

Iran Update



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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.

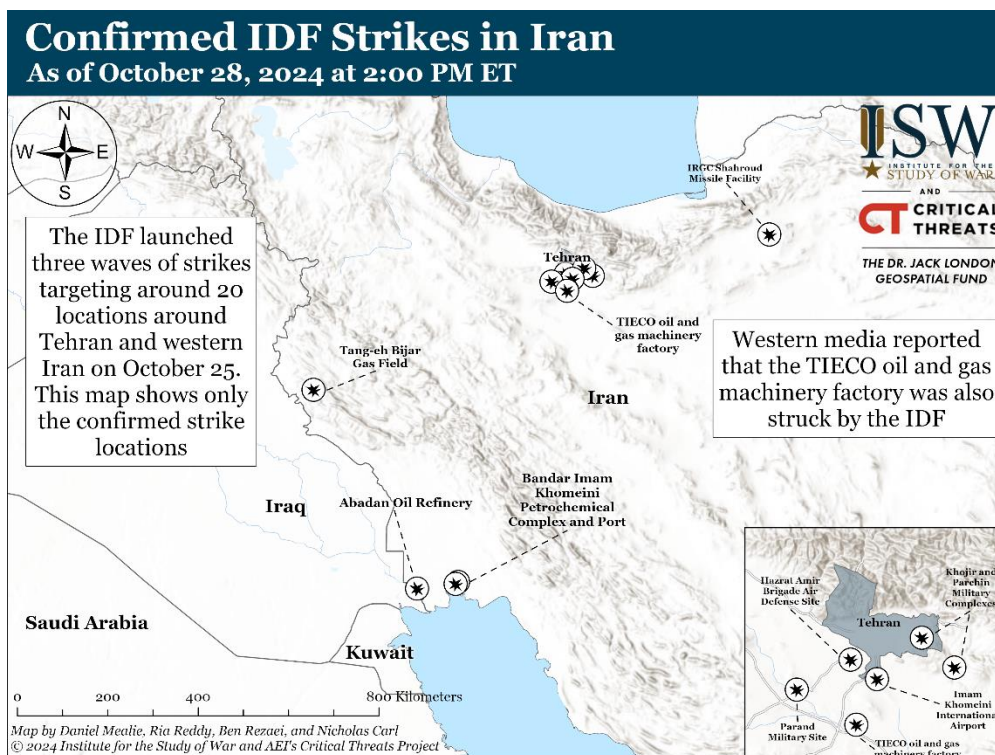
Senior Israeli officials stated that Israel’s retaliatory strikes on Iran on October 25 “severely damaged” Iran’s air defense capabilities, which would make Iran more vulnerable to future attacks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) strikes “severely damaged” Iran’s air defense and missile production capabilities.[1] Unspecified sources within the Israeli defense establishment reported that Israel’s attack destroyed all of Iran’s long-range surface-to-air missile batteries and long-range detection radars, leaving Iran with only domestically produced short-range defense batteries.[2] Western reporting has confirmed damage at a storage unit within the Abadan oil refinery in Khuzestan province and a TIECO oil and gas machinery factory in Tehran province, among others, following the IDF strikes.[3] Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called the strikes on Iran the most significant IDF Air Force operation since the Six-Day War in 1967, emphasizing that their impact represents “a change in the balance of power.”[4] Gallant stated that the damage from the strikes puts Iran at a “huge

disadvantage” when it comes to future Israeli attacks.[5]

Unspecified Iranian sources told Israeli media that Israel also targeted and breached Iranian radar systems in Syria before launching its attack on Iran.[6] The sources noted that the radar screens in Iran’s defense systems “froze” before the IDF strikes.[7] CTP-ISW previously reported that the IDF likely targeted Iran’s early detection network in Syria and Iraq that would have given Iran advanced notice of the incoming Israeli attack.[8]

Constrained Russian manufacturing capacity for new ground-based air defense systems and Russia’s demand for these systems in Ukraine may limit Iran’s ability to acquire new S-300s in the near term. CTP-ISW previously reported that Israeli strikes in Iran have targeted four S-300 air defense systems in Iran.[9] Israeli sources reported that Iran had only four S-300 batteries, suggesting that Iran does not have any functional S-300 batteries right now.[10] The Russian-made S-300 is the most advanced air defense system that Iran operates.

Senior Iranian defense and political officials are downplaying the extent of the strike’s damage while simultaneously threatening a response.[11] Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh claimed on October 28 that the Israeli attack caused only “minor” damage that Iran has since repaired.[12]



Jaish al Adl—a Baloch Salafi-jihadi group—killed ten Iranian Law Enforcement

Command (LEC) officers in an attack on a police patrol unit in Taftan County, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on October 26.^[13] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces regional headquarters responsible for Sistan and Baluchistan Province “destroyed” the team responsible for the attack on October 27.^[14] The IRGC Ground Forces regional headquarters reported that its forces killed four Jaish al Adl fighters and arrested four additional fighters. IRGC Ground Forces troops injured an unspecified number of fighters as they attempted to withdraw. This activity is part of a general increase in anti-regime militancy in southeastern Iran since December 2023.^[15]

Mossad head David Barnea met with CIA Director Bill Burns and Qatari Prime Minister Mohammad bin Abdulrahman al Thani in Doha on October 27 and 28 to continue ceasefire-hostage negotiations.^[16] Israeli media reported that mediators attempted to combine a “small” Egyptian proposal with a comprehensive, multi-stage US-Qatar settlement.^[17] CTP-ISW has not seen the details of this US-Qatar settlement. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi publicly proposed an initial two-day ceasefire in which four Israeli hostages would be exchanged with an unidentified number of Palestinian prisoners.^[18] This would be followed by 10 days of further negotiations. Sisi’s proposed plan bears a resemblance to the proposal of Egyptian General Intelligence Service head Hassan Rashad on October 22 for a “small” ceasefire-hostage deal that would facilitate negotiations for a more comprehensive ceasefire-hostage deal.^[19] A Palestinian source close to the negotiations told Reuters that Hamas would “listen” to new offers but remains committed to achieving a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.^[20] Hamas likely believes that it can survive and recover in the Gaza Strip by waiting out the Israelis, making it unclear why a smaller ceasefire-hostage deal would facilitate successful talks.^[21]

