

Operation Breaking Dawn Recap

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Over three days beginning August 5, Israel conducted Operation Breaking Dawn against the Iran-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as part of a new strategy to preempt the Gazan terrorist group's planned attacks, restore deterrence against the group, and send a deterrent signal to its other Iran-backed adversaries, like Hezbollah. The operation achieved Israel's limited objectives and neutralized PIJ's top leadership and assets in Gaza, while preventing Hamas involvement and Israeli deaths and ended with a ceasefire on the night of August 7.

During the three days of fighting, PIJ launched as many rockets a day as Palestinian militants did during the May 2021 conflict—a significantly higher fire rate than in pre-2021 conflicts—including numerous misfires that caused Gazan civilian casualties. Israel's Iron Dome short-range air defense system demonstrated a higher interception rate than in previous conflicts due to significant technological improvements, neutralizing 96% of dangerous incoming projectiles. The IDF also engaged in an improved, but not perfect, information campaign, disseminating information faster than in previous conflicts.

What Happened

- Israel preemptively launched [Operation Breaking Dawn](#) on August 5 to target PIJ operatives who were preparing to launch strikes into Israel. The initial strikes included killing Taysir al Jabari, PIJ's commander of northern Gaza, and at least twelve PIJ operatives who were preparing to fire anti-tank missiles at Israel.
 - » Preceding the operation, Israel [arrested](#) the head of PIJ in the West Bank, Bassem al-Saadi, on August 2. A seventeen-year-old died during the raid. However, al-Saadi's arrest was not related to Israel's preemptive strike against PIJ targets preparing to conduct attacks.
- During the operation, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) [say they struck](#) 170 PIJ targets, including military posts, attack tunnels, launch sites and weapons facilities. Israel killed top PIJ commanders in addition to al Jabari, including the southern commander, Khaled Mansour.
- Israel and PIJ agreed to an Egyptian-negotiated [ceasefire](#) that went into effect at 11:30 pm local time on August 7. Prior to the announcement of a ceasefire, at least [forty-three Palestinians](#) were killed and 300 injured in the fighting according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. According to Israel, most of the Palestinians killed were militants.

Israel-PIJ Conflict August 5-7, 2022



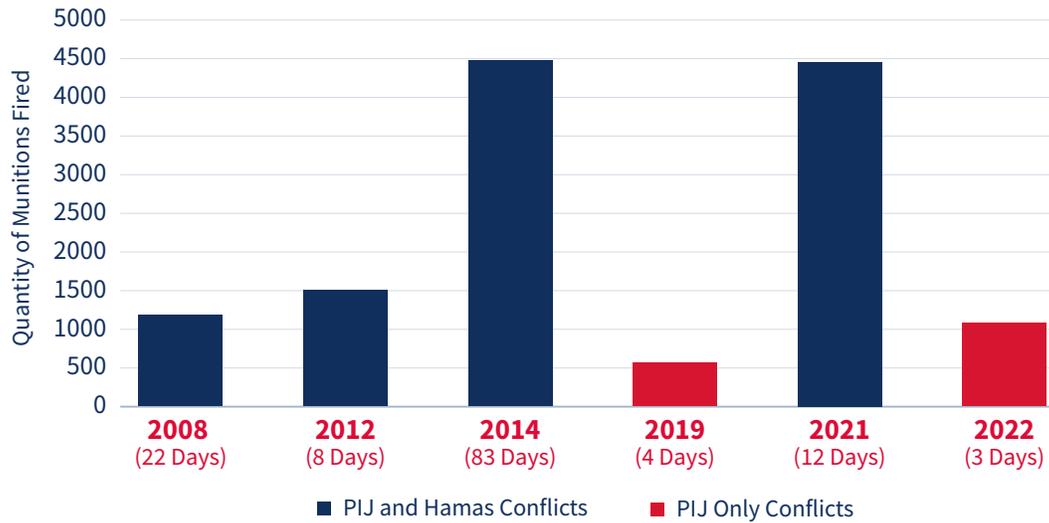
- AUG. 5** ● Israel launched Operation Breaking Dawn, which included preemptive airstrikes against sites in response to threats against Israeli civilians and neutralized Tayseer al-Jabari, PIJ's northern commander.
- AUG. 5** ● The PIJ launched 80 rockets into Israel, with half falling short of the Gaza strip. Over 40 crossed the border, 33 of which were intercepted by Iron Dome. The rest fell in unpopulated areas.
- AUG. 6** ● Following a heavy barrage of rockets, the IDF continued to target PIJ mortar shell and rocket manufacturing sites. The IDF also arrested 19 PIJ terrorist suspects in an overnight raid.
- AUG. 6** ● The IDF concluded that a failed rocket launch attempt by the PIJ was responsible for the death of civilians, including four children, in Gaza.
- AUG. 7** ● The IDF targeted a PIJ terrorist tunnel that was designed to infiltrate Israel and murder Israelis.
- AUG. 7** ● Raafat al-Zamili, the commander of the PIJ's Al-Quds Brigades' missile unit, and Khaled Mansour, the PIJ Southern commander, were killed in Israeli airstrikes. Khattab Amassi, the commander of the terror group's Rafah Brigade, and Mansour's deputy, Ziad Madalal, were also killed.
- AUG. 7** ● Two rockets were intercepted over Tel Aviv, and there were several Iron Dome interceptions on the outskirts of Jerusalem. This was the first time that there were rocket sirens near Jerusalem since the beginning of Operation Breaking Dawn. Rockets were fired simultaneously at communities close to the Gaza border, including one rocket striking a building in Ashkelon and another hitting a home in the Eshkol Regional Council.
- AUG. 7**
11:50 pm ● Ceasefire between Islamic Jihad and Israel that Egypt mediated began.
- AUG. 7**
11:58 pm ● A rocket was intercepted over Sderot.
- AUG. 7**
12:10 pm ● A rocket was intercepted over the town of Mivtahim.

