Iran Update



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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.

Hamas is seeking Russian support in pressuring the Palestinian Authority (PA) to negotiate over a national unity government with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.[1] Hamas Political Bureau member Mousa Abu Marzouk met with Deputy Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Mikhail Bogdanov in Moscow on October 23 to request that Russia pressure PA President Mahmoud Abbas to negotiate with Hamas over a national unity government.

Hamas is likely responding to the Emirati-proposed plan for post-war governance in the Gaza Strip.[2] The plan would involve appointing a reformed PA led by an independent prime minister to administer the Gaza Strip, leaving Hamas excluded from post-war governance. Negotiating a national unity government with the PA, on the other hand, would allow Hamas to retain a role in post-war governance.

Hamas would likely exploit the establishment of a national unity government to gradually expand its control and influence in the Gaza Strip.

US and Israeli officials will resume negotiations in Qatar on a ceasefire-hostage agreement for the Gaza Strip in the coming days.[3] US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Qatari Foreign Affairs Minister Mohamad bin Abdulrahman al Thani announced the plans on October 24. Al Thani added that Qatar has reengaged Hamas since Israel killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.[4] A Hamas delegation separately traveled to Egypt on October 24.[5] Senior Hamas official Khalil al Hayya reiterated Hamas' maximalist negotiating position on October 18.[6]

PA President Mahmoud Abbas has "poured" forces into Tubas in the West Bank in recent weeks in order to crack down on the Palestinian militias there.[7] This PA effort is meant to diminish the influence of the militias in the northern West Bank in response to Iranian efforts to empower the militias and undermine the PA. PA forces have arrested at least three Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighters in Tubas during this period.[8] Residents have reported violent clashes between PA forces and militias there in recent weeks as well.[9] Palestinian militias, including Hamas and PIJ, have accused the PA of serving Israeli interests and called on militants to confront the PA forces in Tubas.[10] The PA operation into Tubas came as Israeli forces conducted their own campaign in August and September 2024 to degrade Palestinian militia across the West Bank in recent months.[11]

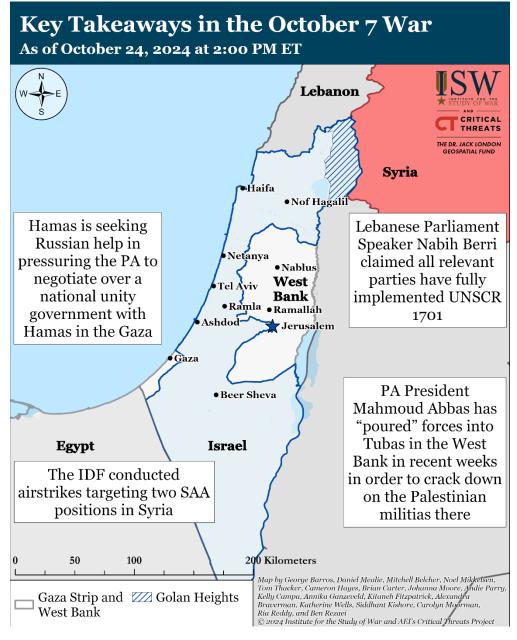
Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said that all relevant parties have fully implemented UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701, which prohibits Lebanese Hezbollah military activity in southern Lebanon. Berri's assertion ignores the extensive, decades-long Hezbollah efforts to entrench itself militarily in southern Lebanon. CTP-ISW has previously argued that the UN Interim Force in Lebanon has largely failed to undertake its assigned tasks, which includes enforcing UNSCR 1701.[12] Berri reportedly made the assertion that all relevant parties are adhering to UNSCR 1701 during a meeting with senior US official Amos Hochstein in Beirut on October 21.[13] Hochstein has reportedly suggested amending UNSCR 1701 by expanding the deployment of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to southern Lebanon.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati separately announced on October 24 that his government plans to recruit more LAF troops and possibly deploy 8,000 soldiers to southern Lebanon.[14] The LAF currently has about 5,000 personnel in southern Lebanon.[15] It is unclear whether the 8,000 number is the envisioned end strength for the LAF in southern Lebanon or would be in addition to the 5,000 soldiers already there. Increasing the LAF force size is unlikely to improve the enforcement of UNSCR 1701, however, so long as the Lebanese state and LAF are unwilling to prevent Hezbollah activity in the area.

