

Iran Update, October 19, 2023

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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. For more on developments and in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. 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, Geneva Conventions, and humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Key Takeaways:

1. Palestinian militias continued indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Palestinian militias targeted 12 IDF military positions with indirect fire and ATGM in southern Israel. An Israeli journalist indicated that Hamas is also trying to attack natural gas rigs in the Mediterranean Sea.
2. Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank may increase on October 20. Hamas called for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across all cities and towns in the West Bank then, as part of Hamas' effort to expand fighting against Israel to the West Bank.
3. CTP-ISW recorded 13 attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory, which is creating opportunities for further attacks into Israel. LH is allowing Palestinian militias to continue attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel.
4. Iranian-backed Iraqi militants in Syria conducted three attacks using one-way drones and rockets against US military positions in Iraq and Syria, marking the second consecutive day of such attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.
5. Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri held separate phone calls with his Russian and Qatari counterparts to discuss the Israel-Hamas war.

Israel-Hamas War as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET

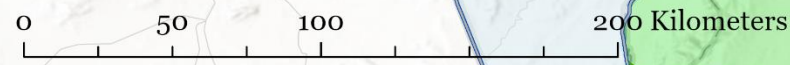


Iran's Axis of Resistance launched a multi-theater attack against the United States and Israel

The al Qassem Brigades fired 30 rockets into northern Israel

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire into Israel from Gaza

Hamas called for demonstrations on October 20



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Israel
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Golan Heights
- Syria
- Gaza Strip and West Bank

