

Iran Update



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November 3, 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.

The Israeli Defense Minister emphasized that Iran is “pouring everything [it] can” into the West Bank, indicating that Iran will very likely attempt to pursue a different strategy when rebuilding Palestinian militias to fight Israel again.[1] Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that Iran is looking for additional routes to destabilize Israel and incite terrorism, particularly utilizing the West Bank, due to the IDF's degradation of Iran's Axis of Resistance. Iran and Hamas have observed the military degradation of Hamas' units in the Gaza Strip. Hamas, however, is likely trying to reconstitute regardless of how badly the IDF defeated it as defeat is a temporary condition.[2] It does not follow that Iran and Hamas will decide to rebuild Hamas and other Palestinian militias in the same way again. Iran and Hamas have almost certainly learned many lessons from the October 7 War, including the difficulty of rearming and rebuilding militias in an area that can be easily isolated, such as the Gaza Strip. Hamas' severe degradation in the Gaza Strip and the difficulty in rebuilding Hamas' military wing isolated there could cause Iran and Hamas to redouble their efforts to strengthen Hamas and Palestinian military organizations elsewhere, including in the West Bank. Iran has increased its efforts to smuggle weapons and other materiel into the West Bank in recent years.[3] Iran's efforts have so far had only limited success.

The IDF captured a Syrian man who was collecting intelligence on Israeli border arrangements during a ground raid in southern Syria. This Iranian-led intelligence effort is likely an attempt to gather information on Israeli border security that Iranian-backed militias could use to undertake small-scale infiltrations into the Golan Heights.[4] The IDF said on November 3 that the Egoz Unit captured Ali Suleiman al Asi in Saida, Daraa Province, in recent months.[5] The IDF said that al Asi collected intelligence on Israeli operations along the Syrian border with the Golan Heights for “future terror activity” on behalf of Iran.[6] The IDF “closely monitor[ed]” al Asi before his capture.[7] The IDF did not specify when the raids took place, but Israeli special operations forces (SOF) have conducted numerous covert raids into Lebanon to

disrupt Hezbollah border infrastructure since October 2023.[8] The IDF said that Aadi's capture prevented a future attack and exposed Iranian attempts to gather intelligence on the Syria-Golan Heights border.[9]

Iran's intelligence collection about Israeli border movements on the Syrian-Golan Heights border is consistent with previous Iranian-backed efforts to gather intelligence to inform future ground attacks. Hamas undertook similar intelligence-gathering exercises ahead of the October 7 attacks.[10] Hezbollah observers on the Israel-Lebanon border likely monitored Israeli border patrols and movements in planning Hezbollah's ground infiltration into Israel.[11] The intelligence collection effort on the Syrian border could support future ground attacks or small-scale incursions, including the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel needs to push Hezbollah north of the Litani River "with or without an agreement" to achieve Israel's stated war aims.[12] Israel's stated war aim is to return residents of northern Israel to their homes under safe conditions.[13] Current Israeli operations in southern Lebanon are unlikely to achieve these war aims, though it does not follow that future Israeli operations will fail to achieve the Israeli objectives. Netanyahu made these remarks during a visit to the Israel-Lebanon border on November 3 to meet with IDF commanders.[14] Israel has designed its current ground operations to dismantle border infrastructure and prevent Hezbollah from conducting direct fire and ground attacks into Israel.[15] These operations do not seek to physically push Hezbollah fighters north of the Litani River and have not done so.

Israel is currently engaged in indirect negotiations with Hezbollah to obtain a ceasefire deal that may require Hezbollah military forces to withdraw north of the Litani.[16] The language of the deal from a recently leaked draft stipulates that Lebanese army "forces, infrastructure and weapons will be the only armed groups and assets deployed" south of the Litani River following the ceasefire.[17] It is unclear if Hezbollah will accept a deal that would call for its forces to move north. Hezbollah has not fulfilled its obligations under UNSC Resolution 1701, which required its forces to withdraw from areas south of the Litani River. The implementation of a large-scale Hezbollah withdrawal is extremely complicated, particularly given that many Hezbollah fighters were born and raised in the area that they would then need to leave.

UK-based Saudi outlet Elaph reported that Israel warned the Iraqi government that if Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continue to attack Israel from Iraqi territory, Israel may strike predetermined targets in Iraq.[18] Unspecified Israeli sources stated that the IDF has identified more than thirty "legitimate targets" in Iraq should Israel decide to launch an attack against the militias. Unspecified Israeli sources told Axios on October 31 that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias may attack Israel in response to Israel's recent strikes on Iran using a large volume of drones and ballistic missiles in the coming days.[19] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has increased its rate of attacks, in particular drone attacks, targeting Israel since mid-September 2024.[20] CTP-ISW recorded that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq increased its rate of attacks by approximately 106 percent between September and October 2024.[21]

Unspecified military officials told Elaph that Israel and the United States have been using satellites to monitor Iranian attempts to transfer ballistic missiles and other unspecified but related equipment

from Iran to Iraqi territory.[22] Iran began supplying Iranian-backed Iraqi militias with short-range ballistic missiles, including Zelzal, Fateh-110, and Zolfaghar missiles, in 2018, but the militias have not used ballistic missiles to attack Israel in the October 7 War thus far.[23]

The United States warned Iran against launching another attack on Israel in retaliation for Israel's strikes into Iran on October 25 because the United States would not be able to restrain Israel's response.[24] An anonymous US official told Axios that the United States sent this message to Tehran through the Swiss diplomats, adding that the United States cannot confirm that Israel's next attack will be as "calibrated and targeted" as before. The Iranian regime is continuing to signal that it will respond to the recent Israel Defense Forces (IDF) strikes into Iran on October 25, although the regime does not appear to have decided how it will respond.[25]

