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Hezbollah's Terrorist Threat to the European Union

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Hezbollah (“Party of God”), the radical Lebanon-based Shiite revolutionary movement, poses a clear terrorist threat to international security. Hezbollah terrorists have murdered Americans, Israelis, Lebanese, Europeans, and the citizens of many other nations. Originally founded in 1982, this group has evolved from a local menace into a global terrorist network strongly backed by radical regimes in Iran and Syria, and funded by a web of charitable organizations, criminal activities, and front companies.

Hezbollah regards terrorism not only as a useful tool for advancing its revolutionary agenda but as a religious duty as part of a “global jihad.” It helped to introduce and popularize the horrific tactic of suicide bombings in Lebanon in the 1980s, developed a strong guerrilla force and a political apparatus in the 1990s, and became a major destabilizing influence in the Arab–Israeli conflict in the last decade.

Prior to September 11, 2001, Hezbollah murdered more Americans than any other terrorist group. Despite al-Qaeda’s increased visibility since then, Hezbollah remains a bigger, better equipped, better organized, and potentially more dangerous terrorist organization, in part because it enjoys the unstinting support of the two chief state sponsors of terrorism in the world today—Iran and Syria. Hezbollah’s threat potential led former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to dub it “the A-Team of terrorism.”

Hezbollah is a cancer that has metastasized, expanding its operations from Lebanon, first to strike regional targets in the Middle East, then far beyond. It

Talking Points

- Hezbollah poses a greater potential terrorist threat to the United States and to the European Union than al-Qaeda does, by virtue of the unstinting support it receives from Iran and Syria.
- The EU has adopted an ostrich-like policy that mistakenly accepts the fiction that Hezbollah’s “political wing” can be distinguished from its terrorist wing.
- The EU must designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group and ban its activities to protect European citizens from terrorist attacks and prohibit Hezbollah fundraising operations in Europe.
- Funds raised in Europe enable Hezbollah to threaten the stability of Lebanon, undermine the security of Israel, obstruct Arab–Israeli peace efforts, and help Iran to destabilize the volatile Middle East.

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now is truly a global terrorist threat that draws financial and logistical support from the Lebanese Shiite diaspora in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, North America, and South America. Hezbollah fundraising and equipment procurement cells have been detected and broken up in the United States and Canada. Europe is believed to contain many more of these cells.

Hezbollah has been implicated in numerous terrorist attacks against Americans, including:

- The April 18, 1983, bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut Lebanon, which killed 63 people, including 17 Americans;
- The October 23, 1983, suicide truck bombing of the Marine barracks at Beirut Airport, which killed 241 Marines deployed as part of the multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon;
- The September 20, 1984, bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in Lebanon; and
- The 1996 Khobar Towers bombing, which killed 19 American servicemen stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Hezbollah also was involved in the kidnapping of several dozen Westerners, including 14 Americans, who were held as hostages in Lebanon in the 1980s. The American hostages eventually became pawns that Iran used as leverage in the secret negotiations that led to the Iran-Contra affair in the mid-1980s.

Hezbollah has launched numerous attacks at far-flung targets outside the Middle East. Hezbollah perpetrated the two deadliest terrorist attacks in the history of South America—the March 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which killed 29 people; and the July 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 96 people. The trial of those implicated in the 1994 bombing revealed an extensive Hezbollah presence in Argentina and other countries in South America. Hezbollah also was involved in aborted attempts to bomb the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, in 1994, and in a failed plot in Singapore.

Hezbollah's Terrorist Threat in Europe

Hezbollah poses a direct threat to EU citizens at home and those traveling abroad, especially in the Middle East. Hezbollah established a presence

inside European countries in the 1980s amid the influx of Lebanese citizens seeking to escape Lebanon's brutal civil war and the recurring clashes between Israel and Palestinian terrorists based in Lebanese refugee camps. Hezbollah took root among Lebanese Shiite immigrant communities throughout Europe. German intelligence officials estimate that roughly 900 Hezbollah members live in Germany alone. Hezbollah also has developed an extensive web of fundraising and logistical support cells spread throughout Europe.

