

Iran Update



Johanna Moore, Carolyn Moorman, Annika Ganzeveld, Ben Rezaei, and Brian Carter

November 23, 2024, Information Cutoff: 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.

Iranian media reported that Iran is activating 5,000 centrifuges in response to the censure resolution that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors passed on November 21.[1] The IAEA Board of Governors censured Iran for failing to fully cooperate with the IAEA. Hardline newspaper *Khorasan* reported on November 23 that Iran is activating around 5,000 centrifuges, including IR-6, IR-4, and IR-2m centrifuges, by injecting uranium hexafluoride gas (UF₆) into them.[2] The IAEA confirmed in August 2024 that Iran had installed but not yet activated eight cascades of IR-6 centrifuges at Fordow.[3] The IAEA also confirmed in August 2024 that Iran had installed 10 cascades of IR-2m centrifuges at Natanz.[4] Iran has installed six additional cascades of IR-2m centrifuges at Natanz since August 2024, bringing the total number of cascades of IR-2m centrifuges at Natanz to 37.[5] Only 15 out of these 37 cascades had been activated as of November 2024.[6] *Khorasan* reported that activating the 5,000 centrifuges will increase Iranian uranium enrichment at the Natanz and Fordow nuclear facilities to 40,000 separative work units (SWU).[7] SWU measure the effort required to separate U-235 and U-238 isotopes in the uranium enrichment process.[8] Iran currently has a total installed enrichment capacity of around 52,900 SWU per year and an enriching centrifuge capacity of around 31,400 SWU per year, according to the Institute for Science and International Security.[9] Iran currently has around 182.3 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, which is enough uranium, if enriched further, to produce four nuclear weapons.[10]

Iranian hardliners are continuing to lobby Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to revoke his fatwa that prohibits the production and use of nuclear weapons to restore deterrence against Iran's "enemies." The Pardisan, Qom Province, Friday prayer leader "desperately requested" on November 23 that Khamenei "reconsider" his nuclear fatwa because "[Iran's] enemies have rows of nuclear warheads" and threaten to use nuclear weapons against Iran.[11] The Friday prayer leader argued that possessing nuclear weapons would "bring [Iran] security." [12] Hardline Parliamentarian Ahmad Bakhshayesh Ardestani separately claimed on November 23 that "a large part" of the Iranian population supports acquiring a nuclear weapon.[13] Ardestani added that possessing a nuclear weapon would increase Iran's "deterrence power." [14] These statements implicitly acknowledge that the Iranian drone and missile attacks on Israel in April and October 2024 failed to restore deterrence with Israel and that additional drone and missile attacks would similarly fail to restore deterrence.

These statements also come amid numerous indications that Iran has very likely restarted its nuclear weapons research program.[15]

The Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee chairman threatened to withdraw from the nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The chairman, Ebrahim Azizi, threatened on November 23 that Iran would withdraw from the NPT if the United States acted “coercively” against Iran.[16] Azizi likely made this statement after some Trump administration transition officials, including former Special Envoy for Iran Brian Hook, said that the incoming administration will reimpose “maximum pressure” sanctions on Iran.[17] Lead Iranian nuclear negotiator Kazem Gharib Abadi separately threatened on November 22 that Iran would withdraw from the NPT if the E3 (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France) triggers the “snapback” mechanism in the JCPOA.[18] Iranian officials have long threatened to withdraw from the NPT, but these statements are noteworthy given the current standoff between Iran and the West over Iranian nuclear activities.

Iran has reportedly intervened in Lebanon ceasefire negotiations to ensure any agreement aligns with Iran’s objective to rebuild Hezbollah after the current Israeli campaign. Iran has been secretly intervening in the negotiations aimed at establishing a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, according to informed sources speaking to Sky News Arabia on November 23.[19] This intervention aims to secure Hezbollah’s position and capabilities in Lebanon by ensuring that Iran can rebuild the group after the war, according to Sky News Arabia’s sources. The Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister’s Special Envoy to West Asia, Mohammad Reza Sheibani, has reportedly held secret meetings and discussions that bypassed official Lebanese channels.[20] Sheibani publicly met with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati on November 5 and discussed national unity, internal cohesion, and Iran’s readiness to provide humanitarian aid to Lebanon.[21]

This report is consistent with recent Iranian activity in Lebanon and CTP-ISW’s assessment of Iranian intentions. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s senior adviser, Ali Larijani, met with senior Lebanese officials in Beirut on November 15 to discuss a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah conflict.[22] The New York Times also reported on November 16 that Khamenei urged Hezbollah to accept a ceasefire and remain north of the Litani River per UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Larijani delivered this message during his Beirut visit. [23] The Sky News Arabia and New York Times reports are consistent with CTP-ISW’s assessment that Iran may plan to rearm and rebuild Hezbollah in southern Lebanon following a ceasefire by utilizing the Axis of Resistance’s established weapons transfer routes through Syria.[24] It does not follow that Iran will choose to support Hezbollah by rebuilding it in the same way that Iran and Hezbollah built the group between 2006 and the present, however.

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and CENTCOM Commander General Michael Kurilla spoke with senior Israeli officials about Israeli military operations and objectives in Lebanon on November 23.[25] Austin spoke with Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz and reaffirmed the US commitment to reaching a diplomatic solution in Lebanon to return Israeli and Lebanese civilians to their homes on the Israel-Lebanon border.[26] Austin also highlighted the need to ensure the safety of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL peacekeepers in Lebanon. Austin’s statement follows three incidents in the past week in which Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters fought in the vicinity of UNIFIL’s position in Chama.[27] Some of these engagements resulted in Hezbollah rocket fire striking the UNIFIL position.

Kurilla held a situational assessment with IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi at the IDF Northern Command Headquarters in Safed, northern Israel, on November 23.[28] Kurilla and Halevi reviewed ongoing Israeli operations in Lebanon within the context of Israel’s broader strategic objectives. These discussions come as senior Israeli political officials review a potential Israel-Lebanon ceasefire agreement to achieve stated Israeli war aims.

