

Former Lebanese Interior Minister Blames Israel for Beirut Attack

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A former Lebanese Interior Minister has publicly [blamed Israel](#) for the attack on Beirut:

This operation in Beirut was carried out by Israel in a clear and explicit manner," Machnouk said, adding: "It is clear we are looking at a crime against humanity, and therefore no one dares to claim responsibility for it."

Nohad Machnouk is the first public figure to explicitly place blame on Israel, and the first in Lebanon as well. My own reporting based on an Israeli source was the first to say that [Israel attacked a Hezbollah arms storage facility](#) at the port.

Pres. Aoun [suggested](#) that a "foreign actor" might be responsible for an attack. Though his most [recent statement](#) rejects the possibility that Hezbollah stored arms at the port—something I would expect him to say as a political ally of the militant group. Even Hassan Nasrallah [suggested](#) that Israel might be responsible. But neither did so in nearly as explicit a fashion as Machnouk, who served in the Future Movement cabinet of Saad Hariri.

Machnouk also alleged that missile remnants have been discovered amidst the rubble at the port. Asia Times reports that a "U.S. explosive experts adds this important statement from a Lebanese source:

A US military explosives expert who has worked closely with the Lebanese army told Asia Times on condition of anonymity that according to his contacts among the Lebanese armed forces, the explosion was an "act of sabotage" against the hangar in question, which was allegedly holding not only ammonium nitrate, but short-range missiles.

This accords with the [video analysis by Robert Baer](#), a 30-year CIA veteran Middle East analyst, who said the explosion and ensuing smoke and debris clearly showed evidence that it involved "rocket propellant." It's common knowledge that Hezbollah has 130,000 rockets stored throughout Southern Lebanon to use in the event of an Israeli attack.

While Machnouk is allied with a political movement opposed to Hezbollah and so might be expected to embarrass it, his government was responsible for storing the ammonium nitrate at the port. So he and the Future Movement would come in for their share of the blame if his statement proves true. So he would have no vested interest in tarnishing his own reputation.

News reports say the FBI has offered to send a forensics team to investigate the explosion. The Lebanese have accepted. That's a bit like assigning the Big Bad Wolf's brother to investigate the death of Little Red Riding Hood. Undoubtedly, the FBI's main interest will be in assigning full blame to Hezbollah and determining which weapons were being stored at the port.

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