



# Hezbollah



**Homebase:** Lebanon

## Key Leaders/Members

**Hassan Nasrallah**  
Secretary General

**Hafiz Muhammad Saeed**  
Political Aide to Secretary General

**Naim Qassem**  
Deputy Secretary General

**Mohamad Yazbek**  
Spiritual Leader

**Sayyed Ibrahim Amin Sayyed**  
Head of Political Bureau

## History, Intent, and Capability

Hezbollah, a Lebanese-based Shia terrorist organization, was founded in 1982 in Lebanon's Bekka Valley in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon that year, as an umbrella for numerous existing militia groups. The organization quickly became a capable fighting force supported by weapons, money, and training from Iran and particularly Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps; a relationship that has continued in its multi-decade history. In 1983, Hezbollah carried out two vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks against United States assets in Lebanon – the U.S. embassy in Beirut and a U.S. Marine Corps barracks, which killed 58 and 241 Americans, respectively. Other Hezbollah attacks - or alleged attacks - include: the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847; 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy and 1993 bombing of a Jewish Cultural center – both in Buenos Aires in Argentina; the 1996 Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia; and the recent bombing of a bus carrying Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria.

Hezbollah is a multi-faceted organization with militant, charitable, and political arms; it is a Lebanese Shia nationalist and self-styled “resistance” organization, but simultaneously it is an Iranian proxy that is consistently used to pursue Iranian aims in the region and around the globe. Since 1992, Hezbollah has held seats in Lebanon's parliament. Hezbollah is widely respected in the region because it is the one militant organization that is believed to have pushed the Israeli government to retreat from land under the force of arms. Hezbollah's 2006 war with Israel demonstrated that it had the continued ability to fight Israel to a bloody standstill. In 2008, Hezbollah captured parts of Beirut in response to calls from the Lebanese government to restrict their weapons and secure communications networks, this following concerns it may have been involved in the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. During negotiations to end the unrest, Hezbollah essentially gained veto power giving them more control within Lebanon's Parliament.

Following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War and the flood of Sunni foreign fighters into Syria to support rebel forces, Hezbollah entered the civil war to support government forces loyal to President Assad. The security of Assad's presidency is important to Hezbollah's support networks - particularly weapons transport networks from Iran – but this has also brought Hezbollah into an open fight with Sunni militants and rebels in Syria, some of whom are allied with al Qaeda.

## Future Outlook

Many believe that Hezbollah would be unlikely to target the United States homeland barring a direct threat to their core interests or to Iran's. The 2011 plot by Mansoor Arbabsiar to solicit a drug cartel to assassinate a Saudi diplomat in the US homeland has, according to Congressional testimony, forced the US to reassess Iran's willingness to countenance such violence; given Hezbollah's role as an Iranian proxy, this finding has big implications for the Hezbollah threat as well. Most analysts believe that if they felt provoked, Hezbollah would certainly have the capability to target U.S. interests in the Middle East, and many believe they could do so in the homeland as well.

The recent bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria, as well as foiled or reported plots in India, Georgia, Thailand, Cyprus, Kenya and Nigeria among other locales, suggest that Hezbollah is becoming increasingly active globally. The recent European Union designation of Hezbollah's militant wing as a proscribed terrorist organization was in response to this increased operational tempo, as well as Hezbollah targeting of European interests in places like Iraq and Syria.