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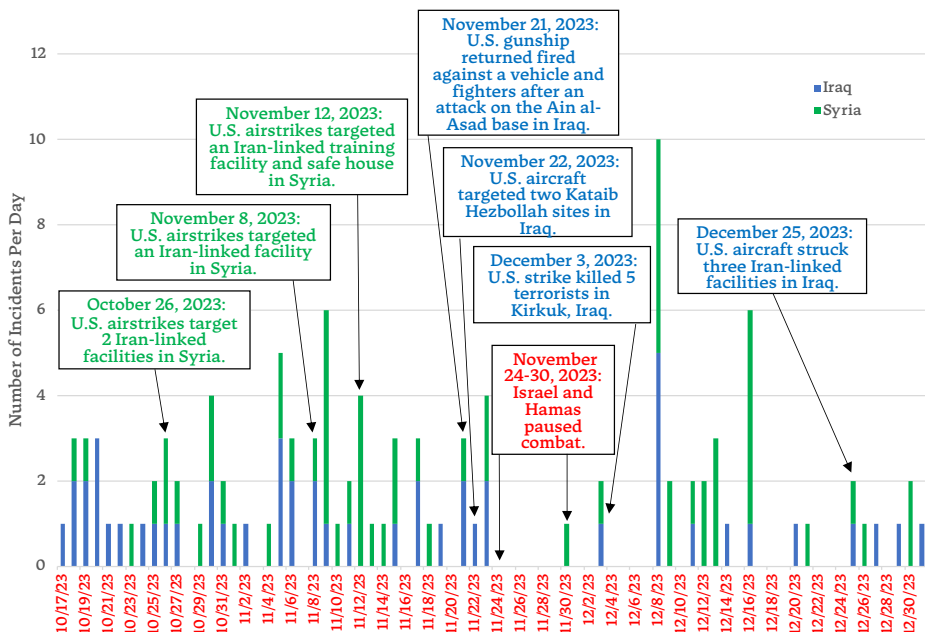
# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update January 2, 2024

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

- Multiple Iran-backed groups escalated their attacks on U.S. personnel, with at least eight attacks in Iraq and Syria since December 29. There have now been at least 115 attacks against U.S. personnel since October 17, but the United States has only targeted the Iran-backed groups on seven occasions. Deterring Tehran and its proxies will require the United States to strike Iranian regime targets directly and more frequently.

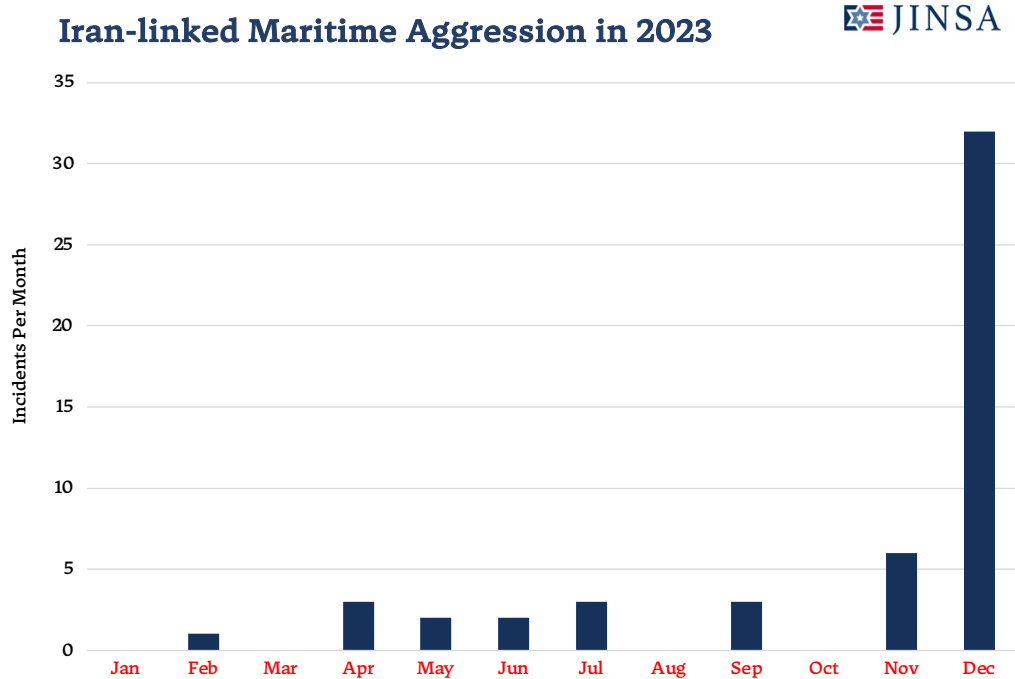
**Iran-backed Attacks Against U.S. Personnel in Iraq and Syria Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War** JINSA



- On December 31, U.S. helicopters returned fire and sank three Houthi vessels that had attacked them and a commercial ship in the Red Sea on multiple occasions – the first instance of the United States using military force to target Houthi fighters. While this marks an important transition from the United States only taking defensive measures to protect

commercial vessels after the Houthis have launched attacks, deterring further aggression by the Houthis and their Iranian regime benefactors will require direct strikes in Yemen.

