

Iran Update, January 30, 2024

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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. Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Iran Update.

Key Takeaways:

- **Northern Gaza Strip:** Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters clashed in western Gaza City where Palestinian militias have likely infiltrated. The Guardian reported that Hamas is returning to the northern Gaza Strip and rebuilding a system of governance there.
- **Central Gaza Strip:** Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters, including conducting an airstrike on Palestinian fighters armed with rocket-propelled grenades. Palestinian fighters separately mortared Israeli forces.
- **Southern Gaza Strip:** Israeli forces continued conducting clearing operations around Khan Younis. Palestinian fighters continued conducting a deliberate defense against Israeli forces in western Khan Younis.
- **Political Negotiations:** Hamas is considering a new hostage-for-prisoner proposal. Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh will soon travel to Cairo to discuss the proposal.
- **West Bank:** Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian militias 10 times. Israeli forces killed three Palestinian fighters affiliated with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad in a hospital in Jenin.
- **Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights:** Lebanese Hezbollah conducted four attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. Unidentified militants launched rockets from Syria into the Golan Heights.

- **Iraq and Syria:** Iran and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah are conducting an information operation to distance Iran from the January 28 one-way drone attack that killed three US service members in northeastern Jordan.
- **Yemen:** Houthi Defense Minister Mohammad Nasser al Atifi said that the Houthis are prepared for a long-term confrontation with US and UK forces in the Red Sea.
- **Iran:** The Iranian Law Enforcement Command Border Guards commander announced that it killed a member of the Baloch militant group, Ansar al Furqan, in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.



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 and Palestinian fighters clashed on January 30 in western Gaza City where Palestinian militias have likely infiltrated. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) resumed operations in western Gaza City on January 28 and 29.[1] The IDF 401st Brigade (assigned to the 162nd Division) killed “many” Palestinian fighters in al Shati refugee camp on January 30.[2] The IDF 5th Brigade (assigned to the 143rd Division) separately engaged Palestinian fighters in the northern Gaza Strip.[3] The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson issued a warning to Hamas operatives in al Shati refugee camp on January 30, calling on them to surrender.[4] The spokesperson published an infographic of Hamas commanders in the Shati and Sheikh Radwan battalions of Hamas’ Gaza Brigade whom the IDF has killed.[5] Palestinian sources reported on January 30 that Israeli forces clashed with and detained Palestinian fighters in Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City.[6]

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed several attacks targeting Israeli forces in northern, southern, and western Gaza City on January 30.[7] Other Palestinian militias are similarly defending against Israeli raids in the northern Gaza Strip. The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, which is the self-proclaimed military wing of Fatah and aligned with Hamas in the current war, fired unspecified munitions at Israeli forces advancing in Gaza City.[8]

This activity is consistent with CTP-ISW’s assessment that Hamas and other Palestinian militias are likely infiltrating some of these areas.[9] CTP-ISW defines infiltration as the process by which “an attacking force conducts undetected movement through or into an area occupied by [opposing] forces to occupy a position of advantage behind those [opposing] positions while exposing only small elements to [opposing] defensive fires.”[10]

The Guardian reported on January 30 that Hamas is returning to the northern Gaza Strip and rebuilding a system of governance there.[11] A former official from Israel’s National Security Council said that Hamas is policing in the northern Gaza Strip and governing trade. A Tel Aviv-based think tank researcher similarly reported that Hamas has re-established control in parts of the Gaza Strip where the IDF previously operated, namely al Shati refugee camp, Jabalia refugee camp, and Shujaiya. Several sources discussed the general breakdown in law and order in the Gaza Strip. Aid officials reported several incidents of unspecified personnel looting aid trucks, primarily in the central Gaza Strip.

This reporting is consistent with CTP-ISW’s assessment that Palestinian militias are likely infiltrating into areas of the northern Gaza Strip where Israeli forces previously conducted clearing operations.[12] Hamas’ return to providing services in areas that Israeli forces previously cleared undermines Israeli efforts to destroy Hamas.

Western media appears, however, to have exaggerated Hamas’ infiltration into the northern Gaza Strip by framing it as preparation for a “new offensive” against Israel.[13] Hamas and other Palestinian fighters are likely in the early stages of the reconstitution of their governance and military

capabilities in the northern Gaza Strip.[14] But these efforts do not necessarily indicate that Hamas is preparing for an offensive campaign in the way that Western media has suggested.

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters in the central Gaza Strip on January

30. The IDF Nahal Brigade (assigned to the 162nd Division) directed a drone strike targeting Palestinian fighters armed with rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) in the central Gaza Strip on January 30.[15] PIJ fighters mortared a concentration of IDF personnel east of Maghazi.[16]

The IDF 98th Division continued to conduct clearing operations in Khan Younis on

January 30. The 35th Paratroopers Brigade (assigned to the 98th Division) and 7th Brigade (assigned to the 36th Division) killed Palestinian fighters and located weapons in western Khan Younis.[17] The 98th Division directed the IDF Air Force to destroy the rocket launchers from which Hamas fighters fired rockets targeting Tel Aviv in Khan Younis on January 29.[18] The IDF reported that the launchers were loaded and that the Air Force also destroyed an unspecified military asset belonging to Hamas' anti-tank unit.[19]

Palestinian militias continued to execute a deliberate defense against Israeli forces in western Khan Younis. PIJ fighters targeted four IDF tanks with RPGs west of Khan Younis on January 30.[20] Other Palestinian militias, including Hamas and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, continued to target Israeli forces in western Khan Younis with RPGs and explosive devices.[21] Palestinian militias separately contested Israeli operations in southwestern Khan Younis.[22]

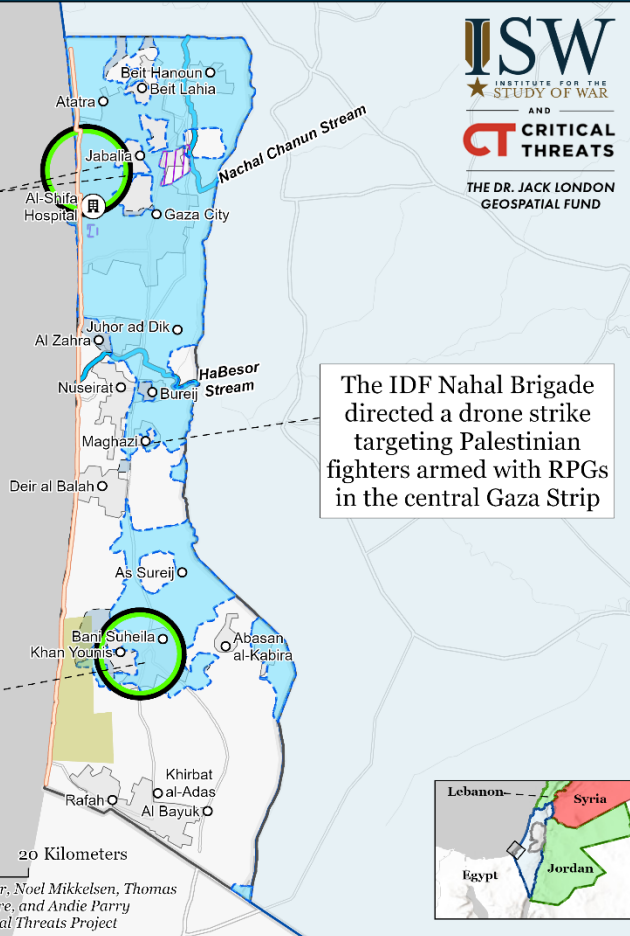
Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of January 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters in Rimal and al Shati Camp in western Gaza City

The IDF Nahal Brigade directed a drone strike targeting Palestinian fighters armed with RPGs in the central Gaza Strip

The IDF 98th Division continued to conduct clearing operations in western Khan Younis



