



Hezbollah's New Drone Threats to Israel

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Hezbollah's use of drones marks a notable and unprecedented escalation of its attacks on Israel, and will continue posing acute threats. Difficult to track and identify, yet precise, these weapons can overwhelm and evade Israel's advanced air defenses to neutralize sensitive Israeli sites and target Israel's population centers. To help counteract this threat, the United States should accelerate the shipment of vital military assets to Israel and support its partner's right to defend itself against this unprovoked aggression.

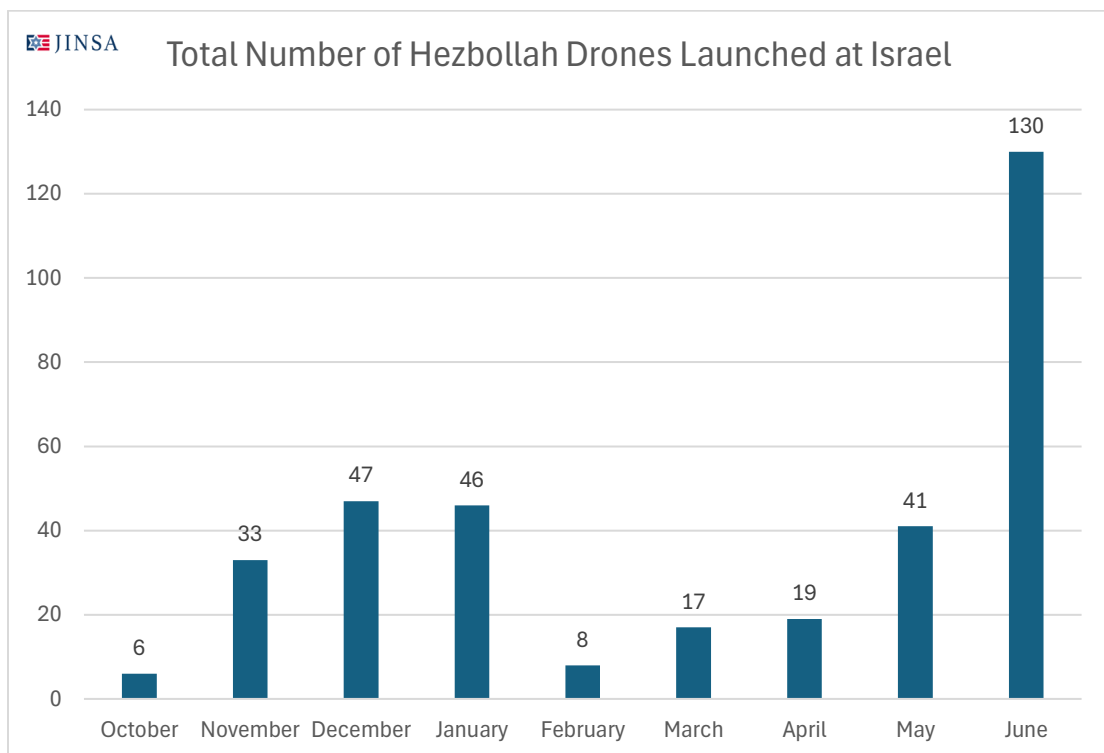
What Happened?

- On June 30, 18 Israeli soldiers were [wounded](#), including one seriously, in a Hezbollah drone attack on the Merom Golan area of northern Israel.
 - » This was the culmination of a series of Hezbollah drone attacks throughout June, in which the Iran-backed terror group launched at least 130 drones from Lebanon at Israel, according to JINSA's [Iran Projectile Tracker](#).

Why Is It Important?

- Hezbollah's increasing use of effective attack drones, according to JINSA's [Iran Projectile Tracker](#), likely represents an accelerated effort to dissuade further, [highly successful Israeli strikes](#) on Hezbollah infrastructure and leadership. This also seeks to probe and exploit vulnerabilities in Israel's air defenses, attrite Israel's interceptor stocks, and ultimately stymie Israel's [stated objective](#) of restoring security to the north—enabling [over 60,000](#) Israelis to return to their homes there after being forced out by Hezbollah's unprovoked attacks since October 8.
 - » Hezbollah has launched over 390 drones at Israel since the war began, including at least 130 throughout June, compared to an estimated 19 total between 2001 and the outbreak of the current conflict in October.
- Hezbollah's drones pose serious threats to Israel, given the size of these arsenals, the drones' maneuverability, payloads, accuracy, and range, and Hezbollah's domestic manufacturing capability.
 - » Hezbollah's arsenal of drones reportedly [numbers](#) at least 2,000. The Iran-backed terror group has primarily [deployed](#) Ababil-model one-way attack drones, particularly the Ababil-T, in its attacks on Israel. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has also [asserted](#) that the group can indigenously manufacture drones, suggesting an ability to continue replenishing this formidable arsenal.
 - » Hezbollah's drones' ability to maneuver in different directions, at an unpredictable trajectory, and at a range of speeds all present further obstacles to interception.

