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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Review of the re-listing of Hizballah's External Security Organisation

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

June 2012  
Canberra

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# Contents

Membership of the Committee .....	iv
Terms of reference .....	vi
List of recommendations .....	vii
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
The Government's procedures .....	2
Procedural comments .....	4
<b>2 The Listing .....</b>	<b>5</b>
The Criteria for listing an organisation .....	5
Overview .....	6
Hizballah's External Security Organisation .....	6
Engagement in Terrorism.....	7
Ideology and links to other terrorist groups/networks .....	9
Links to Australia.....	10
Threat to Australian interests .....	10
Proscription by the UN or like-minded countries .....	10
Engagement in Peace and Mediation processes .....	11
Conclusion .....	11
<b>Appendix A – List of Submissions .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Appendix B – Statement of Reasons – Hizballah's External Security Organisation .....</b>	<b>15</b>



## Membership of the Committee

**Chair**            The Hon Anthony Byrne MP

**Deputy Chair**   The Hon Philip Ruddock MP

**Members**

Mr Michael Danby MP

Mr John Forrest MP

Mr Daryl Melham MP

(until 14 March 2012)

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP

(from 14 March 2012)

Mr Andrew Wilkie MP

Senator Mark Bishop

Senator the Hon George Brandis SC

Senator the Hon John Faulkner

Senator the Hon David Johnston

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens

## Committee Secretariat

<b>Secretary</b>	Mr Jerome Brown
<b>Inquiry Secretary</b>	Mr Robert Little
<b>Administrative Officers</b>	Ms Jessica Butler
	Mrs Sonya Gaspar
	Mrs Emma Black



## Terms of reference

This inquiry and report is conducted under the following powers:

*Criminal Code Act 1995*

### **Section 102.1A Reviews by Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security**

*Review of listing regulation*

- (1) If a regulation made after the commencement of this section specifies an organisation for the purposes of paragraph (b) of the definition of terrorist organisation in section 102.1, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security may:
  - (a) review the regulation as soon as possible after the making of the regulation; and
  - (b) report the Committee's comments and recommendations to each House of the Parliament before the end of the applicable disallowance period.

And

### **Hizballah ESO**

*Criminal Code Amendment Regulations 2012 (No 6)*

Registered: 11 May 2012 (FRLI: F2012L01016)



# List of recommendations

## The Listing

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the regulation, made under the Criminal Code section 102.1, to list Hizballah's External Security Organisation as a terrorist organisation not be disallowed.



## Introduction

- 1.1 This review is conducted under section 102.1A of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (the Criminal Code). Section 102.1A provides that the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (the Committee) may review a regulation specifying an organisation as a terrorist organisation for the purpose of paragraph (b) of the definition of terrorist organisation in section 102.1 of the Criminal Code and report the Committee's comments to each house of the Parliament before the end of the applicable disallowance period.
- 1.2 The regulation under review have specified Hizballah's External Security Organisation (ESO) as a terrorist organisation for the purposes of section 102.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.
- 1.3 This is a review of the re-listing of this organisation.
- 1.4 In a letter received by the Committee on 25 May 2012, the Attorney-General advised that she intended to re-list this organisation prior to the lapsing of their current listing as provided for in section 102.1(3). The Attorney provided statement of reasons for the re-listing. This was accepted as submission number one to this review.
- 1.5 The regulation was tabled in the House of Representatives and the Senate on Monday, 21 May 2012. The disallowance period of 15 sitting days for the Committee's review of the listing began from the date of the tabling. Therefore the Committee has conducted its review to enable it to report to the Parliament by Thursday, 28 June 2012.

## The Government's procedures

- 1.6 In a letter received by the Committee on Friday, 25 May 2012, the Attorney-General's Department informed the Committee that it had adhered to the following procedures for the purpose of re-listing the organisation:

The Security Law Branch of the Attorney-General's Department facilitates the process by which the Attorney-General makes a decision to list, re-list or de-list a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code. This includes obtaining products from ASIO that assess organisations and seeking the advice of the Chief General Counsel of the Australian Government Solicitor in relation to the assessments. These are included in a package of information that is submitted to the Attorney-General to assist her to make a decision as to whether or not a particular organisation will be listed under the Criminal Code.

The following processes were undertaken for the purpose of listing Hizballah's External Security Organisation (Hizballah ESO):

Unclassified Statements of Reasons were prepared by ASIO, and endorsed by DFAT, detailing the case for re-listing Hizballah ESO. The Statement of Reasons was received by the Attorney-General's Department on 14 February 2012.