0 5 10 20 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project



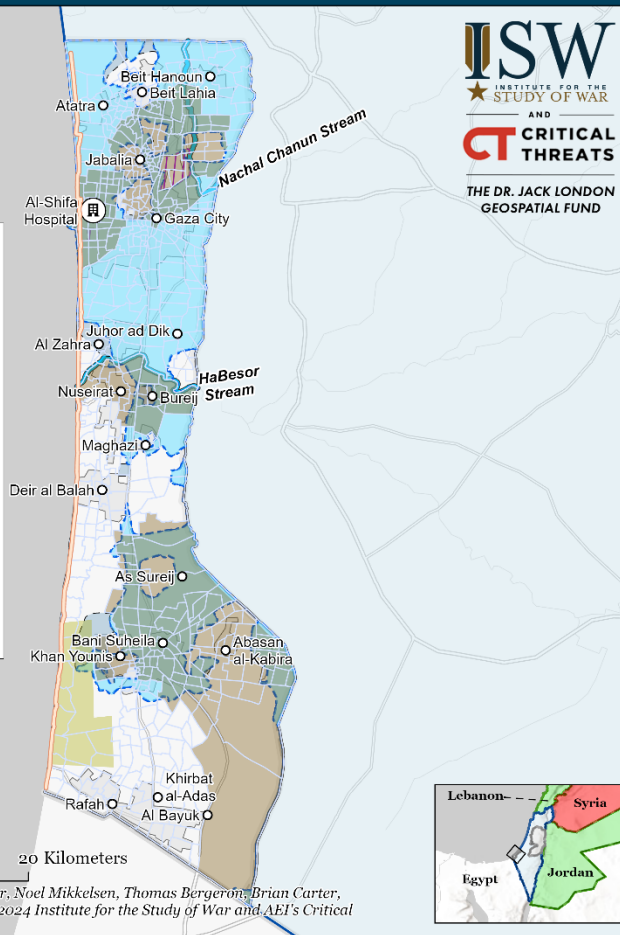
- Israel
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Gaza Strip
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
- Significant Water Obstacles
- Densely Urban Areas
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- ZZ Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias

* 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 January 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
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- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
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Hamas is considering a new hostage-for-prisoner proposal.[23] An unspecified senior Hamas official told Reuters on January 30 that the proposal involved a three-stage truce, during which Hamas would release remaining civilians held hostage in the Gaza Strip, then soldiers, and finally the bodies of killed hostages. Reuters reported that the proposal is part of what appears to be the most "serious peace initiative for months." The ceasefire proposal follows talks involving the US, Israeli, and Egyptian intelligence chiefs and the Qatari prime minister.[24] Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh confirmed that Hamas received a ceasefire proposal and affirmed that the groups' top priority is the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip.[25] Haniyeh will travel to Cairo to discuss the proposal.[26] Hamas and other Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip have previously insisted that they will only accept a deal that ends the war permanently.[27] The proposal,

as outlined by the Hamas official, does not include the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli Shin Bet director met with his Egyptian counterpart to discuss expanding Israeli operations to Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.[28] Two unspecified Israeli sources told Axios on January 30 that the two officials discussed cooperating to prevent weapons smuggling into the Gaza Strip that would enable Hamas to rearm itself. Egypt is concerned that an Israeli military operation in Rafah along the Philadelphi Corridor—a 14-kilometer stretch of land between Egypt and the Gaza Strip—could create a flow of Palestinian refugees into the Sinai Peninsula. Israel informed Egypt that it is planning a military operation to secure the Egypt-Gaza Strip border in early January.[29] The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the timing of the Israeli operation will depend on negotiations with Egypt regarding Israeli hostages in the Gaza Strip and a ceasefire.[30]

Palestinian militias did not claim any indirect fire attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip on January 30.

