



Spotlight on Terrorism : Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria June 3 – 9 , 2024

The Northern Arena*

- 1,687 attacks
- 323 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 74 operatives of other organization killed
- Three non-affiliated operatives killed
- One Lebanese army soldier killed
- One Lebanese internal security operative killed

***Updated from October 8, 2023**

Overview¹

- ▶ This past week Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 52 attacks on military and civilian targets in northern Israel. Falaq-2 rockets were used for the first time. A soldier was killed and 12 others were injured in a UAV attack in Hurfeish, and a UAV fell in the Jezreel Valley, 40 kilometers from the border, the furthest distance since the beginning of the fighting. In addition, anti-aircraft missiles were launched for the first time at Israeli Air Force planes in Lebanese skies.
- ▶ In response to Hezbollah's attacks, Israeli Air Force fighter jets and UAVs attacked Hezbollah targets and operatives in the south and deep inside Lebanese territory. Hezbollah announced that eight of its operatives had been killed in the attacks.
- ▶ Hezbollah made a series of statements claiming it did not want a war with Israel, but threatened a powerful response if a war was "forced" on it.
- ▶ Criticism of Hezbollah continues inside Lebanon, mainly from Christian elements. Samy al-Jamal, leader of the Phalange Party, accused Hezbollah and Iran of hijacking the country.
- ▶ Najib Mikati, the prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon, stated that his government maintained contact with its allies around the world to stop the escalation at the border.

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

- ▶ The UNIFIL spokesman warned there was a high risk of escalation which would lead an extensive conflict affecting the entire region.
- ▶ Shots were fired at the United States embassy in Lebanon; there were no casualties. A Syrian citizen was detained and claimed he had acted "in support of the Gaza Strip." He was reportedly in contact with ISIS elements in Iraq.

South Lebanon

Hezbollah attacks

- ▶ This past week (June 3-9, 2024, as of 12 noon) Hezbollah took responsibility for 52 attacks on military and civilian targets in northern Israel, compared to 56 attacks the previous week. The attacks used anti-tank missiles, mortar shells, UAVs and various types of rockets, including heavy rockets. There has been a noticeable increase in the level of accuracy, deadliness and material damage caused by explosive UAV attacks:

- ◆ **UAV hit in Hurfeish:** On June 5, 2024, two UAVs fell and exploded in Hurfeish in the Western Galilee, killing an IDF soldier and injuring 12 other people, including an IDF reservist who was seriously injured. A UAV hit a soccer field in Hurfeish, and when the rescue forces arrived at the scene, the second UAV hit them (IDF website and Israeli media, June 5 and 6, 2024). Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching a swarm of UAVs to attack an assembly of officers and soldiers south of Moshav Alkush, [allegedly] in response to IDF threats and attacks in al-Naqoura.

- ◆ **UAV falls in the Jezreel:** On the afternoon of June 7, 2024, sirens were sounded in the Nof HaGalil area [near Nazareth]. The IDF spokesperson confirmed that a UAV from Lebanon fell in an open area in the Jezreel Valley, a distance of about 40 kilometers (about 25 miles) from the border, after attempts to intercept it failed. It was the southernmost point reached by an explosive aircraft launched from Lebanon since the beginning of hostilities in October 2023 (IDF website and Israeli media, June 7, 2024).

- ◆ **Falaq-2 rockets were launched for the first time:** On June 8, 2024, Hezbollah announced it had launched a barrage of Falaq-2 rockets at the IDF base in the Beit Hillel area (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 8, 2024). The Falaq-2, manufactured in Iran, is an improved version of the Falaq-1, used by Hezbollah until now. The rocket has a range of between 10 and 11 kilometers (about 6 to 7 miles) and carries a warhead weighing 60 kilograms (132 lbs). According to estimates, Iran has transferred

dozens or possibly hundreds of rockets of this type to Hezbollah (Israeli media, 9 in June 2024).



Right: A four-barrel Falaq-2 rocket launcher mounted on an all-terrain vehicle. Left: Falaq-2 rocket launch in Iran (Medlebanon's X account, June 9, 2024)

- ◆ **Anti-aircraft missiles launched at IDF fighter jets:** On June 6, 2024, anti-aircraft missiles were launched at IDF fighter jets flying over Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed that the planes broke the sound barrier "in an attempt to scare children" and that after they were shot at, they returned to Israeli territory (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 6, 2024). According to reports, it was the first time that Hezbollah launched anti-aircraft missiles at Israeli fighter jets (Ali Murtada's X account, June 6, 2024).
- ◆ **Claim of hitting an Iron Dome aerial defense system launcher:** On June 5, 2024, Hezbollah claimed that it attacked an Iron Dome launcher in Ramot Naftali with an anti-tank guided missile and published a video of alleged hit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 5 and 6, 2024). The IDF did not confirm damage to the "Iron Dome" battery.



