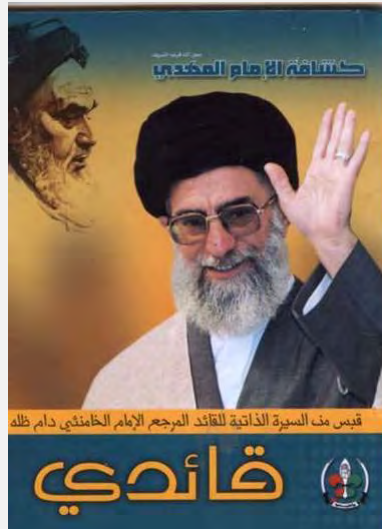




June 17, 2012

Hezbollah as the strategic long arm of the Iranian regime: Khamenei's security advisor has called Hezbollah's leader a "soldier" of the Supreme Leader. Thus, he says, in an Iranian-Israeli confrontation, Hezbollah will fire its rockets at Israeli cities.



Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, a source of authority for Hezbollah: the front cover of a pamphlet issued by Hezbollah's scout movement, entitled My Leader, seized by the IDF in a Hezbollah base during the Second Lebanon War. Khamenei is depicted as a source of religious authority for Hezbollah, a role model for the youth and as a model of the dedicated jihad fighter who contributed a great deal to the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Overview

1. **General Sayed Yahya Rahim Safavi**, former commander of the Quds Force and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's security advisor, recently said that he regarded Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah as **"a soldier [in the ranks of] Leader" Khamenei**. Therefore, he added, he thinks it extremely likely that **Hezbollah will act against Israel should it seeks to harm Iran**. Safavi made similar remarks in 2008, saying that Hassan Nasrallah regarded himself as one of Khamenei's soldiers. He also boasted of the rocket arsenal of "our friends in Hezbollah," **which could cause billions of dollars of damages to Israel's cities**. Other senior members of the Iranian regime have said that Iran provides Hezbollah with comprehensive support and that **the organization is committed to obeying the Iranian leadership**.

2. **Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general**, has frequently said that **Supreme Leader Khamenei is Hezbollah's source of religious authority and that the organization obeys the authority of the Iranian leadership** in strategic issues in general, including **the war against Israel**. A pamphlet distributed by Hezbollah in Lebanon also depicts Khamenei as the source of Hezbollah's religious authority. However, in February 2012 Hassan Nasrallah publicly stated that if Israel attacked Iran's nuclear facilities, Hezbollah would examine its position in real time and decide how to act.

3. In our assessment, Safavi's remark about Nasrallah's being a soldier of Khamenei was **a threat against Israel**. Its subtext read that Hassan Nasrallah could not have independent considerations when it came to strategic issues of Iran's national security, and that **Hezbollah's large arsenal of rockets would, when necessary, be used according to a decision made by Iran**. Such a decision could be made, for example, **to respond to an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities**.

4. During the six years which have passed since the Second Lebanon War, Iran and Syria have **tripled Hezbollah's stock of rockets**, which now stands, in our assessment, at **60,000**, including long-range rockets capable of striking at **central and southern Israel**. Remarks made by Iran (and Hassan Nasrallah) indicate that as far as **Iran and Hezbollah** are concerned, the **rockets can do billions of dollars of damage to the Israeli home front should Iran decide to attack Israel**.

Iran's High Expectations for Hezbollah in a Confrontation

5. On **June 2, 2012**, **Sayed Yahya Rahim Safavi, former Revolutionary Guards commander and today Ali Khamenei's security advisor**, was interviewed by the Iranian channel, Press TV. One of the topics covered was the involvement of Hezbollah in a possible Iran-Israel confrontation. He said that Hezbollah had thousands of rockets, and if Israel wanted to attack Iran, **it was extremely likely that Hezbollah would [use those rockets to] attack Israel**. He added that **he regarded [Hezbollah leader] Hassan Nasrallah as "a soldier of the Leader" Khamenei**. He said that Iran

also had the ability to attack Israel with its long-range rockets: "There is no place within the Zionist entity that is out of range of our rockets" (Press TV, June 2, 2012). **Safavi made a similar statement in 2008**, saying that "...**Sayid Hassan Nasrallah regards himself as a soldier of the Iranian Leader** and the men of Hezbollah take their example from the brave men and women of Iran" (FARS News Agency, Iran, November 16, 2008).