West Bank

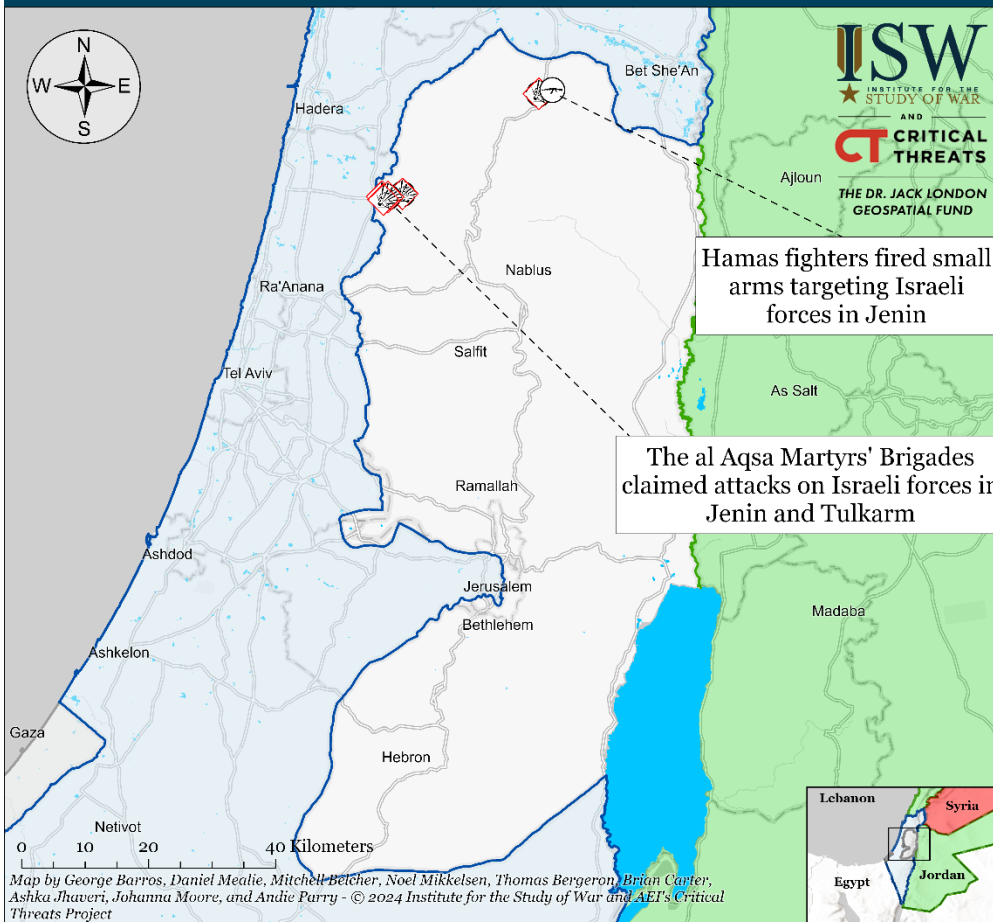
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian militias 10 times across the West Bank. Israeli forces conducted raids, detained six wanted individuals, and captured currency and weapons during operations in Tulkarm, Nour Shams, Nablus, Ein Arik, Azzun, and Tarqumiya.[31] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a militia aligned with Hamas in the current war, claimed that it detonated IEDs and fired small arms targeting Israeli forces in Tulkarm and Jenin on January 29 and 30.[32] Hamas fighters separately fired small arms targeting Israeli forces conducting raids in Jenin on January 30.[33]

Israeli forces killed three Palestinian fighters affiliated with Hamas and PIJ in a hospital in Jenin on January 30.[34] The IDF conducted a joint operation with Shin Bet and undercover Israeli police to target a founder of and spokesperson for Hamas' Jenin Brigade.[35] The IDF said that the target was planning to execute an attack like Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack in the "immediate time frame".[36] Israeli forces killed two other Palestinians affiliated with PIJ's Jenin Brigade during the operation.[37] IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi stated that the IDF is not seeking to fight in hospitals but that the IDF will go wherever necessary to eliminate Hamas.[38] Hamas and PIJ both condemned the operation and acknowledged the fighters' affiliation with their respective organizations.[39]

Clashes in the West Bank as of January 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Becher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

