



## Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 16, 2023

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*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 daily updates during the war. Updated information and analysis are below, which JINSA will continue to produce throughout the war.*

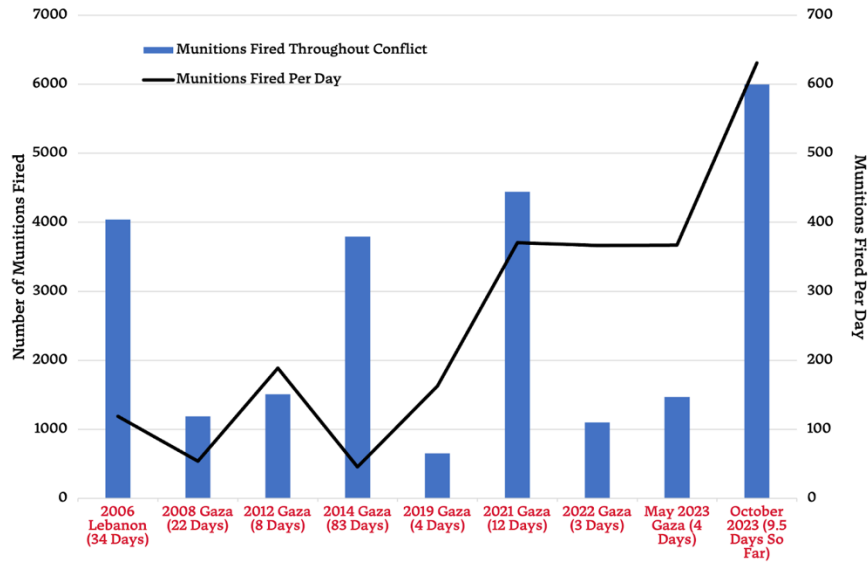
### Last 72 Hours

#### *Attacks Against Israel*

- At least 6,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) from Gaza during the war.
  - » Rockets [struck](#) Sderot and Ashkelon, and terrorists [fired rockets](#) toward Tel Aviv, Herzliya, and Be'er Sheva, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
    - Three rockets [fired](#) from Gaza exploded in Sderot on October 14, causing a house fire but no injuries.
    - Two rockets [struck](#) a building in Ashkelon on October 15.
    - A large [barrage](#) of missiles was fired towards Be'er Sheva on October 16.
- The IDF [announced](#) on October 14 that a rocket had been fired from Syria into Israel but had been intercepted.
- Hezbollah escalated their attacks against northern Israel over the weekend with attacks on Israeli army outposts and northern towns.
  - » On October 14, the IDF announced that approximately thirty mortar shells were [launched](#) from Lebanon towards the Har Dov military outpost in Shebaa, an unspecified number of which struck Israeli soil. Hezbollah later [claimed](#) responsibility for the mortar attacks.
  - » On October 15, the IDF [reported](#) four separate incidents of anti-tank fire launched from Lebanon against Israeli military positions, killing two IDF soldiers and inflicting three injuries.

## Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts

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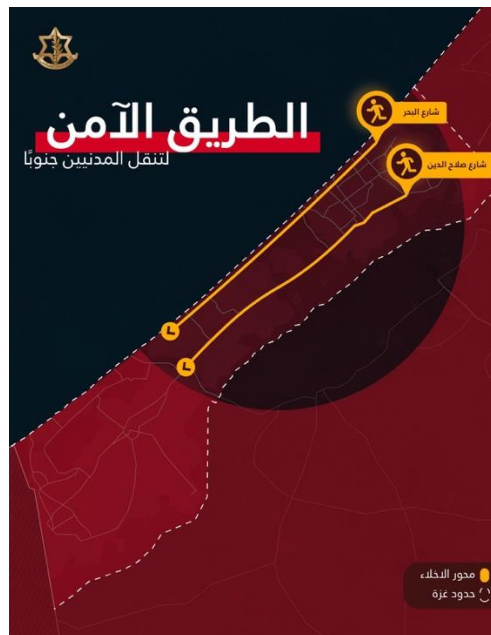


- On October 16, Israel [announced](#) a suspected terrorist infiltration into the Israeli town of Metula on the Lebanese border.
- On October 14, a number of attempted infiltrations into several Israeli population centers were [reported](#).
  - » These include reported infiltrated infiltrations into Beitar Illit, Ma'ale Efraim, and Ma'aleh Michmash in the West Bank, and Gornot Hagalil in the north along the Lebanese border. Hostile aircraft infiltrations were also reported on October 14 in the northern towns of Shfar'am and I'billin.

