

Hezbollah:

Financing Terror through Criminal Enterprise

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
SUMMARY

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage identified Hezbollah as "the A-team of terrorism," and warned "their time will come, there's no question about it."

Such statements are more than just tough talk. Highlights of Hezbollah's record of terror attacks include suicide truck bombings targeting U.S. and French forces in Beirut (in 1983 and 1984) and U.S. forces again in Saudi Arabia (in 1996), its record of suicide bombing attacks targeting Jewish and Israeli interests such as those in Argentina (1992 and 1994) and in Thailand (attempted in 1994), and a host of other plots targeting American, French, German, British, Kuwaiti, Bahraini and other interests in plots from Europe to Southeast Asia to the Middle East.

According to U.S. authorities, concern over the threat posed by Hezbollah is well placed. FBI officials testified in February 2002 that "FBI investigations to date continue to indicate that many Hezbollah subjects based in the United States have the capability to attempt terrorist attacks here should this be a desired objective of the group."

Similarly, CIA Director George Tenet testified in February 2003 that "Hezbollah, as an organization with capability and worldwide presence, is [al-Qaeda's] equal, if not a far more capable organization."

Hezbollah depends on a wide variety of criminal enterprises, ranging from smuggling to fraud to drug trade to diamond trade in regions across the world, including North America, South America, and the Middle East, to raise money to support Hezbollah activities. Published reports even suggest that al-Qaida and Hezbollah have formed additional tactical, ad-hoc alliances with a variety of terrorist organizations to cooperate on money laundering and other unlawful activities.

In the United States, law enforcement officials are investigating a variety of criminal enterprises suspected of funding Middle Eastern terrorist groups, including the stealing and reselling of baby formula, food-stamp fraud, and scams involving grocery coupons, welfare claims, credit cards, and even unlicensed t-shirts sales. U.S. officials believe "a substantial portion" of the estimated millions of dollars raised by Middle Eastern terrorist groups comes

from the \$20 million to \$30 million annually brought in by the illicit scam industry in America.

Cracking down on Hezbollah's proactive involvement in criminal enterprises in the United States has been and should continue to be a focus of U.S. law enforcement authorities' strategy for combating the group's presence in this country and its effectiveness abroad.

[Click here to download a PDF of the full text of this testimony. \(../html/pdf/hezbollah-testimony-05252005.pdf\)](#) ❖

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