

Iran Update



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October 15, 2024, Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

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. 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.

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.

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.

Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem gave a speech detailing Hezbollah’s strategy and vision of the war on October 15.^[1] This was Qassem's third speech since Israel struck and killed Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah on September 27.^[2] Qassem has taken on Nasrallah’s role as the public face of the organization. Qassem may be among the candidates considered to replace Nasrallah given that he has formal seniority in the organization and has appeared as the public face of the group in these difficult circumstances.

Qassem dismissed Israeli claims that Hezbollah fighters are failing to defend against Israeli ground operations in southern Lebanon.^[3] Qassem said that Hezbollah’s organizational model and goals are not those of a regular standing army, but that the group instead

intends to rapidly attack and ambush Israeli forces when they enter Lebanese territory.[4] This suggests that Hezbollah decided to avoid becoming decisively engaged in an area defense along the border.[5] Qassem moreover claimed that Hezbollah has "regained" its operational strength, restored its organizational capabilities, and put in place alternatives for its command-and-control structure.[6] This suggests Hezbollah has reestablished operational control, though Qassem has significant motive to lie or exaggerate to present Hezbollah as a resilient organization to both its followers and its adversaries.

Israeli clearing operations have seized a significant amount of Hezbollah's Radwan SOF assets that the group would likely try to retain if it was able, thus indicating that Qassem is exaggerating the degree of Hezbollah's continued strength.[7] IDF officers have consistently remarked that their forces are engaging Hezbollah fighters from a far distance with medium-range weapons or that Hezbollah fighters have fled altogether, rather than decisively engaging IDF units.[8]

Qassem framed Hezbollah's war with Israel as existential and said that he believes the United States and Israel seek to shape Lebanon and "run it as they wish."[9] He assessed Israel is implementing a three-pronged plan: to strike Hezbollah's leadership and capabilities so that Hezbollah is unable to resist Israeli operations "to end Hezbollah's existence." [10] Qassem said that the final stage of Israel's plan is to shape Lebanon's government to "run it as [Israel wishes]" in collaboration with the United States.[11] The United States is considering pushing for the Lebanese Parliament to elect a president in the coming days, according to US officials speaking to Axios.[12] US officials reportedly believe that Hezbollah influence in the Lebanese political system can be reduced while the group's leadership is weak, and its forces are preoccupied with fighting the IDF.[13] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also addressed the Lebanese people directly, saying that Hezbollah is "weaker today than it has been for many years" and calling for the Lebanese people to "take back [their] country" from Hezbollah.[14]

Qassem's statements indicated that Israel's ground and air operations have not changed Hezbollah's willingness to negotiate a political settlement or ceasefire.[15] Qassem said that he has no faith that Israel will abide by an agreement with Hezbollah, or that international institutions can protect Lebanon from Israel.[16] He also indicated that Hezbollah leadership remains unwilling to agree to a separate deal that does not include an end to Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip.[17] Qassem said that Hezbollah rejected appeals from international mediators earlier this year that called for Hezbollah to remove its forces 10 kilometers from the Israel-Lebanon border.[18] Accounts from Israeli soldiers fighting in Lebanon suggest that most Hezbollah fighters have moved five to ten kilometers north of the border after Israeli ground operations began.[19] IDF commanders fighting in Lebanon acknowledged that the IDF's current operations are destroying Hezbollah's ability to conduct ground operations into Israel, but that other operations or diplomatic agreements will halt Hezbollah rocket fire into northern Israel.[20] Qassem noted that the only solution to return northern Israel's residents to their homes is a ceasefire but did not express faith in the plausibility of a negotiated settlement.[21] Such a ceasefire would presumably include a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, given Qassem's previous statements.

Qassem announced a new war "phase" designed to inflict high casualties on Israel.[22] He said that Hezbollah has altered its strategy to conduct attacks that can maximally "hurt the

enemy.”[23] Hezbollah and Israel have historically engaged in a “tit-for-tat” attack balance and escalation ladder, but that framework has degraded over the past several months.[24] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Hezbollah’s October 13 drone attack targeting an IDF base was likely part of an effort to impose costs on Israel as Hezbollah faces operational challenges in southern Lebanon.[25] These attacks also could have an outsized effect in the Israeli domestic political space as well, and Hezbollah may calculate that continued attacks on rear IDF bases that kill even small numbers of IDF soldiers will cause Israeli public support for the ground campaign in Lebanon to decline. Hezbollah’s October 13 attack demonstrates that Hezbollah can precisely target IDF rear positions in northern Israel at least intermittently. A similar attack on October 14 using three surface-to-surface missiles failed.[26]

Senior Israeli officials guaranteed senior American officials that Israel will target Iranian military and defense sites instead of nuclear or oil facilities in its retaliatory strike on Iran.[27] Unspecified US officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged not to target nuclear or oil facilities in a phone call with US President Joe Biden on October 9.[28] Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant made a similar promise to US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in recent days. Unspecified Israeli officials briefed on the planning process told the *New York Times* that Israel could target missile and drone launchers, missile and drone storage sites, military bases, or major government buildings.[29] The Israeli Prime Minister’s Office released a statement that Israel will “listen to the opinion of the United States” but ultimately will make its final decision based on Israeli national interests.[30] Unspecified officials told the *Washington Post* that Netanyahu softened his stance regarding the retaliation following the US decision to send a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system to Israel.[31] The US Defense Department announced that the initial components of the THAAD battery and an advance team of US military personnel arrived in Israel on October 14.[32]

A recent IDF investigation revealed the role that Hamas’ international and West Bank attack cells play in terrorist attacks targeting Israeli civilians. Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar ordered a return to terrorist attacks targeting Israel after he assumed control of the organization in Summer 2024.[33] Sinwar likely made this calculation given Hamas’ decreasing military capabilities during Summer 2024, as CTP-ISW has previously assessed. Hamas has historically used its capabilities--primarily rockets--to target Israeli civilians and impose costs on Israeli civilians for the actions of the Israeli state. An Israeli investigation into the Hamas’ attempted suicide attack in August 2024 revealed that Hamas used a Nablus attack cell to plan and conduct the attack in Tel Aviv, while a Hamas office in Turkey provided funding and training for the Nablus cell.[34] The IDF also confiscated two improvised explosive devices (IEDs), four kilograms of explosive materials, and 111,000 Israeli shekels, and detained several Hamas members from the Nablus cell. This underscores the role Hamas’ international and West Bank network plays in terrorist operations.[35] Positioning key Hamas facilitators overseas gives the group’s top financiers and trainers some level of protection against Israeli security services that these individuals would not have in the Gaza Strip or even in the West Bank.

