

Explosions Cripple Hezbollah, Shoigu In Tehran and Qaani Baghdad

THE EARLY PHOENIX Special Report

Sept 17, 2024

★ ISRAEL-HEZBOLLAH WAR

1. Hezbollah Hit Hard: 4,000 Injured, 25% Leadership Affected

Around 4,000 Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon were injured after their communication pagers exploded. Eleven members of Hezbollah, including leaders, were confirmed dead in today's attack with 400 in critical condition and 500 losing their sight. This significant blow left 10% to 25% of the party's leadership out of service, marking a major disruption in Hezbollah's command structure. Experts in the region are calling the incident "checkmate" for Hezbollah. Explosions spread into Syria as devices detonated in a car in Damascus, injuring 18 fighters.

2. PETN Explosives in Pagers Cause Vibrations and Detonations

The pagers, acquired as part of a technological upgrade, were brought to Lebanon five months ago from the Taiwanese company Gold Apollo. The explosive material was inserted before the devices arrived in Lebanon. Initial reports indicate they contained PETN, a powerful

explosive material. Each device had no more than 20 grams of PETN, known for its strength and sensitivity. While PETN doesn't explode on impact or ignition, it can be triggered by continuous vibrations. For reference, 1 kilogram of PETN equals 1.25 kilograms of TNT. Repeated, continuous messages sent to the pagers caused prolonged vibrations, leading to the explosion.

3. Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Injured in Mobile Device Explosion

Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, was injured when his mobile communication device exploded in Beirut. His wife confirmed via social media that he sustained minor injuries and is in stable condition. The ambassador's bodyguards were also injured.

4. U.S. Denies Involvement in Hezbollah Pager Explosions

Syrian sources reported a U.S. MQ-4C UAV hovering off the Lebanese coast just before the explosions. This aircraft is known for electronic warfare capabilities. Despite this, the U.S. has denied any involvement. A State Department spokesperson stated the U.S. is still gathering information and urged Iran to avoid destabilizing actions in the region.

5. Hezbollah Vows Retaliation After Explosions

Hezbollah accused Israel of orchestrating recent explosions and vowed retaliation. The Israeli National Security Council imposed a silence order on officials concerning the explosions and related accusations. While Israel remains silent, Prime Minister Netanyahu posted a brief video on X, where he was seen whistling.

Meanwhile, leaked recordings revealed panic and chaos in Lebanon reminiscent of the [2020 Beirut explosion](#).

6. Israeli Army Considers Ground Operation in Southern Lebanon

The Israeli army has proposed a ground operation in southern Lebanon to establish a security zone along the Lebanon-Israel border, advancing from [three axes](#): eastern, western, and central. Preparations for the army are underway in several capacities. [Starting tonight](#), focus shifts from the Gaza Strip to the northern front, with Israel expected to declare the northern front as its main war front soon. U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein's recent visit was viewed as a last diplomatic attempt to de-escalate.

7. Hezbollah Targets Israeli Military; Israel Shells Lebanese Border Towns

[Earlier in the day](#), Hezbollah attacked Israeli military posts near the Lebanese border, claiming casualties. In response, Israeli forces shelled areas near Alma al-Shaab and Yarin in [southern Lebanon](#). Hezbollah said the strikes were retaliation for Israeli attacks on southern Lebanese villages.

8. Israel Thwarts Assassination Attempt on Senior Security Official

Israel's Shin Bet foiled an assassination attempt on former Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi, [planned by Hezbollah](#). The plot involved using an explosive device remotely controlled from Lebanon via a mobile phone and camera. Kochavi was reportedly targeted at a Tel Aviv sports facility. This attempt follows a similar Hezbollah plot thwarted last year, amid

rising tensions between Israeli forces and Hezbollah on the Lebanese-Israeli border.

9. Israeli Airstrikes Target Hezbollah Members After Earlier Explosions

Israeli forces targeted [three Hezbollah members](#) in Blida, southern Lebanon, following earlier explosions. The military arm of Islamic Jihad's [Syrian branch](#) reported a death in its ranks during the southern Lebanon campaign: Muhammad Abdullah. Artillery strikes were also launched on additional targets in the area. [Two drones exploded](#) in the Upper Galilee region around 16:00 hours, coinciding with a barrage of rockets launched from southern Lebanon.

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★ ISRAEL & PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

10. Israel Kills Islamic Jihad Rocket Unit Leader in Rafah

An Israeli airstrike targeted Ahmed Aish Salame al-Hashash, the [head of Islamic Jihad's](#) rocket unit in Rafah. Al-Hashash was operating inside the humanitarian zone in Khan Yunis when he was precisely targeted.

