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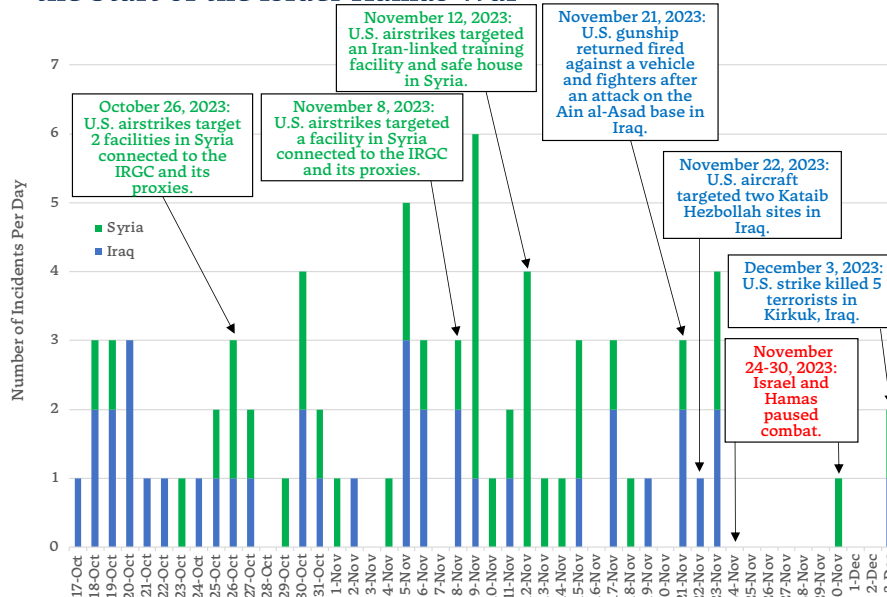
Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 4, 2023

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.

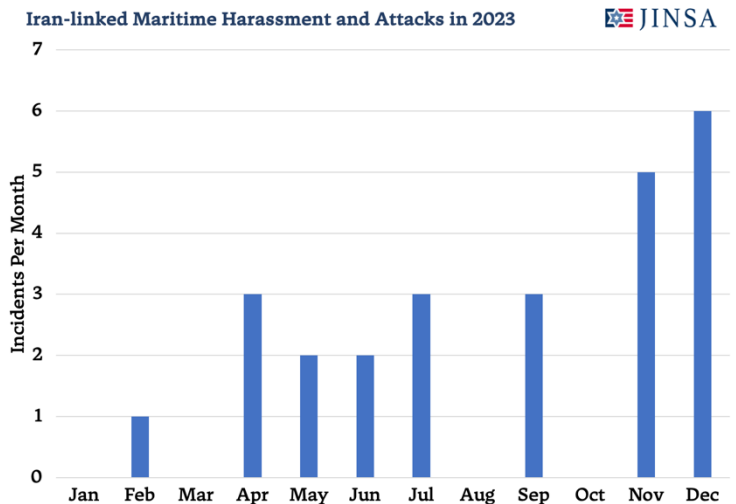
Analysis

- A [U.S. strike](#) against Iran-backed terrorists in Iraq as they prepared to launch a drone attack on December 3 was the first known use of preemptive U.S. military force to disrupt an attack before it could occur since a wave of Iran-backed assaults on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria began last month.
 - » Following U.S. strikes on November 21-22, the U.S. strike also further signaled that the Biden administration is willing to target Iran-backed groups in Iraq, after having initially only conducted strikes in Syria.
 - » Since October 17, Iran-backed groups have conducted 76 attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, indicating that the limited U.S. force has not been enough to deter the Iranian regime or its proxies, even as the United States has expanded the location, rapidity, and intensity of its strikes.

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



- On December 2 and 3, the Iranian regime and the Iran-backed Houthis conducted more maritime harassment and attacks (six) than during all of November (five), already setting a new record total for attacks in a single month that had been established last month.
 - » The same number of incidents have already occurred in November and December as from January to August this year.
 - » Iran-linked harassment of U.S. Navy ships and the targeting of commercial vessels, including those with Israeli ownership, indicate that the Houthis and their Iranian regime benefactors are looking to escalate their pressure on the United States and Israel amid the resumption of combat between Israel and Hamas.
 - Multiple attacks in the Red Sea against the M/V *Unity Explorer*, which is owned by Israeli businessman Danny Unger, mark the fourth instance that the Houthis have targeted an Israeli-owned ship.