Key Takeaways:

• **Gaza Strip:** Hamas is seeking Russian support in pressuring the PA to negotiate over a national unity government with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Hamas is responding to an Emirati-proposed plan for post-war governance in the Gaza Strip, which would marginalize Hamas.

- **Gaza Strip:** US and Israeli officials will resume negotiations in Qatar on a ceasefire-hostage agreement for the Gaza Strip in the coming days. Qatar has reengaged Hamas since Israel killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.
- **West Bank:** PA President Mahmoud Abbas has "poured" forces into Tubas in the West Bank to crack down on Iranian-backed militias there. The PA effort is meant to diminish the influence of the militias in the northern West Bank.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said that all relevant parties are adhering to UNSCR 1701, which prohibits Lebanese Hezbollah activity in southern Lebanon. Berri ignored the decades-long Hezbollah efforts to entrench itself militarily there.



<u>Gaza Strip</u>

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 24.[16] The IDF 401st Armored Brigade killed several Palestinian fighters and confiscated weapons, including Kalashnikov-style rifles and explosives.[17] The IDF stated that it detained over 200 militia fighters.[18] The IDF has continued to engage Palestinian fighters in Jabalia in northern Gaza Strip since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 23. Hamas detonated improvised explosive devices (IED) and fired thermobaric rockets targeting Israeli forces in two locations in Jabalia refugee camp.[19]

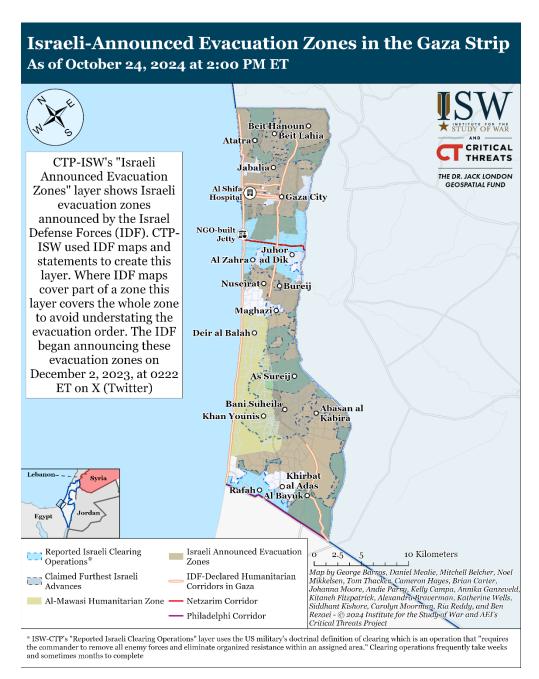
Palestinian militias conducted at least two attacks targeting Israeli forces around the Netzarim Corridor on October 24.[20] x

The IDF 252nd Division continued operations in the central Gaza Strip on October 24.[21] The IDF 454th Artillery Brigade launched a raid targeting Palestinian militia infrastructure in the central Gaza Strip on October 24.[22] A local Palestinian report stated that Israeli armor conducted clearing operations southeast of al Bureij camp on October 24.[23] The National Resistance Brigades mortared Israeli forces conducting clearing operations southeast of al Bureij.[24] Local Palestinian media claimed that the IDF also operated in eastern and northern Nuseirat, citing reports of IDF gunfire in the area.[25]

The IDF conducted an airstrike targeting a Hamas command-and-control site in Nuseirat.[26] The IDF reported that Hamas established the command-and-control site in the former al Shuhada a Nuseirat School. The IDF stated that Hamas used this site to plan attacks targeting Israeli forces in the area.[27] The IDF reported that it took several steps to minimize civilian casualties.[28] Al Awda Hospital stated that at least 17 were killed and 42 wounded in the airstrike.[29]

The IDF 143rd Division continued operating in the southern Gaza Strip on October 24.[30] A local Palestinian journalist reported that the IDF operated between Khan Younis and Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.[31] The journalist reported artillery shelling along the al Naseer and Meraj Streets between Khan Younis and Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.[32] "Hundreds of families" have been displaced in those areas as a result of IDF activities in the southern Gaza Strip on October 24, according to a local Palestinian journalist.[33]





West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

• Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli security services arrested a Palestinian individual who has suspected involvement in "terrorist activities" in Jaffa, Israel, on October 24.[34] The IDF acted on intelligence that the individual was planning to conduct a terror attack. The IDF stated the individual was residing in Israel illegally.

