



Spotlight on Terrorism : Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria March 19-25, 2024

The Northern Arena*

- 1,126 attacks
- 241 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 48 operatives of other terrorist-organization killed
- One non-affiliated operative
- One Lebanese army soldier killed

*Updated from October 8, 2023

Overview¹

- ▶ Hezbollah continued attacking Israeli military targets along the Israel-Lebanon border. In response, IDF forces attacked Hezbollah's military infrastructure in south Lebanon. **Following the IDF attack on Hezbollah targets in Ba'albek in the Lebanon Valley, Hezbollah launched more than 60 rockets at the Golan Heights.** Hezbollah reported two deaths (for the first time in about ten days). Amal reported one dead.
- ▶ The IDF spokesperson in Arabic exposed the use made of civilian ambulances by Hezbollah and Amal operatives for military purposes, such as transporting operatives and weapons.
- ▶ Hezbollah figures reiterate their adherence to their "equation" in the war with Israel, but also state they are prepared to escalate the fighting if Israel attacks more extensively.
- ▶ An unprecedented deployment of Hezbollah operatives was reported in the southern district of Beirut, the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, a Hezbollah stronghold.
- ▶ Officials in Lebanon, mainly Christians, have been harshly critical of Hezbollah for entangling the country in an unnecessary war.

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

- ▶ Data were published about the number of Lebanese dead and wounded since the beginning of the war, as well as the number of displaced residents of south Lebanon. Meanwhile, according to reports, Lebanon's economy continues to collapse in the shadow of the fighting.
- ▶ Two attacks were reported in Syria, one on bases of Hezbollah and pro-Iranian militias and another on weapons storehouses north of Damascus.

South Lebanon

Hezbollah attacks

▶ **During the past week, between March 18 at 12:01 a.m. and March 25 at 3:15 a.m., Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 52 attacks** using anti-tank missiles and rockets, including a Falaq-1 rocket, and UAVs, and firing artillery. (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 18-23, 2024):

- ◆ On March 18, 2024, there were **six attacks**, mainly artillery fire and anti-tank fire.
- ◆ On March 19, 2024, there were **nine attacks**, mainly artillery fire, anti-tank fire and a Falaq-1 rocket, injuring two IDF soldiers (IDF spokesperson, March 19, 2024). The Lebanese reported that an IDF battalion commander had survived a Hezbollah anti-tank missile attack on his vehicle (Lebanon 24, March 19, 2024).
- ◆ On March 20, 2024, there were **seven attacks**, mainly artillery fire and anti-tank fire.
- ◆ On March 21, 2024, there were **nine attacks**, mainly artillery fire and anti-tank fire. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for attacking two buildings, one in Metula and the other in Avivim, where soldiers were [allegedly] stationed. According to the organization, the attack was in response to [alleged] Israeli attacks on civilian settlements and houses (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 21, 2024).
- ◆ On March 22, 2024, there were **six attacks**, mainly artillery fire and anti-tank fire. Hezbollah announced its operatives had used a suicide UAV to attack an IDF post in Metula, claiming a direct hit on a tank (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 22, 2024).
- ◆ On March 23, 2024, there were **six attacks**, mainly artillery fire and anti-tank fire. Hezbollah also announced that it attacked two Iron Dome batteries "in the Kfar Blum settlement," using two suicide UAVs (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 23, 2024) The IDF spokesperson reported on aircraft wreckage found at two sites

in the Kfar Blum area; no casualties or damage were reported (IDF spokesperson, March 23, 2024).

◆ On March 24, 2024, there were **eight attacks** were carried out, mainly artillery fire, Katyusha rockets and anti-tank fire. At 1:10 a.m. about 50 rockets were fired from Lebanon at Israeli territory; several rockets were intercepted and the rest fell in open areas (IDF spokesperson, March 24, 2024) . Hezbollah reported that they attacked Camp Yoav and Camp Kela with more than 60 Katyusha rockets in response to the Israeli attack in Ba'albek (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 24, 2024).

◆ On March 25, 2024, there was **one attack** 3:15 a.m., which included artillery fire.

IDF response

► In response to Hezbollah's attacks, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked Hezbollah's military infrastructure, mainly in south Lebanon, including in Aita al-Sha'ab, Meis al-Jabal, al-Adisa, Ghandouriyeh, Naqoura, Kafrkila, Blida, Yaroun and al-Taybeh. They also attacked Hezbollah units and launchers that launched rockets at Israel (IDF spokesperson, March 19-25, 2024).



