

IDF Announces Operational Control of the Ali al-Taher Ridge –Reactions in Lebanon and Iran

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September 9, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ On September 3, 2026, the IDF announced that it had achieved operational control of the strategic Ali al-Taher Ridge in south Lebanon and cleared the tunnels used by Hezbollah.
- ▶ The Lebanese government reinforced the deployment of army forces in the city of al-Nabatieh, near the Ali al-Taher Ridge, in an effort to prevent Israeli activity in the area, but did not state the action was part of implementing the state's monopoly on weapons.
- ▶ Hezbollah did not officially respond to the IDF announcement, but senior organization figures claimed Israel was exaggerating the importance of the ridge. Commentary in the Lebanese media claimed the organization's silence resulted from Hezbollah's reluctance to undermine the "resistance" narrative and from its concern that transferring the Ali al-Taher Ridge to the Lebanese army would lead to demands to evacuate other Hezbollah sites north of the Litani River.
- ▶ The Iranian regime did not relate to the Israeli announcement despite its earlier threats to respond if the IDF operated extensively on the Ali al-Taher Ridge. Conservative media outlets acknowledged the strategic importance of the ridge while attempting to downplay the significance of the event for Hezbollah.
- ▶ Hezbollah's political and media opponents criticized its rejection of the proposal to transfer its facility on the Ali al-Taher Ridge to the Lebanese army and challenged the organization's argument that it was capable of defending Lebanese territory. Local residents and business owners in al-Nabatieh, one of Hezbollah's strongholds in south Lebanon, signed a statement condemning Hezbollah for handing the area over to the "enemy."
- ▶ **In Amit Institute assessment, the events on the Ali al-Taher Ridge illustrate the dilemma facing Hezbollah, which is required to reconcile its continued independent control of military infrastructure with its claim that its weapons protect Lebanese**

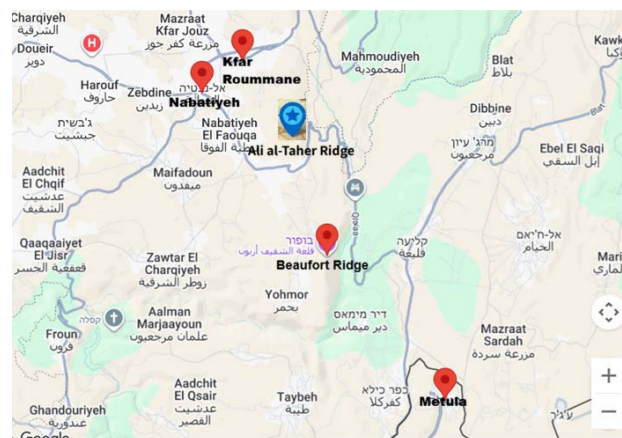
¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the Amit Institute's daily updates as well as its other publications

sovereignty. If Israel attempts to advance toward other strategic Hezbollah sites north of the Litani River, increased domestic pressure may be exerted on the organization to change its position and transfer the facilities to state sovereignty. However, in all probability Hezbollah can be expected to continue to reject what it perceives as a precedent for the gradual dismantling of its infrastructure under Israeli-American pressure.

► The developments on the Ali al-Taher Ridge also pose a dilemma for the Lebanese leadership. On the one hand, the Israeli announcement requires the presidency and the government to oppose the move and relate to it as an infringement of state sovereignty. On the other, the very fact that a military facility not under state control operated in the area strengthens the argument that restoring state authority in the south cannot be limited to demanding an Israeli withdrawal, but requires establishing the Lebanese army's exclusive control over weapons and territory.

IDF Control of the Ali al-Taher Ridge²

► The Ali al-Taher Ridge, which rises to approximately 600 meters above sea level, is located north of the Litani River and Beaufort Castle and overlooks extensive areas that include the city of al-Nabatieh, the village of Tebnine, the al-Tuffah region and Jabal al-Rihan. Its strategic location provides observation and fire command of those areas, as well as control of major transportation routes connecting the coastal area, al-Nabatieh, the Beqa'a Valley, Tyre and Marjayoun.



The Ali al-Taher Ridge and its surroundings (Google Maps)

² See the August 2026 Amit Institute report, [Dismantling the Hezbollah Infrastructure at the Ali Taher Ridge to Advance the Ceasefire Agreement](#).