- The U.S. [transfer](#) of 100 2,000-pound bunker buster munitions are critical to helping Israel eliminate the network of underground tunnels throughout Gaza, while sending thousands of small diameter bombs (SDB) and Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) better enable Israel to target terrorist sites with precision in Gaza’s dense urban environment.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [11,000](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » Rockets [struck](#) Sderot, and sirens sounded in central Israeli [cities](#) Tel Aviv, Rishon LeZion, Lod, Ramla, Be’er Yaakov, Ness Ziona, Or Yehuda, Holon, Ashdod, Rehovot, [Gan Yavne](#), [Yavne](#), [Ashdod](#), [Ein Hashlosha](#), [Nirim](#), and [several others](#). Sirens also [sounded](#) in Eliav and the West Bank settlement Tekoa amid claims from Palestinian Islamic Jihad that it fired rockets toward Jerusalem and other cities.
 - » On December 3, two rockets [struck](#) the city of Sderot, causing property damage and no reported injuries. Several other rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome.
- Hezbollah continued to fire rockets, anti-tank missiles, mortars, and other projectiles at military and civilian locations in Israel from Lebanon over the last 72 hours.
 - » Sirens sounded in the northern Israeli cities of [Kiryat Shmona and Margaliot](#).
 - » On December 4, several rockets were [fired](#) toward Israel’s Mount Dov area near the Israel-Lebanon border, landing in open areas, according to the IDF. The IDF also said that an additional projectile was fired at the Misgav Am area. No reports emerged of injuries from either attack. In addition, the military said that a drone flew toward Israeli airspace from Lebanon on December 3.

- » On December 4, terrorists [fired](#) mortars from southern Lebanon at an IDF post near Shtula and another IDF post near Yiftah, lightly injuring three soldiers.
- » On December 3, [reports](#) indicated that an anti-tank guided missile from Lebanon struck an area near Beit Hillel in Israel's north while rockets were fired at IDF positions along the Israel-Lebanon border.
- » The IDF [said](#) on December 2 that two mortars were fired from Lebanon toward the northern Israeli city of Shomera, landing in open areas and causing no injuries.
- » On December 2, Hezbollah [said](#) that it fired a Katyusha rocket at the northern Israeli town of Dishon, and Israel's *Channel 12* reported that several impact sites were observed in unpopulated areas.
- » On December 1, at least one rocket was [fired](#) toward Kiryat Shmona, causing no injuries or damage, and the IDF said that it intercepted a "suspicious aerial target" entering Israeli airspace from Lebanon earlier that day.
- » On December 1, rockets were [fired](#) toward IDF posts near the northern Israeli cities Rosh Hanikra and Margalot and toward Kiryat Shmona.
- The IDF said on December 2 that troops from its 7037th Reserve Battalion [foiled](#) a terrorist attack in the West Bank. According to the IDF, troops killed an individual who approached troops at a checkpoint near the city of Nablus and pulled out a knife while charging at them. No soldiers were injured in the attempted attack.

IDF Operations

- The IDF expanded its operations into southern Gaza over the last 72 hours, which IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi [said](#) "will be no less powerful than [the operations in northern Gaza], [and] it will have no less results."
 - » On December 3, dozens of [Israeli tanks](#) entered southern Gaza and headed toward Khan Younis.
 - » On December 3, the IDF published video of an Israeli [airstrike](#) killing Haitham Hawajri, the commander of Hamas's Shati battalion, who the IDF claims sent terrorists into Israel on October 7 and was responsible for securing the Shifa Hospital, where the terrorist group had a headquarters.
 - » The IDF [killed](#) Wissam Farhat, commander of Hamas's Shejaiya battalion, in a December 2 airstrike. Farhat was responsible for a 2014 attack that killed seven soldiers, including Oron Shaul, whose body is still held by Hamas. Farhat also helped to plan the October 7 attack.
- The IDF conducted strikes on Hezbollah targets, including command and control sites, in Lebanon after projectile attacks into Israel over the last 72 hours.
 - » On December 4, the IDF conducted [airstrikes](#) on a Hezbollah command center and other locations in Lebanon after rocket attacks against the northern Israeli community of Mattat.
 - » On December 4, the IDF conducted [artillery shelling](#) against targets in southern Lebanon in response to earlier mortar attacks and conducted [airstrikes](#) on Hezbollah sites in response to rocket attacks.
 - » On December 2, IDF fighter jets [struck](#) Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon in response to earlier rocket attacks.

