

# Iran Update



**Kelly Campa, Johanna Moore, Annika Ganzeveld, Ria Reddy,  
Ben Rezaei, and Brian Carter**

**October 19, 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 likely conducted a drone attack targeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in Caesarea, Israel, on October 19.** Three drones crossed into Israeli territory from Lebanon on October 19.[1] The IDF said that one of the drones "hit a building" in Caesarea with no casualties.[2] Israeli residents reported hearing a large explosion following the drone's impact.[3] Neither Netanyahu nor his wife were at the residence at the time of the impact, according to the Prime Minister's Office.[4] Leaked images of the residence show damage to the side of a building.[5] Netanyahu warned in a statement that the Iranian-backed groups that tried to "assassinate" him made a "grave mistake." [6]

**Hezbollah likely intended to kill Netanyahu by using drones to evade Israeli air defenses.** Drones pose substantial challenges for IDF air defenses, though the IDF is gradually improving its

counter-drone capabilities. The IDF intercepted the other two drones that crossed from Lebanon and triggered warning alarms in Gilot, north of Tel Aviv.[7] CTP-ISW is unable to assess what the targets of these two drones may have been. Hezbollah most recently penetrated Israeli air defenses when a drone struck the IDF 1st Infantry Brigade's training camp south of Haifa on October 13. Hezbollah combined short-range, imprecise rockets with drones and missiles during the October 13 attack. There have not been indications that Hezbollah also used imprecise indirect fires, such as rockets, in the October 19 attack targeting Netanyahu. Hezbollah has used single drones to penetrate Israeli air defenses in the past, however, by flying the drones at a low altitude and through challenging terrain to prevent radar detection.[8]

**Hezbollah may have decided to target higher-value Israeli officials in response to recent Israeli operations that have killed multiple senior Axis leaders.** These Israeli operations resulted in the deaths of Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. Hezbollah has not claimed or acknowledged the attack as of this writing, but Hezbollah's operations did announce on October 18 that it would "transition to a new and escalating phase" in its attacks on Israel.[9] Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem also said on October 15 that Hezbollah would initiate a new phase of the war designed to inflict high casualties on Israel.[10]

**Israeli operations temporarily disrupted the operations of Hezbollah's drone unit in late September, according to an unspecified Israeli official.** An unspecified Israeli intelligence official told the *Wall Street Journal* that Hezbollah drone attacks are increasing in frequency following a brief lull caused by the death of Hezbollah's drone unit commander in an Israeli strike in Beirut on September 26.[11] The Israeli intelligence official said that Unit 127—Hezbollah's drone unit—is composed of a "few dozen" fighters and that the unit "suffered" after Israel killed its commander.[12] CTP-ISW observed a brief interval for six days after the commander's death on September 26 in which Hezbollah fired no drones or a single drone into Israeli territory.

**Hezbollah's drone unit appears to have reconstituted and overcome the temporary disruption caused by the loss of its commander.** Hezbollah drone attacks have increased in recent days in both frequency and deadliness. Israeli Army Radio reported that Hezbollah has launched about thirty drones into Israel in the past week.[13] A Hezbollah drone killed four IDF personnel and injured over 60 more in Binyamina on October 13, and another drone attack could have killed Netanyahu on October 19.[14] The IDF has continued targeting tactical-level Hezbollah commanders in southern Lebanon, which CTP-ISW has assessed may be diminishing the combat effectiveness of some Hezbollah units.[15] The effects generated by the removal of Hezbollah commanders is a temporary effect, however. Hezbollah forces remain structured as a conventional fighting force. Military organizations are designed to absorb casualties and rapidly replace commanders to overcome temporary disruptions caused by the loss of leaders.[16]

Some recent Hezbollah attacks, such as the drone strike on the 1st Infantry Brigade's base, indicate that Hezbollah has rebuilt at least some of its communications structure that the IDF campaign previously severely degraded. Hezbollah launched a combined offensive of rockets, missiles, and drones in the 1st Infantry Brigade attack, suggesting that Hezbollah had restored some communication between its rocket, missile, and drone units in order to coordinate the simultaneous launches.[17]

**Two unspecified Hamas officials cited by the BBC on October 19 stated that Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Khalil al Hayya is considered a strong candidate for Sinwar's replacement.[18]** CTP-ISW has assessed that Hayya is Sinwar's most likely successor as Hamas political leader.[19] The Hamas officials said that Hamas will begin discussions to determine Yahya Sinwar's successor "very soon."[20]

