



September 11, 2006

**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)**

**Hezbollah's Shi'ite youth movement, "The Imam al-Mahdi Scouts," has tens of thousands of members. According to captured documents, they are indoctrinated with the principles of radical Iranian Islam. That indoctrination includes the personality cult of Iranian leader 'Ali Khamenei and Hezbollah's "battle legacy;" national Lebanese symbols are minimized.**



**Hezbollah scouts wearing uniforms and carrying plastic rifles in a parade on the anniversary of the outbreak of the second (Al-Aqsa) intifada (Mohamed Azakir/Reuters, September 27, 2002)**

**Children [belonging to the Hezbollah scout movement] in a parade in Beirut commemorating "Jerusalem Day." Next to them is a [Hezbollah] instructor wearing a camouflage suit (Jemal Sayidi/Reuters, November 2003)**



## Overview

⊙ The **Imam al-Mahdi Scouts**<sup>1</sup> are a Hezbollah youth movement which was established in May 1985, after the IDF withdrew from the security zone in south Lebanon. It has branches in the Shi'ite communities of Beirut, the Beqa'a Valley and south Lebanon. It received a permit for its activities from the Lebanese ministry of education in September 1992, seven years after its founding, and today they associated with the Federation of Lebanese Scouts. There are approximately 42,000 male and female Imam al-Mahdi scouts between the ages of 8-16 organized into 499 groups.<sup>2</sup>



**The emblem of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts. The fleur-de-lis is the international scout emblem, however, every scouting organization adds its own elements. In this case the additions are two swords and a hand raised as if taking an oath. The inscription under the emblem reads, “Obey!” The clearly implied messages are militarism, belligerence, obedience and commitment.**

⊙ The objective of the Hezbollah scout movement, as stated in its 2006 calendar, is to prepare an Islamic generation according to the Iman Khomeini's perception of “*Wilayat al-faqih*.”<sup>3</sup> Hezbollah established the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts to attract Shi'ite children and adolescents, to influence their hearts and minds and **to prepare new generations of youth indoctrinated with radical Shi'ite Islam, which propounds the idea of the return of the Mahdi as one of Hezbollah's central principles.** Hezbollah wants to create a new generation of operatives for its own ranks who will take part in its violent campaign against Israel. Furthermore the issue is part of the

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Shi'ite tradition, the Imam al-Mahdi is the “hidden imam” who is supposed to reappear as the Shi'ite Messiah and redeem the world. Belief in the imam as super-human, omnipotent and infallible is one of the unique central beliefs of Shi'a Islam. The first imam was 'Ali, “the prince of the faithful,” Muhammad's son-in-law and the fourth Caliph, according to the Sunni Muslims. From his death in 661 A.D. until 874 A.D., when the 12<sup>th</sup> imam disappeared, there were 11 Shi'ite imams. The hidden imam, according to Shi'ite belief, will return to the world as the “**Mahdi**,” a term meaning “the one guided by Allah to take the straight path.” The Mahdi, one of whose nicknames is “the shadow of Allah on earth,” will bring the message of redemption, take revenge on the enemies of the Shi'ites and bring justice to the world.

<sup>2</sup> According to information appearing on the 2006 Al-Mahdi Scouts calendar (See below).

<sup>3</sup> *Wilayat al-faqih* is Khomeini's belief in putting rule in the hands of a religious Muslim (in this case, Shi'ite). The individual has the authority to decide every issue in the Islamic state.

competition between Hezbollah and the secular Amal movement for control of the Shi'ites.

