

## Iran Update, December 2, 2023

Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Annika Ganzeveld, Amin Soltani, 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](#).*

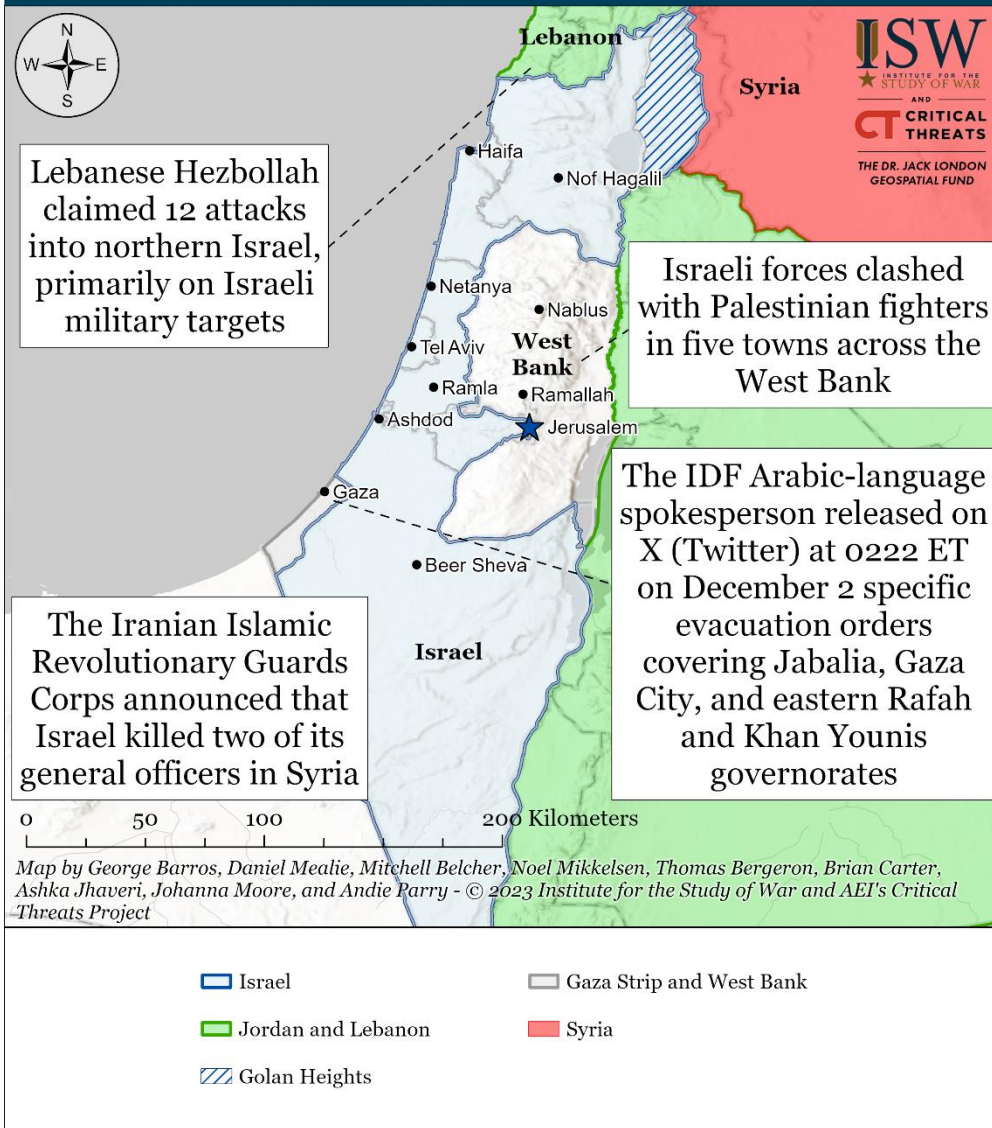
*Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are 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. The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson released on X (Twitter) specific evacuation orders covering Jabalia, Gaza city, and eastern Rafah and Khan Younis governorates.
2. Hamas Political Bureau Deputy Chairman Saleh al Arouri said that Hamas would not agree to further hostage-for-prisoner exchanges until the end of Israel's ground operation and a "comprehensive ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip.
3. Palestinian fighters continued to resist Israeli forces' eastward advance toward Jabalia. Hamas fighters detonated an explosively formed penetrator targeting an Israeli vehicle for the second consecutive day.
4. Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted 25 rocket and mortar attacks into Israel.
5. Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters in five towns across the West Bank. This count is half the weekly average.
6. Lebanese Hezbollah claimed 12 attacks into northern Israel, primarily on Israeli military targets.
7. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps announced that Israel killed two of its general officers in Syria.
8. Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri traveled to Baghdad.

