

# WebMemo



Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 1159  
July 13, 2006

## Iran and its Hezbollah Allies Escalate Their Aggressive Policies in the Middle East

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Yesterday's cross-border attack by Hezbollah (Party of God), the Lebanon-based terrorist group, which resulted in the deaths of three Israeli soldiers and the capture of two soldiers now held hostage in Lebanon, has opened up a volatile second front on Israel's northern border. With this provocative attack, Hezbollah in one stroke has enhanced its prestige in the Arab world, diverted the world's attention from a growing crisis over Iran's nuclear program, and escalated pressure on Israel, which already was engaged in an intensifying confrontation with the Hamas-led Palestinian authority over a similar abduction of an Israeli soldier on June 25. The attack also highlights the role that Hezbollah's patron Iran plays in escalating Middle East violence, and it strengthens the case for sanctions against Iran.

Iran is the biggest beneficiary of the ongoing crisis in Lebanon, which Hezbollah, its longstanding Lebanese Shiite client, triggered. Yesterday's attack is an embodiment of Hezbollah's mission as envisioned by Iran. Iran created Hezbollah in 1982 as a vehicle for exporting its revolution, mobilizing Lebanese Shiites, and developing a terrorist surrogate for attacks on Israel and the United States.

Hezbollah has a long history of violence against Israel and the U.S. It fought Israeli forces that intervened in Lebanon in 1982 to attack Palestinian terrorists operating from Lebanese territory; later it also attacked the Western multinational peacekeeping force dispatched to Lebanon in the aftermath of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict there. Hezbollah terror-

ists bombed the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 and took 15 American hostages in Lebanon later in the 1980s.

Iran provides the bulk of Hezbollah's foreign support: arms, training, and money. Iranian Revolutionary Guards train Hezbollah terrorists and have provided them with sophisticated bombs and long range Katyusha rockets, such as the ones that detonated in Israel's northern port of Haifa today. Syria also has supported Hezbollah and permits Iran to use Syrian airfields to transport weapons, ammunition and equipment to its Lebanon-based allies.

President Bush today singled out Syria for harsh criticism in the latest crisis, saying, "Syria needs to be held to account. Syria is housing the militant wing of Hamas. Hezbollah has got an active presence in Syria. The truth of the matter is, if we really want there to be -- the situation to settle down, the soldiers need to be returned, and President Assad needs to show some leadership toward peace."

Iran is even more deserving than Syria of criticism for the unfolding events today in the Middle East. It not only was the prime mover in creating, bankrolling, and arming Hezbollah, but it also sup-

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/middleeast/wm1159.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/middleeast/wm1159.cfm)

Produced by the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center  
for Foreign Policy Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4999  
(202) 546-4400 • [heritage.org](http://heritage.org)

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ports Hamas terrorism against Israel. The Bush administration should mobilize international pressure not only on Syria's Assad dictatorship, but also on Iran, which continues to get away with murder.

Washington should call for unconditional release of the Israeli hostages, the disarmament of all Lebanese militias, including Hezbollah, and international sanctions against Iran and Syria, which continue to support terrorism against Israel, as well as against Iraqis and coalition forces supporting the democratic Iraqi government.

The United States correctly has strongly supported Israel's right to self defense. It should veto any U.N. Security Council resolution that blames Israel for the current round of violence, which clearly was precipitated by attacks perpetrated by Palestinian and Lebanese terrorist groups. At tomorrow's emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council which is slated to address the current crisis, the United States should block any resolution that criticizes Israel's understandably forceful response to terrorist provocations.

The Bush administration also should push for a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for sanctions against Iran for its continued failure to adhere

to its legal commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards agreement. Although Russia and China have opposed sanctions, Iran's high-handed refusal to accept the EU proposal on defusing the nuclear crisis has weakened Moscow and Beijing's case for further procrastination at the Security Council. Washington should now press the issue and force Russia and China either to abstain or to veto a strongly worded resolution. If they opt to veto action at the Security Council, then the United States should work with the EU, Japan, and other countries to impose sanctions on Iran outside the U.N. framework.

The United States must forcefully respond to Iran's provocative and hostile foreign policy in supporting terrorism and seeking to acquire the most terrifying weapon, a nuclear bomb. Unfortunately, if Iran does acquire a nuclear capability it will become even more aggressive in supporting terrorism in the Middle East and beyond.

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