- » On December 1, the IDF [said](#) that it used a fighter jet, combat helicopter, and artillery to strike a Hezbollah site in southern Lebanon following rockets targeting northern Israel from Lebanon. The IDF also said that aircraft struck a Hezbollah cell preparing an attack against the area near Malkia in northern Israel.
- » The IDF [said](#) on December 1 that it struck a terror cell in southern Lebanon near the northern Israeli city of Zar'it and responded with artillery to the earlier fire from Lebanon targeting army posts near Rosh Hanikra, Margalot, and Kiryat Shmona.
- On December 2, Syrian state-run media agency SANA, citing a Syrian military official, [reported](#) that Israel launched airstrikes against targets near Damascus, causing “material losses.” The report also said that several of the missiles were intercepted by Syrian air defenses.
 - » That same day, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) [announced](#) that two of its officers, Mohammad Ali Atai Shoorcheh and Panah Taghizadeh, were killed on an advisory mission to Syria and that “Zionists” were responsible.
 - » The U.K.-based NGO Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [said](#) that the strikes hit Hezbollah targets in the Damascus suburb of Sayyida Zeinab and that two Syrian citizens and two foreign nationals were killed in the attack, which also wounded five others.
- On December 3, Israel’s *Kan* network [aired](#) a recording of remarks made by Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar in which Bar states that Israel will hunt down Hamas leaders in Lebanon, Qatar, and Turkey even if it takes years to do so. No further details were given about the context of the remarks.
 - » In the recording, Bar [said](#) that “the cabinet set a goal for us, to take out Hamas. And we are determined to do it, this is our Munich,” referring to Israel’s years-long operation to assassinate the terrorists responsible for the 1972 Munich Olympic attacks.
 - » Bar added this would be done “in every location, in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Lebanon, in Turkey, in Qatar, everyone. It will take a few years, but we will be there in order to do it.”
 - » Bar also stated in the recording that threats to Israel in the past year are “unprecedented” and largely unknown to the public.
- The IDF conducted operations in Qalqilya in the West Bank on December 4.
 - » IDF soldiers, officers from Israeli Police’s elite Gideonim unit, and Border Police officers [killed](#) two Palestinian gunmen in the city during a raid. The IDF said the two were responsible for multiple shooting attacks against IDF troops nearby and that it recovered a pistol and assault rifle from the two gunmen.
- The IDF [said](#) on December 2 that it was investigating reports of a rocket misfire after footage surfaced of a Tamir interceptor missile failing and crashing in central Israel following earlier rocket fire from Gaza.
- According to a December 4 [report](#) from *The Times of Israel*, citing an Israeli official, Israel will not station troops to oversee its proposed buffer zone on the Gaza side of the border. The report quoted the official as saying, “it is a security measure, not a political one. We do not intend to remain on the Gaza side of the border.”
- During a December 2 press conference, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) that the Palestinian Authority (PA) “pays murderers ... They educate their children to hate Israel and, to my sorrow, to murder Jews, and ultimately for the disappearance of the State

of Israel.” He also said that PA President Mahmoud Abbas “still hasn’t apologized” for October 7, although reports said that Netanyahu meant to say “condemned,” not “apologized.”

