

Iran Update, November 2, 2023

Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Kathryn Tyson, Johanna Moore, Amin Soltani, Christina Harward, and Nicholas Carl

Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm EST

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 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 and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

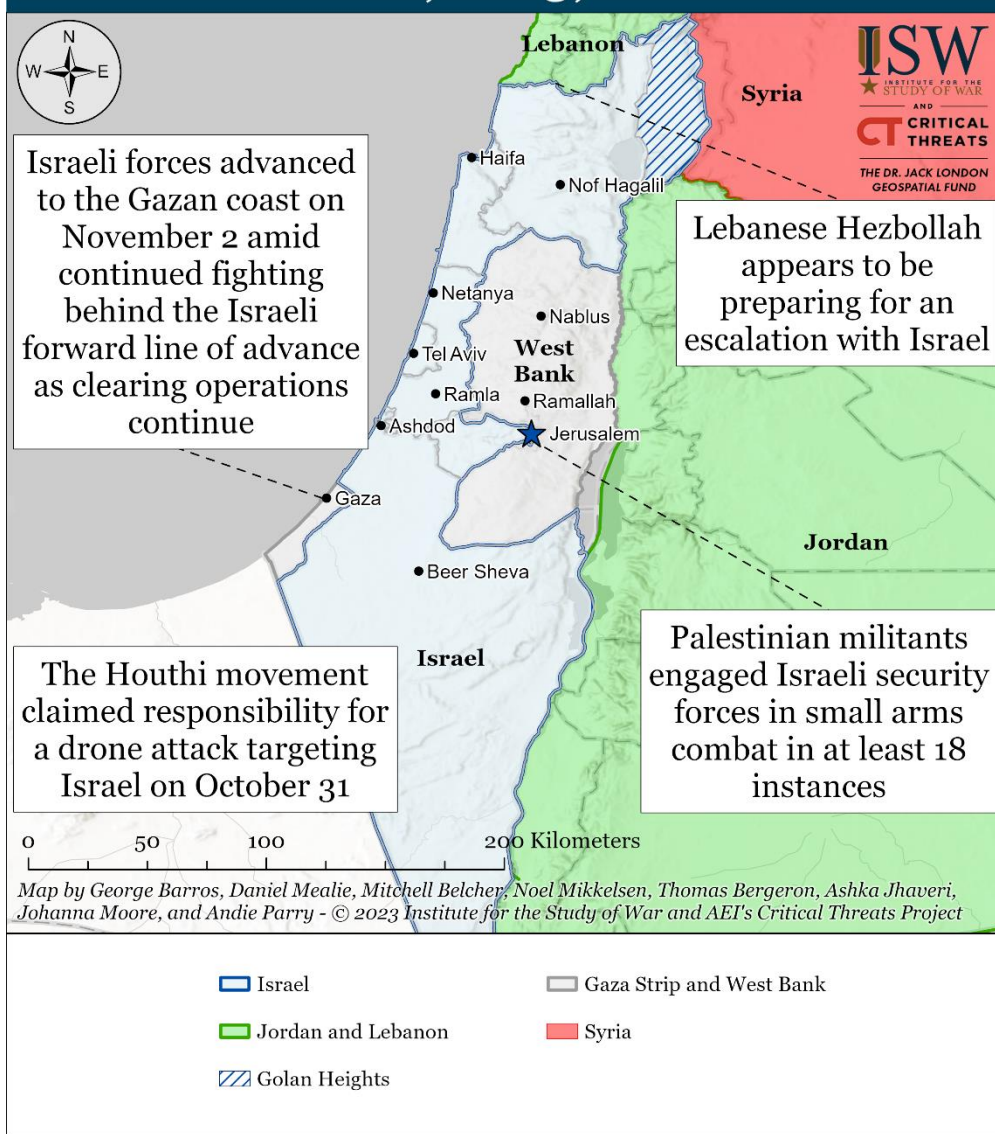
Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

Key Takeaways:

1. Israeli forces advanced to the coast in the central Gaza Strip on November 2 as clearing operations continued. Fighting continued behind the Israeli forward line of advance in the central Gaza Strip, however.
2. Palestinian militants targeted IDF ground forces with small arms, improvised explosive devices, and anti-tank fire along the northwestern Gazan coast north of al Shati camp.
3. Iranian and Axis of Resistance sources reported that Israeli forces continued their advance into Beit Hanoun.
4. Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israeli territory adjacent to the southern Gaza Strip, possibly due to Israeli operations near Gaza City constraining the groups' ability to launch rockets into Israeli towns adjacent to Gaza City.
5. CTP-ISW recorded 18 separate clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in the West Bank.

6. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 28 attacks into northern Israel, which is the largest offensive on this front since the Israel-Hamas War began.
7. Lebanese Hezbollah appears to be preparing for an escalation with Israel ahead of Hassan Nasrallah's planned speech on November 3.
8. The Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces said that the PMF is in a "state of emergency" during a meeting with other PMF leaders in Baghdad, indicating preparations for an escalation with the United States.
9. The Houthi movement claimed responsibility for a drone attack targeting Israel on October 31, marking the fourth attempted Houthi attack on Israel since the war began.
10. Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Rear Admiral Ali Akbar Ahmadian met with Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative for Syrian Affairs Alexander Lavrentiev in Tehran.

