

## Lebanese Army Kills Six Militants in North Lebanon

Contributed by Administrator  
Thursday, 28 June 2007

Lebanese troops on Thursday killed six Fatah al-Islam militants during clashes in the wilds near the town of Qalamoun in northern Lebanon, military sources said.

They said a number of soldiers were also slightly wounded in the army operation that began at daybreak Thursday, after an army raid, acting on a tip-off that Fatah al-Islam militants were using the mountainous area as a hide-out.

Troops, backed by helicopters, pursued the fighters who had taken refuge in Qalamoun's forests and caves.

A military official said the militants were eliminated in the operation, but the army was still combing the area.

"The operation has not ended yet because the army is still cleaning the area of booby traps and checking to see whether the (slain) gunmen's bodies were rigged with bombs," the official told The Associated Press.

Hospital officials in Qalamoun also said six militants were killed in the clash -- three Saudis, two Lebanese and a sixth man whose nationality was not immediately known.

But a security official in Beirut identified the slain fighters as three Saudis, two Syrians and an Iraqi. There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.

Talal Dankar, Qalamoun's mayor, said life in the town was not affected because the fighting raged in remote mountainous areas.

"We first heard the din of gunfire before fighting intensified. We saw the army bringing in reinforcements to the mountainous area above Qalamoun," Dankar told LBCI TV. "The army has eliminated the gunmen."

The mountainous site was near where Fatah al-Islam militants mounted a deadly ambush on the army at the outbreak of the violence last month.

According to a count from official figures, at least 167 people, including 82 soldiers, have now been killed in and around the northern Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared, where Fatah al-Islam militants have been locked in fierce fighting with the Lebanese army since May 20.

Fatah al-Islam leaders have threatened to take the fighting with the Lebanese army outside the camp if it continues its military offensive.

Last Sunday, Lebanese troops raided an apartment complex in Tripoli suspected of housing Islamic militants, sparking a gunbattle that left 10 people dead, including six militants.

The fighting in Nahr al-Bared has been Lebanon's worst violence since the 1975-90 civil war.

Last week, Lebanese Defense Minister Elias Murr declared victory over Fatah al-Islam, but heavy machine gun fire and bursts of artillery shells have continued to reverberate across the camp.

The Lebanese army on Wednesday accused the militants still barricaded in Nahr al-Bared of hiding among Palestinian civilians trapped in the camp and confiscating humanitarian aid sent to them.

In a statement, the army urged Palestinians inside the camp to persuade the fighters to turn themselves in.

Murr said Tuesday that some 300 Islamic militants have been killed or wounded in the fighting, leaving only a few dozen fighters hiding in the besieged camp.(AP-AFP-Naharnet)

Beirut, 28 Jun 07, 09:15