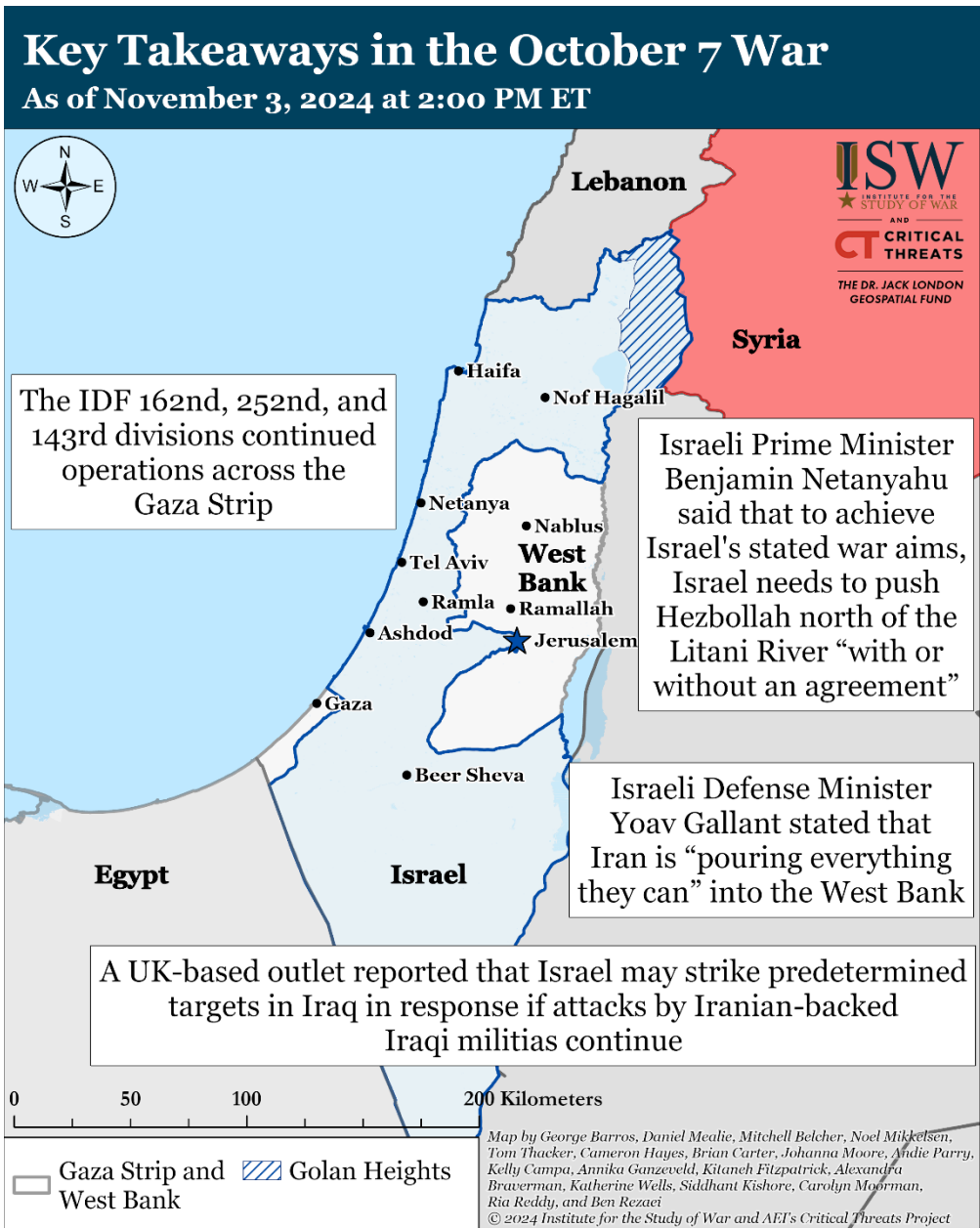
US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that B-52 strategic bombers arrived in the Middle East on November 3.[26] This is part of a larger US military effort to increase its presence in the Middle East ahead of the departure of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* carrier strike group from the region in the next few months.[27]

US CENTCOM Commander General Michael Kurilla met with IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzl Halevi in Israel between November 2 and November 3.[28] The IDF stated that the assessment focused on joint preparations against regional threats, especially against threats from Iran. Kurilla toured the US THAAD missile defense system battery during his trip to Israel.

Key Takeaways:

- **West Bank:** The Israeli Defense Minister emphasized that Iran is "pouring everything [it] can" into the West Bank, indicating that Iran will very likely attempt to pursue a different strategy when rebuilding Hamas to fight Israel again.
- **Syria:** The IDF captured a Syrian man who was collecting intelligence on Israeli border arrangements during a ground raid in southern Syria. This Iranian-led intelligence effort is likely an attempt to gather information on Israeli border security that Iranian-backed militias could use to undertake small-scale infiltrations into the Golan Heights.
- **Israeli Ground Operations in Lebanon:** The Israeli prime minister stated that Israel needs to push Hezbollah north of the Litani River "with or without an agreement" to achieve Israel's stated war aims, which is to return residents of northern Israel to their homes under safe conditions. Current Israeli operations in southern Lebanon are unlikely to achieve these war aims, though it does not follow that future Israeli operations will fail to achieve the Israeli objectives
- **Iranian Retaliation against Israel:** UK-based Saudi outlet Elaph reported that Israel warned the Iraqi government that if Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continue to attack Israel from Iraqi territory, Israel may strike predetermined targets in Iraq.

- **US Diplomatic Efforts:** The United States warned Iran against launching another attack on Israel in retaliation for Israel’s strikes into Iran on October 25 because the United States will not be able to restrain Israel’s response.
- **US Posture in the Middle East:** US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that B-52 strategic bombers arrived in the Middle East on November 3. US CENTCOM Commander General Michael Kurilla met with IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi in Israel between November 2 and November 3.
- **Saudi Arabia:** The Islamic Resistance in the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, an Iranian-backed militia claiming to operate in Saudi Arabia, claimed its second attack since announcing its existence.



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 announced on November 3 that the IDF Air Force struck and killed the assistant to the Hamas Nukhba commander in the Khan Younis Brigade in the southern Gaza Strip sometime in the past week.^[29] The IDF said Raafat Ibrahim Mahmoud Aqdih participated in the attack in Nir Oz on October 7.^[30]

The IDF 162nd Brigade continued clearing operations near Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on November 3. Israeli forces killed dozens of Palestinian fighters in Jabalia on November 3.^[31] The IDF 900th Infantry Brigade directed an airstrike targeting a militia cell that posed a threat to Israeli forces.^[32] Unspecified fighters detonated an IED on the outskirts of Jabalia camp on October 2, killing two soldiers in the 401st Armored Brigade.^[33] The same incident wounded three other soldiers. Hamas separately fired a rocket-propelled grenade targeting an Israeli tank in northern Jabalia on October 2.^[34] The IDF said that Israeli forces have killed over 900 Palestinian militia fighters and detained over 700 Palestinians, including 300 confirmed militia members, since launching a new clearing operation into Jabalia refugee camp on October 6.^[35]

