IDF suspects Hezbollah behind bombing attack on northern highway; terrorist killed

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The Israeli military suspects the Lebanese Hezbollah terror group is behind a blast on a highway in northern Israel that seriously wounded a man earlier this week, the Israel Defense Forces and Shin Bet security agency said Wednesday.

The alleged terrorist was shot dead on the Lebanese border several hours after the attack on Monday. He was armed with an explosives belt at the time.

On Monday morning, a bomb planted on the side of the Route 65 highway near the Megiddo Junction exploded, seriously wounding Shareef ad-Din, 21, from the Arab village of Salem.

Many details surrounding the blast were kept under wraps due to the ongoing investigation, which was spearheaded by the Shin Bet.

The bomb itself was considered unusual according to the IDF, and did not appear to be similar to explosive devices used by Palestinians in recent months.

Following the blast, troops began to close roads and search for the suspected terrorist who planted the bomb.

On Monday afternoon, several hours after the explosion, soldiers spotted a vehicle with the suspected terrorist near the northern Israeli town of Ya’ara, close to the Lebanese border, the IDF said.

Officers of the elite police Yamam counterterrorism unit and Shin Bet officers opened fire at the suspect, killing him. The IDF said the suspect was a “clear danger” to the security forces and had a primed explosives belt on him at the time.

Several more weapons were found in his vehicle, according to the IDF.

The military said the suspected terrorist crossed into Israel from Lebanon overnight between Saturday and Sunday and planted the bomb, possibly on behalf of the Iran-backed Hezbollah.

The exact manner in which the suspect crossed into Israel was still being investigated, as were his potential links to Hezbollah. The IDF said it expects that ongoing construction work to build a wall along the northern frontier, to replace an aging fence, would be completed within two years

The IDF said there were no other known terrorists who had infiltrated into Israel with the suspect, and his is believed to have been alone during the attack.

Following the Monday morning attack at the Megiddo Junction, the alleged terrorist hitched a ride to northern Israel. The driver of the car was detained by officers, according to the IDF.

The military said it was continuing to investigate the circumstances of the incident.

There were no special security instructions for residents, and the IDF said it would remain on alert for potential Hezbollah attacks in northern Israel.

The IDF said the details of the incident remained unpublished for more than two days because it wanted to wait to find out exactly who was behind the bombing attack.

The censorship came under criticism by civilians and analysts, as unsubstantiated rumors regarding the incidents have spread on social media, leaving many worried and confused.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a security assessment with Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Wednesday afternoon regarding the incident. On Tuesday, Gallant’s office also said the defense minister had held a number of security assessments over the previous day due to the attack.