

Iran Update



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November 26, 2024, Information Cutoff: 4:00 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.

Israel and Lebanon approved a ceasefire to end the war in Lebanon on November 26. The ceasefire is set to come into effect on November 27 at 2:00 am GMT.[1] The text published by Israeli media requires a full Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdrawal from Lebanon by January 26, 2025.[2] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu supported the deal in a message to his ministers and noted that Israel needs to focus on Iran, the need to rest its forces, and further isolating Hamas.[3] The ceasefire calls for a Hezbollah withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to dismantle all non-state military infrastructure, prevent Hezbollah's rearmament, and deploy to southern Lebanon to play a predominant security role there.[4] The ceasefire agreement also contains a self-defense clause that would allow Israel to act against Hezbollah if needed.[5] US President Joe Biden said that the deal is designed to be a permanent cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel.[6] Only Lebanon and Israel are parties to the agreement, and it is the Lebanese state's responsibility to ensure Hezbollah's compliance. An independent committee advised by the United States and France, in addition to the current UN observer force in southern Lebanon, will monitor compliance with the ceasefire agreement.[7] The exact structure of the monitoring committee is not codified in the ceasefire text. The deal includes a US letter affirming support for any future Israel operations needed to combat Hezbollah violations of the deal.[8]

This ceasefire and its terms are tantamount to a Hezbollah defeat. Hezbollah has abandoned several previously-held ceasefire negotiation positions, reflecting the degree to which IDF military operations have forced Hezbollah to abandon its war aims.[9] Hezbollah initiated its attack campaign targeting Israel in October 2023 to support Hamas, and Hezbollah's leaders have said repeatedly that it would not end its attacks without a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.[10] This ceasefire does not include an end to Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip. Current Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem has also previously expressed opposition to any stipulations giving Israel freedom of action inside Lebanon.[11]

Israel has accomplished its war aim through two months of military operations in Lebanon and this ceasefire. Hezbollah claimed incorrectly that it defeated Israel.[12]

Israel began its ground campaign in Lebanon to create safe conditions to return Israelis to their homes in northern Israel.[13] IDF operations in Lebanese border towns have eliminated the threat of an October 7-style offensive attack by Hezbollah into northern Israel, and the Israeli air campaign has killed many commanders and destroyed much of Hezbollah's munition stockpiles.[14] Destroying Hezbollah's military organization—which is the only military objective that would prevent all attacks into Israel permanently—was never the stated objective of Israeli military operations.[15] A ceasefire deal, however, will prevent attacks into Israel through diplomatic means.

The ceasefire contains several elements that will prove difficult to implement.[16]

The decision to rely on the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and UN observers in Lebanon to respectively secure southern Lebanon and monitor compliance with the ceasefire agreement makes no serious changes to the same system outlined by UNSC Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. Neither the LAF nor the UN proved willing or able to prevent Hezbollah from reoccupying southern Lebanon and building new infrastructure. Some LAF sources, for example, have expressed a lack of will to enforce this ceasefire because they believe that any fighting with Hezbollah would risk triggering "civil war." [17] Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said on November 26 that the LAF is prepared to deploy at least 5,000 troops to southern Lebanon, however.[18] LAF units have been in southern Lebanon since 2006, but have failed to prevent Hezbollah from using the area to attack Israel.

The difficulties in implementing this deal mean that Hezbollah and Iran can recover from this setback if the United States and Israel fail to prevent Hezbollah and Iran from doing so.

Netanyahu noted that Israeli operations in Lebanon had "pushed [Hezbollah back] decades." [19] The group retains fighters, weapons, and political control throughout Lebanon, however.[20] Hezbollah will almost certainly attempt to reoccupy southern Lebanon because Hezbollah's stated *raison d'être* is to end Israel's control over the Shebaa Farms, which it sees as Israeli-occupied Lebanese territory. The group also supports Iran's efforts to destroy the Israeli state.[21] Hezbollah will be unable to accomplish this task if it is forced to disarm in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah refused to abide by the last disarmament and withdrawal agreement, and it is unlikely that this war has changed Hezbollah leadership's willingness to abandon its aspirations for southern Lebanon.

The IDF struck approximately 180 Hezbollah targets across Lebanon since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on November 25 marking its most intense day of airstrikes on Beirut since September 2024.[22]

The IDF expanded evacuation orders throughout Beirut ahead of its airstrikes.[23] The IDF Air Force attacked over 20 Hezbollah military and financial targets across Beirut.[24] The IDF struck facilities used by Hezbollah's Coastal Missile Unit and various Hezbollah military headquarters and infrastructure.[25] The IDF Air Force also destroyed al Qard al Hassan's financial management and storage facilities.[26] Lebanese media has reported approximately 16 separate Israeli airstrikes in Baalbek and the Bekaa Valley since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on November 24.[27] Hezbollah maintains advanced weapons systems, weapons storage, and military infrastructure across the Bekaa Valley. This intensified activity comes as Israel and Lebanon approved a ceasefire agreement to take effect on November 27 at 2:00 am GMT.

