Iran Update



Iran Update, October 23, 2024

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Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated Iran's intentions to increase ties with Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on October 23.[1] Pezeshkian met with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss Russo-Iranian economic and strategic relations on the sidelines of the summit.[2] Pezeshkian stated that the two officials will finalize and sign memorandums soon, suggesting that both states will sign the new comprehensive strategic partnership agreement.[3] Putin authorized the signing of the deal on September 18.[4]

It is within Iran's interests to have a formalized agreement with Russia. Iran presumably will seek greater international support as Israel's ground and air offensives on the Gaza Strip and Lebanon have disrupted some elements of Iran's proxy network. This is particularly notable given that Hezbollah's capabilities—which now appear disrupted by Israeli action at a minimum—have long served as Iran's principal deterrence against Israeli attack.[5] Russia has discouraged Israeli attack on nuclear facilities, demonstrating the advantages of strong Iranian relations with Russia.[6] The Pezeshkian administration's policy continues former President Ebrahim Raisi's "neighborhood policy." This policy is centered on building relations with regional and extra-regional states, thus demonstrating the administration's efforts to mitigate the impact of international sanctions and bolster the Iranian economy. The regime calculates that mitigating the impact of sanctions increases domestic stability and regime credibility.[7] Russo-Iranian cooperation has accelerated since the start of Russia's offensive campaign in Ukraine due to Iran's military support in the war.

Pezeshkian also met with PRC President Xi Jinping on October 23.[8] This meeting's details are not publicly available, but the officials probably discussed regional developments and growing Sino-Iranian strategic partnership, including Iranian oil exports to the PRC.[9] Iranian Energy minister Abbas Aliabadi separately discussed trade and foreign capital investment with member countries of the Belt and Road Forum in Qingdao, China.[10]

Pezeshkian emphasized the need for BRICS countries to pursue economic cooperation that undermine the US dollar, almost certainly to achieve Iran's economic goal of

mitigating international sanctions on the Iranian economy through its neighborhood policy.[11] It is unlikely that Pezeshkian's conversations with Putin and Xi Jinping will result in BRICS taking any tangible steps to undermine the US dollar in the near future. Russian and Iranian officials have used this de-dollarization rhetoric before, but this rhetoric has historically not resulted in any tangible movement against the dollar.[12] Pezeshkian underlined the urgency in which BRICS countries need to create an integrated trade system with new mechanisms and technologies, which is a reference to an alternative to the SWIFT international messaging system, as proposals in his speech at the summit.[13] Pezeshkian explicitly stated that these would address sanctions and prevent future sanctions and even to counter the US dollar.[14]

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed the death of Hashem Safi ed Din—the presumed successor to Hassan Nasrallah—in an airstrike on Beirut on October 3.[15] Safi ed Din was leader of Hezbollah's executive council and a member of Hezbollah's political-military Shura Council.[16] Hezbollah confirmed his death on October 23, several hours after Israel released its statement.[17] Hezbollah similarly only confirmed the deaths of other senior Hezbollah leaders, like Hassan Nasrallah and Fuad Shukr, after Israel confirmed their deaths.[18] Israeli officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have alluded to Safi ed Din's death over the past three weeks.[19] IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi accused Hezbollah of hiding the deaths of top commanders on October 18.[20]

Hashem Safi ed Din's confirmed death will impact Hezbollah's political succession but will not further affect Hezbollah's immediate tactical decisions. Safi ed Din was dead for 20 days before both sides formally acknowledged his fate, meaning Hezbollah leadership has very likely recovered from the initial disorder caused by Safi ed Din's death and adapted to his absence.[21] Safi ed Din was very well positioned to take over control of Hezbollah from Nasrallah given the IDF reports that Safi ed Din "carried out [Nasrallah's] duties" when Nasrallah was outside of the Lebanon or out of communication.[22] Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem said on October 8 that Hezbollah would wait to appoint a new Secretary General but that there is not a leadership vacuum.[23] Another Hezbollah leader said that the group had a "joint command in place."[24]

