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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 19, 2023

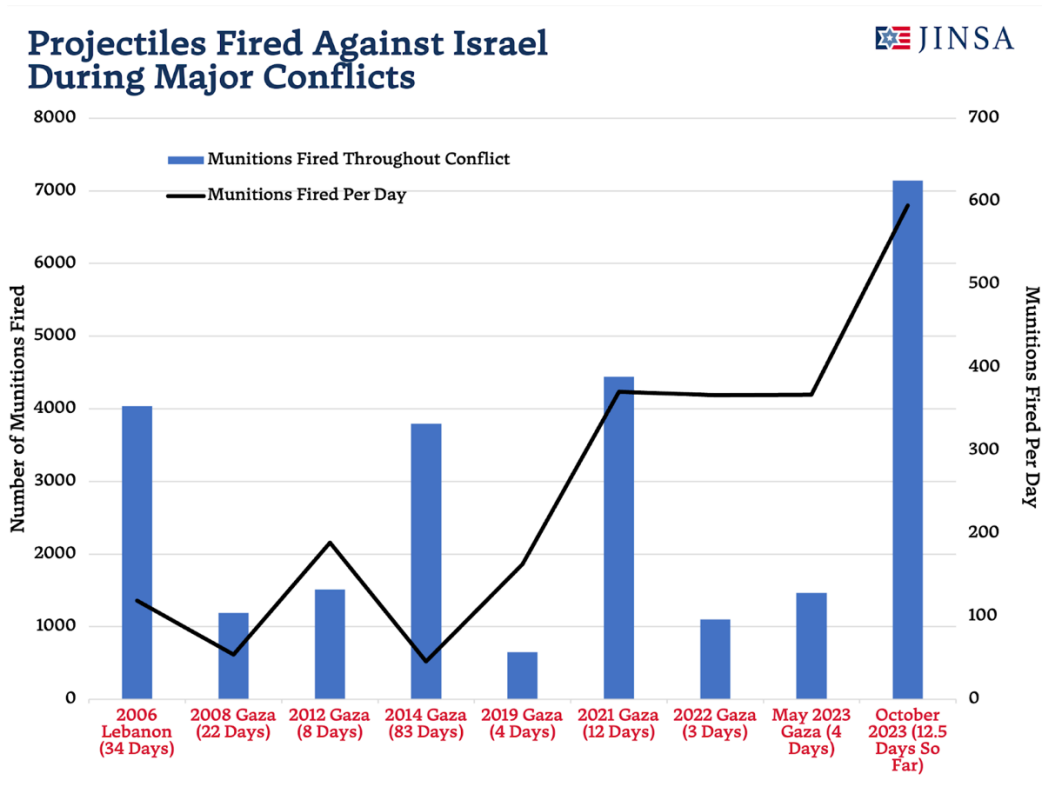
On October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked and unprecedented multi-pronged attack on Israel by land, air, and sea. JINSA issued a NatSec Brief with an [early assessment](#) of the war on October 8 and has produced daily updates during the war. Yesterday, JINSA also held a [webinar](#) with JINSA's President and CEO Michael Makovsky, former CENTCOM and SOCOM Commander GEN Joseph Votel, USA (ret.), and former Deputy CENTCOM Commander VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), on the U.S. military response to the war. Updated information and analysis are below, which JINSA will continue to produce throughout the war.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- Roughly [7,144](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » There were approximately [214](#) rockets targeting Israel in the last 24 hours.
 - » Sirens [sounded](#) in Azor, Beit Dagan, Bnei Brak, Ganot, Hemed, Holon, Mikve Israel, Mishmar Hashiva, Or Yehuda, Qiryat Ono, Qiryat Shemona, Givat Shmuel, Ramat Gan, Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
- Hezbollah and other terrorist groups in Lebanon escalated their attacks against Israel on October 18.
 - » Terrorists [launched](#) an anti-tank missile from southern Lebanon towards the Shushan area of northern Israel.
 - » Nine projectiles were [fired](#) in a single volley from southern Lebanon into Israel, four of which were intercepted by the IDF.
 - » Several anti-tank missiles were [launched](#) from Lebanon at the northern Israeli towns of Malkia, Manara, and Metula.
 - » An anti-tank missile was [launched](#) from Lebanon at the town of Metula, striking an unspecified location near the town and causing no injuries.
 - » Shots were [fired](#) from Lebanon towards the northern town of Har Dov, and shots were also [fired](#) at an IDF military post near Zar'it, along the border.

