

Hezbollah's FPV drones turn the tide of battle

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Wyatt Reed discuss the pivotal role of Hezbollah's fiber optic FPV drones in turning the tide of battle against Israel, transforming the IDF invasion of Southern Lebanon into a quagmire. Wyatt Reed has been covering the war from Beirut and throughout Southern Lebanon. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

Hezbollah clearly has changed. I think you put that question to Wafiq Safa, which is, you know, are you fighting a war for the region, or is this a war of national defense?

#Wyatt Reed

They view this as inseparable from the Iran war conflict, from Gaza. To them, it's all one big war in which Israel is basically leading the U.S. into a huge strategic error, which is the only way you can describe the Iran war—a massive unforced error.

#Max

Yeah.

#Wyatt Reed

Handed control of the Strait of Hormuz directly to the Iranian government, and it will likely remain with them for, you know, maybe forever. Who knows? Barring some kind of outside action. Another, I think, interesting point that he made was describing the introduction of these drones to the battlefield, which is something that they said has really taken place over the past 18 months. And he described it as kind of the resistance's response to the Pager attack in September 2024 that killed dozens of people, wounded over a thousand. And many of those killed and wounded, by the way, were not Hezbollah members. They were children in many cases. Yeah.

#Max

And most of those who were targeted, who were within the ranks of Hezbollah, were like reservists. They weren't even on the front lines.

#Wyatt Reed

Yeah. And there was, you know, the Israelis had this kind of twisted explanation of saying, you know, we would rather not kill all of these people. We want to leave them alive and crippled and basically to serve as a warning to other people. This is what's going to happen to you. We'll leave you disfigured and unable to get a job. And, you know, the resistance's response was the introduction of these drones, which have been a huge game changer in terms of asymmetrical warfare, especially given that Israel seems committed to overextending itself in the south of Lebanon.

#Max

Yeah.

#Wyatt Reed

They're—I really—I don't understand the strategic value of trying to occupy all this territory when they can't even defend their own supply lines. They just get blown up every day. There's another FPV drone video of, you know, some Merkava tank or an armored personnel carrier or just Israeli soldiers themselves running out of the portage zone and getting, you know, destroyed and blown apart by these first-person view drones. So, you know, I think we had some of that video queued up, if not... Yeah, let's watch it.

#Max

So, the real story of this war is the FPV drone, the first-person view drone, which is produced in workshops by Hezbollah members. And they're quadcopters that are strapped with an RPG device, and they deliver the RPG to Israeli positions. And the reason that Israel is unable to do anything about these is because they're connected to a fiber optic cable that stretches for miles. And by being directly connected to a fiber optic cable, it's sort of an analog, asymmetrical solution to Israel's jamming capacity. It also has this laser system that can hit drones.

So Israel doesn't have anything to defend against these drones with, and they're just, with almost complete reckless abandon, hammering Israeli positions and also hammering the Israeli psyche because the Israelis were told in November 2024, when Hezbollah signed a ceasefire after the killing of Secretary General and kind of like spiritual leader Hassan Nasrallah, that they were essentially defeated or at least defanged. And that's just simply not the case anymore. And you have Israelis returning to, going to like Medevac and to Rambam Hospital in Tel Aviv every day. And some of them are coming back in body bags. So here's a highlight reel someone, Ron Burgundy, put

together—an account, Ron Burgundy—that I think really tells the story of this war for Israel as the war continues, which is that they're going to be ground down as they attempt to hold positions and maintain a buffer zone.

#Wyatt Reed

Probably these are Iron Dome batteries, too.

#Max

Some of them are Iron Dome batteries, or they may be decoy Iron Dome batteries, but they're definitely hitting Iron Dome batteries and radars at some points. I mean, some of those Iron Dome batteries are not being held down by cables, so I'm just wondering, like, what is the deal with that?

#Max

I've sped this up just because it's long. You can see them hitting a D9 excavator, hitting actual logistical positions of Israeli soldiers.

#Wyatt Reed

You'll notice that they've put up some kind of netting over the top of certain areas.

#Max

And it does nothing.

#Wyatt Reed

As far as I can tell, it only advertises their position. Yeah, yeah.