Why Is It Important?

- By initiating and concluding Operation Breaking Dawn quickly, Israel both achieved its immediate objectives of neutralizing imminent PIJ threats and reestablishing deterrence, as well as demonstrated the effectiveness of its new strategy of taking preemptive action against threats. Israel's limited objectives and rapid success combined with PIJ's losses and lack of support allowed for a ceasefire to be concluded quickly and on Israel's terms.
 - » By making clear to Hamas that it was focusing on PIJ, Israel was able to achieve its limited objective of preempting planned PIJ attacks while preventing any Hamas involvement and preventing any Israeli deaths.
 - Hamas likely remained on the sidelines because it sees PIJ as a competitor and due to the degradation of its capabilities during and reestablishment of deterrence following the May 2021 round of fighting. Hamas also likely considered that Israel allowing Gazans to enter its territory for work provided popular economic relief that it did not want to jeopardize.

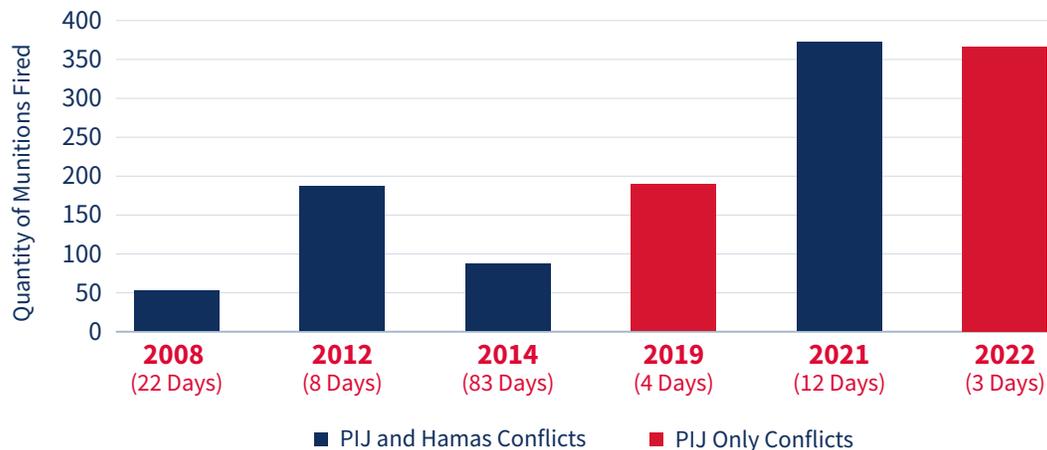
- By avoiding Gaza’s infrastructure and not targeting entire multistory buildings, Israel was able to avoid involving Hamas and much of the Palestinian population.
- » Israel’s Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021 demonstrated its upgraded capabilities for high tempo operations while Operation Breaking Dawn showed the application of these capabilities toward the new strategy of preemptively striking threats.
- » PIJ is an Iranian proxy who relies heavily on Iran for funding, weaponry, and decision-making. PIJ’s leader, Ziyad al-Nakhalah was in Tehran when Israel killed al Jabari. Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander Hossein Salami [told him](#) that Iran is “with you on this path until the end” and that Israel “will pay another heavy price.”
- » Meanwhile, no actors—not even other Iran-backed terrorist groups—supported PIJ while the [United States](#) supported Israel and [major regional actors](#) avoided condemning the attack, including the Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates.
- » This latest round of fighting in Gaza also revealed that PIJ was willing and able to sustain a high rate of fire during brief conflict, Palestinian terrorists continue to blame Israeli airstrikes when their misfires result in civilian casualties in Gaza, and Israel has further improved the already high interception rate of its Iron Dome system.
- » Israel’s operation also sent a deterrent signal to Hamas and, even more importantly, Hezbollah that it is willing to engage in preemptive action against threats.
 - Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah appeared to have received Israel’s message immediately, [arguing](#) on August 6, that they have “heard intimidation statements by the enemy [Israel] against the resistance in Palestine and the resistance in Lebanon. It is bombing in Gaza and addressing Lebanon at the same time, but it is making wrong calculations. It is making wrong calculations if it thinks that it can intimidate or scare us.... I advise the enemy that is sending these messages to stop sending them, because in Lebanon it should not expect at all that the resistance will stand idly by in the face of a certain aggression or a certain infringement on our rights.”
- From August 5-August 7, Palestinian militants launched a total of around 1,100 rockets and mortars into Israel, [according to the IDF](#).
- » PIJ fired roughly double the number of projectiles at Israel as it did in 2019, when it similarly fought Israel without Hamas’ involvement, despite the recent conflict lasting one fewer day.

Projectiles Fired Against Israel Doubled Compared to the Similar Conflict in 2019



- » PIJ launched rockets at roughly the same rate during the recent conflict as Palestinian militants fired during the 2021 round of fighting, a significant increase over its past capabilities.
 - While it is not clear how long PIJ would have been willing to sustain this rate of fire, the terrorist group's willingness and ability to fire a high quantity of rockets at Israel likely indicates that it was either able to maintain to replace its rocket arsenal during and after the 2021 fighting. It also suggests that PIJ believes it will again be able to replenish some of its stockpile and was willing to risk depleting it in this conflict.
 - At the same time, the IDF estimates that twenty percent of the munitions that PIJ fired had low production capabilities, which is likely attributable to Israel's active efforts to limit PIJ and Hamas weapons production capabilities.

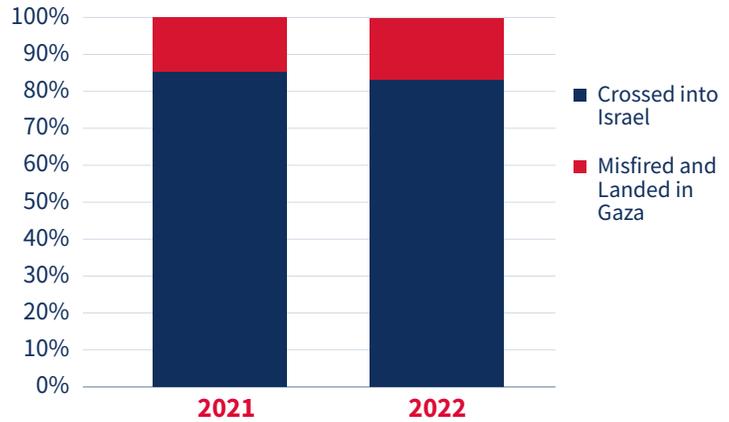
PIJ Fired Roughly the Same Number of Munitions Per Day as During the May 2021 War



- Of the 1,100 projectiles fired by PIJ, 200 exploded within the Gaza Strip and the Iron Dome intercepted 380.

» Palestinian misfires continue to be a major source of civilian casualties in Gaza. The IDF estimates that during the 2021 war one out of every seven projectiles fired at Israel misfired and landed in Gaza. During the fighting this past weekend, one out of every 5.5 munitions landed in Gaza.