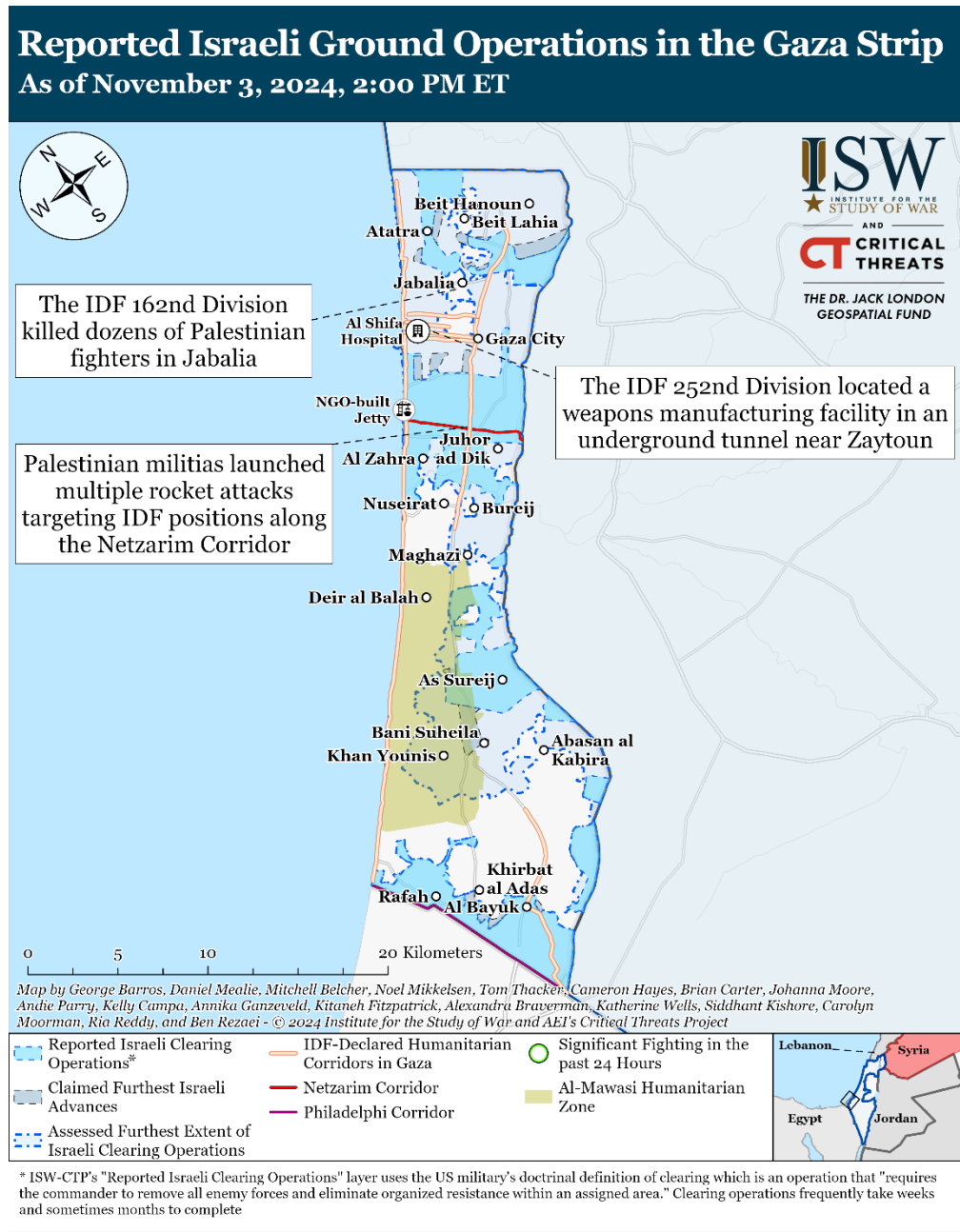
The IDF said that Israeli military police are investigating the death of an Israeli soldier after a grenade detonated on the night of November 1-2 in the northern Gaza Strip.^[36] The IDF did not specify if the incident was combat or non-combat-related, but the initiation of an investigation run by the military police suggests that the incident was not combat-related.

Palestinian fighters seriously wounded a combat engineering officer from the 401st Armored Brigade in the northern Gaza Strip on November 3.^[37]

The IDF 252nd Division continued operations in the central Gaza Strip on November 3. Israeli forces destroyed weapons depots and killed Palestinian fighter cells that posed a threat to Israeli forces.^[38] Israeli forces also identified and destroyed a weapons manufacturing facility in an underground tunnel near Zaytoun, southern Gaza City.^[39] The tunnel contained lathes and hundreds of pieces used to manufacture rockets, shells, and hand grenades.^[40] Israeli forces also found diving equipment intended to use for the infiltration of Israel by sea. Israeli forces located several long-term living quarters in the tunnel. These living quarters contained an oven, cooking utensils, food, beds, and desks.^[41]

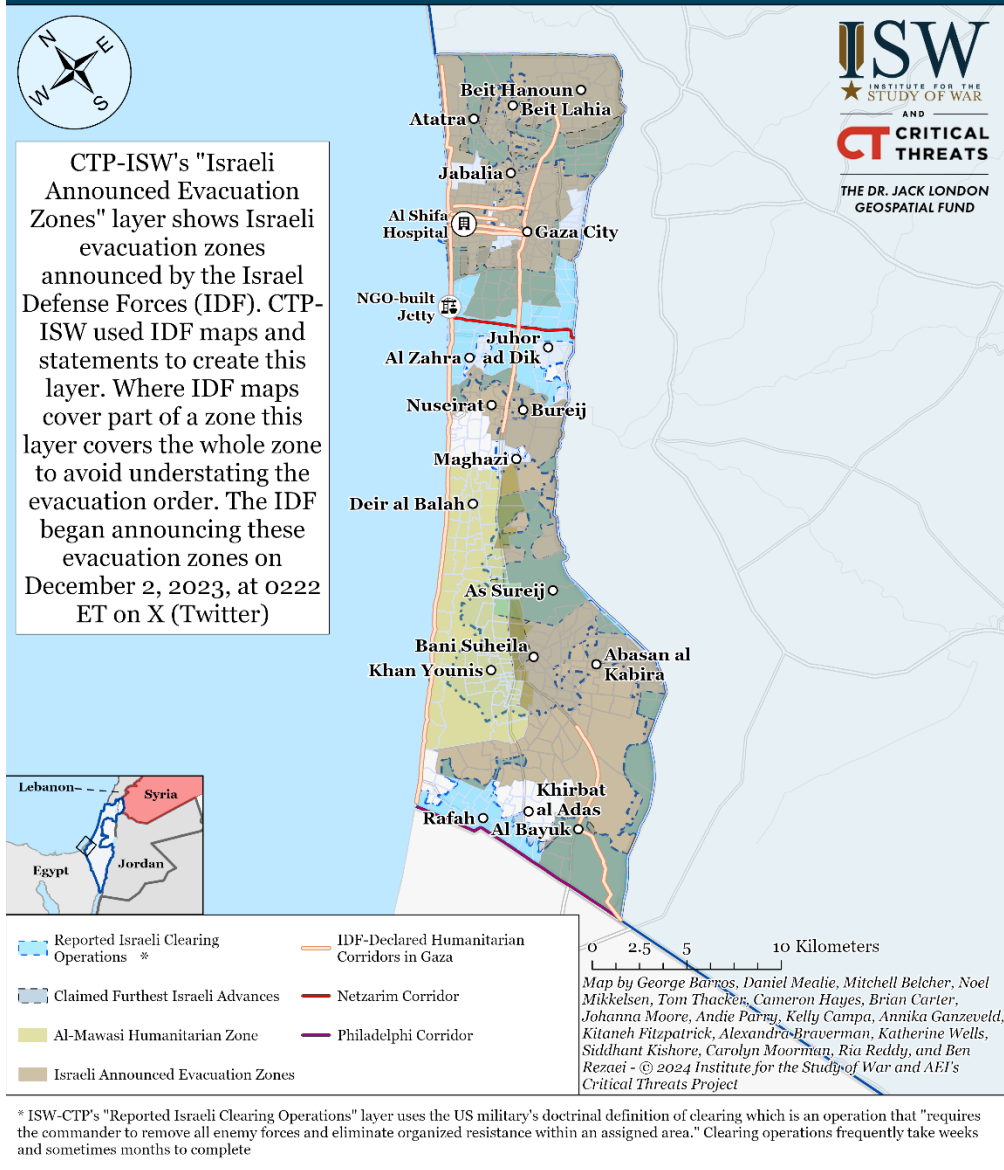
Multiple Palestinian militias fired rockets targeting Israeli positions near the Netzarim Corridor since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 2.^[42]