Iran is actively violating the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and continues to advance its ability to develop and deploy its chemical weapons capabilities both inside and outside of Iran. The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) published a report on November 26 stating that Iran continues to develop capabilities to produce and deliver pharmaceutical-based chemical agents (PBAs) for offensive purposes.[28] The report cites research conducted from 2005 to 2023 by individuals affiliated with Iran’s defense establishment, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Ministry of Defense. PBAs are dual-purpose chemicals that can be used in medical settings but also be weaponized for offensive purposes.[29] The ISIS report focuses on research on fentanyl and medetomidine, which are both agents capable of incapacitating victims by targeting the central nervous system. ISIS identified Iranian research in three key areas: developing large-scale cost-effective methods to synthesize these compounds, exploring techniques to aerosolize these agents for propellant purposes, and creating delivery systems to disperse the agents through grenades, bullets, and drones.[30] The report noted that Iran could use its drones to deliver ammunition containing PBAs. Iranian media released a video in June 2023 showing a multicopter drone dropping rounds of smoke grenades and a bomb, likely containing tear gas.[31]

Iran can use its PBA weapons program both internally and externally. Iranian media confirmed that Iran extensively used grenades against civilians during the Mahsa Amini protests in 2022.[32] Civilian reports indicated symptoms consistent with both fentanyl and medetomidine exposure, rather than traditional riot control gases. Iran has also likely supplied its partners and proxy groups with weaponized PBAs, which the Axis of Resistance could deploy in future military conflicts.[33] Member states of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons are meeting in The Hague from November 25 to 29 to discuss CWC implementation and treaty compliance.[34]

Israeli light infantry advanced to the Litani River near Deir Mimas and Arnoun, southeastern Lebanon, on November 26.[35] Israeli forces operated about four kilometers from the Israel-Lebanon border in the closest part of the Litani River to Israel. Geolocated footage posted on November 26 shows the IDF 1st Infantry Brigade inside the St. Mema Church in Deir Mimas and Israeli forces operating near Arnoun.[36] Several IDF brigades destroyed thousands of Hezbollah rockets and missiles and engaged Hezbollah fighters at close range in the area.[37] Hezbollah claimed a rocket attack targeting Israeli forces attempting to remove a damaged tank from the outskirts of Deir Mimas on November 24, indicating that Israeli forces have been operating in this general region for the past several days.[38] IDF Northern Command Commander Ori Gordin accompanied Israeli forces to the Litani.[39]

Key Takeaways:

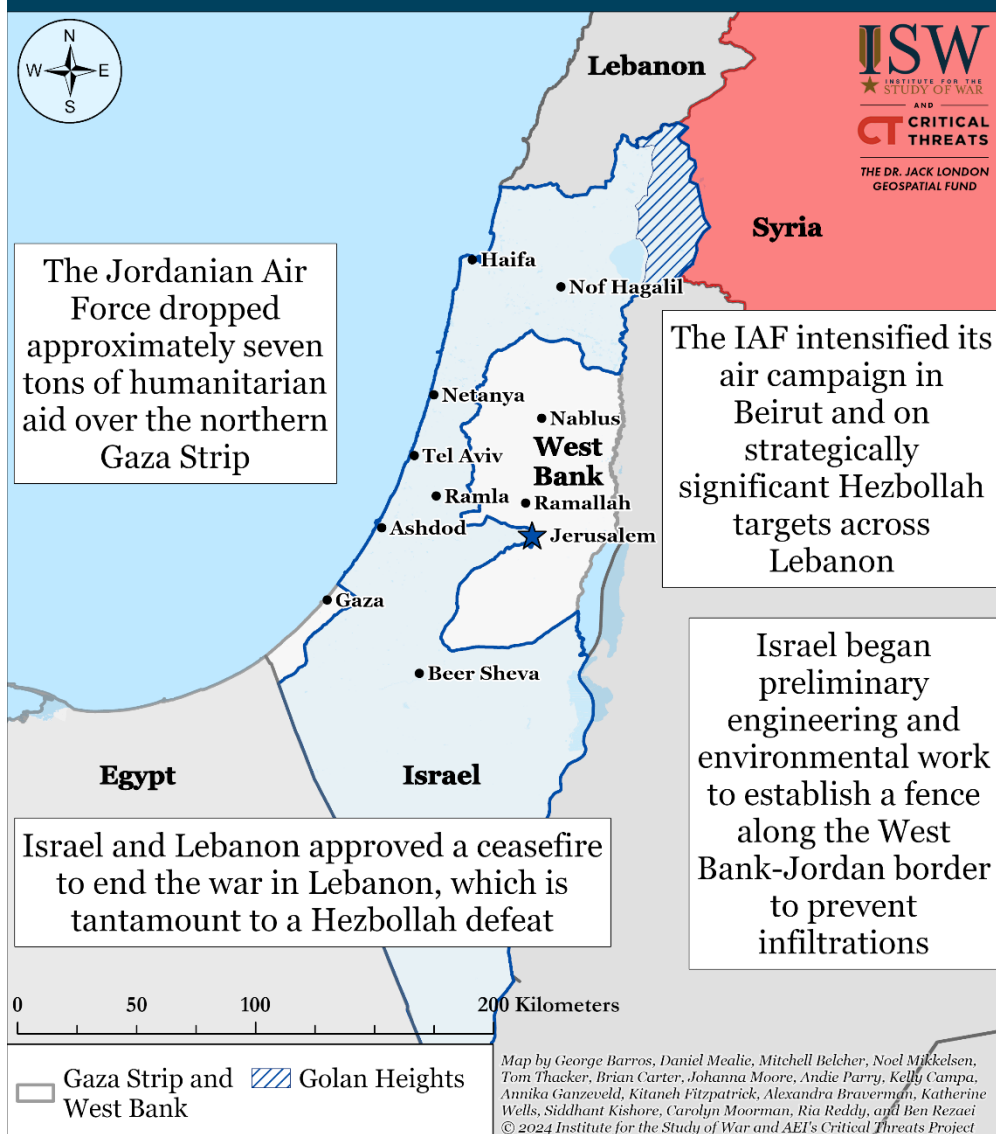
- **Ceasefire in Lebanon:** Israel and Lebanon approved a ceasefire to end the war in Lebanon on November 26. This ceasefire and its terms are tantamount to a Hezbollah defeat. Hezbollah has abandoned several previously-held ceasefire negotiation positions, reflecting the degree to which IDF military operations have forced Hezbollah to abandon its war aims. Israel has accomplished its war aim through two months of military operations in Lebanon and this ceasefire. Hezbollah claimed incorrectly that it defeated Israel.
- **Shortcomings of the Ceasefire:** The ceasefire contains several elements that will prove difficult to implement. The decision to rely on the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and UN

