



# Rocket Fire From Lebanon More Than Triples

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*On at least 4 days in the last week of February and first week of March, terrorists in Lebanon fired barrages of over 30 rockets at Israel. Hezbollah also killed one civilian, and injured nine others, with an anti-tank missile attack. This represents a marked increase in attack intensity—an average fire rate of almost 21 projectiles per day from February 26 through March 3, compared to the more limited attack intensity at a rate of roughly 6 projectiles per day in the preceding week.*

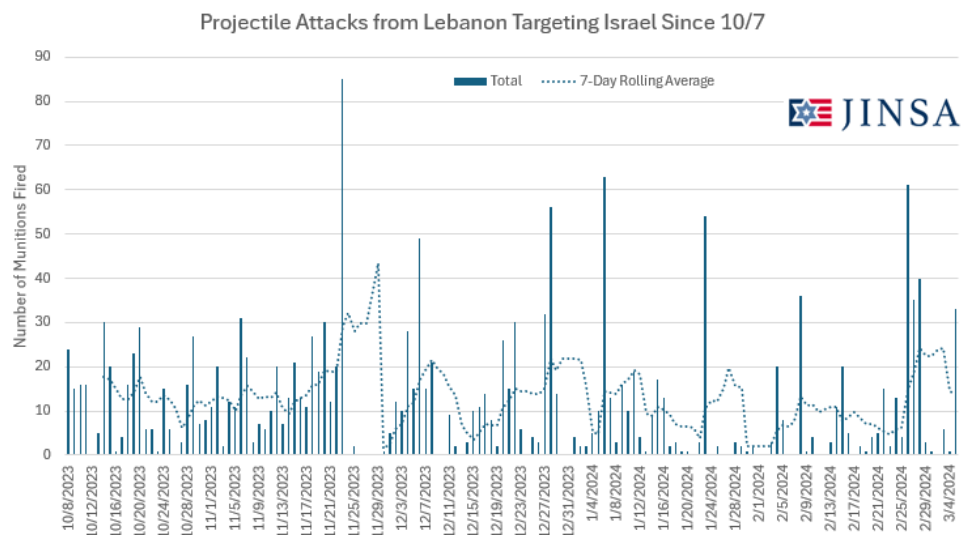
*This surge in Hezbollah and Hezbollah-backed aggression, which has occurred at several other points in the conflict, is likely a response to increasing Israeli military pressure on the group as well as an attempt to gain greater leverage in ongoing diplomatic negotiations with the United States and France. However, given the threat that Hezbollah presents to civilian communities in Israel's north, Israel is unlikely to cease its strikes until it can compel Hezbollah to accept a western-backed deal that restores security and allows Israelis to return to their homes in the north safely.*

*Israel's and Hezbollah's attempts to pressure one another without escalating to a full-scale war could spark one anyway unless Hezbollah is deterred from launching further attacks against Israel. Such deterrence is more likely to succeed if the Biden administration signals to Hezbollah—as it did in the immediate aftermath of Hamas's October 7 attack—that the United States will back Israel, or even fight alongside it, should a war against the terror group erupt.*

