



## Spotlight on Terrorism: Lebanon and Hezbollah February 3 - 10, 2025

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

- ▶ IDF forces continued operations to counter Hezbollah violations of the ceasefire, especially the organization's attempts to smuggle weapons from Syria. The Lebanese army continued to deploy in the towns and villages evacuated by the IDF, including for the first time villages in the eastern sector of south Lebanon.
- ▶ Hezbollah called on the government to increase pressure to ensure the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon by the target date of February 18, 2025. The organization instructed its operatives to limit provocations as residents attempted to return to villages in south Lebanon.
- ▶ The American administration's envoy to Lebanon, Morgan Ortagus, met with senior government officials in Beirut and assured them that Israel would complete its withdrawal in accordance with the ceasefire agreement. She said Hezbollah had been defeated and that its entry into the new government should be prevented; she was condemned by the organization.
- ▶ According to Hezbollah, Nasrallah's funeral on February 23, 2025 will serve as a referendum proving the people's loyalty to the "resistance."
- ▶ Prime minister-designate Nawaf Salam announced the formation of the new Lebanese government, which includes two ministers affiliated with Hezbollah and three ministers affiliated with Amal. Salam emphasized the need to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701.
- ▶ The Lebanese army reinforced its forces along the Lebanon-Syria border after clashes between the security forces of the new Syrian regime and clans affiliated with Hezbollah.

### The Ceasefire

#### The IDF

- ▶ This past week the IDF continued operations in south Lebanon and inside the country to counter Hezbollah's attempts to violate the ceasefire and rearm. IDF airstrikes targeted

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<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.

storehouses of weapons and rocket launchers, Hezbollah operatives at a site for the production and storage of strategic weapons in the Beqa'a Valley and a tunnel in the Beqa'a Valley used by Hezbollah to smuggle weapons across the Syria-Lebanon border (IDF spokesperson, February 10-3, 2025).

► Lebanese media reported that six people were killed and two injured in an airstrike in the Janta Crossing area in the Beqa'a Valley (al-Nashra, February 8, 2025). Reports also referred to Israeli airstrikes in the mountainous area of Harbata in the Beqa'a Valley, in the village of Qald al-Saba near the Syrian border, in the al-mountainous area on the outskirts of al-Zakbah-al-Hermel in the Beqa'a Valley and in the area of Roumanne in south Lebanon (al-Mayadeen, February 9, 2025).



**Hezbollah site in the Beqa'a Valley attacked by the IDF (al-Manar, February 6, 2025)**

## Hezbollah

► Hezbollah continued to demand that the Lebanese government enforce the ceasefire agreement and ensure Israel's complete withdrawal from south Lebanon by February 18, 2025. Hezbollah said they would not agree to another extension of the deadline and that the organization "would have to take action," with or without coordination with the Lebanese government:

- ◆ Hussein Jishi, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed the organization "won" the war by "preventing the enemy from realizing its objectives." He added that Hezbollah fought the "enemy" everywhere and had the capability to expel it from any location. He referred to the [alleged] connection between Hezbollah and the Lebanese people, saying, "We will remain by our people's side in all areas, rebuilding and confronting the enemy until we realize all our rights" (al-'Ahed, February 3, 2025).
- ◆ Ali Fayyad, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, demanded that the new Lebanese government ensure Israel's withdrawal from all Lebanese

territory. He claimed that any presence of the "enemy," even "the size of a fingertip," was "occupation" and had be "resisted."<sup>2</sup> He accused the Americans of covering up Israel's "evasion" and claimed there was no American position according to which the "enemy" would withdraw by February 18. He added that the entry of the Lebanese army into the town of Rab Thalathin was a continuation of the "popular liberation" effort that forced the "Israeli enemy" to withdraw from villages it did not intend to leave. He said Hezbollah would cooperate with the Lebanese government but warned that if government efforts failed, the situation would need to be reassessed, alternatives examined and if necessary, the Lebanese people would have to "assume national responsibility" (al-Manar, February 9, 2025).

◆ Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that as February 18 approached, all senior officials in the country had to increase pressure to complete Israel's withdrawal from all Lebanese territory (al-Nashra, February 10, 2025).

► Hezbollah participated in a meeting of Solidarity with the Resistance in Gaza and Lebanon, organized by Palestinian "resistance" factions<sup>3</sup> in Lebanon and several Lebanese political parties. Mahmoud Komati, deputy chairman of Hezbollah's political council, said no one would stop the "struggle" and the "resistance" would not lay down its arms as long as Lebanon was "in danger." Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon, claimed that the "resistance" had prevented the objectives of the "aggression" from being achieved. According to reports, those present at the meetings agreed that it was necessary to continue the "resistance"<sup>4</sup> as long as the "occupation" remained (Radio al-Nour, February 3, 2025).

