

Iran Update



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November 20, 2024, Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. 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.

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 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors passed the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) censure resolution against Iran on November 21.[1] The resolution censured Iran for failing to cooperate with the IAEA and comply with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.[2] The resolution requires that the IAEA to produce a "comprehensive report" on Iranian nuclear activities by spring 2025.[3] CTP-ISW previously assessed that the report would almost certainly confirm Iranian noncompliance with the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and lay the foundation for the E3 to reimpose UN Security Council sanctions on Iran--known as "snapback" sanctions.[4] The censure resolution comes after the IAEA issued a report on November 19 showing that Iran has increased its stockpile of highly enriched uranium since August 2024.[5] The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Director Mohammad Eslami responded to the censure resolution by ordering the activation of a "large collection of new and advanced centrifuges of various types." [6] The AEOI stated that Iran will continue to cooperate with the IAEA, though it remains unclear to what extent. CTP-ISW will provide further assessments and details in the coming days.

The United States and E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany), prior to the IAEA Board of Governors vote on the censure resolution, called on Iran to "immediately dispose" of its highly enriched uranium stockpile on November 21. US Ambassador to the IAEA Laura Holgate said that Iran should stop producing uranium enriched up to 60 percent and "downblend its 60 percent [enriched uranium] stockpile entirely." [7] Downblending is the process of converting highly enriched uranium into low-enriched uranium.[8] The E3 issued a joint statement similarly requesting that Iran "immediately dispose of its high enriched uranium stockpile." [9] Iran previously offered to cap its stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60 percent at 185 kilograms in exchange for the IAEA Board of Governors rejecting the censure resolution.[10] The E3 stated that a cap of 185 kilograms would mean Iran still

"retain[s] an excessively large stockpile of high enriched uranium as well the capability to resume enrichment to 60 percent at any point," however.[11] 185 kilograms of 60-percent enriched uranium is enough, if enriched further, to produce four nuclear weapons.[12]

Lebanese officials have reportedly proposed several changes to the US-proposed ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah.[13] Unspecified sources speaking to Lebanese media outlet al Akhbar claimed that Lebanese officials requested that the ceasefire agreement refer to the Blue Line—the UN-drawn provisional border—as the official Israel-Lebanon border. Lebanese officials demanded that a date for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to withdraw be announced in conjunction with the ceasefire and that the IDF conduct a “complete, simultaneous, and rapid withdrawal” from Lebanon. The Lebanese officials also demanded that the IDF release all Hezbollah fighters detained in southern Lebanon. Al Akhbar claimed that the language regarding Israel-Lebanon border and clauses on whether Israel would retain the right to respond to ceasefire violations with force in Lebanon remain sticking points between the parties. The US-proposed ceasefire agreement initially allowed Israel to continue to attack Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon if UNIFIL or the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) fail to enforce the ceasefire.[14] Hezbollah has rejected the possibility that the IDF retain the right to operate in Lebanon, however.[15]

A senior Israeli security source said that Hamas wants ceasefire-hostage deal in the Gaza Strip.[16] Israeli military correspondents, citing the source, reported that Hamas is prepared to accept a deal even if it fails to meet Hamas’ repeated demand for a permanent end to the war.[17] The source added that the deal being considered includes a 42-day ceasefire, the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, and other “heavy prices that Israel will be required to pay.”[18] This report marks the first suggestion that Hamas may break from the maximalist demands that it has maintained throughout most of the ceasefire-hostage negotiations. Hamas last reiterated its maximalist demands on November 10.[19]

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III said on November 20 that the Houthis increasingly see themselves as a partner to Iran rather than a subordinate.[20] This framing is consistent with CTP-ISW’s assessment that the Axis of Resistance is more accurately described as an unconventional, Iran-led alliance rather than a constellation of Iranian proxies and partners across the Middle East. Iran considers itself a core part and the leader of the Axis of Resistance but does not outright command many of the other members. Rather, they often compromise and negotiate with one another. Iran does, however, frequently leverage its materiel support to the Axis of Resistance to leverage the decision-making of other members.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on November 21 for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the starvation of civilians.[21] ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan submitted an application to the court to obtain arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant in May 2024.[22]

The ICC issued an arrest warrant for deceased Hamas military leader Mohammad Deif on November 21 for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, including extermination, murder, torture, and sexual violence.[23] The ICC stated that it issued this arrest despite reports that Deif died. The IDF has stated that it killed Deif in an airstrike in the southern

