International Umbrella Groups and Terror Networks

Chapter 11

International Jihadist Groups

- Al Qaeda was not the first international jihadist group
- First one was Hezbollah
  - Backed by Syria and Iran
  - Before Sept. 11th, Hezbollah was responsible for more American deaths than any other terrorist group

Hezbollah: Local and International

- Hezbollah (Party of God)
  - Shiite group spawned in Lebanon after the Iranian Revolution
  - Purpose is to spread the Islamic law of Shiite Islam
  - Operates primarily in Lebanon and Israel
    - However, also has an international jihadist wing
  - Created organizational style used by other groups
    - Egyptian Islamic Group
    - Egyptian Islamic Jihad
    - GIA in Algeria
    - al Qaeda
Hezbollah: Local and International (cont.)

- Hezbollah’s international branch appears to have three major functions
  1) Raise money to support operations
     - Raises funds primarily in the US and Europe
  2) Protect Iranian interests in Lebanon, and projects an Iranian-influenced military presence in the Middle East
  3) Establish a strong presence in South America
     - Base to raise funds through legitimate and illegitimate methods, conduct propaganda, and launch terrorist operations
     - Should the U.S. and Iran enter a war, South American members of Hezbollah plan to attack the U.S.

Hezbollah: Metamorphosis

- Product of:
  - 1978-1979 Iranian Revolution and;
  - The struggle between Israel and its neighbors

- Complicated evolution
  - 1970 – PLO is expelled from Jordan and goes to Lebanon
    - Secular PLO set up operations in Shiite areas in southern Lebanon, creating tension between the PLO and the Shiites
    - PLO began operations against Israel from southern Lebanon

Hezbollah: Metamorphosis (cont.)

- 1975-90 - Lebanon is engaged in a multi-faceted civil war
- Secular Syrian Baathists want to regain control of the Golan Heights
  - Backed southern Shites during the civil war
  - Shites in southern Lebanon wound up allied with Syria against the PLO
- 1982 – In response to PLO attacks from southern Lebanon, Israel invades Lebanon
Iranian Republican Guards, who were designed to spread religious revolution throughout the Muslim world, asked Ayatollah Khomeini for permission to intervene. They created an unlikely alliance between religious Iranian Revolutionary Guards, secular Syrian Baathists, and southern Lebanese Shiites. Syria and Iran now had a common enemy in Israel, and both countries needed proxies to fight for their interests.

As Shiite militias resisted the Israeli invasion, one group began to form in the shadows of the civil war. Centered on a non-organization, it governed council to share ideas, plans, money, but designed to disappear and leave autonomous groups to carry out attacks under a variety of names. They called themselves “Hezbollah” (Party of God). The shadowy nature was ideal for the plans of Syria and Iran.

1982, Iranian officials contacted Syria, offering reduced prices for oil in return for permission to move 1,000 Revolutionary Guards through Syria to Lebanon. Once in Lebanon, Revolutionary Guard linked up with the emerging Hezbollah. They provided Hezbollah with money, weapons, and training. All parties involved benefited from not openly affiliating with the others. The result was a terrorist organization that had never been seen before.
Hezbollah: Metamorphosis (cont.)

- Hezbollah grew from a council of Shi'ite scholars claiming to be part of a spiritual movement
  - This council became a large umbrella
- Overhead, Syrian and Iranian money/supplies supported the movement
  - Hezbollah denied any direct connection
- Several Shi'ite cells operated autonomously below the umbrella
  - Received money, weapons, and ideas through hidden channels linked with the spiritual leaders

Hezbollah: Metamorphosis (cont.)

- Hezbollah formed alliances with two Lebanese Shiite militia groups
  - al Dawa (“The Call”)
  - Islamic Amal
- Hezbollah developed under the leadership of three central figures
  - Sheik Mohammed Hassan Fadlallah
  - Abus Musawi
  - Hassan Nasrallah

Hezbollah: Phase One 1982-85

- In phase one of the development of Hezbollah, the Hezbollah umbrella covered many terrorist groups
  - Islamic Jihad
- Issued vague “suggestions” to those groups
- Provided financial and logistical support to the groups, but remained removed from day-to-day operations
- Other groups began to form under the umbrella
Hezbollah: Phase One 1982-85

(cont.)