The IDF confirmed that it killed several other high-level Hezbollah commanders in the October 3 strike in Beirut. The IDF said that over 25 Hezbollah intelligence personnel were present in the underground bunker during the strike.[25] Several senior Hezbollah intelligence officers died in the strike, including Hezbollah's aerial intelligence collection leader and intelligence head in Syria.[26] The overall chief of Hezbollah's intelligence staff, Ali Hussein Hazima, also died in the strike.[27] The deaths of Hezbollah's top intelligence officers were more likely to have an immediate impact on Hezbollah's operations in southern Lebanon and northern Israel than Safi ed Din's death, though Hezbollah has presumably adapted to the loss of these leaders. Safi ed Din's death will have ramifications for Hezbollah's long-term trajectory, however.

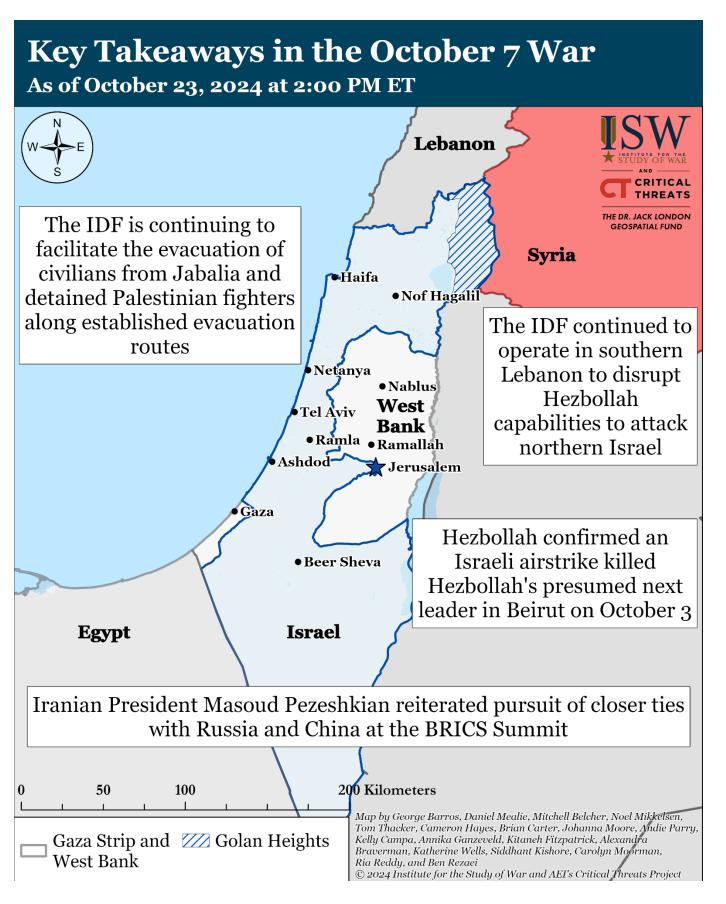
The 146th Division continued to locate and destroy Hezbollah infrastructure and weapons during clearing operations in Marwahin, southwestern Lebanon on October 23.[28] The 205th Armored Brigade (Res.) located a large cache of weapons inside a mosque. The IDF

reported that the cache of weapons included long-range sniper equipment, night vision goggles, rocket-propelled grenades, various grenade launchers, shoulder-fired missiles, and Kornet missiles.

