



Spotlight on Terrorism : Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria

May 19 – June 1, 2023

Overview

- ▶ Hezbollah celebrated its annual "Resistance and Liberation Day," held to mark the IDF's living south Lebanon in 2000. Hezbollah secretary general, Hasan Nasrallah, gave a speech boasting of the organization's military capabilities, stressing the concept of the "unity of the arenas" and threatening Israel with a battle on multiple fronts. Hezbollah held two military exercises in south Lebanon to demonstrate its capabilities. In the larger, more widely media-covered exercise, operatives using live ammunition simulated taking control of an IDF post or Israeli community and abducting IDF soldiers, and displayed the organization's weapons.¹ Lebanese opposition sources criticized Hezbollah for holding the exercise. American sources reported Hezbollah operatives were undergoing training for an attack on American soldiers in Syria.
- ▶ Five Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) operatives were killed on the Lebanon-Syria border; the organization claimed they were killed by Israel and threatened reprisals.
- ▶ Because of its inadequate prevention of money laundering and terrorism funding, Lebanon is a candidate for the FATF² "grey list" of countries guilty of economic crime. INTERPOL issued an arrest warrant for Riad Salameh, governor of Lebanon's Central Bank, on the grounds of corruption.
- ▶ The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is establishing a new militia in the Deir ez-Zor area, under Hezbollah aegis.
- ▶ The UAE expressed concern that Hezbollah was planning to attack Israelis visiting UAE territory.

¹ For further information see the May 22, 2023 report, "Hezbollah holds a military display in south Lebanon and threatens Israel."

² The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog. It sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society (FATF website)

Hezbollah and Lebanon

Resistance and Liberation Day

Nasrallah's speech

- ▶ On May 25, 2023, Hezbollah secretary general Hasan Nasrallah gave a speech for the annual Resistance and Liberation Day, which marks the anniversary of the IDF's living south Lebanon in 2000. He presented the withdrawal as an achievement for the "resistance axis" and as a battle fought together by Hezbollah, the Lebanese army, the Syrian army and the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations. He noted the sacrifice of Hezbollah fighters and of its supporters, especially the residents of the Beqa' Valley and south Lebanon, both Hezbollah strongholds. He thanked the Lebanese army "which completed the mission," the Syrian army "[for its support] from 1982 until the liberation" and the Palestinian organizations "which cooperated with us [in terrorist attacks] before 2000 and after, and sacrificed [its operatives]."
- ▶ Nasrallah threatened Israel, claiming the "resistance axis" concept of the "unity of the arenas" had been taken the initiative from Israel. He dismissed Israeli security warnings advising the "resistance axis" not to attack Israel, claiming threats of a broad-scale war were not coming from Israel but from the "axis," because in any war there would be "hundreds of thousands of fighters" along Israel's borders.
- ▶ He also boasted of the "resistance axis' " high [terrorist] capabilities and minimized Israel's military capabilities, claiming international and internal circumstances were working against Israel, while the "resistance" was full of hope based on the facts. He said that since the IDF's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 the idea of a "greater Israel, from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean" had disappeared completely, and since its disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 "it was getting smaller day by day." He claimed that given the current situation, the "resistance" was more optimistic than ever before that "Palestine" would be liberated and the men of the "resistance" would pray in al-Aqsa mosque, while in Israel people had lost hope and were doubtful about the ability of the State of Israel to survive. Regarding Operation Shield and Arrow, he claimed Israel had been weakened and lost its deterrence. Regarding the claims of Israel and the United States that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) were doing Iran's bidding, he said Iran supported the Palestinians but they made all their own decisions according to their own interests.



Nasrallah gives a speech for Resistance and Liberation Day (al-Mayadeen, May 25, 2023).