► This past week, encouraged by Hezbollah, local residents continued attempting to return to villages and towns in south Lebanon, although fewer than in the previous weeks since January 26, 2025, the original date set for the completion of the IDF's withdrawal from south Lebanon. According to reports, Hezbollah instructed its operatives and commanders who were in direct communication with the public to prevent "provocations" (Lebanon 24, February 9, 2025). Reportedly, the heads of the towns of Tallousa and Rab Thalathin asked residents to comply

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<sup>2</sup> Attacked.

<sup>3</sup> Terrorist organizations.

<sup>4</sup> Anti-Israel terrorism and violence.

with Lebanese army instructions not to enter the towns after its deployment to ensure their safety from unexploded ordnance left by the "Israeli occupation" (al-Akhbar, February 9, 2025).

► The Imam al-Mahdi, Hezbollah's scouting movement, launched a volunteer campaign to help local residents resettle in their villages, from Ras al-Naqoura to al-Arqoub. Hassan Izz al-Din, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, claimed villagers on the border were changing "the equation [sic]," as they entered immediately after 60 days [the timeframe for the IDF withdrawal] and positioned themselves at the entrances to their villages (al-'Ahed, February 3, 2025).

## The Lebanese army

► This past week, Lebanese army forces continued deploying in areas evacuated by the IDF south of the Litani River, in coordination with UNIFIL and the ceasefire monitoring committee. According to reports the Lebanese army deployed in the town of al-Taybeh in south Lebanon, as well as in other border areas south of the Litani River, including Aita al-Sha'ab, Rab Thalathin, Bani Hayyan and Tallousa in the eastern sector. The army said it was important for civilians to adhere to the guidelines it issued, as well as to the instructions of military units on the ground to ensure their safety until the remaining ordnance in the area had been neutralized (Lebanese army X account, February 4 and 9, 2025).



**Right: Lebanese army forces deploy in al-Taybeh (al-Jazeera, February 4, 2025). Left: Lebanese army forces in the area of the villages Rab Thalathin, Tallousa and Bani Hayyan (Lebanese army X account, February 9, 2025)**

► During her visit to Lebanon, Morgan Ortagus, American deputy envoy to the Middle East, visited the headquarters of the Lebanese army's 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade in al-Bayada in the south of the country (al-Nashra, February 7, 2025). She also posted a photo of herself with a Lebanese army

officer holding a 107mm rocket, which was reportedly confiscated from Hezbollah (al-Nashra, February 9, 2025).



**Ortagus with the rocket (Morgan Ortagus' X account, February 9, 2025)**

► Lebanese President Joseph Aoun held several meetings with senior Lebanese security officials to discuss the security situation in the country, including developments in the south and the army's deployment in border villages (Lebanese Presidency X account, February 7, 2025).

## The Lebanese government

► The Lebanese foreign ministry submitted a complaint to the UN Security Council accusing Israel of "severe violations" of Resolution 1701 and of disregarding its commitments under the ceasefire agreement. The complaint noted "Israeli violations" since the ceasefire took effect on November 27, 2024, including "ground and aerial attacks, destruction of homes and residential neighborhoods, and the abduction of Lebanese civilians and Lebanese army soldiers." It also claimed that Israel attacked residents returning to their homes in south Lebanon, resulting in the deaths of 24 civilians and the injury of more than 124, as well as removing markings of the Blue Line.<sup>5</sup> The foreign ministry noted Lebanon's opposition to these [alleged] "violations" and to any unilateral attempt to re-establish Blue Line markers. The ministry also called on the Security Council to take a firm stance and to compel Israel to meet its commitments (al-Nashra, February 4, 2025).

► Lebanese President Joseph Aoun met with the French ambassador to Lebanon and with Guillaume Ponchin, France's representative in the ceasefire monitoring committee, to discuss the situation in south Lebanon. Aoun requested France's involvement in ensuring Israel's implementation of the agreement by February 18, including full withdrawal from Lebanese

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<sup>5</sup> The Blue Line is a demarcation line dividing Lebanon from Israel, not the permanent border.

territory and an end to the destruction of homes in villages in south Lebanon (Lebanese Presidency X account, February 5, 2025).

► On February 7 and 8, 2025, Morgan Ortagus, the American deputy envoy to the Middle East met in Beirut with President Joseph Aoun, outgoing Prime Minister Najib Mikati, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri (al-Nashra and Lebanese News Agency, February 7-8, 2025):

◆ Ortagus conveyed President Trump's congratulations to Aoun on his election and reaffirmed United States support for Lebanon and its people. Aoun said that achieving lasting stability in south Lebanon depended on Israel's full withdrawal, the implementation of Resolution 1701 and the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. After the meeting, Ortagus said Israel had defeated Hezbollah and declared that "the era of Hezbollah terror in Lebanon and the world has ended." She also pledged that Israel would withdraw from all Lebanese territory by February 18, 2025, in accordance with the agreement.