- » Reports indicate that the United States and European partners could be [preparing](#) to conduct strikes against the Houthis in Yemen, but the Biden administration has been hesitant to take this measure.
- » The Iranian regime and the Houthis have conducted at least 38 incidents of maritime aggression since the Israel-Hamas war began. The 32 incidents in December surpassed the 20 that occurred throughout the rest of 2023.



## Last 24 Hours

### *Attacks Against Israel*

- At least [12,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired at Israel during the war.

### **Gaza**

- Sirens sounded in [Ashdod, Holon, Lod, Modiin, Ness Ziona, Rehovot, Kissufim, Snir, Kibbutz Dan, Dafna, and Ghajar](#).
- On January 1, Hamas [fired](#) a barrage of over 20 rockets at locations across southern and central Israel. Most of the rockets were intercepted, and no injuries were reported.
- On January 1, the IDF [released](#) videos of interrogations of Palestinians whom the IDF took prisoner in Gaza, including former Hamas operative Zahdy Ali Zahdy Shahin, who told Israel’s Military Intelligence Directorate’s Unit 504 that he thought “we were being used as human shields.”
  - » He said that Hamas fighters brought him and civilians to Shifa Hospital, and when IDF troops reached the hospital, members of the terror group emerged from tunnels and hid

among civilians there. Shahin said that he admonished a Hamas fighter, telling him, “your place isn’t up here with the civilians, but below. Why did you come up?”

- According to Shahin, the fighter then said that he would “settle the score” after the war.
- » During an interrogation, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) member Muhammad Darwish Amara said that Hamas fighters commandeered his home, and while sheltering in a northern Gazan school, he instructed his son to ensure every couple of days that nobody intruded into their home to steal their property.
- A December 30 *New York Times* [report](#) analyzed the IDF’s slow response to Hamas’s October 7 massacre, citing JINSA Distinguished Fellow Yaakov Amidror, who said that “as far as I recall, there was no such plan” to impede a large-scale attack from Gaza, and “the army does not prepare itself for things it thinks are impossible.”
  - » The report [highlights](#) Hamas’s attack against the IDF’s Gaza Division base in Re’im, incapacitating the unit tasked with coordinating the military’s activity in the region. IDF units turned to messaging apps including WhatsApp and Telegram for information on targets and victims of the attack.
- On December 30, Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that Israeli soldiers have discovered, and Israeli political leaders have provided examples of, large amounts of Chinese-manufactured weapons in Gaza.
  - » According to the report, “nobody thinks” that the weapons arrived via Chinese ships, but they were likely transported through an organized process.

## Lebanon

- Sirens sounded in [Avivim, Baram, Dalton, Kiryat Shmona, Goren, and Avdon](#).
- On January 2, one of two anti-tank guided missiles [fired](#) from Lebanon hit a building in Shlomi in northern Israel, causing mild damage, according to the town’s local council.
  - » Shlomi Mayor Gabi Naaman said, “this is a very serious incident and miraculously no physical damage was caused to the residents. The [attack] this morning illustrates the great danger of the current situation for the residents of Shlomi,” and “we will not agree to live in this situation.”
- On January 1, Hezbollah [fired](#) several projectiles at the Adamit area of northern Israel, lightly injuring five IDF troops.
- On January 1, an aerial target, likely a drone, was [shot down](#) by Israeli air defenses after entering Israeli territory from southern Lebanon.
- On December 30, Hezbollah [claimed](#) responsibility for a rocket attack in which a barrage of over a dozen rockets were [fired](#) at northern Israel. No injuries were reported.
  - » On December 30, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [stated](#) that 80 percent of the rockets fired in the attack misfired and landed inside Lebanon.

## Syria

- Sirens sounded in [Katzrin, Keshet, Avnei Eitan, and Nov](#).
- On January 1, terrorists in Syria [fired](#) a barrage of five rockets, which landed in open areas in northern Israel. No injuries or damage were reported.
- On December 31, the IDF [intercepted](#) an aerial target, likely a drone, which entered Israeli airspace from southern Syria.

- On December 29, two rockets [fired](#) from Syria landed in open areas in northern Israel. No injuries or damage were reported.

