



Operation Northern Shield on the Israel-Lebanon Border for the Destruction of Hezbollah Tunnels Penetrating into Israel (The situation on the ground, December 11, 2018)

December 11, 2018

Overview

On December 11, 2018, **the IDF exposed a third tunnel crossing the Israeli-Lebanese border**. IDF forces continue their activities along the border, so far without friction with Hezbollah or the Lebanese army, which are monitoring the events.

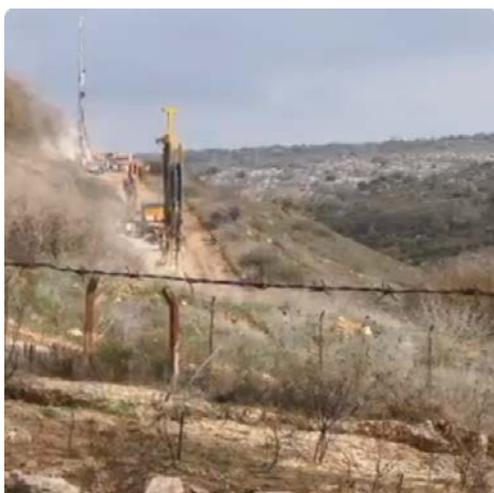
► Hezbollah continues to maintain a low media profile regarding the IDF operation. Statements made by Hezbollah and a Hezbollah-affiliated spokesman send **messages attempting to deter Israel, with reminders that the Israeli home front, including Tel Aviv, is within range of Hezbollah's missiles**. Ibrahim al-Amin, who edits the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily newspaper al-Akhbar, **stressed that the destruction of the tunnel in Kfar Kila will not prevent the infiltration of dozens of Hezbollah operatives into the heart of the Galilee**.



Lebanese army soldiers monitor IDF forces operating in the Meis al-Jabal area (the region between the Israeli communities of Menara and Yiftah (Twitter account of Ali Shuaib, December 11, 2018).

IDF Activities

► Operation Northern Shield continues with the objective of exposing and neutralizing Hezbollah terrorist attack tunnels penetrating into Israeli territory. On December 11, 2018, the IDF announced that **a third tunnel had been exposed** that crossed the Israeli-Lebanese border. It was booby-trapped by IDF forces (IDF spokesman, December 11, 2018).



IDF activity to locate tunnels near the village of Blida, documented by a correspondent of al-Manar TV and the al-Nur radio station, both affiliated with Hezbollah (Twitter account of Ali Shuaib, December 11, 2018).

- ▶ According to the IDF spokesman, the effort to locate Hezbollah tunnels began after there was a broad, high-quality picture of the situation on Israel's northern border. With a great deal of information already gained, the decision was made to set up a laboratory in the north with the technical capabilities to locate tunnels. The IDF spokesman said that neutralizing the threat had many different aspects, from the soldiers on the front to the engineers, the researchers and the experts, who were all working to locate the tunnels. He added that **Hezbollah's tunnels are different from those dug by Hamas and different tools are needed to locate them** (IDF spokesman, December 10, 2018).

UNIFIL Activities

- ▶ The commander of the UNIFIL force that visited the area of Hezbollah's tunnel near Metulla said that **based on the information he had, he could confirm that there was a tunnel on the Israeli-Lebanese border**. On December 9, 2018, IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkott met with UNIFIL commander Major General Stefano Del Col. The IDF chief of staff stressed that Hezbollah's attack tunnels, which penetrated into Israeli territory, were in gross violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. He noted the importance of UNIFIL actions in neutralizing the tunnels [on the Lebanese side of the border] and preventing Hezbollah violations (IDF spokesman, December 9, 2018).



Right: A UNIFIL force in the region of the south Lebanese village of Meis al-Jabal. Left: A Lebanese army force in the region of the Meis al-Jabal (Twitter account of Ali Shuaib, December 10, 2018).

Reactions

Hezbollah

Hezbollah and Hezbollah-affiliated media continue to closely monitor the IDF activity, reporting information and publishing pictures of IDF activities. The Hezbollah leadership, including Hassan Nasrallah, has not directly related to the IDF activity. A Lebanese commentator said of Hezbollah's silence that it was a traditional Hezbollah strategy, adding that the organization was studying the situation on the ground and learning about Israel's intentions (al-Nashra TV YouTube channel, December 9, 2018).