observers in Lebanon to respectively secure southern Lebanon and monitor compliance with the ceasefire agreement makes no serious changes to the same system outlined by UNSC Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War. The difficulties in implementing this deal mean that Hezbollah and Iran can recover from this setback if the United States and Israel fail to prevent Hezbollah and Iran from doing so.

- **Israeli Air Campaign in Lebanon:** The IDF struck approximately 180 Hezbollah targets across Lebanon since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on November 25 marking its most intense day of airstrikes on Beirut since September 2024.
- **Iranian Use of Pharmaceutical-based Agents:** Iran is actively violating the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and continues to advance its ability to develop and deploy its chemical weapons capabilities both inside and outside of Iran.
- **Israeli Ground Campaign in Lebanon:** Israeli light infantry advanced to the Litani River near Deir Mimas and Arnoun, southeastern Lebanon, on November 26. The IDF elements also operated about 10km from Israeli territory in Wadi Saluki, making this advance the deepest penetration into Lebanon since Israeli forces began operations in early October 2024.

Key Takeaways in the October 7 War

As of November 26, 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

Palestinian militias killed an IDF soldier from the 900th Infantry Brigade in the northern Gaza Strip, according to a November 26 IDF report.[40] Israeli media reported that the soldier was killed during an IDF raid in an area between Jabalia and Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip.[41]

The IDF conducted clearing operations in Gaza City on November 26. A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from Israeli vehicles in northern Gaza City.[42] The IDF also conducted an airstrike that struck a school compound in Zaytoun, Gaza City, that killed 13 Gazans, according to medics cited by Reuters.[43] Hamas fired rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) targeting an IDF vehicle and a bulldozer in southern Gaza City.[44]

The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired rockets targeting the IDF along the Netzarim Corridor on November 26.[45]

The IDF reported on November 26 that an unspecified militia fighter fired an anti-tank munition that seriously injured an IDF reservist in the central Gaza Strip.[46]

The IDF 143rd Division likely continued operating in the southern Gaza Strip on November 26. A Palestinian journalist reported gunfire from Israeli vehicles and “violent clashes” in areas east of Rafah City.[47] The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) mortared Israeli forces in western Rafah City.[48] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) mortared Israeli forces along the Philadelphi Corridor.[49]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of November 26, 2024, 12:30 PM ET



Hamas fired RPGs targeting IDF vehicles in southern Gaza City

The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired rockets targeting the IDF along the Netzarim Corridor

