

[House Hearing, 112 Congress]
[From the U.S. Government Publishing Office]

HEZBOLLAH IN LATIN AMERICA--IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. HOMELAND
SECURITY

=====

HEARING

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM
AND INTELLIGENCE

of the

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JULY 7, 2011

Serial No. 112-35

Printed for the use of the Committee on Homeland Security

Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
72-255 PDF WASHINGTON : 2012

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing
Office Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC
area (202) 512-1800 Fax: (202) 512-2205 Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC
20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Peter T. King, New York, Chairman

Lamar Smith, Texas	Bennie G. Thompson, Mississippi
Daniel E. Lungren, California	Loretta Sanchez, California
Mike Rogers, Alabama	Sheila Jackson Lee, Texas
Michael T. McCaul, Texas	Henry Cuellar, Texas
Gus M. Bilirakis, Florida	Yvette D. Clarke, New York
Paul C. Broun, Georgia	Laura Richardson, California
Candice S. Miller, Michigan	Danny K. Davis, Illinois
Tim Walberg, Michigan	Brian Higgins, New York
Chip Cravaack, Minnesota	Jackie Speier, California
Joe Walsh, Illinois	Cedric L. Richmond, Louisiana
Patrick Meehan, Pennsylvania	Hansen Clarke, Michigan
Ben Quayle, Arizona	William R. Keating, Massachusetts

Scott Rigell, Virginia Kathleen C. Hochul, New York
Billy Long, Missouri Vacancy
Jeff Duncan, South Carolina
Tom Marino, Pennsylvania
Blake Farenthold, Texas
Mo Brooks, Alabama
 Michael J. Russell, Staff Director/General Counsel
 Kerry Ann Watkins, Senior Policy Director
 Michael S. Twinchek, Chief Clerk
 I. Lanier Avant, Minority Staff Director

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM AND INTELLIGENCE

 Patrick Meehan, Pennsylvania, Chairman
Paul C. Broun, Georgia, Vice Chair Jackie Speier, California
Chip Cravaack, Minnesota Loretta Sanchez, California
Joe Walsh, Illinois Henry Cuellar, Texas
Ben Quayle, Arizona Brian Higgins, New York
Scott Rigell, Virginia Kathleen C. Hochul, New York
Billy Long, Missouri Bennie G. Thompson, Mississippi
Peter T. King, New York (Ex (Ex Officio)
 Officio)
 Kevin Gundersen, Staff Director
 Alan Carroll, Subcommittee Clerk
 Stephen Vina, Minority Subcommittee Director

CONTENTS

Page

Statements

The Honorable Patrick Meehan, a Representative in Congress From
the State of Pennsylvania, and Chairman, Subcommittee on
Counterterrorism and Intelligence:

Oral Statement..... 1

Prepared Statement..... 2

The Honorable Jackie Speier, a Representative in Congress From
the State of California, and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Counterterrorism and Intelligence..... 3

Witnesses

Mr. Roger F. Noriega, Visiting Fellow, The American Enterprise
Institute:

Oral Statement..... 5

Prepared Statement..... 7

Mr. Douglas Farah, Senior Fellow, The International Assessment
and Strategy Center:

Oral Statement..... 12

Prepared Statement..... 15

Mr. Ilan Berman, Vice President, American Foreign Policy Council:

Oral Statement..... 26

Prepared Statement..... 28

Ms. Melani Cammett, Associate Professor of Political Science and
Director, Middle East Studies Program, Brown University:

Oral Statement..... 34

Prepared Statement..... 35

SECURITY

Thursday, July 7, 2011

U.S. House of Representatives,
Committee on Homeland Security,
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:54 p.m., in Room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Patrick Meehan [Chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Meehan, Cravaack, Speier, Cuellar, Higgins, and Hochul.

Also present: Representatives Duncan and Green.

Mr. Meehan. Good afternoon, and thank you for your patience and your recognition of the requirement that the first responsibility we have to do is to be on the floor to vote. But I am very appreciative of all of our witnesses.

The Homeland Security Committee Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence will come to order. The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on the threat to the U.S. homeland as a result of Hezbollah operations in South and Central America.

I would also like, before we begin, unanimous consent to sit and question a witness. I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Green be authorized to sit for the purpose of questioning witnesses during the hearing.

Okay. Today's hearing is the fourth subcommittee hearing aimed at educating Members of the myriad of terrorist threats to the homeland from various parties of the world. So far we have heard from experts that have--on the threat posed by AQAP in Yemen, the terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan, and the ramifications of unrest in the Middle East and North Africa on U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

Today we will dive deeper into Hezbollah's growing

operation in Latin America and what the implications are for the United States homeland security. Hezbollah is one of the most sophisticated global terrorist organizations in the world, and as Members of Congress, particularly on this subcommittee and this committee, it is incumbent upon us to do everything we can to understand that threat.

As a former United States attorney in Philadelphia, I initiated investigations into terrorist activities, but it included Hezbollah activities that had a direct connection to Latin America. These investigations exposed Hezbollah's vast network throughout the region and ended in convictions.

The U.S. intelligence community and law enforcement have been concerned about the terrorist threat emanating from the Tri-Border area which connects Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay in South America. So the nexus of Hezbollah to the U.S. homeland security is certainly without question.

It is important to remember that before September 11, Hezbollah, not al-Qaeda, was responsible for more American deaths than any other terrorist organization. Doing everything we can to ensure that Hezbollah does not have a staging ground and a safe haven in Latin America is vitally important.

Indeed, it was former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff who warned that while Hezbollah, "makes al-Qaeda look like a minor league team," it poses the greatest threat to American National security.

We really want to hear the intentions and the impressions of the panel here today to help us try to get a real accurate assessment of what we think Hezbollah means in Latin America and its relationship to the United States. It is also worth noting that Hezbollah has been operationally active in Latin America. Most notoriously is the group being implicated in the 1992 attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, and 2 years later at the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association building in Buenos Aires, attacks which killed and injured hundreds of civilians.

Regardless of the circumstances which may lead Hezbollah to launch an attack on the homeland, Hezbollah is already working with like-minded allies and hostile regimes in Latin America to

undermine American National security by raising funds, spreading anti-American and anti-Israeli propaganda, recruiting operatives, laundering money, and smuggling weapons and drugs, all activities that have a direct impact on the United States homeland security.

Moreover, the alliance between one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world, Hezbollah, the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism in Iran, a sworn enemy of the United States, and Venezuela, all in the backyard of the United States, when you put that together, you have a fully functioning, easily accessible terrorist network with a ready capacity to act, if so inclined.

So it is with this background in mind that we are attempting to create awareness and to have a frank examination to gauge the full threat of the nature of this threat to the homeland. So I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses.

I would like to do, as well, if she should come in to attendance, I would like to acknowledge the newest Member of our subcommittee, the gentlelady from New York Ms. Hochul, and I welcome her to the subcommittee.

I would also like to extend recognition that Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen and her Committee on Foreign Affairs have been looking at much the same issue with great impact.

[The statement of Chairman Meehan follows:]

Prepared Statement of Chairman Patrick Meehan

Hezbollah is one of the most sophisticated global terrorist organizations in the world. It is the responsibility of this subcommittee to examine threats of possible terrorist attacks. We must remember that before September 11, Hezbollah--not al-Qaeda--was responsible for more American deaths than any other terrorist organization. Today's hearing was a significant step toward enhancing awareness about Hezbollah's activities in Latin America and understanding this very serious threat to Americans here at home.

Law enforcement and the intelligence community have long been concerned about the terrorist threat emanating from the Tri-Border area connecting Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay in South America. It has been widely reported that Hezbollah is working with like-minded allies and hostile regimes in Latin America to undermine American National

security. Its activities include skirting United States sanctions, raising funds, spreading anti-American and anti-Israeli propaganda, recruiting operatives, laundering money, and smuggling weapons and drugs. The growing nexus between international terror networks and drug-trafficking organizations throughout Latin America is a dynamic and emerging issue facing the counterterrorism and intelligence community.

While serving as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Congressman Meehan initiated investigations into Hezbollah's activities in Philadelphia that had direct connections to Latin America. These investigations exposed Hezbollah's vast networks throughout the region and ended in convictions.

The witnesses at today's hearing included: the Honorable Roger Noriega, Visiting Fellow, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Mr. Douglas Farah, Senior Fellow Financial Investigations and Transparency, International Assessment and Strategy Center; Mr. Ilan Berman, Vice President, American Foreign Policy Council; and Dr. Melani Cammett, Director, Middle East Studies Program, Brown University.

This is the fourth hearing the subcommittee has held aimed at educating Members about the myriad terrorist threats to the homeland from various parts of the world. Earlier this year, the subcommittee heard from experts on the threat posed by AQAP in Yemen, the terrorist threat emanating from Pakistan and the ramifications of unrest in the Middle East and North Africa on U.S. counterterrorism efforts.

Mr. Meehan. So at this point in time I would like to recognize the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, the gentlewoman from California, Ms. Speier, for any comments she may have.

Ms. Speier. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and thank you to our distinguished panelists for joining us today on a topic that I think is very worthy of our consideration.

Hezbollah has been linked to some of the most horrific terrorist attacks against the United States, including two bombings in 1983 against the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, which together killed hundreds of Americans.

Hezbollah has close ties to Iran and Syria, two state sponsors of terrorism, and many have accused the group of acting as an Iranian proxy militia for attacks against Israel and other U.S. allies. Just as troubling, Hezbollah makes extensive use of the large Lebanese communities in the Western Hemisphere to help finance its operations through both legal and illegal means.

The group reportedly conducts extensive illicit financing activities in Latin America, including drug trafficking, counterfeiting, and contraband smuggling. The epicenter of these activities is the Tri-Border Area, an undergoverned border region where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay meet, where the local law enforcement authorities have been unable to counter the activities of numerous terrorists and criminal organizations.

While we know Hezbollah raises money in Latin America, we do not know the true extent of its operations. How much funding does Hezbollah truly receive from its activities, both legal and illegal, in Latin America?

We also do not know the true impact of Iranian influence on Hezbollah's activities in the region, particularly in Venezuela, where President Chavez continues to strengthen ties with Iran.

We also know that Hezbollah's activities are not confined to South America. It has sympathizers that have been linked to a variety of smuggling and fundraising activities here in the United States. In 2002, for example, a large cigarette-smuggling ring in North Carolina was disrupted. The cell had been sending proceeds from its smuggling operations to Hezbollah since at least 1995.

More recently, in 2007, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions against several "charitable" organizations in the United States for serving as fronts to support Hezbollah and Iran.

These cases illustrate the broad network that Hezbollah has established in the Western Hemisphere to finance its activities. Though Hezbollah's supporters continue to provide financial and moral aid from the Western Hemisphere, it is

worth noting that the State Department's 2009 Country Reports on Terrorism indicate that there are no known Hezbollah-related operational cells in this hemisphere. It is important to discover whether this is still the case.

Back in Lebanon, Hezbollah continues to be important, integrated into the Lebanese society, providing important social services and holding key positions in government. At the same time, four Hezbollah members were just indicted by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon for their possible connection to the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq Hariri. We do not know how these developments in Lebanon may disrupt the fragile peace there, or whether they will encourage Hezbollah to turn to terrorism and attack Israel.

In Syria, protests continue to threaten the Assad regime, a regime that has been providing financial and logistical support to Hezbollah for some time. As with the special tribunal, it is difficult to gauge how the Syrian unrest may affect Hezbollah, if President Assad is ousted, with a new regime less supportive of Hezbollah and Iran provokes the group into action, particularly if the United States supports peace efforts. Would regime instability in Syria increase or decrease Hezbollah's operational capabilities and influence in the region?

With all this uncertainty, we are left asking whether the group is still the ``A Team" of terrorists, as Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage suggested in 2003, or whether it is evolving into something else. Some of our witnesses' testimonies suggest Hezbollah is probably not currently directly targeting the U.S. homeland. So the question then is, what events could change that calculus among Hezbollah's leaders?

As the events in the Middle East and the Arab Spring continue to unfold, we must keep a close eye on Hezbollah's strategies and ensure we have the intelligence and resources to respond to the changing threat environment here at home and globally.

So, again, I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses, and I look forward to gaining many insights from you. I also want to welcome our newest Member, Ms. Hochul, from

the great State of New York, to our subcommittee. I yield back.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Ms. Speier.

Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

I would also like, at this time, to ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Duncan be authorized to sit for the purpose of the questioning of witnesses during the hearing.

Hearing none, welcome, Mr. Duncan.

We are pleased to have four distinguished witnesses before us today on this important topic. Let me remind each of you, we strive to try to take this remarkably complex issue and put it down to 5 minutes. But I know you will do your best to summarize your testimony. Ideally, we will be able to explore the concepts that you raise.

Today's first witness is former Ambassador Roger Noriega. Ambassador Noriega is a former U.S. ambassador to the Organization of American States and also served as Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Affairs in the George W. Bush administration. Prior to that he worked here in Congress on the staffs of the House International Relations Committee and the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.

Presently he is a visiting fellow with the American Enterprise Institute and has written exhaustively on a variety of issues in Latin America and on AEI's Latin America Outlook series, using the breadth of his experience to provide commentary on the pressing regional and security issues and how they affect U.S. interests.

Ambassador Noriega, welcome back to Capitol Hill. You are now recognized to summarize your testimony.

STATEMENT OF ROGER F. NORIEGA, VISITING FELLOW, THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Mr. Noriega. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this subject today. I thank the committee, subcommittee for addressing this issue, which I

think requires much more attention than it is getting today.

Hezbollah, backed by Iran and Venezuela, is a determined and deadly enemy of the United States that has made substantial progress in the last 6 years to increase its activities in Latin America. This push is the result of a conscious offensive strategy to spread its influence, legitimize its cause, and advance its violent jihad and operational capabilities on our doorstep.

Unless our Government and responsible partners in Latin America act soon, I believe there will be an attack on U.S. personnel, installations, or interests in the Americas, as soon as Hezbollah leaders make a calculation that they are capable of carrying out such an operation without implicating their Iranian masters in that operation.

Of particular interest to this subcommittee, I am sure, are a series of published reports that Hezbollah operatives have provided weapons and explosives training to drug-trafficking organizations that operate across the U.S. border with Mexico. My conclusion is that U.S. authorities know more than they are willing to say publicly about this subject, and this Congress is right to insist on a thorough explanation of the threat and of our effective countermeasures.

Our research has identified at least two networks associated with Hezbollah growing at an alarming rate in Latin America. One is operated by Hezbollah itself, aided by its collaborators, particularly from Venezuela. Another is managed by a cadre of notorious operatives on behalf of the Iranian Qods Force. These networks conduct fund-raising, money laundering, narcotics trafficking, proselytization, recruitment, and training in the Americas. We can identify more than 80 operatives in at least 12 countries throughout the region, with the greatest areas of concern being Brazil, Venezuela, and the Southern Cone.

A key operative in the Hezbollah network in Latin America is a man named Ghazi Atef Salameh Nassereddine Abu Ali. His photograph is shown here with his brothers. He is a man who was born in Lebanon, became a Venezuelan citizen just 10 years ago, and is now Venezuela's No. 2 diplomat in Damascus, Syria. Along

with these two brothers, Abdallah and Oday, Nassereddine manages a network that raises and launders money and recruits and trains operatives to expand Hezbollah's influence in Venezuela and throughout Latin America.

The individual who oversees the parallel Hezbollah network on behalf of the Qods Force is Mohsen Rabbani, whose picture is shown here. He is a high-ranking Iranian, wanted by prosecutors in Argentina for his role in the terrorist bombings in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994. Rabbani was posted in Argentina at the time as the cultural attache of Iran in Buenos Aires. Although Rabbani is the object of an Interpol red notice, he travels frequently in the region. He was in Venezuela as recently as March 2011 and in Brazil last September.

According to sources in Brazilian intelligence, who were cited by the investigative journalist Leonardo Cortino in the important Brazilian magazine VEJA, at least 20 operatives from Hezbollah, al-Qaeda and Islamic Jihad operate in Brazil as a hub for terrorist activity. Reportedly, Rabbani has recruited dozens of Brazilian followers to his cause.

In addition, Rabbani taps a cadre of persons he has recruited in Argentina to spread Hezbollah's influence throughout Central and South America.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to cite a few examples and show the potency of this threat to the U.S. homeland. At least one member of the terrorist network who was accused of plotting to detonate fuel tanks and pipelines at JFK's International Airport in 2007 met with the man, Mohsen Rabbani, in Iran and was subsequently arrested by U.S. authorities--I'm sorry, by Trinidadian authorities en route to Venezuela, where he planned to board a Conviasa flight to Tehran, a regularly scheduled flight from the Venezuelan airline Conviasa to Tehran.

One of Rabbani's principal collaborators in the Americas is the Sunni radical imam in Brazil who, as far back as 1995, hosted al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed.

In August of last year, President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela hosted a secret summit in Caracas of some of the world's most notorious terrorist leaders right here in our hemisphere,

including Hamas' Supreme Leader Khaled Meshal, Hezbollah's Chief of Operations, and the Secretary General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

In conclusion, recent public statements suggest that U.S. diplomats, at least, are unaware of the increasing operations and reach of Hezbollah in this hemisphere. By contrast, U.S. law enforcement, particularly the DEA, have made great efforts to assess and to confront the threat. But this requires a whole-of-government approach, including an interagency review of the problem, to understand, assess the transnational and multifaceted nature of this threat; to educate friendly governments in the region about what is happening; and to implement effective measures, unilaterally and with willing partners, to disrupt and dismantle these operations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Noriega follows:]

Prepared Statement of Roger F. Noriega

July 7, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Members of the subcommittee, I very much appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today. I would also like to thank you and the committee for your leadership on this very important issue that, quite frankly, does not get the attention it deserves among the many competing foreign threats and policy priorities.

It is well known that Hezbollah acts as a proxy for Iran--specifically, of the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. These determined and deadly enemies of the United States have made substantial progress in the last 6 years to expand their influence and operations in Latin America. Their expanding activities are the result of a conscious, offensive strategy to carry their fight to our doorstep, which receives indispensable support from the regime of Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez.

Our research--from open sources, subject-matter experts, and sensitive sources within various governments--has identified at least two parallel terrorist networks growing at an alarming rate in Latin America. One is operated by Hezbollah, aided by its collaborators, and another is managed by a cadre of notorious Qods operatives. These networks cooperate to carry out fundraising, money-laundering schemes, narcotics smuggling, proselytization, recruitment, and training. We can

identify more than 80 operatives in at least 12 countries throughout the region (with the greatest areas of concern being Brazil, Venezuela, and the Southern Cone).

Of particular interest to this subcommittee, no doubt, are the several published reports, citing U.S. law enforcement and intelligence sources, that Hezbollah operatives have provided weapons and explosives training to drug trafficking organizations that operate along the U.S. border with Mexico and have sought to radicalize Muslim populations in several Mexican cities. The U.S. and Mexican governments have declined to share information publicly on these cases. (Our inquiries to at least one Mexican official about a specific arrest of a suspected Hezbollah operative in Mexico in June 2010 were met with the response, ``Don't ask about that.") It is clear that this is a potential threat that has captured the attention of authorities on both sides of the border. This Congress and the American people have the right to know how our Government is working with Mexico to meet this challenge to our common security.

Hezbollah has a very clear *modus operandi* that it is applying in the Americas. By infiltrating or establishing mosques or ``Islamic centers" throughout the region, Hezbollah is spreading its influence, legitimizing its cause, and advancing its violent jihad on our doorstep. It also is raising funds through various criminal and commercial operations, recruiting converts from among disaffected youth and others, and developing its operational capabilities in our own Hemisphere.

Unfortunately, the Hezbollah threat in the Americas is not new: It is implicated in the deadly terrorist bombings in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1992 (of the Israeli Embassy) and 1994 (of a Jewish Community Center). However, today, Hezbollah's presence in Latin America is growing significantly with the support of the Chavez regime in Venezuela. Chavez, who has a track record of supporting Colombian narcoterrorists, has cooperated with Iran to provide political support, financing, or arms to Hezbollah, Hamas, or Palestinian Islamic Jihad in this Hemisphere and elsewhere. For example, Venezuela's Margarita Island has eclipsed the infamous ``Tri-Border Area"--the region where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay come together in South America--as a principal safe haven and center of Hezbollah operations in the Americas.