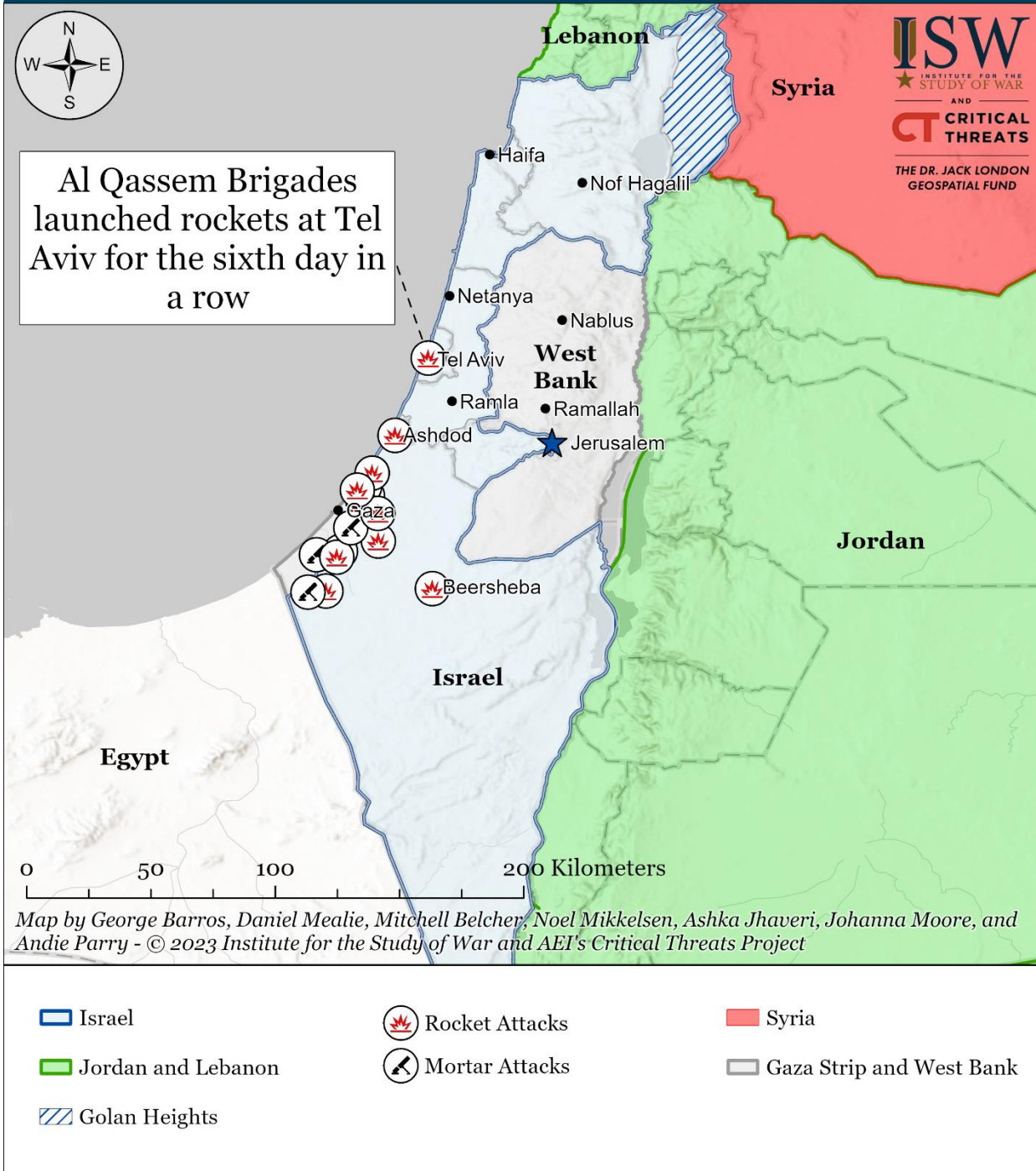
Gaza Strip

Palestinian militias continued indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 19.

The al Qassem Brigades— Hamas’ militant wing—claimed responsibility for 15 mortar and rocket attacks.¹ Saraya al Quds—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another eight rocket attacks.² The al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades—the self-claimed militant wing of Fatah—claimed two rocket attacks.³ The National Resistance Brigades—the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—claimed one mortar attack on an IDF military base in southern Israel.⁴ These attack patterns show how Hamas remains the most prominent actor attacking Israel from the Gaza Strip but also how other Palestinian militias have joined the fighting against Israel since the war began on October 7.