- » Netanyahu claimed further that PA official Jibril Rajoub has said “the same should be done in Judea and Samaria *from* Judea and Samaria.”
- » Referring to the 1990s-era negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that led to the creation of the PA, Netanyahu argued, “I’m not prepared to delude myself and say that this defective thing, established under the Oslo Accords in a terrible mistake” should govern Gaza. He said, “it was a terrible mistake to return the most hostile thing in the Arab world and the Palestinian world into the center of the Land of Israel, the heart of the land.”
- » He argued further that both Hamas and Fatah, the PA’s main faction, express an “ideology, to my sorrow, that rejects the existence of Israel ... so I won’t repeat the mistake and put that entity into Gaza, because we’ll get the same thing.”
 - He elaborated, “we would be putting the same element — utterly unreformed, utterly unchanged — into Gaza, and that’s what even the best of our friends suggest. I think differently. I oppose it. I think we need to build something else. Of course, [there must be] Israeli security control in the whole area ... to ensure no rise of a terror entity for years to come. And the internal governance must undergo a totally different process.”
 - Netanyahu insisted that “the PA has failed in this — it doesn’t fight terror, it finances terror; it doesn’t educate for peace, it educates for the disappearance of the State of Israel. That is not the group that should enter now.”
- » During the press conference, the prime minister noted that Israel is working with the United States to protect civilians in southern Gaza and that Israel “wants to avoid harm to the civilian populace.”
- » He insisted that “it’s a lie” that he strengthened Hamas over the years because Hamas underwent four rounds of conflict with Israel, and “we killed thousands of terrorists.” He argued that money that he allowed to enter Gaza was meant to prevent a humanitarian collapse.
- » Netanyahu said that “we have to finish the job” against Hamas and noted that while Israel previously “didn’t have either the internal national consensus or the international consensus” to destroy Hamas, it does now.
- On December 1, Israeli Member of Knesset Mansour Abbas, chairman of the Islamist Ra’am party, [told](#) *CNN* that “Palestinian militant groups need to throw down their arms. They need to work hand in hand with the Palestinian Authority in order to realize a national movement that will aspire for a state of Palestine in a peaceful solution alongside the state of Israel.”

Humanitarian Efforts

- In coordination with U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Humanitarian Issues David Satterfield, Israel has established a [deconfliction mechanism](#) to prevent humanitarian workers and civilians in Gaza from being caught in crossfire.
 - » The mechanism includes setting up “no-strike zones” where civilians can go to receive humanitarian aid and medical attention, according to Israeli media [reports](#) citing a senior Israeli official.

- » Last month, Israeli media outlets [reported](#), citing a U.S. official, that an IDF officer would be tasked with coordinating between troops and humanitarian organizations.
- On December 4, the IDF announced on X that it was [opening](#) new humanitarian corridors from northern Gaza to southern Gaza after the old corridor, the Salah al-Din Road, became a “battlefield” in areas near Khan Younis in southern Gaza. The IDF said the new humanitarian corridors would be along the coastal road of al-Rashid Street and the central road of al-Shuhada Street.
- On December 4, the IDF [announced](#) that it would suspend fighting in the Rafah refugee camp for four hours for “humanitarian purposes.”
- On December 2, the IDF [released](#) a map that delineates hundreds of small zones in Gaza to communicate with Palestinian civilians which areas will be the target of IDF operations and where inhabitants should go to avoid active combat zones. The IDF has urged Palestinians to follow the military’s future updates about which zones are safe or unsafe.
 - » On December 2, the IDF’s Arabic-language Spokesman Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee [said](#) on X that Palestinians in several of the zones in Jabaliya, Shejaiya, and Zeitoun in Gaza’s north should evacuate to “known shelters” in Daraj and Tuffah in Gaza City.
 - » He also said that Palestinians in Khirbat Ikhza’a, Abasan, Bani Suheila, and Ma’an in Gaza’s south should seek shelter in Rafah.
- On December 2, Israeli media outlets [reported](#) that senior Hamas official Salah al-Arouri, deputy head of Hamas’s political bureau, stated that there would be no more hostage talks until the war ends.
 - » Al-Arouri also reportedly said that Israel could only get the remainder of hostages released by releasing all Palestinian prisoners, that Hamas is ready to exchange bodies of Israeli hostages for the bodies of Hamas terrorists in Israel, and that Hamas is confident the large-scale fighting will soon spread to the West Bank.
- On December 2, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) that while the truce deal had required the Red Cross to visit all of the hostages, Hamas has refused to allow access.
- December 1 [reports](#) indicated that the pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas collapsed following Hamas’s attempt, in violation of the terms of the agreement, to free hostages other than 10 women. Hamas was supposed to release every woman and child held hostage in exchange for an extension of the pause up to nine days, according to three Israeli officials.
 - » Hamas sought instead to release male hostages, according to a message it sent to Qatari and Egyptian mediators, and the group failed to provide a list of hostages to be released during the pause’s final hours.
 - » Israel issued an ultimatum that it would not discuss any other hostage categories until each of the roughly 17 women Hamas is still holding is released, and Mossad head David Barnea warned Hamas via mediators overnight that if an additional group of women and children weren’t released, the IDF would resume fighting.
 - » Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan said to *Al Arabiya* that Israel’s refusal to countenance options other than the release of female hostages was the cause of the fighting pause’s collapse.
 - » An Israeli official told *Walla* that Hamas is attempting to leverage the female hostages to secure further concessions from Israel, that the group does not want the hostages to speak publicly about what they endured at the hands of Hamas in captivity, and that

