

**Organizational Attributes Sheet: Hezbollah**  
**Author: Drew Stragar-Rice and McKenzie O'Brien**  
**Review: Phil Williams**

**A. When the organization was formed + brief history**

- Hezbollah's origins can be traced to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The group began as a splinter group that eventually broke from another Shiite militia, *Amal*. During this period, Hezbollah carried out attacks on Western and Israeli targets during the Lebanese Civil War. One of its most noted attacks was in 1983 on the U.S. Marine Barracks in Beirut. It is also responsible for two attacks in Argentina on the Israeli Embassy (1992) and a Jewish community center (1994).

**B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,**

a. In general

- Drug trafficking; various types of fraud; gems/minerals trafficking (African diamonds); money laundering; sale of pirated software and DVDs; contraband smuggling; counterfeiting and distributing U.S. money; theft and sale of stolen vehicles; weapons trafficking; extortion; forgery of passports and identification cards; bribery; and human trafficking.<sup>1</sup>
- Fraud related to: Credit cards, welfare, Social Security, health care, and insurance.<sup>2</sup>
- **Money laundering:** Hezbollah has used banks and front organizations in Central America and the Caribbean (notably in Curacao, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic) to launder the proceeds from its international criminal operations.<sup>3</sup>
- **Extortion:** Hezbollah appears to extort financial "donations" from Lebanese immigrants in North and South America under the threat of physical harm or death.<sup>4</sup>
- **Cigarette smuggling:** In 2002, a Charlotte based Hezbollah cell was busted for raising money through a multi-million dollar interstate contraband cigarette operation and for securing dual-use technology for Hezbollah's armed wing.<sup>5</sup> Other Hezbollah support groups in the United States have engaged in cigarette smuggling as well. One such group operating out of Dearborn, Michigan and one in Canada were broken up in 2006.<sup>6</sup>

b. *Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in*

- **Drug trafficking:** Related to its drug operations in the Tri-Border area, Hezbollah raises close to \$10 million per year.<sup>7</sup> The terrorist group might be linked to seventeen suspects arrested on drug trafficking charges on the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao on April 28, 2009.<sup>8</sup> The suspects are reported to have specialized in exporting Colombian cocaine obtained from smugglers who transported the drugs to Curacao using speedboats and ocean-going cargo ships that embarked from Venezuela.<sup>9</sup> Hezbollah is also strongly linked to hashish and might be somewhat involved in poppy cultivation in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.<sup>10</sup>
- **Weapons trafficking:** A possible Hezbollah-linked drug ring in Curacao is reported to have imported arms, ammunition and hashish from the Netherlands to Curacao.<sup>11</sup>
- **Gems/minerals trafficking:** Hezbollah is involved in the illegal diamond trade in Africa.<sup>12</sup>
- **Possible merchandise smuggling:** The group also is involved in sophisticated global import-export scams with traders from Indian and Hong Kong to Ivory Coast, Belgium, and South and Central America.<sup>13</sup>

### C. Scope and Size

#### a. Estimated size of network and membership

- Hezbollah consists of several thousand members worldwide. Some reports place the figure between 5,000 and 10,000 members.<sup>14</sup> Most of these members are located in Lebanon and either fulfill the roles of fighters or activists. The number of Hezbollah operatives in Central and South America appears to be considerably less, but these operatives still remain highly effective at fund raising and serving as conduits between criminal organizations.

#### b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)

- Lebanon, Israel, Chile, the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, Venezuela, Panama, Guatemala, Colombia, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Russia, Cyprus, Spain, Singapore, Germany, Liberia, and the United States;<sup>15</sup> Syria;<sup>16</sup> Iran;<sup>17</sup> West African countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Togo and Sierra Leone and Senegal and the Ivory Coast;<sup>18</sup> and Iraq<sup>19</sup>

### D. Leader Characteristics

#### a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- Hassan Nasrallah is the group's political leader. Ayatollah Mohammed-Hussein Fadlallah was Hezbollah's spiritual leader, however he died from a liver hemorrhage in July 2010. Imad Mugniyah was the operations chief until he was killed in 2008 by a car bomb in Damascus.<sup>20</sup> It is unknown who has since filled these latter positions. It is also unknown who might head operations in Central America and the Caribbean.

#### b. Leadership timeline

- Nasrallah became the secretary general of Hezbollah after Abbas al-Musawi was assassinated by Israel in 1992.<sup>21</sup>

#### c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)

- Hezbollah is a centrally run terrorist organization that maintains and guides autonomous cells around the world.<sup>22</sup>

### E. Organizational Structure

#### a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

- Hierarchical structure with global cells.

#### b. Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network? What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?

