Attack On Majdal Shams - 27/07/24

Earlier today, Hizbullah forces launched a surprise attack on Majdal Shams, a Druze town in the Golan Heights region of Israel. This unprecedented assault included a combination of rocket fire and a ground incursion. The attack has resulted in significant casualties, with initial reports indicating at least 20 fatalities and dozens more injured. The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) has responded with artillery and airstrikes targeting Hizbullah positions in southern Lebanon.

Geocoordinates:

- Majdal Shams: 33.2724° N, 35.7754° E

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the attack, stating, "Israel will respond with full force to any aggression from Hizbullah. Our citizens' safety and our sovereignty are non-negotiable."

In response, Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah, declared, "This operation is a direct response to Israeli provocations and incursions into Lebanese sovereignty. We are prepared for any escalation."

International Reaction

- **United States:** "We stand with our ally Israel in condemning this unprovoked attack by Hizbullah and will provide all necessary support to ensure its security" (U.S. State Department) .
- **Lebanon:** "The Lebanese government disavows any responsibility for Hizbullah's actions and calls for immediate cessation of hostilities from all parties" (Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs) .
- **United Nations:** "We urge both sides to exercise maximum restraint and engage in dialogue to prevent further escalation" (UN Secretary-General António Guterres) .
- **Iran:** "Iran supports Hizbullah's right to defend Lebanese sovereignty against Israeli aggression" (Iranian Foreign Ministry) .
- **European Union:** "The EU calls for an immediate ceasefire and a return to negotiations to address underlying tensions" (European External Action Service) .

Scenario Modelling

Scenario 1 (0.8) - Regional Escalation

Likelihood rating: 0.8 (high probability)

In this scenario, the conflict escalates rapidly as Israel intensifies its military response to Hizbullah's attack. The IDF conducts extensive airstrikes on Hizbullah's infrastructure in southern Lebanon and potentially targets sites in Beirut. Hizbullah retaliates with further rocket attacks on northern Israeli cities such as Haifa and Tiberias. The situation prompts a

larger mobilization of Israeli reserves and an increase in ground operations in the Golan Heights.

International Community and World Institutions Reaction:

- **UN Security Council:** An emergency meeting is convened, leading to calls for an immediate ceasefire.
- **United States:** Provides additional military aid to Israel.
- **Iran:** Increases support to Hizbullah, risking broader regional conflict.

Reasons for Likelihood:

- Ongoing hostilities and lack of immediate diplomatic interventions.
- Strong rhetoric and mutual distrust between Israel and Hizbullah.

Reasons for Unlikelihood:

- International pressure for de-escalation.
- Potential economic and humanitarian crises deterring prolonged conflict.

Scenario 2 (0.6) - Contained Conflict with Diplomatic Intervention

Likelihood rating: 0.6 (moderate probability)

In this scenario, the conflict remains contained to the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon regions. Diplomatic efforts, particularly by the United States and the European Union, succeed in brokering a temporary ceasefire. Israel and Hizbullah engage in indirect negotiations mediated by the UN, leading to a de-escalation agreement.

International Community and World Institutions Reaction:

- **United States and EU:** Intensify diplomatic efforts to maintain the ceasefire.
- **United Nations:** Deploys peacekeeping forces to monitor the ceasefire line.
- **Arab League:** Calls for a comprehensive peace agreement addressing broader regional issues.

Reasons for Likelihood:

- Significant international pressure to avoid a full-scale war.
- Historical precedence of ceasefires mediated by international actors.

Reasons for Unlikelihood:

- Deep-rooted animosities and potential spoilers from hardline factions.

Scenario 3 (0.3) - Full-Scale War

Likelihood rating: 0.3 (low probability)

In this scenario, the conflict escalates into a full-scale war involving multiple state and non-state actors. Iran increases its military support to Hizbullah, while Israel seeks broader support from its allies. The conflict spreads beyond the immediate region, with potential involvement from other militant groups and state actors in the Middle East. This results in a significant humanitarian crisis and a massive displacement of populations.

International Community and World Institutions Reaction:

- **NATO:** Increases its presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- **UNHCR:** Launches large-scale humanitarian assistance programs.
- **Global Markets:** Experience instability due to the regional conflict.

Reasons for Likelihood:

- Potential miscalculations or provocations leading to broader engagements.
- Failure of diplomatic interventions.

Reasons for Unlikelihood:

- High costs and risks associated with a full-scale war.
- Likelihood of international mediation to prevent widespread conflict.

Summary and Assessment

Based on the current situation and historical precedents, Scenario 1 (Regional Escalation) appears to be the most likely outcome. The rapid and intense response from both Israel and Hizbullah, combined with the high level of distrust and ongoing hostilities, suggests a significant escalation is probable. However, international diplomatic efforts could play a crucial role in containing the conflict and preventing it from spreading further.

Air Travel Disruption

In the event of regional escalation or full-scale war, significant disruptions to air travel to and from Israel are expected. Major airlines may cancel flights due to security concerns, and airspace over northern Israel and southern Lebanon could be closed. Contingency plans will be required for travelers and airlines operating in the region.

Prompt

Please provide a briefing following the attack upon Majdal Shams by Hizbullah forces earlier. Please also include mention of any potential disruption to air travel to and from Israel resulting from the scenarios modelled.

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References:

1. [US State Department Statement](#)
2. [Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)
3. [UN Secretary-General Statement](#)
4. [Iranian Foreign Ministry](#)
5. [European External Action Service](#)

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