Israel-Hamas War as of November 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip
- Degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip

Israeli forces advanced to the coast in the central Gaza Strip on November 2 as clearing operations continued. Palestinian sources reported that Israeli troops reached the Gaza Strip's coastal roadway west of the Tika hospital and al Nour resort on November 2.^[1]

Fighting continued behind the Israeli forward line of advance in the central Gaza Strip, however. Palestinian militants attacked Israeli armor and infantry near Juhor ad Dik with anti-tank fire.^[2] The attack is consistent with the fact that the IDF is undertaking a clearing operation, which US military

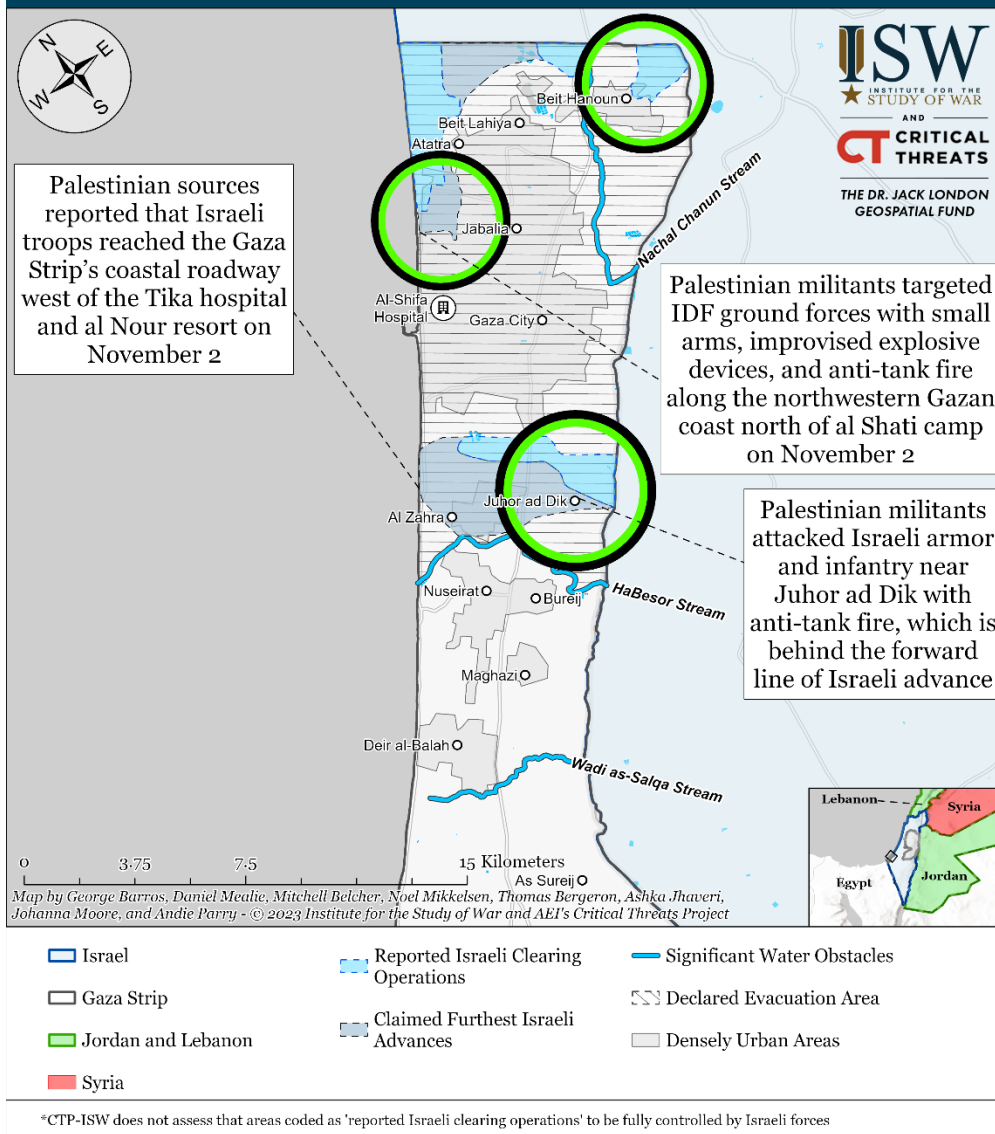
doctrine defines as an operation that “requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area.”[3] Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete.[4] Enemy counterattacks will often persist throughout a clearing operation until the clearing force has successfully eliminated organized resistance in its sector.[5] Attacks may still occur infrequently even after the end of a clearing operation due to the re-infiltration of enemy forces.