On 14 March and 20 March 2012 Mr Robert Orr QC, Chief General Counsel, provided written advice with respect to the Statement of Reasons for Hizballah ESO.

The Director-General of Security wrote to the Attorney-General on 20 March 2012, outlining the background, training activities, terrorist activities and statements of Hizballah's ESO.

A submission was provided to the Attorney-General on 21 March 2012, providing the following documents:

- a. copies of the Statement of Reasons received from ASIO with respect to the organisations; and
- b. advice from the Chief General Counsel.

Having considered the information provided in the submission, the Attorney-General signed statements on 27

March 2012 with respect to Hizballah ESO confirming that she is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation is an organisation directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act, or advocate the doing of a terrorist act, whether or not the act has occurred or will occur.

On 27 March 2012, the Attorney-General wrote to the Prime Minister advising of her intention to re-list Hizballah ESO as a terrorist organisation.

On 27 March 2012, the Attorney-General wrote to the Director-General of Security, in response to the Director-General's letter dated 20 March 2012.

On 14 April 2012, the Prime Minister wrote to the Premiers of the States and Chief Ministers of the Territories advising them of the Attorney-General's decision to re-list Hizballah ESO as a terrorist organisation and requesting their comments on the proposed re-listing. The States and Territories were also advised of the proposed re-listings by e-mail dated 20 April 2012.

The following responses were received from the Premiers and Chief Ministers of the States and Territories:

- ⇒ New South Wales - response dated 7 May 2012
- ⇒ Victoria - response dated 7 May 2012
- ⇒ Western Australia - response dated 7 May 2012
- ⇒ South Australia - response dated 1 May 2012
- ⇒ Tasmania - response dated 4 May 2012
- ⇒ Queensland - response dated 2 May 2012
- ⇒ Australian Capital Territory - response dated 4 May 2012
- ⇒ Northern Territory - response dated 30 April 2012

None of the States and Territories objected to the re-listing.

A submission was provided to the Attorney-General on 18 April 2012, providing the regulation and Federal Executive Council documentation with respect of the re-listing of Hizballah ESO.

On 25 April 2012, the Attorney-General signed Criminal Code Amendment Regulation 2012 in relation to the organisation, and approved associated Federal Executive Council documentation including an explanatory memorandum,

executive council minute and explanatory statement, for the Federal Executive Council meeting that occurred on 10 May 2012.

On 25 April 2012, the Attorney-General advised the Leader of the Opposition of the proposed re-listing of Hizballah ESO as a terrorist organisation by letter, and offered a briefing in relation to the re-listing.

On 25 April 2012, the Attorney-General wrote to the Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security advising of her decision to re-list Hizballah ESO as a terrorist organisation.

On 10 May 2012 the Governor-General made Criminal Code Amendment Regulation 2012 (No. 6) re-listing Hizballah ESO as a terrorist organisation.

The Regulation was registered with the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI) on 11 May 2012 with the FRLI Reference Number F2012L01016 – Criminal Code Amendment Regulation 2012.

The re-listing Regulation came into effect on 12 May 2012, the day after it was registered on FRLI.

The Attorney-General issued a Media Release on 11 May 2012 announcing the re-listing of the terrorist organisation and attaching a copy of the Statement of Reasons.

The Australian Government's National Security website was also updated.

## **Procedural comments**

- 1.7 The Committee is satisfied with the procedures undertaken by the Government and notes the responses of the States and Territories.

## The Listing

### The Criteria for listing an organisation

2.1 To be specified as a terrorist organisation for the purpose of paragraph (b) of the definition of terrorist organisation in section 102.1 of the Criminal Code, the Minister:

... must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not the terrorist act has occurred or will occur).<sup>1</sup>

2.2 At the hearing on 1 February 2005 for the *Review of the listing of six terrorist organisations*, the Director-General of ASIO advised the Committee of ASIO's evaluation process in selecting entities for proscription under the Criminal Code. Some of the factors included:

- engagement in terrorism;
- ideology and links to other terrorist groups or networks;
- links to Australia;
- threat to Australian interests;
- proscription by the UN or like-minded countries; and
- engagement in peace/mediation processes.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Subsection 102.1(2) of Division 102, Subdivision A of the Criminal Code.