## The Iranian aspect

⊗ Since Hezbollah was founded, the Iranians have participated in directing its ideology and in spreading religious Shi'ite culture among the Shi'ites in Lebanon in general and Hezbollah in particular. Hezbollah did not create a culture of its own, but rather **imported that of Iran along with the principles of the Iranian Islamic revolution**. Farsi, the language spoken in Iran, was not an obstacle and Iranian cultural and religious products have been translated into Arabic in Lebanon.<sup>4</sup>

⊗ Members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, who have accompanied Hezbollah since its founding, have played a central role in its activity and in recruiting youths into its ranks. By the second half of the 1980s they had already organized camps for school children who were brought to the Beqa'a Valley from south Lebanon and Beirut and who received military training and cultural and religious instruction during the summer vacation.<sup>5</sup>

⊗ **Twenty years later, during the second Lebanon War, a great deal of Imam al-Mahdi Scouts material was found illustrating how members of Hezbollah's youth movement had been indoctrinated with the principles of the Iranian Islamic revolution and the personality cult of 'Ali Khamenei, and how the Shi'ite community in Lebanon had been indoctrinated through them.**

## Basic military training in the summer camps

⊗ Most Imam al-Mahdi Scouts activity is **social** (games, competition, trips, sports, summer camps) and **doctrinaire** (inculcating Hezbollah and Islamic revolution principles). In addition, there are camps where the participants learn the basic use of arms along with physical training and marching exercises while dressed in scout uniforms or camouflage suits.

---

<sup>4</sup> For details see Shimon Shapira, *Hizbullah between Iran and Lebanon*, (Hebrew), Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, (Tel Aviv, 2000), pp. 134-171.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Haqiqa*, Beirut, May 16, 1987; *al-'Ahed*, Beirut, August 30, 1987; from Shimon Shapira, *ibid.*, p. 144.

⊙ An investigative report published on August 8, 2006 in the Egyptian daily *Ruz al-Yusuf* stated that “Hezbollah has always recruited adolescents and children and trained them for fighting from a very young age. [They are] children who are **younger than 10 years of age, who wear camouflage suits, paint their faces black, swear an oath to jihad and belong to the al-Madhi Scouts, which is an association linked to Hezbollah.**”



An Imam al-Mahdi Scouts camp. One youth is holding a yellow (apparently Hezbollah) flag while another holds the scout flag. At the left there is a poster bearing the name of ‘Abbas Mussawi, the Hezbollah leader killed by the IDF in 1992.<sup>7</sup>

An Imam al-Mahdi Scouts camp<sup>6</sup>



⊙ The Imam al-Mahdi Scouts create the link to Hezbollah at an early age. When the children reach 17 they **find their way into the organization’s fighting ranks**, and there are even those who were killed during the confrontation with Israel. For example, **Hassan Qassem Hamid**, the head of the Hezbollah scout branch in the village of Bint Jbeil, was killed along with his brother during a terrorist attack;<sup>8</sup> **Adhem Hazimeh**, a Hezbollah operative killed in 1995 in an attack on the Sujud post, was also head of a Hezbollah scout branch.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.daralhayat.com/special/features/01-2005/20050107-08p10-01.txt/story.html>.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.bintjbeil.org/News-Bintjbeil/kachaf/index.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.bintjbeil.org/vb/showthread.php?t=14422>, [http://www.true-lebanon.org/fatal\\_casualty.html](http://www.true-lebanon.org/fatal_casualty.html).

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.abu-hadi.net/vb/showthread.php?t=22>

⊗ According to information appearing on the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts calendar, **more than 120 of the movement’s members died as shadeeds in Hezbollah actions, including suicide bombers (*istishhadiyyun*).**

## Including scouts in Hezbollah activities

⊗ Hezbollah customarily includes Imam al-Mahdi Scouts in its activities and Shi’ite events, for example:

✓ **Participation in events:** Youths wearing uniforms and carrying weapons take part in various ceremonies and events on Islamic and Iranian holidays and festival days or those related to Iran and the Palestinians, such as the prophet Muhammad’s birthday, Hezbollah memorial days, days commemorating the outbreak of the second (Al-Aqsa) intifada or **Jerusalem day**.<sup>10</sup>



**Scouts wearing uniforms and carrying rifles (apparently plastic) and marching on Israeli and American flags in a Jerusalem Day parade (Middle East On-Line, August 2006).**

✓ **Including the Scouts in propaganda operations:** **At the end of the second Lebanon war youngsters were included in Hezbollah’s efforts to convince the population that it had won the war.** They distributed candy to the refugees returning to Beirut and congratulated them on the “victory.”

