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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update February 2, 2024

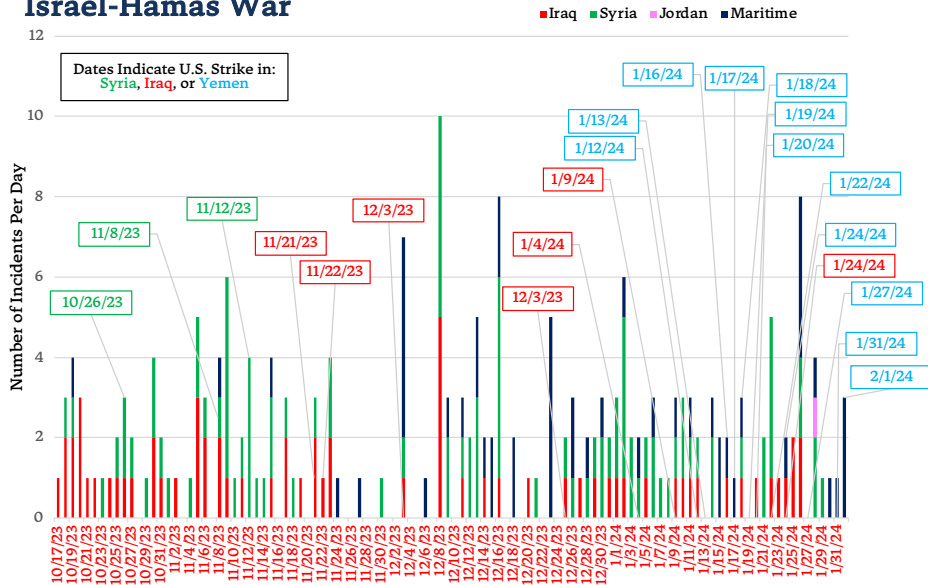
JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. JINSA will release the Swords of Iron Update on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

Analysis

- During a February 1 JINSA [webinar](#) to discuss developments in Israel's war against Hamas, JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin noted the significance of the recent U.S.-Israel [arms sales](#)' inclusion of Apache helicopters, saying that "there are no other platforms like helicopters to defend the border against terrorists. This is the best platform against terrorist threats around the border."
 - » Norkin noted that platforms included in the deal will not arrive in Israel for several years, adding, "we need those platforms [in the arms deal]. We need them – the sooner, the better."
 - » Norkin also contended that the deal was significant for what it did not include, namely KC-46A aerial refueling tankers to [replace](#) Israel's aging tanker fleet. Norkin said, "strong Israeli capabilities means a stable Middle East. We need to project power. We need to deter our enemies ... We decided to buy the [U.S.-made KC-46 aircraft] tankers, and now we should push and press to bring them [as soon as possible] to Israel. It's an important part of Israeli capabilities. It's part of our deterrence."
- Addressing the dynamics driving negotiations toward a potential hostage deal, JINSA's Julian and Jenny Josephson Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish said, "[When] the level of pressure of Hamas reached a high point ... this is the point where Hamas was open to negotiate, really to negotiate. And we are reaching the second point now. It has a very strong connection to what is going on right now in Khan Younis and what happened in the last 100 days when the ground offensive started."
- As the United States promises, but has yet to launch strikes in response to the drone attack that killed three U.S. service members in Jordan on January 28, Iranian forces are reportedly withdrawing from Syria, potentially making it harder for the United States to hold Iran directly accountable. But Iranian-backed aggression has not abated, with the Houthis in Yemen launching three attacks against ships in nearby waters on February 1, among the most the group has conducted in a single day.

- » Reports have [indicated](#) that the United States plans to strike several targets, including Iranian assets, in Iraq and Syria over several days.