PIJ mortared Israeli forces along the Philadelphi Corridor

0 5 10 20 Kilometers

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

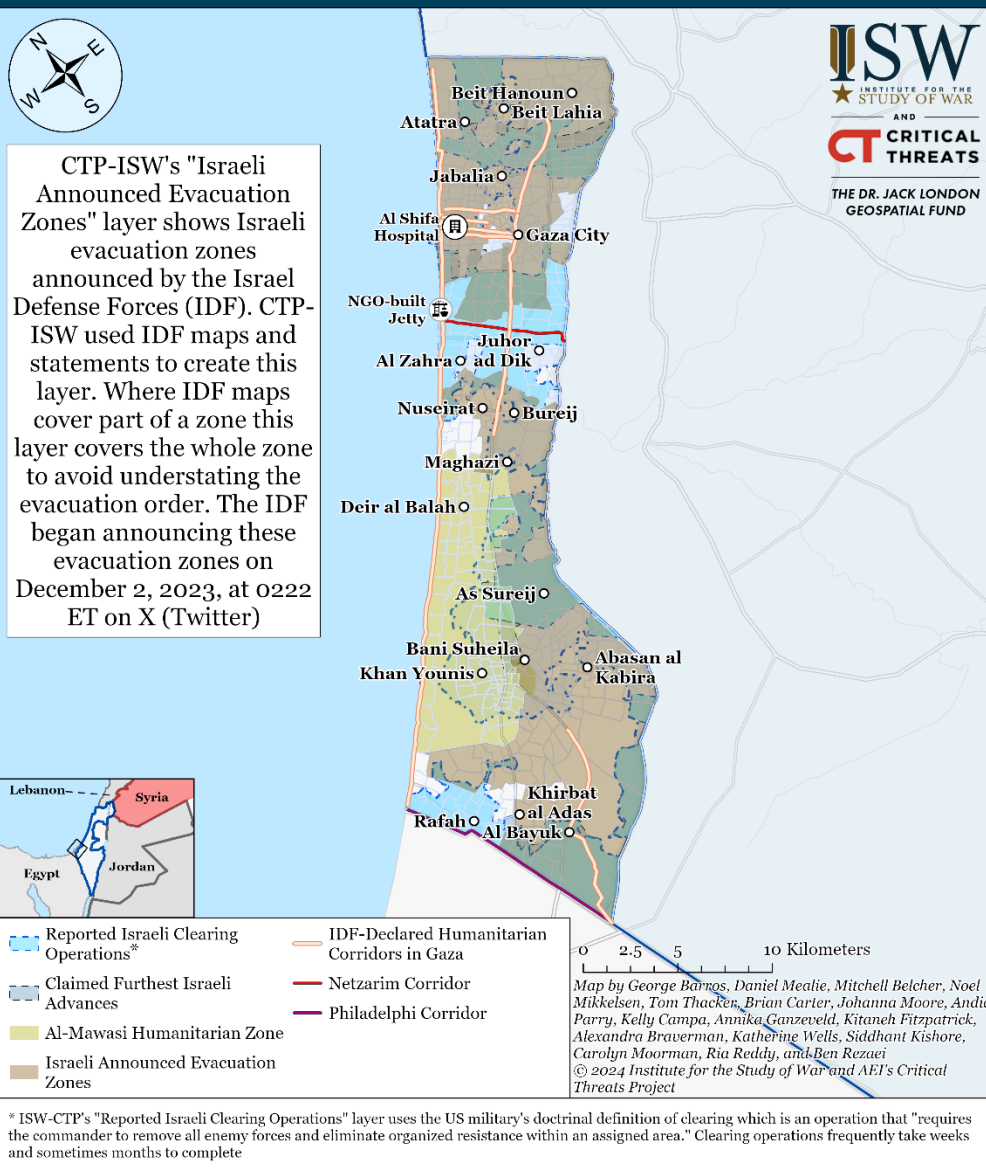
Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations	Philadelphi Corridor	



