

Hezbollah Financing in Angola

Key Findings

- Sanctioned businesses owned by U.S.-designated Hezbollah financier Kassim Tajideen have continued to operate in Angola.
- As recently as April 2018, Hezbollah financier Hatem Barakat claimed to work within Angola.



The National Assembly building in Luanda, Angola. (Source: [Wikipedia](#))

Overview

Angola has served as a refuge for international terrorist financiers. In particular, members of Hezbollah residing in Angola have used Angolan businesses to finance the terror group.¹ Further, the U.S. government has identified Angola as a transit and destination point for illegal drug trafficking from South America.²

Designated Extremist Entities Active in Angola

¹ Spencer S. Su, “Lebanese businessman, Hezbollah supporter, charged with evading U.S. sanctions,” *Washington Post*, March 24, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/lebanese-businessman-hezbollah-supporter-charged-with-evading-us-terror-sanctions/2017/03/24/979dbbd2-10b6-11e7-ab07-07d9f521f6b5_story.html?utm_term=.200856779db3; “Treasury Targets Hizballah Network in Africa,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 27, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg149.aspx>; Chaim Even-Zohar, “Hezbollah Diamond Smugglers Put on U.S. Terrorists List,” *Idex Online*, May 28, 2009, <http://www.idexonline.com/FullArticle?id=32413>.

² “2013 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)--Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes Country Database--Afghanistan through Colombia,” U.S. Department of State, July 1, 2013, <https://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2013/database/211180.htm>.



Hezbollah

Financiers of the Lebanon-based, Iranian-backed terrorist group have resided in Angola, using Angolan businesses to aid in financing Hezbollah. In March 2017, U.S.-designated Hezbollah financier Kassim Tajideen was arrested in Morocco on an INTERPOL warrant and extradited to the United States on charges of fraud, money laundering, and violating global terrorism sanctions regulations. Prior to his arrest, Tajideen had lived in Angola since 1990, operating a business empire that he used to contribute tens of millions of dollars to Hezbollah.³ Tajideen's Hezbollah financing network included three of his businesses in Angola—Golfrate Holdings Lda, Afri Belg Comercio E Industria Lda, and Grupo Arosfran Empreendimentos E Participacoes Sarl—all of which the United States designated as terrorist entities in December 2010.⁴ Other Hezbollah financiers continue to reside in Angola.⁵

Designated by: Arab League, Australia, Bahrain, Canada, European Union, France, Germany, Gulf Cooperation Council, Israel, Netherlands, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States

Harboring Terrorist Financiers

Angola harbors internationally designated and wanted terror financiers

³ Spencer S. Su, "Lebanese businessman, Hezbollah supporter, charged with evading U.S. sanctions," *Washington Post*, March 24, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/lebanese-businessman-hezbollah-supporter-charged-with-evading-us-terror-sanctions/2017/03/24/979dbbd2-10b6-11e7-ab07-07d9f521f6b5_story.html?utm_term=.200856779db3; "Treasury Targets Hizballah Network in Africa," U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 27, 2009, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg149.aspx>; Chaim Even-Zohar, "Hezbollah Diamond Smugglers Put on U.S. Terrorists List," *Idex Online*, May 28, 2009, <http://www.idexonline.com/FullArticle?id=32413>.

⁴ "Treasury Targets Hizballah Financial Network," U.S. Department of the Treasury, December 9, 2010, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg997.aspx>.

⁵ Emanuele Ottolenghi, "Examining the Effectiveness of the Kingpin Designation Act in the Western Hemisphere," U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, November 8, 2017, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA07/20171108/106606/HHRG-115-FA07-Wstate-OttolenghiE-20171108.pdf>.