Iran-backed Attacks Against U.S. Personnel and Maritime Targets Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War

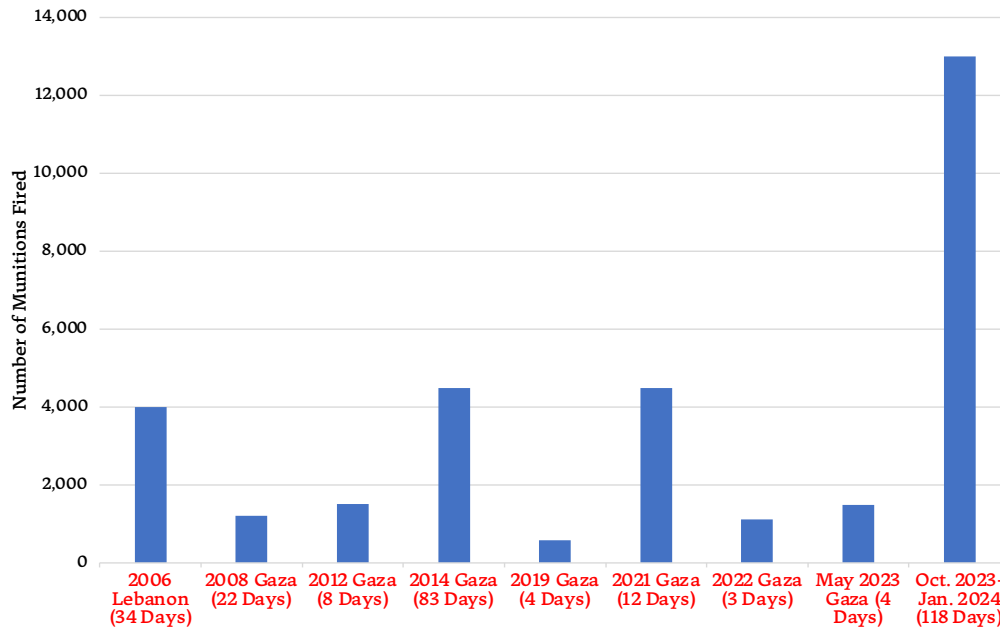


Last 48 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least 13,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) at Israel during the war.

Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



Gaza

- On January 2, the IDF said it [intercepted](#) a “suspicious aerial target,” likely a drone, that entered Israeli airspace from the Gaza Strip.

Lebanon

- Sirens [sounded](#) in Kiryat Shmona, Tel Hai, Kfar Yuval, Ma’ayan Baruch, [Margoliot, Shlomi, and Kibbutz Eilon](#).
- On January 31, projectiles were [fired](#) toward Metula in Israel from Lebanon.

IDF Operations

Gaza

- On February 1, Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](#) that Hamas forces in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis had been defeated entirely and that over 10,000 Hamas operatives have been killed and another 10,000 have been wounded in the war.
 - » According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Gallant’s figures indicate that, factoring in the roughly 2,500 Hamas operatives who have been arrested, at least 56 percent of all Hamas fighters in Gaza are now out of commission.
 - » *The Jerusalem Post* reported, citing several senior Israeli officials, that Hamas’s top leadership in Gaza as well as many hostages are suspected to have relocated from Khan Younis to the southern Gazan city of Rafah.
- The IDF [announced](#) on February 2 that soldiers killed dozens of Hamas operatives in the Khan Younis area over the previous 24 hours.
 - » The IDF’s Paratroopers Brigade killed approximately 20 Hamas gunmen in gunfights in western Khan Younis, and the Givati Brigade eliminated two Hamas cells, including one that launched an anti-tank missile at IDF forces.
- On February 2, the IDF [said](#) troops from its 401st Armored Brigade killed over ten terrorists in the Shati refugee camp in northern Gaza.
- On February 2, the IDF announced that in recent weeks, the 179th Reserve Armored Brigade has [killed](#) hundreds of Hamas operatives and eliminated several significant Hamas tunnels, seized weapons caches, and destroyed Hamas facilities.
- On February 2, the IDF [said](#) that troops from its 99th Division are working to maintain a corridor splitting Gaza into two sections in order to prevent Hamas fighters and weapons from moving from southern Gaza to northern Gaza. It was unclear if this referred to a physical corridor or troop deployments.
- The IDF announced on February 2 that the 99th Division had [raided](#) a Hamas bank in central Gaza, seizing intelligence materials and approximately \$27,000 in cash, and also located a rocket manufacturing plant in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

Lebanon

- On January 31, the IDF [said](#) that it used fighter jets to strike Hezbollah targets in Ayta ash-Shab, Beit Lif, and Blida in Lebanon. The IDF also said that it attacked the source of earlier projectile fire toward Metula.