talks to resume the pause will continue during the fighting to pressure Hamas into additional hostage releases.

- On December 2, at least 50 trucks carrying 138,000 liters of fuel entered Gaza—the [largest amount](#) that has entered Gaza in a single day—after only [dozens](#) of trucks carrying medicine and food, but not fuel, entered the Gaza Strip on December 1 following Hamas’s violation of the fighting pause.
 - » Approximately 200 trucks, including four tankers carrying fuel and four carrying cooking gas, entered the Strip each day during the pause.
 - » Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) said, “after the Hamas terror organization violated the agreement and in addition fired at Israel, the entry of humanitarian aid was stopped in the manner stipulated in the agreement.”

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,300 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another 6,900 have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 401 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 75 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - On December 4, the IDF announced that three soldiers were [killed](#) in Gaza, including Sgt. Maj. (res.) Neriya Shaer, 36, from Yavne; Sgt. First Class (res.) Ben Zussman, 22, from Jerusalem; and Sgt. Binyamin Yehoshua Needham, 19, from Zichron Yaakov.
 - On December 3, the IDF announced that two soldiers were [killed](#) in Gaza, including Staff Sgt. Aschalwu Sama, 20, from Petah Tikva, and Sgt. First Class (res.) Or Brandes, 25, from Shoham.
 - On December 2, the IDF [revealed](#) that a senior officer—Col. Asaf Hamami, 41, from Kiryat Ono, commander of the Gaza Division’s Southern Brigade—was killed on October 7 and also reported that his remains are held by Hamas.
 - » 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, 15,207 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 40,652 have been injured during the war.
 - » According to a November 24 [report](#) from Amos Harel of *Haaretz*, Israeli officials believe that approximately 5,000 of the roughly 15,000 Palestinians killed in the war were terrorists.
 - » 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, 256 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 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, five have [been found dead](#), and seven have been [confirmed 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](#) 136 hostages, including 114 men, 20 women, and two children. 10 hostages are 75 and older, 125 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.
- On December 2, the Mossad [announced](#) in a statement that its representatives in Qatar had been ordered back to Israel. The statement said that due to a “dead end in negotiations, and following instructions from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mossad head David Barnea ordered the negotiating team in Doha to return home.”
 - » The statement added that Hamas violated its obligations under the agreement by not releasing all women and children they had agreed to release in the deal.
- On December 1, IDF spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) that the IDF has been following the case of the kidnapped Bibas family “with intelligence and operationally since the beginning of the fighting.” He addressed Hamas’s video of Yarden Bibas, saying, “on one hand, it’s a sign of life, on the other it’s cruel manipulative terror carried out by Hamas.”
 - » He added, “we demanded today, like every day during the framework, to return the women and children as agreed-upon in the deal, which Egypt and Qatar had a commitment to. Hamas decided to violate the framework,” and “in the framework, the Bibas family, the mother and the kids, were supposed to be returned to Israel. Hamas decided not to do this.”

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On December 3, the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen [attacked](#) three ships with connections to 14 different nations as they sailed in international waters in the Red Sea.
 - » At approximately 9:15 a.m. local time, an anti-ship ballistic missile attack impacted near the *M/V Unity Explorer*, a Bahamian-flagged, U.K.-owned and operated bulk cargo ship with sailors from two nations. Danny Unger, an Israeli businessman, [owns](#) the ship.