- Introduced the use of suicide bombers
  - 18 APR 83 - US Embassy Beirut
    • 63 killed, 120 wounded
  - 23 OCT 83 - Marine Barracks, Beirut Airport
    • 241 US service members killed
  - 23 OCT 83 – French Paratrooper Barracks, Beirut
    • 58 French soldiers killed
- Bombings resulted in the withdrawal of the multinational peacekeeping force in Beirut

Hezbollah: Phase Two 1985-90

- In phase two, Hezbollah launched a systematic kidnapping/hostage campaign
  - 96 hostages from 21 nations
  - Kidnapped between 1982-92
    - 3 MAR 84 - William Buckley, Beirut CIA station chief
      • Held for 15 months before dying from neglect, illness, and torture
    - 17 FEB 88 - LtCol William Higgins, USMC, UN Peacekeeping Mission
      • Kidnapped, tortured, then hanged

Hezbollah: Phase Two 1985-90

(cont.)

- Hezbollah began to change
  - Hezbollah leaders sought to develop an Iranian-style revolutionary movement
  - Nasrallah developed regional centers, which eventually become operational bases (1987-89)
    • Followed the pattern of the Amal militia, one of the largest militias in Lebanon at that time
- Tactics were extremely effective in the first two phases
Hezbollah: Phase Three 1990-2000

- 1991 – Many of Lebanon’s militias sign a peace treaty (Taif Agreement)
  - However, Hezbollah retains its weapons and revolutionary philosophy
    - Becomes primary paramilitary force in southern Lebanon
    - Claims to be a legitimate guerrilla force resisting Israeli occupation
    - Begins to operate in the open and stepped-up its operations against the Israelis
  - Actions make it popular amongst the Lebanese

Hezbollah: Phase Four 1992-2008

- 1992 – Musawi killed; Nasrallah takes over
- 1992 – Hezbollah joins the Lebanese political process
  - Wins 8 seats in parliament
- 1995 – Hezbollah developed strong political bases of support in southern Lebanon, Bekaa Valley and parts of Beirut
  - Created social service: schools, hospitals, public works
  - Hezbollah wins all 23 seats in South Lebanon

Hezbollah: Phase Four 1992-2008 (cont.)

- Transformation complete
  - Hezbollah now a nationalistic group with a military wing
  - Stated goals were:
    - Eliminate Israel
    - Establish an Islamic government in Lebanon
  - Also established itself as an international group, formerly led by Imad Mugniyah, with links in:
    - Africa
    - Asia
    - Tri-border region of South America
Current State of Hezbollah

- Hezbollah reported to be one of the strongest non-state groups in the Middle East
- Organized in three directorates
  1) Political wing
  2) Social services wing
  3) Security wing
- Hezbollah maintains strongholds in southern Lebanon, Bekaa Valley, and central pockets in Beirut
  - Most of Hezbollah’s activities deal with the politics of Lebanon and the vast social service network it maintains in the south

Current State of Hezbollah (cont.)

- The security wing is based in Lebanon and is responsible for training guerrillas and terrorists
- Guerrillas are assigned to militias that operate along Israel’s northern border, especially the Sha’ba farm region
- Hezbollah militias conduct conventional operations against IDF in area
- Hezbollah can maintain all of these operations because it receives funding from Iran

Current State of Hezbollah

- Hezbollah terrorists also operate along the border and conduct operations in Israel
  - Murder
  - Kidnappings
- Have also targeted Lebanese Christians and other Arabs not sympathetic to their cause
- The primary terrorist tactic is bombing
  - Hezbollah had mastered two forms:
    1) Suicide bombing
    2) Radio-controlled bombs for ambushes
Current State of Hezbollah (cont.)

- Hezbollah International has cells in several different countries, including the US
- Maintains an extensive international finance ring partially based on:
  - Smuggling
  - Drugs
  - Other criminal activities
- Hezbollah Supreme Council denies the existence of Hezbollah International

A Sympathetic View of Hezbollah

- Many voices in Lebanon and elsewhere claim that Hezbollah is a legitimate self-defense force
- Hezbollah has no intention of spreading the Iranian Revolution
  - They merely want to defend their community
- Supporters claim they are a religious and political organization supporting a guerrilla army
  - Purpose of the army is to defeat Israel
  - Believe fighting the Israelis is not an act of terrorism
- Many Hezbollah guerrillas refer to themselves as the "Islamic resistance"

A Sympathetic View of Hezbollah (cont.)