The tactical task “clear” differs from “control” in that control requires a force to “maintain physical influence over a specified area to prevent its use by an enemy or to create conditions necessary for successful friendly operations.”[6] Clearing operations precede a force gaining control over an area.

Palestinian militants targeted IDF ground forces with small arms, improvised explosive devices (IED), and anti-tank fire along the northwestern Gazan coast north of al Shati camp on November 2. The al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—claimed that it fired an anti-tank rocket at an IDF vehicle near the Khalidi mosque amid an IDF advance down the coastal road.[7] Palestinian militants also ambushed IDF forces in two separate engagements east of the coastal road.[8]

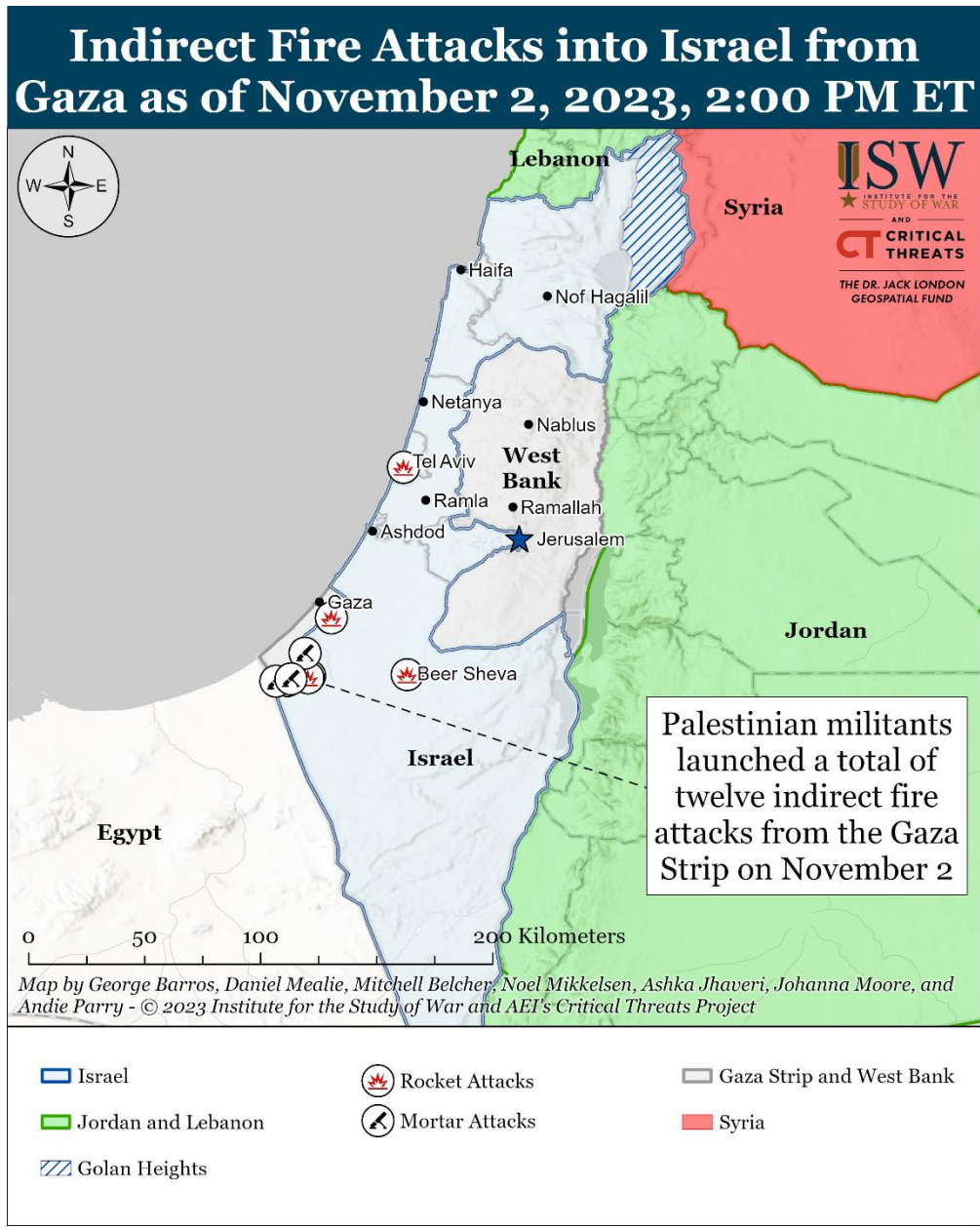
Iranian and Axis of Resistance sources reported that Israeli forces continued their advance into Beit Hanoun.[9] CTP cannot corroborate this reporting. Lebanese Hezbollah (LH)-affiliated outlet al Mayadeen claimed that the IDF is advancing from the east and south as part of an effort to encircle Beit Hanoun.[10]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of November 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