A key operative in the Hezbollah network in Latin America is Ghazi Atef Salameh Nassereddine Abu Ali, a man who was born in Lebanon, became a Venezuelan citizen about 10 years ago, and now is Venezuela's No. 2 diplomat in Syria. Along with at least two of his brothers, he manages a network that raises and launders money and recruits and trains operatives to expand Hezbollah's influence in Venezuela and throughout Latin America. Nassereddine was black-listed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury in June 2008 for his fundraising and logistical support on behalf of Hezbollah. However, testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs last month by State Department officials suggests that they are unaware of the very important role he now is playing to expand that terrorist group's reach beyond Venezuela.

Using his diplomatic status, Nassereddine has built and consolidated relationships with Hezbollah officials in the Middle East, first in Lebanon and now in Syria. Meanwhile, his brother Abdallah Nassereddine, maintains relationships in the broader Islamic community via a multi-national organization known as the Federation of Arab and American Associations. (FEARAB has affiliates throughout South America and the Caribbean with most regional meetings held in Sao Paulo or Buenos Aires.) All the while, their younger brother, Oday Nassereddine, has established a powerbase in Venezuela by setting up training operations on Margarita Island, and is now recruiting adherents via the Circulos Bolivarianos in Barquisimeto, 170 miles southwest of Caracas. (The Circulos Bolivarianos are ubiquitous neighborhood monitoring committees made up of the most radical followers of Hugo Chavez.)

The individual who oversees the parallel Hezbollah network on behalf of the Qods Force is Mohsen Rabbani, a high-ranking Iranian wanted by prosecutors in Argentina for his role in the 1992 and 1994 Buenos Aires attacks. At that time, Rabbani was credentialed as a cultural attache at the Iranian embassy in the Argentine capital. Today, he relies on a network of Argentine converts that he cultivated during that period to recruit operatives throughout the region who are selected for radicalization and terrorist training in Venezuela and in Iran (specifically, Qom).

Although Rabbani is wanted by Argentina and is the object of an Interpol "red notice," he travels periodically to the region. For example, Rabbani was in Venezuela in March 2011, and in Brazil last September, where he and his brother (who lives in Brazil) have

recruited dozens of followers to their radical cause. According to sources in Brazilian intelligence, who were cited by an investigative article in the important Brazilian magazine VEJA, at least 20 operatives from Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and the Islamic Jihad are using Brazil as a hub for terrorist activity.

Two of Rabbani's favored Argentinean disciples are now operating in Chile. Sheik Karim Abdul Paz, who studied under Rabbani in Qom, is the Imam of a cultural center in Santiago, and Sheik Suhail Assad is a Professor at the University of Santiago. Both have publicly stated that they are sympathetic to Hezbollah. Suhail travels frequently throughout Central and South America, meeting with local Muslim communities.

As recently as 2 weeks ago, a U.S. State Department official told this Congress that Hezbollah activity in the Western Hemisphere was confined to ``fundraising"--as if that were comforting. The fact is, that assertion grossly understates the growing Hezbollah threat in our Hemisphere, as my foregoing testimony indicates.

Please allow me to provide some additional anecdotes to illustrate my contention that Hezbollah is on the move in the Americas, and its activities represent a grave and growing threat to the U.S. homeland:

At least one member of the terrorist network plotting to detonate fuel tanks and pipelines at New York's JFK International Airport met with Mohsen Rabbani in Iran; he was subsequently arrested en route to Venezuela where he planned to board a flight to Teheran.

One of Rabbani's principal collaborators in the Americas is the Sheik Khaled Razek Tak el-Din, a Sunni radical from the Sao Paulo Guarulhos mosque, which is linked to members of the Treasury Department-designated Tri-Border network that provides significant financial and logistical support to Hezbollah in Lebanon. As far back as 1995, Tak el-Din hosted al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheik Mohammed.

Last spring, two Iranian Hezbollah operatives were conducting terror training on Venezuela's Margarita Island for persons brought there from other countries in the region. Colombian authorities have reported to me that Hezbollah operates in areas of their country where the narcoterrorist group FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia) has a presence.

The cocaine kingpin Walid Makled, several of whose companies did business with the Hezbollah operative and Venezuelan diplomat Ghazi Nassereddine, confirmed in a televised interview on April 3 that Hezbollah conducts fundraising and operates cocaine labs in Venezuela with the protection of that government.

On November 4, 2009, Israeli commandos intercepted a shipment of grenades, Katyusha rockets, 500,000 rounds of ammunition, and other Russian and Iranian arms aboard the cargo vessel, Francop, which was carrying these weapons from the Venezuelan port of Guanta to Syria, where the intended recipient was Hezbollah.

Hugo Chavez hosted a terror summit of senior leaders of Hamas ("supreme leader" Khaled Meshal), Hezbollah (unnamed "chief of operations"), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Secretary General Ramadan Abdullah Mohammad Shallah) in Caracas on August 22, 2010. That extraordinary meeting was organized at the suggestion of Iran, and the logistical arrangements were made by Nassereddine. In addition to the summit, operatives from other countries gathered in Caracas to meet with these terrorist chieftains.

The Venezuelan airline, Conviasa, conducts regular flights between Caracas and Damascus and Teheran. The Hezbollah networks use these flights and others to ferry operatives, recruits, and cargo in and out of the region.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, due to the "official" support from some governments in Latin America (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and others), and the unwillingness of others to recognize the threat, we can expect to see the Hezbollah presence in Latin America become more active and deadly in the coming years. The apparent terminal illness of the Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez might reduce that country's risky support for Hezbollah; unfortunately, that terror network has metastasized in the Americas, and our research indicates that the most tempting target for Hezbollah in the region is Brazil, one of the world's 10 largest economies with an estimated population of 1 million Muslims.

As it stands today, I believe the Hezbollah/Iranian presence in Latin America constitutes a clear threat to the security of the U.S.

homeland. They have the motivation, and they have been steadily increasing their capacity to act. In addition to operational terrorist activity, Hezbollah also is immersed in criminal activity throughout the region--from trafficking in weapons, drugs, and persons--all of which threaten our security.

The more broad implication for U.S. homeland security is that Hezbollah--via Iran and Venezuela--has engaged the United States in an offensive strategy of asymmetric warfare on our doorstep. It is aiming to win the mental battle of attrition and the moral battle of legitimacy--particularly with the youth in Latin America. Unless our Government recognizes and responds to their efforts, our ability to protect our interests and our homeland will be gradually and dangerously diminished.

U.S. and other government authorities have identified and sanctioned some of the leaders of these networks. However, recent public statements suggest that U.S. diplomats are unaware of the increasing operations and reach of the Hezbollah network. By contrast, U.S. law enforcement agencies--led by the Drug Enforcement Administration--have made great efforts to assess and confront this threat by building cases against foreign officials and sanctioning commercial entities that provide support to this criminal terror organization. However, this dangerous network requires a whole-of-government strategy, beginning with an inter-agency review to understand and assess the transnational, multi-faceted nature of the problem, to educate friendly governments on what is happening, and to implement effective measures unilaterally and with willing partners to disrupt and dismantle their operations.

If our Government and responsible partners in Latin America fail to act, I believe there will be an attack on U.S. personnel, installations, or interests in the Americas as soon as Hezbollah operatives believe that they are capable of such an operation without implicating their Iranian sponsors in the crime.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Noriega, Ambassador Noriega.

Our next witness will be Mr. Douglas Farah, a senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center who focuses on financial investigations and transparency. Mr. Farah consults for United States and European government agencies, specializing in research writing and training on transnational organized crime, terror-financed armed groups, and their effects on states, with particular focus on the Western Hemisphere and Africa. Bringing a wealth of first-hand experience through his 30-year career as an investigative journalist, he has provided numerous expert testimonies to Congressional committees.

A graduate with honors from the University of Kansas, Mr. Farah's most recent scholarly work is entitled Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines and Criminalized States: Emerging Alliances. He has authored two books: One, Blood from Stones: The Secret Financial Network of Terror; and Merchant of Death: Viktor Bout and the New World Order.

Mr. Farah, you are now recognized to summarize your testimony.

STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS FARAH, SENIOR FELLOW, THE INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY CENTER

Mr. Farah. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Members of the committee, I agree with Ambassador Noriega. This is a very important subject to which we pay insufficient attention to.

In order to understand the threat Hezbollah poses, it is important to understand the regional context in which the group's presence is growing. Its chief sponsors, as has been noted, Iran and Syria, are designated state sponsors of terrorism, and they have spent the last decade building ties into criminalized governments in Latin America that also support violent terrorist groups.

There is some concern about Venezuela providing the technology for the increasingly sophisticated narco tunnels now being found along the U.S.-Mexican border that strongly resemble the types used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Retired law enforcement officials have publicly discussed the appearance in

recent years of arrested gang members entering the United States with Farsi tattoos and other items that are possible indicators of Iran's influence in that field.

As a senior DEA official recently noted, cocaine proceeds entering the coffers of Islamic radical groups such as Hezbollah can lead to an ``unlimited source of cheap and easy revenue to carry out potential terrorist attacks."

A joint DHS and State Department symposium last year concluded that the confluence of illicit networks and corruption in an enabling environment can facilitate not only the movement of drugs, arms, stolen, or pirated goods and trafficked persons, but also smuggling of terrorists, weapons of mass destruction, WMD materials, and other dangerous weapons. This trend is particularly powerful when taken in concert with the increasingly blurred lines between certain terror groups and criminal activities.

I think what you are seeing in Latin America is the creation of this enabling environment that is discussed in this report and the distinct blurring or the very visible blurring of lines between terrorism and criminal activities in the group. Hezbollah's presence in this enabling environment has grown in scope and sophistication over the past years as Iran has successfully built close alliances with several governments in Latin America; not just the government of Venezuela, but the governments of Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador as well, the self-described ``Bolivarian Alliance." These alliances afford Iran and its proxy elements state control and effective immunity for its covert activities.

Hezbollah's growing presence is a significant part of a larger and more dangerous pattern of the criminalization of these Bolivarian states closely allied with Iran. These countries, in turn, support another designated terrorist organization that produces an estimated 70 percent of the world's cocaine and 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or the FARC. The relationship between these alliances with Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua with Iran seems paradoxical. It is between groups espousing seemingly

irreconcilable world views, the theocratic Shiite Muslim fundamentalism and socialism for the 21st Century. What binds it together is the common aim of asymmetrical military defeat of the United States, according to their own writings.

The criminalization of multiple states in our hemisphere acting in concert is a threat, but the seriousness of the threat grows enormously when the central element that the governments and their nonstate proxies share is a hatred for the United States and a publicly stated desire to inflict significant damage on the homeland. These groups together have access to hundreds of millions of dollars in illicit revenues annually.

The roots of this unlikely ideological combination can be found, as I discuss in my written testimony, in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the writings of Ilich Sanchez Ramirez, better known as Carlos the Jackal, a Venezuelan citizen who, until his arrest in 1994, was the world's most-wanted terrorist. In his 2003 book, *Revolutionary Islam*, written from prison where he is serving a life sentence, the Jackal praises Osama bin Laden and 9/11 as part of a justified armed struggle of Islam against the West. "From now on, terrorism is going to be more or less a daily part of the landscape of your rotting democracies," he wrote.

Sanchez Ramirez and Chavez maintain a warm and public friendship, and the repeated public praise of Chavez for the Jackal can be seen as a crucial element of Bolivarian ideology.

As I further discuss in my written testimony, Chavez adopted as official Venezuelan military doctrine this book, which is *Peripheral Warfare and Revolutionary Islam: Origins, Rules and Ethics of Asymmetrical Warfare*, by the Spanish politician and ideologue Jorge Verstrynge. The tract is a continuation of the exploration of Sanchez Ramirez's thought, incorporating the explicit endorsement of the use of weapons of mass destruction to destroy the United States. Copies of this book have recently been found in FARC training camps in Colombia for the first time, showing the cross-pollination of this ideology from Venezuela into its proxies operating in Colombia and elsewhere.

It is important to note that the relationship Hezbollah has developed with criminal and terrorist groups in Latin America has escalated from one of mutual accommodation and benefit in the spheres of money laundering, contraband, and financing to more direct and deadly forms of collaboration. Currently there are numerous cases being prosecuted in the United States that shed new light on the direct cocaine-for-weapons deals between Hezbollah and the FARC.

One case that illustrates the breadth of this emerging alliance is Operation Titan, executed by Colombia and U.S. officials in 2008 and still on-going, although much of it is now classified. Colombia and U.S. officials, after a 2-year investigation, dismantled a drug-trafficking organization that stretched from Colombia to Panama, Mexico, the United States, Europe, and West Africa. Most of the drugs originated with the FARC in Colombia, and some of the proceeds were traced to Lebanese expatriate networks funding Hezbollah directly. Other cases are cited in my testimony.

As cocaine trafficking shifts significantly to transit----

Mr. Meehan. Mr. Farah, could you do your best to try to----

Mr. Farah. Yes.

Hezbollah's presence in Latin America is growing, and the organization remains the premier terrorist organization in the world. The core shared belief of these varied actors is that the United States is the primary enemy that needs to be destroyed, that WMD is a legitimate option to achieve that end, that the Iranian Revolution offers a model for defeating the United States, and the ability to wage sophisticated asymmetrical warfare is the key to their future. Because of that, I believe it is a real and growing threat in the hemisphere.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Farah follows:]

Prepared Statement of Douglas Farah

July 7, 2011

Chairman Meehan, Ranking Member Speier, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today on a significant and growing threat to U.S. security in the Western

Hemisphere: The presence of Hezbollah and its primary sponsor, the government of Iran, with its full arsenal of intelligence and specialized military units of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Qods Force. The threat is not limited to the region and the homeland alone, but more broadly its aims include an ability to hold the United States at risk in terms of exercising options in other theatres, most specifically with respect to Iran, Syria, and the Middle East, including Israel.

In order to understand the threat Hezbollah poses it is important to understand the regional context in which the group's presence is growing. Its chief state sponsors--Iran and Syria who also are designated state sponsors of terrorism--are more than a decade into developing a range of close ties to criminalizing states in Latin America which also support violent criminal and terrorist groups.

In addition to its growing presence in Latin America, Hezbollah has a long-standing smuggling network in West Africa, traditionally used for moving contraband diamonds and other commodities and now involved in the trafficking of cocaine from Latin America to Europe. It also has an established presence in the United States and Canada, as the committee, intelligence, and law enforcement communities know.

There is growing concern that Hezbollah is providing technology for the increasingly sophisticated narco tunnels now being found along the U.S.-Mexican border, which strongly resemble the types used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Numerous former intelligence and law enforcement officials have publicly discussed the appearance in recent years of arrested gang members entering the United States with Farsi tattoos and other goods that could indicate a Hezbollah influence.\1\

\1\ Rep. Sue Myrick, ``Myrick calls for Taskforce to Investigate Presence of Hezbollah on the U.S. Southern Border, June 23, 2010, <http://myrick.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=22- &itemid=558>.

As a senior DEA official recently noted, ``There are numerous reports of cocaine proceeds entering the coffers of Islamic Radical Groups (IRG) such as Hezbollah and Hamas in Europe and the Middle East. The danger of DTO's and IRG's profiting from the lucrative cocaine trade can lead to an unlimited source of cheap and easy revenue to carry out potential terrorist acts." \2\

\2\ Statement of Anthony P. Placido, deputy administrator for intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, March 3, 2010.

The threat therefore is neither remote, discontinuous nor contained, nor is it as well understood as it should be. This--and the overall criminal/terrorist/compromised state challenge of which it is a part--requires more integrated analytical, intelligence, diplomatic, and security approaches driven by a strategic assessment of the threat.

As a joint DHS and State Department symposium concluded:

``The confluence of illicit networks and corruption in an enabling environment could facilitate not only the movement of drugs, arms, stolen or pirated goods, and trafficked persons, but also smuggling of terrorists, weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), WMD materials, and other dangerous weapons and technologies that threaten global security. This trend is particularly powerful when taken in concert with the increasingly blurred line between certain terror groups and the criminal activities that fund them. For instance, organizations such as Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Taliban, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), have been known to engage in criminal enterprises for profit or to advance a terror agenda." \3\

\3\ ``Chair's Report: Transpacific Symposium on Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks," Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Department of Homeland Security U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, February 2010, p. 3.

A strategy considering all aspects as part of a whole, rather than separated into lanes such as terrorism, narcotics, WMD, threat finance, human and contraband smuggling, energy, state corruption, and others, is necessary.

Over the past 2 years or so, ranking U.S. military and law enforcement leadership have begun to articulate this complex threat,

and the need for a more comprehensive approach, implicitly one adequately resourced and comprising all elements of U.S. power-- diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. The failure to so engage will negatively affect the United States in each of those dimensions. It will undercut a mainstay pillar of our security, reverse the democratic and economic gains of the 1980s and 1990s Latin America democratization which we did so much to enable and significant cost, and it ultimately will cost U.S. lives, including possibly terrorist attacks.

understanding the actors, relationships, and pipelines

As my submitted CV indicates, I was born of U.S. missionary parents in Latin America, and have worked there as an investigative journalist, as a subject matter expert, and an advisor and trainer on democratic governance and anti-corruption issues for some 30 years. I bring broad cultural, historical, and operational understanding and strong networks across the political spectrum, from guerilla leaders to Ministers of Justice. With this background, I must state that my fieldwork in many different parts of Latin America over the past 3 years clearly established that Hezbollah has developed a significant presence in the region, augmented by thousands of sympathizers who contribute monetary and non-monetary resources to the organization.

This presence has grown in scope and sophistication over the past years as Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has successfully built close alliances with several governments in Latin America, led by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. These alliances afford Iran and its proxy elements state cover and effective immunity for its covert activities. This includes: Unfettered access to global banking facilities, ports, and airports; mining of precursor elements for WMD and advanced weapons systems fabrication; and, a regional base for infiltration and contingency operations aimed at undermining the United States and its interests, while also abetting corruption and the notable build-up in conventional arms manufacturing.

These corrosive activities, taken together, are accelerating the weakening of states--hollowing-out of many of the first-generation democracies and their constitutional and civil society processes, and setting a predicate for a reassertion of authoritarian rule and ruin in these states and their neighbors. These states' survival and growth are critical to long-term regional and U.S. security.

Concurrently we see the further empowerment, training, and technological support of the oppressive security apparatuses in the increasingly undemocratic Bolivarian states provided by the Iran-Hezbollah-ICRG/Qods forces combine. Other outside powers, notably China and Russia further compound these problems (as might, in the future, the still-nascent presence of radical Sunni groups related to the Muslim Brotherhood). However Iran, Hezbollah, and the ICRG/Qods forces are the sharpest edge of this sword at present, and the one most openly aimed at the United States, and least tractable to diplomacy.

All of this comes at the expense of U.S. influence, security, and trade--including energy security and hence economic and infrastructure security (Venezuela is the 4th-largest supplier of U.S. petroleum imports, just behind Mexico; indeed Latin America is our 2nd-largest source of supply overall, only slightly behind the Middle East). While this hearing focuses on Hezbollah, the non-state, armed branch of radical Shi'ite Islamists, one cannot ignore the direct relationship of this organization to state sponsors. As the DIA noted last year:

``The Qods Force stations operatives in foreign embassies, charities, and religious/cultural institutions to foster relationships with people, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well established Shia diaspora. At the same time, it engages in paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes. The IRGC and Qods Force are behind some of the deadliest terrorist attacks of the past three decades, including the 1983 and 1984 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and annex in Beirut, the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the 1994 attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, and many of the insurgent attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in Iraq since 2003. Generally, it directs and supports groups actually executing the attacks, thereby maintaining plausible deniability within the international community.

``Support for these extremists takes the form of providing arms, funding, and paramilitary training. In this, Qods Force is not constrained by ideology; many of the groups it supports do not share, and sometimes openly oppose, Iranian revolutionary principles, but Iran supports them because of common interests or enemies.

``The Qods Force maintains operational capabilities around the world.

It is well established in the Middle East and North Africa, and recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela [author emphasis]. As U.S. involvement in global conflicts deepens, contact with the Qods Force, directly or through extremist groups it supports, will be more frequent and consequential."

\4\

\4\ Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Burgess, Jr., Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iran's Military Power," Statement before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, April 14, 2010.

It is within this context of the merging of state and non-state armed actors that I would like to address the issue of Hezbollah in Latin America and the threat the organization poses to the U.S. Homeland. Hezbollah's growing presence is a significant part of a larger and more dangerous pattern of the criminalization of the self-described "Bolivarian" states in Latin America closely allied with Iran. These countries, in turn, support another designated terrorist organization that produces an estimated 70 percent of the world's cocaine and up to 90 percent of cocaine in the United States--The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia--FARC).

