

The Israel Project

Facts for a Better Future



The Israel Project

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The Jerusalem Office

The Israel Project's (TIP) Jerusalem Office is a non-governmental resource working with foreign journalists based in Israel. It provides reporters with needed facts and information before they file their stories. TIP's Jerusalem team features several Middle East experts and former journalists. TIP's Israel team, led by Marcus Sheff, includes experts who are fluent in English, Hebrew, Arabic, French, German, Farsi and Russian.

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Cover photo: A poster of Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah (Bertramz)

Hezbollah

Hezbollah ("Party of God" in Arabic) is a Lebanese Shiite Muslim terrorist organization and political party. Born in Lebanon in 1982 but nurtured in Iran, Hezbollah has gone from a radical offshoot of the Shiite Amal Party and militia to a major force in regional politics. It is now recognized as a highly skilled, worldwide terrorist network.

Hezbollah's backyard is south Lebanon, locally known as the *Jebel Amal*.¹

In Lebanon's June 2009 elections, the movement won 13 seats in the Lebanese parliament and the Hezbollah-led alliance won 58 of the 128 parliamentary seats.²



At its closest point, the Litani River lies 2.5 miles from the Lebanon-Israel border (Doron)

Suspected of being implicated in the 2005 murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Hezbollah and its allies resigned from the cabinet on January 12, 2011.³ The Lebanese government collapsed as a result, entering a political vacuum that analysts fear will lead to violence and civil unrest.⁴

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon submitted its recommendations about the Hariri assassins to a judge on Jan. 17. The names were not yet revealed but experts believe Hezbollah members will be named.

There were widespread protests and riots in Lebanon's "day of rage" (Jan. 25) in response to Hezbollah-backed Najib Makti's appointment as the next prime minister of Lebanon.

Positions in South Lebanon

Since the withdrawal of Israeli forces in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 (from 1978), Hezbollah has maintained positions directly opposite the Israeli border.⁵

Hezbollah's ongoing attacks against Israel culminated in the capture of two Israel Defense Force soldiers and the killing of two more.

Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel to carry out the attack.⁶ That action sparked Israel's 2006 defensive war against Iran-backed Hezbollah.

During the fighting, the area south of the Litani River (see map above) was largely cleared of Hezbollah forces. The U.N. and Lebanese government then sent forces: 15,000 soldiers of the Lebanese Armed Forces were dispatched south of the Litani. United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) forces were bolstered from under 2,000 to a current total of over 12,000, with expanded powers to search and confiscate weapons and prevent armament and paramilitary movement in the Litani area.⁷

¹ "Hezbollah." *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Edition* (July 2010): 1. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011)

² Schenker, David, "What To Do With Hezbollah Now," CBSNEWS, June 19, 2009, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/06/18/opinion/main5096540.shtml>

³ "Lebanese government collapses," *Al Jazeera*, Jan. 13, 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/2011112151356430829.html>

⁴ Bakri, Nada, "Resignations Deepen Crisis for Lebanon," *The New York Times*, Jan. 12, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/world/middleeast/13lebanon.html?_r=1&hp

⁵ Norton, Augustus Richard, and Boston University. "Hezbollah Assessment." *FDCH Congressional Testimony* (n.d.): *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011).

⁶ Alagha, Joseph. "THE ISRAELI-HIZBULLAH 34-DAY WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 1-22. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011)

⁷ Alagha, Joseph. "THE ISRAELI-HIZBULLAH 34-DAY WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 1-22. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011)

These combined forces have somewhat inhibited Hezbollah's ability to openly maneuver or set up positions close to the border with Israel.

However, the Litani River area remains Hezbollah's main base of operations. Using a combination of underground fortifications and hiding in the towns and villages of South Lebanon, Hezbollah has managed to keep a considerable force within 25 miles (40 km) of the Israeli border.⁸

The general layout of Hezbollah is as follows: There are two forward elements, mainly located in rural fortified positions and in the local populated areas. The units are meant to delay and stall any Israeli advance, causing as many casualties as possible but not meant to hold out indefinitely.