- Generally, Hezbollah membership can be broken down into fighters, activists, and financial supporters.
- More specifically, its local networks can be understood as containing the following components: a recruitment apparatus that uses religious clerics, Islamic centers, and websites to bring new members into the cell; a financing wing whose purpose is to raise money through legal and illegal means (i.e. organized crime); and an operational division tasked with the smuggling operations, increasing the cell's armed capabilities, and collecting intelligence on potential targets.<sup>23</sup> Even though there is specialization within these cells, reports indicate that members within each must have the versatility to accomplish any of the tasks specified by the various roles.<sup>24</sup>

#### c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- **Decentralized:** While Hezbollah is a hierarchical organization with a secretary general and operations chief at its head, it maintains cells in foreign countries. These cells display a rather high degree of self-sufficiency and are free to operate as each sees fit, divorced from micromanagement from leaders in Lebanon. However, the cells are expected to funnel funding back to Hezbollah in Lebanon.<sup>25</sup>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

## F. Resources

### a. Financial

- **Significant financial resources.** Hezbollah receives significant financial backing from parent countries like Iran and Syria but also generates funds through global criminal operations and donations. There are few details publicly available concerning Hezbollah's finances. However, it is believed that Iran supplies at least \$100 million per year and some estimates by analysts judge the number is closer to \$200 million per year.<sup>26</sup>
- Through its criminal operations in the tri-border area in South America, Hezbollah likely raises at least \$10 million per year.<sup>27</sup> Before his arrest in 2001, Sobhi Mahmoud Fayad, a Hezbollah operative in the TBA, sent \$50 million to Hezbollah alone.<sup>28</sup>
- In 2001, it was reported the Hezbollah generated \$6 billion from the entirety of its criminal operations that year.<sup>29</sup>

### b. Human

- **Significant human resources.** Hezbollah retains several thousand members worldwide. Membership is concentrated in Lebanon; however the organization has highly proficient and specialized operatives in many foreign countries, including in Central America and the Caribbean, to carry out political and fundraising objectives.

### c. Logistical

#### i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- Forgery: Unknown amount; used to create counterfeit U.S. dollars, passports, and identification cards.<sup>30</sup>
- Front Organizations are used to raise, launder, and transfer large sums of money: According to Israeli officials, Hezbollah runs several Western Union offices in Lebanon. It is believed that the group gets a 7% cut of the service fee from these offices.<sup>31</sup> Hezbollah also uses charitable organizations to collect money. Some organizations accused of such action are: Islamic Resistance Support Association, the al-Shahid Fund, the Educational Development Association, and the Goodwill Charitable Organization.<sup>32</sup>
- Import-Export Companies: The companies are located in the free-trade zones in South America. For example: Kalmiar Ltd., Bahamas Ltd., Las Vegas Nevada, Ltd., San Francisco Ltd., Saleh Trading Ltd., Frankfourt Ltd., Guarany Ltd., Teen Chile Ltd., and Lucky Crown Ltd.<sup>33</sup>

#### ii. Key routes

- Hezbollah routes start in South America's tri-border region of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil and continue north to include smuggling routes above and below the United States-Mexico border.<sup>34</sup>
- According to a number of American security officials, counterterrorism experts and drug trade law enforcement officials, Hezbollah is reported to use the same routes utilized by Mexican drug trafficking organizations. What is more, the use of these routes is believed to have been increasing over time.<sup>35</sup>
- Additionally, the group has likely used sophisticated tunnels along the U.S.-Mexican border (similar to tunnels dug by Hezbollah into Israel).<sup>36</sup> It is believed that Hezbollah likely has used its routes to smuggle contraband and people into the United States.<sup>37</sup>
- Hezbollah enjoys near total freedom of movement through the tri-border region in South America (Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina).<sup>38</sup>