The West Bank provides Hamas cells considerable advantages over the Gaza Strip for the planning and execution of attacks into Israel. The 700 km-long Israel-West Bank boundary consists of “hundreds” of breach points, according to a report by an Israeli Army Radio correspondent.[36] Hamas previously used one of these breach points in the Israel-West Bank boundary to carry out a shooting attack in Jaffa

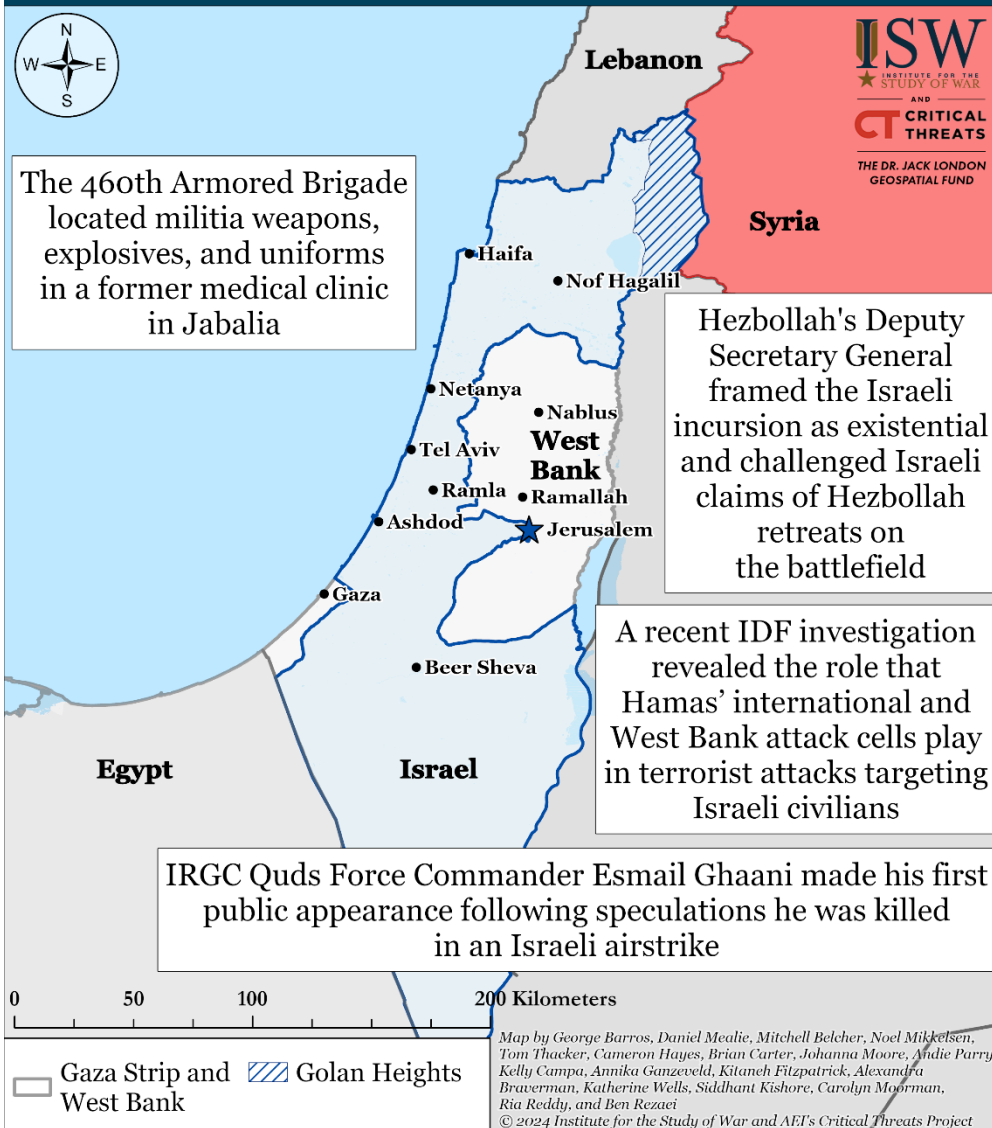
on October 11.[37] Entering Israel from the West Bank is also more logistically feasible for small attack teams, given that Israel has historically allowed some Palestinians to transit between the West Bank and Israel for work. The West Bank itself is also home to many Israelis in outlying and relatively isolated settlements that could be more exposed to larger attacks, should Hamas' capabilities in the West Bank expand.

Key Takeaways:

- **Hezbollah's View of the War:** Hezbollah's deputy secretary general framed Hezbollah's war with Israel as existential and said that he believes the United States and Israel seek to shape Lebanon and "run it as they wish." He also indicated that Hezbollah leadership remains unwilling to agree to a separate deal that does not include an end to Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip. Qassem did not express faith in the plausibility of a negotiated settlement.
- **Hezbollah Operations in Lebanon:** Hezbollah's deputy secretary general dismissed Israeli claims that Hezbollah fighters are failing to defend Lebanese territory, adding that the group intends to rapidly attack and ambush Israeli forces when they enter Lebanese territory. This suggests that Hezbollah decided to avoid becoming decisively engaged in an area defense along the border.
- **Israeli Operations in Lebanon:** Elements of a brigade assigned to the 210th IDF Division entered Lebanon. There are now elements of five IDF divisions in Lebanon.
- **Israeli Retaliation Against Iran:** Senior Israeli officials guaranteed senior American officials that Israel will target Iranian military and defense sites instead of nuclear or oil facilities in its retaliatory strike on Iran.
- **West Bank:** A recent IDF investigation revealed the role that Hamas' international and West Bank attack cells play in terrorist attacks targeting Israeli civilians.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of October 15, 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 162nd IDF Division continued clearing operations in Jabalia, northern Gaza Strip, on October 15. The IDF reported that the 401st Armored Brigade raided militia infrastructure sites, seized various weapons and explosives, and killed “dozens” of Palestinian fighters.[38] The 401st Armored Brigade also destroyed several tunnel shafts. The 460th Armored Brigade reported that

Palestinian fighters in a former UNRWA medical clinic fired at Israeli forces in Jabalia. Israeli forces cleared the facility and reported that Palestinian fighters had converted the UNRWA medical complex into a weapons storage and military position. The 460th Armored Brigade also directed an airstrike targeting a group of fighters who had attacked Israeli forces from the UNRWA facility.