Unspecified Israeli defense officials cited by The New York Times reported that Hezbollah has manufactured copies of Israeli Spike anti-tank missiles that it had captured in previous wars.[29] Israeli and Western defense officials reported that Hezbollah shipped the Israeli-made weapons to Iran during the 2006 war to replicate them. Iran replicated the Spike and produced the Almas anti-tank missile, which has a 16-kilometer range. The Almas anti-tank missile does not require a clear line of sight to launch. The missile's trajectory allows the munition to strike targets from above, making targets like Merkava tanks more vulnerable because the top armor on most tanks is relatively weak. The Almas can carry either a tandem-charged warhead to penetrate armor or a thermobaric warhead. Hezbollah has developed its own Almas manufacturing capabilities since 2006, which would enable it to rebuild its Almas stockpiles after the war with greater ease than if it could only acquire new Almas stocks from Iran via Iraq and Syria.

Hamas blamed Israeli airstrikes for the death of a female hostage in the Gaza Strip, likely to degrade Israeli domestic support for IDF operations in the Gaza Strip. Hamas released images of the body of a female Israeli hostage who Hamas claimed died in an Israeli airstrike in the northern Gaza Strip[30] The IDF said it is currently investigating the incident and is unable to verify or refute Hamas' claim.[31] Palestinian militias have previously released propaganda content about the hostages to trigger domestic Israeli pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to agree to a ceasefire with Hamas by reinforcing that Israel can only secure the release of living hostages through negotiations rather than military operations.[32]

Hamas is also likely setting information conditions to blame Israeli operations in the northern Gaza Strip for the deaths of other hostages there. Hamas claimed that Israeli operations in the northern Gaza Strip threaten another hostage in the area.[33] This effort presumably seeks to stop Israeli operations by generating Israeli public demands to stop the operation.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iranian Nuclear Program:** Iranian media reported that Iran is activating 5,000 centrifuges in response to the censure resolution that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors passed on November 21.
- **Iranian Nuclear Weaponization:** Iranian hardliners are continuing to lobby Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to revoke his fatwa that prohibits the production and use of nuclear weapons to restore deterrence against Iran's "enemies." The Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman threatened to withdraw from the nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
- **Lebanon Ceasefire:** Iran has reportedly intervened in Lebanon ceasefire negotiations to ensure any agreement aligns with Iran's objective to rebuild Hezbollah after the current Israeli campaign. Iran's intervention aims to secure Hezbollah's position and capabilities in Lebanon by ensuring that Iran can rebuild the group after the war, according to regional media. This report is consistent with recent Iranian activity in Lebanon and CTP-ISW's assessment of Iranian intentions.
- **US-Israel Discussions:** US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and CENTCOM Commander General Michael Kurilla spoke with senior Israeli officials about Israeli military operations and objectives in Lebanon on November 23. Kurilla held a situational assessment with IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi at the IDF Northern Command Headquarters in Safed, northern Israel, on November 23.
- **Hezbollah Capabilities:** Unspecified Israeli defense officials cited by The New York Times reported that Hezbollah has manufactured copies of Israeli Spike anti-tank missiles that it had captured in previous wars. Hezbollah has developed its own Almas manufacturing capabilities since 2006, which would enable it to rebuild its Almas stockpiles after the war with greater ease than if it could only acquire new Almas stocks from Iran via Iraq and Syria.
- **Hamas Exploits Israeli Hostages:** Hamas blamed Israeli airstrikes for the death of a female hostage in the Gaza Strip, likely to degrade Israeli domestic support for IDF operations in the Gaza Strip. Hamas is

also likely setting information conditions to blame Israeli operations in the northern Gaza Strip for the deaths of other hostages there. Hamas claimed that Israeli operations in the northern Gaza Strip threatened another hostage in the area.



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 Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on November 23. The 84th Infantry Brigade killed fighters and destroyed Hamas infrastructure.[34] Israeli forces also located dozens of weapons, including rockets ready to launch into Israeli territory. Israeli forces killed Palestinian militia snipers operating near Israeli forces and directed an IDF Air Force strike that killed a sniper observing Israeli forces from a nearby building. Hamas also detonated an explosively formed penetrator (EFP) targeting Israeli armor in the Saftawi area, east of Jabalia.[35] A Palestinian journalist reported shooting from military vehicles in the Saftawi area and west of Jabalia since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 22. [36]

The IDF issued evacuation orders for areas of Gaza City on November 23.[37] The IDF urged Palestinian civilians in the Kuba area, south of Shujaiya, Gaza City, to evacuate south due to Palestinian militias using the area to fire rockets targeting Israel. The IDF intercepted a rocket fired from the Shujaiya area in Gaza City on November 23.[38]