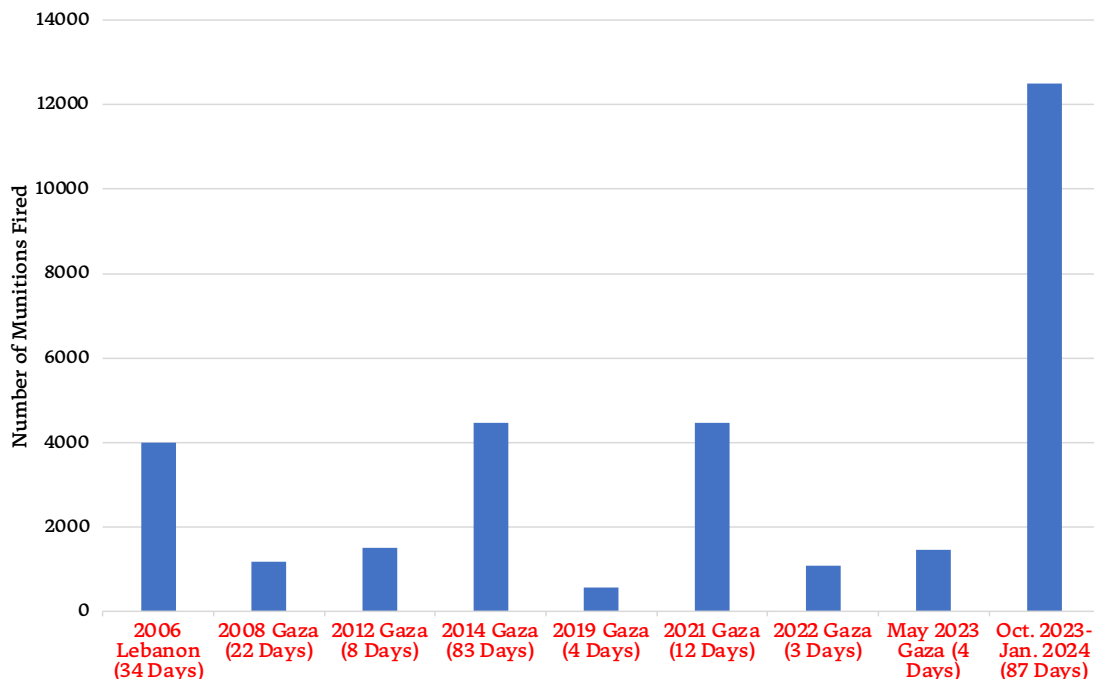
### West Bank

- On December 31, two security guards were [stabbed](#) at the entrance to the Mishor Adumim industrial zone near Ma'ale Adumim. The perpetrator was shot by security forces, and the guards were taken to the hospital in light condition.
- On December 30, an IDF reservist was [seriously injured](#) in a car-ramming attack on an IDF post near the al-Fawwar refugee camp south of Hebron. The IDF shot the attacker at the scene.
- On December 30, five IDF soldiers were [injured](#) in a car-ramming attack on an IDF post near Otniel. Four soldiers were taken to the hospital were either lightly or moderately injured, and one soldier was taken to the hospital in serious condition.
- On December 29, IDF troops shot a Palestinian man who [threw](#) an unspecified explosive device, likely either a grenade or a Molotov cocktail, at troops operating near the town of Abu Dis. No troops were injured in the attack.
  - » The IDF did not specify the assailant's condition after being shot. According to Palestinian media, the assailant was killed by Israeli forces on the scene.

### Iraq

- On December 31, the IDF said that it [shot down](#) an aerial target, likely a drone, that was approaching Israeli airspace from the east. The IDF said it downed the target outside of Israeli airspace, but it was unclear whether it was downed over Jordan or Syria. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an Iran-backed group, claimed to have targeted Israel with “appropriate weapons.”

## Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



## *IDF Operations*

- On December 31, the Israeli cabinet [voted](#) unanimously to postpone municipal elections from January 30 until February 27.
  - » The decision was influenced by IDF data presented at a cabinet meeting last week demonstrating that 688 candidates in the municipal elections were currently serving in reserve units and would therefore be unable to participate in elections if they were held on January 30.
  - » Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the meeting, “[the elections] have already been postponed once, and it's very difficult to push them off for a very long time, but there are two options: hold them at the end of January or hold them at the end of February. My recommendation is clear: Do it at the end of February in order to allow as many reservists as possible to run. It's an elemental and important right.”
- On December 31, the Israeli cabinet [approved](#) the appointment of Israel Katz, currently the Israeli Energy Minister, to replace Eli Cohen as Israeli Foreign Minister. The appointment still needs full Knesset approval to go into effect.
  - » If the appointment is approved by the Knesset, Cohen will replace Katz as Energy Minister for the next two years, after which—if the present coalition government is still in power at that time—Cohen would again serve as Israeli Foreign Minister.