"The Global Gathering in Support of the Choice of Resistance" conference

- ▶ Between May 25 and 28, 2023, the 11th annual The Global Gathering in Support of the Choice of Resistance conference was held in Beirut with the title, “The resilience of the resistance axis and its role in breaking the siege, ending sanctions, and rejecting normalization” (conference website, May 28, 2023; al-Mayadeen, May 27, 2023).
- ▶ Hezbollah holds the conference every year, inviting figures from the Arab-Muslim world and Western countries who support the idea. This year about 70 people participated as representatives, including an Italian woman who said "the resistance is making more and more progress against American imperialism," and an American woman who said "Nasrallah is a hero and the resistance is a concept which should be studied" (al-Mayadeen, May 27, 2023).
- ▶ The option of "resistance" was promoted as the only way to deal with Israel and "liberate the occupied lands" (conference website, May 28, 2023; al-Mayadeen, May 27, 2023). Ibrahim Amin al-Said, chairman of Hezbollah's political council, spoke on behalf of Hassan Nasrallah, praising the idea of "resistance" [anti-Israel terrorism] (conference website, May 27, 2023).



The conference in Beirut (al-Mayadeen, May 27, 2023).

Military exercise in south Lebanon

- ▶ On May 27, 2023, Hezbollah held a limited military exercise in Jabal 'Amal in south Lebanon. Its title was "The shining victory" and it simulated infiltrating Israeli territory and "liberating Palestine." It was symbolic and smaller than the exercise preceding it (See below), and did not include the use of live ammunition (tehrantimes.com, May 27, 2023; @MohammadKhazemm Twitter account, May 27, 2023).



The announcement for the exercise. At the top is a Hezbollah operative in a tunnel and the bottom are the Temple Mount and al-Aqsa mosque (Telegram, May 26, 2023).

- ▶ On May 21, 2023, Hezbollah held a military exercise with the use of live ammunition in the region of Aramta, south Lebanon, with the title, "We swear we will cross [the Israeli border]." Media personnel were invited to watch several hundred Hezbollah operatives simulating breaking through "the Israel-Lebanon border," abducting IDF soldiers or the body of an IDF soldier from a vehicle and attacking an Israeli community or military post. Various weapons were displayed, including multiple-barrel rocket launchers mounted on armored vehicles, quadcopters and machine guns, some of which were apparently intended to intercept IDF UAVs (Agence France-Presse and Telegram, May 21, 2023).



Hezbollah operatives stand at attention before the exercise begins (@Jaafar584044510 Twitter account, May 21, 2023).



Explosion and breaking through Israel's "border wall" under the slogan, "We swear we're coming." Fighting Israel on the border (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2023).

- ▶ Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Operations' Council, gave a speech threatening Israel, stressing the organization's commitment to victory and establishing "an equation of deterrence [against Israel]." He reiterated the importance of the concept of "unity of the arenas" as a way of multiplying the force for victory on the battlefield (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2023).



Hashem Safi al-Din gives a speech at the beginning of the exercise (al-Mayadeen, May 21, 2023).

- ▶ In an interview with al-Manar, Na'im Qassem, deputy Hezbollah secretary general, said an objective of the exercise was to prove to Israel that Hezbollah was constantly on the alert and

had various military capabilities, including the ability to bring the fighting into Israeli territory. He claimed Hezbollah had many weapons which had not been displayed, including precise missiles and UAVs of various types and sizes, with a wide variety of capabilities, including the ability to threaten Israel's off-shore natural gas rig. Similar to other speeches, he said the organization was an integral part of the "unity of the arenas" and the next battle would be held in Israeli territory (al-Manar, May 23, 2023).

Hezbollah criticized for the exercise

- ▶ Former Lebanese prime minister Najib Mikati criticized Hezbollah's military exercise in a meeting with Joanna Wronecka, the UN special coordinator for Lebanon. He said the Lebanese government opposed any event that detracted from the government's authority and the country's sovereignty. He also said the problem of Hezbollah's weapons demanded a national consensus and had to be the country's top priority. He said the government wanted security and stability to be preserved throughout the country and for no activities undermining it to be taken (Lebanese government Twitter account, May 22, 2023).
- ▶ Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces political party, called the exercise "unacceptable" because it had been held at a time when the Lebanese were struggling to rebuild the country and restore Arab and international faith in Lebanon. Hezbollah, he said, had clearly sent a message to all Lebanese that "it doesn't matter how hard you try, we will never allow a genuine state to be established in Lebanon." Jaja added that if Hezbollah believed that holding the exercise increased the chances of its chosen candidate for the presidency of Lebanon, it was mistaken (Samir Geagea's Twitter account, May 22, 2023). The Lebanese Forces party said in an announcement that holding the exercise violated the resolution of the Arab League summit meeting, especially the article calling for the complete rejection of the establishment of armed groups and militias outside the framework of government institutions. In addition, the exercise had been held against the will of the government, damaged Lebanon's credibility and violated its international commitments (al-Nashra, May 24, 2023).
- ▶ Sami Gemayel, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, said the exercise was a provocation for the Lebanese and for the Arab League. He added, "We ask the Arab and international public, would you agree to the same situation in your own country, for an armed group to have weapons, hold military maneuvers and hijack the right of your country's government to make decisions" (Samy Gemayel's Twitter account, May 21, 2023).

