

Iran Update



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November 30, 2024, 2:00 pm ET

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. Click here to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Syrian opposition forces seized Aleppo City and advanced toward Hama City on November 30.[1] Opposition forces made this progress after launching their surprise offensive only three days prior.[2] The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) acknowledged that its forces have withdrawn from Aleppo City to “strengthen” defensive lines and “prepare for a counterattack.”[3] The SAA also acknowledged that opposition forces have entered “large parts of Aleppo [City].”[4] A pro-Syrian regime social media account reported that the SAA suffered command-and-control problems in Aleppo City, possibly leading to the rapid collapse of SAA defenses.[5] Fateh Mubin—one of the main opposition groups leading the offensive—announced on November 29 that opposition forces had separately taken control of Khan Sheikoun, which is about 20 miles from Hama City.[6] Geolocated footage posted on November 30 similarly showed opposition forces advancing through towns en route to Hama City.[7] CTP-ISW cannot verify whether opposition forces are operating in Hama City at the time of this writing.

Pro-regime forces have failed to mount an effective defense against the surprise offensive by opposition forces. The Syrian regime and affiliated sources claimed that the SAA was preparing defensive lines in northern Hama Province on November 30. It appears that opposition forces have advanced past northern Hama Province at this time, however.[8] Russian forces have separately conducted multiple airstrikes—some in cooperation with the SAA—targeting opposition forces in Aleppo City.[9] Russian and Syrian airstrikes have continued to target opposition positions in the Aleppo, Hama, and Idlib countryside as well.[10]

Syrian opposition forces have likely captured valuable military equipment that the SAA and other pro-regime forces abandoned amid disorderly withdrawals.[11] Social media accounts claimed that opposition forces have captured armored vehicles and heavy artillery pieces.[12] Opposition forces also

entered the Abu al Duhur and Nairab military airports in Idlib Province and Aleppo City, respectively.[13]

The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) launched a separate operation into Syrian regime-controlled territory on November 30.[14] The SNA is currently operating northeast of Aleppo City, reportedly with the intent of capturing Tel Rifat, north of Aleppo City, from the joint control of the Syrian regime and Syrian Democratic Forces.[15] The SNA captured Kuweires military airport east of Aleppo City along with several other villages.[16]

The opposition offensive in northern Syria may be inspiring anti-regime activity in other parts of Syria, particularly restive Daraa and Suwayda provinces. Unidentified fighters targeted the Syrian Regime Military Intelligence building in central Suwayda City with a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) on November 30.[17] Local groups have historically targeted this symbol of the Syrian regime in Druze-majority Suwayda City during periods of unrest.[18] Local media separately reported small arms engagements between Syrian regime forces and unspecified actors in multiple areas of Daraa Province.[19] The Syrian regime has faced constant opposition in southern Syria since 2011 and especially since August 2023.[20]

The Syrian regime may struggle to rally the same support from the Axis of Resistance and Russia that they previously provided, which will impede any pro-regime counteroffensives. Hezbollah is in the midst of force regeneration and reorganization after a nearly two-month Israeli campaign in southern Lebanon.[21] Israel's intense monitoring of the Syria-Lebanon ground line of communication could furthermore disrupt Hezbollah efforts to move materiel and personnel to support the Syrian regime.[22] Iran could still send conventional units and Iraqi militias to support the Syrian regime against the opposition forces, however. Russia is separately constrained by its operations in Ukraine, which are a higher priority than operations in Syria. It is unclear to what extent Russia can divert any attention and resources toward Syria. Russia withdrew S-300 air defense systems from Syria back to Russia in 2022, likely to support Russian operations in Ukraine, highlighting the de-prioritization of operations in Syria.[23] Russian air assets are likewise heavily engaged in Ukraine.