\5\

\5\ "Top-ranking member of Colombian FARC Narco-Terrorist Organization Convicted on U.S. Drug Charges, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, February 20, 2007. The DEA describes the FARC as a violent narco-terrorist guerrilla group operating in Colombia, controls large portions of Colombia and finances its violent conflict with the Colombian government by engaging in drug trafficking, augmented by other means including kidnapping and extortion. Drug trafficking is the lifeblood of the FARC because it enables the FARC to acquire weapons, ammunition, and equipment necessary to carry on its violent attacks. DEA estimates that the FARC controls approximately 70 percent of the Colombian cocaine trade, and approximately 80 to 90 percent of the cocaine shipped to the United States comes from Colombia. The FARC produces and distributes thousands of kilograms per month for export to the United States and other countries.

The relationship between these ``Bolivarian states" (Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua) and Iran is crucial to understanding the threat that Hezbollah in Latin America poses. This relationship, among groups espousing and actively pursuing seemingly irreconcilable world views--theocratic Shiite Muslim fundamentalism and Socialism for the 21st Century--is bound by a common aim of the asymmetric defeat of the United States, and a shared view in favor of an authoritarian state that tolerates little dissent and encroaches on all aspects of a citizen's life. This constitutes a core element of the threat.

Hezbollah's influence in Latin America extends to the nature of aggression and diplomacy employed by Chavez and his Bolivarian comrades. Iran and Hezbollah are among the foremost practitioners today of the franchising model of a state sponsor allocating certain elements of statecraft to non-state armed actors involved in transnational organized crime and terrorist activities.

As one study noted,

``The Quds are also believed to play a continuing role in training, arming, and funding Hezbollah in Lebanon and to have begun to support Shi'ite militia and Taliban activities in Afghanistan . . . The Quds has offices or 'sections' in many Iranian embassies, which are closed to most embassy staff. It is not clear whether these are integrated with Iranian intelligence operations or if the ambassador in each embassy has control of, or detailed knowledge of, operations by the Quds staff. However, there are indications that most operations are coordinated between the IRGC and offices within the Iranian Foreign Ministry and MOIS." \6\

\6\ Anthony H. Cordesman, ``Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the al Quds Force, and other Intelligence and Paramilitary Forces (Working Draft)," Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 16, 2007.

Recent headlines reaffirm that such Iranian proxy arming is a growing source of lethal attacks against the United States in both Iraq and Afghanistan presently with the new weapons shipments leading directly to the deaths of American troops. \7\

\\7\\ See for example: Jay Solomon, ``Iran Funnels New Weapons to Iraq and Afghanistan," Wall Street Journal, July 2, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB100014240527023037634045-76420080640167182.html?KEYWORDS=iran+weapons>.

The nature of the threat to the United States, then, is not merely the drugs in the criminal pipelines and multiple transnational criminal activities that directly affect us every day. It is the establishment of political and financial influence and military presence by Hezbollah, a terrorist organization that enjoys the state sponsorship of Iran and, to a lesser degree, Syria, in concert with states that are hospitable to its movements and that are replicating its model, particularly south of our border.

A central common element between Iran and its Bolivarian allies is the willingness to use non-state allies participating in criminal and terrorist activities as instruments of statecraft. As the DIA noted, the Qods Force supports proxy forces while retaining plausible deniability, and the primary force is Hezbollah. Venezuela, in turn, also hosts not only the FARC, but the ETA Basque separatist terrorist organization, the Bolivarian Continental Movement (Movimiento Continental Bolivariano--MCB).

The MCB is a FARC-founded political umbrella group made up of remnants of Latin America's violent Marxist movements and its allies in Europe, the United States, and Latin America. The core mission of the group is to legitimize the FARC's internal and international image as a revolutionary army driven by ideology rather than a criminal organization fuelled by the drug trade. It also is a staunch defender of Chavez and his Bolivarian allies and a favorite forum for calling for armed action against the United States and for armed revolution against the democratically elected government of Colombia.

One thing both Hezbollah and the FARC have in common is a demonstrated willingness to work with outside groups that do not share their same ideology or theology, but who share a common enemy.

An important element in the criminalized relationships among all these groups are the ``pipelines" or series of overlapping pipelines that these state and non-state actors need to move products, money, weapons, personnel, and goods virtually anywhere and at anytime,

without detection and for enormous profits.\8\

\8\ For a fuller discussion of the criminalization of these states and the role of non-state armed actors see: Douglas Farah, ``Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines and Criminalized States: Emerging Threats," PRISM, National Defense University, PRISM 2, no. 3, pp 15-32.

These pipelines are perhaps best understood as a series of recombinant chains whose links can couple and de-couple as necessary to meet the best interests of the networks involved. In the current context I am discussing state and non-state criminal/terrorist organizations who are able to move goods from Iran across the northern tier of South America, through Central America and Mexico and penetrate our borders with impunity.

The criminalization of multiple states in our hemisphere, acting in concert, is a threat across many obvious and less obvious fronts. But the seriousness of the threat grows enormously when the central element these governments and their armed non-state proxies Hezbollah and the FARC share is a hatred for the United States and a publicly stated desire to inflict significant damage on the homeland. This is the reality we face. These groups together, as have access to hundreds of millions of dollars in illicit revenues annually, and billions of dollars more in state revenues that are allocated without transparency or internal supervision and accountability in respect of their nominally democratic host polities.

As I will describe in detail, they share a doctrine of asymmetrical warfare against the United States that embraces the use of weapons of mass destruction, massive civilian casualties as acceptable collateral damage and the underlying belief that the acquisition of nuclear weapons to destroy the United States is a moral or religious imperative. This is not a statement of capacity, but a clear statement of intention.

The first does not necessarily imply the ability to accomplish the latter, but it is an indication that these intentions need to be taken seriously, particularly given the level of resources available to them. Hezbollah, viewed by many in our intelligence community as the most effective, well-structured, and militarily proficient terrorist group in existence, brings a host of skills and abilities to bear in this

regard. While these capabilities had been deployed in our hemisphere before with lethal effect (the 1994 AMIA bombing), they have not been previously deployed under the protection of a network of friendly governments, with access to diplomatic status and immunity and operational freedom.

Last month a senior Venezuelan official publicly endorsed the Iranian position that the United States ``arms international terrorists and finances their activities." He added that ``discrimination and humiliation of nations is the primary cause of terrorism . . . the type of terrorism implemented by imperial powers attacks the sovereignty of nations and the laws that regulate armed conflicts." \9\

\9\ Frank Lopez Ballesteros, ``Venezuela e Iran unen su vision sobre terrorismo," El Universal, June 27, 2011, accessed at: <http://internacional.eluniversal.com/2011/06/27/venezuela-e-iran-unen-su-vision-sobre-terrorismo.shtml>.

One need only look at how rapidly Iran has increased its diplomatic, economic, and intelligence presence in Latin America to see the priority it places on this emerging axis, given that it is an area where it has virtually no trade, no historic or cultural ties and no obvious strategic interests. In Bolivia recently the Iranian embassy reportedly asked for more than two dozen spaces for in the international school for children of their newly-arrived diplomats there. This is an indication of how rapidly the diplomatic mission is expanding despite having very few overt operations under way.

The gains--in financial institutions, bilateral trade agreements, state-to-state shipping by land and sea that undergo no outside review, security forces and intelligence training, and state visits for Latin America (eight state visits between Chavez and Ahmadinejad alone since 2006)--are almost entirely within the Bolivarian orbit (although there are signs of involvement elsewhere in both Central and Latin America, particularly efforts with mixed results to establish broad new ties with Brazil).

What is of particular concern is that many of the agreements signed, such as the agreement to create a dedicated shipping line between Iran and Ecuador, visa-free flights to and from Caracas, Tehran, and Damascus, or the announced intention of the internationally

sanctioned Economic Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) to deposit \$120 million dollars in the Central Bank of Ecuador, follow no normal economic rationale.\10\

\10\ For a more complete look at Iran's presence in Latin America, see: Douglas Farah, ``Iran in Latin America: An Overview," Iran in Latin America: Threat or Axis of Annoyance, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cynthia J. Arnson et al, editors, June 2009, accessed January 21, 2011, at: http://www.douglasfarah.com/pdfs/20090620_DFIraninLatAm-June2009-1.pdf For a look at the anomalies in the economic relations and banking relations, see Douglas Farah and Glenn Simpson, ``Ecuador at Risk: Drug, Thugs, Guerrillas and the `Citizens' Revolution,' " International Assessment and Strategy Center, January 2010. The EDBI was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control for violating sanctions in regards to nuclear proliferation activities and aiding the IRGC.

The OFAC designation of the Iranian bank states that:

``EDBI provides financial services to multiple MODAFL-subordinate entities that permit these entities to advance Iran's WMD programs. Furthermore, the EDBI has facilitated the on-going procurement activities of various front companies associated with MODAFL-subordinate entities. Since the United States and United Nations designated Bank Sepah in early 2007, the EDBI has served as one of the leading intermediaries handling Bank Sepah's financing, including WMD-related payments. In addition to handling business for Bank Sepah, the EDBI has facilitated financing for other proliferation-related entities sanctioned under U.S. and U.N. authorities." \11\

\11\ United States Department of Treasury, ``Export Development Bank of Iran Designated as a Proliferator," Press office of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, October 22, 2008. OFAC also designated a sister bank of EDBI operating in Venezuela as the Banco Internacional de Desarrollo (BID). In the MOU between Ecuador's central bank and EDBI, the EDBI offers to open a branch office of BID in Ecuador as well.

The Bolivarian states have jointly declared their intention to help Iran break international sanctions, holding a joint press conference in Tehran to announce their determination to ``continue and expand their economic ties to Iran" with confidence that ``Iran can give a crushing response to the threats and sanctions imposed by the West and imperialism." \12\ --by which they primarily mean the United States.

\12\ ``Venezuela/Iran Alba Resolved to Continue Economic Ties with Iran," Financial Times Information Service, July 15, 2010.

The multiple mining activities of radioactive elements, the significant investment in financial institutions, the recruitment and training of personnel from across the region by both Venezuela and Iran, and the constant high-level contact among the Bolivarian leaders and Iran all indicate a desire on the part of both parties (Iran and the Bolivarian states) to form a mutually beneficial and self-reinforcing alliance.

As noted above, of particular concern are the credible reports of on-going and extensive Iranian training and equipping of the intelligence services of the Bolivarian states, particularly Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador. This includes both equipment, primarily for communications intercepts, and training trips of Bolivarian state officials and military-age youth cadres to Iran.

It is also notable that in Bolivia and Ecuador, knowledgeable sources reported a significant increase in the Iranian military attaches being assigned to the region. This is unusual as the countries have traditionally have had little military interaction, and an indication of the increasing military-to-military ties that are developing. It is also worth noting that Hezbollah's entre into countries is often through the offices of the military attaches under diplomatic cover, who often operate as a separate entity within the embassies.

the changing nature of the ties

Before going into the origins of this seemingly paradoxical alliance, it is important to note that the relationships Hezbollah has developed with criminal and terrorist groups in Latin America has escalated from one of mutual accommodation and benefit in the spheres of money laundering, contraband, and financing to a more direct and

deadly forms of collaboration.

There has been significant and well documented reporting on Hezbollah's financial ties to the contraband center of the Tri-Border region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil, the contributions of the Lebanese diaspora communities on Isla Margarita and elsewhere, and the significant profits Hezbollah has derived for some time by taxing a range of illicit activities among the Lebanese diaspora communities.

This type of activity, in many ways, was little different from that of many other transnational criminal networks, and was largely financial. However, the 1994 Iranian government-sponsored bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, Argentina, using Hezbollah operatives in the Tri-Border region, is a powerful reminder that these groups can and do operate militarily in Latin America.

There is now-growing evidence of the merging of the Bolivarian Revolution's criminal-terrorist pipeline activities and those of the criminal-terrorist pipeline of radical Islamist groups (Hezbollah in particular) supported by the Iranian regime. This presages a series of new security challenges for the United States and its allies in Latin America.

Currently there are cases being prosecuted in the United States that shed new light on direct cocaine-for-weapons deals between Hezbollah operatives and the FARC.

One case that illustrates the breadth of the emerging alliances between criminal and terrorist groups is Operation Titan, executed by Colombian and U.S. officials in 2008 and still on-going. Colombian and U.S. officials, after a 2-year investigation, dismantled a drug trafficking organization that stretched from Colombia to Panama, Mexico, the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. Most of the drugs originated with the FARC in Colombia, and some of the proceeds were traced through a Lebanese expatriate network, to the funding Hezbollah.\13\

\13\ While much of Operation Titan remains classified, there has been significant open source reporting, in part because the Colombian government announced the most important arrests. See: Chris Kraul and Sebastian Rotella, ``Colombian Cocaine Ring Linked to Hezbollah," Los Angeles Times, Oct. 22, 2008; and ``Por Lavar Activos de Narcos y Paramilitares, Capturados Integrantes de Organizacion Internacional,"

Fiscalia General de la Republica (Colombia), Oct. 21, 2008.

Colombian and U.S. officials allege that one of the key money launderers in the structure, Chekry Harb, AKA ``Taliban'', acted as the central go-between among Latin American drug trafficking organizations and Middle Eastern radical groups, primarily Hezbollah. Among the groups participating together in Harb's operation in Colombia were members of the Northern Valley Cartel, right-wing paramilitary groups and the FARC, demonstrating the ecumenical adaptive nature of Hezbollah's criminal associations and of the ``recombinant networks'' system.

Other recent cases include:

In 2008, OFAC-designated senior Venezuelan diplomats for facilitating the funding of Hezbollah.

One of those designated, Ghazi Nasr al Din, served as the charge d'affaires of the Venezuelan embassy in Damascus, and then served in the Venezuelan embassy in London. According to the OFAC statement in late January 2008, al Din facilitated the travel of two Hezbollah representatives of the Lebanese parliament to solicit donations and announce the opening of a Hezbollah-sponsored community center and office in Venezuela.

The second individual, Fawzi Kan'an, is described as a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter and a ``significant provider of financial support to Hezbollah." He met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, including possible kidnappings and terrorist attacks.\14\

\14\ ``Treasury Targets Hizbullah in Venezuela," United States Department of Treasury Press Center, June 18, 2008, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp1036.aspx>.

In April 2009 police on the island of Curacao arrested 17 people for alleged involvement in cocaine trafficking with some of the proceeds then funneled through Middle Eastern banks to Hezbollah.\15\

\15\ Orlando Cuales, ``17 arrested in Curacao on suspicion of drug trafficking links with Hezbollah," Associated Press, April 29, 2009.

A July 6, 2009 indictment of Jamal Youssef in the U.S.

Southern District of New York alleges that the defendant, a former Syrian military officer arrested in Honduras, sought to sell weapons to the FARC--weapons he claimed came from Hezbollah, and were going to be provided by a relative in Mexico.\16\

\16\ United States District Court, Southern District of New York, The United States of America v Jamal Yousef, Indictment, July 6, 2009.

Such relationships between non-state and state actors provide numerous benefits to both. In Latin America, for example, the FARC and its non-state allies such as ETA, remnants of the Irish Republican Army and others gain access to Venezuelan territory without fear of reprisals, gain access to Venezuelan identification documents, and, perhaps most importantly, access to routes for exporting cocaine to Europe and the United States while using the same routes to import quantities of sophisticated weapons and communications equipment. In return, the Chavez government offers state protection and reaps rewards in the form of financial benefits for individuals and as institutional and materiel benefits derived from the cocaine and contraband trade.

Iran, whose banks are largely barred from the Western financial systems, benefits from access to the international financial market through Venezuelan, Ecuadoran, and Bolivian financial institutions, which act as proxies by moving Iranian money as if it originated in their own, unsanctioned financial systems.\17\ Venezuela also agreed to provide Iran with 20,000 barrels of gasoline a day--leading to U.S. sanctions against the state petroleum company PDVSA earlier this year.\18\

\17\ For a look at how the Ecuadoran and Venezuelan banks function as proxies for Iran, particularly the Economic Development Bank of Iran, sanctioned for its illegal support of Iran's nuclear program, and the Banco Internacional de Desarrollo, see: Farah and Simpson, op cit.

\18\ Office of the Spokesman, ``Seven Companies Sanctioned Under Amended Iran Sanctions Act," U.S. Department of State, May 24, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/05/164132.htm>.

While the ties between Iran and Hezbollah are generally accepted, there is a reluctance in some parts of the policy community to acknowledge the similar type of relationship that Venezuela and other Bolivarian states have with the FARC.

There is abundant evidence establishing Chavez's direct and personal involvement with the FARC, along with senior military and political officials, I will list only some of them.

OFAC has designated numerous senior Venezuelan officials, including the heads of two national intelligence services, as terrorist supporters for direct support of the FARC in the acquisition of weapons and drug trafficking.¹⁹ Among those designated are Hugo Armando Carvajal, director of Venezuelan Military Intelligence; Henry de Jesus Rangel, director of the Venezuelan Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services; and Ramon Emilio Rodriguez Chacon, former minister of justice and former minister of interior--were responsible for ``materially supporting the FARC, a narco-terrorist organization."

¹⁹ Among those designated were Hugo Armando Carvajal, director of Venezuela's Military Intelligence Directorate for his ``assistance to the FARC, (including) protecting drug shipments from seizure"; Henry de Jesus Rangel Silva, director of Venezuela's Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services for ``materially assisting the narcotics activities of the FARC"; and Ramon Emilio Rodriguez Chacin, at the time Venezuela's minister of interior and justice, described as ``the Venezuelan government's main weapons contact for the FARC." See the full designation at: <http://treas.tpaq.treasury.gov/press/releases/hp1132.htm>.

The designation statement accused Carvajal and Rangel of protecting FARC cocaine shipments moving through Venezuela, and said Rodriguez Chacin, who resigned his government position just a few days before the designations, was the ``Venezuelan government's main weapons contact for the FARC."²⁰ In November 2010 Rangel was promoted to the overall commander of the Venezuelan armed forces.²¹

²⁰ ``Treasury Targets Venezuelan Government Officials Support of the FARC," U.S. Treasury Department Office of Public Affairs, Sept.

12, 2008. The designations came on the heels of the decision of the Bolivian government of Evo Morales to expel the U.S. ambassador, allegedly for supporting armed movements against the Morales government. In solidarity, Chavez then expelled the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela. In addition to the designations of the Venezuelan officials, the United States also expelled the Venezuelan and Bolivian ambassadors to Washington.

\21\ ``Chavez Shores up Military Support," Stratfor, November 12, 2010.

Senior officials in Ecuador and Bolivia have also been publicly tied both to the FARC and the FARC's drug trafficking activities. In Ecuador, a senior cabinet official met repeatedly with FARC leaders and there is strong evidence that the Correa campaign received several hundred thousand dollars in donations from the FARC.\22\ In Bolivia, senior members of president Evo Morales' MAS party have worked closely with the FARC,\23\ and a senior police commander who ran the elite counter-narcotics unit was recently arrested for trafficking cocaine and extradited to the United States.\24\

\22\ For a more complete look at the documentation of the Correa and Chavez ties to the FARC see: ``The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of `Raul Reyes,' " International Institute for Strategic Studies, May 2011, <http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/the-farc-files-venezuela-ecuador-and-the-secret-archive-of-ral-reyes/>; Farah and Simpson, op cit.; Francisco Huerta Montalvo et al, ``Informe Comision de Transparencia y Verdad: Caso Angostura," December 10, 2009.

\23\ For details see: Douglas Farah, ``Into the Abyss: Bolivia Under Evo Morales and the MAS," International Assessment and Strategy Center, June 17, 2009, http://www.strategycenter.net/research/pubID.200/pub_detail.asp.

\24\ Martin Arostegui, ``Drug Scandal Shakes Bolivia," Wall Street Journal, March 3, 2011.

the origins of the ideological kinship

As noted, the Chavez model of allying with state sponsors of terrorism such as Iran while sponsoring violent non-state terrorist

organizations involved in criminal activities and terrorism strongly resembles the template used by Hezbollah and Iran.

In order to understand the relationship, it is important to understand the thinking of two significant ideological influences in the world of Hugo Chavez about what they view as the seminal event in goal of destroying the United States. That event was the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

While Iran's revolutionary rulers view the 1979 revolution in theological terms as a miracle of divine intervention in which the United States, as the Great Satan was defeated, the Bolivarians view it from a secular point of view as roadmap to defeat the United State as the evil Empire.

Among the first to articulate the possible merging of radical Shi'ite Islamic thought with Marxist aspirations of destroying capitalism and U.S. hegemony was Illich Sanchez Ramirez, better known as the terrorist leader Carlos the Jackal, a Venezuelan citizen who was, until his arrest in 1994, one of the world's most-wanted terrorists. In his writings, Sanchez Ramirez espouses Marxism tied to revolutionary, violent Palestinian uprisings, and, in the early 2000s after becoming a Muslim, militant Islamism.

