



Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah March 17 – 24, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ Six rockets were fired at Metula from Lebanon. Three were intercepted and three fell inside Lebanese territory; there were no casualties. The IDF attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon and the Beqa'a region; seven people were reported killed. Hezbollah denied involvement in the rocket fire. Lebanese government members made diplomatic efforts to prevent escalation by Israel.
- ▶ IDF forces continued operations against Hezbollah's efforts to restore its military capabilities and against its presence in south Lebanon in violation of the ceasefire agreement. The Lebanese government called for international pressure to be exerted on Israel to force it to withdraw its forces from five points in Lebanese territory. Hezbollah supported the government's efforts.
- ▶ Lebanon continued to oppose American efforts to promote political negotiations with Israel in an attempt to reach a normalization of diplomatic relations. Lebanese government members said they were only prepared for military talks focused on IDF withdrawal, the release of Lebanese detainees and the demarcation of the land border.
- ▶ Disarming Hezbollah continues to provoke dispute in Lebanon. The organization was outraged by comments made by the Lebanese foreign minister, who said Hezbollah was responsible for the destruction and losses in Lebanon and only the state should hold weapons.
- ▶ Tensions continue on the Lebanon-Syria border. The Lebanese army was deployed in the area and shut down six illegal border crossings.

Israel Attacked by Rocket Fire from Lebanon

- ▶ On the morning of March 22, 2025, six rockets were fired at the northern Israeli city of Metula from south Lebanon. Three were intercepted by the IDF, and three fell in Lebanese territory. There were no casualties. In response, the IDF fired artillery at the launch area, carried out two rounds of aerial attacks targeting fifty Hezbollah terrorist sites in Lebanon, including in the city

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

of Tyre and the Beqa'a region. The IDF attacked Hezbollah military command centers, terrorist operatives, rocket launchers and a weapons storage facility (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, March 22, 2025).



IDF strike in south Lebanon (al-Manar, March 22, 2025)

► Lebanese media reported the IDF attacked areas in south Lebanon, al-Qasr and Housh al-Sayyid Ali (Lebanon-Syria border), Nabi Sheet (in the Beqa'a Valley), Iqlim al-Tuffah in south Mount Lebanon, and Tyre (al-Akhbar and the South Lebanon – Enemy Watch Telegram channel, March 22, 2025). The Lebanese ministry of health reported seven people killed, five of them in the village of Toulin in south Lebanon, including a child; forty people were reported injured (al-Nashra, March 22, 2025).

Hezbollah

► Hezbollah denied any involvement in the rocket fire from south Lebanon. It claimed that the "Israeli enemy's" reports were "pretexts for continuing its attacks" on Lebanon, which continued since the ceasefire was declared. Hezbollah also claimed it was committed to the ceasefire and supported Lebanon in dealing with the "dangerous Zionist escalation" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 22, 2025).

► Hezbollah claimed it had informed Lebanese authorities of its support for the state's dealing with recent developments and it remained committed to the ceasefire. Hezbollah claimed that when it carried out operations against Israel, it announced them officially (Al Jazeera, March 22, 2025). Hezbollah denied it was behind the rocket fire, claiming that "the party responsible for the launch was unprofessional" (al-Araby TV, March 22, 2025).

► Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed the "Israeli enemy" continued its "hostile actions" against Lebanese "civilians." He said it was the government's direct responsibility to determine how to end the "dangerous Israeli actions,"

and called on the government to increase its monitoring of events while taking into account Israel's escalating attacks on Lebanon (al-Nashra, March 22, 2025).

► Hassan Ezzeddine, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that the "enemy" did not need pretexts or respect the agreement signed by the Lebanese government. He claimed the full coordination between Washington and Tel Aviv gave the "enemy" more freedom to achieve what it had failed to accomplish on the ground. He added that the "resistance"² gave the government the opportunity to fulfill its role through diplomacy, but the "enemy" ignored diplomacy and wanted to pressure the Lebanese government to surrender to its conditions (al-'Ahed, March 22, 2025).

The Lebanese army

► The Lebanese army reported having located three outdated rocket launchers north of the Litani River between the village of Tebnine and Arnoun-al-Nabatieh, its forces dismantled them (Lebanese army X account, March 22, 2025).