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

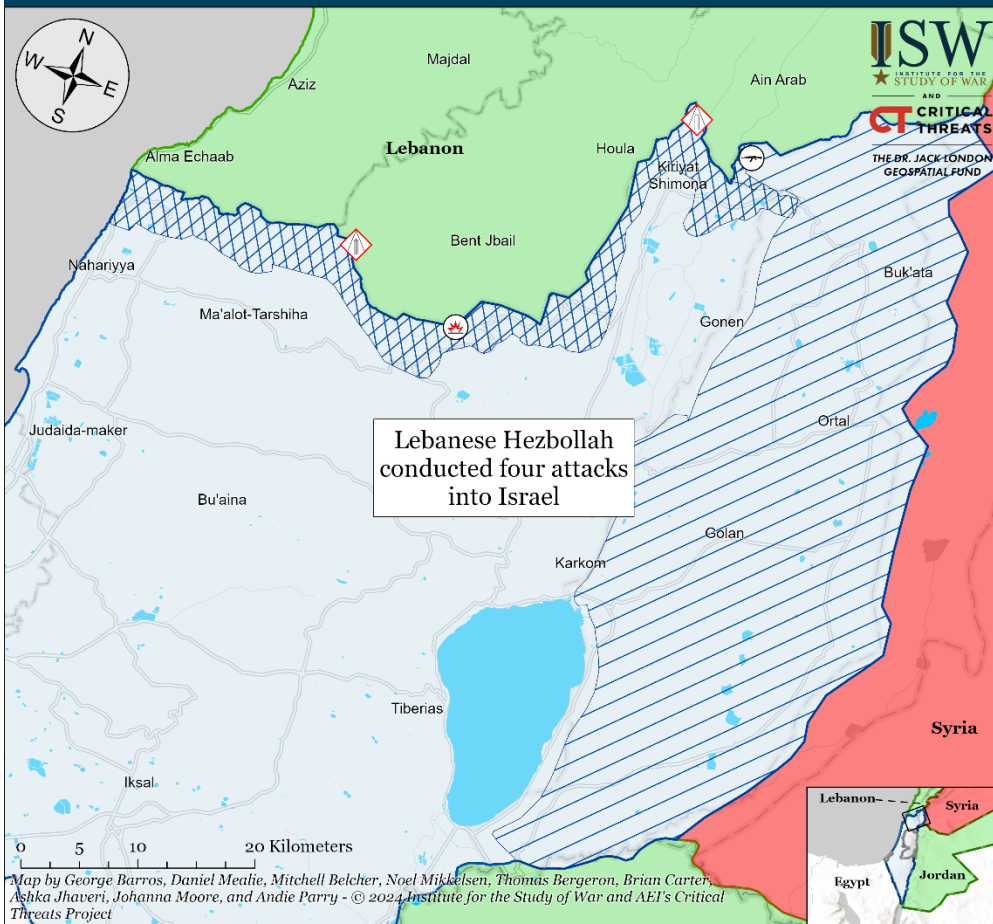
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon as of January 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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

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

Lebanese Hezbollah conducted four attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel on January 30.[40] This number of attacks marks a significant decrease from the 15 attacks conducted by Iranian-backed militias, including Hezbollah, into northern Israel on January 29.[41]

Unidentified militants launched rockets from Syria into the Golan Heights on January 30.[42] The IDF responded by shelling the attack's point of origin in Syria.[43]

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

Iran and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah are conducting an information operation to distance Iran from the January 28 one-way drone attack that killed three US service members in northeastern Jordan. Kataib Hezbollah announced the suspension of its “military and security operations” against US forces on January 30 and claimed that Iran objects to “pressure and escalation” against US forces in Iraq and Syria.[44] Western media previously reported that Kataib Hezbollah conducted the January 28 drone attack into Jordan.[45] Iranian officials previously denied Iranian involvement in the attack, claiming that the attack is part of a conflict only between “resistance groups and the US military,” adding that these “resistance groups...do not take orders” from Tehran.[46] Iran provides “extensive training, funding, logistic support, weapons, and intelligence” to Kataib Hezbollah.[47] Iran also materially supports more broadly the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, which is a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias that includes Kataib Hezbollah. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq has attacked US forces in Iraq and Syria over 160 times since the Israel-Hamas war began.[48] This information operation sets conditions for Iran and Iranian-backed Iraqi factions to frame the United States as the aggressor if the United States strikes Kataib Hezbollah in retaliation for the Iranian-backed drone strike into Jordan.