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



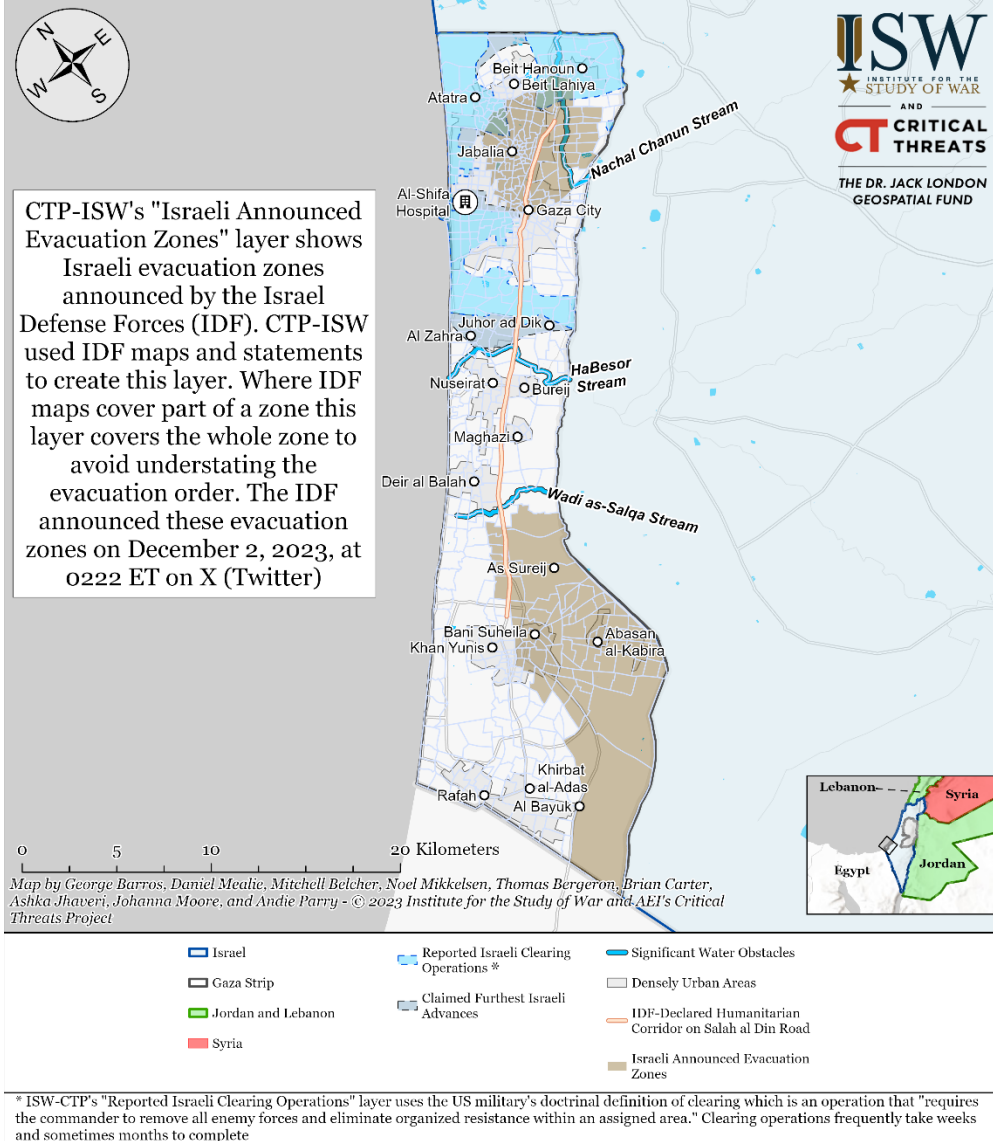
## Gaza Strip

### 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.

**The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson released on X (Twitter) at 0222 ET on December 2 specific evacuation orders covering Jabalia, Gaza city, and eastern Rafah and Khan Younis governorates.[1]** The orders highlight specific blocks and neighborhoods in these areas. The evacuation notices called for civilians to go to “known shelters.”

## Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip as of December 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



**Hamis Political Bureau Deputy Chairman Saleh al Arouri said that Hamas would not agree to further hostage-for-prisoner exchanges until the end of Israel's ground operation and a "comprehensive ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip.[2]** Arouri said that there are no ongoing negotiations between Israel and Hamas regarding the truce.

**Palestinian fighters continued to resist Israeli forces' eastward advance toward Jabalia.** The al Quds Brigades—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—said that its fighters engaged IDF elements advancing through Sheikh Radwan neighborhood.[3] Palestinian media reported engagements between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters along al Ayoun Street in Sheikh Radwan.[4]

**Hamas fighters detonated an explosively formed penetrator (EFP) targeting an Israeli vehicle for the second consecutive day on December 2.** Hamas claimed attacks in the Gaza Strip using EFPs on October 31, November 17, and December 1.[5] Explosively formed penetrators are particularly lethal improvised explosive devices designed to penetrate armored vehicles, such as main battle tanks.[6]

Hamas also claimed that it launched three one-way attack drones targeting Israeli forces in the northern Gaza Strip.[7] Hamas released a video showing its fighters launching the drones, but the video did not show the drones' impacts or targets.

**The IDF released a video showing a significant Palestinian fighter weapons cache in the northern Gaza Strip on December 2.[8]** The IDF showed UNRWA boxes among the weapons and other military materiel in the cache. The cache featured a significant number of 122mm Grad rockets.

**Palestinian fighters continued targeting Israeli forces behind the Israeli forward line of advance, which is consistent with the nature of clearing operations.** The al Qassem Brigades—Hamas' militant wing—claimed that it targeted an Israeli command and control position east of Beit Hanoun on December 2.[9] The al Qassem Brigades also released a video on December 2 showing its fighters targeting Israeli forces in Beit Hanoun with rocket propelled grenades and improvised explosive devices.[10] The group also fired a rocket propelled grenade targeting an Israeli bulldozer near Juhor ad Dik.[11]

Al Qassem Brigades fighters conducted a complex attack targeting an Israeli outpost in al Tawam, northwestern Gaza Strip, on December 2.[12] The al Qassem Brigades said that it detonated anti-personnel improvised explosive devices and heavy machine guns targeting an Israeli infantry unit “stationed” in a building.

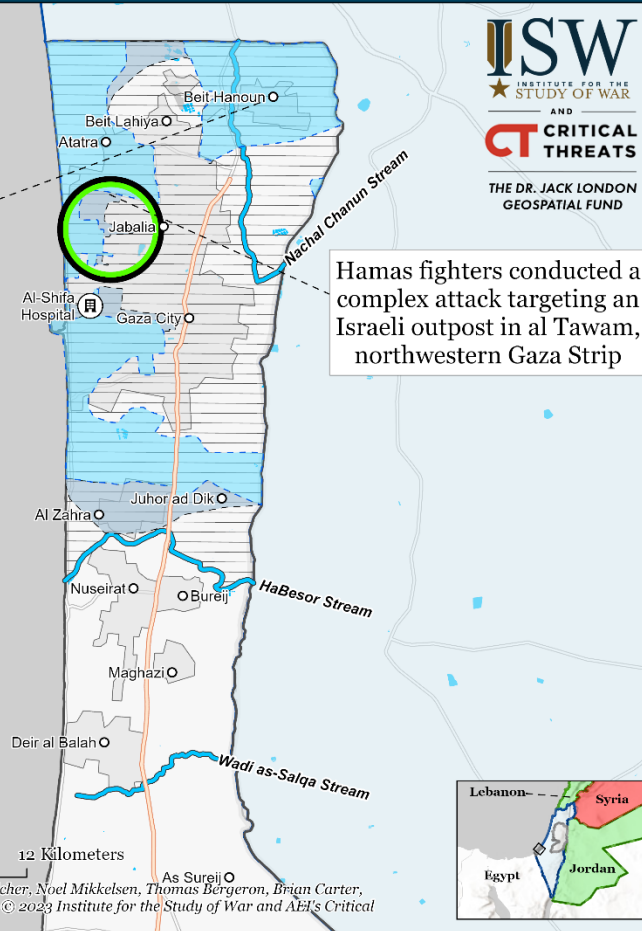
# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of December 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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Hamas claimed that it targeted an Israeli command and control position east of Beit Hanoun