Hezbollah fighters, if they had withdrawn from the area in an orderly fashion, would have presumably withdrawn with high-end weapons systems like Kornets and equipment like night vision goggles. This suggests that Hezbollah fighters—rather than seeking to delay Israeli forces in an organized fashion by slowly withdrawing—instead fled their positions. CTP-ISW noted on October 10 that Hezbollah fighters do not appear to be defending against Israeli forces in these villages, as the Israeli forces have consistently encountered weapons caches and infrastructure formerly used by Hezbollah fighters that "left the area." [29] CTP-ISW assessed that the Israeli air campaign into Lebanon has likely severely disrupted the strategic- and operational-level military leadership in Hezbollah and impeded Hezbollah's ability to conduct and sustain coherent military campaigns at least in the short term. [30]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russo-Iranian Cooperation:** Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated Iran's intentions to increase ties with Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) at the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, on October 23. Pezeshkian emphasized the need for BRICS countries to pursue economic cooperation that undermine the US dollar, almost certainly to achieve Iran's economic goal of mitigating international sanctions on the Iranian economy through its neighborhood policy.
- Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed the death of Hashem Safi ed Din—the presumed successor to Hassan Nasrallah—in an airstrike on Beirut on October 3. Hashem Safi ed Din's confirmed death will impact Hezbollah's political succession but will not further affect Hezbollah's immediate tactical decisions. The IDF confirmed that it killed several other high level Hezbollah commanders in the October 4 strike in Beirut.
- Israeli Ground Operation in Lebanon: An IDF armored brigade captured a large stock of high-end Hezbollah equipment, including night vision goggles and Kornet missiles, in southwestern Lebanon. Hezbollah fighters, if they withdrew from the area in an orderly fashion, would have presumably withdrawn with high-end weapons systems like Kornets and equipment like night vision goggles. This suggests that Hezbollah fighters—rather than seeking to delay Israeli forces in an organized fashion by slowly executing an orderly delay—instead fled their positions.



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Jabalia on October 23. The IDF killed an unspecified number of Palestinian fighters in Jabalia and confiscated weapons.[31]

The IDF is continuing to facilitate the evacuation of civilians from Jabalia along established routes. The IDF also detained "dozens" of Palestinian fighters while facilitating the evacuation. The IDF Arabic spokesperson reported that Hamas is physically assaulting Palestinian civilians evacuating Jabalia in order to discourage them from evacuating the area.[32] The IDF has evacuated more than 20,000 Palestinian civilians from Jabalia since the IDF launched a new clearing operation on October 6. The operation that began on October 6 aims to disrupt Hamas reconstitution efforts in the northern Gaza Strip.[33]

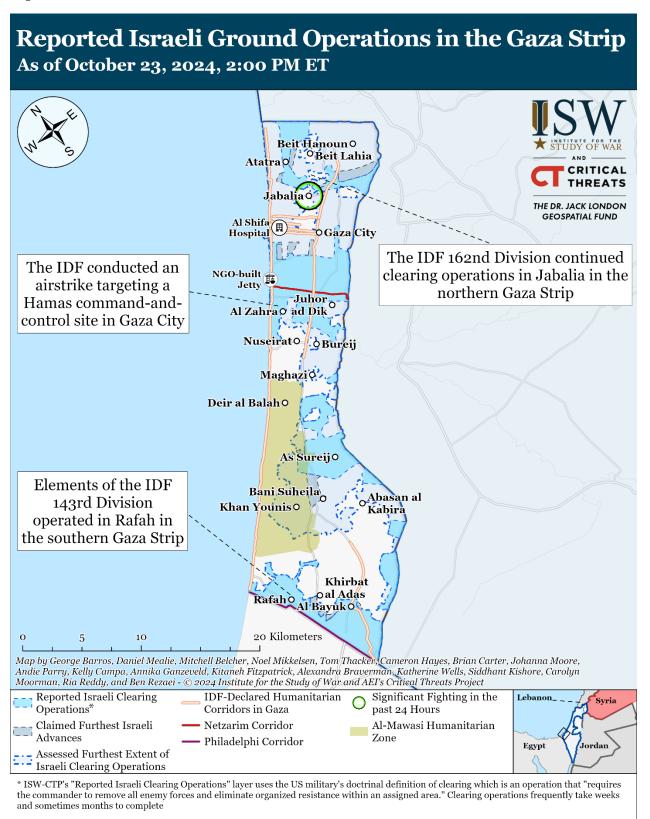
The IDF continued to engage Palestinian fighters in Jabalia in northern Gaza Strip since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 22. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired tandem-charge anti-tank rockets targeting two IDF vehicles operating in eastern Jabalia refugee camp.[34]