- Most Arabs find Hezbollah to be a source of inspiration
  - Achieved heroic status
- Hezbollah’s entry into politics further legitimized its activities
- Mohammed Fneish, a Hezbollah representative in the Lebanese parliament, says Hezbollah is a political and social service organization, but will resist Israel
- Hezbollah’s large-scale health care and education systems are evidence that their emphasis is primarily humanitarian
Many people in the world consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization.

Hezbollah is a deadly international terrorist organization that has developed international links and uses international crime to finance operations.

Hezbollah is a terrorist organization because of:
- Suicide attacks against civilians and peacekeeping forces
- Kidnapping rampage from 83-90
- 1985 Hijacking of a TWA flight
- Two bombings in Argentina in 1992 and 1994

Hezbollah exists for two reasons:
1) Impose a Shi’ite government on Lebanon
2) Destroy the State of Israel

Hezbollah exports revolutionary ideals:
- Contacts exist between Hezbollah and the Iraqi resistance movement
- Interacts with terrorist groups around the world
- It is part of a network of groups that range from Jihadists to traffickers in narcotics
- Uses crime and state support to wage a campaign of terror

Provided a model for the formation of an international umbrella of terrorist organizations:
- The international section remains a conglomeration of like-minded semiautonomous groups
- The model inspired the formation of other networks, and none was as important as the groups related to al Qaeda
Umbrellas and Networks in North Africa

- Decentralized networks model moved into North Africa, but differed from Hezbollah
  - Hezbollah progression:
    - Started with umbrella structure
    - Moved to centralization
    - Sought political legitimacy
  - Africa progression:
    - Started with umbrella structure
    - Moved to further decentralization
    - Three groups adopted this progression
    - Became the model for al Qaeda

The Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

- 1991: Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won the first round of national elections in Algeria
- 1992: Military took control of the government
- Islamist guerrilla groups formed and began an armed campaign against the government
- Several groups joins and formed the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

GIA (cont.)

- Consisted of new Algerian recruits and several Jihadists who had fought in the Soviet-Afghan war
- GIA particularly ruthless
  - Group specialized in the murder of civilians
    - Slitting throats
  - Founding member, Hassan Hattab, broke away in disgust of civilian murders
- Formed the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)
- 1992-2002: 100,000 people are killed
GIA (cont.)

- Conflict characterized by in-fighting between Islamic militant groups
- 2002: GIA largely destroyed by gov't. efforts; GSPC remained the most active rebel group
- 2004: GSPC declared alliance with al-Qaeda
  - Ayman al-Zawahiri announced a "blessed union"
  - Declared France an enemy
  - Indicated that they would fight against French and American interests
- 2007: GSPC changed name to Al-Qaeda in Islamic Magreb (AQIM)

AQIM – Goals

- Overthrow of what they view as pro-Western, non-fundamentalist governments
- Establish theocracy in Algeria, the Middle East, and eventually worldwide

AQIM – Focus of Operations

- Has conducted operations in:
  - Algeria
  - Morocco
  - Mauritania
  - Mali
  - Chad
  - Senegal
  - Nigeria
  - Iraq
AQIM – Relationship with al-Qaeda

- Used alliance to gain credibility
- Strategic alliance (AQ “franchise”)
- Also a source for:
  - Funding
  - Training
  - Direction
- There has been some friction between the two
  - Strategic vs. regional objectives

AQIM – Advantages

- Operates in border regions with little/no government control/presence
- Cell structure provides operational security
- Support from al-Qaeda
- Leverages criminal acts and links to criminal networks to fund/support operations

AQIM – Challenges

- Cell structure limits ability to communicate/cooperate
- Operational ability also impacted by distance and separation of operational cells
AQIM – The Future

- Has allied itself with other regional terrorists threats
  - Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
  - Moroccan Islamic Combat Group
- Intent is to form a larger regional jihadist coalition
- Could provide a base of operations in North Africa for AQ
- AQ could then stage “backdoor” attacks against targets in Europe