

Hizbullah Deployed Advanced Anti-aircraft Rocket Systems, Israel on Alert: Report

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Hizbullah has been able to establish a military presence north and south of the Litani River and is already prepared to a large extent to fire rockets and missiles on Israel, an Israeli newspaper has reported.

Yediot Ahronot daily said Tuesday that security and intelligence chiefs are expected to present a discouraging assessment of the situation during the cabinet meeting Wednesday.

The report added that Hizbullah's new military plan can effectively hinder the Israeli ground forces who would enter Lebanon to curb the missile fire.

Hizbullah's rockets and missiles, estimated at 40,000, are found on both sides of the Litani, Yediot Ahronot revealed.

Yet, the heavy arsenal, the newspaper added, is made up of several hundred rockets with warheads weighing hundreds of kilograms and featuring a range of up to 250 kilometers (roughly 160 miles).

The arsenal is found underground north of the Litani and is well fortified in land bought by Hizbullah, the newspaper said.

In south Lebanon, the group established a fortified underground system that would be used to fight the IDF armored corps and infantry troops that advance towards the rocket arsenal north of the Litani. Meanwhile, the logistics and training center of Hizbullah, which has been boosted with thousands of new fighters, is in the Bekaa Valley region.

However, the most worrisome development to Israelis has to do with a new component that Hizbullah is attempting to set up with Syrian assistance.

The newspaper mentioned an anti-aircraft system that is aimed at limiting Israel's ability to gather intelligence above Lebanon, and later make it more difficult for the Israeli Air Force to strike in Lebanon and Syria.

The Israeli daily warned that if Iran, Syria, and Hizbullah were able to establish a massive anti-aircraft system in Lebanon, this will fundamentally change the strategic balance of power.

This system, the newspaper pointed out, is supposed to provide aerial defense to the entire Syrian-Iranian rocket and missile arsenal in Lebanon and western Syria.

Yediot Ahronot said the message to Syria, which is also being conveyed via Wednesday's cabinet meeting and through other means, some of them clandestine, is as follows: Israel would not accept the establishment of an advanced anti-aircraft system in Lebanon; should it be set up, Israel will not hesitate to act against it.

Israel is also warning Lebanon against granting Hizbullah the freedom to act, in light of the latest government decision in Beirut that in fact defines Hizbullah as part of the national army.

And the third issue: A warning to Hizbullah to refrain from carrying out acts of revenge for the killing of its top commander Imad Mughniyeh in a Damascus car bombing last February; Such acts would meet a "disproportional response."

The Israeli government is attempting to convey all these messages at this time to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and the international community, the daily said.

Israeli officials hope that exposing the Syria-Hizbullah intentions will deter Damascus and Tehran and stop them from implementing their plans in Lebanon.

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<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&E95664B6D2FD58B2C225749D0023BE9A>