



Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah, Lebanon and Syria September 16-23, 2024

The Northern Arena*

2,497 attacks

- 492 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 91 terrorist operatives of other organization killed
- Five non-affiliated operatives killed
- One Lebanese army soldier killed
- One Lebanese internal security operative killed

***Updated from October 8, 2023**

Overview¹

- ▶ This past week Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 77 attacks on military and civilian targets in Israel, including the first attacks on the Jezreel Valley, the Lower Galilee and the suburbs around Haifa. An attempt by a Hezbollah terrorist squad to plant an explosive device bomb near an IDF post was foiled. Two IDF soldiers were killed in the attacks and five civilians were injured; substantial property damage was reported.
- ▶ Israeli Air Force aircraft expanded their attacks on Hezbollah terrorist targets and operatives in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley, including preventive strikes to prevent rockets from being fired and missiles from being launched into Israeli territory. In an attack in Beirut, Ibrahim Aqil, head of Hezbollah's operations and commander of the Radwan Force, was killed, along with the top commanders of the Radwan Force. Hezbollah announced that 65 operatives and commanders had been killed during the past week.
- ▶ The IDF warned the residents of south Lebanon to evacuate their homes in preparation for attacks on Hezbollah weapons hidden in civilian sites. As a result, there was a mass departure of residents from south Lebanon to the north of the country.

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

► Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, spoke after the explosions of Hezbollah operatives' hand-held communications devices and accused Israel of committing "massacres" and "declaring war." He warned that retaliation would be "an eye for an eye." Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, announced the opening of a new phase in the fighting. Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, warned of a "descent into the unknown" and called for the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions to calm the situation. Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, accused Israel of trying to transform south Lebanon into "scorched earth."

► The civilian workers of UNIFIL were called to take their families and move to areas north of the Litani River.

South Lebanon

Hezbollah attacks

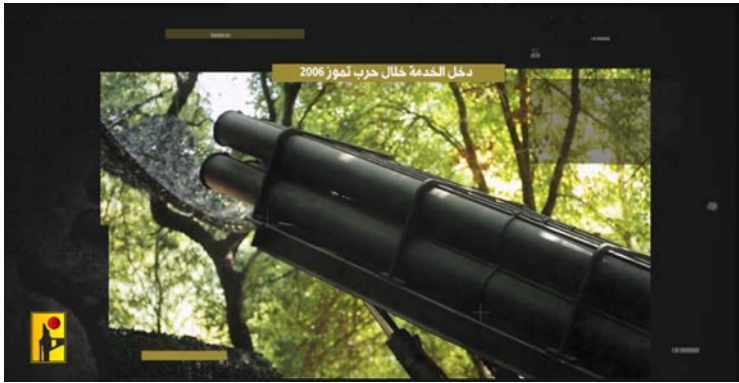
► This past last week (September 16-23, 2024) Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **77 attacks** on military and civilian targets in northern Israel, compared with 65 attacks the previous week. Hezbollah attacked with anti-tank missiles, artillery, UAVs, explosive drones and various types of rockets (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 16-22, 2024). An IDF soldier was killed by an anti-tank missile and a reservist was killed by a suicide UAV. At least five civilians were injured by rockets and the debris from interceptions. There was a substantial amount of damage to property including dozens of buildings in Metula, and fires broke out at several sites in the northern part of the country. There were also dramatic developments:

◆ **Extension of the range of targets to the Jezreel Valley and the suburbs around**

Haifa: On September 22, 2024, Hezbollah extended the range of its targets to the Jezreel Valley, the Lower Galilee, and the Haifa suburbs, claiming to have attacked a military airbase and a military industrial plant, all in response to explosions of Hezbollah's hand-held communications devices on September 17 and 18, 2024, and to the Israeli Air Force attacks in Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 22, 2024; Israeli media, September 22, 2024).

◆ **The use of new rockets:** According to Hezbollah, the attacks on September 22, 2024 were carried out using Fadi-1 and Fadi-2 rockets for the first time since the beginning of hostilities on October 8, 2023. From the information provided by Hezbollah, they are tactical rockets which were used for the first time in the Second Lebanon War in July 2006. The Fadi-1 is a 220 mm rocket with a range of 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) and carries

an 83 kg (182 pounds) warhead. It can be fired from stationary or mobile launchers and is designed to hit supply lines and bases far from the conflict lines. The Fadi-2 type is a 302 mm rocket with a range of 100 kilometers (60 miles) and carries a 170 kg (375 pounds) warhead. It is intended to hit fortified targets, infrastructure and concentrations of forces (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 22, 2024).