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d.	Transportation
i.	Land
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses land smuggling routes across porous borders in South America and Central America.<sup>39</sup></li> </ul>
ii.	Sea
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hezbollah might use ocean-going cargo vessels as well as speed-boats in trafficking activities in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>40</sup></li> <li>• Hezbollah reportedly has received arms shipments from Iran via transportation ships.<sup>41</sup> It is likely many of its illegal operations are conducted in a similar fashion through smuggling routes in the Mediterranean and Red Seas.</li> <li>• Additionally, smuggling routes from South America to Africa are likely traversed via boat across the Atlantic.<sup>42</sup> This is because shipping containers offer a more secure shipping method, since few are searched.</li> </ul>
iii.	Air
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hezbollah has likely used air travel to smuggle goods and money into Lebanon. In 2008, German customs officials caught four Lebanese men with 9 items of baggage containing nearly 9 million euros. The total weight was around 30 kilos.<sup>43</sup></li> </ul>
iv.	Intermodal container
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Containers used for transatlantic smuggling.</li> </ul>
<b>G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities</b>	
a.	Corruption
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hezbollah facilitates nearly all of its criminal operations with bribery of government officials in the countries where it operates.<sup>44</sup></li> <li>• Hezbollah takes advantage of the corrupt nature of South American authorities, particularly in the tri-border area. The group bribes officials in order to facilitate its criminal operations.<sup>45</sup></li> <li>• Hezbollah also takes advantage of corrupt Israeli authorities by supplying drugs and money in exchange for intelligence.<sup>46</sup></li> </ul>
b.	Concealment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money heading to Lebanon to fund Hezbollah operations was found by German customs officials at the Frankfurt airport. The money was found in 9 baggage items, neatly covered in aluminum foil and gift-wrapped.<sup>47</sup></li> <li>• During seaborne travel, smuggled goods, money, and/or drugs, are likely concealed in shipping containers.</li> </ul>
c.	Deception
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As detailed above, Hezbollah has used banks, charitable organizations, and other fronts to launder money and hide its transactions.</li> <li>• Some Hezbollah members also engage in false marriages and use false documentation to create multiple identities.<sup>48</sup></li> </ul>
d.	Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information not found.</li> </ul>
<b>H. Prior / Existing Relationships</b>	
a.	Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hezbollah is believed to cooperate with: Mexican drug trafficking organizations, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, and the “Abadan drug ring” in Iran.<sup>49</sup></li> <li>• According to a number of American security officials, counterterrorism experts and</li> </ul>

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drug trade law enforcement officials, Hezbollah is reported to use the same routes utilized by Mexican drug trafficking organizations, suggesting a degree of cooperation. What is more, the use of these routes is believed to have increased over time.<sup>50</sup>

- **Fernandinho Beira-Mar Gang/Red Command** – this group is linked to Jamil Fahd, who is a weapons and drug trafficker in Paraguay with ties to Hezbollah (see Fernandinho Beira-Mar Gang/Red Command profile).
- **IJL Brazilian Trafficking Ring** – reportedly has connections to Hezbollah (see IJL Brazilian Trafficking Ring profile).<sup>51</sup>
- **Curacao DTO** – this group is claimed to be affiliated with Hezbollah (see Curacao DTO profile).
- **Chekry Harb organization** - Harb's group allegedly paid Hezbollah 12 percent of its profits, according to investigators who did not give a dollar figure (see Chekry Harb profile).<sup>52</sup>
- **Henao DTO** - Potential contacts with Hezbollah through Chekry Harb (see Henao DTO profile).

b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc.

- **Lebanese Canadian Bank (LCB):** Blacklisted by U.S. authorities for its part in a drug trafficking network involved with Hezbollah.<sup>53</sup> Ayman Joumaa reportedly moved cocaine shipments from Colombia through West Africa then to Europe. The alleged laundering process is detailed as follows: 1) Cocaine is shipped from Colombia and Panama to Europe and the Middle East via Africa, 2) The money from the drug sales goes to Lebanon, 3) Funds are moved to U.S. based accounts to purchase used cars from American dealers, 4) The used cars are shipped to Benin and the Congo in Africa, 5) Money from the sales of the cars goes back to Lebanon.<sup>54</sup> The bank also is reported to have helped Joumaa wire money to collaborators in Asia.<sup>55</sup> The network that used this bank moved up to \$200 million every month.<sup>56</sup>
- There is no available information on specific relationships to corrupt state entities, however, Hezbollah takes advantage of existent corruption in the political and law enforcement structures of several of the countries in which it operates (see “Trafficking Methods and Modalities” above).

c. *Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.*

- It is possible that Hezbollah worked with a nascent al-Qaeda in the past, most notably in 1992 and 1994.<sup>57</sup> In Iraq, there was probably more tension, particularly during the sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni that peaked in 2007. However, in the tri-border region, where less importance is placed on sectarian allegiance, Hezbollah and al-Qaeda operatives are thought to have trained and collaborated.<sup>58</sup>

**I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)**

- Hezbollah is a radical Shiite organization. It is inspired by the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the leader of that movement, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

**J. Technical Sophistication**

- Hezbollah has shown a strong level of technical sophistication. It has developed proficiency in international smuggling and drug trafficking operations, exploiting weaknesses in defensive measures at every step of the way.
- It has also proved capable of forging IDs and passports as well as counterfeiting money.

**K. Penchant for Innovation**

- **Assessed as innovative.** Hezbollah is a global terrorist organization that has been active for decades, despite increased international attention. For every success that is achieved in disrupting Hezbollah’s global criminal operations, untold numbers of operations likely

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make it through. In short, each cell or method that has been caught allows Hezbollah to adapt and continue in its endeavors.

