

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

Israel and Lebanon are expected to reach a ceasefire agreement within the next few days that would achieve stated Israeli war aims.[1] The US-proposed ceasefire stipulates that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL) will be the only armed actors operating south of the Litani River, thus requiring Hezbollah fighters south of the Litani to disarm or relocate. The agreement also gives the Lebanese government the sole authority to purchase or produce weapons in Lebanon, “dismantles” any armed group infrastructure south of the Litani River that does not belong to the LAF or UNIFIL, and requires all Israeli forces to withdraw from Lebanese territory.[2]

The current Israeli operation was designed only to create the military conditions that would enable Israeli civilians to return to northern Israel. Destroying Hezbollah’s military organization—which is the only military objective that would prevent all attacks into Israel—was never the stated objective of Israeli military operations.[3] The Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) operation in Lebanon has degraded Hezbollah’s ability to conduct large coordinated indirect fire attacks and ground attacks in Israel.[4] The IDF operation appears to prioritize destroying the Hezbollah capabilities that pose the greatest threats to northern Israeli residents, such as short-range direct fire and October 7-like ground terrorist attacks.[5] A campaign to destroy all Hezbollah attack capabilities—including the group’s long and intermediate-range rockets, missiles, and drones, would be a far greater military undertaking than the current operation, and tantamount to a campaign to destroy Hezbollah’s military organization. The fact that the IDF is preparing to return residents to the north after a ceasefire suggests that the IDF designed the campaign to create the conditions required to prevent another October 7-like attack.[6] The air campaign has degraded some of Hezbollah’s long-range capabilities, but the ceasefire will create conditions that enable residents to return home. The ceasefire would not mean that Hezbollah cannot conduct attacks targeting northern Israel again in the future, however.

The US-proposed ceasefire agreement, if followed, disarms Hezbollah south of the Litani River and ensures that it cannot rapidly rebuild its destroyed capabilities along the Israel-Lebanon border to threaten northern Israel.[7] Maintaining these conditions in southern Lebanon requires that the LAF or UNIFIL ensure Hezbollah does not move materiel or fighters south of the Litani River.[8] Neither UNIFIL nor the LAF prevented Hezbollah from deploying fighters and moving materiel south of the Litani River after 2006, and it is unlikely either organization is willing to do so in 2024.[9] The ceasefire

does enable Israel to take military action in southern Lebanon if the LAF and UNIFIL fail to intervene against Hezbollah.[10]



The IDF Air Force intensified its air campaign in Beirut and on strategically significant Hezbollah targets across Lebanon. The IDF struck over 25 Jihad Council-related targets across Lebanon and assessed that the resulting damage degraded Hezbollah's command and control and intelligence-gathering capabilities.[11] The IDF struck Hezbollah intelligence collection centers and command-and-control sites used to inform senior Hezbollah leadership and direct military activities.[12] These resources would be used to support Hezbollah's rearmament following a potential ceasefire agreement.

The IDF Air Force struck over 12 Hezbollah military headquarters in Beirut since CTP-ISW's data cut off on NOV 24.[13] The IDF struck Hezbollah's intelligence headquarters, its coastal missile unit headquarters, and its Unit 4400 headquarters, which is the unit responsible for weapons smuggling from Syria into Lebanon.[14] The IDF probably calculated that destroying these headquarters would further inhibit Hezbollah's ability to reconstitute its military capabilities by degrading organizations that inform Hezbollah's decision-making and planning.

Israeli forces thwarted a small arms smuggling attempt from Jordan into the West Bank on November 25. The IDF seized 14 pistols and 65 unspecified weapons parts from several unspecified smugglers near Damiyah Bridge in the Jordan Valley.[15] The weapon parts are wrapped in plastic, though some pieces protruding from the plastic are visually consistent with M4/M16 upper receivers.[16] The West Bank-Jordan border is a crucial arms supply route for Palestinian militias operating in the West Bank.[17] Iran and its Palestinian partners like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad facilitate arming West Bank militias through funding and cash transfer.[18]