France and Britain have been the principal European targets of Hezbollah terrorism, in part because both countries opposed Hezbollah's agenda in Lebanon and were perceived to be enemies of Iran, Hezbollah's chief patron. Hezbollah has been involved in many terrorist attacks against Europeans, including:

- The October 1983 bombing of the French contingent of the multinational peacekeeping force in Lebanon (on the same day as the U.S. Marine barracks bombing), which killed 58 French soldiers;
- The December 1983 bombing of the French Embassy in Kuwait;
- The April 1985 bombing of a restaurant near a U.S. base in Madrid, Spain, which killed 18 Spanish citizens;
- A campaign of 13 bombings in France in 1986 that targeted shopping centers and railroad facilities, killing 13 people and wounding more than 250; and
- A March 1989 attempt to assassinate British novelist Salman Rushdie, which failed when a bomb exploded prematurely, killing a terrorist in London.

Hezbollah attacks in Europe trailed off in the 1990s after Hezbollah's Iranian sponsors accepted a truce in their bloody 1980–1988 war with Iraq and no longer needed a surrogate to punish states that Tehran perceived to be supporting Iraq. But this lull could quickly come to an end if the situation changes in Lebanon or Iran is embroiled in another conflict. Significantly, the participation of European troops in Lebanese peacekeeping operations, which became a lightning rod for Hezbollah terrorist

attacks in the 1980s, could become an issue again today, as Hezbollah attempts to revive its aggressive operations in southern Lebanon. Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden have contributed troops to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Troops from EU member states may find themselves attacked by Hezbollah with weapons financed by Hezbollah's supporters in their home countries.

According to intelligence officials, Hezbollah operatives are deployed throughout Europe, including Belgium, Bosnia, Britain, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Radicalizing European Muslims

Europe's vacation from Hezbollah terrorist attacks could come to a swift end if Hezbollah succeeds in its attempts to convert European Muslims to its harsh ideology. Young Muslim militants in Berlin, asked in a television interview to explain their hatred of the United States and Jews, cited Hezbollah's al-Manar TV as one of their main sources of information. Ideas have consequences. In July 2006, four months after Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, in an interview broadcast on al-Manar TV, called for Muslims to take a decisive stand against the Danish cartoons featuring the prophet Mohammed, two Lebanese students sought to bomb two trains in Germany as a reprisal for the cartoons, but the bombs failed to detonate.

Clearly, Europeans are exposing themselves to increased risks of terrorism as long as they allow Hezbollah's political and propaganda apparatus to spew a witch's brew of hatred, incitement, and calls for vengeance.

Hezbollah's Role as a Proxy for Iran

Hezbollah is a close ally, frequent surrogate, and terrorist subcontractor for Iran's revolutionary Islamic regime. Iran played a crucial role in creating Hezbollah in 1982 as a vehicle for exporting its revolution, mobilizing Lebanese Shiites, and developing a terrorist surrogate for attacks on Iran's enemies. Tehran pro-

vides the bulk of Hezbollah's foreign support: arms, training, logistical support, and money. Iran provides at least \$100 million (and probably closer to \$200 million) of annual support for Hezbollah and has lavishly stocked Hezbollah's expensive and extensive arsenal of Katyusha rockets, sophisticated mines, small arms, ammunition, explosives, anti-ship missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, and even unmanned aerial vehicles that Hezbollah can use for aerial surveillance or remotely piloted terrorist attacks. Iranian Revolutionary Guards have trained Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and in Iran.

