



Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria August 26-September 2, 2024

The Northern Arena*

2,304 attacks

- 420 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 87 operatives of other organization killed
- Five 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 **48 attacks** on military and civilian targets in Israel. Two civilians and a member of a security squad were injured and there was considerable property damage.
- ▶ Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hezbollah targets and operatives in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley. Hezbollah announced the death of one of its operatives. An attempted targeted attack was carried out to eliminate a senior terrorist operative of Hamas in Lebanon; the attack failed.
- ▶ Hezbollah-affiliated media outlets falsely claimed that the attack on the IDF intelligence base carried out in retaliation for the killing of Fuad Shukr was successful. The claim has led to increasing assessment that Hezbollah is trying to avoid escalation and a comprehensive war.
- ▶ The UN Security Council extended UNIFIL's mandate for another year.
- ▶ Syria: Three operatives of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's military wing and a Hezbollah operative were killed in an Israeli Air Force attack on a vehicle near the border with Lebanon.

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

South Lebanon

Hezbollah attacks

► During the past week (August 26 to September 2, 2024), Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **48 attacks** on military and civilian targets in northern Israel, compared to 72 attacks the previous week. The attacks were carried out using anti-tank missiles, artillery, UAVs and various types of rockets.

◆ **Increased use of explosive drones:** This past week Hezbollah claimed responsibility for three explosive drone attacks on surveillance cameras located in IDF posts on the northern border (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, August 26-27, 2024). In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah will increase its use of explosive drones to attack surveillance cameras, communication and electrical cables, and technical equipment at IDF posts, because the drones are inexpensive, can focus on a target with great precision and are extremely difficult to intercept.



Explosive drone attacks on surveillance cameras located at IDF posts (Right: Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, August 28, 2024. Left: Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, August 29, 2024)

► The attacks according to Hezbollah (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, as of 1 p.m., August 26 - September 2, 2024):

- ◆ September 2, 2024: Three attacks. An anti-tank missile hit a house in a moshav near the border. There were no casualties, the house was damaged (Israeli media, September 2, 2024).
- ◆ September 1, 2024: Ten attacks. A civilian was seriously injured and a member of a security squad was also injured by an anti-tank missile. An anti-tank missile hit a building in Kiryat Shmona; there were no casualties. Ten rockets were fired into the Western Galilee, most of them falling in an open area; there were no casualties. An explosive drone hit near the border; there were no casualties. Twenty rockets were fired at the

Mount Miron area. Rockets hit in an open area in a moshav, causing a fire; no casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, September 1, 2024).

- ◆ August 31, 2024: Six attacks. A UAV fell in an open area and a rocket hit near the border; there were no casualties (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 31, 2024).

- ◆ August 30, 2024: Six attacks. Rockets were fired into Israeli territory from south Lebanon from a launcher damaged in an Israeli Air Force attack. One of the rockets fell in an open area. Forty rockets were fired into the Western Galilee, hitting populated areas. An explosive drone exploded in Metula, causing minor damage to various facilities. There were no casualties (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 30, 2024).

- ◆ August 29, 2024: Ten attacks. A UAV launched from Syrian territory was intercepted before it crossed the border into Israel. UAVs fell in the northern Golan Heights, causing fires. Anti-tank missiles were fired at Mount Dov. There were no casualties (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 29, 2024).

- ◆ August 28, 2024: Six attacks. Rockets fell in the Kiryat Shmona area; there were no casualties (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 28, 2024).

- ◆ August 27, 2024: Four attacks. An IDF soldier was injured when a UAV fell near Safed (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 27, 2024).

- ◆ August 26, 2024 (as of 1 p.m.): Three attacks. UAVs fell in the Upper Galilee and one fell in the Western Galilee. There were no casualties (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, August 26, 2024).

Hezbollah UAVs

- ▶ According to a lone report, Hezbollah and Iran have spent 20 years developing UAVs, but the sanctions imposed on them have so far prevented them from developing the UAVs to a technological level which would allow them to overcome Israel's GPS jamming, which still maintains an advantage (MTV Lebanon, August 30, 2024).

IDF response

- ▶ In response to Hezbollah's attacks, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hezbollah targets and operatives in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley, including armed squads of terrorist operatives, terrorist facilities, buildings used for military purposes, munitions warehouses, observation posts, launching positions and rocket launchers (IDF spokesperson, August 26-September 2, 2024). An attack on a truck, apparently belonging to Hezbollah, in the north of the Lebanon Valley, was attributed to Israel. After the attack a number of secondary explosions

occurred (indicating the truck was carrying weapons. The explosions led to the evacuation of local residents (al-Nahar, August 28, 2024).



