

Hezbollah TV's Misreporting of Israeli Military Exercise

Contributed by W. Thomas Smith Jr.
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After reading today's headliner at Al Manar, Hezbollah's television-news website, one has to wonder if Hezbollah's reporters and editors are incompetent, manipulated, or both? The story, "Israel to Strike Iran before New US President Sworn in," is a Hezbollah spin-piece that basically reviews an interview with former U.S. ambassador to the UN John Bolton by London's Daily Telegraph.

The piece, which refers to Bolton as "an unflinching hawk who proposes military action to stop Iran developing nuclear weapons," contends that any military operation by the Israelis aimed at taking out Iran's nuclear facilities would probably take place before the next U.S. president enters the Oval Office. According to Bolton:

"An Obama victory would rule out military action by the Israelis because they would fear the consequences given the approach Obama has taken to foreign policy. With McCain they might still be looking at a delay." Can I disagree with the ambassador.

But where Hezbollah totally botches it is when they report: "Last week, Israeli jets carried out a long-range exercise over the Mediterranean that US intelligence officials concluded was practice for air strikes against Iran." The exercise in fact took place on June 2 — more than three weeks ago — and despite the fact that the 100-plane, 900-mile mission over the eastern Mediterranean including parts of Greece, was not reported for more than two weeks (we touched on that here), it has since been widely reported.

But Al Manar still can't get it right. That's not to say that Hezbollah has poor intelligence. On the contrary, the Lebanese-based terrorist army (supported by Iran and Syria) has a far greater intelligence network than many in the West might realize. The shoddy reporting within their media on the other hand only plays to the fact that — unlike legitimate media — Hezbollah's Al Manar has no institutionalized commitment to accuracy. Their focus is instead on disseminating Hezbollah's propaganda whatever and whenever that might be.

Al Manar TV — along with its print-news cousin, Al Akhbar — is simply a Hezbollah soapbox made to appear as if it is legitimate media. Al Manar reporters are kept in the dark about the issues critical to Hezbollah (military capabilities, exercises, numbers and types of weapons, meetings with key leaders, where any of those leaders might be hunkered down at any point in time, and other comings and goings). That's not surprising considering that only a free press would have access to such, and Al Manar and Al Akhbar are actually media branches of Hezbollah's broader propaganda wing. Same with Hezbollah's members of parliament: They are representatives of Hezbollah to be sure. But does anyone actually believe any of them have any clue where Hezbollah's chief Hassan Nasrallah spent last night, or the night before?

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