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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update February 5, 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

- The U.S. [strikes](#) on February 2 against 85 targets at seven locations associated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its proxies in Iraq and Syria reportedly killed approximately 40 individuals. The strikes were significantly stronger and deadlier than previous U.S. efforts to degrade or deter Iran-linked forces. Striking IRGC targets provides greater deterrence against the Iranian regime than only striking their proxies, as recent U.S. strikes had done. Despite the scope of the strikes, by signaling for several days that the strikes would be imminent, the administration enabled Iran-linked fighters to vacate their facilities, thereby limiting their effectiveness.
 - » Soon after the U.S. strikes began, Iran-backed groups [targeted](#) at least one facility in Syria where U.S. personnel are located, indicating that Iran's proxies remain undeterred.
 - » While both President Biden and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin indicated that these were only the initial U.S. strikes in a "[multi-tiered response](#)" to the deadly Iran-backed drone strike that killed three U.S. service members in Jordan on January 28, the Biden administration's public [messaging](#) that it does not seek an escalation continues to undermine the deterrent value of U.S. strikes.
- The United States also conducted five independent strikes against Houthi sites with missiles and drones that the Iran-backed group in Yemen was preparing to fire at ships and another [strike](#) alongside the United Kingdom and other partner nations that hit 36 Houthi targets across 13 locations in Yemen.

Last 72 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

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

Gaza

- Sirens sounded in [Nir Am and Ein Hashlosha](#).

Lebanon

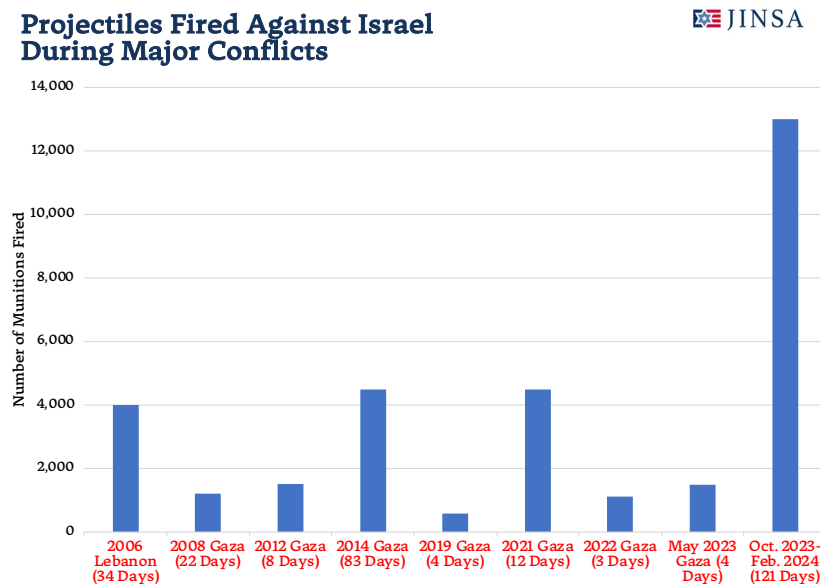
- Sirens sounded in [Shtula](#), [Mattat](#), [Dovev](#), and [Bar'am](#).
- On February 5, Hezbollah [fired](#) a barrage of at least eight rockets into northern Israel, causing no reported injuries.
- On February 4, Israel's Iron Dome intercepted numerous rockets [launched](#) toward Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel. Several other rockets struck unpopulated areas and caused no injuries or damage.
- On February 3, the IDF said that Hezbollah [launched](#) projectiles toward Bar'am and Zar'it in Israel's north.

West Bank

- On February 5, Israeli police [said](#) that after they stopped and began questioning a Palestinian suspect in the West Bank town of al-Eizariya, the suspect brandished a knife and tried to stab them. The police shot and killed the assailant, and no officers were injured.

Red Sea

- On February 2, the IDF [said](#) that it used the Arrow air defense system to shoot down a surface-to-surface missile launched toward Israel from the Red Sea area. A Houthi spokesperson subsequently [said](#) that the group targeted the southern Israeli city of Eilat with ballistic missiles.