PIJ published a message saying “save our shells, you will be blessed with flames,” indicating that PIJ is following Hamas’ approach of reducing indirect fire attacks to conserve its stockpile and prepare for a prolonged war.⁵ Saraya al Quds launched 19 mortar and rocket attacks on October 18 compared to the eight attacks on October 19. CTP-ISW previously reported that Hamas began reducing its rate of attacks from the Gaza Strip on October 12 to conserve munitions.

Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

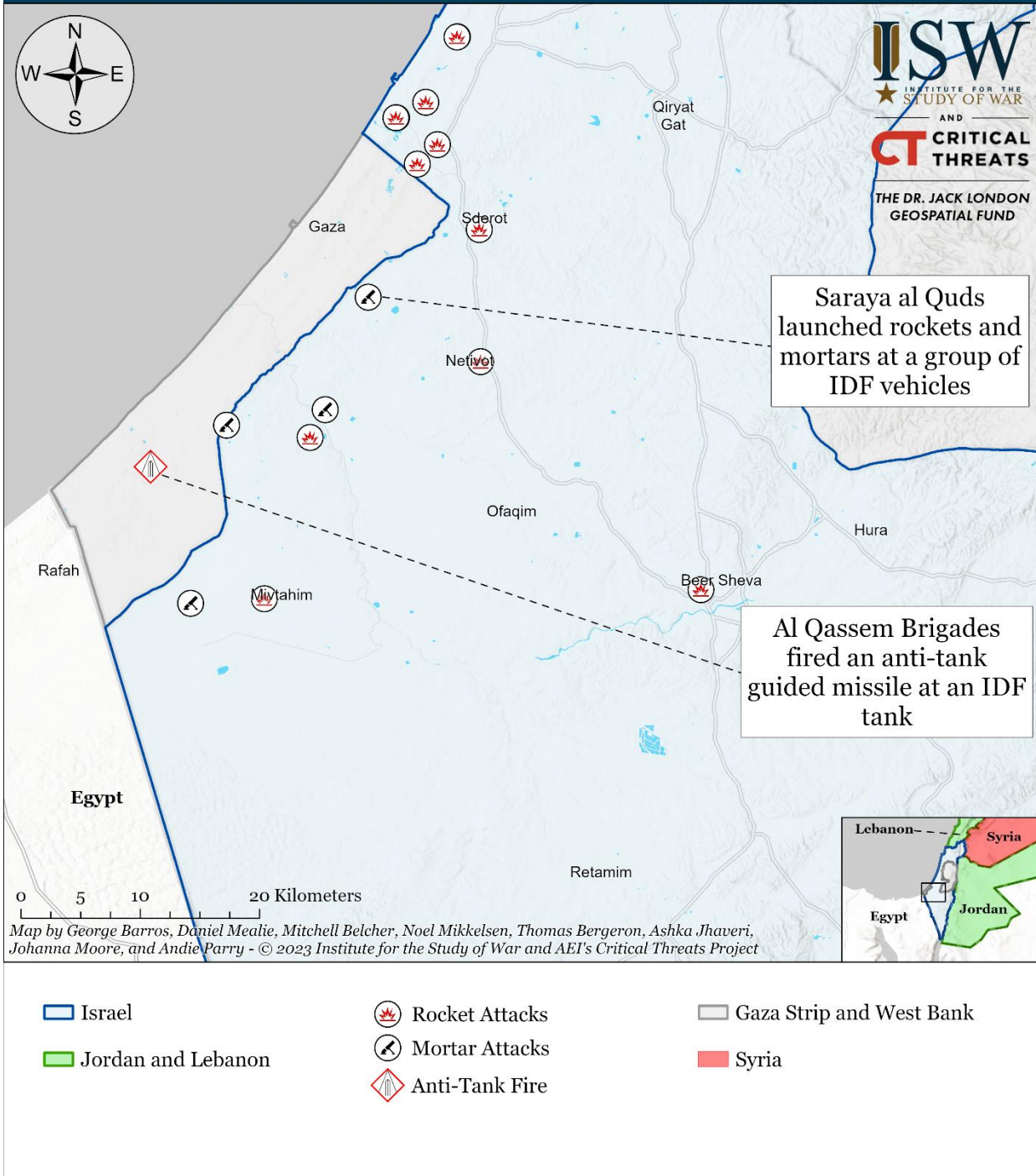
Palestinian militias targeted 12 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) military positions with indirect fire and anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) in southern Israel on October 19. The militias hit 21 military positions on October 18. The IDF evacuated and designated the periphery of the Gaza Strip as a military zone on October 11.⁶ CTP-ISW previously reported that the IDF deployed units to this area, suggesting that the militias seek to target IDF military targets in addition to civilian areas, such as Tel Aviv.