Right: The Iron Dome launcher before the anti-tank missile hit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 6, 2024). Left: The launcher after the hit (EyesOnSouth1's X account, June 6, 2024)

- ▶ Given the increasing use of UAVs and their extended ranges, al-Hadath TV cited "sources" claiming that Hezbollah had been "forced" to expand its "responses" because Israel was [allegedly] violating the "rules of engagement" (al-Hadath Telegram channel, June 8, 2024).
- ▶ It was also reported that Hezbollah was working to create another "deterrent equation," according to which if Israel used bombs that caused fires and phosphorus bombs, Hezbollah would respond by launching rockets that spread fires. According to the report, Hezbollah began to produce Grad and Katyusha rockets that carry extremely flammable substances (Spot Shot on YouTube, June 5, 2024).
- ▶ Daily Hezbollah attacks (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 3 to 9, 2024):
 - ◆ June 9, 2024 (as of 11 a.m.): **One attack.**
 - ◆ June 8, 2024: **Ten attacks.**
 - ◆ June 7, 2024: **Four attacks.**
 - ◆ June 6, 2024: **Seven attacks.** The Kiryat Shmona municipality confirmed damage to two commercial complexes, with no casualties (Kiryat Shmona municipality Telegram channel, June 6, 2024).
 - ◆ June 5, 2024: **Ten attacks.** An explosive UAV was launched at an IDF force south of the border. Two suspicious aerial targets were intercepted, one of which crossed from Lebanon to the Metula area (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 5, 2024).
 - ◆ June 4, 2024: **11 attacks.** A suspicious aerial target that crossed into the maritime space of Nahariya was intercepted. A suspicious aerial target from Lebanon fell in the Hermon area (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 4, 2024).

- ◆ June 3, 2024: **Nine attacks** (after 11 a.m.). The IDF confirmed that about 30 launches from Lebanese territory fell in an open area in the northern Golan Heights. In addition, two explosive UAVs were intercepted and two landed (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 3, 2024).

IDF response

- ▶ In response, Israeli Air Force fighter jets and UAVs attacked Hezbollah targets and operatives. Among the targets attacked were terrorist facilities, including a compound used by Hezbollah's air defense system, military buildings, munitions warehouses, observation posts, launching positions and rocket launchers. Most of the attacks were carried out in south Lebanon, but the IDF confirmed that an attack was also carried out in Wadi Jilou region, east of Tyre, deep inside Lebanese territory (IDF spokesperson June 3-8, 2024). "Sources" also reported that Israel attacked vehicles in the western Lebanon Valley, targeting an "important Hezbollah figure" (al-Hadath, June 4, 2024).



Right: A building destroyed in the attack on the town of Wadi Jilou (Fouad Khreiss' X account, June 6, 2024). Left: A motor scooter with two Hezbollah operatives attacked in the Aitaroun region (IDF spokesperson, June 6, 2024)

- ▶ According to reports, Radwan Force operatives said they were afraid because of the Israeli Air Force aircraft's ongoing attacks (Wazir Araqi's X account, June 3, 2024).

Hezbollah casualties

- ▶ Hezbollah reported the death of eight operatives (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 3 to 9, 2024).
 - ◆ Hussein Ahmed Nasser al-Din, aka Saraj, born in 1980 in al-'Abbasiyah.
 - ◆ Ali Hussein Sabara, aka Abu Hussein Ayman, born in 1975 in Beirut and a resident of al-Babaliyah. The IDF stated that Sabara, who was killed in an attack in the Tyre region,

was involved in upgrading and equipping Hezbollah's air defense system (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, June 3, 2024).

- ◆ Muhammad Shuki Shakir, aka Jihad, born in 1996 in al-Ghaziyah.
- ◆ Haidar Hassan Musallamani, aka Hamza, born in 1987 in Tyre and a resident of al-Naqoura.
- ◆ Hussein Naama al-Hourani, aka Badr, born in 1988 in Bint Jbeil. According to reports he was a Hezbollah commander (Tanzim Thuwwar Lubnan X account, June 6, 2024).
- ◆ Radwan Ali Issa, aka Bilal, was born in 1977 in Houmein al-Tahta.
- ◆ Ahmed Ali Yusuff, aka Sadek, born in 2003 in al-Shihabiyah.
- ◆ Ali Khalil Hamed, aka Abu Tarab, born in 1988 in Aitaroun.