- » Terrorists [fired](#) anti-tank missiles from Lebanon towards the towns of Rosh Hanikra and Manara.
- » A terrorist cell [fired](#) mortar shells towards the area of Turmus in northern Israel.



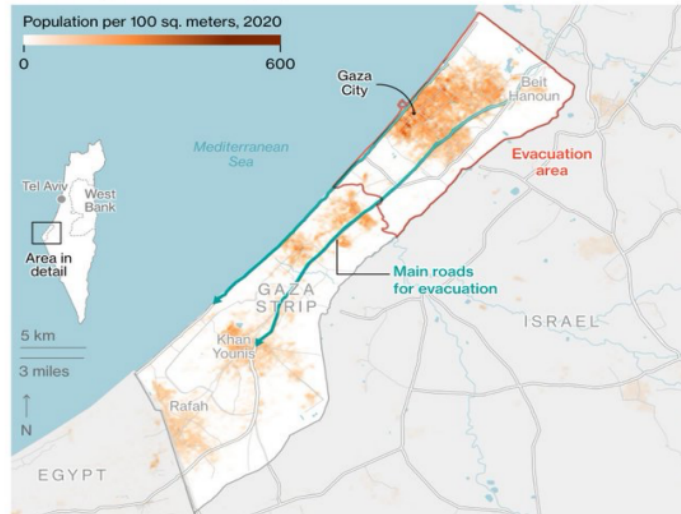
IDF Operations

- The IDF stated that it launched “[hundreds](#)” of strikes on targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) that airstrikes conducted overnight on the Gazan city of Rafah had killed Rafat Abu Hilal, head of the military wing of Gaza’s Popular Resistance Committees terrorist group.
 - » The IDF also stated that hundreds of infrastructure targets in Gaza were [eliminated](#) in the strikes, including anti-tank missile launch sites, operational headquarters, militant command centers, and tunnels.
 - » Palestinian media [reported](#) that the IDF airstrikes had killed Jihad Muheisen, head of the Gaza Strip faction of the Palestinian National Security Forces, and Jamila al-Shanti, a member of Hamas’s political bureau.
- The IDF shelled the launch sites of attacks from southern Lebanon in response to missile attacks that targeted communities and military outposts in northern Israel. At least thirteen Hezbollah terrorists and five Palestinian terrorists have [died](#) in southern Lebanon since October 7.
 - » On October 19, the IDF announced that it was [striking](#) Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon in response to the attacks on October 18. The targets struck by the IDF