An Israeli source told Israeli media on October 27 that Netanyahu is willing to conclude the IDF operations in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon in exchange for a diplomatic resolution that guarantees Israel’s war aims are achieved.^[22] Israeli media reported that Israeli officials intend to host a follow-up summit soon to continue negotiations, with the involvement of Egyptian Intelligence chief Hassan Rashad, and potentially Hamas.^[23]

Hamas has attempted to coerce Palestinian civilians against leaving the northern Gaza Strip since IDF operations in Jabalia resumed on October 6, including by shooting civilians in the legs. The IDF said that civilian evacuations have taken longer than expected due to Hamas physically preventing Palestinians from leaving the north, including by shooting some civilians in the legs.^[24] The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson similarly said on October 23 that Hamas is physically assaulting Palestinian civilians evacuating Jabalia to discourage them from evacuating the area.^[25] Israeli media reported on October 28 that 50,000 Palestinian civilians from the northern Gaza Strip have evacuated south since the IDF began clearing operations in Jabalia on October 6.^[26] The IDF has repeatedly warned civilians to travel to al Mawasi humanitarian zone in the southern Gaza Strip and expanded the humanitarian zone eastward on October 26, likely to accommodate an increased flow of internally displaced Palestinians from the northern Gaza Strip.^[27]

The US Treasury Secretary and seven of her foreign counterparts warned Israel that its decision to withhold payments from Israel to the Palestinian Authority risks an economic collapse in the West Bank that would be detrimental to Israeli security interests.^[28] Israel must approve an extension to allow Palestinian banks in the West Bank to maintain ties with Israeli banks by October 31. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and seven foreign counterparts wrote a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on October 25 and warned that Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's decision to not approve the extension may lead to the collapse of the Palestinian economy.^[29] Smotrich has threatened to withhold his approval to extend a waiver that allows payments from Israel to the Palestinian Authority for the import of food, water, electricity, and other services in the West Bank.^[30] The restriction on the extension would cut Palestinian banks off from over \$13 billion in trade with Israel, thus "damaging Israel's economy and exacerbating an already dire economic situation in the West Bank," according to the letter.^[31] Yellen and her counterparts also added that the collapse of the Palestinian economy would threaten Israeli security interests in the region.^[32] Smotrich has so far refused to renew the waiver but has until October 31 to do so.^[33] US officials told Axios that the Biden administration recently told Israel that it had determined that Palestinian banks met Smotrich's conditions for renewal.^[34]

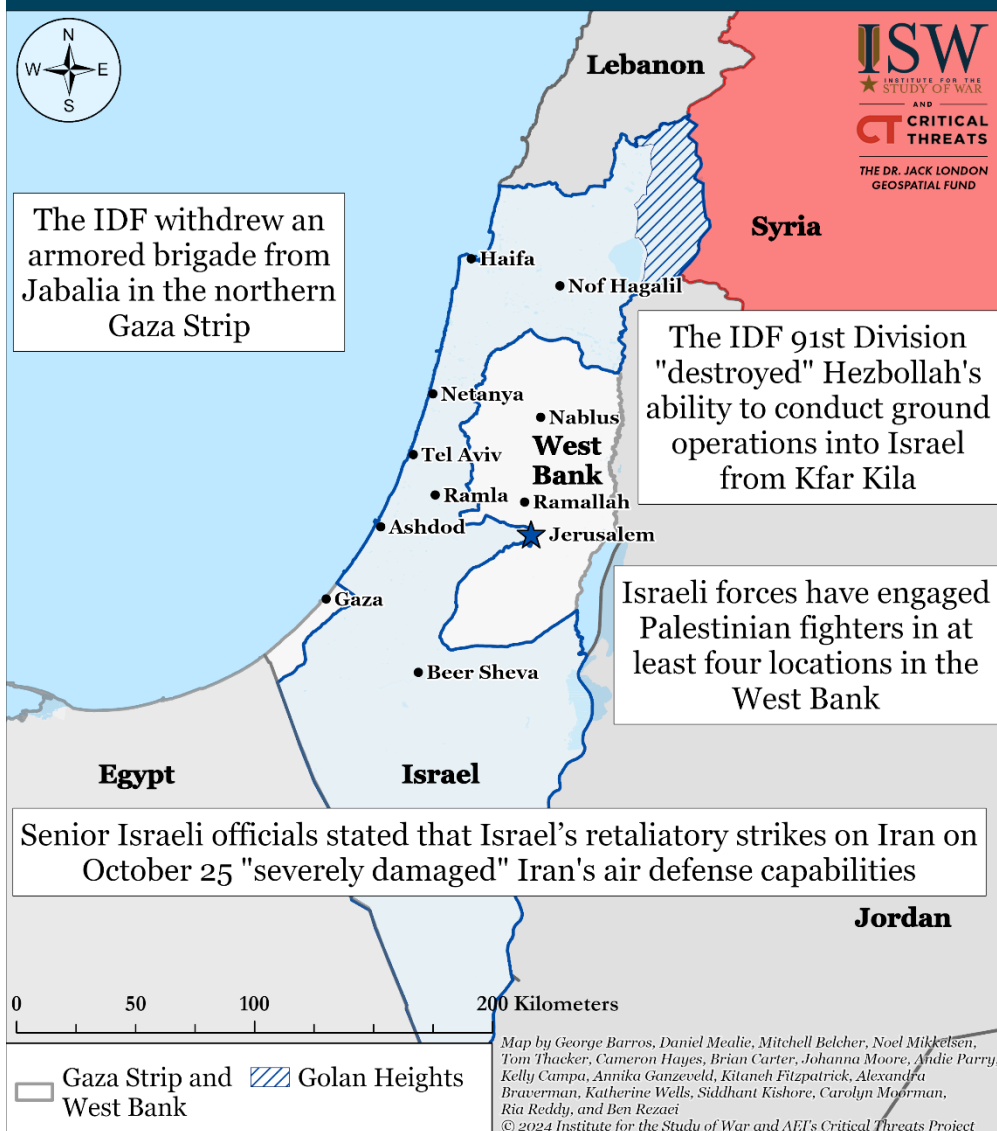
A Yemeni journalist reported that five Houthi fighters died in southern Lebanon fighting alongside Hezbollah, suggesting that Houthi fighters are embedded within Hezbollah there.^[35] A Yemeni journalist reported on October 26 that five Houthi fighters died in southern Lebanon fighting alongside Hezbollah.^[36] The Houthi fighters killed in southern Lebanon are from Saada Governorate in Yemen. Houthis from Saada Governorate are often given preferential treatment due to their close family ties and long-time service within the Houthi movement.^[37] Fighters from Saada, given their loyalty, would be the most likely choices for important foreign missions like advising Hezbollah.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran:** Senior Israeli officials stated that Israel's retaliatory strikes on Iran on October 25 "severely damaged" Iran's air defense capabilities, which would make Iran more vulnerable to future attacks. Constrained Russian manufacturing capacity for new ground-based air defense systems and Russia's demand for these systems in Ukraine may limit Iran's ability to acquire new S-300s in the near term. Some Israeli strikes targeted Iran's S-300s on October 25.
- **Gaza Strip:** Mossad head David Barnea met with CIA Director Bill Burns and Qatari Prime Minister Mohammad bin Abdulrahman al Thani in Doha on October 27 and 28 to continue ceasefire-hostage negotiations.
- **West Bank:** The US Treasury Secretary and seven of her foreign counterparts warned Israel that its decision to withhold payments from Israel to the Palestinian Authority risks an economic collapse in the West Bank that would be detrimental to Israeli security interests.
- **Yemen:** A Yemeni journalist reported that five Houthi fighters died in southern Lebanon fighting alongside Hezbollah, suggesting that Houthi fighters are embedded within Hezbollah there.

Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of October 28, 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 continued clearing operations in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on October 28. Israeli forces killed dozens of Palestinian fighters with the support of the IDF Air Force.[38] Israeli forces also investigated and destroyed underground shafts and located large quantities of weapons.[39] Israeli media reported that the IDF plans to continue operations in Jabalia to destroy the hundreds of Hamas fighters that the IDF believes remain in the Jabalia area.[40] The

IDF added that civilians have completely evacuated the area.^[41] The IDF said that the Jabalia refugee camp is Hamas' main command-and-control "area" in the northern Gaza Strip, according to an Israeli media correspondent.^[42] IDF sources added to the Israeli media correspondent that Hamas was surprised by the IDF's "quick push" into the Jabalia area when the IDF resumed its clearing operations on October 6 and hundreds of Hamas commanders, including top commanders, were trapped.^[43] The IDF has detained around 600 suspected militia fighters at checkpoints as Palestinian civilians evacuated from Jabalia. The IDF has killed hundreds of militia fighters during operations in Jabalia since October 6.^[44] The IDF withdrew the 460th Armored Brigade from Jabalia on October 28, while the 84th Infantry and 401st Armored brigades remained in the area.^[45]

Hamas detonated an explosively formed penetrator targeting Israeli armor within Jabalia camp on October 27.^[46] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades also fired small arms targeting Israeli soldiers on October 28.^[47]

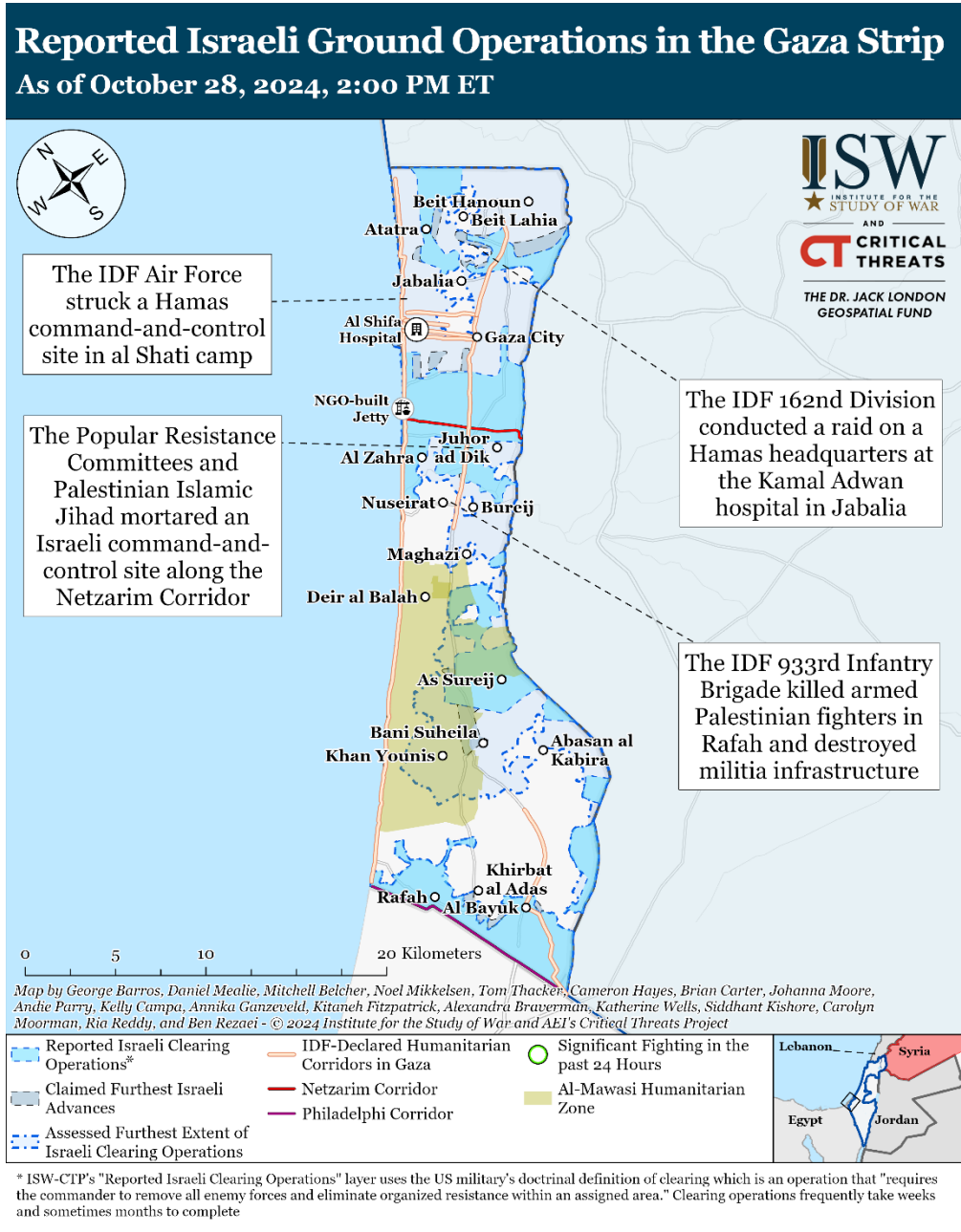
Israeli forces completed a raid on a Hamas command-and-control site inside Kamal Adwan Hospital in Jabalia on October 28.^[48] The IDF said Hamas was using ambulances from the hospital to move Hamas fighters around the Gaza Strip.^[49] Israeli forces evacuated patients, staff, and civilians sheltering in the hospital before they began the raid but Israeli forces kept emergency facilities functional. Israeli forces detained 40 Hamas fighters during the hospital's evacuation and dozens more after the raid, including fighters who participated in the October 7 attacks.^[50] Israeli forces also killed 20 gunmen and found weapons, money, and Hamas documents in the hospital and the surrounding area.^[51]

