> Once the darling of the Arab world, Hizb Allah is now seen, in at least some quarters, as an enemy of Sunnis.<sup>62</sup>

The fighting in Syria should improve Hizb Allah's ability to fight the IDF, but the improvement will be limited, and some of what Hizb Allah learns in Syria will be irrelevant to fighting the IDF. In the fighting in Syria, Hizb Allah enjoys significant advantages over the rebels, including: regime firepower, a secure base area, extensive logistics, robust command and control, and the opportunity for operational maneuver. In a war with Israel, these advantages would be with the IDF. Nevertheless, some improvement in combat performance and coordination of forces should be expected, including a capability for offensive actions at the company level.

Yet, it is in Syria where Hizb Allah's role has the greatest military and political implications. Hizb Allah's intervention has been instrumental in preserving the regime. It is probably the best force on the battlefield at this stage of the Syrian war. It has proven itself a reliable and effective ally. It is willing to accept the political risks and the casualties of a prolonged and essentially open ended intervention.

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58 Blanford, "Battlefield Lessons in Syria Strengthen Hezbollah's Fighting Force."

59 Amos Harel, "Hardened in Syria War, Hezbollah Presents New Set of Threats," *Haaretz*, November 13, 2013.

60 Ben Hubbard and Hwaida Saad, "Deadly Blast Rocks a Hezbollah Stronghold in Lebanon," *New York Times*, August 15, 2013.

61 Hwaida Saad and Ben Hubbard, "Bombings Strike Lebanon, as Mosques are Targeted in Growing Violence," *New York Times*, August 23, 2013.

62 Jeffrey Fleishman, "Hezbollah's Role in Syria Fighting Threatens to Spread Holy War," *Los Angeles Times*,

June 22, 2013.