The IDF foiled an attempted terror attack near the Avnei Hefetz settlement in the northern West Bank on October 24.[35] The IDF found and disabled two explosive devices near a water well during a routine search.[36] The IDF did not report any casualties from the incident.[37] No group has claimed responsibility for planting the explosives, however, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) flag was found near the well.[38] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent noted that unidentified individuals detonated a similar IED targeting Israeli forces searching the same well in August.[39]

The IDF detained several "terror suspects" in Nablus on October 24.[40] The IDF separately conducted several detainments in al Fawwar, Hebron.

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in one location in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's data cutoff on October 23.[41] The Palestinian Mujahideen Movement detonated IEDs targeting an Israeli military vehicle in Nablus on October 24.



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

IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi said on October 23 that the IDF could reach a decisive end to the war.[42] Halevi said that Israel has degraded Hezbollah's senior leadership "in a very thorough way." [43] The IDF recently confirmed the death of Hashem Safi ed Din—the presumed successor to Hassan Nasrallah—in an airstrike on Beirut three weeks prior. CTP-ISW

previously noted that Hashem Safi ed Din's confirmed death will impact Hezbollah's political succession but will not further affect Hezbollah's immediate tactical decisions.[44]

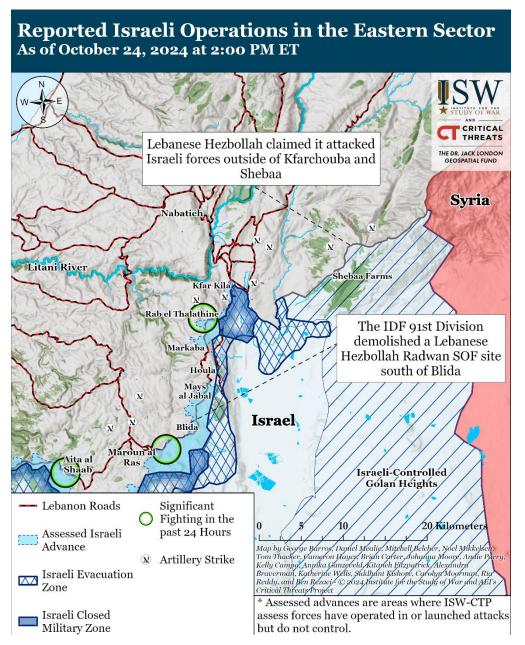


Hezbollah claimed that it has continued to engage the IDF 210th Division in Hasbaya District.[45] Hezbollah previously claimed on October 23 that Israeli forces attempted to advance into the outskirts of Kfarchouba and Shebaa towns.[46] Hezbollah stated that it attacked Israeli positions with unspecified weapons.[47] Lebanese sources reported IDF artillery targeting Kfarchouba and Shebaa on October 24.[48]

The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in southeastern Lebanon on October 24.[49] The 98th Division located weapons depots containing hundreds of anti-tank missiles and mortar shells.[50] Israeli forces directed airstrikes that killed several militants in the area.[51] Hezbollah stated that it attacked advancing Israeli forces between Odaisseh, Rab Thalatheen, and Taybeh with small arms and rockets and caused the forces to retreat.[52] Hezbollah also fired anti-tank guided missiles targeting Israeli armor northwest of Odaisseh and rockets targeting IDF personnel on the eastern outskirts of Markaba.[53]

The IDF 91st Division continued clearing operations in southeastern Lebanon on October 24. The IDF 769th Infantry Brigade and 91st Division engineers destroyed an underground Radwan special operations forces (SOF) complex on the outskirts of Blida.[54] Israeli forces, including the 769th Brigade and the Shaldag SOF unit, had previously located the complex during covert raids into southern Lebanon over the past year.[55] Geolocated footage previously showed Israeli forces clearing the buildings on October 20.[56] The 769th Infantry Brigade also raided military buildings,

including a Hezbollah weapons warehouse in a hotel.[57] Israeli forces located hundreds of anti-tank launchers and long-range missiles that Hezbollah has launched towards northern Israel in recent months.[58] The 91st Division killed about 20 Hezbollah fighters and located large quantities of weapons, including rocket launchers, mortars, and ammunition.[59] Hezbollah claimed that Israeli forces attempted to advance towards eastern neighborhoods in Houla on October 23.[60]



