



July 13, 2006

**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)**

Hezbollah terrorist attack on Israeli's northern border: eight IDF soldiers killed and two abducted (Updated to July 13, afternoon)



Remains of the IDF jeeps attacked by Hezbollah (Al-Manar TV, July 12)

Overview

☑ The two week-old Israeli-Palestinian crisis has been worsened by a deterioration of the situation between Israel and Lebanon in the wake of a Hezbollah terrorist attack carried out on July 12, during which two Israeli soldiers were abducted and eight killed. Israel has laid the blame directly on the Lebanese government for the attack carried out from its territory. In response, beginning on July 13 the IDF attacked Hezbollah targets and Lebanese infrastructures (including the Beirut airport).

☑ So far the international community has called for the release of the abducted soldiers and regards Hezbollah as responsible for the grave escalation which has taken place. It has also called upon Israel to exercise restraint in its responses.

☑ The following is a preliminary summary of the Hezbollah attack and the resulting escalation (as of the afternoon of July 13).

Stage 1: IDF patrol attacked under cover of diversionary fire

☑ During the morning hours of July 12, 2006, Hezbollah in Lebanon initiated a terrorist attack against IDF forces and Israeli civilians living in communities along the Israeli-Lebanese border. It was the worst attack since the IDF left Lebanon in May 2000. Its goal was to abduct IDF soldiers under massive diversionary rocket fire directed against populated areas and IDF forces along the border, Hezbollah's usual mode of operation.¹

☑ The attack began at about 9 a.m. when two IDF Hammer jeeps were ambushed while they were conducting a routine patrol along the northern border between Zar'it and Shetula. The ambush was carried out by Hezbollah terrorists who situated themselves 200 meters (about 220 yards) south of the border within Israeli territory. They detonated explosive charges and fired anti-tank missiles from where they were hiding, setting the two vehicles on fire. **Three Israeli soldiers were killed**, two were wounded (one seriously and one moderately) and two others, whose conditions are unknown, **were abducted by Hezbollah**.

☑ The attack on the IDF patrol was carried out at the same time as massive rocket attacks on Israeli civilian population centers along the border. Hezbollah fire was directed at Shetula (where three civilians were wounded), Shomra, Zar'it (in the western Galilee) and other communities, and at IDF posts in the area.

¹ See, for example, "Hezbollah attacks along Israel's northern border to cover an attempted abduction of Israeli soldiers," Bulletin and two updates at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_e1105.pdf, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_eb1105.pdf, and http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_ec1105.pdf

Stage 2: IDF soldiers pursuing the Hezbollah terrorists attacked

☑ After it became known that two soldiers had been abducted, an IDF force entered Lebanon to pursue the abductors. Approximately 70 meters (75 yards) north of the border the tank drove over a large side charge (estimated at 300 kilograms, about 660 lbs). The tank was severely damaged and **its four crew members died instantly**.

☑ Infantry and armored forces entered Lebanon in an attempt to extricate the tank and found themselves under heavy Hezbollah fire. During the attempt an **IDF soldier was killed** by sniper fire and three more were wounded. (For information about the eight soldiers killed by Hezbollah, see the Appendix below.)

Government decisions and preparing residents of northern Israel for escalation

☑ Following the attack, **Ehud Olmert, Israeli Prime Minister, pointed the finger of blame at the Lebanese government**. He noted that as far as Israel was concerned, the events were not only a terrorist attack, but first and foremost **an unprovoked Lebanese attack carried out against Israel for no reason**. He added that “**Lebanon [would] bear the responsibility for its actions**” (Website of the Prime Minister’s Office, July 13).

☑ On the night of July 12, Israeli government convened an emergency meeting, after which a statement was issued that **Israel viewed the sovereign Lebanese Government as responsible for the action that originated on its soil and for the return of the abducted soldiers to Israel**. It also noted that Israel would respond aggressively and harshly to those who carried out, and are responsible for the action (Website of the Prime Minister’s Office, July 13).

☑ The Lebanese government rejected the accusation that it was responsible for the abduction of the two soldiers, claiming that it “hadn’t known” about the Hezbollah attack and therefore could not be held responsible for the events (AP, July 12).

☑ At the same time, the population of northern Israel was called upon to prepare itself for an escalation of the crisis. Civilians living north of Acre were asked to remain in fortified rooms and bomb shelters, and the Home Front Command issued recommendations that vacationing Israelis leave the northern area; mass-participation events were called off.

IDF responses and Hezbollah attacks

☑ On July 13, in accordance with government decisions, the Israeli Air Force attacked the following:

* **Hezbollah targets:**

- Headquarters, bases, training camps, installations, posts and arms depots throughout Lebanon.
- The building of Hizbollah's Al-Manar TV channel in south Beirut and transmission tower in Baalbek, were attacked (although AL-Manar continued operating).
- On the night of July 13 the Israeli Air Force attacked Hezbollah targets in the Shiite neighborhoods of southern Beirut. Before the attack flyers were dropped advising the residents not to remain in the proximity of Hezbollah bases.