Hamas fighters conducted a complex attack targeting an Israeli outpost in al Tawam, northwestern Gaza Strip



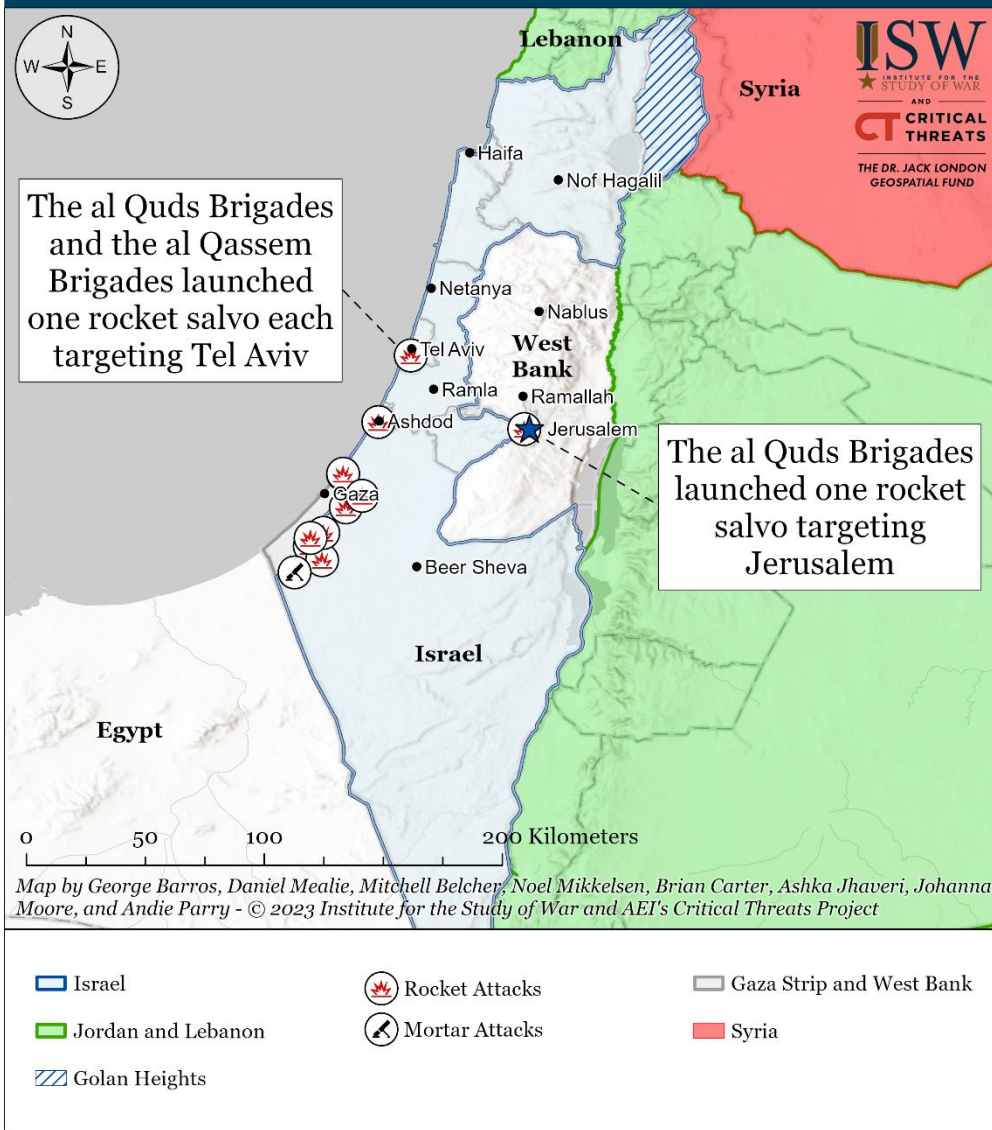
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations\*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Significant Water Obstacles
- Declared Evacuation Area
- Densely Urban Areas
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Salah al Din Road

