

Matt Zweig – Opening & Background

- “I’m not a Middle East focused person. Believe it or not, I’ve spent most of my year working and most of my career working at the intersection of sanctions, illicit finance, export controls, economic instruments of state craft...”
- “I spent about 18 years on Capitol Hill... where I dealt with just a whole range of both functional and jurisdictional sanctions, illicit finance issues... being the staff author of the first two Hezbollah international financing prevention sanctions acts. The first in 2016, the second in 2018.”

Matt Zweig – Congressional Activity on Lebanon

- “The 109th Congress has actually been more active on Lebanon than others in recent memory... direct response to what we’re all watching unfold in the region over the last couple of years.”
- “Safe Lebanon Act... authorizing sanctions on any foreign person or entity that obstructs Lebanon’s electoral process including efforts to prevent the diaspora from voting.”
- “The diaspora is one of the strongest pro sovereignty constituencies in Lebanon... giving them a real vote is one of the most powerful long-term tools that we have.”
- “No Hezbollah in our Hemisphere Act... forces the executive branch to both map that network and confront it... Hezbollah finances itself there through narcotics, trafficking, money laundering, trade-based money laundering schemes.”
- “Pager Act... conditioning military assistance to Lebanon on demonstrable progress by the LAF in dismantling Hezbollah’s infra military infrastructure.”
- “Underlying all of this is the... National Defense Authorization Act... whether you’re going to see the maintenance of 2026 NDAA conditions or reporting requirements with respect to the LAF.”

Matt Zweig – What Actually Works (and What Doesn’t)

- “Sanctions on Hezbollah’s financial infrastructure work. They have to be sustained. They have to be broad. Gold, oil smuggling networks... cryptocurrency architecture... wallet addresses, investigative capabilities.”
- “What doesn’t work are kind of one-off designations followed by inattention.”
- “Secondary sanctions on foreign financial institutions that handle Hezbollah money... are amongst the most powerful tools we had... forces banks to choose

between access to Hezbollah money and access to the United States financial system.”

- “Confronting the global footprint... particularly Latin America, but also West Africa, Europe... these are soft spots where Hezbollah has traditionally generated revenue... recruited operatives.”
- “The ultimate measure of effectiveness is whether the Lebanese state can actually reclaim its monopoly on the use of force.”

Matt Zweig – Trump Administration Approach

- “The Trump administration’s approach to Lebanon has been built on a pretty simple proposition... US engagement should be explicitly conditioned on measured progress towards Hezbollah’s armament and... Israeli-Lebanese rapprochement.”
- “No integration of Hezbollah in Lebanese state institutions... Treasury has been active... significant Hezbollah designations... particularly with respect to... gold reserves and targeting gold.”
- “The administration has been pretty clear on certain red lines.”

Matt Zweig – Q&A Highlights

- On Democrats gaining power: “I don’t think these bills would necessarily be throttled... you probably see more of a focus on pushing aid on building Lebanese state institutions. Probably less of a focus on going after Hezbollah core or Hezbollah periphery.”
- On long-term U.S. vision: “It’s always been the needle that successive administrations have had to thread... how do you best achieve the Lebanese state’s monopoly on the use of force.”
- On sanctions impact: “Sanctions do have a distortive effect... I think they have harmed Hezbollah... Lebanese state institutions, particularly the Lebanese financial sector, has just been riven with not just terrorism risk, but corruption risk.”
- On regional settlement: “I couldn’t imagine Hezbollah’s integration... being acceptable to the administration or specifically the Israelis.”
- On where ALA should focus: “To be perfectly honest I think in the anti-corruption space with respect to Lebanon... both Republicans and Democrats could kind of agree on.”

- On U.S. role in empowering Iran/Hezbollah: “Giving sanctions relief to Iran in any form or fashion... accrues certain benefits to those parties who would otherwise be subject to sanctions... 50 years of neglect.”
- On Iranian funding to Hezbollah: “Bulk cash smuggling... trade-based money laundering... they’d probably be able to ultimately transfer that value to Hezbollah.”
- On why not sanction Lebanese finance figures: “It has to do with... upsetting the apple cart a little bit too much in Beirut... near-term political impact... capabilities gap... most everybody at OFAC and Treasury are moving their targeters over to Iran.”
- On U.S. view of Lebanon: “The institutional economic recovery will be part of... any policy that seeks regional stability... you don’t build the second largest embassy in the world in Lebanon without a reason.”
- On best-case scenario / day after: “The best case scenario I think is... I don’t know if the best case scenario is to let the Israelis do their work or not... when Kar al-Assan was blown up... that did have an effect on their operational capabilities.”
- On past U.S. failures: “The United States has been very inconsistent with our approach... a consistent aggressive posture when it comes to targeting their financial networks is needed... and it didn’t.”
- On peace & economy: “Peace will burn prosperity... you’re dealing with an economic superpower... Lebanon effectively being able to find its niche.”

Zad (Host/Organizer) & Other Participants – Key Points

- “The diaspora is one of the strongest pro sovereignty constituencies in Lebanon.”
- “Follow the money, track the money, expose the people.”
- “We have 20 million people in the diaspora... a lot of them... have built billion-dollar businesses. If you can build a billion dollar business... you can easily rebuild Lebanon.”
- “The key... is to clean up the garbage first... expose them... stop the illicit financing... disrupt their activities... This is not just a question of military disarmament.”
- “Peace with Israel, reform, then foreign direct investments will flow... in billions... Lebanon is a great place to be.”

- “Capital doesn’t go to any place where you don’t have stability, the rule of law and peace.”
- “Our job is to move the needle... bring Lebanon to... the Abraham Accords side.”
- “We cannot have a status quo... This has to finish once and for all... Freedom does not come for free.”