Syria

- According to [reports](#) from February 2, citing the state-run Syrian outlet SANA, an Israeli airstrike close to the Syrian capital city of Damascus killed an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) adviser.
 - » Other [reports](#) cited the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which said that the strikes killed “three members of pro-Iran groups, including an Iranian and an Iraqi,” and Iran’s *Mehr News Agency*, which named the IRGC adviser killed as Saeed Alidadi.

Humanitarian Efforts

- According to [reports](#) from February 1, although Qatar’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari had said that a potential hostage deal “has been approved by the Israeli side and now we have an initial positive confirmation from the Hamas’s side,” an unnamed senior Palestinian source told Lebanon’s *Al-Mayadeen* outlet that this “was rushed and is incorrect.”
 - » An unnamed source closely connected to Hamas said, “there is no agreement on the framework of the agreement yet—the factions have important observations—and the Qatari statement is rushed and not true.”
 - » Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh’s media adviser Taher Al-Nono said to Reuters, “we can’t say that the current stage of negotiation is zero and at the same time we can’t say that we have reached an agreement.”
- On January 31, Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that Ministers without portfolio Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot have proposed that Israel limit the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza so long as Hamas continues seizing the aid. According to the report, Hamas has stolen the majority of all humanitarian goods entering Gaza.
 - » The report stated that the two ministers have proposed a temporary reduction in aid supply while Israel assesses alternative mechanisms to ensure aid reaches Palestinian civilians, including mechanisms that can be sustained after the war.
 - » According to the report, Hamas controls more than half of all humanitarian aid trucks in the Gaza Strip. The report also cites Ronen Bar, the head of Israel’s internal security agency Shin Bet, as saying that at least 60 percent of all humanitarian goods entering Gaza are stolen by Hamas.
- On January 31, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing Israel’s *Kan* broadcaster, that Hamas seeks the release of every member of its elite Nukhba forces that Israel captured during the October 7 attack in exchange for freeing every hostage in Gaza.
- Citing Israel’s *Channel 12*, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on January 31 that Mossad head David Barnea has given a possible hostage deal framework to Israel’s war cabinet. It would involve an initial phase in which 35 hostages—women, sick, wounded, and elderly—would be released in exchange for a 35-day truce, and a potential one-week truce extension to discuss the release of more hostages, including civilian defense personnel and other males.
 - » The number of Palestinian prisoners Israel would release is not finalized because Hamas seeks the release of “quality” prisoners, while Israel aims to retain them but is willing to release less grievous offenders.

- On January 31, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) to a group of UN ambassadors in Jerusalem that "UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency] is totally infiltrated with Hamas," and that "we need to get other UN agencies and other aid agencies replacing UNRWA."
- According to [reports](#) from January 31, Gazan health workers have said that the obstacles to treating the injured in Khan Younis due to ongoing combat have necessitated building field medical points to facilitate access to the front lines.

Post-War Gaza Planning

- *Axios* [reported](#) on January 31, citing two unnamed U.S. officials, that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken requested a State Department review of policy options to achieve U.S. and international recognition of a Palestinian state once the Israel-Hamas war concludes.
 - » State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller subsequently [said](#) on January 31 that "we have been quite clear publicly that we support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state ... with security guarantees for Israel ... That's been the policy of the United States for some time. That has been the policy of this administration."
 - » He added, "we look at any number of options. That's part of the normal planning process. The vast majority of options never usually get implemented."