► According to a preliminary investigation, the rockets were "old" and it was unclear who carried out the launch. A "Lebanese military source" said that the Lebanese army was fully coordinating with UNIFIL forces and was prepared to deal with developments in south Lebanon (Al Jazeera, March 22, 2025). "Sources" claimed the "outdated method" used to launch the rockets from Lebanese territory indicated Hezbollah was not involved, adding that Hezbollah typically issued statements regarding its actions (al-Mayadeen, March 22, 2025).

► Lebanon reported that the area from which the rockets were fired had been used during the war by "Palestinian organizations" to attack Israel, and in this case non-Lebanese elements could be blamed (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 23, 2025).

► According to reports the Lebanese army detained two Syrians in south Lebanon and questioned them as witnesses to the rocket fire targeting Metula. According to "sources," those who fired the rockets used "primitive means" and left Hezbollah flags and pictures of Nasrallah in an attempt to place blame on the organization (al-Joumhouria, March 24, 2025). The two Syrians were released when the army realized they had no connection to the event. Meanwhile, "Palestinian sources" denied Palestinian responsibility for the rocket fire, claiming they would not carry out such an attack, which in the current circumstances benefitted neither the Palestinians nor the Lebanese (al-Akhbar, March 24, 2025).

² Hezbollah and the allied terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.



**Improvised launch platforms discovered near the village of Tebnine
(Lebanese army X account, March 22, 2025)**

The Lebanese government

► Lebanon condemned Israel's attack and warned the situation would deteriorate into a new round of violence. Diplomatic efforts in the international arena were intensified in an attempt to prevent further escalation:

► Joseph Aoun, president of Lebanon, condemned attempts to drag Lebanon back into the cycle of violence. He claimed the events since February 18, 2025, when Israel completed its withdrawal from Lebanon except for five points along the border, were a "continuous attack" on Lebanon and a "blow" to the plan to save the state. He called on all relevant forces in south Lebanon, especially the committee monitoring the ceasefire and the Lebanese army, to follow developments to prevent dangerous consequences and stop violations which could threaten national security. He also asked the Lebanese army commander to take the necessary measures to protect civilians and investigate the circumstances of the incidents (Lebanese president's X account, March 22, 2025).

► Nawaf Salam, Lebanese prime minister, warned military operations in the region could be resumed, which risked dragging the country into a new war bringing disaster to the Lebanese people. He spoke by phone with Michel Menassa, Lebanese minister of defense, and told him to employ all necessary security and military measures to make it clear that war and peace would be decided exclusively by the state. Salam also spoke with Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, UN special coordinator for Lebanon, and called on the UN to increase international pressure on Israel to withdraw from the "occupied Lebanese territories," claiming Israel was in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and the ceasefire agreement (Lebanese government X account, March 22, 2025).

► Youssef Rajji, Lebanese foreign minister, asked international figures to pressure Israel to halt its "aggression," adding that Lebanon did not want escalation. He spoke with the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and France, with the United States deputy special envoy for the Middle East and with the United States deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs (al-Nashra and Al Jazeera, March 22, 2025).

► President Aoun had contacts with American officials which led to the decision that Beirut and other areas in Lebanon would not be included in the Israeli strike zone. The Israelis reportedly informed the Americans that they would continue to strike any Hezbollah activity in any area while avoiding harm to civilians and state institutions. The Lebanese army and security forces were instructed to take a firmer stance in the south to prevent actions that could drag the country into another round of conflict. Aoun and the government reportedly continue to rely on diplomacy, holding contacts with the French to reduce the consequences of the rocket fire from south Lebanon (Nidaa al-Watan, March 23, 2025).

UNIFIL

► UNIFIL expressed concern over the situation and warned that any further escalation could have "disastrous consequences." UNIFIL called on both sides to refrain from actions that could endanger the progress made, especially in light of the threat to civilian lives and the fragile regional stability, and urged them to adhere to their commitments (UNIFIL Telegram channel, March 22, 2025).

The Ceasefire

The IDF

► In addition to responding to the rocket fire targeting Israeli territory from Lebanon, this past week the IDF continued operations against Hezbollah's reconstruction of its military capabilities and its activities in south Lebanon in violation of the ceasefire agreement, which prohibits Hezbollah's presence south of the Litani River. A Hezbollah operative was eliminated in Aita al-Sha'ab in south Lebanon, and an underground facility in the Beqa'a Valley and a site containing rocket launchers in south Lebanon were attacked after activity was identified (IDF spokesperson, March 2025).