- The Iron Dome system is [calibrated](#) to intercept projectiles along an anticipated trajectory, making interception of Hezbollah’s drones—which, unlike rockets and missiles, lack a predictable flight path—a tactical challenge. These drones further [complicate](#) interception by flying at slower speeds than Israeli fighter aircraft.
- As a result, combat helicopters have reportedly proven to be Israel’s [best tool](#) for intercepting drones because of their maneuverability. In addition, helicopters can likely provide aerial reconnaissance to help distinguish drones from false positives.
- However, JINSA Distinguished Fellow and former Commander of the Israeli Air Force IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin recently [said](#) in a JINSA webinar that Israel is “the only nation in the world” that still uses the outmoded model A variant of the Boeing AH-64 Apache, as opposed to newer-model Apaches, and “needs to replace” its helicopters.
- » Due to built-in GPS systems, Hezbollah’s one-way attack drones are [capable](#) of navigating to a target with a high degree of accuracy.
 - Hezbollah’s May 16 [drone strike](#) on the SkyDew, a significant air defense detection asset located dozens of miles inside Israel, underscores the drone’s accuracy.
- » Drones have a considerably [longer range](#) than the anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) Hezbollah has used to target Israeli border communities and military sites since October 8. Hezbollah’s Iran-made Ababil and Shahed-129 drones can travel over 100 kilometers and up to 1,800 kilometers, respectively, in a single flight.
- » The Shahed-129, which Hezbollah refers to as the Ayoub or Ayub, can [carry](#) an explosive payload weighing up to 150 kilograms, on par with the explosive payload weight that Hezbollah’s heavy unguided rockets are [capable](#) of carrying.



Source: JINSA’s [Iran Projectile Tracker](#)

Hezbollah Drone Arsenal

Drone Name(s)	Range	Payload
Ababil-2 , also known as the Mirsad-1	200 km	40 kg
Ababil-3	100 km	<i>unknown</i>
Ababil-T	150 km	30 kg
Ma'arab , also known as the Yasser/Yasir	200 km	<i>unknown</i>
Mohajer-4 , also known known as the Mirsad-2	150 km	15 kg
Shahed-129 , also known as the Ayoub/Ayub	1,800 km	150 kg

Source: [JINSA](#), [Alma Research and Education Center](#), [The Times of Israel](#)



- Hezbollah’s drones further enable the Iranian regime to threaten to unleash its proxy in a major attack on Israel, including as part of a multi-front attack with hundreds of projectiles like the aerial assault Iran unleashed on April 13-14.
 - » Hezbollah could use drones in an initial strike against Israeli radar systems to blind Israel’s air defenses to subsequent waves of attacks that it and the Iranian regime could launch, leaving key military assets and population centers vulnerable.
 - JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror [argued](#) in a recent JINSA webinar that “Hezbollah ... decided to bring more drones, because they understand that even if we [succeed] to intercept 90 percent, the other 10 percent might ... have a huge impact.”

What Should the United States Do Next?

- The United States should expeditiously provide Israel with all weapons systems, including Iron Dome kinetic interceptors and newer-model Apache combat helicopters, needed to intercept incoming Hezbollah drones.
 - » Providing Israel with new combat helicopters should be an especially urgent focus of U.S. policymakers, given both the [unique utility](#) of these platforms in combating drone threats and the [antiquated state](#) of Israel’s current Apache AH-64A fleet.
- Given the need to counter Hezbollah drones from both a defensive and offensive posture, the United States should also provide Israel with the necessary fighter jets, precision-guided munitions, and other assets needed to eliminate Hezbollah military assets in Lebanon and deter Hezbollah from escalating its aggression.
- The United States should also rhetorically back Israel’s right to conduct strikes in Lebanon. It should also eschew issuing statements calling for [de-escalation](#) or in any way signaling that it will not fully support Israel should a full-scale war break out.