

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: October 18, 2024, 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.

The IDF Chief of Staff estimated that Israeli forces have killed at least 1,500 Hezbollah fighters since beginning operations against the group, which is consistent with CTP-ISW estimates.[1] IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi told Israeli forces in southern Lebanon that 1,500 is a conservative estimate.[2] CTP-ISW has independently tallied about 1,450 Hezbollah fighter deaths since October 8, 2023.[3] IDF operations, including the widespread September pager and radio attacks, have almost certainly seriously injured thousands of other Hezbollah fighters and rendered them unable to fight.[4] Halevi said that Israeli operations had struck Hezbollah's entire senior leadership to “wipe out” the chain of command.[5] The IDF has exclusively killed Hezbollah's senior leadership through airstrikes.[6] Halevi added that Israeli ground operations

in Lebanon were decimating Hezbollah’s local leadership.[7] This pattern of targeting means that Hezbollah very likely retains tactical-level commanders in its rear areas away from Israel’s current ground operations, particularly in the northern Bekaa Valley. The IDF Air Force frequently targets sites in the Bekaa Valley but the intensity of operations against Hezbollah’s northern units is significantly less than along the Israel-Lebanon border.[8]



Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Khalil al Hayya reiterated Hamas’ maximalist negotiation position during a speech mourning Yahya Sinwar on October 18.[9] Hayya declared that Hamas would not release the Israeli hostages until the IDF completed a full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and released Palestinian prisoners.[10] Hamas’ maximalist position has consistently demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, including the Philadelphi Corridor along Gaza’s border with Egypt, which Hamas has used to develop its military capabilities over the past

decades.[11] Hamas has also insisted on a permanent ceasefire, the release of high-value Palestinian prisoners, the unimpeded return of Gazans to the northern Gaza Strip, and full reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

Israeli and US officials confirmed on October 18 that mediators are not close to resuming talks in Doha or Egypt.[12] Unspecified Israeli officials said that Israel would likely need to wait for Hamas to appoint a new leader before resuming negotiations.[13] CTP-ISW has assessed that Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Khalil al Hayya is Sinwar's most likely successor as Hamas political leader.[14] Hayya was reportedly one of only a few exiled leaders whom Sinwar trusted, and he has played a key role in ceasefire negotiations.[15] Hayya has a much stronger relationship with Hezbollah and Iran than other options for the top Hamas leadership role, like Khaled Meshaal.[16] Hayya also presumably took over many of Haniyeh's duties—such as engaging with foreign partners—that Sinwar could not perform due to his physical position in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials are considering the impact of Yahya Sinwar's death on hostage negotiations.[17] Israeli officials are reportedly concerned that Yahya Sinwar's death will inspire Hamas to execute the Israeli hostages that it holds.[18] Israeli media reported that senior Israeli officials spoke with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about how to prevent Hamas from retaliating against Israeli hostages for Sinwar's death.[19] Hamas previously used its execution of Israeli six hostages to conduct a series of information operations designed to degrade Israeli will and force Israel to end the war on terms favorable to Hamas, which would ultimately lead to an Israeli defeat.[20]

Israeli military operations over the last year, particularly Israeli subterranean operations, deliberately created the conditions that led to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's death on October 16. Sinwar had previously hidden underground in Hamas' vast tunnel network in Khan Younis until January 2024 and then in tunnels in Rafah until at least August 2024.[21] IDF clearing operations throughout the last year have attempted to destroy these tunnel networks throughout the Strip.[22] These operations enabled the IDF to force Sinwar from his tunnel complex in Khan Younis in January 2024 and then caused Sinwar to move above ground in Rafah after IDF operations there destroyed a number of tunnels.[23] Forcing Hamas leaders like Sinwar above ground by destroying the tunnel networks was part of a deliberate IDF operational design. The discrete tactical engagement that led to Sinwar's death was a chance encounter, but the broader Israeli campaign was intentionally designed to force Hamas rank-and-file and leaders above ground where they could be sought out and destroyed. Sinwar's death was therefore not a matter of chance, but rather the outcome of a deliberate campaign designed to eventually eliminate all of Hamas' senior leadership.