The World Health Organization (WHO) postponed the third and final phase of the polio vaccination campaign in the Gaza Strip, which was set to begin on October 23. The WHO said it postponed the campaign due to the ongoing Israeli clearing operations in the north and the subsequent evacuation of Palestinian civilians from the area.[35] International healthcare workers administered the first dose of the dual dose polio vaccine to Palestinian children across the Strip in September 2024.[36] The WHO provided second doses to Palestinian children in the central and southern Gaza Strip in October.[37] The WHO stated that ongoing Israeli operations in the northern Gaza Strip has created logistical and operational difficulties for healthcare workers.[38] The WHO aimed to vaccinate 119,279 children in the northern Gaza Strip in the final phase of the polio vaccination campaign across the Gaza Strip.

The IDF 252nd Division directed an airstrike targeting a building operated by several armed Palestinian fighters in the central Gaza Strip on October 23.[39] The IDF also conducted an airstrike targeting a Hamas command-and-control site in Gaza City.[40] The IDF reported that Hamas established the command-and-control site in what was the al Zahra School in Gaza City before the war. The IDF said that Hamas used this command-and-control site to plan attacks targeting Israeli forces in the area.[41] The IDF reported that it used precision munitions and intelligence to minimize civilian casualties.

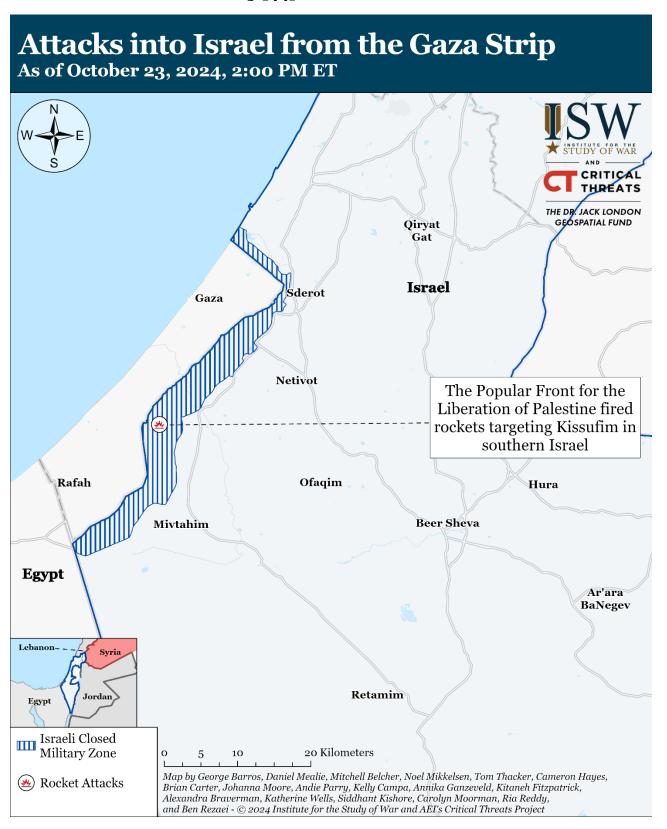
Elements of the IDF 143rd Division operated in Rafah in southern Gaza Strip on October 23.[42] The IDF identified several Palestinian fighters in Rafah and directed an airstrike that killed the

fighters.[43] The IDF observed secondary explosions following the airstrike indicating the presence of explosive materials at the site of the airstrike.



Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of October 23, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET Beit Hanoun O ^OBeit Lahia CTP-ISW's "Israeli Jabalia O Announced Evacuation THE DR. JACK LONDON GEOSPATIAL FUND Al Shifa Hospital Zones" layer shows Israeli OGaza City evacuation zones announced by the Israel NGO-built Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-Jetty ISW used IDF maps and Juhor 0 Al Zahra o ad Dik statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps Nuseirato OBureii cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone Maghazi 0 to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF Deir al Balaho began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 As Sureij o ET on X (Twitter) Abasan al Khan Younis O Lebanon-Khirbat oal Adas Al Bayuko Israeli Announced Evacuation Reported Israeli Clearing 10 Kilometers Operations* Zones Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel IDF-Declared Humanitarian Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Cameron Hayes, Brian Carter, Claimed Furthest Israeli Corridors in Gaza Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Advances Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Netzarim Corridor Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Rezaei - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's - Philadelphi Corridor Critical Threats Project * ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine fired rockets targeting Kissufim in southern Israel on October 23.[44]



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 cutoff on October 22. Israeli security forces arrested "a number of wanted individuals" throughout the West Bank on October 22 and 23.[45] Israeli security forces confiscated various undisclosed weapons.