### IDF Operations

- On October 16, the IDF and the Israeli Ministry of Defense [announced](#) that Israel was evacuating Israeli residents that live within two kilometers of the Lebanese border, including twenty-eight communities across northern Israel, and relocating them to state-funded boarding houses for an indefinite period.
- The IDF stated that it launched strikes on over 250 military targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.
  - » The targets [struck](#) in the Gaza Strip, primarily in northern Gaza, included dozens of military headquarters, several military observation posts, and several rocket launching posts used by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.
  - » Local Palestinian sources stated that an additional twenty targets were [struck](#) the night of October 15 across Gaza.
  - » On October 15, the IDF announced that it had [launched](#) a new round of strikes on Gaza at a number of targets, including a military compound housing several Hamas terrorists.
  - » The IDF [reported killing](#):
    - The [commander](#) of Hamas Southern District of National Security, Muetaz Eid
    - Merad Abu Merad, head of Hamas's aerial system
    - Ali Qadi, [commander](#) of Hamas's Nukhba Jabalya Assault Company

- Belal Alqadra, commander of Nukhba's Southern Khan Yunis Assault Company.
- On October 14, the IDF Spokesperson to the Arab Media distributed [information](#) about two routes that the IDF recommended civilians use to evacuate, and on October 15, the IDF identified a [route](#) civilians could follow to southern Gaza where the IDF would not conduct airstrikes from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm local time.



- On October 14 and October 15, the IDF [launched](#) strikes against targets in Lebanon, including a terrorist cell plotting anti-tank guided missile strikes against Israel and a number of military infrastructure [targets](#).
  - » The IDF also reportedly [exchanged](#) gunfire with targets across the Lebanese border.
- On October 15, Israeli armored and infantry forces conducted localized raids into Gaza that [recovered](#) the bodies of Israelis who had been missing since the October 7 attack.
- IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi [stated](#) on October 15 that “our responsibility now is to enter Gaza, go to the places where Hamas organizes, operates, plans, and launches. To hit them severely everywhere, every commander, every operative, and to destroy infrastructure. In one word - to win” and added that the IDF is “going to do something big and important that will need to change the situation for a very long time and in a clear manner.”
- Energy Minister Israel Katz announced on October 15 that following an agreement between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Biden, Israel would [restore](#) water supply to parts of the southern Gaza Strip.
- On October 16, the IDF stated that it had [arrested](#) forty people in raids across the West Bank, many of whom have ties to Hamas.

### Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,400 people in Israel have [died](#) and another 3,500 have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 289 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#) since the war began, including two IDF soldiers who died in a [missile attack](#) on October 15 at the Lebanon border.
  - » Israel Police announced on October 14 that a total of fifty-one Israeli police officers have been [killed](#) since the October 7 attacks.

- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least thirty American nationals, twenty-four [Thai](#) nationals, seventeen [British](#) nationals, ten [Nepalese](#) nationals, seven [Argentinian](#) nationals, seventeen [French](#) nationals, sixteen [Russian](#) nationals, four [Romanian](#) nationals, four [Chinese](#) nationals, three [Brazilian](#) nationals, three [Belarusian](#) nationals, three Chilean [nationals](#), three [Philippines](#) nationals, two [Ukrainian](#) nationals, two [Peruvian](#) nationals, five [Canadian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Colombian](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Turkish](#) national, and an [Austrian](#) national.
- According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, over 2,750 Palestinians have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and at least 9,700 have been injured during the war.
  - » IDF spokesperson Jonathan Conricus [claimed](#) a strike on a convoy of Gazans fleeing to southern Gaza on October 13 appeared to have been a false flag operation carried out by Hamas that killed seventy people.
- According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, fifty-eight Palestinians have been [killed](#) and an additional over 1,100 have been [wounded](#) in the West Bank.
- The IDF claims that at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza were killed in Israel since the start of the war.
  - » On October 15, Israeli press [reported](#) that a terrorist had been killed near kibbutz Nir Am and an unspecified number of terrorists had been killed after exiting a tunnel in Israel near the Gaza Strip.
- According to the IDF, the families of 199 individuals have been notified that their loved ones were [taken hostage](#).
  - » On October 14, Al Jazeera reported that Hamas had [executed](#) nine hostages, including four foreign nationals.
- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least thirteen [American](#) nationals, fifteen [French](#) nationals, fifteen [Argentinian](#) nationals, nine [Ukrainian](#) nationals, eight [Russian](#) nationals, three [Canadian](#) nationals, three [Philippines](#) nationals, two [Austrian](#) nationals, three [Italian](#) nationals, two [Paraguayan](#) nationals, five [Peruvian](#) nationals, two [Sri Lankan](#) nationals, two [Tanzanian](#) nationals, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, and a [Nepalese](#) national.
  - » At least eight [German](#) nationals, seventeen [Thai](#) nationals, four [Portuguese](#) nationals, three [Italian](#) nationals, and two [Mexican](#) nationals have been taken hostage by Hamas.
  - » UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly responded to questions about a report that over ten British nationals had been taken hostage by [saying](#) that the figure was “not an unreasonable estimate.”

