
Israel involved in 'ongoing combat' on northern border with Lebanon – army

By: RT
27/07/2020



Fighting has broken out along Israel's northern border with Lebanon, with the Israeli military involved in "ongoing combat" with Hezbollah militants. The news comes hours after the fighters reportedly attacked Israeli soldiers.

The fighting was first reported by Israel's N12 TV News on Monday afternoon, with AFP reporters on both sides of the border claiming to have heard loud explosions. Following the reports, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said that Israeli troops were involved in "*ongoing combat*" in the area.

Reuters reported that Hezbollah kicked off the exchange by firing a missile at an Israeli military vehicle in the disputed Shebaa Farms area on the border. The IDF then said that it thwarted an attempted border infiltration by an "*armed squad*," and that no Israelis were hurt.

Residents near the 'Blue Line' – which demarcates the countries' disputed border based on a withdrawal of Israeli forces in 2000 – have been told by the IDF to stay in their homes and avoid open areas. Roads in the area have also been closed following the "*security incident*."

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Though the Lebanese militants supposedly started the exchange, a Lebanese source told Reuters that the attack was itself retaliation for the death of one of Hezbollah's fighters in Syria last week. The militant was killed in an apparent Israeli airstrike on the outskirts of Damascus.

The airstrike angered Hezbollah forces in Lebanon and Syria. In the days that followed, explosions were reported along the Israel-Syria border, and Israel ramped up its military presence along the Lebanese frontier. Despite the military escalation, Hezbollah's deputy leader said on Sunday that the "*atmosphere does not indicate a war... in the next few months*."

Israel and Hezbollah last engaged in open war along the border in 2006, with the month-long conflict killing more than 1,100 people, the majority of them Lebanese. Since then, sporadic exchanges of fire have broken out, most

recently in September 2019, when the Shi'ite militant group launched a volley of rockets into an Israeli military base. Israel responded with an artillery barrage, and no casualties on either side were confirmed.

With hostilities ongoing on Monday afternoon, an IDF spokesman said that *“complex and tense days are ahead of us.”*