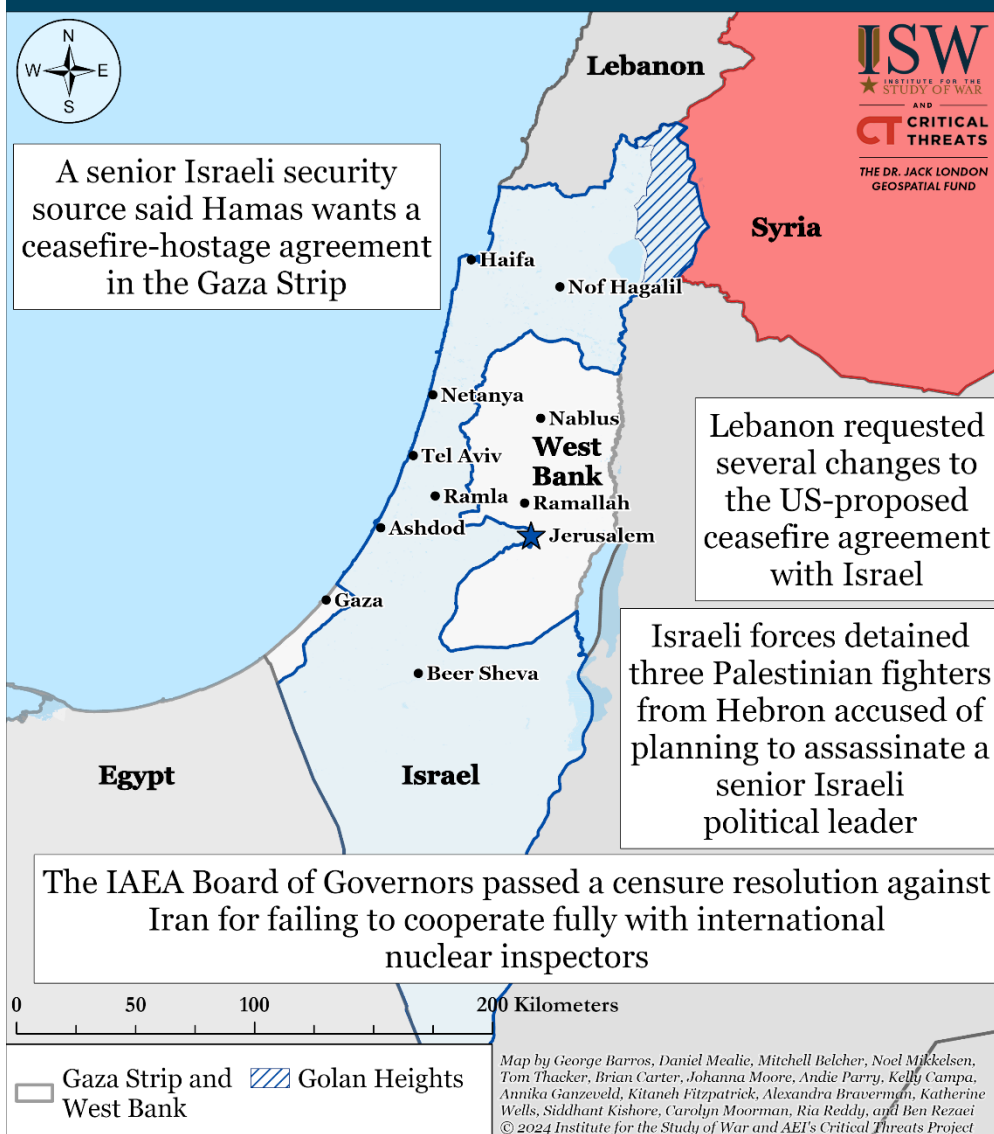
Gaza Strip in July 2024.[24] ICC Chief Prosecutor Khan submitted an application to obtain arrest warrants for deceased Hamas leaders Deif, Yahya Sinwar, and Ismail Haniyeh in May 2024.[25]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran:** The IAEA Board of Governors approved a censure resolution against Iran for its failure to cooperate fully with international nuclear inspectors. This resolution could lead to the reimposition of international sanctions on Iran. Iran responded to the resolution by ordering the activation of recently installed advanced centrifuges at its nuclear facilities.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanon reportedly proposed several changes to the US-proposed ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah. Lebanese media reported that one of the main sticking points is whether Israel will retain the right to strike Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon if Hezbollah violates the ceasefire.
- **Gaza Strip:** A senior Israeli security source told Israeli military correspondents that Hamas wants a ceasefire-hostage agreement in the Gaza Strip. The source added that Hamas is prepared to accept a deal even a guarantee of a permanent ceasefire, which has been a continuous Hamas demand throughout talks.
- **Yemen:** US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said that the Houthis increasingly view themselves as a partner to Iran rather than a subordinate. This characterization is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that the Axis of Resistance is an unconventional, Iran-led alliance rather than a constellation of Iranian proxies and partners across the Middle East.

Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of November 21, 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

The IDF 900th Brigade (162nd Division) has killed dozens of Palestinian fighters and destroyed over 100 militia infrastructure targets in Jabalia and Beit Lhia in the northern Gaza Strip in the past two weeks.[26] Palestinian militias have conducted two attacks targeting Israeli armor and infantry near Beit Lhia since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November

20.[27] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) mortared Israeli soldiers and vehicles in Jabalia refugee camp on November 21.[28] Commercially available satellite imagery posted on November 20 shows demolished buildings in Jabalia refugee camp.[29]

The IDF conducted an airstrike targeting Hamas infrastructure near the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia on November 21. Hamas claimed that the strike killed 66 Palestinians.[30] The IDF stated that it took steps to minimize civilian casualties.[31]