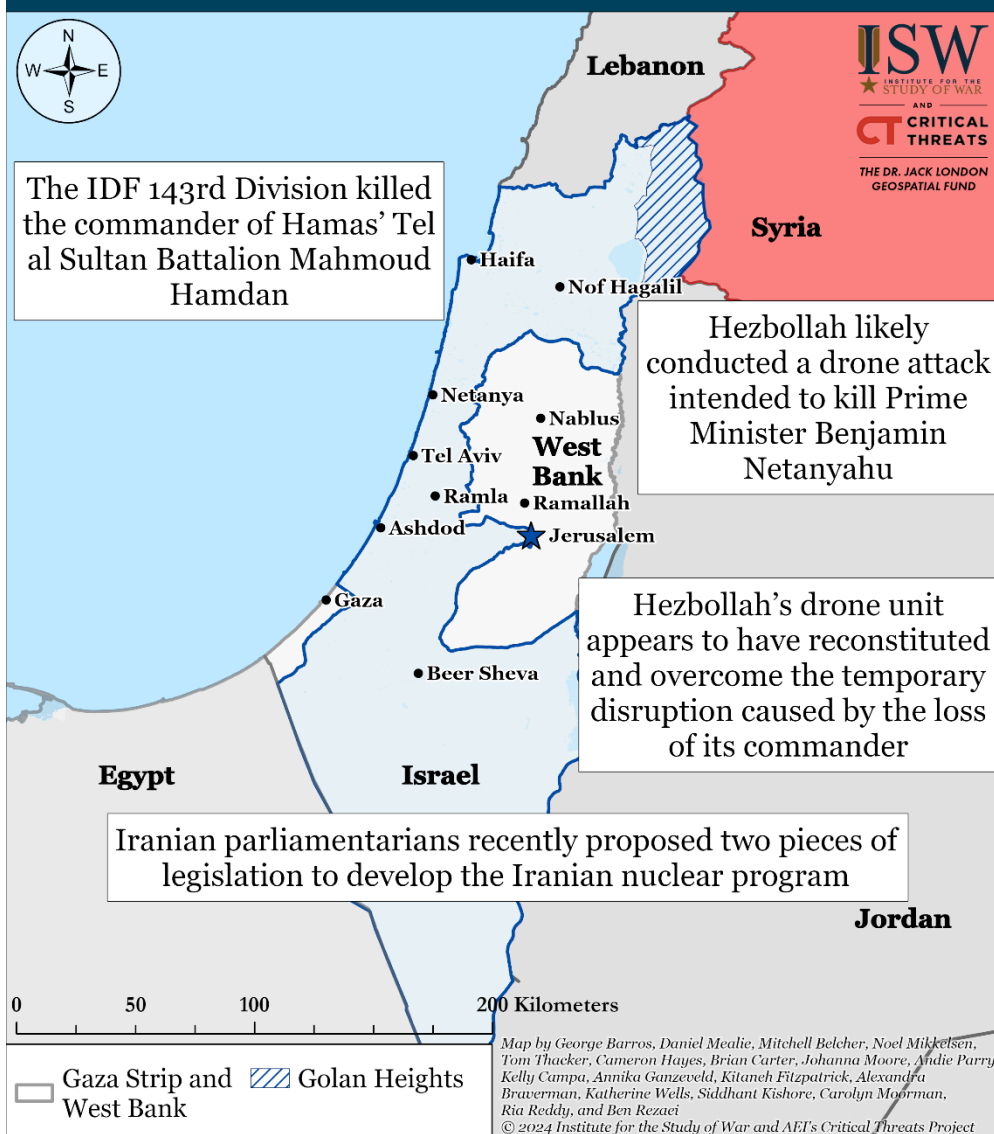
A separate unspecified Hamas official speaking to the BBC said that Hamas' conditions for a ceasefire-hostage deal have not changed despite Sinwar's death, which is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment.[21] Hayya and an accompanying Hamas delegation met with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on October 19 to discuss the October 9 meeting between Hamas and Fatah in Cairo addressing post-war governance in the Gaza Strip and recent "developments."[22] Hayya—who, like Sinwar, is close to Iran—has shown little willingness to moderate his positions.[23]

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Hezbollah Drone Strike Targeting Netanyahu:** Hezbollah likely conducted a drone attack targeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in Caesarea, Israel, on October 19. Hezbollah likely intended to kill Netanyahu by using drones to evade Israeli air defenses. Hezbollah may have decided to target higher-value Israeli officials in response to recent Israeli operations that have killed multiple senior Axis leaders.
- **Hezbollah Drone Operations:** Israeli operations temporarily disrupted the operations of Hezbollah's drone unit in late September, but Hezbollah's drone unit appears to have reconstituted and overcome the temporary disruption caused by the loss of its commander.
- **Sinwar Succession:** Two unspecified Hamas officials cited by the BBC on October 19 stated that Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Khalil al Hayya is considered a strong candidate for Sinwar's replacement. A separate unspecified Hamas official speaking to the BBC said that Hamas' conditions for a ceasefire-hostage deal have not changed despite Sinwar's death, which is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment.
- **Israeli Ground Operations in Lebanon:** The 91st Division continued operations in Mhaibib, southern Lebanon, on October 19. The IDF 8th Armored Brigade and Yahalom combat engineers demolished a Radwan SOF tunnel north of Mhaibib. Part of the complex ran underneath a Lebanese school.

# Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of October 19, 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 engaged Palestinian fighters and directed airstrikes during clearing operations in Jabalia on October 19.[24]** Geolocated footage posted on October 19 showed Israeli forces detaining Palestinian men for questioning near the Indonesian Hospital in northern Jabalia.[25] Geolocated imagery posted on October 17 showed Israeli forces operating at the

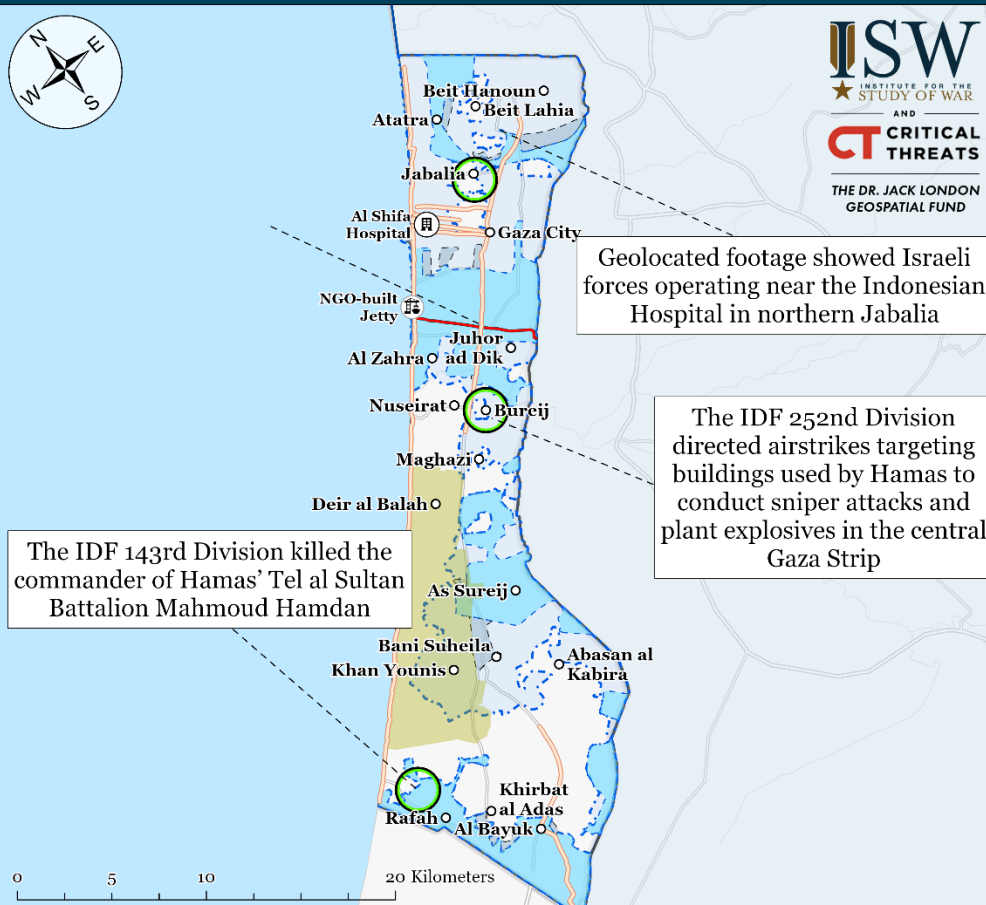
former Othman bin Affan Secondary School for Boys in western Jabalia.[26] Commercially available satellite imagery confirmed that Israeli forces have been operating at the school since as early as October 14.

**The IDF 252nd Division directed airstrikes targeting buildings used by Hamas to conduct sniper attacks and plant explosives in the central Gaza Strip on October 19.[27]** The 252nd Division has operated in Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps, in the central Gaza Strip, since October 17.[28]

**The IDF 143rd Division killed the commander of Hamas' Tel al Sultan Battalion Mahmoud Hamdan on October 18.[29]** Israeli forces engaged Hamdan in a firefight approximately 200 meters from where the former leader of Hamas Yahya Sinwar died. The 933rd Infantry Brigade killed two groups of Palestinian fighters that posed a threat to their forces.[30]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of October 19, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Geolocated footage showed Israeli forces operating near the Indonesian Hospital in northern Jabalia