The IDF 143rd Division continued to operate in the southern Gaza Strip on November 3, locating weapons and killing Palestinian fighters.^[43] Israeli forces destroyed weapons depots and killed fighter cells that posed a threat to Israeli forces.^[44]



Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

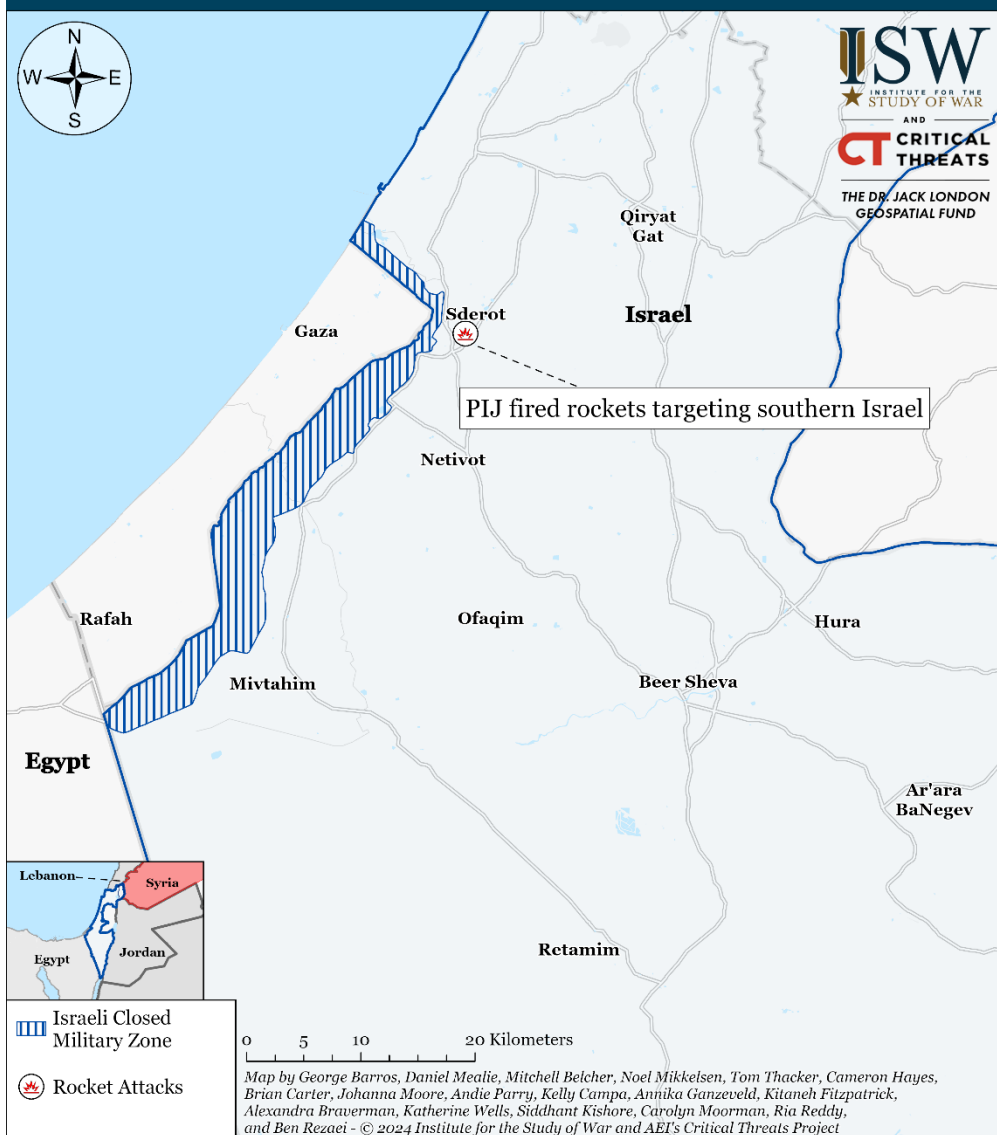
As of November 3, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired rockets targeting Sderot, Meflasim, and other settlements in southern Israel on October 2.[45] The IDF identified two rockets launched from the northern Gaza Strip that fell into open areas.[46]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of November 3, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



