

Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria, and Beyond

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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Counterterrorism Lecture Series \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/counterterrorism-lecture-series\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/counterterrorism-lecture-series)

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The former presidential advisor on Syria discusses the regional and strategic implications of Hezbollah's role in the ongoing civil war, as well as the scope of its militant and terrorist activities.

The following is an excerpt from Ambassador Hof's prepared remarks at a September 3 Washington Institute Policy Forum. To read his full remarks, download the PDF.

Matt Levitt's [new book \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hezbollah-the-global-footprint-of-lebanons-party-of-god\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hezbollah-the-global-footprint-of-lebanons-party-of-god) is the first of its kind to focus specifically on Hezbollah's worldwide clandestine activities, which are largely criminal and terroristic in nature. One of the real services rendered by this work is the spike it drives into the notion that there is somehow a distinction between Hezbollah's military and political wings, a concept clung to by various academicians, politicians, and commentators in spite of categorical denials by senior Hezbollah leaders. It is true that the organization provides social services to its constituents. It is true that Hezbollah acts, in areas where it dominates, as a state within a jurisdiction -- Lebanon -- that itself is barely a state, if at all. Yet Matt Levitt accurately and eloquently described the truth of the matter as follows: "Hezbollah should be judged by the totality of its actions. It cannot be forgiven its criminal, terrorist, or militant pursuits simply because at the same time it also engages in political or humanitarian ones. Hezbollah's leaders often insist the group does not maintain support networks around the world, let alone carry out attacks abroad...But as the schemes and plots documented here demonstrate, Hezbollah can and has mobilized operatives for everything from criminal enterprises to terrorist attacks well beyond Lebanon's borders."

My own interest in Hezbollah, over the past 30 years, has focused largely on its role in Lebanon and the immediate neighborhood. In April 1983 it blew up the American Embassy in Beirut, killing and injuring a great many Lebanese embassy employees who I had gotten to know well during a tour of duty at the embassy that had ended a year earlier... ❖

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