- ▶ Kamil Shamoun, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, said the exercise, which he called "a folklore display," was meant to restore Hezbollah's failing popularity among the Shi'ites in Lebanon. He said more than 70% of the Shi'ites did not believe in militias and wanted the state have and enforce exclusive power throughout Lebanon. In the two weeks leading up to the exercise he stressed that only the government could have weapons and Lebanon had to be neutral regarding Israel and other countries which did not want war with it. He added that the current politicians, many of whom were affiliated with Hezbollah, had failed miserably and made Lebanon notorious, its name linked to drug smuggling, terrorism and corruption (al-Arabiya – al-Hadath, May 22, 2023; OTV Lebanon News, May 10 and 15, 2023).
- ▶ Thirty-one members of the Lebanese parliament signed a statement condemning the exercise. They claimed Hezbollah had exploited the exercise to show the Lebanese, the Arabs and the world that its sovereignty was superior to Lebanon's, adding that Hezbollah used its weapons to protect corruption, disrupt the workings of the collapsing government's institutions and damage Lebanon's foreign relations. They also claimed that Hezbollah considered itself the state despite the fact that most of the Lebanese people rejected it, and it had to stop enforcing its political and military agenda on the country and stop interfering in Lebanon's internal affairs, and allow the country to rehabilitate its relations with the Arab and international communities (al-Nashra, May 26, 2023).

Processions and other events

- ▶ Processions and marches were held in towns and villages in south Lebanon where Hezbollah flags were waved and songs were sung and mottoes chanted in praise of the organization (@alishoeb1970 Twitter account, May 25, 2023; @samerhajali Twitter account, May 25, 2023). An event of hundreds of Lebanese was held in the village al-Khayam, attended by Na'im Qassem, deputy Hezbollah secretary general (@alishoeb1970 Twitter account, May 25, 2023).



Right: A Resistance and Liberation Day procession (@samerhajali Twitter account, May 25, 2023).

Left: The event in al-Khayam (@alishoeb1970 Twitter account, May 25, 2023).

Abduction of Saudi Arabian citizen

- ▶ A Saudi Arabian citizen who worked for the Saudi airline in Beirut was abducted from the city's industrial zone. Hezbollah was assumed to be behind the abduction because the ransom note for \$400,000 was sent in an SMS from the Dahia, the south Beirut suburb which is a Hezbollah stronghold. On May 30, 2023, according to reports, Lebanese military intelligence released the Saudi Arabian captive (al-Jazeera and Sky News in Arabic, May 30, 2023).

Tourists detained

- ▶ Hezbollah detains dozens of tourists in Lebanon and subjects them to long interrogations, claiming to investigate whether they have connections with Israel. An Armenian lawyer who agreed to be interviewed anonymously said she had arrived in Lebanon in January 2023 with three other Armenian women and stayed at the Royal Garden Hotel in Beirut. She said Hezbollah operatives abducted them on a street in Beirut and took them to an apartment where they were interrogated for four days, during which they were given neither food nor water, and their clothing and purses were taken from them. She said the Hezbollah operatives claimed to be Lebanese policemen. They were released with orders to leave Lebanon within four days, which is what they did. She refused to reveal her identity because she was afraid Hezbollah operatives would abduct her again in a different country. She said her friends were also afraid, and refused to be interviewed. Official Armenian agencies refused to relate to the incident (Lebanese news website Sawt Beirut International, May 18, 2023).