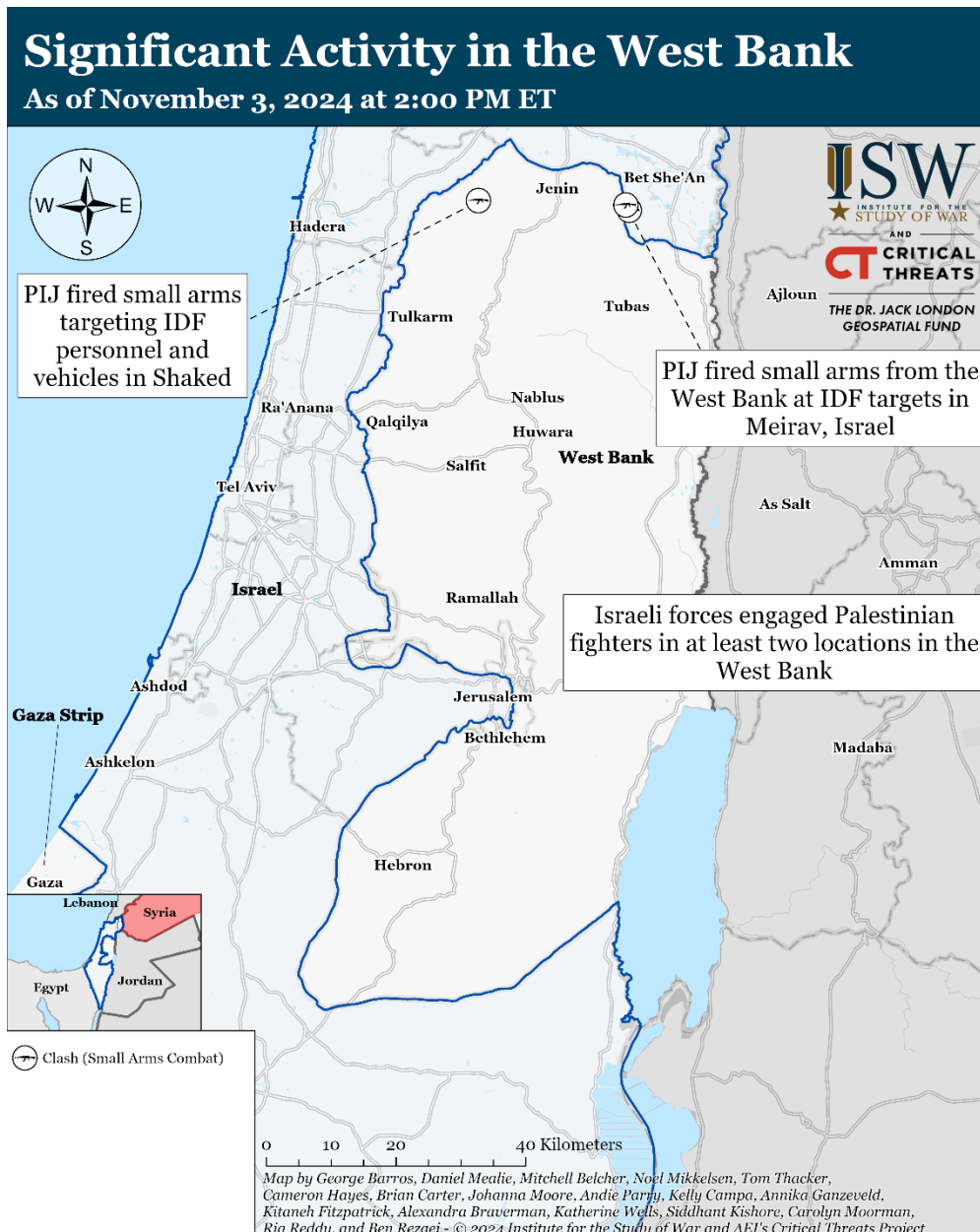
The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF continued the third phase of the polio vaccination campaign in the northern Gaza Strip on November 2, vaccinating over 55,000 children.^[47] The WHO postponed the third and final phase of the campaign on October 23 due to ongoing Israeli operations in the north and the subsequent evacuation of Palestinians from the area.^[48] The WHO administered the first doses to Palestinian children across the Gaza Strip in September 2024 and the second doses to children in the central and southern Strip in October.^[49] The WHO and UNICEF claimed on November 1 that their original goal of administering the second dose to around 119,000 children in the north is “now unlikely” due to access constraints, the security situation, and constant population movement.^[50] The WHO separately reported that an Israeli airstrike on a health care center in Gaza City on Saturday where the vaccination campaign was ongoing injured six people.^[51] The IDF said its initial review determined that the IDF Air Force did not strike in the area at the specified time.

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in at least two locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on November 2.^[52] PIJ fired small arms from the West Bank at IDF targets in Meirav, Israel, on the border of Israel and the West Bank.^[53] PIJ also fired small arms targeting IDF targets in Jalbun, in the West Bank.^[54] Jalbun, in the West Bank, and Meirav, in northern Israel, share a border. PIJ fired small arms targeting Israeli forces and vehicles near the Shaked settlement in the West Bank in two separate instances on November 3.^[55]



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 Army Radio reported that senior Hezbollah naval official Imad Amhaz surrendered without resistance to Israeli special forces in central Lebanon on November 1.^[56] Israeli naval special operations forces reportedly captured Amhaz in Batroun, central Lebanon, on November 1 to gather intelligence on Hezbollah's naval activities.^[57] Israeli intelligence officials had reportedly monitored Amhaz for a long time.^[58] The IDF did not intend to take responsibility for the operation but decided to claim the raid after Lebanese media published a video of the operation.^[59]

The IDF Air Force killed the commander of the Nasr Unit's missile and rocket unit in an airstrike in Jouaiyaa, southern Lebanon, on November 3.^[60] The IDF said that Jafar Khader Faour was responsible for Hezbollah's fire into northern Israel from the Nasr Unit's area of responsibility in southeastern Lebanon.^[61] Faour gave the order to fire Hezbollah's first projectiles of its year-long campaign into Israel on October 8, 2023, and was responsible for numerous attacks that killed Israeli citizens, including in Majdal Shams, Kibbutz Ortal, and, most recently, Metula.^[62] A Nasr Unit drone unit commander was also killed in the same strike.^[63]

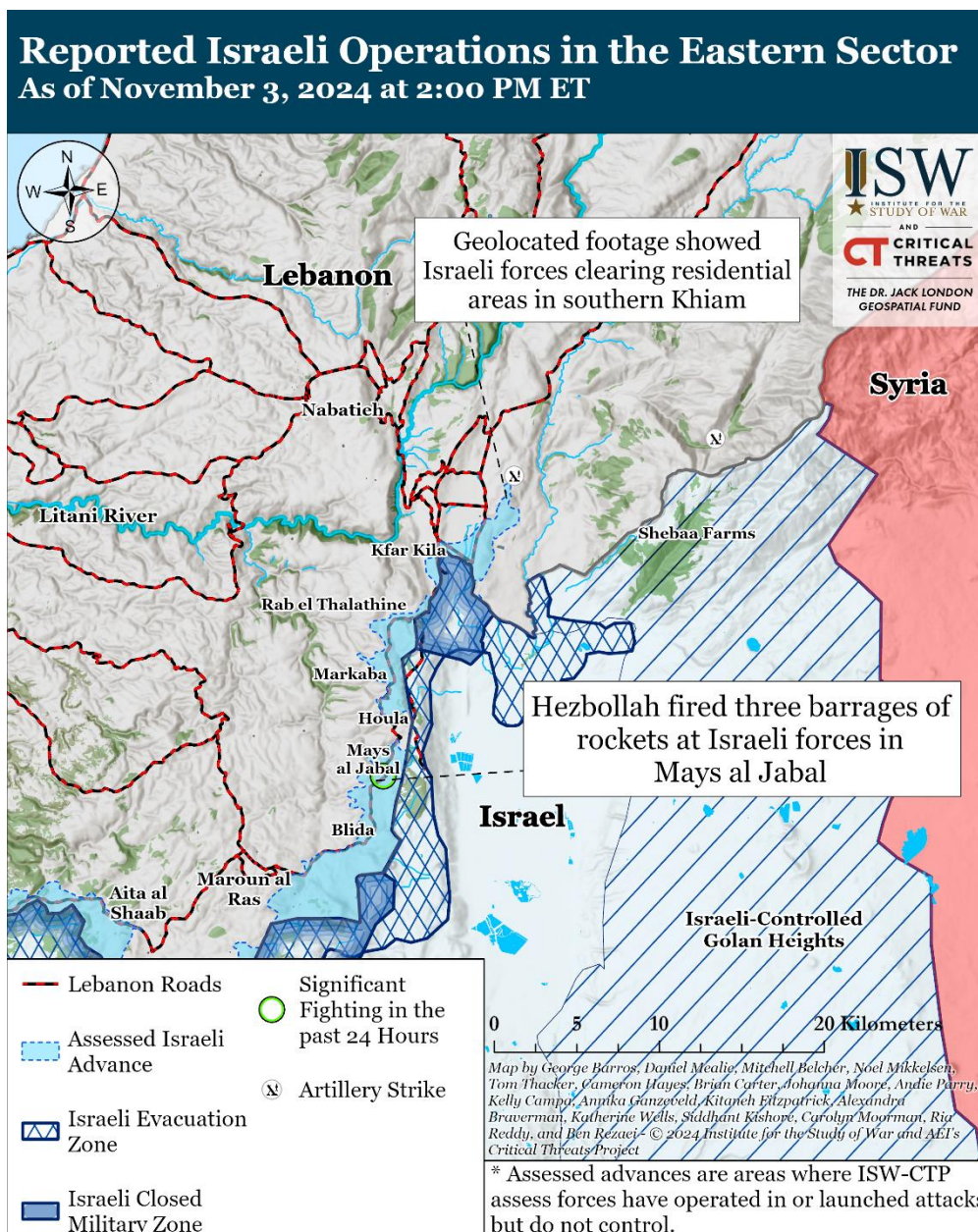
The IDF Air Force killed a Hezbollah drone specialist from Unit 127 on November 3.^[64] Unit 127 is responsible for Hezbollah's drone production, maintenance, and operations.^[65] The IDF said that Ali Barakat worked in Hezbollah's Unit 127 for over 10 years and executed dozens of drone attacks into Israeli territory.^[66] Barakat also developed drones and cruise missiles for Hezbollah.^[67] It is unclear if Barakat was killed in the same airstrike as Faour. The IDF has targeted members of Unit 127 with increasing frequency since Hezbollah's October 13 attack on an IDF base in Binyamina, Israel, that killed four Israeli soldiers.^[68]

