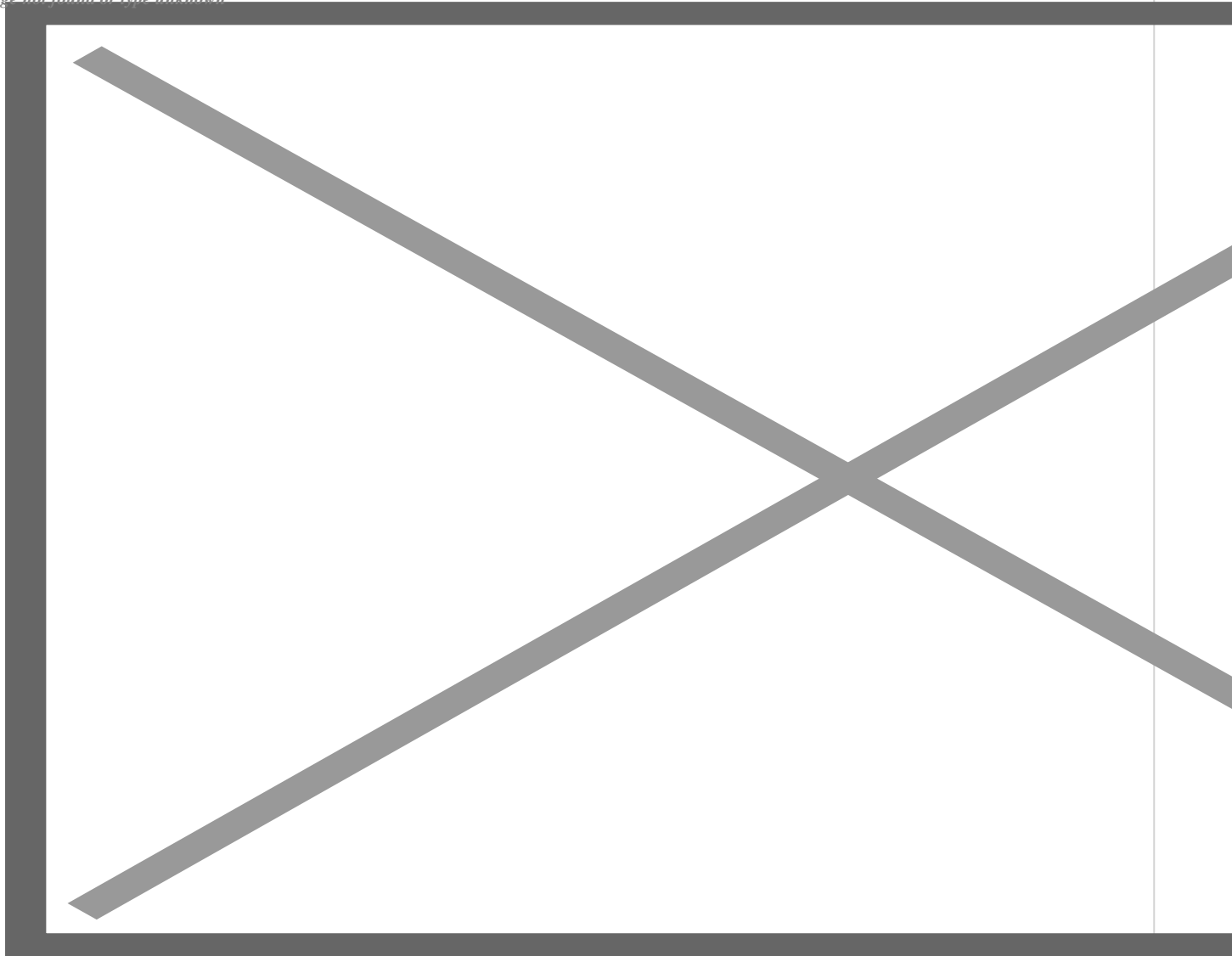


Five Palestinian fighters killed in Lebanon blast blamed on Israel

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Five Palestinian fighters killed in Lebanon blast blamed on Israel

Beirut, June 1 (RHC)-- The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC) has blamed Israel for the killing of five of its members in a blast in eastern Lebanon, near the Syrian

border.

Anwar Raja, a PFLP-GC official, said an Israeli strike on Wednesday hit positions in the Lebanese town of Qusaya. He said 10 people were wounded, of which two were in critical condition.

However, unnamed Israeli sources told news agencies that Israel was not involved in the attack. No official comment came from Israel, nor from the Lebanese army or the Iran-backed Hezbollah group.

There were conflicting reports from Lebanese and Palestinian sources that the blast was a result of an old rocket going off in an arms depot or mines exploding while they were being moved.

Another PFLP-GC official, Lebanon-based Abu Wael Issam, said his group will retaliate “at the suitable time.” He added the strike would not deter his group from “escalating the fight against the Israeli enemy”.

The group has positions along the Lebanon-Syria border as well as a military presence in both countries. It has carried out attacks against Israel in the past.

It has been rare for Israel to carry out air strikes on Lebanon in recent years. However, Israel launched raids in southern Lebanon in April, a day after dozens rockets were fired at Israel, wounding two Syrian workers and causing some property damage. The Israeli military said at the time it targeted installations of Hamas in southern Lebanon.

The PFLP-GC is a left-wing group that broke off from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1968 and has backed the Syrian government. Its forces have fought alongside government troops in the war in Syria.

Based in Syria and Lebanon, the group has a presence in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, as well as Burj al-Barajneh in Beirut. The group became known for major attacks against Israel, including the hijacking of an El Al jetliner in 1968 and the machine-gunning of another airliner at Zurich airport in 1969.

During Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1985, the PFLP-GC captured three Israeli soldiers and negotiated their release in exchange for more than 1,100 mostly Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian prisoners.

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