

## CLAIM

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*“Banning the military wing took care of Hezbollah’s shady dealings in Europe.”*

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### SHORT RESPONSE

**THROUGH ITS EXTERNAL SECURITY ORGANIZATION (“ESO”), WHICH OPERATES A UNIT CALLED BUSINESS AFFAIRS COMPONENT, HEZBOLLAH IS INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES, GATHERING INTELLIGENCE AND BUILDING AN INFRASTRUCTURE TO CARRY OUT TERROR ATTACKS IN EUROPE.**

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### THE FACTS

Since the designation of its military wing as a terrorist organization by the EU in 2013, Hezbollah has carried out illicit activities. For example, **a joint investigation by the DEA, Europol, and some European countries in 2016 uncovered extensive Hezbollah activity related to drug trafficking, money laundering, and arms dealings.** This activity was led by the ESO.

## KEY DETAILS

- ▶ **Operations Cassandra and Cedar**, led by the U.S., exposed the criminal-business wing of Hezbollah via the External Security Organization Business Affairs Component (“BAC”). During Operation Cassandra, Hezbollah elements involved in drug trafficking were arrested in the U.S, South America and several European countries, including France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. Hezbollah’s criminal activity in Europe is run by BAC, which reports to ESO, AKA Unit 910 or Islamic Jihad Organization (“IJO”). Abdallah Safieddine, Hezbollah’s representative in Iran, is also involved in this activity.
- ▶ **Hezbollah’s threat to Europe is also manifested in the build-up of infrastructure.** In recent years, authorities have uncovered safe houses and warehouses containing tremendous quantities of explosive materials. In 2015 a warehouse storing 8.3 tons of ammonium nitrate was discovered in Cyprus and six months later 3 tons of ammonium nitrate were discovered in four London hideouts. On top of the risk for accidental detonations that threaten residential neighborhoods, it was revealed that the charge used in the Burgas bombing in 2012 contained ammonium nitrate.

## HEZBOLLAH’S CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

- ▶ **Ali Fayed**, a gun smuggler for Hezbollah, was arrested in 2014 in the Czech Republic. In response, Hezbollah kidnapped a few Czech citizens in Lebanon to get him released.
- ▶ **In the past decade, authorities have exposed two major Hezbollah crime rings with a significant European presence:** In the Canadian-Lebanese scandal exposed in 2011, a drug trafficking network led by Ayman Jumma smuggled cocaine from South America through Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The volume of illegal funds laundered through that bank was estimated at \$USD 200 million per month. In 2016, Operation Cedar saw the capture of 16 Hezbollah operatives who acted as members of that crime ring in France, Belgium,

Germany, and Italy, laundering money through the international purchase and sale of luxury goods. At the height of their activity, the crime ring laundered about one million euros per week, mostly through Germany.

- ▶ Hezbollah raises money from donations from various charities, Islamic institutions, private individuals and Shi’ite donors. **Fundraising activities are being carrying out in Germany, U.K., Belgium (diamond dealing) and other countries.**
- ▶ Additionally, **Hezbollah raises funds through criminal activity in Europe**, specifically counterfeiting Euros. For instance, during Operation Cassandra in 2008, German authorities arrested two Lebanese nationals holding over eight million euros, which have been raised by Hezbollah’s cocaine smuggling network. A year later, two other ring members were arrested for their involvement in drug trafficking from Beirut to Europe, in a raid on their home in the German city of Speyer.
- ▶ Hezbollah uses its operatives’ freedom of movement in Europe for **crime, fundraising, and incitement, but also for personnel recruitment.** A German intelligence report about Hezbollah’s threat on Germany (May 2019) established that the number of Hezbollah operatives in Germany has increased from 950 to approximately 1,050.
- ▶ Hezbollah’s criminal activity is **also active in cyberspace.** During October 2018, several servers in the Czech Republic were shut down because Hezbollah used them to hack computers and computer networks around the globe. Additionally, Hezbollah is active online and attempts to influence elections and spread disinformation. **Arrests of Hezbollah operatives in Europe are a testament to its activity on European soil.** French police conducted searches in the city of Grande-Synthe, in northern France, at the headquarters and home of the leaders of the Shi’ite organization “Zahra Center”, which have ties to Hezbollah. The center apparently served as logistical support for Iranian operations in France and was closed by authorities.

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHERE HEZBOLLAH’S TERRORIST AND DRUG-SMUGGLING RELATED ACTIVITIES CONTINUED AFTER THE EU’S DESIGNATION OF ITS MILITARY WING AS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION IN 2013.