In his 2003 book *Revolutionary Islam*, written from prison where he is serving a life sentence for killing two French policemen, Sanchez Ramirez praises Osama bin Laden and the 9/11 attacks on the United States as a "lofty feat of arms" and part of a justified "armed struggle" of Islam against the West. "From now on terrorism is going to be more or less a daily part of the landscape of your rotting democracies," he wrote.²⁵

²⁵ "Jackal' book praises bin Laden," BBC News, June 26, 2003.

In this context, the repeated, public praise of Chavez for Sanchez Ramirez can be seen as a crucial element of the Bolivarian ideology, and an embracing of terrorist tactics to achieve justifiable ends. Chavez ordered his ambassador to France to seek the release of Sanchez Ramirez and on multiple occasions, including many times after 9/11, referred to the convicted terrorist as a "friend" and "true revolutionary."²⁶ In a 1999 letter to Sanchez Ramirez, Chavez greeted the terrorist as a "Distinguished Compatriot" and wrote that

\26\ See, for example: Associated Press, ``Chavez: `Carlos the Jackal' a `Good Friend' " June 3, 2006.

``Swimming in the depths of your letter of solidarity I could hear the pulse of our shared insight that everything has its due time: time to pile up stones or hurl them, to ignite revolution or to ignore it; to pursue dialectically a unity between our warring classes or to stir the conflict between them--a time when you can fight outright for principles and a time when you must choose the proper fight, lying in wait with a keen sense for the moment of truth, in the same way that Ariadne, invested with these same principles, lays the thread that leads her out of the labyrinth . . .

``I feel that my spirit's own strength will always rise to the magnitude of the dangers that threaten it. My doctor has told me that my spirit must nourish itself on danger to preserve my sanity, in the manner that God intended, with this stormy revolution to guide me in my great destiny.

``With profound faith in our cause and our mission, now and forever!"\27\

\27\ Paul Reyes (translator) and Hugo Chavez, ``My Struggle," from a March 23, 1999 letter to Illich Ramirez Sanchez, the Venezuelan terrorist known as Carlos the Jackal, from Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez in response to a previous letter from Ramirez, who is serving a life sentence in France for murder. Harper's, October 1999, <http://harpers.org/archive/1999/10/0060674>.

In fact, the Bolivarian fascination with the militant Islamist thought and Marxism did not end with the friendship between Chavez and the jailed terrorist. Acolytes of Sanchez Ramirez continued to develop his ideology of Marxism and radical Islamism rooted in their interpretation of the Iranian revolution.

Since 2005, Chavez has rewritten Venezuela's security doctrine to scrub it of all outside (meaning U.S.), ``imperialist" influences. To replace the old doctrine, Chavez and the Venezuelan military leadership have focused on developing a doctrine centered on asymmetrical warfare, in the belief that the primary threat to Venezuelan security is a U.S.

invasion.

The emerging military doctrine of the ``Bolivarian Revolution," officially adopted in Venezuela and rapidly spreading to Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador, explicitly embraces the radical Islamist model of asymmetrical or ``fourth generation warfare," and its heavy reliance on suicide bombings and different types of terrorism, including the use of nuclear weapons. This is occurring at a time when Hezbollah's presence in Latin America is growing and becoming more identifiable.\28\

\28\ In addition to Operation Titan there have been numerous incidents in the past 18 months of operatives being directly linked to Hezbollah have been identified or arrested in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Aruba, and elsewhere in Latin America.

The main book Chavez has adopted as his military doctrine is Peripheral Warfare and Revolutionary Islam: Origins, Rules, and Ethics of Asymmetrical Warfare (Guerra Periferica y el Islam Revolucionario: Origenes, Reglas y Etica de la Guerra Asimetrica) by the Spanish politician and ideologue Jorge Verstrynge.\29\ The tract is a continuation of and exploration of Sanchez Ramirez's thoughts, incorporating an explicit endorsement of the use of weapons of mass destruction to destroy the United States.

\29\ Verstrynge, born in Morocco to Belgian and Spanish parents, began his political career on the far right of the Spanish political spectrum as a disciple of Manuel Fraga, and served in several senior party posts with the Alianza Popular. By his own admission he then migrated to the Socialist Party, but never rose through the ranks. He is widely associated with radical anti-globalization views and anti-U.S. rhetoric, repeatedly stating that the United States is creating a new global empire and must be defeated. Although he has no military training or experience, he has written extensively on asymmetrical warfare.

Although he is not a Muslim and the book was not written directly in relation to the Venezuelan experience, Verstrynge lauds radical Islam for helping to expand the parameters of what irregular warfare

should encompass, including the use of biological and nuclear weapons, along with the correlated civilian casualties among the enemy.

Central to Verstrynge's idealized view of terrorists is the belief in the sacredness of the willingness of the fighters to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of their goals. Before writing extensively on how to make chemical weapons and listing helpful places to find information on the manufacture of rudimentary nuclear bombs that ``someone with a high school education could make," Verstrynge writes:

``We already know it is incorrect to limit asymmetrical warfare to guerrilla warfare, although it is important. However, it is not a mistake to also use things that are classified as terrorism and use them in asymmetrical warfare. And we have super terrorism, divided into chemical terrorism, bioterrorism (which uses biological and bacteriological methods), and nuclear terrorism, which means `the type of terrorism uses the threat of nuclear attack to achieve its goals.'

"\30\

\30\ Verstrynge, op cit., pp. 56-57.

In a December 12, 2008 interview with Venezuelan state television, Verstrynge lauded Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda for creating a new type of warfare that is ``de-territorialized, de-stateized and de-nationalized," a war where suicide bombers act as ``atomic bombs for the poor." \31\

\31\ Bartolome, op cit. See also: John Sweeny, ``Jorge Verstrynge: The Guru of Bolivarian Asymmetric Warfare," www.vcrisis.com, Sept. 9, 2005; and ``Troops Get Provocative Book," Miami Herald, Nov. 11, 2005.

Based on this book, Verstrynge was invited by Chavez to give the keynote address to military leaders in a 2005 conference titled ``First Military Forum on Fourth Generation Warfare and Asymmetric Conflict" held at the Venezuelan military academy. Following the conference Gen. Raul Baduel, the army commander and Chavez confidant, ordered a special

pocket-size edition of the book to be printed up and distributed throughout the officer corps with explicit orders that it be studied cover to cover.\32\

\32\ For a more complete discussion of how Verstrynge's concepts fit into Chavez's concept of the Bolivarian revolution see: Mariano Cesar Bartolome, ``Las Guerras Asimetricas y de Cuarta Generacion Dentro Del Pensamiento Venezolano en Materia de Seguridad y Defensa," (Asymmetrical and Fourth Generation Warfare In Venezuelan Security and Defense Thinking), Military Review, January-February 2008, pp. 51-62.

This ideological framework of Marxism and radical Islamic methodology for successfully attacking the United States is an important, though little examined, underpinning for the greatly enhanced relationships among the Bolivarian states and Iran and their respective non-state proxies, most prominently Hezbollah. For Iran the benefits are numerous, particularly in building alliances with nations to break its international isolation. But it also affords the opportunity to mine strategic minerals for its missile and nuclear programs, position Quds Force and Revolutionary Guard operatives under diplomatic cover, greatly expand and enhance its intelligence gathering, and operate state-to-state enterprises that allow for the movement of just about any type of goods and material, and more generally acclimate to operations in Latin America, including those aimed toward the United States.

One glimpse at the type of shipments such a relationship can be used for came to light in 2009, when Turkish authorities randomly inspected some crates being shipped from Iran to Venezuela at the port of Mersin. The 22 crates were labeled ``tractor parts" but in fact carried equipment for establishing a laboratory for manufacturing explosives.\33\

\33\ ``Turkey holds suspicious Iran-Venezuela shipment," Associated Press, June 1, 2009. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3651706,00.html>.

the west africa cocaine pipeline: another dangerous nexus
As cocaine trafficking routes shift significantly to transit West

Africa en route to the European market, there is another avenue opening for Hezbollah in Latin America and potential ties to the FARC.

The movement of drugs, particularly cocaine, through West Africa is the product of several developments in the overall drug trade, and the consequences are already devastating, as shown by the new wave of political instability and the creation of the continent's first true ``narco-states.'' \34\

\34\ For a more complete look at this trend see: Douglas Farah, ``Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa," Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on African Affairs, June 23, 2009.

The FARC has a well-established network, including financial handlers, already established in Europe, particularly in Spain, where a good portion of the cocaine enters the European Union. The organization also maintains a presence on the ground in West Africa to handle drug shipments, a role demonstrated in a high-profile series of busts by the DEA in Liberia. \35\ Hezbollah, as discussed below, has a long history in West Africa and controls most of the illicit trade pipelines in the region.

\35\ See Farah, PRISM, op cit; and Benjamin Weiser and William K. Rashbaum, ``Liberian Officials Worked with U.S. Agency to Block Drug Traffic," The New York Times, June 2, 2010.

It is interesting to note that most of the largest cocaine busts in West Africa have come aboard aircraft that departed from Venezuela. \36\ Since Chavez expelled the Drug Enforcement Administration from Venezuela in 2006, and has halted all counter-narcotics cooperation, U.S. officials describe Venezuela as a ``black hole." Not only does the Venezuelan government's attitude encourage drug trafficking by the FARC and others, \37\ but Venezuela's geographic proximity to West Africa make it an ideal launching pad. This is true for both maritime operations and the use of aircraft.

\36\ Among the largest was the May 1, 2007 seizure of 630 kilograms of cocaine aboard a Cessna aircraft in Nouhabidou, Mauritania. The

airplane's GPS showed it had taken off from Venezuelan territory. See: ``Cocaine Trafficking in Western Africa: Situation Report," UNODC, October 2007, pg. 9. In July 2008 another aircraft with 600 kilograms of cocaine and using a false Red Cross emblem on its tail, was seized in Sierra Leone. Another case in 2010 intercepted 4,000 kilos that was to be flown from Venezuela to Monrovia, Liberia. See: ``Manhattan U.S. Attorney Charges Three al-Qaeda Associates with Conspiring to Transport Cocaine through Africa for the FARC," PR Newswire, December 18, 2009; Farah, PRISM, op. cit.

\37\ The most dramatic recent revelations of the complicity of senior Venezuelan officials in the cocaine trade came in the case of Walid Makled, the alleged link between the FARC and Hezbollah for drug trafficking activities. Makled was a well-known financial supporter of Chavez who was designated a major drug trafficking kingpin by the United States. Makled was arrested in Colombia in October 2010, where he gave details of his monthly payments, totaling more than \$1 million, to senior Venezuelan military officials, family members of sitting cabinet officials, and other senior officials. The Colombian decision to extradite Makled to Venezuela rather than the United States caused significant tension between the two countries and probably means that the bulk of the evidence he claims to possess will never see the light of day. Among the documents he presented in prison were checks of his cashed by senior generals and government officials and videos of what appear to be senior government officials in his home discussing cash transactions. For details of the case see: Jose de Cordoba and Darcy Crowe, ``U.S. Losing Big Drug Catch," The Wall Street Journal, April 1, 2011; ``Manhattan U.S. Attorney Announces Indictment of one of World's Most Significant Narcotics Kingpins," United States Attorney, Southern District of New York, November 4, 2010.

``Makled: Tengo suficientes pruebas sobre corrupcion y narcotrafico para que intervengan a Venezuela," NTN24 TV (Colombia), April 11, 2011.

In West Africa, Hezbollah has long maintained an operational presence and has had a significant role in the blood diamond trade and many other illicit activities. In addition, many in the Lebanese Diaspora community in West Africa, numbering several hundred thousand, pay a portion of their earnings to support Hezbollah in Lebanon, with

the knowledge and acquiescence of the host government.\38\

\38\ See: Edward Harris, ``Hezbollah Extorting Funds From West Africa's Diamond Merchants," Associated Press, 29 June 2004.

The importance of this revenue stream was revealed when a charter flight bound for Beirut from Cotonou, Benin, crashed on takeoff on Dec. 25, 2003. On board was a Hezbollah ``foreign relations" official carrying \$2 million in contributions raised in the region. The money was said to represent ``the regular contributions the party [Hezbollah] receives from wealthy Lebanese nationals in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin, and other African states." \39\

\39\ Hamid Ghirya, ``Hezbollah Officials Carrying Donations Reportedly Killed in Lebanese Plane Crash," al-Siyasah (Kuwait), Dec. 29, 2003. For a broader look at the role of the Lebanese diaspora in West African illicit trade activities, see: Lansana Gberie, War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection, The Diamond and Human Security Project, Occasional Paper 6, January 2003.

Given the prominence of the Lebanese Diaspora community and its members' control of most of the existing pipeline to import and export illegal commodities, it is inevitable that those organizations and the drug trafficking groups will encounter each other and mutually benefit from each other because each has something the other wants and needs. Lebanese networks control the decades-old contraband networks and routes to Europe, while the drug traffickers offer a new and lucrative product for the existing pipeline. Violent clashes may take place, but the history of both groups indicates they will cooperate where useful.

Given Hezbollah's long-established presence on the ground in the region and the closeness of its operatives to that community, it is also reasonable to assume that Hezbollah and the drug traffickers, operating in the same permissive environment, will cross paths. It is precisely this type of environment that allows for the otherwise unthinkable alliances to emerge.

Most are short-lived, centering on specific opportunities and operations that can benefit both groups, but others are longer-lasting

and more dangerous. The adaptive nature of the actors and the networks make any number of recombinant forms and outcomes possible. This at once makes their detection, real-time monitoring, and effective disruption or interdiction by the United States and other government and international intelligence and enforcement system, as presently configured, nearly impossible.

Drug trafficking in West Africa also directly strengthens those who seek not only to harm the United States but also to strangle the struggling liberal democracies in Latin America. These include Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, his allies in Iran, the FARC, and Hezbollah. As noted above, the circumstances in West Africa are ideal for allowing many of these non-state criminal and terrorist organizations to greatly expand their cooperation. The money raised from the cocaine trade on the West Africa route brings all these threats closer to the United States.

conclusions

Hezbollah's presence in Latin America is growing, and the organization remains the premiere terrorist organization in the world. It is growing both in economic capacity and in its placing of operatives in the region through the rapid expansion of Iran's diplomatic and intelligence missions, businesses, and investments.

The threat posed by Hezbollah in Latin America to the U.S. homeland centers not only on the organization itself and its demonstrated capacity and willingness to attack the interests of the United States and its allies. It centers also on the organization's relationship with a continuum of actors from states sponsors (Iran and Syria) to hospitable states (Venezuela and its Bolivarian allies) to allied terror and criminal entities (the FARC and its allies in the MCB).

The core shared beliefs of these varied actors is that the United States is a primary enemy that needs to be destroyed; that WMD is a legitimate option to achieve that end; that the Iranian revolution offers model for defeating the United States; and that the ability to wage sophisticated asymmetrical warfare, which so far has reached its pinnacle in the 9/11 attacks on the Homeland, is central to their military doctrine.

These states have embraced the concept of using designated terrorist organizations as proxies for furthering their regional goals and as instruments of statecraft. This has afforded state protection to

these groups and accelerated the criminalization of the states themselves while also spreading support to fellow radicals seeking to subvert regional democracies toward similar ends.

This combination of relationships--Iran to Hezbollah, Iran to Venezuela and the Bolivarian states; Venezuela's ties to the FARC and the growing evidence of joint Hezbollah and FARC drug transnational and transcontinental trafficking activity combine to indicate that Hezbollah's presence constitutes a significant threat to the U.S. homeland. To view Hezbollah as an isolated actor gaining a small foothold in Latin America, as is often done in policy circles, is to misunderstand the nature of the threat, the meaning of the realities on the ground, and their potential consequences.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Farah.

Our next witness is Mr. Ilan Berman. Mr. Berman is vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council. He has been a former consultant for the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency, and provided expertise and counsel to a number of other Government agencies and Congressional offices.

Mr. Berman also concurrently serves as associate faculty to the Missouri State University's Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, a columnist for Forbes Magazine, and as editor for the Journal of International Security Affairs.

Mr. Berman received his undergraduate degree from Brandeis University and went on to obtain a master's from American University, and his juris doctorate from Washington College of Law, also at the American University here in Washington.

Mr. Berman, we look forward to your testimony.

STATEMENT OF ILAN BERMAN, VICE PRESIDENT, AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY COUNCIL

Mr. Berman. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Thank you for the opportunity to come and testify before you today on this issue, which is, I believe, of paramount importance to--not only to our understanding of where we are and where we going in the struggle against international terrorism, but also to the safety and security of the U.S. homeland as well.

Let me start by referencing a quote that the Ranking Member mentioned. A year after the September 11 attacks, then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage made a telling assessment when he called Hezbollah, rather than al-Qaeda, ``the A-Team of international terrorists." What lies behind that assessment is, I think, a rather stunning network in terms of its breadth and its sophistication.

Hezbollah today is active on 5 continents, in 40 or more countries. It has an operating budget of perhaps as much as \$20 million annually derived from various sources. Yet, despite this web of money and this web of activity, Hezbollah's global footprint is fairly poorly understood. It is acknowledged here, as this hearing shows, but it is fairly poorly understood both in terms of its scope and also in terms of its potential impact on the United States and U.S. National security.

In the Western Hemisphere specifically, Hezbollah has erected what could be called a stronghold south of the U.S. border. The Tri-Border Area, where Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina intersect, is obviously the most active, and, in fact, it is very lucrative in the sense that it has been estimated that Hezbollah generates as much as \$20 million annually from its activities in the Tri-Border region that go to finance and funnel the group's activities throughout the world.

But it is certainly not the only outpost that Hezbollah has created in the region. You have incidents of narcotrafficking and money-laundering enterprises in Colombia. You have instances of training camps and government assistance, including financial assistance, from Venezuela. You have, in Mexico, just south of the U.S. border, you have instances not only of the country serving as a fund-raising hub and a financial conduit to Hezbollah, but also as a base for infiltration into the United States.

As this committee itself noted 5 years ago, Hezbollah agents and Hezbollah operatives have used the porous border between the United States and Mexico in the past to infiltrate. Although we don't quite know the scope of that activity, what seems clear from on-going FBI investigations and on-going

border security apprehensions is that that activity is still on-going.

But, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned Hezbollah activity specifically in Latin America. I wanted to broaden the scope a little bit if I could and talk a little bit about the United States and Canada, because the footprint of Hezbollah extends not just south of our border, but also within the United States and north as well.

Today, in the United States, law enforcement agencies believe that Hezbollah is present in active cells in no fewer than 15 cities, spanning from Los Angeles to New York, and that the organization not only has a fund-raising base in this country, but also has the capability, the operational capability, to strike targets if it chooses to do so. There is obviously an assessment that, because of the lucrative nature of Hezbollah's activities in the United States, this isn't a high priority at the moment. But there are precipitating factors that could change this calculus, among them a change of circumstance for Iran in the international standoff over its nuclear program.

In Canada, you have also seen significant fund-raising activity from Hezbollah centering in Ottawa, in Montreal, in Vancouver and in Toronto, the latter specifically because of its proximity to the United States. And as a result, experts believe that Hezbollah is better-positioned in North America than any other terrorist group in the world, including al-Qaeda, which is, I think, a significant assessment.

I would note in closing that it is very hard to make an accurate assessment of both Hezbollah's capabilities and Hezbollah's intentions without taking into account the Islamic Republic of Iran. Hezbollah is an Iranian creation, and Hezbollah, in its charter, which was articulated publicly in 1985, pledged allegiance to the Velayat-e-faqih, the rule of the jurisprudent that governs the Iranian--the Islamic Republic of Iran. And as a result, a lot of what Iran is doing in the region is consistent with and, in turn, reinforced by Hezbollah's activities in the region.

Iran now is looking at Latin America specifically for three

interlocking goals. It looks at Latin America as a way to ease its international isolation. Iranian officials understand very well that their nuclear program could leave them isolated, and so they are looking for international partners. It seeks access to critical resources, such as raw uranium, for example, through its partnership with Venezuela. It seeks to create an anti-American coalition that would further its objective of diminishing American power abroad. In all of these fronts, Hezbollah has served as an asymmetric proxy and as a force multiplier for Iranian interests.