Palestinians in Lebanon

Five Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command operatives killed in Lebanon

- ▶ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Headquarters (PFLP-GC)³ announced that before dawn on May 31, 2023 the Israeli Air Force attacked the organization's military command post in Qousaya, in the Beqa'a Valley (which is under Hezbollah control) in eastern Lebanon, about three kilometers (about 2 miles) west of the Lebanon-Syria border. The organization claimed two commanders with the rank of colonel and three operatives were killed, and ten were wounded. The PFLP-GC, which is affiliated with the "resistance axis" and apparently collaborates with Hezbollah, threatened revenge. Israeli sources and local newspapers said no Israeli Air Force activity had been undertaken in the area. According to a different report, there had been no attack but rather a technical malfunction of the organization's weapons had caused the casualties (al-Arabiya, Telegram and al-Jazeera, May 31, 2023).

General Events in Lebanon

The campaign for the Lebanese presidency

- ▶ After an agreement, in principle, between the opposition parties, the Lebanese Forces, the Phalangists, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Free Patriotic Movement and a number of independent members of the Lebanese Parliament, to jointly support Jihad Azour for president, the Parliament members affiliated with Hezbollah and the Shi'ite Amal Movement attacked his candidacy. Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and head of Amal, called him "a challenger" and "recommended" he drop out of the campaign. Azour, the former minister of finance, who was close to former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, and who belongs to the National Liberal faction, is considered critical of Hezbollah (Ici Beyrouth, May 28, 2023; Sawt Beirut International and al-Jazeera, May 29, 2023).
- ▶ Suleiman Frangieh, the presidential candidate affiliated with the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, tried to promote his candidacy with the help of Syrian President Bashar Assad while at the Arab League summit meeting held in Jeddah on May 18 and 19, 2023. Reportedly, Frangieh appealed to Assad's brother Maher to convince Bashar to speak to the Saudi Arabians on his behalf, but

³ A Palestinian terrorist organization founded by Ahmed Jibril in 1968.

Maher told him he had to talk to Nasrallah, who "held the [presidential] portfolio" (al-Nashra, May 19, 2023).

- ▶ Neemat Frem, a businessman who is also a member of the Lebanese Parliament, announced he was planning to run for president on a platform of combatting corruption, correct administration and promoting the Lebanese economy. He belongs to the camp opposing Hezbollah, but according to recent reports he is trying to represent a pragmatic national position which is not hostile to Hezbollah, by separating the economy from politics and not dealing with complicated issues such as Hezbollah's weapons (naharnet.com, May 18, 2023; today.lorientlejour, May 10, 2023).
- ▶ Representatives Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY) and Michael McCaul (R-TX) appealed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken to initiate measures to ease Lebanon's political and economic crisis, such as imposing sanctions on the country to make it clear to the country's politicians that the political situation was unacceptable (House Foreign Affairs Committee, May 30, 2023). Their objective was to accelerate the process of electing a Lebanese president and stimulate Lebanese politicians to work for Lebanon's political and economic stability.

Lebanon's economy

- ▶ On May 23, 2023, it was reported that Lebanon was a candidate for the FATF "grey list" of economic crime countries because it does not take sufficient measures to counter money laundering and funding for terrorism (Reuters, May 23, 2023).
- ▶ The report was issued a few days after INTERPOL issued a warrant for the arrest of Riad Salameh, the governor of Lebanon's Central Bank, on charges of corruption. The warrant was issued following an investigation conducted in France which raised suspicions that he had stolen hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds. On May 24, 2023, it was reported that a Lebanese court judge forbade Salameh to leave the country (Reuters, May 24-29, 2023; france24, May 24, 2023).
- ▶ Hassan Nasrallah, during his Resistance and Liberation Day speech, called on Salameh to resign. He said that Hezbollah gave Salameh two options: resign or be prosecuted (al-Manar, May 25, 2023).

Syria

Targets near Damascus attacked

- ▶ Al-Mayadeen TV reported that on the night of May 27, 2023, Israeli aircraft attacked Iranian and Hezbollah targets in the Damascus region. According to the report, most of the targets belonged to Hezbollah and the Iranian militias operating in the greater Damascus area (Syrian News Agency, May 28, 2023). No Hezbollah casualties were reported (al-Mayadeen, May 29, 2023).