Right: Attack on a Hezbollah facility in Aita al-Sha'ab. Left: Attack on a building in al-Khiyam (IDF spokesperson, March 22, 2024)



Right: Attack on a Hezbollah observation post in the Yaroun area. Left: Attack on a Hezbollah military structure in the Ghandouriyeh area (IDF spokesperson, March 22, 2024)



Right: Attack on Hezbollah facility in which operatives were identified in al-Adisa. Left: Attack on a Hezbollah military structure in Aita al-Sha'ab (IDF website, March 24, 2024)

► Lebanese sources reported IDF attacks in Aita al-Sha'ab, al-Khiyam, al-Houla, al-Adisa, al-Qantara, al-Ghandouriyeh and Meis al-Jabal (Fouad Khreiss' X account, March 21-23, 2024).



Right: Attack in Aita al-Sha'ab (Fouad Khreiss' X account, March 22, 2024). Left: Attack in al-Khiyam (Ali Shoeib's X account, March 23, 2024)



Attack in Meis al-Jabal (Bintjbeil's X account, March 21, 2024)

► On March 24, 2024, Israeli Air Force planes attacked a workshop in Ba'albek in the Lebanon Valley where weapons were stored (IDF spokesperson March 24, 2024). According to Lebanese reports, the attack was in the al-'Asirah region, east of Ba'albek (al-Nashra, March 24, 2024). **Bashir Khader, governor of al-Hermel**, stated that according to initial reports, three people were injured (Sawt Beirut International, March 24, 2024). According to other reports, there were four attacks, and a senior Hezbollah commander and four other terrorist operatives were killed in the attack. The building attacked had four floors (hardlebanon's X account; Rabih Darido's X account, March 24, 2024).



Right: Attack on the workshop in Ba'albek (IDF spokesperson, March 24, 2024). Left: Attack in Ba'albek (hardlebanon's X account, March 24, 2024)

Lebanese terrorist operative casualties

► Hezbollah reported the death of two operatives from south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, March 24, 2024), announcing their deaths after about ten days in which the deaths of Hezbollah operatives were not reported. The dead are:

- ◆ Hussein Ali Arslan, aka Mustafa, born in 1983 in al-Taybeh.
- ◆ Ali Muhammad Faqieh, aka Zulfiqar, born in 1993 in al-Ansariyah.



Hezbollah casualties (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel , March 24, 2024)

► The **Amal Movement** announced the death of Muhammad Ali Musa Qamiha, aka Lua', from Kafrsir, about 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) northeast of Tyre, stating he was killed "while fulfilling his national and jihadist duty" in the defense of Lebanon and south Lebanon (al-Akhbar, March 20, 2024). He was reportedly killed in an airstrike in al-Qantara, about 20 kilometers east of Tyre. He was the 12th Amal terrorist operative to die since the beginning of the fighting (Mohamaddsyrien's X account, March 20, 2024).



The Amal casualty (al-Akhbar, March 20, 2024)

► **Muhammad Shams Al-Din, a researcher at Information International in Beirut**, said that since the beginning of the war in Lebanon, 350 people had been killed, of whom 239 were Hezbollah [terrorist] operatives, 11 Amal [terrorist] operatives, 48 civilians, a soldier in the Lebanese army and an activist of the Syrian National Party, and about 1,200 people had been injured (al-Janoubia, March 18, 2024).

► According to a report published by the Lebanese ministry of health, as of March 20, 2024, following Israeli attacks in south Lebanon, 316 people had been killed and 1,225 injured, of whom 257 recovered. According to the report, 88% of the injured were male, 95% of them were Lebanese civilians, 60% citizens between the ages of 25-44, 44% of them had gone into shock,

34% were injured as a result of an explosion and 18% were exposed to "chemical substances" (Lebanon News, March 20, 2024). The IDF spokesperson recently reported that Hezbollah was storing weapons and chemical substances in villages and towns in south Lebanon. It is possible that secondary explosions in warehouses containing the weapons and substances injured and/or killed civilians in south Lebanon.



