



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

January 8, 2009

Rockets hit Western Galilee, initial report



**Katyusha rocket hits a senior citizens nursing home in Nahariya
(courtesy of ynet, January 7, photo by Hagai Einav)**

Summary

1. On the morning of January 8 (at approximately 07:45), 4 rockets were fired from the western sector of south Lebanon at the Western Galilee. One rocket hit a senior citizens nursing home in Nahariya, causing structural damage and minor injuries to several people; the other rockets landed near Western Galilee villages. According to a UNIFIL spokesman, 3 rockets were fired at Israel from a region located about 7 km from Naqoura. He added that UNIFIL was investigating the incident with the Lebanese army and that the IDF had UNIFIL's full cooperation (Al-Jazeera TV, January 8).

2. That is the **first** incident of its kind since the beginning of Operation Cast Lead. Up until now Israel's northern front was quiet, despite the belligerent rhetoric of Hassan Nasrallah and other senior Hezbollah figures. On the eve of the operation, there was a (thwarted) attempt to launch rockets to Israel from the western sector of south Lebanon (see **Appendix B**).

3. **Hezbollah indirectly denied responsibility for the incident:** Lebanese Information Minister **Tareq Mitri** said that Hezbollah had made it clear to the Lebanese government that it had nothing to do with firing the rockets. According to Mitri, Hezbollah told the Lebanese government that it was still committed to stability and to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (AFP, January 8, 2009). Hezbollah's Al-Manar channel gave a somewhat laconic report of the incident. It noted that the situation along the border was calm, citing a Hamas spokesman who said that Hamas was not responsible for the rocket fire. Hezbollah's activist **Muhammad Fannish**, who is Lebanon's Energy Minister, noted that if Hezbollah wanted to fire rockets, the organization would claim responsibility for it (Lebanon Now website, January 8).

4. On January 7, the Kuwaiti newspaper **Al-Rai** published a news item saying that the Lebanese army increased its security activity in the Beqa'a Valley, fearing that operatives belonging to Ahmed Jibril's organization might smuggle rockets to south Lebanon. After the rocket attack on Israel on January 8, Arab television channels brought up the possibility that **Ahmed Jibril's PFLP-GC** (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command), a pro-Syrian organization based in Damascus, was the one responsible for the rocket fire. When asked about it, the organization's spokesmen gave deliberately vague replies. For example:

A. Organization leader **Ahmed Jibril** said that he had no information on the details of the incident. He added, however: "We said that we must open all fronts: on the West Bank, on the Jordanian front, the Syrian and Lebanese fronts, and we did not define any single front for that matter" (Al-Alam TV, January 9).

B. **Anwar Raja, the PFLP-GC information chief:** the developments in the Gaza Strip created an atmosphere "which opened up all possibilities". All questions about it should be addressed to the matter of the rockets fired by Israel on Gaza. He added that his organization did not confirm and did not deny that it was the one responsible for firing the rockets on Israel (Iranian Al-Alam TV, January 9).

The activity of Hezbollah during Operation Cast Lead (so far)

5. During Operation Cast Lead, Hezbollah leader **Hassan Nasrallah** made numerous belligerent speeches expressing his support of the Palestinians and encouraging Hamas to continue fighting against Israel. He also lashed out against Egypt and other Arab countries for not assisting Hamas and the Palestinians and not taking action to end the Israeli operations.

6. Despite the belligerent rhetoric, however, Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah made sure not to issue threats of rocket fire on Israel and avoided any operation on the ground that might result in an escalation and a "second front" on the Lebanese scene. At the same time, Nasrallah warned Israel against launching operations in Lebanon, saying that his organization was ready to inflict a blow on the IDF that would be more severe than during the second Lebanon war. **Iran**, whose media furiously lashed out against Israel and Egypt during Operation Cast Lead, so far avoided giving promises of practical assistance to Hamas during the war.¹

Appendices

7. For more information and evaluation on Hezbollah's terrorist attack policy and previous rocket incidents since the second Lebanon war, see appendices:

A. **Appendix A:** The terrorist attack policy of Hezbollah and other terrorist groups operating in Lebanon since the second Lebanon war.

B. **Appendix B:** Thwarted attempt to launch rockets at Israel by an unidentified terrorist group on the eve of Operation Cast Lead.

¹ Several top Iranian officials even went as far as to deny claims that Iran was helping Hamas. For example, **Muhammad Ali Jaafari**, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards chief, noted that the residents of the Gaza Strip did not need military assistance from other countries and that they had enough weapons to defend themselves. For details, see: "Operation Cast Lead--Update No. 7" (January 5, 2009).

Appendix A

The terrorist attack policy of Hezbollah and other terrorist groups operating in Lebanon since the second Lebanon war

Hezbollah's terrorist attack policy

1. Hezbollah's terrorist attack policy since the second Lebanon war was characterized by its **avoidance** of perpetrating terrorist attacks against Israel, including the Shabaa Farms area (Har Dov), where the organization focused its activities until the second Lebanon war. That resulted in a **sustained period of calm** along the Israeli-Lebanese border, an unprecedented phenomenon since the establishment of Hezbollah (1982).

