

## DNI see revenge attack against Jewish interests

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WASHINGTON &mdash; The U.S. intelligence community has concluded that Hizbullah was preparing a major strike against Israel and Jews throughout the world.

Officials said Hizbullah was preparing to avenge the Feb. 12 assassination of its operational chief, Imad Mughniyeh. They said the U.S. intelligence community has determined that the chief target of any Hizbullah retaliation would be Israeli and Jewish interests.

"The intelligence community assesses that the 12 February death of Hizbullah Jihad Council chief Imad Mughniyeh &mdash; who oversaw all Hizbullah military, security, and terrorist operations will prompt retaliation against Israeli and potentially Jewish and U.S. interests," U.S. National Intelligence director Michael McConnell said.

In testimony to the Senate Armed Service Committee on Feb. 27, McConnell said Hizbullah was capable of striking any target throughout the world. He said Hizbullah has also linked the United States to Mughniyeh's death.

"Hizbullah has publicly blamed Israel for the operation but said that other 'arrogant powers,' probably a reference to the United States, had sought to kill Mughniyeh," McConnell said. "Hizbullah has the ability to attack almost worldwide with little warning."

Officials said this was the first U.S. intelligence warning of a Hizbullah strike on Israel and the United States. Earlier, McConnell said Mughniyeh might have been killed by Syria or even his Hizbullah colleagues.

Hizbullah sought to attack the United States before Mughniyeh's death, officials said. They said Hizbullah developed methods of hacking into U.S. government and military computers as well as stealing money through Internet scams.

"Terrorist groups &mdash; including Al Qaida, Hamas and Hizbullah &mdash; have expressed the desire to use cyber means to target the United States," McConnell said. "Criminal elements continue to show growing sophistication in technical capability and targeting, and today operate a pervasive, mature on-line service economy in illicit cyber capabilities and services available to anyone willing to pay."

At the same hearing, Defense Intelligence Agency director Michael Maples said Hizbullah has been working with Iran to train Shi'ite insurgents in Iraq. Maples said Hizbullah has been conducting the training in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

"Lebanese Hizbullah provides the insurgents with the tactics and technology to conduct kidnappings, small unit tactical operations and employ sophisticated improvised explosive devices, among the lessons learned from that group's operations in southern Lebanon," Maples said.

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