

Key Facts

- *61 nations worldwide have designated Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization.*
- *In Europe, some nations, have only designated the "military" wing of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization while others, such as the UK, Germany, Netherlands, Kosovo, and Lithuania have designated the whole organization. In Latin America, Argentina and Paraguay officially designated Hezbollah in 2019, and Colombia, Honduras, and Guatemala in 2020.*
- *Hezbollah's External Security Organization (ESO) is active in Venezuela through a support network embedded into the Maduro regime's illicit economy.*
- *State support by the Maduro regime strengthens Hezbollah's global movement of illicit funds, people, products, and materials.*
- *The Chávez and now Maduro regime in Venezuela have provided countless government ID documents to suspected members and facilitators of Hezbollah.*
- *Tareck El Aissami Maddah (TEAM) runs Venezuela's illicit economy and national industry, linked to a trade-based money laundering network in the Americas managed by Hezbollah support cells.*
- *TEAM was sanctioned by the U.S. and Canada in 2017, and the E.U. and Switzerland in 2018. In 2019, he was indicted by DOJ and added to ICE ten "most wanted" list leading to a $10 million reward issued in 2020 by the State Department for information leading to his capture. He has served as a governor, vice president, and the head of three important ministries in Venezuela since 2008.*

In Brief

The Nicolás Maduro regime in Venezuela maintains an extensive relationship with several foreign terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah and its terror sponsor the Islamic Republic of Iran. The relationship is centered on a strategic partnership between the Maduro regime and the Ayatollah's of Iran providing Hezbollah members, sympathizers, financiers, and fixers, assistance with the covert movement of people, products, money, and materials. This movement is facilitated through an illicit network tied to Venezuela's

Minister of Petroleum, Tareck El Aissami Maddah, and members of his immediate family. The clandestine structure for this network was designed by the Lebanese-Venezuelan dual national and former Venezuelan diplomat in Syria and Lebanon, Ghazi Nasr-Al-Din, sanctioned on June 18, 2008, by US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and placed as a "Person of Interest" by the FBI on January 29, 2015, for his support to Hezbollah.

Background

Hezbollah is responsible for carrying out terrorist attacks in Israel, Lebanon, Kuwait, Argentina, Panama, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, and, along with the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC-QF), is currently fighting alongside the Bashar al Assad regime in Syria, the Badr Organization in Iraq, and the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

A total of sixty-one (61) countries worldwide have designated Hezbollah as a foreign terrorist organization, to include the European Union, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the United States, Israel, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Kosovo, Lithuania, Serbia, Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Honduras, and Guatemala. Hezbollah's External Security Organization (ESO), otherwise known as "Unit 910" or the alias "Islamic Jihad Organization" is active in Latin America, to include ongoing terrorism trials of accused Hezbollah ESO operatives in Peru and Paraguay. Its criminal component, sometimes called the Business Affairs Component (BAC), is involved in massive trade-based money-laundering schemes, with at least eleven (11) Hezbollah supporters and sympathizers in South America sanctioned by the United States and Argentina.

On October 15, 2018, the Department of Justice (DOJ) named Hezbollah as one of the top five transnational criminal organizations in Latin America. An action resulting from various criminal and terrorist investigations led by DOJ's Hezbollah Financing and Narcoterrorism Team (HFNT). On May 27, 2020, the DOJ indicted a former member of Venezuela's National Assembly, Adel El Zabayar, who traveled to Syria in 2009, 2013 & 2014 to allegedly develop, along with Ghazi Nassereddine and Tareck El Aissami, a crime-terror pipeline to facilitate a "cocaine-for-weapons" scheme between Hezbollah and Colombia's FARC.

How it works

- *Venezuelan regime leader **Tareck El Aissami** served as Interior Minister between*

2008 and 2012 coinciding with the time frame that no fewer than 173 Middle Easterners, some with suspected ties to Hezbollah, were provided Venezuelan passports, birth certificates, national IDs, and other documents.

- *El Aissami's key associate for this scheme is **Ghazi Nassereddine**, who was stationed in Syria as a Venezuelan diplomat. Ghazi created the clandestine network structure to provide dual identities to Hezbollah supporters and sympathizers.*
- *The Hezbollah support network in Venezuela is embedded to the Maduro regime's illicit economies of drugs, weapons, gold, contraband, etc. moving through a trade-based money-laundering network (TBML) based out of Colombia and Panama.*
- *The TBML network operates from Margarita Island, Venezuela through cross-border trade with Maicao, Colombia previously managed by **Ali Mohamad Saleh**, a Hezbollah financier, sanctioned by OFAC in 2011 & 2012 for terror-finance and drug trafficking.*
- *The Hezbollah support cell in Maicao, a Colombian Free Trade Zone, connects to the Tri-Border Area of Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina through the illicit trade of charcoal, textiles, beef, cigarettes, liquors, and electronics once managed by Hezbollah financier **Assad Ahmad Barakat** who began contracting with the Hugo Chávez regime back in 2001.*
- *Assad Ahmad Barakat, and his family, have a long history of raising funds for Hezbollah through illicit networks in South America. Sanctioned in 2004 by Treasury's OFAC, he served a six-year stint in a Paraguayan prison for tax evasion. Barakat was arrested again in Foz da Iguaço, Brazil in August 2018 for passport fraud and extradited to Paraguay in July 2020. One of Barakat's main conduits for his TBML schemes is Saleh Trading LTDH, which signed a contract with Venezuela's Ministry of Education on May 11, 2001.*
- *Hezbollah ESO operative **Salman Raouf Salman** is suspected of directing Hezbollah operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including in Venezuela. Coordinating this illicit activity with **Abdallah Safieddine**, Hezbollah's representative to Iran and cousin of Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah.*