\* 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



# Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of December 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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

**Palestinian militias in the Gaza Strip conducted 25 rocket and mortar attacks into Israel on December 2.** The al Qassem Brigades claimed responsibility for seven rocket attacks.<sup>[13]</sup> The al Quds Brigades claimed responsibility for 12 rocket attacks, including one rocket attack targeting Jerusalem and another rocket attack targeting Tel Aviv.<sup>[14]</sup> The National Resistance Brigades—the militant wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)—conducted one mortar attack targeting Sufa, southern Israel.<sup>[15]</sup> The Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades—the militant wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)—conducted five rocket attacks targeting southern Israel.<sup>[16]</sup>

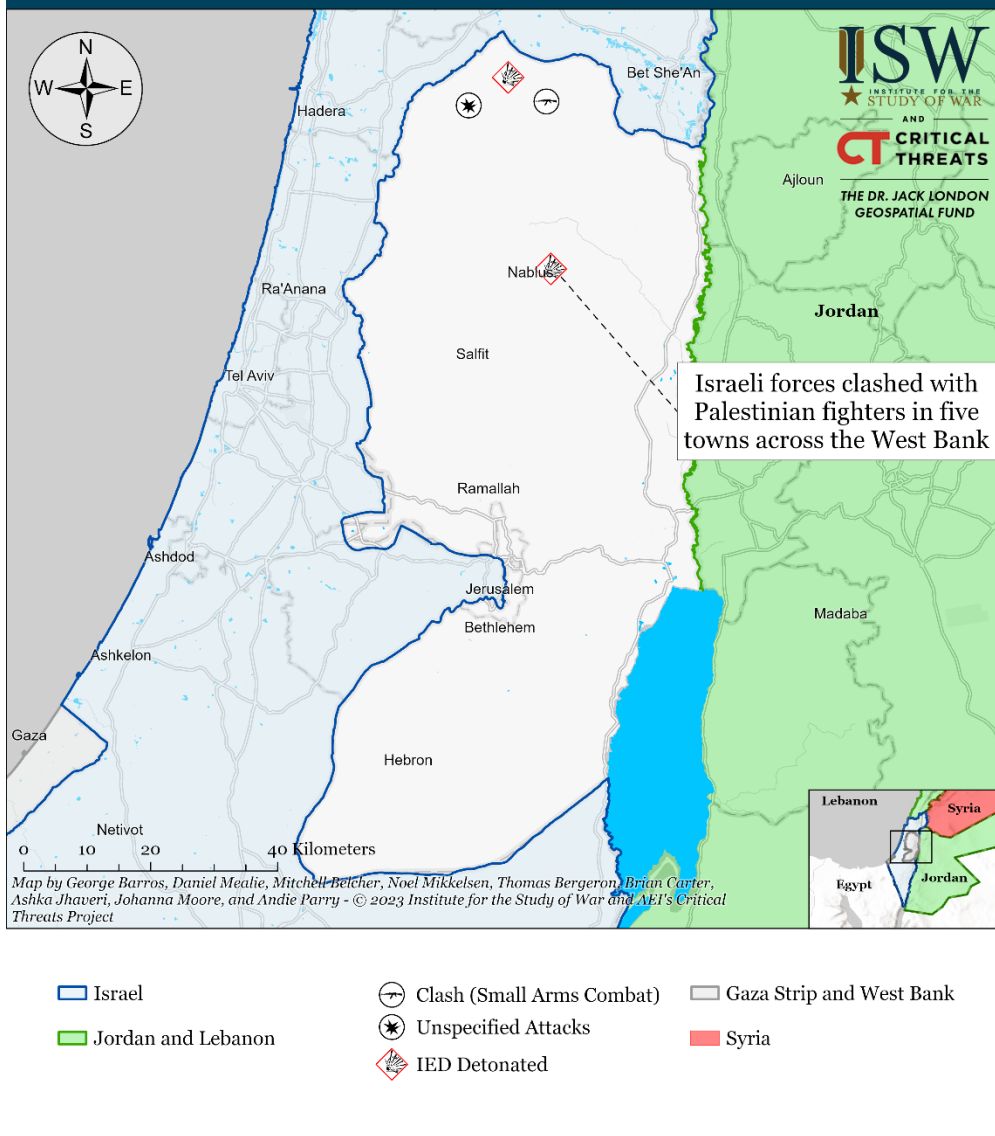
## West Bank

### Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

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

**Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters in five towns across the West Bank on December 2.[17] This count is half the weekly average.** The IDF reported that unidentified militants fired small arms and detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces during an Israeli raid in Nablus overnight on December 1.[18] Palestinian media posted footage that it claimed showed fighters detonating IEDs targeting Israeli forces in Askar refugee camp, Nablus, during the Israeli operation.[19] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify this footage. Local outlets claimed that Palestinian fighters detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces in al Yamoun, northwest of Jenin.[20] A Jenin-focused outlet separately claimed that Palestinian fighters damaged an Israeli military vehicle in Jalbun, east of Jenin, but the outlet did not provide any visual evidence.[21]

# Clashes in the West Bank as of December 2, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



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

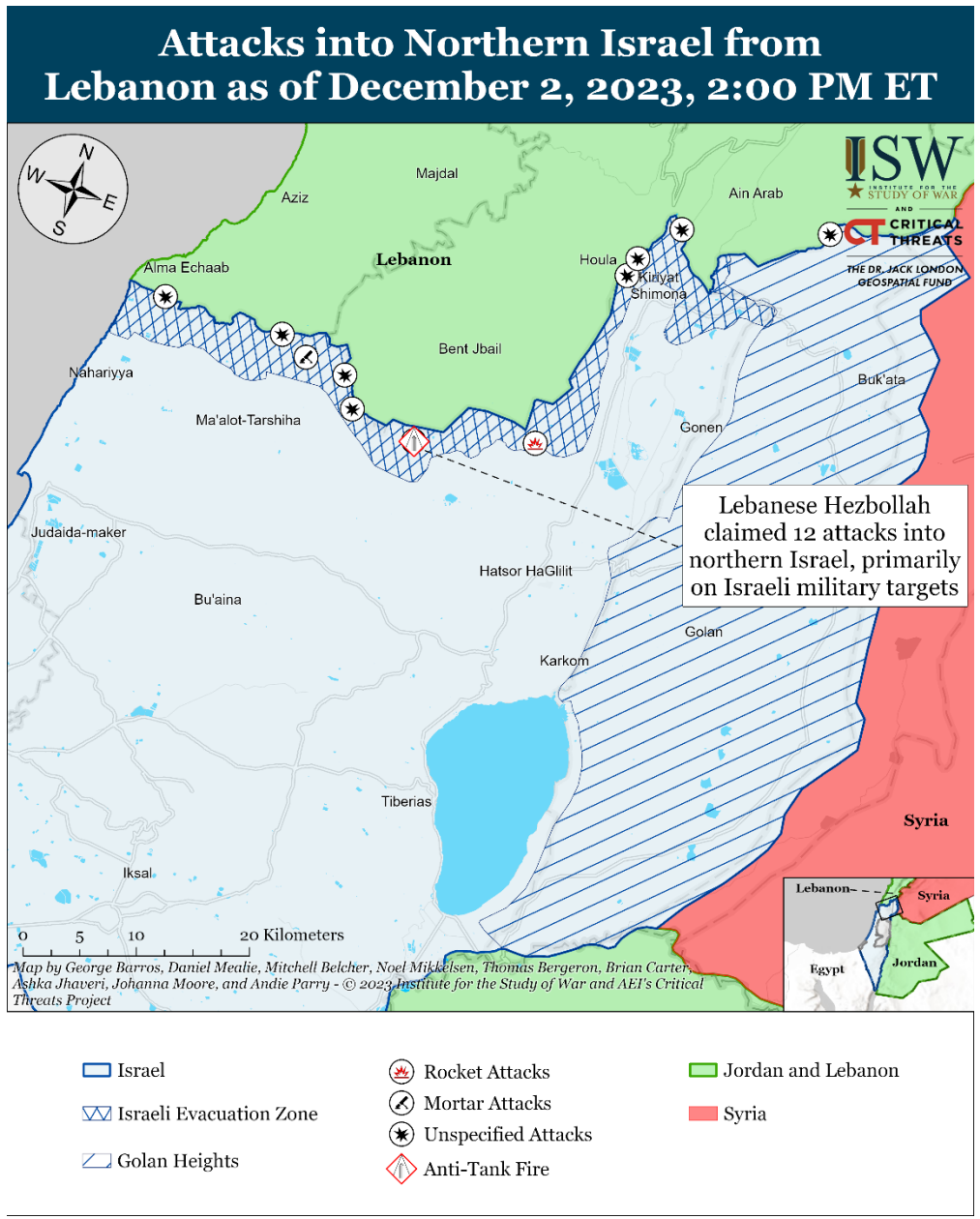
## Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