- » At roughly 12 p.m. local time, the USS *Carney* shot down an Iranian drone launched from Houthi-controlled territory that was headed toward it, although it is not clear if the U.S. ship was the target.
- » In another attack at 12:35 p.m. local time, the Houthis launched a missile that struck the *Unity Explorer*, and the *Carney* responded to its distress call. While assessing the damage, the *Carney* destroyed an incoming drone.
- » At approximately 3:30 p.m. local time, the Houthis struck the M/V *Number 9* with a missile. The Panamanian-flagged, Bermuda- and U.K.-owned and operated bulk carrier reported damage and no casualties.
- » At roughly 4:30 p.m. local time, the Houthis struck the M/V *Sophie II* with a missile. The USS *Carney* responded to the distress call and shot down a drone headed in its direction. The *Sophie II* is a Panamanian-flagged bulk carrier with crew members from eight countries.
- On December 3, Iran-backed militia [launched](#) several rockets at the Rumalyn Landing Zone in northeastern Syria and [launched](#) drones at the Harir Airbase in Iraq, according to a U.S. official.
- On December 2, aircraft attached to the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* Carrier Air Wing [intercepted](#) an Iranian drone that was flying in what U.S. Central Command called an “unsafe and unprofessional manner” near the carrier group as it sailed in the Arabian Gulf.
- On December 2, a number of organizations, including Pennsylvania’s Municipal Water Authority of Aliquippa, were [hacked](#) by Iran-linked hackers, according to a joint press release issued by the FBI, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and Israel’s National Cyber Directorate.
 - » The advisory stated the hackers, who call themselves “Cyber Av3ngers,” are affiliated with Iran’s IRGC.
 - » The press release said that “the victims span multiple U.S. states.” The chairman of the organization said officials told him four other utility companies and an aquarium had also been hacked.

U.S. and International Response

- On December 3, the United States [conducted](#) a "self-defense strike" against a drone staging site that posed an “imminent threat” near Kirkuk, Iraq, according to a U.S. official. According to Iraqi officials, the U.S. strike killed five terrorists.
 - » Earlier that day, Iranian-backed militias had launched strikes against the Rumalyn Landing Zone in northeastern Syria and the Harir Airbase in Iraq.
- On December 3, the White House [announced](#) that Vice President Kamala Harris’s National Security Advisor, Dr. Phillip Gordon, would be traveling to Israel and the West Bank this week for discussions about post-war plans for a “unified West Bank and Gaza under a revitalized Palestinian Authority.”
 - » According to Israeli media [reports](#), the U.S. delegation will also include Harris’s top Middle East advisor, Ilan Goldenberg, and will meet with Israeli national security advisor Tzachi Hanegbi and Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer and PA President Mahmoud Abbas.

- On December 3, White House spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," in response to a question about civilian casualties in Gaza, that "we believe that [Israel] have been receptive to our messages here in terms of trying to minimize (sic) civilian casualties. And I would tell you, we saw that as they went into north Gaza. They did in a more precise way, a smaller way."
 - » Kirby also noted, "just in the last 24, 48 hours, George, they published online a [map](#) of – of places where people could go to avoid combat, and where they could go -- where they could find safety from combat. There's not a whole lot of modern militaries that would do that. I mean that – that -- you know, so, to telegraph their punches in that way. So, they are making an effort."
- On December 3, U.S. congresswoman Representative Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) [stated](#) on CNN, in response to a question about Hamas' sexual violence against women that, "I have condemned what Hamas has done. Absolutely. I have condemned all of the actions, the rape, of course. But I think we have to remember that Israel is a democracy, that is why they are a strong ally of ours. And if they do not comply with international humanitarian law, they are bringing themselves to a place that makes it much more difficult strategically for them to build the kind of allies, to keep public opinion. And I think morally, we cannot say that one war crime deserves another."
 - » After a follow-up question by CNN host Dana Bash, Representative Jayapal said, "Rape is horrific. Sexual assault is horrific. It happens in war situations, terrorist organizations like Hamas, obviously are using these as tools. However, I think we have to be balanced about bringing in the outrages against Palestinians, 15,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli airstrikes, three-quarters of whom are women and children."
- On December 2, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris [spoke](#) about the war at the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28). During her remarks, Vice President Harris said that "Israel must do more to protect innocent civilians" and that "too many innocent Palestinians have been killed."
 - » Vice President Harris said, "the United States is unequivocal: International humanitarian law must be respected. Too many innocent Palestinians have been killed. Frankly, the scale of civilian suffering and the images and videos coming from Gaza are devastating," and "as Israel pursues its military objectives in Gaza, we believe Israel must do more to protect innocent civilians."
 - » Vice President Harris also [met](#) with King Abdullah II of Jordan on the sidelines of the conference, where, according to a White House readout, she spoke about the need for a "clear political horizon for the Palestinian people, toward a state of their own led by a revitalized Palestinian Authority and backed by significant support from the international community and the countries of the region" and "reiterated the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to a two-state solution, and noted it is the best path to durable peace and security."
- On December 2, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [spoke](#) about the war while delivering remarks at a national security conference.
 - » He said he has "repeatedly made clear to Israel's leaders that protecting Palestinian civilians in Gaza is both a moral responsibility and a strategic imperative" and has "personally pushed Israeli leaders to avoid civilian casualties, and to shun irresponsible rhetoric, and to prevent violence by settlers in the West Bank, and to dramatically expand access to humanitarian aid."