Iran and its partners in the West Bank likely seek to exploit these smuggling networks, even if they do not control the networks themselves. It is unclear if Iranian-backed militias are facilitating the actual act of smuggling across the West Bank-Jordan border, but Iranian-backed militias are key elements of Syria-Jordan drug and weapons smuggling networks. Jordanian officials stated there has been an increased effort by drugs and arms smugglers linked to Iranian-backed militias based in southern Syria to cross the border into Jordan over the past few weeks.[19] Both Israeli and Jordanian police have thwarted numerous attempts over the past year by Iran and its partners to transport small arms, explosives, mines, and rockets across the Jordan-West Bank border.[20] Israeli Defense Minister said on November 25 that he would "intensively promote" the construction of a Jordan-West Bank border fence to counter Iran's "institutionalized and organized" effort to establish an eastern front against Israel.[21]

Key Takeaways:

- **Lebanon Ceasefire:** Israel and Lebanon are expected to reach a ceasefire agreement within the next few days that would achieve stated Israeli war aims. The current Israeli operation was designed only to create the military conditions that would enable Israeli civilians to return to northern Israel. Maintaining the ceasefire conditions in southern Lebanon will require that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) or UNIFIL ensure Hezbollah does not move materiel and fighters south of the Litani River. Neither UNIFIL nor the LAF prevented Hezbollah from deploying

fighters and moving materiel south of the Litani River after 2006, and it is unlikely either organization is willing to do so in 2024. The ceasefire would not mean that Hezbollah cannot conduct attacks targeting northern Israel again in the future, however.

- **Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon:** The Israeli Air Force intensified its air campaign in Beirut and on strategically significant Hezbollah targets across Lebanon, including by striking 12 Hezbollah military headquarters in Beirut. The IDF probably calculated that destroying these headquarters would further inhibit Hezbollah's ability to reconstitute its military capabilities by degrading organizations that inform Hezbollah's decision-making and planning.
- **West Bank Smuggling:** Israeli forces thwarted a small arms smuggling attempt from Jordan into the West Bank on November 25. Iran and its partners in the West Bank likely seek to exploit these smuggling networks, even if they do not control the networks themselves. It is unclear if Iranian-backed militias are facilitating the actual act of smuggling across the West Bank-Jordan border, but Iranian-backed militias are key elements of Syria-Jordan drug and weapons smuggling networks.

Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of November 25, 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 operations in Beit Lahia and Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on November 25. The IDF 401st Armored Brigade, 900th Infantry Brigade, and 84th Infantry Brigade continued operations to destroy militia infrastructure and kill Palestinian fighters.[22] Palestinian militias claimed a large number of attacks in Beit Lahia.[23] Hamas engaged Israeli armor and infantry with small arms, hand grenades, and rocket-propelled grenades in central Beit Lahia.[24] Palestinian Islamic Jihad detonated a “high-powered” improvised explosive device targeting an Israeli tank in western Beit Lahia and engaged Israeli infantry with small arms and anti-tank guided missiles.[25] Local Palestinian sources reported that the IDF dropped leaflets ordering Beit Lahia residents to evacuate the area.[26] The order identified Beit Lahia General and Salah ad Din roads as evacuation routes out of the “combat zone.” [27]

The IDF Air Force struck and killed the Hamas Eastern Jabalia Battalion “headquarters” commander in recent days.[28] The commander planned attacks targeting the IDF operating in the Gaza Strip and ordered rocket attacks into Israel.[29] It is unclear if “headquarters” commander refers to the overall battalion commander or a subordinate officer, such as the commander of a headquarters company.

Palestinian militias conducted at least three attacks targeting Israeli command and control sites near the Netzarim Corridor on November 25.[30]

The IDF 933rd Infantry Brigade continues to operate in Rafah along the Egypt-Gaza border.[31] Israeli forces have directed dozens of airstrikes on Palestinian militia targets over the past several days.[32]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of November 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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PIJ attacked Israeli forces in western Beit Lahia

Three Palestinian militias mortared Israeli forces near the Netzarim Corridor

The IDF 933rd Infantry Brigade continues to operate in Rafah along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border

0 5 10 20 Kilometers

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

Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone	
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations	Philadelphi Corridor		

* 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 25, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)