Right: The attack on the truck in the Lebanon Valley (al-Nahar, August 28, 2024). Left: Attack on a building in al-Adeisa (IDF spokesperson, August 27, 2024)

► This past week Hezbollah reported the death of one operative in south Lebanon, Hussein Ahmed al-Musawi, known as Maytham al-Sid, born in 1996, from al-Nabi Chit in the Lebanon Valley (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 1, 2024).



Hussein Ahmed al-Musawi

(Telegram channel of Hezbollah's combat propaganda arm, September 1, 2024)

Attempted elimination of senior Hamas terrorist operative

► According to reports, on August 26, 2024, an Israeli drone launched two missiles at a car parked [at the side of the road] between the towns of 'Abra and the Saida neighborhood near the al-Shama' highway close to Sidon. The attack reportedly targeted Nidal Halihal, aka Abu Omar, a senior Hamas terrorist who was hit while leaving his home towards his car, and the

lower part of his body was seriously injured (al-Nahar; al-'Ahed, August 26, 2024). A "Lebanese security source" claimed Halihal had been "slightly injured" (al-Jazeera, August 26, 2024).



Halihali's vehicle after the attack near Sidon
(Right: al-'Ahed, August 26, 2024. Left: al-Nahar, August 26, 2024)

Possible Hezbollah Attempts to Prevent Escalation

► Following the Hezbollah rocket and UAV attack on Israel on August 25, 2024, in retaliation for the elimination of Fuad Shukr, the organization's military commander,² it is of increasing considered opinion that Hezbollah does not want to escalate the fighting and the chances of a comprehensive war's breaking out on the northern border have decreased:

- ◆ The al-Mayadeen network, which is affiliated with Hezbollah and the "resistance axis,"³ cited "knowledgeable sources" who claimed Israel had "confirmed" Hezbollah had hit an Israeli intelligence base as part of the attack called Operation Arba'in.⁴ The "sources" claimed that six drones hit the base and IDF forces closed the area for several hours to prevent soldiers and civilians from approaching or entering the base. They also claimed that the operation "was successful beyond the shadow of a doubt" as far as Hezbollah was concerned (al-Mayadeen, August 29, 2024). The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar also claimed that six drones launched at the base all hit their target (al-Akhbar, August 29, 2024). **Contrary to Hezbollah's claims, neither the intelligence base nor the air force base was actually attacked and no damage was caused.**

² For further information, see the August 2024 ITIC report, "[Reactions to the Deaths of Fuad Shukr and Isma'il Haniyeh](#)"

³ Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, the "resistance axis" partners seeking the destruction of the State of Israel.

⁴ *Arba'in*: The day of mourning for the Shi'ites which marks the 40th day after the death of Imam Hussein bin Ali and other members of the Ali bin Abu Taleb family in the battle of Karbala' in the year 680 C.E. Traditionally, pilgrimages were made to the tomb of Imam Hussein in Karbala in Iraq on the 40th day.

◆ Simia, the electronic unit of Hezbollah's Executive Committee, issued a notice called Operation Arba'in, which claimed the organization had reacted in a "strong, considered" manner and had not dragged the region into war. It listed as its achievements equating Tel Aviv with the Dahiyeh, exposing the extent of its infiltration of Israeli intelligence, attacking 110 km inside Israeli territory, hitting targets and evading the Iron Dome and Arrow aerial defense systems and defending all its UAV positions against enemy attack. It listed the "enemy's failures" as "a new failure for Israeli intelligence." Israel's proactive [allegedly] action failed to prevent the Hezbollah's retaliation, the Israeli government [allegedly] had to "invent" a new false narrative which did not even convince the Israeli public, Israel's defense systems failed to intercept the rockets and UAVs, and Israel had carried out 40 attacks which hit only a number of launch sites (Simia, August 26, 2024).



Hezbollah's Operation Arba'in notice (Simia, August 26, 2024)

◆ "Sources" claimed Hezbollah was satisfied with several aspects of the retaliation attack, including its ability to "respond," and had proven itself in terms of the distances and the level of weapons used (al-Jadeed, August 26, 2024).

◆ Muhammad Fneish, a senior Hezbollah figure, claimed the objective of the "resistance retaliation" was to punish the "enemy" and return it to abiding by the rules of confrontation [decided on by Hezbollah]. He claimed Hezbollah could prepare for any future development but did not aspire to a comprehensive war, but if the "enemy" exceeded its borders or attacked civilians, the "resistance" was prepared and would respond accordingly. He claimed "the enemy" would no longer be able to attack without an "appropriate response" (MTV network, August 26, 2024).

◆ Ali Shoeib, a correspondent for Hezbollah's al-Manar TV, said that after the "Islamic resistance" in Lebanon had met its commitment and retaliated for the Israeli attack on the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut, and after it had prevented the "enemy" from attacking

the villages in south Lebanon by firing hundreds of rockets at "enemy" bases, it returned to its role of supporting the Gaza Strip (Ali Shoeib's X account, August 26, 2024).