Palestinian militias continued to engage against Israeli clearing operations in Jabalia since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on October 14. The National Resistance Brigades claimed its fighters engaged Israeli forces near al Faluja Cemetery, just east of the former UNRWA medical clinic.[39] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed its fighters fired a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at an Israeli Merkava tank near the Umm al Muminin Mosque in central Jabalia refugee camp.[40] PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades launched three separate mortar attacks targeting Israeli forces east of Jabalia refugee camp.[41]

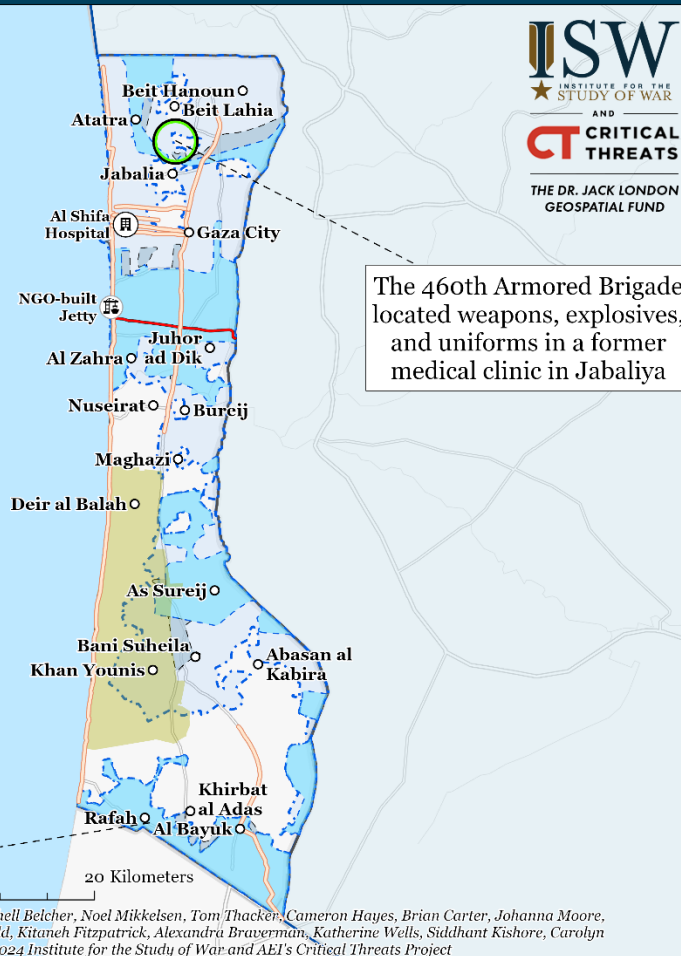
The United Nations reported on October 13 that approximately 50,000 Gazans have been displaced from Jabalia following Israeli evacuation orders.[42] A senior UNRWA official cited by the *Wall Street Journal* reported that only about 100 individuals have evacuated south.[43] The IDF released an audio recording of a Gazan speaking with Israeli forces who claimed that Hamas is beating civilians and preventing them from leaving evacuation zones in Jabalia.[44] Gazans have previously accused Hamas of preventing civilians from leaving as early as October 2023.[45] Local Palestinian reports cited by the *Wall Street Journal* have also claimed that evacuating to the al Mawasi humanitarian zone is equally as dangerous as remaining in the north and that there is no guarantee that civilians will make it to the humanitarian zone.[46] These reports appear designed to discourage individuals from evacuating, thus leaving the individuals within areas that the IDF has publicly described as "combat zones."

US Secretary of Defense Antony Blinken and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin sent a letter to senior Israeli officials on October 13 warning that the Biden administration will be forced to take unspecified steps if aid is not delivered to non-combatants in the Gaza Strip.[47] Blinken and Austin cited lawlessness in Gaza and unspecified recent Israeli actions for the deteriorating conditions in Gaza. The letter stated that the administration would take steps to comply with international norms surrounding the protection of civilians and delivery of humanitarian aid, and the provision of US military assistance. The letter gives the Israeli government one month to be in compliance.

Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant stated that Israel is not imposing a blockade on humanitarian aid into the northern Gaza Strip during a phone call with Austin on October 13.[48] Gallant repeated the same statement with US Ambassador to Israel Jack Lew on October 14. The IDF reported that 30 aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip through the northern Erez crossing on October 14 after delays due to connections between local merchants and Hamas. An unspecified Israeli official cited by Axios claimed that none of the 30 aid trucks arrived in Jabalia on October 14.[49]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of October 15, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