IDF Operations

Gaza

- On February 5, Prime Minister Netanyahu claimed that Israel had [destroyed](#) 18 of 24 Hamas battalions and eliminated more than half of the terrorist group's manpower.

- The IDF [announced](#) on February 5 that it killed dozens of terrorists in operations over the previous 24 hours.
 - » The IDF's Nahal Brigade and 401st Brigade killed a five-person Hamas terror cell in an overnight operation in central Gaza.
 - » Troops from the IDF's 98th Division killed dozens of Hamas operatives in raids in northern and central Gaza over the previous day.
 - » In the southern city of Khan Younis, soldiers eliminated a Hamas cell preparing to attack troops, and troops from the Givati Division raided Hamas facilities and killed dozens of Hamas operatives.
- On February 5, the IDF [announced](#) that troops from the 98th Division had located large weapons caches in Khan Younis, including assault rifles, sniper rifles, grenades, and ammunition.
- On February 4, the IDF [said](#) that soldiers from the Givati Brigade raided the main headquarters of Hamas's Khan Younis Brigade. The headquarters contained a command-and-control center, a rocket depot, an entrance to a large tunnel network, and a training facility.
- On February 3, the Israeli Air Force [dropped](#) leaflets styled as a newspaper in central Gaza. The newspaper, called "The Reality," called on Gazans to "wake up" and said that Hamas "kills your children."
 - » The leaflet also said, "they burned the people's money on tunnels and weapons. They destroyed everything good, beat you and tortured you, abandoned your families in the streets, and they are hiding in tunnels. Are you silent? All this is just a drop in the ocean. Your future is in your hands."
- On February 3, the IDF [said](#) that it replaced the 5th Brigade, which had until now been operating in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza, with other forces. *The Times of Israel* noted that recently the IDF has been tasking the standing army, as opposed to reservists, with combatting Hamas in Gaza as the military prepares for a potential expansion of conflict with Hezbollah and seeks to mitigate the wartime strains on Israel's economy.
- On February 2, the IDF [released](#) the body camera footage obtained from a Hamas terror operative killed in an incident over the past week. The IDF said troops of the Maglan commando unit encountered and killed three Hamas gunmen in Khan Younis.
- The IDF [said](#) on February 2 that it confiscated documents in Gaza outlining Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) extensive use of mosques in Gaza, including as "operational gathering points."
 - » The IDF also said that in the southern city of Khan Younis, Hamas had infiltrated "into local religious leadership positions with the intent of promoting hate speech, instigating violence and encouraging civilians to join terrorist groups."
 - » The military added, "the exploitation of religious leaders and mosques by terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip for promoting terrorism, storing explosives and carrying out attacks represents the grave misuse of religious institutions for military operations, effectively turning worshippers into human shields."

Lebanon

- On February 5, the IDF [said](#) it conducted airstrikes on a Hezbollah command center and building in Yaroun and struck a Hezbollah observation post in Maroun al-Ras.

- » Hezbollah [announced](#) the deaths of three members in Israeli strikes that day, bringing the number of Hezbollah operatives killed since the war began to 182.
- According to [reports](#) from February 4, citing Lebanese media, Israel struck targets in Blida and Mays al-Jabal.
- On February 3, the IDF [said](#) that it struck numerous Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including a command center and a rocket launch site in Yaroun and two observation posts in Marwahin and Ayta ash-Shab.
- On February 3, the IDF [carried out](#) an airstrike on a Hezbollah building in Taybeh and conducted artillery shelling against other areas of Lebanon throughout the day in response to repeated projectile launches by the terror group.
- On February 2, the IDF [said](#) it conducted airstrikes against a Hezbollah cell and several of the terror group's sites in southern Lebanon, including Aitaroun, Khiam, Qana, and Jabal Blat. The IDF also shelled Jebbayn, Atta ash-Shab, and Aitaroun.