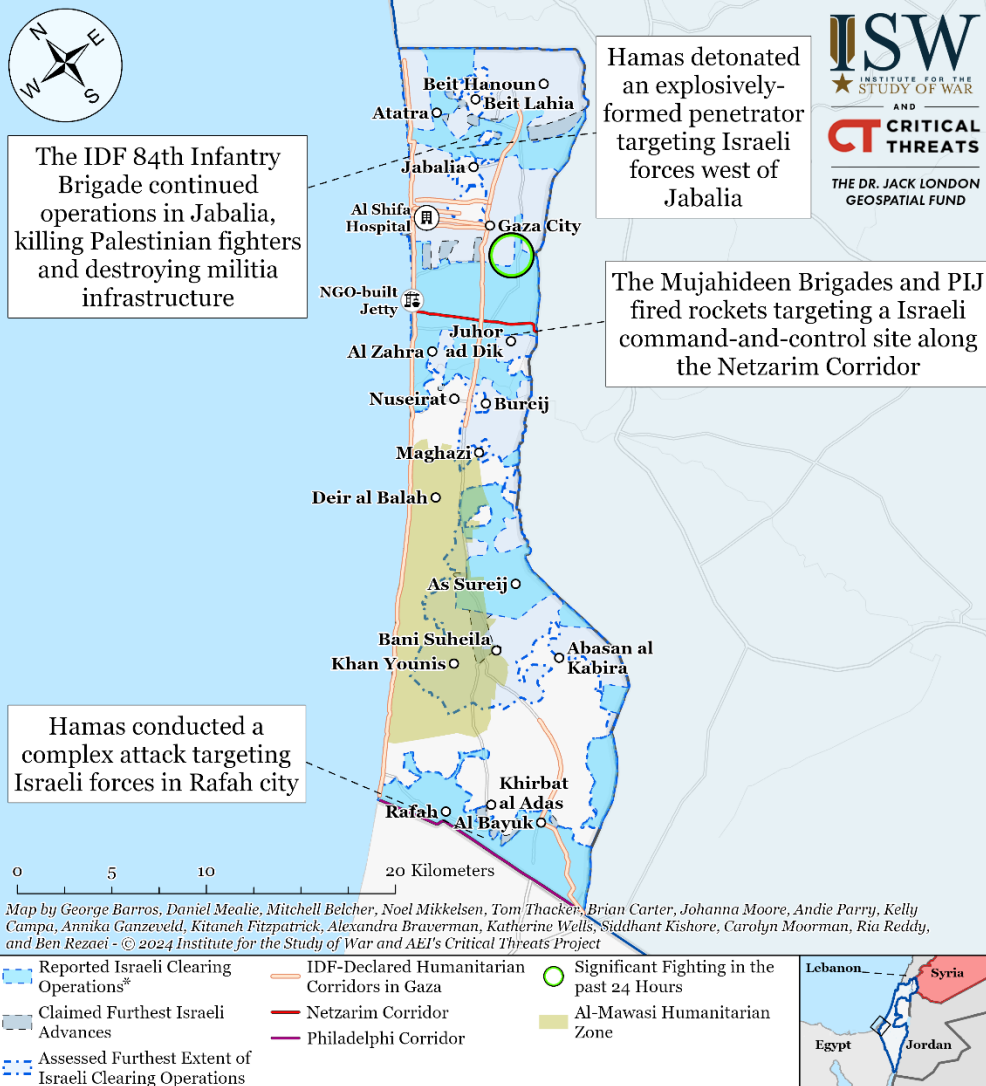
The Mujahideen Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired rockets targeting an Israeli command-and-control site along the Netzarim Corridor on November 23.[39]

Israeli forces continued operating in the central Gaza Strip on November 23. Commercially available satellite imagery from November 22 shows demolished buildings northwest of Nuseirat refugee camp. A Palestinian journalist reported multiple instances of gunfire from Israeli vehicles west of Nuseirat camp on November 23.[40]

Hamas conducted a complex attack targeting Israeli forces in Rafah City on November 23.[41] Hamas detonated an anti-personnel mine targeting five Israeli soldiers and then fired a rocket-propelled grenade targeting an armored personnel carrier.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of November 23, 2024, 12:30 PM ET