Rockets from Gaza Endanger Palestinian Lives Too

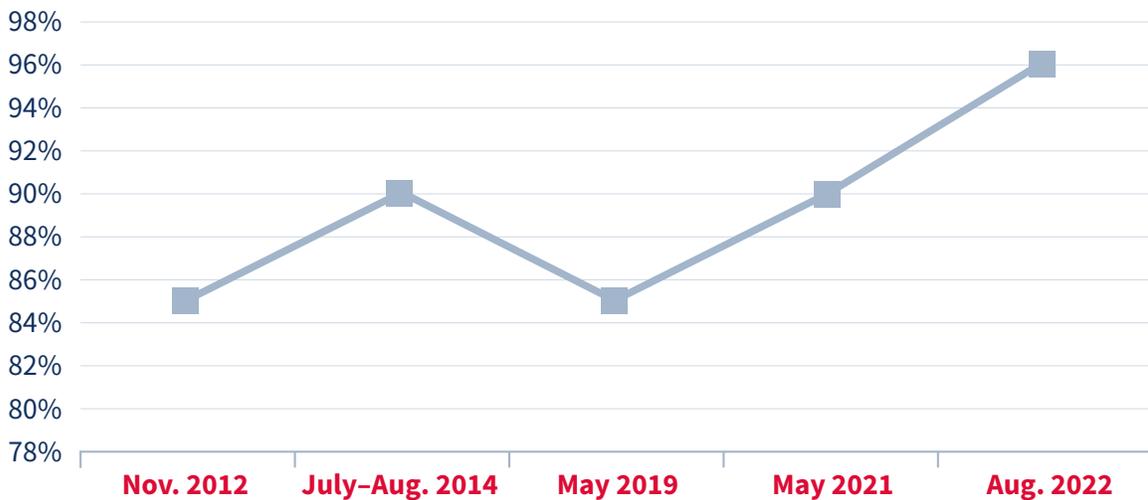


- According to the Israeli military, Iron Dome short-range air defense system intercepted 380 projectiles, an interception rate of 96 percent of the munitions that were fired at populated areas.

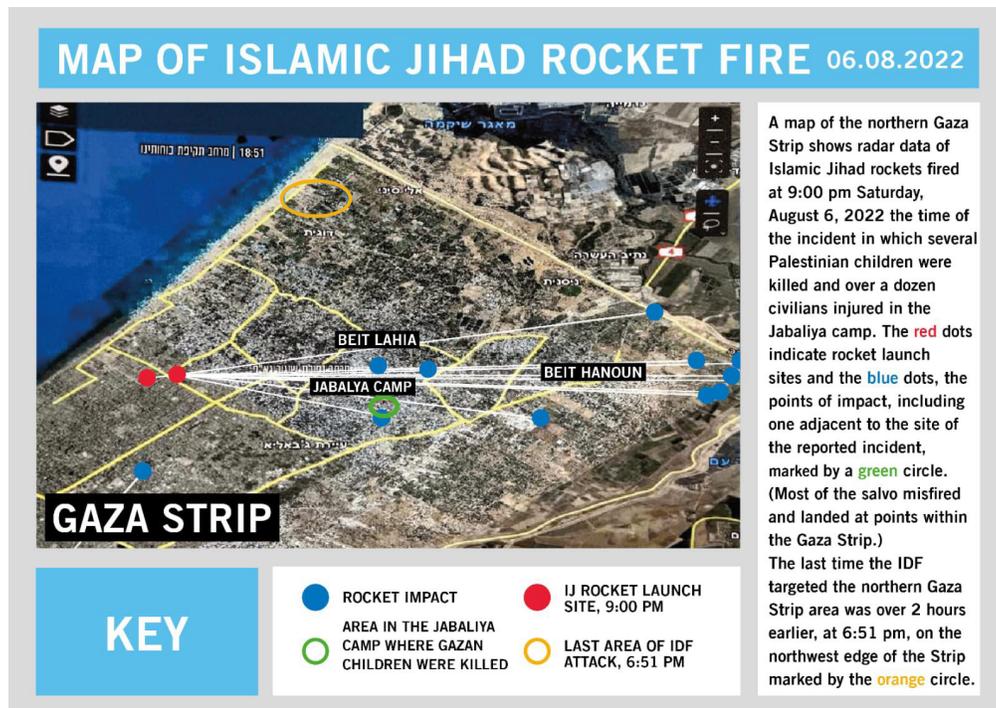
» This is a significant improvement in the effectiveness of the already capable Iron Dome due to technological advancements. In previous wars, Iron Dome intercepted 90% or less of incoming projectiles that crossed into Israeli territory and threatened population centers.

