



IRAN AND HIZBULLAH

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ABSTRACT

Since Khomeini's rise to power in 1979, Iran has maintained aspirations to lead the radical Islamic camp and continues to deepen its ties to extremist states and terrorist groups throughout the Middle East (Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and Gaza).

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

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Since Khomeini's rise to power in 1979, Iran has maintained aspirations to lead the radical Islamic camp and continues to deepen its ties to extremist states and terrorist groups throughout the Middle East (Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and Gaza). At the same time Iran has engaged in a public relations campaign aimed at convincing the West, as well as its neighboring Gulf States of its benign intentions and fitness to be fully integrated into the community of nations.

The one realm where Iran has made no attempt to disguise its ideological fervor is with regard to its implacable hatred of Israel. Iran remains committed to the proposition that Israel has no right to exist and that its destruction is a desideratum. The following statements, coming from the highest levels of authority in Teheran, give evidence of the ideological obsession which Iran has with Israel's very existence:

"The government and people of Iran are of the opinion that the Israeli entity is false and artificial. In fact there is no nation named 'Israel'.....The Zionists scraped together some people from all over the world and, based only on racism, brought about the Zionist regime by virtue of the conquest of Palestine." (Pres. Ali Khomeini addressing senior officers of the Iranian Air Force, Feb. 8, 1996 - Radio Teheran).

"The power of Islam will ultimately bring about the end of the usurpatory and rootless Zionist regime, which has forced its presence upon Palestinian land and which must be destroyed." (Friday sermon delivered by Pres. Ali Khomeini on Feb. 20, 1996 - Iranian News Agency – IRANA).

"When others talk about liberating Palestine they mean the 'annexed' territories of 1967, we mean all Palestinian Land.....Iran is the only country which is opposed to the basic existence of Israel" (Foreign Minister Velliati, Feb. 6, 1996 - interview in "Salaam").

It comes as no surprise, then, that one of Iran's major policy goals is the wrecking of the Middle East peace process. An Arab World, which is overwhelmingly Moslem, at peace with Israel

contradicts an essential pillar of Iranian ideology. To this end Iran has fomented terrorism, either in the West Bank and Gaza or on Israel's northern border, in an attempt to bring about the collapse of the peace process.

Putting its creed into deed, Iran has been implicated in terror attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets throughout the world (i.e. the bombing of the Israel Embassy in Buenos Aires in March 1992, the attempt on the life of Jewish communal leader Jaques Kimche in Istanbul in June 1993, and the bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires in July 1994).

Iranian Embassies and Consulates are forward outposts for terrorist operations with numerous "attaches" coming and going in the weeks prior to and following bombings and assassinations. The Iranian diplomatic mail service, which is inviolable to search and seizure, is constantly used to ferry arms and explosives to operatives around the world. Recognition of official Iranian direction of terrorist activities was evidenced by the warrant for the arrest of Security Minister Falahian issued by German authorities. Falahian is suspected of having engineered the assassination of Iranian dissidents living in Germany in the early 1990's.

In March 1996 a major shipment of arms and explosives destined for Iranian terrorists based in Germany was discovered at the Belgian port of Antwerp. Security sources indicate that the shipment was to be used in terrorist attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets in Europe.

Iran views Hizbullah as its spearhead in the battle against Israel. Hizbullah terrorists are almost in constant combat against IDF troops. The geographic location of Lebanon coupled with its political situation easily enables Iran to ship weaponry, with Syrian acquiescence, to Hizbullah units operating on Israel's border. In January 1996 three Iranian trucks loaded with arms were intercepted by Turkish authorities on their way to Lebanon via Turkey and Syria.

Reliable reports indicate that since April 1996 thirty (30) Iranian planes loaded with ammunition and weapons have landed at Damascus airport. Their cargo, which included Sagger anti-tank missiles, long range Katyusha rockets and high explosive anti-tank mines, was subsequently transferred to Hizbullah forces in south Lebanon. Moreover, according to reports in El-Hiyatt (January 21, 1997) Syria and Iran continue to jointly coordinate Hizbullah's current role and political future.

Iran was instrumental in the founding of Hizbullah and continues to fund its operations at a level of approximately 80 million dollars per year, which is to be increased in 1997 to 100 million dollars. Hizbullah terrorists are trained at Iranian military installations and close contact with the Hizbullah hierarchy is maintained by Teheran through its embassy in Beirut.

Iranian arms and money have not only bolstered Hizbullah's combat readiness but have also left their imprint from an ideological point of view. Contrary to public statements made for the Western media, Hizbullah does not view its role as merely fighting Israeli forces in the Security Zone, rather Hizbullah is now committed to an unrelenting struggle against Israel. At a rally held on the last Friday of Ramadan Hizbullah Secretary General Hassan Nassrallah called upon the Palestinians to rekindle the Jihad against Israel, resume the suicide bombings and the Intifadah. Claiming that the current Palestinian leadership had "betrayed Palestine and Jerusalem" he stated that it is necessary now for a Palestinian "Islamabouli" (Anwar Sadat's assassin) to step forward and for the Palestinians to "execute" their leaders.

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