In closing, let me say that Hezbollah activities can properly be assessed today in the Western Hemisphere as support activities, activities that represent potential political, economic, organizational gain for the organization at large. But Hezbollah constitutes a significant potential threat. If political circumstances in Lebanon, political circumstances internationally with regard to Iran change, Hezbollah and the foothold that it has established on this hemisphere could potentially become a serious threat to U.S. National security directly.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Berman follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ilan Berman

July 7, 2011

Chairman Meehan, distinguished Members of the subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Hezbollah terrorist organization, its capabilities, and its activities in the Western Hemisphere. It is an issue of critical importance to the on-going struggle against international terrorism, and to the safety and security of the U.S. homeland.

A year after the 9/11 attacks, then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, in contextualizing the terrorist threat facing the country, made a telling assessment. ``Hezbollah may be the A-team of terrorists," Mr. Armitage told an audience at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, ``and maybe al-Qaida is actually the B-team." The description was apt, and remains so. With a presence in an estimated 40 countries on 5 different continents, the Lebanese Shi'ite militia represents one of the very few terrorist

groups active today that possess a truly global presence and reach.

\1\ Richard Armitage, ``America's Challenges in a Changed World," remarks to the United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, September 5, 2002, <http://web.archive.org/web/20020917202341/www.state.gov/s/d/rm/2002/13308pf.htm>.

This footprint extends not only to the greater Middle East and Europe, but to the Western Hemisphere as well.\2\ Over the past quarter-century, Hezbollah has devoted considerable energy and resources to establishing an extensive network of operations throughout the Americas. Today, its web of activity in our hemisphere stretches from Canada to Argentina, and encompasses a wide range of illicit activities and criminal enterprises, from drug trafficking to recruitment to fundraising and training.

\2\ For a detailed overview of Hezbollah's global activities, see the ``Hezbollah" chapter of the American Foreign Policy Council's World Almanac of Islamism, which is accessible on-line at <http://almanac.afpc.org/hezbollah>.

a stronghold south of the border

It is something of a truism of American politics that policymakers in Washington pay only sporadic attention to the happenings in their own geopolitical backyard. The relatively low profile of Latin America in our National security policymaking is deeply counterintuitive, given the region's proximity to the U.S. homeland. It is also potentially dangerous, because its political environment--marked by large ungoverned areas and typified by widespread anti-American sentiment--has created a fertile operating environment for a range of radical groups, including those from the greater Middle East. According to U.S. Government estimates, no fewer than six Islamic terrorist groups (including al-Qaeda and the Palestinian Hamas movement) are now active in Latin America.\3\

\3\ Rex Hudson, Terror and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America, Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, December 2010, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/>

Hezbollah, however, is far and away the most prominent. Its presence in the region stretches back to the 1980s, when operatives--taking advantage of weak regional governance and with support from Iran--began to expand the organization's already-substantial international drug-trafficking and smuggling activities from Lebanon's Beka'a Valley to the ``Tri-Border Region" at the intersection of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay.\4\ Hezbollah's regional presence and capabilities were dramatically demonstrated in March of 1992, when the organization carried out a suicide bombing against Israel's embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 29 and injuring 242 others. Two years later, in July 1994, the group struck again, bombing the Argentine-Israel Mutual Association (known as AMIA) in Buenos Aires. These attacks, which still rank as the most devastating in South American history, led U.S. officials to conclude that Hezbollah had become ``the major international terrorist threat" in the region.\5\

\4\ Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Funding Evil: How Terrorism is Financed--and How to Stop It* (Chicago: Bonus Books, 2003), 145-48.

\5\ U.S. Department of State Coordinator for Counterterrorism Phillip Wilcox, Jr., Testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, September 28, 1995, <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/lat/1995/950928WilcoxTerrorism.html>.

More than a decade-and-a-half later, Hezbollah's footprint in the region remains extensive. It encompasses:

The Tri-Border Region.--The lawless territory where Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil meet continues to serve as the epicenter of Hezbollah activity in Latin America. Since the 1980s, the organization has exploited the region's permissive political atmosphere and lack of governmental controls for a broad range of illicit activities, including smuggling, extortion, and narcotics trafficking. These enterprises are highly lucrative; the RAND Corporation has estimated that Hezbollah cumulatively nets some \$20 million annually from the Tri-Border Region alone.\6\ As a result, experts say, the area constitutes the organization's most significant source of independent funding.\7\

\6\ See Gregory F. Treverton et al., *Film Piracy, Organized Crime, and Terrorism* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009), xi, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG742.-sum.pdf.

\7\ Ehrenfeld, *Funding Evil*, 147.

Colombia.--In 2008, U.S. and Columbian investigators capped a 2-year investigation by successfully dismantling a major transnational cocaine smuggling and money laundering ring originating out of Bogota, Columbia. The illicit network, run by Lebanese national Chekry Harb, was found to have funneled at least part of its profits to Hezbollah.\8\ Columbia, however, is more than simply a fundraising hub for Hezbollah; the organization is also known to have formed cells in the country, exploiting the sizeable Shi'ite Muslim community there.\9\ And, as a result of its narcotics trafficking activities, Hezbollah is also believed to have forged close and collaborative ties to the country's premier terrorist group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia, or FARC.\10\

\8\ Chris Kraul and Sebastian Rotella, "Drug Probe finds Hezbollah Link," *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/oct/22/world/fg-cocainering22>.

\9\ Wilcox, testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations.

\10\ Steven Moonblatt, "Terrorism and Drugs in the Americas: the OAS Response," *Americas Forum IV*, no. 2 (February/March 2004), <http://www.oas.org/ezone/ezone24/Monblatt.htm>.

Paraguay.--Paraguay, with its lack of comprehensive counterterrorism laws, similarly has emerged as a major fundraising hub. Hezbollah was estimated at one time to raise as much as \$10 million annually from there.\11\ (Notably, much of that sum could be attributed to Assad Barakat, a Lebanese immigrant to Paraguay, who transferred some \$6 million annually to the group from his successful smuggling and counterfeiting activities between 1999 and his arrest in 2003.)\12\ Like in Columbia, the organization has exploited Paraguay's Muslim community to establish cells and operational capabilities within the country.\13\

\11\ Julio A. Cirino, Silvana L. Elizondo, and Geoffrey Wawro, ``Latin America's Lawless Areas and Failed States: An Analysis of New Threats," in Latin American Security Challenges: A Collaborative Inquiry from North to South (Newport, RI: Naval War College 2004), 24, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA430425&Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf>.

\12\ Casey L. Addis and Christopher M. Blanchard, Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2011), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41446.pdf>.

\13\ Wilcox, testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations.

Venezuela.--Over the past decade, the regime of Hugo Chavez in Caracas has forged an increasingly intimate strategic partnership with the Iranian government. As a corollary of those burgeoning ties, and in a reflection of Chavez' own support for radical causes, Venezuela has emerged as a major hub for Hezbollah. In 2008, the Bush administration directly accused the Chavez regime of serving as a safe haven and financial supporter of the Lebanese militia. That year, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) formally designated two individuals, one of them a Venezuelan diplomat, for assisting the group. In making the designation, Adam Szubin, OFAC's director of political affairs, specifically referred to ``the government of Venezuela employing and providing safe harbor for Hezbollah facilitators and fundraisers." \14\ Indeed, Hezbollah is known to use Venezuela's free trade zone of Margarita Island as a major financing and fundraising center, as well as to possess ``support cells" there. \15\ The organization has also been accused of training Venezuelan militants in south Lebanon for possible attacks on American soil, and of operating training camps inside Venezuela itself, with the collusion of sympathetic government officials. \16\

\14\ Martin Arostengui, ``U.S. Ties Caracas to Hezbollah Aid," Washington Times, July 7, 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/jul/07/us-ties-caracas-to-hezbollah-aid/?page=1>.

\15\ Cirino, Elizondo, and Wawro, ``Latin America's Lawless Areas

and Failed States," 22, 23.

\16\ Ely Karmon, ``Iran and its Proxy Hezbollah: Strategic Penetration in Latin America," Real Institute Elcano Working Paper, April 15, 2009, <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/677/currentpage/4/Default.aspx>; Alan Levine, ``Hugo's Hezbollah," Front Page Magazine, December 11, 2008, <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=33373>.

Mexico.--Mexico's shared border with the United States makes it an attractive operating base for Hezbollah activities aimed at penetrating the U.S. homeland. As this committee itself noted 5 years ago, ``[m]embers of Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based terrorist organization, have already [illegally] entered to the United States across our Southwest border." \17\ Indeed, in 2006 the FBI broke up a Mexican smuggling ring organized by Hezbollah to transport operatives across the U.S.-Mexican border, \18\ and last summer the Kuwaiti daily Al-Siyassah reported that Mexican authorities had successfully identified and disbanded a similar network of Lebanese-Mexicans that was being set up by the group. \19\ These arrests point to the extensive organizational network erected by the group over the past decade-and-a-half--one that operates out of the country's Shi'a Muslim communities in places such as Tijuana, and which partners with drug cartels active in the country. \20\ For the moment, however, Federal agents assess that the group's main focus in Mexico is to raise funds for its activities in the Middle East. \21\

\17\ Majority Staff report, A Line in the Sand: Confronting the Threat at the Southwest Border, Report of the Majority Staff, House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Investigations, n.d., <http://www.scribd.com/doc/2951526/InvestigaionsBorderReport>.

\18\ ``FBI's Mueller: Hezbollah Busted in Mexican Smuggling Operation," NewsMax, March 30, 2006, <http://archive.newsmax.com/archives/ic/2006/3/30/223801.shtml>.

\19\ Jack Koury, ``Mexico Thwarts Hezbollah Bid to Set Up South American Network," Ha'aretz (Tel Aviv), June 7, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/mexico-thwarts-hezbollah-bid-to-set-up-south-american-network-1.300360>.

\20\ ``Terrorist Group Setting Up Operations Near Border," 10News,

May 4, 2011, <http://www.ionews.com/news/27780427/detail.html>.
\\21\\ Ibid.

a foothold in north america

While Hezbollah's presence south of the border represents the most visible manifestation of its activities in the Western Hemisphere, the group is also active throughout North America.

In the United States, law enforcement authorities estimate active Hezbollah cells and/or supporters to exist in no fewer than 15 metropolitan centers, stretching from New York to Los Angeles.\\22\\ These cells, like their counterparts in Latin America, are engaged in a range of criminal activities. The scope of these enterprises was laid bare in the year 2000, when an FBI sting dismantled a Hezbollah ring in Charlotte, North Carolina. Initially charged solely with smuggling cigarettes from North Carolina to Michigan, the so called ``Charlotte Hezbollah Cell" was ultimately found to have been supplying ``currency, financial services, training, false documentation and identification, communications equipment, explosives, and other physical assets" to the Lebanese militia ``in order to facilitate its violent attacks."\\23\\

\\22\\ Gregory T. Diaz and Barbara Newman, *Lightning out of Lebanon: Hezbollah Terrorists on U.S. Soil* (New York: Presidio Press, 2005), 229.

\\23\\ United States v. Mohammad Youssef Hammoud et al., as cited in Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), 35-36.

Significantly, the number of Hezbollah operatives in the United States has been bolstered by illegal migration and infiltration, perhaps substantially so. Authoritative figures regarding the scope of this infiltration remain difficult to ascertain. However, repeated apprehensions by Mexican authorities of human smuggling networks connected to Hezbollah over the past half-decade indicate that this troubling pattern of activity continues unabated.

Hezbollah also has succeeded in establishing a significant base of operations in Canada. An investigation by the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) in the late 1990s and early 2000s found

that a Hezbollah network in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal had laundered tens of thousands of dollars through Canadian banks, and shipped equipment to the Middle East for use by Hezbollah militants in operations against Israeli targets.\24\ A far greater level of activity came to light earlier this year, when the U.S. Treasury Department targeted the Lebanese Canadian Bank, a former subsidiary of the Royal Bank of Canada with offices in Montreal, as a ``primary money laundering concern" for its role in helping an international criminal syndicate wash hundreds of millions of dollars in narcotics revenue. At least a portion of the proceeds from this criminal enterprise, a 5-year task force headed by Treasury and the Drug Enforcement Administration found, were used as ``financial support" for Hezbollah.\25\ Hezbollah is also believed to have a fundraising presence in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, as well as in towns surrounding Toronto, in part because of that area's sizeable Shi'ite community and its proximity to the U.S. border.\26\

\24\ Stewart Bell, ``Hezbollah Uses Canada as Base," National Post, October 31, 2002, <http://www.clhrf.com/documents/hezbollah.canada.htm>.

\25\ ``US Accuses Lebanon-Canada Bank of Hezbollah Links," Agence France Presse, February 10, 2011, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/02/10/137148.html?PHPSESSID=-v944frchrq16sm3n92iqn53gm6>; Justin Blum, ``Lebanese Canadian Bank Linked to Drugs, Terror Group," Bloomberg BusinessWeek, February 10, 2011, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-02-10/lebanese-canadian-bank-linked-to-drugs-terror-group.html>.

\26\ ``Hezbollah: Profile of the Lebanese Shiite Terrorist Organization of Global Reach Sponsored by Iran and Supported by Syria (Part 2)," Center for Special Studies, Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center Special Information Paper, July 2003, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/ENGLISH/IRAN/PDF/JULY_03.PDF.

These complimentary, overlapping networks have given Hezbollah a critical foothold both within and around the U.S. homeland. Indeed, counterterrorism experts believe it to be ``better established [in North America] than any other terrorist organization in the

world." \27\

\27\ LTC Joseph Myers and Patrick Poole, `` Hezbollah, Illegal Immigration, and the Next 9/11," Front Page Magazine, April 28, 2006, <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=4639>.

hezbollah and iranian interests

No analysis of Hezbollah activity in the Western Hemisphere would be complete, however, without acknowledging the interests and objectives of its progenitor and main sponsor, the Islamic Republic of Iran. Hezbollah was established by Iran in 1982, in the midst Lebanon's civil war, as an umbrella organization unifying the country's various Shi'ite militias and Islamist activists. Thereafter, the Islamic Republic helped the militia entrench itself in Lebanon, making it a major political and operational force in what the Iranian regime regarded as the first front in its efforts to `` export the revolution." And since the mid-1980s, Iran has aided the group's worldwide expansion, including into the Western Hemisphere.

Not surprisingly, Hezbollah's activities in the Americas track closely with Iran's own regional activism and strategic objectives. Today, this effort is driven by three interconnected goals.

The first is to lessen the Iranian regime's international isolation. When Iran's theretofore-clandestine nuclear program was revealed in 2003, regime officials were quick to recognize that the issue had the potential to make their country an international pariah. As a result, the Islamic Republic significantly intensified its diplomatic outreach, seeking to forge new political and economic bonds with the international community. This activism has extended to the Western Hemisphere, where over the past decade Iran has nearly doubled the number of its embassies in Latin America (from 6 in 2005 to 10 in 2010) \28\ and expanded its bilateral relations with a number of sympathetic regional regimes, including that of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

\28\ General Douglas M. Fraser, Posture statement before the House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services, March 30, 2011, http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/files/serve?File_id=fcc6b631-6b51-4bdb-boao-6b97ea36cb58.

The second is to access key technologies and strategic resources. As pressure on Iran over its nuclear program has increased, the Islamic Republic has increasingly looked abroad for critical resources and materiel. Latin America has become a key region of interest in this regard. Venezuela, for example, has emerged as an important (albeit unacknowledged) supplier of the raw uranium critical for Iran's nuclear program.^{\29\} The Chavez regime has also repeatedly offered ^{\30\} to supply Iran with as much as 20,000 barrels of gasoline daily as a way of diluting the impact of U.S. sanctions aimed at exploiting Iran's dependency on foreign refined petroleum.

^{\29\} See, for example, Bret Stephens, "The Tehran-Caracas Nuclear Axis," Wall Street Journal, December 15, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704869-304574595652815802722.html>.

^{\30\} "Venezuela Ready to Export Gasoline to Iran," Fars (Tehran), August 16, 2010, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8905251472>.

Finally, Iran has worked diligently to dilute U.S. power and influence in the Americas. Since taking office in 2005, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made major efforts to forge partnerships with anti-American elements in Central and South America, playing on common themes of U.S. domination and oppression. Indeed, a 2009 dossier prepared by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that "since Ahmadinejad's rise to power, Tehran has been promoting an aggressive policy aimed at bolstering its ties with Latin American countries with the declared goal of 'bringing America to its knees.'"^{\31\} The U.S. Department of Defense has concluded much the same thing; "Iran seeks to increase its stature by countering U.S. influence and expanding ties with regional actors," the Pentagon's 2010 report on Iranian military power outlined. "It also seeks to demonstrate to the world its 'resistance' to the West."^{\32\}

^{\31\} "Israel: Ties to South America Aiding Iran's Nuclear Program," Yediot Ahronot (Tel Aviv), May 25, 2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3721335,00.html>.

^{\32\} U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of

Defense, Unclassified Report on Military Power of Iran, April 2010, <http://www.iranwatch.org/government/us-dod-reportmiliarypoweriran-0410.pdf>.

In furtherance of these goals, Iran has erected a sizeable covert presence in the region. The Pentagon has noted that the Qods Force, the elite paramilitary unit of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, is now deeply involved in the region, stationing ``operatives in foreign embassies, charities and religious/cultural institutions to foster relationships with people, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well-establish Shia Diaspora," and even carrying out ``paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes." \33\ And Hezbollah, with its extensive regional network, is known to serve as an important force multiplier for these efforts. \34\

\33\ Ibid.

\34\ Hudson, Terror and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America.

hezbollah and u.s. security

How real and immediate is the threat posed by Hezbollah to the United States? Opinions among experts and U.S. Government officials tend to differ. In the main, Hezbollah's presence in the Western Hemisphere is manifested in ``support" activities: Those that provide financial, operational, or political benefit to the organization at large, and to its principal sponsor, the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a result, absent a significant precipitating development in the Middle East, the likelihood of a terrorist attack on the United States by Hezbollah in the near future remains low. \35\

\35\ Justin Walker and Leila Golestani, ``Threat Analysis: Hamas and Hezbollah Sleeper Cells in the United States," Urban Warfare Analysis Center, March 18, 2009, <http://understandterror.com/articles/Threat%20Analysis%20-%20Hamas%20and%20Hezbollah%20-Sleeper%20Cells%20in%20the%20United%20States.pdf>.

Nevertheless, the organization represents a significant potential

threat to the United States. Over the past decade, Hezbollah's regional activities have shown a clear pattern of targeting U.S. interests and assets throughout Latin America. Among other indicators, Hezbollah operatives are known to have cased the U.S. embassy in Paraguay's capital of Asuncion, and local organizational cells have colluded with al-Qaeda to plot attacks on U.S. and Jewish targets in the region.³⁶ Given this pattern of behavior, a recent Library of Congress analysis concluded, there is a significant chance Hezbollah operatives could seek to carry out attacks on U.S. embassies or consulates in Latin America, or to target particular points of interest--such as ``hotels, tourism centers, airports, or multinational companies, especially those of Israeli, German, French, or U.S. origin"--that are located there.³⁷

³⁶ Cyrus Miryekta, ``Hezbollah in the Tri-Border Area of South America," Small Wars Journal, September 10, 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/533-miryekta.pdf>.

³⁷ Hudson, Terror and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America.

Hezbollah also has the ability to strike at the U.S. homeland itself. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Hezbollah members located in North America can carry out terrorist attacks against targets within the territorial United States, if the organization makes a strategic decision to do so.³⁸ Given the lucrative nature of the organization's illicit activities throughout the Hemisphere, the likelihood of such a development remains low. Still, Hezbollah's strategic calculus could conceivably change if it or its chief sponsor, Iran, were imperiled in a substantial way (for example, through military action that targets Iran's nuclear facilities). In this sense, Hezbollah can be described as a potential insurance policy of sorts for the Iranian regime.³⁹

³⁸ As cited in Matthew Levitt, Testimony before the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia and Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, February 16, 2005, <http://www.iranwatch.org/government/US/Congress/Hearings/hirc-sub-021605/us->

hirc-middleeast- sub-levitt-prepared-021605.pdf.

\39\ Myers and Poole, `` Hezbollah, Illegal Immigration, and the Next 9/11."

Nearly a decade after 9/11, this reality remains poorly understood. While U.S. officials now routinely recognize that Hezbollah's regional activities make it a potential threat to the United States, our counterterrorism policy has failed to focus on the organization at large in a comprehensive, sustained, and meaningful way. Such attention is long overdue, and the most immediate way the United States can begin to address the danger posed by Hezbollah is by acknowledging that the organization uses our Hemisphere as a significant staging ground, fundraising hub, and operational base--and by beginning to craft a strategy to make it more difficult for it to do so.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Berman.