The IDF 91st Division and Air Force killed the commander of Hezbollah's local unit in Khiam unit on November 3.^[69] The IDF killed Farouk Amin al Ashi, who was responsible for conducting numerous attacks targeting the Galilee panhandle from Khiam.^[70] The IDF also killed a company commander in Khiam's Radwan SOF unit.^[71]

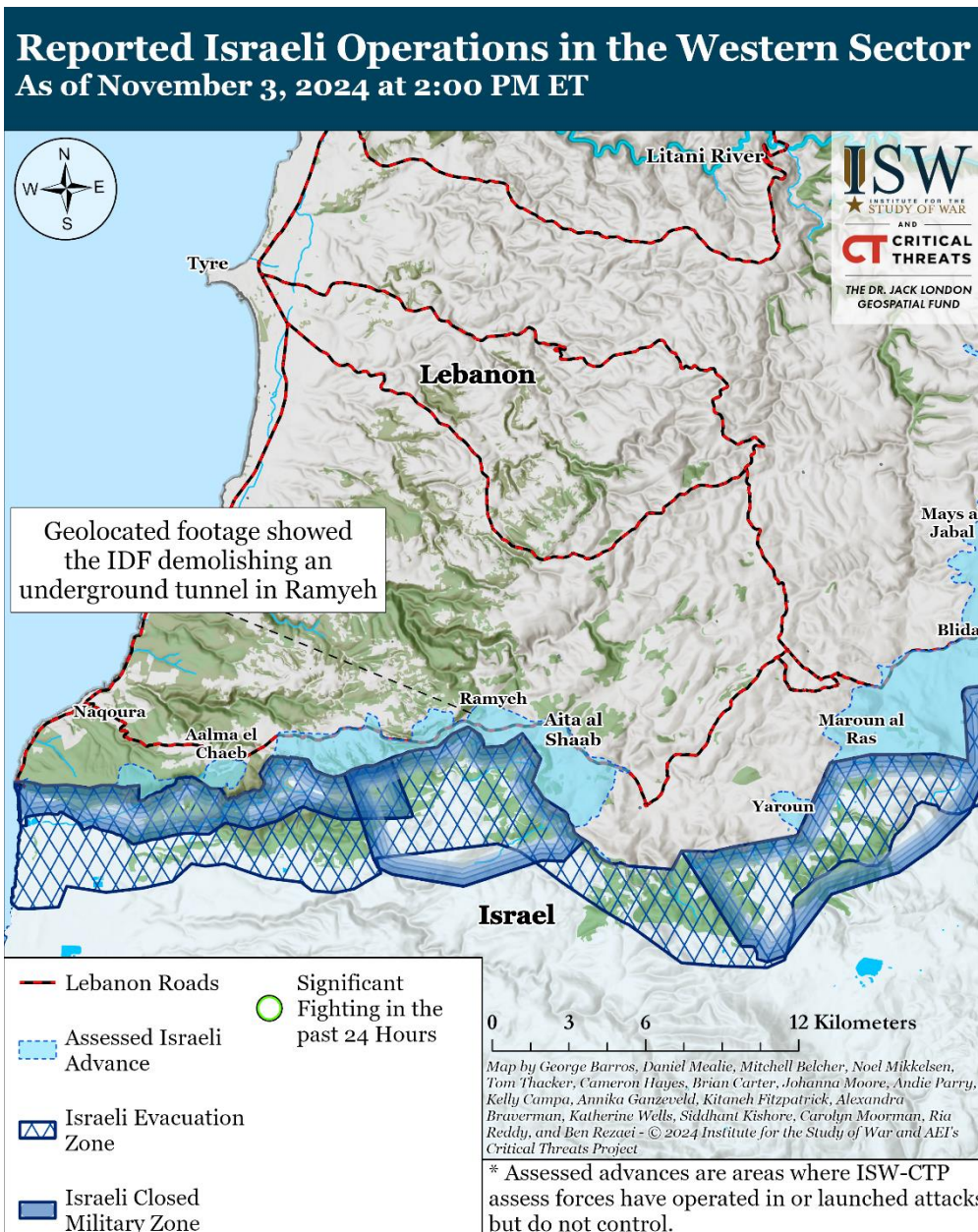
Israeli forces continued ground operations in Khiam. Geolocated footage posted by IDF reservist and Knesset member Yitzik Kroizer on November 2 showed Israeli forces clearing residential areas in southern Khiam.^[72] Lebanese sources reported that Israeli forces conducted clearing operations in Khiam amid heavy artillery shelling in the area on November 3.^[73]

The IDF 91st Division continued operations in southeastern Lebanon on November 3.^[74] The IDF 769th Territorial Brigade raided several buildings overnight and located rockets, rocket launchers, and small arms—including rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikov rifles—in a residential house.^[75] Hezbollah fighters had barricaded themselves in the building.^[76] Israeli forces also located tactical equipment, combat gear, and intelligence documents in the same house.^[77] The 769th Territorial Brigade killed Hezbollah fighters in airstrikes and ground encounters and destroyed other weapons storage facilities in the area.^[78]

Hezbollah fired three barrages of rockets targeting Israeli forces in Mays al Jabal.^[79]