## **Gaza**

- The IDF [said](#) on January 2 that it took control of a Hamas stronghold—the Eastern Outpost made up of 37 buildings—in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighborhood following battles between Israeli special forces and terror operatives in tunnels.
  - » The IDF said that the site is surrounded by residential buildings, a school, and a hospital, and Hamas used a mosque in the outpost as a meeting spot. The IDF also said that Hamas's intelligence division and additional units used the area to “manage the fighting in the entire Gaza Strip.”
  - » The IDF's 401st Armored Brigade discovered a 20-meter-deep bunker after raiding the complex's main building, and the Givati Brigade found five tunnel shafts connected to an underground network. The Air Force's Shaldag unit fought and eliminated Hamas terrorists in one of the tunnels. The Combat Engineering Corps' 601st Battalion and elite Yahalom unit subsequently destroyed the tunnel network.
- On January 2, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](#) to troops while touring Salah a-Din road in central Gaza that “the sense that we are stopping [the campaign against Hamas] is wrong,” and he told troops of the 99th Division's 646th Reserve Paratroopers Brigade that “you are on the corridor; the meaning of this is that on both your sides, operations of a different kind will soon take place.”
  - » Gallant also said, “to the north, we destroyed 12 Hamas battalions. Terrorists still remain, a few thousand of the 15,000 or 18,000 that were in the area. A large number of them were eliminated and others fled to the south.”
  - » He elaborated that “the goal is to exhaust the enemy, kill [its operatives], and achieve a situation in which we control the territory” and that the IDF is “already reaching” Hamas leaders in the Khan Younis area.

- » Addressing threats from terrorists in Lebanon, particularly Hezbollah, Gallant said, “at the same time, unfortunately, there are other threats, the first and most prominent of which is what is happening in the north.”
- The IDF [said](#) on January 1 that it is moving thousands of soldiers, including five brigades, out of the Gaza Strip in the first major drawdown since the start of the war. The troops will rest and conduct training. However, intense fighting in Khan Younis in Gaza’s south is ongoing.
  - » The five brigades and other units [released](#) are the 460th Armored Brigade, the 261st Brigade, the Bahad 1 officers’ school in wartime, the 828th Brigade, the School for Infantry Corps Professions and Squad Commanders; the 14th Reserve Armored Brigade; and 551st Reserve Paratroopers Brigade.
  - » On December 31, IDF Spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said, “the objectives of the war require prolonged fighting, and we are preparing accordingly.”
- On January 1, the IDF [announced](#) that troops from the 99th Division have established “operational control” of new areas in central Gaza. In recent days, the 99th Division killed a number of Hamas operatives, destroyed over 100 tunnel shafts, directed dozens of airstrikes on Hamas targets, and located several weapons caches in central Gaza.
  - » One of the 99th Division’s brigades located a weapons cache in a daycare center, and the division also shelled a building used by Hamas, eliminating a group of Hamas operatives.
- On January 1, the IDF [killed](#) Adel Msamma, who commanded the Nukhba unit of Hamas that attacked the Israeli town of Kissufim on October 7.
- According to a December 31 Army Radio [report](#), the IDF does not think it will be able to fully neutralize the ability of Gazan terror groups to launch rockets toward Israel, particularly short-range rocket fire toward Israeli towns near Gaza, although the military has successfully eliminated long-range missile launchers.
  - » An anonymous senior Israeli officer said, “even in two years’ time, it’s possible that the residents of the Gaza Strip will still be hearing rocket alerts.”
- On December 31, Palestinian media outlet *Shehab*—which is affiliated with Hamas—[reported](#) that the IDF killed Abdul Fattah Amin Maali, a top Hamas commander, in an airstrike.
  - » In the 1990s, Maali was a close associate of Yahya Ayyash, who [pioneered](#) Hamas’s bombmaking program in the 1990s before being assassinated by the Shin Bet in January 1996.
- On December 31, the IDF [said](#) that the Paratroopers Brigade has deployed to southern Gaza after roughly two months of fighting in the territory’s north and that the unit has begun an operation against Hamas’s infrastructure during the past week, killing several Hamas gunmen in close-quarters combat and via sniper fire.
- On December 31, the IDF [said](#) that it conducted airstrikes against dozens of targets overnight, targeting Hamas infrastructure, including a military building and a tunnel, and the Israeli Navy aided Israeli forces with strikes along Gaza’s coast.
  - » The IDF also said that 14th Brigade troops found and incapacitated anti-personnel explosive devices planted in a daycare in northern Gaza’s Shati camp.
- On December 31, Palestinian outlets [reported](#) that Israel conducted dozens of airstrikes and fired artillery overnight in Gaza, including against Deir-al-Balah, al-Maghazi, and Rafah. The

outlets also reported gunfights in Tuffah in Gaza City. The reports were not independently verified.