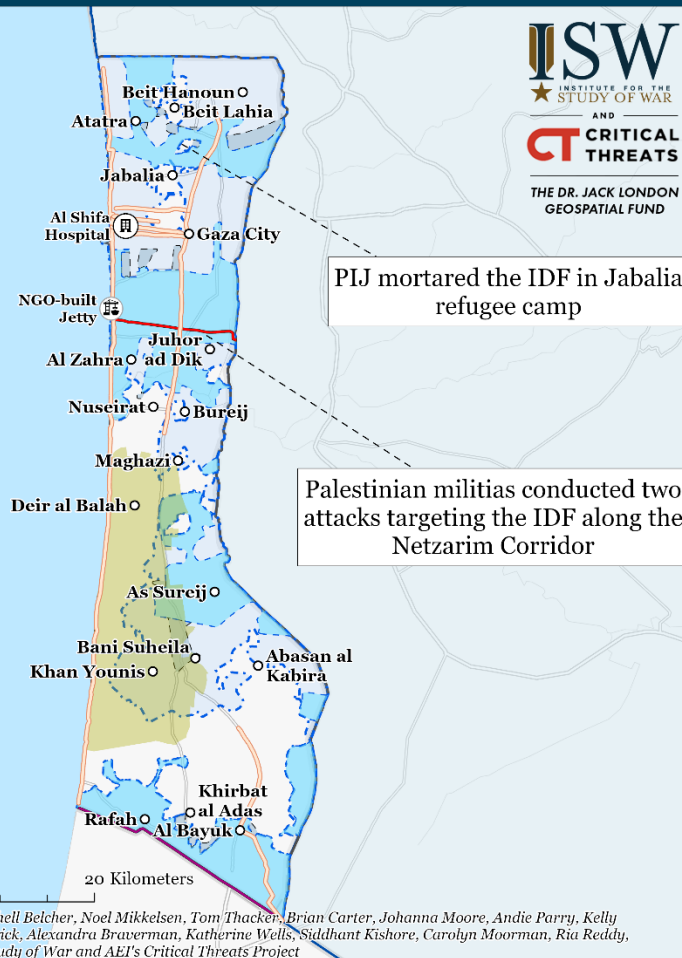
Palestinian militias conducted two attacks targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor on November 21.[32]

Israeli forces continued operating in the central Gaza Strip on November 21. Commercially available satellite imagery from November 21 shows tire tracks northeast of Bureij refugee camp.

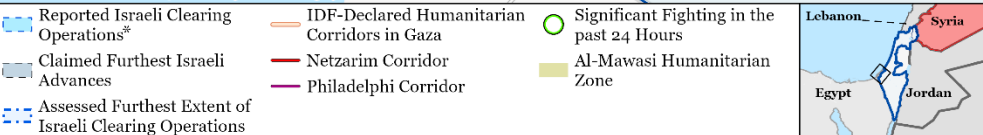
The IDF 143rd Division continued operating near Rafah on November 21. Commercially available satellite imagery from November 21 shows demolished buildings east of Rafah.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of November 21, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

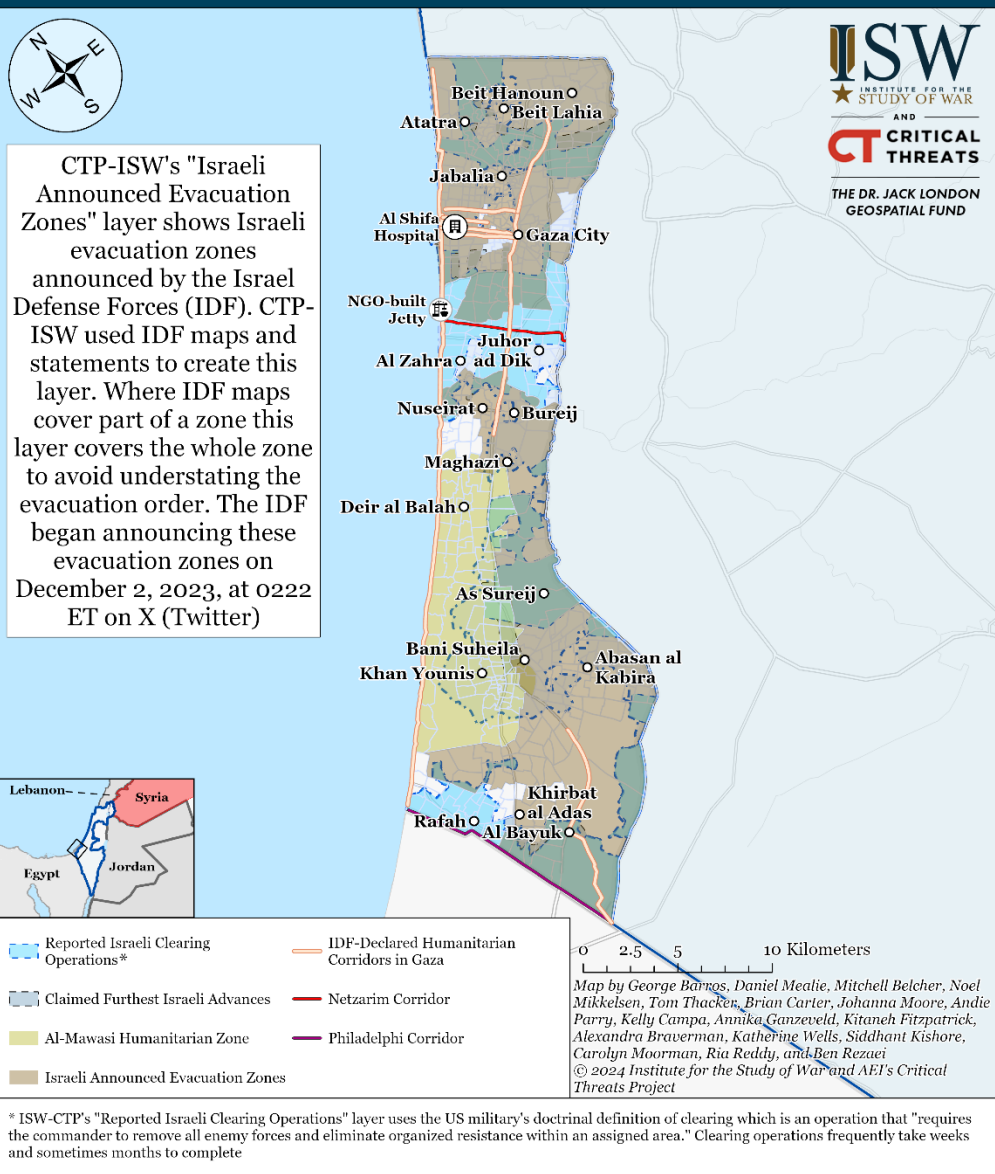


Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2024 Institute for the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