### *Iranian Involvement*

- On October 14, Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Qatar and [reportedly](#) discussed Hamas’s terrorist attack.
  - » The two “agreed to continue cooperation,” and Amir-Abdollahian [described](#) Hamas’s attack on Israeli civilians as a “historic victory.”
- Iran’s Foreign Ministry said that Hamas might [release](#) the hostages if Israel stops conducting airstrikes on Gaza, a claim the terrorist group has not verified.
- On October 15, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) [reportedly](#) redeployed some of its Syrian-based personnel, including missile experts, from positions in eastern Syria further south near Damascus, just two dozen miles from the Israeli border.

- » On October 15, the head of strategic affairs for Israel's Foreign Ministry [wrote](#) on social media that Iran is trying to open a second front in the war through Syria.
- [Axios reported](#) on October 14 that Iran, through UN intermediaries, had sent a message that it will intervene in the war if Israeli operations in Gaza continue, particularly if Israel initiated a ground offensive in Gaza.
  - » These reports came after Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian met with the UN envoy to the Middle East, Tor Wennesland, on October 14.
  - » However, reports on October 15 [indicated](#) that Iran's mission to the UN said, "Iran's armed forces will not engage, provided that the Israeli apartheid does not dare to attack Iran, its interests, and nationals. The resistance front can defend itself."

### *U.S. and International Response*

- The On October 13, the State Department announced that non-emergency personnel and U.S. government personnel were being [evacuated](#) from the U.S. consulate in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem on a case-by-case basis.
- Secretary Blinken continued his diplomatic tour of the region, where, after leaving Israel, he held meetings with the leaders of Jordan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.
  - » At a press conference on October 15, Blinken [outlined](#) that his trip had "four key objectives: to make clear that the United States stands with Israel; to prevent the conflict from spreading to other places; to work on securing the release of hostages, including American citizens; and to address the humanitarian crisis that exists in Gaza."
  - » After visiting Israel, from October 13 to October 15, Blinken traveled across the region to meet with a number of regional leaders, including:
    - Traveling to Amman, Jordan to meet with [Jordanian](#) King Abdullah II and [Palestinian](#) Authority President Mahmoud Abbas;
    - Traveling to Manama, Bahrain to meet with [Bahraini](#) Crown Prince-Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa;
    - Traveling to Doha, Qatar to meet with [Qatari](#) Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha. At a press conference with the Qatari leaders, Blinken said, "what Israel is doing is not retaliation. What Israel is doing is defending the lives of its people and, as I said, trying to make sure that this cannot happen again. And I think any country faced with what Israel has suffered would likely do the same thing;"
    - Traveling to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to meet with [Saudi](#) Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in Riyadh;
    - Traveling to Abu Dhabi, UAE to meet with [UAE](#) President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi;
    - Traveling back to Riyadh to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto ruler of the kingdom. Crown Prince bin Salman kept Blinken waiting for several hours for a [meeting](#) that was scheduled to happen in the evening of October 14 but did not happen until the following morning. In addition to discussing the war, the meeting also touched on the potential for Israel-Saudi [normalization](#), according to U.S. officials; and
    - Traveling to Cairo, Egypt to meet with [Egyptian](#) President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