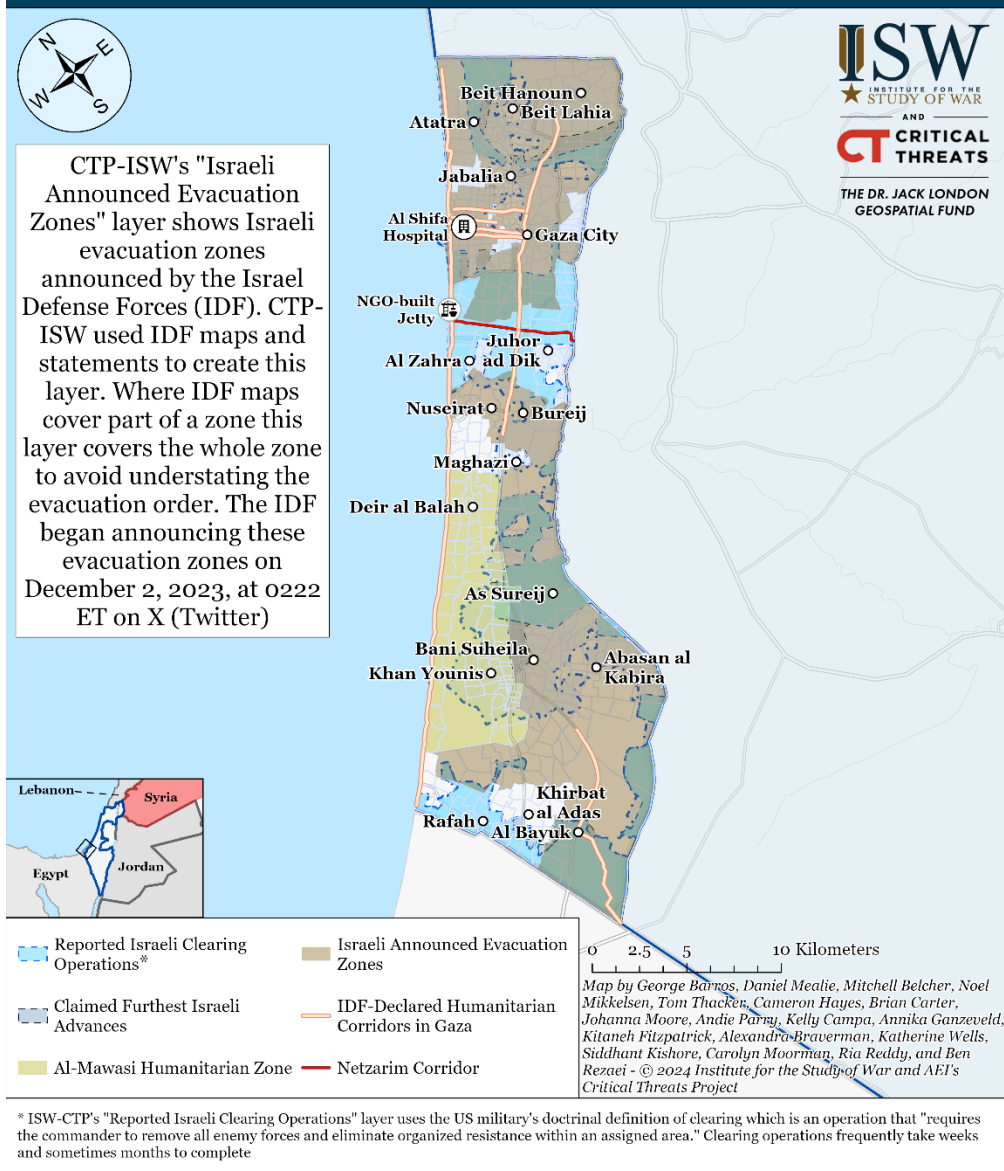


Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Cameron Hayes, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2024 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			

* 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 October 15, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The United States and Canada announced new sanctions on October 15 targeting the Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network.[50] The organization serves as a front in North America and Europe to fundraise money for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Canada and the United States also sanctioned a leader of the PFLP Khaled Barakat. Canada further identified the Samidoun organization as a terrorist organization under its criminal code.

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

A Palestinian individual shot and killed an Israeli Police officer near Ashdod on October 15.[51] The Israeli Army Radio reported that the attacker fired small arms targeting Israeli vehicles on Highway 4 near Ashdod.[52] An armed Israeli civilian shot and killed the attacker.[53] The Israeli media identified the attacker as a Gaza Strip resident who had been living illegally in the West Bank.[54] It is not clear how the attacker entered Israel from the West Bank. Palestinian militias praised the attack, but no group has taken responsibility for it at the time of this writing.[55]

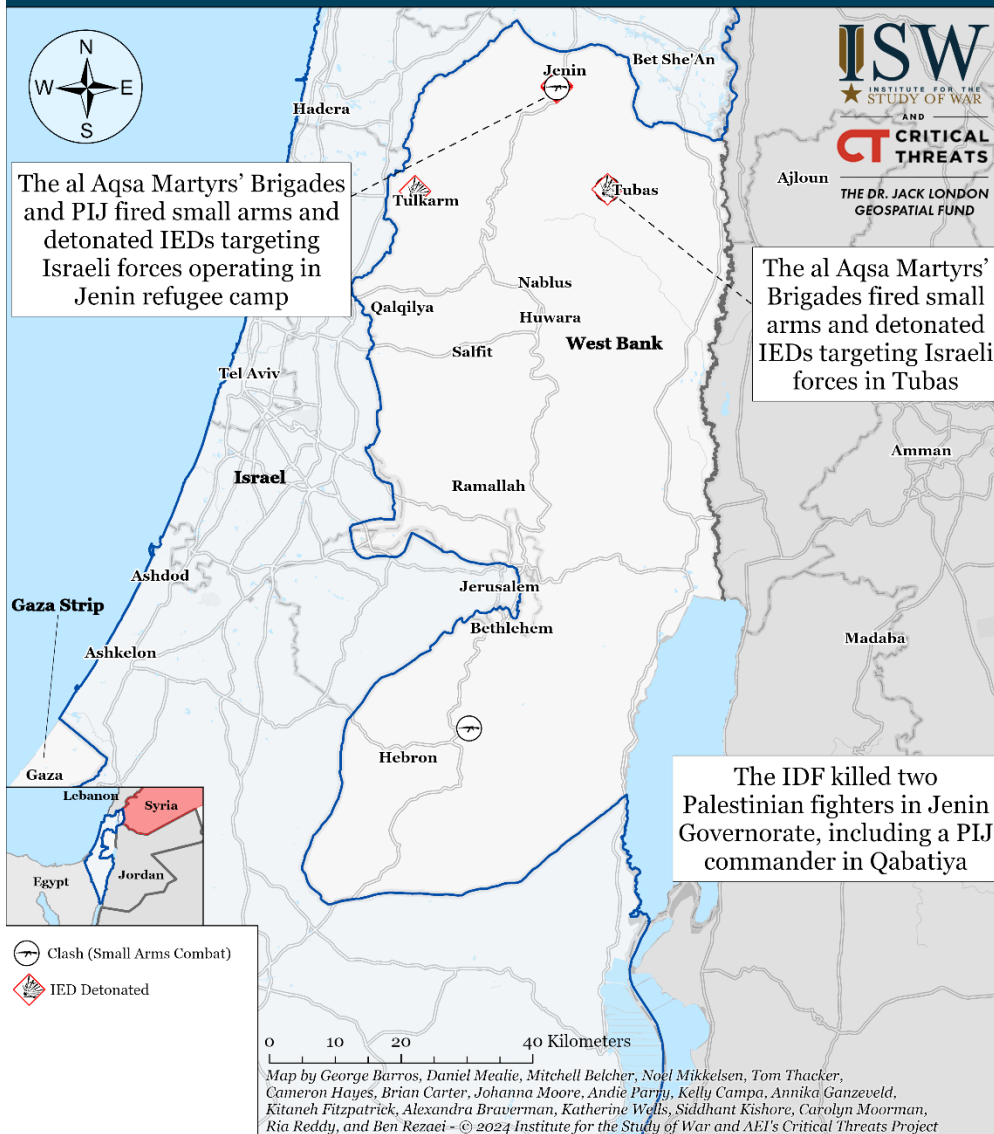
Israeli security forces operated in Jenin and killed two Palestinian fighters on October 14 and 15.[56] One of the Palestinian fighters was the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Jenin Battalion's commander in Qabatiya.[57] The IDF separately detained 20 wanted persons across the West Bank and confiscated small arms and ammunition.[58]

