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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 31, 2023

On October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked and unprecedented multi-pronged attack on Israel by land, air, and sea. JINSA has launched a webpage dedicated to its commentary, webinars, and media coverage about [Israel at War](#). An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below, which JINSA will regularly produce.

Analysis

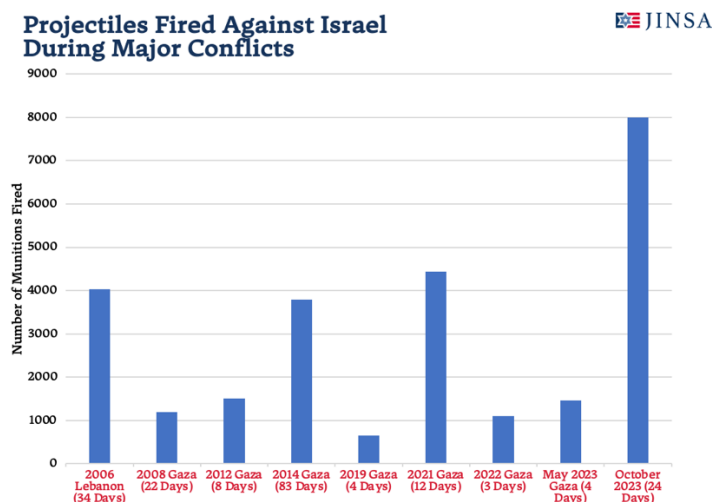
- Iran remains undeterred—despite, or because of, limited U.S. response—as its proxies continue to launch attacks and probe the defenses of U.S. bases in Iraq and Syria, and Israel's Red Sea border.
 - » There have been nine Iran-backed attacks on U.S. forces since U.S. airstrikes on October 27, with unconfirmed reports of further U.S. strikes on October 30, indicating that the United States has not deterred the Iranian regime or its proxies.
 - » The Houthis' attempted ballistic missile and drone attack over the Red Sea toward southern Israel on October 31 may have been an attempt to probe Israel's air defenses.
 - The Houthis' launch of a ballistic missile and Israel's use of the Arrow defense system to intercept it provide further evidence of Iranian proxies' advanced capabilities but also the efficacy of Israel's air defenses.
- Israeli special forces' successful operation to rescue IDF soldier Uri Magidish, whom Hamas abducted on October 7, is a remarkable intelligence and operational accomplishment as well as a morale-boosting feat.
- The United States is facing mounting domestic challenges related to the 10/7 attacks, including partisan differences over security assistance to Israel and challenges responding to growing antisemitism.
 - » On October 30, the U.S. House of Representatives [proposed](#) a \$14.3 billion standalone bill for assistance to Israel. The measure would pay for aid by reducing the same amount in funding allocated to the Internal Revenue Service under the Inflation Reduction Act.
 - The Biden administration called the proposed bill a “[nonstarter](#),” criticizing efforts to separate funding for Israel from its own proposal to combine aid to Israel and Ukraine and also allocate money for humanitarian assistance, the U.S. southern border, and Taiwan.

- » The Biden administration is also grappling with the growing wave of antisemitism that has emerged since the 10/7 attacks, both around the world and on U.S. university campuses.
 - Its messaging was muddled by National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson referring to an October 29 pogrom in Dagestan, Russia as “[protests](#).” Conversely, National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby had [said](#) calling the Dagestan incident a pogrom was an “apt description.”
 - The administration announced on October 30 that it has initiated an [effort](#) to combat university campus antisemitism involving the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, and the Department of Education.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