► Lebanese media reported that a Hezbollah operative was killed in an attack on a vehicle in Aita al-Sha'ab (al-Nashra, March 23, 2025). The Lebanese army reported that Israeli engineering vehicles crossed the fence along the border and operated in Wadi Qatamon, outside the town of Rmeish. The IDF reportedly deployed soldiers inside Lebanese territory in

violation of Resolution 1701 and the ceasefire agreement (Lebanese army X account, March 23, 2025).

Hezbollah

► Hassan Ezzeddine, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the "resistance" would not allow "the enemy" to impose "new equations." He claimed "the enemy" believed the balance of power had shifted in its favor, allowing it to act freely. He claimed such actions were "terrorism and aggression" against Lebanon and a violation of the country's sovereignty. He added that if the government did not fulfill its national responsibility, the "resistance" would not allow the status quo to continue (Lebanese National News Agency, March 17, 2025). On another occasion he claimed Hezbollah was currently employing a "strategy of patience," which he described as "an integral part of the confrontation with Israel." He claimed Hezbollah's leadership was acting with maximum restraint and moderation to allow the Lebanese government to handle the Israeli "aggression" and the removal of the IDF from south Lebanon however it saw fit. However, Hezbollah was "completing its preparations," and if all measures failed and diplomacy was no longer an option, Hezbollah "will act naturally and exercise its natural right [sic] against the enemy" (Al Jazeera, March 22, 2025).

► Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said developments in Lebanon in general, and in the south in particular, required wisdom, patience and judgment, steadfastness, resilience and courage. He accused the "Zionist enemy" of trying to escalate militarily in order to ignite a new war and "empty" south Lebanon of its residents, and claimed the Israeli threat was no longer limited to the "weapons of the resistance" but targeted the entire state and its structure. He claimed Hezbollah supported the government's efforts to achieve national objectives and compel Israel to withdraw from Lebanese territory, and was also committed to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. He warned against actors within Lebanon who sought to justify the attacks on the country and undermine solidarity (al-'Ahed, March 24, 2025).



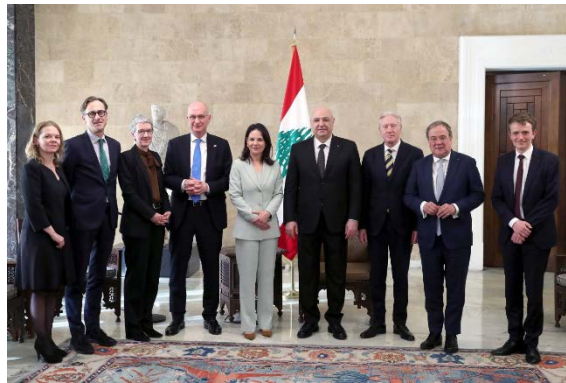
Ali Fayyad (al-'Ahed, March 24, 2025)

► Ihab Hamadeh, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, accused "certain parties" of turning "a blind eye and deaf ear" to the ongoing "Israeli land, sea and air aggression" without "the enemy's" being held accountable. He said the "resistance" would act more strongly and resolutely [than the government] and escalate its confrontation with "the projects of our enemies" since it was always strong "in numbers and equipment" (al-'Ahed, March 24, 2025).

The Lebanese government

► During March 2025, Lebanon continued to criticize the Israeli presence at five points inside Lebanese territory and called on the international community to pressure Israel to withdraw completely:

- ◆ Joseph Aoun, Lebanese president, met with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock. He told her that Israel's continued "occupation" in south Lebanon delayed the implementation of Resolution 1701 and contravened the ceasefire agreement. He added that Israel rejected all the proposals Lebanon had submitted regarding the evacuation of the five positions it held and that it still held several Lebanese prisoners. Baerbock stressed the importance of reforms and Berlin's concern over the situation in Lebanon (al-Nashra, March 19, 2025).



Aoun and the German foreign minister (al-Nashra, March 19, 2025)

◆ Youssef Rajji, Lebanese foreign minister, met with members of the Christian Maronite community, and said Lebanon's goal was to return to the 1974 armistice agreement. He said the only solution was international pressure on Israel, especially from the United States, adding that the full implementation of Resolution 1701 and the cessation of military activity were difficult conditions set by the party that led the war [i.e., Hezbollah], which he claimed was slow to recognize the necessity of the ceasefire. He said the agreement's wording was clear and specified which groups were authorized to bear arms, yet Hezbollah was evading³ the condition (al-Nashara, March 19, 2025).