The IDF stated that Mohammed Sinwar assumed the duties of Hamas' military wing after the IDF killed Mohammad Deif in July 2024.[24] **Read more CTP-ISW analysis of Yahya Sinwar's succession here:** [Sinwar's Death Will Not End Israeli Operations in the Gaza Strip](#) by Brian Carter.

Two Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood members infiltrated Israeli territory near the Dead Sea and fired small arms targeting Israeli soldiers on October 18. The involvement of two Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood members demonstrates potential opportunities for Iran and the Axis of Resistance to recruit Jordanians to target Israel.[25] The Jordanian fighters infiltrated multiple meters beyond the Jordan-Israel border.[26] Israeli forces killed the Jordanian

fighters following an exchange of fire that injured two Israeli soldiers near Neot Hakikar, south of the Dead Sea.[27] The Israeli Army Radio reported that the fighters carried a map, a compass, and an Arabic-Hebrew dictionary.[28] The IDF blocked roads near the area and conducted aerial and ground scans to confirm that additional fighters did not also infiltrate Israeli territory.[29] The fighters reportedly wore Jordanian military uniforms but were not Jordanian soldiers.[30] Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood spokesperson Moaz al Khawaldeh claimed that the fighters were Muslim Brotherhood members who regularly participated in events in support of Gaza and the resistance.[31] Multiple Palestinian militias have released statements praising the attack.[32]

This attack, like the Jordanian truck driver attack that killed three Israeli citizens at the Allenby border crossing between Jordan and the West Bank on September 8, reflects anti-Israel sentiments in Jordan that can be manipulated by Iran and the Axis of Resistance.[33] Both Jordanian and Israeli police have thwarted several attempts in recent months by Iran and its partners to conduct attacks within the kingdom or smuggle weapons into the West Bank.[34] Iranian efforts to manufacture weapons, arm Jordanian agents, and undermine the Jordanian state are consistent with CTP-ISW's previous assessments that Iran is adopting a more confrontational approach towards Jordan in its regional strategy.[35] It is also notable that this attack occurred one day after the IDF announced it had killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar in the Gaza Strip, given Hamas' historic and ideological ties with the Muslim Brotherhood.[36]

Key Takeaways:

- **Israeli Ground Operations in Lebanon:** The IDF Chief of Staff estimated that Israeli forces have killed at least 1,500 Hezbollah fighters since beginning operations against the group, which is consistent with CTP-ISW estimates.
- **Ceasefire Negotiations:** Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Khalil al Hayya reiterated Hamas' maximalist negotiation position during a speech mourning Yahya Sinwar on October 18.
- **The Death of Yahya Sinwar:** Israeli military operations over the last year, particularly Israeli subterranean operations, deliberately created the conditions that led to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's death on October 16. The discrete tactical engagement that led to Sinwar's death was a chance encounter, but the broader Israeli campaign was intentionally designed to force Hamas rank-and-file and leaders above ground where they could be sought out and destroyed.
- **Jordan:** Two Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood members infiltrated Israeli territory near the Dead Sea and fired small arms targeting Israeli soldiers on October 18. The involvement of two Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood members demonstrates potential opportunities for Iran and the Axis of Resistance to recruit Jordanians to target Israel.

Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of October 18, 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

See topline for coverage of the IDF engagement that killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar.

The IDF 162nd Division deployed an additional brigade to Jabalia, northern Gaza Strip, on October 18.[37] The IDF stated that the IDF 84th Infantry Brigade started clearing operations in Jabalia on October 18.[38] Palestinian militias have conducted almost daily attacks targeting Israeli forces in Jabalia since the IDF launched a new clearing operation in the northern Gaza Strip to disrupt Hamas reconstitution efforts.[39]

Palestinian militias conducted at least three attacks targeting Israeli forces operating in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip on October 17 and 18.[40] Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired small arms, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), and thermobaric rockets targeting Israeli forces operating in Jabalia.[41]

The IDF 252nd Division continued clearing operations in the central Gaza Strip on October 18.[42]

Palestinian militias conducted at least two attacks targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor on October 18.[43]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of October 18, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



The IDF 162nd Division deployed an additional brigade to Jabalia



Palestinian militias conducted at least two attacks targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor

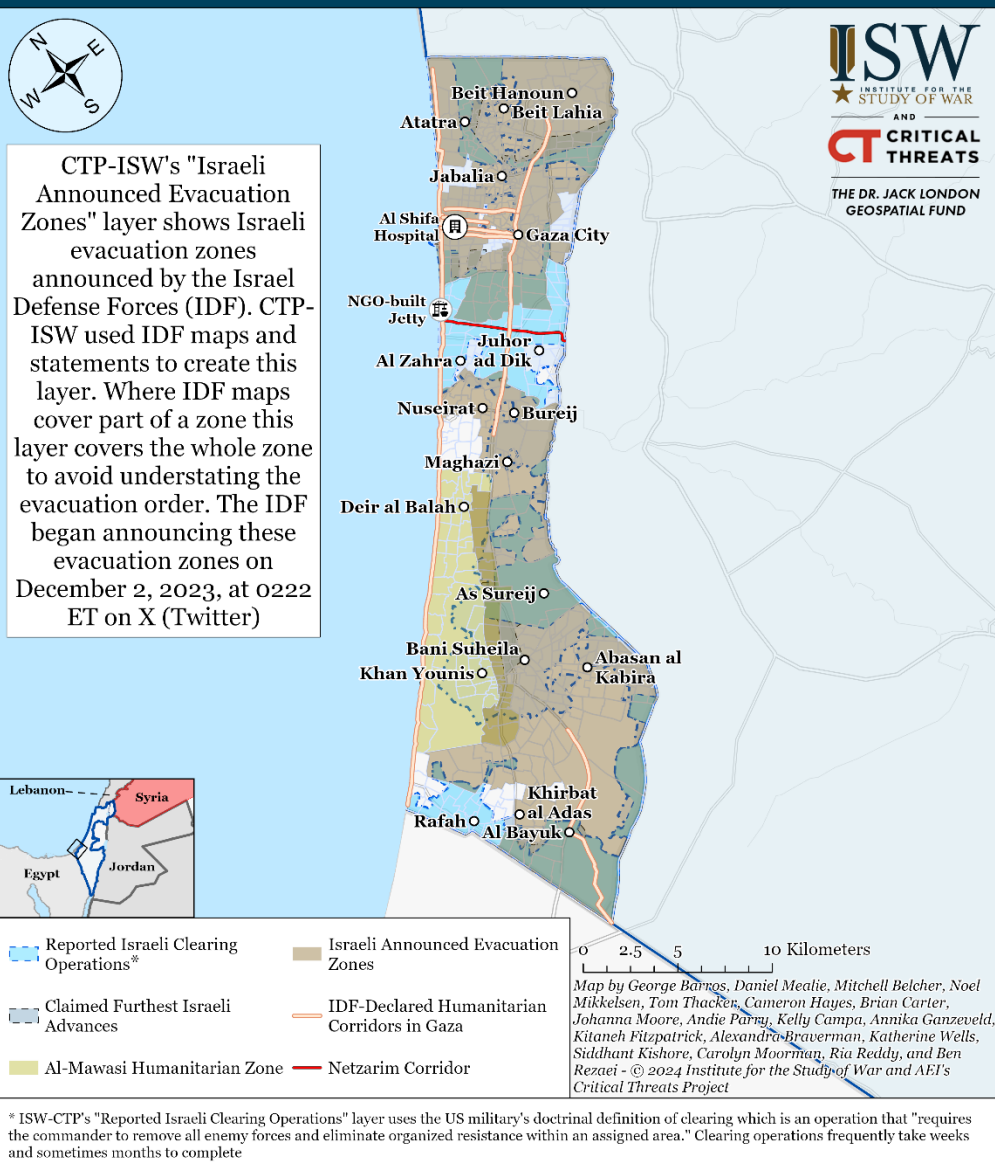


Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Cameron Hayes, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone	
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations			

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of October 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces engaged al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fighters in several locations in Tubas since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 17.[44] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades detonated an IED targeting an Israeli military bulldozer near al Thaghra Street in Tubas.[45]

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of October 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

Northern Israel and Lebanon

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson called on civilians to evacuate immediately from 23 towns and villages in southern Lebanon on October 18.[46] The IDF has previously issued

