

Iranian Early Warning Station, Anti-Air Base on Lebanese Peak

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In the past few weeks, Hizballah at the behest of Iran and Syria has commandeered the 7,800-foot Mt. Sannine, a strategic asset capable of determining the outcome of the next war, as DEBKA-Net-Weekly 356 revealed.

Radar-guided missile positions and an early warning station have since been deployed on its summit, which are capable of monitoring and threatening US Sixth Fleet movements in the eastern Mediterranean and Israel Air Force flights.

This development was serious enough for Israeli defense minister Ehud Barak to repeat three times in as many days that the IDF is keeping a close watch on events in the northern front, especially the deepening ties between Syria and the Lebanese Hizballah. Barak travels to Washington this week.

Mt. Sannine, which dominates the roads connecting Beirut and Damascus, is one of the most prized strategic assets in the region. It was fought over for years by Syria and Israel, both seeking to control this ideal vantage point for an early warning station to command the eastern Mediterranean, the northern half of Israel and the Damascus region.

Its takeover on behalf of Tehran places Israeli security at a grave disadvantage. This topic is expected to figure large in the talks French president Nicolas Sarkozy holds with visiting Syrian ruler Bashar Assad this week.

DEBKAfile's military sources reveal that military movements carried out in the last two weeks by Hizballah in conjunction with Tehran and Damascus can only be interpreted as preparations for war. Lebanese sources have been saying openly that Syria, Iran and Hizballah are now in position for a new Middle East confrontation.

This development was kept under tight wraps by prime minister Ehud Olmert, the defense and foreign ministers and the chief of staff. Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi.

Senior IDF officers told DEBKAfile: If the new military facts on the ground in Lebanon are allowed to stay in place, the next war Hizballah launches with Syria and Iran will find Israel's ground, sea and air forces at a grave strategic disadvantage.

Yet there are no signs of Israel's policy-makers budging.

Olmert and Livni took off for Paris Saturday night July 12 to attend the French president's Mediterranean conference.

Our Middle East sources report that Sarkozy promised US president George W. Bush and Olmert to take up the belligerent movements in Lebanon with Assad and the Lebanese president Michel Sleiman. But political sources stress that the Olmert government's custom of referring Israel's military problems to external addresses is no longer working, neither for the Iranian nuclear issue nor the mounting threats posed by the Shiite Hizballah and Palestinian Hamas.

Iran and Syria have meanwhile acted on the political front to establish a radical government in Beirut dominated by two terrorist groups under their control, as DEBKAfile reported Friday, July 11.

<http://www.debka.com/article.php?aid=1357>

DebkaFile July 14, 2008

Lebanon - Sannine - B'kul Jur'rah Report - Vera Bou Monsef - 01/07/2008

{youtube}PW3SPPXMXDQ{/youtube}

Sarkis condemns Hezbollah's presence in Sanine

By George Eid
iloubnan.info - July 04, 2008

BEIRUT - Tourism Minister Joe Sarkis in a conversation to Al-Sharq al-Awsat daily, explained that that the recent arrests of Lebanese youths in Sannine by Hezbollah members is a sign of the party's "dangerous expansion across Lebanese soil";

And considered it as a part of its "plan to conquer the country through undemocratic ways";

"The party has nothing to do in this region, and its presence is illegal. Only the state and its security services have the right to deploy there. In addition, Mount Sannine is very far from Israel, therefore, the party cannot claim it as a strategic spot," he added.

<http://www.iloubnan.info/politics/actualite/id/26574>

Hizbullah denies military presence in Sannine heights
By Anthony Elghossain
Daily Star staff
Monday, June 30, 2008

Hizbullah denied on Sunday accusations that it is maintaining an armed presence stretching across the Mount Lebanon range, after Phalange leader and former President Amin Gemayel said that such a presence exists. "Some leaders of the March 14 coalition have said that Hizbullah controls military points in the Sannine.

Gemayel: Masked Gunmen Kidnapped Youths in Sannine

Phalange party leader and former President Amin Gemayel revealed that an "armed presence" in Mount Sannine has gone unnoticed.

He said masked gunmen, firing from behind rocks, attacked a group of youths in the highlands of Sannine and briefly kidnapped them.

Gemayel said they were released after questioning them about their political affiliations.

While he did not make an outright identification, Gemayel hinted that those responsible for the incident were a "group that kidnapped four youths from the Metn region who were picnicking in an area between the Metn and Kesrouan."

Beirut, 24 Jun 08, 09:39

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/0/B8BEA81B9375D882C225747200299886?OpenDocument>

Hizbullah in Sannine?

Phalange Party leader Amin Gemayel said hooded gunmen have kidnapped an undisclosed number of people who were vacationing in the Sannine Mountain range and released them after a while.

Gemayel said the captives were interrogated about their political affiliations. He did not disclose further details.

However, reliable sources said Hizbullah gunmen on Sunday intercepted two Sports Utility Vehicles carrying a number of vacationing youth in Tohan area, between Sannine Mount and Zaarour and kidnapped them for a few hours.

The captives, according to the sources, included "a citizen from Aql family and another citizen from the Khoury family."

He said the captives were "held for more than three hours during which they were interrogated individually in a tent that was part of a camp set up by the Hizbullah squad in the mountainous region."

The development escalated tension as it revealed deployment by Hizbullah gunmen in strategically-located highland that commands road links between the coastal sector of Lebanon and the inland Bekaa Valley as well the coastal highway linking north Lebanon to Beirut.

Beirut, 23 Jun 08, 20:30

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/0/BEA3D69E1DE6DF90C225747100652B2A?OpenDocument>

[Photo 1 Sannine][Photo 2 Sannine]