

Israel Faces Multifront Escalation

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Last week's attacks against Israel from southern Lebanon, Gaza, and Syria reflected unprecedented coordination among Iran-backed terrorist groups that surround Israel, led by Hamas with Hezbollah's assent, as well as these groups' growing abilities to launch rapid and large multifront projectile barrages. This assault seeks to gauge Israel's readiness to respond—and more generally to erode Israeli deterrence—amid Israel's perceived weakness and distractions from internal tensions, Tehran's emergence from its regional isolation, and uncertainties about America's commitments to Israel and Middle East security. The United States urgently must stop distancing itself from Israel's concerted efforts to counter Iranian-led aggression, end its unconditional diplomatic outreach to Tehran, and rebuild fraying ties with Arab partners who otherwise will hedge further toward Iran, China, and Russia.

What Happened?

- Overnight on April 5, Palestinian terrorists in Gaza fired sixteen projectiles into southern Israel after [clashes](#) between Israeli police and Palestinians at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. One rocket hit a factory near Sderot, and the rest landed in empty fields or were intercepted by Israel's short-range Iron Dome air defense system.
- On April 6, Palestinian militants in southern Lebanon [launched](#) at least thirty-four rockets at northern Israeli towns and villages. While Israeli air defenses intercepted twenty-five of the rockets, at least five landed in Israeli territory, lightly injuring at least three people.
 - » Israel blamed Hamas and targeted ten sites in Gaza and three in Lebanon linked to terrorists. These strikes against military installations and tunnels did not cause any casualties.
- On April 7, Israel [downed](#) a quadcopter drone that infiltrated its territory from Lebanon.
- Overnight on April 8, militants in Syria [launched six rockets](#) at the Israeli Golan Heights, with three entering Israeli territory and one being intercepted. A local militia called Liwa al-Quds, or the Jerusalem Brigade, claimed responsibility for the attack.
 - » Israel [responded](#) that day with artillery and drone strikes against launchers and Israeli aircraft later struck targets near Damascus.

- **APRIL 5** ● Palestinian terrorists in Gaza fired 16 projectiles into southern Israel in the morning and 2 more in the evening.
- **APRIL 6** ● Palestinian militants in southern Lebanon launched 34 rockets at northern Israel.
- **APRIL 7** ● Israel intercepted a small quadcopter drone that entered its territory from Lebanon.
- **APRIL 8** ● Militants in Syria launched six rockets at the Golan Heights.

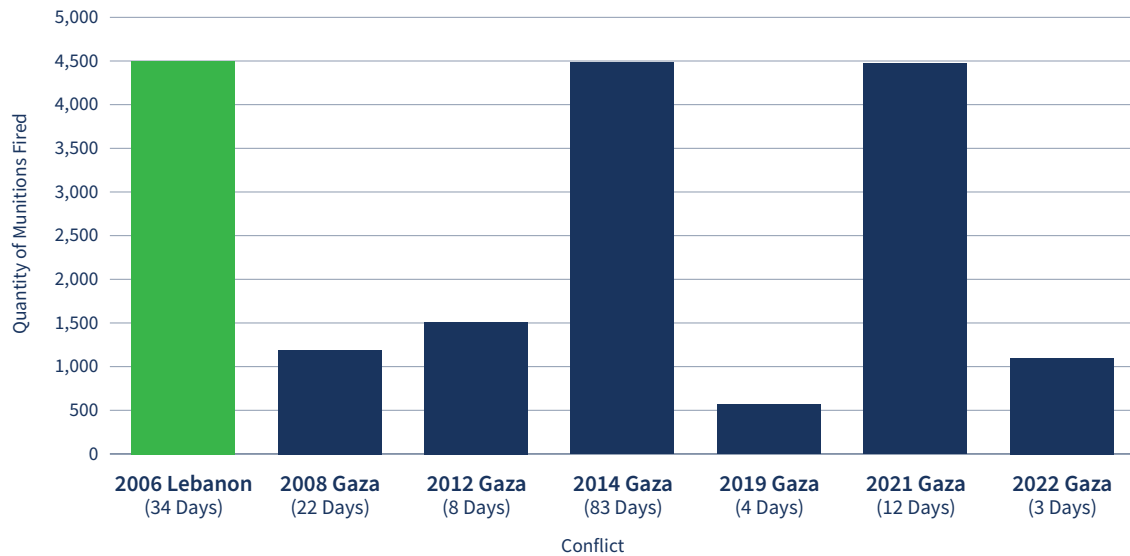
Why Is It Important?