Hezbollah casualties (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 3 to 8, 2024)

Statements by Senior Hezbollah Figures

► This past week there were several statements by senior Hezbollah and Hezbollah-affiliated figures regarding the possibility of war between Israel and Hezbollah:

- ◆ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, who participated in a ceremony in Beirut to mark the 35th anniversary of the death of the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ruhollah Khomeini, claimed that the objective of the current "conflict" in south Lebanon was to support the "Palestinian resistance" and said the fighting would not stop

until the war in the Gaza Strip stopped. He alleged that Hezbollah currently had no plan for an all-out war, unless Israel decided to wage one (al-Nashra, June 7, 2024). He told al-Jazeera that any Israeli expansion of the "war against Lebanon" would be met with destruction, ruin and displacement in Israel. Referring to the American mediation attempts to end the fighting in south Lebanon, he claimed the proposals made by United States President Joe Biden were not "objective" (al-Jazeera, June 4, 2024).

◆ Nawaf al-Masawi, responsible for resources and borders in Hezbollah, said that the next war with Israel would be "the last war" and that the region would not look the same afterwards. He claimed that the IDF did not have a stockpile of weapons required for a war in Lebanon and Israel's leaders knew nothing about the real capabilities of the "resistance"² (al-Mayadeen, June 7, 2024).

◆ Mohammad Raed, the chairman of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese parliament, said Operation al-Aqsa Flood had caused a "strategic change" in the region and exposed Israel's inability to deter and defend itself. He claimed the Lebanese front "supported the Palestinian people," and its goal was to stop Israeli "aggression" and hamper Israel's capabilities and prevent it from achieving its stated goals in the Gaza Strip. He also claimed they were successful in coping with the air superiority that had distinguished Israel in the past because their determination far outweighed Israel's capabilities (al-Alam, June 4, 2024). In a memorial ceremony in the town of al-Ghazia, he said Israel was entangled in a failure from which it could not extricate itself. He claimed that "a great victory is around the corner" and that the "resistance" was present and stronger than before, and anyone who thought otherwise was helping the "enemy" (al-Nashra, June 8, 2024).

◆ Mohammad Raad, a Hezbollah-faction member of the Lebanese Parliament, rejected the criticisms in Lebanon against Hezbollah and the accusations that the organization had unnecessarily dragged the country into an "abyss of [fighting] arenas." He claimed that support for the Gazans was based on their humanity, Arab nature, brotherhood and common interests. He wondered how the West, which was hundreds [sic] of kilometers away from the region, could justify its financial, military and media support for Israel (al-Nashra, June 8, 2024).

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

◆ Ibrahim al-Amin, the editor-in-chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar, warned that if Israel decided to launch an all-out war against Hezbollah it would be an "insane decision," noting that every time Israel tried to raise the bar of its reaction, Hezbollah responded with "a bar higher than expected." He claimed Israel had lost the element of surprise, since the war of attrition lasting eight months and the preparations of the "resistance" [Hezbollah] for the possibility of war made Israel's bank of targets "worthless." He also pointed out that Hezbollah had so far only used old generation of UAVs, and that in the event of a war, Israel would have to deal with different types of missiles and a new generation of armed UAVs capable of performing several simultaneous missions (al-Akhbar, June 6, 2024).

◆ The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar stated that Hezbollah did not expect a war against Israel in the near future, if at all. The paper alleged that the parties had not crossed the "agreed" threshold of fighting within a range of five to seven kilometers on both sides of the border [see above, the June 7 attack in the Jezreel Valley] and Hezbollah adhered to its position that when a ceasefire was declared in the Gaza Strip, the fighting would stop in south Lebanon. However, even after the ceasefire, Hezbollah would not allow Israel to continue "violating Lebanese airspace" and efforts would continue to reach a final decision regarding the disputed border points (al-Akhbar, June 8, 2024).

Criticism of Hezbollah

► Interviewed by al-Hura TV in Lebanon, Samy al-Jamal, chairman of the Phalange Party, said Lebanon had been "hijacked by Hezbollah and Iran." He added that the country was in a state of disquiet because of the "laws of the jungle" that Hezbollah and its allies created in Lebanon (al-Nashra, June 5, 2024).

