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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 6, 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

- As Israel continues extending its ground operations into southern Gaza, reports have indicated that U.S. officials hope that by January Israel will transition its operations away from high-intensity combat toward an approach of more targeted strikes against Hamas terrorists and leaders. Any pressure by the United States for Israel to prematurely alter its ground operations could reduce Israel's ability to eliminate Hamas terrorist cells and infrastructure.
- The lack of deterrence against Iran-backed attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria, as well as Houthi attacks on commercial and U.S. Naval vessels, has frustrated current and former U.S. officials. Retired Vice Admiral John Miller, a participant on JINSA's 2018 [Generals and Admirals Program to Israel](#) and the former commander of U.S. 5th Fleet, has [argued](#) that "we are not taking this seriously," and that attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria "have gone largely unanswered ... We're not deterring anybody right now."

Last 24 Hours

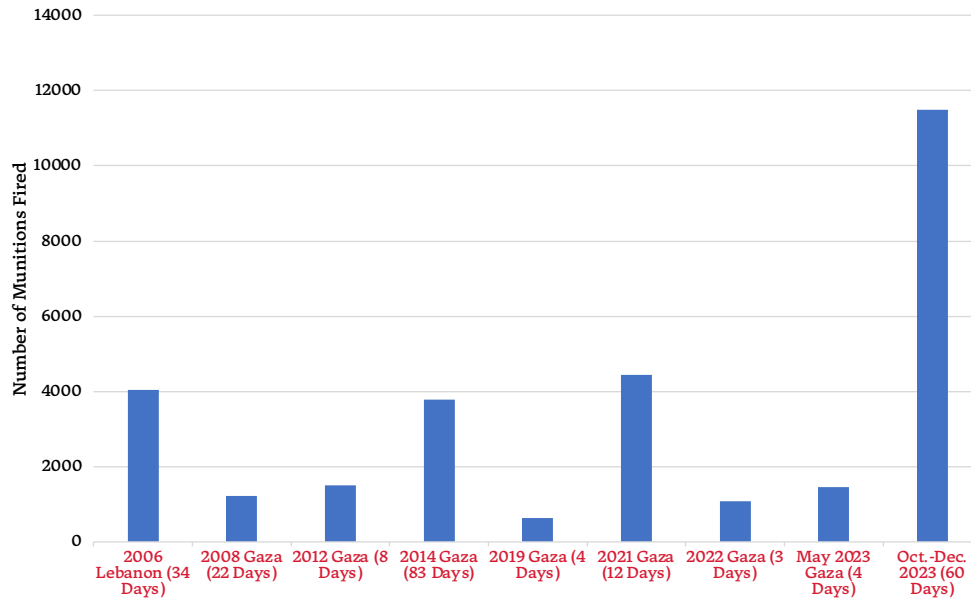
Attacks Against Israel

- Roughly [11,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » Rockets [struck](#) Tel Aviv, [Ashkelon](#), and sirens sounded in [Nir Oz](#), [Magen](#), [Nir Yitzhak](#), [Kissufim](#), Ashkelon, and Re'im.
 - » On December 5, a barrage of 15 rockets was [fired](#) at Tel Aviv from Gaza, resulting in one minor injury.
- Several projectiles were [fired](#) from Lebanon in the last 24 hours.
 - » On December 6, several rockets were [fired](#) toward IDF posts near the Israel-Lebanon border.
 - » On December 5, a drone from Lebanon entered and [fell](#) in northern Israel.

- On December 6, the IDF [said](#) that its long-range Arrow air defense system intercepted a surface-to-surface missile likely launched from Yemen that triggered sirens in Eilat, although “the target did not cross into Israeli territory, and did not pose a threat to civilians,” according to the IDF.

Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts

JINSA



IDF Operations

- The IDF [stated](#) that it has encircled the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza in the last 24 hours as it begins the third stage of its ground operations against Hamas.
 - » On December 6, the IDF [said](#) troops of the 460th Armored Brigade and the Nahal Brigade’s 50th Battalion discovered one of the largest caches of weapons since its operation in Gaza began.
 - Located near a health clinic and a school, the IDF [said](#) the cache contained “hundreds of missiles and RPG launchers of various types, dozens of anti-tank missiles, dozens of explosive charges, long-range missiles aimed at the center of the State of Israel, dozens of grenades and unmanned aerial vehicles.”
 - » On December 5, the IDF said that its troops reached central Khan Younis, and head of the IDF’s Southern Command Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman [said](#) that troops are involved in the heaviest fighting since the military launched its ground invasion.
 - In a statement, Finkelman said, “we are in the heart of Jabaliya, in the heart of Shejaiya and from this evening, also in the heart of Khan Younis,” and “this is the most intense day [of battles] since the start of the [ground] maneuver, in terms of terrorists killed, the number of engagements and the use of fire from the ground and the air.”
 - He added, “in the past day, infantry, armor, engineering and air forces have cooperated to fight terrorists face to face, and many terrorists were assassinated.”