- included an observation post along the Lebanese-Israeli border from which anti-tank missiles had been fired into Israel.
- » On October 18, the IDF responded to an anti-tank missile launched towards the Shushan area of northern Israel by [firing](#) artillery into Lebanon and striking Hezbollah infrastructure targets.
 - » On October 18, the IDF retaliated with [live fire](#) after several anti-tank missiles were launched from southern Lebanon towards the Israeli towns of Malkia, Manara, and Metula.
 - » On October 18, an IDF tank struck and [eliminated](#) two terrorist military outposts in southern Lebanon after it spotted terrorists preparing to launch an anti-tank missile into Israel.
 - » On October 18, the IDF [struck](#) a military post in southern Lebanon in response to an anti-tank missile attack on the town of Metula.
 - » On October 18, the IDF responded with [live fire](#) after shots were fired at the town of Har Dov near the Lebanese-Israeli border.
 - » On October 18, the IDF used a drone to strike a terrorist cell that had [fired](#) mortar shells towards the area of Turmus in northern Israel.
 - » The IDF responded to shots fired at its military post in Zar'it near the Lebanese-Israeli border by [firing on](#) targets in Lebanon on October 18.
 - » The IDF retaliated against an anti-tank missile attack launched toward the towns of Rosh Hanikra and Manara by [striking](#) Hezbollah targets in Lebanon on October 18.
 - On October 18, a Syrian NGO [reported](#) that Israel had struck a Syrian target in the southern Syrian town of Quneitra around the same time that the IDF announced that it was targeting Hezbollah “terrorist positions” in Lebanon.
 - The IDF said that [524](#) Palestinians had been arrested in the West Bank since the start of the war.
 - » The IDF reported on October 19 that Israeli security forces had [arrested](#) sixty-three Hamas operatives and arrested a total of eighty terrorists overnight in West Bank raids.
 - These arrests reportedly included Ramallah-based senior Hamas operative Hassan Yousef.
 - » Israeli press reported that police officers had [clashed](#) with Palestinian gunmen near Tulkarem in the West Bank on October 19, and Palestinian press reported that terrorists had set off explosive devices and fired on Israeli forces.
 - » Overnight, the IDF [demolished](#) the home of a Hamas terrorist who killed an IDF soldier in the West Bank in July.
 - The IDF has urged Gazans to [evacuate](#) towards the area of Al-Mawasi, south of Wadi Gaza, where international humanitarian aid will be provided.

Israel Urges Evacuation of Northern Gaza

The Israeli army has allowed Gaza residents safe movement to the south of the territory before Saturday 4pm local time



Sources: Israel Defense Forces; European Commission, Global Human Settlement Layer

Source: [Bloomberg](#)

Casualties and Hostages

- Approximately 1,400 people in Israel have [died](#) and at least 4,600 have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 306 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least thirty-one [American](#) nationals, twenty-four [Thai](#) nationals, twenty-one [French](#) nationals, seventeen [British](#) nationals, ten [Nepalese](#) nationals, seven [Argentinian](#) nationals, sixteen [Russian](#) nationals, four [Romanian](#) nationals, four [Chinese](#) nationals, three [Brazilian](#) nationals, three [Belarusian](#) nationals, three [Chilean](#) nationals, three [Philippines](#) nationals, two [Ukrainian](#) nationals, two [Peruvian](#) nationals, five [Canadian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Colombian](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, an [Italian](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Turkish](#) national, and an [Austrian](#) national.
- According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, approximately 3,500 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza and 12,000 have been injured during the war.
- According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, sixty-nine people have been [killed](#) and an additional 1,300 have been wounded in the West Bank.
 - » Palestinian media sources reported on October 19 that one person was [killed](#) by Israeli security forces near Budrus, in the West Bank.
- The IDF claims at least [1,500](#) infiltrators from Gaza have been killed in Israel since the start of the war.
 - » The IDF said the military [cannot rule out](#) that there may still be terrorist infiltrators in Israeli territory from the October 7 attacks.
- According to the IDF's latest press release, the families of 203 individuals have been notified that their loved ones were [taken hostage](#).

- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least thirteen [American](#) nationals, fifteen [French](#) nationals, fifteen [Argentinian](#) nationals, nine [Ukrainian](#) nationals, eight [Russian](#) nationals, three [Canadian](#) nationals, three [Philippines](#) nationals, two [Austrian](#) nationals, three [Italian](#) nationals, two [Paraguayan](#) nationals, five [Peruvian](#) nationals, two [Sri Lankan](#) nationals, two [Tanzanian](#) nationals, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, and a [Nepalese](#) national.
 - » At least eight [German](#) nationals, seventeen [Thai](#) nationals, four [Portuguese](#) nationals, two [Italian](#) nationals, and two [Mexican](#) nationals have been taken hostage by Hamas.
- On October 17, the IDF released a [preliminary report](#) with video, photo, audio, and radar evidence about the attack against the Al-Ahli hospital, refuting claims that it was responsible and confirming that it was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket that struck the hospital's parking lot.
 - » President Biden [rebutted](#) Hamas's claims and the insufficiently skeptical repetition of these [claims](#) by Western press outlets that the explosion was caused by an Israeli airstrike, stating that he believed Palestinian terrorists were responsible, and cited unspecified Department of Defense data he was provided.
- Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Mark Warner (D-VA), Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, respectively, released a joint statement on October 18 [absolving](#) Israel of responsibility in the explosion, citing unspecified intelligence.
 - » The statement said, "the Senate Intelligence Committee has received and reviewed intelligence related to the attack on al-Ahli hospital in Gaza. Based on this information, we feel confident that the explosion was the result of a failed rocket launch by militant terrorists and not the result of an Israeli airstrike."



Source: [Israel Defense Forces](#)

- On October 18, anti-Israel protesters amassed outside the U.S. Capitol building, and several hundred [flooded](#) the Capitol Rotunda. Nearly 300 protesters were [arrested](#) inside the Capitol, and three people were charged with assault on a police officer.
- Since the war began, there has been an increase in antisemitic attacks and terrorist threats worldwide.

- » On October 18, the U.S. and Israeli Embassies in Buenos Aires, Argentina, were both [briefly evacuated](#) after receiving bomb threats via email.
- » On October 18, approximately sixty-five German police officers were [injured](#) during anti-Israel riots in Berlin.
- » On October 17, pro-Palestinian rioters [burned down](#) the historic synagogue in Al Hammah, Tunisia.

Iranian Involvement

- On October 19, there were early [reports](#) of a drone attack at the Conoco gas field in eastern Syria, where U.S. troops are deployed, with indications of five explosions there, and additional reports of three drones targeting the U.S. military facility in Tanf, also in eastern Syria.
 - » Two of the drones targeting Tanf were reportedly shot down, while the third struck the facility, causing some damage.
- Two Iran-backed groups [claimed](#) to conduct separate attacks on October 18 against bases in Iraq hosting U.S. service members, in which troops sustained minor injuries. The attacks by Iran-backed militia against U.S. forces at bases in Iraq were the first attacks by any Iran-backed groups against American troops since March.
 - » U.S. Central Command said in a [press release](#) that “in the last 24 hours, the U.S. military defended against three drones near U.S. and Coalition forces in Iraq. In western Iraq, U.S. forces engaged two drones, destroying one and damaging the second, resulting in minor injuries to Coalition forces. Separately in northern Iraq, U.S. forces engaged and destroyed a drone, resulting in no injuries or damage.”
 - » The Islamic Resistance of Iraq, an umbrella term for Iran-backed militias, claimed credit for targeting the al-Asad base in Iraq with two drones.
 - » Tashkil al-Waritheen, a front group for Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, claimed responsibility for a drone attack against the al Harir airbase in Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Soon after the Al-Ahli hospital explosion on October 18, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian posted on X (formerly known as Twitter) that time is “running out” for Israel, *Fox News* [reported](#).
 - » Amir-Abdollahian, also reportedly tweeted, “after the terrible crime of the Zionist regime in the bombing and massacre of more than 1,000 innocent women and children in the hospital, the time has come for the global unity of humanity against this fake regime more hated than ISIS and its killing machine,” and “time is OVER!”
- Amir-Abdollahian [reportedly](#) said during a previous televised interview that “time is running out very fast,” and “if the war crimes against the Palestinians are not immediately stopped, other multiple fronts will open and this is inevitable.”

U.S. and International Response

- As JINSA [noted](#) on October 18, President Biden visited Israel that day and met with its new war cabinet. Before the meeting, Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu delivered [remarks](#).