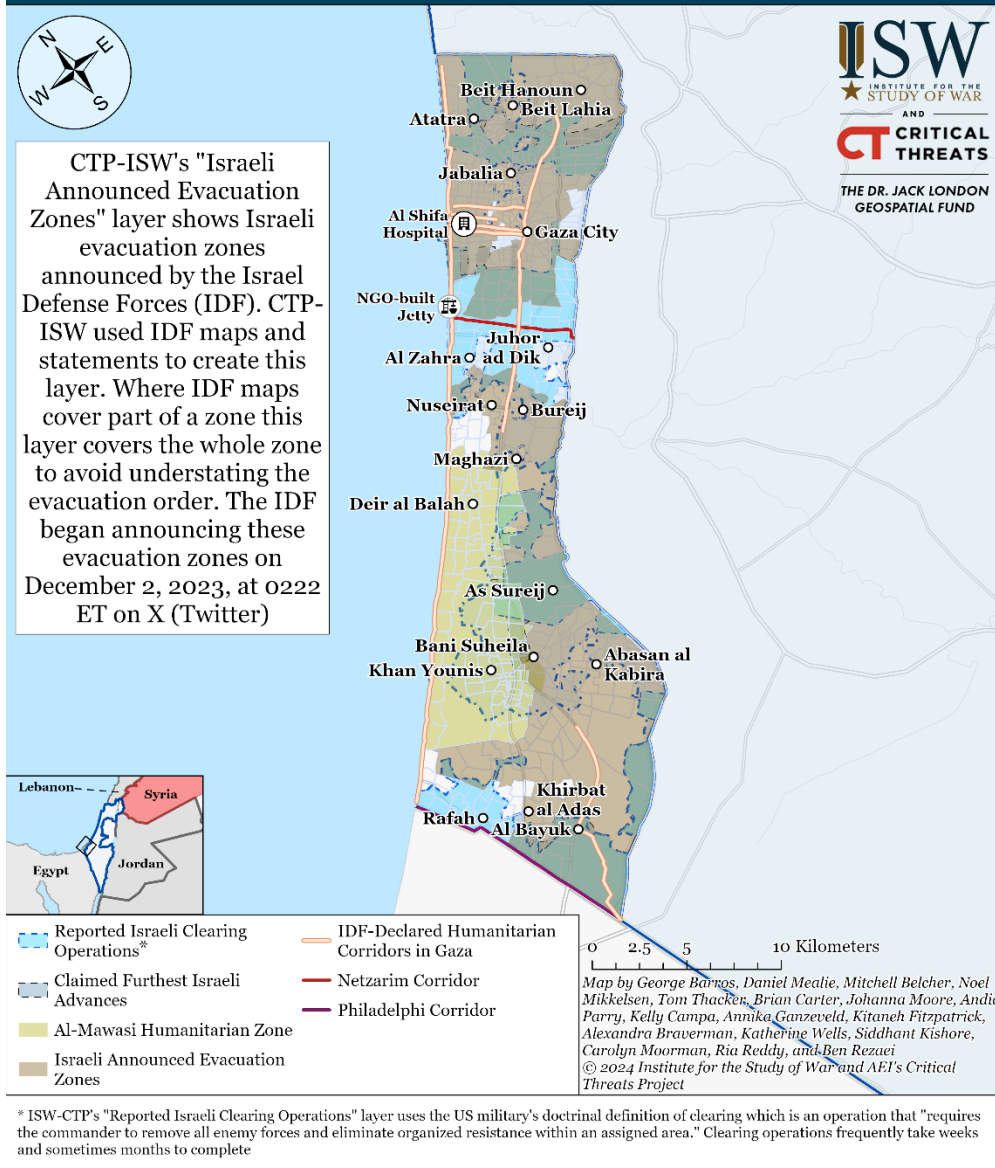


Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

As of November 23, 2024 at 12:30 PM ET

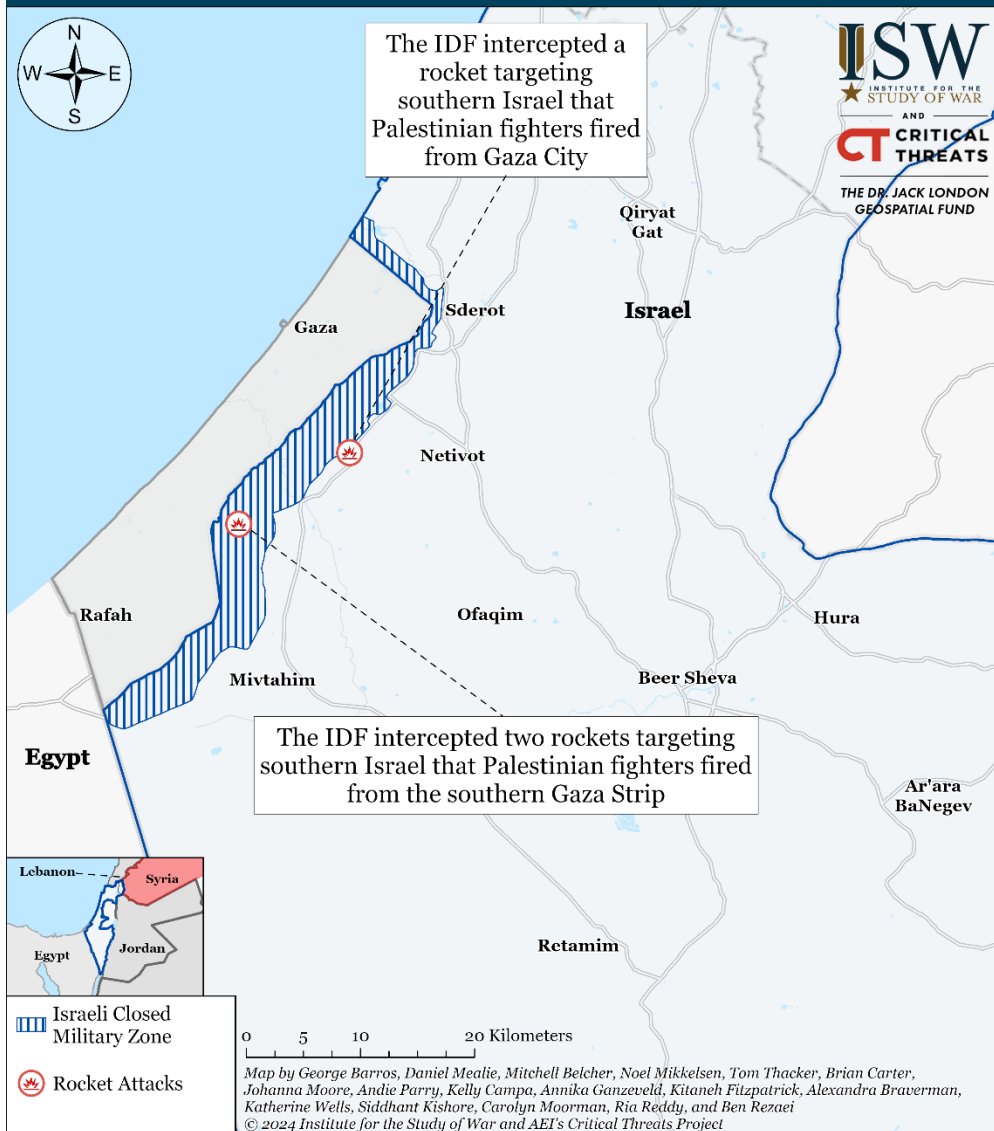


* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Palestinian militias conducted multiple rocket attacks targeting southern Israel on November 23. The IDF intercepted two rockets fired from Khan Younis.[42] Hamas said that it fired rockets targeting a nearby Israeli military base.[43] The IDF separately identified a rocket launched from Gaza City that fell in an open area in southern Israel, causing no casualties.[44] The IDF called for civilian evacuations from an area within Gaza City on November 23 that Palestinian militias had used to fire rockets into Israel, likely related to this attack.[45]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of November 23, 2024, 2:00 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

