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# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 24, 2023

*On October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked and unprecedented multi-pronged attack on Israel by land, air, and sea. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below, which JINSA will regularly produce.*

## Analysis

- While visiting Israel on October 24, French President Emmanuel Macron [endorsed](#) the expansion of the counter-ISIS coalition to “also fight against Hamas,” which JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal and Director of Research Jacob Olidort had recommended on October 20.
  - » Writing in *The National Interest*, Misztal and Olidort [argued](#) that “[t]his coalition, formed based on the existing counter-ISIS coalition, should consist of NATO and Arab partners, as well as partners in the Indo-Pacific, and should aim to degrade, if not altogether destroy, the Iranian regime’s proxy network and its capabilities to launch and inspire attacks in the region and around the world through military, economic, diplomatic, and rhetoric means. At a minimum, this means expelling or eliminating Iranian regime proxies from their countries and de-platforming them from any local media presence.”
  - » Creation of an international coalition to degrade Iranian proxies, particularly those outside of Israel’s immediate vicinity, could thwart Iranian efforts to escalate and expand the conflict, thereby affording Israel more freedom of action in Gaza and potentially Lebanon.
  - » However, international involvement in Israel’s Gaza offensive may conversely undermine Israel’s strategic necessity to defend itself by itself and could be used by partners to try and influence or restrain Israel’s tactics, strategy, or desired end-states.
- Hamas’s attempts to win a strategic victory in the court of public opinion, casting itself as a victim and good faith actor, continue with the release of another two hostages and multiple media reports of ongoing talks, mediated by Egypt and Qatar, over the release of an additional fifty hostages.
  - » These talks seem to confirm *Axios’s* [reporting](#) on October 24 that Israel is postponing a ground invasion in order to allow hostage negotiations to play out, with hopes for a fruitful outcome.

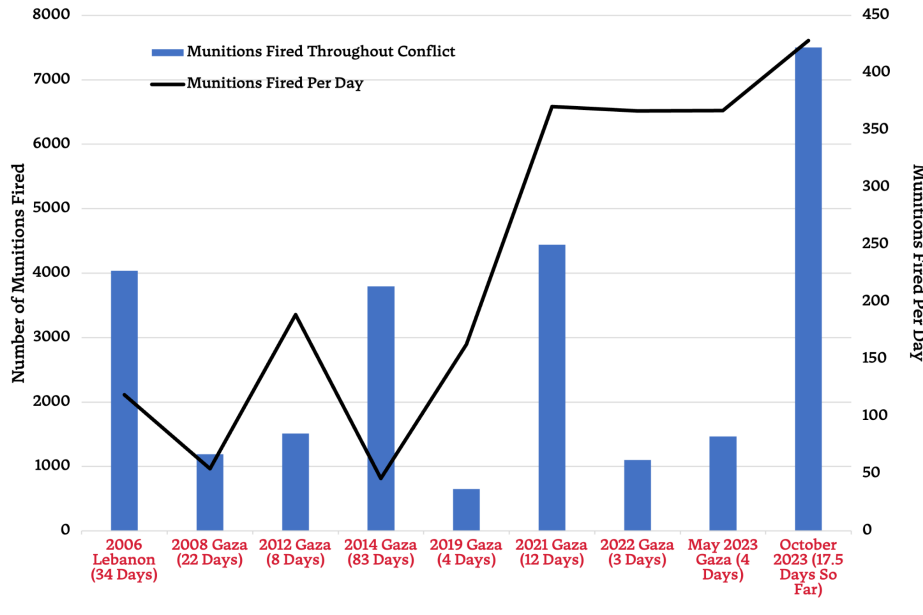
- » Though Israel is undoubtedly seeking the safe release of its citizens as well as foreign nationals held in Gaza as a top priority, it seems improbable that a ground offensive will be held off indefinitely.
- Russia’s rhetoric towards the current conflict suggests it is increasingly hostile to Israel’s position, likely due to Russia’s broader geopolitical concerns about greater U.S. involvement in the Middle East, its deepening security relationship with Iran and China, and its desire to prolong instability in the region as a distraction from its war in Ukraine.
  - » Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s [visit](#) to Tehran on October 24, where he met with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian to discuss “further building up” the Russian-Iranian relationship, comes on the heels of a meeting on October 20 between Russian and Chinese officials in which China’s envoy to the Middle East [blamed](#) Israel for the conflict.
  - » Russia will reportedly [veto](#) a United Nations Security Council Resolution to be set forth on October 24 that condemns Hamas, calls on Hamas to release all hostages, and demands Iran cease exporting arms and funds to terrorist groups.

