

Terrorism and hezbollah essay sample

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Hezbollah, one of the most significant organizations presenting a threat to the United States today, is a sophisticated organization with decades worth of refined tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). In an attempt to prepare for this threat their current operational TTPs will be discussed, as will the implications of their use.

Hezbollah Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

Hezbollah is a transnational terrorist organization with a demonstrated capability of striking targets outside of their geographical sphere. They have sophisticated operations ranging from simple IEDs to soft power projection operations designed to influence the local populace. These facts, combined with their demonstrated history of attacking the US and her allies present one of the most significant threats we face today. To prepare for this adversary one must understand their tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs).

TTPs and Capabilities

Hezbollah (Committee on Homeland Security, 2012) has demonstrated a capability to perform kidnapping and intimidation campaigns. In 1988 they kidnapped LTCOL Higgins, tortured him and then filmed his execution. Over the course of their history they have conducted kidnappings of civilians, government officials, and military members (CFR, 2010). These operations have included clandestine insertions targeting armed Israeli personnel, then exfiltrating without notice with the captives. Kidnapping and intimidation campaigns are a key TTP for Hezbollah and they are proficient in this task.

Suicide Bombing

Suicide attacks are a well-established TTP through history dating back to 1090 C. E. (CRS, 2003). While the method of attack is old, Hezbollah's attack on the Marine barracks in 1983 is often looked at as the "date of initiation of a wave of contemporary suicide attacks" (pg. CRS-4). The attack resulted in more than 240 killed and 100 injured. Shortly thereafter the U. S. withdrew all troops from Lebanon. The high body count and the withdrawal of U. S. troops was played as a huge win. The lesson of the strongest country in the world acquiescing to a comparatively small terror organization from this tactic was not lost on other terror groups.

Soft Power Projection

Hezbollah is also adept at utilizing soft power projection to influence the battle space (CFR, 2010). In Lebanon they are a "major provider of social services, operating schools, hospitals, and agricultural services" (pg. 1) and have become heavily involved in politics. These TTPs are utilized to increase credibility and win the support of the populace. They are so effective that they are considered the cornerstone of counter insurgency efforts by the United States.

Involvement with Criminals

Hezbollah associates and supporters have become heavily involved in business with criminal cartels across all of Latin America (US Congress, 2012). Some of these individuals have been involved in human smuggling, drug smuggling, and money laundering; resulting in millions of dollars being

added to the Hezbollah coffers. There have even been cases of large caches of weapons recovered. Iran, the lone remaining state sponsor of Hezbollah, now has “ embassies in 11 Latin American countries” (pg. 7).

Implications of these TTPs

The first implication to consider is the long view that Hezbollah can take. From their origins in 1982 (CFR, 2010) to today they have evolved from an extremist religious organization to part of an organized and recognized government with the capability to strike transnationally. This long view, combined with their successful operations against both Israel and the U. S., makes them a powerful example and source of inspiration to other terror groups. It also demonstrates that they are willing to be both patient and persistent.

Perhaps the most chilling implication of Hezbollah’s TTPs is their involvement with transnational drug cartels. As Hezbollah often acts as a proxy for the Iranian government, sees the US as an enemy, and recent tensions between the US and Iran have increased it presents an opportunity for asymmetric warfare on U. S. soil. They have the capable to smuggle across the U. S. border, have access to large volumes of weapons, and have shown that they are not afraid to directly target U. S. personnel. If the Iranian government and Hezbollah feel that they have nothing to lose, there is a real possibility that multiple attacks could follow.

Entering into Criminal Enterprises

Another implication is the possibility of Hezbollah seriously entering into criminal enterprises. Kidnapping tourist or VIPs for ransom could be utilized as a source for income. Or they could develop like the Zetas (CRS, 2012). The Zeta's started off as an elite military unit that was targeting cartels. They were bought off and started working as enforcers. After a period of time they decided to go into business for themselves and became direct competitors. This resulted in dramatically increased levels of violence and a criminal organization that operates with military proficiency. As the drug trade brings in billions of dollars a year, the temptation may be too great to pass up.

Conclusion

Hezbollah is a resourceful and patient organization. They have large financial resources, learn from their successes, are patient, and have a demonstrated history of striking the U. S. As the tensions between the U. S. and Iran increase, so too does the possibility of terror attacks. It is also important to consider the temptations presented by a large and lucrative criminal empire. Hezbollah possess the TTPs, personnel, and experience in the area to become successful. They are a persistent and capable enemy.

References

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