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# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 5, 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.

## Analysis

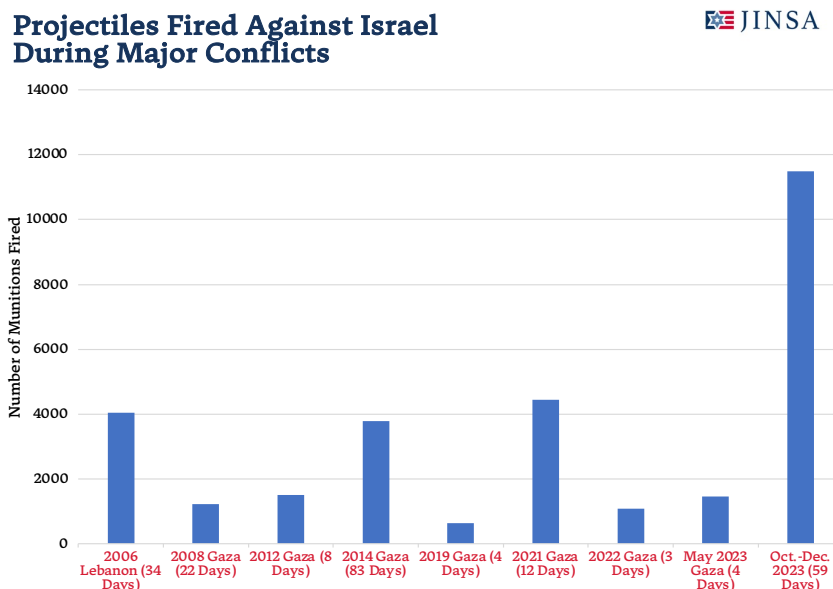
- Palestinian terrorists will likely increase their efforts to spread disinformation and erroneously allege erroneous Israeli war crimes as Israel expands its operations to eliminate terrorist cells and infrastructure in major Hamas strongholds like Jabaliya in northern Gaza as well as Khan Younis and Rafah in the south.

## Last 24 Hours

### Attacks Against Israel

- Roughly [11,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
  - » Rockets struck [Ashkelon](#), lightly [injuring](#) two women, and sirens [sounded](#) in Amioz, Ashkelon, Beersheba, Carmia, EinHashlosha, Magen, Mavki'im, Mivtahim, Nirim, Nir Oz, Nir Yitzchak, Petah Tikva, Ramat Gan, Sufa, Yesha, and other locations across southern Israel.
- Terrorists in Lebanon continued launching rockets, drones, and mortars at Israel over the last 24 hours.
  - » On December 5, the IDF [said](#) that a drone from Lebanon entered Israeli airspace before crashing near the northern Israeli city of Margaliot, causing no injuries.
  - » On December 4, terrorists [fired](#) rockets from southern Lebanon at Kiryat Shmona and an IDF post near Shtula.
  - » On December 4, terrorists [launched](#) mortar attacks from southern Lebanon against Israel.
- On December 4, Israel's *Channel 12* [reported](#) that in late spring 2022, Hamas's television network broadcast a simulated attack on Israel from Gaza which bore heavy similarities to the October 7 attack.