The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement detonated an IED targeting a civilian bus in Beersheba in southern Israel on October 15.[59]

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in at least four locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 14.[60] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and PIJ fired small arms and detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces operating in Jenin Refugee Camp.[61] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades separately fired small arms and detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces in Tubas.[62]

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of October 15, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Northern Israel and Lebanon

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

The IDF announced on October 15 that a fifth division is operating in southern Lebanon.[63] The IDF 810th Brigade (210th Division) has conducted several “targeted raids” from Mount Dov into the mountainous terrain north of the Israeli-controlled Shebaa Farms over the past

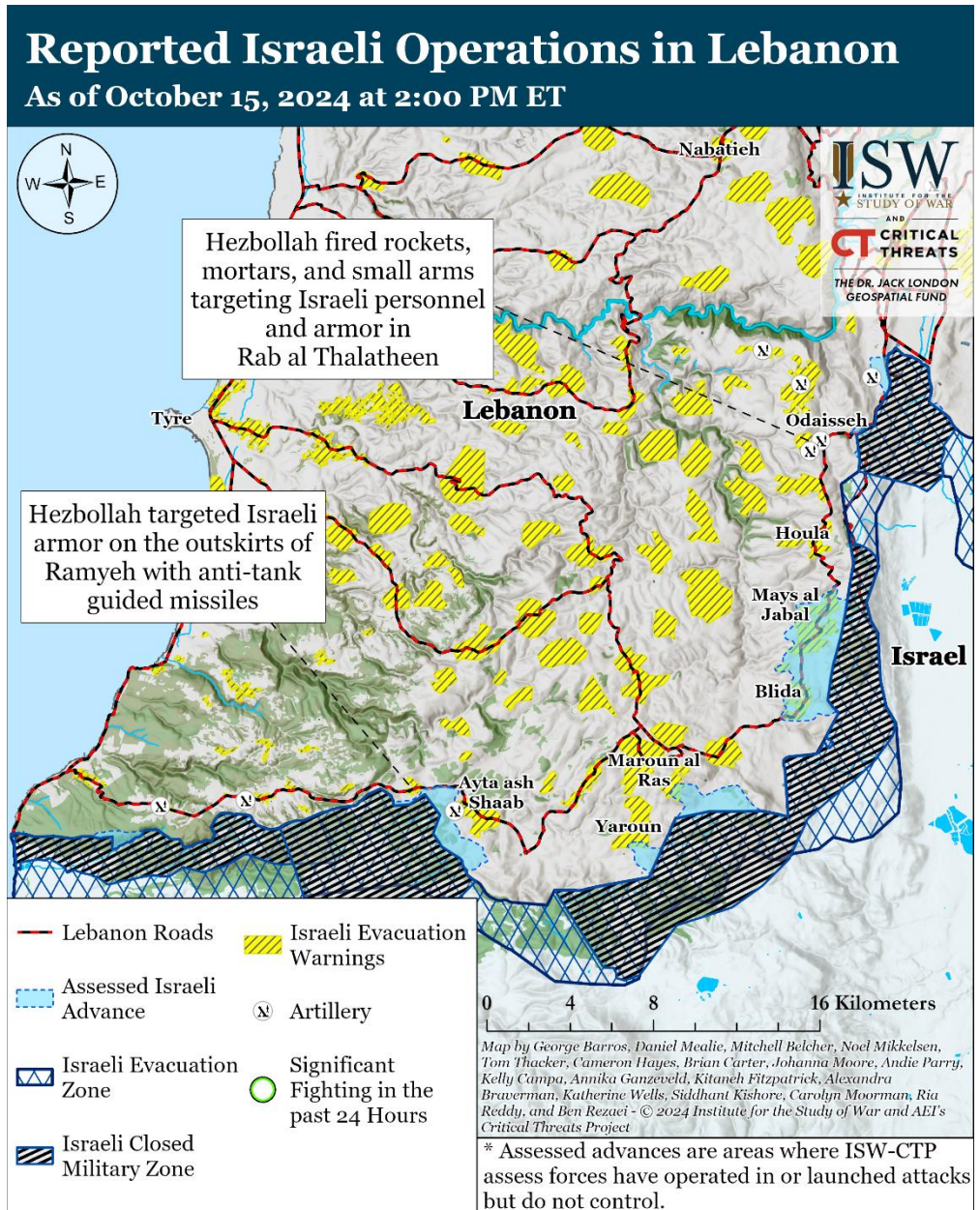
two weeks, according to the brigade's commander.[64] The deployment of the 210th Division marks the fifth division headquarters operating in southern Lebanon. Only some elements—two reserve battalions and a special mountain infantry reserve unit—within the 810th Brigade are currently deployed to Lebanon.[65] The 810th Brigade has raided Radwan SOF compounds and destroyed weapons, observation devices, and military infrastructure in the area.[66] Israeli forces located a Radwan SOF compound in Lebanese territory opposite Mount Dov from which Hezbollah fighters had "fled." [67] The IDF has consistently conducted artillery shelling along the Israel-Lebanon border in the Shebaa Farms since beginning ground operations that presumably supported Israeli ground movements in the area.[68] Hezbollah-affiliated media reported on October 13 that Israeli forces briefly crossed into a border town east of Ghajar and planted an explosive.[69] Lebanese media also reported that Hezbollah fighters fired rockets targeting Israeli forces near al Sadana and Birkat al Naqar, north of Shebaa Farms, on October 14.[70]

