PALESTINIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION - MALAYSIA

منظمة الثقافة الفلسطينية - ماليزيا

PCOM

Special Report
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"Hezbollah Pager Explosion"

According to the Lebanese Ministry of Health, 11 people were martyred and around 4,000 were injured today, Tuesday, in southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut due to explosions targeting Hezbollah members, caused by wireless communication devices (pagers) in an operation likely orchestrated by the Israeli occupation.

1. What are pagers?

A pager is a small wireless communication device developed in the 1960s for emergency use. It relies on sending digital signals via radio waves to notify the user that someone tried to contact them. It can also send short text messages. Before the widespread use of mobile phones, pagers were a popular means of communication, particularly among doctors working night shifts and emergency service personnel. They were also used in military and security fields.

2. Why do Hezbollah members use pagers?

The pager is considered relatively old technology that cannot connect to the internet, making it somewhat safe from cyberattacks, espionage, and tracking attempts, which are common with mobile or smart phones. For this reason, it is still used in military and security fields, and this is likely why Hezbollah members possess these devices.

3. How did the devices explode?

The New York Times revealed early on Wednesday new information about how Israel booby-trapped the communication devices that exploded, killing and injuring many Hezbollah members in Lebanon and Syria.

The newspaper quoted informed officials saying that Israel hid explosives inside a batch of Taiwanese communication devices (pagers) that were imported to Lebanon.

The officials stated that Hezbollah had ordered more than 3,000 communication devices from the Taiwanese company "Gold Apollo," and small explosives were placed next to the battery of each device.

They clarified that the communication devices ordered by Hezbollah were tampered with before reaching Lebanon.

The newspaper also quoted Israeli officials saying that the devices were distributed to Hezbollah members across Lebanon and some of its allies in Iran and Syria.

In the same context, Al-Monitor newspaper reported from intelligence sources that thousands of devices obtained by Hezbollah had been booby-trapped by Israel before being handed over to the group.

The sources mentioned that Israel carried out the attack after gathering information indicating that two Hezbollah members had discovered the devices had been compromised, while the original plan was to detonate them in case of an all-out war to gain a strategic advantage.

CNN also reported from sources that the explosion of the pagers in Lebanon was a joint operation between Mossad and the Israeli army.

The Wall Street Journal reported from informed individuals that the damaged communication devices were part of a new shipment recently received by Hezbollah.

Additionally, the American newspaper cited the security company "Lobec International" as saying that the explosion was caused by software that overheated the batteries, leading to their explosion, or by a remotely detonated charge.

The Washington Post, quoting a security research center, said that the incident resulted from the largest operation to replace imported communication devices with a batch containing explosives.
A Lebanese security source told Al Jazeera that the wireless communication devices that exploded had been pre-rigged with explosives.

The Lebanese security source explained to Al Jazeera that the weight of the charge that was detonated did not exceed 20 grams of explosive materials.

He added that the communication devices that were detonated were imported five months ago, indicating that investigations are underway regarding multiple theories on how the explosive charge was activated.

Sources close to Hezbollah told the Associated Press that the new communication devices were equipped with lithium batteries, and it appears they exploded due to overheating.

Commenting on the incident, Euronews quoted system analyst and former U.S. intelligence agent Edward Snowden, suggesting that explosives were planted in the devices rather than a cyber breach, as the high number of consistent and very severe injuries points to such a cause; otherwise, there would have been more fires.

Meanwhile, Reuters reported that Su Cheng-Kuang, the founder of the Taiwanese company Gold Apollo, said the communication devices that exploded in Lebanon carried the company's trademark, but production was outsourced.

Su added that the targeted devices were manufactured by a company in Europe that had the right to use the Taiwanese company's brand.

In light of the recent developments, Reuters reported that Taiwanese police had arrived at the headquarters of Gold Apollo.

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4. Which areas were most targeted?
The injuries were concentrated in southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut. However, there were no specific targeted areas, as the victims were all individuals carrying pager devices, regardless of their location. This is evidenced by the injury of four individuals in Syria as a result of an explosion in their car in a tunnel in the capital, Damascus. Syrian media suggested that the injured were Hezbollah members whose communication devices exploded.

5. How many victims so far?
Moments after the series of explosions began, the number of injured rose to more than 4,000 people in Lebanon alone, 400 of whom are in critical condition. All of the injured were Hezbollah members carrying the targeted devices. The Lebanese Minister of Health announced the martyrdom of 11 people, including a child, among the victims. He stated that hospitals in the south have exceeded their capacity, and efforts are being made to transfer the wounded outside the province. The Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, was also among the injured due to the explosion of a communication device he was carrying, according to Iran's Mehr News Agency.

Source: Al Jazeera, Agencies & American Press