The Hezbollah flag flies above two U.N. vehicles at Kfar Kila, 2 miles (1 km) from the Israeli border. (The Israel Project)

The Northern Unit is effectively a reserve force, ready for deployment. In addition, Hezbollah can count on further reinforcements from the Beirut area and the Bekaa Valley on the Syrian border.⁹



(Israel Defense Forces)

As seen in the map above, the bulk of Hezbollah's forces still lie in the Litani area. The smaller inset map shows the ethnic layout of South Lebanon: Hezbollah concentrates its forces in the Shiite areas. As part of its understanding with its Christian allies, Hezbollah does not place its forces or weapons in or around Christian villages, and the same goes for the Druze villages.¹⁰

Hezbollah stores weapons and stations its forces in Shiite villages and towns. Hezbollah's hiding in populated areas, where any military exchange with Israel would result in significant civilian casualties, is a

⁸ Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson. "Hezbollah Activity Four Years After Second Lebanon War – 2010." *IDF Blog*. August 31, 2010. <http://idfspokesperson.com/reports/hezbollah-activity-four-years-after-second-lebanon-war-2010/> (accessed January 9, 2011).

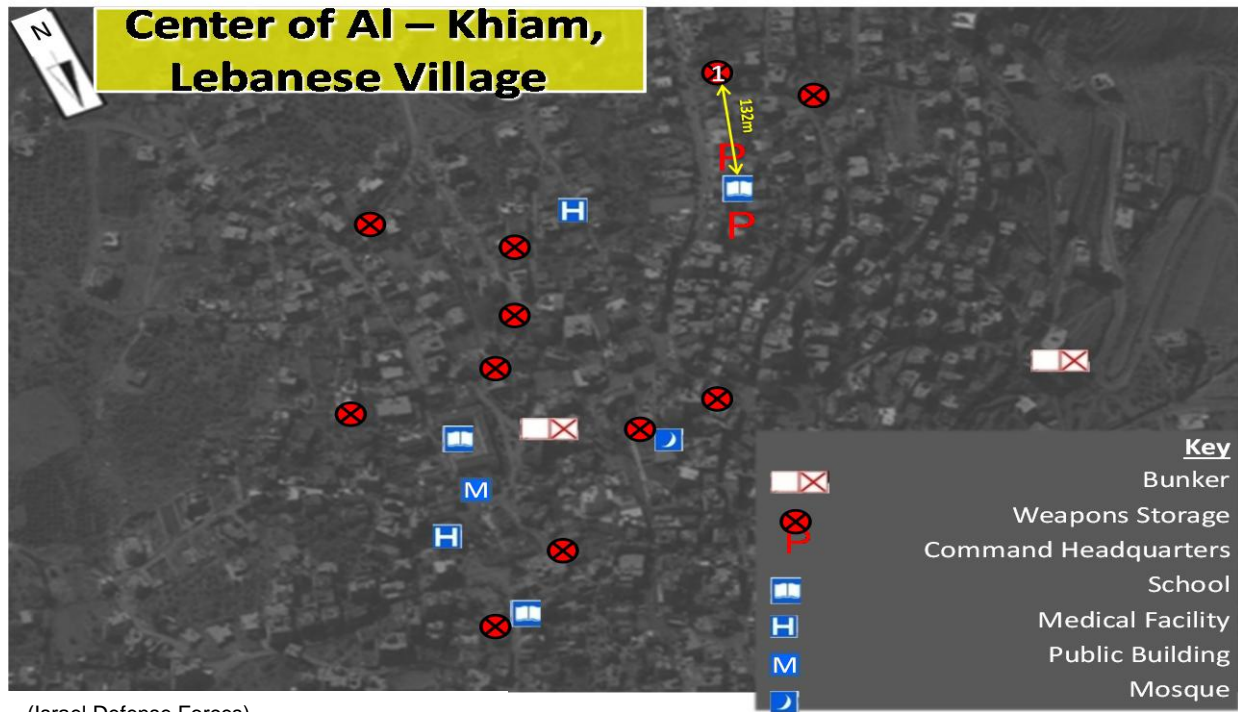
⁹ Norton, Augustus Richard, and Boston University. "Hezbollah Assessment." *FDCH Congressional Testimony* (n.d.): *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011).

¹⁰ Sharp, Jeremy M. *Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict*. Congressional Report, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006.

favorite tactic. An example of this can be seen clearly in the village of Al-Khiam, located fewer than 4 miles (6 km) from the Israeli border. (see map below)

However, fixed positions are not the mainstay of Hezbollah tactics. Despite the high level of organization and communication, Hezbollah ground units continue to comprise small mobile squads of fewer than a dozen men, usually armed with machine guns, some sort of assault rifle and a number of anti-tank weapons.¹¹ It was units like these that caused the most casualties to the IDF in the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict in 2006, not the static defense posts which, once identified, are vulnerable to air-strikes.¹²

The quality and quantity of Israeli surveillance and UNIFIL patrols mean that if a Hezbollah unit has not found an inconspicuous hiding place, it moves continuously. As a result, the entire area of south Lebanon serves Hezbollah as a base for terrorist activities.