Iran has used Hezbollah as a club to hit not only Israel and its Western enemies, but also many Arab countries. Iran's revolutionary ideology has fed its hostility to other Muslim governments, which it seeks to overthrow and replace with radical allies. During the Iran-Iraq war, Tehran used Hezbollah to launch terrorist attacks against Iraqi targets and against Arab states that sided with Iraq. Hezbollah launched numerous terrorist attacks against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which extended strong financial support to Iraq's war effort, and participated in several other terrorist operations in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Iranian officials conspired with the Saudi branch of Hezbollah to conduct the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia. Today, Hezbollah continues to cooperate with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards to destabilize Iraq, where both groups help train and equip the Mahdi Army, the radical anti-Western Shiite militia led by the militant cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

By refusing to use its economic leverage over Iran to dissuade Tehran from continuing its troubling nuclear weapons program, the EU is making a military clash between the United States and Iran much more likely. In that event, Hezbollah cells throughout Europe are likely to be activated to strike at American, and perhaps NATO, targets. Even if Hezbollah elects to restrict its focus to American embassies, businesses, and tourists, many Europeans are likely to perish in such attacks.

Hezbollah's Ties with Other Terrorist Groups

In addition to the direct threat Hezbollah poses to Europeans, it also poses an indirect threat by vir-

tue of its collaboration with other terrorist groups that have targeted Europeans. Many of these groups already have been placed on the EU terrorism list.

Hezbollah has developed a cooperative relationship on an ad hoc basis with the al-Qaeda terrorist network and several radical Palestinian groups. In June 2002, U.S. and European intelligence officials noted that Hezbollah was “increasingly teaming up with al-Qaeda on logistics and training for terrorist operations.” Both al-Qaeda and Hezbollah established training bases in Sudan after the 1989 coup that brought the radical National Islamic Front to power. Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, which also established a strong presence in Sudan to support the Sudanese regime, ran several training camps for Arab radical Islamic groups there and may have facilitated cooperative efforts between the two terrorist groups.

Another worrisome web of cooperation between Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and Hamas support networks is flourishing in the tri-border region at the juncture of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. This lawless and corrupt region has provided lucrative opportunities for Hezbollah supporters to raise funds, launder money, obtain fraudulent documents, pass counterfeit currency, and smuggle drugs, arms, and people.

Modern terrorist networks often are composed of loosely organized transnational webs of autonomous cells, which help them to defeat the efforts of various law enforcement, intelligence, and internal security agencies to dismantle them. This decentralized structure also helps to conceal the hand of state sponsors that seek to use terrorist groups for their own ends while minimizing the risk of retaliation from states targeted by the terrorists.

The amorphous, non-hierarchical nature of the networks, and their linkages with cooperative criminal networks, leads to a situation in which some nodes of the web function as part of more than one terrorist group. This cross-pollination of terrorist networks makes it difficult to determine where one terrorist group ends and another one begins. Therefore, giving Hezbollah a free pass to operate inside the European Union also aids other groups who are plugged into the same web of criminal gangs, family enterprises, or clan networks.

In 2002, Germany closed down a charitable fundraising organization, the al-Aqsa Fund, which

reportedly was a Hamas front that also raised money for Hezbollah. Hezbollah also has colluded with al-Qaeda affiliates in Asia. Abdul Nasser Nooh assisted both Hezbollah and al-Qaeda activities, and Muhammad Amed al-Khalifa, a Hezbollah member, was involved in sending a shipment of explosives to the Philippines through an al-Qaeda front company.

According to U.S. intelligence officials, Hezbollah has cooperated with the terrorist network formerly led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed in Iraq in 2006. This network officially became part of al-Qaeda in 2004. Despite Zarqawi’s militantly anti-Shia views, the two groups have reportedly coordinated terrorist efforts against Israel on an ad hoc basis. Zarqawi’s network, composed of Sunni extremists from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Iraq and other countries, has a strong fundraising and support infrastructure in Europe that poses a significant threat to Europeans as well as citizens of a wide range of other countries.