West Bank

- On February 5, the IDF [said](#) it had detained 33 wanted Palestinians during overnight raids in the West Bank, including a terror suspect accused of previously shooting at IDF troops.
- According to [reports](#) from February 3, in accordance with the U.S. Leahy Law prohibiting U.S. military aid to countries that violate human rights, the Biden administration has asked Israel for clarification about several accusations that the IDF used U.S. arms to violate human rights in the West Bank.
 - » According to the report, Israel has less than two months to provide the United States with explanations regarding a series of incidents. If the Biden administration does not find those explanations satisfactory, Israel risks losing U.S. funding for weapons and military supplies used in the West Bank.

Humanitarian Efforts

- The U.K.-based *Al-Araby al-Jadeed* [reported](#) on February 5 that many Gazans have successfully bribed Egyptian border guards—including bribes worth as much as \$10,000—to allow them into Egypt. The Egyptian government reportedly replaced many border crossing officials and stationed many supervisors at border posts in mid-December in an attempt to end the bribery schemes.
 - » The report, citing a spokesman for the Egyptian Border Authority, states that over 35,000 people have left Gaza via Egypt since the war began, including approximately 2,000 sick and wounded people.
- On February 5, Spain's Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares [announced](#) that Spain will provide UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) with an extra 3.5 million euros, or \$3.8 million, in aid.
 - » Over a dozen countries have temporarily halted aid to the agency in recent weeks pending an ongoing UN investigation into Israeli intelligence assessments that over 1,000 UNRWA staffers have ties to terrorism and that several UNRWA staffers were involved in the October 7 attack.
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has [allocated](#) an additional \$5 million in funding to UNRWA, according to a February 3 report from UAE state media agency *WAM*.

- Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan [told](#) Lebanon's *LBCI* network on February 2 that Hamas will only accept a hostage release deal if Israel agrees to a permanent ceasefire and the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.
 - » Hamdan mentioned two Palestinian prisoners whose release Hamas is especially interested in, namely Marwan Barghouti, who helped plan and lead the Second Intifada, and Ahmad Sadat, the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terror group, who is serving a 30-year sentence for assassinating an Israeli cabinet minister in 2001.
 - » Hamdan stated that proposals with a phased approach involving several fighting pauses would not be acceptable to the group, saying, "we have tried temporary truces and it turned out that the Israelis don't respect these truces but always violate them."
- According to unconfirmed [reports](#) from February 2, Israel's security cabinet discussed a framework for a potential hostage deal that involves Hamas releasing every hostage over 142 days in exchange for the IDF freezing its operations in Gaza.
 - » According to unnamed sources who participated in a security cabinet meeting discussing the deal, 35 women, ill, and elderly hostages would be released first in exchange for a one day-long fighting pause for every hostage released.
 - » The parties would subsequently negotiate the release of the remaining 100 hostages, whom terrorists would release over another 100 days while fighting is stopped.

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 562 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 225 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF [announced](#) the death of Sgt. First Class (res.) Shimon Yehoshua Asulin, 24, from Beit Shemesh.
 - » 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 27,365 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 66,630 have been injured during the war.
 - » On October 25, 2023, 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 381 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,382 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 5, a [drone attack](#) killed six fighters from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and wounded twenty others at the al-Omar oil field in eastern Syria, where U.S. personnel are also located.
- On February 4, the Iranian regime issued a [warning](#) to the United States against targeting the *Behshad* and *Saviz*, cargo ships that have loitered near the Red Sea and are suspected of being forward operating bases. In a video released by the Iranian regime, a narrator described the ships as “floating armories” on a mission to “counteract piracy in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.”
 - » Both ships are registered as commercial cargo ships for a company that the U.S. Treasury Department had sanctioned for being a front for the Iranian regime-run Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.
- On February 4, the Iran-backed Houthis released a video showing the group conducting an [exercise](#) against a mock Israeli command-and-control center and taking Israeli hostages.
- On February 4, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree [claimed](#) that the U.S. and U.K. strikes against the Iran-backed group “will not deter us” and “will not pass without response and punishment.”
- On February 4, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman, Nasser Kanani, [denounced](#) the U.S. and U.K. strikes against the Houthis in Yemen and accused the United States and Britain of “fueling chaos, disorder, insecurity and instability.”
- On February 3, Kanani [condemned](#) the U.S. strikes in Iraq and Syria as “violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity” of the two countries.