A Hamas delegation traveled to Cairo on November 29 for further ceasefire-hostage negotiations.[24] Egyptian officials are separately discussing a new proposal with Hamas and Israeli officials, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. [25] The proposal involves pausing fighting for at least 60 days, opening the Rafah border crossing, and increasing the flow of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip to 200 trucks entering daily.[26] The Palestinian Authority would assume control of the Gazan side of the Rafah crossing, according to the proposal.[27] The IDF would then monitor traffic through the border crossing. *Wall Street Journal* added that Egypt and Hamas have indicated that they will drop their demand that the IDF withdraw from the area around the Rafah border crossing.[28] Hamas may be increasingly willing to accept a ceasefire-hostage deal since Israel and Hezbollah reached a ceasefire in Lebanon. Hamas expressed its readiness to resume negotiations after the ceasefire began in Lebanon.[29] Hamas may calculate that negotiations are necessary to ensure its survival. Yahya Sinwar previously calculated that Hamas could survive if the October 7 War expanded and thus compelled the IDF to reduce military pressure on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.[30] That scenario is less likely since Hezbollah exited the war.

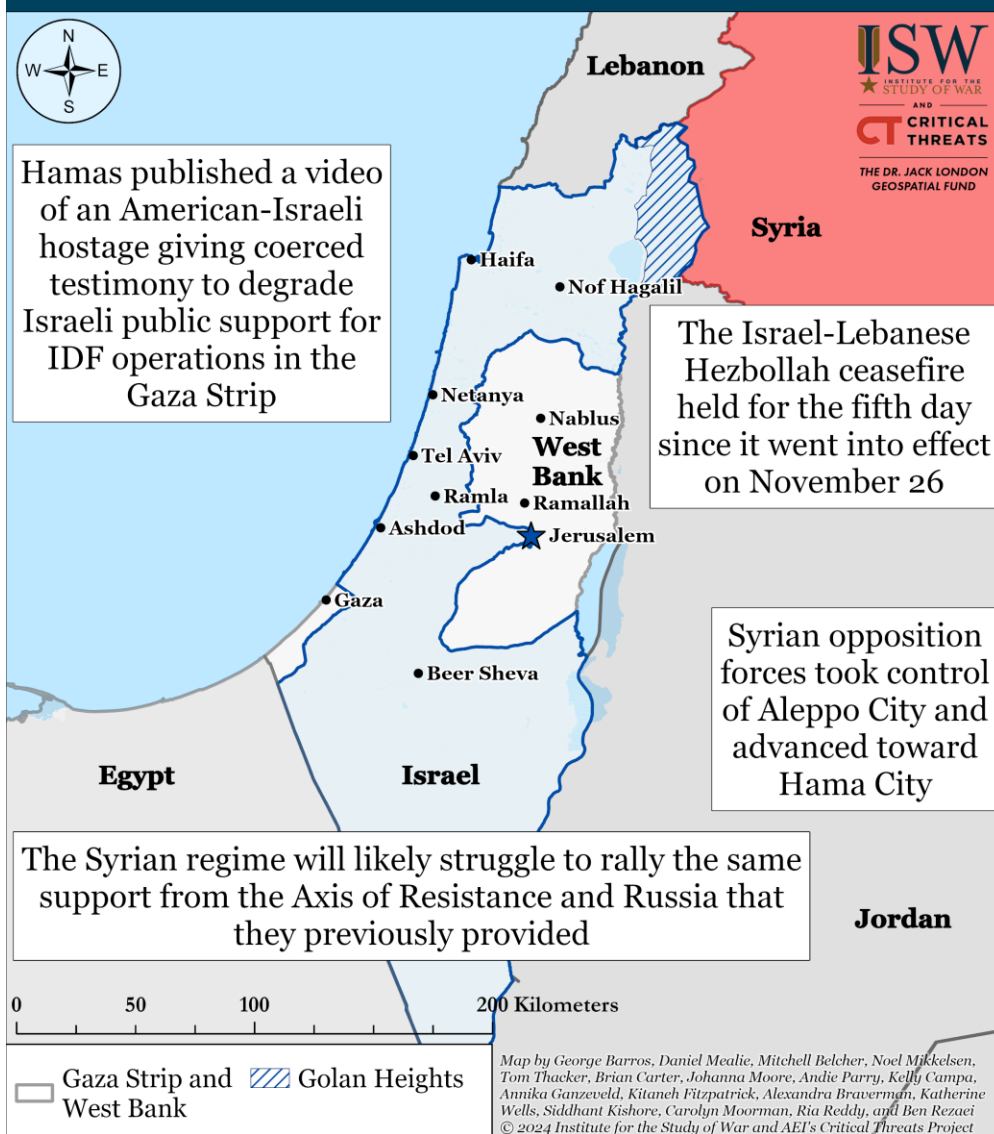
Hamas published on November 30 a video of an American-Israeli hostage giving what appears to be a coerced testimony.[31] The publication of the video is likely meant to pressure the United States and Israel to support a ceasefire-hostage deal in the Gaza Strip. The hostage, Edan Alexander, called on Israeli citizens to demonstrate daily against IDF operations in the Gaza Strip.[32] Alexander also called on US President-elect Donald Trump to cut military support to Israel and to pressure Israel to negotiate with Hamas. This video is the latest of several that Hamas and other Palestinian militias have published of hostages in recent months as part of an information operation meant to degrade Israeli willingness to sustain military operations in the Gaza Strip.[33]