---

<sup>10</sup> **Jerusalem Day** is a holiday for identifying with the Palestinians and the desire to “liberate Jerusalem.” It has been noted each year on the last Friday of the Ramadan fast since 1979, following a decision made by the Ayatollah Khomeini. It is celebrated in Iran and other countries with Shi’ite populations (Lebanon and Iraq, to name two). In Lebanon, Jerusalem Day events are organized by Hezbollah, which exploits the day to hold parades, rallies and shows of strength. There are also speeches made calling for the destruction of Israel and aid for the Palestinians’ armed campaign against it, and expressing objection to diplomatic solutions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and fierce hatred for the United States.





**Imam al-Mahdi Scouts distributing candy to those returning to Beirut after the second Lebanon war, claiming victory for Hezbollah (Middle East On-Line, August 2006).**

✓ **Issuing many publications (magazines, booklets, calendars, Internet postings)** as to market the ideology of Hezbollah and Iran’s Islamic revolution. To that end there is a **mobile library** which travels between the Shi’ite villages and lends parents publications for children and adolescents up to the age of 16. The Imam al-Mahdi Scouts calendar is a particularly effective marketing device, and there is a series of booklets with titles such as “Sharon the Evil One,” “The Story of Sayid ‘Abbas Mussawi, the Greatest Shadeed of the Islamic Resistance,”<sup>11</sup> “The Jihad Youths” and others.



**A selection of magazines published by the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts (From left to right: “The Story of Sayid ‘Abbas Mussawi, the Greatest Shahdeed of the Islamic Resistance,” “The Jihad Youths” and “Sharon the Evil One.”**

## **Hezbollah’s educational activities**

⊙ Education is one of Hezbollah’s **main fields of activity, as it is for the Hamas movement.** The organization, and its Iranian supporters, recognize the fact that **a comprehensive educational network, from kindergarten through university, is vital to educating the coming generations of Lebanese Shi’ites in the spirit of the Iranian Islamic revolution.** During the second Lebanon war the IDF found **material**

<sup>11</sup> “The greatest shaheed” is the nickname of Hussein bin ‘Ali, who was killed in the Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D., and the event that shaped Shi’a Islam. He is revered by both Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims. As one aspect of fostering ‘Abbas Musawi’s image, he posthumously received the nickname “the greatest shaheed of the Islamic resistance.”

used to indoctrinate children and adolescents with Hezbollah's revolutionary principles.

⊙ Hezbollah's educational activity focuses on Shi'ite adolescents in south Beirut, south Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley. The organization makes an effort to reduce their tuition and help pay their educational expenditures, enabling some of its supporters to send their children to school for free. Thus, under Hezbollah's aegis, the schools have become **attractive**, especially for Shi'ite children, even if they are not from families which support Hezbollah.

### The education received by kindergarten children...



Kindergarten children wearing camouflage suits and yellow Hezbollah headbands putting on a show. The girls in the back row are waving Hezbollah flags. (Photographs found during the second Lebanon war in the possession of Hezbollah operatives in Yarun and Rabb al-Talatin in south Lebanon).

### Using the scout movement to indoctrinate children and adolescents

⊙ As part of its educational investment, Hezbollah uses the **Imam al-Mahdi Scouts** to indoctrinate children and adolescents with the principles of radical Islam as set forth by Khomeini. The objective is to nurture hostility toward Israel and prepare them ideologically to join the ranks of the organization as operatives.



Inculcating the idea of “the liberation of Jerusalem:” wearing a flak jacket and carrying a rifle, the child has a headband reading “Oh Jerusalem, I am coming.”

### **A *Ruz al-Yusuf* investigative report**

⊙ An investigative report published by the Egyptian daily *Ruz al-Yusuf* on August 18, claimed that the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts movement has trained “armed militias” in south Lebanon composed of children aged 10-15. The first lesson Hezbollah teaches them, said the report, deals with **the destruction of the State of Israel**. “[The lesson] is always an important part of the curriculum and is always aimed at children and adolescents who are new [to the program].” The objective, it continued, was to train a “**high-caliber Islamic generation**” of children who would be willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allah (*awlad istishhadiyyun*) in the campaign against Israel.<sup>12</sup>



Thus Hezbollah trains its future operatives...  
(from a report in the Egyptian daily *Ruz al-Yusuf*, August 8, 2006).