The IDF Air Force struck a Hamas command-and-control site in the northern Gaza Strip on October 27.^[52] The IDF stated that Hamas fighters used the former Asma school in al Shati camp to conduct attacks targeting Israeli forces and Israeli territory. The IDF added that it took steps to minimize civilian casualties.^[53] Hamas-affiliated media claimed that three journalists were killed in the attack.^[54] The IDF said that the journalists worked for Hamas' media apparatus but that the journalists were not the targets of the strike.^[55]

Palestinian militias continued to target Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired rockets targeting Israeli forces and armor along the Netzarim Corridor on October 27.^[56] The Popular Resistance Committees and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad mortared an Israeli command-and-control site along the Netzarim Corridor on October 28.^[57]

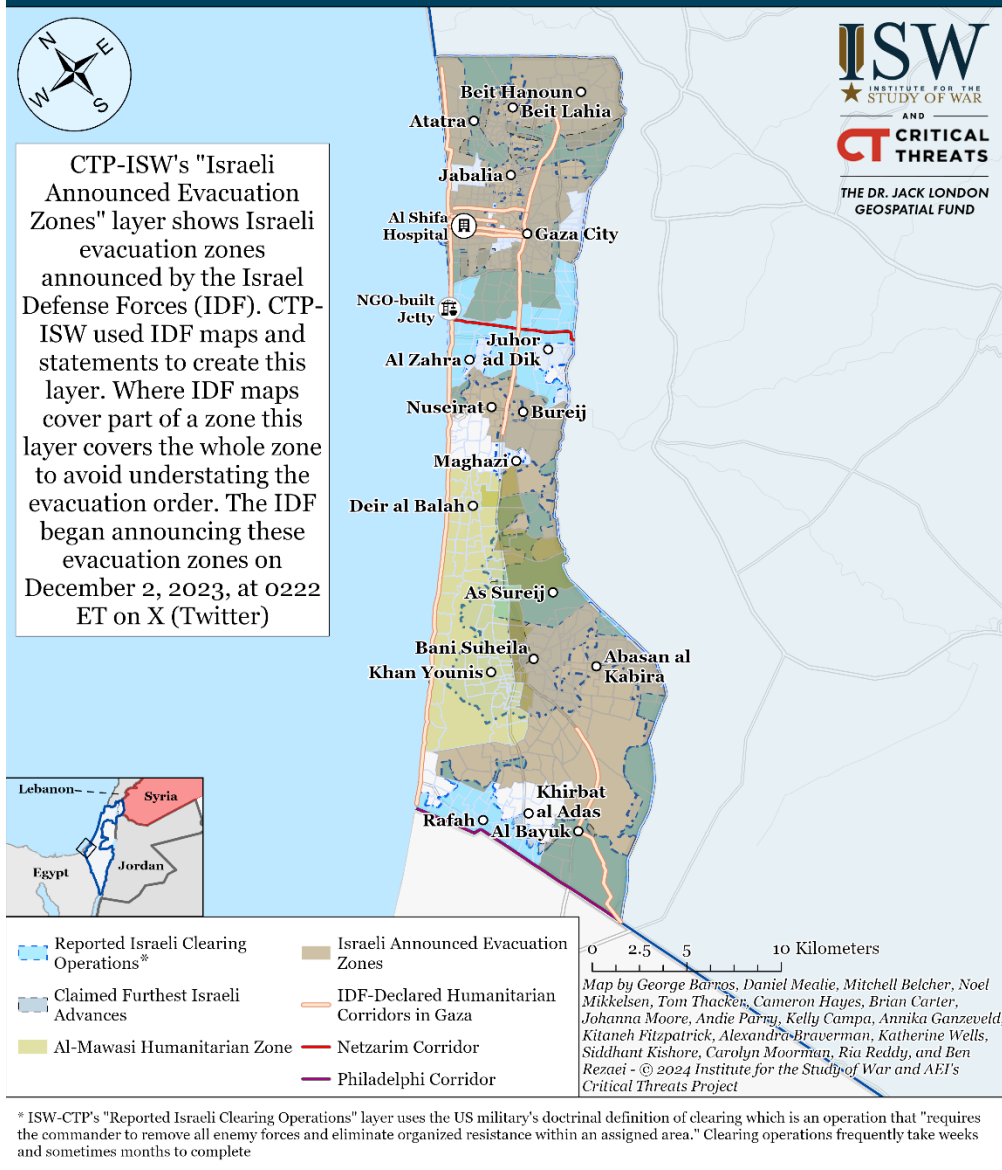
The IDF 252nd Division continued targeted raids in the central Gaza Strip on October 28, killing multiple fighters and destroying a military building in the area.^[58] A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from vehicles north Nuseirat and Bureij refugee camps since CTP-ISW's last

The IDF 933rd Infantry Brigade, deployed under the 143rd Division, killed armed fighters and destroyed militia infrastructure in the Rafah area on October 28.[60] Israeli forces coordinated an IAF strike that targeted and killed militia fighters operating in a rigged house near Israeli forces.[61] A Palestinian journalist reported heavy gunfire from military vehicles east of Rafah.[62]



Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

As of October 28, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

An unknown individual fired small arms targeting an Israeli settlement of Shaked in the West Bank on October 28.[63] The attacker approached the settlement in a vehicle and opened fire targeting the settlement before fleeing to a nearby Palestinian village on foot.[64] The IDF reported no casualties and launched a search operation in the area to locate the attacker.[65]

Israeli security forces detained 11 wanted persons in several locations across the West Bank during overnight raids on October 27 and 28.[66] The IDF interrogated 20 individuals

suspected of “terrorist activity” and confiscated tens of thousands of Israeli shekels in “terrorist funds.”[67] The IDF also confiscated three firearms during the raids in the West Bank.

