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Israel has momentum in its battle with Hezbollah. But what comes next?

Israel is racking up military wins against its regional foes. But fighting multiple wars will take its toll, and experts wonder what the long-term strategy is.

By Steve Hendrix, Claire Parker and Karen DeYoung / October 6, 2024

JERUSALEM — At 3:30 p.m. on Sept. 17, someone pushed a “red button,” and a low-simmering conflict blasted open into a full-scale war.

For months, Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah had been locked in a cross-border slugfest, exchanging daily attacks that forced civilians in both countries from their homes but that never produced a military knockout or allowed for a diplomatic breakthrough.

[...]

Once southern Lebanon is largely cleared of Hezbollah fighters, weapons and tunnels, the IDF can monitor the border area and respond from Israeli territory, said **Orna Mizrahi, a former deputy national security adviser and senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies.**

“We understand that it’s going to be a very long, devastating war both for Israel and Lebanon,” Mizrahi said. “This is why I think that the government decided that the goal will be more limited, just to create the security reality to bring the people back home and not really to remove Hezbollah and all its capabilities.”

The absence of clarity, in Lebanon and Gaza alike, reflects Israel’s lack of a broader strategy for ending its longest stretch of war fighting since 1948, said Michael Milshtein, a former adviser to the military on Palestinian affairs and head of the Palestinian Studies Forum at Tel Aviv University’s Moshe Dayan Center.

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