

This article was downloaded by: [UQ Library]

On: 09 September 2013, At: 13:29

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rpic20>

Field Notes on Hizbullah's Recruitment, Training and Organisational Structure

Mariam Farida ^a

^a MA Candidate, International Relations, University of New South Wales

Published online: 03 Aug 2011.

To cite this article: Mariam Farida (2010) Field Notes on Hizbullah's Recruitment, Training and Organisational Structure, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 5:2, 71-77, DOI: [10.1080/18335300.2010.9686950](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/18335300.2010.9686950)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/18335300.2010.9686950>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Field Notes on Hizbullah's Recruitment, Training and Organisational Structure

MARIAM FARIDA

MA Candidate, International Relations, University of New South Wales

ABSTRACT

9/11 refocused world attention on radical Islamist movements. One such movement is Lebanon's Hizbullah, which was identified by Washington as a terrorist organization. This study examines the case of Hizbullah as an example of a successful guerrilla movement. It does so by looking at a number of explanatory variables that help explain Hizbullah's success as a guerrilla movement. These variables include Hizbullah's recruitment strategy, its hierarchal structure, its historical background, and the services and support (military and financially) it offers its members and their families. Research for this thesis is based on a number of sources. I have used a number of personal interviews with anonymous members of Hizbullah's security organs to reconstruct Hizbullah's secretive recruitment strategy. The secondary literature on guerrilla movements has also helped me situate Hizbullah in comparative perspective. I have also looked at the available primary and secondary literature on Hizbullah. The thesis closes with some observations pertaining to prospects for Hizbullah's future demobilization and re-integration into civilian life.

Introduction

Hizbullah is an Islamic guerrilla movement, framed by Islamic social and political ideology. The formation of Hizbullah came as a result of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the conflict continued until the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon in May 2000. By the early 1990s, Hizbullah was able to find a role within Lebanese society and state. It established a dynamic social program, funded by sources of *zakat* (Islamic alms), financial support from Iran, and donations from wealthy Lebanese abroad, through which it has managed a nationwide network of social, educational and charitable programs. These efforts in addition to the long struggle against Israel have helped Hizbullah gain the support of a wide segment of the Lebanese population, especially but not exclusively in the Shi'a sect. This was clearly demonstrated in the results of Lebanon's 2009 parliamentary elections, thus confirming and cementing their presence within the country's borders.

Hizbullah's structure differed significantly from that of the other Lebanese political parties. Groups such as Lebanese Falanges (Katae'b), Amal, and Lebanese Forces (Al Kowaat al Lobnaneya), in addition to other groups, are mostly structured as a dynastic military group involved in domestic civil war. Hizbullah's refusal to be a part of the Lebanese civil war gave credit to the party, whilst at the same time the fact that its political structure was strikingly similar to that of a Western political organization rather than a typically Lebanese further confirmed its support base and presence amongst the Lebanese. Hizbullah used social services network in order to expand its popularity and existence within the Lebanese territory, which was unusual as the rest of the Lebanese parties were more military oriented rather than services oriented.

This social services network included six main aspects, including: Jihad for construction (Jihad Al-Bina'); the Islamic Health authority; the non-interest loan society; Islamic beneficiary support society; the Martyr association; the Islamic institution for education. In addition, there were also sports, cultural, and informational institutions, such as the Imam Khomeini centre, Al'hd magazine, and the al-Manar TV channel.

The recruitment process

Nevertheless, the success of Hizbullah's structure is not only bound to the social services network it provided, but also to the high-tech military capabilities it has obtained from the party's major ally, Iran. That Hizbullah owns major weaponry capabilities is a key indicator of its success in its fight and victory against Israel in March 2000. In order to maintain its strength, the party has sought to attain a unique recruitment strategy as well. The following information is based mainly on strictly anonymous personal interviews held with Hizbullah fighters and social service members in Lebanon from May to June 2006.

This research paper served as a dissertation for a Masters degree at the Lebanese American University (Beirut, Lebanon). The following table includes a sample profile of my interviewees from Hizbullah. Nevertheless, and given the secretive nature of Hizbullah, I have based my study of their recruitment strategy on personal interviews conducted between May and June 2006. The interviews were with important members of the military and non-military divisions of Hizbullah. However due to the sensitivity of the topic and to security reasons the names of the interviewees were kept anonymous. The interviews were held in different areas in Beirut, such as the media relations department and civil relations department, which are now destroyed after Israel war on Lebanon in 2006 (in addition to other public places).

The success of the Islamic Resistance Group, as it was labelled in the 1980s, was evident in several attacks against Israeli soldiers, giving it a clear edge over other parties, and thus helping it attract recruits. Hizbullah's reputation and credibility grew and the party soon gained control over the majority of the Shi'a areas in southern Lebanon, the Beirut southern suburbs, and areas in Baalbeck and the Bekaa.