#Max

You know, hitting those D9s, hitting the Toyotas, the smaller vehicles with an RPG can do a lot of damage. I know the Merkava has reactive armor, but you can see in many of these strikes they're hitting from the rear of the Namer armored personnel carriers and trying to hit the undercarriage of the Merkava. So we don't see what kind of damage they're doing, but you can assume they're doing a lot of damage when personnel are exposed.

#Wyatt Reed

Everybody drew lessons from the Ukraine proxy war. And the lesson that Hezbollah drew was that there is no real answer for an army that needs to move and operate as a standard army, not as

guerrilla fighters. They have no way, they have no answer for drones, specifically those, like you noted, these FPV drones that have fiber optic cables, which means they are immune to jamming and to electronic countermeasures.

The lesson I think the Israelis drew was that we should hire a bunch of mercenaries and create our own foreign legion, and find idiots from either, you know, Westerners who are bored or, more likely, I think, people from third world countries that want a decent paycheck and are willing to die to get it. But they've proposed a 10 to 12,000-member mercenary army to come take the places of all of these Ashkenazi Jews that don't want to die on the front lines and don't want to die in southern Lebanon. So instead, you know, you get the sense that they're sending the Mizrahim, they're sending the Ethiopian Jews, and now they're running out. They need to find some mercenaries to throw at southern Lebanon.

#Max

Let's go to Peru and find a lost tribe in the Amazon, a lost tribe of Jews, and ship them over. I mean, they've been doing that — no DNA test required.

#Wyatt Reed

In fact, specifically prohibited it.

#Max

During the first Lebanon war, the first invasion of Lebanon, there was this movement called the Four Mothers. And it was led by four kind of very upstanding Ashkenazi women whose sons had been killed in the war. This is during the 80s. And they managed to organize large demonstrations with thousands of people calling for an end to the war because so many Ashkenazi Israelis were being killed and they didn't want to die. The whole shooting and crying concept came out of that war. We go to war and we shoot and we do what we have to, and then we come back and we cry about having to follow these orders, and we make beautiful art and songs and dark songs and films like **Waltz with Bashir**. Have you ever seen **Waltz with Bashir**?

#Wyatt Reed

I think, if I'm not mistaken, one of my high school teachers made us watch it.

#Max

Yeah, I mean, I could see that. I think it might have won an Oscar. But it's the ultimate Israeli shooting and crying film, which highlights the Ashkenazi culture of the Israeli military, which is sort of like... you have to follow this initiation ritual to be a Zionist, but ultimately you hate it, and then

you just kind of move on with your life. And by talking about it and going to *Breaking the Silence* and delivering testimony of all the horrible crimes you were forced to commit — blowing children's heads off and so forth, and bombing homes — that you expiate your sins and your guilt, and you're welcomed back into liberal Zionist society.

Waltz with Bashir presents the whole Lebanon war as kind of a dreamlike scenario, and Bashir referring to Bashir Gemayel, who was killed — the Maronite right-wing Phalangist leader. And, you know, it reenacts actual scenes that took place in that war, but it's all dreamlike, and it's only from the perspective of Israelis who don't really take a moral stand on anything. **Beaufort**, another film that I mentioned earlier, an Israeli film about the defeat of the Israeli military in southern Lebanon after Operation Grapes of Wrath — that's another shooting and crying film.

Breaking the Silence, its directors, they collect all these testimonies of soldiers, but they have no policy on refusal, and many of them are actually in the reserves. But they'll do tours of occupied Hebron, and they're like anti-occupation. So... Israeli society is in a place now, Jewish-Israeli society, where they can't even allow shooting and crying. So remove that whole class of people from the war. They thought they could do it with technical innovations and technological innovations like the drone. I mean, the Hermes drone came out of the failure of the first Lebanon war to reduce casualties and therefore take political pressure off this country's militaristic, fascist government.

They thought they could do anything they wanted to Hezbollah, and now Hezbollah has learned this lesson, and the FPV drone has completely flipped the script, and it's a political problem for Israel. Shir Hever, by the way, is someone who's doing a lot of work I would refer people to. He's an Israeli, or maybe an ex-Israeli, who helps lead the BDS movement from Germany and is doing enormous amounts of research on the transformation of the Israeli military, the IDF, into a kind of mercenary army, which I think is part of the downward trajectory of Israel — that it actually, other than its air force and Mossad, is pretty much in deep decline.