► Some of the indirect statements made by Hezbollah figures and a Hezbollah-affiliated newspaper editor were the following:

◆ **Na'im Qassem, deputy Hezbollah secretary general**, was interviewed but did not directly relate to the IDF operation. He said that **Hezbollah deterred Israel and prevented it from taking [a military] initiative**. He added that **the entire Israeli home front, including Tel Aviv, was within the range of the organization's missiles** (al-Wifaq, December 9, 2018).

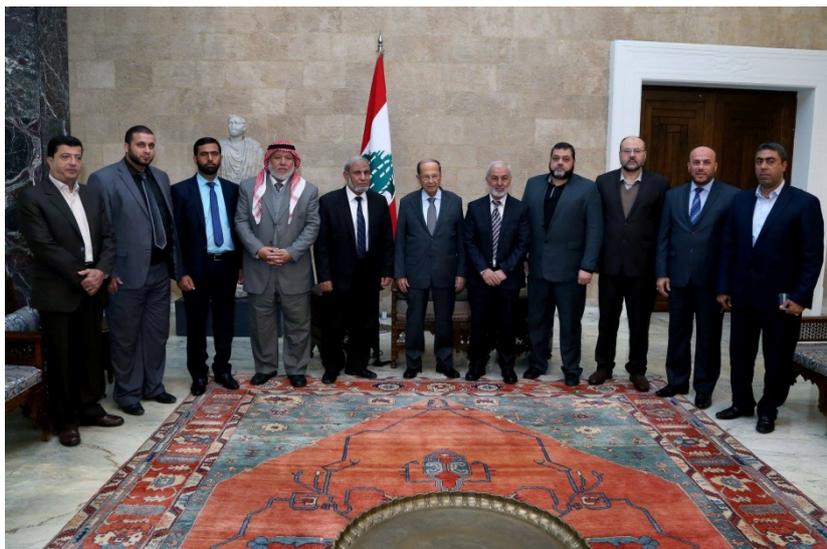
◆ **Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council**, said the "strategy of the resistance" is the defense against an American and Israeli attack in Lebanon . He said Israel could threaten regional countries but was **deterred by the military buildup of the "resistance"** (al-Nashra, December 10, 2018).

◆ **Ibrahim al-Amin, the editor of the Hezbollah-affiliated newspaper al-Akhbar**, wrote an editorial entitled "From [the First Lebanon War] to Operation Northern Shield,

the fighting of the defeated [i.e., Israel]." He said **that after the Second Lebanon War Hezbollah moved from a defensive concept, whose main objective was "to foil the plans of the enemy," to an offensive concept, whose main objective was "to move the fighting into enemy territory."** He claimed there was no natural or man-made obstacle that could prevent the advance of dozens of [Hezbollah] operatives into the heart of the Galilee, whether on foot, by bicycle, or by military or civilian vehicle. He ended the editorial saying that the imagination of the enemy ("Israel") was good enough to understand that **the destruction of the tunnel in Kafr Kila "would not lock the gate to the liberation of Palestine"** (al-Akhbar, December 10, 2018).

Palestinian Terrorist Organizations

- ▶ **Relating to the IDF activities in the north, Khaled al-Batash**, a member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) political bureau, said Israel ("the enemy") wanted to regain the deterrence it had lost in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon by talking about tunnels in Lebanon. He added that the means at the disposal of the "resistance" [i.e., the weapons in the hands of the terrorist organizations] existed **thanks to the support of the "resistance axis," which included Iran and Hezbollah**. He also said that if the [northern and southern] fronts joined forces against Israel they could act in any way they pleased (al-Mayadeen, December 7, 2018).
- ▶ **A delegation of Hamas members from the Palestinian Legislative Council met with Michel Aoun, the president of Lebanon**, at the presidential palace in Beirut. They wished him "safety for our sister Lebanon in the face of the Zionist plots, in light of the claims of the occupation about the discovery of a tunnel in south Lebanon." **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, who headed the delegation, said Israel was transferring its internal crisis to south Lebanon (Michel Aoun's Facebook page, December 10, 2018, the Facebook page of the Hamas faction in the Palestinian Legislative Council, December 10, 2018).



Hamas delegation meets with the Lebanese president (to the right of the flag) (Michel Aoun's Facebook page, December 10, 2018).