Right: Fadi-1 rocket firing. Left: A multi-barrel launcher for Fadi-1 rockets (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 22, 2024)



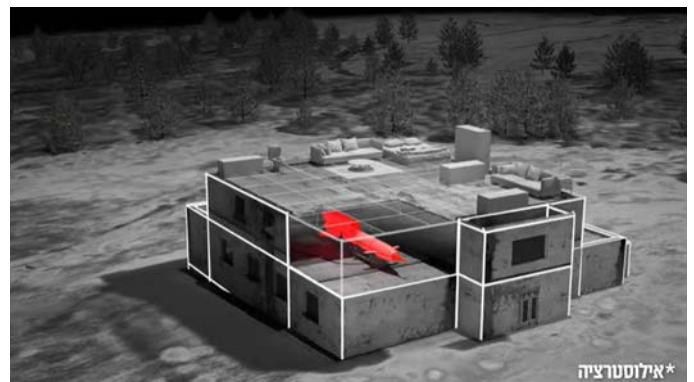
Right: Fadi-2 rocket firing. Left: A Fadi-2 rocket launcher (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 22, 2024)

◆ **An IED attack on the Lebanon-Israel border was prevented:** On September 16, 2024, IDF forces identified suspects approaching the border area. Artillery forces and aircraft attacked and eliminated two terrorist operatives who were planning to attack an IDF post with an IED. Their body cameras recorded their activities and part of the attack which eliminated them (IDF spokesperson, September 19, 2024).



The weapons and equipment found in the terrorists' possession (IDF spokesperson, September 19, 2024)

◆ **The launch of a cruise missile was prevented:** On September 23, 2024, the IDF spokesperson reported that a few weeks ago an Israeli Air Force strike attacked a civilian building in south Lebanon from which Hezbollah terrorist operatives were about to launch a Russian DR-3 cruise missile² at Israel. According to the announcement, Hezbollah operatives hid the missile in a room in the building and created an opening specifically for the launch (IDF spokesperson, September 23, 2024).



Right: Illustration of a DR-3 cruise missile inside the structure. Left: The cruise missile, as documented before its destruction (IDF spokesperson, September 23, 2024)

IDF response

► This past week, in response to Hezbollah attacks and as a preventive measure, Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked Hezbollah terrorist targets and operatives in south Lebanon and the Lebanon Valley, including hundreds of launchers with thousands of rockets, most of which were ready for immediate firing into Israeli territory, as well as armed terrorist squads and facilities, buildings used for military purposes, munitions warehouses and posts (IDF spokesperson, September 16-23, 2024). On September 23, 2024, the IDF reported attacks on more than 300 Hezbollah terrorist targets (IDF spokesperson, September 23, 2024, 12:30 p.m.).

² The DR-3 cruise missile has a range of 200 kilometers (120 miles), a wingspan of about two meters and a warhead weighing up to 300 kgs (660 pounds).

The Lebanese ministry of health reported at least 100 dead and more than 400 wounded in the attacks (al-Mayadeen, September 23, 2024, 2:00 p.m.).



Israeli Air Force strikes in south Lebanon (al-Akhbar, September 23, 2024)

- ▶ On September 23, 2024, the IDF spokesperson called on the residents of the villages in south Lebanon to leave their homes if Hezbollah was using them to hide weapons, since the Israeli Air Force was preparing further attacks. The IDF spokesperson said that Hezbollah was endangering them and they should stay away to protect themselves and their families (IDF spokesperson, September 23, 2024). Lebanese media reported that text and voice messages were sent to the phones of residents in south Lebanon and were broadcast on a radio station taken over by the IDF, all calling on the residents to evacuate (Lebanon Debate, MTV Lebanon, September 23, 2024). The CEO of the Lebanese communications company Ogero, Imad Karidiya, claimed the network had not been hacked, but noted that tens of thousands of calls had been received from abroad disguised as calls from Lebanon to mislead the residents who answered. He claimed Israel had used the same tactic during the war in 2006, because Israeli numbers cannot access the Lebanese communication network (al-Medan, September 23, 2024).
- ▶ After the IDF warnings there was a mass exodus of residents from Sidon, Tyre and the villages in south Lebanon, and the road to Beirut and north Lebanon were clogged (al-Nahar, September 23, 2024).