- On December 31, the IDF's Spokespersons Unit [stated](#) that a December 29 incident in which IDF soldiers fired a warning shot at a United Nations humanitarian convoy was due to a miscommunication between troops.
  - » The humanitarian convoy had completed a delivery of humanitarian aid to northern Gaza and was returning to a facility in southern Gaza when it was asked by the IDF to travel by a different route due to ongoing fighting.
  - » According to the IDF, the convoy's detour was not conveyed to a group of IDF troops on the ground in Gaza, and the troops fired a warning shot to get the convoy to stop. The IDF said it "sharpened" certain procedural regulations in response to the incident.
- On December 31, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) that the IDF anticipates the war in Gaza lasting at least until the end of 2024. Hagari added that reservists will increasingly be allowed to leave Gaza during the year to help boost the Israeli economy, and that the IDF is focusing on training officers and commanders to prepare for new operations in the coming year.
- A December 30 *Wall Street Journal* [report](#) said that nearly 70 percent of the 439,000 homes in Gaza and roughly half of Gaza's buildings have been damaged or destroyed during fighting, including Byzantine churches, ancient mosques, factories, apartments, malls and luxury hotels, theaters, and schools.
  - » Political scientist Robert Pape argued, "the word 'Gaza' is going to go down in history along with Dresden and other famous cities that have been bombed."
    - As JINSA's Director of Research Jacob Olidort and JINSA Policy Analyst Yoni Tobin demonstrated in a recent [NatSec Brief](#), even when using Hamas-provided casualty figures, the Allied bombing campaign against Germany resulted in several times more casualties per capita than Israel's operations in Gaza have.
  - » The Norwegian Refugee Council-led Shelter Cluster said that it will take at least one year to remove the rubble, which is rendered more difficult by unexploded ordnance, and rebuilding housing will take seven to ten years at a cost of roughly \$3.5 billion.
- During a December 30 press conference, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) that Gaza "will not be a threat to Israel," and "over 8,000 terrorists have been killed" in Gaza as the IDF destroys Hamas's military capabilities "step by step." He also said that the campaign will continue for many additional months until Hamas is destroyed and every hostage is brought home.
- On December 30, troops from the IDF's 7th Armored Brigade [raided](#) terrorist sites in Khan Younis, including a complex containing the headquarters of Hamas's Khan Younis intelligence division and a Palestinian Islamic Jihad command center. The IDF said its troops recovered "very valuable" intelligence materials during the raid.
- On December 30, the IDF's Givati Brigade [raided](#) several Hamas sites across southern Gaza, eliminating several Hamas operatives and infrastructure.
- On December 30, the Israeli Air Force and the Israeli Navy [struck](#) dozens of Hamas operatives and [conducted](#) approximately 50 airstrikes on Hamas targets across the Gaza Strip.
  - » Troops [eliminated](#) two Hamas facilities in Beit Lahiya, in northern Gaza, and also seized large quantities of bombs and firearms, as well as Hamas communications equipment.

- » According to Palestinian media sources, the IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes on targets in central Gaza and near the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza. According to Israeli media reports, the airstrikes are in preparation for greater ground operations into the city of Khan Younis itself.
- On December 30, the IDF's 188th Armored Brigade [raided](#) a school in central Gaza's al-Bureij camp after the IDF received intelligence that dozens of Hamas operatives were hiding in the school.
  - » During the raid on the school, which was being used as a civilian shelter, the IDF came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades and firearms. Troops eliminated several Hamas operatives and captured others and destroyed nine tunnel shafts and three launching posts in the al-Bureij camp.
- On December 29, the IDF [said](#) it had discovered and destroyed a hideout apartment with a large tunnel system beneath it that belonged to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.
- The Israeli Military Police [announced](#) on January 1 that it was launching an investigation into an incident in which a Palestinian terror suspect was killed by a soldier while in Israeli custody.
  - » According to the IDF, the suspect was questioned by Military Intelligence officials and then handed over to a soldier. At some point, the soldier shot the suspect dead. According to Israel's *Kan* network, the soldier said he was attacked by the suspect and shot him in self-defense.