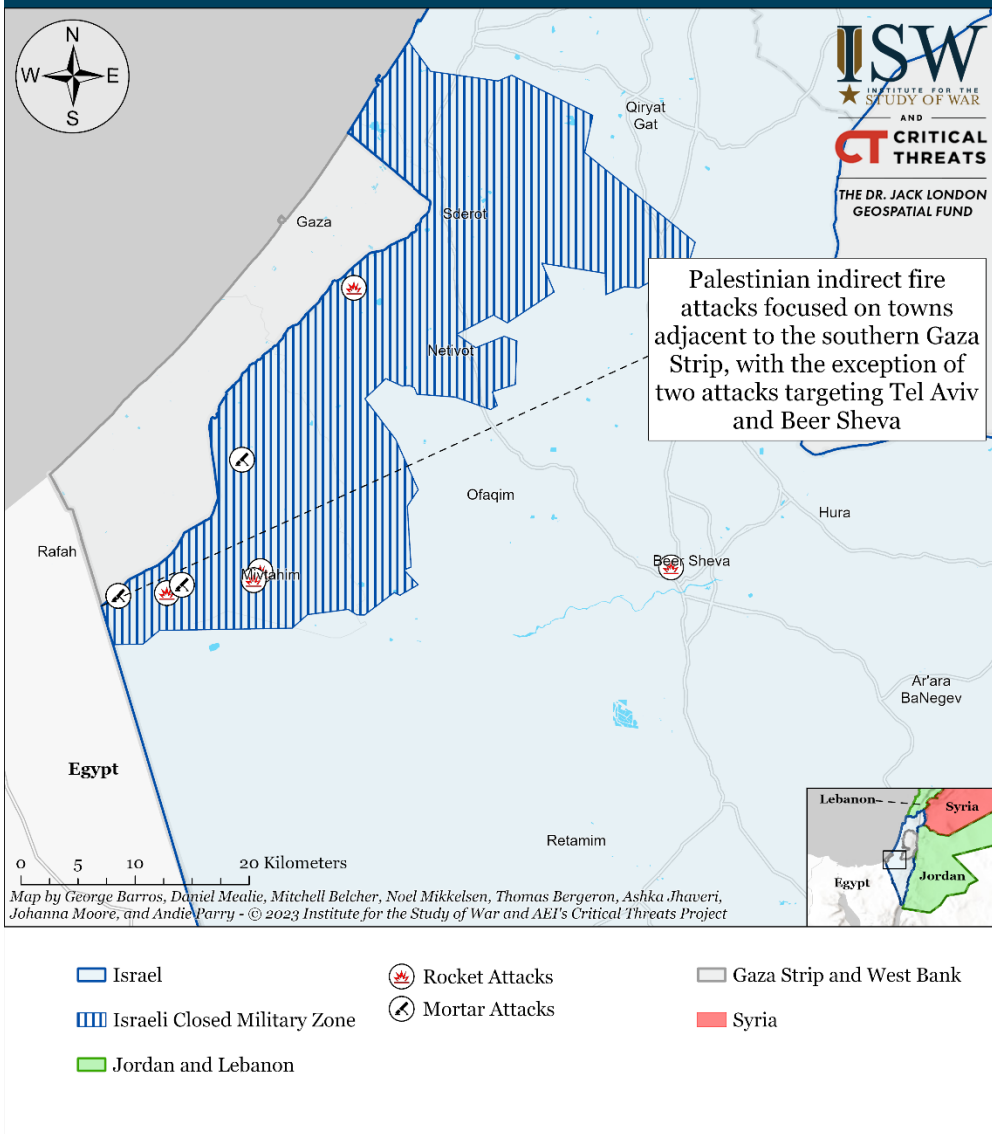
Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israeli territory adjacent to the southern Gaza Strip, possibly due to Israeli operations near Gaza City constraining the groups' ability to launch rockets into Israeli towns adjacent to Gaza City. Palestinian militants launched a total of twelve indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip on November 2. These attacks focused on towns adjacent to the southern Gaza Strip, with the exception of two attacks targeting Tel Aviv and Beersheba.^[11] Israeli operations are making it more difficult for Hamas and its allies to fire rockets and mortars into areas adjacent to the northern Gaza Strip as Palestinian militants are forced to fight IDF units. Palestinian militias retain the ability to launch rockets from the southern Gaza Strip into northern Israel by using longer-range rockets, such as the R160.^[12]

Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted indirect fire attacks into Israel at a slightly decreased rate on November 2. The al Qassem Brigades claimed responsibility for four indirect fire attacks.[13] The al Quds Brigades—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—claimed responsibility for another five indirect fire attacks.[14] The National Resistance Brigades—the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)—claimed three indirect fire attacks into southern Israel.[15]



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

Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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