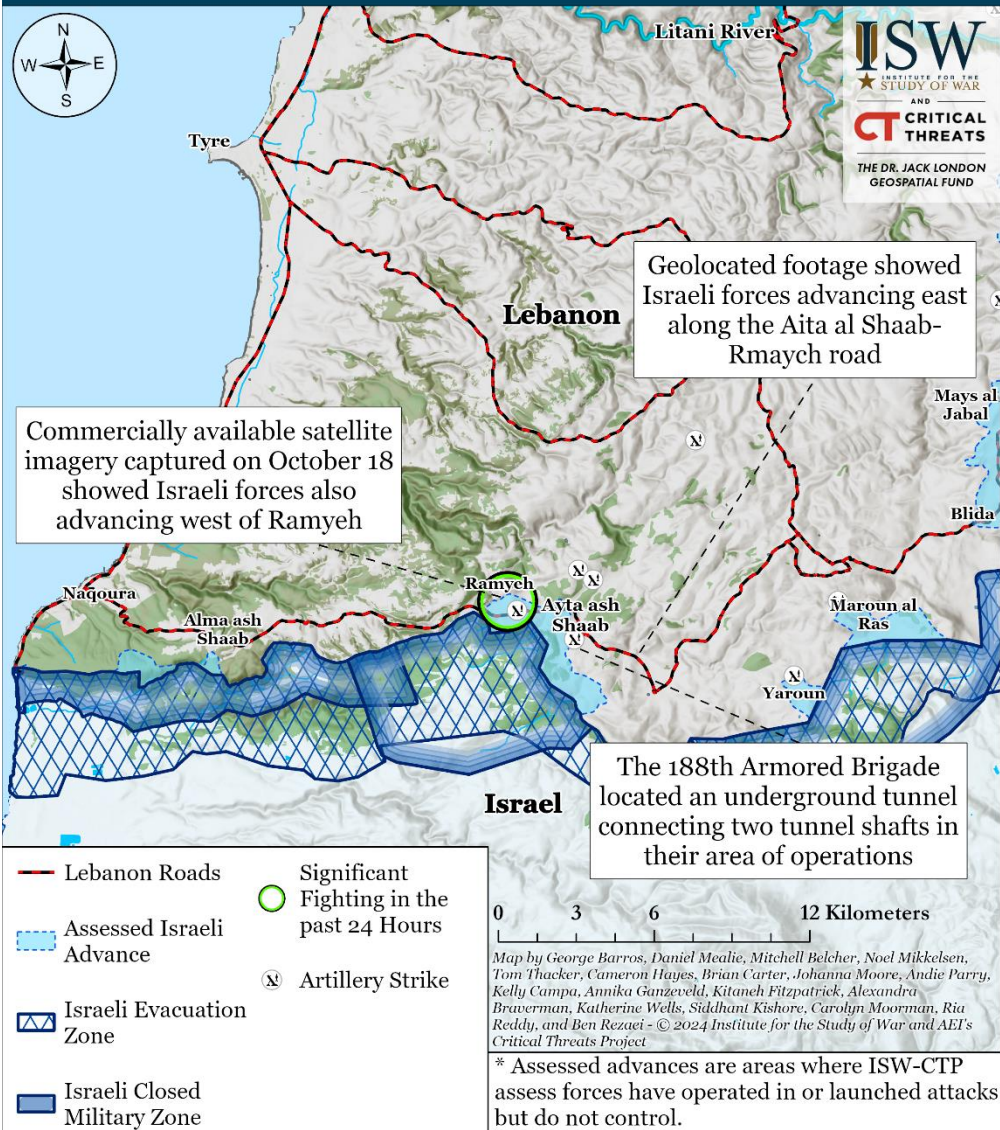
evacuation orders for all 23 villages. The spokesperson told residents that they should move north of the Awali River.[47]

The IDF mobilized an additional unspecified reservist brigade to fight in southern Lebanon on October 18.[48] The IDF noted that the additional brigade would enable Israel to accomplish its war aims, including returning displaced residents to northern Israel.[49] The IDF has currently deployed five divisions to southern Lebanon.[50] Another three IDF divisions are active in the Gaza Strip.[51]