The report of the Lebanese ministry of health on the results of the fighting on the country's southern border (Lebanon News, March 20, 2024)

Hezbollah use of civilian ambulances

► The IDF spokesperson in Arab revealed that in Kafrkila in south Lebanon, a known Hezbollah stronghold, there is a yellow ambulance with a symbol unique to the village which belongs to Hezbollah's Islamic Health Organization and is used for military purposes by Hezbollah and Amal. According to the IDF spokesperson, the ambulance is operated by the Sheet clan, led by Hassan Muhammad Sheet, who also manages the local village authority. An analysis of the ambulance's activity showed exceptional journeys between Hezbollah-affiliated sites after airstrikes, even when there was no need to evacuate wounded, and for long periods of time after the attacks. According to assessments, Hezbollah and Amal use the ambulances to transfer military operatives from place to place, especially in regions under IDF surveillance. They are also used to transfer weapons or military equipment. The IDF spokesperson also disclosed the names of two terrorist operatives who drove the ambulance in Kafrkila, they were Musa and Mohammed Sheet, who were killed on January 1, 2024 and were recognized as Hezbollah military-terrorist operatives after their deaths. However, paramedics who were killed in Kafr Hunin, according to the IDF spokesperson, were not recognized after their deaths as operatives of the organization. Moreover, there is considerable evidence that Hezbollah and Amal use the Islamic Health Organization as a cover for terrorist activity. For example, Hussein

Khalil from the town of Baraachit, who was killed in an attack in Blida on February 23, 2024, was photographed armed and with an Amal badge. After his death, it was reported that he served as a paramedic in the organization (Telegram channel of the IDF spokesperson in Arabic, March 19, 2024).²



Right: Two Hezbollah terrorist operatives who also worked as paramedics. Left: The "civilian" ambulance used by Hezbollah and Amal in Kafrkila (Telegram channel of the IDF spokesperson in Arabic, March 19, 2024)



**Amal operative who also worked as a paramedic
(Telegram channel of the IDF spokesperson in Arabic, March 19, 2024)**

Hezbollah operatives deployed in Beirut

► On March 21, 2024, it was reported that Hezbollah operatives with full military equipment were deployed in an unprecedented and extensive manner in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia area in Beirut. It was also reported that masked activists checked the identities of passersby on the streets (al-Nahar, March 21, 2024). It is not clear what the cause for the alert was or whether the forces are still deployed in the field.

For further information, see the July 2019 ITIC report, "The Islamic Health Organization: Hezbollah² institution providing health services to Hezbollah operatives and the Shiite population in general as a means for gaining influence and creating a Shiite mini-state within Lebanon."

Senior Hezbollah Figures

► During his Friday sermon, **Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general**, stated that the support the Lebanese front gave the Gaza Strip was part of Hezbollah's "equation" with Israel and had [allegedly] achieved its goal. He claimed there were parties who wanted Hezbollah to carry out more "military activity" [terrorist attacks] as part of the conflict, but, he claimed, what had been done so far was sufficient and achieved the goal. He criticized people who claimed Hezbollah should not intervene in the conflict with Israel, and claimed "support" should be given to the Palestinian people. He claimed that the "resistance" [Hezbollah] was fighting Israel within its self-declared limitations, but if Israel extended its attacks they were prepared to escalate their "activities." The situation, he said, depended on developments on the ground, which would determine what was required and what would be done (al-Mayadeen, March 22, 2024). On another occasion, he claimed that Lebanon could not be independent and strong without "the resistance," adding that Israel was [allegedly] trying to expand its attacks on civilians in Ba'albek in the western Lebanon Valley and elsewhere, but each attack would have a corresponding "response" (al-'Ahed, March 24, 2024).

► **Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council**, claimed Israel was defeated and in crisis because of the [alleged] "deep internal discord in Israeli society." He claimed Israel threatened Lebanon although it "feared" the strength and element of surprise of the "resistance" forces. He said that any "aggression" would be met with a response and no attack would go unpunished. He reiterated Hassan Nasrallah's threat, that escalation would lead to escalation, and said the "resistance" looked towards the battlefield, not the negotiating table. He also claimed that the "resistance front"³ had undermined Israel's security from Kiryat Shmona to beyond the Red Sea and that the "resistance" [terrorism] in Lebanon had only gotten stronger as a result of the war (al-Nabatiyah TV, March 21, 2024).

► **Muhammad Yazbek, head of Hezbollah's Sharia Council**, claimed Hezbollah continued to attack Israel and would not stop until the war in the Gaza Strip ended. He claimed that the pressures on Hezbollah from inside Lebanon and in the international arena would not affect it. He praised the assistance from the "resistance" fronts in Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon (al-'Ahed, March 22, 2024).

Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the ³ pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

The Lebanese Government

- ▶ **Najib Mikati, prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon**, said the Lebanese government would continue working for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the return the south Lebanese residents to their towns. He added that he was certain the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip would include the countries of the region and they would have long-term stability and peace (al-Araby al-Jadeed, March 19, 2024).
- ▶ **Abdallah Bou Habib, the Lebanese foreign minister**, held a joint press conference with **Mauro Vieira, the Brazilian foreign minister**. Habib stated they did not want a war in Lebanon, and wanted the full implementation of Resolution 1701 (al-Mayadeen , March 19, 2024).
- ▶ The Lebanese foreign ministry directed the country's representatives to the UN to submit a complaint to the Security Council about Israel's [alleged] violation of Lebanon's sovereignty by disrupting navigation systems at the capital's airport. The ministry said that it condemned such actions, which have dangerous consequences for the lives of citizens (Lebanese foreign ministry X account, March 22, 2024). The ministry also called on the international community to increase its efforts in support of UNRWA to enable the agency to continue providing humanitarian aid to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and neighboring countries. According to the ministry, there was no alternative to UNRWA (Lebanese foreign ministry X account, March 18, 2024).

The Lebanese Army

- ▶ **Charles Brown, Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the American Army**, said United States was prepared to finance the Lebanese Army in the south of the country, adding that the United States had asked the army to deploy a large number of soldiers along the border with Israel (Lebanon 24, March 20, 2024).

UNIFIL

- ▶ Aroldo Lazzaro, UNIFIL commander, in his remarks marking the 46th anniversary of UNIFIL's founding, called on all parties to implement Resolution 1701. He noted that implementing the resolution was necessary now more than ever in view of recent challenges. He claimed UNIFIL members continued their important task of keeping the peace and supported a peaceful solution (al-Nashra, March 19, 2024).

Internal Lebanese Affairs

Residents of south Lebanon

- ▶ Following the fighting in south Lebanon, tens of thousands of residents left their homes.
 - ◆ Lebanon's ministry of health reported 91,316 displaced residents (Lebanon News, March 20, 2024).
 - ◆ The Lebanese al-Janoubia website reported that about 50 villages in the southern and al-Nabatiyeh governorates had been emptied of their inhabitants and that the number of displaced people exceeded 90,000 (al-Janoubia, March 18, 2024).
- ▶ **Najib Mikati, prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon**, said that his government was committed to compensating every citizen who was harmed by IDF attacks during the war. According to the report, the family of each shaheed would receive approximately \$20,000 and all those who their houses would receive \$40,000. He stated that the funds would be transferred only after the end of the fighting and after the state conducted a survey of the damages (al-Akhbar, March 20, 2024).
- ▶ Meanwhile, according to reports, Hezbollah began compensating civilians whose houses were destroyed in the fighting, and that each civilian whose house had been destroyed would receive enough to rent a house for a year and buy furniture (Lebanon 24, March 20, 2024). The exact amount Hezbollah would distribute to each was not specified.

The Lebanese economy in the shadow of the war

- ▶ **Dr. Abbas al-Hajj Hassan, the Lebanese minister of agriculture**, said that the IDF attacks caused heavy losses to Lebanese agriculture, in terms of both crops and livestock. He said Lebanon had lost huge productive farms and thousands of sheep and cattle had been killed in attacks. He estimated the economic damage caused by the war amounted to more than \$2.5 billion, but noted that accurate estimates could be made only after the war ended. He added that due to the damage to the country's agricultural sector, the GDP had dropped by more than 30% (al-Jazeera, March 21, 2024).
- ▶ He alleged that Israel wanted to achieve two things in the war: to damage forested areas to expose Hezbollah operatives, which he claimed could help Israel tactically but not strategically [he did not elaborate, but might have been insinuating it would create stronger long-term local hostility to Israel]. In addition, he claimed Israel damaged the olive industry in south Lebanon,

making it impossible for Lebanon to compete in the global export of olive oil (al-Jazeera, March 21, 2024).



Dr. Abbas al-Hajj Hassan Lebanese minister of agriculture (al-Jazeera, March 21, 2024)

► According to al-Jazeera TV, agriculture supports approximately 70% of the Lebanese, and that during the war at least 80 thousand dunams (about 20,000 acres) of agricultural land and 60,000 olive trees had been destroyed, and 683 fires broke out as a result of Israeli attacks (al-Jazeera, March 21, 2024).