## What Happened?

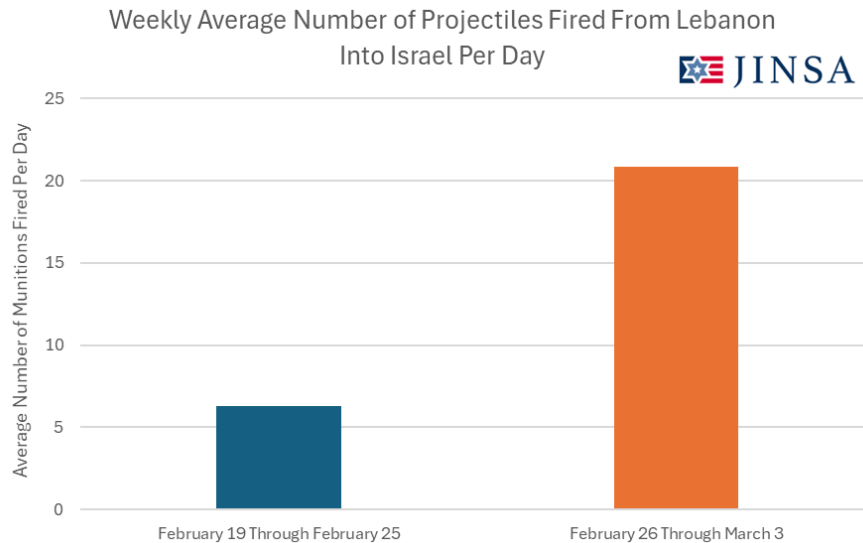
- On March 5, Hezbollah took credit for a [barrage](#) of more than 30 rockets targeting the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona.
- On March 4, terrorists in Lebanon [fired](#) an anti-tank missile toward the northern Israeli town of Margaliot, killing one person and wounding [nine](#) others. All the victims are said to be foreign workers. [Reports](#) indicated that the man killed was an Indian national.
- On March 2, an Israeli airstrike against terrorist targets in the southern Lebanese town of Naqoura [reportedly](#) killed Abbas Ahmed Halil, grandson of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

- On February 26, Hezbollah [fired](#) a barrage of 60 rockets toward an IDF base in the Golan Heights.
- Reports from February 27 [indicated](#) that Hezbollah rejected a French proposal to quell the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that would obligate the terror group to withdraw its personnel 10 kilometers north of the Israel-Lebanon border.