- These multifront attacks utilized unprecedented coordination among Iranian terrorist proxies to probe Israel’s ability to respond, and to uphold deterrence, amid political tensions inside Israel.
- This latest round of persistent low-intensity conflict between Israel and Iranian proxies is notable for the coordinated multifront projectile attacks from Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza.
 - » Both Hamas and Hezbollah are proxies of the Iranian regime who heavily rely on Tehran for funding, weaponry, and direction. Furthermore, given that Hezbollah controls southern Lebanon to such an extent that no terrorist group can deploy military capabilities there, let alone attack Israel, without its permission, Hezbollah leveraged Hamas as its own proxy force and did not have to directly join the fighting when it greenlit the Gazan terrorist group’s attacks on Israel.
 - On April 8, the leader of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah [met](#) with Hamas head Ismail Haniyeh in Beirut to discuss cooperation. The gathering of Sunni terror organizations under the auspices of Shia leader Nasrallah underscores the organized nature of this campaign, as well as Hamas’ expanding ability to threaten Israel from southern Lebanon as well as from Gaza.
 - Saleh al-Arouri, a founding member of Hamas’ military wing and its West Bank leader who is thought by Israeli officials to be responsible for the rocket fire against Israel, [attended](#) the Nasrallah-Haniyah meeting.
- Coming in the wake of recent tensions at Al Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount, as well as Israeli internal political disputes, this multifront ambush seeks to exploit Israel’s perceived inability at present to respond effectively, and more broadly to gauge and erode Israel’s deterrence in light of recent [successful](#) Israeli strikes against Iranian military personnel and related targets.
 - » Consistently, Iranian-backed proxies have [retaliated](#) conspicuously against U.S. targets in Syria in response to Israeli strikes on Iranian targets in Syria, suggesting effective Israeli deterrence against Iran and its proxies. However, in light of months-long tensions in Israel triggered by the Netanyahu government’s pursuit of judicial reforms, Hamas’s calculation may be that the Israeli government is too unstable and internally focused to respond sufficiently to uphold deterrence.

- Most notably, a [growing number](#) of Israeli reservists have [pledged](#) not to report for training if the judicial reform moves forward. Given Israel’s small size, it relies heavily on reservists, especially as pilots and as members of elite combat units.
- On March 6, Nasrallah [argued](#) that “everything that is happening in Israel is a sign of the end of this entity.”
- » By attacking Israel from Lebanon, Hamas also indicated that it has expanded its offensive capacity and capability without losing its grip on Gaza.
 - Storing and firing weaponry in Lebanon signals that Hamas’s leadership feels its weapons stores in Gaza are sufficient and its control over the territory remains secure.
- » Hezbollah meanwhile has sought to denigrate Israel’s ability to respond, with Nasrallah [proclaiming](#) last month that Israel is “moving toward downfall and collapse,” followed last week by deputy chief Naim Qassem’s [assertion](#) that Hezbollah’s “deterrence balance remains in place” to dissuade any forceful Israeli response.
- » Notably, Iran’s proxies also used recent [incidents](#) at Al Aqsa/Temple Mount—which occurred during Ramadan and Passover—as an excuse to launch rockets at Israel, in a notable parallel to how Hamas exploited and escalated similar tensions to ultimately [produce](#) the May 2021 Gaza conflict.
- More broadly, the multifront attack also comes amid Iran’s emergence from its regional diplomatic isolation. In turn, this development corresponds to weakening U.S. leadership in the Middle East, and to fraying Israeli ties with the United States and its budding Arab partners like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.
 - » In March, China [brokered](#) a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia to restore their diplomatic ties, and the Foreign Ministers for all three countries [met](#) in Beijing on April 6.
- The attack from Lebanon on April 7, which was the largest from that country since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, shows Palestinian militants’ increased willingness and ability to fire massive barrages in quick conflicts that are as large as any of those Israel faced throughout the entire 2006 war.
 - » Over the thirty-four days of the 2006 war, Hezbollah fired 4,500 munitions at Israel, or just over 236 per day.
 - » During the 2021 conflict between Israel and Gaza, Palestinian militants launched roughly 4,460 projectiles, a similar total amount as Hezbollah fired during the entire 2006 Lebanon war. However, with the 2021 Gaza conflict only lasting twelve days, Israel faced a significantly higher rate of fire than its previous conflicts at roughly 370 projectiles per day.
 - » From August 5-7, 2022, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) [launched 1,100 rockets](#) into Israel from Gaza. During the three-day conflict, PIJ launched roughly 366 projectiles per day, a similar total to what Palestinian terrorists fired throughout the entire 2021 conflict.