Hatem Barakat

Hezbollah Financier

- The U.S. government designated Barakat as a Hezbollah financier in 2006.⁶
- As of April 2018, Barakat listed his place of employment on Facebook as the Infonet Princesa, an electronics and toy store in Luanda, Angola.⁷ Barakat's profile listed the store under employment of April 3, 2018, though his place of residence was listed as Brazil.⁸



Kassim Tajideen

Hezbollah Financier

- Prior to his March 2017 arrest in Morocco, U.S.-designated Hezbollah financier Kassim Tajideen had lived in Angola since 1990, operating a business empire across Africa that he used to contribute tens of millions of dollars to Hezbollah, according to the U.S. government. The network included three businesses in Angola—Golfrate Holdings Lda, Afri Belg Comercio E Industria Lda, and Grupo Arosfran Empreendimentos E

⁶ “Treasury Targets Hizballah Fundraising Network in the Triple Frontier of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, December 6, 2006, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp190.aspx>.

⁷ Emanuele Ottolenghi, “Examining the Effectiveness of the Kingpin Designation Act in the Western Hemisphere,” U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, November 8, 2017, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA07/20171108/106606/HHRG-115-FA07-Wstate-OttolenghiE-20171108.pdf>.

⁸ Hatem Barakat, Facebook page, accessed April 3, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100008314491434&sk=about§ion=education&lst=9327782%3A100008314491434%3A1522779681>.

Participacoes Sarl—all of which the United States designated as terrorist entities in December 2010.⁹

- As recently as 2015, Tajideen’s Angolan businesses continued to receive shipments from U.S.-based companies in violation of American sanctions.¹⁰

Snapshot of Angolan Counterterrorism Legislation and Initiatives

Angola has reaffirmed its commitment to fighting against terrorism as recently as January 2018, when Angolan president Joao Lourenco stated in an interview that Angola is working to prevent the country from being affected by international terrorism.¹¹

Within its Ministry of the Interior, Angola has a National Anti-Terrorism Observatory, which consists of a group of multi-sectoral experts tasked with monitoring any potential terrorist threat. Angola also has legislation outlawing any form of collaboration with a terrorist group.¹² Angola is also a member of the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), an associate member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). A 2012 evaluation of Angola’s AML/CTF framework by the World Bank and the ESAAMLG assessed that Angola’s AML/CTF legislation, passed in 2011, needed better implementation procedures and did not sufficiently comply with international standards.¹³ On February 10, 2014, Angola’s National Assembly passed a new law criminalizing terror-financing in accordance with U.N.-backed international regulations, including the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.¹⁴

Policy Prescriptions

⁹ “Treasury Targets Hizballah Financial Network,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, December 9, 2010, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg997.aspx>.

¹⁰ “United States of America v. Kassim Tajideen, also known as Haj Kassim, Big Haj, Big Boss, Qasim Tajideen, Qassim Tajideen, Kasseem Tajideen, Kassim Taj Aldine, Kassim Taj Aldin, Kassim Taj Al Din, Kassim Tajadin, and Imad Hassoun, also known as Immad Tiassoun,” U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, March 7, 2017, 14-15, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/952071/download>.

¹¹ “Angola guarding against international terrorism, considering austerity: president,” Xinhua, January 9, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/09/c_136880687.htm.

¹² “SC Open Debate on the Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts,” U.N. Security Council, April 14, 2016, https://www.un.int/angola/statements_speeches/sc-open-debate-threats-international-peace-and-security-caused-terrorist-acts.

¹³ “Mutual Evaluation of Angola,” Financial Action Task Force, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/countries/a-c/angola/documents/merangola2012.html>.

¹⁴ “Angola: Anti-Terrorism and Money Laundering Law,” Library of Congress, February 28, 2014, <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/angola-anti-terrorism-and-money-laundering-law/>.

In order to better combat terrorism and terrorism financing, Angola will need to fully enforce its own counterterrorism policies and increase the resources devoted to monitoring and countering terrorism financing.

Specifically, the United States must incentivize Angola to:

- Clarify the status of U.S.-designated businesses in the country and close any in violation of U.S. sanctions.
- Arrest any and all financiers or operatives of Hezbollah, in line with international sanctions against the group.
- Clarify Hezbollah's status as a terrorist entity in line with the international community.
- Fully enforce its own AML/CTF legislation in order to prevent Angolan businesses from being used to launder and transfer funds to terrorist groups.