► According to the IDF, a major strategic underground Hezbollah facility operated on the Ali al-Taher Ridge, serving as the main headquarters of Hezbollah's Badr Unit, which directs the organization's military activity north of the Litani River. Beginning in June 2026, after the IDF took control of the Beaufort Ridge and its network of tunnels, IDF activity focused on the Ali al-Taher Ridge. That included air and artillery strikes to eliminate terrorists identified in the area, prevent the escape of trapped terrorists and the transfer of assistance to the underground compound, and destroy Hezbollah infrastructure.

► On September 3, 2026, the IDF announced it had completed clearing two Hezbollah tunnels on the Ali al-Taher Ridge in the security zone in south Lebanon, adding that the forces had achieved operational control of the area above and below ground. Hezbollah operatives were eliminated and others fled, and the tunnels were found to contain operations rooms, weapons storage rooms and facilities for extended stays. According to the IDF, the facility had been built over two decades, planned and funded by Iran (IDF spokesperson, September 3, 2026).



Strikes on the Ali al-Taher Ridge (Akhbar al-Yawm Agency, September 9, 2026)

The Lebanese Government

► In recent weeks, in an effort to halt the Israeli attacks, advance direct negotiations with Israel and implement the June 2026 framework agreement, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun proposed that Hezbollah terrorists evacuate the Ali al-Taher Ridge and Lebanese army forces enter and take control of the site. The proposal was supported by the Americans and by Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese Parliament and a Hezbollah ally, but the Lebanese army had reservations and demanded guarantees that Israel would not enter the site to verify the dismantling of the infrastructure.

► The Lebanese government did not formally relate to the IDF announcement. However, Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri said the objective of the proposal to transfer the

facilities on the ridge and control of the site to the Lebanese army was to prevent a large-scale Israeli operation in the area, but "reaching understandings had encountered difficulties" (Lebanese News Agency, September 6, 2026).

► A source familiar with the Israel-Lebanon negotiations said Hezbollah had surprised the Lebanese leadership because it had passed up an opportunity to transfer the ridge to the Lebanese army and thereby give the Lebanese delegation an advantage for the next round of negotiations with Israel. However, according to the source, Hezbollah was more interested in redeploying and ensuring its continued possession of weapons north of the Litani River (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 6, 2026).

► Control of the Ali al-Taher Ridge enables the IDF to increase military pressure on the al-Nabatieh area, one of the largest cities in south Lebanon and a major Hezbollah stronghold north of the Litani River. Concerned about an Israeli move, sources said the Lebanese army had begun expanding its deployment in the city and the surrounding area, following instructions from President Aoun and army commander Rodolphe Haykal, in coordination with Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. However, the purpose of the move was reportedly to strengthen the security presence and prevent further escalation, not to begin disarmament or turn al-Nabatieh into a demilitarized zone (*al-Madan*, September 8, 2026; *Nidaa al-Watan*, September 9, 2026).

► The Lebanese army sought to refute claims about the absence of a state presence in the area. The army command stated that its units were deployed in all areas of the south where there was no Israeli presence, particularly in the al-Nabatieh region, and following the recent developments it had reinforced its missions in several locations to reassure local residents (Lebanese army X account, September 8, 2026).



Lebanese army patrol in al-Nabatieh (Bint Jbeil News X account, September 9, 2026)

► A source close to the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said Israeli control of the ridge was a blow to Hezbollah's defensive array and ability to exploit the terrain for command, concealment and operational [military] activity. He added that politically it exposed the limitations of the organization's claim that it was the only force capable of defending Lebanon against Israel. Sources close to the Pentagon said the Lebanese army's inability to deploy at the site illustrated the state's difficulty in restoring its sovereignty. According to the source, the American objective should be neither continued Hezbollah control nor Israeli control without a time limit, but rather the deployment of the Lebanese army at the site, with practical international assistance and the establishment of a credible verification mechanism (*Nidaa al-Watan*, September 7, 2026).

Hezbollah's Stance

► In recent weeks, Hezbollah claimed the Ali al-Taher Ridge would not fall through surrender, but only after "steadfastness and resistance."³ The organization rejected President Aoun's proposal to withdraw from the ridge in favor of the Lebanese army and said the issue was not the fate of a single military post, but the establishment of an "equation" regarding all Lebanese territory, and that evacuating the ridge would lead Israel to demand the evacuation of other "resistance" sites, including north of the Litani River and in the Beqa'a Valley (*al-Akhbar*, August 29, 2026).

► Hezbollah did not directly respond to the IDF announcement, but senior organization figures and those close to it tried to downplay the significance of the loss of the ridge:

◆ Mahmoud Qamati, Hezbollah political council deputy chairman, claimed the organization was "steadfast and resisting" on the ridge and warned that any Israeli advance would be met accordingly. He tried to downplay the significance of the Israeli announcement, claiming they were only "secondary tunnels" (Radio Monte Carlo, September 6, 2026).