* 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

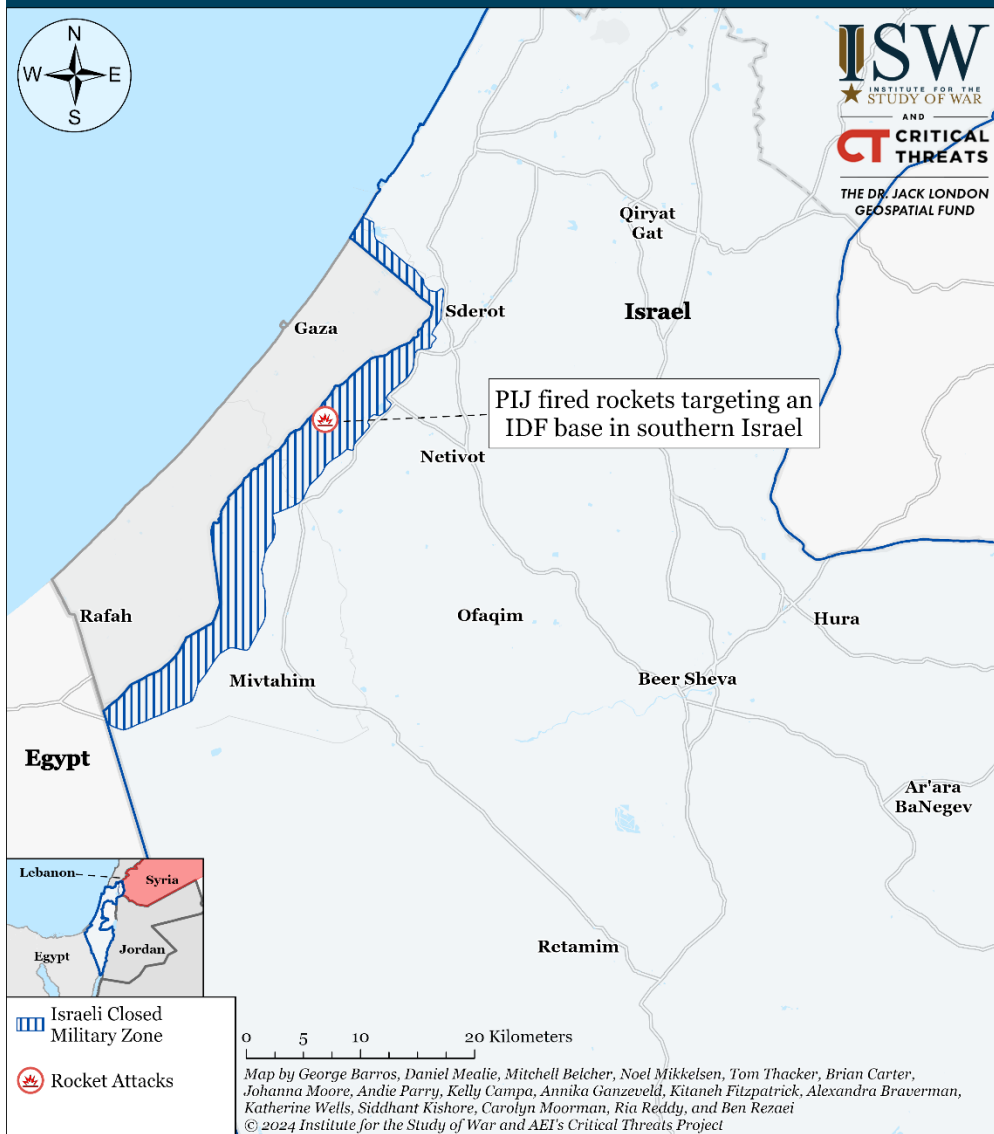
As of November 26, 2024 at 12:30 PM ET



PIJ fired rockets targeting an IDF base in southern Israel on November 26.[50]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of November 26, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Two C-130 Royal Jordanian Air Force planes dropped approximately seven tons of humanitarian aid over the northern Gaza Strip on November 26.[51] This is the first time Jordanian military aircraft have airdropped aid over the Gaza Strip since April 2024.

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces are continuing to disrupt smuggling routes to the West Bank. Israeli police arrested two men on November 25 on suspicion of trying to smuggle 20,000 bullets from Israel into the West Bank.[52] Israeli Police separately arrested an Arab-Israeli woman on November 26 on

suspicion of trying to smuggle 6,000 5.56 rifle rounds from Israel into the West Bank.[53] An Israeli police official stated the police believed that the woman was part of a larger weapons smuggling ring.

Israel began preliminary engineering and environmental work on November 26 to establish a fence along the West Bank-Jordan border to prevent infiltrations.[54] Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz announced on November 26 that he received approval to build a high-tech border fence on the West Bank-Jordan border.[55] The Israeli Defense Ministry announced that the first phase of the border plan will include conducting environmental surveys and laying an initial section of the fence with new surveillance equipment. The West Bank-Jordan border currently consists of a chain link fence in some sections equipped with sensors while other sections are only equipped with barbed wire.[56] This border has been the site of frequent drug and weapons smuggling attempts throughout the past decade.[57] Iran and other smuggling networks use this border to smuggle weapons to Palestinian militias in the West Bank.[58] Israeli government administrations have unsuccessfully tried in the past to upgrade defenses along the 192-mile West Bank-Jordan border.[59]

Northern Israel and Lebanon

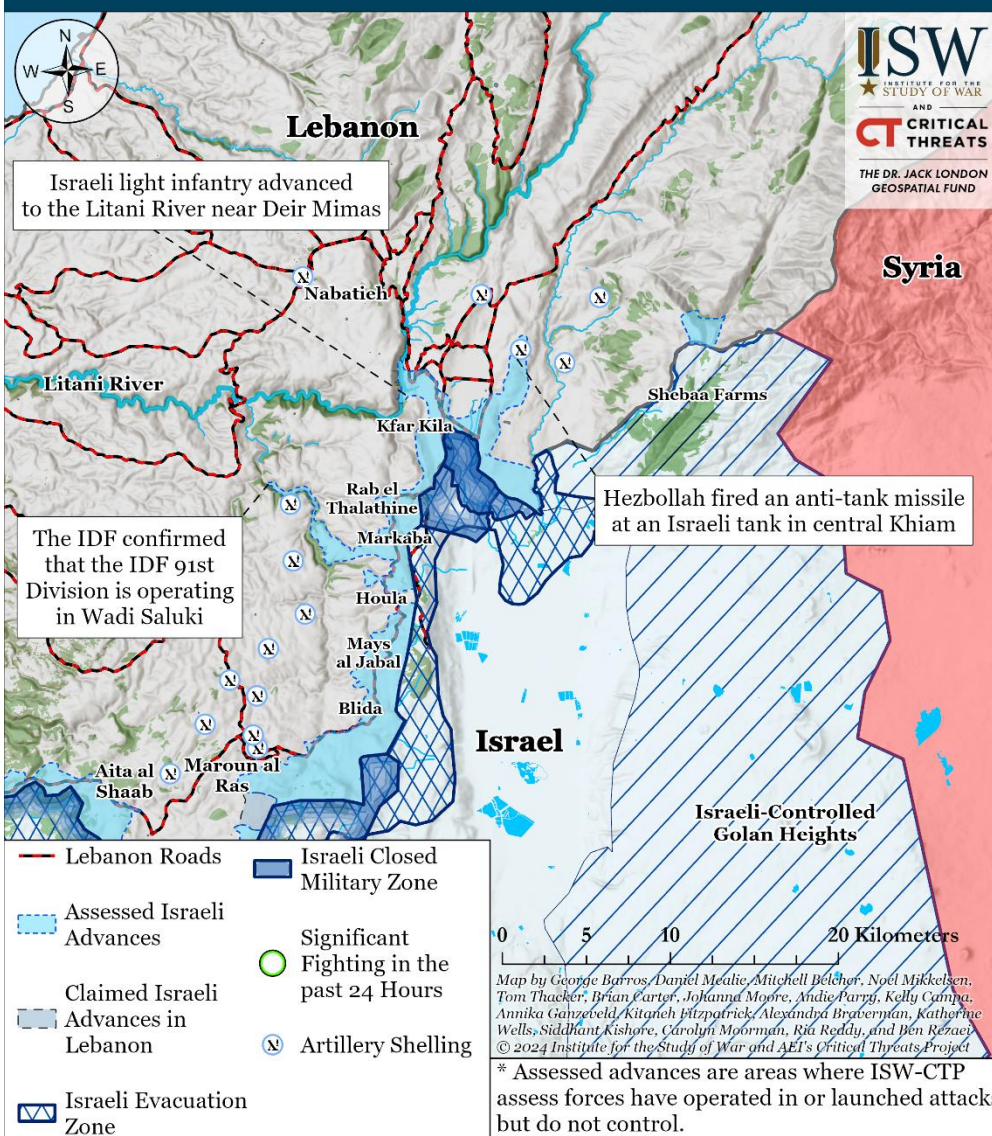
Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:

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

Israeli forces continued to operate in Khiam, southeastern Lebanon, on November 26.[60] Hezbollah acknowledged that Israeli armor is operating in central Khiam, stating that Hezbollah fighters targeted an IDF tank with an anti-tank missile there.[61] Hezbollah also attacked Israeli forces southeast of Khiam with a "high-quality" rocket.[62] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on November 25 appeared to show Israeli clearing operations expanding north across Khiam.

The IDF 89th Commando Brigade operated in Wadi Saluki, Nabatieh District, on November 26.[63] The IDF elements operated about 10km from Israeli territory, making this advance the deepest penetration into Lebanon since Israeli forces began operations in early October 2024.[64] Israeli forces located hundreds of Hezbollah weapons, including dozens of rocket launchers ready to fire at northern Israel.[65] The force also located Hezbollah's underground infrastructure in the area.[66]

Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of November 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

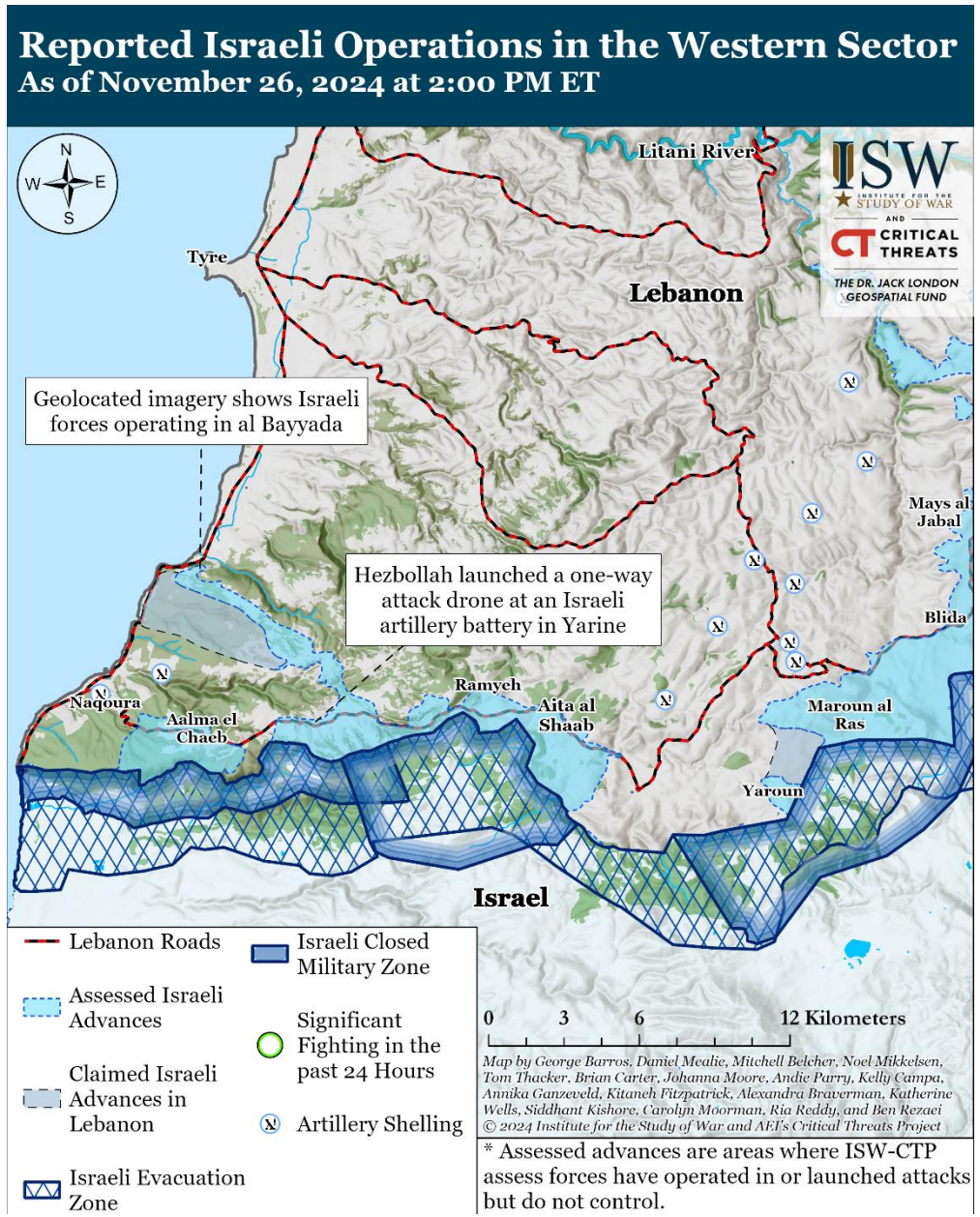


Israeli forces continued clearing operations around Maroun al Ras on November 26. Local Lebanese sources reported Israeli artillery shelling in Bint Jbeil and Ainata, which are north of Maroun al Ras, on November 26.[67]