An Israeli journalist indicated that Hamas is trying to attack natural gas rigs in the Mediterranean Sea.⁷ The journalist claimed that the IDF has intercepted several attempts from unidentified militants to conduct rocket attacks on such rigs. Israel previously shut down the Tamar gas field, which Hamas struck in 2014, on October 9.⁸ About 58 percent of the energy from the gas field served Israel, while 15.5 percent was exported to Jordan.⁹ The Israeli Navy stopped Hamas attempts to send its unmanned mini-submarines into the sea, which Hamas could use to attack energy platforms, according to a report on October 19.¹⁰

The IDF stated that some Hamas infiltrators may still be in Israel after the attack on October 7.¹¹ Hamas sent hundreds of fighters into Israel on October 7 to attack nearby border posts, military sites, and residential areas. The IDF noted that it captured an infiltrator who was trying to return to the Gaza Strip on October 18 and that there have been no new infiltrations into Israel “in recent days.”

IDF airstrikes into the Gaza Strip continue to kill senior Hamas officials. The IDF killed Hamas Palestinian Legislative Council member Jamila Abdallah Taha al Shanti and National Security Forces Major General Jihad Muheisen.¹²

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



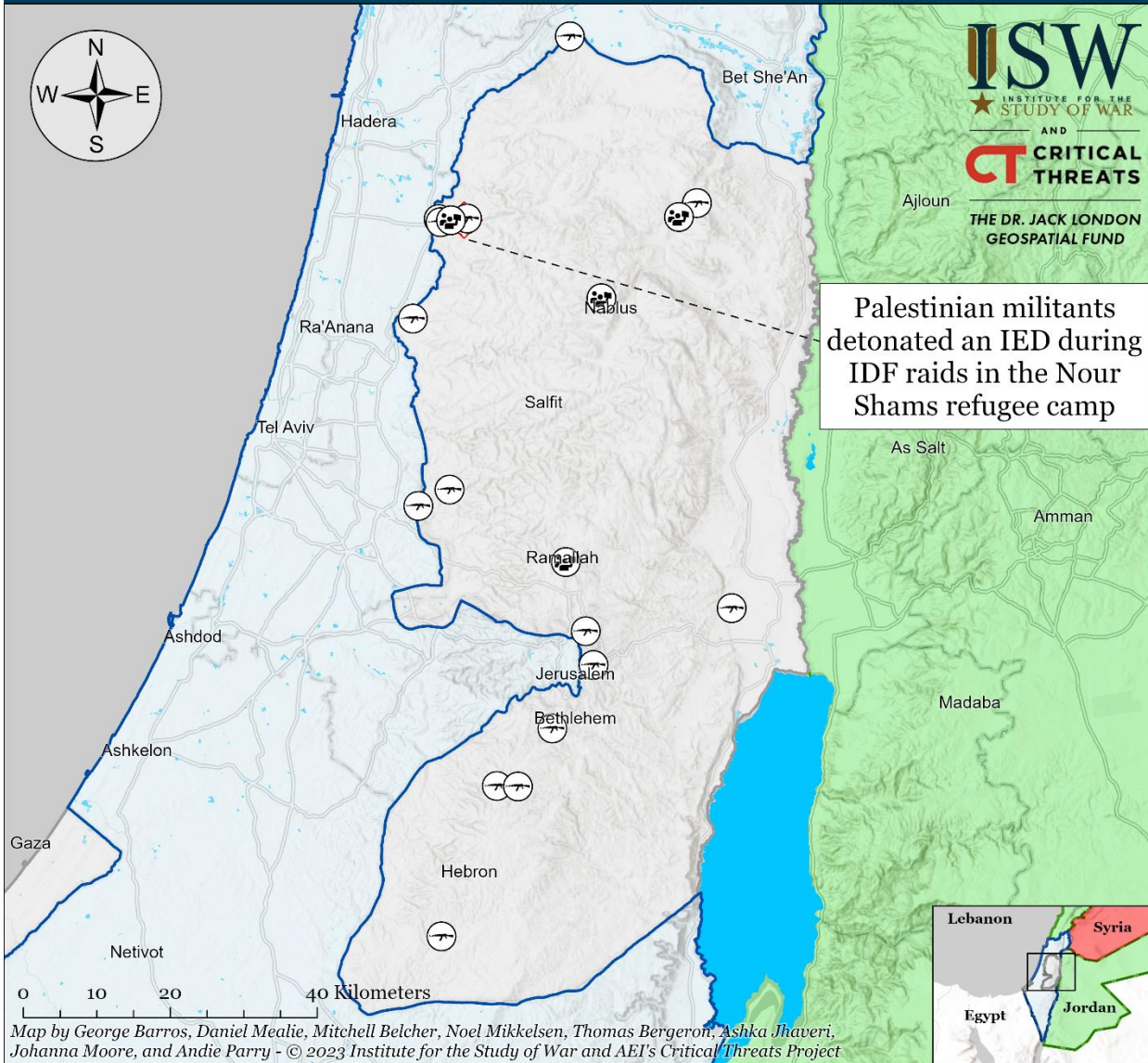
Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

West Bank

Clashes between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in the West Bank may increase on October 19. CTP-ISW recorded 20 distinct clashes in the West Bank on October 19—half the number recorded the previous day.¹³ Hamas called for protests in support of the Gaza Strip across all cities and towns in the West Bank on October 20, as part of Hamas’ effort to expand fighting against Israel to the West Bank.¹⁴ Anti-Israel activity in the West Bank has typically surged on days when Hamas calls for demonstrations and greater violence since the war began.

IDF forces and PIJ-affiliated militants clashed in Tulkaram, West Bank on October 19.¹⁵ The PIJ-affiliated Tulkaram battalion claimed an IED attack that killed an Israeli major and wounded 10 Israeli Border Police.¹⁶ CTP-ISW has observed three IED attacks thus far in the West Bank since October 7—all on October 18-19. IDF forces captured a stash of IEDs during raids in the Noor al Shams Refugee camp, which is near Tulkaram.¹⁷ Hamas- and PIJ-affiliated militants previously used IEDs during clashes with IDF forces in Tulkaram on October 5.¹⁸

Clashes in the West Bank as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Israel | Clash (Small Arms Combat) | Gaza Strip and West Bank |
| Jordan and Lebanon | March | Syria |
| | IED Detonated | |

