



Reactions to the targeted killing of the commander of Hezbollah's Aziz Unit

July 7, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ On July 3, 2024, Hezbollah announced the death of Muhammad Naama Nasser, aka Hajj Abu Naama, killed in an Israeli airstrike which targeted his vehicle in the al-Housh area southeast of Tyre, in south Lebanon; another Hezbollah operative was killed in the attack. The IDF spokesperson confirmed that the Israeli Air Force had attacked Nasser, who since 2016 had commanded Hezbollah's Aziz Unit, which is responsible for the western sector in south Lebanon.
- ▶ The organization's announcement called Nasser the "shaheed commander," only the third time since the beginning of the current conflict that Hezbollah awarded the title to one of its operatives, a testament to his senior position. According to Hezbollah, he was a long-time operative, joining the ranks of the organization in 1986, and was also involved in fighting in Syria and Iraq. Photos and videos were published of Nasser with senior Hezbollah figures, with former Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani and during the fighting in south Lebanon before Israel's withdrawal in 2000.
- ▶ Hezbollah's responded to the killing with six attacks on military targets in northern Israel over two days. Two of the attacks, the most extensive since the start of the hostilities in October 2023, were simultaneous, with upwards of 200 rockets and more than 20 UAVs launched at IDF headquarters and bases in the Golan Heights, the Upper Galilee and the Western Galilee. An IDF soldier was killed, three civilians were injured and fires broke out in various areas.
- ▶ Senior Hezbollah figures said killing Abu Naama would not weaken the organization and or stop the "resistance". According to the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Akhbar, his death was a great loss and in Hezbollah perspective, indicated that Israel intended to continue to eliminating senior figures, assuming it would not lead to an all-out 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.

►Like Hezbollah's reactions after the previous eliminations of its senior commanders, the reaction to the killing of Abu Naama was meant to show Nasser's status in the organization and to deter Israel from carrying out more targeted killings. Although it was the largest combined attack since the beginning of the fighting, the rockets and UAVs did not exceed the range of 35-40 kilometers (22-25 miles) from the border.

►The Palestinian organizations, led by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, issued mourning notices for Nasser's death and praised his role in the "resistance front"² and for providing aid to the Gaza Strip.

Targeted Killing of Muhammad Nasser

Hezbollah's announcement

►On the afternoon of July 3, 2024, Lebanese media reported that an Israeli UAV had attacked a vehicle in the town of al-Housh, approximately 3 kilometers (2 miles) southeast of Tyre and approximately 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the Israeli border, killing two people (al-Manar, July 3, 2024). It was later reported that one of the casualties was a senior Hezbollah commander, identified as Abu Naama or Abu Ali Nasser, the commander of the Aziz Unit.³ It was the third most significant Israeli attack since the hostilities began on October 8, 2023 (al-Hadath Telegram channel, July 3, 2024; Sky News Arabic Telegram channel, July 3, 2024).

►Hezbollah published a mourning notice for the "shaheed commander" Muhammad Naama Nasser, aka Hajj Abu Naama, born in 1965 in the town of Hadatha in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024). It was the third time during the current hostilities that Hezbollah gave one of the organization's casualties the title of commander (the other two were of Wissam Hassan Tawil, commander of the Radwan Unit, on January 8, 2024, and Taleb Sami Abdallah, the commander of the al-Nasr Unit, on June 11, 2024),⁴ indicating Nasser's senior position in Hezbollah's ranks. Also reported was the death of Muhammad

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

³ Hezbollah has two units with sectorial responsibility operating between the Litani River and the border with Israel ("the blue line"): the al-Nasr Unit is responsible for the eastern sector, from Bint Jbeil to Mount Dov in the east and the Aziz Unit is responsible for the western sector, from Bint Jbeil to the Mediterranean. Both units are subordinate to Hezbollah's southern front headquarters, under the command of Ali Karki, and is responsible for the area from the Sidon to the Israeli border. In addition, the Bader Unit is responsible for the area between the Litani River and Sidon and is also subordinate to the Southern Front headquarters.

⁴ For further information, see the June 16, 2023 ITIC report, "[Reactions to the targeted killing of Taleb Sami Abdallah, commander of Hezbollah's al-Nasr unit.](#)"

Ghassan Khashab, aka Dhu al-Fiqar, born in 1997, from the town of al-Mansouri in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, June 12, 2024).