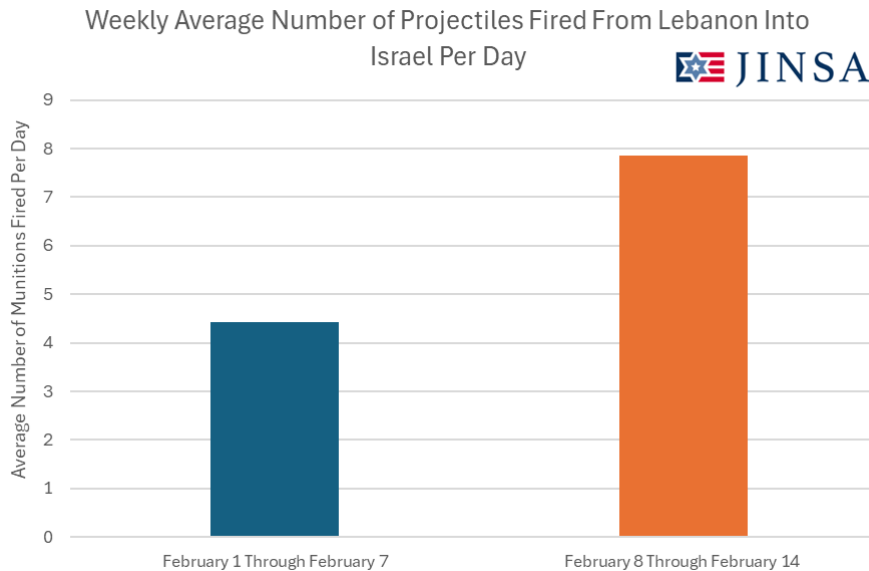


## Why Is It Important?

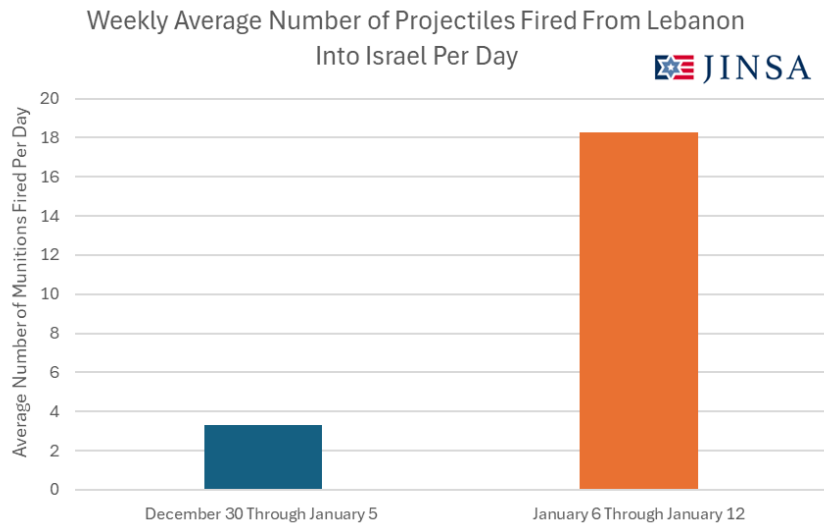
- From February 26 through March 3, the weekly average number of projectiles fired from Lebanon toward Israel per day was 20.86, an almost 232 percent increase from 6.29 in the seven days before February 26 (February 19 through 25). Such increases frequently occur after Israeli strikes inflict substantial pain on Hezbollah, suggesting that Hezbollah seeks to compel Israel to reduce the military pressure that the IDF is exerting on the terrorist group, among other goals.
  - » However, given the [threat](#) of an October 7-type invasion and massacre in Israel’s north by Hezbollah’s Radwan unit, Israel’s military operations against Hezbollah are likely to continue. Hezbollah’s anti-tank missiles also pose a particularly dangerous threat to Israeli civilians because their low trajectories allow them to evade the Iron Dome. Israel seeks to compel Hezbollah to acquiesce to a western-backed deal that obligates the terror group to retreat from the Israel-Lebanon border and that halts its attacks ahead of a looming Israeli ground operation to dismantle Hamas’s last stronghold in Rafah.
- Hezbollah has carried out several of its more intense projectile attacks against Israel soon after successful Israeli operations against the terrorist group, frequently ballooning the weekly average number of projectiles fired toward Israel per day from Lebanon.
  - » Hezbollah’s barrage of 60 rockets targeting an IDF base on February 26 [followed](#) Israeli airstrikes that day in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley that killed at least two Hezbollah operatives. Reuters described Israel’s strikes as “its deepest attack into Lebanese territory” since Hezbollah began attacking Israel in October.
    - In the week before the attack (February 19 through 25), the average number of projectiles fired toward Israel from Lebanon per day was 6.29. In the week of the attack (February 26 through March 3), it was 20.86—an increase of almost 232 percent.
    - Hezbollah [claimed](#) that its March 5 rocket barrage against Kiryat Shmona was a response to Israeli strikes in the Lebanese town of Hula that day and did not mention the March 2 strike that reportedly killed Nasrallah’s grandson. However, such an Israeli strike might compel additional intense Hezbollah responses, assuming the details of the Israeli strike are confirmed.



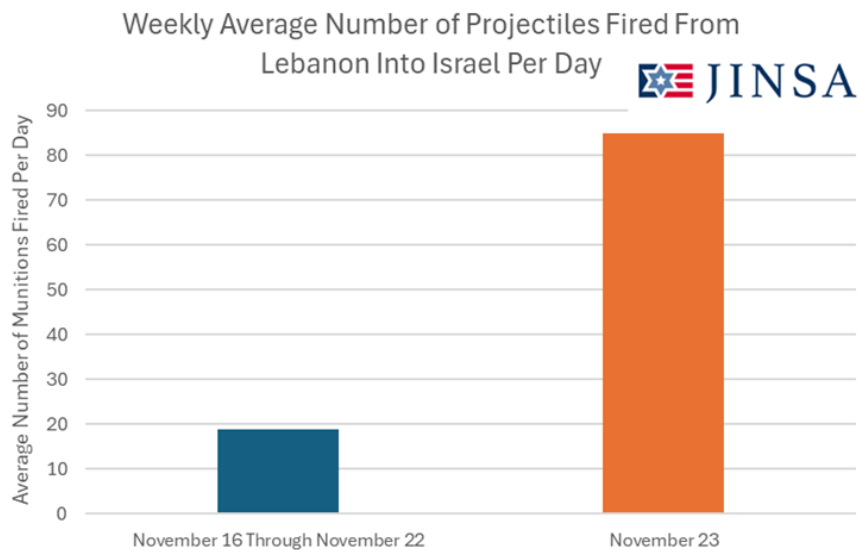
- » On February 8, Hezbollah [launched](#) more than 30 projectiles toward northern Israel, which the group described as an attack against an IDF base in response to “Zionist aggression.” Soon before the barrage, Israel targeted two Hezbollah members, one a senior commander, in a drone strike in Nabatieh in Lebanon’s south.
  - In the week before the attack (February 1 through 7), the average number of projectiles fired toward Israel from Lebanon per day was 4.43. In the week of the attack (February 8 through 14), it was 7.86—an increase of approximately 77 percent.