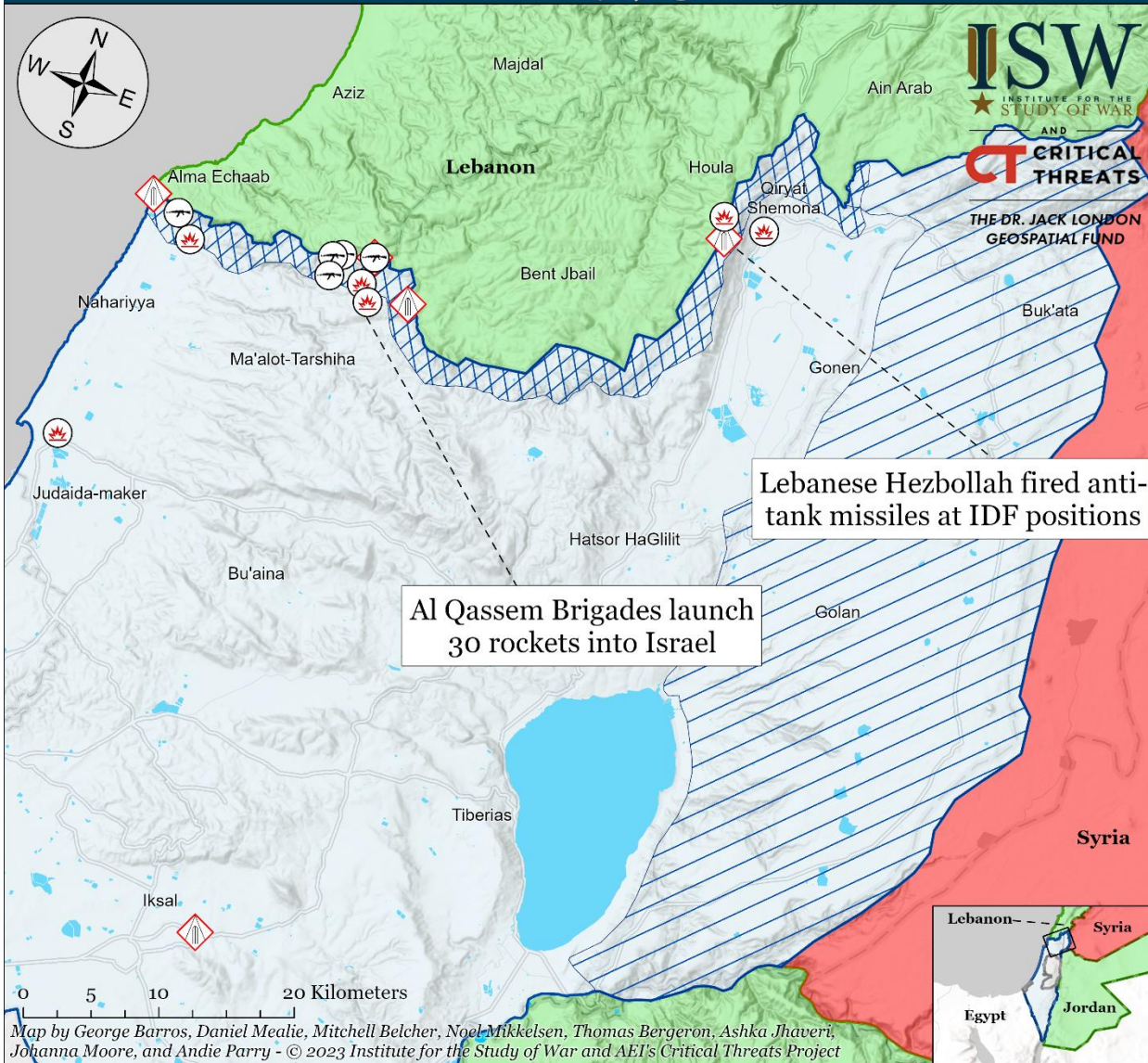
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and marches in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

CTP-ISW recorded 13 attacks from Lebanon into Israeli territory on October 19.¹⁹ The attacks targeted locations across the entire length of the Israel-Lebanon border.²⁰ Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed six mortar and small arms fire attacks.²¹ LH launched four ATGM at Israeli military positions along the eastern border and released a video of its recent ATGM attacks on Israeli tanks.²² LH has also continued to target Israeli communications and surveillance equipment over the last week of fighting.²³ CTP-ISW previously noted that these LH attacks create opportunities for further operations against Israel.²⁴

LH is allowing Palestinian militias to continue attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel. The al Qassem Brigades branch in Lebanon said on October 19 that its militants fired 30 rockets at western Israel.²⁵ CTP-ISW recorded rocket barrages fired toward both western and eastern Israel, however.²⁶ The IDF disclosed that LH gave the al Qassem Brigades permission to fire rockets from Lebanon.²⁷ This reporting is consistent with CTP-ISW's previous assessment that LH probably approves attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel given the extent to which LH controls southern Lebanon.²⁸

