

Summary

The current situation on the Israeli-Lebanese border has recently escalated with the announcement of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) of its approval for offensive plans against Hezbollah. The announcement comes after Hezbollah published surveillance drone footage of strategic and military locations in Israel. The situation further deteriorated after the Israeli Foreign Minister threatened "all-out war" while Hezbollah threatened further attacks in kind. The offensive has not yet been approved by the Israeli government as the war cabinet has recently been dissolved.

Recent events and developments

On June 18, the IDF announced on X that its generals had approved plans for an offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon and accelerated the readiness of the ground forces, although the Israeli government's approval is still pending since the war cabinet was dissolved on May 17. The announcement came hours after Hezbollah published surveillance drone footage showing several military and strategic locations in Israel, including docks and airports in Haifa, which Israel took as a threat. The Israeli Foreign Minister stated that Israel is willing to "change the rules against Hezbollah and Lebanon" and threatened "all-out war". Hezbollah answered with threats of more air attacks and claimed to have acquired unspecified new weapons. Threats against Cyprus have also been made as the group claims that the country plans to allow Israel to use its airports for strikes in Lebanon, which the Cypriot government denied. Currently, air attacks continue. On June 11, Israel killed a senior Hezbollah field commander resulting in the largest retaliatory attack since October 8 by Hezbollah using 100 rockets and 30 drones to target 9 Israeli military sites on June 13. The latest strike occurred on June 18. According to a May UN report, the hostilities have resulted in the displacement of 93,811 people from South Lebanon and the death of 83 civilians while the civilian death toll in Northern Israel was 11. The US tries to exert diplomatic pressure by sending an envoy to meet with Lebanese and Israeli officials to de-escalate the conflict. Nevertheless, discussions remain at an impasse.

Impact assessment

The IDF's announcement of its approval for offensive plans against Hezbollah, coupled with accelerated military preparedness and explicit threats from the Israeli Foreign Minister and Hezbollah, marks a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict which has until now been fought primarily through ranged means. Since October, Israel's aim has been for Hezbollah to retreat behind the Litani River approximately 30 km north of the Lebanese border. A potential ground offensive will most likely try to achieve this goal. According to reports, the US has warned Israel that a ground offensive on Lebanon could provoke Iran to intervene. This might be in the form of increased long-range attacks on Israel by Iranian proxies or the partial transfer of Iranian-backed militias from Syria, Iraq, or even Yemen into Lebanon to join the conflict. Furthermore, airstrikes on urbanized Hezbollah strongholds farther up north will also likely be conducted by the IDF. The Daniyeh district in Beirut, considered to be a Hezbollah stronghold in the city and which was targeted in January, serves as an example. Nevertheless, the recent dismissal of the Israeli war cabinet on June 17 might cause a delay in the decision-making process regarding a potential offensive. The US is pursuing a diplomatic solution, but Hezbollah has stated it will only compromise if a ceasefire in Gaza is reached. With Hamas recently rejecting the Biden administration's ceasefire proposal, de-escalation along the Israeli-Lebanese border seems unlikely. Moreover, Hezbollah's threats against Cyprus signal a willingness to broaden the conflict.

Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to Lebanon receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Do not travel to the South-Lebanese border region.
- Closely monitor the local and international media for updates on the situation.
- Ensure that contingency and security plans are up-to-date and that staff are aware of them.

Customized advice

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