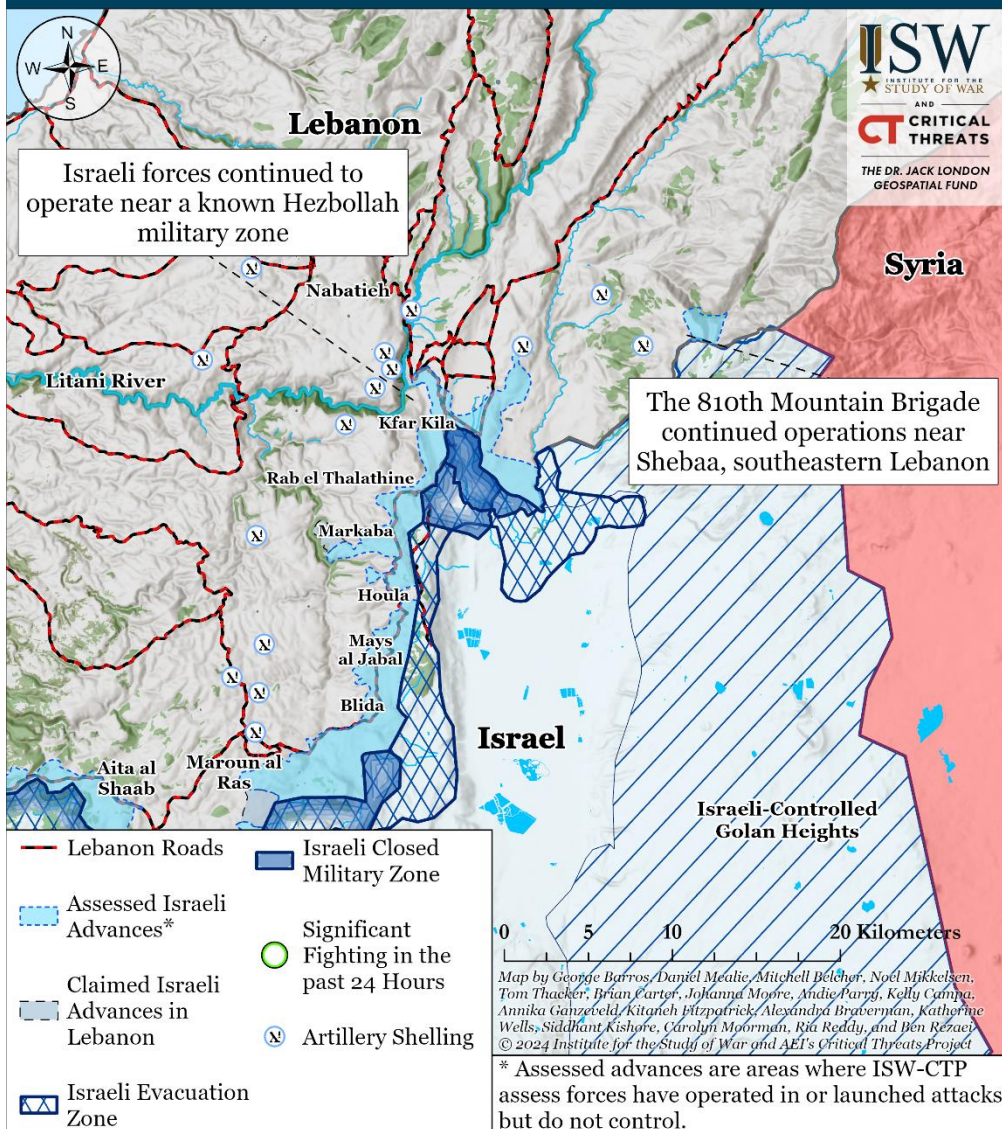
The 810th Mountain Brigade (210th Division) continued operations around near Shebaa, southeastern Lebanon on November 23.[46] Israeli forces located a Hezbollah launch site with living quarters and hide sites sometime in the past week. The IDF seized rockets, rocket launchers, and an Iranian-made 106mm anti-tank gun at the facility. Israeli forces also located and destroyed a building used by Hezbollah fighters. The 810th Mountain Brigade has operated around Shebaa for approximately two months.[47]

The IDF 98th Division continued to operate in Khiam.[48] Hezbollah claimed at least nine rocket attacks targeting Israeli forces on the eastern outskirts of Khiam.[49] Lebanese media reported ongoing Israeli artillery shelling in Khiam.[50]

Israeli forces continued to operate around Deir Mimas and Kafr Kila on November 23. CTP-ISW reported on November 22 that Israeli forces appeared to have advanced along the Nabatieh-Marjaayoun Road towards Deir Mimas.[51] The mayor of Deir Mimas claimed on November 23 that Israeli forces were positioned at the northern entrance to the town.[52] Hezbollah fighters have used areas surrounding the Christian town of Deir Mimas and its local church as cover to conduct attacks into Israel.[53] The ravine and hills immediately west of Deir Mimas are a known Hezbollah military zone.[54] The decision by Israeli forces to assume positions directly overlooking these ravines supports the IDF's objective to destroy key Hezbollah infrastructure.

Hezbollah attacked Israeli forces operating around Deir Mimas on November 23. Hezbollah claimed that its forces engaged Israeli forces with small arms fire on the western outskirts of Deir Mimas.[55] Hezbollah also claimed at least four rocket attacks targeting Israeli forces in the Deir Mimas-Kfar Kila triangle.[56]

Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of November 23, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