- » On January 6, the IDF said that Hezbollah projectiles [struck](#) an air traffic control base on Mount Meron. The terror group framed the attack as an “initial response” to Israel’s January 2 drone strike that killed Hamas leader Saleh al-Arouri in Beirut. That day, terrorists in Lebanon fired 63 projectiles into Israel, according to JINSA data.
  - In the week before the attack (December 30 through January 5), the average number of projectiles fired toward Israel from Lebanon per day was 3.29. In the week of the attack (January 6 through 12), it was 18.29—an increase of almost 456 percent.



- » On November 23, Hezbollah [fired](#) at least 80 projectiles toward Israel in salvos that included rockets, anti-tank guided missiles, and mortars—the largest daily quantity to date. The attacks damaged buildings in Kibbutz Menara in Israel’s Upper Galilee region. *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that the attacks “came after the IDF killed five Hezbollah fighters late Wednesday night [November 22], including the son of a Hezbollah member of parliament and a commander in Hezbollah’s Radwan commando force.”
  - In the week before the attack (November 16 through 22), the average number of projectiles fired toward Israel from Lebanon per day was 18.86, but the 85 projectiles fired on November 23 marked a roughly 350 percent increase from that number. Hezbollah largely abided by a week-long pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas that began on November 24, suggesting that the terror group sought to carry out a final attack before the lull.
  - Furthermore, the November 23 bombardment following Israel’s November 22 strike against Hezbollah affirms the “tit-for-tat” dynamic that largely drives fighting between Israel and the terror group. Hezbollah’s attack that day used 601 percent more projectiles than the daily average of 11.41 projectiles fired from Lebanon toward Israel per day from October 8 through March 5.