* 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

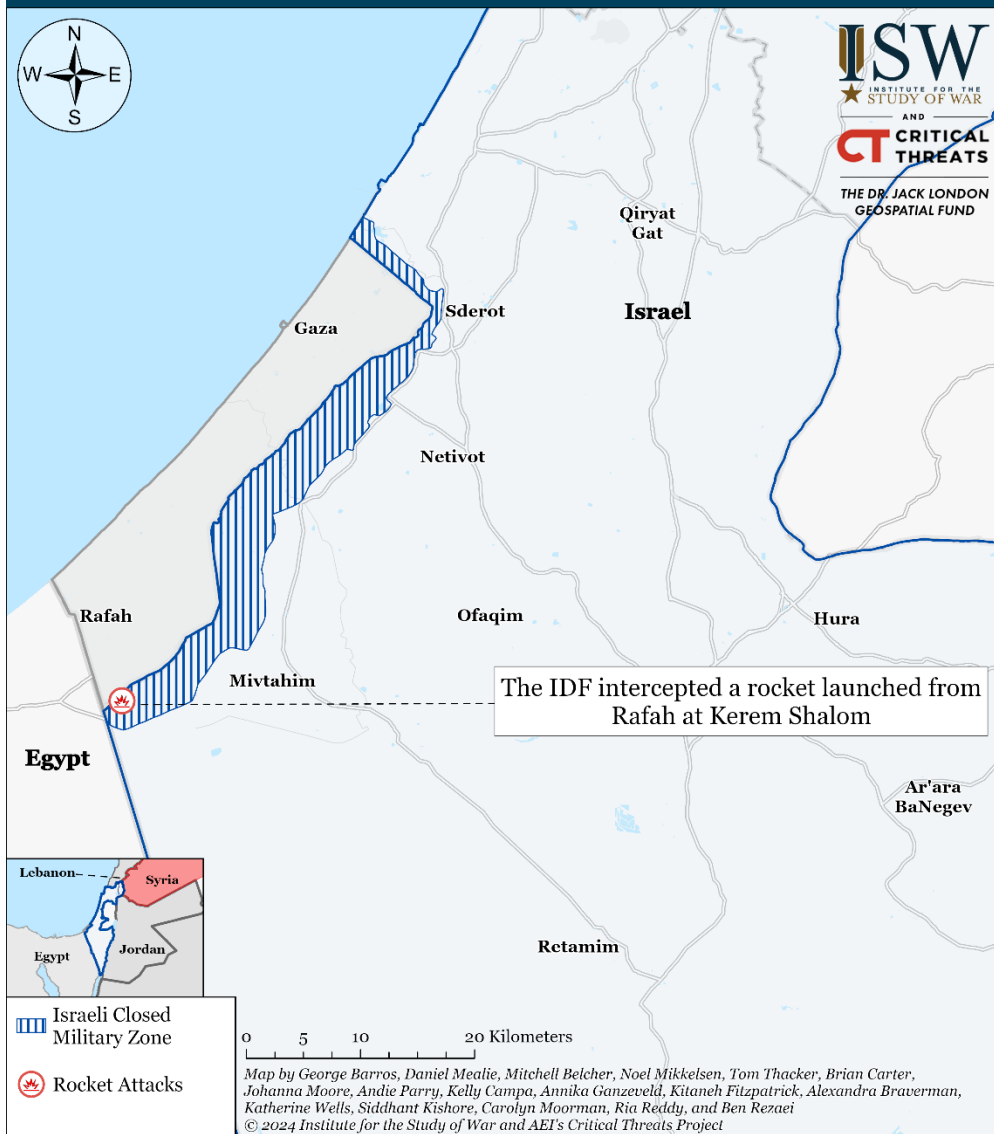
Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of November 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The IDF intercepted a rocket that was launched from Rafah toward southern Israel on November 21.[33]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of November 21, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Defense Minister Israel Katz recently sent a letter to the United States emphasizing that Israel has no policy of forcefully evacuating or starving Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.[34] Dermer and Katz denied that Israel seeks to forcibly displace or starve Palestinian civilians in the northern Gaza Strip in reference to current IDF clearing operations in Jabalia and Beit Lahia.[35] The Israeli officials sent the letter in response to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's October 13 letter demanding that Israel improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. [36]

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

The IDF killed nine Palestinian fighters during a two-day counterterrorism operation in Jenin Governorate on November 19 and 20. The IDF conducted a drone strike killing three Palestinian fighters who recently conducted a series of shooting attacks targeting IDF positions and Israeli settlements.[37] The IDF reported secondary explosions following the drone strike, indicating the presence of weapons or explosives near the fighters at the time of the strike.

Israeli forces detained three Palestinian fighters from Hebron who planned to assassinate Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir.[38] The fighters reportedly sought assistance from Hamas and Hezbollah, but it is unclear whether these militias provided assistance to them.