The IDF 252nd Division directed airstrikes targeting buildings used by Hamas to conduct sniper attacks and plant explosives in the central Gaza Strip

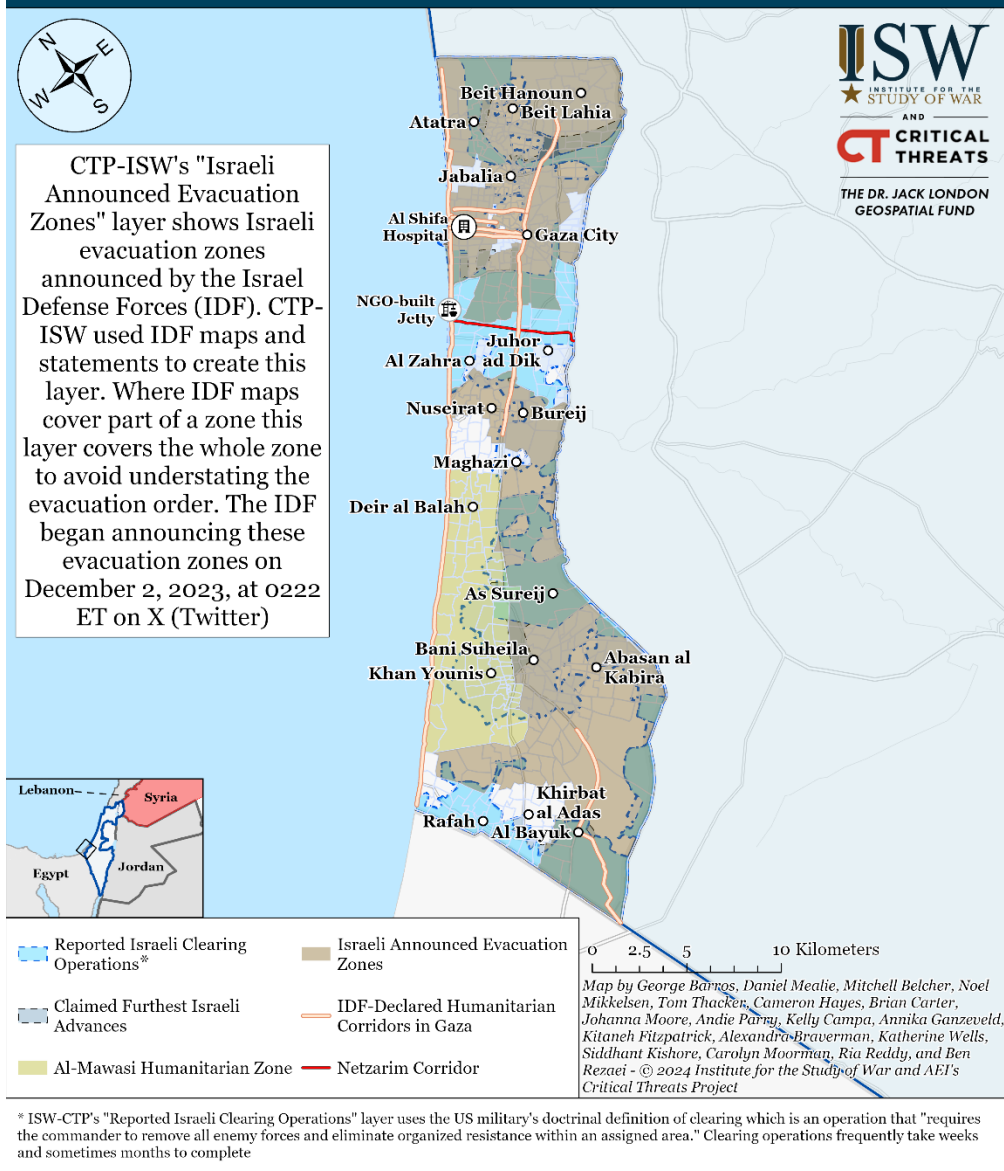
The IDF 143rd Division killed the commander of Hamas' Tel al Sultan Battalion Mahmoud Hamdan

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 19, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered an increase in humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip to 250 trucks per day.[31]** The Israeli security cabinet is set to review and vote on the order on October 20. This decision follows a letter from the United States to senior Israeli officials on October 13 warning that the Biden administration will be forced to take unspecified steps, implying the withholding of military aid to Israel, if aid is not delivered to non-combatants in the Gaza Strip.[32]

**The Israeli body overseeing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip announced on October 19 that 81 crates of humanitarian aid were airdropped into Khan Younis in coordination with the United Arab Emirates.[33]** COGAT stated that the crates contained 10,000 packages of food and medical supplies.