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 561 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 224 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [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.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, at least 27,131 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 66,287 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, 380 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,391 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, [seven](#) [have](#) been [found](#) dead, one was [mistakenly](#) killed by the IDF, and one was [killed](#) during an IDF attempt to rescue him.
 - » 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, according to Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy, a figure that includes the dead bodies of 25 hostages and four abducted prior to October 7.
 - » 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 IDF spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the 136 hostages [include](#) two Israeli civilians and the bodies of two IDF soldiers held in Gaza since 2014 and 2015.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On February 2, Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi [said](#) during a speech, “we will not start any war, but if anyone wants to bully us they will receive a strong response.”
- On February 1, Reuters [reported](#), citing five sources, that Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has begun withdrawing its senior officers as well as “dozens of mid-ranking officers” from Syria.
 - » According to the report, Iran will rely more on Shiite militias in Syria to preserve Iranian interests there, and three sources told Reuters that the IRGC would manage Syrian operations remotely with help from Hezbollah.
 - » One source told Reuters that Iran “reduced [its] presence and movements [in Syria] to the greatest extent,” and an Iranian source told Reuters that Iran downgrading its operations in Syria would “help Tehran to avoid being pulled into the Israel-Gaza War.”
 - » Another source said that Iran feared that recent precise Israeli strikes on Iranian assets in Syria was evidence of an “intelligence breach” within Syrian security forces, playing a part in Iran’s decision to withdraw mid-level and senior IRGC officials from the country.
- On February 1, Reuters [reported](#), citing four U.S. officials, that Iran manufactured the drone used in the deadly January 28 attack on a U.S. base in Jordan in which three Americans were killed and dozens were injured.
- On February 1, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) [said](#) that at roughly 12:45 p.m. local time, the Houthis launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles toward the Red Sea in the direction of the M/V *Koi*, a Liberian-flagged and Bermuda-owned cargo ship. The missiles landed in the water and did not impact any ships.

- On February 1 at roughly 10:30 a.m. local time, CENTCOM [struck](#) and destroyed a Houthi explosive-laden unmanned surface vehicle (USV) in the Red Sea after determining that it “presented an imminent threat to merchant vessels and the U.S. Navy ships in the region.”
- On February 1 at approximately 5:00 a.m. local time, CENTCOM [shot down](#) a Houthi drone over the Gulf of Aden.
- On January 31, CENTCOM [announced](#) that at roughly 8:30 p.m. local time, the Houthis launched an anti-ship ballistic missile toward the Gulf of Aden, which the USS *Carney* intercepted prior to intercepting three additional Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) nearby.

U.S. and International Response

- Citing three unnamed sources, [reports](#) from February 2 indicate that an arrangement involving a defense pact with the United States and an Israeli commitment to establish a Palestinian state would satisfy Saudi Arabia.
- During a [press conference](#) on February 1, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said, “we will have a multi-tier response [to the January 28 drone attack that killed three U.S. service members], and we have the ability to respond a number of times depending on the situation.”
 - » He also said, “we look to hold the people responsible for this accountable and we also seek to take away capability as we go forward,” and that “there are ways to manage this so it doesn’t spiral out of control, and that’s been our focus throughout.”
 - » Austin argued that it is irrelevant whether or not Iran knew about the January 28 drone attack because “we do know that Iran sponsors these groups and funds these groups, and in some cases trains these groups.”
 - » He explained, “when we conduct a strike we are going to take away capability. This particular attack [on Sunday] was egregious and on the sleeping areas of our base,” and “we will respond at a time and place of our choosing. Iranian proxy groups have been attacking our troops before 7 October.”
- On February 1, *CBS News* [reported](#), citing U.S. officials, that “plans have been approved for a series of [U.S.] strikes over a number of days against targets—including Iranian personnel and facilities—inside Iraq and Syria.”
 - » According to a January 31 *NBC News* [report](#) citing U.S. officials, the operations might last “weeks” and involve cyber operations in addition to military action in multiple countries.
- On February 1, President Biden signed an [executive order](#) (EO) that expresses his view that “the situation in the West Bank—in particular high levels of extremist settler violence, forced displacement of people and villages, and property destruction—has reached intolerable levels and constitutes a serious threat to the peace, security, and stability of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel, and the broader Middle East region.”
 - » The EO imposes punitive measures, namely freezing U.S.-based assets, against “any foreign person” who, among other offenses, engages in “actions—including directing, enacting, implementing, enforcing, or failing to enforce policies—that threaten the peace, security, or stability of the West Bank” and acts of violence against civilians.