- On February 2 at 9:20 p.m. local time, the Iran-backed Houthis [launched](#) seven drones over the Red Sea. The USS *Laboon* and F/A-18s from the *Dwight D. Eisenhower* Carrier Strike Group later shot them down, and there were no reported injuries or damage.
- On February 2 at approximately 10:30 a.m. local time, the Houthis [launched](#) one drone over the Gulf of Aden. The USS *Carney* later shot it down, and there were no reported injuries or damage.

U.S. and International Response

- On February 5, a group of U.S. senators [unveiled](#) a proposal to allocate a total of \$118 billion toward several initiatives, including U.S. border security and aid to Ukraine, Israel, and additional U.S. allies.
 - » The legislative package was met with opposition from Republicans in the House of Representatives—questioning the bill’s effectiveness at securing the border and the amount of aid it provides to Ukraine—as well as by some progressive Democrats in the Senate, who view the bill as too restrictive on the border and [may](#) vote against it.
 - » The bill provides for \$14 billion in military aid for Israel; \$20 billion for border security; \$60 billion for Ukraine, \$5 billion to U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific; and \$10 billion for civilians in Ukraine, Gaza, and the West Bank.
 - » In a statement released that day, President Joe Biden [urged](#) senators to vote for the proposal, which the statement said “provides Israel what they need to protect their people and defend itself against Hamas terrorists. And it will provide life-saving humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.”
 - » House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), who called the bill “dead on arrival” in the House, is [planning](#) instead on having a vote in the House on a narrower bill with only aid for Israel.
- On February 5, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [traveled](#) to Saudi Arabia on his fifth trip since the war began, where he is expected to also visit Israel, Egypt, and Qatar.
- On February 5, an Israeli bank [froze](#) the account of David Chai Chasdai, an Israeli settler who was recently sanctioned by the United States for leading a rampage in the West Bank city of Huwara that resulted in the death of a Palestinian.
 - » On February 4, an Israeli bank had similarly [frozen](#) the business and personal accounts of Yinon Levi, also an Israeli settler who the United States sanctioned for violence against Palestinians.
- On February 4, starting at 10:30 a.m., the United States [struck](#) four Houthi anti-ship cruise missiles in Yemen that were prepared to launch.
- On February 4 at approximately 5:30 a.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) a Houthi land attack cruise missile in Yemen.
- On February 4 at approximately 4 a.m. local time, the United States [launched](#) a strike against a Houthi anti-ship cruise missile in Yemen that was prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea.
- On February 4, Biden administration Senior Advisor for Energy and Investment Amos Hochstein [met](#) with Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in Israel to discuss a possible border deal with Lebanon.