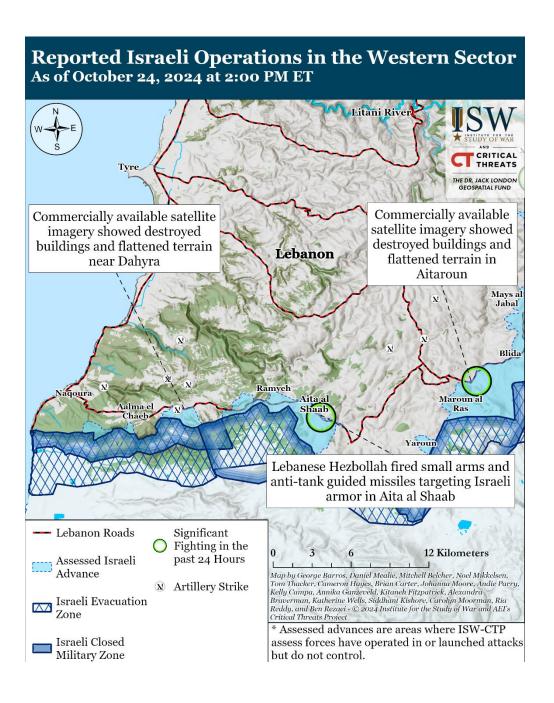
The IDF 36th Division expanded clearing operations in Aitaroun and Aita al Shaab on October 24.[61] The 36th Division located and destroyed a number of weapons depots, a rocket launcher, and improvised explosive devices.[62] Hezbollah claimed on October 23 that Israeli forces attempted to advance towards Aitaroun's town center from the east and from the west.[63] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 24 showed flattened terrain and destroyed buildings in Aitaroun, indicating that Israeli forces operated in the town. Commercially

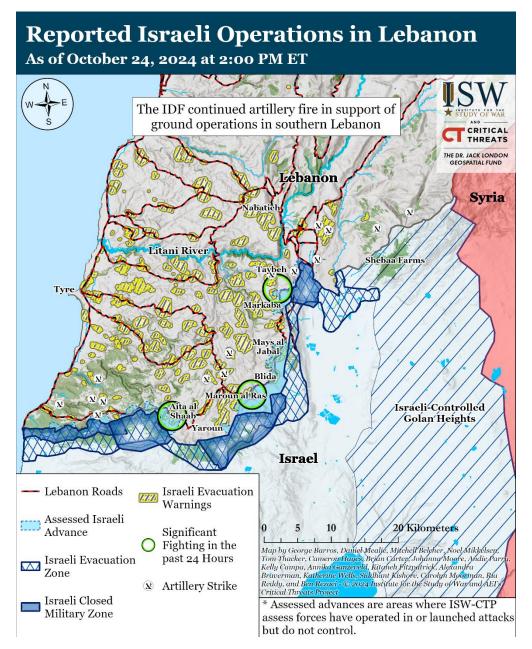
available satellite imagery captured on October 24 also showed flattened terrain and destroyed buildings in the eastern outskirts, indicating that Israeli forces operated in the eastern outskirts of Aitaroun. Hezbollah fired mortars and rockets targeting IDF personnel east of Aitaroun. [64]

Hezbollah fighters fired small arms and several anti-tank guided missiles targeting Israeli armor operating in Aita al Shaab.[65] Hezbollah claimed that it killed or wounded several IDF personnel.[66]

The IDF 146th Division continued to locate and destroy Hezbollah infrastructure and weapons during clearing operations in southwestern Lebanon on October 24. The 146th Division located dozens of Kalashnikov rifles and shoulder-fired missiles inside a house. [67] The 646th Paratroopers Brigade (Res.) conducted operations cleared areas of Hezbollah fighters and destroyed Hezbollah infrastructure, weapons, and several Hezbollah positions. [68] Israeli forces located an underground residence complex that Radwan SOF intended to use to conduct ground attacks into Israel. [69] Israeli forces found bunk beds, storage cabinets, food, weapons, and launching positions inside the complex. [70] The 646th Paratroopers Brigade also located four munitions warehouses containing Kalashnikov rifles, ammunition, rockets, mortars, shoulder-fired missiles, RPGs, and advanced anti-tank missiles. [71]

Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 24 showed flattened terrain and destroyed buildings in Dahyra and eastern Matmoura, indicating that Israeli forces operated in the area. Hezbollah fired rockets targeting Israeli forces on the outskirts of Dahyra.[72]