In the Middle East, Hezbollah has cooperated with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades to launch terrorist attacks against Israelis. After the outbreak of the second Palestinian intifada in 2000, Hezbollah’s notorious terrorism coordinator, Imad Mugniyah, was selected by Iran to assist Palestinian terrorist operations against Israel. Mugniyah reportedly played a role in facilitating the shipment of 50 tons of Iranian arms and military supplies to Palestinian militants on board the freighter *Karine A*, which was intercepted by Israeli naval forces in the Red Sea in January 2002 before its cargo could be delivered. Hezbollah has also provided Hamas and other Palestinian extremist groups with technical expertise for suicide bombing.

Hezbollah’s Destabilizing Influence in the Middle East

Hezbollah threatens the security and stability of the Middle East, and European interests in the Middle East, on a number of fronts. In addition to its murderous campaign against Israel, Hezbollah seeks to violently impose its totalitarian agenda and subvert democracy in Lebanon. Although some experts believed that Hezbollah’s participation in the 1992 Lebanese elections and subsequent inclu-

sion in Lebanon's parliament and coalition governments would moderate its behavior, its political inclusion brought only cosmetic changes.

After Israel's May 2000 withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the September 2000 outbreak of fighting between Israelis and Palestinians, Hezbollah stepped up its support for Palestinian extremist groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. It also expanded its own operations in the West Bank and Gaza and provided funding for specific attacks launched by other groups.

In July 2006, Hezbollah forces crossed the internationally recognized border to kidnap Israeli soldiers inside Israel, igniting a military clash that claimed hundreds of lives and severely damaged the economies on both sides of the border. Hezbollah is rebuilding its depleted arsenal with financial support from its European fundraising networks. This poses a threat to European soldiers in the U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon. To be consistent, the EU should ban such fundraising.

Hezbollah uses Europe as a staging area and recruiting ground for infiltrating terrorists into Israel. Hezbollah has dispatched operatives to Israel from Europe to gather intelligence and execute terrorist attacks. Examples of Hezbollah operatives who have traveled to Israel from Europe include Hussein Makdad, a Lebanese national who used a forged British passport to enter Israel from Switzerland in 1996 and injured himself in a premature bomb explosion in his Jerusalem hotel room; Stefan Smirnak, a German convert to Islam who was trained by Hezbollah in Lebanon, and was arrested at Ben Gurion airport after flying to Israel in 1997; Fawzi Ayoub, a Canadian citizen of Lebanese descent, who was arrested in 2000 after traveling to Israel on a boat from Europe; and Gerard Shuman, a dual Lebanese-British citizen, who was arrested in Israel in 2001.

Additionally, long before al-Qaeda and the Taliban began to finance their operations using profits from drug smuggling from Afghanistan, Hezbollah was a major supplier of illicit drugs to Europe and other regions. The organization tapped into long-standing smuggling networks operated by Shiite

clans in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, a Hezbollah stronghold. Hezbollah raises money from smuggling Lebanese opium, hashish, and heroin. It also traffics in illicit drugs in the tri-border region of South America. Hezbollah cells also engage in other forms of criminal activity, such as credit card fraud and trafficking in "conflict diamonds" in Sierra Leone, Congo, and Liberia to finance their activities.

The EU's Ostrich-Like Policy Regarding Hezbollah

The United States long has designated Hezbollah as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands have followed suit. The United Kingdom has placed the "Hezbollah External Security Organization" on its terrorist list. But the European Union has dragged its feet on taking serious action against Hezbollah.

In May 2002, the EU added 11 organizations and seven individuals to its financial sanctions list for terrorism. This was the first time that the EU froze the assets of non-European terrorist groups. But it did not sanction Hezbollah as an organization—only several individual leaders, such as Imad Mugniyah.

By taking these half-measures, the EU mistakenly has embraced the fallacy that terrorist operations can be separated from the other activities of a radical organization. Attempts to compartmentalize the perceived threat by accepting the fiction that a "political wing" is qualitatively different from a "military wing" are self-defeating. This is a distinction without a difference.