Hezbollah claimed that it targeted Israeli forces attempting to advance into Markaba and Rab al Thalatheen on October 15. Hezbollah fired small arms and rockets at Israeli infantry attempting to advance from the east near the outskirts of Rab al Thalatheen.[71] Hezbollah also targeted Israeli personnel and armor in the town of Rab al Thalatheen with mortars and rockets.[72] Lebanese sources reported that clashes between Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters also took place in the adjacent villages of Markaba and Odaisseh.[73] The IDF began operating in Odaisseh on October 1, but Hezbollah-affiliated sources reported that Israeli forces withdrew from Odaisseh on October 7.[74] Lebanese sources reported that IDF artillery units fired numerous rounds of artillery targeting the Rab al Thalatheen area on October 15. [75]

Israeli forces detained several Hezbollah fighters during operations in southern Lebanon. The IDF 1st Infantry Brigade (36th Division) located three Radwan SOF fighters inside a building formerly used by Hezbollah.[76] Israeli forces detained and interrogated the three Radwan fighters and then transferred the fighters to a correctional facility for further interrogation in Israel.[77] Israeli forces also located an underground shaft and weapons in the building.[78] The IDF also released footage from the interrogation of a Hezbollah fighter captured during operations in Lebanon.[79] The Hezbollah fighter said that Radwan SOF and regional Hezbollah leaders, including a regional commander and his deputy, fled from Israeli forces operating in Lebanon.[80] The fighter said that Hezbollah forces had planned to conduct a ground invasion into Israel but fled following Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's death.[81] It is not clear if the fighter in the video is one of the three Radwan fighters that the 1st Brigade captured.

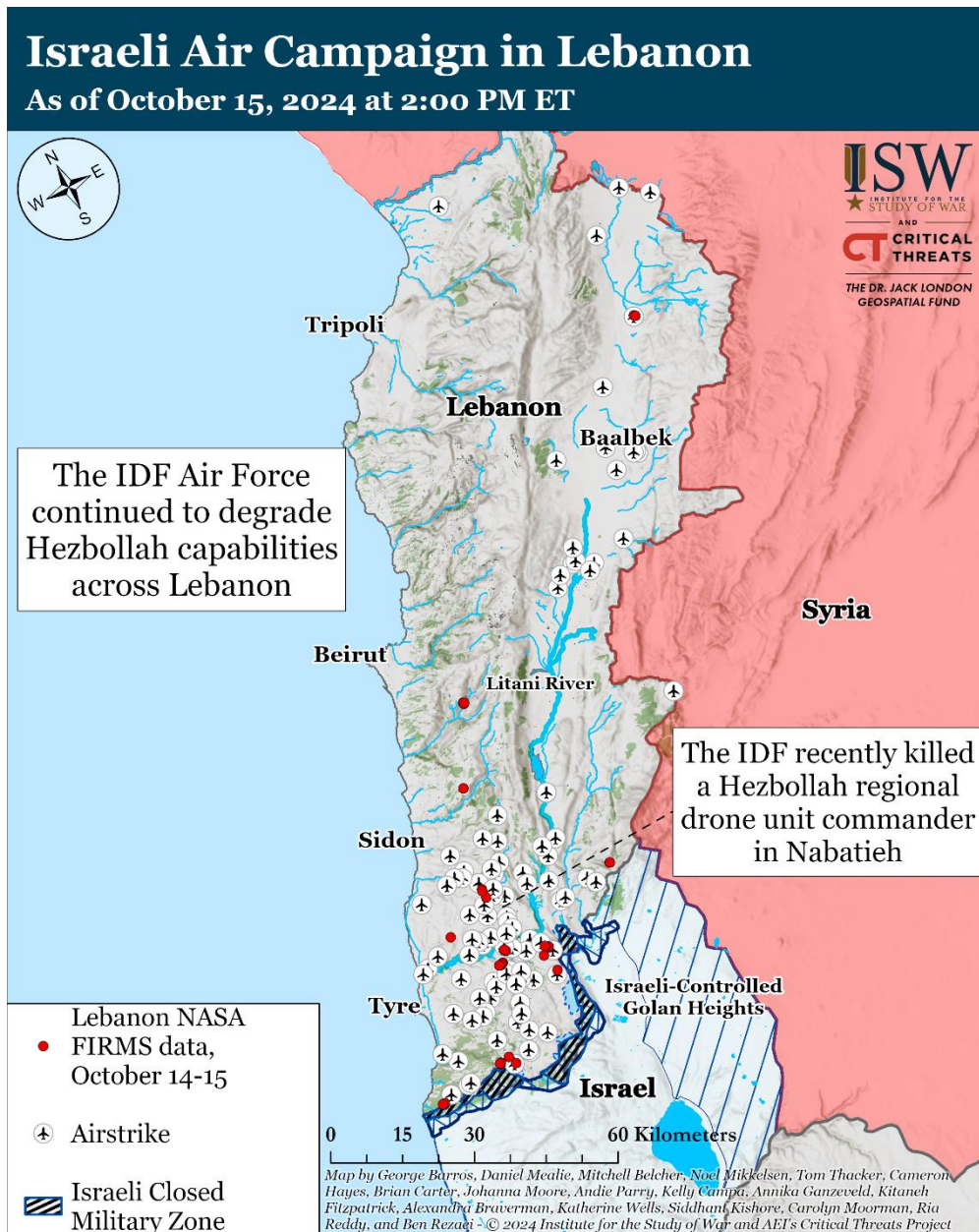
Israeli forces advanced northeast towards Aita al Shaab between October 13 and 14. Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 14 showed flattened terrain and vehicle tracks in western Aita al Shaab and the surrounding hills to the west, southwest, and south of the village, indicating that Israeli tanks or bulldozers operated on the outskirts of Aita al Shaab and south of the village. An unspecified IDF Division began operations in the area on October 13.[82] Hezbollah continued to engage Israeli forces near Aita al Shaab and Ramyeh in southern Lebanon on October 15. Hezbollah fired anti-tank guided missiles targeting Israeli armor advancing near the outskirts of Ramyeh.[83] Hezbollah said its attacks killed or wounded several Israeli soldiers.[84]