– Biden [released a statement](#) after the ceasefire was announced on August 7 offering his “support for Israel’s security is long-standing and unwavering—including its right to defend itself against attacks. Over these recent days, Israel has defended its people from indiscriminate rocket attacks launched by the terrorist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the United States is proud of our support for Israel’s Iron-Dome, which intercepted hundreds of rockets and saved countless lives.”

Iron Dome’s Increased Interception Rate



- The IDF significantly improved the quality and speed in which they released information about the initial phases of the operation that involved their preplanned preemptive targets. While the IDF closely cooperated with the United States and published information countering disinformation faster than it did during the 2021 conflict, there were still apparent delays in disseminating information about activities that took place after Israel’s initial strikes.
 - » Israel’s move to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) from European Command (EUCOM) enabled closer coordination for information operations with the United States at both strategic and tactical levels in both countries that helped shape the international narrative about the conflict.
 - » Publishing information and countering disinformation quicker was a [critical recommendation](#) that JINSA’s Gaza Assessment Policy Project made in its report about the May 2021 conflict.
 - » The IDF released videos while the operation was still ongoing that showed how it [targeted PIJ rocket launcher sites](#) before they could fire. Shortly after the fighting ended, the IDF [published videos](#) demonstrating how it [delayed airstrikes](#) to prevent civilian casualties.
 - » The IDF [quickly released information](#) about Jabari and the strike that killed him, demonstrating the effective adoption of post-2021 conflict planning to pre-clear information on planned targets so they can be rapidly published at the time of the strike. Releasing accurate information quickly enabled Israel to better shape the international media and public perception surrounding this strike.
 - The IDF instituted specialized cells for information operations to examine what Israel’s adversaries and friends were saying publicly about the conflict and react in real time without compromising intelligence.
 - » International Spokeswoman for Prime Minister Yair Lapid, Keren Hajioff [refuted claims](#) that Israel had killed several Palestinian children on August 6, instead claiming, “Islamic Jihad terrorists fired a rocket towards Israel which fell short inside Gaza, hitting a Palestinian home in the Jabalia neighborhood and tragically killing at least four children. There is video documenting the entire thing.” The IDF’s specialized information operations cells knew within one hour of the reports that the children had died that Israel was not responsible, but Israel did not publish the video validating this claim until a day later, on August 7.
 - » Similarly, despite knowing that its strikes were not responsible for the death of the Palestinian children on August 6, the IDF did not [release a map](#) making its case until a day later. The map shows the locations of its airstrikes and PIJ misfires in the vicinity of where the children died.



Israel Defense Forces, Twitter, August 7, 2022, <https://twitter.com/IDF/status/1556167657363312641?s=20&t=ao66pgInjY6yrp2SCMHalg>

- In 2019, Israel and PIJ engaged in a similarly brief escalation that avoided bringing in Hamas. In both 2019 and the conflict this past weekend, Israel indicated early on that it would not be targeting Hamas unless it also launched projectiles at Israel. This past weekend, Hamas chose not to launch rockets at Israel over the weekend, indicating that the deterrence established in 2021 still holds.
 - » With control over Gaza, Hamas faces the challenge that it is not yet ready to engage Israel in a war that reaches levels similar to the May 2021 conflict but also wants to avoid appearing weak compared to PIJ.
 - » In 2019, Israel killed al Jabari's predecessor as PIJ commander in Gaza, Baha Abu al-Ata, which initiated a four-day escalation. Hamas largely stayed out of that round of violence despite a Hamas member dying. Hamas's decision to avoid fighting was easier because—similar to Operation Breaking Dawn—Israel made clear that it would not target its leadership or infrastructure unless it also launched rockets.
 - Traditionally, regardless of who in Gaza launches an attack, Israel has held Hamas responsible as the organization in charge of the territory. With Operation Breaking Dawn, however, Israel made clear it draws a distinction between PIJ and Hamas.