2 Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD, *Review of the listing of six terrorist organisations*, Parliamentary Paper No.: 67/2005; Tabled 7 March 2005, p. 15.

- 2.3 The Committee continues to use these criteria as the basis of its reviews of all listings.

## Overview

- 2.4 This report is a consideration of the re-listing of Hizballah's ESO under the Criminal Code. In past reviews of re-listings the Committee has stated its preference to see information which relates to the activities of the organisation since the last re-listing. Receiving information on activities since the last re-listing, whilst not in itself conclusive, is an appropriate consideration in the process of re-listing. Whilst historical background is important to consider, and will be noted, evidence for a re-listing should focus on what has changed since the last review. The issue of currency of evidence was raised in the Committee's report, *Review of the re-listing of Al-Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah* (October 2006):

The re-listing of an organisation is a fresh exercise of executive discretion and the Committee believes that there must, therefore, be a sufficient degree of currency in the evidence to warrant the use of the power.<sup>3</sup>

## Hizballah's External Security Organisation

- 2.5 This organisation was initially listed in 2003 under legislative arrangements which required that for an organisations to be listed they had to be on the United Nations list of terrorist organisations. The ESO came up for review under the current proscription regime in 2005, in 2007 and in 2009. This review is of the fourth re-listing of ESO as a terrorist organisation.
- 2.6 The Committee would like to make it very clear that this is *not* a listing of the entire Hizballah organisation. However, in looking at the ESO in particular, the Committee is faced with a difficulty. Many of the resources, such as Jane's Terrorism and Counter Insurgency Centre and the United States National Counterterrorism Centre, that the Committee uses to independently look at terrorist organisation that have been re-listed do not now differentiate between Hizballah and Hizballah's ESO.

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3 Joint Parliamentary Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD, *Review of the listing of Al-Qa'ida and Jemaah Islamiyah*, October 2004, p. 3.

2.7 In relation to the difficulty of attributing specific attacks to Hizballah's ESO the statement of reasons refers to the "secretive" nature of the ESO and that:

... it is difficult to gather detailed information about the group's role and activities. However, there is no indication that the ESO's role has changed in recent times, and considering Hizballah's stated desire to avenge the death of Imad Mughniyah, and the recent arrest of a probable Hizballah operative in Bangkok, it is likely that the ESO retains its separate terrorist function within Hizballah's overall organisational structure.<sup>4</sup>

2.8 The Attorney-General's statement of reasons is at Appendix B

## Engagement in Terrorism

2.9 The statement of reasons states that:

The External Security Organisation is a discrete branch within Lebanese Hizballah responsible for the planning, coordination and execution of terrorist attacks against Hizballah's enemies outside of Lebanon.<sup>5</sup>

2.10 The statement of reasons states that Hizballah's ESO has a record of regular terrorist attacks mainly against Israeli and US targets up until the early 1990s.

2.11 The statement of reasons refers to two attacks in particular against "Israeli interests" in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1992 and 1994. While the 1992 attack was against the Israeli Embassy, the 1994 attack was against a Jewish cultural centre.

2.12 As mentioned above, Jane's does not differentiate between Hizballah and Hizballah's ESO. It should be noted that the statement of reasons suggests, in relation to the arrest by Thai authorities of an individual allegedly linked to Hizballah that:

... any Hizballah connection almost certainly would be through the ESO and points to ESO's on-going interest in, and preparations for, terrorist activities outside Lebanon.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Statement of Reasons, Submission 1, see Appendix B.

5 Statement of Reasons, Submission 1, see Appendix B.

6 Statement of Reasons, Submission 1, see Appendix B.

- 2.13 The Committee is satisfied that terrorist acts and fundraising overseas attributed to Hizballah by Jane's involve Hizballah's ESO. In stating this the Committee notes this paragraph of the statement of reasons:

There have been no major acts of terrorism specifically attributed to the ESO since 1994. Nevertheless, Hizballah has vowed to retaliate against Israel for Israel's perceived role in Mughniyah's assassination. The ESO is likely to be responsible for planning future terrorist attacks against Israeli interests to this end.<sup>7</sup>

- 2.14 In relation to Hizballah's targeting of Israel, Jane's states that Hizballah:

... demonstrated an increasingly assertive military confidence in a 16 February 2011 speech by Nasrallah in which he stated that Hizballah militants were now more than a local defence force. He went on to respond to alleged statements made by IDF Chief of General Staff Benjamin Gantz that IDF soldiers should be ready to re-engage with southern Lebanon in the event of a crisis, stating that Hizballah forces would be ready to cross the border with Israel and secure the Galilee region in the event of a conflict with Israel.<sup>8</sup>

