



Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 26, 2023

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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

- *The Wall Street Journal's* [reporting](#) on October 25 that hundreds of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members trained in Iran in September, if true, raises questions about how the operatives were able to leave Gaza for Iran without detection by Israeli intelligence, or why, if detected, Israel did not impede the October 7 attack.
 - » Because the terrorists likely left Gaza via Egypt, this suggests intelligence-sharing between Egypt and Israel before the October 7 attack was likely inadequate.
- President Biden's warning on October 25, in response to the recent spate of Iran-backed [attacks](#) on U.S. troops, that "if [Iran continues] to move against these troops, we will respond. And [the Ayatollah] should be prepared" stands in stark contrast to the [reportedly](#) more tepid sentiments of certain members of the administration that averting a much-feared wider regional war with Iran necessitates Israeli restraint.
 - » Because effective deterrence requires adequate military capability and palpable will to use it, the president is likely attempting to bolster the latter vis-a-vis Iran and its proxies.
 - » However, Iranian proxies have [attacked](#) U.S. personnel more than a dozen times since October 7, injuring 24 soldiers, and the United States has not responded with military force against the perpetrators.
- *The Wall Street Journal's* October 25 report that Israel has agreed to a U.S. request to postpone a ground operation into Gaza until nearly a dozen U.S. air defense systems are deployed across the region, due to concerns about increased attacks on U.S. assets in the region in light of Iran's repeated threats to intervene in the conflict, were seemingly confirmed by President Biden's remarks on October 25. He "[indicated to](#)" Prime Minister Netanyahu that the latter should postpone a ground operation into Gaza pending progress in ongoing hostage negotiations.
 - » The report stated the systems would be deployed likely by the end of the week, and Prime Minister Netanyahu's announcement on October 25 that the Israeli Security Cabinet had unanimously decided on an unspecified timetable for Israel's ground operation into Gaza further suggests that a ground operation will not be postponed indefinitely and will not be contingent on developments on the hostage front.
 - » Netanyahu's announcement came just hours before Israel announced it had [conducted](#) a low-level infantry and tank ground operation in Gaza to "prepare the battlefield." The

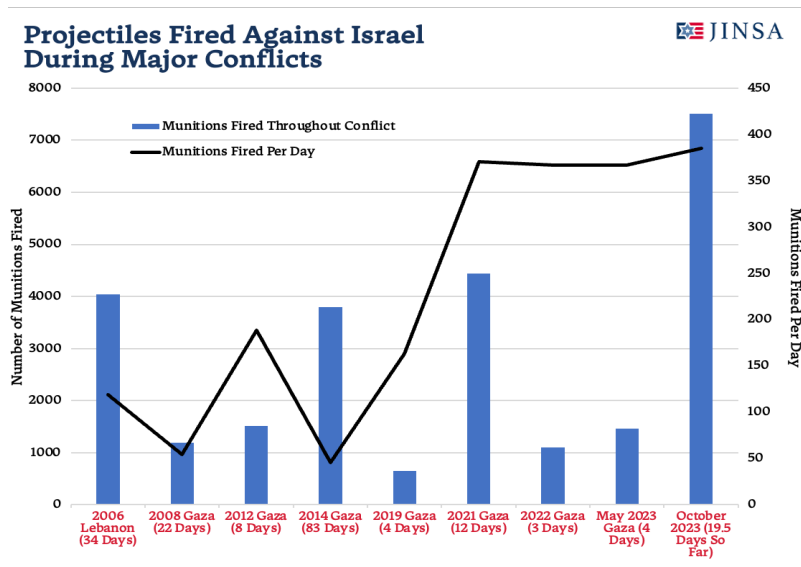
Israeli troops returned to Israel following the operation. Separately, Israeli Navy forces entered Gaza, presumably by sea, to neutralize a missile site in Khan Yunis.