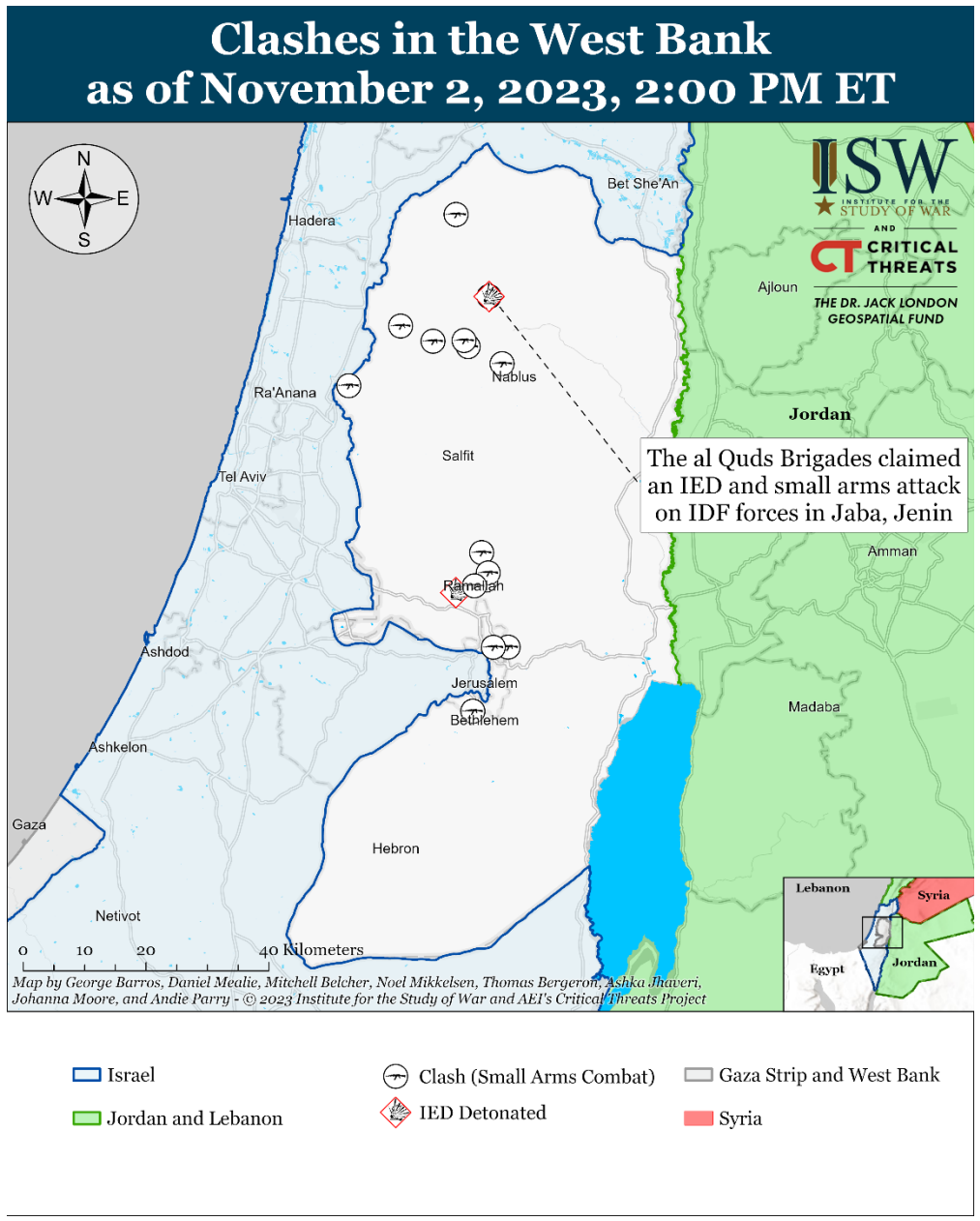
West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there

CTP-ISW recorded 18 separate clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in the West Bank on November 2. The al Quds Brigades' Jaba Battalion claimed an IED and small arms attack on IDF forces in Jaba the evening of November 1.^[16] Palestinian Authority-controlled Wafa News reported that the Jaba Battalion engaged the IDF at the entrance to the town.^[17] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed a separate attack on Israeli forces at the Jalazone

refugee camp, north of Ramallah.[18] Axis of Resistance-affiliated media circulated a statement from the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades warning that Palestinian militants will attack if Israeli forces try to enter the town. The IDF reported that Palestinian militants threw explosives at Israeli forces conducting arrests and weapons seizures in Bitunya.[19] Axis of Resistance and Palestinian media reported 14 additional instances of fighting taking place between Palestinian militants and Israeli forces in central and northern West Bank.[20] The Lion's Den—a West Bank-based Palestinian militia—released a statement on October 26 calling on West Bank residents to take up arms and “strike [everywhere] there is an [Israeli] soldier or settler.”[21] CTP-ISW previously recorded a comparable number of attacks on Israeli forces in the West Bank on October 28, after Israel began its clearing operations in the Gaza Strip.[22]



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel and fix them there
- Set conditions for successive campaigns into northern Israel