## Last 24 Hours

### *Attacks Against Israel*

- At least [7,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
  - » A rocket [struck](#) a road and neighborhood garden in Sderot, causing damage to several vehicles, a rocket salvo [targeted](#) Beersheba, another salvo targeted Beit Shemesh, and sirens sounded in Ein Hashlosha, Nirim, Nitzan, Nahal Oz, Ashdod, and Yad Mordechai, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
- Attacks from southern Lebanon continued to target communities and military outposts in northern Israel.
  - » *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that shrapnel from a missile fired from Lebanon toward a military post near Misgav Am wounded two children in the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona.
  - » An [anti-tank missile](#) fired on October 24 from Lebanon at the Shtula area in northern Israel did not cause any reported injuries.
- On October 23, the IDF [screened](#) for 200 members of the press forty-three minutes of video from Hamas’s October 7 attack showing murder, torture, and decapitation, including footage from terrorists’ bodycams.
  - » Israeli officials said that they were releasing the footage in a closed setting to journalists to combat “a Holocaust-denial-like phenomenon happening in real-time” of people refusing to accept the evidence of Hamas’s heinous attack.

## Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



### IDF Operations

- The IDF stated that it [launched](#) strikes on approximately 400 targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.
  - » The IDF announced that it had [struck](#) dozens of Hamas operatives, dozens of Hamas infrastructure targets, command centers, and operational planning facilities. The IDF also stated that it [killed](#) the deputy commanders of Hamas’s Furqan, Nuseirat, and Shati battalions.
  - » The IDF [said](#) that it killed Ibrahim al-Sakher, head of Hamas’s anti-tank guided missile array in northern Gaza, in an airstrike the morning of October 23.
    - The IDF said further that al-Sakher orchestrated an attack that killed IDF soldier Omer Tabib in the May 2021 war between Israel and Hamas and planned several other anti-tank guided missile attacks against Israel.
  - » The IDF [said](#) on October 23 that it killed five Hamas aerial forces members: leader of the aerial array Murad Abu Murad, unit trainer Moathe Abed al-Rahman, the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood’s air defense commander Othman Hamdan, supplies manager for the unit in Gaza City Muhammad Alrifi, and northern Gaza training leader Ghassan Shakfouh.
- The IDF [stated](#) that it struck eight Hezbollah cells, seven before they could launch rockets in the last 24 hours, and that it has [eliminated](#) over 20 Hezbollah cells since the war’s start.
  - » The IDF [carried out](#) a drone strike against a terrorist in southern Lebanon who was attempting to launch rockets at the northern Israeli town of Bar’am.
  - » The IDF [said](#) that it fired toward the source of the rocket fire that targeted Kiryat Shmona.
  - » The IDF [launched](#) drone strikes and artillery fire to neutralize two Hezbollah cells in southern Lebanon planning anti-tank guided missile attacks against the Mount Dov area and Matat in Israel’s north.

- The IDF [conducted](#) an overnight raid in the West Bank, in which the army arrested eighteen suspected members of Hamas.
- According to an October 24 report by Barak Ravid of *Axios*, citing two Israeli officials, Israel is willing to postpone a ground operation into Gaza to allow talks on hostage negotiations to continue.
  - » Ravid [reported](#) that Israel told Egyptian mediators that Hamas would need to release all women and children as part of any hostage deal and that once Israel enters into Gaza, a deal would be impossible.
  - » Ravid quoted a senior Israeli official as saying that “both Israel and the Biden administration want to exhaust every effort to try and get hostages out of Gaza. If Hamas proposes a big package, of course we will be ready to do things in return.”

