



**Statement of
John G. Kavanagh
Chief
International Terrorism Operations Section II
Counterterrorism Division
Federal Bureau of Investigation**

**Before the
Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Non Proliferation and the
Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia
Committee on International Relations
House of Representatives**

September 28, 2006

Chairman Royce, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Members Sherman and Ackerman, members of both Subcommittees, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on the topic of Hizballah, and the concerns you have about Hizballah's capabilities. I will address some of the types of activities Hizballah has been and is involved in within the United States, while keeping in mind the sensitivities associated with discussing certain operational matters in an unclassified setting.

Hizballah (Party of God) is one of the most capable terrorist organizations in the world. This Lebanon-based radical Shi'a organization advocates the destruction of Israel and the establishment of Islamic rule in Lebanon and the Middle East. Hizballah was created in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon. As seen in the recent conflict with Israel, Hizballah has a well trained guerilla force that is proficient in military tactics and weaponry. Since its inception, Hizballah has employed suicide bombers and has committed airline hijackings, kidnappings and murders in furtherance of its goals and objectives. Prior to September 11, 2001, Hizballah was responsible for 288 American deaths, more than any other terrorist organization at that time.

Hizballah is known or suspected to have been involved in numerous anti-United States attacks overseas, including the suicide truck bombings of the United States Embassy in Beirut in April 1983; the bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps barracks in Beirut in October 1983 that killed 241 U.S. servicemen; and the attack on the United States Embassy annex in Beirut in September 1984. Hizballah is also responsible for the kidnappings and murders of U.S. Government officials William Buckley and Lt. Colonel William Higgins. In June 1996, a Saudi Hizballah member also drove the vehicle that destroyed one of the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 U.S. servicemen; according to the indictment, a member of Lebanese Hizballah assisted Saudi Hizballah with the construction of the tanker truck bomb used in the

attack. Hizballah has shown the ability to strike outside the Middle East region by attacking the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1992 and bombing a Jewish Argentine cultural center in Buenos Aires in 1994. Hizballah has been designated by the Secretary of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in accordance with Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Currently four high profile Hizballah members are wanted in the United States in connection to the June 14, 1985, hijacking of TWA flight 847 as it departed Athens International Airport en route to Rome. The hijackers shuttled the airplane between Beirut and Algiers, where they brutally beat several U.S. passengers and executed U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem. The four members who have been indicted for their roles in this crime are Imad Mughniya, the head of Hizballah's security apparatus, Hasan Izz-Al-Din, Muhammad Ali Hammadi and Ali Atwa. There are also 14 outstanding arrest warrants for those responsible for the Khobar Towers attack.

The FBI in conjunction with the U.S. Intelligence Community and through the FBI led Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) continues to investigate Hizballah activities directed at the United States. Although Hizballah retains the capability to attempt to strike at United States interests, we assess that Hizballah has not directly targeted the United States since the attack on Khobar Towers in 1996. Within the United States, Hizballah associates and sympathizers have engaged in a wide range of criminal activities to include money laundering, credit card fraud, immigration fraud, food stamp fraud, bank fraud and narcotics trafficking. Recently the FBI and its law enforcement partners concluded an investigation in Detroit, Michigan, where 107 Federal indictments were obtained, leading to the arrests of 58 Hizballah subjects and the seizure of approximately 5 million dollars in property. These individuals were involved in a variety of Federal violations, to include providing material support to a terrorist organization and Federal racketeering charges.

It is common in the United States for associates of terrorist organizations to use alleged Middle East charitable organizations to funnel money back home to support the various terrorist organizations. The FBI with its partners in the Department of Treasury, Department of State and the rest of the Department of Justice works closely to have these organizations that are providing material support to terrorists shut down and have those knowingly engaged in such conduct criminally charged. In March 2006, the Department of Treasury designated Al-Manar television a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity. Al-Manar is the Hizballah television propaganda medium that raises funds for Hizballah via advertisements, and Al-Manar's programming includes features glorifying Hizballah fighters and suicide bombers. The FBI and its partners in the New York JTTF recently arrested an Al-Manar satellite television service provider for knowingly engaging in prohibited transactions with Al-Manar.

The FBI with our partners in the U.S. Intelligence and the law enforcement communities will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute the threat posed by Hizballah in order to protect our citizens and preserve our national security. Director Mueller recently remarked, "It has been nearly five years since the last terrorist attack on America. Yet there is no room for complacency. As we have seen in recent months, our enemies are adaptive and evasive. They are taking full advantage of technology. They are combining their resources and their expertise to great effect. We must do the same."

Thank You for the opportunity to address this important issue. I am happy to answer your questions.