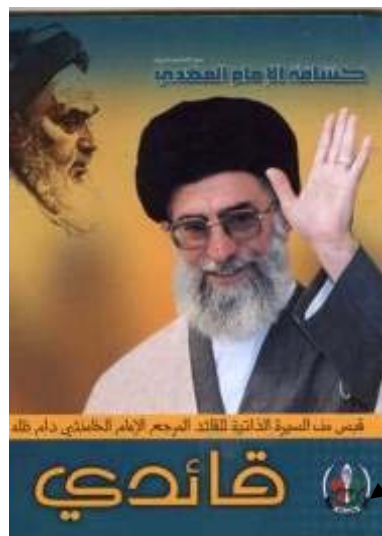
<sup>12</sup> The report quotes statements made by Hezbollah deputy general secretary, Na'im Qassem, in a Canadian radio interview: “A nation whose children are willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allah is a victorious nation... Israel cannot overcome us...because we have sons...who in the future will rid the earth of the Zionist pollution which conquered it...”



## The personality cult of the Iranian “leader,” ‘Ali Khamenei

⊙ During the second Lebanon war, a booklet entitled “My Leader” was captured from Hezbollah operatives in the village of Yarun and in others. It was distributed by the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts and contained biographical information about the Iranian “commander-leader” Khamenei. He is represented as admirable, worthy of emulation, and as an example of a devoted jihad fighter who contributed much to the Islamic revolution.

### The front cover of “My Leader”



The emblem of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts

⊙ The personality cult of Iranian leader ‘Ali Khamenei: The cover of “My Leader,” with a picture of ‘Ali Khamenei (right) and the leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini in profile (upper left). The upper text reads, “The Imam al-Mahdi Scouts” and the lower, “Selected passages from the biography of the commander, the highest source of [Shi’ite Islamic] authority, the imam Khamenei, may Allah grant him long life.”<sup>13</sup> The emblem of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts appears in the lower right corner. (The author’s name and date of publication are absent but the condition of the booklet indicates it is new.)

<sup>13</sup> The Shi’ite terminology used to describe Khamenei was taken from a description of one of the titles of the Imam al-Mahdi.

⊙ According to the booklet’s introduction, “These are the words of the succinct summary and glorious milestones in the life of the commander-leader Khamenei, which we have quoted from the book “The Authority of the Commander-Imam”...[in order] to present them to you, our brother  **Jihad warrior** who holds fast to the path of Allah. **For Jihad warriors are the most worthy of having [the qualities of] their commander-leader and master [i.e., Khamenei] revealed to them.** Therefore, we invite you, dear reader, to examine this booklet, and to keep it so that you may reread it and study its message whenever you choose.”

### Two illustrations from “My Leader”



A young ‘Ali Khamenei wearing a uniform looking out a plane window. According to the booklet, in 1979 Khamenei represented the Imam (Khomeini?) in the Iranian Ministry of Defense and commanded the Revolutionary Guards. He later served as Khomeini’s representative in the Supreme Security Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (p. 48).



‘Ali Khamenei in a well-guarded army jeep somewhere in the desert, possibly during an Iranian military show (p.24).

### A calendar with Hezbollah propaganda

⊙ Among the material the IDF captured were calendars for the year 2006 distributed by Hezbollah’s Imam al-Mahdi Scouts. They were aimed at inculcating the Shi’ite population, especially the younger generation, with Hezbollah and radical Iranian

Shi'ite propaganda.<sup>14</sup> Prominent are the calls for a **violent campaign against Israel** and praise for suicide bombers.