Sayed Yahya Rahim Safavi depicts Nasrallah as a soldier of Khamenei. The pictures in the background are of Khomeini and Khamenei (FARS News Agency, Iran, November 16, 2008).

6. In recent years Safavi and other senior Iranians have mentioned the commitment of Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip to Iran:

1) In a Friday sermon delivered in Tehran on February 3, 2012, **Supreme Leader Khamenei** said that **Iran had played an important role** in the "33-day war" against Israel in Lebanon [the Second Lebanon War] and in the "22-day war" against Israel in the Gaza Strip [Operation Cast Lead]. Both wars, he said, ended in defeat for the Zionist regime.

2) **Qassem Suleimani**, commander for the Quds Force, said in a speech delivered in Qom that **Iran had a presence in both south Lebanon and Iraq**. He added that those two areas were, to a certain extent, **influenced by the actions and ideology of the Islamic Revolution in Iran**. He said that the Second Lebanon War [the so-called "33-day war"] was a **victory for Hezbollah**, which succeeded in conducting the war on the territory of the "Zionist entity." In

that way, he said, Hezbollah **had gone from being threatened to being threatening and possessing deterrence** (ISNA, January 18, 2012).¹

3) **Rahim Safavi** told Al-Alam TV that "Iran has no need to aim its ballistic missiles at Israel. **The Katyusha rockets possessed by our friends in Hezbollah are sufficient to destroy the billion-dollar cities built in Israel.** Israel knows that if it starts a war it will be attacked on the Lebanese front, the Palestinian front and the Iranian front. **Our missiles are not limited in either number or range. They cover the entire territory of occupied Palestinian and there is no location that is not within their range**" (Al-Alam TV, November 23, 2011).

4) **Ali Akbar Velayati**, advisor to Leader Khamenei, interviewed by Al-Jazeera TV on July 25, 2009, **said that Iran gave comprehensive aid and support to Hezbollah and Hamas.** He said that if it weren't for Iranian support, the two would not have "won" the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead. He said that "We fully supported Hezbollah and accepted responsibility for the attack [i.e., Operation Cast Lead] in the Gaza Strip [through] our support of Hamas. **I can honestly say that Iran fully and comprehensively supported Hezbollah, and that Hezbollah knows it is in the debt of the [Iranian] leadership.** Of course, **the leadership of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah is exceptional.** He always says that without Iranian support they would not have won [the Second Lebanon War]. **Some of the resistance [sic] of the Palestinian people in Gaza was [made possible] thanks to Iranian support and help...**"²

Khamenei as a Source of Authority for Hezbollah

7. **Sheikh Naim Qassem**, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general, has previously related to the ties between the organization and the Iranian Leader. Interviewed at length by the Lebanese newspaper Nahar al-Shabab on July 30, 2009, he was asked about the relations between the Iranian leadership and Hezbollah. He answered that Hezbollah was a "religious-political party" with a Shi'ite identity and that **it had to acquire religious and political legitimacy from the [Iranian] leadership, which had the**

¹The statement was **strongly criticized in Iran and Lebanon, leading Iran to deny it:** Ghazanfar Roknabadi, the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, said that the media had distorted Suleimani's speech and claimed that Iran did not intervene in the internal affairs of other countries (IRNA, January 22, 2012).

²For further information see the August 16, 2009 bulletin "**Two rare statements about Iran-Hezbollah relations: Ali Akbar Velayati, advisor to the Supreme Leader Khamenei, admits Iran fully supports Hezbollah. Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general, says Hezbollah derives legitimacy for its activities from Khamenei.**"

authority to grant it. He said that as a political party, Hezbollah regarded the **Imam Khomeini** as the ruling cleric who gave it legitimacy. After him came the **Imam Khamenei**, who "**determines our general lines, releasing us from blame and gives us legitimacy.**"

8. Sheikh Qassem also gave an example of the significance of the kind of religious directive Hezbollah had to accept from Khamenei: **if, for example, Khamenei has determined that fighting Israel is a religious duty, then "anyone killed in fighting Israel will be, to the best of our understanding, a shaheed."** However, should Leader Khamenei decide that the war was forbidden, "then the dead man will go to hell, because he was not permitted to fight in the war." Sheikh Qassem emphasized that **Hezbollah could not begin an operation against Israel without religious authorization from the ruling cleric in Iran.**³ However, he said, the ruling cleric **is not supposed to go into detail** about how his ruling will be carried out (timing, necessary weapons, etc.), and such things were to be decided by Hezbollah.

