



Ari Cicurel
Assistant Director of Foreign Policy

Zachary Schildcrout
Policy Analyst

Anna Schafel
Programs and Outreach Associate

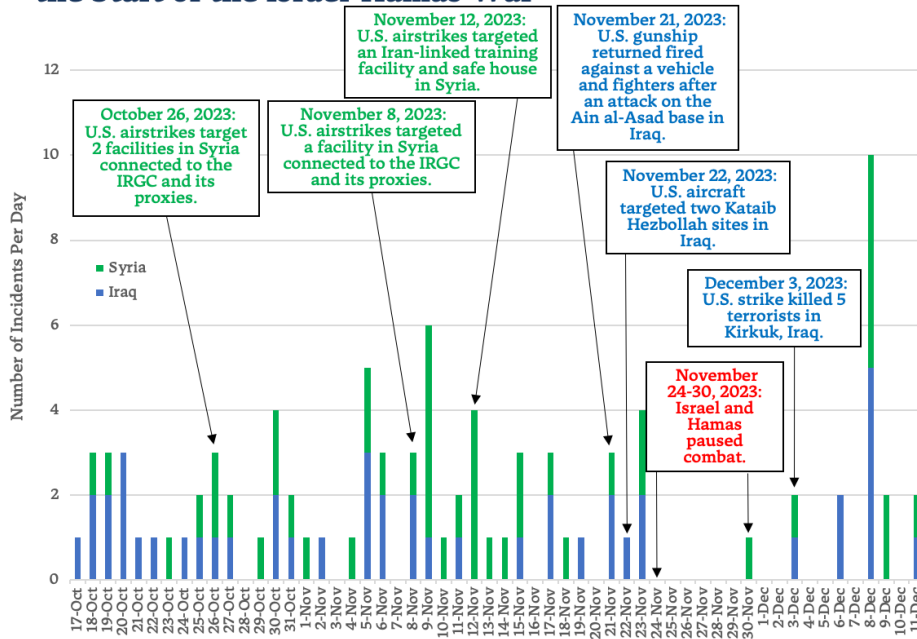
Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 12, 2023

JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

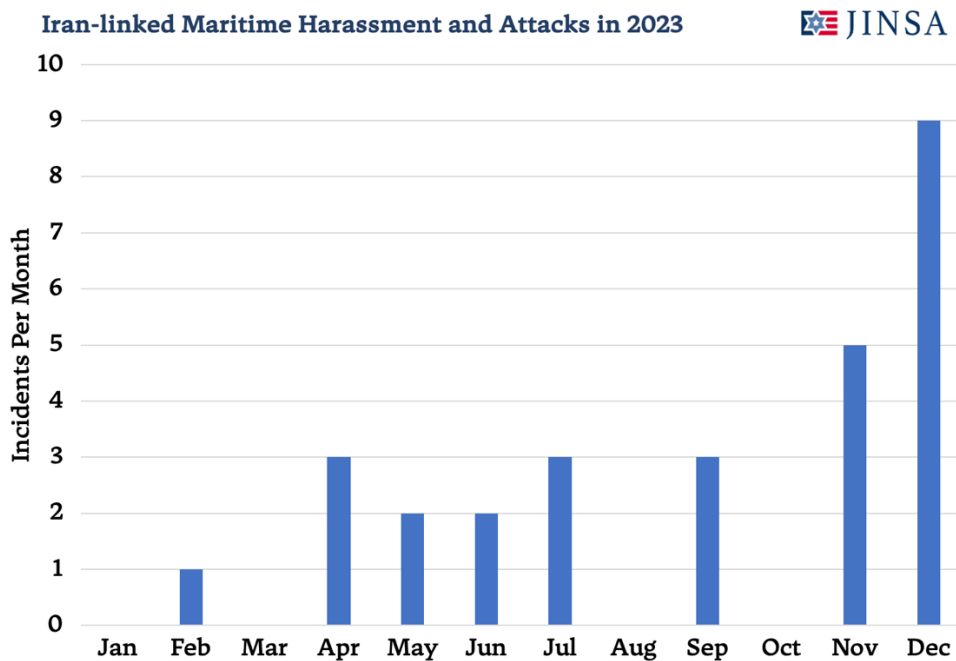
Analysis

- While projectile attacks from Gaza targeting Israel have declined significantly in recent weeks, Hezbollah and other terrorists in Lebanon have escalated their attacks against Israel using a combination of drones, rockets, and anti-tank missiles.
- Antisemitic incidents have reached [unprecedented levels](#) over the last two months according to the Anti-Defamation League, which recorded 2,031 incidents between October 7 and December 7, a 337 percent increase from the same period in 2022.
- Iran-backed groups continued their escalation of attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria with two more attacks on December 11. These groups have conducted at least 92 strikes on U.S. personnel since October 17, surpassing the total that they had conducted in the 32 months between the start of the Biden administration in January 2021 and the start of the Israel-Hamas.

Iran-backed Attacks Against U.S. Personnel Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War 



- The Houthis' missile and drone attacks against a commercial ship sailing through the Red Sea and false claims that it is only targeting vessels bound for Israel continue to disrupt freedom of navigation through critical Middle Eastern waters. The Houthis' maritime aggression is part of a concerted Iran-backed pressure campaign against Israel and the United States.



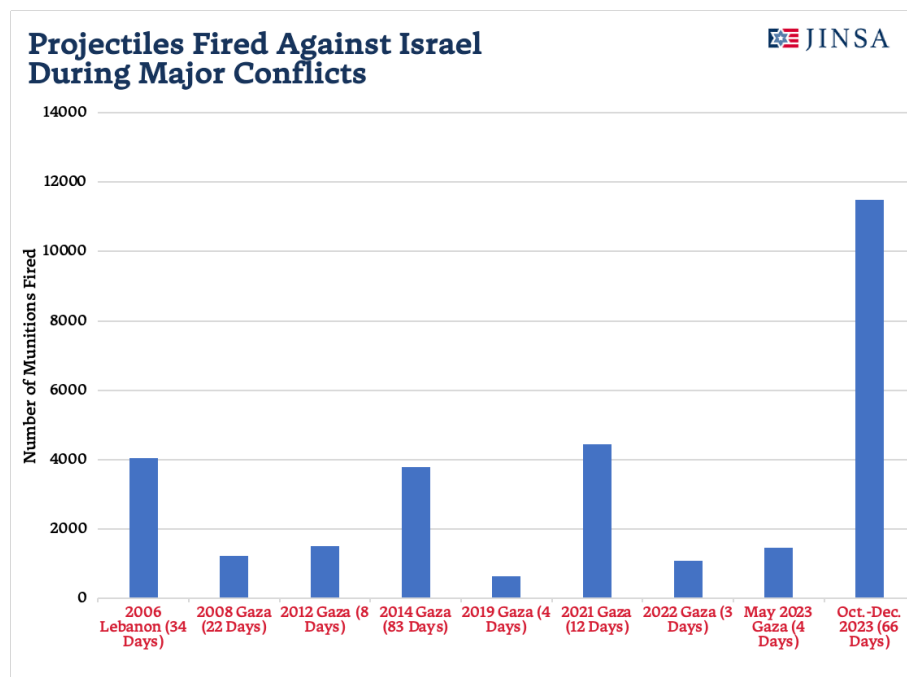
- During a Hanukkah celebration at the White House, President Biden again expressed his strong support for Israel and efforts to return all of the hostages that Hamas holds in Gaza. Yet, several families of U.S. citizens who are being held hostage did not receive [invitations](#) to the event, despite asking to attend.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [11,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » Sirens [sounded](#) in Sderot, Ashkelon, Karmia, Zikim, Mefalsim, Netiv HaAsara and Yad Mordechai.
- Terrorists in Lebanon continued to fire drones, rockets, and anti-tank missiles at Israel over the last 24 hours.
 - » On December 12, sirens [sounded](#) in Acre and Shlomi in Israel's north as well as Shomrat and Bustan HaGalil.
 - » On December 12, the IDF [said](#) that a "suspicious aerial target" from Lebanon triggered earlier drone infiltration sirens in the Upper and Western Galilee when it entered Israeli air space, and interceptor missiles were launched toward the target.
 - » The IDF [said](#) on December 12 that an area near Malkia in Israel's north came under fire from two rockets fired from Lebanon, which landed in open areas.