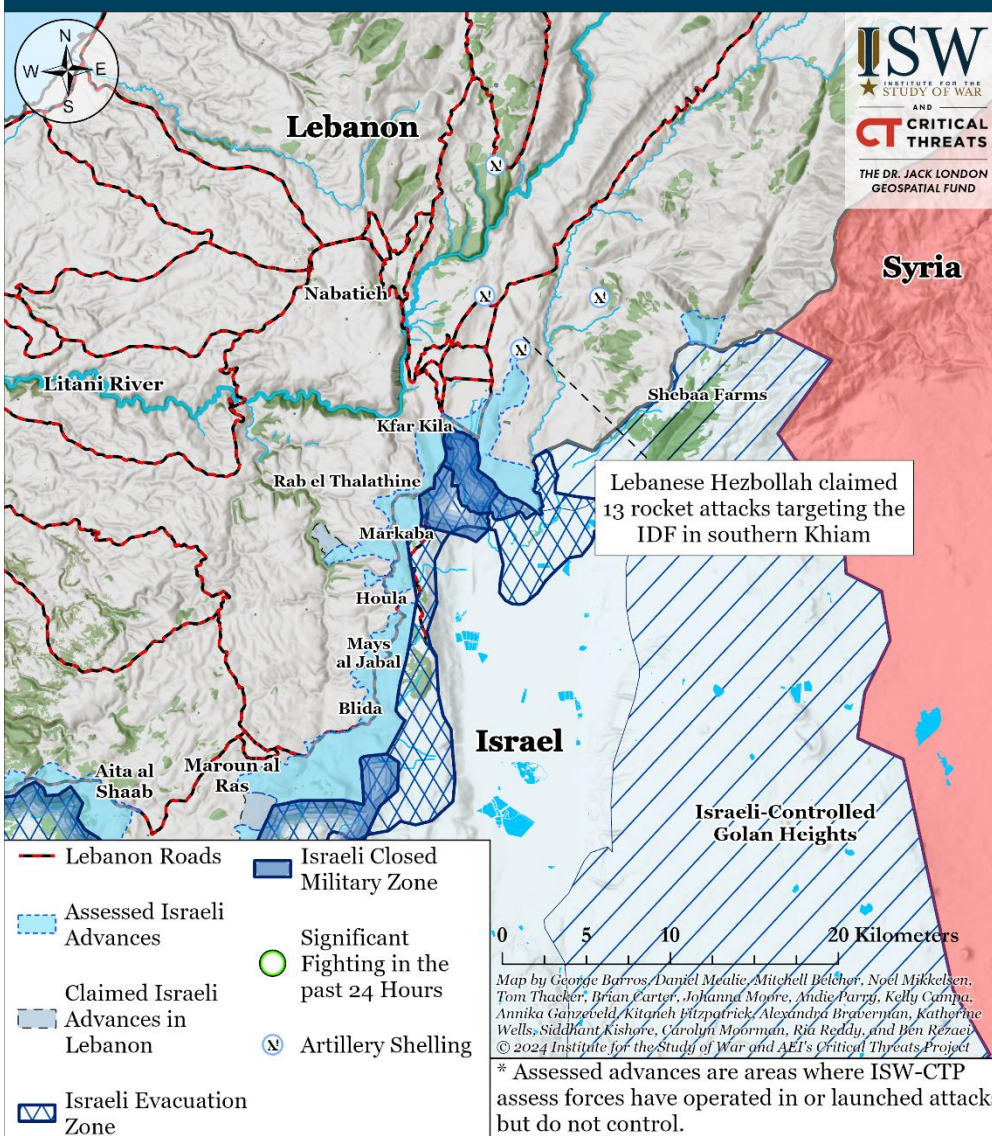
Northern Israel and Lebanon

Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:

- End Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip
- Survive the October 7 War as a capable political and military organization with control over Lebanon

Hezbollah has claimed at least 13 rocket, drone, and mortar attacks targeting Israeli forces reportedly advancing in southern and eastern Khiam since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 20.[39] The IDF advanced at least five kilometers from Israel toward and into Khiam during a three-day operation between October 28 and 31.[40] Hezbollah claimed that the IDF withdrew into northern Israel from Khiam on October 31 but did not provide evidence for this claim.[41] Khiam's terrain provides an expansive view of northern Israel and would enable Hezbollah artillery observers to support indirect fire attacks into Israel. Observers can directly view a large swath of territory in the Galilee panhandle, Shebaa Farms, and Golan Heights from Khiam, including several IDF Northern Command bases.