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least four locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on October 27.[68] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades fired small arms and detonated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) targeting Israeli forces operating in several locations across Jenin Governorate.



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 sources reported that IDF artillery continued to shell areas in Hasbaya District, southeastern Lebanon, on October 28. Lebanese sources reported that the IDF conducted artillery shelling in Halta, Kfarchouba, and Shebaa.[69] The IDF said on October 15 that the IDF 210th Division has conducted several “targeted raids” from Mount Dov into the mountainous areas in Hasbaya District over the past three weeks.[70]

The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in Odaisseh on October 27. Geolocated footage posted on October 27 showed the IDF demolishing buildings in northern Odaisseh.[71] IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, Northern Command Commander Major General Uri Gordin, and 98th Division Commander Brigadier General Guy Levy toured a Hezbollah underground compound in southern Lebanon.[72] The IDF said that the IDF had demolished the tunnel in the past two days.[73] Hezbollah fired two barrages of rockets targeting Israeli forces in al Amra, west of al Wazzani.[74]

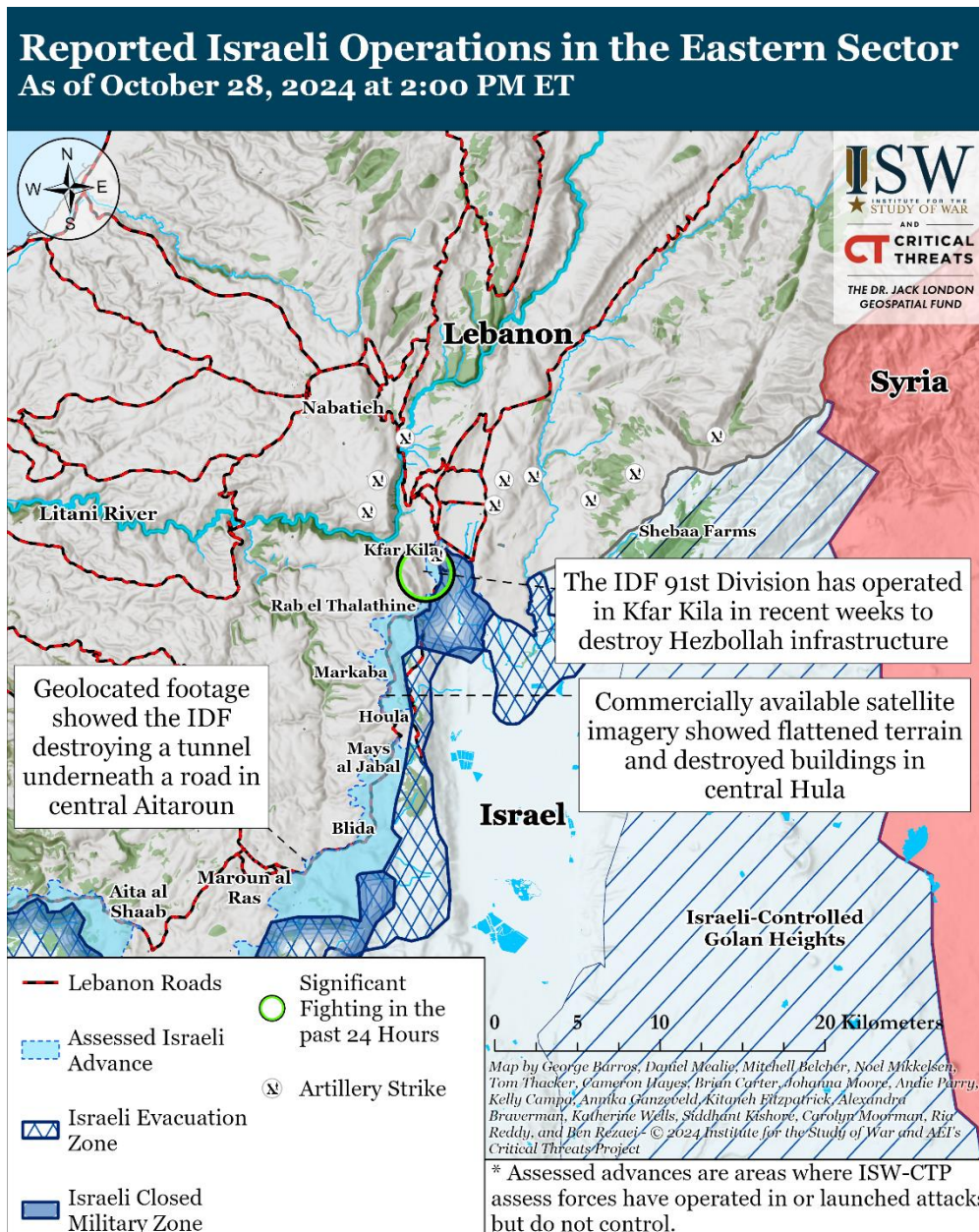
The IDF 91st Division has “destroyed” Hezbollah’s ability to conduct a ground infiltration into Israel from Kfar Kila.[75] The IDF said that Israeli forces had conducted numerous covert operations into Kfar Kila village and its surroundings to conduct reconnaissance on several Hezbollah targets over the past year.[76] The IDF announced that the IDF 769th Territorial Brigade had expanded operations into the Kfar Kila area on an unspecified date in the past few weeks.[77] The 769th Territorial Brigade has destroyed hundreds of Hezbollah military buildings, thousands of weapons, and seized Hezbollah documents, launchers, and tactical equipment since beginning operations in the area.[78] These assets belonged to the Radwan special operation forces (SOF), according to the IDF.[79] Israeli Army Radio reported that 1,000 Radwan fighters had planned to conduct a ground operation into Israel from Kfar Kila.[80] The IDF said that Israeli operations have “destroyed” Hezbollah’s capabilities to conduct ground raids into Israel from Kfar Kila.[81] Hezbollah may still be able to conduct indirect fire attacks from the Kfar Kila area into Israel, however.[82]