- » Hezbollah [announced](#) on December 11 that it had fired a number of anti-tank missiles at a home in the northern Israeli town of Metula. No injuries were reported.
 - Hezbollah claimed the home was used by the IDF, and that the attack was in response to the death of Hussein Ali Mansour, the mayor of the Lebanese village of Taybeh, in earlier IDF shelling.



IDF Operations

- The IDF continued to expand its operations in southern Gaza over the last 24 hours.
 - » An Israeli [airstrike](#) in Rafah killed 12 people according to Palestinian media.
 - » The IDF and the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service, said that they have [arrested](#) 500 terrorists in Gaza in the past month, with 140 detained since the pause in combat operations ended on December 1.
 - » According to [reports](#) from December 11, troops from the IDF’s Nahal Infantry Brigade discovered a Hamas training facility in a Jabaliya mosque in Gaza’s north.
 - According to IDF footage, the third floor of the mosque contains a room used for combat simulation, and the military found a machine gun, rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher, a computer, and a projector in the room.
 - The IDF found equipment to construct explosive devices in a separate room. It also found firearms, grenades, and other military equipment in the mosque.
 - » According to [reports](#) from December 11, the IDF announced that reservists in the IDF’s Jerusalem Brigade stopped a Hamas attempt to attack the brigade’s encampment in Gaza last week.
 - Troops in the brigade’s 9207th Battalion knew to clear the encampment and prepare for the attack because of an intelligence alert it received last Sunday night.
 - The Air Force provided support with strikes while the ground troops fired upon the Hamas terrorists who emerged from a tunnel. An explosive that detonated in the

Hamas tunnel caused numerous secondary explosions. The IDF subsequently destroyed the tunnel entrance and nearby tunnel infrastructure.

- The IDF conducted strikes against terrorists in Lebanon who had targeted Israel over the last 24 hours.
 - » On December 11, the IDF [shelled](#) targets in southern Lebanon after earlier anti-tank missile attacks on the Israeli town of Metula.
 - » On December 11, the IDF [said](#) it struck a cell in southern Lebanon that had fired rockets at the Shtula area in northern Israel and had used a launcher to fire projectiles at the Yiftah area. One mortar was also fired at Shtula, which landed in an open area.
 - » On December 11, the IDF [carried out](#) an airstrike in southern Lebanon in response to rocket fire on the Galilee. The IDF said several rockets were fired from Lebanon at army positions along the border, but no injuries were reported. Troops responded with artillery shelling at the sources of the fire.
- An IDF [drone strike](#) in Jenin killed four people, according to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Health Ministry.
- During their December 11 conversation, Minister Without Portfolio Benny Gantz [thanked](#) Secretary Blinken for the U.S. veto of the UN Security Council's recent resolution that called for an immediate ceasefire. Gantz also told Blinken that Israel will need to remove Hezbollah's threat along the Israel-Lebanon border.
- On December 11, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly [told](#) the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that "the difference between Hamas and the PA [Palestinian Authority] is only that Hamas wants to destroy us here and now and the PA wants to do it in stages."
- On December 11, *The Washington Post* [reported](#) that according to Amnesty International, Israel's October use of U.S.-supplied white phosphorus munitions in southern Lebanon should be investigated as a war crime. Use of the munitions injured at least nine civilians. The *Washington Post* report noted that white phosphorus, which is used to create smoke that masks troop movements, can stick to skin and cause potentially fatal burns and respiratory damage because it burns at high temperatures.
 - » The IDF subsequently [said](#), "the IDF only uses legal weaponry," and "the main smoke shells used by the IDF do not contain white phosphorus. Similar to many Western armies, the IDF also has smoke shells that contain white phosphorus, which are legal according to international law, and the choice to use them is influenced by operational considerations and availability compared to alternatives."
 - » The IDF added, "these shells are intended for smokescreens, and not for an attack or ignition, and they are not legally defined as incendiary weapons" and said that its procedures for using white phosphorus shells, which restrict their use in urban areas "except in certain exceptional cases," are "in line with international law, and are even stricter than [the latter]."