- » Biden said that “ Hamas has slaughtered, as has been pointed out, over 1,300 people — and it is not hyperbole to suggest ‘slaughtered’ — including thirty-one Americans as part of that.”
- » He argued that Hamas committed “atrocities that make ISIS look somewhat more rational.”
- » Further urging the importance of maintaining Israel’s capacity to defend itself, Biden insisted, “we’re going to make sure that occurs, as you know.”
- » Addressing the Israelis regarding the October 17 explosion at Al-Ahli hospital, Biden clarified, “based on what I’ve seen, it appears as though it was done by the other team, not — not you. But there’s a lot of people out there who are not sure. So... we [have] to overcome a lot of things.”
- » Biden finished his remarks by saying, “and I want to say to the people of Israel: Their courage, their commitment, their bravery is — is stunning. It’s really stunning. I’m proud to be here.”
- President Biden separately delivered [remarks](#) during the visit on October 18 in which he said that the October 7 attacks “has opened painful scars ... the world watched [during the Holocaust], it knew, and the world did nothing. We will not stand by and do nothing again. Not today, not tomorrow, not ever” and that “for a nation the size of Israel, the October 7 attacks were like fifteen 9/11s.”
 - » Biden added, “as the American president, there is no higher priority than the release and safe return of all these hostages.”
 - » Biden reiterated his commitment to ensuring Israel’s security, saying, “we’re going to make sure you have what you need to protect your people, to defend your nation. For decades, we’ve ensured Israel’s qualitative military edge. And later this week I’m going to ask the U.S. Congress for an unprecedented support package for Israel’s defense.”
 - » Biden also stated, “we’re going to keep Iron Dome fully supplied so it can continue standing sentinel over Israeli skies saving Israeli lives. We’ve moved U.S. military assets to the region.”
- On October 18, President Biden [announced](#) that the United States and Egypt had reached a deal to allow around twenty humanitarian trucks to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing, adding, “if Hamas confiscates them or doesn't let it get through . . . that [the arrangement] is going to end.”
- On October 18, the U.S. Navy announced that the U.S. Sixth Fleet command-and-control ship *USS Mount Whitney* would be heading to the Eastern Mediterranean to [complement](#) the two Carrier Strike Groups and the Marine Expeditionary Unit also being deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean.
 - » *USS Mount Whitney* enables commanders to [direct](#) air, ground, and maritime units from a single location, has advanced intelligence capabilities, and can process large amounts of data, according to the Navy.
- On October 18, the Treasury Department announced sanctions on ten Hamas operatives or financial benefactors based in the Gaza Strip, Algeria, Sudan, Turkey, and Qatar.
 - » The Treasury [press release](#) states the action “targets members managing assets in a secret Hamas investment portfolio, a Qatar-based financial facilitator with close ties to the Iranian regime, a key Hamas commander, and a Gaza-based virtual currency exchange and its operator.”

- » However, neither the United States nor its European partners took steps to prevent the October 18 [expiration](#) of key UN sanctions on Iran’s missile and drone proliferation and related activities, and instead sought to [replace](#) the expiring sanctions with lesser U.S.-only penalties against such activities.
- On October 18, the White House announced that President Biden will be [addressing](#) the American people on October 19 at 8:00 pm ET on the increasing security threats around the globe, including the ongoing wars in Ukraine and Israel.
- On October 19, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak [arrived](#) in Israel and is scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Herzog.
 - » Sunak told Israeli press that “above all, I’m here to express my solidarity with the Israeli people. You have suffered an unspeakable, horrific act of terrorism and I want you to know that the United Kingdom and I stand with you.”
- On October 17, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [spoke](#) by phone with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.
 - » Blinken offered condolences for the loss of life inflicted by the explosion at Al-Ahli hospital and further stressed that Hamas does not serve as a legitimate representative of Palestinian aspirations.
 - » Blinken condemned all terrorism and “stressed the United States’ firm commitment to upholding the law of war, to include important protections for civilians.”
 - » The two leaders discussed efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gazan civilians and to contain the war.
- On October 17, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz [spoke](#) next to Netanyahu in Israel.
 - » Scholz said that Germany’s “one place” amid Hamas’s terrorist attacks “is alongside Israel.”
 - » Scholz added, “It is very important to say this today here during these difficult times in Israel: Germany’s history and the responsibility it had for the Holocaust requires us to help maintain the security and existence of Israel.”
 - » Scholz noted that he discussed improving humanitarian conditions in Gaza with Netanyahu.
 - » Denouncing Hamas, Scholz described the group as “bloodthirsty” and as the war’s instigators, and he said, “the brutal attack on innocent civilians, the execution of civilians, murders of babies, abduction of women, men and children, and humiliation and parading of Holocaust survivors [before cameras], makes the blood run cold.”
 - » He pledged German support to help free hostages held by Hamas and warned, “no [outside] actor should see it as a good idea to intervene in this conflict.”