## Lebanon

- On January 2, an Israeli [strike](#) in the southern suburbs of Beirut reportedly killed Saleh al-Arouri, deputy head of Hamas's political bureau and considered to be the de facto [commander](#) of the group's military wing in the West Bank, and at least three other people.
  - » Hebrew media reports indicated that he was set to meet with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah tomorrow.
- On January 2, the IDF [said](#) that it used fighter jets to strike Hezbollah positions in the Lebanese village of Yaroun.
- On January 1, the IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including a Hezbollah cell, rocket launching posts, and other infrastructure in response to earlier projectile attacks. Hezbollah claimed three of its members were killed in the IDF airstrikes, later [updating](#) the figure to four.
- On January 1, the IDF [said](#) that it targeted a Hezbollah cell in southern Lebanon readying a drone attack against northern Israel, noting that "an Air Force aircraft attacked the squad before it could carry out the launch, and destroyed the aircraft they were using."
  - » The IDF also said, "this is another example of the cynical exploitation by the terror organization of civilian populations and facilities," referencing the group's attempt to fire drones toward Israel from the Lebanese town of Maroun el-Ras. It said further that it struck Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon using fighter jets.
- On December 31, the IDF [said](#) that it used tanks and helicopters to target three Hezbollah anti-tank squads in southern Lebanon, and the IDF shelled the source of earlier missile fire toward northern Israel with artillery.



- On December 31, the IDF carried out airstrikes against Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon, including terrorist infrastructure in the town of Ramyeh and Hezbollah positions in the towns of Aamra and Khiam.
  - » The IDF said that Hezbollah “operates from the area of [Ramyeh], which is used as a terror center for the group” and used for observation and conducting terror attacks.
  - » That same day, Hezbollah [announced](#) that one of its fighters had been killed in Israeli airstrikes.
- On December 30, the IDF [said](#) that it used a fighter jet and additional aircraft to strike three terror cells in Lebanon’s south, and it struck Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon with artillery. The IDF also said that air defenses intercepted a “suspicious aerial target.”
- On December 30, the IDF [conducted](#) “widespread” strikes on Hezbollah targets in the town of Kfarkela in southern Lebanon. The IDF said the town is a Hezbollah stronghold used to conduct attacks. The IDF also carried out strikes in the nearby towns of Bint Jbeil and Marwahin.
- On December 29, the IDF [struck](#) a Hezbollah launching post and other infrastructure in southern Lebanon.
- On December 30, Prime Minister Netanyahu [said](#) that Israel is willing to strike Iran if Hezbollah expands its involvement in the conflict.
  - » Netanyahu stated, “if Hezbollah widens the fighting, it will absorb strikes it never dreamed of. And so, too, Iran,” adding that “we will fight by all means until we have restored security for the residents of the north.”
  - » Netanyahu added that “Iran leads the ‘axis of evil’ and the aggression against Israel ‘on the various fronts,’” adding that Israel will undertake any measure “to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear weapons.”
- On December 29, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) that Israel had, over the previous two days, “completed a series of widespread strikes by fighter jets, tanks and artillery on Hezbollah targets” including rocket launching posts, compounds and other infrastructure, in order to drive Hezbollah from the Lebanese-Israeli border.
  - » Hagari stated that Hezbollah’s deployment in southern Lebanon “no longer looks the same as it did on October 6, and it will never be the same again.”

## Syria

- Overnight on January 2, the IDF conducted [strikes](#) against Syrian army infrastructure.
- On January 1, the IDF [shelled](#) Hezbollah targets in southern Syria in response to earlier rocket attacks.
- On December 30, the U.K.-based NGO Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [claimed](#) that at least nine Israeli airstrikes killed five Syrians, four from Hezbollah, six Iraqis, and eight Iranians.
- On December 29, a likely Israeli strike at the Damascus International Airport [killed](#) 11 leaders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), according to Saudi media. Iranian regime officials [denied](#) that the strike killed 11 IRGC members.

## West Bank

- On January 2, the IDF, Israeli Border Police, and the Shin Bet [conducted](#) a raid in an unspecified location in the West Bank. The forces arrested seven terror suspects and confiscated weapons.
  - » Since October 7, the IDF has [arrested](#) over 2,550 suspects, including approximately 1,300 with confirmed ties to Hamas.
- On January 2, the IDF's 8211th Reserves battalion [carried out](#) a raid on a terrorist facility in the town of Azzun. During the raid, four terrorist operatives were killed. An IDF soldier was shot and taken to the hospital in moderate condition.
- On January 1, Palestinian media outlets [reported](#) that during IDF raids, several Palestinians were arrested in the town of Qatanna, two people were arrested in Bethlehem, several others were arrested near Ramallah and Nablus, and one person was arrested in East Jerusalem.
- On December 31, the IDF [conducted](#) a drone strike against gunmen who attacked IDF troops in the West Bank's Nur Shams camp near Tulkarem. Israeli forces captured five wanted Palestinians and seized weapons during the operation.
  - » On December 31, Palestinian media outlets [reported](#) that two people were injured in IDF airstrikes near Tulkarem.