Humanitarian Efforts

- On December 12, the IDF [said](#) the Kerem Shalom border crossing station is now inspecting aid deliveries to Gaza, in an effort to increase the number of aid trucks that can enter Gaza each day.

- » Israel also uses the smaller Nitzana border crossing station to inspect the trucks before they are sent to Rafah, and the aid deliveries that are inspected at Kerem Shalom will likewise need to enter Gaza through Rafah.

Casualties and Hostages

- Approximately 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another approximately 6,900 have been injured in the war.
 - » 434 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 105 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF said that of the 105 soldiers [killed](#) in Gaza, 20 were killed by so-called friendly fire or other accidents.
 - IDF reservist Tzvika Lavi, from the settlement of Eli, [died](#) from wounds he sustained several weeks ago fighting in Gaza. The IDF has not yet released a statement.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 31 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 18,412 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and over 50,000 have been injured during the war.
 - » The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed roughly 7,000 terrorists in Gaza during the war.
 - » On October 25, President Biden [cautioned](#) against trusting Gaza Health Ministry casualty figures, stating: “I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed ... I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, at least 280 people have been [killed](#), and at least 3,100 have been wounded in the West Bank.
- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.
- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [one](#) has been rescued by the IDF, and [seven](#) have been [found](#) dead.
 - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
 - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.
 - Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German](#) nationals, 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian](#) nationals, 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino](#) national, 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
 - Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.

- Terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 138 hostages, including 114 men, 20 women, and two children. 10 hostages are 75 and older, 127 are Israeli, and 11 are foreign nationals, including eight from Thailand.
 - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 9 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On December 11, Iran-backed groups [fired](#) multiple rockets at U.S. personnel at Patrol Base Shaddadi in Syria.
- Also on December 11, Iran-backed groups in Iraq [launched](#) a one-way attack drone at U.S. personnel at the Ayn al-Asad base in Iraq.
- On December 11, the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen [launched](#) an anti-ship cruise missile that struck the MT *Strinda*, a Norwegian-flagged tanker, in the Red Sea and claimed without verification that it “was loaded with oil” bound for Israel. The Houthis also launched a [drone](#) at the ship, which the French frigate, *Languedoc*, intercepted. There were no injuries in the attack.
 - » Over the weekend, the Houthis had [promised](#) to target any ship traveling to Israel. However, according to the *Strinda*’s owner, the ship had left Malaysia [carrying](#) palm oil bound for Italy.

