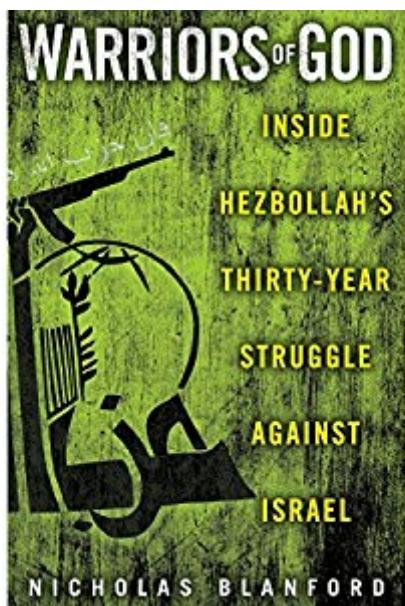


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# Warriors Of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel



## **Synopsis**

Hezbollah is the most powerful Islamist group operating in the Middle East today, and no other Western journalist has penetrated as deeply inside this secretive organization as Nicholas Blanford. Now Blanford has written the first comprehensive inside account of Hezbollah and its enduring struggle against Israel. Based on more than a decade and a half of reporting in Lebanon and conversations with Hezbollah's determined fighters, Blanford reveals their ideology, motivations, and training, as well as new information on military tactics, weapons, and sophisticated electronic warfare and communications systems. Using exclusive sources and his own dogged investigative skills, Blanford traces Hezbollah's extraordinary evolution - from a zealous group of raw fighters motivated by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution into the most formidable non-state military organization in the world, whose charismatic leader vows to hasten Israel's destruction. With dramatic eyewitness accounts, including Blanford's own experiences of the battles, massacres, triumphs, and tragedies that have marked the conflict, the story follows the increasingly successful campaign of resistance that led to Israel's historic withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. *Warriors of God* shows how Hezbollah won hearts and minds with exhaustive social welfare programs and sophisticated propaganda skills. Blanford traces the group's secret military build-up since 2000 and reveals the stunning scope of its underground network of tunnels and bunkers, becoming the only journalist to independently discover and explore them. With the Middle East fearful of another, even more destructive war between Lebanon and Israel, Blanford tenaciously pursues Hezbollah's post-2006 battle plans in the Lebanese mountains, earning him newspaper scoops as well as a terrifying interrogation and a night in jail.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

I was surprised at how good this book is. Despite its significant military and political power, and well-deserved status as "the most powerful non-state military force in the world," Hezbollah remains by its own necessity and design a "shadowy" organization, and thus a challenging object for anyone wishing to research its history, structure, operational record, and military capabilities. In "Warriors of God," Nicholas Blanford, since 1994 the Beirut correspondent for "The Times" and several other newspapers and magazines, has succeeded rather brilliantly in offering as thorough a portrait of Hezbollah as we are likely to have for many years hence. South Lebanon, while ethnically diverse and topographically rugged, is not a big place, and in his seventeen years of reporting prior to "Warriors of God's" 2011 publication, Blanford has ranged all over its varied landscape, usually while covering the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. He has also gained access to a diverse body of Hezbollah members, from part-time militiamen and full-time fighters, to an interview with the head of Hezbollah himself, Hassan Nasrallah, and various other officials. Blanford follows the arc of Shiite history in the Jabal Amil region (roughly today's South Lebanon) from the Middle Ages to Lebanon's independence in the mid-1940s, and into the 1970s-'80s when the marginalized Lebanese Shiites sought more effective representation in Lebanon's confessional political system. Hezbollah emerged in this latter period as a Shiite militia in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) more closely aligned with Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini than the mainstream Shiite militia, Amal. But Hezbollah found its real purpose with Israel's 1982 invasion of southern Lebanon. Israel succeeded in ousting the PLO from Lebanon in 1982, and the Lebanese Shiites (and many other Lebanese sects) were grateful for this. But Israel's continued occupation of Lebanese territory engendered Hezbollah's ire, and eventually its fervent opposition. Israel withdrew to a "security belt" of Lebanese territory along its northern border in 1985. It was in the period 1985-2000 that Hezbollah grew into a formidable military force as it sought to expel Israel and its South Lebanon Army militia allies from Lebanese land. In the 1990s Hezbollah pioneered the use of IEDs against Israeli troops, as well as enhancing its arsenal of rockets, its ground forces, and its intelligence capabilities. Facing mounting losses and increasing dissent at home, Israel unilaterally withdrew from Lebanon in May 2000. Hezbollah considered Israel's withdrawal incomplete as it still occupied a strip of territory called Shebaa Farms, which Israel and the U.N. identify as part of the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights, but which Hezbollah calls Lebanese land. This led to a low-grade conflict which culminated in the 2006