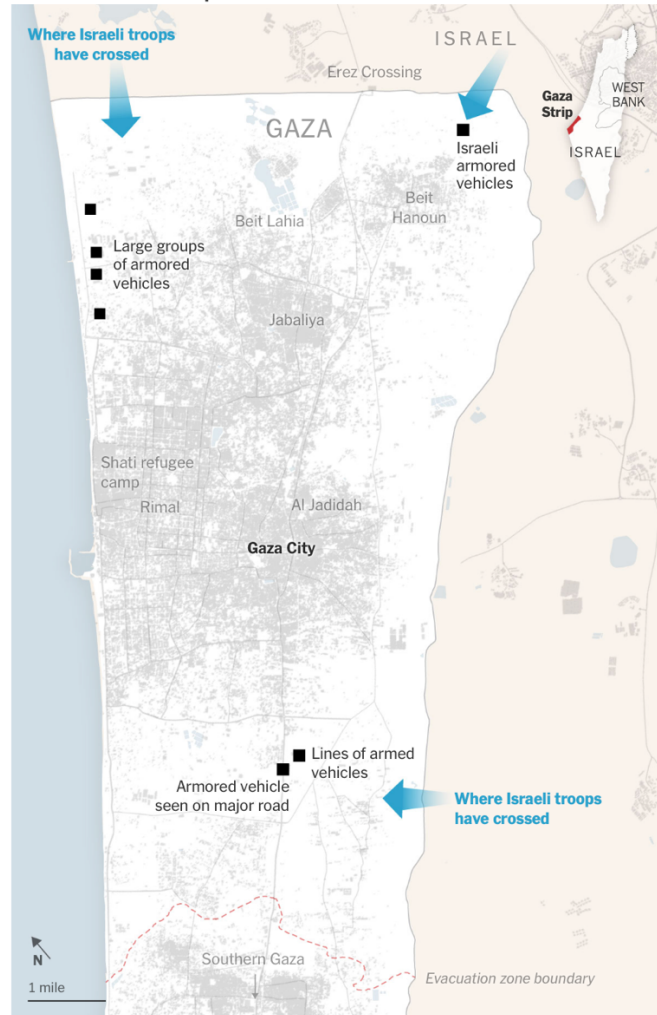
- At least [8,000](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » There were several rockets targeting Israel in the last 24 hours.
 - » Sirens [sounded](#) in [Ashkelon](#), [Beersheba](#), [Kissufim](#), Erez, Nativ Ha’asara, Kfar Saba, Jaljulya, Hod Hasharon, Tel Aviv, Petah Tikva, Ra’anana, Herzliya, and surrounding areas, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
 - A rocket [hit](#) a home in Eshkol, but there were no casualties because no one was home.
 - Shrapnel from a rocket interceptor [injured](#) a 29 year-old man following a rocket attack near Beersheba.
- On October 31, sirens [sounded](#) in the northern Israeli city of Metula.
- On October 30, an Israeli Border Police officer was seriously [injured](#) after being stabbed in a terrorist attack at the Shivtei Yisrael rail station in central Jerusalem.
 - » Israeli Police said in a statement that Israeli forces pursued and “neutralized” the assailant.



IDF Operations

- The IDF stated that it [launched](#) ground and aerial operations against 300 targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.
 - » The IDF [struck](#) numerous anti-tank missile launching posts, rocket launching posts, underground tunnels, and military compounds from the air and also engaged terrorists with its ground forces after being targeted by machine gun fire and anti-tank missiles while conducting operations in Gaza.
 - According to *The New York Times*, citing satellite imagery, photos, and videos, Israel is [advancing](#) into Gaza through three different locations, including large infantry advances in central Gaza just south of Gaza City, armored vehicles advancing into northeast Gaza near Erez Crossing, and infantry entering northwest Gaza along the Mediterranean Sea.
 - » On October 31, the IDF and the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, announced that the IDF had [killed](#) Nasim Abu Ajina, commander of the Beit Lahia Battalion of Hamas Northern Brigade.
 - Abu Ajina was the Hamas commander who directed the October 7 attack against the Israeli kibbutz of Erez and the Israeli town of Netiv HaAsara, and he also commanded Hamas's Aerial Array unit that helped develop drones and motorized paragliders used in the October 7 attack.
 - » On October 30, the IDF and the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, [announced](#) that Israeli special operators rescued IDF soldier Uri Magidish after Hamas abducted her during the October 7 attack.
 - Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](#), "this [rescue operation] is further proof of our ability to reach the hostages, the importance of the ground operation, and above all our commitment to each and every one of the hostages."
 - » IDF Southern Command leader Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman [entered](#) Gaza with troops from the Southern Command to assess the situation. The military said, "IDF forces continue the ground operation in order to accomplish the goals of the war."
 - This marked the first time since the war began that the IDF Southern Command entered Gaza.
 - » According to Israeli media reports citing senior Israeli officials, Mossad head David Barnea [visited](#) Qatar over the weekend to discuss a potential hostage deal with Hamas, which reportedly did not lead to an agreement.
- The IDF stated that it targeted Hezbollah sites in Lebanon from which militants launched attacks against northern Israel in the last 24 hours.
 - » On October 30, the IDF [announced](#) that it struck Hezbollah positions in response to mortar and missile attacks targeting Israel that day.
 - » On October 31, the IDF similarly [targeted](#) Hezbollah locations responsible for mortar and missile attacks against northern Israel that day.