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- On October 23, Hamas freed [two more hostages](#), Yocheved Lifshitz, 85, and Nurit Cooper, 79. Hamas is believed to continue to hold Lifshitz and Cooper’s husbands, Oded Lifshitz, 83, and Amiram Cooper, 85.
  - » In her first public comments since being released, Lifshitz [noted](#) that she does not know where Hamas held her: “They loaded me onto a motorcycle... with one terrorist holding me from the front and the other from behind so that I wouldn’t fall. We crossed the border fence into the Strip, and at first they held me in the town of Abasan al-Kabira, which is close to [Kibbutz] Be’eri. After that, I don’t know where I was taken.”
  - » Lifshitz described terrorists forcing her to walk through “[a spiderweb](#)” of tunnels in Gaza. Her son, Arnon, [noted](#) that “she was together with another 55-60 people in the same place. If they are all in the same situation then there is room for optimism,” but that his father, Oded, was in a separate location.
  - » IDF Spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari [thanked](#) Egypt for playing a “key role” in securing the release of the two hostages.
- According to separate reports from both [The Wall Street Journal](#) and [The Times of Israel](#), Israel, through mediators Egypt and Qatar, is negotiating for the release of an additional fifty hostages held by Hamas.
  - » The talks reportedly “made progress over the past two days before hitting a snag on [October 23],” according to *The Times of Israel*.
  - » According to *The Wall Street Journal*, citing three officials, Hamas has demanded that Israel allow fuel to enter into the Gaza Strip in exchange for hostages.
- Over 1,400 people in Israel have [been killed](#) and another 4,629 have been injured in the war.
  - » According to the IDF’s latest press release, 307 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
  - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least thirty-two [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 Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 5,087 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 15,273 have been injured during the war.
- According to the Palestinian Authority-controlled Palestinian Ministry of Health, around 100 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 1,374 have been [wounded](#) in the West Bank.
- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.
- According to the IDF, the families of 220 individuals have been notified that their loved ones were [taken hostage](#).
- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least eleven [American](#) nationals, nine [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.
- An IDF soldier was [wounded](#) by an improvised explosive device during an overnight raid into the West Bank village of Burqa on October 24. The soldier was transported to a hospital in moderate condition.
- An IDF soldier was [killed](#) near the Israeli town of Kissufim on October 23 by an anti-tank missile fired from the Gaza Strip.

### *Iranian Involvement*

- On October 23, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) [reported](#) that “the U.S. military destroyed two one-way attack drones near U.S. and Coalition forces in southwest Syria before they reached their intended targets,” averting casualties and damage.
  - » CENTCOM further [noted](#) that “we are vigilantly monitoring the situation in the region and will take necessary and proportionate action to defend U.S. and Coalition forces.”
  - » On October 23, the U.S. Defense Department stated that Iran was responsible for the spate of recent drone and rocket attacks on U.S. personnel in the Middle East.
    - Defense Department spokesperson Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder stated that though the Pentagon does not have information on whether Iran “explicitly ordered” the attacks, but “by virtue of the fact that they are supported by Iran, we will ultimately [hold Iran responsible](#).”
    - A senior U.S. defense official told [Politico](#) on October 23 that “we see a prospect for much more significant escalation against US forces and personnel in the near term. And let’s be clear about it, the road leads back to Iran.”
- On October 23, advisor to the IDF’s Southern Command Major General Michael Edelstein, former IDF military attaché to the United States, [stated](#) at a press conference that “we have evidence of Iranian involvement ... not just about equipment, but more than this.” Edelstein did not add further details.

- On October 24, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi [met](#) with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Tehran to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral ties.
  - » Lavrov also met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian to discuss unspecified energy and logistics projects.
  - » According to a Russian Foreign Ministry statement, "In a traditionally trusting atmosphere, current aspects of the bilateral agenda were substantively discussed with an emphasis on further building up the entire complex of multifaceted Russian-Iranian partnership."
- After a meeting on October 23 with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a Hezbollah ally, Gebran Bassil, also allied with Hezbollah and head of the Free Patriotic Movement, [claimed](#), "no one can drag us into war unless the Israeli enemy attacks us, and then we will be forced to defend ourselves."
  - » Bassil also spoke on the phone with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and claimed that "all the Lebanese agree that they do not want war, but that does not mean that we should allow ourselves to be attacked without a response."