- Netanyahu’s announcement did not indicate that a full-scale major ground operation would be imminent, only that a timetable had been set for Israel’s operations. Israel will likely continue to conduct a number of smaller, pinprick ground raids beforehand, as it did overnight, to both gather intelligence on the facts on the ground in Gaza and to preemptively eliminate threats such as improvised explosive devices and terrorist positions along key thoroughways in the Gaza Strip.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [7,512](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » [Rockets struck](#) Alfei Menashe, Rishon Lezion, Petah Tikva, and an area near Eilat, and sirens sounded in Ashkelon, Carmia, Ein Haslosa, Kissufim, Qiryat Shemona, and Zikim, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
 - Hamas [claimed](#) that it fired an R160 rocket, a projectile with a 160-kilometer [range](#), toward Haifa.
 - » The IDF [intercepted](#) five missiles in central Israel on October 26.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) on October 25 that it intercepted a surface-to-air missile fired from Lebanon at an IDF drone.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) on October 25 that a rocket launched from Gaza en route to the Carmel area of northern Israel exploded mid-air. No injuries were reported.
- Terrorists in southern Lebanon [fired](#) an anti-tank missile at IDF soldiers near Avivim along the Lebanese-Israeli border. No injuries were reported.
- At least [two](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles were fired from Syria in the last 24 hours, impacting an unpopulated area in the Golan Heights.



IDF Operations

- On October 25, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel had set a time for its ground invasion of Gaza in a televised address, [stating](#), “the timing of the operation was determined unanimously by the war cabinet and the chief of staff.”
 - » Netanyahu said that “we are preparing for a ground incursion. I won’t specify when, how, how many. I also won’t detail the range of considerations, most of which the public is not aware of.”
- The IDF stated that it [launched](#) strikes on over 250 targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours and more than [10,000](#) since the war’s start.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) early on October 26 that it operated in northern Gaza with tanks and infantry, striking multiple terrorist targets, before returning to Israel.
 - The military claimed that this operation was “in preparation for the next stages of combat.”
- The IDF [stated](#) that it struck infrastructure targets, command centers, anti-tank missile launch sites, rocket launchers, and tunnels, and that along with the Shin Bet it had killed Taysir Mubasher, commander of Hamas’s North Khan Yunis Battalion.
 - Mubasher was [responsible](#) for a number of attacks on Israel and had previously been the commander of Hamas’s naval forces.
 - » The IDF separately announced that its naval forces [struck](#) a Hamas surface-to-air missile position in Khan Yunis.
- The IDF stated that it launched strikes against several targets in Lebanon in the last 24 hours.
 - » The IDF [struck](#) a target in Lebanon in response to a surface-to-air missile launched from Lebanon at an IDF drone on October 25.
 - » The IDF [struck](#) targets in Lebanon with artillery in response to an anti-tank missile launched from southern Lebanon on October 25.
- On October 25, the IDF [struck](#) military infrastructure targets and mortar launchers belonging to the Syrian Army. The IDF also [launched](#) airstrikes against Aleppo International Airport, according to the Syrian Defense Ministry. An IDF spokesperson said the strikes were in response to projectiles launched against Israel from Syria on October 24.
 - » According to Syrian-run state media, eight Syrian soldiers were [killed](#) in the airstrikes and an additional seven were injured.
 - » The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based NGO, said that 11 soldiers were killed and that the strikes [destroyed](#) an air defense radar, a weapons depot, and targeted an infantry unit.
- On October 26, the IDF [announced](#) that it had detained 60 suspected terrorists, including 46 suspected members of Hamas, in overnight raids across the West Bank.
- On October 25, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [announced](#) in a televised address that a wide-ranging probe would be conducted into Israel’s intelligence and operational failures surrounding the October 7 attack.
 - » Netanyahu stated, “October 7 was a black day in our history. We will get to the bottom of what happened on the southern border and the Gaza-envelope area. The debacle will

be checked to the full. ... Everyone will have to give answers on the debacle — including myself — but all that will happen only after the war,” he said. “As prime minister, I am responsible for securing the future of the state. And right now, my job is to lead the state of Israel and the people to a crushing victory over our enemies. ... Now is the time to join forces one for one goal: to surge forward to victory ... with deep faith in the justice of our cause.”