Attacks into Israel from Lebanon as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Israel | Clash (Small Arms Combat) | Jordan and Lebanon |
| Israeli Evacuation Zone | Rocket Attacks | Syria |
| Golan Heights | Anti-Tank Fire | |

Recorded reports of rocket attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian-backed Iraqi militants in Syria conducted three attacks using one-way drones and rockets against US military positions in Iraq and Syria, marking the second consecutive day of such attacks targeting US forces in the Middle East.²⁹ The Islamic Resistance of Iraq fired three drones targeting the al Tanf Garrison, Syria and three one-way drones targeting Conoco Mission Support Site.³⁰ Iranian-backed Iraqi militias also launched an unspecified number of rockets targeting US forces at Ain al Asad Airbase, Anbar province, Iraq.³¹

The Houthis launched at least three land-attack cruise missiles and eight drones “potentially” targeting Israel.³² US Navy warship USS *Carney* intercepted the missiles.³³

Axis of Resistance Red Lines

Members of Iran’s Axis of Resistance have articulated their thresholds for intervening in support of Hamas’ war in Israel

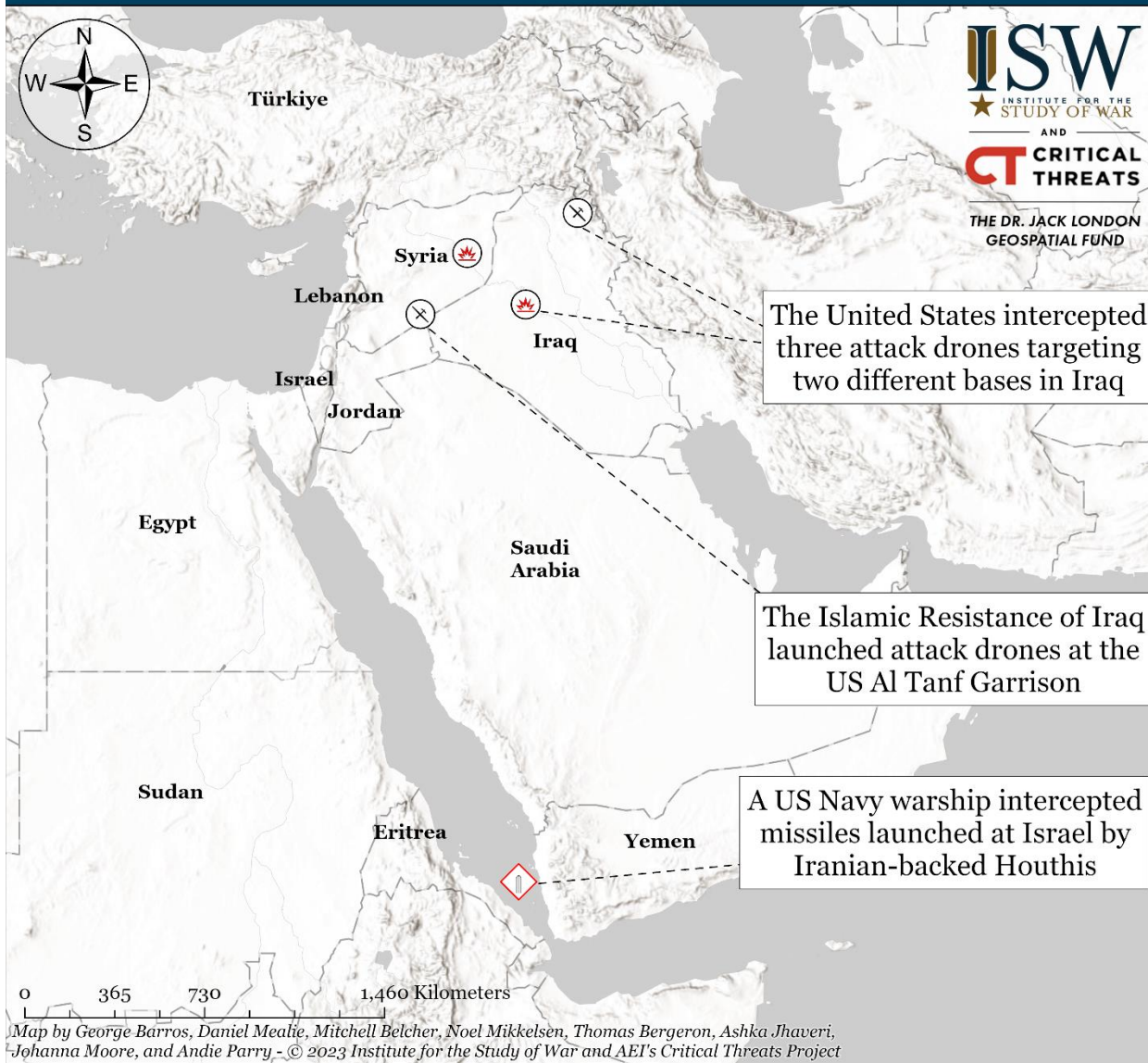





■ Possible tripped red line as of October 19

Actor	Threat	Stated Red Line
Iran	Conduct missile attacks into Israel from Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen and send fighters from Syria into Israel	Israel attacks Iran
	Direct its proxies to attack US positions in Iraq and Syria	United States refreezes \$6 billion to Iran
Lebanese Hezbollah	Enter the war	Israel conducts a ground operation into Gaza
Badr Organization	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Hezbollah	Attack US military positions	The United States intervenes in the war
Kataib Seyyed ol Shohada	Intervene in the war	The United States intervenes in the war
Houthi Movement	Conduct drone and missile strikes	The United States intervenes in the war

The Iranian-backed Iraqi groups and Houthis are behaving as if the United States has crossed their stated red lines of intervening in the war to support Israel. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah (KH)’s military spokesperson said that the United States is an “essential partner in killing [Gazans]” and must “bear the consequences” on October 18.³⁴ KH’s military spokesperson also said that the United States is “aware of the capabilities of the Iraqi Resistance” and that the Iraqi resistance can target anywhere in Iraq.³⁵ Other Axis of Resistance factions have also expressed this risk since October 7. The Houthi Movement’s supreme leader said on October 10 that his forces would respond with missiles and drones if the United States intervened in the conflict.³⁶

Iranian-sponsored attacks in the Middle East as of October 19, 3:00 PM ET



-  Rocket Attacks
-  Drone Strike
-  Surface-to-Surface Missile

Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri held separate telephone conversations with his Russian and Qatari counterparts to discuss the ongoing Israel-Hamas war on October 19.³⁷ Bagheri warned that continued Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip

could force “other actors,” including “resistance groups,” to engage in the conflict, echoing previous regime rhetoric about the possibility of conflict expansion since October 13.³⁸ Bagheri also called on the international community to take action to halt Israeli attacks into the Gaza Strip and on regional countries to disallow the transmission of American military equipment through their countries to Israel. Bagheri finally highlighted the American role in Israel’s “criminal operations,” consistent with regime rhetoric since October 13.³⁹

Iranian officials and media continued to highlight the American role in Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip on October 19. President Ebrahim Raisi decried the US veto of a UN Security Council resolution calling for a humanitarian pause in Israeli attacks into the Gaza Strip on October 19, emphasizing the world’s “hatred” toward the United States and Israel.⁴⁰ Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian criticized the US call for restraint while it supports Israeli offensive operations into the Gaza Strip during his meeting with Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister Faisal bin Farhan on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Countries meeting in Jeddah.⁴¹ Abdollahian was echoing his own earlier remarks during a press conference in Beirut on October 13.⁴² Bagheri claimed that the United States is “commanding” Israel’s “criminal operations” during separate phone calls with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Qatari Defense Minister Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah.⁴³ Other Iranian officials claimed that the Gaza strip has been turned into a “laboratory” for American weapons.⁴⁴ Iranian media similarly claimed that the United States plays a role in Israel committing infanticide in the Gaza Strip, that it now “fully supports” an Israeli ground incursion into the strip, and has begun to supply armored vehicles for the Israeli war effort.⁴⁵ Some Iranian outlets also called for the closure of US military bases used to re-supply Israel.⁴⁶

The Iranian regime is trying to rally public support for the Palestinian cause, possibly to prepare Iranians for the prospect of a regional war. Senior Iranian officials, including Raisi and IRGC Deputy Commander Brigadier General Ali Fadavi, attended anti-Israel protests in Tehran on October 18.⁴⁷ The regime has called on Tehran residents to protest on October 20 against Israel’s killing of women and children in the Gaza Strip.⁴⁸ State-run outlet IRNA published an interview on October 18 of young Iranian boys expressing their support for Palestinians and desire to go to Gaza.⁴⁹ Fars News Agency separately claimed on October 18 that 3.7 million Iranians have volunteered to fight Israel.⁵⁰ Numerous outlets have circulated images of severely wounded or killed Gazan civilians to stoke anger and hatred among the Iranian public toward Israel and the United States.⁵¹

The Iranian regime has historically framed itself as the champion of the Palestinian cause. Iranian media has repeatedly recirculated statements from Palestinian leaders that Iran is the “biggest supporter” of Palestine.⁵² Senior Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, have described the liberation of Palestine as one of the most important issues facing the Islamic world.⁵³

¹ Sources available upon request.