Locations of Israeli troops in northern Gaza



Source: Satellite imagery, videos and photos - By The New York Times

Source: [The New York Times](#)

Casualties and Hostages

- Over [1,400](#) people in Israel have been killed and another [4,629](#) have been injured in the war.
 - » [315](#) Israeli soldiers have been killed.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 32 [American](#) nationals, 24 [Thai](#) nationals, 35 [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 unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 8,525 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza and 21,048 have been [injured](#) during the war.

- On October 25, President Biden [cautioned](#) against trusting Gaza Health Ministry casualty figures, stating: “I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed ... I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, 122 people have been [killed](#), and an additional over 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.
 - » The IDF announced that it had [killed](#) a suspect that had crossed into Israel from Gaza on October 30.
- According to the IDF’s latest press release, the families of 240 individuals have been notified that their loved ones were [taken hostage](#).
- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least 9 [Ukrainian](#) 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 12 [German](#) nationals, 17 [Thai](#) nationals, 15 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 12 [American](#) nationals, 6 [Russian](#) nationals, 6 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals have been taken hostage.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On October 30, U.S. officials confirmed that Iran-backed groups had launched at least [twenty-four attacks](#) against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria since October 17.
 - » There have been at least nine attacks against U.S. personnel since the United States launched airstrikes on two Iran-backed facilities on October 27.
 - » Syrian media outlets reported further otherwise unconfirmed [strikes](#) in Deir Ezzor, Syria on October 30, which may have been conducted by the United States or Israel.
- On October 31, Israel’s long-range Arrow air defense system intercepted a long-range surface-to-surface missile traveling over the Red Sea toward Eilat, Israel, marking the first operational use of the system in the ongoing war. The IDF also [announced](#) that it had used fighter aircraft to neutralize “hostile targets” flying in the Red Sea area. The IDF’s statement also said that “all threats were intercepted outside the territory of the State of Israel.”
 - » On October 31, Abdelaziz bin Hattab, a senior leader of the Houthis, [said](#) that “these drones belong to the state of Yemen” during an interview with Yemeni media.
 - The Houthis previously [launched](#) five cruise missiles and thirty drones toward Israel on October 19. On October 27, a projectile landed in the Red Sea near Egypt, and another struck a hospital in Taba, Egypt. The Houthis likely launched both [attacks](#).
- On October 31, Iranian army chief of staff Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri [claimed](#) during a news conference that 400 kilometers, or 248 miles, of tunnels run underneath northern Gaza, and “vehicles and motorcycles can pass through some of them.”
 - » He also said that some tunnel entrances are inside Israel and argued that Israel’s hesitation to launch a full-scale ground operation in Gaza stems from Israeli fear that the operation would mark “another defeat.”

- On November 3, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah plans to give his first public [speech](#) since the outbreak of the Israel-Gaza war.