Key Takeaways:

- **Syria:** Syrian opposition forces seized Aleppo City and advanced toward Hama City. Pro-Syrian regime forces have failed to mount an effective defense against the opposition offensive.
- The Turkish-backed SNA launched a separate offensive into Syrian regime-held territory. The SNA captured a military airport from the joint control of the SAA and SDF.
- The opposition offensive in northeastern Syria may be inspiring anti-regime activity in other parts of the country, particularly restive Daraa and Suwayda provinces.
- The Syrian regime may struggle to rally the same support from the Axis of Resistance and Russia that they previously provided, which will impede pro-regime counteroffensives.
- **Gaza Strip:** A Hamas delegation traveled to Cairo for further ceasefire-hostage negotiations and has indicated that it will drop its demand for the IDF to withdraw from parts of the Gaza Strip.
- Hamas published a video of an American-Israeli hostage giving what appears to be a coerced testimony in order to pressure the United States and Israel to support a ceasefire.

Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of November 30, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip:

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in the northern Gaza Strip on November 30. A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from Israeli vehicles and IDF artillery shelling around Beit Lahia and Jabalia refugee camp.[34] The journalist also reported that the IDF demolished civilian infrastructure there.[35] Palestinian militias killed a soldier from the IDF 401st

Armored Brigade in the northern Gaza Strip.[36] Palestinian militias separately injured a soldier from the IDF 7th Armored Brigade in the northern Gaza Strip.[37]

The IDF continued clearing operations in the central Gaza Strip on November 30. The IDF conducted an airstrike destroying a Palestinian rocket launcher in Deir al Balah humanitarian zone.[38] The IDF stated that the rocket launcher was aiming toward southern Israel.[39] The IDF stated that it took steps to minimize civilian casualties.[40] A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from Israeli soldiers and vehicles around Maghazi, Bureij, and Nuseirat refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip.[41] The journalist also reported IDF gunfire and shelling in eastern Deir al Balah.[42] Hamas fired RPGs targeting an IDF tank north of Nuseirat refugee camp.[43]

