

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Press Center

Treasury Sanctions Hizballah Operatives in West Africa

6/11/2013

Action Targets Hizballah's Global Support Network Responsible for Fundraising and Recruiting

WASHINGTON – The Department of the Treasury today designated four Lebanese supporters of Hizballah who are responsible for aiding the organization's attempts to extend its influence throughout West Africa. Ali Ibrahim al-Watfa, Abbas Loutfe Fawaz, Ali Ahmad Chehade, and Hicham Nmer Khanafer, who are responsible for Hizballah's activities in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, and the Gambia respectively, have been organized fundraising efforts, recruited members, and in some cases styled themselves as ambassadors of Hizballah's Foreign Relations Department. Today's designations, pursuant to Executive Order 13224, which targets terrorists and their supporters, further expose the alarming reach of Hizballah's activities and its determination to create a worldwide funding and recruitment network to support its violence and criminal enterprises around the world. Even as Hizballah claims to be a resistance organization, its expansive global network is sending money and operatives to carry out terrorist attacks around the world and fighters to the front lines of the Syrian civil war.

"As Hizballah continues to use its global network of operatives and supporters to extend its malign influence beyond the borders of Lebanon, we will continue to use all tools at our disposal to take action to disrupt these efforts," said Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen. "These actions are increasingly important as the funding from Hizballah's traditional patron, Iran, is squeezed by international sanctions."

In addition to targeting Hizballah's terrorist operations, the Treasury Department has exposed Hizballah's links to vast narcotics trafficking and money laundering operations by both designating the network of narcotics kingpin Ayman Joumaa as well as employing Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act against Lebanese exchange houses transferring illicit profits into the international financial system. Treasury has also targeted Hizballah support networks run by Ali Mohamad Saleh in South America. These combined actions have exposed and disrupted Hizballah's attempts to expand its influence beyond the borders of Lebanon. Nonetheless, Hizballah has shown that it is determined to adapt and use its international networks to support terrorist attacks against civilians around the world.

U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with the individuals designated today, and any assets of those designees subject to U.S. jurisdiction are frozen.

Ali Ibrahim al-Watfa

Ali Ibrahim al-Watfa was formally appointed as the permanent Hizballah liaison to Sierra Leone by the Hizballah Foreign Relations Department, and he is a senior member of, and has assisted in leading, a Hizballah cell in Freetown, Sierra Leone, that is focused on fundraising for the group. Al-Watfa coordinated the transfer of funds from Sierra Leone to Hizballah in Lebanon through the Hizballah Foreign Relations Department.

Abbas Loutfe Fawaz

Abbas Loutfe Fawaz is a Hizballah Foreign Relations Department official who serves as Hizballah's leader in Senegal, playing a key role in Hizballah's activities and recruiting members for Hizballah. Following the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict, Fawaz established a group of Hizballah followers and, taking advantage of increased Lebanese nationalism generated by the conflict, became more active in promoting Hizballah and fundraising for the group. Fawaz used supermarkets, which he owned and operated, in Dakar, Senegal, to raise funds for Hizballah and attract supporters. Fawaz hosted a visit to Dakar, Senegal, of Hizballah members from Lebanon to promote Hizballah's interests, garner support among the Lebanese expatriates, and solicit financial donations.

Fawaz traveled to Lebanon to meet with Hizballah officials to discuss security in relation to the potential indictment of Hizballah members by the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) for the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Prior to his travel to Lebanon, Fawaz identified tens of Lebanese nationals residing in Senegal for whom he would arrange travel to Lebanon if Hizballah security officials deemed them to be of use. Fawaz also led a group of Hizballah members and supporters in secret meetings in order to devise ways to increase Hizballah's fundraising efforts and to promote Hizballah's popularity among Lebanese nationals in Dakar. Fawaz was deeply involved in Hizballah's efforts to influence the selection of a director of an influential Islamic institute in Dakar, and was also a key figure in arranging travel for a high-level Hizballah delegation from Lebanon.

Ali Ahmad Chehade

Ali Chehade is the Hizballah Foreign Relations Department official for Cote d'Ivoire, and in this capacity attempted to coordinate travel for Hizballah members from Senegal to Cote d'Ivoire. Chehade, who was sent to Cote d'Ivoire from Lebanon by senior Hizballah leadership, also is a Hizballah recruiter assisting Specially Designated Global Terrorist Abd Al Munim Qubaysi.

Hicham Nmer Khanafer

Hicham Khanafer has been an active and influential Hizballah member in The Gambia, where he has been involved in recruiting and fundraising for Hizballah. He hosted weekly meetings for local Hizballah members and supporters at his home, and he held weekly Hizballah fundraising and recruiting drives at a local mosque.

Identifying Information

Name: Ali Ibrahim al-Watfa
AKA: Ali Ibrahim al-Wafa
AKA: Alie Ibrahim al-Wafa
AKA: Alie Ibrahim al-Watfa
AKA: Al Haji Alie Ibrahim
DOB: 1969
POB: Al Qalamun, Lebanon
Location: 26 Malama Thomas Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Name: Abbas Loutfe Fawaz
AKA: Abbas Fouaz
AKA: 'Abbas Abu-Ahmad Fawwaz
DOB: 07 August 1978

POB: Jwaya, Lebanon
Alternate POB: Dakar, Senegal
Personal ID No.: 096574S (Senegal)
Citizenship: Lebanese
Alternate Citizenship: Senegalese
Location: Dakar, Senegal

Name: Ali Ahmad Chehade
AKA: Ali Cheade
AKA: Ali Shihadi
AKA: Abou Hassan Ali Chehade
AKA: Abou Hassan Jawad
AKA: Abu Hassan Jawad
DOB: January 5, 1961
POB: Ansarie, Lebanon
Passport No.: RL0516070 (Lebanon)
Citizenship: Lebanese
Location: Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Name: Hicham Nmer Khanafer
AKA: Hisham Kanafer
AKA: Hisham Khanafir
AKA: Hicham Kanafer
AKA: Hisham Khanafar
DOB: May 23, 1965
POB: Ainata, Lebanon
Alt POB: Kuntair, Gambia
Passport No.: 1617889, Lebanon
Nationality: Lebanese
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