11. Israeli Opposition Leader Yair Lapid Meets Obama as Netanyahu Faces Criticism

A rare meeting occurred on September 16 between former President [Obama](#) and Yair Lapid, one of Israel's most influential opposition leaders. This followed rumors that Prime Minister Netanyahu intended to replace Defense Minister Yoav Galant. [Haaretz](#) reported that the current American administration considers Gallant as their go-to

person calling Netanyahu's government "inept and messianic". Former War Council member Benny Gantz accused Netanyahu of jeopardizing Israel's security by prioritizing politics over the [Hezbollah conflict](#). Gantz warned that firing Galant during military tensions could destabilize the country's defense efforts. Protests erupted against Gidon Sa'ar, rumored to replace Galant, with critics highlighting risks to national security. Galant opposes Netanyahu's military strategy, including keeping forces in the Philadelphi Corridor, arguing it hinders negotiations with Hamas. He also disagrees with [laws exempting Haredi men](#) from military service.

12. US Treasury Sanctions Israeli Spyware Company Intellexa as Security Threat

The U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned [five senior executives of Intellexa](#), an Israeli-founded firm behind the controversial "Predator" spyware. The sanctions aim to curb the misuse of surveillance technologies that pose threats to national security, privacy, and freedom of expression. According to the State Department, this move is part of broader efforts to combat the abuse of commercial spyware and protect civil liberties.

13. IDF Secures Breached Jordanian Border with Barriers and Drones

After the deadly attack at Allenby Crossing, the IDF plans to secure the breached Jordanian border using a new unit, barriers, and drones. The goal is [to prevent](#) explosives from reaching West Bank terrorists.

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★ IRAN

14. Shoigu In Tehran After Assad And Kim Jong Un

Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu arrived in Iran on an [unannounced visit](#), just days after meeting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang. During his meeting in Tehran with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Shoigu delivered a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin, as reported by Russian state media. He also held talks with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Akbar Ahmadian. This development follows Shoigu's meeting with Bashar al-Assad on September 16 and recent U.S. sanctions on Iranian and Russian entities involved in the transfer. On September 11, Sky News published satellite images of a ship that had transported about [220 short-range Fateh-360](#) ballistic missiles from Iran to Russia across the Caspian Sea.

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★ IRAQ

15. IRGC Quds Chief Qaani Arrives To Manage Wiretapping Scandal

Ismail Qaani, Commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, has arrived in Baghdad. He aims to extinguish the "[volcano about to explode](#)" within the pro-Iran Coordination Framework following the wiretapping scandal. Allegations suggest the scandal originated from Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's office, [accused of spying](#) on high-profile political figures for potential blackmail. Nouri al-Maliki and Qais al-Khazali targeted in breach, causing rift; [Maliki](#) pressures al-Sudani to resign for political gain. Maliki urged Sudani to cede intelligence control and purge his clan from official roles, also seeking a PM office overhaul. He pressed Sudani to dissolve Al-Furatayn, barring his future parliamentary election participation. Sudani rejected these demands,

intensifying political tensions and necessitating intervention by their top commander, Qaani.

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★ SYRIA

16. Iranian Secret Units Strengthen Assad and Hezbollah Defenses

Iranian opposition media revealed increased activity of Iranian Revolutionary Guard secret units across Syria and Lebanon. Following the October 7 massacres in 2023, these units, particularly Unit 8000 and Unit 8040, aim to enhance Assad and Hezbollah [air defense capabilities](#) to counter Israeli strikes. They oversee smuggling military equipment and upgrading Syrian radar systems. Unit 8030 operates on the Mediterranean coast, specializing in maritime operations, including deploying anti-ship torpedoes and planning piracy off Yemen and in the Strait of Hormuz.

17. Iraq Refuses Repatriation of 20,000 Al-Hawl Camp Citizens

Iraq rejects the return of [20,000 citizens](#) from Syria's Al-Hawl camp due to their involvement in security issues. Of these, 4,000 have returned, but 15,000 remain, including some with serious crimes. Iraqi officials differentiate between their displaced citizens and foreign fighters in the camp. The US, meanwhile, highlights the presence of 27,000 people, mainly children, in Al-Hawl and Al-Roj camps. Rehabilitation programs have begun for returning Iraqis, though concerns remain about foreign nationals in the camps.

18. Biden Omits Syria from 2025 Major Drug-Producing Countries List

Despite Syria's estimated [\\$3-5 billion](#) revenue from Captagon production, President Biden's 2024 memo did not include

Syria in its list of major drug-producing nations. The exclusion is likely due to U.S. law criteria, which focus on countries [impacting the U.S.](#) drug market, particularly involving drugs like fentanyl. The memo emphasizes countries like Afghanistan and Mexico, where drug trade directly affects the U.S. market. The Syrian regime's Captagon trade, primarily affecting regional markets, likely explains its omission from the U.S. list.

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★ YEMEN

19. Houthi Leader: Ready to Send Thousands of Fighters to Support Hezbollah

Houthi leader Nasr al-Din Amer announced on Tuesday that the group is prepared to send hundreds of thousands of fighters [to support Hezbollah](#) if the confrontation with Israel escalates. He noted that the missile launched by the Houthis at Israel was not a response to Israeli airstrikes on Hodeidah port, adding that the Houthis are working to expand their capability to target any location across Israel.