South Lebanon War, in which Hezbollah effectively countered an Israeli military ground incursion into South Lebanon, while also launching thousands of rockets into Israel and even crippling an Israeli naval vessel with an anti-ship missile, though Israel leveled blocks of apartment buildings in Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold, destroyed other Lebanese infrastructure, and seeded South Lebanon with over a million cluster-bomb sub-munitions. In "Warriors of God" Blanford meticulously catalogs the course of this ever-intensifying conflict from the mid-1990s, offering fascinating details of Hezbollah's ever-expanding and increasingly sophisticated arsenal; its construction of extensive underground bunkers; its tit-for-tat intelligence war with Israel; and offering evidence that the next Israel-Hezbollah war will be on a level of unprecedented ferocity, with Hezbollah having now stockpiled over 100,000 missiles, many long-range with payloads of hundreds of kilograms. This book was published in 2011, and in its introduction Blanford notes the then-escalating civil unrest in Syria (along with Iran, Hezbollah's vital patron), and wonders how this conflict will affect Hezbollah. Five years on, Hezbollah, while losing well over one thousand fighters, has gained invaluable conventional combat experience and access to even deadlier weapons systems in Syria's ongoing civil war. It is safe to say that Hezbollah has played a fundamental role in propping up the Syrian regime of Bashar al Assad, and only grown stronger in the process. Blanford is a good writer whose prose is clear and engaging. As other reviewers have noted, the big flaw in "Warriors of God" is the lack of a map of South Lebanon. This is an annoying omission as Blanford is always citing this or that town or village; and while maps are a few clicks away on the internet and South Lebanon's geography is fairly easy to learn, it would be much more convenient to have a map the reader can flip to in the book's pages. Blanford is good at painting a verbal picture of South Lebanon, whether the coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre, the mountain redoubt of Jezzine, the steep slopes of Shebaa Farms and Mt. Hermon, or the crowded Shiite suburbs of South Beirut, but a map (and maybe some photographs) would be appreciated. Hezbollah, with billions of dollars from Iran, is also a provider of social services to the Lebanese Shiite community, rebuilding civilian homes damaged or destroyed in war with Israel, and paying monthly pensions to the widows and children of its killed fighters, and Blanford covers this aspect as well. But the main theme of "Warriors of God" is, as the subtitle says, "inside Hezbollah's thirty-year struggle with Israel."

Very informative! This book deserves more attention than it has received. Great Writer! Well written!

Blanford has spent decades covering Hezbollah and he fills the book with personal experiences in southern Lebanon. Some might not like the book, because most of the focus is on Hezbollah and he

does not portray Israel in the best light. The author doesn't sugar coat anything.

The most comprehensive, easy to read, accounting of Hizballah I have ever read. Hard to put down. A must read for anyone with serious need to learn about this organization/terror group.

The best book written on Hezbollah.

A really fascinating study of a unique organization in the Middle East. Blanford's thorough analysis of Iran's Viet Cong could use a follow-up considering current events and Hezbollah's unabashed enforcement of Persian policy.

Blanford is an American that is also a Lebanese patriot in the sense that he pretty much despises anyone in Lebanon with a gun that is not part of the regular army or the police. Most regrettably the number of people in Lebanon with guns is probably higher than it is in the States, the difference is that their assault rifles really are assault rifles, they don't just look like them.

The Hezbollah is in words of Richard Armitage "The terrorist A team" and for the IDF General Guy Zur "The best guerrilla force in the world", If even your enemies have so high opinion, you deserve a complete analysis. Blanford made a superb job showing the birth and the rise of the Hezbollah, from a bunch of amateurs to a first class military and political force.

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