US President Joe Biden announced on January 29 that he decided on the US response to the Jordan attack, adding that the United States does not seek to expand the war in the Middle East.[49] Biden did not provide details about what course of action the United States will take. US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby added in separate comments that the United States may use a “tiered approach” involving “multiple actions” to respond to the attack.[50]

A Kataib Hezbollah official told Western media that the group decided to halt its attacks targeting US forces following separate Iraqi federal government contacts with US officials and Iranian-backed Iraqi militias “to prevent escalation after the Jordan attack.”[51] Iraqi social media sources claimed that a “high-level” US delegation traveled to Baghdad on January 29 to discuss the attack, but they did not provide evidence to corroborate their claims.[52] An “informed source” told Iraqi media that the Iraqi federal government asked the United States to avoid conducting retaliatory strikes inside Iraqi territory to prevent “any escalation and security tension inside Iraq.”[53] The United States has previously conducted strikes targeting Iranian-backed Iraqi militia facilities in response to militia attacks that injured US personnel.[54] Iranian-backed Iraqi actors incorrectly frame these US self-defense strikes as “violations” of Iraqi sovereignty to pressure the Iraqi federal government to order the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. The United States has the right to protect and defend its personnel in Iraq, who are deployed at the invitation of the Iraqi federal government to fight ISIS.[55]

The Iraqi parliament speaker election is driving tensions between Iranian-backed Iraqi actors.[56] Iraqi parliamentarians voted for a new parliament speaker on January 13 after the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court removed the previous incumbent, Mohammad al Halbousi, in November 2023.[57] Halbousi’s candidate, Shaalan al Karim, won the most votes in the first round of voting.[58] No candidate secured the 165 votes required to become parliament speaker, however. Iranian-backed Iraqi actors, particularly Asaib Ahl al Haq Secretary General Qais al Khazali and State of Law Coalition head Nouri al Maliki, are trying to prevent Karim from becoming parliament speaker. Khazali and Maliki hope to instead install their preferred candidate, Mahmoud al Mashhadani.[59] The Washington Institute for Near East Policy reported on January 29 that the Shia

Coordination Framework—a loose coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi political parties—charged acting Parliament Speaker Mohsen al Mandalawi with ensuring that Mashhadani becomes parliament speaker.[60] Such a demand is not legal under the Iraqi constitution. Parliamentarians aligned with Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq also claimed after the January 13 vote that members of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization and the Iraqi Shia National Wisdom Movement voted for Karim.[61] The Victory Alliance, headed by former Prime Minister Haider al Abadi, recently denied that members of the Victory Alliance political party voted for Karim.[62]

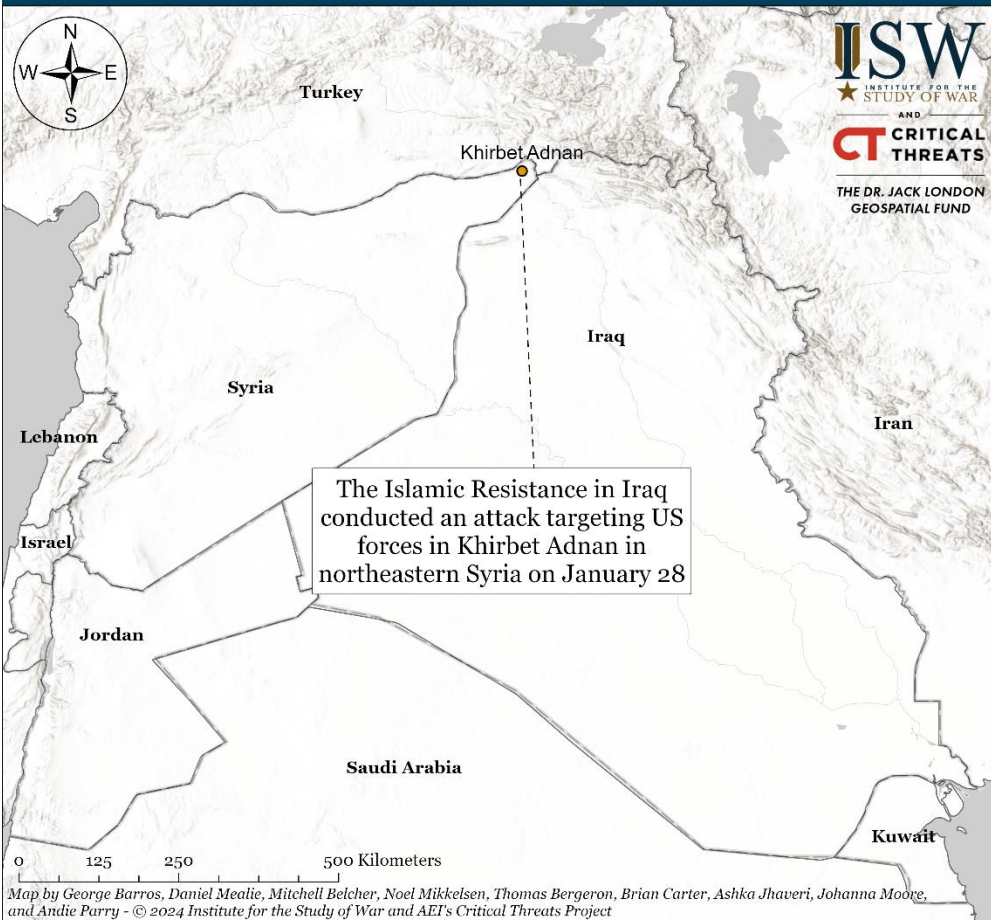
Syrian Kurdish news outlet North Press Agency (NPA) claimed that Israel killed eight Lebanese Hezbollah fighters in an airstrike in Sayyida Zeynab, Damascus, on January 29.[63] NPA identified two of the Hezbollah fighters as Hussein Khalil Hashem and Hussein Fadel Awada. Hezbollah claimed both fighters but did not specify how they died.[64]

