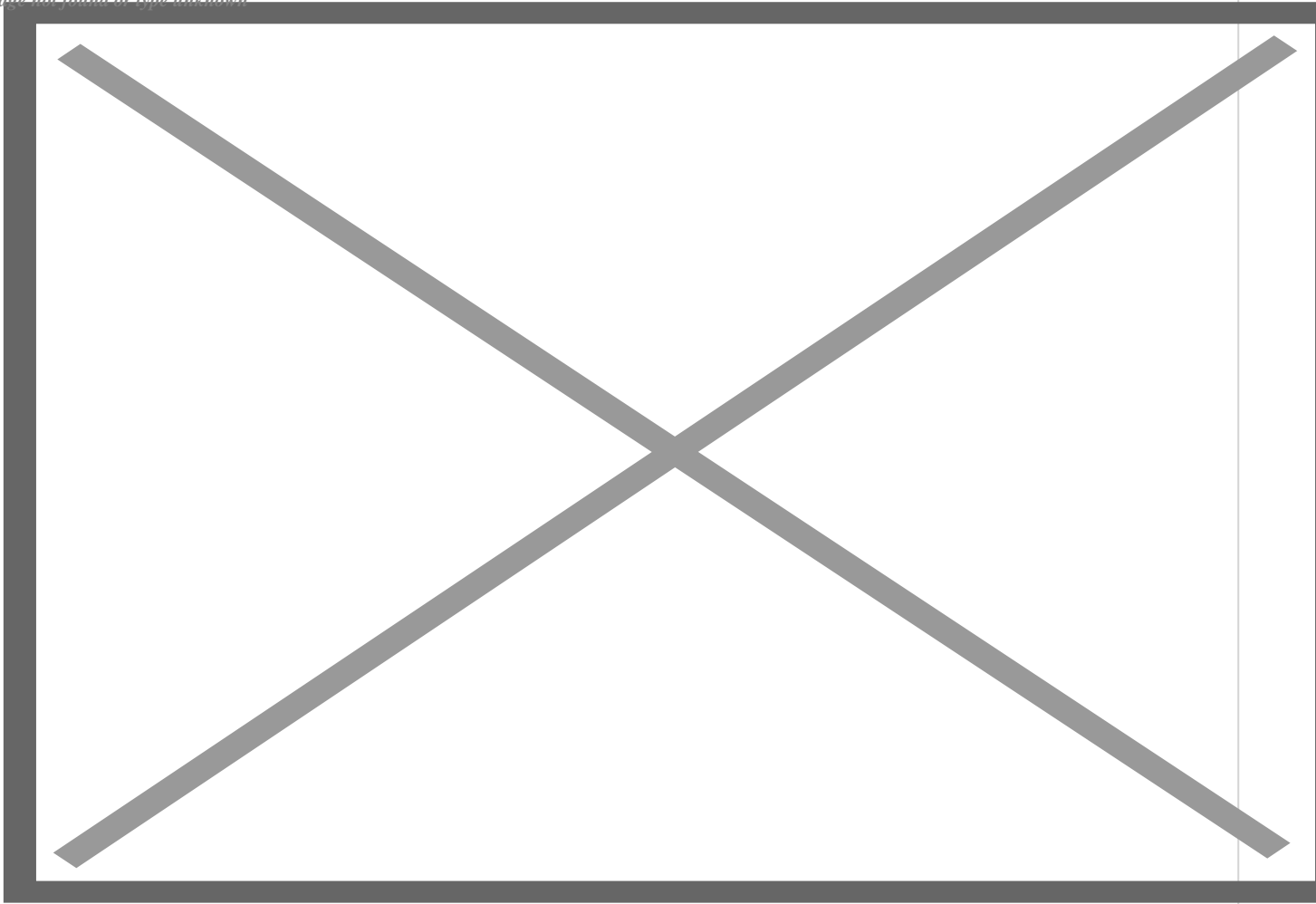


Israeli military says its ready for all out war on Lebanon

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Smoke billows from fires ignited by Israeli shelling on the forested areas of the southern Lebanese village of Deir Mimas on June 15, 2024 [Rabih Daher/AFP]

Tel Aviv, June 19 (RHC)-- Israel is ready for an “all-out war” in Lebanon and has plans approved for an offensive targeting Hezbollah, officials have said.

The claims from Israel’s foreign minister and military late on Tuesday followed Hezbollah’s release of threatening drone footage. The climbing tension conflicts with United States efforts to avert an escalation

amid months of low-level hostilities across the Israel-Lebanon border.

The nine-minute drone footage of the Israeli port city of Haifa filmed in daytime, showed civilian and military areas, including malls and residential quarters, in addition to a weapons manufacturing complex and missile defence batteries.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz responded vehemently in a post on X, calling out Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah for boasting about filming the ports of Haifa, which are operated by foreign companies from China and India.

"We are very close to the moment of decision to change the rules against Hezbollah and Lebanon. In an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed and Lebanon will be severely hit," he wrote.

Later, the Israeli military said in a statement that Ori Gordin, head of its Northern Command, which includes the front line with Hezbollah, has approved plans to mount a ground assault across Israel's northern border.

"As part of the situational assessment, operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated, and decisions were taken on the continuation of increasing the readiness of troops in the field," it said.

Israel and Hezbollah have been engaged in border fighting since shortly after the start of the war on Gaza, following the October 7 attacks on Israel. The confrontation is increasingly expanding, with both sides saying they are ready to go to war.

Nasrallah is scheduled to deliver a speech on Wednesday afternoon. He has said in the past that Hezbollah will only stop its attacks if Israel halts its invasion of Gaza, which has killed at least 37,000 Palestinians.

The Israeli military has been regularly launching air strikes on Lebanon since the start of the war. On Tuesday, it claimed to have hit military infrastructure across multiple areas in the south of the country.

On Monday it said that it killed a "central operative" in Hezbollah's rocket division in a drone strike. A week previously, it assassinated Taleb Abdullah, reportedly the commander of a Hezbollah division covering the western sector of the front line between the border with Israel and the Litani river.

Hezbollah recently said that it has carried out more than 2,100 military operations against Israel since October 8 in what it says is an effort to support Palestinians.

More than 400 people have been killed in Lebanon, including journalists and paramedics, over the past eight months, with 25 deaths in Israel. At least 90,000 people have been displaced in Lebanon, and more than 60,000 have been forced from their homes in northern Israel.

The U.S. is pushing diplomatically to prevent an escalation, White House envoy Amos Hochstein said on Tuesday during a trip to Lebanon. "We have seen an escalation over the last few weeks. And what President Biden wants to do is avoid a further escalation to a greater war," Hochstein told reporters in Beirut after meetings in Israel a day earlier.

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