



To Counter Hezbollah Aggression, Strengthen U.S. Support for Israel

Zac Schildcrout
Policy Analyst

The Iran-backed terrorist group Hezbollah and other terrorist groups in Lebanon have attacked Israel on a near daily basis since Hamas's October 7 invasion—there have been roughly 244 projectile attacks in 73 days according to JINSA's research, and other organizations have documented higher quantities. As a result, roughly 80,000 Israelis have evacuated from communities along the northern border. Restoring Israel's security, and returning Israelis to their homes, will require not just defeating Hamas but also ensuring, whether diplomatically or militarily, that Hezbollah does not and cannot attack from the north.

Yet, recent U.S. diplomatic efforts to negotiate an Israel-Lebanon border deal, as well as U.S. pronouncements that equivocate between Hezbollah attacks and Israeli responses, may make a war more likely if Hezbollah perceives a lack of U.S. resolve to support Israel. The United States should instead adopt the "no daylight" principle, clearly articulating that it supports, and will equip, any future Israeli military efforts to neutralize Hezbollah's threat.

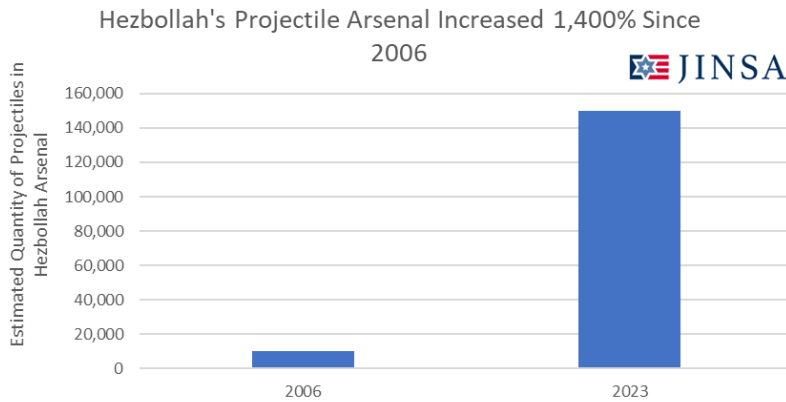
What Happened?

- According to JINSA's research, since Hamas's October 7 [massacre](#) in Israel, Hezbollah and other terrorist groups in Lebanon have launched roughly 244 projectile attacks against Israel in 73 days using rockets, drones, and anti-tank guided missiles, an average of approximately 3.34 per day. Other databases have documented an even [higher](#) total count.
 - » Attacks from Lebanon have [killed](#) six Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers and four Israeli civilians, according to the IDF.
 - » These attacks have [compelled](#) roughly 80,000 residents of Israel's north to temporarily leave their homes.
- A December 18 U.S. Department of Defense [readout](#) of U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III's trip to Israel noted, "[the Secretary] shared his view that Lebanese Hezbollah forces should move away from the border with Israel and cease attacks so that Israeli communities can return to their homes."
- On December 15, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [argued](#) that "a negotiated outcome" is the optimal way to "send a clear message that we will not tolerate the kinds of threats and terrorist activity that we have seen from Hezbollah and from the territory of Lebanon."
 - » The *Financial Times* [reported](#) on December 14 that U.S., U.K., and French officials are attempting to achieve a negotiated outcome between Israel and Lebanon that would augment the Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF) presence in southern Lebanon and lead to Hezbollah's evacuation from the border, as stipulated by the 2006 United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701.