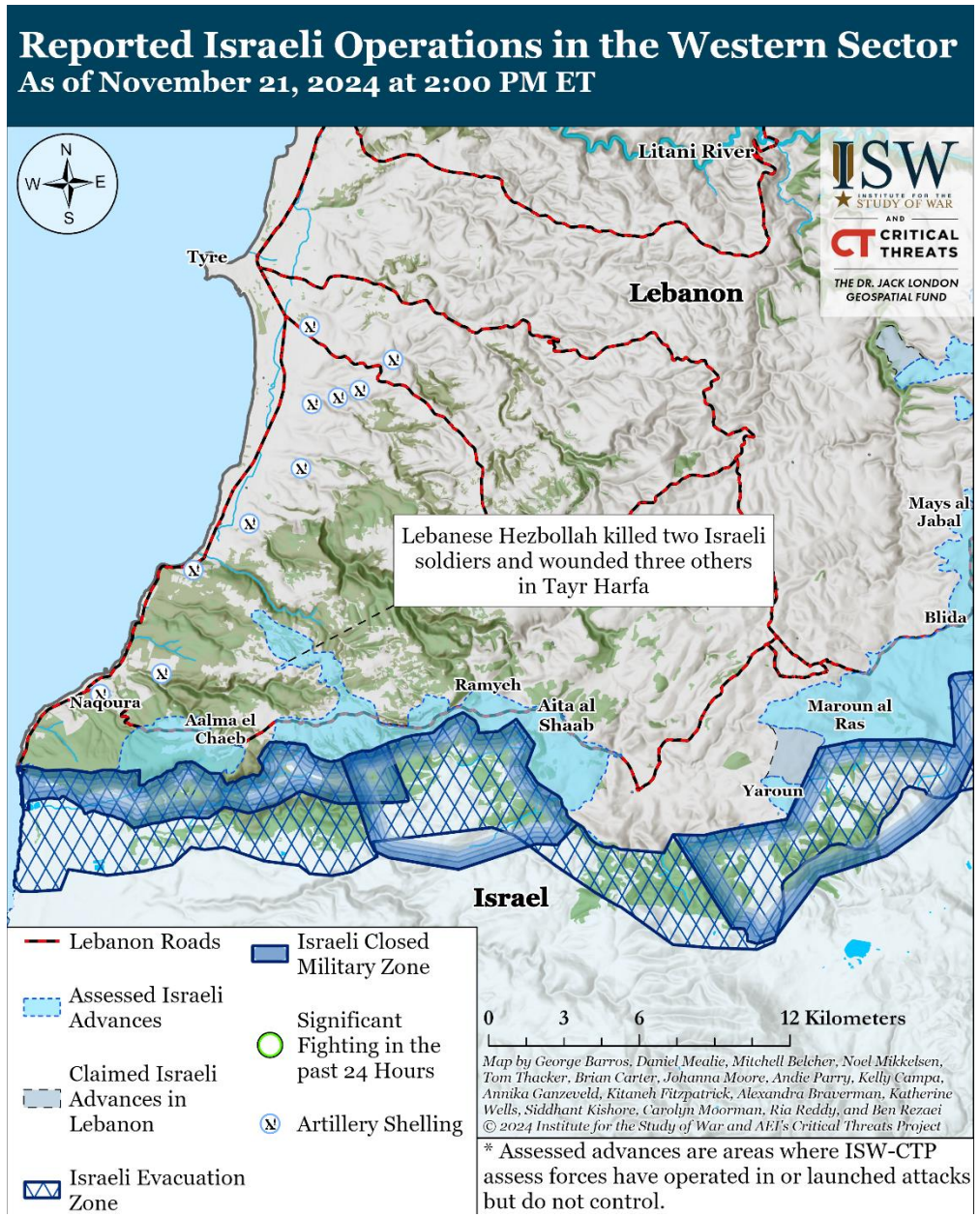
Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of November 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Hezbollah fighters attacked the IDF 13th Battalion (1st Golani Brigade, 36th Division) in a previously cleared historical fortress in western Tayr Harfa on November 20.[42] Two Hezbollah fighters wounded two Israeli soldiers and killed another as the soldiers entered the fortress.[43] The Hezbollah fighters also killed an Israeli civilian who was accompanying the Israeli forces.[44] Israeli forces killed the two Hezbollah fighters. Hezbollah claimed that its fighters attacked Israeli forces with direct fire from nearby positions.[45] Hezbollah also claimed that it fired anti-tank munitions and destroyed an armored personnel carrier that attempted to rescue the Israeli casualties.[46]

IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzl Halevi established a team to “examine and strengthen operational discipline and military culture in combat” following the death of the Israeli civilian in Tayr Harfa.[47] The team will submit an assessment to Halevi of combat forces’ adherence to “discipline,

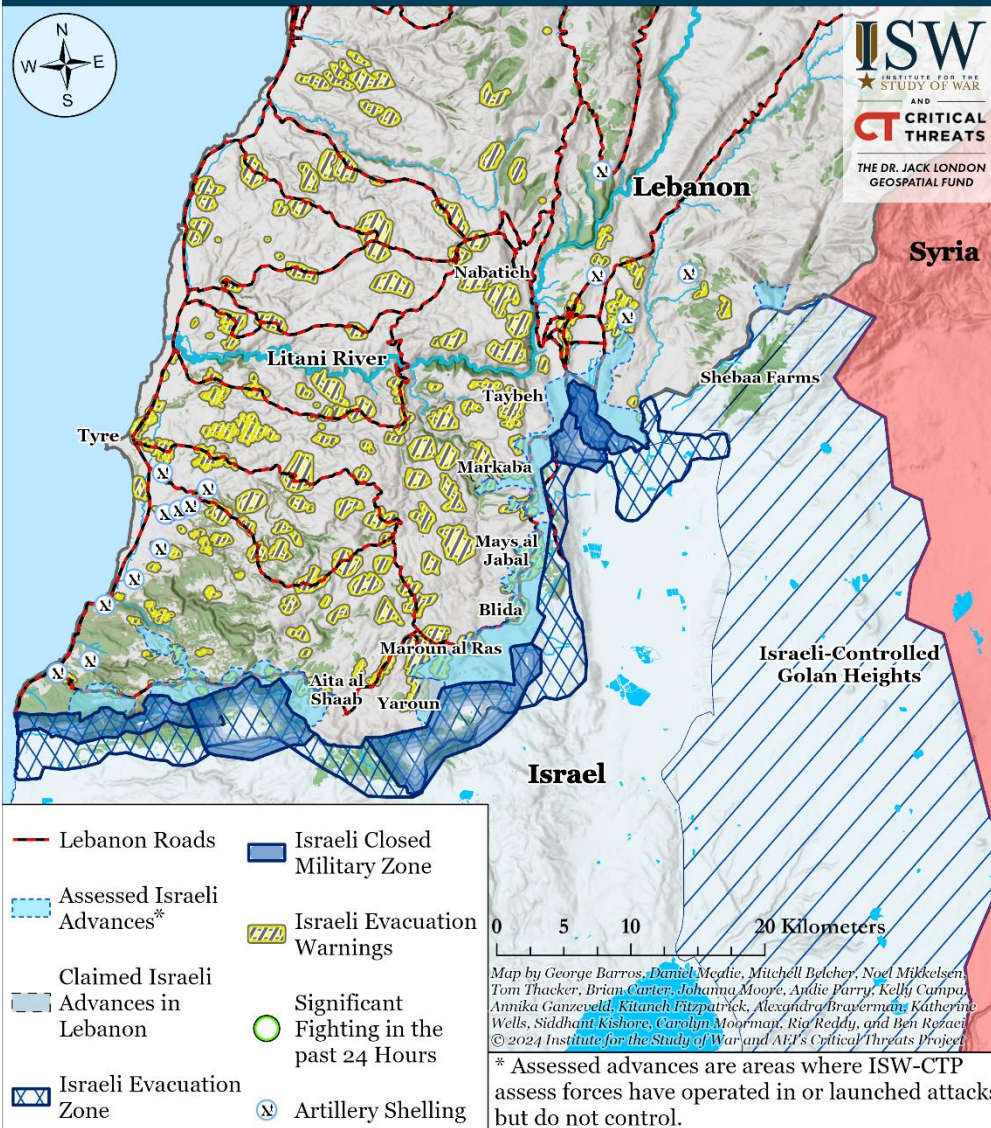
military orders and procedures, codes of conduct, and norms practiced within military units” in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. Israeli Military Police have opened a separate investigation into the circumstances that enabled a retired Israeli soldier to be present in an active combat zone.[48]