Analysis

- The attacks by Iran-backed militia against U.S. service members in Iraq and Syria indicates the deterioration of U.S. deterrence against these groups and the Iranian regime, who funds, arms, and directs them.
 - » Tehran may be seeking to deter the United States from becoming more involved in the Israel-Gaza war and to prepare its proxies for a broader regional war.

- The fallout from the Al-Ahli hospital incident, including the rush to judgment by many international media outlets before the circumstances surrounding the incident could be properly verified, underscores the [success](#) of Hamas and others in using misinformation and disinformation to delegitimize Israel’s lawful self-defense operations.
- On October 18, JINSA hosted a [webinar](#) about the U.S. military response to the war in Israel and the state of the U.S. force posture in the Middle East with JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky, former CENTCOM and SOCOM Commander GEN Joseph Votel, USA (ret.), and former Deputy CENTCOM Commander VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.).
 - » GEN Votel lauded the U.S. decision to deploy two carrier strike groups to the region, stating that “there’s been a real sense of urgency to it and a real focus on it,” but both GEN Votel and VADM Fox emphasized the importance of credibility in establishing and maintaining deterrence against Iran and its proxies.
 - Citing historical examples such as Operation Praying Mantis in the 1980s, in which U.S. military strikes against Iranian naval vessels deterred Iran’s placing of sea mines in international waters, VADM Fox underscored that “the Iranians only respect force.”
 - Cautioning about the dangers of deterrence failure, GEN Votel said that Hezbollah is “the most powerful terrorist organization in the Middle East” and that if Hezbollah actively becomes involved in the conflict, “Israel will have to choose where the priority will go.”
 - » VADM Fox stated the carrier strike groups provide flexibility for U.S. civilian policymakers and that the naval assets could be used both for humanitarian purposes, such as evacuating Americans, or for military strikes.
 - » The panelists also discussed the benefits Israel has conferred by its transition from EUCEM to the CENTCOM area of responsibility, including with respect to supply lines.
 - VADM Fox argued that “having Israel in CENTCOM is an enormous help... you’ve already got the touchpoints and a framework of cooperation.”
 - » VADM Fox advocated for more assertive and creative approaches to U.S. naval force posture, including forward-deploying U.S. naval assets to areas in Europe such as Greece, emulating the forward-deployed U.S. naval assets in Japan.
 - » The panelists also discussed the role of external influences including Qatar, where U.S. Central Command has its forward headquarters at al-Udeid Air Base. VADM Fox stated that Qatar has been “shrewd” in its dealings with other actors, including the United States, as it is also a leading benefactor of Hamas.
 - GEN Votel agreed with this characterization and added that other regional players would need to play a role in the rebuilding of Gaza.
 - GEN Votel made the following remarks on the subject: “What role do Qatar, Jordan, and the U.A.E. play in the long term? At some point, we’ll have to address the future of Palestinian political leadership. The so-called shuttle diplomacy will be to level intelligence, best exemplified by the explosion at the hospital yesterday. An important part of our diplomatic environment is to level the information and have everyone operate at a common point.”