BEIRUT, Lebanon — Iran confirmed Monday that one of its generals was among the dead in an Israeli airstrike that also killed several Hezbollah fighters in southern Syria on Sunday, an announcement that added to the tension and unpredictability in the region after the strike.

The attack placed Israel in a direct battlefield confrontation on Syrian soil with its longtime enemies Iran and Hezbollah. And it put pressure on Hezbollah to respond militarily, risking further escalation on the outskirts of Syria’s chaotic civil war.

The death of the general, Mohammad Ali Allahdadi, added to the evidence of Iran’s deep military involvement across the Syrian conflict. But the strike that killed him also appeared to be a departure from the tacit agreement in which a host of foreign players — Israel, Iran, Hezbollah, Turkey, the United States, and its Persian Gulf Arab allies — have increasingly intervened openly in Syria while seeking to avoid direct clashes with one another.

Citing anonymous intelligence sources, the Israeli news media reported that officials believed Hezbollah was planning an attack on Israelis from the area, near the Golan Heights frontier.

The increased tension highlights how Syria has essentially become a place for foreign intervention, with a wide range of countries each pursuing tangled and sometimes contradictory interests on its soil. And as the Syrian state has become more fragmented during four years of civil war, those foreigners have begun to act with more brazenness and impunity — a situation in which
missteps could inadvertently lead to an expansion of the war.

Less than two years ago, Hezbollah and Iran mostly tried to keep their military roles in Syria quiet. But now Iranian generals and Hezbollah fighters roam Syria, advising and even directly fighting alongside Syrian forces.

At the same time, Israel has mostly turned a blind eye toward the Qaeda-affiliated insurgents battling the Syrian government near the border — an idea nearly unthinkable before the Syrian uprising. Israeli hospitals have even treated United States-backed Syrian insurgents who have been allowed to cross the border, including from groups that have sometimes cooperated on the battlefield with those Qaeda-affiliated fighters. That in turn has led the Syrian government to accuse Israel of supporting Sunni extremists against it.

Indeed, the Hezbollah television station Al Manar, after showing footage of the destroyed vehicles in which the Hezbollah and Iranian fighters had died, reported that the reason the senior figures were visiting the area was to study the cooperation there between insurgents and Israelis.

Adding to the mix, American warplanes are crisscrossing the skies bombing Islamic State militants in the north and east, two years after President Obama had threatened to target the government’s military over the use of chemical weapons on rebellious areas near Damascus.

And as Iran shows its hand more openly in Syria, Iran’s regional rival, Saudi Arabia, and other Sunni gulf monarchies are spurred, analysts say, to continue funding and arming the insurgents against President Bashar al-Assad.

“Syria has become an open field,” said Kamel Wazne, a Lebanese political analyst who studies Hezbollah and Iran. “Everything can happen at any minute.”

The last major war between Israel and Hezbollah was set off, analysts generally agree, by miscalculations on both sides about how the other would respond to provocation. Analysts said that Sunday’s episode most likely showed that Israel believed that it had a wider range of options to maneuver without drawing retaliation, because Hezbollah is tied down in Syria.

But at the same time, both Hezbollah and Israel have ratcheted up
preparedness for another war. Hezbollah has rebuilt its stockpile of rockets and replaced them with longer-range ones. Israel, military analysts say, has been preparing itself for a repeat of the fight. Israeli news outlets reported Monday night that the military had raised the alert level along the northern front, ordered soldiers deployed there not to take regular leaves, and set up Iron Dome missile-defense batteries in the area.

Aaron David Miller, a historian and former State Department Middle East adviser who analyzes the region at the Woodrow Wilson Center, said the situation was volatile. A range of developments — threats from Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, in a speech on Friday; the Israeli airstrike; and internal tensions in Iran as the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps resists a nuclear deal with the United States — have created a “brewing perfect storm,” he said on Twitter.

General Allahdadi’s death was announced on the Revolutionary Guards’ website and by news media affiliated with Hezbollah and the Iranian government.

The announcement said the general had been advising Syrians on how to fight terrorism, which is how Damascus characterizes its battle against an insurgency that began nearly four years ago with peaceful protests. The fight now includes extremist fighters from the Islamic State and the Nusra Front. But the Iranian statement was ambiguous, since Iran also calls Israeli military activities terrorism.

It remained unclear on Monday whether Israel had knowingly targeted General Allahdadi or other individuals in the two vehicles that were fired upon on Sunday. The United Nations force patrolling the frontier said the vehicles were hit by fire from Israeli drones, not helicopters as Hezbollah and Iran had reported.

Also killed in Sunday’s strike was Jihad Mughniyeh, the son of Imad Mughniyeh, a top Hezbollah military commander who was assassinated in Damascus in 2008 in an attack that Hezbollah attributes to Israel. A senior Hezbollah commander was also said to have been killed.

Israel has not commented officially on the strike. On Monday, Eyal Ben-
Reuven, a retired Israeli major general, said in a conference call with international journalists that the presence of such a high-ranking Iranian figure alongside Hezbollah commanders near the Golan Heights suggested that they may have been “planning an operation against Israel on a high level.”

He and other Israeli analysts said they continued to believe that Hezbollah wants to avoid a serious engagement with Israel because it is so heavily committed in Syria.

Mohammad Ghannam contributed reporting from Beirut, and Jodi Rudoren from Jerusalem.

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