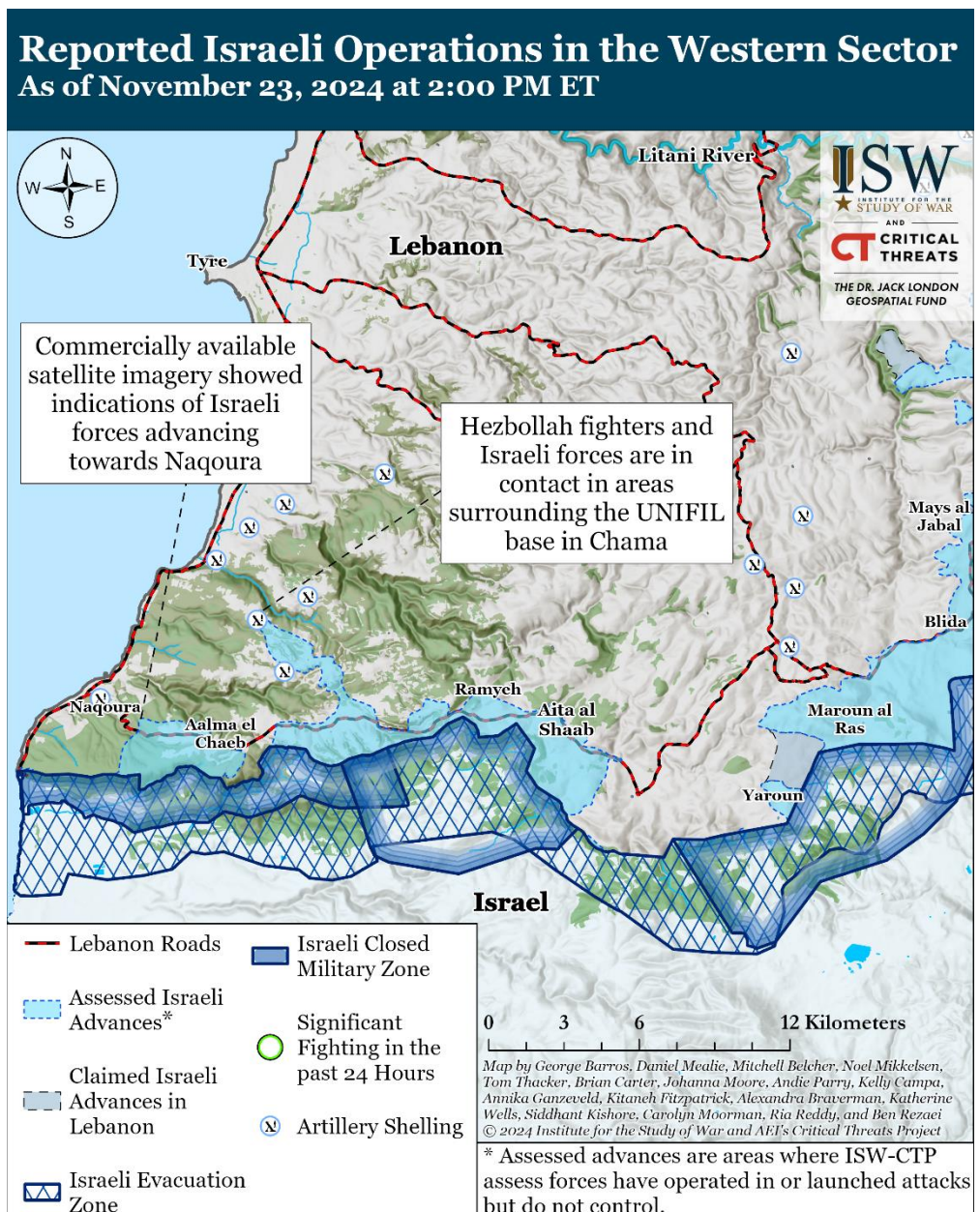
Hezbollah has attacked Israeli forces in Jebbayn since CTP-ISW's data cut off on November 22.[57] Hezbollah claimed its fighters engaged Israeli forces with small arms fire and rocket attacks.[58] Hezbollah also fired an anti-tank guided missile at an IDF tank.[59] Hezbollah claimed the attack wounded and killed members of the crew. The IDF has advanced small elements through Jebbayn to the Lebanese coast, which is approximately 6 km northwest of Jebbayn. This suggests that the IDF is confident that Hezbollah cannot meaningfully impede its operations, and that the IDF can sustain smaller units in front of the main force while continuing clearing operations in the rear.

Hezbollah fighters and Israeli forces are in contact in areas surrounding UNIFIL's Western Sector Headquarters in Chama, southern Lebanon. Hezbollah claimed that it fired an anti-tank guided missile at a Merkava tank west of Chama.[60]

The IDF reported that the rockets that struck UNIFIL position 2-3 on November 22 were launched by Hezbollah from Deir Kanon.[61] UNIFIL reported that two rockets "likely launched by Hezbollah or Hezbollah-affiliated groups" struck the facility and injured four peacekeepers.[62]

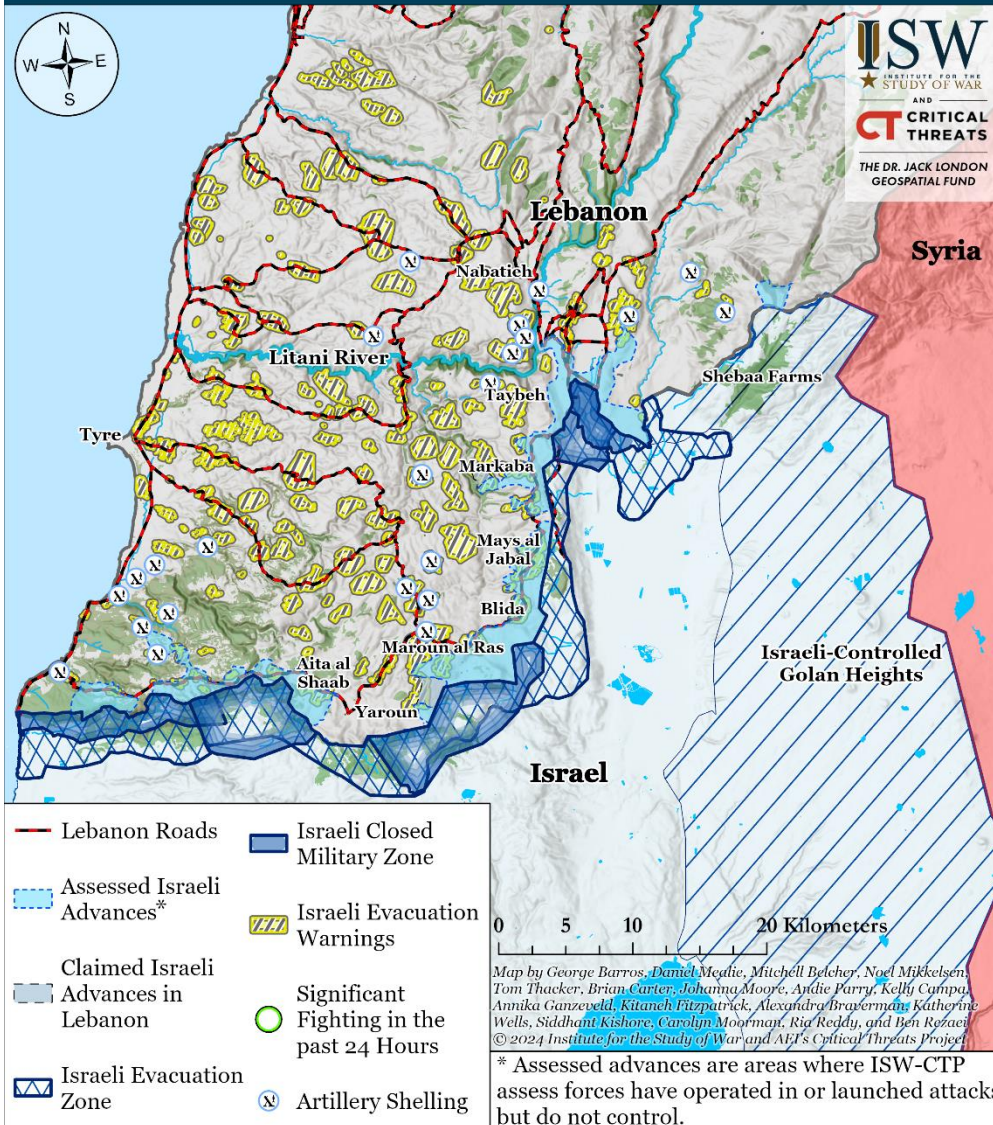
The Italian Defense Ministry issued a correction to Defense Minister Guido Crosetto's claim on November 19 that Israeli forces conducted a rocket attack targeting a UNIFIL position 2-3.[63] Crosetto incorrectly stated that Israel conducted the rocket attack. An Italian defense source asserted that Hezbollah was responsible for the attack on November 19.