- » Austin said, referencing Israel’s current urban warfare campaign in Gaza, that his former post as leader of the campaign against ISIS taught him “the lesson [that] you can only win in urban warfare by protecting civilians.”
- On December 2, *Politico* reported that a number of Muslim leaders and activists are [launching](#) a national campaign, entitled #AbandonBiden, against the re-election of President Biden due to his stance against a permanent ceasefire.
 - » Jaylani Hussein, director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations chapter in Minnesota, told *Politico* that “we are not powerless as American Muslims. We are powerful. We don’t only have the money, but we have the actual votes.”
- On December 1, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) to reporters before leaving Dubai, “it’s important to understand why the pause came to an end. It came to an end because of Hamas. Hamas reneged on commitments it had made,” and “in fact, even before the pause came to an end, it committed an atrocious terrorist attack in Jerusalem, killing three people and wounding others, including Americans.”
 - » He added, “[Hamas] began firing rockets before the pause ended, and as I said it reneged on the commitments it made in terms of releasing certain hostages.”
- A [report](#) in *The Wall Street Journal* on December 1 indicated that the United States has sent Israel 100 BLU-109 bunker buster bombs, which carries a 2,000-pound munition, as part of its support for Israeli efforts to eliminate Hamas. Per the report, the United States has also transferred 5,000 Mk82 unguided or bombs, over 5,400 Mk84 2,000-pound warhead bombs, roughly 1,000 GBU-39 small diameter bombs (SDB), and approximately 3,000 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMS), which turn unguided bombs into guided “smart” munitions.
- On December 1, in response to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s plan to create a security buffer zone in Gaza, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby [said](#) of the U.S. position, “We don’t support any reduction of the geographic limits of Gaza ... Gaza must remain Palestinian land, and cannot be reduced.”
- On November 30, Secretary Blinken [told](#) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during meetings that the Biden administration is readying visa bans against Israeli settlers who attack West Bank Palestinians, according to an Israeli official and a U.S. official.
 - » The announcement of the bans will reportedly not include the names of those blacklisted – just the number who have been banned – to deter further attacks by those who won’t know whether they will be targeted in the ban as a result. The ban may be imposed the week of December 3.
 - » Secretary Blinken said during a November 30 press conference that “we’re looking to the Israeli government to take some additional steps to really put a stop to this. And at the same time, we’re considering our own steps.”
 - » On November 30, a French foreign ministry spokesperson said that the European Union should sanction Israeli settlers who attack West Bank Palestinians.
 - » However, earlier this month, an Israeli official told *The Times of Israel* that the government is increasing its measures to combat violence on the part of a “nucleus” of several hundred extremists, and it has arrested several people in recent weeks.
- Representative Brad Schneider (D-IL) and Representative Robert Aderholt (R-AL) [organized](#) a letter dated November 30 to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin that a bipartisan group of 55 members of Congress signed calling for two U.S. army hospital ships to be deployed to “the waters off Gaza” to treat wounded Gazan civilians.

