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Israeli operations in Lebanon have defeated Hezbollah and compelled the group to end its involvement in the October 7 War. On November 26, Israel and Hezbollah reached a ceasefire deal that ended Hezbollah's attacks into Israel and required the group to disarm in southern Lebanon.[1] These conditions achieve the stated Israeli war aim of safely returning displaced citizens to their homes in northern Israel. The ceasefire ensures the Israeli right to self-defense against any future threat that Hezbollah may pose as well.[2] Hezbollah, on the other hand, is severely degraded and has failed to achieve its stated war aim of compelling Israel to accept a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.[3] Israel's victory and Hezbollah's defeat have drastically changed the security landscape in the Middle East by limiting Hezbollah's ability to deter Israel. Though Israel has won this round of conflict in Lebanon, Hezbollah will almost certainly begin reconstituting its forces and likely try re-entrenching itself in southern Lebanon at some point. The United States and Israel must ensure that Hezbollah adheres to the ceasefire. If Hezbollah violates the ceasefire, the United States must permit Israel to use force to disrupt Hezbollah's efforts to rebuild its forces and the threat that it poses to Israel.



Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire

As Reported by Israeli Army Radio on November 26, 2024

Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Terms	Stipulations in US "Guarantee Letter"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdraw from Lebanon by January 26, 2025. • Hezbollah withdraws from southern Lebanon • Hezbollah and the IDF end offensive operations. • Any sale, supply, and production of weapons or weapons-related materiel to Lebanon will be under the supervision of the Lebanese government • The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) dismantle all non-state military infrastructure, prevent Hezbollah's rearmament, and deploy to southern Lebanon to play a predominant security role. This security role will include deployments to the borders and border crossings • UNIFIL and an independent committee advised by the United States and France will monitor ceasefire compliance. This ceasefire is not codified in the text of the agreement. Israel and Lebanon will report any violations of the ceasefire to the committee • Both Israel and Lebanon have "an inherent right to self-defense" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States and Israel will share "sensitive intelligence" about violations, including Hezbollah infiltration into the LAF • The United States may share information provided by Israel with third parties, including the committee and the Lebanese government, to allow these parties to address ceasefire negotiations • The United States will "cooperate" to interdict the transfer of weapons and personnel from Iran to Lebanon • The United States recognizes Israel's right to respond to threats from Lebanon • Israel can act at any time against violations in southern Lebanon • Israel can act anywhere in Lebanon if Lebanon is unwilling or unable to stop violations, including the illegal transit of weapons into Lebanon • Israel will have intelligence overflight rights over Lebanon

Source: Israeli Army Radio [4]

Hezbollah entered the war on October 8, 2023—one day after Hamas' ground attack into Israel. Hezbollah began firing almost daily drone, missile, and rocket attacks targeting towns and military sites in northern Israel.[5] These attacks led thousands of Israeli citizens to evacuate, leaving many of them displaced for over a year.[6] The stated Hezbollah objectives were to fix some Israeli forces along the border and compel Israel to accept a ceasefire with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.[7] Israel tried to attrit Hezbollah forces along the border in response by conducting intermittent shelling and airstrikes into Lebanon targeting Hezbollah leaders and logistics.

Israel eventually decided to conduct major operations into Lebanon in summer 2024 to make Hezbollah unwilling to continue attacks. Israel began this campaign by conducting airstrikes targeting key leaders, including Hassan Nasrallah, and detonating thousands of pagers and hand-held radios belonging to Hezbollah members across Lebanon.[8] These efforts disrupted Hezbollah forces and paralyzed the group temporarily. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) exploited this disruption by launching ground operations against disorganized Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon.[9] The IDF cleared the surrounding border towns in Lebanon and seized key terrain, such as ridgelines from which Hezbollah would fire into northern Israel.

These Israeli operations made serious progress toward securing citizens in northern Israel by addressing the most immediate threats that Hezbollah posed. The IDF ground operations disrupted the ability of Hezbollah to fire coordinated, large-scale rocket barrages into northern Israel.[10] The IDF also destroyed key offensive capabilities that Hezbollah had in southern Lebanon, such as tunnels meant to support ground attacks into northern Israel.[11] Hezbollah had long planned for its powerful offensive military unit, the Radwan Force, to use these tunnels to conduct attacks into Israel that would be similar to what Hamas did on October 7, 2023.[12] These ground attacks are part of a concept developed by Iran and its Axis of Resistance to use ground warfare and information operations to destabilize Israel and ultimately erode the viability of an Israeli state.[13]