- On October 25, Israel announced on social media that it had [uncovered](#) the identity of a prominent Hamas spokesperson with the alias Abu Ubeida.
 - » Abu Ubeida, according to IDF Arabic-language spokesperson Avichay Adraee, has the name Hudhaifa Kahlout. The IDF also posted a video of his face. Abu Ubeida has appeared behind a mask or scarf in his media appearances.
- On October 26, the Israeli media outlet *Kan* [reported](#) that the evacuation of Israelis from communities near the Gaza and Lebanese borders would continue until at least December 31, likely meaning that evacuated residents will not be permitted to return to these areas until that date at the earliest.

Casualties and Hostages

- Over [1,400](#) people in Israel have been killed, and another [4,629](#) have been injured in the war.
 - » [309](#) Israeli soldiers have been killed.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 32 [American](#) nationals, 24 [Thai](#) nationals, 21 [French](#) nationals, 17 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 7 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 16 [Russian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Chilean](#) nationals, 3 [Philippines](#) nationals, 2 [Ukrainian](#) nationals, 2 [Peruvian](#) nationals, 5 [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, at least [7,000](#) people have been killed in Gaza and at least [17,439](#) have been injured during the war.
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, 95 people have been [killed](#) and an additional nearly 1,900 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 [224](#) individuals have been notified that their loved ones were taken hostage.
- Two Israelis were [injured](#) in missile attacks on Rishon Lezion and another two were injured in missile attacks in Petah Tikva. All four were treated and are in mild condition.
- Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani [said](#) on October 25 that there has been a “certain breakthrough” in negotiations to free Israelis from Hamas captivity.
 - » Israel National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi also stated that “I’m pleased to say that Qatar is becoming an essential party and stakeholder in the facilitation of humanitarian solutions” and added “Qatar’s diplomatic efforts are crucial at this time.”

- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least 11 [American](#) nationals, 9 [French](#) nationals, 15 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 9 [Ukrainian](#) nationals, 8 [Russian](#) nationals, 3 [Canadian](#) nationals, 3 [Philippines](#) nationals, 2 [Austrian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 2 [Paraguayan](#) nationals, 5 [Peruvian](#) nationals, 2 [Sri Lankan](#) nationals, 2 [Tanzanian](#) nationals, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, and a [Nepalese](#) national.
 - » At least 8 [German](#) nationals, 17 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals have been taken hostage.
- Two Israeli settlers and at least three Palestinians were [injured](#) in clashes near the West Bank village of Deir Jarir on October 26. The Palestinian Authority’s media site Wafa stated that five Palestinians were injured, while other Palestinian reports stated three Palestinians were injured.
- Dozens of Israeli settlers in the West Bank stormed the Palestinian village of Burin, according to the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din, on October 25. The settlers reportedly [assaulted](#) farmers, lit vehicles on fire, stole equipment and produce, and vandalized other equipment.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On October 25, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that approximately 500 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members were trained in Iran by members of the IRGC’s Quds Force in September in preparation for the October 7 attacks.
 - » Citing unnamed sources, the report stated that senior Palestinian officials and head of the Quds Force Brig. Gen. Esmail Qaani were present at the training.
 - » The report also stated, citing Western and Egyptian officials, that Hamas operatives contacted IRGC and Hezbollah officials on October 7 to inform them that the attack had begun.
 - » The report also quoted IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari as saying “before the war, Iran directly assisted Hamas with money, training, weapons, and technological know-how. Even now, Iran is helping Hamas with intelligence.”
- On October 26, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian [arrived](#) in New York to participate in a UN General Assembly session.
 - » Amir-Abdollahian stated to Iranian state-run media before he arrived in the United States that “in light of the ongoing massacre and genocide against civilians in Gaza, and the comprehensive support that the US and European countries provide blindly to the Zionist entity, the situation in West Asia has reached a point of concern for all countries of the region.”
 - » Amir-Abdollahian added that “I warn the US and its proxy Israel that if they do not immediately stop the crime against humanity and genocide in Gaza, anything is possible at any moment and the region will go out of control.”
- On October 25, Hezbollah’s media wing [released](#) an image of Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, Ziad Nakhale, the leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Saleh al-Arouri, the deputy head of Hamas’s military wing, meeting in an undisclosed location. It was unclear when the photo was taken.
 - » Hezbollah media reported the leaders met to discuss how to achieve “a real victory of the resistance.”

