



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria (March 14 - 18, 2024)

### Northern Arena

- 1,074 attacks
- 239 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 47 operatives of other terrorist-organization killed
- One non-affiliated operative
- One Lebanese army soldier killed

### Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ Hezbollah continued attacking against Israeli military targets along the border, carrying out 29 attacks. In response, IDF forces attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Given the increase of IDF attacks in Lebanon, Hezbollah issued a video threatening reprisals in kind if the IDF continues expanding its attacks in Lebanon.
- ▶ According to a report, last month Esmail Qaani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force, met with Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah. Nasrallah reportedly told him that Hezbollah would fight on its own against Israel, and called on Iran to remain uninvolved in direct fighting out of concern for the safety of its nuclear facilities and to avoid a confrontation with the United States.
- ▶ Hezbollah targets northeast of Damascus were attacked in an airstrike attributed to Israel.
- ▶ The British Telegraph reported that Iran smuggled weapons to Hezbollah using ships passing through the Suez Canal en route to ports in Europe.

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

<sup>2</sup> The data relate to incidents beginning on October 8, 2023, the day Hezbollah began its attack after the start of the war in the Gaza Strip.

## South Lebanon

### Hezbollah attacks

► **Between March 14, 2024 at 12:30 p.m. and March 17, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.**, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **29 attacks** using anti-tank missiles, rockets, artillery and firing 14.5 mm heavy machine guns (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 14-18, 2024).

- ◆ On March 14, 2024, there were **six attacks**.
- ◆ On March 15, 2024, there were **nine attacks**, mainly rocket launches, including a Burkan rocket .
- ◆ On March 16, 2024, there were **six attacks**, including two Burkan rockets launched at the same time and the launch of anti-tank missiles. They targeted Mount Dov, Malkia, and Misgav Am; IDF forces responded with artillery fire (IDF spokesperson, March 16, 2024).
- ◆ On March 17, 2024, there were **eight attacks**, mainly involving artillery and anti-tank fire. During the night IDF forces intercepted a suspicious aerial target over Israel's maritime space in the Acre region, to the north of Haifa (IDF spokesperson, March 17, 2024). The incident is under investigation.

### IDF response

► In response, IDF forces attacked a series of Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon from the air and with artillery fire. Among the targets were a military structure used by Hezbollah in the al-Khiyam region, an observation post in the Kafrkila area, targets in Meis al-Jabal, Mirwahin, Tayr Harfa, Labouneh, Markaba, military buildings in Naqoura, Yaroun and Ramya (IDF spokesperson, March 14-18, 2024).

► On the afternoon of March 17, 2024, warplanes attacked Hezbollah targets in four areas simultaneously. The targets included a terrorist facility and an observation post in the Aitaroun area, a military building in the Alma al-Sha'ab area, and observation posts in the Mirwahin and Aita al-Sha'ab areas (IDF spokesperson, March 17, 2024).



**Attacks on Hezbollah terrorist targets in Aitaroun. Right: Attack on an observation post. Left: Attack on a terrorist facility (IDF spokesperson, March 17, 2024)**



**Attack on a Hezbollah military structure in the Alma al-Sha'ab area. Left: Attack on a Hezbollah observation post in the Aita al-Sha'ab area (IDF spokesperson, March 17, 2024)**



**Attacks in Mirwahin. Right: Military structure. Left: Observation post (IDF spokesperson, March 16, 2024)**



**Right and center: Attack on Tayr Harfa. Left: Attack on Markaba (Fouad Khreiss' X account, March 16, 2024)**



**Right: Attack on Ramya. Left: Assault on Aitaroun (Fouad Khreiss' X account, March 17, 2024)**



**Right: Attack on al-Adeisa (Ali Shoieb's X account, March 18, 2024). Left: Attack on a military structure in the Ramya area (IDF spokesperson, March 18, 2024)**

## Hezbollah issues a video threatening Israel

► Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel issued a video, its title quoting Hassan Nasrallah, who said "If you expand, we will expand." In the video Hezbollah threatens to increase its attacks if the IDF increases its attacks in Lebanon: "If you step up your attacks, we will step up ours." The video shows the weapons used by Hezbollah since the beginning of war (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel March 15, 2024). The video was apparently

issued as a warning to the IDF, which has expanded its response in Lebanon as far as the Beqa'a Valley in the past two weeks.



