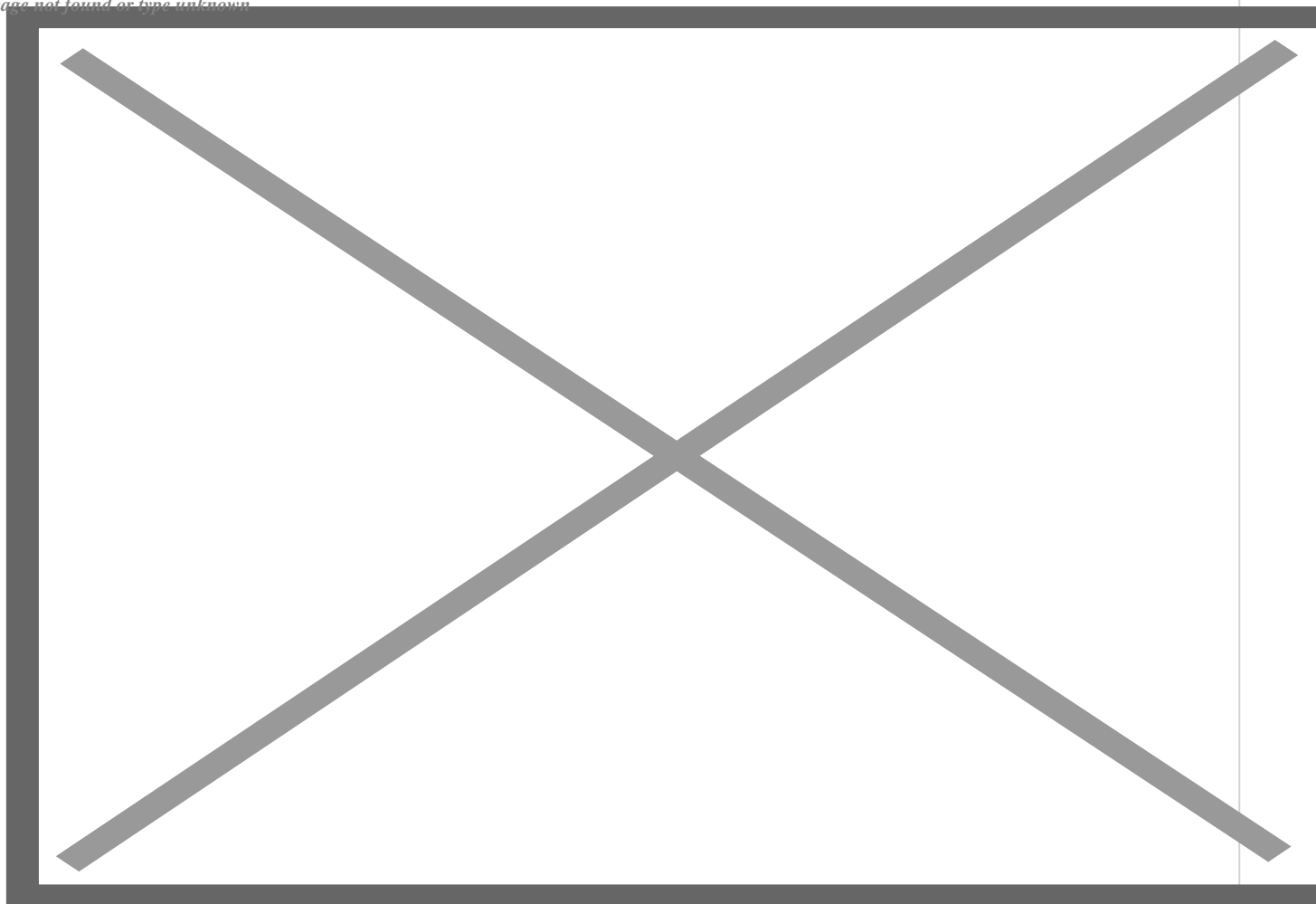


Hamas official survives Israeli attack that kills two others in Lebanon

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Members of the Civil Defence inspect the area next to a destroyed vehicle in Jadra, Lebanon
[Aziz Taher/Reuters]

Beirut, February 10 ((RHC))-- An Israeli drone raid that hit a car 35km (22 miles) from the Lebanese capital, Beirut, has killed at least two people, but a Hamas official who was the target survived the attack, security sources told Al Jazeera.

Two missiles fired by an Israeli drone hit the Hamas official's vehicle in the coastal town of Jadra on Saturday and two bystanders were killed in the attack, Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr reported from Beirut. The two victims were civilians, a Lebanese Civil Defence official told the AFP news agency.

The Hamas official targeted in the attack was close to Saleh al-Arouri, Hamas's deputy chief killed last month in a suspected Israeli raid on a suburb of Beirut, a security source said. The Times of Israel daily reported that the person targeted was Basel Salah, describing him as a recruiter for Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank.

The attack was the second attack in Lebanon this week beyond the border region with Israel. "This was deep inside Lebanon, approximately 60km [37 miles] from the border with Israel, outside the battleground where the Israeli army and the Lebanese group Hezbollah have been exchanging fire, triggered by the war on Gaza," Khodr said.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging near-daily fire since October 7 when Hamas launched an attack on Israeli territory in which some 1,100 people were killed. Israel's military then launched a land, air and ground assault on Gaza that has left more than 28,000 people dead.

However, usual exchanges of fire between Hezbollah and Israel's military have been mostly limited to the border region. There was no immediate comment from Hamas in Lebanon or from the Israeli military.

"On Thursday, an Israeli drone targeted a vehicle in the southern city of Nabatieh, also outside the battleground, targeting members of Hezbollah. "This becoming a strategy on the part of the Israelis; what is clear, is that there's no longer a front line," she said.

"Back in January, Hamas's number two man was assassinated in the heart of the Lebanese capital. Israelis are using this opportunity to target officials from Hezbollah, from Hamas, as well as to try to degrade the capabilities of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon."

On Saturday, Hezbollah said it had seized an Israeli Skylark drone over Lebanese air space "in good condition." The Skylark is a small, unmanned aerial vehicle typically used for surveillance. After Saturday's attack, the group released two statements claiming attacks on Israeli soldiers.

The first targeted a "gathering of Israeli enemy soldiers" in the Hadab Aita Heights with rockets, hitting them directly, a statement read. The second statement said a building in al-Manara containing Israeli soldiers was attacked and hit directly. This attack, Hezbollah said, was "in response to the Zionist attacks on southern villages and civilian homes."

Lebanese officials and Western diplomats have said Hezbollah has signalled its openness to US diplomatic efforts to secure calm on the border with Israel once a ceasefire is in place in Gaza.

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