Hezbollah launched a one-way attack drone targeting an Israeli artillery battery near Yarine in southwestern Lebanon on November 25.[68] This is the first time Hezbollah has claimed an attack on an Israeli artillery position in Lebanon. Israeli media reported on November 17 that the IDF 36th Division deployed an artillery battery into Lebanese territory to extend the IDF's artillery firing range.[69]

Geolocated imagery posted on November 26 shows Israeli forces operating in al Bayyada, which is on the Lebanese coast north of Naqoura.[70] Lebanese media claimed Israeli forces

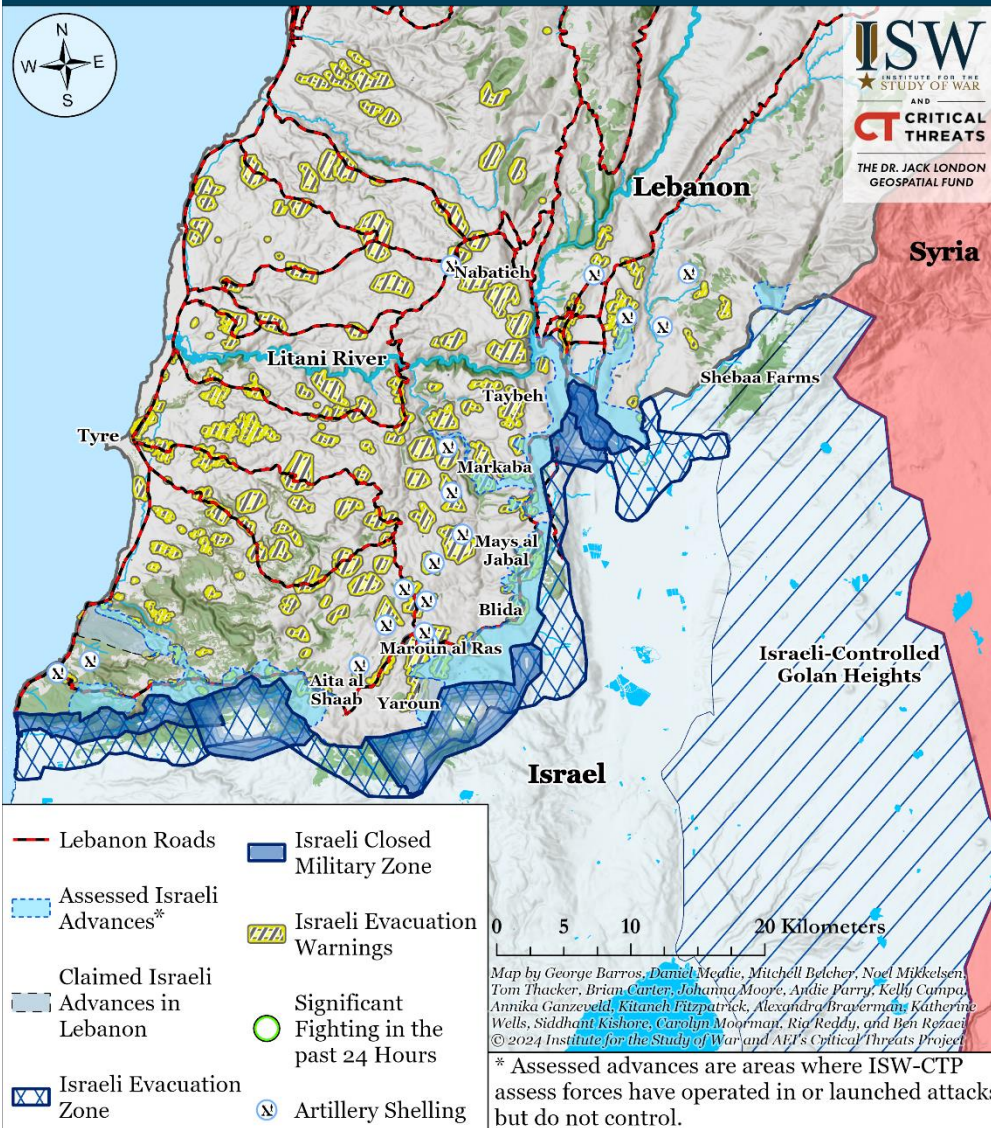
advanced down the northern-facing slope of al Bayyada Hill.[71] Al Bayyada Hill overlooks UNIFIL Position 1-26 and a nearby Hezbollah military site.[72] The hill also provides Israeli forces with an advantageous position to monitor Hezbollah activity along the coast.



