

Israel will widen any future Lebanon conflict into Syria

By [Global Research](#)

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BEIRUT: The Israeli state must take into account Syria's role in supporting Hizbullah in any future war with the Lebanese group, an Israeli security analyst said on Friday. Renewed hostilities could also see Israel launch a ground invasion of the Bekaa to cut Syrian supply routes to the Shiite group, Jonathan Spyer, senior research fellow at the Global Research in International Affairs Center, wrote in the Jerusalem Post. Hizbullah officials contacted by The Daily Star declined to comment on the story.

"Any future strike at Hizbullah that does not take into account its status as a client of Syria is unlikely to land a decisive blow," he said, citing a recent report in the British magazine Jane's Defence Weekly which claimed that Syria had supplied the Shiite group with missiles capable of hitting central Israel.

"The logic of confrontation in Lebanon suggests that Syria may find it hard to avoid direct engagement in a future Israel-Hizbullah clash," Spyer said. The "point of no return" would be if Damascus provided anti-aircraft devices to Hizbullah to use during Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace.

The analyst also said that "if Israel wants ... to strike a real blow against Hizbullah, this implies an Israeli ground incursion into the Bekaa" and areas close to the Syrian border, which allegedly now host most of the group's military infrastructure.

Tensions between Israel and Lebanon have mounted in recent months, with Beirut accusing Israel of running espionage rings across the country. Earlier this month Tel Aviv blamed Hizbullah for planting 300 kilograms of explosives near the Blue Line border.

Last week Israeli minister without portfolio Yossi Peled said he believed another conflict with Lebanon was "only a matter of time," prompting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to deny his government was seeking a war.

In a meeting Wednesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak was quoted by Israeli daily Yediot Ahronot as saying Israel had no "intentions to attack Syria or Lebanon." Barak has in the past, however, said Israel would not only target Hizbullah but also Lebanon's government and infrastructure in a future conflict.

During his own meeting with Mubarak on Thursday, Lebanese Prime Minister nevertheless said Beirut took all Israeli threats "seriously."

"Any threat against Lebanese territory, whether in the south, Bekaa, [the Beirut suburbs of]

Dahiyeh or any other region in Lebanon is a threat against all of Lebanon and the Lebanese government," Hariri told reporters, calling for Arab solidarity to "counter these threats."

Spyer said that the "ominous statements" by Israeli officials were not intended to announce the arrival of a war but rather to warn Syrian officials "that they should not think their alliance with Hizbullah is cost free." A report published by Al-Liwaa newspaper last week claimed Lebanon could be dragged into a possible war with Israel as early as March.

The Israeli state launched a devastating 34-day war on Lebanon in July 2006 after Hizbullah members captured two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border raid. -

With additional reporting by Wassim Mroueh

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For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca