



Ari Cicurel  
Assistant Director of Foreign Policy

Yoni Tobin  
Policy Analyst

Anna Schaftel  
Programs and Outreach Associate

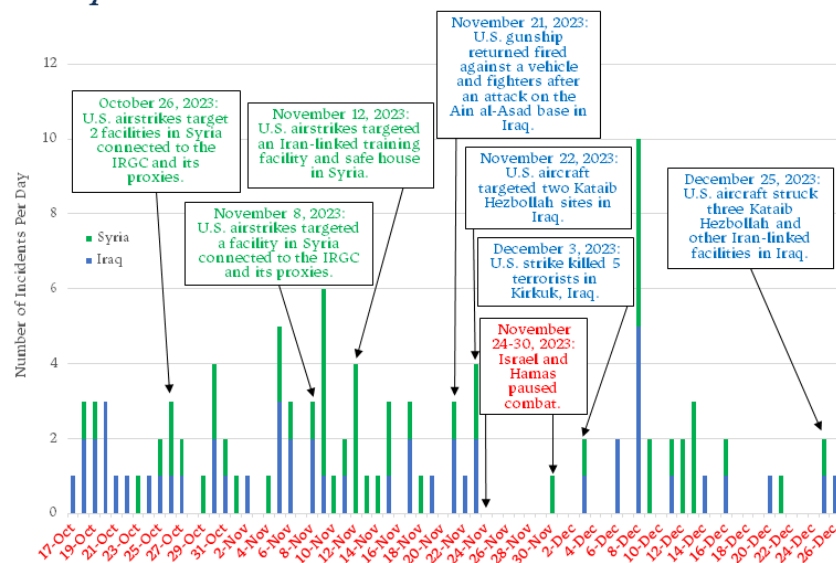
# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 27, 2023

JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below. JINSA's Swords of Iron updates will be periodic until January 2, 2024.

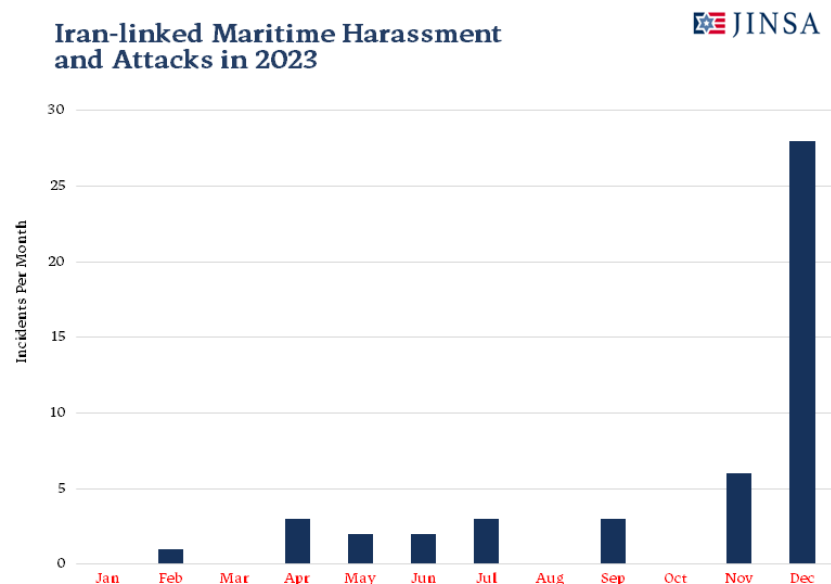
## Analysis

- On December 25, the United States conducted airstrikes against drone facilities in Iraq, following an Iran-backed attack against the Erbil Air Base in Iraq that injured three U.S. personnel and another targeting U.S. forces in al-Shaddadi, Syria. Since October 17, when a new wave of attacks began, there have now been at least 105 strikes by Iran-backed groups targeting U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria and seven rounds of U.S. airstrikes in response, as Ari Cicurel detailed in a [JINSA NatSec Brief](#).
- U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's [statement](#) about the U.S. strike indicated that the United States does not wish to escalate against Iran-backed groups—even as he simultaneously noted a willingness to take further measures. The statement signaled a reticence to use sufficient military force to deter the Iranian regime or its proxies from launching attacks.

**Iran-backed Attacks Against U.S. Personnel in Iraq and Syria Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War** JINSA



- In contrast to U.S. strikes that have targeted the Iranian regime’s proxies, Israel has directly [targeted](#) the Islamic Republic of Iran officials and assets, including Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which trains, funds, arms, and directs Tehran’s proxies abroad.
  - » An Israeli strike in Syria on December 25 killed IRGC Brig. Gen. Razi Mousavi, who was responsible for the proliferation of Iranian weaponry to proxies, including Hezbollah.
- While continuing attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, the Iranian regime has shifted the emphasis of its regional pressure to maritime aggression by conducting attacks against commercial and naval vessels. Deterring Iranian aggression, protecting commercial shipping, and ensuring freedom of navigation will require U.S.-led military force beyond the recent measures to enhance security in the Red Sea.
  - » The Houthis have continued to target commercial vessels in the Red Sea, despite the announcement of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a U.S.-led multinational task force to protect shipping in the waterway.
  - » A [drone strike](#) launched from Iranian territory against a commercial ship offshore of India reinforced that Iran-backed naval attacks are a problem not only in the Red Sea but also across the region’s waterways.
  - » Since the Israel-Hamas war began, Iran and the Houthis have conducted at least 34 incidents of naval aggression, including [firing](#) roughly 100 missiles and drones at commercial vessels.
  - » In December alone, there have been 28 incidents of Iran-backed naval aggression, more than the 20 incidents throughout the rest of 2023.



## Since December 22

### *Attacks Against Israel*

- At least [12,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired at Israel during the war.

## Gaza

- Sirens sounded in [Kissufim](#), [Kfar Aza](#), [Sa'ad](#), [Re'im](#), [Ibim](#), [Nir Am](#), [Be'eri](#), [Alumim](#), [Sderot](#), [Ashkelon](#), [Nahal Oz](#), [Karmia](#), [Zikim](#), and [Netiv Ha'asara](#).
- On December 26, a rocket [struck](#) a synagogue in an unspecified Israeli town in the Sdot Negev area near the Gaza Strip, causing significant property damage. No injuries were reported.
- On December 25, a barrage of at least 12 rockets was [fired](#) at the Israeli city of Ashkelon. No damage or injuries were reported.
- On December 24, *Al Jazeera* published a letter purportedly [written](#) by Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, which states that Hamas is "fighting a fierce, violent and unprecedented battle against the Israeli occupation forces, and the occupation army suffered heavy losses in life and equipment" and that Hamas is "crushing" the IDF.
  - » The letter also states that Hamas "will not be subject to the conditions of occupation" in an apparent reference to hostage negotiations. It also falsely claims that Hamas has killed over 1,000 IDF troops in Gaza.
  - » *Al Jazeera* [deleted](#) the article containing the letter from its website later that day.

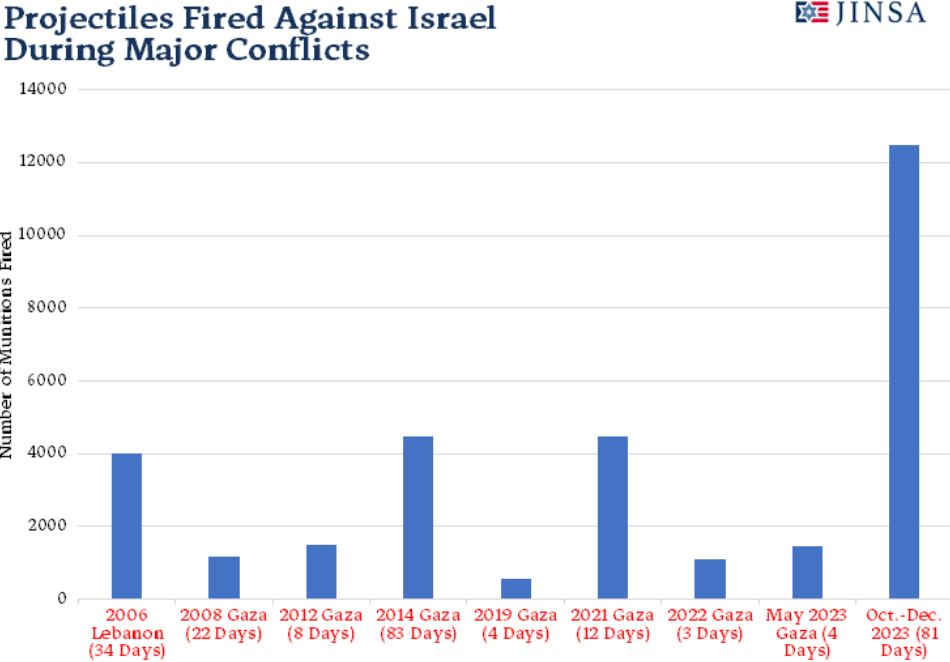
## Lebanon

- Rockets [struck](#) Iqrit and [Kiryat Shmona](#), and sirens sounded in [Rosh Hanikra](#), [Achziv](#), [Margaliot](#), [Mount Dov](#), [Yiftah](#), [Sasa](#), [Matat](#), [Dovev](#), [Avivim](#), [Yir'on](#), [Kafr Kila](#), [Kiryat Shmona and Manara](#).
- On December 27, terrorists in southern Lebanon [launched](#) a barrage of rockets at the Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona, impacting several locations and causing property damage. No injuries were reported.
- On December 27, Hezbollah [launched](#) three explosive-laden drones at the Mount Dov area and also launched several other projectiles, which landed in open areas. No injuries or damage were reported.
- On December 27, Hezbollah [launched](#) a barrage of at least 18 rockets on the northern Israeli town of Rosh Hanikra. At least six of the rockets were intercepted, while the rest [landed](#) in open areas. No damage or injuries were reported.
- On December 26, Hezbollah [launched](#) an anti-tank missile which hit a Greek Orthodox church in the northern Israeli town of Iqrit. The missile attack moderately [wounded](#) a civilian in his 80s, and a subsequent Hezbollah [attack](#) on IDF troops and medics evacuating the wounded man injured nine troops, one seriously.
  - » Hezbollah [claimed](#) credit for the attack, which it said targeted an IDF outpost in nearby Shomera.
  - » The IDF [said](#) that Hezbollah fired a missile which landed near a mosque in the town of Yaroun in southern Lebanon during the attack, and that Hezbollah also [fired](#) projectiles at the northern Israeli towns of Yiftah and Mount Dov near the Lebanese-Israeli border.
- On December 26, Hezbollah [fired](#) a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli military aircraft, which missed.
- On December 25, terrorists in southern Lebanon [fired](#) two projectiles at the northern Israeli town of Manara. No injuries were reported.
- On December 25, Hezbollah [fired](#) an unspecified number of rockets and missiles at IDF posts along the Lebanese-Israeli border and [fired](#) at least two anti-tank guided missiles at the town of Misgav Am. No injuries were reported.

- On December 25, terrorists in southern Lebanon [fired](#) a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli military aircraft in the area, which missed.
- On December 24, [reports](#) in Israeli media indicated that Hezbollah began withdrawing its Radwan special forces from southern Lebanon, amid indications that the IDF could launch a surprise attack.
- On December 24, Hezbollah [launched](#) a barrage of rockets at the town of Ramot Naftali and later that day [launched](#) several projectiles at the northern Israeli towns of Arab al-Aramshe, Avivim, and Margaliot. No injuries were reported.
- On December 23, an IDF soldier was [wounded](#) in a Hezbollah projectile attack near the northern Israeli town of Manara.

**Red Sea**

- On December 26, the IDF [announced](#) that it had shot down an aerial target over the Red Sea that was heading towards Israel, which it said was believed to be a drone launched from Yemen.
  - » The Houthis claimed credit for firing several drones at the southern Israeli city of Eilat that day.
  - » Earlier that day, Egyptian media outlets [reported](#) that witnesses heard loud explosions and saw an aerial object being shot down in the Red Sea roughly a mile off the coast of the Egyptian city of Dahab. It is unclear whether or not this incident was the same as the one described by the IDF.



**IDF Operations**

- On December 26, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [claimed](#) that Israel is “in a multi-front war and are coming under attack from seven theatres: Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Judea and Samaria (West Bank), Iraq, Yemen and Iran. We have already responded and taken action in six of these theatres.”

## Gaza

- On December 26, *the Wall Street Journal* [published](#) an op-ed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in which Netanyahu laid out Israel's three prerequisites for peace, which are the destruction of Hamas, the demilitarization of Gaza, and the deradicalization of Gaza.
  - » Regarding the destruction of Hamas, Netanyahu wrote that Hamas's "military capabilities must be dismantled and its political rule over Gaza must end."
  - » Netanyahu argued that for Gaza to be demilitarized, there will need to be a "temporary security zone on the perimeter of Gaza and an inspection mechanism on the border between Gaza and Egypt" to prevent future attacks on Israel and to prevent weapons smuggling into Gaza, and that Israel will need to "retain overriding security responsibility for Gaza" for the "foreseeable future."
    - Netanyahu further stated that the notion that the Palestinian Authority (PA) could demilitarize Gaza is a "pipe dream" due to the PA's glorification and funding of terrorism, and its lack of capability or will to actually demilitarize Gaza.
    - Netanyahu noted that PA leader Mahmoud Abbas has yet to condemn the October 7 attack, while some PA ministers have denied the attack took place or blamed Israel for it.
  - » On the deradicalization of Gaza, Netanyahu contended that "Palestinian civil society needs to be transformed so that its people support fighting terrorism rather than funding it," citing the successful deradicalization of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan after World War II and the successful deradicalization in certain Arab countries after 9/11 as models.
- On December 27, the IDF said it [struck](#) approximately 200 Hamas targets over the past day.
  - » In northern Gaza, troops from the Yiftah Brigade and the 261st Brigade eliminated Hamas operatives and a Hamas weapons depot, and the IDF's 401st Armored Brigade eliminated a Hamas operative preparing an anti-tank missile attack in Gaza City.
- On December 27, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi [claimed](#) that "the war will continue for many more months, and we will operate in various ways – so that the achievement will be preserved over time." Halevi also argued that the IDF is "close to completing the dismantling" of Hamas's battalions.
- On December 26, the IDF [announced](#) that the Israeli Air Force struck over 100 Hamas targets in the southern Gaza Strip overnight in preparation for an expanded ground operation in the area.
  - » The IDF eliminated tunnel shafts and other terrorist infrastructure, multiple Hamas cells and individual operatives in southern Gaza.
- On December 26, the IDF [announced](#) that it had begun intensifying its operations targeting Hamas's al-Bureij battalion, which consists of about 1,000 fighters. The IDF eliminated a terror tunnel shaft and training facility belonging to the battalion.
- On December 26, the IDF [raided](#) a Palestinian Islamic Jihad compound in the neighborhoods of Daraj and Tuffah in Gaza City, locating firearms, explosives, and intelligence materials.
- On December 25, the IDF's Kiryati Brigade [eliminated](#) a complex containing a weapons manufacturing facility and a concrete factory in the Khan Younis area of southern Gaza. The IDF said the complex was used by Hamas to build tunnels.

- » The IDF revealed that the unit has destroyed over 100 Hamas sites and killed dozens of Hamas operatives in recent weeks, and also announced that its troops are establishing control of the main routes in the Khan Younis area.
- On December 25, the IDF announced that it had [eliminated](#) several Hamas cells in the past week that were preparing to launch ambush attacks against IDF troops.
  - » These included an IDF Navy strike on Hamas operatives that were preparing ambushes, as well as Hamas operatives that launched mortars at IDF soldiers in the Khan Younis area of southern Gaza, an Air Force strike on a Hamas commander and several operatives carrying a rocket, and an airstrike against Hamas operatives operating in a building in northern Gaza.
- On December 25, the IDF [said](#) it was investigating claims that dozens of people were killed in an Israeli airstrike in the Maghazi camp, in the center of the Gaza Strip. Hamas authorities revised their initial death toll from the strike from 70 to 68.
  - » Hamas's death toll cannot be independently verified and does not distinguish between Hamas terrorists and civilians.
- On December 25, Israel claimed that it found [evidence](#) that Hamas had used Gaza's Indonesian Hospital for terrorist activities, including the presence of a white Toyota truck "of the same type used by Hamas" in the October 7 attack, "additional weapons," and a Toyota Corolla belonging to the family of Samer Talalka, one of the hostages that Israel mistakenly killed. Bloodstains belonging to the hostages were found in the car.
- On December 24, the IDF [released](#) footage of a large Hamas tunnel network located underneath the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza City.
  - » The tunnel network, where the bodies of five Israelis hostages had been recovered by the IDF earlier this month, was a square kilometer in size and contained infrastructure and materials for weapons manufacturing.
  - » The subterranean network also contained two levels, with an elevator leading to a large hall and a command center located dozens of meters below ground. The network had branches with tunnel shafts leading into the house of Hamas's former northern Gaza brigade commander Ahmed Ghandour, and other branches were located underneath a school and a hospital.
  - » The IDF said it destroyed the tunnel network after it finished scanning the network and recording videos of it.
- On December 24, the IDF [announced](#) that its Air Force, Navy, and ground forces struck approximately 200 targets across the Gaza Strip that day.
  - » That day, the IDF's 401st Armored Brigade and the elite Shayetet 13 commando unit [engaged](#) in a firefight with Hamas operatives in a school serving as a shelter in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood. The IDF killed an unspecified number of Hamas operatives, and dozens of Hamas fighters surrendered.
    - After the firefight, the IDF recovered assault rifles, grenades, explosive devices, ammunition, and other weaponry in the school.
  - » The same day, the IDF [launched](#) strikes against seven Hamas operatives and four Hamas observation posts in the Jabaliya area of Gaza City and also eliminated several Hamas operatives in an airstrike on northern Gaza.
  - » Also that day, the IDF [located](#) a weapons cache in a civilian shelter in northern Gaza which contained explosive belts for children, dozens of mortars, hundreds of grenades, and Hamas intelligence materials. The IDF also raided a Hamas facility in southern

Gaza's Khan Younis areas, locating weapons including dozens of grenades and explosive devices.

- On December 23, the IDF [killed](#) Hassan al-Atrash, the Hamas official responsible for Hamas's weapons supply, in an airstrike on Rafah in southern Gaza.
  - » Al-Atrash was responsible for weapons production, weapons smuggling into the Gaza Strip, and weapons smuggling into the West Bank, according to the IDF.
- IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) on December 23 that the IDF has destroyed or seized approximately 30,000 explosives across the Gaza Strip, including rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles.
  - » Hagari added that the IDF is working "very heavily" to eliminate Hamas's terror tunnel network in the Khan Younis area of southern Gaza.
  - » Hagari further stated that in the Gaza City neighborhoods of Daraj and Tuffah, IDF troops located a weapons cache in a school, which included explosive devices, rockets, and strategic capabilities belonging to Hamas's naval forces.

## Lebanon

- On December 27, the IDF said it [struck](#) several Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon in response to earlier rocket fire and drone attacks, including a Hezbollah facility and other positions near the Lebanese-Israeli border.
- On December 27, Lebanon's *National News Agency* [reported](#) that three people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a building in Bint Jbeil, a Hezbollah stronghold in southern Lebanon.
- On December 26, the IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes and artillery shelling against terrorist positions in southern Lebanon, including a Hezbollah facility and another building where a terrorist who launched a missile attack had fled to, in response to earlier rocket and missile attacks.
- On December 25, the IDF [struck](#) launching posts and other terrorist targets in southern Lebanon in response to earlier projectile attacks. Earlier that day, the IDF [conducted](#) shelling against Hezbollah sites in response to earlier rocket and missile attacks.
- On December 25, the IDF [announced](#) that it had conducted airstrikes against a number of Hezbollah sites overnight, including military facilities and other military infrastructure.
- On December 24, the IDF [struck](#) a terrorist cell in southern Lebanon that was plotting an attack near the Lebanese-Israeli border. The IDF also [launched](#) strikes and conducted artillery shelling against Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon that day, including military infrastructure and rocket launching posts.
- On December 23, the IDF [struck](#) a Hezbollah military headquarters and Hezbollah launching posts in southern Lebanon and also conducted artillery shelling against a number of positions near the Lebanese-Israeli border in response to earlier projectile attacks.

## Syria

- On December 25, Iranian media [reported](#) that a senior officer in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Brig. Gen. Razi Mousavi, was killed in an alleged Israeli airstrike in Damascus, Syria.

## West Bank

- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, six people were [killed](#) in an IDF operation in Tulkarem on December 27.
- On December 26, the IDF [said](#) that one IDF soldier was injured in clashes with Palestinian gunmen during an overnight raid in the Nur Shams refugee camp near Tulkarem. During the

raid, IDF soldiers seized approximately 30 firearms, detonated an explosives lab, and detained eight suspects.

### *Humanitarian Efforts*

- On December 27, Israel [returned](#) the bodies of 80 Palestinians killed during combat in Gaza after inspecting the bodies to ensure none of them were hostages.
- On December 25, Reuters [reported](#) that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad rejected an Egyptian proposal for the groups to relinquish control of Gaza in exchange for a permanent ceasefire.

### *Post-War Gaza Planning*

- On December 26, Israel's Minister for Strategic Affairs and former JINSA Distinguished Fellow Ron Dermer [met](#) in Washington with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. The meeting included discussions about "the transition to a different phase of the war to maximize focus on high-value Hamas targets" and "planning for the day after [the war], including governance and security in Gaza, a political horizon for the Palestinian people, and continued work on normalization and integration," according to a U.S. National Security Council spokesperson.
- The IDF [announced](#) on December 26 that it had begun demolishing buildings inside the Gaza Strip along the Israeli-Gaza border, including the Gaza City neighborhood of Sheijya, in preparation for the establishment of a 1-kilometer buffer zone inside Gaza.
  - » The United States had previously expressed opposition to the notion of a buffer zone inside Gaza, with State Department spokesman Matthew Miller [saying](#) on December 6 that Israel's establishment of a security buffer zone inside the Gaza Strip is "something we oppose."

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#) and another 6,900 have been injured in the war.
  - » 498 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 164 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
    - The IDF [announced](#) the deaths of David Bogdanovskyi, 19 from Haifa; Orel Bashan, 20, from Haifa; Gal Hershko, 20, from Yiftah; Itamar Shemen, from Lapid; Master Sgt. (res.) Nadav Issachar Farhi, 30, from Herzliya; Master Sgt. (res.) Eliyahu Meir Ohana, 28, from Haifa; Sgt. First Class (res.) Elyassaf Shoshan, 23, from Jerusalem; Sgt. First Class (Res.) Ohad Ashur, 23, from Kfar Yona; Cpt. Oshri Moshe Butzhak, 22, from Haifa; Staff Sgt. Nir Rafael Kananian, 20, from Beit Keshet; Staff Sgt. Birhanu Kassie, 20, from Beit Shemesh; Master Sgt. (res.) Shay Termin, 26, from Rosh Pina; Warrant Officer (res.) Alexander Shpits, 41, from Karmiel; [Staff Sgt. Roy Elias](#), 21, from Tzofar; [Maj. \(res.\) Aryeh Rein](#), 39, from Mishmarot; [Master Sgt. \(res.\) Nitai Meisels](#), 30, from Rehovot; Sgt. Rani Tamir, 20, from Ganei Am; [Staff Sgt. \(res.\) Elisha Yehonatan Lober](#), 24, from Yitzhar; Sgt. First Class (res.) Joseph Yosef Gitarts, 25, from Tel Aviv; [Master Sgt. \(res.\) Maor Lavi](#), 33, from Susya; Cpt. Shay Shamriz, 26, from Merkaz Shapira; Cpt. (res.) Shaul Greenglick, 26, from Ra'anana; [Lt. Yaron Eliezer Chitiz](#), 23, from Ra'anana; Staff Sgt. Itay Buton, 20, from Petah Tikvah; Staff Sgt. Efraim Jackman, 21, from Neve Daniel.



- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 32 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
  - On December 22, Israel [confirmed](#) the death of Gadi Haggai, a 73-year-old Israeli American who was previously thought to be taken hostage, alive, by Hamas on October 7. A spokesperson for his kibbutz, Nir Oz, said he was killed in the October 7 massacre, and his body was taken into Gaza by Hamas terrorists.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 21,110 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza and 54,918 have been [injured](#) during the war.
  - » On December 4, Associated Press and AFP [reported](#), citing an IDF official, that roughly 15,000 Palestinians have died since the war began and that roughly 5,000 of those killed were terrorists.
  - » 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, 305 people have been [killed](#) and an additional 3,803 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.
- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [one](#) has been rescued by the IDF, and [seven](#) [have](#) been [found](#) dead, and [three](#) were mistakenly killed by the IDF.
  - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
  - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.
    - Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German](#) nationals, 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian](#) nationals, 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino](#) national, 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
    - Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.
- Terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 129 hostages.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 8 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
- According to a [report](#) from Israel’s *Kan* public broadcaster, Israeli officials have considered not killing Hamas leaders in Gaza Yahya Sinwar and Muhammad Deif and instead deporting them to Qatar as part of a deal to release the remaining hostages and end the war.
  - » The *Kan* report indicated that, even if implemented, this would be a long-term issue and would not disrupt the IDF’s current efforts to dismantle Hamas’s leadership.

## *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On December 27, the IRGC released a [statement](#) claiming that Hamas's October 7 attack was a response to the January 2020 U.S. killing of former IRGC-Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani. Hamas denied the validity of the IRGC statement.
- On December 26, the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen [fired](#) 12 one-way attack drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles, and two land attack cruise missiles over the Red Sea during a 10-hour period. The projectiles were later intercepted by U.S. Navy assets, and there was no damage to ships in the area or reported injuries.
- Also on December 26, the Houthis launched [missiles](#) at the *MSC United* as it sailed in the Red Sea, which caused no injuries.
- On December 26, Israel's Cyber Directorate [warned](#) it had discovered a new Iranian phishing attack method, targeting Israeli organizations: malware disguised as a security software update, in order to trick the victim into downloading malware that steals and then deletes information.
- On December 26, multiple rockets were [fired](#) at the U.S.-led coalition base in al-Shaddadi, Syria.
- On December 25, Iran-backed groups [launched](#) a one-way attack drone at the Erbil Air Base in Iraq, critically injuring one U.S. service member and wounding two U.S. personnel.
  - » That day, Iran-backed groups also claimed to target U.S. forces at the Green Village facility in Syria.
- Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian [posted](#) on X on December 25 that "Tel Aviv faces a tough countdown" after an Israeli strike in Syria reportedly killed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Brig. Gen. Razi Mousavi.
- Mousavi was responsible for coordinating between the Iranian and Syrian militaries and assisted in proliferating weaponry to the Iranian regime's proxies, including Hezbollah.
- On December 24, the Pentagon claimed that Iran [launched](#) a one-way attack drone from its territory that struck the MV *Chem Pluto*, a Liberian-flagged, Japanese-owned, and Dutch-operated chemical tanker with reported ties to Israel, as it sailed 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) off the coast of India.
- On December 23, the Houthis [fired](#) numerous drones and missiles at commercial ships in the Red Sea.
  - » The Houthis fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles into international shipping lanes in the Red Sea that did not impact any commercial vessels.
  - » Between 3 and 8 p.m. local time, the Houthis launched four drones that were later intercepted by the USS *Laboon*.
  - » At roughly 8 p.m. local time, the Houthis launched a one-way attack drone that nearly missed striking the MV *Blaamanen*, a Norwegian-flagged, owned, and operated chemical/oil tanker.
  - » Also, at approximately 8 p.m. local time, the Houthis launched a one-way attack drone that struck the MV *Saibaba*, a Gabon-owned and Indian-flagged crude oil tanker, causing no injuries.
- On December 23, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on Muslim nations to [prevent](#) the delivery of fuel and other goods to Israel, amid the Iran-backed Houthis' escalation of attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

- On December 22, senior Hezbollah official Nawaf Musawi [told](#) Lebanese media outlet *Al-Manar*, which is affiliated with Hezbollah, that Hezbollah has offered to open a major front against Israel but Hamas has told them that doing so would not end the war in Gaza.
  - » Musawi said that “we asked our brothers in Gaza what could we do? If to initiate an all-out war in Lebanon. Would that stop the war in Gaza or not? Their response was no, it would not stop it, the war in Gaza will not end, only with Israel’s victory inside Gaza.”
- On December 22, White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson [said](#), “we know that Iran was deeply involved in planning the operations against commercial vessels in the Red Sea,” referring to repeated Houthi attacks.
  - » She also [said](#), “Iranian support throughout the Gaza crisis has enabled the Houthis to launch attacks against Israel and maritime targets, though Iran has often deferred operational decision-making authority to the Houthis.”

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

- After the Iran-backed attack against the Erbil Air Base injured three U.S. personnel and another attack targeted U.S. forces at the Green Village facility in Syria on December 25, the United States conducted airstrikes against three Kataib Hezbollah and other Iran-linked drone facilities in Iraq. According to a [statement](#) from U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the strikes “intended to disrupt and degrade capabilities of the Iran-aligned militia groups.”
  - » U.S. Central Command [assessed](#) that the strikes destroyed the target sites and most likely killed multiple militants.
  - » Secretary Austin’s statement further noted that “[w]hile we do not seek to escalate conflict in the region, we are committed and fully prepared to take further necessary measures to protect our people and our facilities.”
- On December 26, U.S. Navy assets, including the USS *Laboon* and F/A-18 Super Hornets in the *Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group, [intercepted](#) 12 one-way attack drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles, and two land attack cruise missiles that the Houthis had fired over a 10-hour period.
- On December 25, Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that 244 U.S. transport planes and 20 U.S. ships have delivered over 10,000 tons of armaments and military equipment to Israel since the start of the war. The equipment, according to the report, includes “armored vehicles, armaments, personal protective equipment, medical supplies, ammunition, and more.”
  - » The report also stated that reports that Israel is conserving ammunition in the conflict to ensure that it does not run out are untrue.
  - » According to the report, the Israeli Defense Ministry has made around \$2.8 billion in additional purchases from the United States since the war began.
- On December 23, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a call in which they [discussed](#) the “objectives and phasing” of IDF operations, and President Biden emphasized the need to protect civilians and allow them safe evacuation from combat zones, according to a White House readout. The readout also stated that the two discussed the importance of securing the release of all remaining hostages in Gaza.
  - » The Israeli government’s readout [stated](#) that Netanyahu expressed “appreciation for the U.S.’s position in the Security Council,” a reference to U.S. efforts to prevent a binding ceasefire resolution from being passed in the United Nations Security Council. The

- readout also said that Netanyahu “clarified that Israel will continue the war until all of its goals are achieved.”
- » At a cabinet meeting on December 24, Netanyahu [stated](#) that on the call, “I told Biden we will fight until there is total victory, however long it takes,” adding that “the U.S. understands this.”
  - On December 23, *the Wall Street Journal* [reported](#), citing officials, that President Biden called Prime Minister Netanyahu on October 11 to talk Netanyahu out of carrying out a major preemptive strike on Hezbollah forces in Lebanon that Israel believed were plotting an attack.
    - » The report states that Israel had intelligence that Hezbollah was preparing a large-scale invasion of Israel as part of a “multipronged attack” and that Israeli fighter aircraft were already in the air at the time of the phone call.
    - » The report also states that Israeli soldiers on the northern border received orders from their commanders to prepare for an imminent Hezbollah paragliding attack on Israel. Israel sent out an alert that morning for everyone in northern Israel to immediately go to a bomb shelter. The report, citing U.S. and Israeli officials, said the warnings were false alarms.
    - » According to the report, Israeli officials notified U.S. officials at 6:30 a.m. Washington time that Hezbollah was planning an imminent attack and requested U.S. support in the preemptive strike. However, the Biden administration’s top officials soon determined that U.S. intelligence did not correspond with Israeli intelligence about the alleged Hezbollah plans.
    - » An initial 45-minute phone call between Biden and Netanyahu was followed by roughly six hours of back-and-forth calls between U.S. and Israeli officials, and the Israeli war cabinet ultimately decided not to follow through with the strike, according to the report.
    - » The Netanyahu government [denied](#) the report, with the Prime Minister’s Office releasing a statement calling the report “incorrect,” adding, “already on the first day of the war [against Hamas on October 7], Prime Minister Netanyahu decided that Israel would first work to achieve a decisive victory in the south, while deterring an attack in the north ... this policy was adopted by the [war] cabinet.”
    - » Netanyahu himself seemed to [deny](#) the report while speaking at a cabinet meeting on December 24, stating, “there have been reports that [the] U.S. has prevented, and is preventing, us from carrying out operations in the region. This is not true. Israel is a sovereign country. Our decisions on the war are based on our operational considerations, and not external pressures.”
  - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will reportedly [visit](#) Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar next week.
  - Between 3 and 8 p.m. local time on December 23, the USS *Laboon* [shot down](#) the four drones that the Houthis had launched as it patrolled the Red Sea as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian, the new multinational maritime task force to patrol the waterway.
  - On December 24, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) received widespread criticism after she [posted](#) on Instagram comparing Jesus to the Palestinians, saying that he was born in “modern-day Palestine “ under a “government engaged in a massacre of innocents.”
    - » She [continued](#), “He was part of a targeted population being indiscriminately killed to protect an unjust leader’s power ... Thousands of years later, right-wing forces are violently occupying Bethlehem as similar stories unfold for today’s Palestinians ... The

high Christian holiday is about honoring the precious sanctity of a family that, if the story were to unfold today, would be Jewish Palestinians.”

- On December 22, President Biden released a [statement](#) that First Lady Jill Biden and he “are heartbroken by the news that American Gadi Haggai is now believed to have been killed by Hamas on October 7. We continue to pray for the well-being and safe return of his wife, Judy.”
- On December 27, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [claimed](#) that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s actions in Gaza are “no different” from those of Adolf Hitler.
- On December 25, the shipping firm Maersk [announced](#) that it would prepare to resume transit through the Red Sea after the announcement of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a new U.S.-led multinational task force to protect freedom of navigation through the key waterway.
  - » Maersk had [paused](#) shipping through the Red Sea on December 15 in response to the escalation of Houthi attacks on commercial shipping.
- On December 24, *Fox News* [reported](#), citing an internal company memo it reviewed, that social media platform TikTok deliberately refused to run an ad campaign by the families of hostages held in Gaza because the ads were “too political or too graphic.” The ads were accepted by Meta platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

#### *Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks*

- On December 26, an explosion [occurred](#) near the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi, India. No one was injured, in what Israel’s National Security Council [said](#) “may have been an attack.” Israeli media outlets [reported](#) that a note was found near the scene of the attack which stated the attack was “revenge” for Israel’s actions in Gaza.
- On December 26, two synagogues in Toledo, Ohio, [received](#) bomb threats, according to local Jewish leaders.
- On December 25, pro-Palestinian protesters in New York City [turned violent](#) during a Christmas Day march, clashing with police and injuring several officers. Several people were arrested.
- On December 25, pro-Palestinian protesters [gathered](#) outside the homes of U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan early on Christmas morning. Protesters [chanted](#), among other slogans, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” and “Austin, Austin, rise and shine, no sleep during genocide!”
- On December 25, an anti-Hamas billboard in Worcester, Massachusetts was [vandalized](#). The billboard, put up by the group JewBelong, originally said, “Let’s be clear: Hamas is your problem too.” It was graffitied over to say, “Let’s be clear: Hamas is freeing Palestine,” and “Israel murdered 25,000 people.”
- On December 24, the *Jerusalem Post* [reported](#) that Austrian, German, and Spanish police were on high alert due to concerns that Islamists were planning an attack on Christmas or New Year’s Eve, and that several suspects had already been arrested in Vienna and Germany.
  - » [According](#) to *Bild*, a German news source, the suspects were Tajiks affiliated with the Islamic State in Khorasan, a branch of ISIS. Several suspects were arrested in the Ottakring district of Vienna, and another was arrested in Saarland, Germany.
- On December 24, around 10,000 pro-Palestinian protesters [marched](#) in Rabat, Morocco, in one of the largest protests since the Israel-Hamas War began.

- On December 23, the graves of the former chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, and his wife, Loki, were [vandalized](#) with swastikas in Hamburg, Germany.
- On December 20, a primary school in London, England, was [forced to close](#) due to threats made by pro-Palestinian protesters. The threats came after the school had sent a letter home asking parents not to allow their children to make “extremist and divisive comments” or wear the Palestinian flag, after several parents had encouraged their children to do so.

## Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Ari Cicurel, [Seventh U.S. Strike Amid Over 100 Iran-backed Attacks in Iraq and Syria](#), December 27, 2023
- Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.) and Ari Cicurel, [“The US Must Help Israel Deal with Hezbollah Before It’s Too Late,”](#) *The Hill*, December 23, 2023
- Zac Schildcrout, [IDF Deaths Highlight Perils of Urban Warfare](#), December 22, 2023
- Webinar: [Gaza Update](#), with JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, JINSA VP for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret) Yaacov Ayish, and JINSA Assistant Director of Foreign Policy Ari Cicurel, December 21, 2023
- Zac Schildcrout, [To Counter Hezbollah Aggression, Strengthen U.S. Support for Israel](#), December 21, 2023