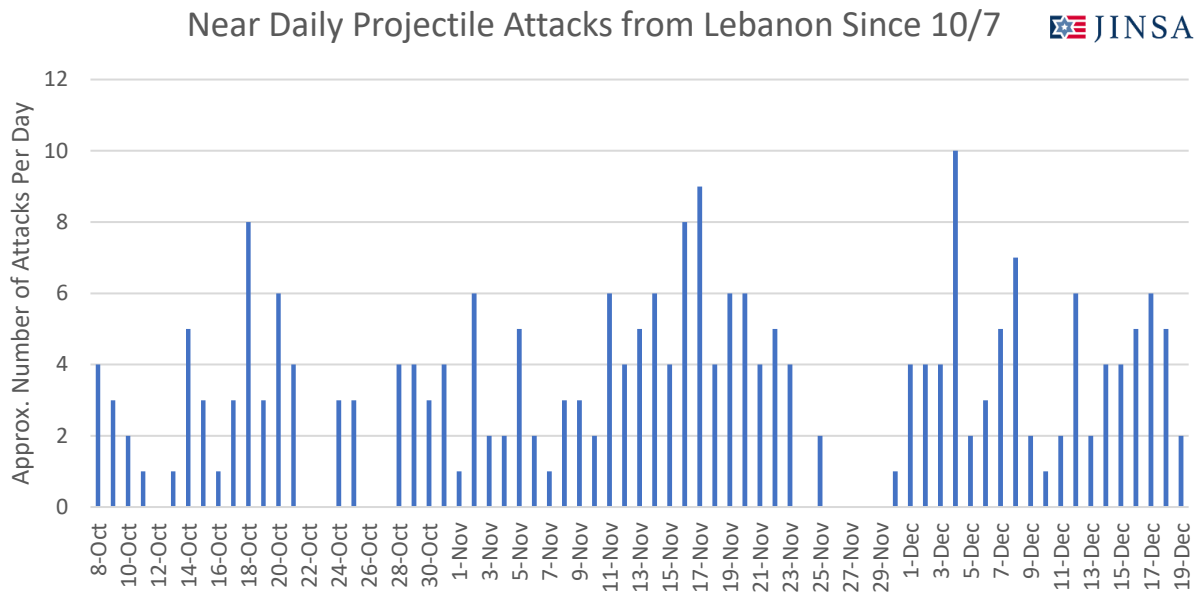
- » On December 6, *Yediot Ahronot* and *Ynet* columnist Nadav Eyal [detailed](#) on X that the White House seeks to facilitate an agreement to settle land border disputes between Israel and Lebanon.
 - The initiative is reportedly being spearheaded by Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Adviser for Energy and Investment Amos Hochstein, who led the effort behind the October 2022 Israel-Lebanon maritime boundary demarcation deal.

Why Is It Important?

- Hezbollah’s persistent, deadly attacks against Israel—and the significant number of Israelis driven from their homes by this threat—highlight the broader security challenges that Israel faces after 10/7 well beyond the Gaza Strip. Israel has made clear it will not consider itself secure until Hezbollah is removed from southern Lebanon—as demanded by UNSCR 1701—either through diplomacy or military force. Current Biden administration policy, which reportedly involves negotiating an Israel-Lebanon border deal, is founded on poor assumptions about how Hezbollah responds to diplomacy and does not appear sufficient to address the strategic challenge posed by the terrorist group.
- UNSCR 1701 [calls for](#) “an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons” besides those of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) south of Lebanon’s Litani River. It also calls for “the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that ... there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State.” Both the LAF and UNIFIL have failed to enforce these provisions. Hezbollah’s continued presence in Lebanon and along the Israel border violates the resolution.
- Israeli leaders have expressed a sense of urgency to degrade Hezbollah’s threats to Israeli citizens and compel the enforcement of UNSCR 1701.
 - » On December 9, Israel’s National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi [said](#), “[Israeli] residents will not return [to the north] if we don’t” battle Hezbollah as Israel is battling Hamas in Gaza. He also stressed that “we can no longer accept [Hezbollah’s elite] Radwan force sitting on the border. We can no longer accept [UN Security Council] Resolution 1701 not being implemented.”
 - Hanegbi warned further that Hezbollah’s Radwan unit could perpetrate an October 7-type massacre “within minutes” and added, “we are making clear to the Americans that we are not interested in war [in the north], but that we will have no alternative but to impose a new reality in the north” if the threat remains.
- During a December 6 meeting with mayors and heads of councils in northern Israel, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](#) that Israel will “act with all the means at its disposal” to push Hezbollah across the Litani River in Lebanon should diplomatic efforts to do so fail. Hezbollah’s Radwan unit has [trained](#) to invade northern Israel and hold Israeli territory. This threat, compounded by the unit’s presence on the Israel-Lebanon border, prevents Israeli civilians from safely returning to their homes.
- A full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah would inflict unprecedented death and destruction in Israel and Lebanon. In 2006, Hezbollah [possessed](#) approximately 10,000 short-range, unguided rockets and missiles; now the group [possesses](#) an estimated 150,000 or more—a 1,400 percent increase.