► **Muhammad Shams Al-Din, a researcher at Information International in Beirut**, noted that as a result of the war, ten million square meters (about 2,500 acres) of agricultural land and forests were burned in Lebanon. He claimed the indirect damage to the Lebanese economy amounted to \$6 million per day, or approximately \$960 million since the beginning of the fighting till today (al-Janoubia, March 18, 2024).

Criticism of Hezbollah

► Following the statement made by **Najib Mikati** regarding the government's commitment to compensate every civilian harmed by IDF attacks during the war, severe criticism was directed in Lebanon towards Hezbollah, especially by Christian sources:

◆ **Nadim al-Jamil, a Phalanges Party representative in the Lebanese Parliament**, expressed indignation that the country was forced to compensate local residents because of destruction caused by Hezbollah by joining the war against Israel (Sawt Beirut International, March 22, 2024).

◆ **The Lebanese Forces Party** said in a statement that since Hezbollah had declared the war, Hezbollah should be held responsible for the families of the victims and those whose homes were destroyed, and that the government had no right to pay the bill for the wars of Iran and its proxy in Lebanon from the pockets of the Lebanese. Any

compensation paid by the state due to a war declared by Hezbollah had to be firmly refused, because Hezbollah was working in the service of Iran and had entered the war in response to an Iranian, not a Lebanese request (Lebanese Forces X account , March 22, 2024).

► **Dr. Makram Rabah, a historian and political science researcher at the American University of Beirut**, was investigated by Lebanon's general security apparatus on charges of collaboration with Israel because he criticized Hezbollah in an interview. He had said that Hezbollah was not the "protector of the Lebanese," but a group of drug dealers selling Captagon and dragging all of Lebanon into a war with Israel, a war that had nothing to do with Lebanon. He said Hezbollah was leading Lebanon to destruction and Hezbollah is the one that started the fighting on October 8, 2023, and therefore Israel's counterattack was considered justified in terms of international law. He added that he was not afraid to give his opinion on the organization, even though Hezbollah used the executive and judicial authorities against those who expressed their opinion freely. He was released after three hours of interrogation, calling the investigation "absurd." The incident sparked criticism in Lebanon, claiming that Hezbollah was working to silence the Lebanese people (al-Hura, al-Hadath and 24.ae, March 20, 2024).



Lebanese political science researcher, Makram Rabah (24.ae, March 20, 2024)

Release of Hezbollah Detainees

► On March 18, 2024, Wafiq Safa, a senior member of Hezbollah's security and liaison mechanism, flew to the UAE, accompanied by two people of unknown identity. The purpose of his trip was reportedly to try to release a number of Lebanese (apparently Hezbollah operatives) detained in the UAE before Ramadan began. Safa is considered Hezbollah's

"special missions" person. If he did in fact fly to the UAE, it was most likely very important for Hezbollah to achieve the release and return of the detainees (al-Jazeera, March 20, 2024).



Wafiq Safa (al-Jazeera, March 20, 2024)

Hezbollah's Battle for Hearts and Minds

► Hezbollah's Simia Telegram channel published a video called "The history of the security zone with Lebanon," which is intended to show Hezbollah's coming victory over Israel. It begins with a map objective the border between: "occupied Palestine" and Lebanon, and proceeds to the history of the security zone: 1978, "the first Israeli invasion" [Operation Litani]; 1985, "the second invasion" [the establishment of the security zone in Lebanon]; 2000, "after the liberation" [the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon]. The video ends with a map from 202, "after the war," which shows a projected "Lebanese control over the north of the State of Israel" (Simia Telegram channel, March 20, 2024).



2024, according to Hezbollah's video (Simia Telegram channel, March 20, 2024)

Counterterrorism Activities in Lebanon

► The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar reported that two people in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, the southern suburb of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold, were detained on

suspicion of spying for Israel. "Advanced devices" had allegedly been found in their possession with extensive videos of the area. They also reportedly provided information to a fake American company, apparently a cover for an Israeli company, about areas in Beirut, including the faces of passersby, streets, buildings, cars and shops. The two suspects were allegedly able to locate the location of any cell phone user as soon as he connected to a WIFI network. In addition, during the investigation it was learned that one of the detainees had conducted surveillance of the apartment in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia where Saleh al-'Arouri was staying, about two weeks before he was killed. It was noted that the detainees were accused of spying for a foreign country and transferring sensitive information about state security (al-Akhbar , March 21, 2024).