Hezbollah claimed that it engaged Israeli forces that were operating near Kfar Kila on October 28.[83] Hezbollah fired four barrages of rockets and mortars targeting Israeli forces on the Kfar Kila-Metula border.[84] Hezbollah fired small arms targeting Israeli personnel and armor advancing towards Tal Nahhas, north of Kfar Kila.[85]

The IDF 91st Division also appeared to continue clearing operations in Hula on October 27. Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 27 showed flattened terrain and destroyed buildings in central Hula along the Marjaayoun-Bint Jbeil Road, indicating that Israeli tanks or bulldozers operated in the area. The 91st Division directed an airstrike targeting a cell of Hezbollah fighters that posed a threat to Israeli forces.[86]

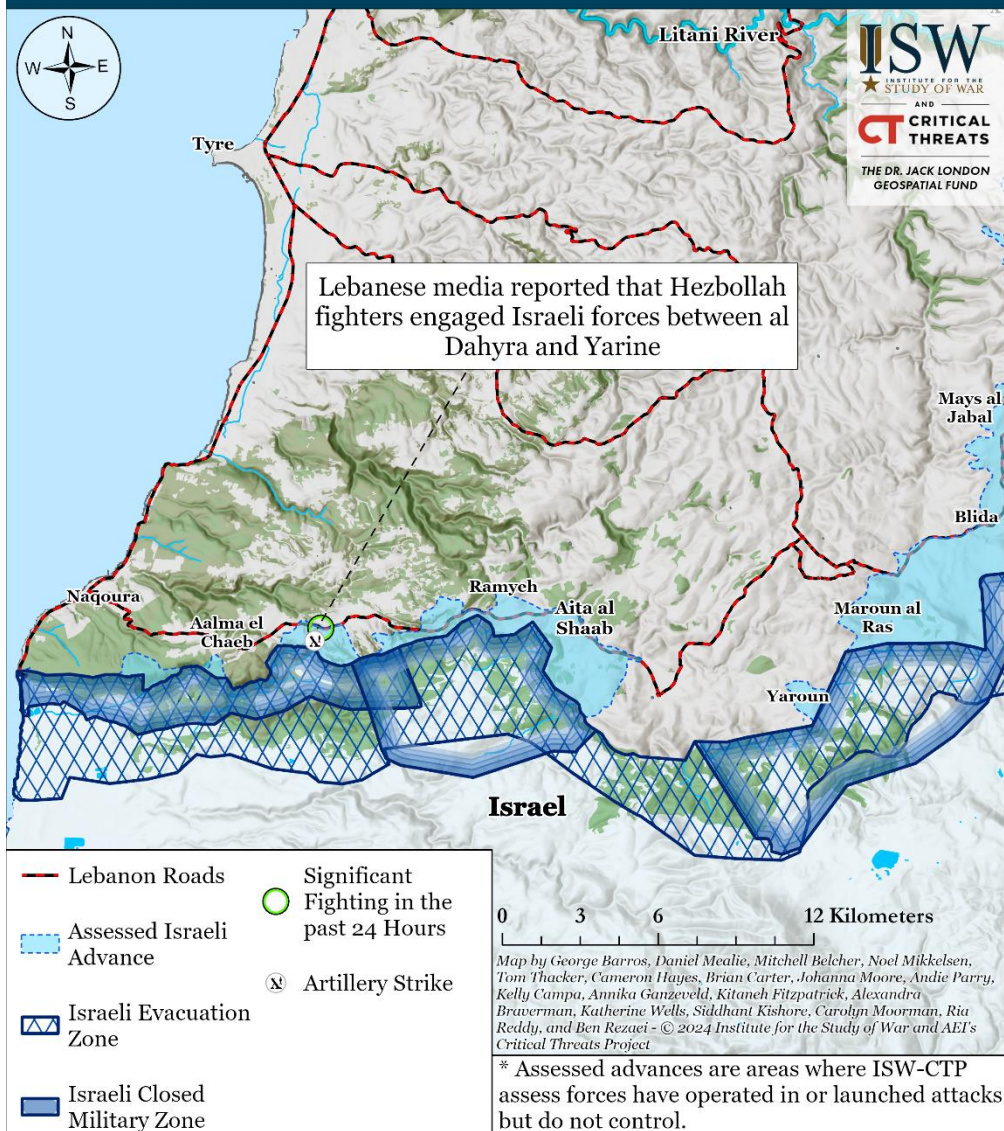
The IDF 36th Division continued operations in Aitaroun on October 27.[87] Geolocated footage posted on October 27 showed the IDF destroying a tunnel underneath an unnamed road in

central Aitaroun.[88] Israeli forces have operated in and near Aitaroun since October 23.[89]