- » On December 5, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [told](#) a press conference that the IDF had killed “about half of Hamas’s battalion commanders.”
 - “We are settling accounts with all those who kidnapped, participated, murdered, slaughtered, raped and burned the daughters of our people. We will not forget and we will not forgive,” he added.
- » On December 5, IDF Spokesman Daniel Hagari [said](#), “we are proving that our forces are surrounding the center of Khan Younis while respecting international law... we are showing the world that we can do this, simultaneous with humanitarian efforts,” and “this will allow us to manage the fighting over time. To strike a terrorist group that uses civilians as human shields, and hides underground, we need time.”
 - Discussing the hostages Hamas abducted on October 7, Hagari said, “they acted courageously, both before and after [being released]. They fought cowardly, vile terrorists who took children and women hostage in Gaza.”
- » On December 5, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi [addressed](#) reports that Israel plans to flood Hamas’s tunnels in Gaza with seawater, arguing that the plan is “a good idea.”
 - He added, “we are seeing a lot of underground infrastructure in Gaza, we knew there would be a lot. Part of the goal is to destroy this infrastructure,” and “we have various ways [to deal with the tunnels], I won’t talk about specifics, but they include explosives to destroy, and other means to prevent Hamas operatives from using the tunnels to harm our soldiers.”
 - Halevi also said, “therefore, any means which give us an advantage over the enemy that [uses the tunnels], deprives it of this asset, is a means that we are evaluating using. This is a good idea, but I won’t comment on its specifics.”
- » IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi [announced](#) at a press conference on December 5 that “after 60 days since the beginning of the war, our forces are surrounding the Khan Younis area in southern Gaza. At the same time, we are working to deepen the achievement in the northern part of the Strip. Anyone who thought that the IDF would not know how to resume the fighting after the truce was mistaken. Hamas is feeling this strongly.”
 - He noted, “they ask us a lot about the destruction in Gaza. Hamas is the address, Sinwar is the address. Our forces find in nearly every home weapons, terrorists. We understand that part of their way of operating is to leave weapons in the homes, a terrorists [sic] comes to the home in civilian clothing, and fights from there.”
 - Halevi also stressed that “this requires heavy firepower, to strike the enemy and to protect our forces. That’s why they are operating with great power, but at the same time working to avoid harm to those who are uninvolved, as much as possible.”
- » *Al Arabiya* [reported](#) on December 6 that the IDF has surrounded a home that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar owns, although there is no evidence that Sinwar is there.
- The IDF continued conducting strikes against terrorist cells in Lebanon over the last 24 hours.
 - » Lebanon [said](#) on December 5 that “[a Lebanese] army military position in the... Adaysseh area was bombarded by the Israeli enemy, leaving one soldier martyred and three others injured.” The IDF subsequently [said](#), “Lebanese army forces were not the target of the attack,” and “the IDF is sorry for the incident, and it will be investigated.”

- » On December 6, the IDF [said](#) that it has been launching artillery and tank fire toward Hezbollah sites in south Lebanon since that morning. The IDF used a drone to strike a Hezbollah command room and an additional site used by the group.
- The IDF conducted operations in [Jenin](#) in the West Bank.
 - » On December 6, the IDF [said](#) that reservists in the Menashe Regional Brigade, Duvdevan, LOTAR, and Border Police detained 10 wanted Palestinians and uncovered two tunnel shafts and three bomb-making facilities overnight. The IDF also said that it confiscated firearms and other weapons, as well as equipment.
 - According to the IDF, its troops exchanged fire with nearby Palestinian gunmen and individuals throwing explosive devices. One soldier was lightly wounded.
 - » The IDF also [said](#) on December 6 that it detained 16 suspects in additional West Bank areas.
- Upon the orders of Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on December 7, Israel [held](#) Tal Yinon Dardick, an Israeli settler in the West Bank, in administrative detention, which is in place until April 2. This was the third instance of an Israeli settler being placed in administrative detention since the war began for posing a threat to national or public security.
- On December 5, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen [posted](#) on X that he “decided to revoke the residence visa to Israel of the UN ‘humanitarian’ coordinator Lynn Hastings. Someone who did not condemn Hamas for the brutal massacre of 1,200 Israelis, for the kidnapping of babies and the elderly and for the horrific acts of abuse and rape, and for using the residents of Gaza as human shields, but instead condemns Israel, a democratic country that protects its citizens, cannot serve in the UN and cannot enter Israel!”
- Panning the response of international human rights groups at a [press conference](#) on December 5, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “to the women’s rights organizations, to the human rights organizations, you’ve heard of the rape of Israeli women, horrible atrocities, sexual mutilation? Where the hell are you?” He added, “I expect all civilized leaders, governments, nations to speak up against this atrocity.”