## West Bank

### **Axis of Resistance objectives:**

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**CTP-ISW did not record any engagements between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's data cut-off on October 18.**

## 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

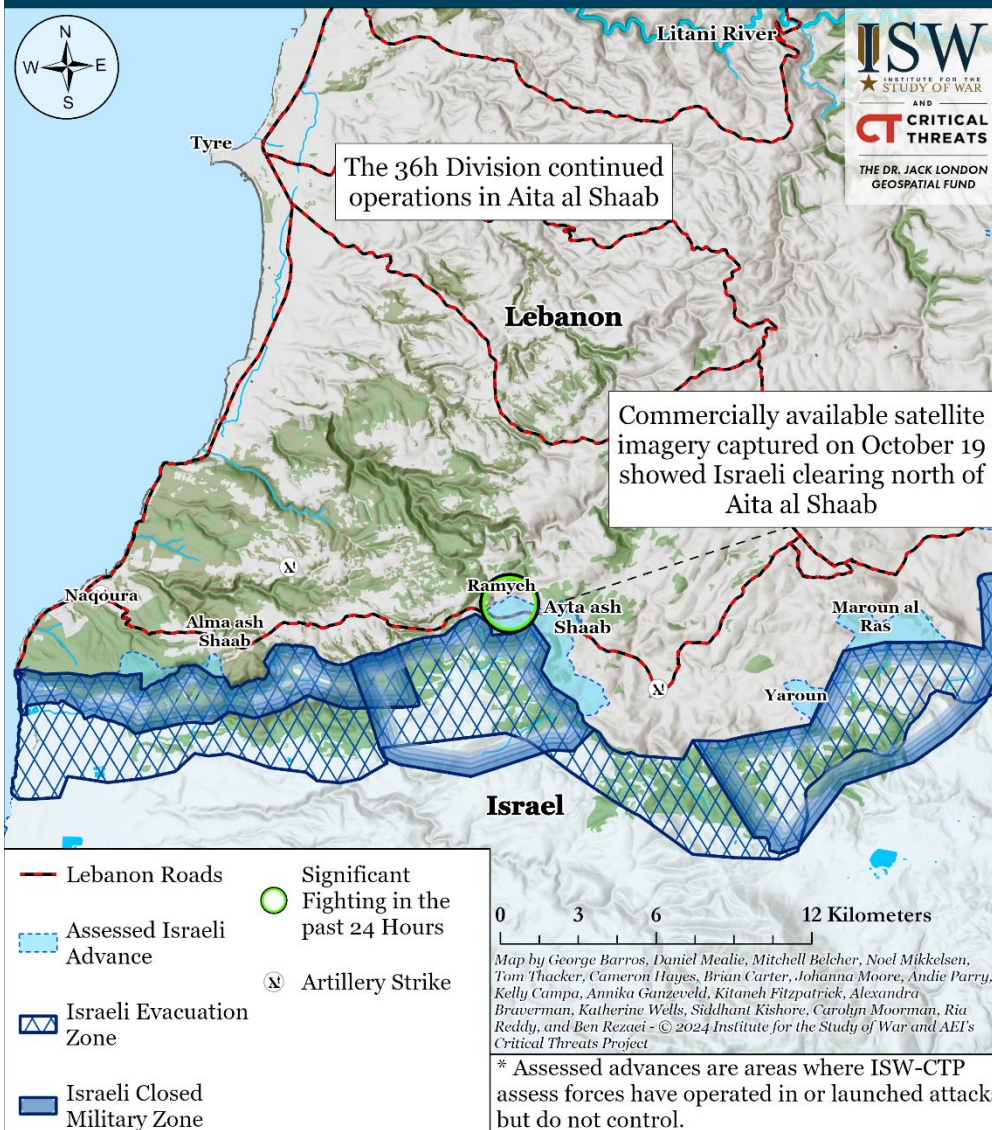
**Lebanese media reported that the IDF conducted artillery shelling near Kfarchouba, Hasbaya District, on October 18.[34]** The IDF said on October 15 that the IDF 810th Brigade (210th Division) has conducted several “targeted raids” from Mount Dov into the mountainous terrain in Hasbaya District over the past week.[35]

**The 98th Division continued operations around Kfar Kila and Markaba, southeast Lebanon, on October 19.** The IDF said that the IDF 35th Paratrooper and 89th Commando brigades are operating in the IDF’s “furthest point” of operations in southern Lebanon.[36] CTP-ISW assesses that the 98th Division has advanced approximately 2.7 kilometers into Lebanon in Rab al Thalatheen, likely the furthest point of advance across any advance in southern Lebanon. Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 19 showed flattened buildings in western Markaba, indicating that Israeli forces operated in the area. Satellite imagery also showed Israeli forces advancing along a road southeast of Kfar Kila. The IDF 7th Armored Brigade located a Hezbollah compound within a school and located numerous weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), weapons parts, and other combat equipment.[37] Israeli forces also located an observation post overlooking towns in the Galilee panhandle and found explosives and intelligence equipment.[38] The IDF 55th Paratrooper Brigade (Res.) located and destroyed dozens of weapons, including Kornet anti-tank missile launchers, explosives, dozens of RPGs, and others.[39] Hezbollah mortared Israeli forces near Fatima Gate between Kfar Kila and Metula.[40]