Iranian-backed militants, including LH, conducted 28 attacks into northern Israel on November 2, which is the largest offensive on this front since the Israel-Hamas War began. LH fired one-way attack drones for the first time at the IDF Zebdin barracks in the contested Shebaa Farms area. LH has primarily relied on anti-tank squads to attack IDF positions up until this point.[23] LH claimed to simultaneously attack 19 IDF positions along the Lebanon-Israel border.[24] This uptick in attacks precedes LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's planned speech on November 3, during which he may announce further escalation against Israel. LH declared on October 8 that it is not a neutral party in the conflict but has nevertheless sustained daily attacks into northern Israel since the war began.[25]

LH conducted attacks on IDF positions that are consistent with their ongoing attack campaign targeting IDF radar and sensor sites and military targets. LH attacked communication and surveillance equipment at the al Abbad site on November 2, which created conditions for successive operations against the IDF in northern Israel by targeting critical Israeli signals facilities and communications infrastructure.[26] LH also fired a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli drone, which is a capability that LH has employed since October 28.[27] The al Qassem Brigades claimed to have fired 12 rockets from southern Lebanon toward Kiriyat Shimona on November 2.[28] LH almost certainly permits such attacks from southern Lebanon given the extent to which LH controls the area and coordinates with the other Iranian-backed groups operating there. CTP-ISW recorded five unclaimed attacks from southern Lebanon, including a rocket attack on Safed.[29]

LH appears to be preparing for an escalation with Israel ahead of Nasrallah's planned speech. Iran and LH have been creating the expectation in the information environment that Nasrallah will announce some kind of escalation, which could include Hezbollah increasing its rate of attacks or using more advanced military systems against Israel. LH previously warned that it would get involved in the war if Israel conducts ground operations into the Gaza Strip.[30]

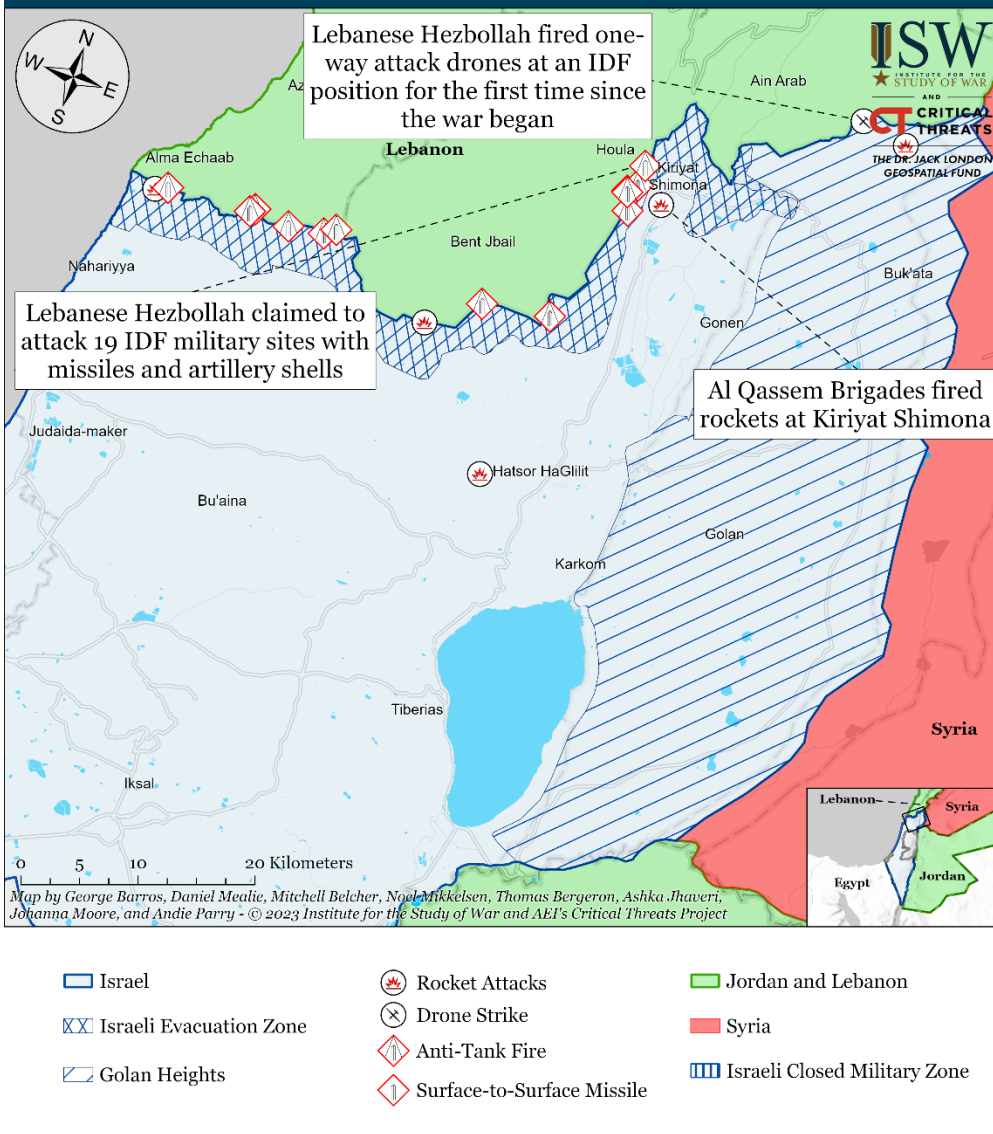
- Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani traveled to Beirut on November 1 to coordinate the next stage of the Israel-Hamas War with LH.[31] Ghaani also traveled to Beirut on October 20 to coordinate with LH and Palestinian militia leaders in a joint operation center there.[32] Ghaani previously visited Syria to direct Iranian-affiliated militias to prepare to open a second front against Israel on October 15.[33]
- Palestinian militias messaged their support for and anticipation of LH's involvement in the war. Unspecified Hamas sources informed the London-based al Quds al Arabi outlet that Hamas expects Nasrallah to announce LH's participation in the war.[34] The sources said Hamas also wants LH to allow Palestinian groups within Lebanon to fight Israel, as LH controls the border. Hamas has previously messaged that LH is working at all military and political levels in the war.[35] The al Quds Brigades separately released a statement on November 2 praising LH's combat abilities.[36]