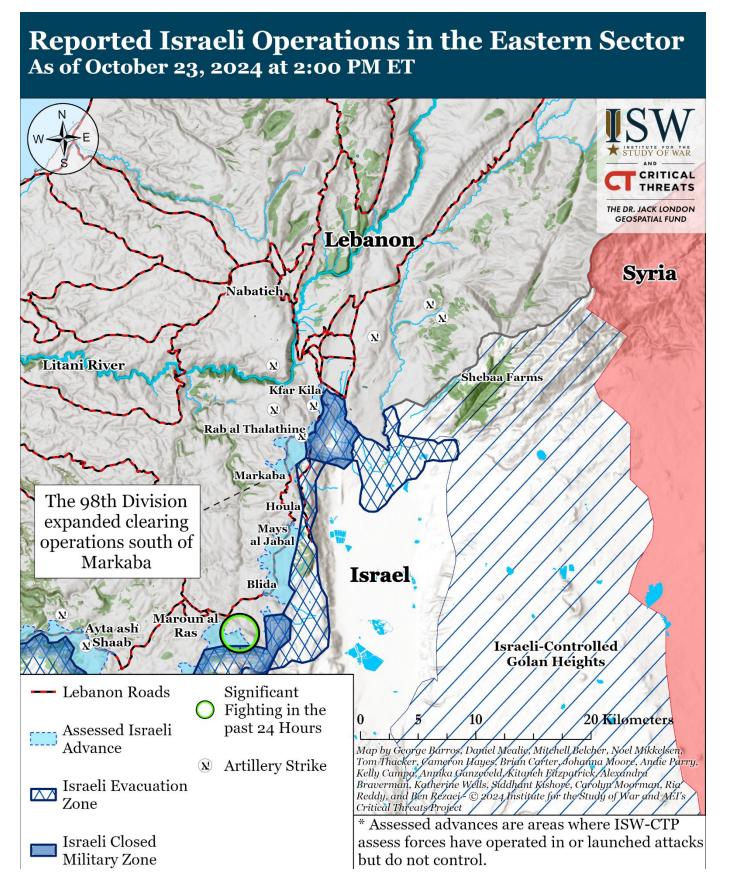
Northern Israel and Lebanon

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 98th Division continued clearing operations in southeastern Lebanon on October 23. Lebanese media reported artillery shelling around Taybeh and Kafr Kila.[46] Hezbollah claimed one rocket attack targeting Israeli forces on the outskirts of Taybeh.[47] The IDF 98th Division has operated in towns and villages adjacent to Taybeh, such as Kfar Kila, since the beginning of IDF ground operations in Lebanon.[48] Hezbollah claimed on October 22 that it engaged Israeli forces advancing towards Taybeh.[49] Lebanese media also reported artillery shelling around Yohmor, north of Taybeh.[50]

Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 23 showed tank tread tracks south of Markaba, indicating that Israeli forces operated in the area. Hezbollah launched six rocket attacks targeting forces operating between Odaisseh, Rab al Thalathine, and Markaba.[51] Hezbollah also launched two rocket attack targeting Israeli forces in Houla, south of Markaba.[52]