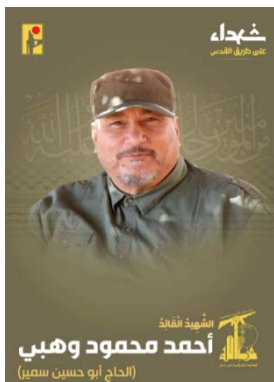


Right: Traffic jams on the coastal road leaving Tyre (Lebanese Phalanges X account, September 23, 2024). Left: Traffic jams in Tyre (al-Nahar, September 23, 2024)

The elimination of Ibrahim Aqil and the upper echelons of the Radwan Force³

- ▶ On September 20, 2024, the Israeli Air Force attacked the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, Beirut's southern suburb, and eliminated Ibrahim Aqil, head of Hezbollah operations and commander of its Radwan Force. He was killed during an underground meeting with other Radwan Force commanders where they were planning to carry out a terrorist attack and massacre in the Galilee. Fifteen other top Hezbollah terrorist operatives were killed in the attack, including senior commanders in the Radwan Force's chain of command (IDF spokesperson, September 21, 2024). According to the most recent update from the Lebanese ministry of health (September 23, 2024, 10:00 a.m.), 52 people were killed in the attack (al-Diyar, September 23, 2024). After the attack, local residents fled from the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia, mainly towards Mount Lebanon in the north (Lebanon Debate, September 23; al-Akhbar, September 23, 2024).
- ▶ Hezbollah confirmed that Ibrahim Aqil, aka al-Hajj Abd al-Qader, was killed in the Israeli attack. The announcement called him a "great jihad commander," the highest honorific given to a Hezbollah casualty and the second to receive it since the start of the current conflict on October 8, 2023. Also killed in the attack was Ahmed Mahmoud Wahhabi, aka al-Hajj Abu Hussein Samir, who was called "the shaheed commander," and who commanded the Radwan Force's training unit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 21, 2024).

³ For further information, see the September 2024 ITIC report, "[Reactions to the Elimination of Ibrahim Aqil and the Top Command of the Radwan Force.](#)"



Right: Hezbollah's announcement of Ibrahim Aqil's death Left: Hezbollah's announcement of Ahmed Mahmoud Wahhabi's death (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 20, 2024)

Hezbollah hand-held communications devices explode⁴

► On September 17, 2024, thousands of pagers held by Hezbollah operatives connected to the organization's internal communication network exploded, killing at least 12 and injuring thousands in Lebanon and Syria. The next day, Hezbollah walkie-talkies exploded throughout Lebanon and according to reports at least 25 people were killed and hundreds injured. Hezbollah blamed Israel for the explosions, accused it of deliberately attacking "civilians," and promised revenge.

Hezbollah casualties

► During the past week, Hezbollah announced the deaths of 65 operatives and commanders in Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, September 16-23, 2024). Most of them were killed in the series of explosions of the communications devices and in the Israeli Air Force strike in Beirut which killed Ibrahim Aqil and the Radwan Force's top commanders.

Nasrallah's Speech

► On September 19, 2024, Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, gave a speech relating to "the latest developments," i.e., the exploding communications devices. The main points were the following (al-Manar, September 19, 2024):

- ◆ **He accused Israel of "massacres:"** He claimed that Israel wanted to kill "4,000 people in one minute" with the exploding pagers, and to kill "an additional thousand people per minute" with the explosions of the walkie-talkies. He claimed Israel had "violated all the rules and laws and crossed all the red lines" since it used "civilian devices," thereby committing "war crimes or declaring war."