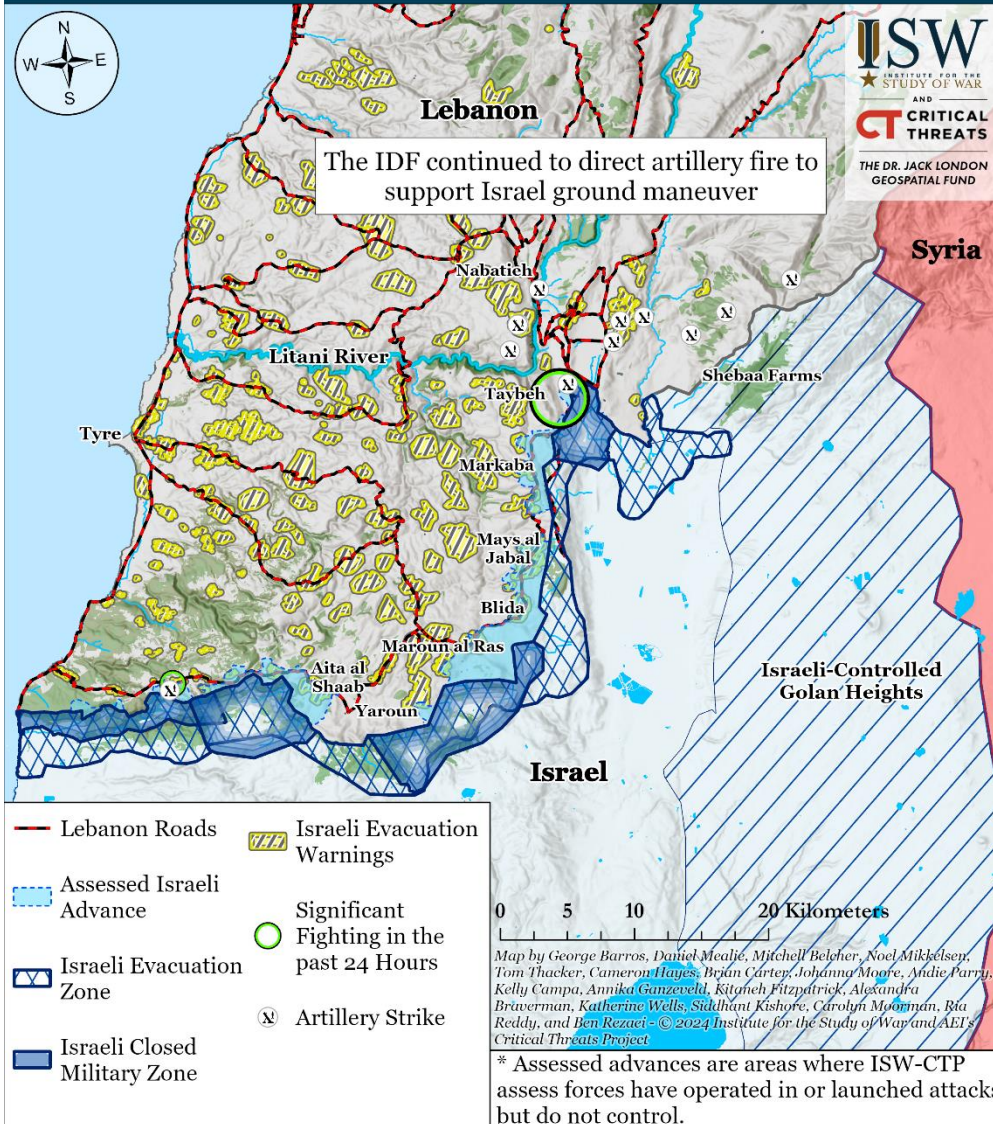
The IDF 146th Division continued clearing operations in southwestern Lebanon on October 28.[90] Israeli forces continued to locate Hezbollah infrastructure and facilities.[91] Lebanese media reported that Hezbollah fighters engaged Israeli forces between al Dahyra and Yarine.[92] Lebanese sources also reported that Israeli tanks fired at unspecified targets in the adjacent towns of Umm Tutteh, Yarine, and Jebbayn.[93]

Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector As of October 28, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

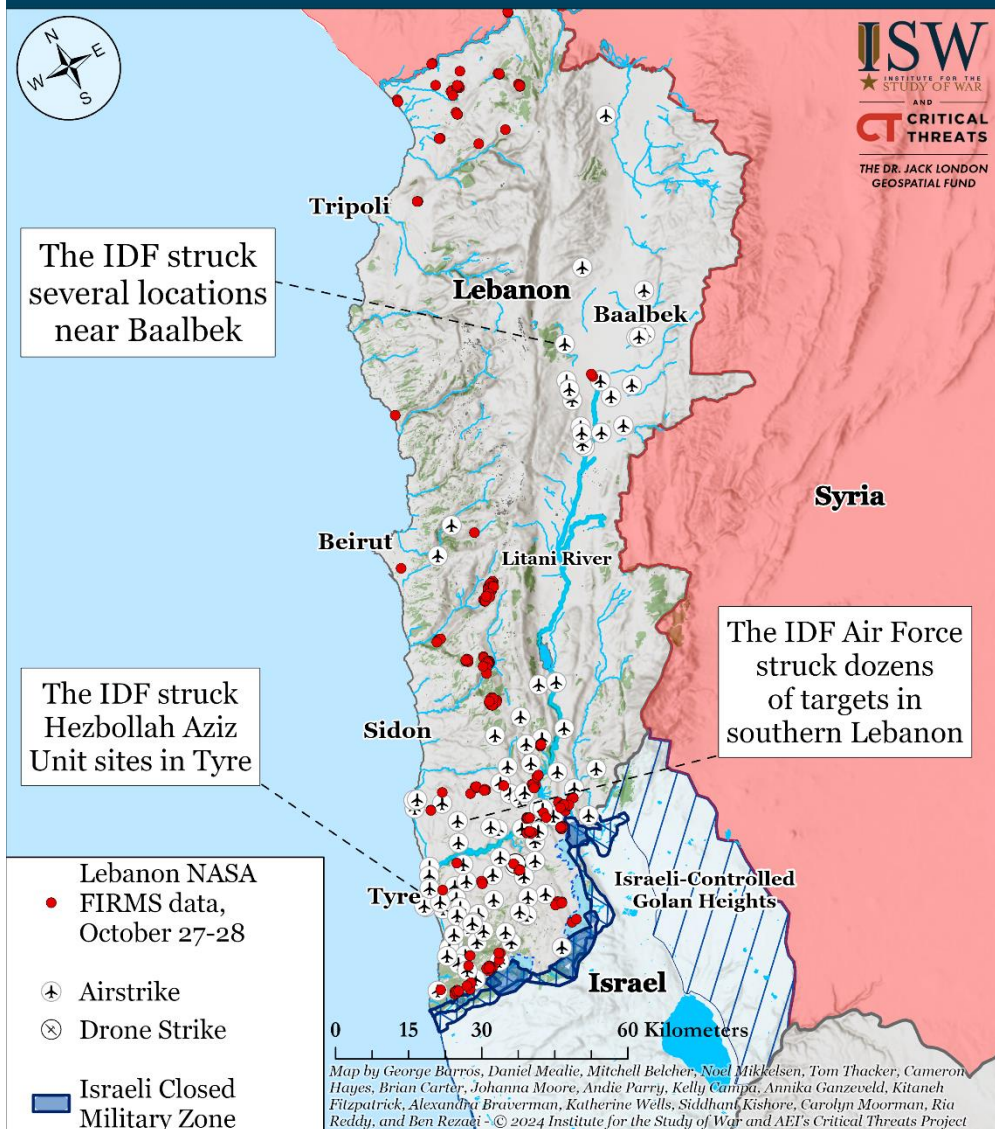
As of October 28, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The IDF continued its air campaign targeting Hezbollah capabilities and infrastructure on October 28.[94] The IDF Air Force struck dozens of Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including a rocket launcher and dozens of Hezbollah fighters.[95] The IDF Air Force also struck weapons depots, military buildings, and observation posts in central Tyre affiliated with Hezbollah's southwestern command, the Aziz unit.[96] The IDF said that Tyre is a significant area for Aziz unit activities.[97] The IDF issued evacuation warnings to Tyre residents prior to the strikes.[98]

Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon

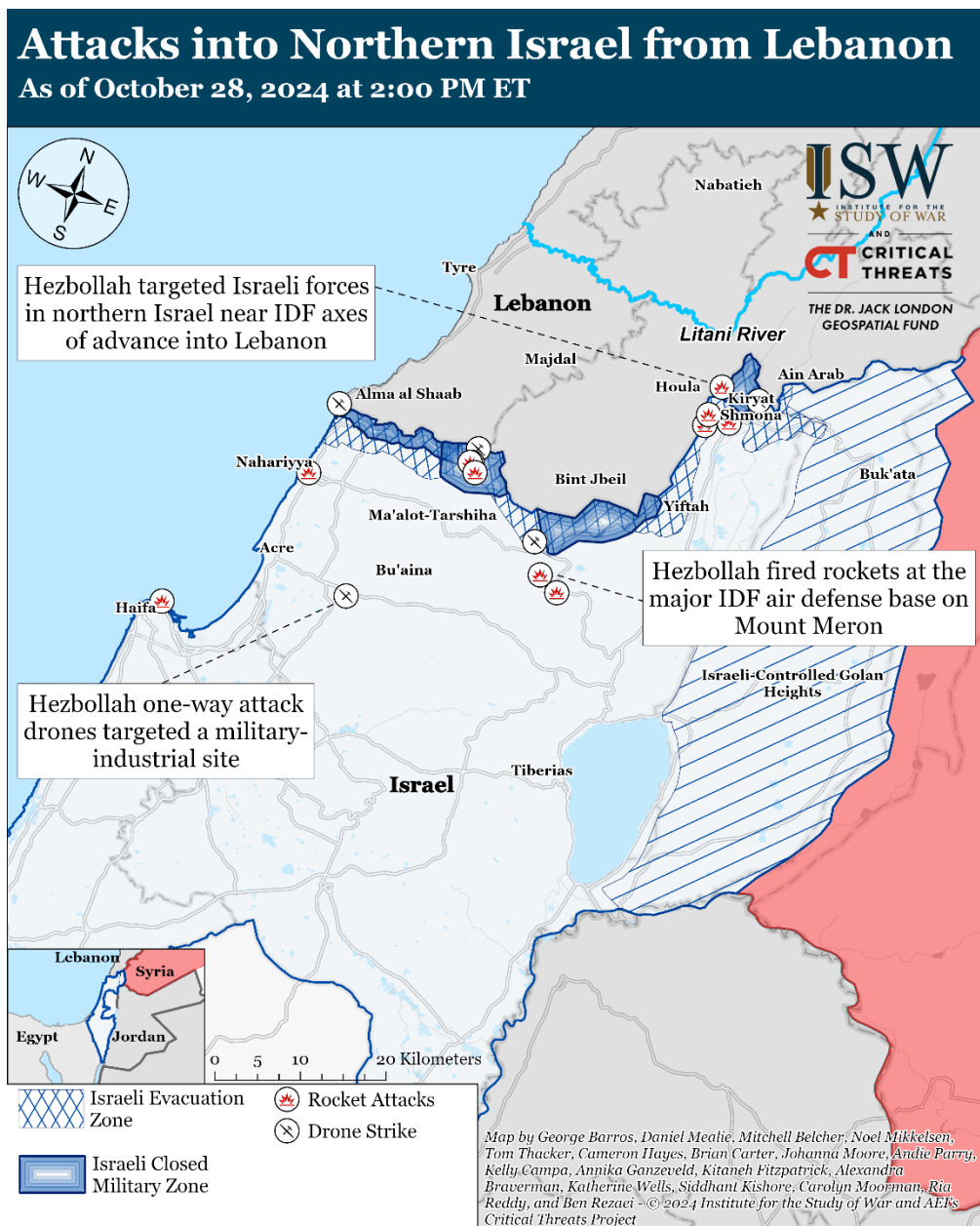
As of October 28, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on October 27 to 2:00pm ET on October 28. 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 27. [99] Hezbollah targeted a prominent IDF air defense and communications site on Mount Meron, which Hezbollah has targeted repeatedly since October 2023.[100] Hezbollah continued to target Israeli military-industrial sites in northern Israel.[101] Hezbollah began regularly targeting Israeli military-industrial sites in late September when the IDF intensified its air campaign across Lebanon.[102]

The Israeli Defense Ministry signed a \$500 million agreement with Israeli defense technology companies on October 28 to expand the production of a laser air defense system.^[103] The deal with Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Elbit Systems will “significantly increase” the production of the laser units needed for the Iron Beam system.^[104] Israeli officials estimate that the Iron Beam will be operational within a year.^[105] The Iron Beam has an unlimited magazine as it uses high-energy lasers.^[106] The lasers are significantly cheaper to use compared to Iron Dome interceptor missiles.^[107] Lasers would minimize collateral damage that current Israeli air defense systems that use interceptor missiles risk.^[108] The system is designed to be used in tandem with other defense systems such as the Iron Dome.^[109] Iron Beam, which intercepts short-range rockets, mortars, and drones, would be particularly useful for protecting northern Israel from Hezbollah.^[110]



Iranian-backed Iraqi militia al Thawriyyun claimed that it conducted a drone and rocket attack targeting US forces at al Tanf Garrison in eastern Syria on October 27.^[111] Syrian media reported that US-led Coalition forces intercepted a drone near al Tanf Garrison on October 27.^[112] Al Thawriyyun has conducted three attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria since July 26 and is likely a cover group for some elements within Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah.^[113] Kataib Hezbollah condemned Israel for using Iraqi airspace to attack Iran on October 25.^[114] Kataib Hezbollah said that the attack could not have happened without the “agreement and premeditation” of the United States and that the United States will “pay the price for its recklessness.”^[115] This attack does not appear to be in response to Israel’s attack on Iran, as al Thawriyyun conducted attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria before Israel attacked Iran.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has claimed one attack targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 27.^[116] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed a drone attack targeting a military target in northern Israel.^[117]

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[8] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-26-2024>

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