**The 91st Division continued operations in Mhaibib, southern Lebanon, on October 19.[41]** The IDF 8th Armored Brigade and Yahalom combat engineers demolished a Radwan SOF tunnel north of Mhaibib.[42] Part of the complex ran underneath a Lebanese school. Israeli forces located a command center, a weapons depot, residences, scooter bikes, ammunition, and other military equipment within the complex.[43] Israeli forces demolished a similar Radwan SOF underground structure in Mhaibib on October 16.[44] Israeli forces located weapons and equipment near the complex, including mines, anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft guns, grenades, RPG launchers, machine guns, Kalashnikov rifles, and ammunition.[45] Israeli forces also located and destroyed over 50 shafts and underground infrastructure found in mosques, schools, and other civilian buildings.[46]



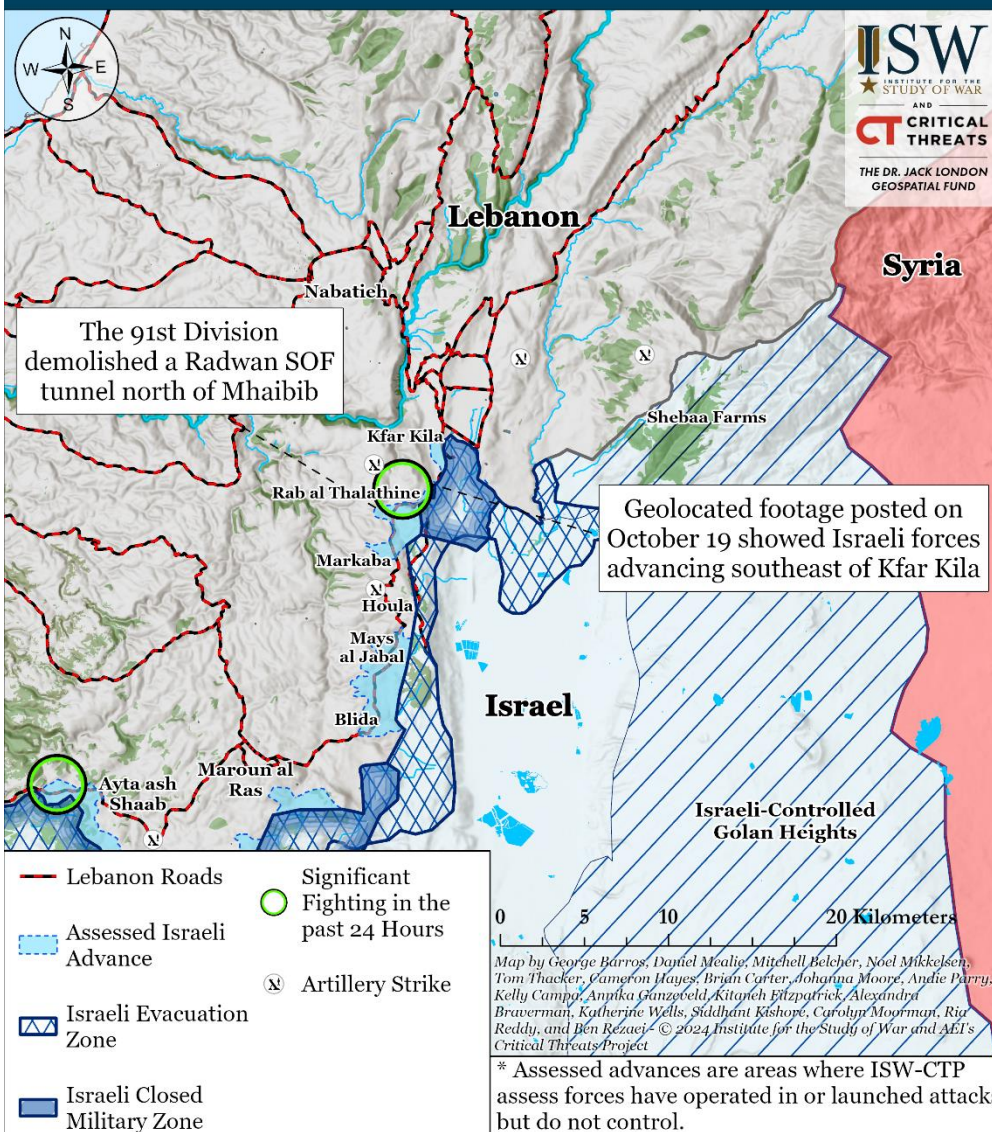
## Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector As of October 19, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**The 36th Division continued operations near Aita al Shaab, southern Lebanon, on October 19.** Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 19 showed flattening buildings northwest of Aita al Shaab, indicating Israeli forces continued to operate in the area. Israeli forces destroyed numerous weapons, including rocket launchers, rockets, and Kornet anti-tank guided missile launchers aimed to fire at northern Israel.[47] Hezbollah fighters launched rockets targeting Israeli forces in Aita al Shaab.[48] The IDF 188th Armored Brigade directed an airstrike targeting a launcher from which Hezbollah launched rockets at Israeli forces.[49]