- This “tit-for-tat” pattern is driven by Hezbollah’s desire to punish and deter additional Israeli defensive operations and Israel’s need to neutralize the terror group’s threat to Israeli civilians. While such a dynamic perhaps engenders opportunities for Israel to strike high-value targets, it is likely not sufficient to compel the terror group’s full retreat from the border and afford Israeli civilians the security necessary to return to their homes.
  - » This underscores the [importance](#) of staunch U.S. support for Israel should Israel decide it has no choice but to intensify military operations against Hezbollah to compel the terror group’s full retreat from Israel’s northern border.
- Hezbollah’s relentless aggression against Israel since October 8 and the threat from the Radwan unit have [compelled](#) more than 80,000 Israelis to leave their homes, prompting Israeli military operations against the terror group geared toward expelling it from the border.
  - » Attacks from Lebanon since October 8 have [killed](#) seven civilians in Israel and 10 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers and reservists.
  - » Israeli minister Benny Gantz has [said](#), “the stopwatch for a diplomatic solution is running out; if the world and the Lebanese government don’t act in order to prevent the firing on Israel’s northern residents, and to distance Hezbollah from the border, the IDF will do it.”
    - According to [reports](#) from early February, such a diplomatic solution backed by the United States and several allied countries might involve a Hezbollah evacuation 8-10 kilometers from the border. Hezbollah would be replaced with 10,000 to 12,000 Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) troops. Israel would also be required to cease flights over Lebanese airspace and to partially withdraw its soldiers from its side of the border.
  - » A December 24 *Jerusalem Post* [report](#) that Hezbollah moved some of its personnel, including Radwan forces, northward after sustaining more than 100 casualties underscores the importance of continued Israeli military pressure on the terror group.
- [Reports](#) that Hezbollah rejected a recent French proposal that would obligate Hezbollah to withdraw 10 kilometers from the border underscore the difficulty of forcing the group to accept a ceasefire agreement without successfully deterring it from attacking Israel.
  - » Chief among Hezbollah’s professed goals driving the group’s persistence even amid western diplomatic intervention is to coerce Israel into ceasing its military operations against Hamas in Gaza. This would enable the survival of a key node in Iran’s “axis of resistance” of terrorist groups that threaten and attack U.S. and Israeli civilians and troops. On February 13, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah [said](#) that the terror group’s attacks against Israel would continue until Israel ceases its “aggression” in Gaza.
    - *The Jerusalem Post’s* February 28 [report](#) that Iran has authorized Hezbollah to conduct a large-scale attack against Israel if Hezbollah is “certain” that Israel will invade Rafah, if true, could suggest that Iranian operatives leaked the information to deter Israeli action there.
    - Rafah is Hamas’s [last stronghold](#) in the Gaza Strip, and Iran might be concerned that Israel will incapacitate not only the regime’s Hamas proxies, but Iran’s much better-armed and much more formidable Hezbollah proxy in Lebanon.
  - » In tandem, Hezbollah seeks to compel Israeli territorial and other western concessions in a future U.S.-backed agreement. Nasrallah [boasted](#) on January 5, “we now have an opportunity to return to us Lebanese territories that Israel took over, such as Shebaa Farms, thanks to our standing on the side of Gaza and its people, but any talk about this should only happen after the end of the war on Gaza, and this is our official position.” His bombast came in the wake of a December 22 *New York Times* [report](#) indicating that the Biden administration aspires to advance negotiations between Israel and Lebanon to resolve their outstanding land border [disputes](#).

- A February 6 [report](#) indicated that a proposal to end Israel-Hezbollah fighting backed by the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy will involve “economic benefits to boost the Lebanese economy to sweeten the deal for Hezbollah.” This also suggests that the terror group likely sees its aggression against Israel as an economic asset.
- Although these dynamics suggest that both Israel and Hezbollah seek to use force to compel concessions without escalating to a full-scale war, each increase in the intensity of Hezbollah’s attacks risks crossing the threshold into such a conflict.
  - » Palpable U.S. and other western [fear](#) of escalation with Hezbollah renders this outcome more likely by signaling to Hezbollah and its Iranian benefactors that aggression prompts concessions, rendering a more destructive war more likely.
    - As Nasrallah [boasted](#) in July 2023, referring to the U.S.-mediated October 2022 Israel-Lebanon maritime border deal that followed Hezbollah [aggression](#), “what we did with the oil, gas and maritime border delineation, today also, through complementarity and cooperation between the state and the resistance ... we can recover our occupied land in the town of Ghajar.”
    - As JINSA argued in its new [report](#), “The Day After: A Plan For Gaza,” when U.S. envoys publicly express fear of escalation, “this only reinforces dangerous Iranian impressions of U.S. self-deterrence and, by extension, willingness to pressure Israel to deescalate if diplomacy fails.”
  - » Accordingly, Hezbollah is likely to continue attacking Israel until the terror group is deterred from doing so. This largely requires convincing Hezbollah that the United States will back Israel in, and possibly even enter, a full-scale war should one become necessary to restore security for Israel’s northern residents.
    - President Biden [announced](#) on October 10 that “the Department of Defense has moved the USS Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to the Eastern Mediterranean and bolstered our fighter aircraft presence.”
    - He also warned “any country, any organization, anyone thinking of taking advantage of this situation [Hamas’s October 7 massacre], I have one word: Don’t.” This staunch warning may have kept Hezbollah’s attacks against Israel below the level at which Israel would feel compelled to launch a full-scale war.