## Humanitarian Efforts

- On January 1, Israel's *Channel 12* [reported](#), citing sources in Gaza, that Hamas has reached an agreement with looters of aid shipments in Gaza under which the looters will refrain from looting aid shipments in return for receiving large portions of aid. The report also stated that "almost no governance exists" in northern Gaza.
- On December 31, Qatar-based *Al Araby* [reported](#) that the leader of PIJ, Ziyad al-Nakhalah, has refused to agree to any hostage release deal unless Israeli troops are fully withdrawn from the Gaza Strip. PIJ holds an unknown number of hostages currently.
- On December 30, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [said](#) that 81 aid trucks entered Gaza through Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing and Egypt's Rafah crossing.
  - » The Kerem Shalom checkpoint had previously been closed for three days due to aid seizures by local Palestinians and security incidents, including an IDF drone strike, according to OCHA.
- On December 30, Osama Hamdan, a senior Hamas official in Lebanon, told *Al Jazeera* that the terror group does not want another [temporary pause](#) in combat and that its priority is to achieve a permanent ceasefire.

## Post-War Planning

- On December 31, Prime Minister Netanyahu [argued](#) that "the Philadelphi Corridor – or to put it more correctly, the southern stoppage point [of Gaza], must be in [Israel's] hands."
- On December 30, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) at a press conference that Israel's National Security Council has held eight separate meetings to discuss the specifics of post-war Gaza.

- According to a December 30 Israeli media [report](#), Prime Minister Netanyahu is more open to a Palestinian Authority (PA) role in civilian governance in post-war Gaza than he has revealed publicly. Netanyahu has repeatedly publicly said that he does not want any role for the PA in a post-war Gaza.

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another 6,900 have been injured in the war.
  - » 507 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 173 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
    - The IDF [announced](#) the deaths of Master Sgt. (res.) Constantine Sushko, 30, from Tel Aviv; Cpt. Harel Ittah, 22, from Netanya; [Sgt. Maj. \(res.\) Eliraz Gabai](#), 37, from Petah Tikvah; Sgt. First Class (res.) Liav Seada, 23, from Tiberias; [Sgt. First Class \(res.\) Amichai Yisrael Yehoshua Oster](#), 24, from Karnei Shomron.
    - On January 1, Kibbutz Be’eri [announced](#) that one of its residents, Ilan Weiss, 56, who had been missing since October 7, was confirmed to have been killed that day in Hamas’s attack on their community.
  - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [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, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 22,185 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 57,035 have been injured during the war.
  - » On December 4, Associated Press and AFP [reported](#), citing an IDF official, that roughly 15,000 Palestinians have died since the war began and that roughly 5,000 of those killed 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, 324 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 3,400 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, and [three](#) were mistakenly killed by the IDF.
  - » 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](#) 129 hostages.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 8 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
  - » Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office [said](#) that of the 129 hostages currently believed to be held in Gaza, 23 have died or been murdered in captivity and their bodies are being held.
- On January 1, the IDF [announced](#) that of the 170 IDF soldiers killed to that point in the ground operation in Gaza, 29 were killed in friendly fire incidents.
  - » These 29 deaths included 18 soldiers killed due to being mistakenly identified as an enemy combatant, nine soldiers killed in accidents such as accidental weapons discharges, being run over mistakenly or being killed in shrapnel from a controlled demolition of a tunnel or building, and two soldiers who were killed.

#### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On January 1, the Iranian regime sailed a [frigate](#), the *Alborz*, into the Red Sea.
- The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen repeatedly attacked at least one commercial vessel sailing through the Red Sea.
  - » On December 31, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported a possible Houthi [attack](#) in which a ship in the Red Sea roughly 55 nautical miles southwest of the Yemeni port of Hodeidah experienced “a loud bang accompanied by a flash on the port bow of the vessel.”
  - » On December 31 at 6:30 a.m. local time, four Iranian-backed Houthi small boats [attacked](#) the *Maersk Hangzhou*, a Singapore-flagged, Denmark-owned/operated container ship, by firing small arms and attempting to board the vessel. A security team on the ship returned fire. The Houthis then fired on U.S. helicopters deployed from the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* and USS *Gravelly* who had responded to assist the *Maersk Hangzhou*.
  - » The Houthis had initially attacked the *Maersk Hangzhou* on December 30 at 8:00 p.m. local time by [launching](#) a missile that struck the ship as it sailed in the Red Sea. The Houthis then fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles that were shot down by a U.S. vessel.
- Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria continued escalating their attacks against U.S. personnel.
  - » On January 1, air defenses shot down a drone that had targeted the [Ain al-Asad airbase](#) in Iraq.
  - » On January 1, air defenses neutralized a drone that targeted the [Erbil Airport](#) in Iraq.
  - » On January 1, two rockets [targeted](#) Mission Support Site Euphrates in Syria and a drone targeted the al-Shaddadi base in Syria.
  - » On December 31, two drones were shot down near the [Harir Airbase](#) in northern Iraq.