► The Palestinian "resistance" [terrorist] organizations and the Islamic Force in Tyre reported the detention of three people on suspicion of involvement in the killing of Hadi Ali Mustafa, aka Abu Shadi, a Hamas military-terrorist operative, an Israeli attack in south Lebanon on March 13, 2024. They stated that the three walked around the al-Rashidiya refugee camp claiming to sell toilet paper and planted surveillance devices in front of the homes of senior members of the Palestinian resistance. They were of the opinion that a surveillance device had been placed in Abu Shadi's car (al-Mayadeen , March 22, 2024).

Hezbollah in the United States

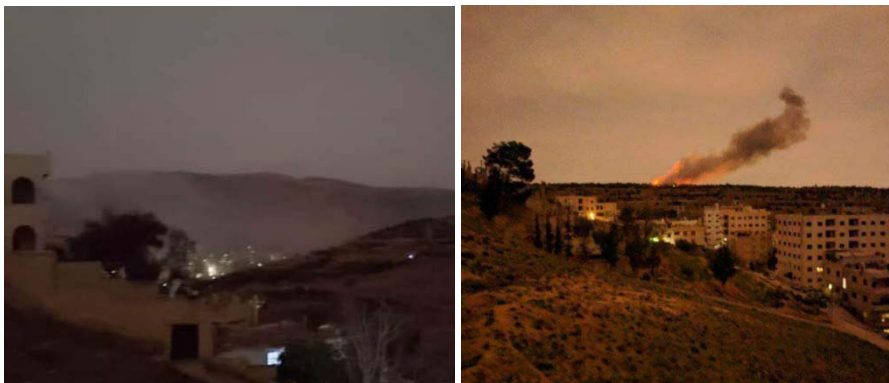
► It was reported that Bassel Bassel Abadi, a 22 year-old Lebanese citizen, was arrested on March 9, 2024, near the city of El Paso in Texas, after crossing the border from Mexico to United States territory. During his interrogation, he identified himself as a Hezbollah operative and stated that he had been trained by Hezbollah for seven years and had served as a security guard for four years at sites where Hezbollah weapons were stored. Asked about his actions in the United States, he said, "I'm going to try to make a bomb," adding that he was planning to go to New York (New York Post, March 17, 2024; Center for Immigration Studies, March 18, 2024).



**Bassel Bassel Abadi, a Hezbollah operative who was arrested in the United States
(al-Arabiya YouTube channel, March 18, 2024)**

Syria

► On March 24, 2024, an attack was reported on munitions warehouses in the al-Draij area, near Judaydat al-Shibani, about seven kilometers north of Damascus; the attack was attributed to Israel (Sham for Studies X account, 24 In March 2024). The targets attacked belonged to Syrian forces and Hezbollah; they caught fire (Halab Today TV X account, March 24, 2024).



Attack in the al-Draij area, north of Damascus (Sham for Studies X account, March 24, 2024)

► According to a Syrian "military source," on March 19, 2024, at 2:10 a.m., Israel launched missiles from the direction of the Golan Heights at several positions in the Damascus countryside, and the Syrian aerial defense unit shot down some of them. It was also reported that the attack caused only material damage (SANA, March 19, 2024). According to another report, the missiles attacked weapons warehouses belonging to Hezbollah and pro-Iranian militias in the Yabroud area about 50 kilometers (about 30miles) northeast of Damascus. The weapons and ammunition were destroyed and a fire broke out at the site. Another report stated that there were dead and wounded (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 19, 2024).

- ▶ According to another report, bases of pro-Iranian and Hezbollah militias were attacked in the a-Dimas area, about ten kilometers (six miles) northwest of Damascus (Nur Abu Hassan's X account, March 19, 2024). Another report stated that the al-Mayadin airfield, about 40 kilometers (about 25 miles) southeast of Deir al-Zor, was attacked and a Hezbollah commander and five senior commanders in the pro-Iranian militias were killed in the attack (al-Janoubia, March 19, 2024).
- ▶ Ali Mahmoud Abbas, the Syrian minister of defense, met in Tehran with Mohammad Bagheri, the chief of the general staff of the Iranian armed forces, to discuss regional developments, especially the war in the Gaza Strip and Israeli Air Force strikes in Syria and Lebanon. According to the report, Abbas said that the Operation al-Aqsa Flood had changed the world, meetings should be held more frequently and the axis of the armed forces of Syria and Iran should be strengthened at all levels (Tasnim, March 18, 2024).



The Syrian minister of defense meets with the Iranian chief of staff (Tasnim, March 18, 2024)