- On October 25, Ayatollah Khamenei [accused](#) the United States of “directing” Israel to carry out airstrikes in Gaza.
 - » Ayatollah Khamenei, during a speech in Tehran, also said that “America is a definite accomplice of criminals” and that “the United States is in some way directing the crime that is being committed in Gaza.”
 - » Khamenei added that the hands of Americans “were tainted with the blood of the oppressed, children, patients, women and others” and “that in this matter and future matters, the Palestinian nation is victorious and the future world is the world of Palestine, not the world of the Zionist regime.”

U.S. and International Response

- At a press conference on October 25 with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, President Biden [said](#), “my warning to the Ayatollah was that if they continue to move against these troops, we will respond. And he should be prepared.”
- At the same press conference, President Biden stated that he has not demanded that Israel hold off a ground operation into Gaza, but rather urged Prime Minister Netanyahu to wait to conduct a ground offensive until more hostages have been freed.
 - » President Biden [stated](#), “what I have indicated to [Prime Minister Netanyahu] is that if that’s possible to get these folks out safely, that’s what he should do. It’s their decision but I did not demand it. I pointed out to him, if it’s real, it should be done.”
- President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu [spoke](#) by phone on October 25 to discuss developments in Gaza and efforts to secure the release of American hostages.
 - » According to a White House readout, the two leaders discussed ways to “ensure safe passage for foreign nationals wishing to depart Gaza,” as well as “U.S. support for the continuous flow of humanitarian support to the civilian population in Gaza.”
 - » The readout also states that President Biden “reiterated that Israel has every right and responsibility to defend its citizens from terrorism and to do so in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law” and “also noted the importance of focusing on what comes after this crisis to include a pathway for a permanent peace between Israelis and Palestinians, emphasizing that Hamas does not represent the Palestinian people or their legitimate aspirations.”
- The U.S. House of Representatives passed, by a 412-to-10 vote with 6 abstentions, a four-page resolution entitled H. Res 771 [supporting](#) Israel on October 25. The [resolution](#) condemned Hamas and supported Israel’s right to self-defense.
 - » The resolution also contained text stating the House of Representatives “stands with Israel as it defends itself against the barbaric war launched by Hamas and other terrorists,” “reaffirms Israel’s right to self-defense,” and “condemns Hamas’ brutal war against Israel.”
 - » The resolution calls on Hamas “to immediately cease these violent attacks and safely release all living hostages and return the bodies of deceased hostages.”
 - » The resolution also states, “Iran has long provided support to Hamas and other terrorist groups and proxies, and prior United States Government unclassified assessments indicated that, ‘Iran has historically provided up to \$100 million annually in combined

support to Palestinian terrorist groups, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.”

