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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 10, 2023

On October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked and unprecedented multi-pronged attack on Israel by land, air, and sea. JINSA issued a NatSec Brief with an [early assessment](#) of the war on October 8 and an [update](#) yesterday. JINSA also held a [webinar](#) yesterday with JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky, Senior Fellow John Hannah, IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, and IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin. Below are updated information and analysis, which JINSA will continue to produce throughout the conflict.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- Palestinian terrorists in Gaza have fired [over 4,500 rockets](#) at Israel as of Tuesday morning.
    - » On Tuesday, a rocket attack killed a foreign worker and [injured](#) two others in southern Israel.
    - » A rocket landed in Beersheba, causing no reported injuries, and rocket sirens were [reported](#) Tuesday in Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Beersheba, Omer, and other Israeli communities in southern Israel.
    - » The IDF issued a warning to residents of Sderot, Miflasim, and Nir Am to seek shelter due to a potential unspecified aerial [intrusion](#) near the Gaza Strip.
- Hezbollah [fired](#) several rockets and mortars at two Israeli military outposts in the Galilee region on Tuesday. Reports also emerged that terrorists in Lebanon [fired](#) an anti-tank missile at the northern Israeli city of Avivim.
- On Monday, three members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed credit for [an infiltration](#) into Israel from Lebanon, [killing](#) three Israeli soldiers. The IDF [announced](#) it killed two other gunmen who tried to cross the Lebanese-Israeli border.
- On Tuesday, reports emerged that Hamas [threatened](#) a massive rocket attack toward Ashkelon at 5:00 PM Israel time.
- The IDF [announced](#) Tuesday that 1,500 bodies of Hamas terrorists had been found in Israeli territory and that no Hamas members had infiltrated into Israel since Monday night.

IDF Operations

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Israeli television Monday night that he had [ordered](#) the IDF to prepare for a mass offensive against Hamas at an unprecedented intensity.

- » Netanyahu, in his remarks, listed five immediate actions Israel was undertaking: 1) stopping enemies from entering Israel, 2) initiating a massive attack against Hamas, 3) fortifying the rest of Israel's borders and particularly regarding Lebanon and West Bank, 4) gathering international support, and 5) solidifying unity in Israel.

  » Netanyahu also called for an immediate unity government, compared Hamas to ISIS, and stated that the enemy wanted a war, so it would get a war. He also thanked the U.S. government for its support and thanked other supporters abroad. Netanyahu cautioned Israelis not to believe what he called "fake news" about Egyptian foreknowledge of the attack and called for patience.

- The IDF on Monday announced that approximately 100,000 reserve troops were amassed near the border with Gaza. The IDF mobilized an additional 60,000 reservists, bringing the total to 360,000.

  » The Israeli Air Force announced that it had flown back hundreds of IDF soldiers who had been abroad on transport aircraft.

  » Israel evacuated all civilians from twenty-four Israeli villages near the Gaza border in possible preparation for an Israeli ground operation.

  » *Axios* reported that Prime Minister Netanyahu told President Biden on Monday that "we have to go in [to Gaza]. We can't negotiate now" in order to "restore deterrence."

- On Tuesday, the IDF announced that it was conducting "widespread" airstrikes across the Gaza Strip and has hit at least 1,352 targets since the start of the operation.

  » The IDF struck over 200 targets in Khan Yunis and Rimal in the Gaza Strip between Sunday night and Monday morning and reportedly bombed the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip on Monday.

  » Among the targets hit by the IDF were a Hamas weapons storage depot, a war planning center, and a military compound.

  » According to multiple media reports, on Tuesday, Egypt closed the Rafah crossing after Israel threatened that it would bomb vehicles Egypt allowed into Gaza.

  » After an earlier statement from the IDF's international media spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Hecht advised Palestinians to leave Gaza for Egypt, the IDF clarified that "in recent days, the IDF has been instructing the population inside of the Gaza Strip to distance themselves from designated areas. We emphasize that there is no official call by Israel for residents of the Gaza Strip to exit into Egypt."

- On Monday, Israel struck several Hezbollah targets–two observation posts and one location utilized during emergency contingencies in southern Lebanon, killing five Hezbollah members. Hezbollah claimed that Israel killed three of its members.

- The IDF stated that its elite Maglan unit had identified a terror cell on the Zikim beach along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, after which a helicopter was dispatched and the IDF killed the terrorists.