◆ "Diplomatic sources privy to the talks conducted by Washington, Tel Aviv and Beirut," said Hezbollah had informed the Americans via the Lebanese government that "it was necessary" to adhere to Hezbollah's "rules of engagement," as they did not want to expand the war and aspired to avoid damage to infrastructure and civilians. Hezbollah claimed it had no intention of expanding the fighting, otherwise it would have launched its precision missiles in response to the killing of Fuad Shukr. The "sources" added that it was likely the conflict would remain as "support for Hamas" (al-Sharq al-Awsat, August 26, 2024).

◆ Ali al-Amin, editor of the Lebanese news site Janoubia, said that Hezbollah's retaliation for the killing of Fuad Shukr relieved the pressure being exerted by its supporters to react strongly against Israel and restored some of its damaged dignity (Janoubia, August 29, 2024).

◆ Charles Brown, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that after the exchange between Israel and Hezbollah, the risks the war would expand in the near future had lessened (Reuters, August 27, 2024).

The Lebanese Government

► In a speech given on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr,⁵ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, accused the "Israeli war machine" of turning the border villages near Israel into scorched earth using "illegal" weapons and called Israel "absolute evil." He said the Lebanese government was committed to UN Security Council Resolution 1701, claiming Israel was a serial violator of UN resolutions. He called the war in the Gaza Strip "genocide and a political crime" and called for support for the Palestinian people, adding that "the situation in the Gaza Strip cannot be resolved except by escalating resistance in all available forms, political, public and cultural, and with weapons" (al-Nashra, August 31, 2024).

⁵ An Iranian-born Lebanese-Shi'ite imam, Musa al-Sadr was one of the most influential figures in Lebanon's Shi'ite community. He founded the Amal Movement and was a Shi'ite leader in Lebanon until the mid-1970s. In 1978, all traces of him disappeared in Libya.

Criticism of Hezbollah

► Gebran Bassil, chairman of the Free National Movement in Lebanon considered an ally of Hezbollah, criticized the organization's continued fighting against Israel in the name of supporting the Gaza Strip. Bassil said Hezbollah members had asked him, "What is your [Movement's] position regarding Hezbollah? One day you say, 'We are with you in the war,' and the next day you say, 'We are against you in the war'." He answered, "We are with you when you defend Lebanon, we are with you when Israel attacks us, but we are not with you when you start a war against Israel." Bassil noted they were in favor of a defensive strategy, but not of an attack strategy. He also asked, "What is the purpose of this war in which we participate?" and rejected the justification that it was in aid of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. He said destroying part of Lebanon and having its people killed was not helping the Gaza Strip by (Mary Saadeh's X account, August 30, 2024).



Gebran Bassil (Mary Saadeh's X account, August 30, 2024)

The Lebanese Army

► An "opposition source" in Lebanon claimed that Hezbollah was taking every possible step to prevent the Lebanese army from equipping itself with the necessary means for deployment on the border, using false excuses ranging from funding to inter-sectarian balances and party disputes. That belies the claim of a "high-level source" from the "Shi'ite couple" [Hezbollah and Amal] alleging that both movements fully support Resolution 1701, including in the sections concerning the deployment of the Lebanese army south of the Litani River (Lebanon al-Kabir, August 29, 2024).

► According to reports, Joseph Aoun, the commander of the Lebanese army, cancelled all annual vacations abroad for Lebanese army soldiers, including officers, because of the recent escalation in south Lebanon and the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hezbollah (al-Nashra, August 27, 2024).

► According to reports, 4,700 Lebanese army officers and soldiers are prepared to cross the Litani River, a number which does not include approximately 300 management personnel. It was also reported that no response had yet been received from the contributing countries to the request for a grant to recruit 6,000 additional soldiers and deploy them in south Lebanon (Lebanon al-Khabir, August 27, 2024).

► Josep Borrell, EU foreign minister, said the European Union supported the Lebanese army and was expected to provide it with additional aid next year (al-Nashra, August 30, 2024).

UNIFIL

UNIFIL mandate extended for another year

► On August 28, 2024, the UN Security Council unanimously approved the extension of the UNIFIL mandate in Lebanon for another year (Reuters, August 28, 2024):

- ◆ Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, thanked the UN Security Council, France and the United States for understanding Lebanon's need to preserve the activities of UNIFIL. He also noted Lebanon's commitment to cooperate in facing the challenges and threats to stability in south Lebanon, and Lebanon's commitment to implementing international resolutions, first of all Resolution 1701 (Lebanese prime minister's X account, August 28, 2024).