Israel imposed sanctions on 24 “clients” of Hezbollah’s financial arm, al Qard al Hassan, on November 21.[49] The sanctions target clients who have helped Hezbollah purchase weapons and pay fighter salaries. These sanctions are part of a broader Israeli campaign aimed at cutting funding and resources to Hezbollah to degrade its ability and willingness to continue fighting.[50]

Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

As of November 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The IDF has continued its air campaign targeting Hezbollah leadership and infrastructure in southern Lebanon since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 20. The IDF issued evacuation orders on November 20 for residents in Haret Hreik and Ghobeiry in the southern suburbs of Beirut.[51] The IDF has struck at least 12 Hezbollah sites in southern Beirut, including headquarters and weapons depots, since issuing the evacuation orders.[52]

Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon

As of November 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

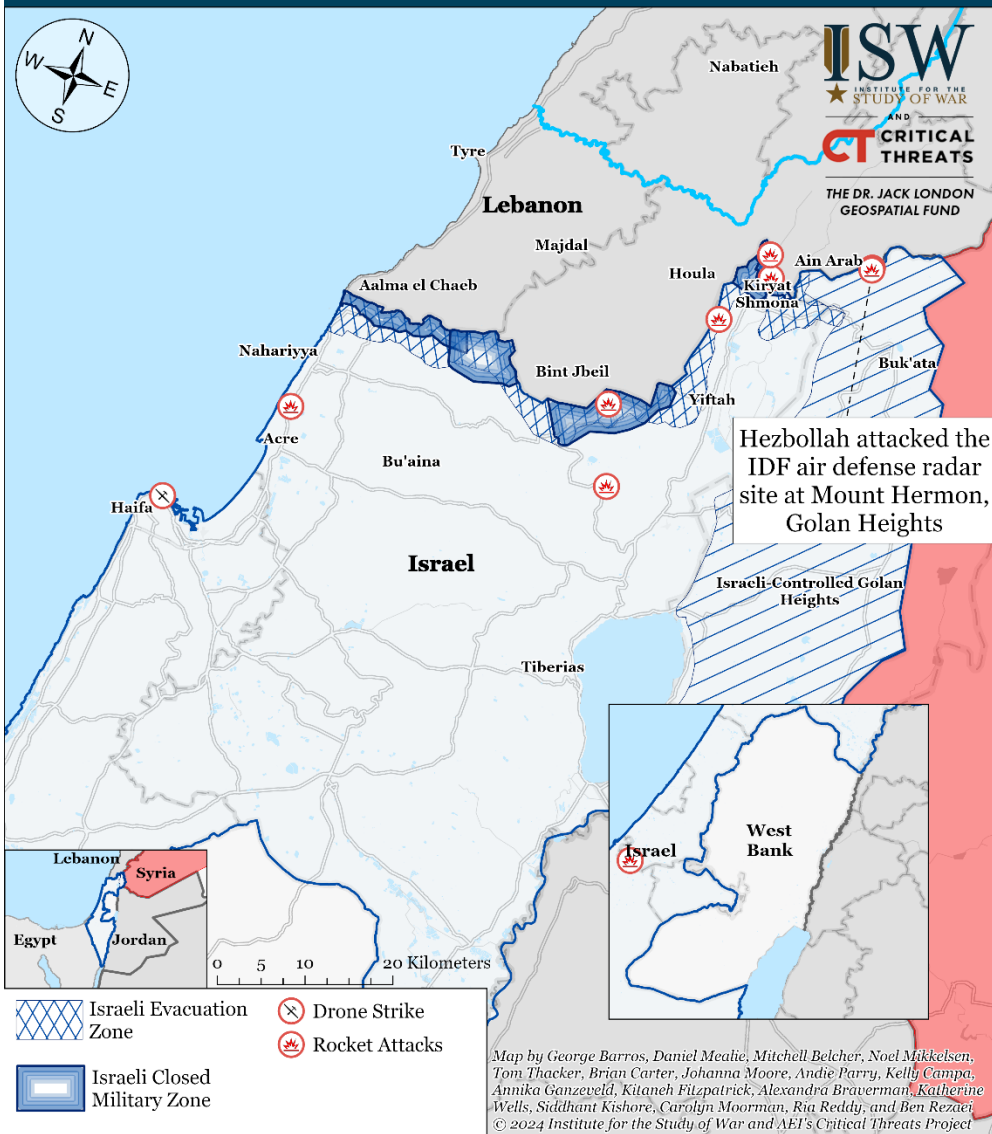


This map illustrates individual Israeli air and artillery strikes based on local Lebanese reporting. This map depicts strikes reported from 2:00pm ET on November 20 to 2:00pm ET on November 21. This map is not exhaustive. CTP-ISW cannot independently verify the locations of Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah has conducted at least 11 attacks into Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on November 20.[53] Hezbollah launched rockets targeting an IDF military base in Ashdod, southern Israel, for the first time on November 21.[54] Ashdod is approximately 160 kilometers from the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah launched rockets targeting an IDF radar site on Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights.[55] Hezbollah launched rockets targeting an IDF military base in Acre, northern Israel.[56] The IDF identified at least ten Hezbollah launches targeting the area.[57] A Hezbollah rocket killed an Israeli civilian in Nahariya, approximately 10 kilometers north of Acre.[58] Hezbollah continued to launch rockets targeting IDF forces on the Israel-Lebanon border on November 21.[59]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of November 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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 military target in southern Israel on November 20.[60]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are threatening to respond to any Israeli strike on Iraq. Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Gideon Saar wrote a letter to the president of the UN Security Council on November 18, in which he emphasized the Israeli right to defend itself against Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks.[61] Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani subsequently chaired an emergency National Security Ministerial Council meeting on November 19, during which he ordered Iraqi security forces to prevent "any military activity outside the control of the state," likely referring to

Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks targeting Israel.[62] Kataib Sarkhat al Quds—formerly known as Ashab al Kahf—warned on November 20 that it will target “all [US and Israeli] economic and military interests” across the Middle East if Israel attacks Iraq.[63] A senior leader in Harakat Ansar Allah al Awfiya separately claimed that an Israeli attack on Iraq would not deter the Islamic Resistance from Iraq, which is a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, from continuing to attack Israel.[64] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq increased its rate of attacks by nearly 150 percent between September and October 2024 and has claimed 60 attacks in November 2024 thus far.[65]