The IDF 91st Division continued clearing operations in southern Lebanon. The IDF 228th Brigade (Res.) continued to conduct raids to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure and locate weapons. [85] Israeli forces also located dozens of underground shafts and significant other underground infrastructure.[86] The 228th Brigade has directed over 100 airstrikes targeting Hezbollah fighters.[87]



The IDF continued an air campaign to degrade Hezbollah capabilities and leadership on October 15. The IDF Air Force conducted numerous airstrikes targeting Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley over the past day, including positions and infrastructure along the Lebanon-Syria border.[88] The IDF announced that it killed the head of the northern Litani sector of Hezbollah's aerial unit Khader al Abd Bhaja in Nabatiyeh several days ago.[89] Bhaja's unit was responsible for launching attack and reconnaissance drones into northern Israel.[90] The announcement of Bhaja's death follows the IDF Air Force's statement that it would prioritize targeting

Hezbollah’s drone unit and drone production infrastructure in response to Hezbollah drone attack that killed four IDF personnel in Israel on October 13.[91]



This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on October 14 to 2:00pm ET on October 15. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

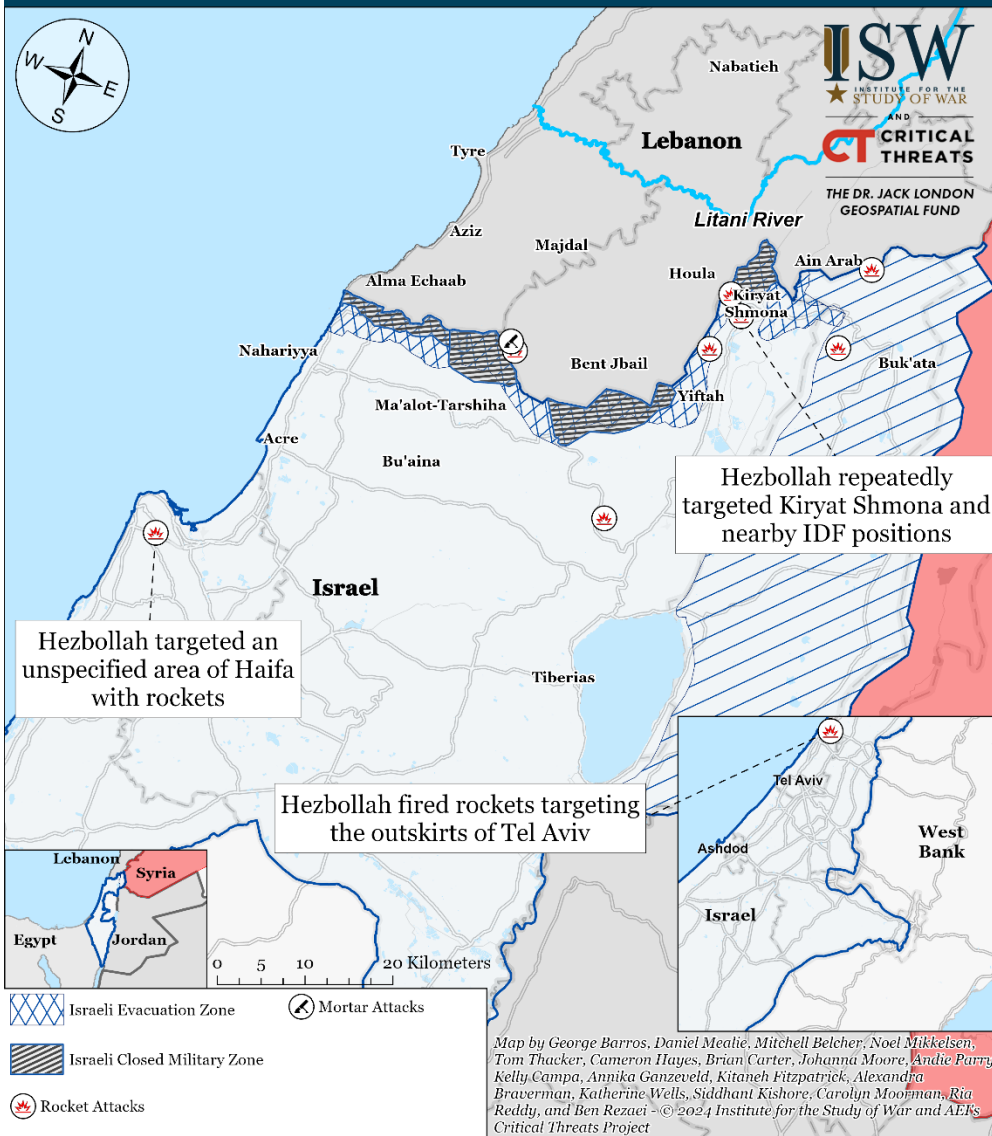
Hezbollah has conducted at least 17 attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 14.[92] Hezbollah conducted 30 attacks into Israel during the October 13 to 14 reporting period, meaning the reporting period from October 14 to 15 saw a decline in Hezbollah attacks into Israel.[93] Hezbollah continued to target IDF and civilian sites deep in Israel near Tel Aviv and Haifa.[94] Hezbollah’s operations room stated on October 11 that Hezbollah forces would gradually

increase their rate of attack targeting Israeli towns and military bases "deep" within Israel.[95] Hezbollah fired rockets and mortars in at least 11 separate attacks targeting Israeli positions along the Israel-Lebanon border.[96] Hezbollah repeatedly targeted the town of Kiryat Shmona and IDF positions nearby.[97]