◆ Nawaf Salam, Lebanese prime minister, claimed Israel was using the weapons in Hezbollah's possession as a pretext to remain in south Lebanon, even though its presence there violated international law and bilateral understandings. He said Israel had to withdraw completely from south Lebanon and the state was responsible for liberating the land (al-Arabiya, March 21, 2025).

◆ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, claimed Hezbollah was committed to the ceasefire, had not interfered with its implementation, had withdrawn from south of the Litani and had not fired a shot for six months, despite Israel's "ongoing violations." He said Hezbollah did not respond to Israeli "violations," was following a policy of restraint and supported the state in implementing the agreement (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 23, 2025).

► According to a "Lebanese source," Israel announced it would remain at five positions in south Lebanon but in fact held seven positions, occupying an area of 11 square kilometers. He claimed that since the start of the ceasefire, no weapons has moved south of the Litani River

³ i.e., not adhering to the condition.

and that transferring Hezbollah's weapons located south of the river was a "technical matter requiring time." The "source" said the Lebanese army had confiscated and destroyed "thousands of weapons," including large quantities of Kornet anti-tank missiles, and 6,000 Lebanese soldiers were deployed south of the Litani (al-Hadath, March 19, 2025).

The Lebanese army

► An American and European military and diplomatic delegation toured south Lebanon accompanied by a delegation from the ceasefire monitoring committee and a delegation from the Lebanese army. The tour followed a meeting at UNIFIL headquarters, where the needs of the Lebanese army were discussed (al-Akhbar, March 21, 2025).

UNIFIL

► In a speech marking 47 years of UNIFIL activity, Commander Aroldo Lázaro said it was essential to restore Lebanese sovereignty and the Lebanese armed forces, with UNIFIL support, had to remain the source of security in south Lebanon. He added that UNIFIL's ability to support the Lebanese army effectively depended on the support of the government and local authorities and their cooperation was essential to ensure the mission's operations (UNIFIL website, March 19, 2025).

► The spokesman for the UN secretary general said a UNIFIL soldier was injured by a landmine in Lebanon. He noted the importance of respecting Resolution 1701 (al-Nashra, March 19, 2025).

Possibility of Normalizing Israel-Lebanon Relations

► This past week Lebanon continued dealing with American efforts to promote a dialogue with Israel for a normalization agreement. The Lebanese government reiterated its opposition to any political negotiations or normalization with Israel, stating that direct talks would only be held with military representatives to resolve the issues of Lebanese prisoners and Israel's withdrawal from the five positions in south Lebanon, in accordance with the ceasefire agreement:

- ◆ Youssef Rajji, Lebanese foreign minister, said Lebanon rejected any form of normalization with Israel and claimed the Americans had not related to the issue. He said Lebanon would not agree to direct political negotiations with Israel (al-Nashra, March 19, 2025).

- ◆ "Diplomatic sources" reported that the United States asked Lebanon to begin diplomatic negotiations with Israel outside the military meetings held in Naqoura, in

order to reach agreements on three issues: Lebanese “captives” held by Israel, Israel’s withdrawal from the five positions it still held in south Lebanon, and the demarcation of the land border. The United States proposed appointing diplomatic committees to address the issues on the condition that Lebanon responded within two weeks. “Sources” said that the decision on the American proposal would be made by the president, the speaker of the parliament and the prime minister. The same sources said efforts were being made for a “middle ground” which would avoid overt American pressure for normalization while ensuring progress on Lebanon’s demands. “Official sources” confirmed Lebanon’s insistence on implementing Resolution 1701 and achieving Israeli withdrawal from the five positions and the release of prisoners as a precondition for responding to the American proposal (al-Madan, March 19, 2025).

◆ The American administration reportedly sent an “urgent message” to the Lebanese president, prime minister and speaker of the parliament via Morgan Ortagus, deputy special envoy for the Middle East, urging a prompt response to the American request for direct political talks on the disputed points. A “Lebanese source” claimed the Americans used a “threatening tone,” with Ortagus stating that direct negotiations were the only way to address the points of contention, and if Lebanon refused the United States would will no longer see a need to continue the ceasefire monitoring committee’s work or to apply pressure on Israel. The Lebanese president’s team proposed an alternative scenario: refraining from formal political negotiations while not opposing the American proposal by adding civilian technical experts to the military delegation in the ceasefire monitoring committee. It was also reported that the speaker of the parliament had yet to respond, while the prime minister was not fundamentally opposed to the American proposal, despite previously pledging not to take part in negotiations which would lead to normalization with Israel (al-Akhbar, March 20, 2025).

