

The October 7 War: Observations October 2023 - May 2024

OVERVIEW

On October 7, Hamas invaded Israel, killed 1,200 people, and kidnapped 252 others in the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, setting off a heavily scrutinized regional conflict. Based on primary source research, a fact-finding trip to Israel, and discussions with senior Israeli, international aid agency, and United Nations officials, the Jewish Institute for National Security of America has published a report authored by retired U.S. generals, admirals, and military legal experts that provides a preliminary assessment of the conflict. The report provides operational, legal, strategic, informational, and contextual observations to assist American policymakers and military leaders seeking to understand this conflict and its implications.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

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KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. Hamas's October 7 attack shook the foundations of Israeli security, well beyond the immediate vicinity bordering the Gaza Strip, with Iran and its proxies also attacking Israel since the war began.
2. Israel's determination to dismantle Hamas as a conventional military force in the Gaza Strip is justified self-defense and represents a reasonable and legal objective.
3. The IDF's performance on Gaza's complicated battlefield to effectively combine air power, indirect fire, and ground forces in a significant above- and under-ground maneuver demonstrates operational and tactical excellence.
4. The IDF encountered a complex urban and subterranean battlefield in which Hamas transformed almost the entirety of Gaza, including civilian infrastructure, into fortified fighting positions to oppose Israeli advances and purposely create civilian casualties.
5. IDF operations in this complex environment were carried out in compliance with the Laws of Armed Conflict (LOAC), while Hamas has serially and intentionally violated LOAC by hiding among civilians.
6. Hamas is better understood as a "terror army" with the structure, training, infrastructure, and advanced weapons of a conventional force.
7. Israel's early reticence to provide more than the legally required humanitarian assistance or to administer areas of Gaza that have generally been cleared of Hamas threaten to undermine the tactical victories it has won on the battlefield.
8. The United States would benefit from studying the IDF's ground maneuver operations in Gaza's dense complex urban terrain and particularly the tactics, techniques, and procedures it developed.
9. Although the IDF has made some improvements compared to past conflicts, it faced challenges communicating with international audiences, combatting Hamas disinformation, and conveying the gravity of the enemy threat.
10. The Israeli government's lack of a clear strategy for a post-Hamas future for Gaza jeopardizes IDF battlefield successes.