The IDF dropped leaflets ordering Palestinians to leave Beit Lahia



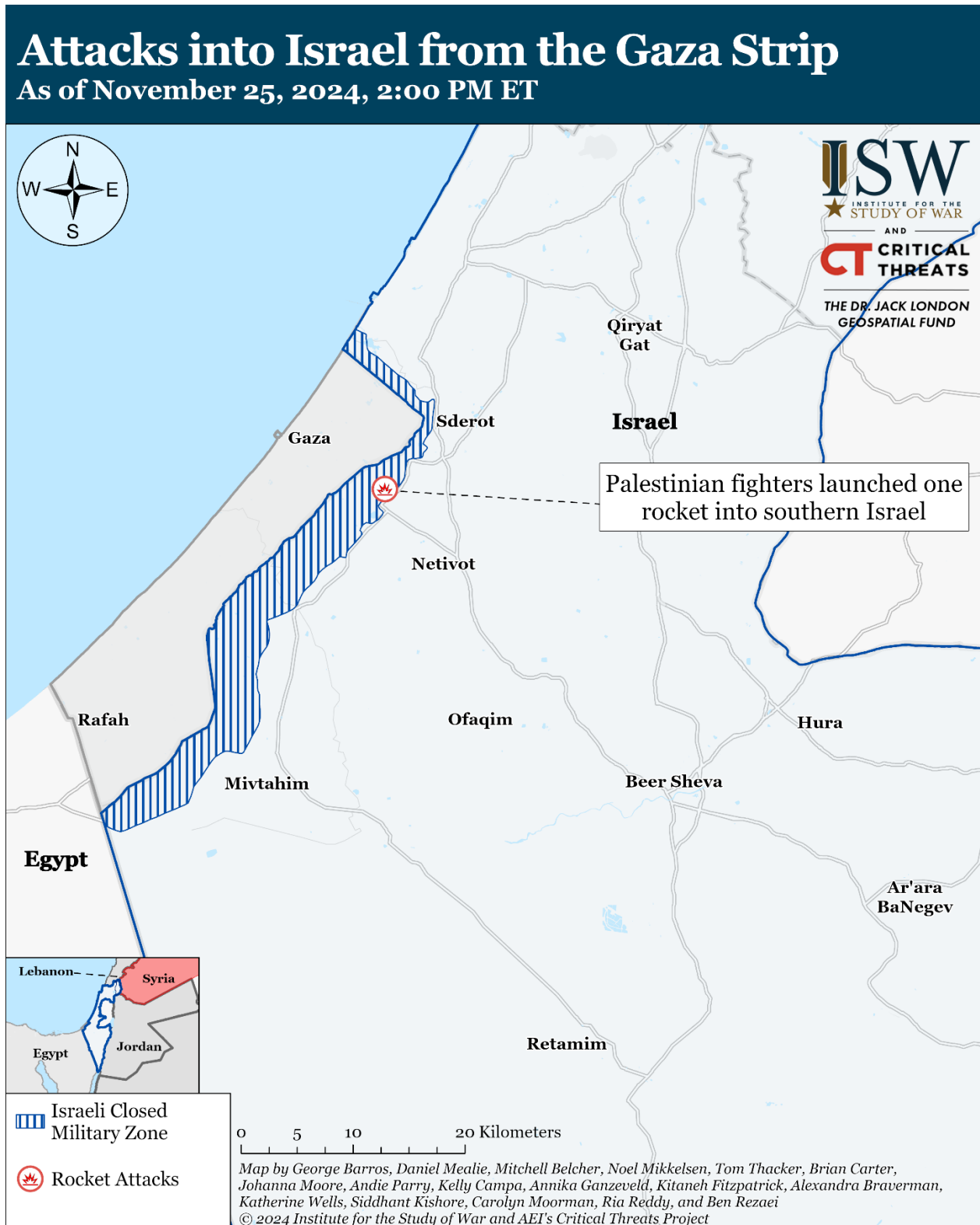
- ▬ Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- ▬ IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
- ▬ Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- ▬ Netzarim Corridor
- ▬ Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- ▬ Philadelphi Corridor
- ▬ Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

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
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* 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 fighters launched one rocket from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel on November 25. The rocket landed in an uninhabited area near Kfar Azza.[33] No militia group has claimed the attack at the time of this writing.



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

See the topline section.