The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations around Kfar Kila and Taybeh, southeastern Lebanon, on October 18. The 98th Division directed an airstrike targeting the commander of Hezbollah's Taybeh sector Mohammad Hussein Ramal.[52] Ramal was responsible for directing strikes into Israel from the Taybeh area. The 55th Paratrooper Brigade (res.) (98th Division) destroyed rocket stockpiles at launch sites and confiscated other weapons in the area.[53] Hezbollah claimed three mortar attacks and one rocket attack targeting Israeli forces around Kfar Kila.[54] Southern Lebanese media also reported an Israeli airstrike near Taybeh.[55]

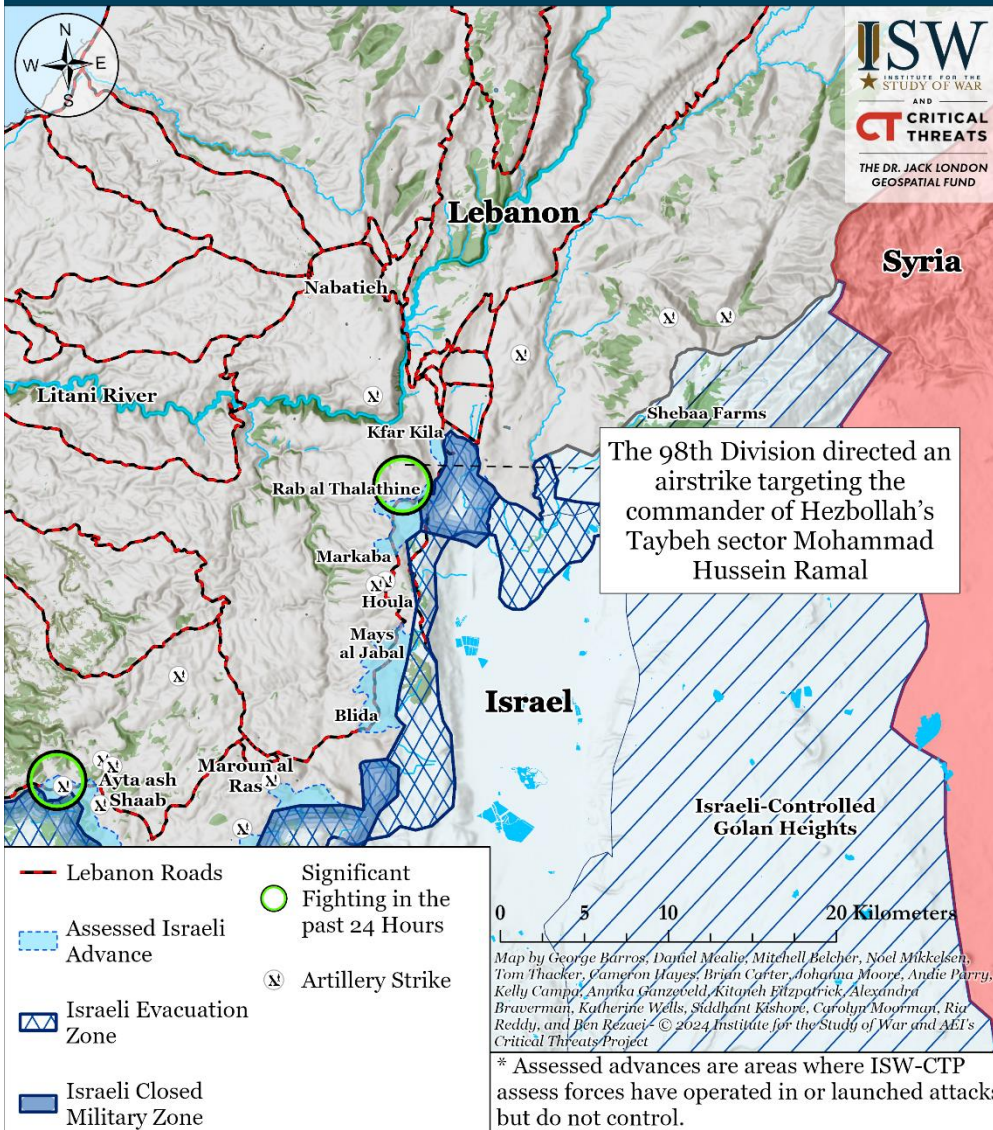
The IDF 91st Division seized Hezbollah sniper weapons, “combat equipment,” and anti-tank launchers during clearing operations in southeast Lebanon on October 18.[56] Israeli forces also located rockets prepared to launch into Israeli territory.

Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector As of October 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



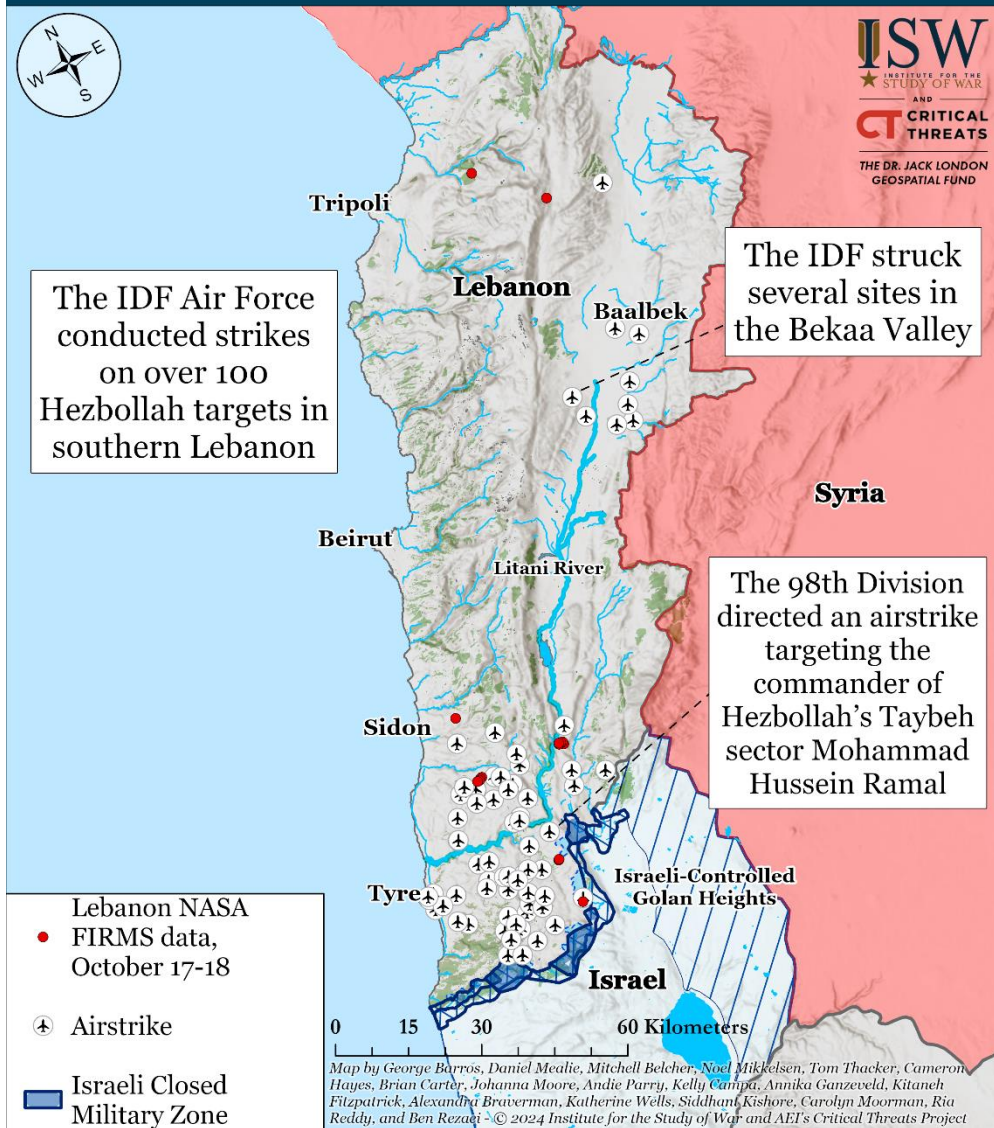
The IDF 36th Division continued clearing operations around Aita al Shaab on October 18. The 188th Armored Brigade located an underground tunnel connecting two tunnel shafts in their area of operations.[57] The tunnel contained Hezbollah documents, weapons, and supplies to sustain fighters underground. Israeli forces sealed the shafts to prevent their use. The 188th Armored Brigade also seized and destroyed “dozens” of Hezbollah weapons caches and infrastructure.[58] The 7th Armored Brigade located rocket launchers prepared to launch into Israel.[59] Geolocated footage from local Lebanese sources posted on October 18 showed Israeli forces traveling eastwards on the Aita al Shaab-Rmaysh road.[60] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on October 18 showed Israeli forces also advancing west of Ramyeh.

Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of October 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon

As of October 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

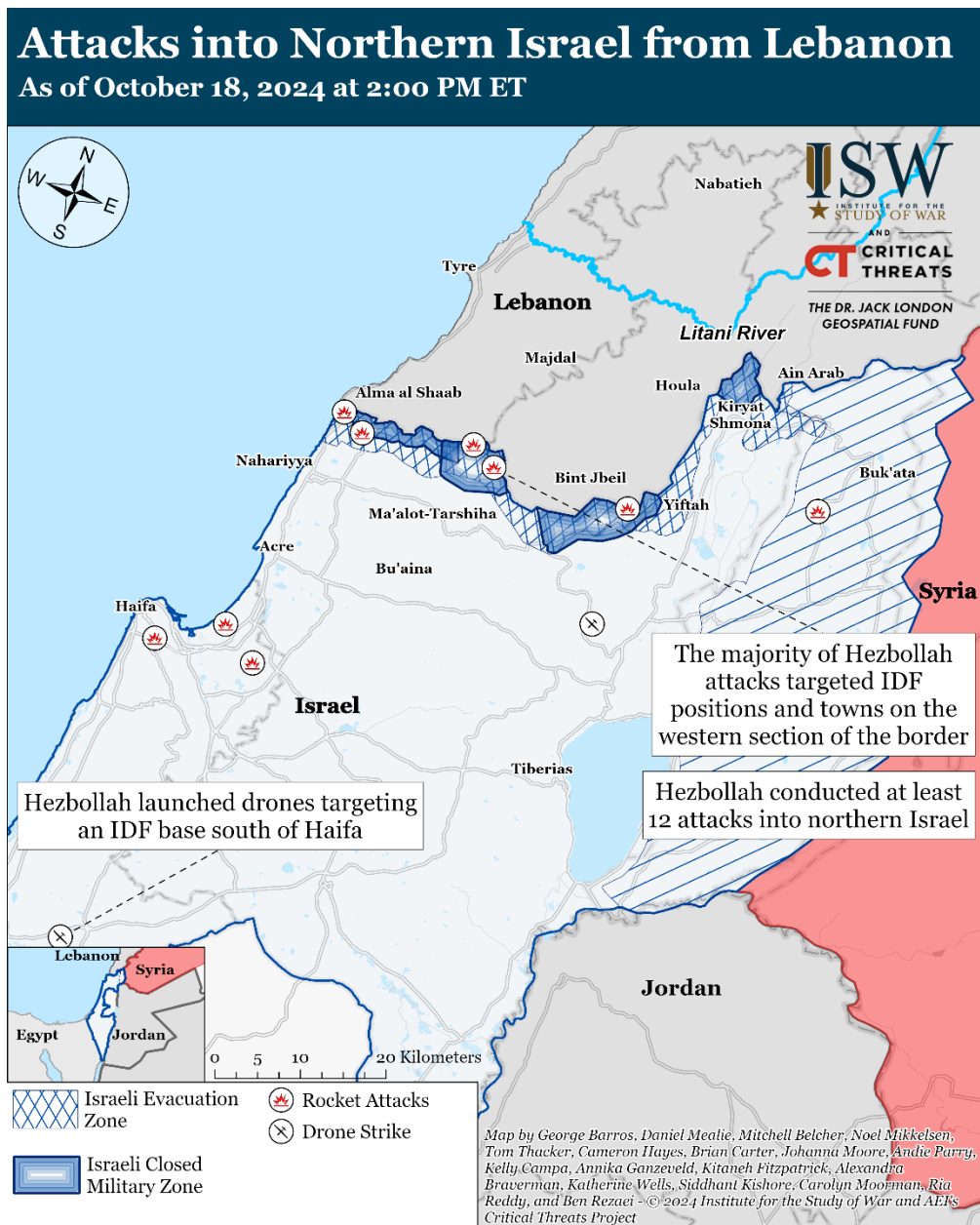


This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on October 17 to 2:00pm ET on October 18. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah has conducted at least 12 attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on October 17.[61] The majority of Hezbollah attacks targeted IDF positions and towns on the western portion of the border, which is in Hezbollah's Aziz Unit area of operations.[62] Hezbollah conducted three rocket attacks targeting sites near Haifa, northwestern Israel.[63] Hezbollah also launched a squadron of attack drones targeting Ein Shemer, which is the IDF's missile air defense and regional brigade base south of Haifa.[64] Hezbollah continued to target Israeli forces along the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah fighters launched anti-tank guided missiles targeting two tanks near Avivim, which is adjacent to areas where Israeli forces are conducting ground operations in Lebanon.

[65] Hezbollah's attacks on Israeli forces aim to degrade the IDF's ability to conduct effective ground operations.

Hezbollah's operations room announced on October 18 that it would "transition to a new and escalating phase" in its attacks on Israel.[66] The statement said that the new phase would be evident in the "coming days." [67] CTP-ISW did not observe Hezbollah operations against the IDF that are consistent with a "new phase" on October 18. Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem announced a new war "phase" designed to inflict high casualties on Israel on October 15.[68]



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a drone attack targeting an unspecified “vital target” in northern Israel on October 18.[69]

An unspecified source told Iraqi media that the United States and Iran have postponed indirect talks aimed at defusing regional tensions after Israeli forces killed Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Yayha Sinwar in the Gaza Strip on October 16.[70] The United States and Iran were scheduled to hold indirect talks in Baghdad on October 17 to try to prevent the October 7 War from “getting out of control.”[71] Iraqi media reported that a US delegation arrived in Baghdad unannounced on October 16 to initiate the talks.[72] The arrival of the US delegation came after Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters in Oman on October 14 that Iran had stopped its indirect talks with the United States.[73] Araghchi was likely referring to indirect talks that US and Iranian officials have held in Oman in recent months to try to avoid escalation in the region.[74]