#Wyatt Reed

Yeah, and there, Hezbollah is only increasing its ability. Its intelligence capabilities, for example, are far superior to what I believed before I came here and before I spoke to Wafik Safa, who kind of gave me a hint as to the developments they've made in terms of their intelligence capabilities. He noted that the operation to eliminate Colonel Meir Biederman, who was the commander of the 401st Armored Brigade, which is the unit that famously killed Hind Rajab, left him critically wounded. For all we know, he may be dead.

The Israelis are not forthcoming about their casualty count. But he was critically wounded in an incredibly sophisticated drone strike, and you can see the footage of it. This drone managed to enter a secure compound, basically the command center of what seems to be a forward operating base.

They managed to take out the commander of this unit, and they told me that they knew where he slept and where he rested. They knew his schedule, and they tracked him there when he was having a meeting with a bunch of other significant Israeli military officials.

So for them to be able to obtain that kind of intelligence, and presumably they're going to be able to replicate that again, that's another issue that the Israelis, I don't think, have a real clear answer for. I have no idea how they are getting that kind of information. Perhaps they've compromised some of the Israelis' devices. Perhaps they're getting information fed to them through, you know, from Russia or China to Iran to them, kind of thing. Perhaps they have their own indigenous intelligence capabilities that they've developed within Israel themselves. Who knows? But, you know, what is very clear is that the Israelis are more exposed to attacks than I think they've been in decades.

#Max

Yes, and not just through FPV drones, but Iranian ballistic missiles have really punched some holes in Israel's fake Iron Dome, which we subsidize as U.S. taxpayers. Turns out the United States was doing the lion's share of interception or attempted interception because Israel needed to preserve its own munition stockpile, and the U.S. burned through its own stocks, which were supposed to defend against China or Russia, the real powerful revisionist powers. But now, just a little quadcopter with an RPG tied to its belly has entered the battlefield and completely changed the game.

It's one of the stories of the year. I don't know what Israel's going to do about it. I haven't played anything from your interview with Wafik Safa of Hezbollah because it's translated with subtitles and I don't like reading over it. It's kind of boring to hear me read it, but everyone can follow it. We've posted several clips. Everyone can watch it at The Grayzone on our YouTube channel. But he previews some other, in his words, surprises. What was he referring to?

#Wyatt Reed

I sure wish I knew. You know, it wasn't clear whether he was referring to a new type of drone or another technological capability that they're going to unleash on the battlefield, or whether this is just, you know, political. So, I mean, I wish I knew a little bit better. I didn't want to prod too much because he seemed like he was being kind of deliberately enigmatic about it. But if the FPV drones are any indication, you know, if I were an Israeli, I would be pretty nervous about that.

#Max

Yeah. Yeah. It really is remarkable that the U.S. military, with its proposed \$1.5 trillion budget, has been completely stymied by Iran. And that is one reason why Trump is moving toward attacking Cuba, just to have a win. They can't get a win. The U.S. has been defeated in a way that it has not before. Since I can remember, I mean, the Vietnam War was a defeat. It was a real psychological defeat for U.S. empire, and the U.S. working class suffered enormously, of course. It was terrible for

the American population. I remember moving to Washington, D.C. as a boy in the mid-'80s to a majority Black neighborhood and seeing guys strung out on heroin in their BDUs from Vietnam all over the place.

That generation was still being killed off with heroin, and then the crack epidemic came and cleaned it all up. But the U.S. economy didn't suffer. The global economy didn't suffer in the same way. The Iran war can't be contained in the same way these other wars were contained. It's something that the U.S. hasn't experienced, especially in the post-World War II era. I think it's a much deeper blow to U.S. global hegemony than Vietnam was, and certainly more than the Second Gulf War, which was another defeat for the U.S. It wasn't economically contained, and, you know, the U.S. elite extracted a lot of benefit — Halliburton stock, for example. So, unfortunately, the Lebanese population is suffering massively.