◆ Mikati demanded that the United States pressure Israel to complete its full withdrawal by February 18, 2025, and to stop the [alleged] "systematic destruction" of towns and villages in south Lebanon. He also called for the immediate implementation of Resolution 1701 "word for word," and for resolving border disputes along the Blue Line.

◆ Berri and Ortagus reportedly discussed the general situation in Lebanon, particularly developments in the south, in light of what he claimed was Israel's continued "violation" of Resolution 1701 and the ceasefire agreement. Berri claimed Israel was "absolute evil" and stated that "its continued occupation necessitates resistance." He called on the American administration to compel Israel to implement the agreement, enforce Resolution 1701 and fully withdraw from Lebanese territory. He also praised the role of the Lebanese army and its deployment in accordance with the agreement.





**President Aoun meets with Ortagus. Lebanese media and social networks criticized Aoun for shaking hands with Ortagus, especially since she wore a ring with a Star of David (1, February 7, 2025)**

## Hezbollah

### Preparations for Nasrallah's funeral

► Interviewed by Radio Sputnik, Mahmoud Komati, deputy head of Hezbollah's political council, reported that the funeral of the late Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and his designated successor, Hashem Safi al-Din, scheduled for February 23, 2025, would serve as a referendum demonstrating loyalty to the "resistance," and therefore, the event was being painstakingly planned. He said Hezbollah wanted the greatest possible public participation to prove that many in Lebanon were committed to Hezbollah's "path" and the principles it represented.<sup>6</sup> Komati added that figures from outside Lebanon would be invited to the funeral, as Nasrallah was not just a Lebanese figure but a shaheed of the entire Islamic nation and a symbol for global "liberation movements [sic]" (Lebanese News Agency, February 4, 2025).



**Nasrallah's gravesite under construction in Beirut (Omid X account, February 4, 2025)**

► In preparation for Nasrallah's funeral, Hezbollah's combat information released a promotional video titled "I Command You" [to continue on the path of "resistance"]. It was accompanied by a clip from a speech by Nasrallah in which he emphasized that Israel's killing

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<sup>6</sup> The destruction of the State of Israel.

of his predecessor, Abbas al-Mousawi, had only made the "resistance" stronger, and that from time to time, "the resistance needs a push forward of this kind" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 3, 2025).



From Hezbollah's propaganda video  
(Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, February 3, 2025)

## Na'im Qassem appointed Khamenei's religious representative in Lebanon

► Iran's leader, Ali Khamenei, appointed Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem as his religious representative in Lebanon (Iran's leader's website, February 5, 2025).



Document received by Na'im Qassem

## Australia imposes sanctions on Na'im Qassem

► The Australian government announced it was imposing sanctions on Hezbollah secretary general Na'im Qassem. According to the foreign ministry, Hezbollah is responsible for the deaths of countless civilians in Lebanon, Israel and across the Middle East (Australian Foreign Ministry website, February 3, 2025).

► Hezbollah condemned the sanctions against Qassem. The organization claimed that the move "exposed" Australia as a "submissive tool in the service of the American-Zionist project." Hezbollah added that the decision had no legal or moral basis but rather reflected bias toward the "Zionist entity." It further stated that the decision would not affect the morale of



"resistance" in Lebanon or Hezbollah's "natural right" to "resist,"<sup>7</sup> defend its country and stand by the Palestinian people, but instead would strengthen its determination to continue the "struggle" against the "occupier" (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, February 3, 2025).

## Lebanon

### The new Lebanese government

► On February 8, 2025, Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's designated prime minister, informed President Joseph Aoun that he had formed a new government. The cabinet was structured along sectarian lines, with the "Shi'ite Twins" [Hezbollah and Amal] receiving five ministerial portfolios: Health Minister Rakan Nasser al-Din and Labor Minister Muhammad Haidar, affiliated with Hezbollah; Finance Minister Yassine Jaber, Environment Minister Tamara al-Zein, and Administrative Development Minister Fadi Maki, affiliated with Amal (al-Mayadeen, February 8, 2025).<sup>8</sup>

► Salam said the government would be a "reform and rescue government" and noted the need to implement Resolution 1701. He also promised that the government would work to restore public trust in the state through economic reforms and the establishment of an independent judiciary. He acknowledged that the composition of the government might not satisfy everyone but said it would be "diverse" (al-Nashra, February 8, 2025).



