

Israel-Hamas war

Israel says it killed Hizbollah heir apparent in air strike

Announcement comes hours after inconclusive talks between US secretary of state Antony Blinken and Benjamin Netanyahu



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike near the Lebanese city of Tyre on Tuesday © Kawnat Haju/AFP/Getty Images

Andrew England and Neri Zilber in Tel Aviv, Chloe Cornish and Raya Jalabi in Beirut and Najmeh Bozorgmehr in Tehran YESTERDAY

Israel said it had killed Hashem Safieddine, heir apparent to assassinated Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, in an air strike in Lebanon earlier this month.

In a statement on X, the Israel Defense Forces on Tuesday [stated](#) Safieddine, who was expected to succeed Nasrallah, was “eliminated” in an [air strike](#) on the Lebanese militant group’s “main intelligence HQ” in the southern Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh.

The IDF added another [Hizbollah](#) commander, Ali Hussein Hazima, had also been killed in the strike.

There was no immediate response from Hizbollah.

The claim came hours after US secretary of state Antony Blinken and Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) held inconclusive talks in Jerusalem as the Joe Biden administration attempts to end the [war in Gaza](#) and secure the release of Israeli hostages following the killing of Hamas’s leader Yahya Sinwar.

Ahead of the meeting, the US state department said there was “an opportunity to move the ball forward” on ceasefire negotiations. But diplomats say there is little momentum for renewed talks as Netanyahu’s far-right government continues its offensive in Gaza and intensifies its assault against Hizbollah in Lebanon.

A few hours before Blinken’s arrival, Hizbollah fired several barrages of rockets and missiles across northern and central Israel, including at Tel Aviv and Haifa. The Lebanese militant group said it targeted the Gilot intelligence base just north of Tel Aviv and a naval base in Haifa.

The Israeli military said the Iran-backed group fired at least 80 projectiles into Israel throughout the day, killing one Israeli soldier and seriously wounding three others in the north after a rocket detonated.

Blinken and Netanyahu met for two and half hours and discussed efforts to end the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon as well as Iran’s role in the region, according to statements from both of their offices.

The secretary of state’s visit comes as the region is braced for the Israeli response to an Iranian missile attack on [Israel](#) three weeks ago.





US secretary of state Antony Blinken disembarks from his plane in Tel Aviv on Tuesday © Nathan Howard/AFP/Getty Images

Israel has vowed a “precise and deadly” retaliation for the barrage of 180 ballistic missiles Iran fired, in what Tehran said was a response to the Israeli assassination of Nasrallah last month.

Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi on Tuesday warned Tehran would “respond in kind” if Israel attacked the Islamic republic. Araghchi said he had received assurances from all Iran’s neighbours that “they will not permit their airspace to be used against us”, adding that Iran’s forces were “closely monitoring activities at US bases” in the region.

Israeli forces killed Sinwar, the mastermind of Hamas’s October 7 2023 attack that triggered the hostilities across the region, in southern Gaza last week.

Since his death, Israeli strikes have killed scores of people in northern Gaza. Israel has also widened its attacks on Hizbollah in Lebanon.

An Israeli strike killed 18 people, including four children, and wounded dozens more after hitting a narrow residential alleyway across the street from a government hospital in south Beirut on Monday night, Lebanese health officials said on Tuesday. At least four buildings were reduced to rubble by the strike.

The Israeli military said it launched the strike against a Hizbollah “target” near the hospital, but added it was not targeting the medical facility. Residents of the area had not been warned to evacuate.

A multistorey residential building in south Beirut was also levelled by an Israeli air strike on Tuesday, shortly after the military warned residents to leave the area.

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An Israeli air strike brings down a residential building in south Beirut on Tuesday © Reuters

Meanwhile in Gaza, Hamas has said it would accept a deal only if Israel agrees to a permanent ceasefire and withdraws its troops from the besieged strip – something Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected during months of US-led negotiations.

The Israeli offensive in Gaza has killed more than 42,000 people, according to Palestinian health officials. The US last week told Israel it needed to take “urgent and sustained actions” to improve the dire humanitarian situation in the territory or risk losing military aid from Washington.

Netanyahu’s far-right allies in his ruling coalition have threatened to leave his government if he agrees to what they describe as a “reckless” deal with the Palestinian militant group. Hamas, meanwhile, has to select a new leader to replace Sinwar.

Blinken’s visit came a day after White House envoy Amos Hochstein held talks in Beirut with Lebanese leaders about diplomatic efforts to end the conflict between Hizbollah and Israel. Hizbollah has said it will not agree to a ceasefire as long as Israeli troops are fighting in Gaza.

Hours after Hochstein’s talks in Lebanon, Israeli forces launched more than a dozen air strikes on Beirut and its suburbs, killing 63 people and injuring 234, according to Lebanese health authorities.

Israel’s military said it targeted Hizbollah weapons storage facilities, a naval base and other sites linked to the group in the Lebanese capital.

The conflict began after Hizbollah started firing rockets towards Israel following Hamas’s October 7 2023 attack, forcing about 60,000 northern Israelis from their homes. Israel’s offensive has killed more than 2,500 people in Lebanon and forced more than 1.2mn from their homes, mostly in the past month, according to Lebanese authorities.

About 80 Israeli civilians and soldiers have been killed by Hezbollah fire into Israel and during Israel's land invasion of southern Lebanon.

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