Our final witness today is Dr. Melani Cammett. Dr. Cammett is the director of the Middle East Studies Program at Brown University, where she is also an associate professor for political science. Before her current post, she was an assistant professor for political economy, also at Brown, and as an Academy Scholar at the Weatherhead Center's Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies.

In 2002, Dr. Cammett received her Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkley, following two master's degrees, the first from Fletcher School at Tufts, and the second from UC Berkley.

In 2007, Dr. Cammett authored her first book, Globalization and Business Politics in Arab North Africa: A Comparative Perspective. She has written a great deal on a number of issues involving the Middle East, with her words appearing in a number of journals and other works.

Dr. Cammett, you are now recognized for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MELANI CAMMETT, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE AND DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST STUDIES PROGRAM, BROWN
UNIVERSITY

Ms. Cammett. Thank you for asking me to testify. The United States has rightfully been concerned about Hezbollah since the 1980s. Its activities in Latin America are now a particular focus, especially in the Tri-Border areas, as the other witnesses have attested.

To assess the likelihood that Hezbollah will target the United States from its Latin America footholds, it is critical to understand the evolution of the organization and the way it operates, in Lebanon in particular. Hezbollah arose in the early 1980s out of specific domestic and regional factors. First, it is a by-product of a variety of Lebanese Shia political movements that began in the 1960s and 1970s. I won't go into detail about these organizations. But by 1981, a militant faction broke off from one of these groups to establish what was then called the Islamic Amal, and that was folded into Hezbollah, which was officially announced in 1985.

Many other Shia political and religious organizations emerged at this time and developed big followings in the Lebanese Shia community, both in Lebanon and abroad. Some of these groups are explicitly opposed to Hezbollah and condemn it for its close ties with Iran, and especially for its, Hezbollah's, adherence to the concept of the Velayat-e-faqih. So it is important to recognize that not all Shia in Lebanon and abroad actually support Hezbollah.

The Iranian Revolution was a second impetus for the rise of Hezbollah. Of course, Iran helped to set up a militia in the early 1980s in Lebanon, and also charitable activities.

Finally, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 motivated the formation of Hezbollah. This is not a controversial statement. This is a point that both Israeli and Hezbollah officials agree on. So from the beginning, Hezbollah has presented itself as the leader of the ``resistance" against Israel, and continues to do so to this day.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hezbollah began to transition from a predominantly militant organization to include greater participation in the formal institutions of the state, and this entailed three different components of the organization, which were established or consolidated at this

time: Its military, political, and social welfare wings. Of course, in the West, Hezbollah is best known for its militant operations, which are largely focused on Israel.

Hezbollah, it is important to note, emphatically differentiates itself from al-Qaeda and from other Sunni extremist groups. There are major doctrinal and strategic differences between Hezbollah and these types of organizations such as al-Qaeda. For one thing, Sunni extremist groups view Hezbollah as traitors to Islam, as a traitor to Islam as a Shia organization. Also, Hezbollah, unlike these groups, engages in mainstream politics.

In the early 1990s, in 1992 in particular, Hezbollah made the strategic decision to field candidates in elections in Lebanon. It has done so every year since then, every election since then, and, in fact, in 2005, finally accepted cabinet-level positions in the Lebanese government. This participation in the formal institutions of the state, as well as the particular rules of the Lebanese electoral system, provide incentive for Hezbollah to woo supporters from beyond its own religious community and from beyond its hard-core support base.

It has had a very strong showing in all elections, and there are a number of reasons why this might be the case. It manages its social welfare programs quite well. Its role as the head of the so-called resistance against Israel has garnered a lot of domestic support for it. It also has a reputation as a clean and uncorrupt organization.

So all of these militant and non-militant operations are quite expensive, of course, but it is really difficult, if not impossible, to attain accurate information on its budget and funding sources. I have tried to do this in field research in Lebanon, but when you speak with Hezbollah officials, they point to, of course, charitable donations, various Islamic religious taxes that go to them, donations from wealthy business people, and investments in their own private businesses.

Of course, Iran is an important contributor to these activities as well. It is hard to know how much money Iran contributes or how much is generated from its activities in

Latin America because of the sort of obscure nature of the sources that we have on these issues.

Hezbollah's acts of violence are almost exclusively directed at Israel at the present time, and there is no firm evidence that Hezbollah aims to target the United States militarily. Although Hezbollah condemns the United States for its alliance with Israel, it has not targeted U.S. interests with violence since the 1980s and has not called for targeting the United States.

So there are a number of reasons why Hezbollah is not terribly interested in targeting the United States at the moment. Part of it has to do with its political evolution, engagement in mainstream politics. Part of it has to do with tactical calculations. Again, Latin America is home to many Shia migrants, some of which are sympathetic to Hezbollah and may give their taxes to clerics affiliated with Hezbollah. But it doesn't necessarily mean that they are supportive of Hezbollah's violent activities, and those same members of the diaspora may be supportive of other Shia organizations in Lebanon.

So to conclude, the proposition that Hezbollah intends to launch terrorist acts against the United States from Latin America at this time, in my view, is not based on firm evidence.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Cammett follows:]

Prepared Statement of Melani Cammett

July 7, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the subcommittee, I want to thank you for asking me to testify today.

Since the early 1980s and with renewed vigor since 9/11, the United States has been concerned about the goals and actions of Hezbollah, the Shia Muslim party in Lebanon. In the context of the Global War on Terror, the organization's activities in Latin America have received increased scrutiny.

In particular, the Tri-Border Area (TBA), or the relatively ungoverned region where Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay meet, is alleged to be a key node in Hezbollah's global fundraising network and

may even provide a launching pad for terrorist operations. Hezbollah reportedly engages in money-laundering, counterfeiting, piracy, and narcotics trafficking in this region, and uses the area as a base for recruitment.\1\

\1\ See, inter alia: Lt. Col. Philip K. Abbott. ``Terrorist Threat in the Tri-Border Area: Myth or Reality?" In *Military Review* (Sept.-Oct. 2004): 51; John L. Lombardi and David J. Sanchez, ``Terrorist Financing and the Tri-Border Area of South America." In Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds. *Terrorist Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 231-246; Gregory F. Treverton, et al. *Film Piracy, Organized Crime, and Terrorism*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2009), pp. 75-81.

To contextualize Hezbollah's purported activities in Latin America and to assess the likelihood that the organization will use the region as a base for targeting U.S. interests, it is critical to understand the origins and evolution of the party. My testimony therefore provides background on the origins of Hezbollah during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) and its evolution in postwar Lebanon.

the wartime origins of hezbollah

Hezbollah arose out of specific domestic and regional factors, including the historical disenfranchisement of the Shia population in Lebanon, the Iranian Revolution, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Shia Mobilization and the Historical Roots of Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a by-product of Lebanese Shia political movements that originated in the 1960s in response to the longstanding marginalization of the Shia community in domestic politics and society. Historically, the Shia had the highest poverty rates and lived in the most underdeveloped rural regions in Lebanon, notably in South Lebanon and the Bekaa. Shia marginalization was also institutionalized in Lebanon's confessional political system, which favored Maronite Christian as well as Sunni Muslim elites. Based on an unwritten agreement of 1943 and modified at the end of the civil war in 1990, the system distributes political posts by sect. The arrangement reserves the more powerful positions of President and Prime Minister for a Maronite and Sunni,

respectively, while allocating the relatively weak post of Speaker of the Parliament to a Shia. Since 1990, all government posts are split evenly between Christians and Muslims, despite the fact that Christians constitute at most about 40 percent of the population and have lower birth rates and higher emigration rates than Sunnis and, especially, the Shia. Although a census has not been held since 1932, it is well known that the Shia became the single largest confessional group in Lebanon in the 1980s and remain so today. As a result of these political and economic realities, the Shia have not had influence in domestic politics commensurate to their size.

Until the 1970s, a wealthy elite dominated political representation of the Shia and generally neglected the interests of the majority of the community. The Imam Musa Al-Sadr, a charismatic Shia leader dedicated to the advancement of the community, established numerous institutions to promote the socioeconomic development of the Shia as part of his "Movement of the Deprived," which was initiated in 1974. The following year, al-Sadr's organization established a military wing, Amal, headed by Nabih Berri.² By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Amal Movement began to factionalize. The more militant members broke off in 1981 under the leadership of the Sayyid Husayn Al-Musawi, who founded the Islamic Amal, which was later folded into Hezbollah.

² Berri remains the head of the Shia Amal Movement, which became a political party in post-war Lebanon, and has held the post of Speaker of the Parliament continuously since 1992.

The Iranian Revolution and the Creation of Hezbollah

The Iranian Revolution was a second impetus for the rise of Hezbollah. Many future leaders of Hezbollah and other Shia movements in Lebanon carried out their religious training in the same Circles of Learning (Hawzat al-`Ilmiyyah) in Najaf, Iraq and later in Qom, Iran. Shia clerics from Lebanon, Iran and Iraq studied, met and formed networks there. Their experiences in Iran likely influenced them to mobilize the Lebanese Shia community and to pursue an Islamic state. In the early 1980s, during the civil war, various Shia clerics were jockeying for power in Lebanon and Khomeini encouraged them to start a movement. Iran therefore sent members of its Revolutionary Guards to help with military training and began to send aid to the Lebanese Shia

community, assisting in the formation of Hezbollah.

The Israeli Invasion as a Catalyst for the Emergence of Hezbollah

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, first in 1978 and extended in 1982, was another key factor in motivating the formation of Hezbollah-- and this is a point on which both Israeli and Hezbollah officials agree. From the beginning, Hezbollah presented itself as the leader of the Resistance against Israel. The Lebanese civil war, which disproportionately affected the population of South Lebanon, exacerbated the poor living conditions of the Shia. The Israeli invasion, which was concentrated in the South, provided an environment that increased the appeal of Hezbollah and especially its military operations. Hezbollah claimed credit for the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, deriving popular support from its role as the vanguard of the Resistance.

The precise origins of Hezbollah are difficult to pinpoint. Various individuals and groups, including those linked to the bombings of the U.S. Embassy and marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 and the kidnappings of Westerners during the 1980s, are said to be precursors to Hezbollah, which did not formally exist at the time. In 1985, Hezbollah officially announced its establishment with the publication of its Open Letter. The document outlined its philosophy of "oppression," called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon modeled after Iran's Islamic Republic, declared its opposition to the state of Israel, and detailed other aspects of its ideological orientation.

Throughout the civil war, Hezbollah focused its activities outside of formal state structures. Its main priority was the military struggle against Israel. In the domestic arena, Hezbollah largely stayed out of sectarian battles, engaging only in armed clashes with competitors in the South and southern suburbs of Beirut, notably the Shia Amal Movement and various Leftist groups. During the war, Hezbollah also ran some social programs, especially health programs, which catered largely although not exclusively to the families of fighters "martyred" or wounded in fighting against Israel.

the evolution of hezbollah in the post-war period (1990-present)

From 1989 to 1992, Hezbollah initiated its transition from a predominantly militant movement to greater participation in the formal institutions of the state. Three different wings of the organization were established or further consolidated in the post-war period,

including the institutions of its military wing as well as those of its political party and social welfare programs.

Hezbollah as a Militant Group

Hezbollah is best known in the West as a militant organization. In the post-war period, it has retained and honed its military capabilities at the same time that it increased its participation in mainstream, non-violent politics in Lebanon.

In its capacity as an armed movement, Hezbollah concentrates its violent acts and rhetoric on Israel. It continues to present itself as the vanguard of the Resistance in Lebanon as well as a defender of the Palestinians against Israeli occupation. Hezbollah maintains a perpetual state of war against Israel and engages in periodic cross-border skirmishes with Israeli forces, most famously in recent years with the capture of two Israeli soldiers and killing of several others on July 12, 2006, which sparked the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese conflict.

Hezbollah has largely avoided the use of violence within Lebanon. An important exception occurred in May 2008, when street clashes erupted between Hezbollah and its allies, on the one hand, and groups associated with the predominantly Sunni and pro-West Future Movement and its allies, on the other hand. The decision of Hezbollah to turn its weapons ``inward" hurt the credibility of the organization among many Lebanese.

Hezbollah is especially keen to differentiate itself from Sunni terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. Major differences, both doctrinal and strategic, separate the two groups. Al-Qaeda and other Sunni extremist organizations view Shia Muslims as traitors to Islam. Furthermore, while Hezbollah has become a mainstream political party in the domestic arena, al-Qaeda is a global organization primarily aimed at perpetrating terrorist acts rather than developing ties with local populations. Notwithstanding Hezbollah's militant wing, it would therefore be a mistake to put it in the same category as al-Qaeda and related groups.

Hezbollah as a Political Party

With the end of the civil war, the Hezbollah leadership made the strategic decision to participate in the formal political system. In the early 1990s, the organization denounced its stated goal of pursuing the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon and opted to field candidates in all post-war elections, including the parliamentary

elections of 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2009 as well as municipal elections held in 1998, 2004, and 2010. Since 1992, Hezbollah has held seats in parliament and in 2000 its national representation exceeded that of the Amal Movement for the first time. In 2005, Hezbollah finally agreed to accept cabinet-level positions, despite the fact that its prior electoral successes had qualified it to hold ministerial posts in the past. By participating in the executive branch of government, the party could no longer depict itself as an opposition faction within the parliament.

Participation in formal political institutions provides incentives for parties to woo supporters from beyond their own religious communities and hard-core supporters. The Lebanese electoral system reserves seats for representatives from different sectarian communities at the district level, but voters from all religious backgrounds vote for all candidates, irrespective of religious affiliation. This arrangement also encourages parties to forge cross-sectarian alliances in order to sweep the ballot. Thus, Hezbollah--and other parties--have formed alliances, often but not always of convenience. A 2006 accord with Michel Aoun, head of the Christian Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), established an alliance between Hezbollah and the FPM that endures to this day. Since 2000, Hezbollah has also run joint lists with the Amal Movement, thereby undercutting real competition between the two parties in national elections.

Hezbollah has had a strong showing in elections both at the local and national levels, although its coalition--the March 8th Alliance--did not win the majority of seats in the 2009 parliamentary elections. A variety of factors likely contribute to its success. First, Hezbollah derived substantial credibility from its role in compelling the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, although as time passes this source of support is declining. Second, the party has proved exceptionally adept at grassroots outreach, enabling it to forge strong linkages between its cadres and citizens. Its extensive and well-managed networks of social programs partially explain its popular appeal. Hezbollah's social welfare activities both enable the party to establish direct ties with the population in the areas where they operate and to bolster its reputation for good governance and relative lack of corruption. Even Hezbollah's harshest critics concede that the organization runs well-managed and high-quality programs in the spheres of health, education,

and other social sectors.

In the post-war period, and especially since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, Hezbollah has expanded its repertoire of political mobilization strategies to include classic non-violent forms of participation such as demonstrations and sit-ins. In December 2006, Hezbollah and its allies in the March 8th coalition withdrew their representatives from the national government and initiated a sit-in by their supporters, who camped out for 17 months in downtown Beirut. Officially, the March 8th leadership launched these protests to call for more posts in the government--specifically, one-third of cabinet positions, which would give the coalition veto power. Hezbollah's opposition to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), which was established to investigate the assassination of Hariri, was a key factor behind the opposition's withdrawal from the government. The Doha Agreement, brokered by the Qatari government, ended the standoff after violent clashes erupted in May 2008 between the March 14th and March 8th coalitions.

The STL continues to destabilize Lebanese politics, with Hezbollah declaring its firm opposition to the proceedings and attempting to undermine the investigation's credibility, particularly after prosecutors announced the indictments of four Hezbollah members. The issue of the STL was an important motivation for the decision by Hezbollah and its allies to force the breakdown of the government of Saad al-Hariri, the son of Rafic Hariri, in January 2011. The decision of the Druze political leader, Walid Jumblatt, to defect from the March 14th coalition enabled Hezbollah and its allies to orchestrate the breakdown of the Hariri government, thereby enabling the March 8th coalition to become the majority in parliament. In January 2011, Najib al-Miqati was nominated as the new Prime Minister and, after a delay of almost 6 months, he constituted a government.

Political developments since 2005 demonstrate that Hezbollah remains heavily invested in formal state institutions and resorts to a wide range of political to pursue its interests in domestic politics. The adoption of extra-electoral forms of political participation such as mass demonstrations and sit-ins is by no means unique to Hezbollah. Observers of Lebanese politics, however, are increasingly concerned about Hezbollah's stance on the STL and its implications for stability in the country. To block cooperation with the STL, Hezbollah has tried

to question its legality, overturned sitting governments, and issued veiled threats to block the proceedings of the court at all costs.

Hezbollah as Social Welfare Provider

The Social Unit of Hezbollah is charged with providing social services and technical help to members, supporters, families of ``martyrs" and others. The social wing of the organization incorporates multiple welfare programs. These include its construction wing (Jihad al-Bina') which helps people construct and rehabilitate homes, supplies water and electricity to parts of Lebanon, and runs schools, shops, hospitals, clinics, mosques, cultural and social centers, and agricultural cooperatives. The Islamic Health Organizations runs a network of hospitals, clinics, and dispensaries throughout the South, Bekaa and southern suburbs of Beirut. Hezbollah also runs several networks of schools, a microcredit agency, and a program to assist the poor and orphans, the Imam Khomeini Support Committee (Lajnat Imdad al-Khomeini), which is modeled after an institution in Iran.

Hezbollah's social programs largely benefit Shia Muslims, mainly because it locates its social welfare activities in predominantly Shia neighborhoods and villages. Furthermore, its most generous programs are reserved for its core members and particularly the families of militia fighters and those who have been wounded in clashes with Israel. Nonetheless, basic Hezbollah services are accessible to all who seek them, Shia and non-Shia alike.

The provision of social welfare is not unique to Hezbollah. All major sectarian political parties in Lebanon provide welfare, either directly through their own facilities or by brokering access to services supplied by the government or private providers. What appears to distinguish Hezbollah from many other parties who offer social services is the professionalism and quality of its welfare programs.

Hezbollah's Funding Sources

Hezbollah's militant and non-militant operations undoubtedly require a large budget. Obtaining reliable information on the organization's finances and funding sources is notoriously difficult, if not impossible.

Hezbollah officials emphasize the importance of charitable donations and taxes, including the obligatory Shia religious taxes of zakat and khums, which allegedly account for one-half of the operating

budget of the organization's welfare programs.\3\ They also point to donations from wealthy businesspeople and investments in private ventures. Hezbollah representatives are more reticent about the role of Iranian funds. Estimates of Iran's contributions range from \$25-50 million \4\ to \$100-200 million,\5\ although some claim that Iranian financial support has steadily declined.\6\ Reduced support from Iran suggests a possible motive for seeking alternative, sometimes illicit sources of financing such as the activities that Hezbollah allegedly carries out in the TBA. A 2004 estimate alleged that Hezbollah's operations in the TBA generate about \$10 million annually for the organization.\7\ The Anti-Defamation League claims that Hezbollah's total operating budget ranges from \$200-500 million.\8\ Given the speculative nature of these estimates and their obscure sources, these figures are impossible to verify.

\3\ Mona Harb. *Le Hezbollah a Beirut (1985-2005): De la Banlieue a la Ville* (Paris: IFPO-Karthala, 2010), p. 94.

\4\ Anthony Cordesman, "Iran's Support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon." (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 15, 2006), p. 3.

\5\ Matthew Levitt. "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God." In Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds. *Terrorist Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 131-151.

\6\ See Abbott, op. cit. and Ahmed Nizar Hamzeh. *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 63.

\7\ Julio A. Cirnio, Silvana L. Elizondo, & Geoffrey Wawro. "Latin American Security Challenges: A Collaborative Inquiry from North and South." In Paul D. Taylor, ed., *Latin America's Lawless Areas and Failed States: An Analysis of the New Threats* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2004), p. 24.

\8\ Anti-Defamation League. "Hezbollah's International Reach" (December 7, 2004). Available at http://www.adl.org/terror/hezbollah_print.asp.

Is Hezbollah Likely to Target the United States?

Hezbollah is a militant organization because it employs violence, but its acts of violence are almost exclusively directed at Israel in

what the organization and many Lebanese view as a protracted war. At present, however, there is no indication that Hezbollah aims to target the U.S. militarily. Although Hezbollah condemns the United States for its alliance with Israel and Middle East policy, it has not targeted the United States or U.S. interests with violence since the 1980s.

