

# Containing Hizballah's Terrorist Wing

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## Brief Analysis

As part of the international effort to ensure that the cessation of hostilities between Lebanon and Israel can become a sustainable ceasefire, much attention has been paid to blocking arms shipments to Hizballah, as called for in UN Security Council Resolution 1701. But another threat to peace in the region is Hizballah's potent terrorist wing. Arguably its most dangerous offensive weapon, Hizballah's terrorist wing was active throughout this recent conflict.

### Hizballah: A Specially Designated Terrorist Organization

Terrorism was Hizballah's original founding principle and *raison d'être*. It was on the basis of the group's extensive involvement in terrorism against U.S., European, and Middle Eastern interests that President Clinton in January 1995 designated Hizballah a specially designated terrorist organization and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, a specially designated terrorist.

Throughout the recent military conflict with Israel, Hizballah used terror operations to augment its military effort. According to Israeli authorities, between July 17 and August 9, as Israel's conflict with Hizballah was reaching its most critical phase, Israeli security forces prevented nine terrorist attacks sponsored by Hizballah. All of these attacks, which would have been carried out by local Palestinian terrorist groups with Hizballah's funding and operational support, were directed at targets within Israel's 1967 ceasefire lines; among those arrested were a woman and a fifteen-year-old boy. In addition to preventing these attacks, Israeli security forces succeeded in killing one Hizballah terrorist facilitator, Ibrahim Nibah, and arresting another, Nahil Muhammad Yassin, in the West Bank as they were planning future attacks. The breadth of Hizballah's involvement in Palestinian terrorism is demonstrated by the fact that all three of the major Palestinian terrorist groups— Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades—were beneficiaries of Hizballah's support and guidance in these failed attacks.

Complementing its operational support of terrorism against Israel, Hizballah also provides vital training to new recruits to Palestinian terrorist organizations. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the quality of the training Hizballah offers. As James Kitfield noted in his 2002 National Journal article "The Hezbollah Model," Hizballah has significantly increased the capacity of Palestinian terrorist groups by exporting its model of operations to these

groups. According to Kitfield, in addition to suicide attacks, Hizballah has provided Palestinian groups with training on multiple attacks, organizational discipline, willingness to sacrifice, innovation, and institutionalized learning, all of which have made these organizations formidable terrorist enterprises. Additionally, while much of Hizballah's training occurs in its camps located throughout Lebanon, it also occurs on Hizballah's websites and through Hizballah trainers who travel covertly to Gaza via Egypt.

#### Gaps in Resolution 1701

Given the important role of Hizballah's terrorist wing in its overall strategy, Hizballah will retain a potent offensive capability so long as its terror apparatus remains intact. Resolution 1701 focused on Hizballah's military, not its terrorist, capability. For example, Resolution 1701 says nothing about Hizballah's terrorist training camps in Lebanon. Given the duration of their existence and the number of terrorists who have graduated from them over the years, these camps have been among the most important sources of terrorist violence in the region. If not dismantled, they will be a continuing source of trained terrorists in the future.

An additional problem with Resolution 1701 is its imperfect approach to the issue of Hizballah's missiles, which serve no military purpose and are meant solely to terrorize the Israeli civilian population. One of the most important paragraphs of the resolution, Operative Paragraph 8, calls for "the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of armed personnel, assets, and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and UNIFIL" (the UN Interim Force in Lebanon). Leaving aside the implications of Hizballah's increasingly influential role in the Lebanese government in the wake of this conflict and the extent to which Hizballah's military units below the Litani River can or will be disarmed, this provision says nothing about Hizballah maintaining missiles of longer range and greater accuracy north of the Litani River boundary. Although another part of that paragraph requires that "there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State," it is unclear what mechanisms will be used to ensure that Hizballah has no long-range missiles. These missiles provide Hizballah with a potent terrorist weapon against Israel.

A third important gap in Resolution 1701 concerns the flow of funding to Hizballah from outside the country. While the issue of Hizballah's resupply of weapons is addressed, albeit inadequately, in both this resolution and in Security Council Resolution 1559, no restrictions are placed on the external supply of funds to Hizballah. These funds are believed by Israeli authorities to play an important role in the support of Palestinian terror operations in Israel.

#### Conclusions

If the international community moves against Hizballah's military capabilities but takes no action against its terror wing, Hizballah will have every incentive to make greater use of its impressive terrorist capability. It would seem to be a logical extension of UNIFIL's mandate for it to assist the Lebanese government in dismantling Hizballah's training camps. Since these camps have long been a source of training for many terrorist groups from the Middle East and beyond, they pose a clear threat to international peace and security and therefore should be a matter of UN concern. Until these camps are closed, Resolution 1559's requirement to disarm Hizballah and thereby endow the current Lebanese government the necessary authority to govern Lebanon will be severely compromised.

A second issue that is clearly within the mandate of the UN is the disposition of Hizballah's longer range missiles, particularly those that can reach Israel from beyond the Litani River. While the short-range katyusha rockets are also a threat, that problem would be addressed by the full implementation of Resolution 1701. Until Hizballah's longer range weapons are addressed, they will remain a significant terror threat to Israel. Full disarmament of Hizballah, as called for in Resolution 1701, will be needed to address this problem.

A more problematic issue for the international community will be Hizballah's external funding. Unfortunately, this problem is complicated by Hizballah's role in charitable activities, such as rebuilding war damage. Furthermore, the

massive influx into Lebanon of reconstruction funds from foreign governments and charitable organizations provides a covert means to divert funds to Hizballah's military and terror operations. This notwithstanding, the goal of disarming Hizballah will not be achieved until its external funding is reduced.

For the same reasons that Hizballah's external support must be controlled, so must its support of Palestinian terrorist organizations be disrupted. No less than Hizballah, these organizations must also be isolated from their external sponsors. Given the extent of Hizballah's support to these groups, the disruption of this nexus is a prerequisite for stability between Israelis and the Palestinians.

Although Hizballah's military capacity has undoubtedly been degraded by Israel's recent offensive in southern Lebanon, the organization's will to rebuild its resources and to continue its conflict with Israel remains undiminished—as does the willingness of Syria and Iran to support Hizballah's military and terrorist capabilities. In this situation, it would be unduly optimistic to assume that Hizballah will not make use of its extensive terrorist infrastructure. A sustainable peace requires addressing this problem.

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