² Sources available upon request.

³ Sources available upon request.

⁴ Sources available upon request.

⁵ <https://t.me/sarayaps/16397>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1712031420065919123>

⁷ https://twitter.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1714925804302340292

⁸ <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/4259531-israel-hamas-war-threatens-regional-gas-volatility/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/news/news-140523/he/ng-2022.pdf>

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1714925804302340292

¹¹ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-its-possible-hamas-infiltrators-still-in-israel-one-arrested-last-night/

¹² <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-769124>; <https://apnews.com/live/israel-hamas-war-news-10-19-2023#0000018b-47da-d1d9-a3cb-e7dfcee80000>

¹³ Data available upon request.

¹⁴ <https://t.me/almanarnews/131691>

¹⁵ <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-769177>

¹⁶ <https://t.me/sarayaps/16400> ; <https://t.me/almanarnews/131642> ; <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1715051107938922955> ; <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-769177> ; https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/police-say-10-officers-wounded-in-explosion-during-idf-raid-in-tulkarem/

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1715000894834540769>

¹⁸ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-clashes-with-palestinian-gunmen-during-raid-in-west-bank-refugee-camp/>

¹⁹ Sources available on request ; <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-18-2023>

²⁰ Sources available on request.

²¹ <https://central-media.org/36373/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A> ; <https://www.almanar.com.lb/11086682>

²² <https://central-media.org/36367/633/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88-%7C-%D8%AF%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%85-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%85> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1714997682035380530> ; <https://central-media.org/36373/600/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%88%D9%82%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A>

²³ <https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/al-qassam-fire-rockets-from-south-lebanon-amid-hezbollah-ope>

²⁴ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-17-2023>

²⁵ <https://t.me/qassambrigades/28651>

²⁶ <https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1715001245495095485> ;

<https://twitter.com/manniefabian/status/1715014426099675443>

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1715059907697762792>

²⁸ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-15-2023>

²⁹ <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-18-2023>

³⁰ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/iran-backed-groups-said-to-target-us-bases-with-drones-in-syria/

³¹ https://twitter.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/1715074391833219171;

https://twitter.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/1715079749721059684

³² <https://abcnews.go.com/International/security-incident-involving-us-navy-destroyer-red-sea/story?id=104147141>

³³ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/security-incident-involving-us-navy-destroyer-red-sea/story?id=104147141>

³⁴ <https://t.me/maymun5/53630>; <https://t.me/maymun5/53635>

³⁵ <https://t.me/maymun5/53630>; <https://t.me/maymun5/53635>

³⁶ <https://saba.ye/ar/news3270850.htm>

³⁷ <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1402/07/27/2974442> ; <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/624279> ;

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/10/19/2974480>

³⁸ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-13-2023> ;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-14-2023> ;

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<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-october-16-2023> ;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-17-2023> ; <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-18-2023>

³⁹ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-13-2023> ;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-14-2023> ;

<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-15-2023> ;

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⁴⁰ <https://president dot ir/fa/147315>

⁴¹ <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020727000372> ; <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/en/news/2023/10/19/2974411>

⁴² <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-october-13-2023>

⁴³ <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/07/27/2974442> ; <https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/624279> ;

<https://www.tasnimnews dot com/en/news/2023/10/19/2974480>

⁴⁴ <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85264149>

⁴⁵ <https://www.presstv dot ir/Detail/2023/10/19/713007> ; <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020727000661> ;

<https://www.farsnews dot ir/media/14020727000500>

⁴⁶ <https://www.presstv dot ir/Detail/2023/10/19/713029>

⁴⁷ <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85263073> ;

<https://twitter.com/JasonMBrodsky/status/1714454943472492694>

⁴⁸ <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/07/27/2974636>

⁴⁹ <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85263155>

⁵⁰ <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020726000114>

⁵¹ <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/14020726000304> ;

<https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/07/27/2974636>

⁵² <https://www.farsnews dot ir/news/13930230000641> ;

<https://www.irna dot ir/news/84320123>

⁵³ <https://farsi.khamenei dot ir/speech-content?id=27165>