- » On December 30, 26 rockets and three drones [targeted](#) U.S. personnel at the Green Village and Euphrates Mission Support bases in Syria. None of the projectiles hit the bases and there were no reported injuries.

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

- U.S. naval vessels in the Red Sea responded to the Houthi attacks on the *Maersk Hangzhou* over the weekend.
  - » On December 31, helicopters deployed from the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* and USS *Gravelly* the United States [returned fire](#) against Houthi vessels that attacked them as they responded to the second distress call from the *Maersk Hangzhou*. The U.S. helicopters sank three Houthi vessels, [killing](#) all ten Houthi fighters onboard, and the fourth fled the area.
  - » On December 30, the USS *Gravelly* had shot down two ballistic missiles that targeted the *Maersk Hangzhou*.
- The U.S. Department of Defense [announced](#) that the USS *Gerald R. Ford* will return to the United States in the coming days after it extended its deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean following the October 7 attack. The USS *Bataan*, an amphibious assault ship, and its accompanying vessels, the USS *Mesa Verde* and the USS *Carter Hall* will replace the *Ford*.
- Reporting in [the New York Times](#) indicated that U.S. defense officials have prepared plans to strike the Houthis in Yemen. However, the Biden administration is hesitant to conduct the strikes because it fears that they could benefit Iran and endanger a delicate truce between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia.
  - » VADM Kevin Donegan, USN (ret.), a former Commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet and 2022 JINSA Generals and Admiral Program participant, told *The New York Times* that “not responding when U.S. forces are attacked in any fashion risks the lives of U.S. sailors and marines if a missile were to make it past U.S. defenses ... It also sets a new precedent that attacking a U.S. ship carries low risk of retaliation and as we have seen invites more attacks from the Houthis.”
- A report in the *Sunday Times* on January 1 indicated that the United States, the United Kingdom, and possibly other European nations are preparing to conduct [airstrikes](#) against the Houthis in Yemen.
- On December 30, U.S. Fifth Fleet Commander VADM Brad Cooper [argued](#) that “the Houthi reckless attacks will likely continue” and that “this is an international challenge that demands collective action.” Cooper said he “expect[s] in the coming weeks we’re going to get additional countries” to join Operation Prosperity Guardian, the new multinational task force to protect shipping in the Red Sea.
- On December 29, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken approved the potential [emergency sale](#) to Israel of M107 155mm projectiles and related equipment for \$147.5 million, bypassing congressional review.
- On December 29, President Biden [extended](#) duty-free reciprocal trade and concessions for Israel for some agricultural products until December 31, 2024, which the president said will allow the two governments to replace a trade deal that dates back to 2004.
- On January 1, shipping giant Maersk paused all transit of its vessels through the Red Sea for 48 hours in the wake of the attacks on the *Maersk Hangzhou*. However, it [announced](#)

that it plans to sail at least 30 container ships through the Red Sea, while pausing the resumption of transit through the waterway for some ships.

- » Maersk had announced on December 24 that it would resume transit through the Red Sea after a pause that began on December 15.
- On January 1, Turkey [detained](#) 33 individuals it claimed to suspect of spying for Israel's Mossad.
- On December 29, South Africa filed an [application](#) with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to begin a genocide case against Israel over the war in Gaza.
  - » Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy [responded](#) on January 1 that "in giving political and legal cover to the October 7 massacre and the Hamas human-shields strategy, South Africa has made itself criminally complicit with Hamas's campaign of genocide against our people."

#### *Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks*

- On January 1, anti-Israel protesters [drove](#) slowly in front of New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, chanting and disrupting traffic, and causing police to restrict access to the airport. The cars were painted with "intifada," "f\*ck Israel," and "long live the resistance."
- On January 1, tens of thousands of anti-Israel protesters [marched](#) in Istanbul, Turkey.

## Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), VADM John W. Miller, USN (ret.), and Ari Cicurel, "[To Deter Houthi Strikes in Red Sea, US Must Turn From Defense to Offense](#)," *Breaking Defense*, December 28, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, "[Seventh U.S. Strike Amid Over 100 Iran-backed Attacks in Iraq and Syria](#)," December 27, 2023
- Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.) and Ari Cicurel, "[The US Must Help Israel Deal with Hezbollah Before It's Too Late](#)," *The Hill*, December 23, 2023
- Zac Schildcrout, "[IDF Deaths Highlight Perils of Urban Warfare](#)," December 22, 2023