Northern Israel and Lebanon

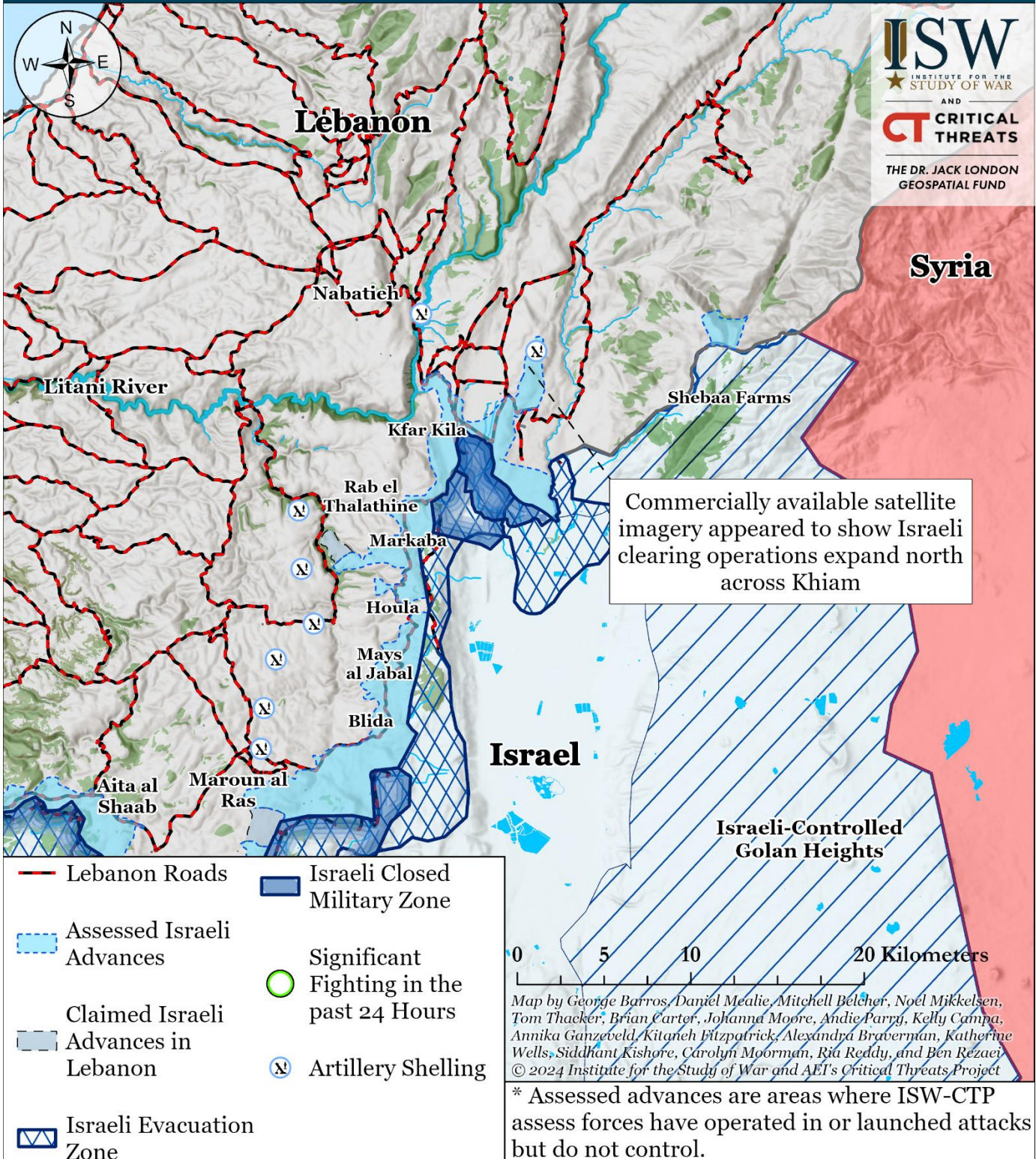
Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:

- End Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip
- Survive the October 7 War as a capable political and military organization with control over Lebanon

Israeli forces have continued clearing operations in southeastern Lebanon since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 24. Hezbollah claimed three rocket attacks and a one-way drone attack targeting Israeli forces south of Khiam.[34] Israeli forces have reportedly been operating on Khiam's southern and eastern outskirts since advancing into the area on November 16.[35] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on November 25 appeared to show Israeli clearing operations expanding north across Khiam.