- 2.15 GlobalSecurity.org states that:

In Israel's view, Hizballah's activities are part of Iran's overall policy with regard to Israel, which is to fan the flames of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and initiate terrorist activities against Israel, despite the fact that Hizballah is a Lebanese organization consisting entirely of terrorists from Lebanon, with no national connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In view of Iran's interest in smudging its fingerprints with regard to direct control over internal terrorist activities, Hizballah's status is significant as Iran's front-line operative arm against Israel.<sup>9</sup>

- 2.16 The United States National Counterterrorism Centre states that:

Several Hizballah operations have been disrupted since Mughniyah's death, including the 2008 disruption of a cell in Baku, Azerbaijan, targeting the Israeli embassy there, and the late-2008 disruption of a Hizballah cell in Egypt targeting Israeli tourists and ships in transiting the Suez Canal. Additionally, a

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7 Statement of Reasons, Submission 1, see Appendix B.

8 Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, <[www.jtic.janes.com](http://www.jtic.janes.com)> viewed on 28 May 2012.

9 GlobalSecurity.org, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hizballah.htm>> viewed on 28 May 2012.

Hizballah operation was reportedly disrupted in Turkey in 2009, and in early 2011 Israel warned its citizens of several Hizballah plots against Israeli interests in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Cyprus.<sup>10</sup>

## Ideology and links to other terrorist groups/networks

### Ideology

#### 2.17 Jane's states that:

Hizbullah, or Party of God, was formed in 1982 but formally announced its existence in February 1985. It was initially composed of small radical Shia Muslim groups that looked to Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution for inspiration. Many of the early leaders had studied in Shia seminaries in Najaf in Iraq where they were inspired by the radical teachings of Mohammed Baqr as-Sadr and Ruhollah Khomeini.

Hizbullah began to emerge in the wake of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Islamist members of the mainstream Shia Amal Movement broke away to form Islamic Amal, headed by Hussein Mussawi. Islamic Amal joined with former members of the Lebanese Dawa Party and numerous small radical Shia groups to form Hizbullah. The group originated in the northern Bekaa Valley before spreading to the southern suburbs of Beirut and then slowly southward during the 1980s. It won a loyal support base through the provision of social services, including health, education, and infrastructure in impoverished Shia areas. In 1992, it stood candidates in the first post-civil war parliamentary elections, securing eight seats for Hizbullah members which, along with four allies, granted the party a parliamentary bloc of 12.<sup>11</sup>

#### 2.18 The statement of reasons describes how the ESO came into being:

The ESO was set up by Imad Mughniyah, who has been described variously as the head of Hizballah's security section, a senior intelligence official and as one of the founders of Hizballah. After Imad Mughniyah fled to Iran following Hizballah's 1983 attack on the US military in Beirut, the 'international wing' grew out of the military wing to become a separate branch under Mughniyah's

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10 United States National Counterterrorism Centre, <<http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/hizballah.html>> viewed on 25 May 2012.

11 Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, <[www.jtic.janes.com](http://www.jtic.janes.com)> viewed on 25 May 2012.

control. This is thought to be the genesis of Hizballah's 'international wing', or the ESO.<sup>12</sup>

## Links to other terrorist groups/networks

2.19 The statement of reasons states that:

Hizballah elements provide training, operational support and material to Palestinian extremist groups, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and HAMAS's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, both of which are proscribed entities, and Shia militia elements in Iraq. Although these activities are undertaken by units within Hizballah specifically created for these tasks, elements of the ESO are likely involved.<sup>13</sup>

2.20 Global Security.org state the following in relation to fundraising:

Besides operating a worldwide network of fundraisers, funds are also raised through so-called 'charity funds'. Some of these are extremist Islamic institutions that, while not directly connected to Hizballah, support it, albeit marginally, in view of their radical Islamic orientation. While some of these funds undoubtedly pay for Hizballah's military and terrorist operations, other funds enable the group to provide its members with day jobs, to drape itself in a veil of legitimacy, and to build grassroots support among not only Shi'a, but also Sunni and Christian Lebanese.<sup>14</sup>

## Links to Australia

2.21 There is no information in the statement of reasons on Hizballah's ESO having any direct funding or support links with Australia.

