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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 12, 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 has produced updates throughout the war. JINSA also held a [webinar](#) yesterday with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal and Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish. Below are updated information and analysis, which JINSA will continue to produce throughout the conflict.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [5,000](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » On Thursday morning, seven rockets struck Sderot and Beit Shemesh, and sirens [sounded](#) in Jerusalem, Even Yehuda, Tayibe, Ariel, and Kfar Yona, as well as in locations in southern Israel.
 - » An anti-tank guided missile was reportedly [launched](#) from the Gaza Strip on Thursday morning, hitting an empty house in Netiv Ha'asara.
- A [false alarm](#) occurred on October 11 in which a number of air raid sirens went off across northern Israel, with media sources reporting that 15-20 drones had infiltrated into Israel from Lebanon.
 - » Further sirens went off ten minutes later amid reports that a terrorist had entered into Israel from Lebanon and had infiltrated the Israeli border towns of Ma'ayan Baruch and Ma'alot Tarshiha.
 - » The sirens were a false alarm, according to IDF Spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, who stated, "there was an error, and we are investigating it – we will check if it was a technical fault or human error. The bottom line is I want to calm the public and say that at this stage, there is no major security incident in the north."
- IDF soldiers found an [ISIS flag](#) in Kibbutz Sufa in the equipment of a Hamas terrorist.

IDF Operations

- The IDF announced that it [launched](#) strikes on over 200 targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.

- » These include airstrikes [targeting](#) several operational headquarters of the Hamas elite fighting unit Nokhba, which orchestrated Saturday's mass infiltration.
- » The IDF announced that it killed Mohammed Abu Shamala, a senior member of Hamas's naval forces, in the strikes, which reportedly also destroyed naval weapons stored in Shamala's house. The strikes also killed Mustafa Shahin, a Hamas operative who filmed and streamed Saturday's attacks.
- The IDF stated that it has [launched](#) strikes on 2,687 targets in Gaza since the war began.
- According to IDF Spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, Hamas is [no longer in control](#) of parts of the Gaza Strip.
- Hagari also [stated](#) that fifteen terrorists were killed in four separate incidents in southern Israel over the past 24 hours.
- Syrian media [reported](#) on October 12 that Israel had conducted an air strike near the Damascus International Airport and [Aleppo International Airport](#), and that Syrian air defenses had been [employed](#).
- Israeli Energy Minister Israel Katz [announced](#) on X on October 12 that Gaza would not be provided with any electricity, water, or fuel until all Israeli hostages were returned.

Casualties and Hostages

- Five Israelis were [injured](#) in a rocket attack against Sderot on Thursday, and two people were injured Thursday after a rocket [struck](#) Beit Shemesh near Jerusalem.
- Israeli authorities [stated](#) Thursday that over 1,300 people in Israel have died, and another 3,297 people have been [injured](#) in Israel during the war.
 - » Of the injured, 1,805 were [reportedly](#) in good condition, 581 were in moderate condition, 335 were in serious condition, and twenty-eight were in critical condition.
 - » At least 222 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#) since the war began.
 - » 423 Israeli soldiers remain [hospitalized](#), with 111 in serious condition, 189 in moderate condition, and 113 in mild condition, according to the Israeli health ministry.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed since the war began, including at least twenty-five [American](#) nationals, twenty-one [Thai](#) nationals, seventeen dead or missing [British](#) nationals, ten [Nepalese](#) nationals, seven [Argentinian](#) nationals, ten [French](#) nationals, four [Russian](#) nationals, three [Chilean](#) nationals, two [Ukrainian](#) nationals, two [Peruvian](#) nationals, three [Canadian](#) nationals, three [Chinese](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Colombian](#) national, a [Brazilian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, 1,354 people have [been killed](#) and an additional 6,049 injured in the Gaza Strip since October 7. An additional twenty-nine Palestinians have [been killed](#) and 150 [wounded](#) in the West Bank.
 - » According to the Palestinian Authority, Israeli settlers [killed](#) two Palestinians near the West Bank town of Qusra, south of Nablus.
- Hamas has taken an [estimated](#) 150 people hostage, and the IDF has notified over ninety-five families that their loved ones were [taken hostage](#) by Hamas.
- According to the *Washington Post*, as of October 11, a number of foreign nationals still [remain missing](#), including seventeen American nationals, twenty French nationals, fifteen Argentinian nationals, nine Ukrainian nationals, six Russian nationals, three Canadian

nationals, five Philippines nationals, three Austrian nationals, three Brazilian nationals, three Chinese nationals, two Italian nationals, one Chilean national, two Paraguayan nationals, two Peruvian nationals, two Sri Lankan nationals, two Tanzanians, and one Irish national.