The IDF designed its campaign to facilitate a political settlement rather than to destroy Hezbollah entirely. Israeli political leadership ordered the IDF to create conditions that would return citizens to northern Israel, which did not imply destroying Hezbollah as a military organization. The Israeli campaign—in line with the orders from Israeli political leadership—severely degraded Hezbollah, destroyed key capabilities in southern Lebanon, and destroyed the willingness of its leaders to continue fighting. That led Hezbollah to accept the ceasefire deal on November 26, despite having failed to achieve its stated objective of forcing an end to fighting in the Gaza Strip. But destroying all of Hezbollah's ability to attack Israel would have been tantamount to destroying Hezbollah as a military organization, which would require a much greater military effort than what Israeli political leadership ordered the IDF to do. Destroying Hezbollah would have presumably required the IDF to capture Beirut to destroy Hezbollah military and political leadership and destroy the long-range strike capabilities that Hezbollah has deeper in Lebanon. Such an operation would risk destabilizing Lebanon and entail a years-long military commitment.

Although Hezbollah can still break the ceasefire and fire into Israel at any time, the strategic threat that it poses to Israel is far diminished. The large Hezbollah rocket and

drone barrages in the days before the ceasefire will inevitably draw comparisons between this ground campaign and the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War, in which Hezbollah fired hundreds of rockets just before Israel agreed to the ceasefire.[14] Hezbollah sought to prove in 2006 that it had won the war and likely aimed to do so again in 2024 by firing rockets at much higher rates leading up to the ceasefire deal.[15] The IDF inflicted far greater damage to Hezbollah in this campaign than it did in 2006, however. The IDF has killed nearly all of the top Hezbollah commanders, degraded the Radwan Force, destroyed kilometers of offensive tunnels, and demonstrated the Israeli ability to rapidly inflict massive casualties upon Hezbollah at relatively little cost.[16]

Israel's victory in Lebanon and its defeat of Hamas drastically improved Israel's security situation by removing the immediate threats posed by Iranian-backed groups around the Israeli periphery. Israel is thus redefining the security landscape of the Middle East in fundamental ways—at least temporarily.

Hezbollah will almost certainly try to reconstitute its forces and very likely with Iranian support, however. Hezbollah therefore still poses a strategic threat to Israel, despite being defeated in this round of conflict. The United States and Israel must ensure that Hezbollah continues to adhere to the ceasefire and does not rearm in southern Lebanon. The United States and Israel will also need to hold the guarantors of the ceasefire accountable. The ceasefire relies on UNIFIL and the Lebanese state to implement many of its provisions, including preventing Hezbollah from rearming. But UNIFIL and the Lebanese state proved unable and unwilling to fulfill this same responsibility after UN Security Council Resolution 1701 ended the Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006, raising questions about whether they could enforce the latest ceasefire. Washington must therefore continue to support the Israeli right to use force against Hezbollah efforts to rearm and re-entrench in southern Lebanon. Failing to prevent Hezbollah from rearming will increase the risk of a new war in the years ahead dramatically. And there is no guarantee that a future Israel-Hezbollah war will be as contained and short as this one was.

[1] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/16929>; <https://t.me/moriahdoron/16912>

[2] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/16929>; <https://t.me/moriahdoron/16912>

[3] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-signals-it-will-cease-fire-when-israel-stops-attacking-gaza-2024-02-29/>

[4] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/16929>; <https://t.me/moriahdoron/16912>

[5] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-strikes-lebanon-after-hezbollah-hits-shebaa-farms-2023-10-08/>

[6] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/09/23/northern-israel-evacuees-hezbollah-war/>

[7] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-signals-it-will-cease-fire-when-israel-stops-attacking-gaza-2024-02-29/>;
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/iran-update-october-25-2023>

[8] <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2024/09/pager-attack-increases-pressure-on-hizbullah/>; <https://apnews.com/article/lebanon-israel-hezbollah-airstrikes-28-september-2024-c4751957433ff944c4eb06027885a973>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/understanding-israel%E2%80%99s-campaign-defeat-hezbollah-lebanon>

[9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/understanding-israel%E2%80%99s-campaign-defeat-hezbollah-lebanon>

[10] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/understanding-israel%E2%80%99s-campaign-defeat-hezbollah-lebanon>

[11] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-unearts-hezbollah-web-tunnels-southern-lebanon-middle-east/>

[12] <https://www.aei.org/research-products/one-pager/hamass-view-of-the-october-7-war/>

[13] <https://www.aei.org/articles/how-iran-plans-to-destroy-israel/>

[14] <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combat-studies-institute/csi-books/we-were-caught-unprepared.pdf>

[15] <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-november-24-2024>

[16] <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/10/26/israel-demolishes-massive-hezbollah-underground-bunker-in-southern-lebanon/>; https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/troops-destroy-tunnels-equipped-for-long-term-stays-in-south-lebanon/; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-4-2024>; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-faces-long-recovery-officials-fear-thousands-fighters-lost-israel-2024-11-27/>