Commercially available satellite imagery captured on November 23 showed indications of Israeli forces advancing west from Chama towards Naqoura. Hezbollah-affiliated media reported that the IDF advanced west toward Naqoura from Chama, southwestern Lebanon, on November 22.[64] Israeli Army Radio reposted the reports.[65]



Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

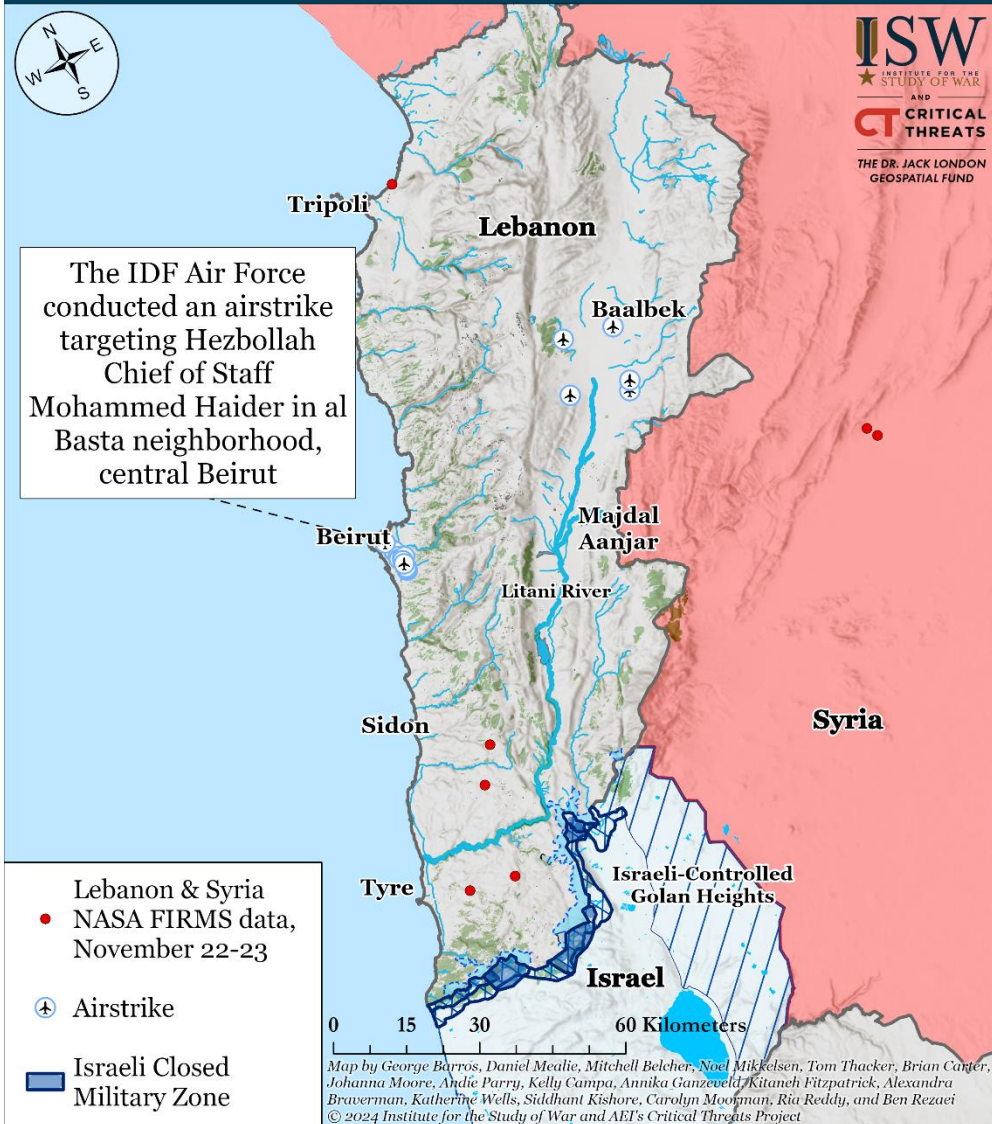
As of November 23, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The IDF airstrike in Beirut targeting Hezbollah's chief of staff and Depth Command commander is consistent with Israel's broader air campaign that aims to disrupt Hezbollah's operational- and strategic-level capabilities. The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike in al Basta neighborhood, central Beirut, on November 22 reportedly targeting Hezbollah Chief of Staff and commander of Hezbollah's Deep Command Mohammed Haider (a.k.a. Abu Ali Haider).[66] The airstrike struck a multi-story apartment building and killed approximately 22 people, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.[67] Unspecified Israeli officials reported that Haider was not killed in the airstrike.[68] Haider has served as de-facto Chief of Staff of Hezbollah for a month and a half since the IDF Air Force's decapitation campaign killed many of Hezbollah's senior leaders in September 2024.[69] Haider manages Hezbollah capabilities in northern Lebanon as commander of Hezbollah Depth Command. This command would manage the operationally and strategically significant long-range missile systems stored in northern Lebanon.

Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon

As of November 23, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



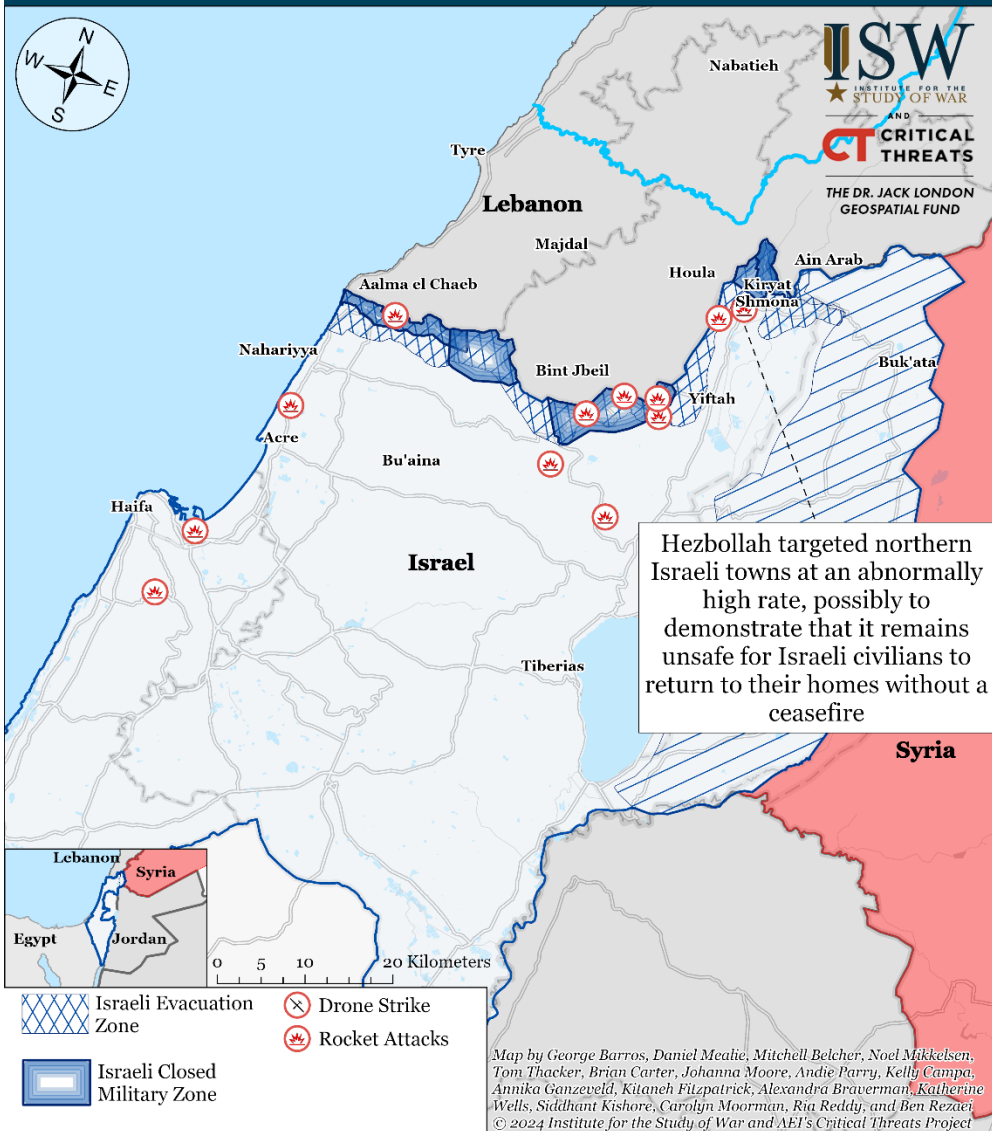
This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on November 22 to 2:00pm ET on November 23. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah has conducted at least 15 rocket and drone attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on November 22.[70]

Nearly half of Hezbollah's attacks targeted towns in northern Israel, possibly to pressure the Israeli government during ongoing ceasefire negotiations. One of Israel's stated war aims is to return Israeli civilians to their homes in the north. This objective requires stopping observed and unobserved fire attacks into northern Israel by either destroying Hezbollah capabilities to do so or compelling Hezbollah to accept a ceasefire on terms favorable to Israel.[71]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of November 23, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Iranian-backed militias have attacked US forces 206 times since October 2023, according to the Pentagon.[72] These attacks include 125 attacks targeting US forces in Syria, 79 attacks targeting US forces in Iraq, and two attacks targeting US forces in Jordan. The Pentagon previously announced in January 2024 that Iranian-backed militias had conducted 151 attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East since October 2023.[73] The Quarter 1 2024 Department of Defense Lead Inspector General Report for Operation Inherent Resolve reported that Iranian-backed militias had conducted at least 170 attacks targeting US forces since October 2023.[74]

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.

POWERED BY:



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[1] <https://sarasari.khorasanonline.ir/Newspaper/item/99171>

[2] <https://sarasari.khorasanonline.ir/Newspaper/item/99171>

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[5] <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/24/11/gov2024-61.pdf>

[6] <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/24/11/gov2024-61.pdf>

[7] <https://sarasari.khorasanonline.ir/Newspaper/item/99171>

[8] [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Separative_work_unit_\(SWU\)#:~:text=Separative%20work%20unit%2C%20abbreviated%20as,1%2C000%20kg%20of%20separative%20work.](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Separative_work_unit_(SWU)#:~:text=Separative%20work%20unit%2C%20abbreviated%20as,1%2C000%20kg%20of%20separative%20work.)

[9] [https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/analysis-of-iaea-iran-verification-and-monitoring-report-november-2024#:~:text=Iran%20has%20a%20total%20installed,%2C%20about%2031%2C400%20SWU%2Fyear.&text=Iran's%20stockpile%20of%20near%205,3838.5%20kg%20\(hex%20mass\).](https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/analysis-of-iaea-iran-verification-and-monitoring-report-november-2024#:~:text=Iran%20has%20a%20total%20installed,%2C%20about%2031%2C400%20SWU%2Fyear.&text=Iran's%20stockpile%20of%20near%205,3838.5%20kg%20(hex%20mass).)

[10] <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/19/middleeast/iran-nuclear-enrichment-intl-latam/index.html>

[11] <https://t dot co/uqPUEHnZoe>

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