Exercises carried out by the "Golan Portfolio" unit

- ▶ According to an American intelligence report, Hezbollah-Lebanon's Golan Portfolio unit held military exercises in preparation for attacking American army forces in Syria. The exercises, held in the al-Dumayr military base, located about 35 kilometers (about 22 miles) northeast of Damascus, included the operation of tanks and light and medium arms. It was also reported that the Golan Portfolio gathers intelligence information in preparation for a possible attack on United States military bases in eastern Syria (Long War Journal, May 25, 2023; al-Hadath, May 24, 2023).
- ▶ The Golan Portfolio unit was established in Syria by Hezbollah in 2018 to attack targets in Israel and open another front in Syria, should the IDF clash with Hezbollah. The unit is headed by Ali Musa Daqduq and two of his sons.⁴

New Hezbollah Iranian-backed militia in Deir ez-Zor

- ▶ Local Syrian sources reported that high-ranking IRGC operatives and the leaders of the pro-Iranian militias operating in Syria recently met in Deir ez-Zor to coordinate the establishment of a new pro-Iranian militia. The meeting was attended by Hajj Abbas, IRGC operative in Albukamal; Hajj Sajed, Hajj Abbas' deputy and responsible for the Afghan Fatemiyoun militia; and Hajj Radwan, commander of the Imam Ali base, the largest Iranian base in Syria, located in the Albukamal region on the Syria-Iraq border. Also present were Hajj Abu Aziz and Hajj Mujahed, representing Hezbollah-Lebanon. Hajj Abbas ordered those present to choose a group of men from every pro-Iranian militia to man the new militia, which would be trained and operated by Hezbollah. It would be directly subordinate to Abu Aziz from Hezbollah and

⁴ For further information see the March 17, 2019 report, "Ali Mussa Daqduq (Abu Hussein Sajed): portrait of the commander of Hezbollah's military network in the Syrian Golan Heights ("the Golan Portfolio")."

its operatives would be armed but would not wear uniforms. The unit's activities would include gathering intelligence and locating civilians operating against the IRGC, and depending on the region, the information would be transmitted to the relevant militia, which would take action against such civilians (iraninsider.net, May 29, 2023).

Hezbollah military training near Latakia

- ▶ Syrian and Lebanese sources reported that about 750 Hezbollah operatives arrived in Latakia for training in the nearby hilly areas. No other information was given (Ayn al-Furat, May 23, 2023).

Hezbollah Abroad

The UAE

- ▶ On May 29, 2023, it was reported that the UAE had stopped issuing entrance visas to Lebanese civilians suspected of security violations. Recently, online visa applications from Lebanese were rejected. Despite Lebanese foreign ministry denials that such a UAE decision was in place, apparently in reality it does exist. According to Arab sources, the UAE authorities had security concerns because of suspicious recent movements and transfers of funds, alongside anti-UAE propaganda and incitement on the Arab social networks regarding normalization of relations with Israel. Al-'Ahed TV confirmed the report, stating the UAE had postponed granting entrance visas to Lebanese following threats from Hezbollah (al-'Ahed, May 31, 2023). Hezbollah's threats may have referred to attacks on Israelis visiting the UAE.

Paraguay

- ▶ Asunción Marc Ostfield, the American ambassador to Paraguay, held a press conference at the embassy where he stated that Hugo Velázquez, Paraguay's current vice president, and former President Horacio Cartes, who held office between 2013 and 2018, had ties with Hezbollah operatives. Ostfield announced the United States had imposed sanctions on both men, noting that Hezbollah routinely holds meetings in Paraguay where local politicians are bribed to close deals and promote projects (gfatf.org, May 15, 2023).⁵

⁵ <https://www.gfatf.org/archives/cartes-and-velazquez-have-ties-hezbollah/>

United States

Rewards offered for information about Hezbollah terrorist operatives

- ▶ The American State Department offered rewards of up to \$10 million for information about two Hezbollah terrorist operatives (State Department, May 30, 2023):
 - ◆ Muhammad Ja'far Qasir, who helps fund Hezbollah through smuggling and other operations, and works for the IRGC's Qods Force to sell Iranian oil and coordinate the delivery of funds and weapons from the Qods Force to Hezbollah.
 - ◆ Muhammad Qasim Al-Bazzal, a key Hezbollah financier who coordinates financial activities between Hezbollah and the IRGC's Qods Force. He uses front companies to help the Qods Force evade sanctions and fund terrorist activities through the illicit sale of oil, steel and other goods.