The reaction of Hezbollah to strong U.S. support for Israel during the 2006 Israeli-Lebanese conflict provides insight into Hezbollah's stance vis-a-vis the United States in the current period. During the war, the United States unequivocally backed Israel's right to defend itself from Hezbollah attacks and even provided military support to Israel while the conflict played out. The United States also rejected calls for a ceasefire in the first part of the war, claiming that a ceasefire agreement should not be brokered until certain conditions were met. In addition, the United States unilaterally opposed a U.N. Security Council proposal for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon while the U.S. Congress passed resolutions that condemned Hezbollah and its state sponsors for provoking the war and underscored Israel's right to self-defense.\9\

\9\ U.S. Senate Resolution 534 (July 18, 2006) and U.S. House of Representatives Resolution 921 (July 20, 2006).

During the 2006 war, many Lebanese citizens--including those who do not support Hezbollah--interpreted these official U.S. statements as favoritism of Israel at the expense of Lebanese lives and infrastructure. Hezbollah condemned the U.S. position during the war and Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, stepped up the anti-American rhetoric in his speeches. In addition, during and after the war, Hezbollah and its supporters spray painted ``Made in the U.S.A." on the debris of Israeli bombs as a symbolic means of highlighting what they viewed as U.S. complicity in Israeli attacks on Lebanon. Despite this strong anti-American stance and propaganda, however, Hezbollah did not promote the targeting of U.S. interests whether within the region or elsewhere. Since 2006, the organization has remained strongly critical of American policy towards the Middle East but has not indicated its desire to target U.S. interests with military operations.

Hezbollah's disinterest in targeting the U.S. militarily stems from its political evolution in the post-war period as well as tactical

calculations. As detailed above, Hezbollah is increasingly vested in Lebanese politics and has become a major party in the domestic political scene. This strategic orientation requires compromise and pragmatism, limiting the organization's propensity to deploy violence to pursue its goals. Furthermore, Hezbollah is now a far more complex organization than it was in the 1980s. It encompasses multiple interests, both within its separate organizational bodies and within its domestic constituencies. It would be a mistake to view its military, political, and social wings as one seamless operation geared exclusively towards violent struggle. Indeed, credible sources claim that Hezbollah has experienced internal debates about the relative weights of its political and social programs versus its militant activities, particularly since the 2006 war with Israel. Hezbollah is a highly disciplined organization that does not expose internal dissension, but such factional differences are entirely plausible and, indeed, are common in any political organization, whether violent or non-violent.

Tactically, a full-scale military conflict with the United States would inevitably lead to big losses and would shift Hezbollah's priorities beyond its main military focus, notably its struggle against Israel. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Hezbollah aims to launch global terrorist operations, as carried out by Sunni extremist groups such as al-Qaeda. To the contrary, the organization has explicitly and repeatedly condemned the indiscriminate, large-scale acts of violence perpetrated by Sunni extremists.

With respect the TBA, the proposition that Hezbollah intends to launch terrorist acts against the United States from the region are not based on conclusive evidence. Latin America is home to many Lebanese Shia migrants, but they have diverse religious and political orientations. Sympathy for Hezbollah as the leader of Resistance as well as the paying of religious taxes to Shia clerics, even those linked to Hezbollah, are not commensurate to support for or participation in terrorist acts. As detailed above, Hezbollah is a multi-faceted organization that garners popular support for diverse reasons. Many Lebanese--including opponents of Hezbollah and non-Shia Lebanese--view the organization's on-going conflict with Israel as justified in the context of a protracted war.

conclusion

Analysts have made two main overarching claims about the security implications of Hezbollah's activities in Latin America and, specifically, in the TBA: First, the region provides a space where Hezbollah (and other groups) conduct illicit activities that are central to their fundraising operations. Second, the region offers a geographic platform in the Americas from which Hezbollah and other groups can launch terrorist operations against the United States, among other Western targets.

Regarding the first claim, I do not have sufficient independent information to confirm or deny the nature or extent of Hezbollah's activities in the TBA. The information cited in published sources on Hezbollah's budget structure, including the funds it allegedly derives from illicit activities in the TBA, is largely speculative.

On the second claim, the notion that Hezbollah intends to launch terrorist operations against U.S. interests, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, seems implausible at this juncture. Since the 1980s, Hezbollah has evolved into a mainstream actor in Lebanese politics and has opted to participate in the formal institutions of the state. As a result, the party has become more pragmatic and far more willing to make compromises than in the past. Hezbollah remains committed to its struggle against Israel, but confrontation with the United States is a much riskier venture and is well beyond the scope of its domestic and regional priorities.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Dr. Cammett.

Thank you, each of the panelists, for your very, I would say, not only engaging, but eye-opening testimony.

I will recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

At the outset, I think what was important was that, almost across the board, each person identified this as not only an important issue for us to be looking at, but an issue that isn't appreciated enough, that we aren't doing enough observation on. So I am hopeful that this can be a platform for us, if appropriate, to continue to do that kind of analysis.

But I am also struck by this line in which we look at what is already, by each person's testimony, a very sophisticated criminal enterprise. In my experience as a prosecutor, the concern about the sort of narco trail that would be guns and

drugs and trafficking and other things that would reach right into American cities. But I am concerned about where and how you draw the line between what is a criminal enterprise and what becomes a terroristic threat, because I am struck by the testimony which is talking about training at our borders, the Mexican border, of individuals on explosives in some of your testimony; training on tunneling like we are seeing in Lebanon.

So where is the line? I think it was engaged in the ``tragedy of asymmetric warfare on our doorstep" was the words I think either Mr. Farah or Ambassador--Mr. Farah, you used. So are we dealing with a narco organization, or do we have a legitimate terroristic threat at our doorstep? I would like to ask each of you to just give me your observation on that.

Mr. Noriega. Mr. Chairman, let me just give you my thoughts on this. It is important to note that their cooperation with other criminal organizations, drug-trafficking organizations, and providing operational capacity training, explosives training, and that sort of thing does represent a threat not only to our neighbors in the region that are fighting the drug-trafficking organizations, but the American people who bear the brunt of this narcotrafficking.

Let me just add in response to something Dr. Cammett said, that a month ago the Iranian Defense Minister was in Bolivia and said that he was there to inaugurate an academy on asymmetrical warfare, basically militia training in Bolivia. He declared that their purposes was to be prepared to respond to any threat from the United States.

So what the evidence that we have is that this initiative to push into Latin America began in 2005. So it is a rather new initiative; and also that they have made common cause with Sunnis in the region and with drug-trafficking organizations in this region. So it is a new approach that Hezbollah is using, and it does pose a threat to us.

Mr. Meehan. Mr. Farah, you talked about that asymmetric, what seems to be an expansion. Can you articulate what you think that needs and how that moves beyond the very important narco issue? But it seems to be an expansion of a threat.

Mr. Farah. Well, there is a firm belief, if you read the

literature, including this book and what Carlos the Jackal has written, that the United States can be defeated, and that weapons of mass destruction are now valid tools for achieving that end, and that they can't confront the United States militarily. This--what I think is truly different about the situation now is that you have criminalizing states such as Venezuela where you have senior leadership deeply involved in drug trafficking, and Bolivia where you have senior leadership deeply involved in drug trafficking, and franchising out other elements to terrorist organizations like the FARC and Hezbollah as instruments of statecraft. I think that's what you see, and it is significantly different in the region now than it was 5 years ago.

They understand, I think, that they cannot attack the United States frontally militarily since they don't have the capacity to do that. But they are firm believers in leveraging the powers that they do have and what they do have access to.

Again, they explicitly discuss at great length WMD. It is not a passing reference. In fact, this book describes in great detail how to build WMD and how to go on the internet and get it if you want it, which is not unique. But it is interesting because it has been adopted as official Venezuelan military doctrine, and President Chavez had this book printed up in a pocket-sized edition and distributed to an officer corps to read and study as part of their curriculum. It takes it to a different level, the belief that this is not only necessary, not only possible, but necessary. I think that is what is different now.

Mr. Meehan. Mr. Berman and Dr. Cammett, do you have a quick observation on this point?

Mr. Berman. Well, a couple of seconds, if I may. I think--when you asked the question about whether or not Hezbollah is a criminal enterprise or a terrorist organization, I think if you look at the history, the answer is both. Hezbollah during the 1980s got its seed money from narcotrafficking activity in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. So the earliest appearance of Hezbollah in the Tri-Border region, for example, was marked by narcotrafficking activities. This is what the organization

knows. It is also where a lot of its revenue comes from.

So it is very hard to make that seamless transition to compartmentalize them as one or the other. The organization is pragmatic. It is pragmatic in its interaction and interoperability with Sunni groups such as al-Qaeda, as prosecutorial testimony has shown in the past. Similarly here, it is pragmatic in its interaction with criminal enterprises that further its----

Mr. Meehan. I accept and don't for a moment question Hezbollah as an actor of terrorism, but in their activities here on America's doorstep, at what point in time are they moving from a group who is benefiting from the ability to generate revenue from narcoterrorism, you know, narcotics trafficking and other things, and becoming a location for sort of a base of destabilization and potential terrorism against the United States?

Mr. Berman. Well, sir, I think that is an excellent question. The committee and the subcommittee are in a much better position to answer it than I. But I can tell you that from the organizations, the law enforcement agencies that have been looking at this issue, they tend to address Hezbollah in ancillary fashion, as part of the war on drugs, as part of the criminal activities, racketeering, smuggling, otherwise, rather than address it head-on the fact that these revenue-generating enterprises actually provide material gain to an international terrorist organization as designated by the State Department.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you. My time has expired.

I recognize Ranking Minority Member Speier for questions. Thank you.

Ms. Speier. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for your testimony.

Let me just ask at the outset, how many of you, in your scholarship, have interviewed officials of Hezbollah? Can we just go down the line starting with you, Ambassador?

Mr. Noriega. As far as I know, I haven't interviewed anybody directly involved, although I have--some of the people that I worked with directly have had contact with people who are aware of Hezbollah's operations. For example, one operative

in Argentina told us as recently as yesterday that he and other terrorist leaders met in Caracas with that triumvirate of terrorist leaders in August of 2010. So he had operational real-time information about their operations.

So although I don't meet with their scholars or anything, we have met with people that have dealt directly with Hezbollah.

Ms. Speier. Thank you.

Mr. Farah.

Mr. Farah. As a journalist I don't know how senior they were. I have dealt with Hezbollah on the ground in West Africa and also in Latin America. I don't know with any sense of reality where they fit in the hierarchy.

Ms. Speier. Thank you.

Mr. Berman.

Mr. Berman. Ms. Speier, I have not. However, in my written remarks you will see there it references extensively FBI and DEA testimony from agents that have. So I will use those as secondary sources.

Ms. Speier. All right.

Dr. Cammett.

Ms. Cammett. Yes, I have, in the course of researching a book that I am currently completing on Hezbollah's social welfare activities. I have interviewed a number of people from some of their social programs, and I have interacted with the media and public relations office where you have to go to obtain clearance in order to meet with officials from the organization.

Ms. Speier. So Dr. Cammett has made a fairly bold statement that suggests that Hezbollah is not a threat to the United States at this time. Is that a fair----

Ms. Cammett. From the evidence that I have seen, I do not conclude that, at this particular moment, Hezbollah is interested in targeting the U.S. militarily.

Ms. Speier. All right. Can I have comments from each of you as to whether or not you agree with that?

Mr. Noriega. Well, I think this is something that is very, very important, because you have had within recent weeks State

Department officials telling this Congress that the only activities that Hezbollah has in this hemisphere is fund-raising, as if that were to come as some sort of comfort to us that all they are doing is raising money to attack our interests.

But I believe that, based on the information that we have, that these operatives are training, that they are training others who represent a physical threat to the United States and our interests. So, frankly, I believe that the fund-raising is only part of it; but that they are seeking an operational capacity to be prepared to attack our interests when it becomes--when they make the calculation that it is in their interest to do so.

Ms. Speier. Thank you. I am going to have to ask you to complete your comments because I have got one more question I am going to try to sneak in.

Mr. Farah and Mr. Berman, if you could.

Mr. Farah. I would agree that what I think they are doing is positioning themselves across the region to be able to inflict great harm if Iran is attacked or if Israel attacks Iran or we attack Iran on their nuclear program, or, as Ambassador Noriega said to you, be positioned for when they feel the time is right, if they feel the time is right. I don't believe they are in an offensive mode right now to attack us just because we are here, but I think they are positioning themselves to be able to do that if they view it as necessary.

Ms. Speier. Thank you.

Mr. Berman.

Mr. Berman. I will try to be quick. I agree with Mr. Farah. I think what you see now is a rather elaborate fund-raising logistical web. But the web right now is being harnessed to generate revenue for the organization. But the web could easily be used to project an operational capability, as Ambassador Noriega talked about.

Ms. Speier. All right. One last question, if I can get this in in a minute. We have spent a fair amount of time looking at the terrorist organizations in Pakistan, LET, Pakistani Taliban and the like, which, to my point of view, is where the greatest

risk to the United States potentially is right now. If you were to evaluate Hezbollah and the Pakistani terrorist organizations, how would you rank them?

Mr. Berman. I will address it very quickly. I think any such calculus has to be measured against the ability of the organization to actually sustainably project power into the U.S. homeland. I think because of the network that Hezbollah has built in the Western Hemisphere, Hezbollah has the potential to do so. Whether they have the political decisionmaking and have made the decision to do so is another story entirely, but I think it is better positioned logistically to be able to do so if the decision is made.

Ms. Cammett. I would agree to some degree with that statement, because Hezbollah certainly seems to be more spread globally. But that is a very different thing from saying it has the desire, motivation, tactical decision to actually launch an attack. I mean, there is no question that Hezbollah has supporters and probably operatives in the United States already. I mean, I know in my interviews with the pedagogical training center, Hezbollah, they got a lot of their textbooks from California, textbooks on physics and mathematics, textbooks used in California schools. They said to me quite clearly, we have lots of supporters in the United States that send us their pedagogical material. So they are clearly well-implanted here. They probably are much better organized than some of these Pakistani organizations in terms of targeting the United States, but they are quite a different organization in terms of their interests and goals than those Pakistani types of organizations.

Ms. Speier. Thank you. My time has expired.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Ms. Speier.

I now recognize the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Cravaack.

Mr. Cravaack. Thank you for being here today on this important subject, and I would like to dovetail just what you said, Doctor, on just--question I had is, do any of you see a link between Iran and Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood organizations here in the United States, such as CAIR or ISNA?

Ms. Cammett. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Cravaack. I will take it from the left to the right.
Ambassador?

Mr. Noriega. It is out of my area to comment specifically on that, sir.

Mr. Cravaack. Mr. Farah.

Mr. Farah. I spent considerable time looking at Islam and the other Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups here, and I did not come across an Iranian tie-in to those organizations.

Mr. Berman. Similar, my expertise does not extend to the synergy between those two.

Ms. Cammett. I have never heard of a linkage, but I can't speak authoritatively.

Mr. Cravaack. Can you possibly expand upon it then both with the Muslim Brotherhood, Iran being a Shia and the Muslim Brotherhood being Sunni, and each of them independently seeing that--wanted to see the destruction of the United States; can you see them kind of an independently going on at this point, or do you see them joining up forces later on? Mr. Farah.

Mr. Farah. I think one of the unique things about the Brotherhood is its ability to bridge this Sunni/Shia divide. It is the only transnational organization that does that, and if you listen to the testimony of Youssef Nada, the self-described foreign minister of the Muslim Brotherhood, immediately after 9/11 he went on Al Jazeera 2 hours a night for 5 nights in a row, and he described how the Brotherhood accompanied Ayatollah Khomeini back. There were three planes that went back. One was the ayatollah, one was the security, and one was the Muslim Brotherhood.

So they have been very involved in bridging that, the Sunni/Shia divide. So I think that--I don't think they are adverse to that. I think one of the--it has been commented on the ability to reach out across the Sunnis in Latin America is not unusual for the Brotherhood. It is unusual for almost any other group of the Pan-Muslim world to be able to do that.

So if you look at the underlying ideology in the Muslim Brotherhood testimony presented in the Holy Land case, the desire to hoist the United States on its own petard, et cetera, et cetera, it is consistent with different strains of radical

Islamic thought about the United States, whether they would be operationalizing in the United States.

I would add one small thing, and that is that if you look at where the Muslim Brotherhood established its financial capacity and housed its money, it was in this hemisphere. It wasn't elsewhere. We had the Bahamas. We had the different banks in the Bahamas, Bank Al Taqwa particularly, and you have multiple offshore companies I investigated 2004-2005 where all of the major Brotherhood leaders had significant offshore and shell companies established in Panama. So they clearly are familiar with this hemisphere and like to use it at least for financial reasons.

Mr. Cravaack. Okay. Thank you.

Ambassador Noriega, given Chavez's regime's involvement and support for the FARC and the FARC-Hezbollah connection, how do you recommend the United States move forward in our foreign policy towards Venezuela?

Mr. Noriega. I think we took some positive steps by sanctioning PDVSA, the state-run oil company of Venezuela, for its support for Iran for providing gasoline in violation of U.S. law to Iran. I know that there is a debate between designating Venezuela as a terrorist state. I prefer, since that is a decision that the Secretary of State or the President would have to make, I think it is better enable and encourage law enforcement to go after in a tactical way those institutions, individuals that support, to provide logistical financial support for terrorism.

For example, Conviasa, the Venezuela airline, has regular service from Caracas to Tehran and Damascus, and it is not the only persons that they carry, but they do ferry operatives, recruits, and cargo to and from.

Mr. Cravaack. Doesn't Venezuela shield that from Interpol; is that correct?

Mr. Noriega. Pardon me?

Mr. Cravaack. Doesn't Venezuela shield the passengers on that aircraft?

Mr. Noriega. It is my understanding the passenger manifests are generally reserved, and there are people that do not pass

normal immigration when they come and go, and cargo doesn't go through Customs.

Again, this is one final point. Just 2 weeks ago, a State Department official said that that flight wasn't going anymore. Well, that is because Venezuelans did a press release and said it isn't going anymore. We have to do better than reading press releases from Caracas. In point of fact, my sources say that that flight goes every Saturday from Caracas to Tehran.

Mr. Cravaack. Just one more question real quick. Mr. Farah. You piqued my interest when you said--I just want to make sure I understood it correctly. Given means and opportunity to use weapons of mass destruction, do you believe Hezbollah would use them here in the United States?

Mr. Farah. I think if they viewed that in their interest, particularly in Iran's interest, that they are positioning themselves--I believe it is primarily a defensive positioning. I don't believe it is an offensive intention without what they would view as provocation, but I think that if you read their literature and listen to what they say--and they say it extensively, particularly in Venezuela with Iran--that they view that as their right and moral imperative to destroy the United States, and the weapons of mass destruction are a way for them to do that, yes.

Mr. Cravaack. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding. I yield back.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Cravaack.

The Chairman now recognizes Mr. Higgins from New York.

Mr. Higgins. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hezbollah in Arabic is the Party of God. It is a Shia group that is committed to violent jihad. It acts as a proxy for Syria, for Iran, for Venezuela. It is involved in radicalization efforts in Mexico and along the United States southern border. It has infiltrated the Western Hemisphere, but more directly it has infiltrated the United States with a presence in 15 cities, as has been said here, and also 4 major cities in Canada, including Toronto because of its close proximity to the United States.

If Hezbollah is not targeting the United States, what are

they doing here? Those efforts aren't moving away from our region. It is estimated, I think, Dr. Noriega, in your testimony that there are some 80 Hezbollah operatives in the 12-region area of Latin America.

My thought is we should also have a representative from the Department of Homeland Security here because my sense is that a presence that is pervasive and growing is a very serious threat that needs to be addressed. I would ask all of you to comment on that.

Then a final question. There is a book by Gretchen Peters called Seeds of Terror, and it is an analysis of violent jihad and the connection between narcotrafficking, and she estimates that in Afghanistan, which heroin is about 60 percent of the entire economy, the Taliban receives about a half a billion dollars a year in the heroin trade. It is not that they own the fields, but they preside over it. They charge protection, and I would be curious to know--most of the heroin that comes in the United States now comes from Latin America. So I would like to know the extent to which Hezbollah is funded by heroin trafficking and how extensive that threat is. So any of you that want to take that, I appreciate your comments.

Mr. Noriega. Very quickly, sir. When we talk about asymmetrical warfare, I would submit that supporting drug trafficking is a form of asymmetrical warfare against the United States. I am aware of Hezbollah being involved, according to drug kingpins themselves, in cocaine-smuggling operations in Venezuela with the support of the Venezuelan Government there, by the way.

One final note in terms of going after this threat. Again, I am aware of law enforcement inquiries into individuals and particular forms of financing that Hezbollah uses in Venezuela, and with the support and encouragement of this committee, I can see these law enforcement agencies going forward and knocking the blocks out from under Hezbollah's ability to generate that kind of revenue here in our hemisphere.