**Lebanese media reported that the IDF conducted artillery shelling near Tair Harfa and Naqoura, Tyre District, on October 19.**[50] The IDF last acknowledged the 146th Division's operations in southwest Lebanon on October 14.[51]

## Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of October 19, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**The IDF continued its air campaign to degrade Hezbollah's capabilities and leadership on October 19.** The IDF struck Hezbollah weapons depots and launchers aimed at northern Israel.[52] The IDF also conducted multiple strikes targeting weapons warehouses and infrastructure used by Hezbollah's intelligence apparatus in Dahiyeh, Beirut.[53] Local Lebanese media reported at least eleven strikes targeting sites in Dahiyeh.[54] CTP-ISW cannot confirm local Lebanese reporting. The IDF issued evacuation warnings to residents of Haret Hreik, Burj al Barajneh, and Choueifat al Umara to evacuate at least 500 meters from Hezbollah infrastructures.[55] The IDF also reportedly struck a vehicle in Jounieh, north of Beirut.[56] The strike killed two people.[57] Jounieh is a majority-Christian city.

The IDF also targeted and killed Hezbollah's deputy commander of the Bint Jbeil sector, Nasser Abd al Aziz Rashid.[58] Rashid promoted and carried out attacks from the Bint Jbeil area against Israelis.[59]

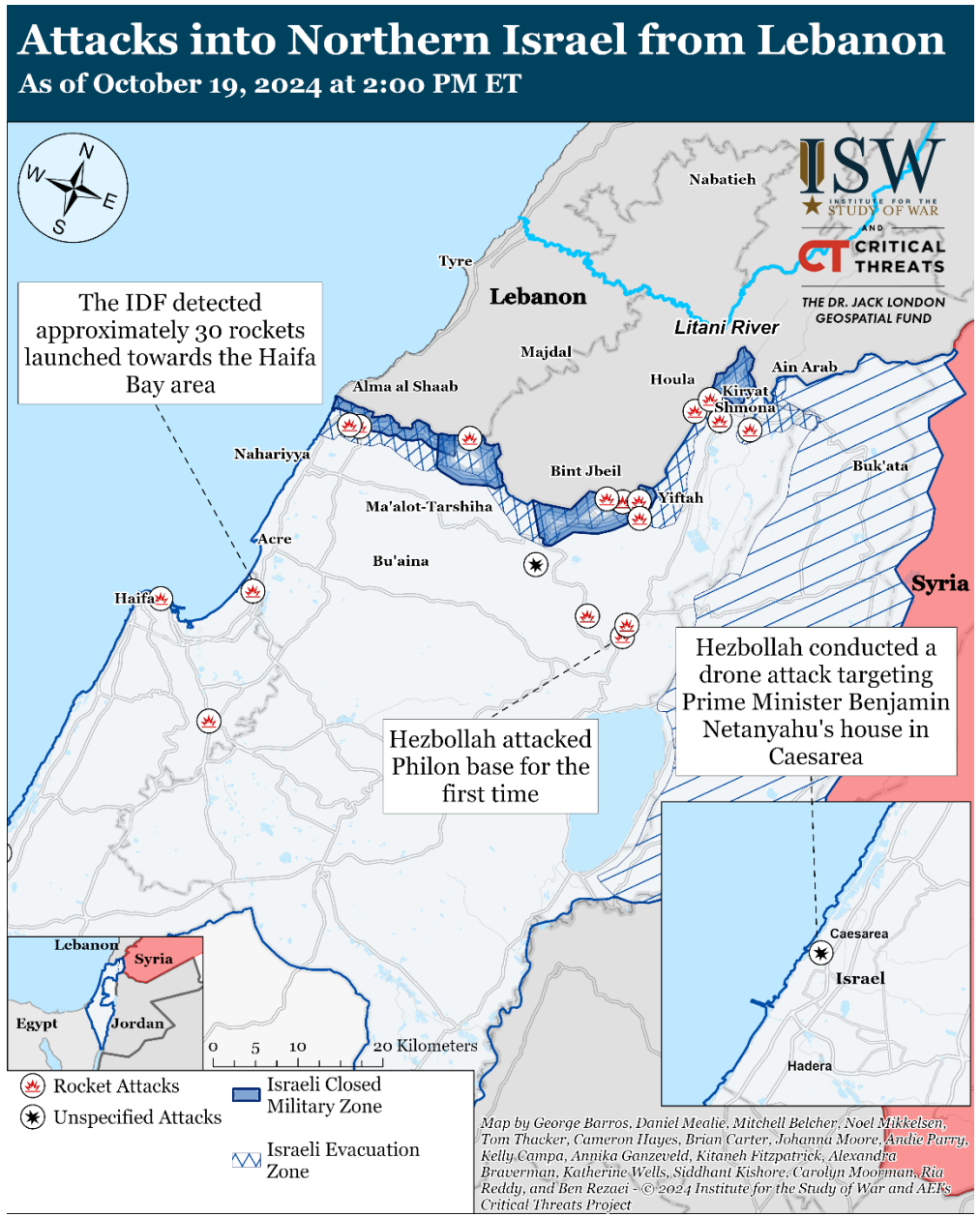
An Israeli Army Radio correspondent reported that Rashid had taken over the Bint Jbeil sector's command after the previous commander, Emad Maatuk, was seriously injured.[60] The correspondent reported that a senior officer in the Nasr Unit who oversaw rocket fire was also killed in the airstrike.[61]