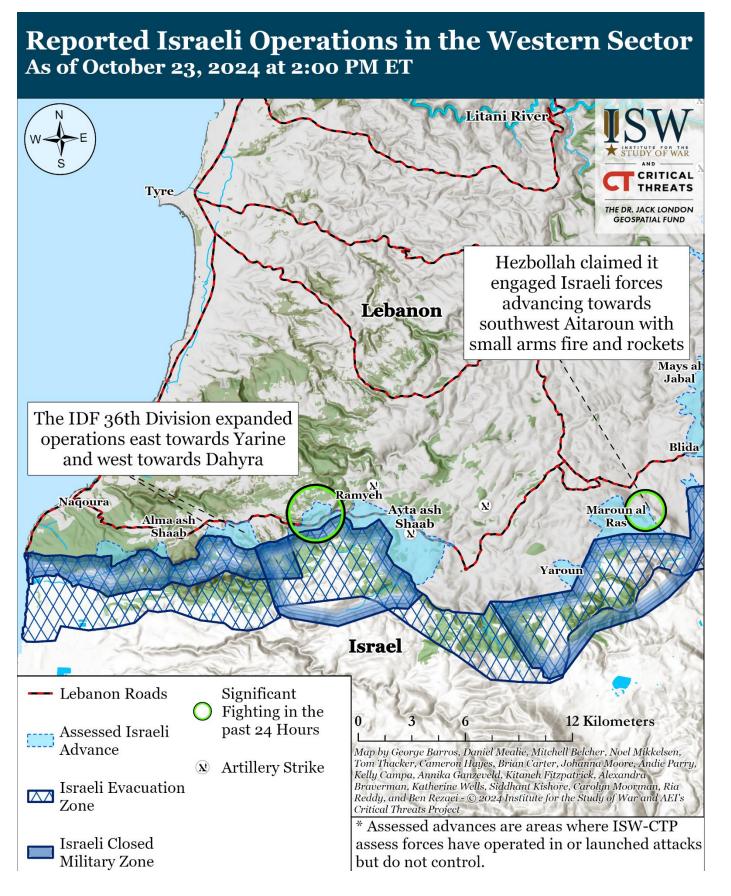


The IDF 36th Division expanded clearing operations in southern Lebanon on October 23.

The 36th Division directed airstrikes that killed over 20 Hezbollah fighters who posed a threat to Israeli forces operating in the area.[53] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 23 showed tank tracks advancing down a hill towards southeastern Aitaroun. Hezbollah claimed it engaged Israeli forces with small arms fire in southwestern Aitaroun, forcing Israeli forces to retreat.[54] Hezbollah claimed its fighters mortared Israeli forces as the IDF withdrew.

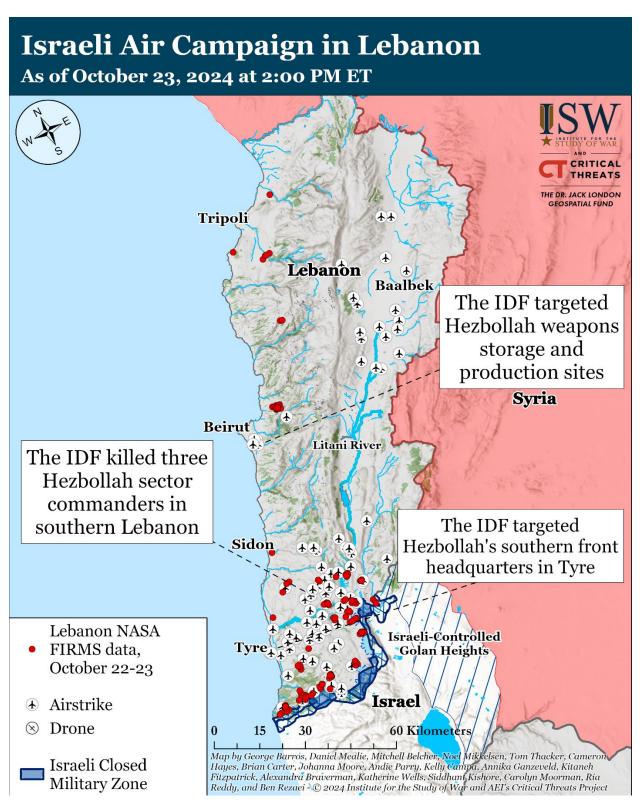
Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 23 showed Israeli tank tracks and destroyed infrastructure in northern Marwahin, indicating Israeli forces conducted clearing operations in the area. Hezbollah conducted two rocket attacks targeting Israeli forces on the outskirts of Ramiyeh.[55] Lebanese media reported artillery shelling around Hanine.[56]

Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 23 showed Israeli forces expanded clearing operations indications south of Yarine and west along Dahyra-Yarine road. Hezbollah claimed one rocket attack targeting Israeli forces on the outskirts of Dahyra.[57]



Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon As of October 23, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET THREATS THE DR. JACK LONDON GEOSPATIAL FUND Lebanon **Syria** Litani River Shebaa Farms Taybeh N Markaba Jabal Maroun al Ras Ayta ash Israeli-Controlled λShaab Golan Heights Israel Lebanon Roads Israeli Evacuation Warnings Assessed Israeli Advance 20 Kilometers 10 Significant Fighting in the Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Cameron Hayes, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annik<mark>a Ganzeveld</mark>, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Israeli Evacuation Zone past 24 Hours Braverman, K<mark>atherine Wells, Siddh</mark>ant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and B<mark>en Rezaei - © 2024 In</mark>stitute for the Stydy of Way and AET Artillery Strike Critical Threats Project Israeli Closed Military Zone * Assessed advances are areas where ISW-CTP assess forces have operated in or launched attacks but do not control.

The IDF Air Force continued to degrade Hezbollah's tactical-level leadership and command sites across Lebanon. The IDF struck and killed Hezbollah regional commanders for Jibchit, Jouaiyya, and Qana sectors of southern Lebanon in recent days.[58] Hezbollah tactical-level sector commanders organize attacks from their geographical areas targeting Israeli forces in southern Lebanon and northern Israel. The IDF Air Force also struck and killed Hezbollah air unit specialist on October 22 in Hermel, northern Lebanon.[59] The IDF struck three Hezbollah drone unit headquarters on October 22.[60] The IDF has targeted dozens Hezbollah drone unit assets over the last month.[61] Israel also targeted Hezbollah command and control sites in central Tyre city, southern Lebanon.[62] The IDF said that the sites included Hezbollah's southern front headquarters.[63] The IDF specified that its air campaign targeting headquarters in Tyre aims to "make it difficult" for Hezbollah to "restore its military capabilities."[64] The IDF also targeted several weapons depots and manufacturing sites in southern Beirut.[65]



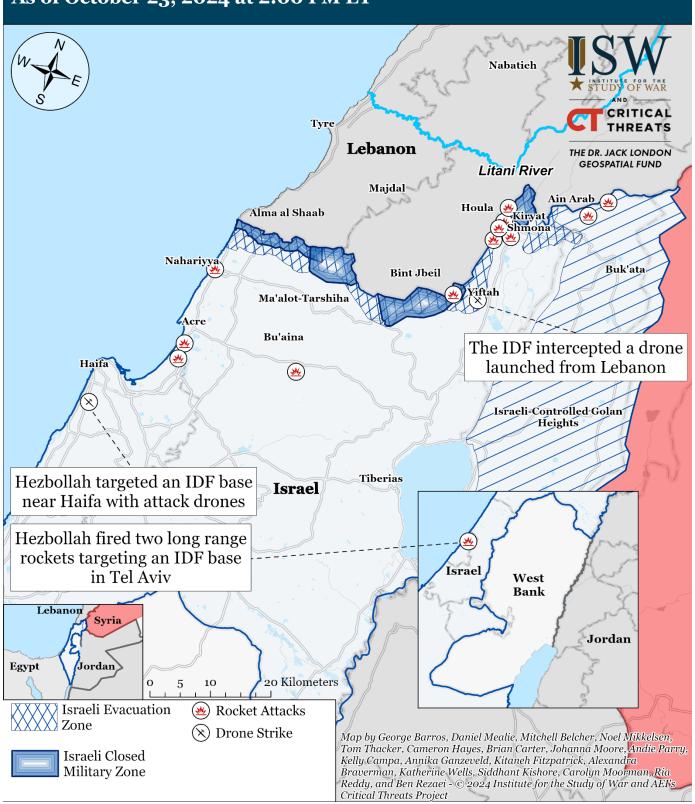
These maps illustrate individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. These maps depict strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on October 22 to 2:00pm ET on October 23. These maps are not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least 20 attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 22.[66] The IDF said that Hezbollah launched at least 90 rockets from Lebanon into Israel over the past day.[67] Nine Hezbollah attacks targeted IDF positions on the eastern side of the Israel-Lebanon border in Hezbollah's Nasr Unit area of operations.[68] Hezbollah conducted four rocket attacks targeting Israeli forces in Misgav Am, northeastern Israel.[69] Hezbollah similarly concentrated fire on Misgav Am on October 22.[70] Hezbollah fighters launched rockets targeting Israeli forces in Margaliot, which is adjacent to the Lebanese town of Markaba. Israeli forces are conducting clearing operations in Markaba.[71] Hezbollah's attacks on IDF elements aim to degrade the IDF's ability to conduct effective ground and air operations, though these attacks appear ineffective.