Right: Scene of the targeted attack (Fouad Khreiss' X account, July 3, 2024). Center: Hezbollah's mourning notice for Muhammad Naama Nasser. Left: Hezbollah mourning notice for Muhammad Ghassan Khashab (Telegram channel of Hezbollah's combat propaganda arm, July 3, 2024)

►According to Hezbollah, from the time Nasser joined the organization in 1986, his activities included the following (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024):

- ◆ Participation in many "military" operations against Israeli army positions during the occupation of south Lebanon, where he was wounded more than once; he gradually received more responsibility.
- ◆ Participation in the "heroic response" to Israeli "aggression" in the Second Lebanon War in July 2006.
- ◆ Participation in the conflict against terrorist organizations in Iraq and Syria between 2011 and 2016, where he was wounded in battle in the eastern ridge [on the Syria-Lebanon border] in 2015.
- ◆ He took command of the Aziz Unit after the "martyrdom" of its commander, Hassan Muhammad al-Hajj, aka Hajj Abu Muhammad al-Iqlim in 2016.
- ◆ During Operation al-Aqsa Flood he planned, led and supervised many "military operations" against sites, installations, bases and deployment points of the Israeli enemy in the north of "occupied Palestine."
- ◆ He received several awards from Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.
- ◆ In addition, Hezbollah published videos and photos of Nasser throughout his career in the organization, showing him in the field and in meetings with the chairman of Hezbollah's executive council, Hashem Safi al-Din, with former Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani, who was killed in an American attack in January 2020, with Taleb

Sami Abdallah (aka Abu Taleb), commander of the Nasser Unit, killed in June 2024, and with Wissam Hassan Tawil, commander of the Radwan Force, killed in January 2024. One video showed Nasser participating in a Hezbollah force raid on a South Lebanon Army post in Beit Yahoun on May 15, 1999 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024).



Right: From Hezbollah's archives, Nasser in action in the field (al-Markazi, July 3, 2024). Left: Nasser with Taleb Sami Abdallah, killed in an attack in June 2024 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024)



Nasser with Qods Force commander Qasem Soleimani (left) (Hussein Sabra's X account, July 3, 2024)

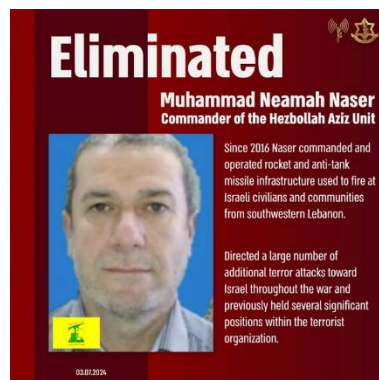
◆ Nasser's funeral service was held at the Said al-Shuhadaa compound in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, the southern suburb of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold. It was attended by Hezbollah operatives and several senior figures, headed by Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council. His coffin was then transported to his native village of Hadatha for burial (al-'Ahed, July 4, 2024). Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's secretary general, is expected to speak at a memorial ceremony for Nasser in the Said al-Shuhadaa compound on July 10, 2024 (al-'Ahed, July 6, 2024).



Nasser's coffin at the service in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia (al-'Ahed, July 4, 2024). Left: Hezbollah figures at the internment in Hadatha (al-Akhbar X account, July 4, 2024)

The IDF announcement

- ▶ The IDF spokesperson confirmed that Nasser, the commander of Hezbollah's Aziz Unit, was killed in an Israeli Air Force attack in the Tyre region. He had been responsible for firing anti-tank missiles and rockets from southwest Lebanon at Israeli territory and carried out additional terrorist acts against Israel during the war (IDF spokesperson website, July 3, 2024).
- ▶ According to reports, Nasser, who served in Hezbollah's special forces, had many years of experience. He was involved in all the terrorist attacks and abduction attempts in the western sector of South Lebanon and was in contact with the Iranians. The command of the Aziz Unit included responsibility for the entire western sector, between the Israeli border and the Litani River, and the command of all rocket and anti-tank missile launches and other Hezbollah attacks on Israel, from the central south Lebanon border to the Mediterranean. According to reports he was killed while he was driving his car in the western sector with men under his command (Israeli media, July 3, 2024).



Nasser's identity card (IDF spokesperson, July 3, 2024)

Hezbollah Attacks in Retaliation

► Hezbollah's response to the killing of Nasser included the use of heavy firepower to attack military targets in northern Israel. Explosive drones and rockets of various types were launched to a range of 35-40 kilometers (22-25 miles) from the border, a range in which Hezbollah had already operated in the past.

► On July 3, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for ten attacks, all after the official announcement of Nasser's death. Four were claimed as directly in response to the killing (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024):

- ◆ The launch of 100 Katyusha rockets at a military headquarters and an air defense base in the Golan Heights.
- ◆ The launch of Falaq rockets at a military headquarters in Kiryat Shmona.
- ◆ The launch of dozens of Katyusha rockets at a military headquarters in the Golan Heights.
- ◆ The launch of Burkan rockets at an IDF post in the Upper Galilee.