- » The broadcast reportedly included a number of parallels with the October 7 attack, including the use of white pickup trucks, the disabling of Israeli communications, attacks on targets including kibbutzim and IDF bases, including the Re'im base, and IDF soldiers being kidnapped.
- » Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, reportedly said during the broadcast that the attack was "an inseparable part of what we are preparing," and that preparations included weapons production and intelligence gathering.
- On December 4, Israel's *Channel 12* [reported](#) that an intelligence officer in the IDF's Gaza Division prepared a slideshow in July 2022 which laid out Hamas plans for a massive attack on Israel. The report also included details about the IDF initial response to the attack in the night before and early morning of October 7.
  - » The July 2022 presentation, which reportedly was titled "The Mass Invasion Plan of Hamas," reportedly included a diagram of roughly 20 Hamas squadrons invading Israel by breaching the border fence and a memo, which noted, "this [prospective] invasion constitutes the gravest threat that IDF forces are facing in the defense [of Israel]."
  - » The report stated that IDF Military Intelligence held a discussion about the possibility of such an attack, with one officer reportedly saying, "we cannot say how [Yahya] Sinwar will act, and therefore commanders in the field should take the necessary precautions."
  - » According to the report, on October 1 of this year, the Gaza Division commander ordered a situational assessment which found a "sharp increase in drills" by Hamas's elite Nukhba unit, including that six battalions were drilling once or twice a week.
  - » The report also stated that an individual stationed at a IDF base near Gaza sent an email the night of October 6 to higher-ups indicating an attack was imminent due to "certain signs," an assessment reportedly shared by Shin Bet.
  - » At around 3:30am the morning of October 7, IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi reportedly met with the head of IDF operations and the Southern Command chief and asked for more information and double-checking, and also ordered that the Israeli Air Force be alerted to the reports.
- *The New York Times* [reported](#) on December 4 that during Hamas's October 7 attack, a rocket that the group likely fired struck Israel's Sdot Micha military base in central Israel, at which nuclear-capable missiles reportedly are stationed, according to experts.



## *IDF Operations*

- The IDF continued to launch strikes on targets in Gaza over the last 24 hours and conducted operations in northern Gaza's Jabaliya, including [raiding](#) Hamas's general security headquarters and encircling the Jabaliya refugee camp, and [carried out](#) airstrikes in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.
  - » While [conducting](#) operations in Jabaliya, IDF soldiers located rockets and other weapons, and eliminated Hamas operatives, including members of Hamas's elite Nukhba unit. The IDF Navy also struck dozens of targets along the Gazan coast.
  - » The IDF [said](#) that reservists in the 551st Brigade, commandos from the elite Shayetet 13 unit, and Shin Bet members jointly conducted a raid on Hamas general security headquarters in Jabaliya, locating weapons, military equipment, and intelligence.
  - » The Israeli Air Force [struck](#) Hamas targets across Gaza, including rocket launchers, weapons depot, and other sites.
  - » During a firefight, troops from the IDF's 7th Armored Brigade [conducted](#) a drone strike on three Hamas operatives, and troops from another brigade killed two Hamas operatives who attempted to fire a rocket-propelled grenade at them.
  - » In a separate incident, the IDF [killed](#) two Hamas operatives who ambushed troops from a tunnel entrance and opened fire, and the IDF also conducted a drone strike on three Hamas operatives nearby.
  - » Palestinian communications company PaITel [said](#) on December 4, "we regret to announce that all telecom services in Gaza Strip have been lost due to the cut off of main fiber routes from the Israeli side," and "Gaza is ... blacked out again."
  - » According to [reports](#) from December 4, unnamed Israeli officials believe that at least 15,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza during the war and estimate that more than 5,000 of the deaths are Hamas members.
    - AFP cited an anonymous Israeli official as saying, "I'm not saying it's not bad that we have a ratio of two to one," and it is a "core strategy" of Hamas to use human shields.
    - The official also said, "hopefully, [the ratio] will be much lower" as the war progresses and that "in the south [of Gaza], because we have basically doubled the population, operations are much more precise."
- The IDF struck terrorist targets in Lebanon after terrorists there launched attacks against Israel over the last 24 hours.
  - » On December 5, Israeli aircraft [struck](#) multiple Hezbollah [sites](#) in Lebanon, including observation posts, weapons depots, and other military sites used by the terror group's operatives, after terrorists in the country repeatedly launched rockets at Israel, including the Israeli border town of Zarit.
  - » On December 4, the IDF [launched](#) strikes against a Hezbollah weapons depot in southern Lebanon in response to earlier mortar fire.
  - » On December 4, the IDF [conducted](#) artillery shelling against targets in southern Lebanon in response to rocket launches from Lebanon.
- Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [delivered](#) remarks about the IDF's operations in the southern Gaza Strip on December 4.