## Threat to Australian interests

2.22 The statement of reasons contains no information on this matter.

## Proscription by the UN or like-minded countries

2.23 Hizballah's ESO has been listed as a terrorist organisation in the United Kingdom, under 'Hizballah's Military Wing'. Hizballah as a whole, which

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12 Statement of Reasons, Submission 1, see Appendix B.

13 Statement of Reasons, Submission 1, see Appendix B.

14 GlobalSecurity.org, <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hizballah.htm>> viewed on 28 May 2012.

includes the ESO, has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the governments of the United States, Canada and Israel.

## Engagement in Peace and Mediation processes

2.24 No information on this matter was provided in the statement of reasons.

## Conclusion

2.25 It is clear that many research organisations, such as Jane's Counterterrorism and Insurgency Centre and the United States National Counterterrorism Centre, that the Committee refer to in reviewing a re-listing such as this no longer make a distinction between Hizballah and Hizballah's ESO. On this basis, and with the benefit of having examined this organisation on numerous occasions, the Committee was able to conclude that certain activities attributed to Hizballah could equally be attributed to Hizballah's ESO.

2.26 The Committee found that the Hizballah ESO continues to engage in activities that satisfy section 102.1 of the Criminal Code. The Committee does not recommend disallowance of the regulation.

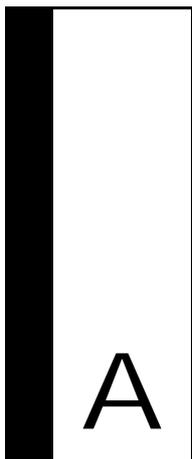
### Recommendation 1

**The Committee recommends that the regulation, made under the Criminal Code section 102.1, to list Hizballah's External Security Organisation as a terrorist organisation not be disallowed.**

**Hon Anthony Byrne, MP**

Chairman

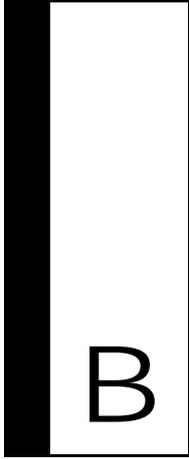




## Appendix A – List of Submissions

1. The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Attorney-General
2. Attorney-General's Department





## Appendix B – Statement of Reasons – Hizballah’s External Security Organisation

### **Hizballah’s External Security Organisation (ESO)**

(Also known as: Foreign Action Unit; Hizballah ESO; Hizballah International;  
Islamic Jihad Organisation; Revolutionary Justice Organisation;  
and Special Operations Branch)

The following information is based on publicly available details about the ESO. To the Australian Government’s knowledge, these details are accurate and reliable and have been corroborated by classified information.

#### **Basis for listing a terrorist organisation**

Division 102 of the *Criminal Code* provides that for an organisation to be listed as a terrorist organisation, the Attorney-General must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation:

- (a) is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, or assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur); or
- (b) advocates the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur).

## **Details of the organisation**

### **The Hizballah Context**

Hizballah is a pragmatic political organisation with deep roots in Lebanese society. Founded in 1982 with Iranian assistance during the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, Hizballah evolved into a multi-faceted organisation including political, social and military components supported by Iran and Syria.

Within Lebanon, Hizballah represents the Lebanese Shia community, the country's largest sect, and maintains a social welfare network that encompasses education and health services. Currently, it has two ministerial portfolios and constitutes an integral part of the ruling March 8 coalition.

As a fully-fledged political organisation, Hizballah engages with numerous international organisations and governments. For example, Hizballah liaises with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the context of the management of the cease-fire in southern Lebanon.

Hizballah also maintains a highly capable and well-resourced militia structured ostensibly to resist Israeli aggression, but also to defend and promote Shia interests in the context of Lebanon's historical and ongoing sectarian divisions. In 2006 it fought against the Israeli Defence Force and since then has been arming itself in preparation for future conflict. Hizballah receives training, funding and military equipment from Iran and Syria and is a highly sophisticated military actor.

### **The ESO Objectives**

The External Security Organisation is a discrete branch within Lebanese Hizballah responsible for the planning, coordination and execution of terrorist attacks against Hizballah's enemies outside of Lebanon. Since entering the Lebanese Parliament in 1992 and the Government in 1995, Hizballah has sought to strengthen its public image as a respected resistance movement and lessen its

reputation as a terrorist group. This has seen the ESO operate independently of the parent body and become one of the best organised terrorist groups in the world.