◆ Ihab Hamadeh, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said he doubted the Israeli announcement was credible because of the continued attacks and shelling in the area. He claimed Israel had not issued photographs confirming the capture of the ridge or the logistical weapons claimed to have been there, and

³ Intransigence and terrorist attacks.

wondered how some of the Hezbollah "fighters"⁴ who had been trapped had escaped if Israel maintained a tight siege from the air and the ground. He claimed Israel was representing the Ali al-Taher "hill" as Hezbollah's last stronghold so Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu could exploit it in the upcoming Israeli elections. He added that Israeli control of the "hill" was not a military disaster nor the end of the road, adding that Hezbollah had displayed a "legendary stand" on the ridge, but warned there were red lines regarding continued IDF activity; he did not elaborate (Sputnik Radio, September 4, 2026).



Ihab Hamadeh (al-Manar, September 1, 2026)

◆ Messages conveyed through Hezbollah's affiliated media outlets claimed Israel was exaggerating the importance of the Ali al-Taher Ridge and the infrastructure damaged or brought under its control consisted mainly of "administrative and logistical facilities," the loss of which did not affect the core of Hezbollah's military array north of the Litani River (Asas Media, September 9, 2026).

◆ Hezbollah-affiliated *al-Akhbar* editor Ibrahim al-Amin claimed that the Israeli operation was part of a military-political move to increase pressure on Hezbollah and the state without expanding the hostilities. He said Hezbollah did not intend to surrender to the American attempt to bring about the transfer of the posts in the area to the army, lest that be used to increase pressure on its infrastructure and create a confrontation between the Lebanese army and the "resistance"⁵ (*al-Akhbar*, September 8, 2026).

► Sources close to Hezbollah claimed its silence was a "deliberate policy of operational ambiguity," alleging that since mid-June 2026, Hezbollah had not publicly dealt with events

⁴ Terrorist operatives.

⁵ Hezbollah and the other terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon.

in order to keep information about its activity and intentions from Israel. The sources claimed the fighting in the area had not yet ended and Israel had not achieved all its objectives at the site (*al-Joumhouria*, September 9, 2026).

► According to another report, Hezbollah has been unclear about the Ali al-Taher Ridge for the past three months, but implicitly questioned the Israeli narrative and did not provide descriptions of the facility at the site. According to sources, the term "operational control" did not necessarily indicate full, continuous, permanent control of the entire ridge. However, they did confirm that Israel had taken control of a facility in the eastern part of the site approximately a month earlier and claimed the objective of issuing documentation from it was to create the impression that Israel controlled the entire ridge (*al-Nashra*, September 4, 2026).

► According to commentator retired Brigadier General Mohammad al-Husseini, a former senior Lebanese army officer claimed Hezbollah had not transferred the ridge to the Lebanese army not only because of its strategic location, but its main reason had been the possibility that it would set a precedent for other sites and areas of the organization's operations. He said the issue was not only south Lebanon but rather all the areas of confrontation of the "resistance axis,"⁶ and that there was "a single regional equation of pressure and deterrence" which included the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandab Strait alongside the Ali al-Taher Ridge, and therefore the loss of the ridge was a blow to the equation. According to al-Husseini, the public supporting Hezbollah would have perceived transferring the ridge to the Lebanese army as a retreat, even though it would be implementing state sovereignty, and therefore the organization sought to preserve its image as a "resistance force" (*al-Nashra*, September 7, 2026).

► Lebanese commentator Ibrahim Bayram wrote that Hezbollah's silence following the Israeli announcement increased the embarrassment, questions and concern even among the organization's supporters, who were left without knowing the status of the site. He said the explanation Hezbollah gave was that the silence was intended to avoid compliance with the Israeli narrative and to wait until a fuller picture could be presented. According to his narrative, the campaign at the site had not yet ended, the organization's operatives had managed for months to withstand Israeli attacks, and even after the announcement Israel

⁶ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq.

had not proved it had achieved full control of the entire ridge and its facilities. However, he noted that Hezbollah's not presenting a public version of an event of such importance put it in the difficult position of having to explain itself to its supporters (Lebanon 24, September 7, 2026).

The Iranian Position

► According to claims, during the campaign for the Ali al-Taher Ridge, commanders and operatives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were trapped at the site alongside Hezbollah "fighters." The Iranian leadership reportedly told the Hezbollah leadership that it would not abandon the organization, and sources close to Hezbollah were quoted as saying that they were counting on Iranian intervention if Israel tried to capture the ridge (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 19-20, 2026).