U.S. and International Response

- On October 30, the U.S. House of Representatives [released](#) a proposed \$14.3 billion standalone bill for assistance to Israel.
 - » The measure would pay for aid by reducing the same amount in funding allocated to the Internal Revenue Service under the Inflation Reduction Act.
 - » The White House asked Congress two weeks ago to approve a \$105 billion aid package which would have included roughly \$14 billion for assistance to Israel and roughly \$61 billion for aid to Ukraine.
 - » Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) [told](#) *Fox News* on October 30 that “if you put this to the American people ... I think they’re going to say standing with Israel and protecting the innocent over there is in our national interest.”
 - » White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre [stated](#) on October 30 that the bill is a “nonstarter” that would “set an unacceptable precedent that calls our commitment to one of our closest allies into question,” referring to aid to Ukraine.
- On October 30, the White House [revised](#) its rhetoric on the recent anti-Jewish riot in Dagestan—which National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson initially described as “[protests](#)”—to now say that it resembled “pogroms.” National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby said, “some people will compare it to the pogroms of the late 19th and early 20th century and I think that’s probably an apt description.”
 - » Kirby dismissed Russian President Vladimir Putin’s claims that the Ukraine and its western allies instigated the pogrom as “classic Russian rhetoric” and said further, “the West had nothing to do with this. This is just hate, bigotry and intimidation, pure and simple.”
- On October 30, Kirby [stated](#) that the Biden administration “do[es] not believe that a ceasefire is the right answer right now ... We do not support a ceasefire at this time.”
- State Department Spokesman Mathew Miller [confirmed](#) that the Biden administration “made clear to the Government of Israel over the weekend that communications networks [in Gaza] needed to be restored, and we are pleased that they took steps to do that.” He added, “maintaining these channels is not just about connectivity. It is about ensuring that vital information flows, humanitarian coordination continues, and families can stay in touch.”
- Due to a decrease in demand for them, the State Department will [cease](#) charter flights for U.S. citizens seeking to leave Israel, according to the department’s spokesperson Matthew Miller.
- On October 30, U.S. Department of Defense Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh [told](#) reporters that the United States is providing weapons to Israel daily, “we are not putting any limits on how Israel uses weapons,” and “[it] is really up to the Israeli Defense Force to use and how they are going to conduct their operations.”
- U.S. Treasury Department official Brian Nelson [traveled](#) to Saudi Arabia and Qatar to advance work to counter terrorist financing, advance regional stability, and provide Gaza with humanitarian aid, according to the department.

- » Nelson co-chaired a Terrorist Financing Targeting Center meeting in Riyadh.
- » He met with Qatar Central Bank governor Bandar al Thani, Attorney General Issa bin Saad al Nuaimi, and leaders of the National Counterterrorism Committee in Doha.
- » The U.S. readout said that Nelson pledged to continue work with regional partners to hamper funding to Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Iran-backed groups.
- On October 30, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [spoke](#) with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani to discuss the Israel-Hamas war.
- On October 30, the Biden administration set a [two-week deadline](#) for itself to develop a new strategy to combat university campus antisemitism in the wake of an alarming rise in discriminatory and threatening incidents since the Israel-Gaza war began.
- On October 30, 26 aid trucks [entered](#) Gaza through the Rafah crossing, the sole passageway between Egypt and Gaza, according to Egyptian media. State Department Spokesman Matthew Miller stated on October 30 that a total of 150 aid trucks have entered into Gaza since the war began.

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Blaise Misztal, "[Israel's Strategic Challenge](#)," *War on the Rocks*, October 30, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, "[United States Undermines Deterrent Value of Its Strikes Against Iran-linked Targets](#)," October 27, 2023
- Webinar: [Gaza Update](#) with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal, JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, and JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, October 27, 2023
- John Hannah and Blaise Misztal, "[Israel-Hamas war: It's not too late to salvage peace with Saudi Arabia](#)," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2023
- 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
- LTC Geoffrey Corn (ret.), "[The Disproportionate Confusion about Proportionality](#)," *Lawfire Blog*, October 26, 2023
- John Hannah and Blaise Misztal, "[Israel-Hamas war: It's not too late to salvage peace with Saudi Arabia](#)," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2023