**Salam announcing the new government (al-Jadeed, February 8, 2025)**

► President Aoun welcomed the formation of the new government and wished it success. According to Aoun, the ministers did not belong to political parties and would act solely in the interest of the Lebanese people and country. He claimed that the establishment of the "reform

<sup>7</sup> Attack Israel.

<sup>8</sup> Members of the government affiliated with the "Shi'ite Twins" do not belong to the Hezbollah or Amal factions in the Lebanese Parliament.

and rescue government" was based on the criteria of competence, experience, expertise and reputation (Lebanese Presidency X account, February 8, 2025).

► Before the announcement of the government's formation, it was reported that an American delegation led by Morgan Ortagus, deputy special envoy to the Middle East, had conveyed a message to senior Lebanese officials that the Trump administration demanded the formation of a government committed to reforms, eliminating corruption and curbing Hezbollah, warning that failure to comply would lead Lebanon into deeper isolation and economic collapse (Reuters, February 6, 2025). Following her meeting with President Aoun, Ortagus noted the United States' desire for Hezbollah to be excluded from any future Lebanese government, stating that "the era of Hezbollah terror in Lebanon and the world is over." In response, the Lebanese presidency's media office stated that some of Ortagus' remarks were "her personal opinion only." Her statements enraged Hezbollah and its officials:

- ◆ Muhammad Raad, leader of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said her remarks were blatant interference in Lebanese sovereignty, deviated from diplomatic norms and international relations, and undermined the Lebanese national consensus (al-'Ahed, February 7, 2025).
- ◆ A small protest by Hezbollah supporters was reported at the entrance to Beirut airport in response to her statements (al-Nashra, February 7, 2025).
- ◆ After the formation of the government had been announced, Hezbollah published a poster on the social media mocking Ortagus' efforts to establish a Lebanese government without Hezbollah representatives, with the caption, "Her efforts failed like those before her, Hezbollah is in the government" (Simia, February 8, 2025).



**Hezbollah's poster mocking Ortagus (Simia, February 8, 2025)**

- ◆ Hussein al-Hajj Hassan, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that contrary to Ortagus' claims, Hezbollah had not been defeated and

remained firmly entrenched alongside other "resistance" movements (al-Nashra, February 10, 2025).

◆ Hassan Izz al-Din, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said the organization had not obstructed the formation of the government. He added that anyone who had dreamed of eliminating Hezbollah or excluding it from the government had realized that Shi'ites were deeply rooted in Lebanon and belonged to the people and the state. He expressed hope that the new government would have two priorities, expelling the "Zionist enemy" from Lebanese territory and rebuilding the damages and villages in the south (al-Nashra, February 10, 2025).

## **Qatari prime minister visits Lebanon**

► Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman visited Lebanon and met with President Joseph Aoun, incoming Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, outgoing Prime Minister Najib Mikati, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. He noted Qatar's commitment to continuing support for Lebanon and assisting the Lebanese army. He also called for the implementation of Resolution 1701 and the ceasefire agreement (Lebanese Presidency X account, February 4, 2025; al-Nashra, February 4, 2025).



**Aoun (right) meets with Abdulrahman (Lebanese Presidency X account, February 4, 2025)**

## **Reconstructing Lebanon**

► Lebanese Minister of Transport Ali Hamieh met with a delegation from the World Bank to discuss the bank's meetings with agencies involved in the country's reconstruction. Hamieh stated that the issue of reconstruction was a significant and important for all parties concerned (Lebanese News Agency, February 4, 2025).

## **Clashes along the Syria-Lebanon border**

► On February 6, 2025, security forces of the new Syrian regime launched operations against arms and drug smuggling in the southwestern rural area of Homs near the border with

Lebanon, a region inhabited by Shi'ites and known for the presence of clans affiliated with Hezbollah. Clashes broke out, resulting in numerous casualties and the displacement of residents. During the fighting, rockets and shells landed in Lebanese territory, including on military positions (al-Nashra and al-Mayadeen, February 6-10, 2025).

► Despite the events along the border, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun spoke with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa to congratulate him on his appointment. They agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation and maintain coordination to control the situation along their mutual border and prevent harm from coming to civilians (al-Nashra, February 7, 2025).

► Following President Aoun's directive, the Lebanese army ordered its units along the northern and eastern borders to respond to attacks from Syria, and it was reported that they had begun using "appropriate weapons." The army also stated that its forces had started implementing "exceptional security measures" along the border, including establishing observation posts, conducting patrols and erecting temporary checkpoints (Lebanese army X account, February 9, 2025).



**Lebanese army forces reinforced at the border with Syria (al-Hadath, February 9, 2025)**