- » *Axios* [reported](#) that the initial sanctions will target four Israelis accused of attacking and displacing West Bank Palestinians.
- On February 1, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) [announced](#) that the Senate would vote next week on a bill that would provide aid to Israel and Ukraine, as well as strengthen border security.
- On January 31, the U.S. Treasury Department [announced](#) that it sanctioned three entities and one individual in Lebanon and Turkey for providing financial support to an IRGC and Hezbollah financial network.
 - » According to a press release, the sanctioned entities and individuals “generated hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of revenue from selling Iranian commodities, including to the Syrian government,” which “provide[d] a key source of funding for the IRGC-QF and Hizballah’s continued terrorist activities and support to other terrorist organizations throughout the region.”
- On January 31 at approximately 3:30 p.m. local time, CENTCOM [struck](#) a Houthi surface-to-air missile that was prepared to launch. CENTCOM said in a statement that the missile “presented an imminent threat to U.S. aircraft.”
- U.S. CENTCOM [said](#) on January 31 that at roughly 1:30 a.m. local time, it carried out strikes targeting a Houthi UAV ground control station and 10 one-way UAVs.
- On February 2, Turkish police [arrested](#) seven people who are suspected to be Mossad informants, according to a report from Turkish state-run media Anadolu Agency.
- On February 2, Belgium [summoned](#) Israel’s ambassador to Belgium to condemn Israel’s alleged bombing of the northern Gazan offices of Belgian development agency Enabel on January 31. Belgian officials said no employees were in the building at the time, and the IDF said that it was looking into Belgium’s claims.
- On January 31, the European Union’s (EU) top foreign policy official Josep Borrell [said](#) that the body will initiate a naval mission to protect ships in the Red Sea by “intercepting ... the attacks against the ships. Not participating in any kinds of actions against the Houthis. Only blocking the attacks of the Houthis,” according to remarks he gave to reporters.

Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks

- On February 2, Sweden announced that it is [investigating](#) an explosive device [found and destroyed](#) at the Israeli embassy in Stockholm on January 31 as a “suspected terror crime.”
- On February 2, protesters near Israel’s Nitzana border crossing with Egypt [prevented](#) Israeli authorities from checking aid bound for Gaza. Earlier in the week, the IDF had announced that the area was a closed military zone, making it illegal for civilians to be near the crossing.
- On February 1, hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters [blocked traffic](#) along several major roadways in Washington, D.C, including in front of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Police prevented the protesters from marching to the Capitol building.
- On February 1, hundreds of marchers [protested](#) in Warren, Michigan outside of an United Auto Workers (UAW) hall as President Biden met with UAW workers. Marchers [chanted](#), “we won’t vote on election day,” and held signs accusing Israel of war crimes.

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Webinar: [Gaza Update 2/1](#), with IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin, and Dr. Michael Makovsky, February 1, 2024
- Yoni Tobin, [Alleged UNRWA Involvement in 10/7 Attack Highlights Dangers of Agency](#), January 30, 2024
- Webinar: [Was the ICJ Ruling a Win for Israel?](#) with COL Marc Warren, USA (ret.), LTC Geoffrey S. Corn, USA (ret.), IDF Colonel (res.) Adv. Pnina Sharvit Baruch, and Blaise Misztal, January 29, 2024
- GEN [Joseph Votel, USA \(ret.\)](#) and Claire O. Finkelstein, “[Why the ICJ Ruling Misses the Mark: Mitigating Civilian Harm With An Enemy Engaged in Human Shielding](#),” *Just Security*, January 29, 2024
- Blaise Misztal and Ari Cicurel, [Deadly Iran-backed Attack Requires Response Against Iranian Regime Targets](#), January 29, 2024