Humanitarian Efforts

- On December 6, the IDF’s Arabic spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted on X that there would be a tactical [pause](#) in combat from 10:00 until 2:00 p.m. local time in the Ash Shaboura area in Gaza’s Rafah district.
 - » Adraee’s post also said that there is fighting along the Salah al-Din Road in Khan Yunis and that civilians should avoid the area. Instead, according to Adraee, the IDF opened an evacuation corridor west of Khan Yunis.



Source: [IDF](#)

- During a press conference on November 5, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [argued](#) that there is “no contradiction” between IDF operations and humanitarian aid because both help Israeli efforts with regards to the hostages that Palestinian terrorists are holding in Gaza.
- A [video](#) circulating on social media appears to show gunmen in Gaza stealing from aid trucks entering through the Rafah crossing.

Casualties and Hostages

- Approximately 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another 6,900 have been injured in the war.
 - » 410 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 83 IDF soldiers have been killed during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF announced the deaths of three soldiers [killed](#) in Gaza in the last 24 hours, including, Master Sgt. (res.) Matan Damari, 31, from Dimona; Master Sgt. (res.) Ilay Eliyahu Cohen, 23, from Beit Nehemia; [and](#) Sgt. First Class (res.) Yehonatan Malka, 23, from Beersheba.
 - Lt. Col. (res.) Yochai Gur Hershberg, 52, from Havat Philip, was [killed](#) in a car crash.
 - » 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, 16,248 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and at least 43,000 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, 263 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](#) 138 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, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [spoke](#) with families of hostages who returned to Israel in a meeting that attendees described as loud and angry.
 - » During a subsequent news conference, Netanyahu said, “I heard stories that broke my heart, I heard about the thirst and hunger, about physical and mental abuse,” and “I heard and you also heard, about sexual assault and cases of brutal rape unlike anything.”
 - » Dani Miran, whose son Hamas kidnapped on October 7, said he walked out of the meeting, and “this entire performance was ugly, insulting, messy.” He accused the government of making a “farce” of the hostage issue and said further, “they say ‘we’ve done this, we’ve done that.’ (Hamas’ Gaza leader Yahya) Sinwar is the one who returned our people, not them. It angers me that they say that they dictated things. They hadn’t dictated a single move.”
 - » Jennifer Master said, “it was a very turbulent meeting, many people yelling.” Jennifer’s partner Audrey is held hostage in Gaza.
 - Master told Israel’s *Channel 12* that “we are all trying to make sure our loved ones get home. There are those who want the women who are left or the children who are left, and those who say we want the men.”

U.S. and International Response

- Speaking at a fundraiser on December 5, President Joe Biden [said](#), “reports of women raped—repeatedly raped—and their bodies being mutilated while still alive—of women corpses being desecrated, Hamas terrorists inflicting as much pain and suffering on women and girls as possible and then murdering them. It is appalling ... The world can’t just look away at what’s going on. It’s on all of us—government, international organizations, civil society and businesses—to forcefully condemn the sexual violence of Hamas terrorists without equivocation. Without equivocation, without exception.”
- On December 5, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken released a statement announcing [visa restrictions](#) on Jewish settlers who have been “involved in undermining peace, security or stability in the West Bank, including through committing acts of violence or taking other actions that unduly restrict civilians’ access to essential services and basic necessities.”
 - » Blinken’s statement noted that the Biden administration has “underscored to the Israeli government the need to do more to hold accountable extremist settlers who have committed violent attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank ... As President Biden has repeatedly said, those attacks are unacceptable.”