⊗ Every month certain dates are singled out for special mention. They relate to events from the history and legacy of Hezbollah and to the violent campaign waged against Israel by Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations. For example, Jerusalem Day, which fosters identification with the Palestinian problem and the “liberation” of Jerusalem; Resistance and Liberation Day, which commemorates the IDF’s withdrawal from the security zone in south Lebanon in May 2000; the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000; Hezbollah’s fighting against the IDF during Operation Accountability in 1993; and the anniversary of the death of Hadi Nasrallah, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah’s son in south Lebanon. There are also pictures and dates related to the Islamic revolution in Iran and dates related to religious events if the Shi’ite Islamic calendar.

⊗ The Lebanese identification of the organization is conspicuously minimized. The only event noted which is related to Lebanese history is Lebanon’s independence day, and with the exception of modest pictures of Lebanese flag, **there are no Lebanese symbols or pictures of the country’s past or present leaders.**

⊗ The following are examples of events and propaganda found on the calendar:

---

<sup>14</sup> The Palestinian terrorist organizations also make effective use of calendars to spread their propaganda. Examples can be found in the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center display at Gelilot.

## The calendar's front cover



Hassan Nasrallah reviewing various Imam al-Mahdi Scouts activities. To Nasrallah's right is the organization's emblem and the inscription "Imam al-Mahdi Scouts." At the lower right is a very small Lebanese flag.

## April



The main events of April are Islamic Solidarity Week and Leader's Day (i.e., Khamenei, whose picture is in the upper left corner.) Other events are "the Qana massacre," a suicide bombing attack against an IDF-SLA post in the village of Bint Jbeil

## May



The main event of May is the day the IDF withdrew from the security zone (May 25). Other events are the Shaheed Festival, the day Morteza Motahhari died (1979),<sup>15</sup> and the “Humiliation and Betrayal Agreement between the Zionists and Lebanon” (the agreement signed on May 17, 1983, during the first Lebanon War and sabotaged by Syria and its allies).

## July



The main event of July is “the birthday of the honorable lady al-Zahra.”<sup>16</sup> Other events are the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders and the beginning of the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in 1993. At the upper left is a picture of the Ayatollah Khomeini, under him the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts emblem and to the right the inscription “the [hidden] imam guided on the straight path [is] a living, eternal fact.”<sup>17</sup> Below are pictures from an Imam al-Mahdi Scouts summer camp.

<sup>15</sup> The Ayatollah Morteza Moutahhari was one of the leaders and ideologists of the Islamic revolution in Iran and one of the Ayatollah Khomeini’s closest associates.

<sup>16</sup> A nickname given to Fatima, Muhammad’s beloved daughter and wife of ‘Ali, the founder of Shi’a, only to whom the Islamic title of respect is given.

<sup>17</sup> Another reference to the centrality of the belief in the return of the Mahdi, the hidden imam, in Iranian Shi’ite ideology. It is inculcated into members of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts.



## September



The main events of September are the imam al-Mahdi's birthday and the Day of the World's Oppressed. Other events are the destruction of the World Trade Center, the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada and the death of Hadi Nasrallah, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's son, killed in a clash with the IDF in south Lebanon. At the left Hassan Nasrallah is shown presenting a medal to one of the children, under which is written "Oh Allah, may you feel the full liberation of *wali*" (i.e., the return of the hidden imam).

## October



The main events of October are Jerusalem Day and the day of Islamic revival (possibly the day the Islamic holy month of Ramadan begins, when the Qur'an was revealed). Upper left is the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts emblem beneath a picture of Khomeini. Beneath the emblem are members of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts studying the Qur'an. The boy with the microphone has a picture of Khamenei on his shirt. Upper right is a very small Lebanese flag, and lower right are young Scouts saluting during a Jerusalem Day parade.

## November



The main event of November is Lebanon's independence Day, an exception amidst the wealth of Iranian Shi'ite Islamic and Hezbollah events. The Lebanese flag is waved by members of the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts and appears more prominently than on pages devoted to other months. November was also the month in which a suicide bombing attack was carried out against IDF headquarters in Tyre in 1982, a date Hezbollah calls "Shaheed Day."