Casualties and Hostages

- As of early Tuesday morning, there have been over 900 Israelis confirmed dead since the attacks began on Saturday, including at least 123 IDF soldiers. According to the Israeli Health Ministry, a total of 2,806 Israelis have been injured, including 535 Israelis currently in hospitals, of which 106 are in critical or serious condition.

  » The bodies of 108 Israelis were found in Kibbutz Be'eri, a kibbutz near the Gaza border.

- » Forty-one Israeli police officers have been killed so far in firefights with terrorists in southern Israel, according to the Israeli Police.
- » At least eleven Americans, ten Nepalese nationals, one Cambodian national, and a French national have been killed in the attacks, and several American, British and French nationals remain missing. A British national serving in the IDF was killed in the attack.

- Israeli ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan stated Monday that between 100 and 150 people are currently being held hostage in the Gaza Strip, including foreign nationals.
- According to Palestinian officials, 765 Palestinians have been killed and over 4,000 Palestinians wounded.
- Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh released a statement that there will not be a prisoner swap until the end of the war.

Iranian Involvement

- The *Washington Post* reported Monday, citing current and former Western and Middle East intelligence officials, that the weekend's attack was planned for at least a year with support from other Iranian proxies who provided logistical assistance and military training.
  - » This support reportedly involved training outside of the Gaza Strip, according to the officials.
- White House Deputy National Security Advisor Jonathan Finer told *CBS News* that "Iran is broadly complicit in these attacks…. Iran has been Hamas's primary backer for decades. They have provided them weapons, they have provided them training, they have provided them financial support…. What we have not seen yet at this moment, although we are continuing to look at it very closely, is any sort of direct involvement in the immediate attacks that took place over the last couple of days."
- In his first televised speech since the attacks on Saturday, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei claimed that the Iranian regime was not involved in the Hamas attack, but he praised what he called Israel's "irreparable" military and intelligence defeat.

U.S. and International Response

- President Biden is scheduled to speak at 1:00 pm ET Tuesday to discuss the U.S. response to the attacks.
- Sources told the *Washington Post* on Monday that the White House is planning to ask Congress for additional military aid to Israel as soon as next week and reportedly will be paired with a request for funding for the war in Ukraine.
- Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke on the phone with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, and according to the State Department readout, reiterated "U.S. support for Israel as it defends itself against Hamas' terrorist attacks."
- Secretary of State Blinken also wrote on X that "Israel has the right to protect its citizens from these attacks and secure release of hostages."
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., who entered the role earlier this month, held his first call with his counterpart, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, during which Brown said he "stands by the IDF."
- The leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy issued a joint statement expressing their "steadfast and united support to the State of Israel, and our

unequivocal condemnation of Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism." They further expressed that their "countries will support Israel in its efforts to defend itself and its people against such atrocities. We further emphasize that this is not a moment for any party hostile to Israel to exploit these attacks to seek advantage."
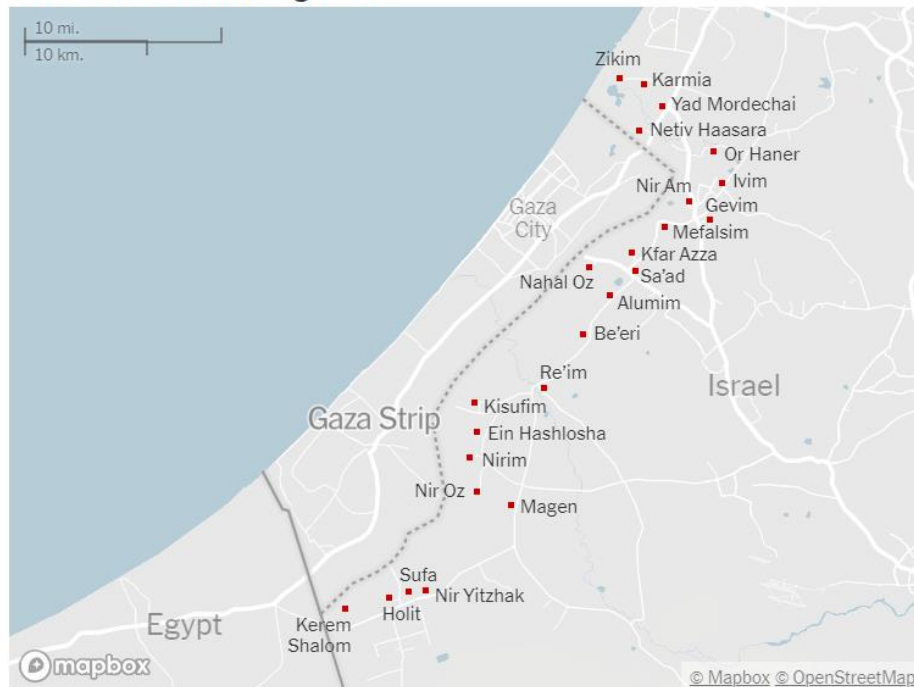
Analysis