The Lebanese government summoned the Iranian Charge d’Affaires in Beirut after Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf stated that Iran is prepared to negotiate with France to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 in Lebanon.[75] Ghalibaf made the statement in a recent interview with French media.[76] UN Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Lebanon war, requires Hezbollah forces to remain north of the Litani River.[77] Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati described Ghalibaf’s statement as a “blatant interference” in Lebanese affairs.[78] The Iranian parliament claimed on October 18 that French media misrepresented Ghalibaf’s comments and emphasized that the Axis of Resistance will play a role in any political agreement.[79] The parliament added that Iran will support any ceasefire accepted by the Lebanese government and Hezbollah.[80]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi attended the 3+3 meeting with Russian, Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Armenian officials in Istanbul on October 18, to discuss the regional framework promoting stability in the south Caucasus.[81] Georgia, who is part of the 3+3 group, did not send representatives to the meeting.[82] Araghchi met with Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan on the sidelines of the 3+3 meeting.[83] Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated on X (Twitter) that Iran wants to cooperate with its partners at the 3+3 Summit to establish peace and promote economic exchanges.[84] Iran is particularly interested in cooperation with its neighboring South Caucasus partners, given the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and Azerbaijan’s push to build the Zangezur Corridor, which would cut off Iran’s trade route through Armenia to Europe.[85] Iran also seeks to reduce Israeli influence in the South Caucasus region, which is a reference to the developing Israeli-Azerbaijan relationship.[86]

POWERED BY:  BABELSTREET

[1] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1847281779012465122>

- [2] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1847281779012465122> ; <https://www dot idf.il/240887>
- [3] Data available on request.
- [4] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-september-17-2024> ;
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-september-18-2024> ;
- [5] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1847281779012465122>
- [6] <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/how-israel-killed-a-ghost-73e6db68> ;
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- [17] https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/israel-cautiously-optimistic-that-sinwars-death-could-be-opportunity-for-hostage-deal-official-says/
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[20] <https://isw.pub/IranUpdate090524>

[21] <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2024/10/18/hamas-yahya-sinwar-hostages-drone-video/75732115007/>

[22] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1829143254018715821>

[23] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/15629>

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[28] <https://x.com/GLZRadio/status/1847242989313077348>

[29] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1847226672644252142> ;
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