► On July 3, 2024, the IDF spokesperson said some of the launches from Lebanon were intercepted and some of the rockets fell in the Kiryat Shmona area, but most of the hits were in open areas. In addition, fires broke out in the central Golan Heights. In all cases, no casualties were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 3, 2024).

► On July 4, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for nine attacks; two were claimed as directly in response to Nasser's death (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 4, 2024):

- ◆ The launch of more than 200 missiles and rockets of various types at five command bases in the Golan Heights and the Upper Galilee, with the simultaneous launch of a swarm of explosive UAVs at seven IDF bases in Safed, the Golan Heights, Mt. Hermon, the Western Galilee and the Lower Galilee. A source in Hezbollah stated that more than 20 drones had been launched (al-Jazeera, July 4, 2024). Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen TV reported that the attack, which continued for more than an hour, was the heaviest and most extensive since the beginning of the hostilities in October 8, 2023 (al-Mayadeen, July 4, 2024).



Missile and UAV launches (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 4, 2024)



Map of the attacks (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 4, 2024)

► On July 4, 2024, the IDF spokesperson reported that UAVs and rockets had been identified penetrating Israeli airspace from Lebanese territory, and that aerial defense fighters and fighter jets had intercepted some of them. He reported that the alert in the Ilania region was a false alarm, contrary to Hezbollah's claim that it had attacked a military base in the area. The IDF confirmed that more than 200 rocket and 20 UAV launches had been detected. An IDF soldier was killed and three civilians were injured in the attacks. Debris from the interceptions and UAV hits caused fires in various areas of the Golan Heights, the Upper Galilee and the Western Galilee (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, July 4, 2024).



Fire in the Golan Heights caused by a rocket hit (Nature and Parks Authority, July 4, 2024)

Common characteristics of the attacks

► **Combined and concentrated attacks:** Concentrated barrages of various types of rockets and explosive UAVs were launched simultaneously. In addition, there was an exceptional concentrated attack of a hundred rockets, as Hezbollah sought to increase its chances of hitting targets while making it difficult for the IDF's air defense systems to respond, and to increase secondary damage through fires resulting from the impact of rockets and UAVs or debris from interceptions.

► **Range:** Hezbollah did not exceed the ranges in which it has operated so far, about 35 to 40 kilometers (22 to 25 miles) from the border, with most of the attacks concentrated in the Upper Galilee and the Golan Heights.

► **Duration:** The attacks were spread over two days, unlike attacks for killing operatives or harming civilians in south Lebanon, which last one day.

► **Despite the increase in the intensity of the attacks, they were different from the attacks following the elimination of Taleb Sami Abdullah, commander of the Nasser Unit, in June 2024: this time Hezbollah announced six retaliatory attacks, compared to 13 after the previous targeted attack; and the response lasted two days, unlike the three days after the killing of Abdallah.**

Hezbollah's Perspective

► Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council, eulogized Nasser at a service held for him in Beirut. He called Abu Naama an example of the strength of the "resistance" and said his life had been full of "victories." He said that every time a leader became a shaheed there was another who carried the flag, and the "resistance's" will became stronger and its position more solid. He added that Israel should not think that killing Nasser would open the way to south Lebanon: it would not give Israel a military advantage and was not an achievement for Israel, unlike the achievements of Abu Naama. He said the retaliatory attacks were aimed at new targets which Israel did not imagine would be hit, and threatened that the reaction would be long and the [Lebanese] front would remain "strong and burning." He added that Hezbollah would continue to "defend" south Lebanon with "thousands of heroic mujahedeen, the brothers and sons of shaheeds" (al-'Ahed, July 4, 2024).



Hashem Safi al-Din at a ceremony in Beirut (al-'Ahed , July 4, 2024)

► Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that the killing of Abu Naama would not cause the "resistance" to retreat and would not weaken its will or its decision to continue the conflict with Israel, and would not ease the pressure on the northern front. He added that the reckoning with the enemy had increased and that Israel had no choice but to stop its "aggression" against the Gaza Strip. He warned there would be a response to the "crime," claiming that Israel understood the "arm of the resistance is long." He added that Israel had not learned from past attempts that assassinations of "resistance" leaders and fighters would increase their determination to continue jihad and increase their capabilities (al-Nashra, July 3, 2024).

► Hussein Jashi, a member of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament, said that people who thought the elimination of one of its leaders would weaken Hezbollah were deluding themselves, since Hezbollah was only becoming stronger, more determined and more persistent. During a ceremony in memory of one of the Hezbollah victims in the town of al-Ghassaniyah, he said that in the past, senior leaders of Hezbollah, including Abbas al-Musawi and Imad Mughniyeh, had been killed, but the "resistance" did not end (al-'Ahed, July 4, 2024).

