

Banning Hizballah TV in America

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Brief Analysis

Seeking to prevent terror propaganda and incitement to terror in America, the U.S. government added al-Manar (Arabic for "the beacon"), the official television mouthpiece of Hizballah, or the Lebanese Party of God, to the Terrorism Exclusion List (TEL). By designating the network as a terrorist organization the government will effectively take Hizballah television off the air in the United States by denying entry to its employees and to anyone who supports the network.

Background on al-Manar

Hizballah is a charter member of both the State Department's Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list and the Treasury Department's Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity (SDGT) list. The organization uses al-Manar -- which it calls the "station of resistance" -- to reach not only the citizens of Lebanon, but also the broader Arab, Muslim, and Western worlds. Indeed, Hizballah disseminates its violent propaganda via al-Manar to an estimated 10-15 million viewers daily.

This past week, the French Higher Audio Visual Council (CSA) ordered the French-owned Eutelsat, which broadcasts al-Manar in parts of Europe, to cease carrying the station because it incites violence and contains anti-Semitic messages. In November 2003, the channel was removed from the Australian satellite package TARBS.

In the United States, al-Manar can be viewed through Intelsat (a Barbados-owned company with offices in Washington, D.C.) and WorldLink TV (a San Francisco-based nonprofit network that repackages news from the Arab world in a program called Mosaic). In addition the Blackstone Group, a New York-based company, owns New Sky Satellite (NSS), which broadcasts al-Manar in parts of Europe and Northern Africa. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has sought to shut al-Manar down, but has found its hands tied because the station is broadcast via satellite and is not American.

Background on TEL

Today the State Department added al-Manar to the Terrorist Exclusion List (TEL). Under Section 212 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (as amended by Section 411 of the USA PATRIOT Act) the secretary of state, in consultation with or upon the request of the attorney general, is authorized "to designate terrorist entities for immigration purposes" on the TEL.

The primary criteria for being listed on the TEL include: committing or inciting to commit a terrorist activity, preparing or planning a terrorist activity, gathering targeting information for a terrorist activity, and providing material support to further terrorist activity. Under the statute, "terrorist activity" is defined by a detailed list of actions (such as hostage taking and the use of a weapon with the intent to endanger people's safety or cause substantial property damage) and "also captures any threat, attempt or conspiracy to do any of these activities."

According to an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) memorandum, the TEL is intended to enhance the government's ability to deport or deny admission to any aliens who, like those affiliated with al-Manar, use their "position of prominence to endorse or espouse terrorist activity or to persuade others to support terrorist activity."

Al-Manar Espouses Terror

According to one official in al-Manar's Art Graphic Department, al-Manar's music videos are meant to "help people on the way to committing what you call in the West a suicide mission. [They are] meant to be the first step in the process of a freedom fighter operation."

The United States has been a primary target of al-Manar programming and is depicted as a global oppressor. In a speech broadcast on al-Manar, Hizballah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah stated, "Our enmity to the Great Satan is complete and unlimited. . . . Our echoing slogan will remain: Death to America!" One video features an altered image of the Statue of Liberty. The statue's head has been transformed into a skull with hollow eyes, her gown dripping in blood. Instead of a torch, she holds a sharp knife. After asserting that the United States "has pried into the affairs of most countries in the world," the video ends with the slogan, "America owes blood to all of humanity."

Al-Manar often juxtaposes sacred Islamic text with images of "martyrdom" to incite its viewers to support and even carry out acts of terror. In one video, Qur'anic verses are sung in somber, quiet tones and scrolled across the screen while footage in the background shows U.S. and Israeli flags being burned, demonstrators waving a "Down with U.S.A." sign, a suicide bomber recording his valediction, victims and rescue personnel scrambling in the aftermath of a suicide bombing, and similar images.

Indeed, al-Manar takes its case for suicide operations straight to the people. Viewers are told that "the path to becoming a priest in Islam is through jihad." Potential bombers are implored to focus their attention on the afterlife and on judgment day "instead of getting preoccupied with our lives here on earth." Mothers are encouraged to give up their sons for God, country, and the blessings of the afterlife, to prepare them "for battle knowing that their blood will mix with the soil." In the eyes of Hizballah, "this belief in judgment day is the most powerful weapon in the face of technology and advanced weaponry." Such belief "drives fear into the heart of the Israeli soldier as he sits in his tank, while God guides [Hizballah's] bullets and rockets to their targets."

Al-Manar also encourages Iraqi insurgents to attack U.S. troops as well. One video lambastes U.S. troops in Iraq with the following lyrics: "Down with the mother of terrorism! America threatens in vain, an occupying army of invaders. Nothing remains but rifles and suicide bombers." The video ends with an image of a suicide bomber's belt detonating.

Ramifications of Designating al-Manar on the TEL

Under the TEL, those subject to possible exclusion and deportation would include members of al-Manar's staff; aliens who use positions of prominence to persuade others to support al-Manar; those who solicit funds or

membership for al-Manar; and those whose actions provide material support -- including communications -- to al-Manar.

Practically, the designation would bar foreign al-Manar employees from entering the U.S. However, Muhammad Dalbah, al-Manar's Washington bureau chief and an American citizen, would not be subject to deportation. Companies that advertise on al-Manar, or those whose activities could be seen as supporting the station or persuading others to do so, could also be barred from entering the U.S., as could satellite wholesale operators that broadcast the station.

Al-Manar functions as the main propaganda machine for Hizballah, responsible for the deaths of more Americans than any terrorist group other than al-Qaeda. Adding it to the TEL is the first step toward shutting down its operations in the United States. The next step would be designating the station an SDGT in its own right. This would enable the government to freeze financial assets tied to the station or to individuals or organizations that associate with it, and to sanction foreign banks that provide services to the station, affecting its ability to broadcast overseas as well.

Matthew Levitt, director of terrorism studies at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, is the author of *Exposing Hamas: Funding Terror under the Cover of Charity* (Yale University Press, 2005). Avi Jorisch, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and an adjunct scholar of The Washington Institute, is the author of **[Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah's al-Manar Television \(templateC04.php?CID=66\)](#)** (Washington Institute, 2004). ❖

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