

Was the Rocket Attack from Syria on Northern Israel ordered by Iran?



Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon on a tour of the northern border, August 18, 2015. (Amos Ben-Gershon/GPO)

Yesterday, four rockets fired from the Syrian side of the Golan frontier hit near Kfar Sold in Northern Israel causing fires in the area. In response the IAF dispatched aircraft and attacked 14 positions inside Syria, while the IDF on the Golan opened up artillery fire on suspected targets. According to a *Times of Israel* (TOI) [report](#) six civilians were killed, seven wounded in an IAF attack on a vehicle 10 kilometers from the Syrian Israel frontier in the Quneitra region of Southern Syria. That Israeli attack may have targeted members of a Palestinian Islamic Jihad cell. However, Daud Shihab a spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad continued [claiming](#) no responsibility for the attack. Nevertheless, he suggested that they knew were to attack saying:

We'll know when to respond to an Israeli attack – and that will be where the Iron Dome was installed yesterday,” he said, referring to Israeli missile defense systems [deployed the southern cities](#) of Ashdod and Beersheba on Thursday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights in London [suggested](#) five of the casualties may have been members of the National Defense Force. Early Friday morning, August 21, 2015, the Syrian military fired a missile at an Israeli aircraft.

An IDF senior officer contend that the group behind these attacks the Palestinian Islamic Jihad based in Gaza, with headquarters in Damascus, was ordered by Iran to execute the

attacks. The *TOI* [cited](#) an Israel source who said:

We were monitoring this cell and it was attacked some 10-15 kilometers from the border, on territory firmly in the control of the Syrian military. This is an Islamic Jihad cell directed by Iran.

The Iran-controlled Al-Mayadeen TV in Damascus reported that three of those killed were Palestinian.

The pretext for these attacks may have been the hunger strike, just ended, by an Israeli held prisoner, Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader, Mohammed Allan. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad said it would undertake reprisal attacks of its own choosing in response to those killed and wounded in the Israel drone attack. Israel PM Netanyahu cautioned that he didn't want this incident to escalate into a wider conflict saying:

We have no intention of ratcheting up this confrontation, but our policy [of retaliating for attacks against Israeli civilians] remains as it was.

Notwithstanding Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon said:

The strike against the cell was proof that Israel will not tolerate efforts to harm the security of its citizens.

"We have no intention of compromising on this issue, and I suggest no one test our resolve on this matter," he said in a brief statement after the attack.

i24News [reported](#) an IDF officer commenting:

It's clear that Iran is behind all of the terror attacks here [in the Golan] in the past two years. The Iranians are using the border – they establish units – whether it's [Imad] Mughniyeh, [Samir] Kuntar, and more – to carry out [the attacks].

The officer added that the Iranian regime was transferring

funds, providing training and sending advisers to Syria to help the Islamist group Hezbollah.

Remember the [IAF attack in January 2015](#) on the Syrian side of the Golan frontier that took out a senior Iran IRGC general and Hezbollah officers including Jihad, the son of the late master terrorist Imad Mughniyah? That led to an abrupt series of clashes with Hezbollah in the disputed Shebaa Farms area on the Lebanese border. Today's rocket attacks in Israel's north and immediate IAF air attacks and IDF artillery fire demonstrates both resolve and concern by Israeli PM Netanyahu and his security cabinet to stifle a possible rocket war in the country's North. Given the huge arsenal of rockets and missiles held by Hezbollah, Israel wants to avoid a much larger onslaught than the Hezbollah rocket attacks during the Second Lebanon War in 2006 that displaced over a million Israelis during the 34 day war.

We have argued that Israel may have to undertake incursions across the UNDOF demilitarized zone to clear out Iranian Quds force supported Palestinian Jihad fighters. As my colleague Ilana Freedman and this writer noted in a January 2015, NER article the IDF also needs to address detection and destruction of possible cross border tunneling in Israel's north by Hezbollah. Given Tehran "success" with the P5+1 nuclear deal and this week's sale of S300 Russian advanced air defense systems to Iran's Quds Force commander Gen. Soleimani feels emboldened to foment more proxy conflicts destabilizing the Middle East region. Clearly with this week's attacks in the country's north Israel is in the Quds Force gun sights. Ayatollah Khamenei's playbook called "Palestine" suggests that Israel will be routed not with nuclear weapons but low intensity warfare.

Back in January we noted this comment from Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yaakov Armidror and former National Security Advisor:

[Yaakov Armidror](#), former IDF Maj. Gen. (ret.) and National

Security Advisor in a recent strategic evaluation of Terrorist threats facing Israel ,[published](#) by the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies , reported by the *Jerusalem Post*, [noted](#) Hezbollah capabilities:

Looking ahead to 2015, Israel faces threats posed mainly by non-state entities motivated by Islamic ideology.

“The strongest of them is Hezbollah, which was formed with a dual purpose in mind. It represents Iran’s long reach in the area and against Israel, while at the same time it aims to control Lebanon, where the Shi’ites are the largest ethnic group,” Amidror added.

Hezbollah most closely resembles an army, and its arsenal totals some 150,000 missiles and rockets, several thousand of which can target any area in Israel.

“This rare and substantial firepower apparently even exceeded the firepower possessed by most of the European states combined,” Amidror said in the report.

Additionally, Hezbollah is armed with surface-to-sea missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, drones and modern anti-tank missiles.

“It is well organized into a military-style hierarchy and appears to possess command and control systems of high quality. It was established by Iranian leaders, but its leadership has always consisted of Lebanese people who were closely linked to Iran’s interests,” the report continued. “Hezbollah assisted the Shi’ites by providing for their needs in the civilian sphere as a base for building its military power.”

We concluded:

Hezbollah’s possible invasion threat would be costly to the Shi’ite terrorist army. Especially in view of both Israeli intelligence penetration of the Iranian proxy.

Nonetheless, the Israel's military command must be on alert for possible retaliation by Hezbollah in the Shebaa Farms area adjacent to the Golan and in the Galilee.