2. It is our assessment that such a policy of terrorist attacks by Hezbollah is the result of **three main reasons**: **one**, Hezbollah's interest in a period of calm to restore its strength and continue its military buildup without any interference from Israel, UNIFIL, and the Lebanese government; the **second reason** is Hezbollah's concern that changing its policy of terrorist attacks would trigger a severe reaction by Israel, which has to do with the increase of Israel's deterrence; **the third reason** is Hezbollah's focus on its internal Lebanese struggles (in which it enjoys success) and its interest not to get dragged down into confrontations with the Lebanese army and UNIFIL, which may trigger harsh criticism inside Lebanon.

3. In addition to those reasons, which are relevant to the Lebanese context, it is our belief that its avoidance of terrorist attacks is also the result of the **regional policy of Iran and Syria**, Hezbollah's two sponsors. According to the regional strategic considerations of those two countries, an uncontrollable escalation and a conflict with Israel at an inconvenient time and inconvenient circumstances is to be avoided. In the Lebanese and Israeli-Lebanese context, that policy strives to allow Hezbollah to continue building up its **military infrastructure** in Lebanon without interruption and to continue **establishing its political power** in the government, in the parliament, and in other administrative organs in Lebanon.

4. As a result of that policy, Hezbollah avoids perpetrating terrorist attacks against Israel since the second Lebanon war. Most of its efforts in the military sphere focused on **rebuilding its military infrastructure**, which was hit in the Lebanon war, including **building a new rocket arsenal** made up of tens of thousands of rockets, posing a considerable threat to Israel's home

front, including Gush Dan (Israel's central region) and beyond.² We therefore believe that it was not Hezbollah that fired on the Western Galilee or perpetrated the terrorist attack thwarted by the Lebanese army on the eve of Operation Cast Lead (see below).

Anti-Israeli terrorist attacks from south Lebanon by global jihad elements

5. The prevailing calm on the Israeli-Lebanese border and in south Lebanon since the second Lebanon war was broken several times when **global jihad** elements operating in Lebanon attempted to fire rockets on Israel. That was the result of a decision taken by the Al-Qaeda leadership following the second Lebanon war to increase its presence in Lebanon as a launch pad for terrorist attacks against Israel and foreign targets in Lebanon.

6. The global jihad elements are based in Palestinian refugee camps, mainly **Ein el-Hilweh**, in the vicinity of Sidon. The **Nahr el-Bared** refugee camp near Tripoli used to be the stronghold of a global jihad organization called Fath al-Islam. However, when that organization was uprooted by the Lebanese army, it moved its headquarters from Nahr el-Bared (2007) to the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp in south Lebanon (where several terrorist organizations affiliated with global jihad are based).

7. Since the second Lebanon war, global jihad terrorist elements have perpetrated several terrorist attacks in south Lebanon aimed against UNIFIL and Israel. Those attacks were perpetrated without Hezbollah's authorization and despite attempts by the Lebanese army to prevent such activity. Their terrorist activity also included two incidents of **firing rockets on Israel:**

A. **On June 17, 2007**, two rockets were fired from the Taybeh-Addayseh region at Kiryat Shmona, for the first time since the second Lebanon war. There were no casualties but some property was damaged. Hezbollah denied involvement in the attacks. Lebanon's Prime Minister and the Lebanese army strongly condemned the firing and promised they would take action to seize those responsible for it.

² For details, see: "Anti-Israeli Terrorism in 2007 and its Trends in 2008" (May 2008).



A rocket which landed in Kiryat Shmona damaged a car and formed a crater in a road (Al-Arabiyya TV, June 17, 2007)

B. **On January 8, 2008**, the remains and fragments of two rockets were found in the town of Shlomi in the Western Galilee. Investigation showed that those were 107-mm rockets fired at night from Lebanon. One rocket landed in the yard of a residential building and parts of it were found on the porch. The remains of the second rocket were discovered nearby. No one was hurt and little damage was caused. No organization claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack.



The remains of a rocket found in Shlomi (Nana website, courtesy of Channel 10, January 8, 2007)

Appendix B

Thwarted attempt to fire rockets on Israel by an unidentified terrorist group on the eve of Operation Cast Lead

1. Two days before the start of Operation Cast Lead (December 25), the Lebanese army defused **8 rockets** that were ready to be launched at Israel, in Wadi Hamoul, about a mile northeast of the town of Naqoura (not far from the UNIFIL headquarters in Lebanon). Those were 5 122-mm rockets and 3 107-mm rockets. The rockets were not new; however, they were in usable condition and were ready to be launched at Israel.



The rockets defused by the Lebanese army on December 25, 2008

2. **The Lebanese army** and UNIFIL forces searched the area for any additional rockets. During a visit to south Lebanon (December 27), the Lebanese President called upon "all sides" to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and expressed his hope that no faction would turn Lebanon "into an area of conflict or settling scores". He added that attempts to fire rockets at Israel would not be

tolerated and made it clear that Lebanon would not be a launch pad for rockets against Israel. **Hezbollah kept a low profile** and denied any responsibility for the incident through unofficial messages. The Hezbollah headquarters in south Lebanon noted that it was not the organization's way to place "anonymous rockets" and that "when it wants to bomb sites of the Israeli enemy, it will issue a claim of responsibility" (Al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 27). **Hamas and Fatah** representatives in Lebanon were also quick to deny any responsibility for launching the rockets.