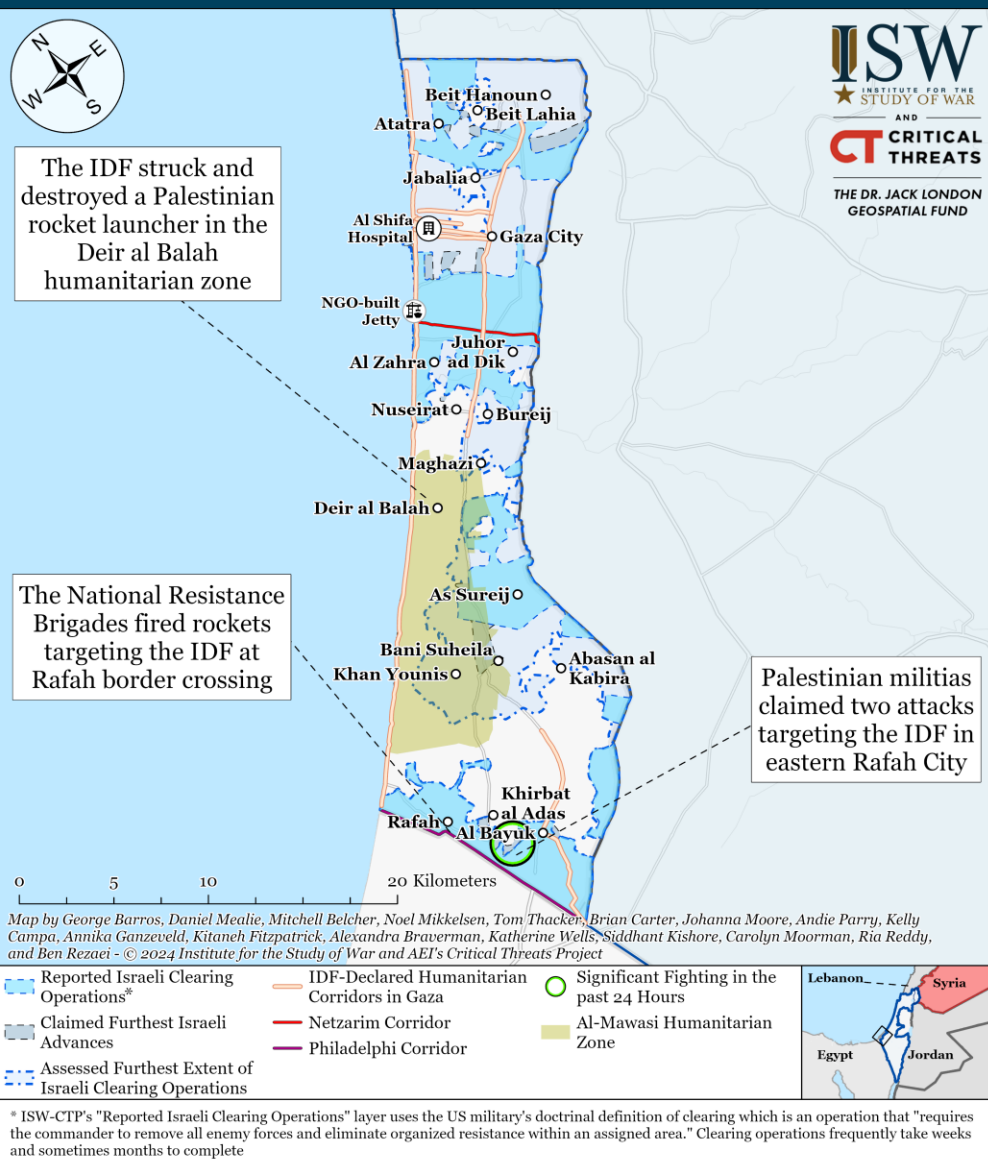
The IDF 143rd continued has clearing operations in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. The IDF 993rd Infantry Brigade has seized anti-aircraft and anti-tank munitions, Kalashnikov style-rifles, and grenades near an unspecified mosque and hospital in Rafah in recent days.[44] The IDF 993rd Infantry Brigade also directed an airstrike that struck a Hamas cell that rigged explosives an unspecified area in Rafah.[45] A Palestinian journalist reported that the IDF demolished civilian infrastructure in eastern Rafah City.[46]

The IDF Air Force struck a vehicle, killing Palestinian fighter Ahed Azmi Qadih in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on November 30.[47] The IDF stated that Qadih participated in attacks in Nir Oz, a kibbutz in southern Israel, during the Hamas-led attacks on October 7, 2023.[48] Israeli intelligence agencies were tracking Qadih for a “long time”, according to the IDF.[49] The airstrike also killed four other Palestinians with Qadih.[50] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent reported that Qadih and three other Palestinians killed in the airstrikes were World Central Kitchen (WCK) employees.[51] The IDF clarified that the Qadih was traveling in a private car that was unaffiliated with any aid organization.[52] The IDF is investigating claims of Qadih’s affiliation with WCK.[53]

Palestinian militias claimed three attacks targeting the IDF in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on November 30.[54] Palestinian militias, including Hamas, fired RPGs and detonated improvised explosive devices (IED) targeting Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers in eastern Rafah City.[55] The National Resistance Brigades fired rockets targeting the IDF at Rafah border crossing on November 30.[56]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of November 30, 2024, 12:30 PM ET



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Nothing Significant to Report.