Hezbollah's *raison d'être* is to violently impose its totalitarian ideology on Muslims and forge a radical Islamic state determined to destroy Israel and drive out Western and other non-Islamic influences from the Muslim world. No genuine "political party" would finance suicide bombings and accumulate an arsenal of over 10,000 rockets to be indiscriminately launched at civilians in a neighboring country.

Agreeing to accept a false distinction between political and terrorist wings is also dangerous. It allows Hezbollah to continue raising money for violent purposes. Money is fungible. Funds raised in Europe, ostensibly to finance charitable and political causes, can free up money to finance terrorist attacks or can be diverted to criminal activities. The

recent violent convulsion in Gaza and last summer's war in Lebanon underscore the great dangers inherent in treating radical Islamic movements as normal political parties.

Hezbollah leaders themselves see little distinction between political and terrorist activity (which they consider to be "military" or "resistance" actions). Mohammed Raad, one of Hezbollah's representatives in the Lebanese parliament, proclaimed in 2001, "Hezbollah is a military resistance party, and it is our task to fight the occupation of our land... There is no separation between politics and resistance." In 2002, Mohammed Fannish, a Hezbollah political leader and former Lebanese Minister of Energy, declared: "I can state that there is no separating between Hezbollah military and political aims."

The EU also excluded the fundraising network of Hamas from the terrorism list in 2002. But in August 2003, the EU reversed itself and classified all of Hamas as a terrorist organization. It is high time to do the same with Hezbollah.

Some Europeans may hope that by passively accepting Hezbollah's fundraising activities, the EU can escape its terrorism. But this ostrich-like policy ignores the fact that fundraising cells easily can transform themselves into operational terrorist cells if called on to do so. Hezbollah cells are like stem cells that can morph into other forms and take on new duties. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has warned that Hezbollah support cells inside the United States could also undertake terrorist attacks. The same is true in Europe.

Individual EU member states, such as France and Germany, have previously taken legal action against Hezbollah. Germany has deported Hezbollah operatives and France banned Hezbollah's al-Manar television network in 2004. But such actions were undertaken in an ad hoc manner on a country-by-country basis, not in a systematic manner by the EU as a whole. Given that protecting citizens is the highest duty of the state, such half-hearted piecemeal policies are irresponsible.

Putting Hezbollah on the EU terrorism list would require the consent of all 27 EU member states. Such action would oblige each member to prohibit the channeling of money from European entities

and individuals to Hezbollah, and to seize Hezbollah assets in the EU. On March 10, 2005, the EU Parliament voted overwhelmingly to adopt a resolution that affirmed Hezbollah's involvement in terrorist activities and ordered the EU Council to "take all necessary steps to curtail" Hezbollah.

But France, Spain, and Belgium have blocked action in recent years. French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier in February 2005 justified French opposition to declaring Hezbollah to be a terrorist group by saying: "Hezbollah has a parliamentary and political dimension in Lebanon. They have members of parliament who are participating in parliamentary life. As you know, political life in Lebanon is difficult and fragile." But one major reason that life is so "difficult and fragile" in Lebanon is that Hezbollah, backed by Iran and Syria, seeks to intimidate democratic forces in Lebanon through the use of terrorism. Taking a stand against Hezbollah not only would undermine its ability to finance terrorism against its Lebanese opponents, but would also make life much less difficult in Lebanon in the long run.

Classifying Hezbollah as a terrorist organization would significantly constrain its ability to operate in Europe and severely erode its ability to raise funds there and use European banks to transfer funds around the globe. All EU member states would be required to freeze Hezbollah assets and prohibit Hezbollah-related financial transactions. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah recognized the damage that this would do to his organization in a March 2005 interview aired on Hezbollah's al-Manar television network: "The sources of [our] funding will dry up and the sources of moral, political, and material support will be destroyed."