► Joelle Bou Abboud, a member of the Phalange Party's political bureau, said that the fighting caused more damage to Lebanon than to Israel. She said Lebanon has lost its economy and the tourist season, agricultural fields were burned, houses were destroyed and the students did not go to school. She added that if Israel had started a war on October 8, 2023, the entire country would have stood by Hezbollah in the conflict, but it was Hezbollah that made the decision to start the fighting. Referring to the fires in northern Israel caused by Hezbollah

attacks, she said they did not help the Gaza Strip or distract Israeli attention from the Gaza Strip and Rafah (Spot Shot, June 4, 2024).

The Battle for Hearts and Minds

Mocking the IDF's ability to intercept UAVs

► Hezbollah's social networks portfolio, Simia, published a notice comparing the capabilities of Hezbollah's UAVs with the IDF's aerial vehicles. It showed a UAV of the organization with the caption, "Our UAVs reach their targets," and below it, an Israeli Hermes 900 UAV with the caption, "While your UAVs are intercepted in our skies" (Simia, June 5, 2024).



Hezbollah mocks the IDF (Simia, June 5, 2024)

Aid for Hezbollah from Iraq

- According to a report the Iraqi government donated 500 bulletproof vehicles to the Radwan Force, each costing \$350,000 (Wazir Araqi's X account, June 3, 2024).
- According to a report, hundreds of oil and gas tankers from Iraq arrive daily in Lebanon for Hezbollah via Syria. Hezbollah sells the oil and gas to Lebanese residents to enrich the organization's coffers (Wazir Araqi's X account, June 5, 2024).

The Lebanese Government

Western leader' statement on Lebanon

► Najib Mikati, Prime Minister of the interim government in Lebanon, welcomed the June 6, 2024 joint statement by the leaders of the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany calling for the prevention of escalation of tensions on Israel-Lebanon border in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. He said his government's top priority was to maintain contact with Lebanon's allies around the world and with the resolution-making countries to

stop the escalation and the Israeli [alleged] "acts of hostility" in south Lebanon (Lebanon24, June 7, 2024).

Contacts for an agreement on the Israel-Lebanon border

► Spokesman for Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, repeated his call for an immediate ceasefire on the Blue Line [the Israel-Lebanon border]. He claimed Guterres was concerned that the exchange of fire not only destroyed settlements near the border, but had an impact deep within both countries. He also called on Israel and Lebanon to recommit to the implementation of Resolution 1701 and to stop the attacks (UN website, June 6, 2024).

UNIFIL

► Andrea Tenenti, UNIFIL spokesman, admitted that the situation on the Israel-Lebanon border was worrisome. He warned of a high possibility of escalation and that a misunderstanding could lead to a more widespread conflict. He also said such a situation would be a disaster for the entire region. He added that UNIFIL was in contact with Lebanese authorities and the IDF and was working to prevent an expansion of the conflict (al-Jazeera, June 5, 2024).

Shots Fired at the American Embassy in Lebanon

► On the morning of June 5, 2024, shots were fired at the United States embassy in the 'Oukar area, about six kilometers (about 3.5 miles) northeast of Beirut. Lebanese army soldiers returned fire, wounding the shooter, who was taken for medical treatment (Lebanese Army X account, June 5, 2024). An embassy security guard was reportedly wounded (Janoubia, June 5, 2024) The American embassy in Beirut confirmed that there had been a shooting near its entrance, the Lebanese Army and security forces responded quickly and there were no casualties among the staff (United States embassy in Lebanon X account, June 5, 2024).

► The shooter was identified as Qais al-Faraj, 23 years old, who immigrated from Syria to Lebanon 15 years ago. An examination of his phone revealed that he had been in contact with ISIS elements in Iraq. At least 19 of his family members and friends were detained (al-Nahar, June 6, 2024). A legal source stated that during questioning he claimed he had carried out the attack "in support of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip" (Agence France-Presse, June 5, 2024). According to another report, he acted alone and did not belong to a cell. He reportedly purchased the weapons with his own money and gathered information about the embassy using Google (LBC International, June 6, 2024).

► Abdullah Bou Habib, the Lebanese foreign minister, condemned the shooting and emphasized that Lebanon was committed to protecting diplomatic missions operating in the country. He also stated that they were monitoring the incident and clarifying the details with the relevant authorities (al-Nashra, June 5, 2024).