- » The United States will [inform](#) the dozens of individuals whose visas are revoked and will not be publishing the list.
- Senior Biden administration officials are hopeful that Israel will move toward a more targeted strategy against Hamas terrorists and leaders by January, according to a [report](#) that *CNN* released on December 6.
 - » Multiple senior Biden administration officials who spoke with *CNN* believe that the current phase of Israel's ground invasion in the southern part of the Gaza Strip will last several weeks and possibly end in January, at which time Israel will transition to low-intensity targeting of Hamas terrorists and leaders. An unnamed Israeli official confirmed to *CNN* that a transition is likely to occur in the next several weeks.
 - » The report also states that U.S. intelligence does not believe Israel can maintain its high level of readiness indefinitely, in particular because of the large number of reservists that Israel has had to mobilize.
- On December 5, the United States announced that it had [delivered](#) a second plane with 36,000 pounds of food and medical supplies for Gaza. A U.S. Air Force C-17 aircraft delivered the aid to Egypt for transportation to Gaza, where UN agencies will distribute it.
- On December 5, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani [accused](#) Israel of genocide while delivering remarks at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit in Doha, stating, "this is a genocide committed by Israel" and that Israel's "systematic and purposeful killing of innocent civilians continue [sic], including women and children.
- On December 5, while [delivering](#) remarks at the GCC summit, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, "Israel's war crimes and its crimes against humanity in Gaza should not be left unanswered."
 - » He [added](#), "the Netanyahu administration is endangering the security and future of our entire region in order to extend its political life."
- On December 4, U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller [said](#), "it seems one of the reasons [Hamas doesn't] want to turn women over that they've been holding hostage and the reason this pause fell apart is they don't want those women to be able to talk about what happened to them during their time in custody." Miller later added that he was "not able to speak with a definitive assessment that that is the case."
 - » On December 5, the IDF responded by [saying](#) that public discussion of the state of the remaining hostages "is irresponsible, inaccurate and should be avoided."
- On December 4, New York University law professor and former Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) head Robert Jackson and Columbia University law professor Joshua Mitts [published](#) an academic paper arguing that there was extensive evidence of insider trading, specifically short-selling of shares, in the lead-up to the October 7 attack.
 - » The paper alleges that "exceptional" and "extraordinary" trading activity took place in the days before October 7, specifically short selling of shares (i.e., bets against the value of the security) in the MSCI Israel Exchange Traded Fund, as well as short selling in Bank Leumi, one of Israel's largest banks.
 - Among the paper's findings were that between September 14 and October 5, there were 4.4 million new shares sold short in Bank Leumi, and that on October 2, "nearly 100% of the off-exchange trading volume in the MSCI Israel ETF" was short selling.
 - » The authors concluded that their "findings suggest that traders informed about the coming attacks profited from these tragic events."

- » As JINSA’s Director of Communications Jonathan Harounoff [told](#) TalkTV’s Rosanna Lockwood, “there may have been people with prior knowledge of the October 7 attack trading on terror and engaging in this deeply unsettling form of financial terrorism.”

Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks

- On December 5, the presidents of Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology [testified](#) before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce in a hearing about rising antisemitism on their campuses.
 - » When Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY-21) [questioned](#) the presidents on whether “calling for the genocide of Jews” is against the codes of conduct of their universities, all three claimed that the answer depends on context.
- On December 5, New York State [indicted](#) 28-year-old Yehia Amin on hate crime charges for an antisemitic attack against a 23-year-old Israeli tourist in Time Square on October 18. Amin is accused of stalking the tourist and his friends, who were wearing yarmulkes, going on an antisemitic tirade that lasted several minutes, saying, “ Hamas should kill more of you” and “all Jews should die,” before punching him.

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Webinar: [Reflections From Law Enforcement Trip to Israel](#), with JINSA Homeland Security Program Director Steven Pomerantz, Executive Director and CEO of the National Sheriffs’ Association Jonathan Thompson, and President of the National Sherriff’s Association Sheriff Greg Champagne of St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, December 5, 2023
- Yoni Tobin, [The United States Must Re-Designate the Houthis as Terrorists](#), December 5, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, [First Preemptive U.S. Strike Since 10/7](#), December 4, 2023
- Zac Schildcrout, [10/7 Attack Highlights Need to Sanction Iran-Backed Terrorists](#), December 1, 2023
- Webinar: [Gaza War Update](#), with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal and two JINSA Distinguished Fellows, IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin and IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, November 30, 2023
- Webinar: [Flying Blind? Electronic Warfare’s Impact on Civilian Planes](#), with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal, Former Deputy Commander of U.S. Central Command Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.) and Former Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, U.S. Air Force Lt Gen Joseph Guastella, USAF (ret.), November 29, 2023
- Webinar: [Britain’s Reaction to Israel-Hamas War](#), with JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky, Editorial Board Member and Opinion Columnist at The Wall Street Journal Joseph Sternberg, and former president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews Jonathan Arkush, November 27, 2023
- Michael Makovsky, “[What Israel Needs](#),” *The National Interest*, November 24, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, [First U.S. Strikes in Iraq Amid Iran-backed Escalation](#), November 22, 2023
- Zac Schildcrout, [U.S. Iran Policy Unchanged Despite Iranian Involvement in 10/7](#), November 21, 2023

- Gabriel Noronha, [*United States Permits Iran to Receive Billions in Iraqi Payments*](#), November 21, 2023
- Jacob Olidort and Yoni Tobin, [*Israeli Precautions Save Palestinian Lives*](#), November 16, 2023