► A few hours before the Israeli announcement, Iran reportedly warned the United States through Oman that it would respond to a large-scale Israeli move to take control of the Ali al-Taher Ridge. A White House official denied the report (*al-Madan*, September 3, 2026).

► A source familiar with the negotiations between Lebanon and Israel claimed Hezbollah could not have evacuated the Ali al-Taher Ridge without consulting the Iranian leadership, given Tehran's threat to act on Hezbollah's behalf if Israel attacked the site, and therefore the assessment was that Iran had given the organization a green light to leave the ridge (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 6, 2026).

► The Iranian authorities did not relate to Israel's announcement regarding control of the ridge. However, conservative media outlets tried to downplay its significance, although they noted that Lebanon remained at the top of the agenda with regard to the ongoing confrontation with the United States:

◆ The Raja News website, which is affiliated with the radical wing in Iran, called for an Iranian response following the IDF takeover of the Ali al-Taher Ridge. An op-ed piece called the area, which provides a full view of south Lebanon and the roads leading to the border, an ideal point for launching missiles and UAVs at the "occupied territories," adding that it linked the south Lebanon front to the rear. Hezbollah's tunnel network and underground command center turned the area into a strategic base, control of which could continuously threaten northern Israel. The website noted that an end to the military confrontations in south Lebanon had been a condition for progress in the negotiations between Iran and the United States, and the gap between politicians'

statements and the situation on the ground showed that the agreement, which was presented as a document indicating the defeat of the United States, had in practice become a means of buying time for the "Zionist regime" for it to continue weakening the "resistance axis" before the next "comprehensive war" with Iran. Now, after the "enemy's real plan" had been exposed, and in view of the "Zionist regime's" advance on the Ali al-Taher Ridge and the fall of the area, Iran was expected to respond beyond statements and condemnations on X (Twitter). According to the article, such a response was required as a reminder that Lebanon was a "red line" in the Islamic Republic's foreign policy and "military equations" (Raja News, September 4, 2026).

◆ An op-ed piece on the Farda News website stated that Hezbollah was concerned by developments on the Ali al-Taher Ridge but also feared Israeli military pressure would become a new political-military rule in Lebanon. Israel would declare a particular point a threat, attack it, the United States would pressure Beirut to evacuate it and finally the "resistance" would hand the position over to the Lebanese army to end the attacks. Should that happen, Ali al-Taher would not be the last demand and Israeli security demands would expand to areas beyond the recognized arrangements in south Lebanon. Therefore, the dispute was over the right to determine the rules of engagement and not merely over control of the ridge. According to the website, with regard both to Lebanon and the confrontation between Iran and the United States, no alternative to war and "resistance" had yet been presented. An alternative should be presented and a plan showing how military achievements could be translated into political achievements should be made clear (Farda News, September 5, 2026).

◆ The radical daily *Kayhan* reported that Israel's attempt to boast of its control of the Ali al-Taher Ridge did not indicate Hezbollah's defeat. In an article examining Hezbollah's development and growing strength since the 1980s, commentator Saadollah Zarei wrote that Hezbollah's entry into the campaign alongside Iran had exposed it to greater hostility from the "American-Zionist front," including from its opponents in Lebanon and Arab states in the Persian Gulf. Despite the Iran-United States and Israel-Lebanon ceasefires, Hezbollah was subjected to daily IDF bombardment. Nevertheless, Israel had not achieved its declared objective of eliminating the organization and was forced to inflate the importance of the destruction of "a particular village or the capture of a hill," while the Israeli government

was concerned about the results of the elections in Israel "because of its military failures." According to Zarei, while Iran's military attacks on the main regional American military bases had dealt severe blows to the administration and while the United States military was unable to end Iran's control of the Strait of Hormuz, the Israeli military was inflating the importance of the capture of "a hill in Lebanon," when even its actual capture was still uncertain. Moreover, even if Israel had achieved something during the five-month confrontation with Hezbollah, it might lose it within a few days (*Kayhan*, September 5, 2026).

Criticism of Hezbollah

► Hezbollah's opponents said the "development" at Ali al-Taher illustrated the price of the unending existence of an independent "military authority" not subordinate to the state. The criticism focused on Hezbollah's refusal to accept President Aoun's proposal and transfer the ridge to the Lebanese army, alongside questions regarding the organization's claim that it led the "resistance" against Israel:

◆ Fouad Makhzoumi, a member of the Lebanese Parliament and an opponent of Hezbollah, said that if the reports of the fall of the ridge were correct, Hezbollah had prevented the Lebanese army from deploying there, despite President Aoun's initiative, but had failed to prevent Israel from entering it (Fouad Makhzoumi's X account, September 5, 2026). Lebanese Forces Party chairman Samir Geagea also criticized the fact that the area had not been handed over to the Lebanese army before the IDF entered (Lebanese News Agency, September 6, 2026).