Name	Age	Role	Years of participation	Religion	Social Status
Abu Mahdi	41	Responsible for the training of the martyr division of the combat section	20 years	Muslim-shi'a	poor
Abu Ali	35	member of the Media Department	Participated in the combat section from 1984 to 1992. then transferred to media department	Muslim-shi'a	Middle-class
Abu Mustapha	24	member of the resistance army (rocket launcher)	9 years	Muslim-shi'a	Middle to wealthy (educated)
Mohamad	25	member of the resistance army (Martyr section)	10 years	Muslim-shi'a	Poor
Ali	30	member of the resistance army (commandos)	9 years	Muslim-shi'a	poor
Abbas	45	Recruitment monitor	20 years	Muslim-shi'a	Middle to Poor
Ibrahim	50	Information Centre	20 years	Muslim-shi'a	Middle to Poor

Table 1 – Details of interviewees

Recruitment was also sought by monitoring certain individuals and convincing them to join the group. The process of recruitment begins when a young man has a friend or a group of friends who are members in Hizbullah, and share religious observations, views, and pay visits to mosques. One Hizbullah member informed the author that Hizbullah has a presence in several areas in Lebanon, specifically in mosques; however, it remains a secret in which cities they are located. When an unknown individual starts visiting the Friday Islamic lecture/prayer and mingles with others, a representative from Hizbullah will ask about this individual and begin to “spy” on him until they uncover his life story.

Once a potential recruit is identified, then the Hizbullah official may suggest to the individual to attend religious courses, usually held once a week. The choice is left to the individual as to whether he would like to join the group. When a candidate requests to join the group he will then be asked to visit the centre of registration, the exact location of which is unknown for security reasons. The candidate then fills an

application form that takes from four to six hours. This application includes questions related to his life, youth, relatives, favourite colours, food, as well as problems in his family, address, education, and personal life. He is also asked to provide a complete portrait of himself (sketch and photos). This application represents a profile for each candidate. After filling the application, the candidate will be monitored. Furthermore, the candidate is asked to present two recommendation letters from people who are already members in Hizbullah. As he is being monitored, a committee called the “Human Resource Committee” studies the application form and decides on whether to accept or reject the candidate. Subsequently, the security vetting group or “*Jihaz el Morakaba al Dakhili*” will study his application. Among the conditions the candidate must meet are: decent behaviour, strong religious convictions, approval of the doctrine of “Welayet El-Faqih”¹, abstention from drinking, commitment to the mission, loyalty, secrecy, and disciplined attitude. Upon observations and reports taken from the three divisions (Human resources committee, security vetting, and registration centre), the application will either be refused or approved depending on the qualifications mentioned above. If the application is approved, the candidate will have to wait approximately four months for his enrolment to become effective.

There are two types of enrolment in Hizbullah, on payroll, and not on payroll:

On payroll: This includes full time employees with Hizbullah who are working in any service sector, and are paid by the organization. However Hizbullah’s wages tend to be very low. The work is divided into one of the following fields: Resistance army, media, social sector, educational sector, and health sector.

Not on payroll: where a member attends a few informal meetings and gatherings in addition to occasional voluntary work. In this case, the member can have a side job designated by the party enrolment committee, but is instructed to keep secret his part time enrolment.

In case of misbehaviour by any member in the group, certain procedures take place where the candidate will be given a warning and a freeze of services for six consecutive months. Consequently, the member is forbidden from continuing his duties or attending his usual courses. If the misbehaviour persists, he will then be sent a letter of rejection or termination from the organization. An appeal might be raised but not before a period of one year has passed. During this period, the organization will still monitor the candidate to ensure that the latter does not break its confidentiality code.

The training process

The potential candidates go through a training procedure after the first approval has been granted. This procedure is as follows:

- 1 Welayet El-Faqih, rule of the Clerics, initiated by Khomeini during the Iranian revolution in 1979; which constitutes the recognition of the absolute and supranational political and religious authority of the Supreme Guide, the Wali el-Faqih.

Preparation period one: Cultural courses and military courses. The candidate resides in a centre for education (whose position is kept secret) for two and half months, where they take daily sessions of three to four hours. Discussions vary from ethical behaviour to advanced religious teachings. By the end of the course discussions focus on Jihad coupled with a week's teachings of ethics.