### 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



**Lebanese Hezbollah (LH) claimed 12 attacks into northern Israel on December 2, primarily on Israeli military targets.**[22] This rate of LH attacks into northern Israel is consistent with the rate of attacks recorded before the humanitarian pause in the Gaza Strip began on November 24. The IDF separately reported that unidentified fighters in southern Lebanon launched mortars toward northern Israel.[23] Israeli Army Radio also reported that unidentified fighters fired an anti-tank missile targeting Moshav Dov. The missile hit a civilian building in the town.[24]



## 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 Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) announced on December 2 that Israel killed two of its general officers in Syria.**<sup>[25]</sup> IRGC-affiliated media published images of the two in their military uniforms with insignias matching the rank of brigadier general second class.<sup>[26]</sup> The Iranian regime explicitly blaming Israel for killing the two officers generates the expectation within the Iranian domestic information space that Iran will retaliate. The announcement comes after social media accounts reported that the IDF Air Force conducted airstrikes on IRGC targets in southern Syria, including the IRGC headquarters near Sayyida Zainab, on December 2.<sup>[27]</sup>

**US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed Iranian-backed threats to US forces in Iraq during a phone call with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani on December 1.**<sup>[28]</sup> Blinken called on the Iraqi central government to protect US personnel in Iraq and to pursue the perpetrators of recent attacks against US forces. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed 74 attacks on US positions in Iraq and Syria since the Israel-Hamas war began. The group threatened on November 30 to escalate against the United States inside and outside Iraq if Israel resumes operations in the Gaza Strip, which Israel did after the humanitarian pause ended on December 1.<sup>[29]</sup> Sudani emphasized the Iraqi central government’s commitment to protecting international coalition advisers stationed in Iraq.<sup>[30]</sup> Iranian state media highlighted Sudani’s condemnation of the November 22 US airstrikes on Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah sites in Jurf al Sakhr, Babil Province, which he described as a “violation of Iraqi sovereignty.”<sup>[31]</sup>

**Iranian Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS) Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri traveled to Baghdad on December 2.**<sup>[32]</sup> Bagheri will meet with senior Iraqi military and political officials, including Sudani and President Abdul Latif Rashid, during his visit.<sup>[33]</sup> Iranian state media reported that Bagheri will discuss “fighting terrorism, developments in the region, bilateral defense cooperation, and border cooperation” with these officials. Bagheri is Iran’s most senior military official. He oversees the AFGS, which is responsible for military policy and strategic guidance, among other duties, for the Iranian armed forces.<sup>[34]</sup> The AFGS, along with the Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters, additionally commands, controls, coordinates, and supports Iran’s conventional army, the IRGC, and the Law Enforcement Command under the supreme leader.<sup>[35]</sup>

Bagheri’s visit to Baghdad notably follows Sudani’s phone call with Blinken. The Iraqi central government has previously coordinated with the Iranian regime following meetings with US officials. Sudani recently met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in Tehran on November 6 after meeting with Blinken in Baghdad on November 5, for example.<sup>[36]</sup> Bagheri’s visit is also noteworthy given how rarely he travels abroad.

**Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held a phone call with his Omani counterpart Badr al Busaidi on December 1.**<sup>[37]</sup> Abdollahian stated that Axis of Resistance leaders told him that they will give a “more regrettable and harsher” response to Israel if it resumes operations in the Gaza Strip during his visit to Beirut on November 22. Abdollahian met with the deputy chairman of Hamas’ Political Bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al Haya, PIJ Secretary General Ziyad al Nakhalah, and LH Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah during his visit to Beirut.<sup>[38]</sup>

**Artesh Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Erani announced that Iran, China, and Russia will hold a naval exercise during the 2024 Maritime Security Belt naval war game.**<sup>[39]</sup> The three countries last held a naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman in March 2023 as part of the trilateral Maritime Security Belt they established in 2019.<sup>[40]</sup>

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[1] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1730849868447436881?s=20>

[2] <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48493>; <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48494>;  
<https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48495>; <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48498>;  
<https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48499>; <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48501>;  
<https://t.me/hamaswestbank/48504>

[3] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16769>

[4] <https://t.me/newpress1/60442>

[5] <https://t.me/hamasps/17818>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/143>; <https://t.me/hamasps/18049>;  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-december-1-2023>

[6] <https://taskandpurpose.com/tech-tactics/efp-explosively-formed-penetrator-projectile/>

[7] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/566>

[8] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1730927776159449142>;

<https://twitter.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1730936158249525717>

[9] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/576>

[10] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/577>

[11] <https://t.me/newpress1/60529>

[12] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/29271>

[13] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/567>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/568>;

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<https://t.me/hamasps/18048>; <https://t.me/hamasps/18050>

[14] <https://t.me/sarayaps/16765>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16766>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16770>;

<https://t.me/sarayaps/16772>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16773>; <https://t.me/sarayaps/16774>;

<https://t.me/sarayaps/16775>

[15] [https://t.me/kataeb\\_moqawma/3969](https://t.me/kataeb_moqawma/3969)

[16] <https://t.me/kataebabuali/10497>; <https://t.me/kataebabuali/10498>;

<https://t.me/kataebabuali/10500>

[17] <https://t.me/jeninnews1/78562> ; <https://t.me/jeninnews1/78591> ;

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<https://twitter.com/SafaPs/status/1731010342791098862>

[18] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1730876669227839745>

[19] <https://t.me/newpress1/60441>

[20] <https://t.me/jeninnews1/78562>

[21] <https://t.me/jeninnews1/78591>

[22] <https://t.me/almanarnews/138495> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/40535](https://t.me/C_Military1/40535) ;  
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<https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1730963850223108560> ; [https://t.me/C\\_Military1/40536](https://t.me/C_Military1/40536) ;  
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<https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1730890943388139571> ;  
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[23] <https://twitter.com/IDFSpokesperson/status/1730890943388139571> ;  
<https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1730891417831010789>  
[24] <https://twitter.com/GLZRadio/status/1730967657388691949>  
[25] <https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/634886>  
[26] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1402/09/11/2998852>  
[27] [https://x.com/no\\_itsmyturn/status/1730823918976401654?s=20](https://x.com/no_itsmyturn/status/1730823918976401654?s=20) ; <https://x.com/SAMSyriaO/s tatus/1730918942883958789?s=20>  
[28] <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-iraqi-prime-minister-al-sudani-3/>  
[29] <https://t.me/s/elamharbi>  
[30] <https://www.barrons.com/news/baghdad-warns-us-over-attacks-on-iraq-territory-b55e827d>  
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[32] <https://www.mehrnews dot com/news/5955914>  
[33] <https://www.irna dot ir/news/85309378>  
[34] <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Pivot-to-Offense-How-Iran-Is-Adapting-for-Modern-Conflict-and-Warfare.pdf?x91208>  
[35] <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Pivot-to-Offense-How-Iran-Is-Adapting-for-Modern-Conflict-and-Warfare.pdf?x91208>  
[36] <https://www.leader dot ir/fa/content/26761> ;  
  
<https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-november-5-2023>  
  
[37] <https://www.mehrnews dot com/news/5954932>  
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[40] <https://apnews.com/article/china-russia-iran-naval-drills-oman-gulf-9f515b3246e4cbe0d98a35e8399dc177>