#### L. Activities in United States

a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities

- Interstate smuggling

b. *Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities*

- Two brothers believed to be associated with Hezbollah, were caught running an interstate smuggling ring based in Charlotte, NC that trafficked contraband cigarettes and acquired dual-use technology. The funds from the trafficking operation and the technology were to be sent back to Hezbollah in Lebanon.<sup>59</sup>
- Hezbollah has reportedly used the same routes as Mexican drug trafficking organizations to smuggle contraband and people into the United States. There have been no attacks within the United States by Hezbollah to date.<sup>60</sup>

c. Linkages with US groups

i. Market/transaction links

- Information not found.

ii. Stable supplier

- Information not found.

iii. Franchise arrangement

- Information not found.

iv. HQ and Branch office

- Information not found.

#### M. Evaluations

a. Strengths

- Hezbollah is a very strong and adaptive international terrorist group and criminal organization. It has a global network that is becoming increasingly self-sufficient in terms of funding, generated from sympathetic support as well as the myriad criminal activities in which the group is engaged. Hezbollah has been diversifying its portfolio with criminal activities should the Iranian leadership choose to cease its funding to the group. Additionally, its criminal activities in Central and South America pose serious challenges for the United States. It is reported that Hezbollah routinely uses Mexican drug trafficking routes to enter the United States for smuggling purposes. Both operatives and weapons could be already in the country.
- International Hezbollah cells also retain strength from their relative autonomy. They are free to operate as each group sees fit, divorced from micromanagement by leaders in Lebanon.
- One of Hezbollah's greatest strength comes from the international support it receives from a Shiite Muslim diaspora that "stretches from the Middle East to Africa and Latin America."<sup>61</sup> These pools provide new cell recruits and large amounts of funding.
- Hezbollah is likely involved in many of these criminal operations in order to supplement the funding it receives from outside sources like Iran and Syria. This will effectively allow the group to continue its operations if the parent countries cease funding.

b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities

- Not all countries label Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and therefore do not implement proper responses to curb its operations. In short, there is disagreement in the international community to what degree Hezbollah is a resistance organization versus a full-blown terrorist group. However, one area that most countries can agree Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

upon is the legality of particular criminal activities (i.e. drug and human trafficking, goods smuggling, etc.) This is where the U.S. and other concerned nations can find common ground to focus on restricting the financial support methods of Hezbollah.

c. Additional insights

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**Other Notes**

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<sup>2</sup> Ehrenfeld.

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<sup>4</sup> Ehrenfeld.

<sup>5</sup> "Hezbollah has global fundraising reach," *UPI*, November 25, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Levitt.

<sup>8</sup> Zambelis.

<sup>9</sup> Levitt.

<sup>10</sup> Zambelis.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Levitt.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>15</sup> Reuters. "Colombia Ties Drug Ring to Hezbollah," *The New York Times*, October 22, 2008.; Miryekta, C. "Hezbollah in the Tri-Border Area of South America," *Small Wars Journal*, September 10, 2010.

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<sup>18</sup> Emerson, Steven. "Blood Money: Hezbollah's revenue stream flows through the Americas," *The American Legion Magazine*, March 2007. <http://www.steveemerson.com/4281/blood-money-hezbollahs-revenue-stream-flows>.

<sup>19</sup> Roggio, Bill. "US Department of Justice plans to prosecute Hezbollah commander captured in Iraq," *The Long War Journal*, May 16, 2011. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/05/us\\_department\\_of\\_jus.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/05/us_department_of_jus.php).

<sup>20</sup> Cambanis, Thanassis. "Grand Ayatollah Fadlallah, Shiite Cleric, Dies at 75," *The New York Times*, May 24, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/05/world/middleeast/05fadlallah.html>; and "Hezbollah," *Council on Foreign Relations*.

<sup>21</sup> Norton, A. R. *Hezbollah* (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 2007) 99.

<sup>22</sup> Miryekta, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>26</sup> Levitt.

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- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Miryekta, 5.
- <sup>29</sup> Ehrenfeld.
- <sup>30</sup> Ehrenfeld.
- <sup>31</sup> Levitt.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> "Hezbollah, Mexican drug cartels working together," *Ynetnews.com*, March 27, 2009.  
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- <sup>44</sup> Miryekta.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid, 6.
- <sup>46</sup> Levitt.
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<sup>48</sup> Levitt.
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- <sup>59</sup> "Hezbollah has global fundraising reach."
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- <sup>61</sup> "Hezbollah, Mexican drug cartels working together."