◆ Asaad Dergham, a member of the Lebanese Parliament from the Strong Lebanon faction, claimed that the absence of a response from the organization to the developments at Ali al-Taher reiterated the question of whether its decision-making was Lebanese. He said it had become clear that Hezbollah's decisions were part of Iranian strategy and the organization's "equations" collapsed when they conflicted with external interests (MTV Lebanon, September 8, 2026).

◆ Ali al-Amin, editor-in-chief of the Janoubia website, said the development at Ali al-Taher was further evidence of the erosion of Hezbollah's "military" role against Israel. He said in practice it had lost the hill militarily even before the Israeli announcement, whose timing was chosen out of political considerations, while Hezbollah's silence and its shifting of responsibility to the state did not provide an answer to the question of

what had happened. Al-Amin claimed that Hezbollah's weapons had morphed from "resistance" to internal since they could no longer harm Israel, and in view of the current situation the Lebanese state had to strengthen its presence and sovereignty on the ground instead of continuing to rely on "resistance" slogans (al-Janoubia, September 7, 2026).

◆ According to an article in the daily *al-Liwaa*, while Hezbollah sought to preserve its status and "resistance" facilities and assets, Israel continued to destroy villages, displace residents and expand its activity in the south on the grounds of its need to act against the organization's infrastructure. The article questioned why residents of the area were required to pay the price for Hezbollah's decision to establish a military presence at Ali al-Taher, and related to the event as part of broader criticism of the concept of "resistance," which was no longer able to protect the south and enabled Israel to use the organization's military presence as justification for continuing its activity (*al-Liwaa*, September 9, 2026).

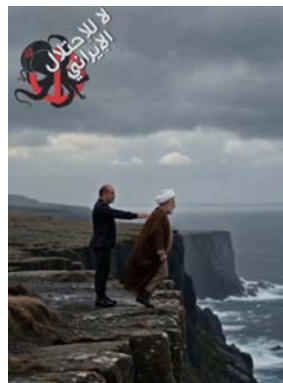
◆ Lebanese political commentator Maarouf al-Daouq said Hezbollah's silence after the Israeli announcement and its intensified criticism of the president and the government did not conceal the military failure or the price of the decision not to hand over the post. He said the event undermined the arguments justifying Hezbollah's continued possession of weapons outside state control and gave Israel a new bargaining chip in the negotiations (*al-Liwaa*, September 9, 2026).

◆ Prof. Hilal Khashan of the American University of Beirut said the Israeli takeover showed the failure of Hezbollah's concept and claimed that the organization had in practice chosen to hand the site, which he called a "symbol of its pride," over to Israel rather than transfer it to the Lebanese army. He said it reflected the erosion of Hezbollah's military capability against Israel and strengthened the argument that the role of its weapons was increasingly being reduced to the internal Lebanese arena (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 7, 2026).

► Unusual criticism also came from the Shi'ite public in south Lebanon. "The Second Nabatieh Appeal," signed by hundreds of people from all walks of life from the city and the surrounding area, claimed that what had happened at Ali al-Taher could not simply be ignored. When it had been possible to transfer the site to the responsibility of the state and the Lebanese army, Hezbollah had rejected the idea, and "the land that was not handed over

to the state at the appropriate time ended up in the hands of the enemy." The signatories demanded the deployment of the army in al-Nabatieh and its surroundings, the state's assumption of full responsibility for the security of the area and the restriction of declarations of war and peace to its legitimate institutions (MTV Lebanon, September 8, 2026).

► Social media were also critical of Hezbollah and Iran, which was portrayed as having abandoned the organization despite its threats to take action against Israel. The Lebanese "No to the Iranian Occupation" channel (10,500 followers on X) published cartoons and AI videos showing Iranian Majlis [Parliament] Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf stabbing a Hezbollah fighter in the back; Revolutionary Guards commander Ahmad Vahidi pushing Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem off a cliff; and Na'im Qassem giving Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Katz a tour of the facility at Ali al-Taher after refusing to allow the Lebanese army to enter it ("No to the Iranian Occupation" X account, September 6-7, 2026).



Anti-Hezbollah and anti-Iran cartoons and videos
("No to the Iranian Occupation" X account, September 6-7, 2026)