But France in particular has blocked action on taking the logical next step with Hezbollah. The recent election of Nicolas Sarkozy as France's new president offers hope for a major shift in the French position. Sarkozy hopefully will replace Jacques Chirac's "See No Evil" wishful thinking with a principled stand against permitting a lethal killing machine to infect alienated European Muslims with its violent ideology, milk them of money to finance mass murder, and brainwash them to become suicide bombers against a wide array of targets.

What EU Leaders Should Do

European Union leaders must be persuaded to take concerted and systematic action against Hezbollah. First and foremost, they must understand that in the long run, this is the best way to protect their own people, the highest duty of government. Wishful thinking about the possibility of inducing Hezbollah to stray from the fundamental tenets of its own ideology will compromise the security of EU citizens. Turning a blind eye to Hezbollah's activities will only allow it to metastasize into a more deadly threat. Cracking down on Hezbollah activities would not only reduce the potential terrorist threat, but would reduce the threat of its ancillary activities, such as drug smuggling, criminal enterprises, and efforts to radicalize European Muslim communities.

Second, EU leaders can be criticized for the strained logic behind their current position. It makes little sense to designate individual Hezbollah leaders as terrorists, but continue to permit the organization to raise money for their deadly work. It is a mistake to exempt Hezbollah's "political wing" from responsibility for the crimes perpetrated by the "military wing" that executes its orders. Running a hospital or an orphanage does not absolve an organization for the murder of innocents. The EU must be proactive and uproot Hezbollah's support infrastructure in Europe in order to curtail the activities of its terrorist thugs around the world.

Third, EU leaders should be asked to join the multilateral efforts of their democratic allies to protect all of their citizens from the attacks of totalitarian Islamic extremists. There is an ideological dimension to this conflict, as well as a terrorist dimension. It would be irresponsible for the EU to stay neutral in this global ideological struggle, given the presence of a growing Muslim population inside Europe that could fall prey to radical Islamic ideologies.

Banning Hezbollah also would be a step that would help stabilize the volatile Middle East and support Arab-Israeli peace efforts. Even the Palestinian Authority requested that the EU ban Hezbollah in 2005, complaining that Hezbollah was recruiting Palestinian suicide bombers to sabotage the tenuous truce with Israel.

Putting Hezbollah on the EU terrorism list also would help stabilize Lebanon. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559, jointly sponsored by France and the United States, calls for the disarming of all militias in Lebanon. Yet EU toleration of Hezbollah fundraising operations inside its own borders enables efforts to finance the purchase of arms and ammunition for the biggest and most dangerous militia in Lebanon. Adding Hezbollah to the EU terrorism list would be an important step toward disarming its militia and restoring the rule of law in Lebanon.

Banning Hezbollah also would contribute to the containment of Iran's rising power. Tehran has used its Lebanese surrogate to advance its own radical foreign policy agenda in the past and is sure to do so again.

The U.S. Congress has played a role in appealing for greater cooperation from the EU in curtailing Hezbollah's activities. The House of Representatives, in March 2005, passed H. Res. 101, which urged the EU to add Hezbollah to its terrorist list. The Senate followed suit the next month. Congress should continue to press the EU to do the right thing regarding Hezbollah by passing further resolutions and holding hearings such as this one to educate EU leaders and their constituencies about the potential challenges posed by Hezbollah.

The EU can no longer afford to ignore Hezbollah's festering threat or hope to deflect its attacks onto other countries. The longer the EU balks at effective action, the stronger the potential threat grows, funded by the free flow of donations, diverted charitable funds, and criminal booty out of the EU and the payments for drugs smuggled into the EU.

As Winston Churchill observed, "An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last." The Hezbollah crocodile has eaten half of Lebanon and has laid dangerous eggs around the world. The EU must take proactive action, not wait for these eggs to hatch.

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