- US officials told the *Wall Street Journal* that US intelligence indicates that the Russian Wagner private military company plans to give LH Russian Pantsir-S1 air defense missile systems.[37] Russia and Iran have increased their military-technical ties over the past year. Iran has provided Russia with Shahed-136/131 drones and domestic Shahed production capabilities, and Russia reportedly provided Iran with advanced surveillance software and cyber weapons and promised Iran Su-35 aircraft.[38]

LH has been amassing forces on the borders with Israel in Lebanon and Syria since the Israel-Hamas war began. CTP-ISW has monitored LH redistribute its forces across the Levant for the possibility that the war in Israel will expand into a regional conflict fought on multiple fronts. LH and the IRGC Quds Force have attempted to build up their force presence in Syria and Lebanon to this end. LH immediately transferred special forces and medical teams to the borders with Israel. Hundreds of LH militants in the Radwan Unit, which is a special unit focused on infiltrating Israeli territory, mobilized and arrived in Syria on October 8 to spread out along the border with Israel.[39] LH deployed forces from eastern Syria to southwestern Syria and Lebanon several times in the past few weeks.[40] Ghaani previously warned Syrian President Bashar al Assad during a visit on October 15 that Iran intends to use Syria as a second front if the Israel-Hamas war expands geographically.[41]

IDF spokesperson for Arab Media Avichay Adraee said on November 2 that the Iranian-backed, Syria-based Imam al Hussein Brigade arrived in Lebanon in recent weeks to assist LH in fighting Israel.[42] The militia has already engaged with the IDF in recent weeks along the Lebanese border.[43] The militia has been preparing and gathering capabilities to threaten US forces in Syria and Israel, according to a document obtained by *Newsweek* about the Imam Hossein Division in July 2023.[44] Former IRGC Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani founded the militia in 2016, and it now represents an Iranian-led, multi-national combat force comprised of thousands of fighters from around the Middle East.[45] Iran uses cargo planes landing in Syria to arm the militia, according to *Newsweek*. [46] Iran has already attempted to facilitate arms to forces in Lebanon and Syria, which Israel interdicted and indicated that the airstrikes are meant to prevent Iran from delivering weapons and equipment to LH and other Iranian-backed militias.[47]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Syria and Lebanon as of November 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