9. Two years previously, **Sheikh Qassem made similar remarks.** Interviewed on April 16, 2007 by **Al-Kawthar**, the Iranian Arabic TV channel, he said that **Hezbollah did not determine policy for itself.** He said that **Hezbollah accepted the authority of the Iranian leadership and received religious guidance from it in every facet of its fighting against Israel** (for example when to fire rockets and carry out suicide bombing attacks, which require religious sanction from the Iranian leadership). In describing the source of Hezbollah's authority, he often used the term ***vali-ye faqih***, ruling cleric, when **referring to Khomeini and his heir, Khamenei.**

10. His remarks show that **Hezbollah's political and military instructions come from Iran** despite the fact that Hezbollah is not only a terrorist organization but a Lebanese political party as well, part of the Lebanese government, and influential in internal Lebanese politics. Sheikh Qassem repeatedly made it clear that in matters of principle, including **when to go to war**, fire rockets and carry out suicide bombing attacks all **required authorization from the Iranian leadership.** He claimed that the Iranian leadership did not go into details regarding how to carry out such actions, but in our assessment there is no doubt that it has both the capability and the tools to control the severity of the actions of Hezbollah, the organization which serves as the long arm of Iran on the Israel's northern border.

³***Vali-ye faqih***, the ruling jurist, formerly the title of the Ayatollah Khomeini and currently the title of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.



Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general, at a ceremony held in the Iranian embassy in Lebanon on the anniversary of Khomeini's death (Al-Manar TV, June 3, 2009).

11. However, despite Hezbollah's commitments to decisions made by the Iranian Supreme Leader, in a recent statement **Hassan Nasrallah remained vague about how Hezbollah would act if Israel attacked Iran's nuclear facilities**. In a speech given in honor of the birth of the prophet Muhammad, he said that if Israel did attack, Iran would not ask anything of Hezbollah and would not dictate to it, but that **Hezbollah would have to decide what to do by itself** (Al-Manar TV, February 7, 2012). In our assessment, his vagueness was designed to keep Hezbollah from being exposed to both domestic and foreign accusations of being an Iranian agent and claiming that Lebanon was liable to suffer if Hezbollah intervened in a confrontation between Israel and Iran. **In effect, in our assessment, there has been no change in Hezbollah's basic commitment to carry out the decisions of the Iranian regime.**

12. Vagueness aside, Hassan Nasrallah recently emphasized **Hezbollah's ability to attack the Israeli home front**. Speaking at a ceremony marking the end of the rebuilding of the southern Beirut suburb which is a Hezbollah stronghold, he said that "today is a new day for you. Oh, residents of the southern suburb. The hand you use to build and resist [sic] now has its finger on the trigger to force a real equation on the Israelis, **that for every building destroyed** [in the southern suburb of Beirut], **a building in Tel Aviv will be destroyed**. I will tell you a secret, and it is 100 percent certain: in 2006, in a certain respect without a doubt we could have struck Tel Aviv, but we wanted to protect our capital [Beirut] and so we did not attack Tel Aviv. Today, however, not only can we strike Tel Aviv as a city, but if Allah wishes and with strength

and courage from Allah, **we can attack very specific targets in Tel Aviv, and in every place in occupied Palestine**" (Al-Intiqad, May 11, 2012).

The Palestinian Terrorist Organizations

13. In our assessment, Iran's faith that the Palestinian terrorist organizations will join the battle is **much smaller than its faith in Hezbollah**. In the open internal Palestinian dialogue which recently developed about the issue, senior Hamas leaders (Ismail Haniya, Salah al-Bardawil and Mahmoud al-Zahar) said that **they would act in the interests of the Palestinian people**, and that the support the Iranians gave Hamas was unconditional. However, a senior figure in the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad**, an organization close to and dependent on Iran, said that **his organization would not be able to stand on the sidelines if Iran were attacked**. That was because "such an attack would influence the entire region, and we are part of it" (Qudsnet website, May 21, 2012).