- » Hamas is holding an unknown number of Americans hostage in Gaza, U.S. National Security Council (NSC) spokesman John Kirby [stated](#) on Wednesday.
- » Several German nationals, eleven Thai nationals, two Colombian nationals, and two Mexican nationals have been [taken hostage](#) by Hamas.
- » Italy's Foreign Ministry [stated](#) that two missing Italian nationals have "probably been taken hostage."

Iranian Involvement

- During an October 11 JINSA webinar featuring JINSA's Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal and Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, Gen. Ayish [said](#), "You don't have to try too much to see that the equipment of Hamas... training of Hamas... that [Hamas is] coordinating with [Iran]."
 - » Gen. Ayish [said](#) further that "to say [Iran] is not behind [the attack] you have to be blind... Iran is orchestrating the whole arena. You can see it with Hamas, PIJ, Hezbollah, everything. Not only arms, not only training, [Iran] is behind every evil in the region."
- According to *Iran International*, the head of the National Security Committee of the Iranian parliament Vahid Jahalzadeh announced that a delegation of Iranian lawmakers is set to travel to both [Syria and Lebanon](#) in the coming days.
 - » Jahalzadeh said on October 11 that the delegation had already met with members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to discuss the events in Israel.
 - » Jahalzadeh also stated that the delegation discussed "[future operations](#)" with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad as well.
- Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) took a call from Iranian President Raisi, the first between the two leaders, during which they discussed the war.
 - » A [readout](#) from the Saudi Press Agency says that MBS [stressed](#) that "the Kingdom is making all possible efforts in communicating with all international and regional parties to stop the ongoing escalation" and underscored "the kingdom's firm position towards supporting the Palestinian cause."
 - » An Iranian [readout](#) stated that the two leaders discussed "the need to end war crimes against Palestine."
- Syrian President Bashar al-Assad held a phone call with President Raisi on Thursday, during which, according to a Syrian [readout](#), the leaders discussed the urgency of a unified Arab and Islamic stance against Israel.
 - » The readout stated that Assad said to Raisi that "every hour of delay in achieving unity among Arab and Islamic States implies further Zionist transgressions against the Gaza Strip's population."

U.S. and International Response

- On October 11, President Biden [spoke](#) with Jewish community leaders about his “unwavering support for Israel and work to combat antisemitism.”
 - » During the meeting, the President reportedly [said](#), “I told the Iranians - be careful.”
- As JINSA previously [reported](#), according to the Department of the Navy, the United States is deploying a second aircraft carrier in addition to the USS Gerald Ford, the USS Dwight Eisenhower and its strike group, later this week to boost deterrence and prevent regional powers from joining the war.
 - » During a press briefing on October 10, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [said](#), “it is certainly distinctly possible that [Iran-backed militia groups] choose to try to exploit or take advantage of this situation. And we have been sending clear warnings that doing so will resort — will result in — in a firm response and consequences from the United States.”
- A number of senior U.S. officials commented about the war on October 11.
 - » U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [spoke](#) with Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs and former JINSA fellow Ron Dermer over the phone and expressed “his profound condolences for the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel,” per the State Department.
 - » NSC spokesperson John Kirby [said](#), “we just don’t have enough info to make decisions like that” when asked whether U.S. troops would attempt to rescue American hostages in Gaza.
 - » U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris [wrote](#) that “President [Biden] and I are committed to supporting Israel, deterring other hostile actors, and helping protect innocent people.”
 - » The White House’s X account [noted](#) in a post that President Biden and Vice President Harris spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu over the phone to discuss continuing U.S. support for Israel. They pledged to speak regularly “in the face of an unprecedented and appalling assault by Hamas terrorists.”
 - » U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen raised the possibility of new sanctions against Iran, [stating](#) that “I wouldn’t take anything off the table in terms of future possible actions.”
- Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel on October 12 and [met with](#) Prime Minister Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, where he [told](#) Netanyahu, “we’re here, we’re not going anywhere.”
 - » Before leaving Joint Base Andrews to travel to Israel, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#), “we stand resolutely against terrorism. We’ve seen the almost undescrivable acts committed by Hamas against Israeli men, women, and children. Every day we’re learning more, and it is simply heartbreaking. Not since ISIS have we seen this kind of depravity, and we will continue to stand very resolutely against it.”
- Two U.S. lawmakers, Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), introduced legislation to [immediately freeze](#) the \$6 billion in assets the U.S. authorized to be released from a South Korean bank for Iranian use.
 - » Egypt has [rejected](#) proposals to establish humanitarian corridors for Palestinian civilians fleeing Gaza, but Egypt’s foreign ministry [said](#) that the Rafah Crossing, the sole passageway between Gaza and Egypt, remains open.