◆ Ibrahim al-Amin, editor of Hezbollah’s daily Lebanese newspaper al-Akhbar, said that while Lebanon’s leadership was made up of American administration “puppets,” the American president had adopted Israel’s position of being willing to withdraw from Lebanon only in exchange for a security-political agreement. He claimed the Americans were pressuring Lebanon to engage in direct political negotiations and warning that failure to do so would place responsibility on Lebanon. He said the main problem was that “some people” in Lebanon legitimized American pressure, describing them as a

“choir” led by the American embassy in Beirut and funded by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. He placed responsibility on those willing to cooperate with such a plan, explicitly naming President Aoun and Prime Minister Salam (al-Akhbar , March 20, 2025).

◆ Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, claimed Israel sought to lure Lebanon into political negotiations to normalize relations, but Lebanon would not be tempted. He added that there was already an agreement with international and Arab support and UN approval, but Israel was obstructing its implementation and seeking to bypass it (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 23, 2025).

The Dispute in Lebanon Over the Future of Hezbollah

► The issue of Hezbollah’s weapons continues to divide Lebanese politics. Government members and Hezbollah opponents continue emphasizing the need to disarm the organization and ensure that the state’s security forces are the sole armed entities, while Hezbollah representatives and their allies reiterate that the “resistance’s” weapons are essential for defense against the “Israeli occupier”:

◆ Tamara Zein, environment minister affiliated with the “Shi’ite Duo” of Hezbollah and Amal, claimed that while some ministers argued that Hezbollah had to be disarmed, others prioritized calls for Israel’s withdrawal from the five points in south Lebanon. She added that President Aoun had determined that the timing of disarmament depended on the capabilities of the Lebanese army to deploy in south Lebanon, and external factors would not dictate the timeline (al-Hurra, March 17, 2025).

◆ Youssef Rajji, Lebanese foreign minister, sharply criticized Hezbollah over the war’s outcome and its consequences for the country. He said the state was responsible for protecting the country and its citizens, but asked, “Who caused the destruction and loss of life? Who led the Israeli army into villages and towns in south Lebanon and allowed it to remain in five locations?” He said he was not blaming the “resistance” but “The facts confirm it.” He added that the state would file a complaint against Israel for its “crimes” in Lebanon but asked who really caused the losses, who claimed to support Gaza and who repeatedly declared their intent to “liberate Jerusalem.” He added that the ceasefire agreement stipulated weapons could only be held by the state and that “regardless of the international community’s opinion, the majority of Lebanese people aspire to live in a normal country where only the state has weapons.” Rajji said Lebanon

had already suffered disasters through weapons and war and challenged “that group,” which refused to establish a normal state, to present a plan for “expelling Israeli forces, stopping aggression and ending the occupation” (France 24, March 19, 2025).

◆ In response, Ibrahim al-Moussawi, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, accused Rajji of “giving the enemy freedom to continue its crimes” and “harming national interests.” He claimed it was not the first time the foreign minister had attacked Hezbollah, even as the “Israeli occupation” continued daily “aggression” against the Lebanese people. Al-Moussawi said Hezbollah hoped Rajji would fulfill his minimum national responsibilities but instead “went too far with his [alleged] fabrications.” He claimed Hezbollah remained committed to the Lebanese government’s directives under Resolution 1701 and its operational framework (al-'Ahed, March 20, 2025).

◆ Al-Akhbar editor Ibrahim al-Amin criticized those who thought the time of the “resistance” had passed and who were willing to tolerate Israel’s “daily killings.” He accused Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE of collaborating to “fuel civil war” in Lebanon and Syria. He added that when the moment came, no one would wait for permission from a ruler and the door would open to a new era of “resistance.” He also attacked Lebanon’s ruling authorities, accusing them of surrendering to the “American patronage regime” and attempting to silence the opposition (al-Akhbar, March 18–19, 2025).