### *U.S. and International Response*

- The United Nations Security Council will be [voting](#) on October 24 on the U.S.-drafted resolution that condemns Hamas and calls for an unprecedented level of support for Israel.
  - » The resolution reportedly calls for humanitarian pauses, calls on Hamas to release all hostages, and thanks all mediating parties for their efforts.
  - » Russia is expected to veto the resolution, according to [reports](#).
  - » Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen will [address](#) the United Nations Security Council on October 24 to call for more international pressure on Hamas to release its hostages. Cohen reportedly will be accompanied by the family members of three hostages.
- On October 24, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Israel and will [meet](#) with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, according to the PA leader's office.
  - » According to a statement from his office before the visit to Israel, Macron would [endorse](#) "resumption of a genuine peace process" with the Palestinians and "halting colonization" of the West Bank.
    - His office elaborated, "the only way to be useful is to one, show solidarity to Israel; two, make commitments against terrorist groups very clear; and three, to open up a political perspective."
  - » Speaking alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Macron called for [widening](#) the international coalition assembled to combat ISIS to "also fight against Hamas."
- President Biden [spoke](#) with President Netanyahu on October 23, where Biden "welcomed the release of two additional hostages from Gaza...and reaffirmed his commitment to ongoing efforts to secure the release of all the remaining hostages taken by Hamas – including Americans – and to provide for safe passage for US citizens and other civilians in Gaza."
  - » The readout also stated, "the President also underscored the need to sustain a continuous flow of urgently needed humanitarian assistance into Gaza; updated the



prime minister on US support for Israel and ongoing efforts at regional deterrence, to include new US military deployments.”

- President Biden told [reporters](#) on October 23, “we should have those hostages released and then we can talk” when asked if he supports the release of hostages in exchange for a ceasefire.
- On October 23, reports [indicated](#) that the United States sent “a few” military advisers to Israel “to share some perspectives,” according to National Security Council (NSC) spokesman John Kirby.
  - » Kirby added that “Iran continues to support Hamas and Hezbollah, and we know that Iran is closely monitoring these events and in some cases, actively facilitating these attacks and spurring on others who may want to exploit the conflict for their own good or for that of Iran,” and “we know Iran’s goal is to maintain some level of deniability here, but we’re not going to allow them to do that.”
- On October 23, U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller [told reporters](#) that a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas would “give Hamas the ability to rest, to refit, and to get ready to continue launching terrorist attacks against Israel.”
- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on October 23 that NSC spokesman John Kirby said that how Israel conducts its military campaign in Gaza is up to the Israeli political and military leadership.
- Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte [visited](#) Israel on October 23 to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu and also traveled to the West Bank to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.
  - » According to a Dutch press release, Rutte stated, “the fight against Hamas must be waged.”
- Since Hamas’s October 7 massacre of approximately 1,400 Israelis, mostly civilians, there have been several protests in European cities featuring harsh denunciation of Israel and its legitimate self-defense efforts, [including](#) in Paris, Brussels, and [London](#).

## Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel At War

- Jonathan Ruhe, [Rebuilding U.S. Deterrence to Counter Iran-led Escalation](#), October 23, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, [Iran-Backed Attacks Risk Escalating Israel-Hamas Conflict](#), October 23, 2023
- Blaise Misztal [Quoted](#) in *The Daily Signal*, October 23, 2023
- LTC Geoffrey Corn (ret.) [Appearance](#) on *LiveNow Fox*, October 23, 2023
- Blaise Misztal and Jacob Olidort, “[The Case for a Counter-Iran Coalition](#),” *The National Interest*, October 20
- LTC Geoffrey Corn (ret.), “[The Fallacy of Equality of Condemnation](#),” *Smerconish*, October 20, 2023