REWARD UP TO \$10 MILLION

FOR INFORMATION ON MUHAMMAD JA'FAR QASIR

Muhammad Ja'far Qasir helps fund the Hezbollah terrorist organization through smuggling and other criminal operations. He also works with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) to sell Iranian oil and coordinate delivery of funds and weapons from IRGC-QF to Hezbollah.

If you have information about Muhammad Ja'far Qasir and/or Hezbollah financial networks, contact RFJ via Signal, Telegram, WhatsApp, or our Tor-based tipline below. You may be eligible for a reward.

سازمان اطلاعاتی لبنان



Tor Link: [he5dybnt7sr6cm32xt77pazmtm65fiqy6irivtfrugfc5ep7eiodiad.onion](https://onion.city/he5dybnt7sr6cm32xt77pazmtm65fiqy6irivtfrugfc5ep7eiodiad.onion)

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REWARD UP TO \$10 MILLION

FOR INFORMATION ON MUHAMMAD QASIM AL-BAZZAL

Muhammad Qasim al-Bazzal is a key Hezbollah financier who coordinates financial activities between Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF). He uses front companies to help the IRGC-QF evade sanctions and fund terrorist activities through the illicit sale of oil, steel, and other goods.

If you have information about Muhammad Qasim al-Bazzal and/or Hezbollah financial networks, contact RFJ via Signal, Telegram, WhatsApp, or our Tor-based tipline below. You may be eligible for a reward.

سازمان اطلاعاتی لبنان



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(American State Department, May 30, 2023).

Hezbollah terrorist operative receive prison sentence

- ▶ The Justice Department today announced that Alexei Saab, aka Ali Hassan Saab, aka Alex Saab, aka Rachid, 46 years old, from Morristown, New Jersey, was sentenced to 12 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release for receiving military-type training from Hezbollah, marriage fraud, and making false statements. He was arrested in 2019 and convicted in May 2022. He joined Hezbollah in 1996 and underwent military training in 1999. In 2000 he joined Hezbollah's Unit 910, responsible for the planning and coordination of intelligence, counterintelligence, and terrorist activities on behalf of Hezbollah outside of Lebanon. He then received extensive training in tradecraft, weapons and military tactics, including how to construct and detonate bombs and other explosive devices and how to best use these devices in attacks. Specifically, Saab received detailed instruction in, among other things, triggering mechanisms, explosive substances, detonators, and the assembly of circuits.

In 2008 he entered into a fraudulent marriage, falsely affirming, under penalty of perjury, that the marriage was not for any immigration-related purposes. He gathered intelligence in American cities, including Boston and Washington, D.C., and photographed local airports, tunnels and bridges, provided detailed information on these locations to Unit 910. Saab admitted that his surveillance was designed to best position the IJO to attack the U.S. in the future (United States Department of Justice website, May 23, 2023).

Hezbollah-Russia Relations

- ▶ Matthew Levitt and Aurora Ortega, two experts on terrorism, wrote an article exposing the developing connections between Russia and Hezbollah. According to the article, the formation of the ties began while both were fighting on the side of the Syrian regime during the Syrian Civil War. In 2018 Hezbollah helped Russia circumvent the sanctions imposed on Iran. In 2021 a Hezbollah delegation arrived in Russia and met with Russian government officials headed by Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister, and the relations between them are apparently progressing (RUSI, May 23, 2023).⁶

American Sanctions on Two Syrian Financial Facilitators

- ▶ The United States imposed sanctions on two Syrian money service businesses, located in Damascus, al-Fadel and al-Adham, for covertly enabling the Syrian regime and its allies, Hezbollah and the IRGC, to access the international financial system by violating international sanctions. The US Treasury Department reported the two companies enabled millions of dollars to flow into accounts in the Syrian Central Bank, and that al-Fadel allowed Hezbollah to use its services to transfer funds from regional countries to Syria (United States Department of the Treasury website, May 30, 2023).⁷

⁶ For further information see <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/hizbullah-and-russias-nascent-alliance>

⁷ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1508>