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Created:	20240927			Status:	Live
Title	AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – 27/09/2024				



# AMBREY THREAT CIRCULAR – ISRAEL – HEZBOLLAH ESCALATION

**Source:**

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**A. Executive Summary**

- On the 17<sup>th</sup> of September thousands of beepers were remotely detonated reportedly killing 12 and wounding 2,750.
- Since the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2024, Hezbollah and Israel have launched escalatory airstrikes deep into opposing territories.
- Haifa port is assessed to be at heightened risk as a potential direct target for Hezbollah.
- Beirut and other Lebanese ports are assessed to be at moderate risk and a naval blockade of Lebanon may occur.
- All vessels and their onshore personnel are advised to prepare to respond to intelligence or security events by implementing pre-agreed mitigation measures.

**B. Situation**

With the explosion of beepers across Lebanon on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, which Hezbollah soon alleged to have been caused by Israel’s intelligence service, Mossad, tensions further increased between Israel and Hezbollah. Since the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, Hezbollah and Israel have been engaged in an escalated aerial campaign striking targets in Central Israel as far south as Haifa as well as vast stretches of Lebanon with individual strikes on Beirut. The IDF and Israeli hardliners have been utilising aggressive rhetoric for months calling for Israeli operations against Hezbollah to ensure the safe return of settlers to Northern Israel. The IDF reportedly has conducted multiple exercises preparing for ground operations in Lebanon and an armoured unit was transferred from the Gaza Strip to the Confrontation Line in recent days. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, gave a speech asking Lebanese civilians to evacuate Israeli target areas, stating the IDF began warning civilians since the morning. Netanyahu further said that once Israel’s operation was completed people could safely return to their homes, however, he did not specify when this would be or what would be considered as completed. An Israeli official has been quoted as saying the airstrikes in Lebanon were designed “to change the balance of power in the north”, while the commander of the Northern Command, Uri Gordin, reportedly stated: “We have entered another phase of the campaign, we need to be very strongly prepared for entering manoeuvre and action.” On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, Israel’s Chief of Staff, Herzl Halevi, told troops in northern Israel that the airstrikes were preparing “the area for the possibility of your [the present IDF forces] entry, and also to continue causing blows to Hezbollah.” On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, Hezbollah issued a statement highlighting the cause for their operations in red as “in defence of Lebanon and its people.” This was the first use of this phrase since Hezbollah’s operations commenced in response to the outbreak of the Israel-Gaza conflict on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. The use of the term indicated Hezbollah’s acceptance of the escalation of the conflict and a likely increasing engagement of Israel by Hezbollah. Shortly after the Hezbollah statement, the killing of Ibrahim Qubaisi, Hezbollah’s commander of the missile and rocket force, in an Israeli airstrike on Beirut was confirmed.

US officials have called for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. Ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas have remained fruitless and with escalation along the Confrontation Line the diplomatic resolution has become increasingly unlikely. Further, Hezbollah’s Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, repeatedly linked the cessation of hostilities along the Confrontation Line to a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Israel has additionally formulated its demands for a ceasefire with Hezbollah. These include Hezbollah’s retreat to north of the Letani River and creating a 7km demilitarised zone, effectively removing Hezbollah from southern Lebanon. Israel also demands the dismemberment of Hezbollah. The US and European allies have called for a 21-day ceasefire in the hope to achieve a lasting diplomatic resolution of the conflict during that period. However,

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Israel and Hezbollah have continued launching attacks and Netanyahu has vowed to continue to “strike Hezbollah with full force”.

### C. Threat Update

Ambrey assesses the risk to vessels calling Israeli ports to be elevated. Ambrey assesses it likely that the Israeli bombing campaign will continue for the foreseeable future, with an attempt to disrupt Hezbollah’s offensive capabilities and removing as much of their defensive capabilities as possible. Both sides continue to operate with restraint. Yet, the increasing civilian fatalities are likely to spiral the escalation into larger-scale confrontation. Possible further escalatory Israeli airstrikes or an Israeli ground incursion would highly likely cause direct operations against Haifa port. Simultaneous action by Hamas, Houthi, or Iraqi militants place Israel’s remaining ports (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Hadera, Eilat) at continuous risk of collateral damage in singular long-range targeting operations.

Beirut and other Lebanese ports are assessed to be at moderate risk. Unlike Houthi-held Hodeida in Yemen, which is a key access point for resupply lines, Hezbollah do not rely solely on maritime trade for resupply as goods can be transferred from on land via Syria and Iraq. Thus, the military and economic effect of disrupting Lebanon’s ports would be limited on Hezbollah. In 2006, the Israeli Navy established a blockade as part of its economic warfare, rendering direct strikes against port infrastructure unnecessary. Yet, with the prolongation of the conflict, the likelihood of direct hits increases. Therefore, Ambrey assesses merchant vessels in Lebanese ports as well as offshore Lebanon to be at risk of collateral damage. A direct targeting of Lebanon-bound shipping is assessed unlikely; however, disruptions would occur if Israel were to once more establish a naval blockade.

Ambrey assesses it highly likely that the Houthi will continue operations against southern Israel and merchant shipping for the duration of Israeli military operations against Hamas and Hezbollah.

### D. Mitigation

- Vessels calling Israeli ports are advised to avoid anchoring/drifted within Israeli territorial waters where feasible.
- Vessels calling Israel are advised to designate a Safe Muster Point above the waterline and a central within the accommodation block as possible. It is recommended to reduce crew deck movements and bridge manning to a minimum.
- Companies conducting Israel port calls should be aware of the risk implications for the remainder of their fleet in the southern Red Sea.
- Ambrey recommends a thorough affiliation check as part of a transit risk assessment is performed for all Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Arabian/Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean voyages. This is being performed as a matter of course for all Ambrey tasks.
- AIS transmissions and other signal emissions ought to be immediately stopped if UAV activity is encountered. Irregular and frequent course and speed alterations also are assessed to reduce the likelihood of damage.
- Companies should be prepared to make decisions quickly in the event of being targeted. They should practice Crisis Management responses to likely scenarios with all relevant stakeholders.

### E. Contact Information

Ambrey: +44 203 503 0320, [intelligence@ambrey.com](mailto:intelligence@ambrey.com).

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