The opening frame of the Hezbollah video  
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 15, 2024)

## Senior Hezbollah Figures

- ▶ According to seven different sources, Reuters reported on a meeting held in Beirut in February 2024 between **Esmail Qaani, commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, and Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general**, regarding the possibility of starting a war between Israel and Lebanon. According to the report, Nasrallah said that if a war with Israel broke out, Hezbollah would fight on its own and called on Iran to remain uninvolved in direct fighting. Qaani indicated that Iran did not want a direct confrontation with Israel, and advised Hezbollah to refrain from entering a broader conflict with Israel. The sources stated that Iran and Hezbollah were aware of the dangers of a broader war in Lebanon, including the danger that it would lead to attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities. An Iranian security source admitted that Iran's direct involvement might serve Israel's interests and provide justification for the continued presence of American troops in the region (Reuters, March 15, 2024).
- ▶ It was also reported by a senior Iranian figure that before the meeting with Nasrallah, Qaani met in Iran with the commanders of the pro-Iranian militias in Yemen, Iraq and Syria. The meeting was also attended by three representatives from Hezbollah and Hossein Salami, IRGC commander. All participants agreed that Israel wanted to expand the war in Lebanon and that they should avoid falling into the trap, since it would lead to an additional presence of American troops in the region (Reuters, March 15, 2024).

## Opposition to Hezbollah

► **Michel Aoun, former president of Lebanon**, said he opposed Hezbollah's position, which was dragging Lebanon into a conflict that was none of the country's business. He said he had supported Hezbollah against Israel during the Lebanon War in 2006 as well as Hezbollah's activity against ISIS terrorism in the Syrian Civil War, but now the situation was different. According to him, this time Hezbollah's involvement was not real "resistance" or self-defense (961 website, March 17, 2024).

► Aoun's remarks reflect the differences of opinion between Lebanese Christians and Hezbollah regarding Hezbollah's intervention in the war. The Christian Lebanese, including those known to be affiliated with Hezbollah, are concerned about Lebanon's entanglement in a war at a time when Lebanon is struggling with a severe political and economic crisis. In addition, the Christian population is also concerned that Hezbollah, in cooperation with Hamas, will turn south Lebanon into a center of Hamas activity against Israel (lebanondebate.com, March 18, 2024).

## The Lebanese Government

► **Abdullah Bou Habib, Lebanon's foreign minister**, met with **Hervé Magro, the French ambassador to Lebanon**, and gave him the official Lebanese response to the French initiative regarding the restoration of stability in south Lebanon. Lebanon has expressed its willingness to implement Security Council Resolution 1701 on the condition that Israel undertakes to implement all clauses of the Resolution, which was passed at the end of the Second Lebanon War. Lebanon also expressed a willingness to renew the tripartite meetings between Lebanon, Israel and UNIFIL in Naqoura (al-Jadeed, March 15, 2024).

► The French proposal includes the withdrawal of Hezbollah's Radwan Force to a distance of at least ten kilometers from the border and the deployment of up to 15,000 Lebanese army soldiers near the border in south Lebanon, and Israel will stop flying in Lebanese airspace. According to the Lebanese al-Akhbar, Israel set a deadline for a political agreement with Lebanon, and informed the Western countries that if an agreement with Lebanon was not reached by March 15, 2024, Israel would prepare for an escalation in Lebanon while increasing military activity in the region. Israel denied the report (al-Akhbar, March 8, 2024).

## Syria

► The IDF spokesperson reported that on the evening of March 14, 2024, IDF warplanes attacked two military Syrian army facilities used by Hezbollah operatives (IDF spokesperson, March 14, 2024).



**Attacking a military facility in Syria (IDF website, March 14, 2024)**

### An airstrike northeast of Damascus

► A Syrian military source stated that on March 17, 2024, at around 12:42 a.m. Israel launched missiles from the direction of the Golan Heights at several positions in southern Syria and that the Syrian aerial defense unit shot down some of them. It was also reported that a soldier was injured in the attack and material damage was caused (SANA, March 17, 2024). According to another report, the missiles attacked Hezbollah weapons warehouses in the area between Muadamiyat al-Qalamoun and al-Qteife, about thirty kilometers northeast of Damascus, an area where a large number of Hezbollah headquarters and weapons warehouses are located (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 17, 2024).



**Attack in the al-Qteife area (Adnan Jawish's X account, March 17, 2024)**

## Iran's Aid to Hezbollah

### Smuggling weapons from Iran to Hezbollah

► According to an article in the British Telegraph, following the Israeli Air Force attacks on the airports in Syria, Iran began smuggling weapons to Hezbollah on ships that pass through the Suez Canal to ports in Europe, including Belgium, Italy and Spain, to disguise the routes of the ships. According to the report, the ships sail from Iran through the Suez Canal, from there to the port of Latakia in northern Syria, and from there to Europe. The ships unload weapons in Latakia including missiles and bombs, which are then transferred overland to Hezbollah in Lebanon (The Telegraph, March 14, 2024).