- » Gallant stated that “this action that is happening now, in the north of the Gaza Strip, will soon lead to shattering [ Hamas in ] the entire area of Gaza City and the north of the Gaza Strip,” adding, “at the same time, the IDF has begun to work in the south of the Gaza Strip. The fate of the terrorists in the Hamas battalions there will be the same as those in the north and worse.”
- On December 4, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) during a press conference that “the deployment of the forces that carry out regular operational activities [on the border of] the Gaza Strip did not change before October 7,” contradicting reports that two Commando Brigade companies were deployed to the West Bank two days before the Hamas attack.
  - » Hagari also said, “we will investigate in depth the decision on the reserve forces, which is a General Staff decision that is made regularly according to a situational assessment,” referring to forces that bolster various areas in line with IDF General Staff assessments.
  - » He said further that “every weekend, we position the reserve forces [in different areas], depending on the threats,” and “we will investigate this when we have the operational possibility.”
- *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) on December 4, citing unnamed U.S. officials, that Israel is planning to use a system of large pumps to flood Hamas’s tunnel network in Gaza with seawater to destroy them and force the group’s members to leave the tunnels.
  - » To do this, Israel would reportedly use seawater pumps capable of moving thousands of cubic meters of water per hour that it assembled in mid-November about one mile north of the Al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza.
  - » U.S. officials reportedly said that they are unsure whether Israel will execute the plan, and that Israel has not decided whether it will do so. Some U.S. officials are reportedly concerned about the plan, while other officials stated that the United States supports destroying the tunnels and that there was no opposition to the plan.
  - » An unnamed source familiar with the plan said to *The Wall Street Journal*, “we are not sure how successful pumping will be since nobody knows the details of the tunnels and the ground around them,” and “it’s impossible to know if that will be effective because we don’t know how seawater will drain in tunnels no one has been in before.”
  - » An IDF official declined to comment, saying, “the IDF is operating to dismantle Hamas’s terror capabilities in various ways, using different military and technological tools.”

#### *Humanitarian Efforts*

- On December 5, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman al-Thani [suggested](#) at a press conference that negotiations for hostage swaps and combat pauses were still ongoing, saying, “Qatar continues to make efforts to restore the truce, release hostages, and exchange prisoners.”
- 100 [humanitarian aid trucks](#) and 69,000 liters of fuel entered Gaza through the Rafah crossing on December 4, compared to 180 aid trucks that entered on December 3.

#### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Approximately 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another 6,900 have been [injured](#) in the war.

- » 406 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
  - 80 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
  - The IDF [announced](#) the deaths of five soldiers [killed](#) in Gaza in the past 24 hours, including Sgt. Yakir Yedidya Schenkolewski, 21, from Migdal Oz, Cpt. Eitan Fisch, 23, from Peduel, Staff Sgt. Tuval Yaakov Tsanani, 20, from Kiryat Gat, Cpt. Yahel Gazit, 24, from Rakefet, and Master Sgt. (res.) Gil Daniels, 34, from Ashdod.
- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 31 [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, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, at least 15,899 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 42,000 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, at least 246 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 3,397 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.
  - » 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](#) 136 hostages, including 114 men, 20 women, and two children. 10 hostages are 75 and older, 125 are Israeli, and 11 are foreign nationals, including eight from Thailand.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 9 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.

- On December 5, Dr. Hagar Mizrahi, head of the Israeli Health Ministry’s medical division, told a Knesset panel that Hamas drugged hostages with [tranquilizer pills](#) before handing them over to the Red Cross to make them appear calm and happy after suffering psychological abuse for roughly 50 days.

#### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On December 4, *Al Arabiya* [reported](#) that Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said that “allegations” Iran provided drones to the Houthis were “made in line with efforts to deviate public opinion of nations and to cover up crimes by the Zionist regime and the US government.”
- At the White House on December 4, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [said](#) that “Iran, we believe, is the ultimate party responsible” for the Houthis’ three attacks targeting commercial vessels in the Red Sea on December 3 and that “the weapons here are being supplied by Iran.”
  - » Sullivan also said that the United States is in [talks](#) with international partners about establishing military escorts for ships transiting the Red Sea.
- The Kremlin announced that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will [visit](#) Russia to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 7.