Hezbollah has continued to claim attacks targeting Israeli forces near Deir Mimas, southeastern Lebanon, since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 24. Hezbollah claimed a rocket attack targeting Israeli forces attempting to remove a damaged tank from the outskirts of Deir Mimas.[36] Hezbollah also claimed two rocket attacks targeting Israeli forces in the Deir Mimas-Kafr Kila triangle.[37]

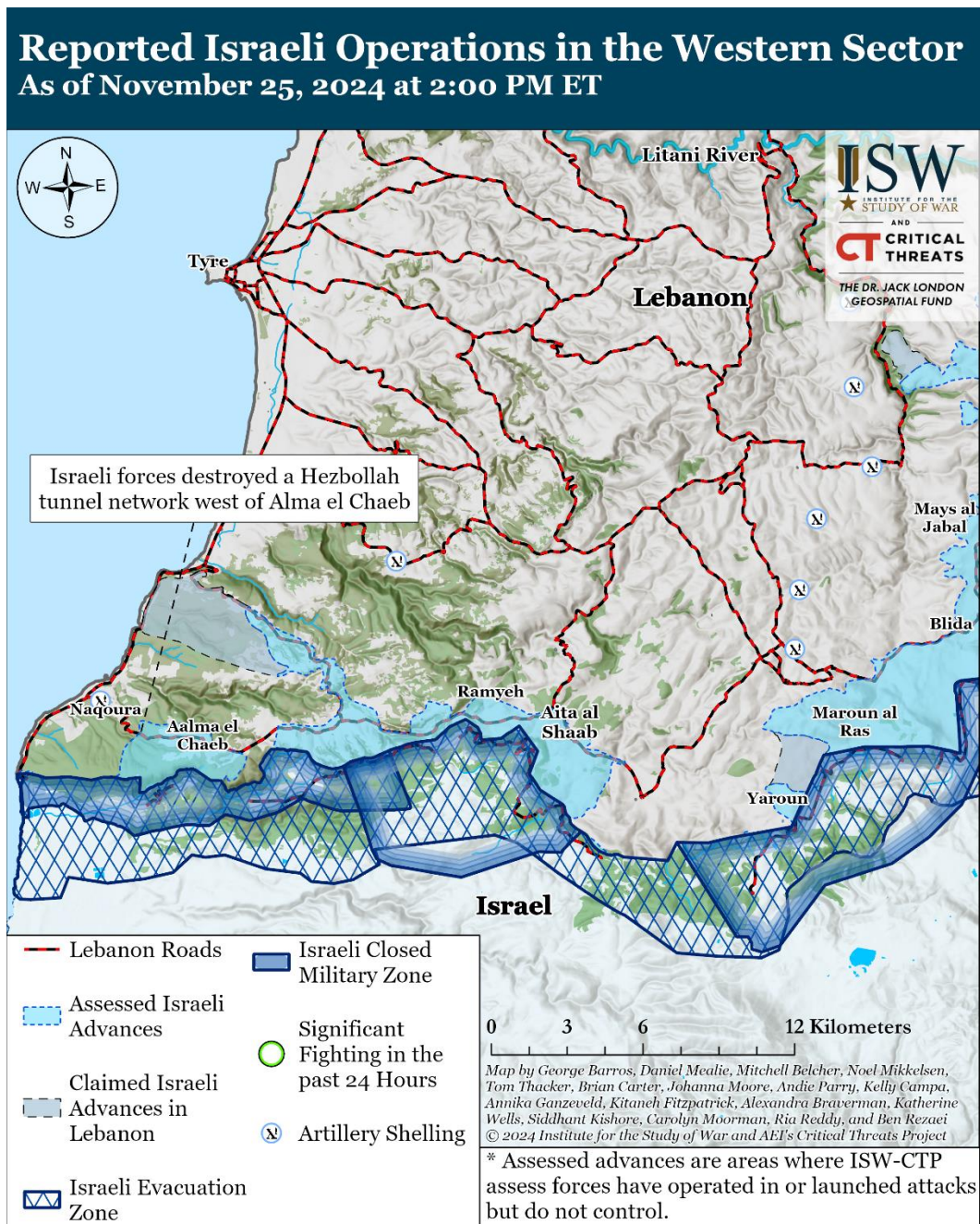
Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of November 25, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Israeli forces have continued clearing operations across southwestern Lebanon since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on November 24. The IDF 91st Division located various Hezbollah weapons and rocket launchers that Hezbollah fighters had prepared to fire into the Galilee.[39]