Iran and Axis of Resistance

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

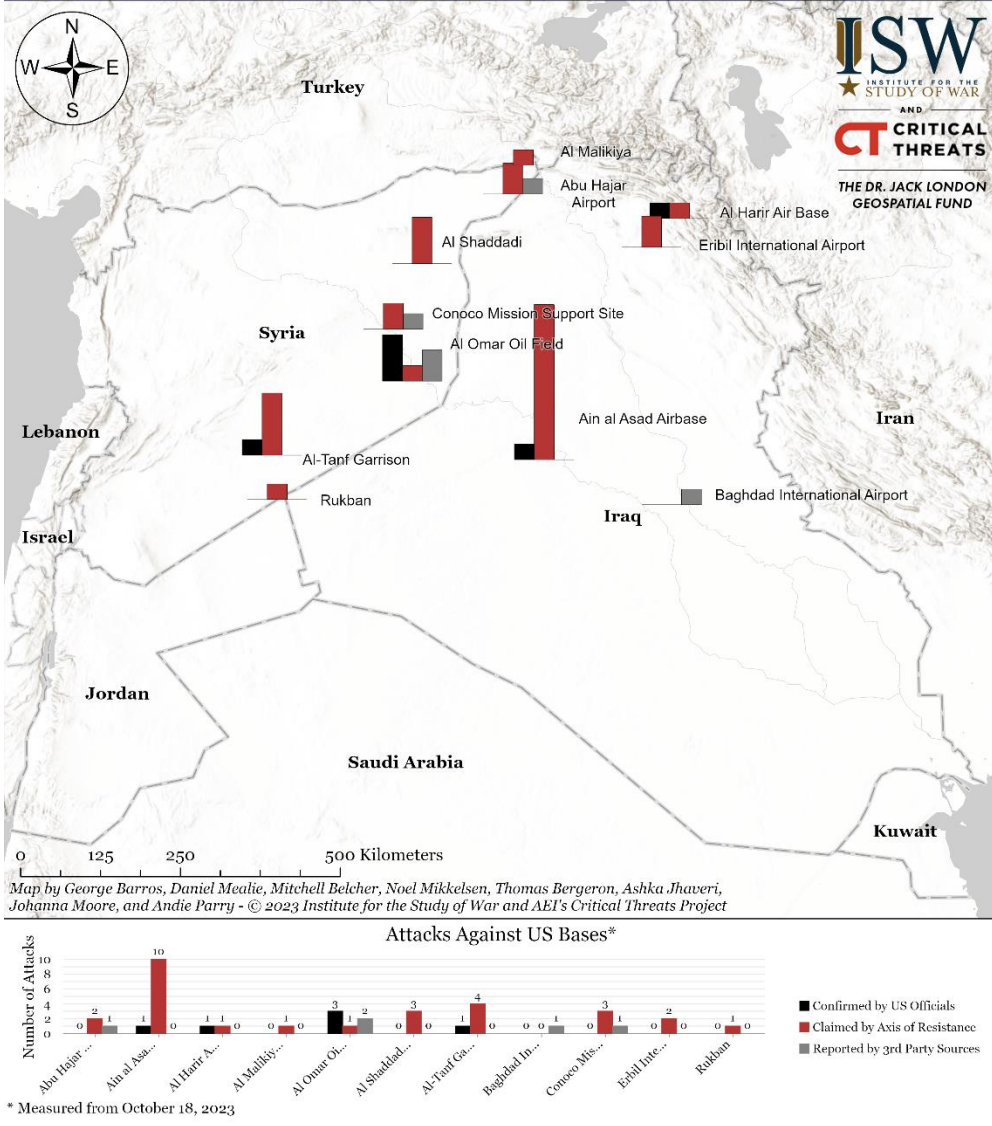
- Demonstrate the capability and willingness of Iran and the Axis of Resistance to escalate against the United States and Israel on multiple fronts
- Set conditions to fight a regional war on multiple fronts

The Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) said that the PMF is in a “state of emergency” during a meeting with other PMF leaders in Baghdad on November 2, indicating preparations for an escalation with the United States. PMF Chief of Staff Abdulazi al Mohammadawi said that the current conditions in the region “warn of war” and PMF forces must be on alert to defend Iraqi sovereignty.[48] Mohammadawi (also known as Abu Fadak) served as the secretary general of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah and maintains

strong ties to the group.[49] KH has repeatedly threatened to conduct attacks on US military positions in recent weeks and is part of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which is a loose coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias and the group that has claimed most of the recent drone and rocket attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria.[50]

The Houthi movement claimed responsibility for a drone attack targeting Israel on October 31, marking the fourth attempted Houthi attack on Israel since the war began. The Houthis said that it launched a “large batch of drones,” which it claimed hit Israeli territory.[51] The IDF said that it intercepted an “aerial attack” over the Red Sea on October 31 but that there was no threat to civilians and the attack did not enter Israeli territory.[52] A Houthi spokesperson separately criticized Saudi Arabia on November 2 for intercepting Houthi attacks targeting Israel and cooperating with the United States.[53] Saudi Arabia and the US Navy intercepted Houthi cruise missiles headed toward Israel on October 19.[54]

Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of November 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Rear Admiral Ali Akbar Ahmadian met with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s Special Representative for Syrian Affairs Alexander Lavrentiev in Tehran on November 1.[55] The two officials discussed the Israel-Hamas war, joint political and security cooperation, and cooperation in Syria. Lavrentiev also delivered a message from Putin to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

An Iranian media delegation traveled to Lebanon to meet with Palestinian militia commanders on November 2, likely in part to coordinate Axis of Resistance messaging and information operations.[56] Unspecified Iranian media officials met with the representatives from various Palestinian militias fighting Israel, including Hamas and PIJ. *Nour News Agency*—an outlet tied to Iran’s Supreme National Security Council—reported on the delegation and emphasized that both Iranian and Palestinian officials agreed that “today’s war is a war of

narratives” and that the “responsibility of journalists. . . is to be in the field of the narratives war and present the voice and image of the oppressed Palestinian people to the world.”



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- [2] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/193>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/194>; <https://t.me/newpress1/56852>
- [3] <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>; <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm3-90-1.pdf>
- [4] [https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/OperationalArt in COIN o.pdf](https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/OperationalArt%20in%20COIN%20o.pdf)
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- [11] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/204>;
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- [12] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-long-range-rocket-fired-from-gaza-toward-haifa-area-no-injuries/; https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-long-range-rocket-fired-from-gaza-toward-haifa-area-no-injuries/
- [13] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/196>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/200>;
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