

Hezbollah's Billion Petrodollars

Contributed by Walid Phares
 Friday, 11 January 2008
 Last Updated Saturday, 12 January 2008

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The first change is a shift in leadership responsibilities. A report published initially in the Saudi owned Sharq al Awsat said the office of Ayatollah Khomeini appointed deputy secretary general Sheikh Naim Qassim as the new supreme commander of Hezbollah forces and the personal representative of the Ayatollah in Lebanon. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, according to this report remains as secretary general of the organization. Sources said this change in control and command is because of "differences in opinions" between Nasrallah and Qassim.

The Hezbollah media arm rushed to deny the veracity of this shift. But observers with direct knowledge of the organization's inside structure said Khomeini indeed ordered changes in Hezbollah's structures, but not because of differences between its leaders. They said it was in preparation for a potential massive move by Hezbollah to seize more power in Lebanon and before a possible clash with the Lebanese Government and the United Nations over the disarmament process.

Sources believe the assassination of Brigadier General Francois Hajj, director of operations in the Lebanese Army was another preemptive measure ordered by the Pasdaran command in Lebanon. Hajj was slated to become the next commander of the Lebanese Army. The latter was to deploy across Lebanon and eventually begin the collection of weapons. Hence, believe the observers, a Syro-Iranian order was issued to preempt and eliminate a man who could have become the military commander to force Hezbollah to disarm. This would have been compared to the al Qaeda elimination of Masoud Shah in September 2001 just before the 9/11 strikes. Hence, the concerns that the assassination and the reshuffling within the organization may be a prelude to dramatic move by the Iranian funded Terror group. Which lead to the other important information revealed by al Shaq al Awsat and published in the leading Lebanese Newspaper al Nahar.

The second major change according to these reports Hezbollah is a huge increase in annual budget funded by Tehran. Hezbollah's funding was elevated from \$400 million US to \$1 billion. This ballistic leap would enable the organization to crush any opponent inside Lebanon and engage in worldwide operations against Western Democracies and Arab moderates. According to experts in Lebanon, the \$400 millions figure was enough to pay for hundreds of social centers and thousands of salaries enough to insure a full control over the Shia community, its representatives in Parliament and buy significant influence inside the Sunni, Druze and particularly Christian community. One hundred million dollars alone, could pay for the activities of movements opposed to the Cedars Revolution and the democratically elected Government of Seniora.

Hezbollah obtained support in the Christian districts and launched media outlets across the country. Another thirty millions can put enormous pressures on soldiers and officers of the various sectors of defense and security. In return the Government branches and the military have been deprived from solid financial support coming from outside the country. Those who rose against the Syrian occupation were mostly from the deprived and oppressed segments of civil society. And those who dared opposing Hezbollah's domination of the country lacked the basic means of NGOs. The confrontation was totally unbalanced. Iran was pouring 400 millions of Petrodollars to roll back the Cedars Revolution while the latter was highly praised overseas but wasn't a recipient of freedom funds.

But if \$400 million can buy Hezbollah a magic place under Lebanon's sun, what would a \$1 billion do? Observers in Lebanon say: "anything anywhere." Indeed the Moguls of the so-called "resistance" have been able to create alternative TV and radio stations, launch multiple dailies, pay for a nonstop sit-in across Downtown Beirut, and more importantly leap to hyper international power. Over the past year the Iranian-funded hydra is said to have hired PR companies from Beirut to major capitals to wage the mother of all wars of ideas not just against the vulnerable Cedars Revolution in Lebanon but also in defense of Ahmedinijad's nuclear strategy. Indeed, stories filed out of Tehran can't be credible. But reports and analysis sprayed from dozens of apparently neutral web sites or forwarded from credible journalistic sources can do devastation in the West. And what better launching pad than Beirut, cultural capital of the Arab world, to use? All

what the Iranian funded organization has to do is to "double" if not "triple" the income of any person of interest in any sector of choice: media, academia, military, consulting, intelligence, etc. both in Lebanon but also around the world, including if needed in the United States.

One Billion dollars spent on Hezbollah in Lebanon can have ripple effects as far as Detroit and Argentina. There is no native force in Lebanon that can match this tidal wave nor even one tenth of it. This is Iran's Petro power deployed on the Eastern Mediterranean not a local social movement building orphanages. A month ago as I was participating in a cross fire program on al Jazeera facing off with a coordinator of Iranian propaganda in the Arab world, I was asked why the US maintains a Navy in the Middle East. "Where are Iran's fleets," he asked. I replied that the Iranian regime maintains land fleets. "Hezbollah's 30,000 rockets and its millions of dollars is an Iranian fleet" I answered.

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