⁴ For further information, see the September 2024 ITIC report, "[Hezbollah Communications Devices Explode.](#)"

- ◆ **He admitted the extent of the damage:** He admitted that Lebanon had suffered "a security and humanitarian blow unprecedented in its history." However, he claimed that the blow "did not and will not overcome" the country.
- ◆ **The expected response:** He stated that the organization was investigating the circumstances of the explosions, would reach "certain conclusions" and then decide what the required response would be. However, he claimed retaliation would be "an eye for an eye" and would come "from places the enemy expects it and from places it does not expect it," but said Hezbollah kept the details of the response to a limited number of people.
- ◆ **Continued support for the Gaza Strip:** He said Hezbollah would not stop fighting Israel as long as the war in the Gaza Strip continued. He said to the Israeli government that the only way to return the residents to their homes in the north was to "stop the aggression against the Gaza Strip and the West Bank."



Nasrallah in a speech (al-Manar, September 19, 2024)

Statements from Other Hezbollah Figures

- ▶ Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, spoke at Ibrahim Aqil's funeral, accusing Israel of committing "war crimes" by blowing up Hezbollah's communications devices and attacking Beirut. He said the fighting had entered "a new phase," which he called an "open account," claiming that attacks on the Jezreel Valley and the Haifa suburbs were part of Israel's "paying the bill." He claimed that Hezbollah had succeeded in disrupting the Israel's attempts to "silence the resistance, incite the environment against it and stop its support for the Gaza Strip" in order to return the residents to the north. He said Hezbollah would continue fighting until the war in the Gaza Strip ended (al-'Ahed, September 22, 2024).
- ▶ Ibrahim al-Amin, the editor-in-chief of the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, wrote that Hezbollah had "reprogrammed its operating mechanisms" in view of the expansion of Israeli attacks, and began to implement them in practice. He said the new "mechanisms"

"preserve previous notebooks which have to be preserved and open the door to new chapters [sic] written by a new generation of leaders." He also claimed that Hezbollah was committed to continuing its "support" for the Gaza Strip and that the challenge was to "prevent the enemy from returning its settlers [sic] [to the north] before the end of the war in the Gaza Strip" (al-Akhbar, September 23, 2024).

The Lebanese Government

► Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government, called to end the war and avoid a "descent into the unknown." He said Lebanon was committed to all UN Security Council resolutions designed to calm the situation and was discussing the reimplemention of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 to achieve long-term stability. According Mikati, Amos Hochstein, the special envoy of the American administration, was trying hard to reach a diplomatic solution which would bring calm to the region. He added that the government was also working to reinstate its authority over all Lebanese territories (al-Arabiya, September 22, 2024).

► Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of trying to turn the towns in south Lebanon into a "scorched and uninhabited land" by "completely destroying the houses and killing civilians." According to him, Israel's goal is to drag Lebanon and the region into war-scale large, but the attempt to tempt Hezbollah to expand the war "is inappropriate" and will fail. He said that although Lebanon did not want war, it had the right to defend itself. He said Lebanon would abide by "the rules of conflict" and continue to demand the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (al-Sharq al-Awsat September 23, 2024).

► On September 20, 2024, Abdallah Bou Habib, the Lebanese foreign minister, participated in an emergency UN Security Council meeting, called because of the escalation in Lebanon. He accused Israel of blowing up radios, terrorizing the Lebanese population and damaging the public health system. He called the events "terrorism incarnate and a clear violation of international law, which without a shadow of a doubt is classified as a war crime." He called on the Security Council to condemn "Israel's terrorist attacks" and bring Israel to trial (UN website, September 20, 2024).

UNIFIL

► UNIFIL spokesman Andrea Tenenti said attacks on the border were intensifying. He claimed they were concerned about the escalation and called on all parties to stop immediately

(Reuters, September 20, 2024). According to reports, UNIFIL demanded that all its civilian employees leave with their families to safe areas north of the Litani River (al-Hurra TV, Sawt Lebanon, September 23, 2024). However, he denied that the force was evacuating its positions in al-Naqoura and claimed that UNIFIL observers continued their activities (al-Siyasah, September 23, 2024).

Syria

Syrian Air Force personnel's vacations cancelled

► "Exclusive" sources reported that the Syrian defense ministry had cancelled all the vacations of the army's officers, NCOs and aerial defense soldiers, effective as of September 21, 2024 and until further notice. According to the report, the directive was the result of concern Israel would attack military sites in Syria (Sawt al-Asama, September 21, 2024).