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U.S.: Two Venezuelans are supporting terrorism

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Washington concerned about Venezuela's relationship with Hezbollah
- Diplomat Ghazi Nasr al-Din is assigned to Venezuela's embassy in Lebanon
- U.S. says he arranged travel of Hezbollah members to train in Iran
- A Caracas resident who owns two travel agencies was also named by U.S.

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From Terry Frieden
CNN Justice Producer

TEXT SIZE

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The U.S. government designated two Venezuelans, including a diplomat, as supporters of international terrorism Wednesday for what it called their support of the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah, the U.S. Treasury Department announced Wednesday.



AP PHOTO
Lebanese police near a U.S. diplomat's motorcade that was attacked by Hezbollah's Shiite supporters Wednesday.

The U.S. action highlights the administration's concern over what it calls a growing relationship between the Caracas government and Hezbollah, which Washington has branded a terrorist organization.

The largest Shiite Muslim political movement in Lebanon, Hezbollah maintains an armed force that fought a month-long war with Israel in 2006. It demonstrated its muscle in street battles with supporters of Lebanon's government in May, bringing the country to the brink of civil war.

"It is extremely troubling to see the government of Venezuela employing and providing safe harbor to Hezbollah facilitators and fundraisers," Adam Szubin, director of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, said in a statement announcing the decision. "We will continue to expose the global

nature of Hezbollah's terrorist support network, and we call on responsible governments worldwide to disrupt and dismantle this activity."

The Bush administration has raised alarms about Venezuela's ties to groups it considers terrorist organizations. A recent State Department report criticized ties between the government of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and leftist rebels in neighboring Colombia, and it expressed concern about new Venezuelan ties with [Iran](#) and Cuba -- countries Washington has designated as state sponsors of terror.

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The designation targets Ghazi Nasr al-Din, a Venezuelan diplomat assigned to a post in the country's embassy in [Lebanon](#). He was previously assigned to the embassy in Syria.

The U.S. statement said Nasr al Din's activities included arranging the travel of [Hezbollah](#) members to attend a training course in Iran.

Also named by the U.S. government is Fawzi Kan'an, a Caracas resident who owns two travel agencies. He is described by U.S. authorities as a "supporter and a significant provider of financial support to Hezbollah."

Kan'an "has met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues including possible kidnapping and terrorist attacks," the Treasury Department said. The statement said he had also traveled with Hezbollah members to Iran for training.

The U.S. action freezes any assets the individuals and the travel agencies may have in the U.S. and prohibits any U.S. business transactions with the men or the travel businesses.

The [Justice Department](#) had no comment on whether a criminal investigation had been opened into possible violations of U.S. laws. But both Treasury and Justice officials stressed that the action was taken only after a thorough inter-agency process that also included the State Department.

As part of an agreement that ended a months-long standoff, the Hezbollah-led opposition will hold 11 of the 30 seats in Lebanon's Cabinet. [E-mail to a friend](#) | [Mixx it](#) | [Share](#)

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