◆ President Joseph Aoun declared that according to the constitution, no authority had legitimacy if its actions violated the “pact of coexistence.” He stressed that only through unity could rights be restored, territories and prisoners freed, the country rebuilt and prosperity achieved. He pledged not to allow further destruction (Lebanese National News Agency, March 20, 2025).

◆ Prime Minister Nawaf Salam stated that the Hezbollah weapons chapter ended after the government’s basic policy outline had been presented. He said the slogan “people-army-resistance” was a thing of the past, the government declaration clearly limited weapons to the state and everyone was committed by it. However, he noted that disarmament would not happen overnight (al-Arabiya, March 21, 2025). In response, Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said Salam had to explain what protected the Lebanese from “ongoing Israeli aggression.” He added that “resistance” was never just a word, it was “the past, present and future.” He

said the government should focus on confronting Israeli “violations” instead of issuing statements that “do not serve the national position” (Hezbollah’s social media file, Simia, March 23, 2025).

◆ Lebanese Forces MP Ghassan Hasbani called on the Lebanese army to disarm Hezbollah “willingly or by force.” He said the army, according to the ceasefire agreement signed by the Lebanese government, had to confiscate Hezbollah’s weapons even if it led to a confrontation, and there was no alternative. He said if Hezbollah continued to exist as an armed entity, it eventually erase Lebanon from the map. He warned the government that it had to immediately fulfill its duty toward Hezbollah (Ghassan Hasbani’s X account, March 22, 2025).

The Lebanese Army

The new Lebanese army commander

► Nawaf Salam, Lebanese prime minister, met with Rodolph Haykal, the incoming commander of the Lebanese army, to discuss Lebanon's security situation. Salam congratulated Haykal on assuming his new position (Lebanese government X account, March 17, 2025).

► Rodolph Haykal met with the Lebanese army general command headquarters and commanders of major units and independent battalions. He promised the army would meet the challenges ahead, work to establish the state’s authority throughout Lebanese territory, continue implementing Resolution 1701 in coordination with the UNIFIL force and confront “the repeated aggression and violations of the Israeli enemy” (Lebanese army X account, March 21, 2025).



Rodolph Haykal speaking to senior army officers (Lebanese army X account, March 21, 2025)

Tension along the Lebanon-Syria border

► Given the exchanges of fire between security forces of the new Syrian regime and armed Hezbollah-affiliated operatives along the Lebanon-Syria border, Lebanese President Joseph

Aoun was briefed on developments by Commander Rodolph Haykal. Aoun noted the need for a ceasefire and an end to hostilities. Meanwhile, the Lebanese army announced that its units had deployed in the Housh al-Sayyid Ali–Hermel area and had begun patrols “to maintain security and protect stability in the border region” (Lebanese National News Agency and Lebanese army X account, March 19, 2025).

► The Lebanese Army reported it had closed six illegal border crossings in the al-Qaa, al-Qasr–Hermel, Housh al-Sayyid Ali, and Qabash–Hermel areas, to combat infiltration and smuggling across the country's northern and eastern borders (Lebanese army X account, March 23, 2025). Despite the closure of the crossings, a patrol by the army’s military intelligence directorate arrested a smuggler named Shahad al-Hajiri in the al-Qaa area and seized six vehicles containing smuggled goods (NNA Lebanon, March 24, 2025).



**A Lebanese army tractor sealing illegal border crossings
(Lebanese army X account, March 22, 2025)**

► A “source” said the Lebanese army was fully briefed on the situation along the border and all residents and parties stand behind it. The source added that the army was preparing for the failure of diplomatic solutions to the border tension and had therefore prepared a contingency plan confronting Syrian forces in 22 villages located along the border. “Sources” accused the new Syrian regime of attempting to purge mixed-population areas of Lebanese residents on the border to alter the demography (al-Joumhouria, March 19, 2025).

► Lebanese commentator Samer Zureik accused Hezbollah of being behind the clashes on the Syrian border, despite the organization’s claims that “tribes” or “bands of smugglers” were responsible, just as it previously claimed that attacks on UNIFIL forces in south Lebanon were carried out by “locals.” According to Zureik, Hezbollah is attempting to forge a new identity for its weapons on the pretext of protecting the Shi'ites from Sunni massacres, and the organization is transforming from a regional force which waved the banner of “resistance to Israel” into a militia operating along sectarian lines (al-Nidaa al-Watan, March 18, 2025).