Houthi Defense Minister Mohammad Nasser al Atifi said that the Houthis are prepared for a long-term confrontation with US and UK forces in the Red Sea.[65] Atifi added that US and UK interests in the Red Sea will be considered “legitimate targets.” Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi previously identified US and UK vessels as “legitimate targets” on January 18.[66]

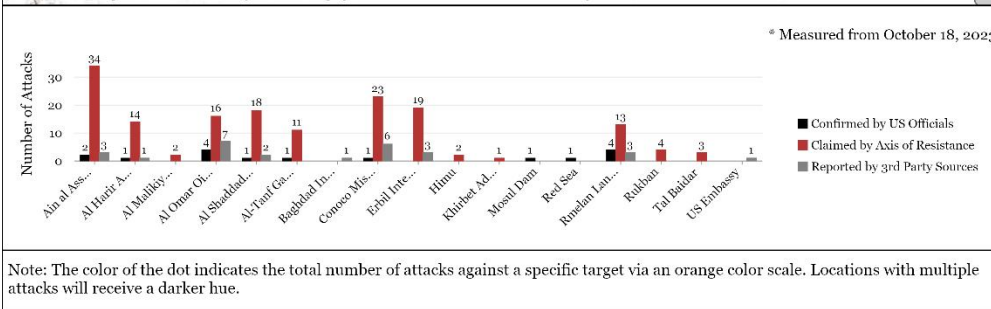
The Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) Border Guards commander announced that the LEC killed a member of the Baloch militant group, Ansar al Furqan, in Sistan and Baluchistan Province on January 30.[67] The LEC Border Guards commander said that the LEC killed the fighter in Jakigur, Rask County, near the Iran-Pakistan border. The LEC killed one other Baloch fighter in Jakigor on January 29.[68] Ansar al Furqan previously claimed to attack IRGC personnel near the border in December 2023 and conducted another attack targeting a police station in Zahedan on January 25.[69]

Salafi-jihadi groups and other insurgents have increased the rate of their attacks targeting the regime in southeastern Iran since December 2023. Salafi-jihadi and Balochi militant group Jaish al Adl has conducted at least five attacks targeting Iranian security personnel in this period.[70] The Afghan branch of the Islamic State separately detonated two suicide vests conducted a terrorist attack in Kerman Province on January 3, killing over 90 individuals.[71] Iran retaliated for this uptick in militancy by conducting drone and missile attacks on alleged Islamic State positions in Syria on January 15 and alleged Jaish al Adl targets in Pakistan on January 16.[72]

Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of January 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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[1] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-january-29-2024>

- [2] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1752255422931624045>
- [3] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1752255422931624045>
- [4] <https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1752318054891971053>
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- [6] <https://t.me/hamza20300/209052>; <https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1752060390383534276>
- [7] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17338>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1498>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1499>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/1497>
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