



Palestinian footballers killed in Gaza



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## Israeli army masses along Lebanon border

Wed, 14 Jan 2009 17:55:06 GMT

**Israel deploys military units along the border with Lebanon amid growing concerns that the assault on Gaza was the onset of a multi-front war.**

Nineteen days after the start of the Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip, the Lebanese daily *Al Safir* reported Wednesday that southern Lebanon had witnessed the build-up of Israeli armored vehicles - tanks, military vessels and Apache helicopters - along the border.



Southern Lebanon is witnessing the build-up of Israeli armored vehicles - tanks, military vessels and Apache helicopters - along the border.

"The Israeli army has mobilized its troops along the border from the western Lebanese village of Naqurah to the southern border village of Al Wazzani."

Citing military officials from Lebanon, the daily added that Israeli forces had also fired flares into the Lebanese territory.

While the report adds that the Lebanese army is on high alert, informed sources told Press TV's correspondent in Beirut that Hezbollah has also put its members on red alert.

Wednesday saw at least three rockets fired from the area of Habaniyeh in southern Lebanon into Israel. No casualties among the Israelis have been reported. Within minutes of the attack, Israel responded by firing eight rockets into southern Lebanon.

Following the rocket exchange, Israel sent telephone warnings to residents of southern Lebanon threatening to start a second front.

"People of Lebanon, launching rockets from southern Lebanon against innocents in northern Israel harms your own interests," one of the warnings said, according to AFP.

Israel's prime minister warned last week that no one in the region should "get the wrong impression" over Israel's determination "on any front."

"We are not afraid of any confrontation or threat. We truly hope that no one will put us to the test," Ehud Olmert said in a speech broadcast on army radio.

On the opening days of the war on Gaza, Former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton said the Israeli offensive would ignite a multi-front war which could lead to a US attack on Iran.

"So while our focus obviously is on Gaza right now, this could turn out to be a much larger conflict," the hawkish US official told FOXNews, adding, "We're looking at potentially a multi-front war."

Amid widespread speculation that the conflict in the Palestinian territory could spill over to other parts of the Middle East, Bolton added that there is "the possibility of the use of military force possibly by the United States, possibly by Israel," on Iran after the current war.

However, after Israel launched the ground phase of its operation last Saturday, Nadim Shehadi, a Lebanese political analyst said "It looks like Israel has enough trouble as it is, and there is no way (Israel) can come out of this saying it was a success."

On December 25, two days before the start of the Israeli offensive against Gaza, Lebanese soldiers found and dismantled eight Katyusha rockets equipped with timers pointed south toward Israel.

Ever since the rocket incident, there has been an escalation of tensions on the border between Israel and Lebanon.

Lebanese president Michel Suleiman suggested Israel was responsible for the eight rockets found in southern Lebanon, saying that he fears "it is an Israeli attack to implicate Lebanon," according to the *NOW Lebanon* news website.

As the Palestinian casualties from Israel's Operation Cast Lead have topped 1,000 on day 19, Israel refuses to respond to international calls for a ceasefire.

Israeli Defense Minister ruled out the possibility of halting the ongoing offensive against the impoverished Strip on Tuesday.

Ehud Barak said "We heard yesterday, and respect, UN Secretary-general Ban Ki-moon's appeal, and we are closely following the progress on the Egyptian truce initiative, but the fighting goes on and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] continues to operate our troops."

MT/CS/HGH

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