(Israel Defense Forces)



In violation of U.N. Security Resolution 1701 which calls on Hezbollah to disarm, Israel Defense Forces discovered a civilian building used as a Hezbollah weapons hideout in the south Lebanon town, Al-Shahabiya, in September 2010.

¹¹ Norton, Augustus Richard, and Boston University. "Hezbollah Assessment." *FDCH Congressional Testimony* (n.d.): *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011).

¹² Alagha, Joseph. "THE ISRAELI-HIZBULLAH 34-DAY WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 1-22. *Military & Government Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 9, 2011)

Hezbollah Fighters and Weapons' Capabilities in South Lebanon

July 12, 2010 marked the fourth anniversary of the beginning of Israel's defensive war against Hezbollah.¹³ With Iran's aid, Hezbollah has been actively building up its arsenal and guerilla warfare capabilities since its war with Israel in 2006. Both are direct violations of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, which calls for Hezbollah to disarm.¹⁴

Hezbollah took an immense amount of damage to its manpower and logistical infrastructure in 2006. Yet, soon after the war, Iran and Syria sponsored a massive reconstruction of its capabilities.

First and foremost was a revamped training program of its personnel. A report from April 2007 cites 500 Hezbollah terrorists being sent to Iran for training by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.¹⁵ The same report shows that terrorists are cycled through Iran on periodic training exercises and Syria also takes a major role in training fighters, especially in the use of rockets.

Estimates vary on how many armed fighters Hezbollah can actually call on at any one time; a report from the 2006 war stated that Hezbollah had around 1,000 full time fighters and 6,000-10,000 reservists. Other reports cite as many as 20,000 fighters of all types.¹⁶ These include the hundreds of specially trained technicians and engineers needed to service Hezbollah's rocket arsenal.

Hezbollah has a large weapons cache, outmatching those of actual armies, including that of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Jamestown Foundation states its average terrorists "*are armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades, typically assembling in small teams to avoid concentrations that would draw Israeli attention.*"¹⁷ That report also states "*the use of mortars (81mm and 120mm) has been honed to near perfection... Hezbollah fighters have developed efficient assault tactics for use against armor, with their main anti-tank weapons being AT-3 Sagers and AT-4 Spigot missiles.*"

TOW missiles, an acronym for "tube-launched, optically-tracked, wire data link auto-guided missile," are said to be present in Hezbollah's warehouses.¹⁸ The TOW has been linked to the Iran-Contra Scandal, in which weapons were allegedly provided to Iran by then U.S. president Ronald Reagan in order to secure the release of American hostages taken by Hezbollah and Iran-loyalists in Lebanon.

The vast majority of the weapons come from Syria and Iran, with Iran equipping Hezbollah with unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for reconnaissance purposes.¹⁹ Syria and Iran allegedly gave the group Russian and Iranian produced MANPAD's (man portable air defense weapons) such as the SA-7.²⁰

The low estimate for Hezbollah's rocket capabilities is that it possesses at least 40,000 rockets of various range abilities.²¹ Moreover, Israeli intelligence officials believe Hezbollah has 40,000 rockets south of the Litani alone, as told to The Israel Project in December 2010.

The actual types are of mostly Iranian origin, including the Fajr 3 and 5, with ranges around 46 miles (75 km), the Zelzal-1 with a 93 mile (150 km) range.²² This means Hezbollah has the ability to threaten Tel Aviv and central Israel from south Lebanon.

¹³ Cohen, Stephen P, "Preventing the Next Lebanon War," *The Wall Street Journal*, July 20, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704201604575373261917465060.html>

¹⁴ Resolution 1701," Security Council: United Nations, August 11, 2006, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>

¹⁵ El Hussein, Rola. "Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria." *Third World Quarterly* (2010), 31: 5, pg. 803-815.

¹⁶ Rao, Preshant. "Analysis: Hezbollah a Force to be Reckoned With." *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*. July 18, 2006. <http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/press-coverage-2006/july-2006/hezbollah-a-force-to-be-reckoned-with/> (accessed January 9, 2011).

¹⁷ MacGregor, Andrew. "Hezbollah's Tactics and Capabilities in South Lebanon." *The Jamestown Foundation*. August 1, 2006.

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=860](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=860) (accessed January 9, 2011).

¹⁸ "Origins of TOW," United States Army, <http://www.redstone.army.mil/history/tow/summary.html>. Accessed Jan. 12, 2010.

¹⁹ Katzman, Kenneth. *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*. Congressional Report, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2010.

²⁰ Levitt, Mathew A. "Hezbollah: Financing Terrorism Through Criminal Enterprise." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. May 25, 2005. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/hezbollah-testimony-05252005.pdf> (accessed January 11, 2010).