Northern Israel and Lebanon

Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:

- End Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip

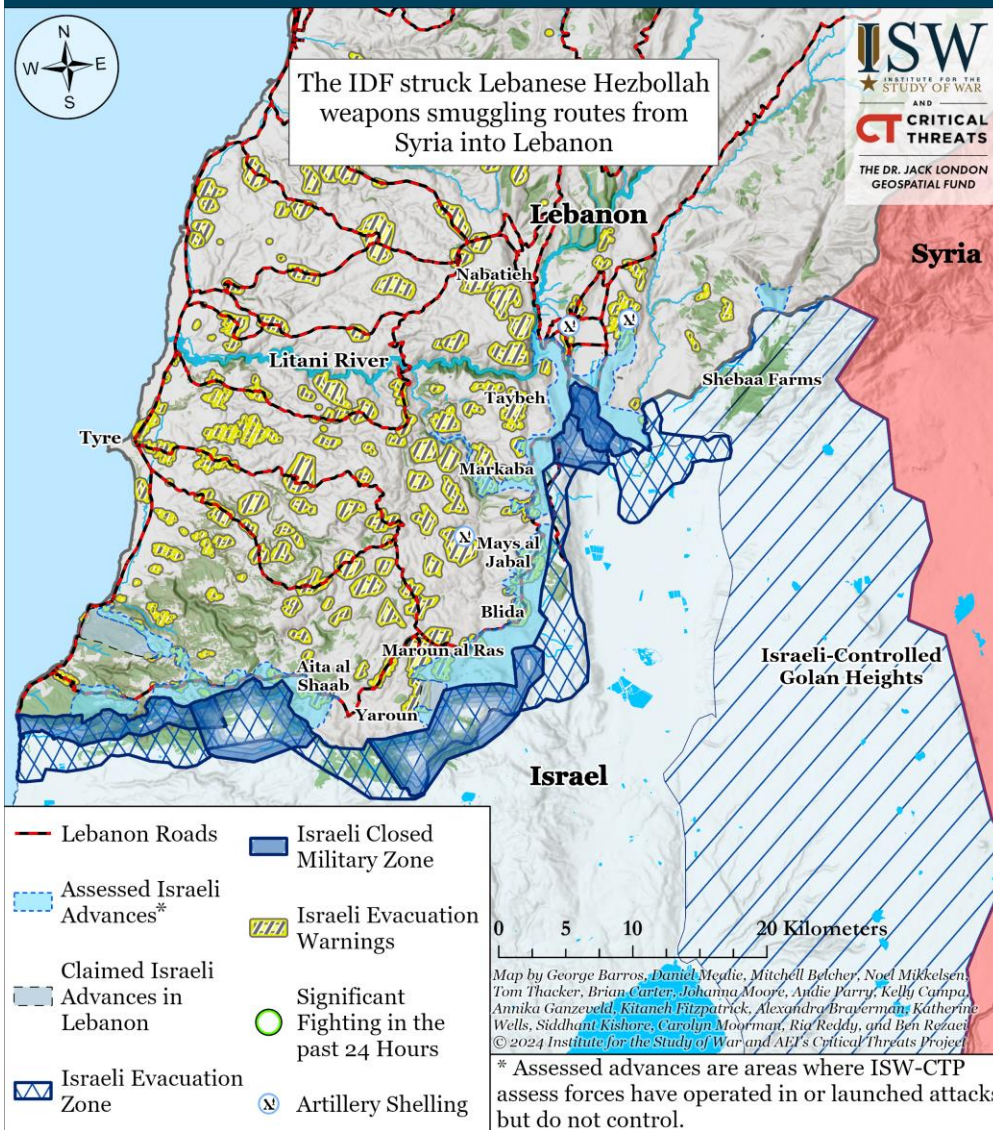
- Survive the October 7 War as a capable political and military organization with control over Lebanon

The Israel-Lebanese Hezbollah ceasefire continued to hold for the fifth day since it went into effect on November 26. Hezbollah has conducted no attacks into Israel, and the IDF and Hezbollah have engaged in no ground combat. The IDF still has a force presence in southern Lebanon for now to counter any potential violations of the ceasefire by Hezbollah.[57] The IDF Home Front Command reduced restrictions for gatherings and schools in the northern Golan Heights and northern Israel on November 30.[58] The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson republished "no-go" zones in southern Lebanon and reiterated that citizens are prohibited from returning until further notice.[59]

The IDF conducted airstrikes targeting Hezbollah fighters and infrastructure in southern Lebanon in response to militant activity that the IDF stated violated the ceasefire.[60]

Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

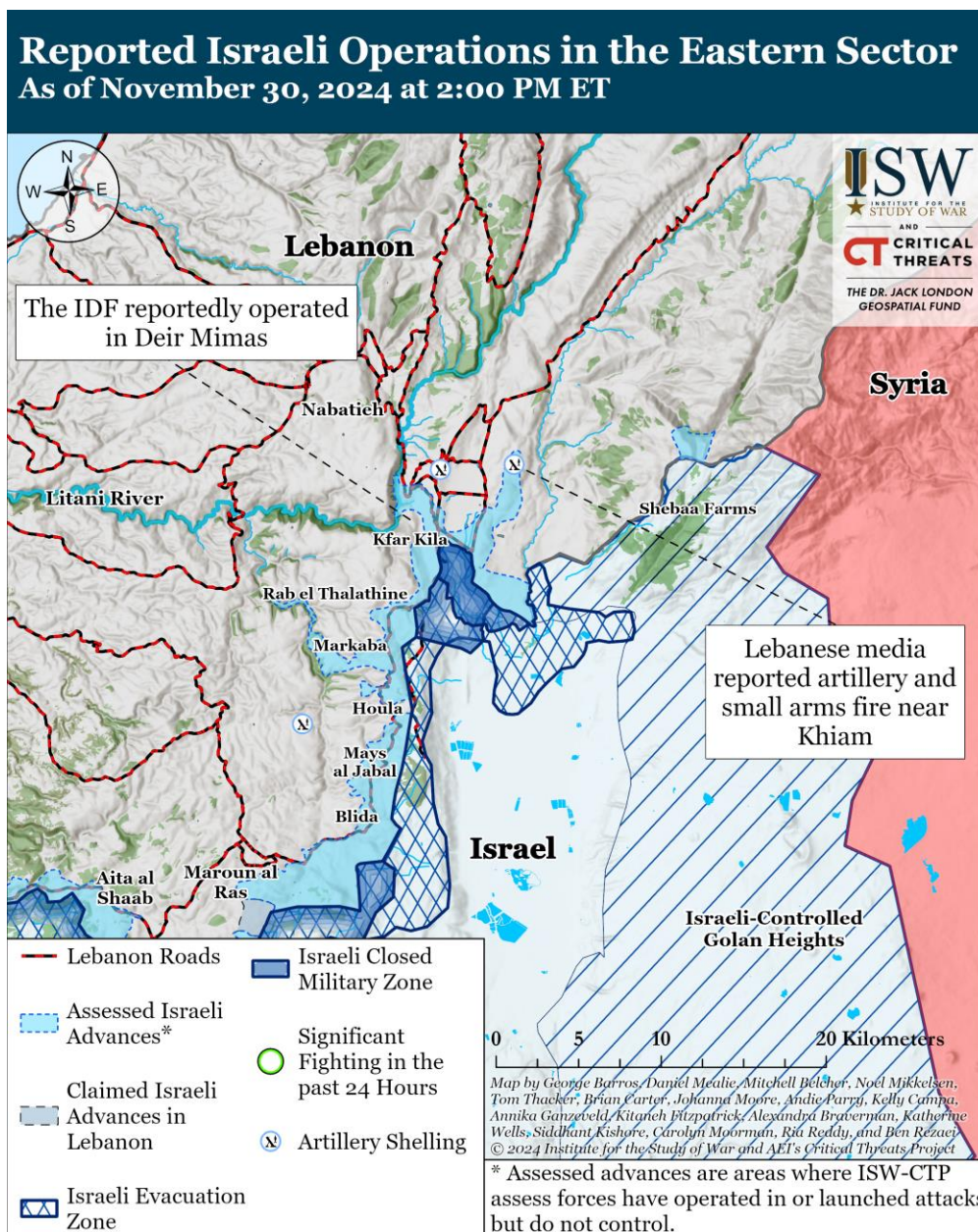
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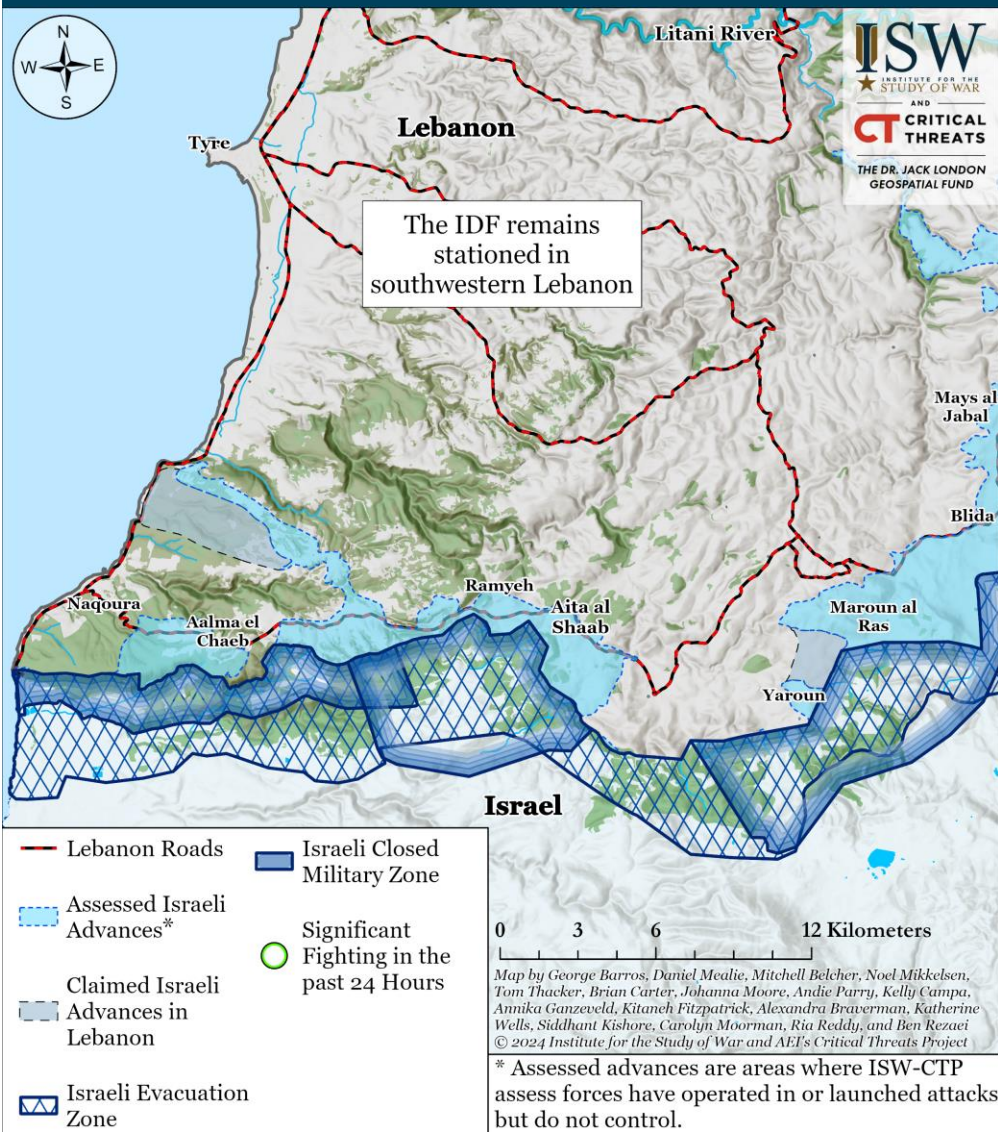
Israeli leaders have given no indication that they feel that these violations threaten the integrity of the ceasefire. The IDF struck a rocket launcher at a Hezbollah site near Sidon after detecting unspecified activity at the site on November 28.[61] The IDF separately conducted an airstrike targeting armed likely Hezbollah fighters loading a vehicle with RPGs, ammunition, and other military equipment in southern Lebanon on November 30.[62] The IDF also directed an airstrike targeting Hezbollah fighters returning to known Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon on November 30.[63] The IDF arrived at the scene thereafter and found weapons, including grenades and small arms.[64] The IDF Air Force struck a military vehicle near a Hezbollah missile production site "deep in Lebanon." [65] The IDF separately located Hezbollah munitions in a mosque in southern Lebanon in recent days.[66]