- On February 3, the United States and the United Kingdom, with the support of Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, conducted strikes against 36 Houthi targets across 13 locations in Yemen. The strikes “specifically targeted sites associated with the Houthis' deeply buried weapons storage facilities, missile systems and launchers, air defense systems, and radars,” according to a U.S. Defense Department [statement](#).
- On February 3 at approximately 7:20 p.m. local time, the United States [conducted](#) strikes against six Houthi anti-ship cruise missiles in Yemen that were prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea.
- On February 3, Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) announced that the House of Representatives would vote this week on a [\\$17.6 billion aid package](#) to Israel. This bill includes \$3.3 billion more aid than a previous iteration of the aid package that the House passed and sent to the Senate and does not include the controversial offsets to decrease funding for the Internal Revenue Service.
 - » The House bill would provide \$9.7 billion to replenish Israeli missile and defense system stocks, \$7.7 billion to replenish U.S. stocks sent to Israel and expended by the United States in military operations after the October 7 attack, and \$200 million to bolster protection for U.S personnel in the Middle East and help evacuate U.S. personnel if necessary.
 - » The bill does not include funding for Ukraine or the border, which are bundled with the Senate aid package to Israel.
 - » On February 4, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre argued that “the security of Israel should be sacred, not a political game.” She added, “we strongly oppose this ploy which does nothing to secure the border, does nothing to help the people of Ukraine defend themselves against Putin’s aggression, and denies humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians, the majority of them women and children, which the Israelis supported by opening the access route.”
 - » On February 3, Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CA) [said](#) that the bill “will ensure Israel has the tools it needs to complete the mission and sends a strong signal to others in the region that the US unequivocally stands with Israel” in the wake of the October 7 atrocities.
- On February 2 at approximately 4:40 p.m. local time, the United States [conducted](#) strikes against four Houthi drones in Yemen that were prepared to launch.
- On February 2 at 4:00 p.m. EST, the United States [conducted airstrikes](#) in Iraq and Syria against Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force and proxy groups. Numerous aircraft, including long-range bombers that flew from the United States, launched more than 125 precision munitions that [struck](#) more than 85 targets at four facilities in Syria and three in Iraq.
 - » The strikes, which took place over 30 minutes, hit command and control operations centers, intelligence centers, rocket, missiles, and drone storage, and logistics and munition supply chain facilities and reportedly [killed](#) approximately 40 people.
 - According to the U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the strikes [killed](#) 23 guards at the targeted locations in Syria.
 - An Iraqi government statement [said](#) that the U.S. airstrikes struck locations where Iraqi security forces were stationed and that 16 people were killed and 23 wounded in Iraq in the strikes.

- Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a government security force including Iranian proxy groups, [said](#) that 16 of its members were killed in the airstrikes.
- » On February 3, President Biden [indicated](#) that U.S. strikes “will continue at times and places of our choosing.”
- » On February 3, Hamas released a [statement](#) condemning the U.S. strikes in Iraq and Syria, and arguing that “those who pour oil on the fire, we assure you that the region will not find stability, nor peace until the Zionist [Israeli] aggression, genocidal crimes and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip ceases.”
- » On February 3, Lt. Gen. Douglas Sims, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [told](#) reporters that “we confidently struck targets that will impact their ability to conduct future strikes against Americans.”
- » On February 2, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [stated](#) that “this is the start of our response” and “we do not seek conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else, but the President and I will not tolerate attacks on American forces.”
- » Earlier [reports](#) from February 2 indicated that ahead of the airstrikes, the United States augmented its air defenses at its base in Jordan at which a drone attack by Iran-backed terrorists killed three U.S. soldiers on January 28.
- [CNN reported](#) on February 2 that over 800 anonymous U.S. and European officials coordinated a statement denouncing their governments for being too supportive of Israel. The statement warns that there is a “plausible risk that our governments’ policies are contributing to grave violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and even ethnic cleansing or genocide.”
 - » The statement also calls for a ceasefire, argues that Israel’s operations are bolstering support for Hamas, Hezbollah, and other malevolent actors, and argues that “our governments’ current policies weaken their moral standing and undermine their ability to stand up for freedom, justice, and human rights globally and weaken our efforts to rally international support for Ukraine and to counter malign actions by Russia, China and Iran.”
- On February 2, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield [said](#) that a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire put forward by Algeria that day could jeopardize “sensitive negotiations” to secure the release of hostages held in Gaza.
- The U.S. Treasury Department [announced](#) on February 2 that its Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned four entities based in Hong Kong and Iran that facilitate procurement of materials that Iran uses for its ballistic missiles and drones.
 - » Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson said in a statement, “we will not hesitate to leverage our full suite of tools to disrupt the illicit procurement networks that supply the components for these weapons systems, as well as hold accountable those who seek to export these weapons to terrorist proxy groups.”
- The Treasury Department also [announced](#) on February 2 that OFAC sanctioned Hamid Reza Lashgarian, Mahdi Lashgarian, Hamid Homayunfal, Milad Mansuri, Mohammad Bagher Shirinkar, and Reza Mohammad Amin Saberian—all officials in the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Cyber-Electronic Command (IRGC-CEC), which has conducted cyber attacks against U.S. infrastructure. Lashgarian is the head of the IRGC-CEC.