* **Lebanese infrastructures:**

- Airports: Two runways and fuel store were hit at the Beirut international airport, and airports in northern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley were also attacked;
- Bridges: Bridges over the Litani, Zaharani and Awali Rivers connecting northern and southern Lebanon were attacked;
- The main road connecting Beirut and Damascus was attacked, according to a July 14 morning report

* **Air and sea closures** were imposed on Lebanon as well.

The Lebanese report that so far 40 people were killed in the attacks.

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Aerial bombardments: Alawali bridge in Sidon on the main coastal road between Beirut and the south (left); the building of Almanar TV channel in Beirut (middle), Al-Manar Beirut’s international airport runway hit in the attack (right) (Al-Arabiya TV and Al-Jazeera TV, July 13)

☑ In response, beginning in the morning on July 13, Hezbollah initiated massive rocket attacks against the main population centers of northern Israel, including cities and towns deep within the Galilee. As of the afternoon of July 12, Nahariya, Rosh Pina, Safed, Hatzor Haglilit, and others had been hit. A woman was killed in the attack on Nahariya and 60 civilians were wounded, one of them seriously.

☑ **Update:** Hezbollah rocket fire continued during the afternoon and evening hours, although it diminished during the night. **For the first time**, a 122 mm rocket fell in **Haifa**, in the Stella Maris neighborhood. In the shelling of Safed a second Israeli civilian was killed. During July 12-13 Hezbollah fired a total of approximately 120-150 rockets, as well as mortar shells and anti-tank missiles. Two civilians were killed and approximately 115 wounded.

Hassan Nasrallah’s speech after the attack

☑ Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s general secretary, made a speech broadcast by Al-Manar TV on July 12. He noted that the two IDF soldiers who had been “captured” by his organization were “in a safe place, far, far away.” He would report on their condition, he said, “when the time comes.” He stated that the only way to release them would be through **indirect negotiations** to trade them for Lebanese prisoners in

Israeli prisons.”² Nasrallah did not specifically ask for a cease fire but noted that Hezbollah was “not interested in escalation in south Lebanon... We do not want to drag Lebanon into war.” He threatened that if Israel escalated the situation then Hezbollah would respond strongly and that Israeli “should be ready for surprises” (possibly a reference to the attacks on Haifa and the Galilee).



Hassan Nasrallah: the Israeli soldiers will only be released through indirect negotiations
(Al-Manar TV, July 12)

☑ In the Palestinian context, Nasrallah claimed that the decision to carry out the abduction was not related to the events in the Gaza Strip and he was merely keeping his promise that “this year will be the year the prisoners are released.”³ He said abduction was the only way the Lebanese prisoners could be released but did not say whether the release of Palestinian prisoners would also be demanded. He also said that the Hezbollah action might pave the way for a resolution to the Gaza Strip crisis and that the Palestinians had to be patient. Hezbollah had no objection, he said, to a **joint Lebanese-Palestinian effort** to resolve the crisis.

☑ It should be noted that the Palestinians terrorist organizations received news of the attack favorably and view it as a tool that could be used to accelerate the release of

² One of the prisoners in question is a Samir Kuntar Druze from the Lebanese mountains, a member of the pro-Iraqi terrorist organization of Abu al-‘Abbas, who was sentenced to life imprisonment for his participation in a terrorist attack in Nahariya carried out from the sea in 1979. He personally shot Danny Haran to death in front of his four year-old daughter, and then bashed her brains out with his rifle butt. A policeman was also killed in the attack. In the past, Israel has refused to release him in any negotiations with Hezbollah, while the organization has made this murderer the focus of its demands.

³ For further information see our Information Bulletin entitled “Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah boasts of the organization’s ability to maintain a balance of deterrence with Israel,” at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_e0506.pdf.

Palestinian prisoners. Senior Hamas leaders praised the action but noted that there had been no Hezbollah-Hamas coordination and that the only thing they had in common was the desire to release prisoners (Hamas Website, July 13).

Appendix

The eight Israeli soldiers killed in the Hezbollah attack on July 12⁴



Staff sergeant Alexei Kushnirski, 21, from Ness Tsiona. Survived by his parents and sister.



Staff sergeant Yaniv Baron, 20, from Maccabim. Survived by his parents, brother and sister.



Sergeant Nimrod Cohen, 19, from Mitzpe Shalem. Survived by his parents and brother.



Sergeant Major Wasim Nazal, 27, from Jat-Yanuh. Survived by parents, wife and son.



Staff Sergeant Gadi Museyev, 20, from Acre. Survived by his parents and sisters.



Staff sergeant Shlomi Yermiahu, 20, from Rishon Letzion. Survived by his parents and two brothers.



Sergeant major Eyal Benin, 22, from Omer. Survived by his parents and family.



Sergeant major Shani Turgeman, 24, from Beit Shean. Survived by his parents, brother and sister.

⁴ Source: IDF spokesman