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★ GULF NATIONS

20. UAE Eliminates Tariffs on 99% of Australian Products

Australia and the UAE reached a trade agreement that eliminates tariffs on 99% of [Australian products, saving \\$135 million annually](#). The deal will boost Australian exports by \$678 million and enhance UAE investments in critical minerals. It is expected to take effect later this year, providing new opportunities for Australian farmers. The UAE

is Australia's largest trading partner in the Middle East, with bilateral trade reaching AU\$9.9 billion last year.

21. Saudi Arabia to Produce Over 70% of Turkish AKINCI Drones by 2026

Turkiye announced that Saudi Arabia will locally produce over [70% of AKINCI drones](#) by 2026 following an agreement with Baykar. The deal includes manufacturing drone structures and final assembly in Saudi Arabia. This comes after Saudi Arabia signed a major contract in 2023 to purchase AKINCI drones. The historic agreement also involves the local production of munitions and payloads, strengthening defense cooperation between the two nations.

22. German Artillery Delivered to Ukraine via Qatar in Arms Deal

Germany approved the sale of 12 RCH 155 self-propelled artillery systems to Qatar for €100 million. Qatar transferred half of its PzH 2000 howitzers to Germany, which will be sent to Ukraine under [the Ring Exchange](#) program. Six units will be delivered by the end of 2024, with the remaining six in 2025, after necessary maintenance, to strengthen Ukraine's military capabilities.

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★ EGYPT & AFRICA

23. A Deal That Worries Israel: Chinese Aircraft to Egypt

Israeli military sources expressed concern over Egypt's purchase of advanced Chinese J-10C fighter jets. This deal, announced in August 2024, could shift the regional balance of power by giving Egypt significant air superiority. The Chinese J-10C, equipped with advanced air-to-ground and

air-to-air missiles, offers Egypt a [cost-effective alternative to American](#) and Russian military equipment. Reports suggest this acquisition, alongside Egypt's French Rafale jets, strengthens Cairo's military capabilities. Israeli analysts warn that the purchase of these fourth-generation fighters could undermine Israel's air advantage, particularly if Egypt obtains stealth aircraft in the future.

24. Egypt's Sovereign Bonds Surge After Saudi Investment Announcement

Egypt's sovereign bonds rose on Tuesday following the announcement of [a \\$5 billion Saudi investment plan](#). All of Egypt's international bonds saw gains, with the 2047 bond rising 1.6 cents, reaching \$79.72 by 10:44 GMT, marking its highest level since May, according to Tradeweb data. Bonds maturing in 2027 were also trading at their highest price since early 2022, as reported by Reuters.

25. Mass Escape Attempt from Morocco to Spain Thwarted

Moroccan authorities successfully stopped a mass migration attempt [toward Spain on Sunday evening](#), preventing thousands of illegal immigrants from breaching the border fence near Ceuta. Officials reported the arrest of nearly 4,500 people, including 140 minors and 500 illegal immigrants, in connection with the attempt. Social media campaigns had encouraged the mass escape, leading to six thwarted storming attempts. Among those arrested were 70 individuals accused of inciting illegal immigration. Moroccan security forces remain on alert as more migrants gather in Fnideq, with tensions expected to continue.

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★ TURKIYE

26. In response to "Bilal Erdogan," Turkish opposition leader pledges to return Syrian refugees

Ozgur Ozel, leader of Turkiye's opposition "Republican People's Party," has pledged to send Syrian refugees back to their homeland after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's rule ends. This statement came in response to comments made by Bilal Erdogan, the president's son, regarding the lower crime rate among Syrian refugees [compared to Turkish citizens](#). Bilal's remarks have sparked a heated debate, with opposition parties reaffirming their commitment to repatriating Syrians.

27. Turkiye Officially Requests U.S. Jet Engines for "Hürjet" and "Kaan" Fighters

Turkiye has formally requested F404 engines from GE Aerospace for the initial version of its "Hürjet" light fighter jet. It also seeks F110 engines for early models of the fifth-generation "Kaan" fighter, currently under development, [before transitioning to locally produced engines](#). This marks a strategic step in enhancing Turkiye's defense capabilities.

28. Turkiye Vows to Continue Intelligence Diplomacy for Conflict Resolution

Turkiye's intelligence chief, İbrahim Kalın, emphasized the critical role of intelligence diplomacy in conflicts like Ukraine and Gaza. He pledged ongoing efforts to contribute to peaceful solutions. Kalın recently attended [the Baku Security Conference in Azerbaijan](#), where he highlighted the strong Turkish-Azerbaijani relations and the successful intelligence diplomacy Turkiye employs to address regional and international conflicts.

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