- » Jacob Magid of *The Times of Israel* argued that this is unlikely to materialize because Gaza's port has sustained damage from Israeli airstrikes, and the port isn't suited to accommodate such large ships.
 - For this reason, other countries, such as France, that have deployed hospital ships to the region have utilized Egypt's El Arish coast.
- On December 2, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [told](#) reporters that Hamas must be part of any political settlement to the war and that he does not view Hamas as a terrorist organization. Erdogan also called for the International Criminal Court to prosecute Israeli officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for Israel's conduct in the war.
 - » Erdogan said in response to a question about possible U.S. sanctions against Turkey for its support of Hamas, "I stand by my position. No matter what anybody says, I cannot accept Hamas is a terror group."
 - » Erdogan added, the "exclusion [from Gaza] and destruction of Hamas is not an option."
- On December 2, French President Emmanuel Macron [said](#) at a press conference that Israel's goal of destroying Hamas would take 10 years to accomplish.
 - » Macron argued, "we are at a moment when Israeli authorities must more precisely define their objectives and their final goal: the total destruction of Hamas — does anyone think it is possible? If this is the case, the war will last 10 years."
 - » Macron also said that "there is no lasting security for Israel in the region if its security is achieved at the cost of Palestinian lives."
- On December 1, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, [issued](#) its first statement since October 7. The statement began, "we deeply regret that military operations have resumed in Gaza, and we reiterate that all women, Israeli women, Palestinian women, as all others, are entitled to a life lived in safety and free from violence. We unequivocally condemn the brutal attacks by Hamas on Israel on 7 October."
 - » The statement also said the UN Women support investigations led by the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, into gender-based crimes and welcomed that the Commission opened its call for submissions on gender-based crimes since October 7.
 - » In response, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen [posted](#) on X, "UN Women's announcement was both feeble and late, coming after nearly two months of silence during which war crimes, crimes against humanity, and gender-based crimes carried out by the Hamas terrorist organization were ignored." In the post, Cohen called on UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous to resign.
- A December 1 statement from the Egyptian foreign ministry [condemned](#) the breakdown of the Israel-Hamas fighting pause and the renewed Israeli operations but did not mention Hamas or its violations of the terms of the pause.
- On December 1, Libya [reportedly](#) released Hamas members Marwan al-Ashqar, his son Baraa, Mouayad Abed, and Nasib Choubair, whom Libyan police detained in 2016 at the United States' request. After being convicted of weapons tracking, Libya sentenced them to 17 to 22 years in prison in 2019.
 - » Photos emerged of the four men in a private jet en route to Istanbul, Turkey. They are expected to subsequently travel to Qatar, a haven for senior Hamas members.

Rising Antisemitism, Protests, and Attacks

- On December 3, anti-Israel protesters [gathered](#) in front of a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania restaurant, Goldie, owned by an Israeli Jewish chef, chanting, “Goldie, Goldie, you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide.”
- On December 3, the *Virginia Gazette* [reported](#) that a scheduled Hanukkah celebration at a festival in Williamsburg, Virginia, was canceled because organizers believed it “seemed very inappropriate” given the Israel-Hamas War.
 - » The United Jewish Community of the Virginia Peninsula [responded](#), saying, “to be clear, the menorah lighting, which was to be led by a local community rabbi, had nothing to do with Israel or the conflict. Yet, appallingly, the event organizer claimed that a Chanukah celebration would send a message that the festival was 'supporting the killing/bombing of thousands of men, women, and children,' -- and even went a step further, by offering to reinstate the event if it was done under a banner calling for a ceasefire.”
- On December 2, police in London, England [arrested](#) two people during pro-Palestine protests held as part of a “day of action” organized in the UK; a teenage boy was arrested for damaging a police vehicle, and a man was charged with a “racially aggravated public order offense for holding a placard.”
- On December 2, a German-Filipino tourist [was killed](#) and two other people were injured in Paris, France, in what President Emmanuel Macron called “a terrorist attack.”
 - » The attacker was a 26-year-old French national who had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in a video recorded beforehand and had told police he could “no longer bear to see Muslims die, in Afghanistan and in Palestine,” [according](#) to French interior minister Gérald Darmanin.
- On December 1, a protester with a Palestinian flag [self-immolated](#) in front of the Israeli consulate in Atlanta, Georgia.
- On December 1, approximately six Israeli settlers [vandalized](#) a storefront in the West Bank village of As-Sawiya by smashing the store’s glass windows with clubs and rocks.
- On November 30, Representative Adam Smith’s (D-WA) home in Bellevue, Washington, was [vandalized](#) with red handprints and the word “ceasefire” graffitied in red paint.

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