► The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar reported that Nasser had escaped from several assassination attempts in recent months and that his death was a great loss for the "jihad body" in Hezbollah. As commander of the Aziz Unit, Nasser caused pain to Israel during the current hostilities, and his elimination was an Israeli settling of old scores because of his participation in hundreds of operations against Israel and its allies before the departure from Lebanon in 2000 and after, and during the Second Lebanon War. According to the newspaper, by eliminating him Israel meant to show it planned to continue carrying out targeted attacks, assuming it would not lead to an all-out war (al-Akhbar, July 4, 2024).

- ▶ Hezbollah's al-Manar TV eulogized Nasser during its main news broadcast, saying he had completed years of jihad, "supported the truth and protected the oppressed," and that "his name was preserved in the fields of jihad, from the hills and plains of the south, to the Levant and Iraq and wherever duty took him over the years." Al-Manar added that "his blood will accompany the signs of victory that grow from day to day," and that more "reactions" were expected, until Israel ended its "aggression" against the Gaza Strip (al-Manar TV, July 3, 2024).
- ▶ Hussein al-Amin published an article in al-Akhbar about Nasser's activities in Hezbollah, based on conversations with past and present operatives. According to the article, Nasser decided to fight Israel after the IDF entered Lebanon in June 1982 and he was among the first Hezbollah operatives in the villages of south Lebanon. During the 1990s, he was made commander of the Bint Jbeil region and oversaw a large number of "special operations which were painful to the enemy." After the IDF withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, he was among the first in Hezbollah to assist the Palestinian "resistance" organizations in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. During the Second Lebanon War he participated in the fighting in the villages closest to the border, including face-to-face battles with IDF fighters. After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, he commanded the fighting in the Homs area. In 2014 he flew to Iraq and commanded the fighting against ISIS in the Samraa region. Three months later he returned to Syria and participated in the battles in the eastern ridge, where he was wounded. When Operation al-Aqsa Flood began in October 2023, Nasser, as the commander of the Aziz Unit, oversaw the infiltration of Palestinian Islamic Jihad squad which fought against IDF forces in Arab al-Aramsheh. A "resistance operative" in the article described Nasser as "brave, calm and confident" during the nine months of fighting (al-Akhbar, July 4, 2024).
- ▶ In another article, Hussein Ibrahim praised Nasser, whom he called Bou Naama, calling him a "rare person, an experienced military leader and a brave fighter." Ibrahim said Nasser had not missed a single battle, from "Palestine," where he provided weapons to the "resistance fighters", to Iraq and Syria (al-Akhbar, July 4, 2024).



Milestones in Nasser's career (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, July 3, 2024)

Palestinian and "Resistance Axis" Reactions

►The military wings of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and other Palestinian organizations issued mourning notices for Abdullah's death and expressed appreciation for his work:

- ◆ The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, issued a mourning notice praising Nasser's "decisive role" in supporting the Palestinian people and their "resistance" during Operation al-Aqsa Flood and his years-long central role in the "resistance front" against the "Zionist occupation" (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, July 3, 2024).
- ◆ The PIJ sent its condolences to Hezbollah leader Nasrallah on Nasser's death, claiming that "mixing the blood of the mujahedeen shaheeds of Palestine and Lebanon will cause pain to the enemy and bring the hour of victory closer" (Filastin al-Yawm Telegram channel, July 3, 2024).
- ◆ The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military wing, sent condolences to "our brothers in the Islamic resistance in Lebanon following the treacherous assassination of Nasser." The Jerusalem Brigades stated that its leadership and "fighters" were proud of the influential role Nasser had played in supporting the Palestinian "resistance," and that he and his brothers in the resistance were the best among those who loved "Palestine" and its people. The wing added that "Hajj Abu Naama's blood will increase [its] determination to continue on the path of jihad, pride and honor" (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, July 3, 2024).

- ◆ The Popular Resistance Committees' leadership sent condolences to Hezbollah and Nasrallah and congratulated Nasser on his "martyrdom." The announcement stated that "with his pure blood, Nasser wrote the most wonderful stories of victory and provided the most wonderful scenes of sacrifice." The Popular Resistance Committees would, according to the statement, "commit itself to advance along the blessed path until victory, liberation and the defeat of the enemy of humanity" (al-'Ahed, July 3, 2024).
- ◆ The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's military wing, issued a mourning notice stating that the "treacherous attack" on Abu Naama and on all those killed before and after him would increase their determination to continue on the path of the shaheeds in "resistance and struggle" [terrorism and violence] until "the liberation of all our national Palestinian territory and the restoration of all the rights that were taken from our people." The Brigades sent the message to the Hezbollah leadership and operatives, who were called "our friends and blood-brothers in the struggle and in the unity of destiny," that they "saluted the souls of those who illuminated the path of freedom and independence with their blood" (Palestinian Center for Communication, July 3, 2024).