- » Nelson said, “the United States will not tolerate [targeting critical infrastructure] and will use the full range of our tools and authorities to hold the perpetrators to account.”
- On February 2, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) [announced](#) terrorism and sanctions-evasion charges and seizures connected to a billion-dollar oil trafficking network it said finances Iran’s IRGC.
 - » The DOJ seized more than \$108 million which China Oil & Petroleum Company Limited, a front company for the IRGC, attempted to launder through U.S. financial institutions. The DOJ also said more than 500,000 barrels of sanctioned Iranian oil was seized.
- On February 2, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [discussed](#) the Israel-Hamas war with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan during a phone call. According to the Saudi readout, the two leaders talked about “the efforts made to deal with the [war’s] security and humanitarian consequences.”
- The UNSC is reportedly [slated](#) to hold an emergency meeting on February 5 at 4:00 pm EST to discuss the recent U.S. airstrikes on Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria. The meeting was reportedly requested by UNSC permanent member Russia.
- The European Union’s (EU) foreign policy chief Josep Borrell [wrote](#) on February 4 that “defunding UNRWA would be both disproportionate and dangerous,” and “the allegations against UNRWA staff are serious and no one responsible should go unpunished. However, UNRWA reacted immediately and the contracts of the accused staff members were terminated. An investigation by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services is underway.”
 - » He added, “while the emotions prompting suspensions of funding are understandable, political responsibility has to look beyond emotions and consider the consequences of such a step.”
- On February 4, U.K. Defense Minister Grant Shapps [said](#) in a statement that the United Kingdom’s strikes alongside the United States over the previous day against Houthi targets in Yemen was “not an escalation. We have already successfully targeted launchers and storage sites involved in Houthi attacks, and I am confident that our latest strikes have further degraded the Houthis’ capabilities.” Shapps added that the strikes were “proportionate and targeted.”
- According to [reports](#) on February 2, the shipping group CMA CGM will not send vessels through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait so long as the security risks persist, according to an unnamed source.
- On February 2, spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Jens Laerke [said](#), “Rafah [in southern Gaza] is a pressure cooker of despair and we fear for what comes next,” and “it’s very important for us and for OCHA to put on record today our deep concern about what’s happening in Khan Yunis and Rafah in the southern part of the strip because it’s really not looking good.”
- On February 2, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [told](#) reporters, “we are looking into how to make sure that those responsible for extremist violence or extreme settler violence in the West Bank are held to account for it.”
- During an interview with Lebanon’s *LBCI* broadcaster aired on February 2, British Foreign Secretary David Cameron [said](#) that he told Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to “start talking about the things that a Palestinian state could be rather than the things it can’t be.”

- » He also argued that Netanyahu had “not ruled out comprehensively a two-state solution.”
- On February 2, a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research [indicated](#) that approximately 50 percent of U.S. adults believe Israel’s military offensive in Gaza has “gone too far,” up from 40 percent in November.

Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks

- On February 5, the *BBC* [confirmed](#) it had [fired](#) one of its employees, Dawn Queva, a *BBC Three* senior scheduling coordinator, after she made a series of antisemitic and Holocaust denial posts.
 - » The posts, which went back as early as 2014, included repeated denials of the Holocaust and antisemitic conspiracy theories.
- On February 4, a college student in Berlin [beat](#) his Jewish classmate so severely he had to be hospitalized after the two got into an argument about the Israel-Hamas War.

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Gabriel Noronha, [Rethinking U.S. Hostage Policy in Gaza and Beyond](#), February 2, 2024
- Webinar: [Gaza Update 2/1](#), with IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin, and 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