U.S. and International Response

- On December 11, U.S. and French ships rendered assistance in response to the Houthi attacks on the MT *Strinda*.
 - » U.S. Central Command released a [statement](#) that there were no U.S. Navy ships in the area at the time of the incident but that the USS *Mason* responded to the vessel’s distress call and rendered assistance.
 - » France [announced](#) that its frigate, the *Languedoc*, shot down a drone that the Houthis had fired at the *Strinda*.
- At a [Hanukkah celebration](#) on December 11, President Biden said, “my commitment to the safety of the Jewish people, and the security of Israel, its right to exist as an independent Jewish state, is unshakeable ... Were there no Israel, there wouldn’t be a Jew in the world who is safe ... The warmth and connection I feel to the Jewish community is unquestionable ... you don’t have to be Jewish to be a Zionist, and I am a Zionist.”
 - » Several family members of U.S. citizens who are being held as hostages had asked to be [invited](#) to the White House Hanukkah celebration but did not receive invitations.
- Following reports that Israel had used American-made white phosphorus shells in Lebanon, White House spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) that the Biden administration was “concerned” and would look for more information on the matter.
- U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan will visit Israel at the end of this week, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin is expected to [travel](#) to Israel next week.
- Top European Union diplomat Josep Borell [claimed](#) that proportionally, “the destruction of buildings in Gaza ... is more or less or even greater than the destruction suffered by the

German cities during the Second World War,” and “the human suffering constitutes an unprecedented challenge to the international community.”

- On December 12, the UN General Assembly is [scheduled](#) to debate a draft resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, which expresses “grave concern over the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population” and stresses requirements under international law to protect Israeli and Palestinian civilians.
 - » Egypt and Mauritania [requested](#) the meeting, invoking UN General Assembly Resolution 337 in a letter to the body’s president, Dennis Francis. Resolution 337 permits action by the General Assembly if the Security Council did not “exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”
 - » The draft also demands the immediate release of all hostages and guaranteed humanitarian access.
- On December 12, the World Health Organization (WHO) [called](#) for the “protection of health care and humanitarian assistance in Gaza,” and it noted its previous struggles attempting to deliver medical supplies to a Gaza City hospital and evacuate critically hurt patients, blaming delays caused by military checkpoints and detainment of Palestinian Red Crescent Society personnel.
 - » WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that “the people of Gaza have the right to access health care,” and “the health system must be protected. Even in war.”
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) head Philippe Lazzarini [said](#) on December 12 on social media, following a visit to Gaza, that the situation there is an “endless deepening tragedy.” He added, “people are everywhere, live in the street, need everything,” and “they plead for safety and for an end to this hell on earth. Our colleagues are asked to do the impossible in what is an impossible situation.”

Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks

- The Anti-Defamation League [reported](#) that antisemitic incidents have reached unprecedented levels. Between October 7 and December 7, the ADL recorded 2,031 incidents, which is the highest ever two-month number since it began tracking antisemitism in the U.S. in 1979 and represents a 337% increase from the same period in 2022.
- On December 11, University of Massachusetts Boston Chancellor Marcelo Suárez-Orozco [said](#) that “hateful” and “vile” antisemitic graffiti had been found in bathrooms in several buildings on campus. He [wrote in a letter](#) that “there can be no equivocation on what this is: a hate crime that strikes at the heart of who we are. And we should all be outraged that this reprehensible, cowardly behavior has infiltrated the UMass Boston community.”
- On December 11, Palestinians in the West Bank staged a [general strike](#), closing shops, schools, and government offices, to protest Israeli operations in Gaza as well as the U.S. veto of the United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a humanitarian pause on December 8.
- Hawaii police and federal law enforcement are [investigating](#) antisemitic graffiti and threats made on December 9 to detonate hidden explosives “inside every Hawaii synagogue.”

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- Webinar: [Gaza War Update](#), with IDF Major General (ret.) and JINSA Distinguished Fellow Yaakov Amidror and JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF Major General (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, December 7, 2023
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- Yoni Tobin, [Hamas War Crimes Harm Palestinians and Israelis Alike](#), December 6, 2023
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- Webinar: [Britain's Reaction to Israel-Hamas War](#), with JINSA President and CEO Michael Makovsky, Editorial Board Member and Opinion Columnist at The Wall Street Journal Joseph Sternberg, and former president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews Jonathan Arkush, November 27, 2023
- Michael Makovsky, "[What Israel Needs](#)," *The National Interest*, November 24, 2023