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Hezbollah retaliates with drones, Katyushas, and narratives

Hezbollah's precise military strikes and quick propaganda salvos didn't only counter Israel's narratives on its 'preemptive ops' on Sunday. It also redefined the rules of engagement, leaving Tel Aviv grappling with both immediate tactical losses and long-term strategic dilemmas.



(Photo Credit: The Cradle)

After 27 days of keeping all of Israel on a knife's edge, Hezbollah launched the [first phase](#) of its retaliatory military operation in response to the [assassination](#) of military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut's Dahiyeh neighborhood late last month.

The timing of the strike was unexpected, targeting specific qualitative Israeli military facilities and symbolic sites, and coincided with the latest [round of talks](#) between Hamas and Egyptian and Qatari mediators in Cairo and the religiously significant day of [Arbaeen](#).

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Hezbollah's statements confirmed the success of its strikes, indicating that they achieved several strategic objectives, including reestablishing deterrence and long-term rules of engagement.

Israel's 'pre-emptive strike' and Nasrallah's counter

Meanwhile, in an early attempt at establishing damage control, Tel Aviv rushed to shape the narrative on Sunday's early-morning events, touting its so-called "pre-emptive strike" as a military and intelligence success.

But in his widely televised speech that same evening, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah [challenged](#) Israel's shifting narratives point by point, saying that the true impact of Hezbollah's response would be noticeable in its future strategies – not in the "lies" of occupation officials like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Lebanese resistance's Arbaeen Operation was conducted in two distinct phases. In the [first phase](#), 340 Katyusha rockets – not the 8,000, then 6,000 claimed by Tel Aviv – targeted various northern Israeli military bases and barracks, including Meron, Israel's primary air traffic control headquarters in the north, Neve Ziv, the Ja'tun base, Za'oura, the Sahel base, the Kila, Yoav, Nafah, and Yarden barracks in the occupied Golan Heights, and the Ein Zeitim and Ramot Naftali bases. The rocket salvo served one purpose – to act as a decoy, engaging Israel's air defenses, while Hezbollah's actual targets were struck elsewhere using a fleet of armed drones.

This paved the way for the second phase: an aerial assault deep inside Israel using a significant number of attack drones that struck at strategic military sites like the Ein Shemer base, a multi-layered missile air defense installation, and the Gililot base, home to the Mossad headquarters and Israeli Military Intelligence, often abbreviated to 'Aman.'

According to Nasrallah, this target was "110 kilometers from the Lebanese border and 1,500 meters from Tel Aviv," an unprecedented penetration of Israel's strategic depth into the heart of the occupation state's military assassinations and psychological warfare SWAT team, [Unit 8200](#).

The complex attack – which mirrors Iranian tactics displayed on 13 and 14 April this year – demonstrated Hezbollah's [sophisticated military capabilities](#), executed with high precision to achieve its intended objectives. Despite Israeli denials and claims that it launched a massive pre-emptive strike to thwart the attack, Nasrallah says the sites were successfully struck.

The Israeli military censor immediately banned the publication and dissemination of any video and imagery of the targeted sites, so evidence of the strike's success is likely to be found more in the future actions of the warring parties.

Outmaneuvering Israeli intelligence

Following a series of [extensive raids](#) across southern Lebanon early Sunday morning, particularly valleys and forested areas along the border and in parts of the Tuffah region, Israeli military spokesmen launched their narrative of a “pre-emptive strike” to halt a planned Hezbollah attack involving thousands of rockets aimed at “civilian” areas.

But that narrative was quickly undermined by Hezbollah's execution of its planned attack and by Nasrallah's detailed rebuttal. In his speech, the Hezbollah leader revealed that the hangars and launchers designated for the attack remained unharmed and were all operational when the attack commenced.

He further disclosed that some drones were launched from Lebanon's northern Litani and others from the country's Bekaa region, which had not been affected by Israeli strikes. This indicated a lack of Israeli intelligence regarding the locations of the munitions prepared for the attack.

Nasrallah also highlighted a significant intelligence feat achieved by Hezbollah. He recounted the efforts of Shukr, also known as Hajj Mohsen, who, before his martyrdom, successfully transferred rockets in a misleading operation that bore similarities to the “qualitative weight” operation executed by Israel during the initial 48 hours of the July War in 2006.

In that operation, Israel claimed to have destroyed 80 percent of Hezbollah's long-range rockets, only to discover later that Hezbollah had relocated its rockets without detection. The revelations in Nasrallah's latest speech about “[Operation Arbaeen Day](#)” suggest that Hezbollah may have orchestrated a disinformation campaign over several years, complicating Israeli calculations and undermining their pre-planned strategies for aggression against Lebanon.

This disinformation operation was further supported by Hezbollah's “[Imad-4](#)” video, which showcased a highly sophisticated underground missile facility intended, in part, to demoralize Israel's military brass and, in part, to challenge false Israeli claims that the Lebanese resistance fires its munitions from civilian areas.

Strategic and tactical outcomes

In a testament to the [futility](#) of [Israel's assassinations policy](#), Hezbollah has demonstrated that it not only maintains effective and secretive control over its military operations but

that it continues to defy Israeli expectations at every turn. The Lebanese resistance also showed that huge US and western military deployments in the region do not hinder its ability to carry out strategic responses, though executing these responses remains challenging.

Hezbollah's response achieved several objectives related to the immediate conflict and the broader rules of engagement established over decades of border confrontation. Importantly, Hezbollah reasserted the [rules of deterrence](#) that Israel sought to undermine through its aggression on Dahiyeh last month.

By striking targets north of Tel Aviv, Hezbollah challenged the perceived invulnerability of the occupation state's interior, forcing Israeli security and military establishments to reconsider their strategies before taking any further action inside Lebanon.

Moreover, Hezbollah reinforced the principle of protecting civilians by limiting the conflict to a military scope, countering Israel's long-standing tactic of targeting civilian areas to weaken resistance and force concessions, a strategy currently employed by the Netanyahu government in Gaza.

Tactically, Hezbollah succeeded in separating its response from broader Palestinian resistance operations. Despite Israeli and US hopes of severing Lebanese support following the Dahiyeh attack, Hezbollah has continued to support Palestinian resistance efforts.

Additionally, Hezbollah kept northern Israel within its range, increasing pressure on Tel Aviv, particularly as Hezbollah expanded its targeting of settlements.

Resistance Axis on standby

The timing of Hezbollah's response, just before the Cairo ceasefire talks, provided some leverage for Palestinian negotiators, as demonstrated by Hamas's [firm stance](#) on a permanent ceasefire and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

The Israeli delegation, meanwhile, arrived in Cairo still reeling from the effects of the Gilot strike. Additionally, Hezbollah's actions kept the Israeli military under continuous strain across all branches in the north, with the [psychological impact](#) undoubtedly seeping into the occupation state's wider society.

While the current phase of Hezbollah's response appears to have concluded, with Tel Aviv declaring the end of its "attack" and Nasrallah indicating a pause in operations, further action remains possible based on Israel's next moves.

This leaves Tel Aviv under pressure, also awaiting potential responses from Iran, Yemen, and Iraqi factions of the region's Axis of Resistance, which are likely to be on par with Hezbollah's actions.

These developments restore the strategic dynamics shaped by a series of Israeli aggressions, with the resistance forces retaining the initiative through continued support operations aimed at maintaining pressure on both Tel Aviv and Washington to halt their war and atrocities committed in both Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

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