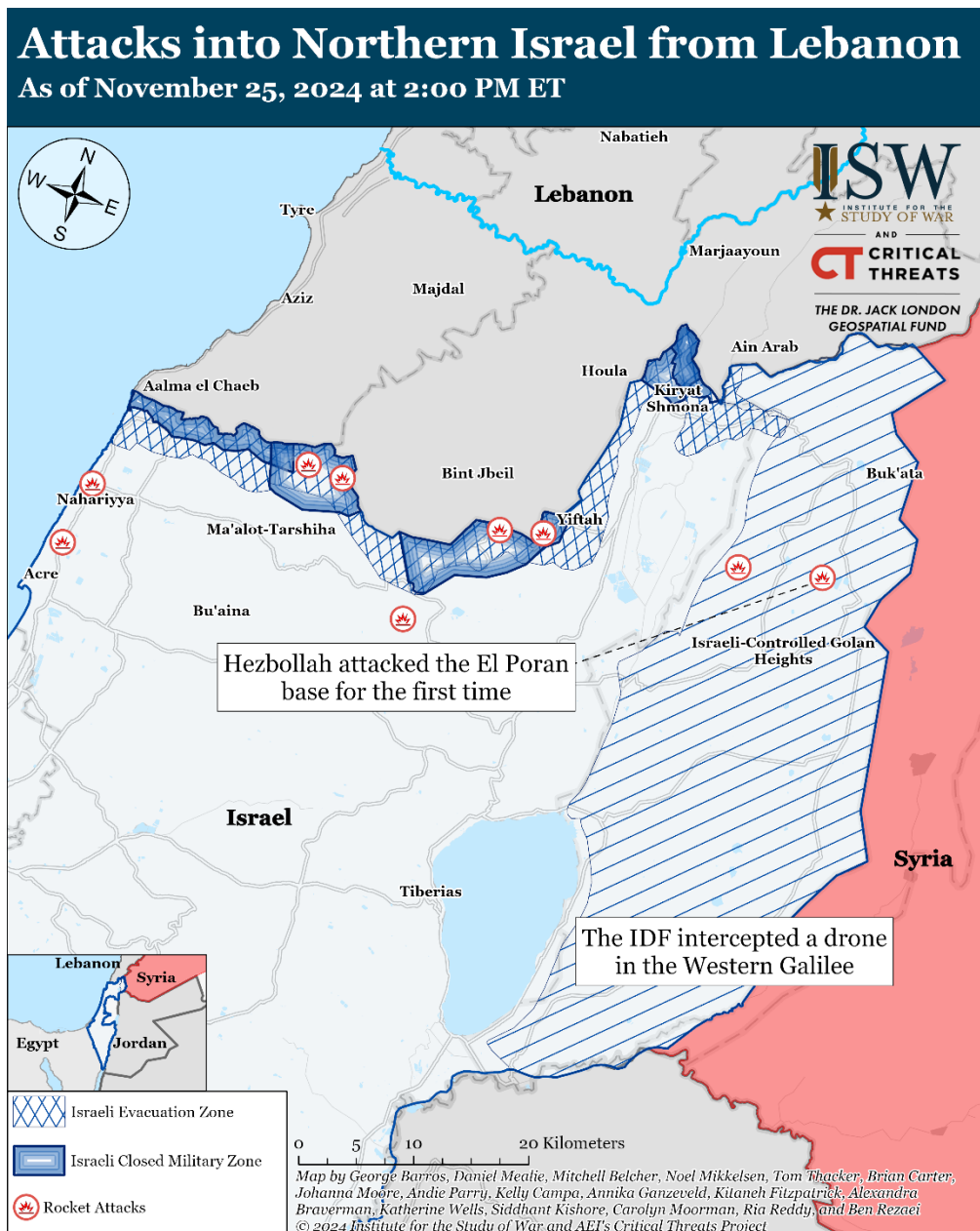
Hezbollah has continued attacks on Israeli forces in Chama since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 24. Hezbollah claimed a one-way drone attack on Israeli forces in Chama.[40] Hezbollah also fired an anti-tank weapon at an Israeli tank west of Chama.[41]

Geolocated footage posted on November 25 showed Israeli forces destroying a Hezbollah tunnel network west of Alma el Chaeb.[42]



Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least 13 attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 24.[43] Hezbollah claimed that it conducted a rocket attack targeting the El Poran base in the Golan Heights for the first time.[44] Hezbollah also launched rockets targeting the IDF's Sharaga base north of Acre.[45] The IDF also intercepted a drone in the Western Galilee that Hezbollah launched from Lebanon.[46]