Israel is making adjustments to its air defense capabilities, including its drone interception technology and protocols. The Israeli Ministry of Defense conducted "first-of-its-kind" tests with eight Israeli defense companies to improve drone interception capabilities on October 15 in southern Israel.[98] Israeli Army Radio reported that the Ministry of Defense will select several projects for accelerated development to deploy new drone interception capabilities within months.[99] Hezbollah's October 13 attack on an IDF base recently exhibited the challenges that drones pose to Israeli air detection systems, particularly when launched in a combined offensive with indirect fires to distract air defenses.[100]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of October 15, 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 two drone attacks targeting “vital targets” in northern and eastern Israel since CTPS-ISW’s last data cutoff on October 14.[101] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has previously claimed drone attacks targeting the Jordan Valley in eastern Israel but has never previously claimed to target an unspecified area in eastern Israel.[102]

An Iranian-backed Iraqi militia source told Iraqi outlet Baghdad Today that Lebanese Hezbollah and other members of the Axis of Resistance are ready to conduct “martyrdom act[s]” to target Israeli forces in Lebanon.[103] The source added that the Axis of Resistance will conduct martyrdom acts, possibly referring to suicide bombings, in Lebanon once Hezbollah

provides the “green light.”[104] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have previously stated their willingness to fight Israel in Lebanon upon Hezbollah’s “green light.”[105] It is notable that an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia member would publicly discuss operational and tactical circumstances relevant to Lebanon. It is not immediately clear why an Iraqi militia fighter would make these claims instead of a Hezbollah official, though such statements do underscore the expressed unity within the Axis of Resistance.

A senior Iranian Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS) officer and a senior Omani military officer met as part of the 19th annual meeting of their Military Friendship Commission in Muscat, Oman on October 14.[106] The AFGS Chief of Defense Diplomacy and International Relations Brigadier General Mohammad Ahadi and the Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) Major General Matar bin Salim al Balushi emphasized enhancing military cooperation between the two nations. Iranian and Omani officials also reviewed several issues outlined in the agenda of the meeting, which aimed to strengthen cooperation in military fields.[107]

The Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) arrested two cells of Jaish al Adl fighters in Rask and Sarbaz city, Sistan and Baluchistan province on October 14.[108] Jaish al Adl is a Baloch, Salafi-jihadi group that operates in southeastern Iran and Pakistan. The LEC conducted continuous intelligence surveillance and coordinated operations with local law enforcement to arrest an unspecified number of Jaish al Adl fighters. The fighters planned to carry out unspecified attacks.[109]

Azerbaijan Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev met with senior Iranian officials during a two-day visit to Tehran.[110] Mustafayev discussed bilateral diplomatic and economic cooperation with President Masoud Pezeshkian on October 14.[111] Mustafayev also met with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Economics and Finance Minister Abdol Nasser Hemati separately on October 15.[112] Araghchi will travel to Istanbul on October 18 for the 3+3 Summit, where Iranian, Turkish, and Russian officials will mediate diplomatic discussions between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[113]

The Australian Foreign Affairs Ministry announced new asset freezes and travel bans on the following individuals on October 15 in response to the October 1 Iranian ballistic missile attack on Israel and Iran’s transfer of missiles to Russia:[114]

- Nader Khun Siavash and Seyed Mirahmad Nooshin, both directors in Aerospace Industries Organization that oversees the ballistic missile program
- Seyed Javad Mousavi, the Aerospace Organization CEO
- Mohammad Gholami, the Shahid Hemet Industrial Group commercial director
- Amir Radfar, Shahid Bagheri industrial group director

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani attended IRGC Operations Deputy Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan's funeral in Tehran on October 15.[115] Ghaani was last seen publicly when he visited the Hezbollah office in Tehran on September 29.[116] Western and Middle Eastern outlets speculated that Ghaani was killed or injured during the Israeli airstrike targeting Hashem Safi ed Din—the presumed successor to Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah—in Beirut on October 4.[117]

Photos of Ghaani attending Nilforoushan’s funeral confirm Ghaani is alive and in Iran at the time of this writing.[118] Nilforoushan died in the Israeli airstrike that killed Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut on September 27.[119] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and IRGC Commander Hossein Salami also attended the funeral, among other Iranian senior leadership.[120]

Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Ansar ol Mehdi Protection Corps Sardar Fathullah Jamiri introduced Hadi Melanori as the new commander of the IRGC Aviation Protection Unit on October 12.[121] The IRGC Aviation Protection Unit is responsible for airport and aircraft security to prevent airplane hijackings in Iran.[122] The IRGC Aviation Protection Unit has a “direct relationship” with other Iranian military institutions including the Artesh and IRGC Aerospace Force.[123] Mohammad Mehdi Masoumi is the former commander of the Aviation Protection Unit.[124]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi held a phone call with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, on October 14.[125] Wang expressed concern over rising tensions in the Middle East and reiterated China’s support for multilateral initiatives to ease tensions.[126] Wang also held a phone call with Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz on October 14, during which he called for a ceasefire and emphasized that Israel must take further action to ensure the safety of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) personnel.[127]

Houthi-affiliated media claimed that the United States and the United Kingdom conducted a series of airstrikes over the past two days. Houthi-affiliated media reported two US-UK airstrikes over al Salif on the coast, northwest of al Hudaydah city, on October 14.[128] Houthi-affiliated media also reported four US-UK airstrikes on the coastal area of al Luhayyah, north of al Hudaydah city, on October 15.[129]

Anti-Houthi media's recent reporting suggests that Houthi efforts to build an extensive tunnel network in the Houthi-controlled mountainous region between Sana’a and Sa’ada have intensified, which is likely part of a long-running Houthi effort to harden their facilities against air attacks.[130] The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) published satellite imagery of these Houthi excavation projects for underground military facilities in April.[131] One of the facilities documented by IISS was a Scud storage facility under the Ali Abdullah Saleh regime that the Houthis have since repurposed. The Houthis are likely using these sites for weapons storage, arms transfers, and launch sites, to make it harder for adversaries to target their military sites.

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[2] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/apartment-building-beirut-hit-israel-widens-air-campaign-2024-09-29/> ; www dot almanar.com.lb./12584475

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