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

- On December 4, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [said](#) at a press conference that “we have said a number of times that we will continue to support Israel’s right to defend itself. I will let Israel speak for their own operations.” Austin added that he speaks to his Israeli counterpart daily and that he mentions each time they speak the importance of Israel protecting civilians in Gaza.
- On December 4, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [stated](#) at a press conference that the United States expects Israel not to conduct any strikes in “no-strike zones” that Israel has designated.
  - » Sullivan said that Israel has “every right to go after the Hamas terrorists who committed this brutal massacre on October 7, and who continue to fire rockets just in the last hours at civilian areas in Israel, but they also have a responsibility to try to protect civilians. They have indicated that there are areas where there will be ‘no-strike’ zones. And in those zones we expect Israel to follow through on not striking.”
- On December 4, State Department spokesperson Matt Miller [told](#) reporters that, regarding Israel’s combat operations in Gaza, “we want to judge this based on results, not based on intent” and that “we do not want to see a military campaign in the south that looks like the north, and what we mean by that is we do not want to see the same level of civilian casualties, we do not want to see the same level of mass displacement.”
  - » Miller also [said](#), “we’ve made clear [to Israel] we want to see [the amount of fuel entering Gaza] back up not just to the level of fuel that went in during the pause, but actually higher.”
- On December 4, *Fox News* reported that Senator Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) [wrote](#) a letter to UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini requesting an investigation into UNRWA after a

November 29 report from Israel's *Channel 13* stated that one of the hostages was kept in the attic of an UNRWA teacher.

- On December 5, France [froze](#) the assets of Yahya Sinwar, Hamas's leader in Gaza, for six months.
- On December 4, Reuters [reported](#) that, in response to a leaked recording by Shin Bet director Ronen Bar saying that Israel would hunt down Hamas members worldwide, including Turkey, a Turkish intelligence official said "necessary warnings were made to the interlocutors based on the news of Israeli officials' statements, and it was expressed to Israel that (such an act) would have serious consequences."
- On December 4, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim ibn Hamad Al Thani [met](#) in Qatar to discuss the war.
  - » According to a Turkish readout, "During the meeting, the latest developments in Israel's Gaza massacre, efforts for a ceasefire and permanent peace, and steps taken and to be taken to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza were discussed. The readout added that Erdogan stressed that "Israel must be held accountable for the war crimes it has committed."
- On December 4, a Dutch court [began](#) proceedings in a lawsuit filed by a group of human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Oxfam, against the Dutch government for selling F-35 aircraft components to Israel.
  - » The lawsuit reportedly [alleges](#) that by doing so, the Dutch government is in violation of the Geneva Convention and the Genocide Convention of 1948 by abetting alleged Israeli war crimes.
- According to December 4 [reports](#), a French diplomatic delegation including defense policy director at the French Defense Ministry Alice Rufo and political director of the French Foreign Ministry Frederic Mondoloni will travel to Israel to work with Lebanese and Israeli officials on a solution to ongoing fighting between Israel and terrorists in Lebanon and the Israel-Hamas war.
  - » Reportedly, the delegation members will not enter Gaza.
- [Reports](#) from December 4 indicate that the United Kingdom's military will carry out surveillance flights over the Gaza Strip to attempt to locate hostages that Hamas abducted on October 7.
  - » The U.K. Ministry of Defense said in a statement, "in support of the ongoing hostage rescue activity, the UK Ministry of Defense will conduct surveillance flights over the Eastern Mediterranean, including operating in air space over Israel and Gaza," and "surveillance aircraft will be unarmed, do not have a combat role, and will be tasked solely to locate hostages."
  - » The ministry added that "only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities responsible for hostage rescue." U.K. government minister Victoria Atkins confirmed to the BBC on December 3 that the aircraft will be "unarmed and unmanned drones."
  - » On Sunday, Hamas called on the United Kingdom "to reconsider" its plans.

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

- Israel's National Security Council [issued](#) a travel advisory on December 4, raising its threat level for 80 countries.
  - » Israel raised its threat level to a “Level 2,” indicating a need for increased vigilance, for a number of countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom.
  - » Israel raised its threat level to a “Level 3,” indicating that civilians should avoid travel unless it is essential, for a number of countries including Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

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