- » The resolution finally “condemns Iran’s support for terrorist groups and proxies, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad; urges full enforcement of United States sanctions against Iran to prevent Iran’s funding of terrorist groups, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and stands ready to assist Israel with emergency resupply and other security, diplomatic, and intelligence support.”
- *The Wall Street Journal* reported on October 25, citing U.S. officials, that Israel has [agreed](#) to a U.S. request to delay its ground operation until the Pentagon finishes deploying nearly a dozen air defense systems in Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The systems will reportedly be delivered as soon as later in the week.
- The U.S.-drafted United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Hamas and reaffirming Israel’s right to defend itself [failed](#) on October 25 after both China and Russia vetoed the measure.
 - » U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield stated in response to the outcome that “the United States is deeply disappointed that Russia and China vetoed this resolution. A resolution that, as I’ve said, was strong and it was balanced. That was the product of consultations with members of this Council. We did listen to all of you. We incorporated feedback. And we worked to forge consensus around a resolution that would send a clear message to the world – and most importantly, to Israelis and Palestinians – that this Council is determined to meet this moment.”
- The United Nations Security Council [voted down](#) a Russian-drafted resolution calling for a ceasefire, with the United States and the United Kingdom voting against the draft and nine members abstaining. Only Russia, China, Gabon, and the United Arab Emirates voted in favor of the resolution.
- The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted to [advance](#) the candidacy of Jacob Lew, the Biden administration’s nominee for U.S. ambassador to Israel. The entire Senate is expected to begin considering Lew’s nomination later this week.
- The U.S. State Department Office of the Spokesperson [announced](#) on October 25 that Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Amb. Barbara A. Leaf left for the Middle East “to consult with regional partners and advance efforts to prevent the conflict in the Middle East from spreading.”
 - » The Spokesperson’s office also said that Leaf will “discuss humanitarian solutions to protect civilians while reiterating U.S. support for a region that advances the aspirations of all its people.”
 - » She is scheduled to visit the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel.
- *CNN* reported on October 25 that the U.S. Treasury Department is [working](#) with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates to freeze a secret Hamas investment portfolio worth up to \$1 billion and worth at least \$400 million.
- JINSA [fellow](#) Gabriel Noronha will [testify](#) before the House Financial Services Committee’s Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee’s October 26 hearing entitled “Moving the Money: Understanding the Iranian Regime’s Access to Money Around the World and How They Use It to Support Terrorism.”

- » On October 25, Noronha [testified](#) separately before the House Financial Services Committee’s Subcommittee on National Security, Illicit Finance, and International Financial Institutions, in a [hearing](#) on “How America and Its Allies Can Stop Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran from Evading Sanctions and Financing Terror.”
- The Palestinian Red Crescent [announced](#) that 12 aid trucks had entered Gaza through the Rafah crossing with Egypt on October 26 after no aid trucks entered on October 25.
- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [reportedly](#) asked Qatar’s prime minister to “turn down the volume on Al Jazeera’s coverage because it is full of anti-Israel incitement.”
- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced on October 25 that he was [canceling](#) his planned upcoming visit to Israel due to Israel’s “inhumane” war against Hamas.
 - » President Erdogan sharply [criticized](#) Israel during his announcement, stating that Israel’s goal is “to commit crimes against humanity” and that “Hamas is not a terrorist organization but a liberation group” which seeks “to protect its lands and citizens.”
- Japanese media [reported](#) that Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa is planning to visit Israel on November 2. Her visit will also reportedly include a visit to Amman, Jordan, to visit with Jordanian and Palestinian leaders.
- Jordan’s Queen Rania suggested on October 25 that Israeli children may not have been killed by Hamas during the October 7 attacks, [stating](#), “the CNN website at the beginning of the conflict reported a headline of Israeli children found butchered in an Israeli kibbutz and when you read through the story, it hasn’t been independently verified.”

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel At War

- Gabriel Noronha [Testimony](#) before the House Financial Services Committee, “Understanding the Iranian Regime’s Access to Money Around the World and How They Use It to Support Terrorism,” October 26, 2023
- Gabriel Noronha [Testimony](#) before the House Financial Services, “How America and Its Allies Can Stop Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran from Evading Sanctions and Financing Terror,” October 25, 2023
- John Hannah [Appearance](#) on *Fox News*, October 24, 2023
- Webinar: [The View from Israel’s South](#) with JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky and JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, October 24, 2023
- LTC Geoffrey Corn (ret.), [Israel-Hamas and the Law of Armed Conflict](#), October 24, 2023
- Gabriel Noronha [Quoted](#) in *Jewish News Syndicate*, October 24, 2023
- GEN Philip Breedlove [Appearance](#) on *Fox News*, October 24, 2023
- JINSA Research [Cited](#) in *The Times of London*, October 24, 2023
- Blaise Misztal [Quoted](#) in *The Daily Signal*, October 24, 2023
- 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