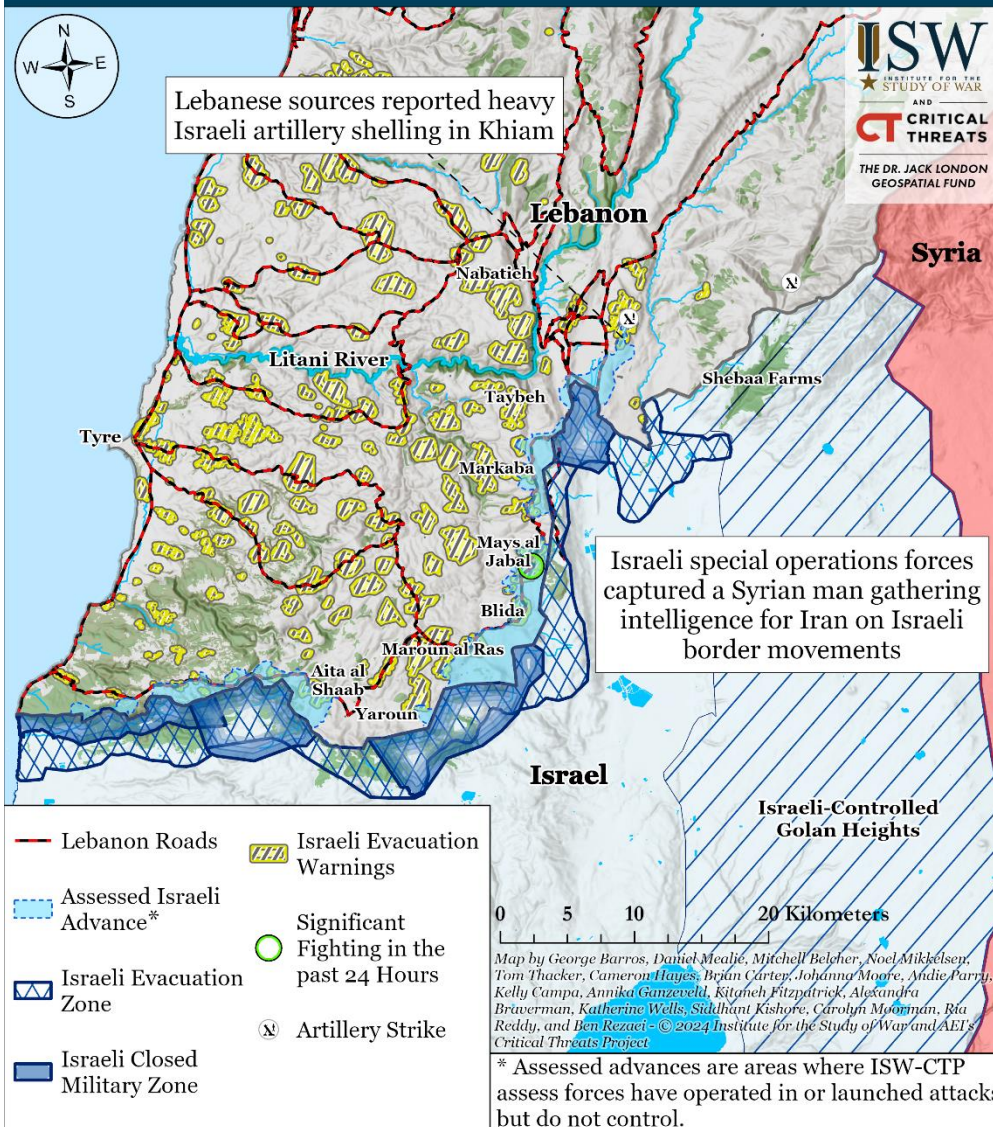


The IDF 36th Division continued operations in southern Lebanon on November 3.^[80] The 36th Division engaged Hezbollah and Radwan SOF fighters and killed them in close-quarters combat and airstrikes.^[81] The IDF naval special operations unit Shayetet 13, Yahalom combat engineers, and Oketz canine unit raided a compound in southern Lebanon that Hezbollah used to plan and conduct infiltration attacks.^[82] Israeli forces engaged and killed Hezbollah fighters in a tunnel at the compound.^[83] Israeli forces located dozens of weapons, including Kalashnikov rifles, anti-tank guided missiles, surface-to-air missiles, mortars, and a rocket launcher aimed to fire at northern Israel.^[84] Israeli forces demolished the compound.^[85] Geolocated footage posted on November 3 showed the demolition of a tunnel underneath a hill northwest of Ramyeh.^[86] It is unclear if this is the same underground infrastructure that Shayetet 13 and the Yahalom engineers raided.



Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

As of November 3, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

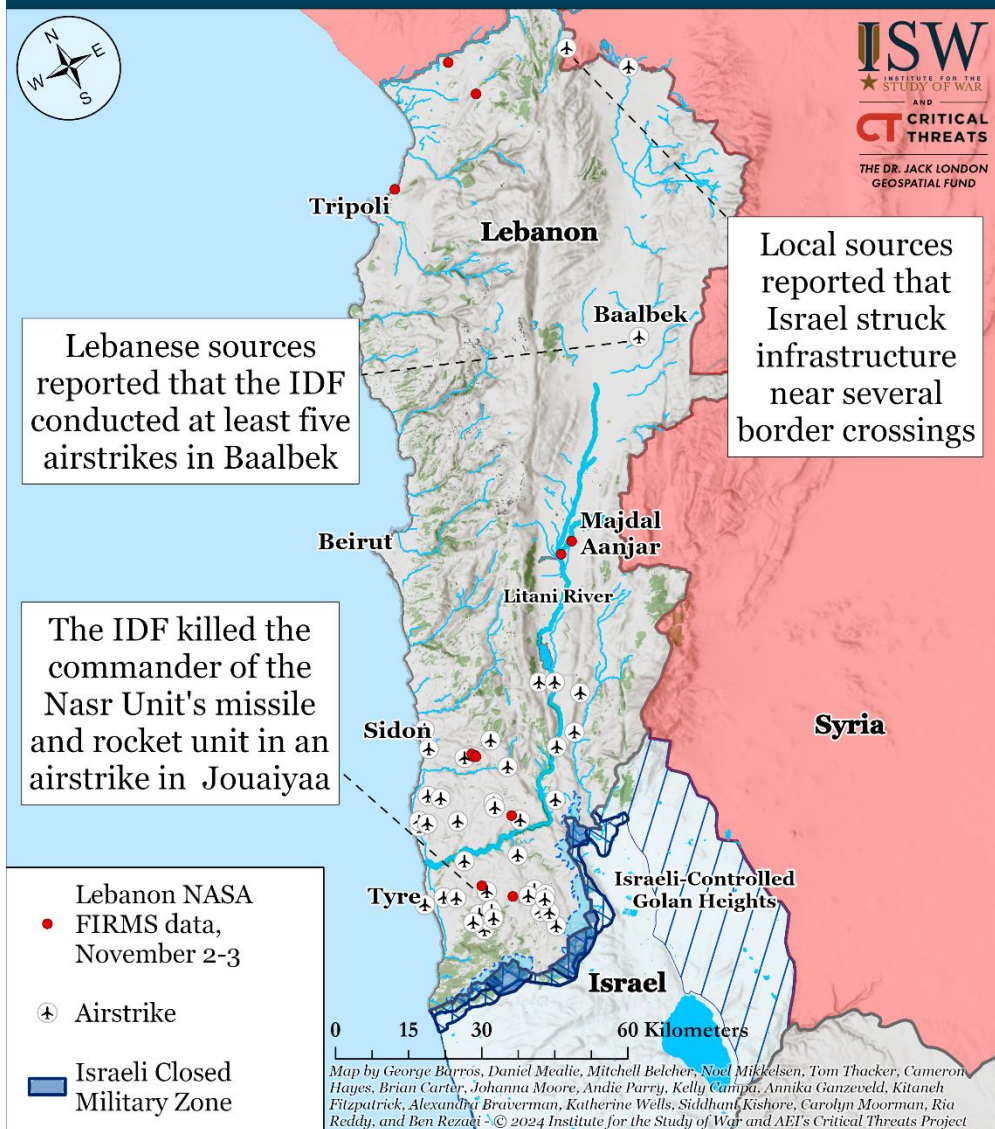


Local Lebanese and Syrian sources reported that Israel struck infrastructure near several border crossings between Syria and Lebanon on November 2. The IDF struck a road on the Syrian side of the Akum crossing in northern Lebanon.[87] Lebanese sources also reported that the IDF conducted an airstrike targeting the Jarmash-Qald al Sabaa crossing between Lebanon and Syria.[88] The IDF Air Force has consistently struck targets near the Lebanon-Syria border to interdict Hezbollah weapon transfers and degrade infrastructure affiliated with Unit 4400, which is responsible for the transfer of funds and weapons from Iran to Hezbollah.[89]

Lebanese sources reported that the IDF conducted five airstrikes targeting sites in Baalbek and Douris on November 3.[90] The IDF has recently targeted sites in Baalbek to degrade Unit 4400's infrastructure in the area.[91]

Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon

As of November 3, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

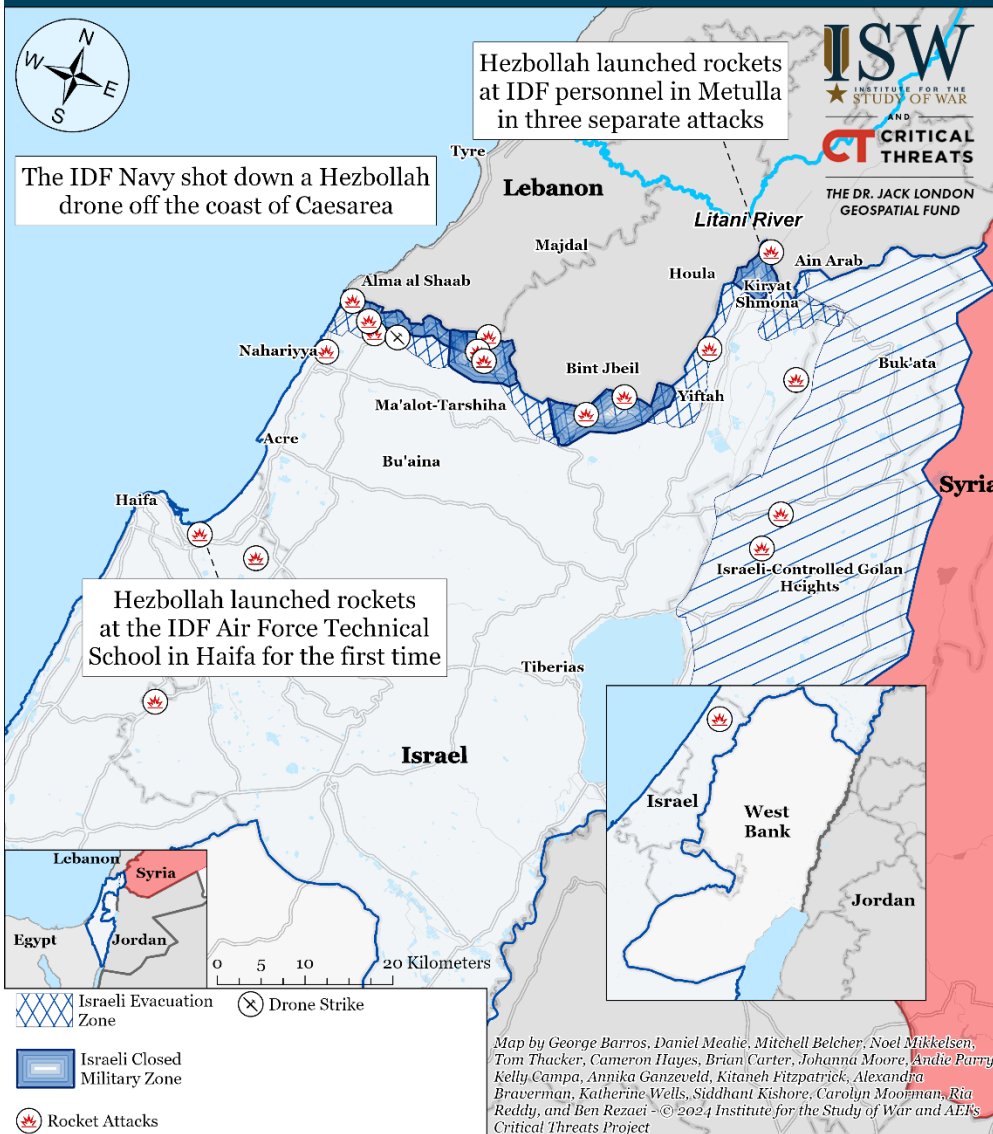


This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on November 2 to 2:00pm ET on November 3. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah has conducted at least twenty-four attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 2.[92] Hezbollah launched rockets targeting Israeli forces in Metula in three separate attacks on November 3.[93] Hezbollah launched rockets targeting the Israeli Air Force Technical School in Haifa for the first time on November 3.[94] The IDF reported that a Hezbollah drone it failed to intercept caused a fire in the Wadi Ara area in northern Israel.[95] An IDF Navy boat separately shot down a Hezbollah drone off the coast of Caesarea before it entered Israeli airspace.[96] Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vacation home is in Caesarea, and Hezbollah previously targeted the home on October 19.[97] The IDF estimated that Hezbollah launched over 100 rockets at Israel on the morning of November 3.[98]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of November 3, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has claimed three attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 2. The claims include the following:

- A drone attack targeting an unspecified "vital target" in the Golan Heights.[99]

- Two separate drone attacks targeting unspecified “vital targets” in the Jordan Valley.[100]

The IDF reported on November 3 that it identified a drone in the southern Golan Heights that did not cause any damage or casualties.[101] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent noted that the drone entered the Golan Heights airspace from Syria for ten minutes before likely crashing.[102]

The Islamic Resistance in the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, an Iranian-backed militia claiming to operate in Saudi Arabia, claimed that it launched a drone attack targeting an unspecified target in the Jordan Valley on October 31.[103] This is the second claim by this militia CTP-ISW has observed since it began operating in October 2024.[104]

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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