Senior Iraqi officials have discussed Russo-Iraqi relations with Russian officials in recent days. Newly-elected Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al Mashhadani met with Russian Ambassador to Iraq Elbrus Kutrashv in Baghdad on November 19.[66] Kutrashv has met with numerous Iraqi political, military and media officials in recent months.[67] Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani separately held a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on November 21 to discuss coordination between OPEC and OPEC+ countries as well as “the unprecedented escalation of tension” in the Middle East.[68] Iraqi crude oil exports fell for the second consecutive month in October 2024 due to OPEC+ production cuts.[69] Sudani and Putin may have discussed the possibility of an Israeli strike on Iraq in response to repeated Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks targeting Israel.

Syrian media reported on November 21 that the IDF detained a Syrian man in al Rafid, Quneitra Governorate, Syria, on the border of Syria and the Golan Heights.[70] Israeli media reported that the IDF shot the man in the leg after he crossed into Israeli territory.[71] The IDF previously detained a Syrian man who was collecting intelligence on Israeli border positions for Iran in an unspecified area along the Syria-Golan Heights border in July 2024.[72]

Syrian state media reported that the IDF airstrike on Palmyra, Syria, on November 20 killed 36 people.[73] A US-based Syrian analyst reported on November 21 that the strikes killed 48 fighters. The strikes targeted at least three sites in Palmyra, including a military intelligence site.[74]

Iran and Syria are taking steps to try to expand bilateral trade. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf announced that the Iranian Parliament passed a bill amending a 2010 free trade agreement between Iran and Syria during a meeting with Syrian Foreign Affairs Minister Bassam al Sabbagh on November 21.[75] The amendments reportedly include reducing customs duties to zero percent and changing the added value limit of traded goods.[76] Unspecified “experts” wrote an op-ed on the Iranian Parliament website on October 21, before Parliament voted on the bill, arguing that these amendments are unlikely to significantly increase trade between Iran and Syria because the countries lack the infrastructure necessary to implement these amendments.[77] Sabbagh separately met with Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian on November 20 and Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi on November 19.[78]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian traveled to Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, on November 21 amid an uptick in anti-regime militancy in southeastern Iran.[79] Pezeshkian met with the families of 10 police officers who died in a Jaish al Adl attack on October 26.[80] Jaish al Adl is a Baloch, Salafi-jihadi group that operates in southeastern Iran near the border with Pakistan. Pezeshkian met with Shia and Sunni clerics, including prominent Sunni Cleric Moulana Abdul Hamid, and tribal leaders. Abdul Hamid regularly criticized the regime and incited

protest activity in Zahedan after Iranian security forces brutally suppressed protests in Zahedan in late September 2022. Pezeshkian emphasized his administration's commitment to addressing underdevelopment, inequality, and social issues in the province.[81]

Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh met with senior Venezuelan officials in Caracas, Venezuela, on November 21 on the sidelines of the 10th Iran-Venezuela Joint Economic Commission.[82] Nasir Zadeh met with the Venezuelan ministers of finance, agriculture, mines, industries, science and technology, tourism, and energy.[83]

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.

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.

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