*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 18 to 2:00pm ET on October 19. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.*

**Hezbollah conducted at least 23 attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on October 18.[62]** Hezbollah conducted one drone and three rocket attacks on Israeli military targets around Haifa.[63] The IDF detected approximately 30 rockets launched towards the Haifa Bay area and intercepted some.[64] Hezbollah attacked the Nashraim base

southeast of Haifa for the first time since it started its attacks into northern Israel on October 8.[65] Hezbollah also attacked the Philon base, east of Safed, for the first time since it started its attacks into northern Israel on October 8, 2023.[66]



**Iran and the Axis of Resistance**

**Iranian parliamentarians recently proposed two pieces of legislation to develop the Iranian nuclear program.[67]** Forty parliamentarians signed the first piece of legislation, which is titled “Development Plan for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Technology,” and 63 parliamentarians signed the second piece, which is titled “Plan to Develop [Iran’s] Nuclear Industry.”[68] Both pieces of legislation call for developing new nuclear reactors, including small modular reactors, fast neutron reactors, nuclear fusion reactors, and nuclear research reactors.[69] The legislations also call for

increasing Iran’s nuclear power capacity to 7,000 megawatts.[70] Iran currently has one operational 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant in Bushehr.[71]

**Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei emphasized Hamas’ resilience in a statement commemorating Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Yahya Sinwar on October 19.**[72] Khamenei stated that “ Hamas is alive and will remain alive” and reiterated Iran’s support for Palestinian militias.

**The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militants—has claimed two attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW’s last data cutoff on October 18.**[73] The claims include the following:

- A drone attack targeting an unspecified military target in northern Israel.[74]
- A drone attack targeting an unspecified "vital target" in the Golan Heights.[75]

The IDF intercepted a drone that was heading toward Israel from Syria on October 18.[76] The drone did not enter Israeli airspace. The IDF also identified a drone that was launched "from the east" and entered Israeli airspace from Syria on October 18.[77] The drone crashed in the northern Golan Heights, causing no injuries.

**Iranian-backed Iraqi militia supporters attacked a Saudi media office in Baghdad on October 18 after the media outlet labeled several Axis of Resistance leaders, including Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, as “terrorists.”**[78] Approximately 400-500 individuals attacked the office.[79] An unspecified Iraqi Interior Ministry official stated that the protesters destroyed computers and electronic equipment in the office and set fire to part of the building.[80] Some protesters reportedly carried Popular Mobilization Forces and Kataib Hezbollah flags.[81]

**Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea claimed on October 18 that the Houthis “successfully” targeted the Malta-flagged *Megalopolis* container ship in the Arabian Sea with multiple drones.**[82] Sarea stated they targeted the ship for violating the Houthi ban on vessels accessing Israeli ports.[83]

**Houthi media claimed on October 18 that the United States and the United Kingdom conducted two airstrikes targeting Ras Issa, Hudaydah Province, Yemen.**[84] US Central Command has not confirmed the strikes at the time of this writing.

# Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

As of October 19, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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[2] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1847507161871511895>

[3] <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-drone-targets-netanyahus-house-in-caesarea-pm-wife-not-home-no-injuries/>

- [4] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/15640>
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