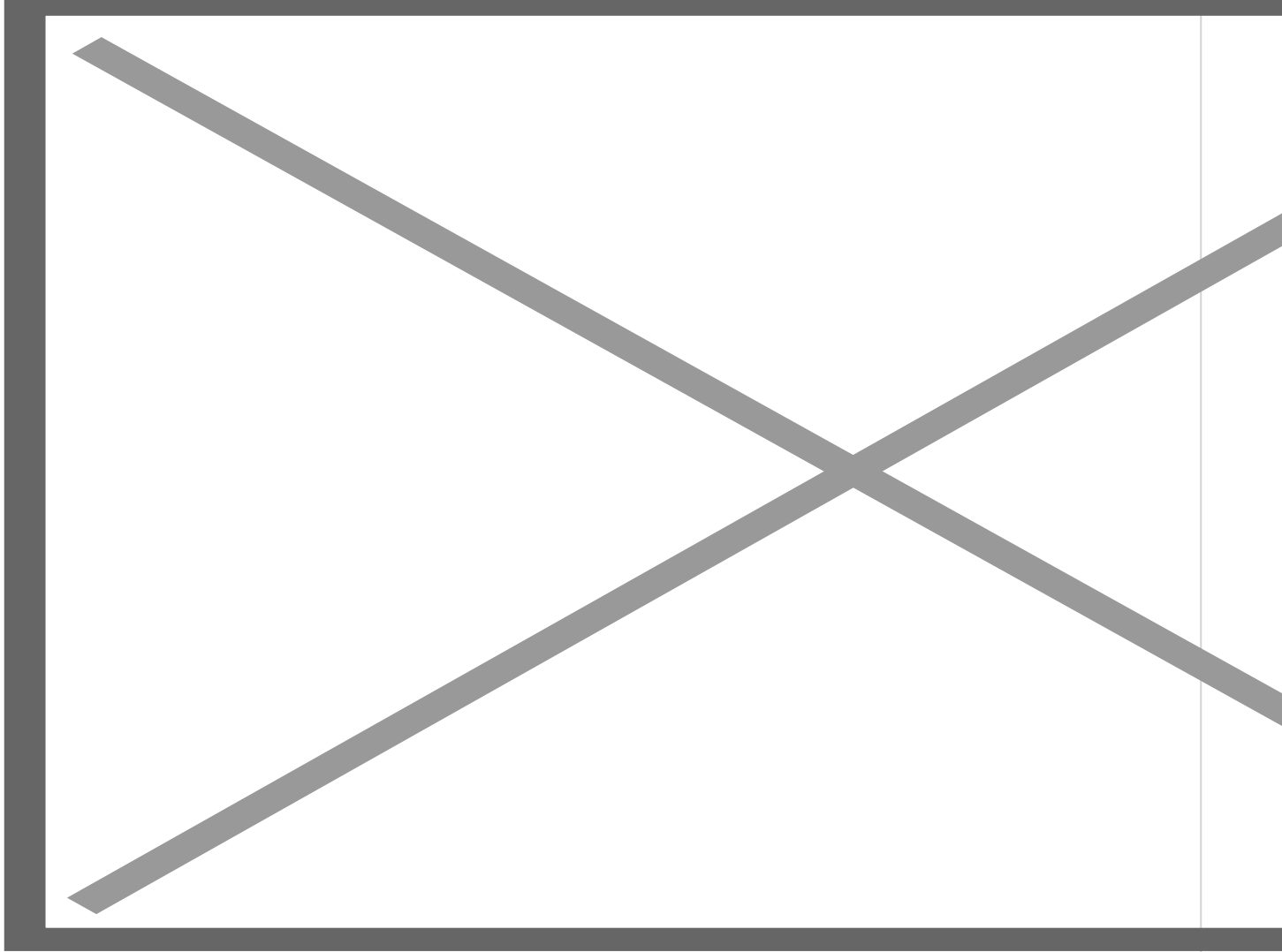


Report reveals Israeli forces preparing for ground offensive into southern Lebanon

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Israeli troops in undisclosed location

Beirut, January 16 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime has been training its ground forces for a potential operation into southern Lebanon, shows a report, as trading of fire between the regime and the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement keeps intensifying.

The Tuesday report by Al Jazeera said that Israeli forces had been holding exercises near the border between the Israeli occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon with the stated aim of preparing for a ground offensive into areas in southern Lebanon where Hezbollah holds a sway.

That came hours after a report by Reuters news agency said that Israeli military's special forces had carried out a cross-border operation into Lebanon, a rare acknowledgment of such operations by the regime.

However, sources told the Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV that reports about infiltration of the Israeli regime's ground forces into Lebanon were untrue.

Al Jazeera's Tuesday report quoted Ori Gordin, the chief of the Israeli army's northern command, as saying that tens of thousands of Israeli soldiers have been deployed toward the border with Lebanon.

Gordin was also seen in a video published by the Israeli military while he was speaking to soldiers and overseeing the training in areas near the Lebanese border.

The developments come as clashes that began in early October between Hezbollah and Israel over the regime's aggression on Palestine's Gaza have intensified in recent weeks, especially after senior Hezbollah and Gaza-based Hamas commanders were killed in declared or suspected Israeli operations in Lebanon.

Attacks by Hezbollah on Israeli military targets have forced the regime to evacuate settlers living in areas near the Lebanese border, with no immediate plan existing for their return.

Hezbollah has warned that it would massively scale up its attacks on Israel if the regime decides to expand the war.

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