- The massive IDF mobilization, which has been the largest and quickest in Israel's history, the evacuation of Israeli towns near the Gaza border, and the *Axios* report that Prime Minister Netanyahu told President Biden "we have to go in" to Gaza supports the widely-held belief that Israel will soon be initiating a ground operation into Gaza.

- Such an operation will require both tactical and broader strategic planning to deal with combat in an urban environment with one of the highest population densities in the world and to mitigate the threat to IDF soldiers from Hamas's large, complex network of tunnels inside Gaza.

  » As JINSA has previously noted in its assessment of the 2014 Operation Protective Edge, the last major Israeli ground operation in Gaza, conditions in Gaza create a great deal of operational complexity:

    – "Hamas exploited Gaza's dense urban terrain to protect their forces and to maximize the military and political costs to Israel as the result of any military response. This was designed to help protect Hamas's own infrastructure, [and] exploit Israel's aversion to casualties."

    – "Hamas sought to neutralize the IDF's precision-guided munitions (PGM) by covering and concealing its military leadership and forces within civilian infrastructure and underground, including tunnels. Hamas utilized parts of its expanded tunnel networks to maneuver and supply its forces while limiting the likelihood of being detected or targeted."

- While Hezbollah has fired or tolerated other militants firing from southern Lebanon into Israel, it has not yet escalated to a full multi-front war. Palestinian Islamic Jihad's incursion into Israel from Lebanon, which killed an IDF soldier, elicited an Israeli response on Hezbollah targets, suggesting that Israel will hold Hezbollah accountable for any malign activity on its northern border, regardless of whether it was directly implicated or not.

- On JINSA's webinar about the war on October 9, former commander of the Israeli Air Force Major General (ret.) Amikam Norkin noted that "the air force is acting in 3 vectors: defending the population using the Iron dome, special forces operations on the ground, and strikes against Hamas targets in Gaza."

- JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs and former head of the IDF General Staff Operations Branch Major General (ret.) Yaacov Ayish said on the webinar that "the IDF is preparing not only in terms of readiness in the south, but also in the north… right now, we're talking about three hundred thousand troops and commanders… the point here is not only to look at the south sector… but also to the north."

- JINSA Distinguished Fellow and former National Security Advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister IDF Major General (ret.) Yaakov Amidror noted that "the situation is that the government gave a clear order… to destroy the military capability of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Very concrete, very clear… the mission of the military forces today was to finish, to clean, the areas inside Israel [of terrorists]…. For the stability of the Middle East in the future, America should support Israel, and help Israel get enough time to do what is needed

to destroy Hamas... I think it's important to understand that Hamas crossed all the red lines of human wars."

- » Amidror added that "The decision here is not to negotiate with Hamas. We're not negotiating… In a way, the fact that they are holding the hostages in Gaza might be relevant very much in the future, because we need time, and that will give us the time. I don't see them giving up the greatest success from their point of view."

- JINSA Senior Fellow John Hannah explained that "what Israel needs now more than anything… is diplomatic cover, not just for two weeks until the images of the war and carnage are on TV that Hamas is responsible for… this is going to be at least a couple of months…. We've got to be thinking about how to replenish that [American weapons] stockpile in Israel… we've got to make sure it's fully loaded up and that Israel has everything it needs in the long term."

- » Hannah added that "the Iranian and Hezbollah tentacles are very clear, and there has been a very high degree of operational support, planning, and training going on between Hamas, PIJ, Hezbollah, and Iran… If we find out that the Iranians supported this mission, what is our response going to be?... In terms of the Iranian goal here, I believe that… this movement towards Israeli-Saudi rapprochement, that this is a dagger aimed at the Iranian 'resistance' in the region... I have no doubt that all of this, at least one of its chief goals, is to derail… American-Saudi-Israeli efforts."

Where Israel is evacuating towns

The New York Times