²¹ Katz, Yaakov. "IDF reveals Hizbullah positions." *The Jerusalem Post*. July 7, 2010. <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=180733> (accessed January 9, 2011).

²² Katz, Yaakov. "IDF reveals Hizbullah positions." *The Jerusalem Post*. July 7, 2010. <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=180733> (accessed January 9, 2011).

The most basic rocket is the Katyusha-122, which has a range of less than 18 miles (29 km). Hezbollah is also said to have added the M-600 Scud D to its inventory from Syria, which has a range of 186 miles (300 km) and, being fitted with a GPS inertial navigation system, is accurate to within 656 feet (200 meters) of a pre-selected target. Hezbollah is reported to have at least 200 of these variants.²³

- Israeli intelligence reports that Hezbollah possesses 26,000 more rockets than it did on the eve of the Second Lebanon War.²⁴
- Hezbollah has Iranian Zelzal-2 ballistic missiles, capable of carrying a 1,300lb (600kg) warhead with a maximum range of 124 miles (200km), placing all major Israeli cities in range of Hezbollah fire.²⁵
- Hezbollah has three organizational structures and sophisticated weaponry, including the M-6002 missile, supplied by Iran through Syria to Hezbollah with the help of the organization's 10,000 operatives.²⁶
- Syria mass-produced and delivered new, longer-range Scud-D missiles to Lebanon that travel as far as 435 miles (700km) and can carry chemical or biological warheads.²⁷
- WikiLeaks cables revealed that the United States had urged Syria to stop transferring ballistic missiles (Scud-D, Fateh-110 missiles) to Hezbollah earlier in 2010. They have the potential of reaching Tel Aviv and central Israel.²⁸
- Hezbollah also possesses a large arsenal of guided anti-tank missiles, including advanced Russian-built models. The militia also has a large cache of shore-to-sea missiles.²⁹
- Hezbollah has approximately 20,000 fighters with as many as 200 fighters stationed in every Shiite village in south Lebanon.³⁰
- In July 2010, Israeli military released aerial photos of Al-Khiam village in southern Lebanon, 4 miles (6 km) from Israel's border. Hezbollah has a military presence in more than 100 civilian villages.³¹
- Iran provided Hezbollah with \$200 million in 2008 to fund its terrorist activities, and has trained 3,000 Hezbollah militants in Iranian camps.³²

²² Rao, Preshant. "Analysis: Hezbollah a Force to be Reckoned With." *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*. July 18, 2006. <http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/press-coverage-2006/july-2006/hezbollah-a-force-to-be-reckoned-with/> (accessed January 9, 2011).

²³ Ben-David, Alon. "Israel Sees Increased Hezbollah Capability." *Aviation Week*. May 18, 2010. http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_channel.jsp?channel=defense&id=news/awst/2010/05/17/AW_05_17_2010_p28-226325.xml (accessed January 11, 2011).

²⁴ Harel, Amos, "Defense officials: Renew diplomatic pressure on Syria as Hezbollah rearms," *Haaretz*, July 13, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/spages/1001037.html>

²⁵ "At a glance: an assessment of Hezbollah's military capability," *Gulfnews*, <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/06/07/17/10053556.html>. June 3, 2009

²⁶ Malbrunot, George, "Dans le secret des caches d'armes du Hezbollah," *Le Figaro*, October 25, 2010 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2010/10/25/01003-20101025ARTFIG00681-dans-le-secret-des-caches-d-armes-du-hezbollah.php>

²⁷ Tabler, Andrew, "Inside the Syrian missile crisis," *Foreign Policy*, April 14, 2010 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/14/inside_the_syrian_missile_crisis

²⁸ Harkov, Lahav, "Wikileaks: Syria gave Hizbullah Scud-D missiles," *The Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 7, 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=198348>.

²⁹ "At a glance: an assessment of Hezbollah's military capability," *Gulfnews*, <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/06/07/17/10053556.html>. June 3, 2009

³⁰ Pfeffer, Anshel, "Hezbollah readying for urban war in southern Lebanon, IDF warns," *Haaretz*, July 7, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/hezbollah-readying-for-urban-war-in-southern-lebanon-idf-warns-1.300617>