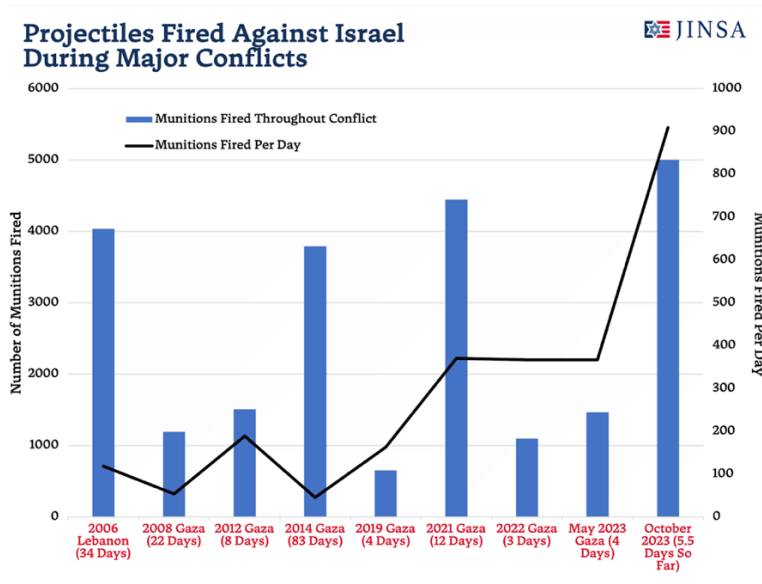
- Egypt also announced that it was directing international aid into Gaza through an airport in the northern Sinai peninsula amidst repeated Israeli [warnings](#) not to allow vehicles into Gaza.
- As JINSA [noted](#) previously in its update about the war, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant held a briefing with NATO defense ministers on Thursday.
 - » Gallant [announced](#) in a press release after the meeting that he briefed NATO defense ministers “on developments in the war against Hamas.”
 - Gallant added, “I described the atrocities committed by Hamas against infants, women, the elderly. The ‘ISIS’ of Gaza will not exist on our borders. The IDF will destroy Hamas.”
 - During the call, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [said](#), “Israel does not stand alone.”
 - *Al Monitor* [reported](#) that diplomatic sources told the outlet that defense ministers from the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy, and Hungary all issued strong statements supporting Israel.
- Internal discussions continue to take place within the European Union regarding continued funding to the Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and Gaza.
 - » Denmark and Sweden announced on October 10 that they would [suspend](#) development aid, while Austria announced a [total suspension](#) of the over \$19 million in annual aid it provides to the Palestinians.
- *Axios* [reported](#) on October 12 that, according to U.S. and Israeli officials, Israel, Egypt, and the United States are in talks to create a safe passage for Americans in Gaza to flee into Egypt.

Analysis

- Israel has already faced over 5,000 rockets since October 7, surpassing the total in any of its wars since at least 2006, including the 2014 Gaza War that lasted eighty-three days and 2006 Lebanon War that lasted thirty-four days.
 - » After launching 3,000 rockets at Israel on October 7, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups in Gaza have slowed their rate of fire to roughly 400 rockets per day during the four and a half days since then. The slower rate of fire could indicate preparation for a long war.
 - » Given the high rate of fire from Hamas on the first day of the war, Israel has still faced more projectiles per day than any other conflict since at least 2006.
- Unconfirmed reports of Israeli airstrikes deep into Syria, if true, in addition to repeated mortar and artillery fire from Syria and at least one attempted infiltration from Lebanon into Israel, suggest a broadening of the conflict into a second or possibly even third front in either Lebanon or Syria.
 - » Hezbollah and other Iran-backed groups have long used parts of southern Lebanon and southwestern Syria to coordinate and conduct operations against Israel.
 - » Israeli leaders will likely be reluctant to divert too many resources from Israel’s operations in the southern theater against Hamas to deal with adversaries in the

northern theater, particularly as Israel continues to amass reserves, now over 360,000, along the Gaza border.

- On a JINSA [webinar](#) yesterday, IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish said about IDF airstrikes in Gaza, "the results are devastating due to the fact that Hamas has embedded itself in the civilian neighborhoods all over. It doesn't matter which neighborhood. All neighborhoods."
 - » According to Ayish, the IDF has not identified any tunnel penetrating the Israeli border.
 - » Ayish emphasized that "the support we heard yesterday from President Biden... we know to appreciate it, we don't take it for granted... the U.S. presence can contribute to readiness in many areas."
 - » Ayish also stressed that "the only way to change the way that the Iranians are acting is by creating the relevant deterrence, and that has to be based on... a credible threat and sanctions, and we are far from that."



Source: Israeli Defense Forces - The New York Times