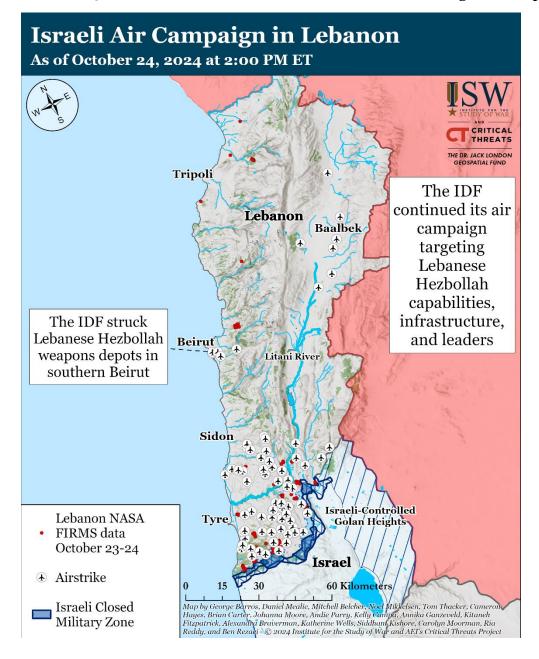


The IDF continued its air campaign to degrade Hezbollah's capabilities and infrastructure on October 24. The IDF Air Force struck over 160 Hezbollah targets across Lebanon, including launchers, fighters, military infrastructure, and weapon depots.[73] The IDF said it struck a number of Hezbollah's weapons storage and manufacturing positions in the southern suburbs of Beirut.[74] The IDF issued warnings to residents of Burj al Barajneh and Hadath to evacuate at least 500 meters from Hezbollah infrastructure prior to attacking the area.[75] Lebanon's National News Agency reported that the IDF conducted a total of 17 strikes that destroyed six buildings in the southern suburbs of Beirut.[76] Lebanon's National News Agency claimed that the IDF strikes were "the most violent" to hit Beirut's southern suburbs since the war started.[77]

The IDF continued to target Hezbollah's drone unit, Unit 127, on October 24. The IDF said it killed a Unit 127 fighter in a targeted strike in southern Lebanon.[78] The fighter had launched a

drone targeting Israel.[79] The IDF strikes targeting Hezbollah's drone unit and drone production infrastructure are part of its response to Hezbollah's October 13 attack on an IDF base in Binyamina, Israel, that killed four Israeli soldiers.[80]

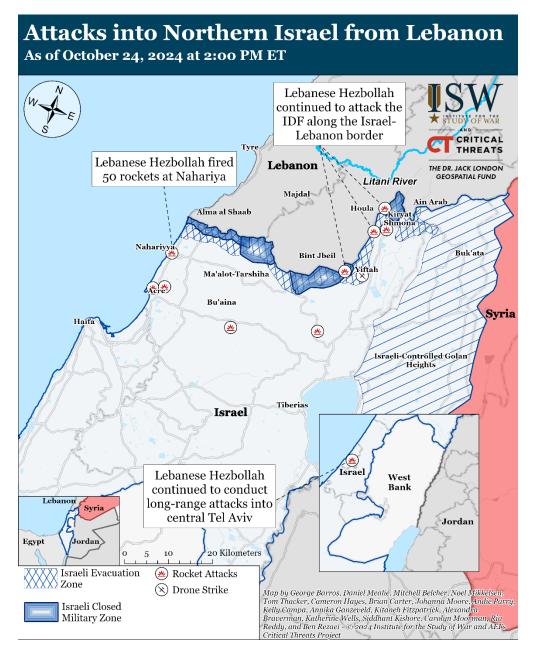
The LAF claimed that three LAF soldiers were killed in an IDF airstrike on a town near the Israel-Lebanon border.[81] The IDF is investigating the reports and stated that it does not intend to harm any Lebanese soldiers.[82] US Defense Secretary Austin Lloyd expressed concerns about reports of Israeli strikes against the LAF and stressed the importance of taking steps to ensure the safety of LAF soldiers and UN peacekeepers during his call with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.[83] This incident marks the third Israeli strike that targeted LAF positions since October 1.[84]