³¹ <http://dover.idf.il/IDF/English/News/today/10/07/0801.htm>

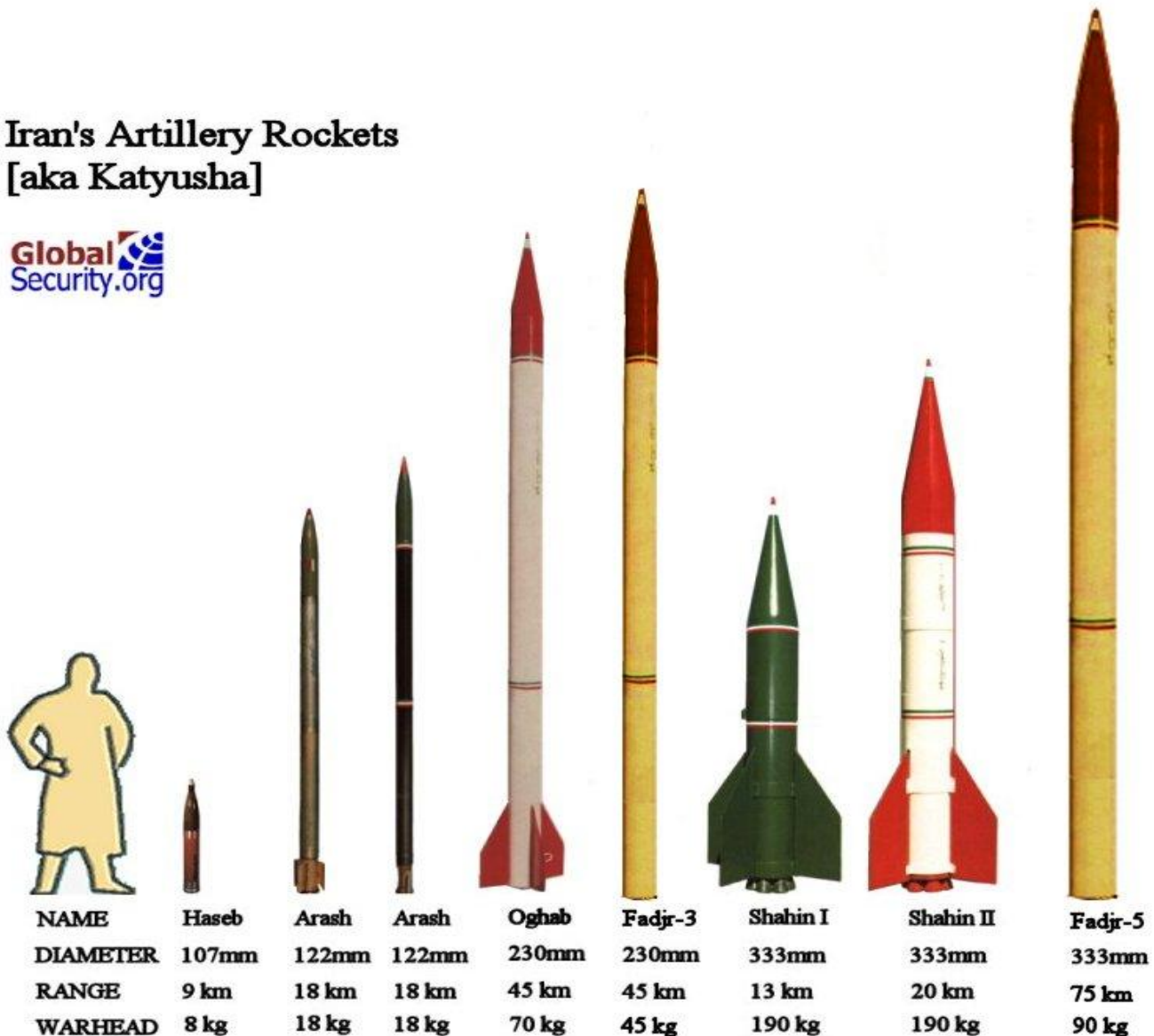
³² Country Reports on Terrorism 2008, "United States Department of State Publication; Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, April 2009, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/>

- Regarding disarmament, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah said:

*"Whoever wants to forcefully disarm the Resistance—and I have said this more than once—we will chop off his hand, behead him, and get rid of his soul. We are that determined."*³³

- On May 29, 2009, Nasrallah declared on Al-Manar television that Iran is unconditionally arming and supporting Hezbollah.³⁴

Iran's Artillery Rockets [aka Katyusha]



³³ "Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah: We Support Armed Struggle against the Americans in Iraq. We Will Chop off the Hand and Head of Whoever Tries to Disarm Us", MEMRI TV Monitoring Project, MEMRI TV Clip No. 1094, March 30, 2006; Al-Jazeera TV (Qatar), March 30, 2006

³⁴ Nasrallah: Iran arming Hezbollah unconditionally," *Haaretz.com*, May 30, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1088986.html>

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