**Israel: UN 'ignored reality' by blaming us for tensions along Lebanon border**

UN report cites Israel as responsible for the potential of renewed conflict on northern border due to the government's recent warning that Hezbollah has received advanced Scud missiles from Syria.

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Israeli officials expressed disappointment at UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday over his report that appears to blame Jerusalem for the renewed tensions on the Lebanese border.

The report cites Israel as responsible for the potential of renewed conflict due to the government's recent warning that Hezbollah has received advanced Scud missiles from Syria.

"Rhetoric escalated rapidly, creating a perception in the public that a resumption of conflict was imminent," the secretary-general wrote in the report.

The document represents a slap in the face for Israel, which has accused Hezbollah of violating UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the Second Lebanon War in 2006. Senior officials in Jerusalem and members of the defense establishment said the report "ignored reality."

In recent days, the head of Military Intelligence's research division, Brig. Gen. Yossi Baidatz, traveled to New York, where he briefed a number of Security Council ambassadors on Israel's concerns about the situation in southern Lebanon.

Baidatz also met with Ban's senior aides and officials responsible for UN peacekeeping forces. He expressed concerns about recent incidents in southern Lebanon in which residents attacked UNIFIL troops stationed there. Baidatz said Israel remains convinced that Hezbollah is responsible for these attacks.

The UN chief wrote in his report that the heightened tensions were stoked by Israel's claims of Hezbollah's arms acquisitions. He said this "raised the specter of a miscalculation by either party leading to a resumption of hostilities, with potentially devastating consequences for Lebanon and the region."

Ban said President Shimon Peres was the first Israeli official to publicly make the accusation against Hezbollah, with senior Israeli officials repeating the charge in statements to the media and during briefings with UN representatives. Ban added that Syria and Lebanon denied the claims while acknowledging that the UN did not have the ability to verify these reports.

The UN chief wrote that Israel's accusations created the sense that a clash with Syria and Lebanon was inevitable. According to Ban, tensions subsided due to the pacifying messages sent between Israel and Syria via third parties, among them the UN, the United States, the European Union and Arab governments.

Israel's disappointment was compounded by the fact that Ban's report did not mention Hezbollah's involvement in a series of attempts by Lebanese in the south to interfere with UNIFIL's operations over the past month.

Just before the report's release, Israel's envoy to the UN, Gabriela Shalev, wrote to Ban detailing three incidents in which locals confronted UNIFIL troops. Some Lebanese even stole equipment belonging to the soldiers. Shalev wrote that there were "clear signs" that Hezbollah instigated these incidents as part of the Shi'ite group's "suspicious military activity" in the area.

In his report, Ban said UNIFIL enjoys "freedom of movement" in all of southern Lebanon. He also cited five unusual incidents in which UNIFIL troops were injured and a UN vehicle was stolen, but he refused to blame Hezbollah.