Preparation period two: This is also called the Ansar course (referring to the advanced level of the training courses). The second period of the courses begins after a period of six months. Phase two extends over two and a half months. It involves comprehensive education in Islam, with special emphasis on the doctrine of Jihad. After the end of each session, candidates sit for evaluation exams where the officials decide whether or not the candidate should be promoted. Upon approval, the candidate is then allowed to attend secret stage two meetings attended by Hizbullah members. These meetings are prohibited to non-members of the party. By this, the candidate is officially declared a social member of the party. After attending informal and military lessons he will be sent for an internship period at a social services institution for a period of nine months. Subsequently, the candidate will have the choice of enrolling in civil duties or military duties. Throughout the military service, there will be training sessions for a period of one month; these are called Mojahed One and Mojahed Two sessions.

At the military academy, the candidate is taught about all kinds of weapons; how to use, break, gather arms, in addition to a two hour daily session on cultural and religious studies. Each soldier is appointed to specific tasks that fit his qualifications. On the battlefield there are two kinds of fighting units, 'front lines' and 'back lines'. The training areas are often located in 'border areas' in Iran, Southern Lebanon, Bekaa or Baalbeck. It is imperative in Hizbullah's code of ethics that every member of the party should experience this border training, from the youngest member to the secretary general himself. This is done to ensure that the code of ethics is embedded in every member and that all members share Hizbullah's fighting experience. However, only experienced soldiers are allowed to permanently fight at the border areas. During the military training sessions, which take between six months to a year, candidates stay at the training centre for a consecutive period of several months without any parental visits (in several cases, the candidate might be able to have a day's rest outside the camp but will have to return). Consequently, the candidate is completely isolated from any outside interruptions, either by family, friends or social obligations. During this period, soldiers learn to use real weapons and missiles, strategies and attack tactics in addition to defensive plans, how to kidnap, escape, night walk, change of location during the day and night, explosives training, physical training and creating traps. They also study military strategies related to different wars that have transpired in the past. This is done to familiarize themselves with other experiences and learn from past mistakes. During the training period, soldiers face very hard and dangerous tasks. When the time arrives to engage in battle, they are fully prepared for any adverse situations. Some Hizbullah cadres suggest that the training centres are often more demanding than actual combat against Israeli forces.

Organisational structure

The military and security apparatus of Hizbullah is largely invisible so as to make it difficult for enemy penetration. What is known is that the two main organs comprise the: Islamic Resistance; and the Security Organ. To make sure that the following occurs, the military and security organs are under direct control of the ruling Hizbullah clerics, specifically Secretary-General Nasrallah. Hizbullah's Islamic Resistance consists of two sections: the 'enforcement and recruitment section' and the 'combat section'.

The enforcement and recruitment section: This section recruits members and then submits them to ideological indoctrination that reinforces the party's beliefs in Welayat al-Faqih and the religious command to fight enemies.

The combat section: This section provides training in martial arts, marksmanship, medical support, and weaponry. The outcome of the training determines one's position in one of the four organs of Hizbullah's combat section. These are:

- Martyrs organ: individuals who are willing to lead a suicide operation;
- Commandos or Special Forces organ: Elite warriors who have distinguished themselves in guerrilla warfare. They are then trained in Islamic revolutionary training camps in Iran;
- Rocket launchers and fighters' organ: Individuals with experience in operating all kinds of weaponry, in particular, surface-to-surface or surface-to-air rockets and mortars;
- Regular fighters' organ: Individuals who have sufficient skills to lead attacks but who are mainly in charge of surveillance, logistics and medical support.

These groups operate throughout the main three Shi'a regions of Lebanon. These groups do not communicate with one another. They communicate only upwards through the hierarchy to the military operational headquarters, which is under the control of the party's secretary general. Consequently, if the enemy compromises one cell, Hizbullah's military organization remains secretive and intact.

The Hizbullah Security Organ is the most confidential of all the structural units and is headed by a member who is experienced in security and intelligence matters whose loyalty to the secretary-general and the Shura Council is unquestionable. Two sections comprise the Security Organ, 'party security' and 'external security'.

Party security: This organ is charged with internal security matters within the party and society at large, including preventing Hizbullah's enemies from penetrating the party's organization and to deal with any disagreement among party members. This organ keeps files on all party members and anybody who approaches the group from the outside.

External security: This organ (also called 'encounter security') functions to counter intelligence attempts by the party's internal and external enemies who aim at penetrating

the party's structure. The cells that Hizbullah maintains in countries outside the Middle East play an important role in protecting the party from external threats.

Conclusion

Hizbullah's distinctive and robust strategic and recruitment structure has managed to ensure a permanent popularity for the group in Lebanon. The use of a social services network in addition to secret recruitment strategy helped in the success of Hizbullah for the past 25 years and evidence shows that it will continue to help in promoting additional success in the future years. This study suggests that Hizbullah remained successful for almost 20 years and it has proved that it can be part of the Lebanese politics. As for the members of Hizbullah, they will remain ideologically bonded to Hizbullah even if the guerrilla aspect of it is disarmed.