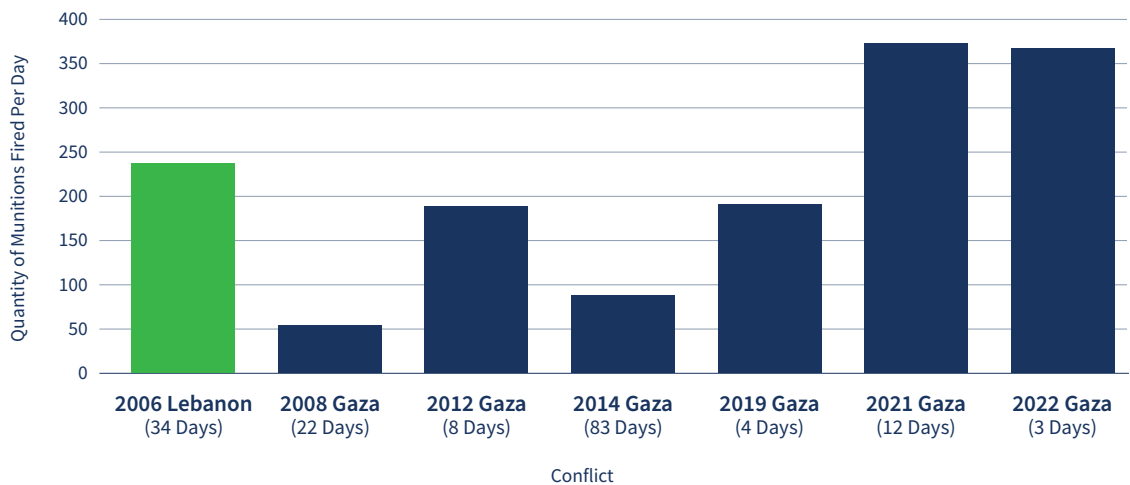
Projectiles Fired Against Israel in Conflicts

Data from the IDF



Palestinian Terrorists Have an Increased Capacity to Attack Israel

Data from the IDF



- Since the 2006 war, Hezbollah has expanded its arsenal of rockets and missiles from roughly 11,000 to 130,000, including a small but growing arsenal of advanced precision munitions.
 - » Israel and Lebanon [last exchanged fire](#) in August 2021 when Hezbollah launched nineteen rockets into Israeli territory and Israel then targeted the sources of the attacks. There were no casualties in that incident.
- The cross-border escalation between Israel and its neighboring enemies comes amid a spate of terror attacks against Israelis, including a March 15 incident where Israeli soldiers killed a man who had infiltrated from Lebanon and was accused of [exploding a car](#) with a bomb two days prior.

What Should the United States Do Next?

- The convergence of multiple worrisome trends highlighted by the recent multifront attack on Israel—growing confidence by Iran’s terrorist proxies to test and undermine Israeli deterrence, increasingly larger projectile barrages by Hamas and other terrorist groups, fraying U.S. influence and [deterrence](#) in the Middle East, and Israel’s perceived weakness and distraction—all point to the need for stronger U.S. leadership and strengthened bilateral strategic ties with its closest partner in the region: Israel.
 - » The United States should reverse its longstanding unofficial policy of publicly distancing itself from Israel in the wake of the latter’s ongoing military campaign to degrade and deter Tehran by imposing direct costs on Iran-led aggression regionwide.
 - In tandem, the Biden administration should adopt a [Plan B](#) of comprehensive pressure and abandon its [counterproductive](#), unconditional diplomatic outreach to Tehran which merely enervates U.S. deterrence, encourages further Iranian nuclear and military expansion, and alienates U.S. regional partners.
 - » Such divisions and policies reinforce for U.S. partners and adversaries alike that America cannot be counted on to help counter shared Iran-led threats to regional stability, which in turn encourages Iranian aggression, undermines U.S. deterrence, and isolates Israel by encouraging moderate Arab countries to hedge toward Tehran and seek alternative security providers like China and Russia.