

Hizbullah mentored pre-9/11 Al Qaida on suicide attacks against U.S.

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WASHINGTON — Hizbullah helped Al Qaida plan suicide attacks against the United States despite religious differences, a new report said.

The report by the Foreign Policy Research Institute asserted that Hizbullah provided Al Qaida with plans on the use of suicide attackers to blow up U.S. installations. The report, authored by researcher Michael Horowitz, said the Iran-sponsored Hizbullah assistance enabled the Al Qaida bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

"In the 1980s, Hizbullah was the hub from which suicide tactics spread to the Palestinians and other groups," the report titled, "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism," said. "In the 1990s and beyond, Al Qaida became the hub."

The report, based on a review of 800 groups deemed terrorists, said Al Qaida adopted Hizbullah's use of suicide bombings as an operational decision. Horowitz, assistant professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, said Al Qaida founder Osama Bin Laden determined that suicide bombers marked the only option in his goal to destroy the U.S. embassies in east Africa.

"So, despite profound theological differences between the Salafist/jihadist views of Al Qaida and the Shi'ite Hizbullah, Bin Laden sent his operatives to go talk to the Hizbullah leadership," the report said. "They came back with what were effectively operational blueprints for how to plan and execute suicide attacks, especially against hard targets like embassies."

The report said new groups tended to adopt suicide attacks while more established organizations, such as the Palestine Liberation Organization or the Irish Republican Army, rejected the doctrine that their members must die. The only PLO wing to use suicide bombings was Fatah.

Fatah was said to have adopted suicide attacks in response to the influence of such rivals as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Horowitz said the success of Islamic suicide bombings against Israel threatened the prestige of the secular Fatah movement.

"They [Fatah] eventually adopted suicide terrorism in 2000 in the Second Intifada, years after Hamas and Islamic Jihad," the report said. "One explanation for their delay is the way prestige was locked up with particular people and within the organization. You received credit and priority in the organization based on hijackings, kidnappings and remote attacks. It made suicide terrorism something very complicated for them to deal with organizationally. It took them a long time to figure out how to adopt it."

The report said Islamic suicide bombings, estimated to cost \$150, must be seen as a military tactic rather than an ideological decision. Horowitz said insurgency groups have stopped suicide attacks when judged to be ineffective.

"Explaining suicide terrorism requires viewing it as a military innovation and better understanding the organizational requirements needed for its adoption," the report said. "The organizational element is the real obstacle. Therefore, which groups should be more likely to adopt and which should be more likely to pass on suicide bombing even if that tactic, on the surface, could help them achieve their goals? It should be easier for the younger groups that do not have embedded ways of doing business to adopt suicide terrorism and harder for those more established groups."

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