

THE DISAPPEARING TERRORISTS

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“Night is here but the barbarians have not come.
And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?
Those people were some kind of solution.”
— Constantine Cavafy

It hardly makes sense to have a global war on terror if there are not that many terrorists threatening to blow themselves up in Peoria. Terrorism can hardly be considered a growth industry, particularly if one assesses it based on the congressionally mandated State Department [annual report](#) on the subject. According to the report, every year terrorists become fewer and less capable.

And one would be hard-pressed to find too many instances in the document of terrorists killing Americans or even trying to kill Americans, which may be attributable to fewer Americans being found these days in places like Iraq. It is becoming even more difficult to find groups and individuals scattered overseas that have the resources, the motivation, and the skills necessary to travel to the heart of the Great Satan and, once here, acquire explosives, evade the police, make their way to Penn Station, and blow themselves up.

Lacking any real terrorists and recognizing that the war on terror must go on for reasons best known to bureaucrats and defense contractors, it has perhaps become an acceptable option to make some up. One of the most persistent allegations about the next-generation terrorism threat relates to Hezbollah. It is often noted among the punditry that Hezbollah has killed more Americans than any other terrorist group except al-Qaeda. Surprisingly, the bald assertion is actually true even if one might reasonably argue that Hezbollah does not really fit the definition of a terrorist group at all. Hezbollah did indeed carry out the 1983 [bombing](#) of the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 17 Americans and nearly wiping out the CIA station, which was meeting in a conference room. A subsequent bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut killed 242 more Americans. Some other kidnappings and killings of Americans in Lebanon in the 1980s were also attributed to Hezbollah. The bombings, killings, and abductions occurred at a time when the U.S. was using military force to restore order in Lebanon, an intervention that was pretty much directed against Hezbollah with the intention of dismantling the group as a political entity.

Hezbollah has not killed any Americans since those acts of what some might consider self-defense, and there is no evidence whatsoever that the group has any interest in targeting the U.S. It is very much focused on furthering its own interests in Lebanon, where it is now a party of government, and in opposing Israeli military actions and U.S. covert operations

designed to destroy it.

Nevertheless, the beat goes on. Richard Armitage, the former number two at the State Department, might have been the first U.S. official to [describe](#) Hezbollah as the “A-team” of terrorists. Shortly thereafter, Armitage retired and set up his own consulting firm that tells corporate clients how to deal with the terrorist threat, so his interest in warning about the dangers posed by terrorism might not have been completely disinterested. The ubiquitous Hillary Clinton has also [warned](#) about Hezbollah, employing similar terms even though she knows better than most that Hezbollah has no interest in confronting the United States. And then there are the media security experts, the Judith Miller clones for whom no lie is too big as long as one can tell it with a straight face. Their line, which has been promoted assiduously since 9/11, is that Hezbollah has sleeper cells in the United States that are ready to rise up and assault the American public as soon as Iran gives the word. According to the [story](#) being promoted, Hezbollah has hundreds and possibly thousands of secret agents scattered throughout the U.S. Many of them have been here for years, and some have even been successful at setting up businesses and making money, which will, of course, be used to fund terrorism. They are only waiting for someone to come by and give them the secret handshake to stage an attack.

The only problem with that narrative is that the FBI, which has been tapping phones and entrapping Muslims while trying to identify and undo such terror cells, has failed to find a single one in over 10 years. Even within the government, many have now come to believe that the sleeper cells are a total fiction, quite likely derived from someone’s imagination. There has been no actual evidence collected by America’s multitude of intelligence and security agencies suggesting that any such underground organization is in place, and the federal government has yet to find and arrest a single authentic Hezbollah operative at large in the United States.

And then there is the related [story](#) of how Hezbollah is all over the place in Latin America, just waiting to cross the border into Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Indeed, some of the accounts describe how Qurans and prayer rugs have already been found in America’s Southwest, a sure sign that terrorists are crossing over with the flow of illegal immigrants seeking work. Under pressure from Congress and the White House, the CIA and the FBI have carefully checked out all the stories, and guess what? No Muslim religious or terrorist-related bric-a-brac has actually been discovered along the U.S.-Mexican border, and the CIA has been unable to develop any information suggesting that there are Hezbollah cells in target countries Mexico, Paraguay, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala, or even perpetual irritant Venezuela, which has made the mistake of being friendly with Iran.

One has to ask why Hezbollah, with its limited resources and capabilities, would take the time and effort to position sleeper cells or terrorist cadres in the United States or Latin America, but the answer is self-evident: it has no reason to do so. So one has to look a little further into the problem and try to figure out what the real agenda is. To be sure, on one level, Hezbollah, which has defeated the Israeli army, is a particular bete noire for both Washington and Tel Aviv. It is reflexively damned as both terrorist and a threat, outside the pale and routinely vilified.

But the greater and more important agenda is to blacken Iran and create from whole cloth one more phony reason to go to war. It is the same reasoning that was used against Saddam Hussein — that he was “supporting international terrorism.” This cart-before-the-

horse form of analysis starts with the fact that Hezbollah is an ally of Iran. The allegation that it is preparing to carry out terrorist actions inside the U.S. is taken to mean that it is really acting as a proxy for the mullahs in so doing. Tehran is therefore sponsoring a new al-Qaeda. Those who want a new war with Iran consequently argue that Tehran's [terrorist agenda](#) must be stopped at all costs lest there be another 9/11.

Ironically, Hezbollah is, as terrorists go, a paper tiger, while both the United States and Israel with a wink and a nod are supporting actual acts of terrorism inside Iran. So one should be asking folks like Hillary Clinton and Richard Armitage who really constitutes the "A-team" of terrorists: is it Hezbollah, or is it actually the United States and Israel?

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