Mr. Farah. I think that if you look at the FARC and Hezbollah and the Taliban, you see the criminalization of terrorist groups, without a doubt. What are they doing here? I

think that that is what we need to spend a lot more time thinking about, because I think that if you look at Hezbollah and you look at Iran and you look at Venezuela, none of them have excessive cash right now. They are all being squeezed, and yet they are choosing to spend significant resources on placing themselves in this hemisphere. It seems to me to indicate it is very important to them.

What is it? As I said before, I think it is largely a defensive positioning at this point to be able to strike hard if they feel that they are either under attack or about to be attacked.

I think Gretchen's book is very good. I think it is sort of a very significant object lesson of how these groups evolved, and I think what you see in Latin America now with the Hezbollah and FARC becoming closer and closer is you see the ability to exchange information technologies, trafficking routes, and access to specific resources, Hezbollah with weapons and the FARC with drugs, that bodes very ill for the region.

Mr. Higgins. Let me just--to me, that is very disturbing. You say that they have a presence in the United States and North America generally so as to have leverage, to be positioned that if they are attacked, they can attack. You know, it is almost like we are waiting--to suggest that they don't--that Hezbollah does not pose a threat, a direct threat, to the United States, I think, is inconsistent in a very compelling way with the facts as they are presented here. You don't infiltrate an area, you know, unless you have an intent, and the intent, you know, clearly is it is not benevolent. We know that. We know that.

Ms. Cammett. I think there is a number of reasons why they might have a presence here. I mean, for one thing, I am sure there is similarly ordinary citizens of Lebanese descent who are sympathetic to the organization. I don't know if that amounts to a presence, but I mean, fund-raising is an important reason in and of itself, forget military operations. Now, fund-raising I am not trying to say is a good thing, you know, the kinds of activities are not, you know--not to be condoned

necessarily, but that is distinct in a number of ways from launching violent activities in part because fund-raising is going to multiple dimensions.

Mr. Higgins. I understand that, but it is an organization that is committed to violent activities. So is the fund-raising--the presence is intended in some way, directly or indirectly, to engage in violent activities.

Ms. Cammett. Against the United States or against other governments?

Mr. Higgins. They are here. They are here, in Canada in a major city in close proximity to the United States and western New York.

Ms. Cammett. Right, but it is not clear to me that there is evidence that they are targeting the United States with that. That doesn't mean----

Mr. Higgins. Pretty clear to me of what their intent is, whether it is immediate or longer-term, and that is a profound concern. It should be to everybody here, including, you know, the United States Government, Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Higgins.

The Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina Mr. Duncan.

Mr. Duncan. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this meeting.

On this committee we have talked about the issue of the Mexican border and southern border, the Tri-Border region in South America many times, and according to DHS, between 2007 and 2010, 180,000 people, 180,000 people, have been captured that are other than Mexicans at the southern border.

In July of last year, we had the first IED explode in this hemisphere just south of the Mexican border. In 2005, Mahmoud Youssef Kourani crossed the border from Mexico into California traveling to Dearborn, Michigan, where he was later sentenced to 4½ years in prison for conspiring to raise money for Hezbollah. So out of the 180,000 people that came into this country, how many were the Mahmoud Youssef Kourani-type folks? That is a question that I have.

We see more and more evidence of Hezbollah being involved,

I think, with the Mexican drug cartel with extensive tunneling. They have an expertise in that area, as you have heard from other questions.

So, Mr. Farah, in your written testimony you said that there is growing concern that Hezbollah is providing technology for the increasingly sophisticated narcotunnels now being found along the U.S.-Mexican border, which strongly represent and resemble the types that are being used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Can you elaborate on that conclusion, and can you speak to whether or not it is possible for Hezbollah to exploit these drug tunnels and the human smuggling routes that the Mexican drug cartels and networks use to attack the United States of America?

Mr. Farah. I think there are several issues in that question. One is I think if you look at the pipeline, the transcriminal pipelines that cross from North and South America through Central America to Mexico and the United States, their delivery rate is better than UPS. They can deliver--if you put either 30 illegal Chinese or 30 AK-47s or 30 kilos of cocaine, they are going to cross through the same basic checkpoints, cross the same terrain until they cross the border, which they do thousands of times a day. So is that possible? Absolutely.

But I think the other issue that you have to consider is that with the state alliances that they have, there is a less need--I think there might be operational need to push people across the border and through coyotes and that type of thing. I think that it is more likely now, because they can obtain diplomatic passports from Bolivia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Ecuador without any difficulty whatsoever. You would rather fly across and land in a country and walk through the Customs and Immigration with a diplomatic passport than crawl across the border.

I think with the tunnels, the evidence is interesting, but not conclusive. I would suggest there is probably a technology exchange, one way of one group learning from the other and exchanging either cocaine or other products in exchange--or knowledge maybe of smuggling use in exchange for the technology for tunneling or whatever else they need, because if you look

at the history of the FARC and the drug traffickers particularly, I think this holds true for Hezbollah as well, they are willing to work across ideological boundaries. They are willing to ally themselves in the short term. Instead of-- you know, they don't get married to anyone, but they have a lot of one-night stands with different criminal organizations, and then everybody walks away happy; or maybe not so happy, but they generally walk away unless they are decapitated or something.

But generally you have this ability to cross these lines, make short-term alliances and walk away, and it seems to me from what I have seen on the tunneling front that this technology transfer should concern us because it shows it exists and that communication can exist. I doubt it signifies an alliance between Hezbollah and anybody else on the ground there in an organic sense.

Mr. Duncan. I realize that the tunnels are mainly used for smuggling drugs. That is the most profitable thing. But there is a lot of concern within Congress of what could be brought into this country through those tunnels and other means.

Can you speak to the validity of people of Middle Eastern descent who may want to do harm to this country coming to South America, learning Spanish language, assimilating, and then working their way up through Latin America and entering this country as tourists or on other diplomatic passports? Can you expound on that just a little bit?

Mr. Farah. I think it happens. I think one of the concerns, particularly with Ecuador, is that they lifted all visa requirements for everyone, except maybe I think North Korea stayed on the list. So essentially what you have, it is like water running downhill. You go to the easiest place, which is why the Mexican cartels are now flying to Ecuador to buy FARC cocaine directly, because they can. There are no visa checks. The FARC is on their side of the border, and off they go.

So I think that the ability to move through Latin America, and particularly Central America, easily is there. Whether they need to sit around and learn Spanish enough, my sense is that that is usually not the case. You can usually just buy your way

across without having to spend 6 months learning Spanish. Why bother? If you really want to go deep undercover, maybe you do that.

But the other thing I would just suggest on the movement of product is that the tunnels are of great concern. I think one of the other things that plays into that enormously is the first immensurable craft that the FARC is now able to create with Russian technology that you are seeing now that can go from Ecuador and Colombia all the way to Mexico and to our shores carrying 10 tons of whatever they want, and I think that that is something that should make us very nervous as well.

Mr. Duncan. Thank you.

I am out of time. I yield back.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Duncan.

The Chairman now welcomes and recognizes Ms. Hochul. Ms. Hochul.

Ms. Hochul. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The last comments about this making you very nervous, this whole hearing is making me very nervous, as my first committee meeting. I commend you for bringing this to the attention of the public, Mr. Chairman, and I also concur with my colleague from upstate New York's views, where is the Homeland Security Department?

I think a lot of the questions you raise as really an early warning system for us. Now my first thought is what is the answer, and what is being done about it? I think that is perhaps a law enforcement answer. So I hope that there will be, and perhaps there already is planned, a follow-up to ask our law enforcement community, Nationally and internationally our colleagues, what is being done about this, because I am getting the sense that we are sitting ducks here, and why are we waiting to be attacked first, after the lessons of 9/11, sounds like there are a lot of dots to be connected in our own hemisphere, and that is extremely troubling to me.

As a prosecutor, you certainly know, Mr. Chairman, prosecutors want to know--in law enforcement you follow the money trail. I am sure there is--as we are hearing, there is a tremendous amount of money being made in this narcotrafficking.

Is that money being spent and are the leaders living in lavish homes and palaces, or is that being funneled back to the Middle East to buy arms to threaten Israel and also perhaps threaten us?

So I wanted to know if there has been any questions raised that you are aware of, any evidence where this money, as the ill-gotten proceeds from the narcotrafficking--where is the money ending up? Is it in banks? Is it in the Middle East? Is it being spent here? What is the answer to that question?

Ms. Cammett. I mean, I think it is clearly part of it, a large part of it, is probably going to weapons which are mainly directed at Israel at this point in time. It is also directed--used in the social welfare programs, which are incredibly extensive. I mean, there is something like 50 health-related institutions, 25 or 30 schools, and this is one of absolutely the largest social programs, social networks in Lebanon, serving the largest block of Lebanese citizens, or among the largest. So these are all incredibly expensive endeavors.

They also, you know, have a political party wing, but I am sure the bulk of the money, if I could just guess, goes to weapons and military-related activities, but also to these social programs in Lebanon.

Mr. Berman. Ma'am, in my written remarks, the cases that were cited, including the cigarette-smuggling case that the Chairman alluded to, I think there is a pretty clear chain of evidence that suggests that the bulk of the proceeds from smuggling, from fund-raising, whether it is cigarette smuggling or racketeering or what have you, end up actually being funneled back to the organization in the Middle East rather than being spent on the organization's operatives here. I think what you see is you see a pretty clear financial conduit that enriches the larger organization rather than individual members.

Ms. Hochul. That is even more troubling. I would feel better if they were living in mansions as opposed to going back and flying--arming themselves to attack Israel perhaps or to pose more threats to our allies in the Middle East. So that is not the answer I wanted to hear, but I think that is probably

accurate, and, again, this just raises--my question is, what is the law enforcement response to this? Perhaps it is satisfactory. I just need to hear it.

Mr. Farah. In my dealings with the policymakers, there is a tendency still to look at--you know, you saw four Hezbollah guys in Paraguay, so that is not very interesting; you see three guys in Bolivia, that is not very interesting. There is still not a great deal of emphasis on stepping back and saying, what does all of this tell us? If you have these multiple activities, instead of viewing it as 2 guys doing something here, and you are not seeing the other 18 guys doing similar things across the region, or 200 people, I think that is one of our--our country reporting is very narrow. In focusing on the country, there is very little integration across country lines looking at Hezbollah as a theme as opposed to what is happening in that country specifically.

Ms. Hochul. Can I ask you a question? Who would be the responsible party for connecting those international dots, in your opinion?

Mr. Farah. That is above my pay grade, I am afraid. I think there are--I think DOD is working on it. I think Treasury is working on a robust finance effort that is directed at Hezbollah, but not particularly in Latin America. I think it is a fragmented effort, and there were some good people working on it, but very little cohesion on the Latin America element.

Mr. Noriega. Ma'am, I think you hit the nail right on the head in terms of one of the things we can be doing, and that is going after the financing, and there are some credible efforts going on within law enforcement out of the Southern District of New York, for example, going after narcotraffickers that are allied with terrorists; the DEA using special authorities through an interagency process to designate institutions as supporters of Hezbollah. For example, they did it in the case of--I think it is called the Lebanese Canadian Bank, and had the effect of collapsing that bank and cutting off that conduit of funds.

The same interagency process is looking--this, again, is law enforcement--is looking at other instruments that Hezbollah

uses in this hemisphere for moving people and moving money, and so they are making some progress. It is a serious thing. That is at the law enforcement level.

I believe the policymakers are well behind the curve on this, and testimony before this Congress in recent weeks suggests that they are absolutely oblivious to this growing problem. I don't know whether it is because they don't want to confront Chavez or because they don't think Latin America is a priority, but this is our hemisphere, and I know they don't want to provoke Chavez, but the fact is this is provocative what he is doing, and it requires a credible response, and it starts with an interagency process that will review the whole problem, connect all these thoughts, and then come up with effective whole-of-Government response.

Ms. Hochul. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Meehan. The Chairman now recognizes Mr. Cuellar from Texas.

Mr. Cuellar. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here, and it is my good friend--Ambassador Noriega, it is always a pleasure seeing you again.

Let me ask you--well, let me start off with this, the basic premise. If I was a bad guy, and I wanted to attack the United States, I would go to the backyard, which is Mexico, Central America, South America. I will start out with that premise itself. But let me ask you some facts.

I think about 2 years ago I had some Members, some of my colleagues, that went down to my hometown in Laredo, and right in the middle of the press conference, one of them said, you know, there are training camps right across the river in Mexico, and they got these training camps, terrorist training camps. The media then turns to me and asks me, is that correct? I said, as far as I know, no. Then they turned to the Homeland Security folks that were there. They asked them the same question. They said no. Homeland said they had no information of terrorist camps in Mexico.

Do any of you all have any contrary information that I

might not be aware of?

Mr. Noriega. If I can jump in, since you mentioned my name, sir. Good to see you again.

The one--several anecdotal bits of information involving Mexicans has involved their going to Lebanon and Venezuela for training.

Mr. Cuellar. You say anecdotal. Evidence.

Mr. Noriega. No. These were I should say specific reports citing U.S. law enforcement and intelligence sources.

Mr. Cuellar. Okay.

Mr. Noriega. It involved Mexicans and a handful--I don't think it is--training camps, I don't have any reasons to suggest that, but it involved these people actually leaving Mexico for training, for sort of specialized training. I am not aware of any sort of--I have never even seen it suggested about training camps in Mexico.

Mr. Cuellar. Any of you all--and thank you, Ambassador. Anybody has any information contrary?

Well, the other thing that is implied also is because--and I will be the first one; I mean, we need to defeat the drug cartels. It is a serious problem, and I think we know what is happening down there. But it has always been implied that because of what is happening down there, that you had this terrorist coming up there. It is always a possibility, and I will be the person to say we have got to watch out for that. But of the main terrorists that we have had that have come into the United States that have caused damage to us, how many have come in through Mexico? Any of you all? Anybody? Okay. All right.

Now, let me change to the third--and oh, let us talk about the Tri-Border area, because I have been down to that area, and we talked to law enforcement. What is your understanding of the presence of United States law enforcement, whether it is DHS or Department of State, that are down there to monitor and combat that type of activity? Because the way I understand it, you have got drugs, you have got everything, and, of course, I am worried about the terrorist aspect of it. Are we doing enough down there in the Tri area?

Mr. Farah. I would say, sir, that in my research in the region, I think that the Tri-Border area is no longer the center of--as big a center or big a concern as it was simply because it is so much safer for these groups to operate out of Venezuela now under state protection. They can decamp to a state where they are wholly protected, and the Brazilians sometimes get frisky, and the Paraguayans sometimes reacted unpredictably. So if you want stability, you go to where you see your state protector and where you can control the environment.

I think that the Tri-Border is a huge contraband center, without question, and most of the people, in my experience there, who are funneling back to Hezbollah were not organic members of Hezbollah. They were the Lebanese diaspora community, sympathizing, the family asked them to, they were pressured, whatever, and there is a lot of money that flows back. But I don't think--you saw some but not a very significant organic Hezbollah presence there. I think the significant money activity with the Iranian banks that are now operating out of Venezuela and Bolivia and Ecuador is much safer and much easier to go elsewhere than to hang around there.

Mr. Cuellar. Okay. I go back to--because my time is almost over--but I will go back to the basic statement I said that involves the bad guy wanting to attack the United States. I would really look at the southern part of it. Is there anything that our U.S. law enforcement folks should be doing, whether it is intelligence or whatever the department might be, that we ought to be doing to protect ourselves from activities in our own backyards which are south of the United States?

Mr. Noriega. I would say two things, sir.

Mr. Cuellar. Yes, sir.

Mr. Noriega. Building on what Doug said, one of my colleague says that Margarita Island in Venezuela makes the Tri-Border area look like a kindergarten. We need to get all over that phenomenon.

Final thing is the reports that I saw referencing Mexicans actually cited Mexican authorities having arrested them. So it

is not like Mexico is not an ally of ours in this. Mexico apparently is aware and is trying to help on this.

Mr. Cuellar. I want to thank all of you, and we really appreciate what you all do. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Meehan. The Chairman now recognizes Mr. Green from Texas. Mr. Green.

Mr. Green. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also thank you for the unanimous consent to be a part of this hearing. I thank the Ranking Member as well for your help.

I have had the opportunity to read the charter or perhaps the constitution of Hamas. My assumption is that some of you have read it is a fair statement. Very little that you have said is more frightening than reading the constitution or charter.

Mr. Farah, you mentioned in their own words, in their own writings, you can find things that can be quite convincing. Do we have a similar document for this organization, for Hezbollah? Do we have a similar document, similar to the charter that Hamas has published, which is very clear in terms of what their intentions are? Is there a similar document?

Mr. Farah, since you mentioned their writings.

Mr. Farah. I am not a Hezbollah expert. I would defer to those who may have read that. I don't know if--I have not read the Hezbollah constitution, if there is one.

Ms. Cammett. Hezbollah published its open letter in 1985, which was its official proclamation of its establishment, and then it published another open letter updating that in I believe it was 2009 or 2010, quite recently, and so there are two documents on record that state its positions. The initial one focused on its opposition to Israel and on its ideology. It focuses a lot on this notion of what it calls oppression and how to overcome oppression, particularly focused on the Shia, among other things. But there are at least two documents that are publicly available translated into English.

Mr. Green. To what extent can we find linkage between Hezbollah and Hamas? Do you have some specific things that you can call to my attention rather quickly?

Mr. Berman. Well, I think, sir, specifically if you are looking for linkages, operational linkages, between the organizations, you would have to look at Hezbollah infiltration into the Palestinian Territories, specifically into the Gaza Strip, where Hezbollah is involved in running universities, running charitable organizations as a proxy of Iran, which has a rather large presence in the Palestinian Territories. But also since the Gaza Strip is under Hamas stewardship, if you could call it that, then the organization operates with Hamas' acknowledgment, with Hamas' aid and support.

Mr. Green. Can we find similar linkage between Hezbollah and al-Qaeda?

Mr. Berman. Sir, I think you can, and I think you would be hard-pressed to find something over the last couple of years, but not because of--there is an absence of evidence, but, frankly, because I think we haven't really paid as much attention. But if you look back, for example, into the late 1990s into the trial of Ali Mohamed, who was an Egyptian military officer, he talked--he was an al-Qaeda operative. He talked about receiving training in improvised explosive devices in suicide bombings from Hezbollah operatives as well.

You also see interoperability between the way Hezbollah operatives and al-Qaeda operatives move around in Latin America, which has been cited by the Congressional Research Service and the Library of Congress.

Ms. Cammett. I would say that the relationship between Hezbollah and al-Qaeda is very, very different from the relationship between Hezbollah and Hamas. It has a much closer relationship with Hamas and, you know, positions itself as a defender of the Palestinians and has cooperated with Hamas and so forth. I think that is well-documented, and Hezbollah officials would be quite open about that.

Al-Qaeda, I have heard these reports that there have been some contacts between some Hezbollah officials and some al-Qaeda operatives. I have no direct knowledge of this. I have heard these reports, but there certainly isn't any kind of institutionalized relationship. There are very important differences, not just doctrinal, but tactical. You could see in

Lebanon with these Sunni extremist groups running around that tend to be based in some Palestinian camps there that Hezbollah is very much opposed to them and was working against them, and I think not just rhetorically, but in reality Hezbollah is not in cahoots with al-Qaeda, I mean, apart from these perhaps reports that may be true--I can't confirm them or deny them--about certain tactical arrangements. There is no systematic relationship between al-Qaeda and Hezbollah as far as I can tell.

Mr. Green. Have we had any indications that Nasrallah, who heads Hezbollah, has had contact at some point with bin Laden?

Ms. Cammett. I don't know. Not to my knowledge. I don't think so.

Mr. Green. Finally, I don't hear a lot about the No. 2 person in Hezbollah. I know who Nasrallah is. But do you have any intelligence on who the apparent successor might be to Nasrallah?

Ms. Cammett. There are a number of people in the Central Council there. I wouldn't be able to say which one in particular is the successor. Nasrallah has been continually reappointed as the head secretary general of Hezbollah.

Mr. Green. Thank you. Perhaps next time I can ask you a question about Lebanon and how they have infiltrated that government. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. Meehan. Thank you, Mr. Green, and to all of our colleagues on the panel, for your interest and attendance today, and I want to thank this panel not only for your perseverance today with us, but your preparation and the great opportunity we have had to engage with you. I thank the witnesses.

The Members of the committee may have some additional questions. If, in fact, they do, we will ask that you would respond in writing, if that is done, within--and the hearing record will be open for 10 days for that purpose.

So, without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]