The ESO was set up by Imad Mughniyah, who has been described variously as the head of Hizballah's security section, a senior intelligence official and as one of the founders of Hizballah. After Imad Mughniyah fled to Iran following Hizballah's 1983 attack on the US military in Beirut, the 'international wing' grew out of the military wing to become a separate branch under Mughniyah's control. This is thought to be the genesis of Hizballah's 'international wing', or the ESO.

The ESO was led by Mughniyah until his assassination in Damascus in 2008. There have been no major acts of terrorism specifically attributed to the ESO since 1994. Nevertheless, Hizballah has vowed to retaliate against Israel for Israel's perceived role in Mughniyah's assassination. The ESO is likely to be responsible for planning future terrorist attacks against Israeli interests to this end.

### **Leadership and Membership**

Little is known about the current structure or membership of the ESO. It remains a covert and highly secretive organisation that has been successful in restricting information about its organisational structure and membership. Its current leader is Talal Hamiyah.

### **Terrorist activity of the organisation**

*Directly or indirectly engaged in the doing of terrorist acts*

Neither Hizballah nor the ESO have publically admitted responsibility for any terrorist attacks outside Lebanon. Nevertheless, the ESO is widely considered responsible for at least two major attacks against Israeli/Jewish interests outside of Lebanon in the early 1990s: the attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, and the attack on the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AIMA) in Buenos Aires in 1994.

- On 17 March 1992, a truck laden with explosives was used to destroy the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. 29 people were killed, and 242 injured. Although Hizballah denied involvement, responsibility for the attack was claimed in the name of the Islamic Jihad Organisation, which cited its motive as revenge for Israel's assassination of Hizballah Secretary-General Abbas al-Musawi in February of that year. The Islamic Jihad Organisation is widely considered to be synonymous with the ESO. Argentinean authorities eventually issued an arrest warrant for then ESO leader Mughniyah for organising the attack.
- On 18 July 1994, a van carrying explosives was detonated outside the AIMA, killing 85 people and injuring more than 300. In 1999, Argentine authorities issued an arrest warrant for Mughniyah for his alleged involvement. No group claimed responsibility for the attack and Hizballah has repeatedly denied accusations that it conducted the attack. However, the Argentinean authorities concluded that ESO was responsible.

*Directly or indirectly preparing and/or planning terrorist acts*

In January 2012 Thai authorities announced the arrest in Bangkok of an individual allegedly linked to Hizballah and in possession of explosive precursors. The individual denied being connected to Hizballah and it remains uncertain whether the explosive materials were intended for use in Thailand or for shipment elsewhere. Nonetheless, any Hizballah connection almost certainly would be through the ESO and points to ESO's on-going interest in, and preparations for, terrorist activities outside Lebanon.

In addition, in 2008 alleged ESO operative Ali Karaki was arrested in Baku, Azerbaijan, and charged with plotting to bomb the Israeli Embassy.

*Directly or indirectly assisting in the doing of terrorist acts*

Hizballah elements provide training, operational support and material to Palestinian extremist groups, including the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and HAMAS's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, both of which are proscribed entities, and Shia militia elements in Iraq. Although these activities are undertaken by units within Hizballah specifically created for these tasks, elements of the ESO are likely involved.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the secretive nature of the ESO, it is difficult to gather detailed information about the group's role and activities. However, there is no indication that the ESO's role has changed in recent times, and considering Hizballah's stated desire to avenge the death of Imad Mughniyah, and the recent arrest of a probable Hizballah operative in Bangkok, it is likely that the ESO retains its separate terrorist function within Hizballah's overall organisational structure.

On the basis of the above information, ASIO assesses the ESO continues to directly and/or indirectly engage in conducting, preparing, planning, assisting, advocating or fostering the doing of terrorist acts, involving threats to life and serious property damage. This assessment is corroborated by information provided by reliable and credible intelligence sources.

In the course of pursuing its objectives the ESO is known to have committed or threatened action:

- that causes, or could cause, serious damage to property, the death of persons or endanger a person's life;
- with the intention of advancing Hizballah's political, religious or ideological causes; and
- with the intention of intimidating the global public and sections of the global public.

## **Other Relevant Information**

The United Kingdom and New Zealand have listed Hizballah's ESO as a terrorist organisation under 'Hizballah's Military Wing'. Hizballah as a whole (including ESO) has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the governments of the United States and Canada.

