

Israel Says It Discovered Third Cross-border Hezbollah Tunnel

Army says it holds the Lebanese government responsible for digging of tunnels, which it deems a violation of UN Security Council resolution.



Israeli soldiers operating to destroy a third Hezbollah cross-border tunnel discovered on December 11, 2018. IDF Spokesperson's Unit

- **Israeli operation against Hezbollah tunnels enters its explosive stage**
- **Lebanon: U.S. informed us Israel has no aggressive intention**

The Israeli military located a third Hezbollah terror tunnel crossing into Israeli territory, the Israeli army's spokesperson said in a statement on Tuesday afternoon.

Israel announced the launch of Operation Northern Shield a week ago, aimed at destroying cross-border tunnels constructed by Hezbollah.

The army said that the tunnel does not pose a threat and that it was investigating its terrain.

>> Israeli operation against Hezbollah tunnels enters its explosive stage

Earlier Tuesday, Lebanon's president said that Israel's operation to destroy Hezbollah attack tunnels across the border won't endanger the calm along the frontier. Michel Aoun, a Hezbollah ally, said that Lebanon takes the tunnel issue "seriously" and is prepared to "take measures to remove causes of disagreement" after receiving full report on the situation.

Aoun added that the U.S. has informed Lebanon that Israel has "no aggressive intentions," and also noted that his country too has "no aggressive intentions."



Israeli soldiers examining a third Hezbollah cross-border attack tunnel discovered on December 11, 2018. IDF Spokesperson's Unit

The Israeli army noted upon announcing the discovery of the third tunnel that it places the responsibility on the digging of the tunnels on the Lebanese government, and that it considers the existence of such tunnels a grave violation of UN resolution 1701.

The Israel Defense Forces said that the tunnel was booby-trapped and that anyone who entered it from the Lebanese side "would face a serious danger to their lives."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke about the revelation of the third tunnel on Tuesday afternoon, saying: "Hezbollah thought it was digging uninterrupted. We knew about it and planned it [to launch Operation Northern Shield] and it didn't leak. We're carrying out exactly what we planned, but we are also prepared for setbacks."

The premier spoke after holding a security assessment in the Northern Command along with IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot and other senior commanders. Netanyahu, who is acting as defense minister following the resignation of Avigdor Lieberman, received a security briefing on the current progress in the operation to destroy the tunnels.

"We are systematically dismantling the tunnels," Netanyahu added.

"The most important thing is the preparation here for a very strong reaction should Hezbollah make the big mistake of deciding to hurt us or resist what we are doing. Hezbollah will take blows it can't even begin to imagine," the prime minister continued.

Also on Tuesday, an Israeli delegation of senior military officers is scheduled to leave for Moscow to meet their Russian counterparts and discuss operations to destroy Hezbollah-built cross-border tunnels.

The trip is set to be the first meeting between Israeli and Russian officials since September 20, when an Israeli delegation traveled to Moscow in an attempt to ease tensions caused by an incident in which Syrian anti-aircraft missiles downed a Russian plane while trying to thwart an Israeli airstrike.

Haaretz's Amos Harel wrote on Monday that the Israeli operation has entered its explosive stage. According to Harel, there is no wall or fence separating the Israeli and Lebanese forces where the demolition is going on, and all it would take is one antsy Lebanese soldier to spark a fire that would be hard to extinguish.



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