- » [Several hundred](#) of Hezbollah's projectiles are precision-guided, compared to almost zero in 2006. Although Israel's air defense systems such as the Iron Dome can intercept projectiles fired toward built-up areas with [greater than](#) ninety percent success, Hezbollah could likely [overwhelm](#) Israel's air defenses by mixing these precision munitions into larger barrages of unguided projectiles.



- The United States apparently believes that land border negotiations between Israel and Lebanon could be an effective means to keep more intense war between Israel and Hezbollah at bay. But the likely basis for this assumption, that the U.S.-negotiated October 2022 Israel-Lebanon maritime border [deal](#) contributed to stability, is faulty. That agreement likely convinced Hezbollah of the efficacy of using force against Israel.
 - » In early July 2022, Hezbollah [launched](#) three unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) toward Israeli energy infrastructure in the Mediterranean Sea and [threatened](#) to escalate in September 2022. The maritime boundary agreement was reached shortly thereafter, likely convincing Hezbollah that its attacks were effective leverage.
 - Hezbollah aggression continued after implementation of the agreement, including a particularly audacious roadside [bombing](#) in Israel in March 2023 that wounded a civilian and an April [barrage](#) of 34 rockets targeting Israel carried out by Hamas, likely with Hezbollah's approval.

- » U.S. efforts to encourage negotiations between Israel and Lebanon amid Hezbollah attacks might convince Hezbollah, again, that its aggression compels Israeli concessions and lead to greater hostilities.
- U.S. statements about Israel and Hezbollah that feign neutrality and/or urge Israel to exercise restraint are also likely to result in more, not less, Hezbollah aggression by casting doubt on U.S. support for Israel.
 - » On December 6, U.S. State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller [said](#), “we want to see a diplomatic solution [to Israel’s security threats from Hezbollah] ... and we would oppose any widening of the conflict and urge Israel not to widen the conflict.”
 - » Such statements are even more perplexing when compared to recent staunch U.S. support for other allies.
 - For example, in response to several provocations by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) against Philippine vessels on December 9-10 in the South China Sea, a December 10 [statement](#) attributed to Matthew Miller sharply admonished the PRC, arguing that “these actions reflect not only reckless disregard for the safety and livelihoods of Filipinos, but also for international law.”
 - Miller further warned that “the United States stands with our Philippine allies in the face of these dangerous and unlawful actions.”
- Israel needs an adequate supply of weapons not merely to defeat Hamas in Gaza but to maintain an arsenal sufficient to fight Hezbollah. A depleted Israeli weapons stockpile will only encourage more Hezbollah attacks.
 - » As JINSA President and CEO Dr. Michael Makovsky [relayed](#) after his recent trip to Israel, Israeli officials told him that they need much more weaponry to sustain operations against Hamas and prepare for war with Hezbollah, including MK-84 bombs, Boeing-made Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) kits, Boeing Apache and Sikorsky CH-53K helicopters, and Boeing F-15 jets.
 - JDAMs enable Israel to add precision capabilities to unguided “dumb bombs,” improving its ability to strike terrorist targets and minimize collateral damage.

What Should the United States Do Next?

- The United States should make clear in public statements that there is “no daylight” between it and Israel and that it supports future Israeli military efforts to neutralize Hezbollah’s threat to Israeli troops and civilians should diplomatic efforts to do so fail.
- The United States should use its position in the United Nations and other international fora to call attention to failures to implement UNSCR 1701 and pressure the United Nations, Lebanon, and other actors to take stronger steps to enforce it.
- To disabuse Hezbollah of the notion that it can use aggression to compel Israeli concessions via a border deal, the United States should avoid pressuring Israel to accept an agreement that would increase risks to Israeli security or prevent its ability to operate against the terrorist group in Lebanon or Syria.
- To [strengthen](#) protection against Hezbollah’s rocket arsenal and bolster Israeli deterrence, the United States should [expedite](#) deliveries to Israel of precision-guided munitions (PGMs), tank shells, artillery, and other munitions, as well as sufficient Iron Dome, David’s Sling, and Arrow air defense batteries and interceptors.