

IRAN READY TO HIT UK



Hezbollah fighters could target Britain

Sunday July 13, 2008

By Jason Groves

IRAN is poised to launch terror attacks in Britain if the West presses ahead with military strikes against its nuclear facilities, intelligence experts warned last night.

As tensions in the Middle East continued to grow, they warned that the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah had already established sleeper cells in Britain and

mainland Europe tasked with carrying out bloody reprisals.

Likely UK targets include nuclear power stations, military bases, Government buildings and high-profile politicians and members of the Jewish community.

Richard Kemp, former adviser on terrorism to Tony Blair, said the difficulty of attacking Western and Israeli military targets directly meant Iran was likely to use its terror network to retaliate. Hezbollah, formed in Lebanon in the 1980s, has grown to become a major force in the Middle East.

He said: "In my view Iran's only realistic method of retaliation is through Hezbollah.

"Hezbollah undoubtedly have the capability to carry out attacks against Western targets outside the region. They have people here in the UK and they would aim to carry out attacks if they saw us as being in any way supportive of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities."

Claude Monique, director of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Centre, said: "Intelligence services across Europe believe Hezbollah pose a serious threat. They have already put in place a network of operatives and there is some evidence that reconnaissance has been carried out on potential targets.

"They are in wait-and-see mode at the moment and no-one knows exactly what they will do, but there is little doubt they will retaliate if Iran is attacked."

The warnings come amid mounting speculation that either Israel or the United States may attack Iran's nuclear facilities from the air. And tension mounted last week when, in a show of strength, Iran test-fired nine long-range ballistic missiles capable of hitting targets in Israel and coalition bases in Iraq.

In America Republican hawks suggest there is a “window of opportunity” for an attack after the US elections in November, before a new President is sworn in on 20 January next year.

But Sir Richard Dalton, British ambassador to Iran until 2006, insists there are still huge political, legal and military barriers to any attack.

Sir Richard, now an adviser to the think tank Chatham House, said the prospects had not changed, despite Iran’s missile launches and despite the major Israeli exercise last month which was widely seen as a rehearsal for air strikes on Iran.

Tomorrow the Government will ask MPs to approve adding Hezbollah – which attacked Israel with rockets in 2006 provoking an Israeli invasion of Lebanon – to a list of terrorist groups banned in the UK.

Yesterday Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said he viewed the impending ban as a “badge of honour”.

He added: “I consider it a natural decision to be issued by a founding bloc of the Zionist entity.”