- » On October 15, after meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Secretary of State Antony Blinken [announced](#) that the Rafah crossing, the sole passageway between Gaza and Egypt, would soon be opened for aid deliveries at a minimum.
  - Blinken [announced](#) that “Rafah will be open. We’re putting in place with the UN, with Egypt, Israel, with others, the mechanism by which to get the assistance in and to get the assistance in and to get it to people who need it.”
- » Blinken then returned to [Israel](#) on October 16 after several days of shuttle diplomacy.
- When [asked](#) during an interview with CBS News’s “60 Minutes,” released on October 15, whether Hamas must be eliminated entirely, President Biden responded, “yes I do.”
  - » The president also [said](#) that “it would be a mistake for Israel to occupy Gaza again” and that “Israel understands that a significant portion of Palestinian people do not share the views of Hamas and Hezbollah.”
  - » Biden [urged](#) that “there needs to be a Palestinian authority. There needs to be a path to a Palestinian state” and reassured listeners that “there’s standards that democratic institutions and countries go by. And I’m confident that there’s going to be an ability for the innocents in Gaza to be able to have access to medicine and food and water.”
- On October 15, CNN [reported](#) that Prime Minister Netanyahu had invited President Biden to visit Israel soon and that the United States was considering such a visit.
- Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [spoke](#) on October 15 about developments in the war, marking the sixth time the two counterparts have spoken.
- President Biden [appointed](#) former Ambassador David Satterfield as the Special Envoy for Middle East Humanitarian Issues to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.
- On October 16, Blinken spoke with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, where Blinken “reiterated the need for Hamas to halt all violent attacks and free hostages immediately... [and] welcomed Turkiye’s constructive engagement,” according to a State Department [press release](#).
- German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is planning to [arrive](#) in Israel on October 16 and will also reportedly travel to Egypt and Jordan to discuss the ongoing war.
- The U.S. Embassy in Israel organized a ship that will leave from Haifa to Cyprus to [evacuate](#) American citizens on October 16.

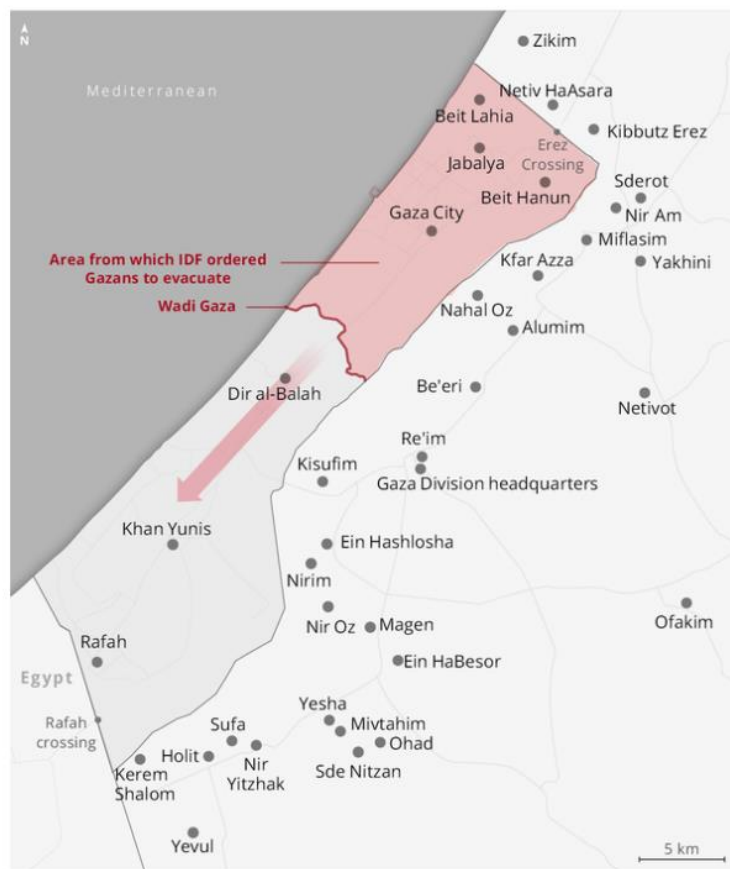
## Analysis

- Israel’s evacuation order for residents living up to two kilometers from the Lebanese border comes after a pronounced uptick in shelling from Lebanon and repeated Israeli strikes on Hezbollah targets within Lebanon, suggesting that Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies could be willing to escalate their involvement in the war.
  - » These developments also portend a likely strong Israeli response as it seeks to deter Hezbollah and other Iranian proxy groups from entering the war in a widespread, coordinated manner.
  - » Additionally, Israel may be increasingly concerned about the possibility of direct involvement by the IRGC itself after the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) on October 15 that IRGC personnel had been moved from eastern Syria to positions in southern Syria close to the Israeli border.



- Israel's strikes into northern Gaza, striking a number of military targets including planning centers, observation posts, and launcher sites, are likely part of an effort to degrade Hamas not only militarily, but also degrade its intelligence-gathering capabilities and command and control centers in advance of an imminent ground operation into Gaza.
- An uptick in terrorist violence in the West Bank, including multiple attempted infiltrations into Israeli communities over the weekend, threatens to spread thin IDF forces and resources as it seeks to address growing threats from Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria.
- The Israeli Air Force has been [flying](#) IDF ground commanders over Gaza in recent days to familiarize them with the territory, a strong indication that Israel will send in ground forces soon.

**Israel - Hamas war:**  
Gaza Strip and surrounding Israeli communities



Source: [Haaretz](#)