Hezbollah also launched rockets targeting IDF bases and Israeli military-industrial sites. Hezbollah fired long-range rockets targeting an IDF signals intelligence base in the suburbs of Tel Aviv and drones at an IDF base south of Haifa.[72] Hezbollah fired rockets targeting a military-industrial site northeast of Haifa.[73]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

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



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Local Syrian and Axis of Resistance-affiliated sources reported that Iranian-backed militants launched rockets targeting US forces at Conoco Mission Support Site in Deir ez Zor, Syria, on October 22.[74] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify these reports. CENTCOM has not at this time issued a statement about any ongoing live-fire exercises in northeastern Syria.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has claimed seven attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 22. The claims include the following:

- A drone attack targeting an unspecified "vital target" in the Jordan Valley.[75]
- Three drone attacks targeting unspecified "vital target[s]" in the Golan Heights.[76]
- Two drone attacks targeting unspecified "vital target[s]" in Eilat.[77]
- A drone attack targeting an unspecified "vital target" in central Israel.[78]

The Israeli Air Force intercepted two drones that were "launched from the east" over Israeli territorial waters near Eilat on October 22.[79] The Israeli Air Force separately intercepted a drone that was "launched from the east" in Syrian airspace on October 22.[80]

Iraqi Acting Parliament Speaker Mohsen al Mandalawi met with his Lebanese counterpart, Nabih Berri, in Beirut on October 23.[81] Mandalawi claimed that Israeli operations in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip threaten global security and may generate "devastating" economic conditions in the Middle East.[82] Mandalawi called on Islamic and Arab parliaments to support the Iraqi parliament's diplomatic efforts to end the October 7 War.[83]

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei emphasized the importance of resisting and confronting Israel in a speech in Tehran on October 23.[84] Khamenei stated that the war in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and the West Bank are pivotal in changing the "fate and history of the region."[85]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed Passive Defense Organization head Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali as special assistant to the president in passive defense matters on October 22.[86] The Passive Defense Organization is an Iranian regime institution responsible for defending Iran's civilian, military, cyber, and nuclear infrastructure from attacks. The organization oversees cyber warfare, coordinates responses to natural disasters, and enhances national resilience across critical sectors like banking, energy, and nuclear security.[87] Jalali will enhance interagency collaboration and promote a culture of passive defense across Iran in his new role.[88]

A US-based Middle East outlet, citing unspecified Israeli and American security sources, reported on October 23 that in recent days the United States and Israel have reached an "understanding" regarding Israel's retaliatory strike on Iran.[89] The

reported "understanding" stipulates that if Israel refrains from targeting Iran's oil industries and nuclear power infrastructure before the US general election on November 5, then the United States will lift its suspension on certain arms and munitions shipments to Israel. The United States will also reportedly increase its attacks on Houthi weapons depots in Yemen as part of the deal. The report further claimed that the Pentagon is considering sending a second THAAD anti-missile battery system to Israel. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify this report.

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