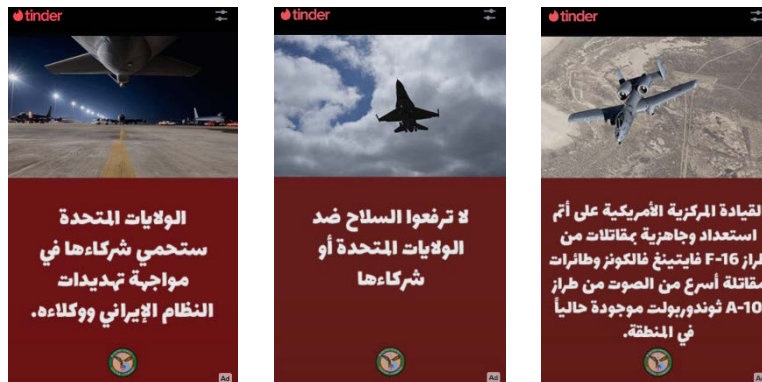
- ◆ The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, claimed that the United States had failed in its attempt to change the wording of UNIFIL's mandate and the status quo had been maintained. It also claimed that the "resistance" had always been suspicious of the activities of the UN forces, since not only did they conduct patrols, they operated radars which the "enemy" could use, either through access to the radar's data or by penetrating its network "Authorized UNIFIL personnel" stated that the force did not operate against the "resistance" or "in the service" of any of the parties. According to the sources, the radar protects the forces and monitors "Israeli air violations." They added that the objective of the radar was to warn the force of artillery shells falling on their bases (al-Akhbar, August 29, 2024).

- ◆ Candace Ardell, UNIFIL spokeswoman, said that one of the rockets fired by Hezbollah on August 25, 2024, in retaliation for the killing Fuad Shakr, was fired near a UNIFIL post. She added that on the same day an explosion occurred near another UNIFIL post in the area of Meiss al-Jabal, but no injuries or damage were reported. She said that using areas

close to UNIFIL posts to carry out cross-border attacks was unacceptable and constituted a violation of Resolution 1701 (Reuters, August 27, 2024).

United States Wages Psychological Warfare on Tinder in Lebanon

► The United States Army's Central Command (CENTCOM) posted several warning messages in Arabic on the Lebanese Tinder app reading, "US [Army] Central Command is on high alert and ready with F-16 Fighting Falcons and A-10 Thunder Bolt sound barrier-breaking fighter jets," "Don't take up arms against the United States or its partners," "The United States will protect its partners in dealing with the threats of the Iranian regime and its proxies." In expert assessment it was a psychological warfare campaign aimed at Hezbollah operatives in an attempt to deter them from continuing to attack Israel. Tinder later announced the messages had been deleted (Task & Purpose, August 28, 2024).



CENTCOM warnings posted on Tinder in Lebanon
(Séamus Malekafzali's X account, August 22, 2024)

Syria

Senior PIJ terrorist operative eliminated

► On August 28, 2024, an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked along the Syria-Lebanon border, killing Faras Qassem, a key operative in the PIJ's operations department in Syria. He had been in charge of constructing PIJ operational plans in Syria and Lebanon and played a central role in recruiting Palestinian operatives to Hezbollah for terrorist attacks on Israel from Lebanon. According to reports, several other PIJ operatives en route from Syria to Lebanon to carry out

terrorist activities for Hezbollah were also killed in the attack (IDF spokesperson, August 28, 2024).⁶

► According to reports, the attack was carried out in the al-Zabadani region, about nine kilometers east of the Syria-Lebanon border (Ghattas' X account, August 28, 2024). Two "security sources" said that three of those killed in the attack on the Syria-Lebanon border were PIJ operatives and the fourth was a Hezbollah operative. It was also reported that the vehicle did not transport weapons (Reuters, August 28, 2024).

► The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing, confirmed the death of three of its operatives: Faras Hussein Qassem, 37 years old; Osama Mufaq 'Arisha, 39 years old, and Hussam Ziyad 'Arisha, 39 years old, all of whom were Jerusalem Brigades operatives in Syria (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, August 28, 2024). Hezbollah announced the death of Muhammad Hassan Taha, aka Karar, born in 1972, from Baalbek in the Lebanon Valley (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, August 28, 2024). According to the social networks, Taha was among the passengers of the vehicle that was attacked and was killed (Hayan Mo's X account, August 28, 2024).



From right to left: Faras Hussein Qassem, Osama Mufaq 'Arisha, Hussam Ziyad Arisha (Telegram channel of Jerusalem companies, August 28, 2024). Extreme left: Muhammad Hassan Taha (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, August 28, 2024)

⁶ For further information, see the August 2024 ITIC report, "[The Organizations Assisting Hezbollah in Combat Against Israel.](#)"