The IDF conducted airstrikes targeting Hezbollah supply routes along the Syrian-Lebanese border on November 25.[47] The IDF confirmed that this was part of its interdiction campaign against Hezbollah's Unit 4400, which is responsible for Iranian arms shipments into Lebanon.[48] Local Syrian sources reported that IDF airstrikes targeted five border crossings in the al Qusayr area in Syria, which is adjacent to northeastern Lebanon.[49]



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has reduced its rate of attacks targeting Israel in recent days, likely to try to prevent an Israeli attack on Iraq. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed an average of .83 attacks per day between November 19 and 24, compared to an average of 2.67 attacks per day between November 13 and 18.[50] An Iraqi OSINT account claimed that Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba has “refused to stand down” and has continued to attack Israel.[51] Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba and Kataib Hezbollah previously “fiercely resisted” orders from Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani to suspend attacks targeting US forces in Iraq in late January 2024.[52]

The lower rate of attacks follows recent warnings from the United States and Israel that the IDF may strike targets in Iraq if Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continue to attack Israel.[53] Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Gideon Saar recently wrote a letter to the president of the UN Security Council on November 18, in which he emphasized Israel’s right to defend itself against Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks.[54] Saar wrote this letter in response to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq increasing its rate of attacks targeting Israel by nearly 150 percent between September and October 2024. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani subsequently ordered the Iraqi Security Forces on November 19 to confront any armed group that attempts to launch an attack from Iraqi territory.[55] It is unclear whether pressure from the Sudani administration on Iranian-backed Iraqi militias caused the decrease in militia attacks, or whether the Islamic Resistance in Iraq voluntarily reduced its rate of attacks targeting Israel.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq conducted two drone attacks targeting an unspecified “vital target” and an unspecified military target in southern Israel on November 24.[56]

The IDF detected a drone that crossed into Israeli territory “from the east” on November 25.[57] The drone fell in an open area in the Golan Heights, causing no casualties. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has not claimed an attack targeting the Golan Heights or northern Israel at the time of this writing.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi traveled to Oslo, Norway, on November 25 to discuss bilateral relations and international developments.[58] The Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry has not provided details about Ravanchi's visit to Norway but denied that his visit is related to upcoming nuclear talks between Iran and the E3 in Geneva on November 29.[59]

Ravanchi is scheduled to visit Geneva on November 29 to meet with senior E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) diplomats to discuss Iran's nuclear program, nuclear negotiations, and recent EU sanctions on Iranian aviation and shipping companies.[60] Ravanchi was part of the Iranian nuclear negotiating team under former President Hassan Rouhani that helped conclude the 2015 nuclear deal.[61] The visit comes after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors passed the E3 censure resolution against Iran on November 21.[62] Iran is reportedly

activating 5,000 centrifuges in response.[63] Iranian media affiliated with Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani criticized the upcoming nuclear negotiations in Geneva as “only for the benefit of Europe.” [64] Shamkhani was an obstacle to reaching the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 and reviving it after 2018.[65] This suggests ongoing internal divisions within Iranian leadership over Iran’s nuclear doctrine and negotiations.[66]

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Ground Forces and Azerbaijani Land Forces started a joint four-day special operations forces exercise near Aslanduz city, Ardabil Province, Iran, near the Iranian-Azerbaijan border on November 24.[67] Iranian and Azerbaijani forces have held four joint military exercises this year while also holding high-level defense official meetings.[68]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi appointed Ali Reza Bigdeli as the Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan on November 24.[69] Bigdeli replaced Hassan Kazemi Qomi, who served in the role since December 2022.[70] Bigdeli previously served as deputy foreign affairs minister for consular affairs.[71] Bigdeli’s appointment comes amid an uptick in anti-regime militancy in southeastern Iran since December 2023.

Iranian Economic Affairs and Finance Minister Abdol Nasser Hemmati highlighted foreign investment opportunities in Iran during the World Investment Conference on November 25.[72] Hemmati highlighted Iran’s abundant oil and gas reserves and emphasized that Iran can play a “key role” in strengthening global supply chains. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian previously stated in September 2024 that Iran requires over \$100 billion in foreign investment in order to achieve its target of eight percent annual economic growth.



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