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 23 to 2:00pm ET on October 24. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah has conducted at least eighteen attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 23.[85] The IDF reported that Hezbollah launched at least 120 rockets on October 24.[86] The IDF reported that Hezbollah launched at least 50 of the 120 total rockets at Nahariya on October 24.[87] Hezbollah injured at least two Israelis in its attack on Nahariya.[88] Hezbollah continued to target civilian sites in Kiryat Shmona, Safed, Karmiel, and Nahariya.[89] The IDF intercepted at least two Hezbollah drones on October 24.[90] Hezbollah continued targeted Israeli forces along the Lebanon-Israel border in five separate incidents.[91]

Hezbollah continued to conduct long-range attacks into central Israel, including one attack on Tel Aviv and two on Haifa.[92] Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem said on October 15 that Hezbollah would initiate a new phase of the war designed to inflict high casualties on Israel.[93] Hezbollah's Operations Room also noted on October 17 that Hezbollah would "escalate" its attacks in the coming days.[94] Hezbollah has since expanded the scope and pace of operations into Israel, including by targeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's home in Caesarea with an attack drone on October 19 and conducting multiple attacks targeting Tel Aviv in central Israel.[95]



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 October 23. The claims include the following:

- A drone attack targeting an unspecified military target in northern Israel[96]
- A drone attack targeting an unspecified "vital target" in northern Israel[97]
- A drone attack targeting an unspecified "vital target" in the Jordan Valley[98]

The IDF likely conducted airstrikes targeting two Syrian Arab Army (SAA) sites in Syria on October 22.[99] The airstrikes struck SAA sites in western Homs and Kafr Sousa neighborhood in Damascus. The Syrian Defense Ministry stated that the Israeli airstrikes killed one SAA personnel and injured seven others.[100]

Iranian state and Houthi media reported that the United States and United Kingdom conducted airstrikes targeting the Hudaydah airport twice overnight between October 23-24.[101] Anti-Houthi media reported that a US airstrike targeted a Houthi military tunnel in the Hudaydah airport.[102] US Central Command (CENTCOM) has not acknowledged the strike at the time of writing.

Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi vowed to continue missile and naval operations against Israel in his weekly speech on October 24.[103] Abdulmalik claimed that Israel wants to control the security of Lebanon. Abdulmalik reiterated that Iranian-backed Iraqi groups have increased their "position." The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has increased its rate of claimed attacks targeting Israel since mid-September 2024.[104] Abdulmalik praised the recent Hezbollah attack targeting the residence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Caesarea, Israel, on October 19.[105]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met with numerous foreign leaders on the sidelines of the two-day BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, on October 23 and 24. Pezeshkian met with the following leaders:

- **Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.** Pashinyan called for increasing economic, commercial, and energy cooperation with Iran.[106]
- **Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko.** Pezeshkian claimed that US sanctions are ineffective and emphasized that Iran can expand relations with Belarus as it has with Russia.[107] Lukashenko called for greater economic cooperation between Iran and Belarus and emphasized that the completion of the International North-South Transport Corridor will increase Iranian-Belarusian commercial exchanges.[108]
- **Bolivian President Luis Arce Catacora.** Catacora expressed willingness to expand cooperation with Iran and expressed concern about the war in the Middle East.[109]
- Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi. Sisi and Pezeshkian discussed efforts to stop the October 7 War.[110] Egypt—along with the United States and Qatar—has mediated ceasefire-hostage negotiations between Israel and Hamas throughout the war. Sisi called for greater understanding between Iran and Egypt.[111] Iran and Egypt do not have formal diplomatic ties, although Iran has signaled its willingness to restore relations with Egypt in recent months. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi recently met with Sisi in Cairo on October 17.[112]
- Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan. Nahyan and Pezeshkian emphasized the need to stop Israeli operations in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.[113] Pezeshkian also reiterated Iran's territorial claims to the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa islands in the Persian Gulf.[114]

- Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Pezeshkian reiterated that Iran will give a "decisive and unbelievable response" to Israel if Israel attacks Iran.[115]
- **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.** Pezeshkian claimed that Iran's membership in BRICS can help "reduce unilateralism" and decrease the effectiveness of international sanctions.[116]
- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. Pezeshkian claimed that "independent" countries can create a "new world order."[117] Iran has historically tried to use multilateral institutions, such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, to encourage the formation of a "multilateral" world order to confront US "unilateralism." Maduro called for Iran and Venezuela to increase energy cooperation.[118]

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