The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike targeting military infrastructure near Lebanon-Syria border crossings after identifying the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah from Syria.[67] Syrian media reported that the IDF struck the Jusiya border crossing, southern Homs Province, on November 30.[68] The IDF has repeatedly targeted this border crossing due to Hezbollah weapons smuggling here.[69] The weapons are transferred by Hezbollah's Unit 4400, which is involved in arms smuggling. The IDF reiterated its commitment to remove any threats in Lebanon that violate the ceasefire.

US Special Operations Command Central (SOCENT) Major General Jasper Jeffers traveled to Beirut on November 27 to oversee the implementation and monitoring mechanism of the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire.[70] Jeffers will serve in this role alongside US Special Envoy to Lebanon Amos Hochstein until a permanent civilian US official is named.



Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector As of November 30, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The IDF intercepted two drones that have approached Israeli airspace from the east since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 29. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are often responsible for these attacks but have not claimed the attacks at the time of this writing.

The Iraqi Army has deployed three brigades including the 101st Armored Brigade to Sinjar in northwestern Iraq, along the border with Syria on November 30.[71] These deployments are in response to securing Iraqi border with Syria in the wake of Syrian opposition forces seizing military and civilian sites in northwestern Syria.[72] The Iraqi army also deployed two Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Brigades along the Iraq-Syria border.[73] Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet al

Abbasi traveled to Sinjar and conducted a situational assessment of the security situation along the border.[74]

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf held a phone call with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri on November 30.[75] The two discussed the ceasefire in Lebanon and the surprise Syrian opposition offensive in Syria.

Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Coordination Deputy Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naghdi announced on November 29 that the Iranian focus is on conducting al Aqsa Storm 2, implying another ground attack on Israel, rather than conducting True Promise 3, implying another missile attack on Israel.[76]

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

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[2] <https://isw.pub/IranUpdate112724>

[3] [https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbidoNLvqs8he1nfSAwDXZNjNchF2yedWWd5xb4qxoQz7XzmxhgtYVvKReg4NWE5sRZmFl?__cft__\[o\]=AZWnkGBp-bkDqSbt2ugI57nF8Q3IdU8FfpcLB_yNXNjnEZW1F3JYXTu8VPyFpaOrUOOGg1NhBjTrDxz-ve_35s-CoPyVRikiNco6_TUWD6AfqERRPRymeRvagU_n6-yIOPQSQkYut6HOLbP4nPYPkvEzZV_a5664BjodhjDgxEkUxNZBT1CqBMtKPujpEvhoZB-k&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbidoNLvqs8he1nfSAwDXZNjNchF2yedWWd5xb4qxoQz7XzmxhgtYVvKReg4NWE5sRZmFl?__cft__[o]=AZWnkGBp-bkDqSbt2ugI57nF8Q3IdU8FfpcLB_yNXNjnEZW1F3JYXTu8VPyFpaOrUOOGg1NhBjTrDxz-ve_35s-CoPyVRikiNco6_TUWD6AfqERRPRymeRvagU_n6-yIOPQSQkYut6HOLbP4nPYPkvEzZV_a5664BjodhjDgxEkUxNZBT1CqBMtKPujpEvhoZB-k&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R)

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[5] <https://x.com/SAMSyria0/status/1862779726147834242>

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[8] <https://x.com/SAMSyria0/status/1862856902801084589> ; [https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbidozEamWBhofmpfjAP5ZpPx8ktB2aXKBGeiWHuSuQ1pgXCX7h4JggSA9JFby5jyZsSel?__cft__\[o\]=AZVhNdQTxLHL2WHfnmmN7ZtNHpMtTzrHZwn3HcxshH2ngrpBF37c3qlmLxdV7zB4ZoodR42LAtT9yyM9c24l89XSSbpwHU1hOXh3nbnmaJ4o14VYzhJxKLDNoRNob4EVoo-17UZnyTVamtkOdnJj5VIBjNzvA-](https://www.facebook.com/mod.gov.sy/posts/pfbidozEamWBhofmpfjAP5ZpPx8ktB2aXKBGeiWHuSuQ1pgXCX7h4JggSA9JFby5jyZsSel?__cft__[o]=AZVhNdQTxLHL2WHfnmmN7ZtNHpMtTzrHZwn3HcxshH2ngrpBF37c3qlmLxdV7zB4ZoodR42LAtT9yyM9c24l89XSSbpwHU1hOXh3nbnmaJ4o14VYzhJxKLDNoRNob4EVoo-17UZnyTVamtkOdnJj5VIBjNzvA-)

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