Syrian media reported that the IDF conducted airstrikes that struck two locations in Homs Governorate, western Syria, on November 26.[73] The IDF has previously struck Syrian Arab Army (SAA) sites, Hezbollah military infrastructure and supply routes, and Iranian-backed militia positions in Homs Governorate.[74]

Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

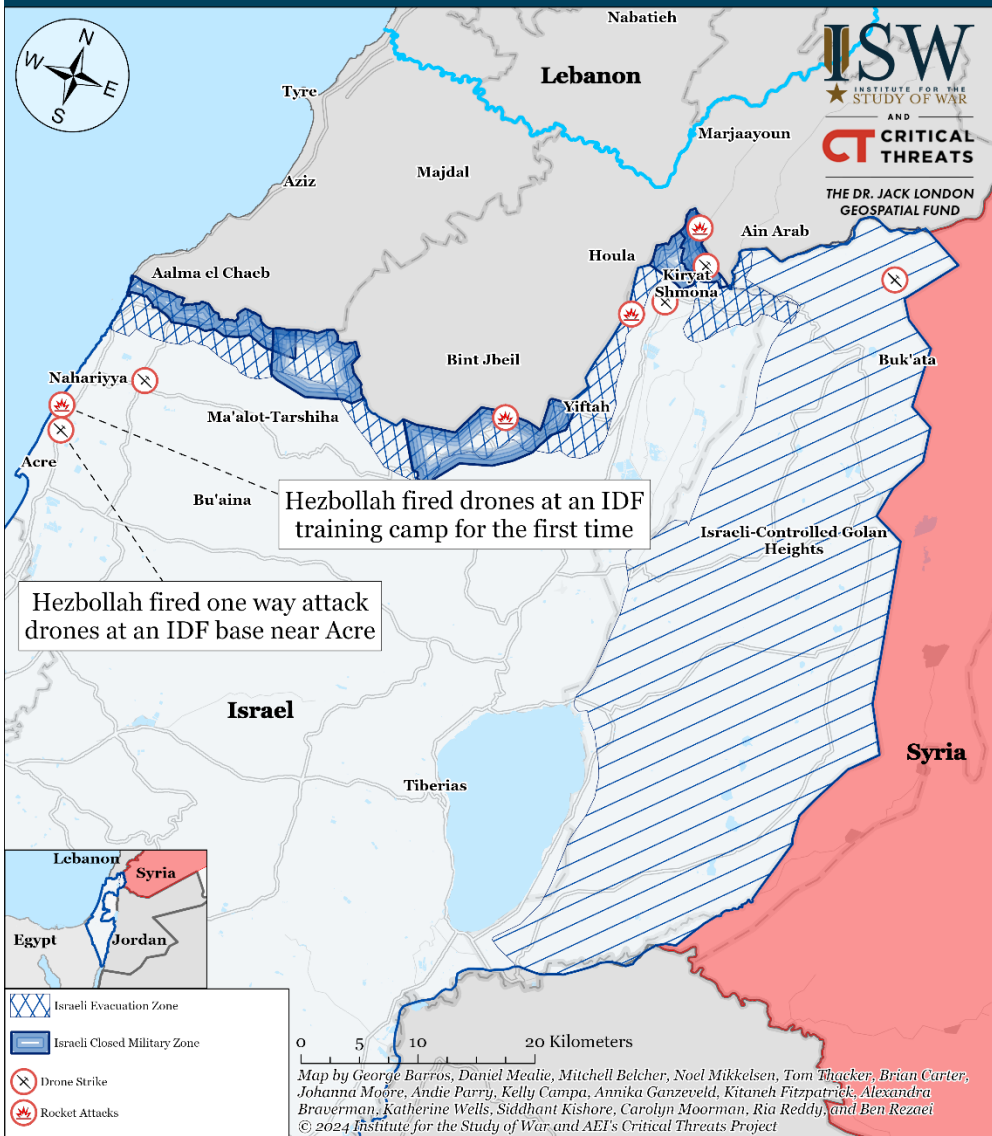
As of November 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Hezbollah claimed at least 12 drone and rocket attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets in northern Israel since CTP-ISW's data cut off on November 24.[75] Hezbollah conducted four separate rocket and drone attacks targeting IDF unit headquarters in northern Israel.[76] The IDF identified eight additional attacks likely conducted by Hezbollah that the group did not claim.[77]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of November 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Iran and the Axis of Resistance

A senior Russian delegation met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman al Saud in Baghdad on November 26 ahead of an OPEC+ meeting on December 1.[78] The Russian delegation included Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilev, and Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister and Special Representative to the Middle East Mikhail Bogdanov.[79] The Russian delegation's visit to Iraq comes ahead of an OPEC+ meeting on December 1, in which OPEC+ members might decide to postpone planned oil production increases.[80] Iraqi crude oil exports fell for the second consecutive month in October 2024 due to OPEC+ production cuts.[81] The Russian delegation separately met with Iraqi Energy Minister Ziad Ali Fadhil and discussed opportunities for Russian companies to develop the Iraqi oil and energy industries.[82]

A member of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba's political council claimed on November 26 that Iran is planning a "severe strike" targeting Israel in response to the October 25 IDF strikes into Iran.[83] The political council member, Firas al Yasser, claimed in an interview with Russian media that the next Iranian attack on Israel will be "more violent" than the Iranian drone and missile attacks on Israel in April and October 2024.[84] Yasser claimed that a ceasefire in Lebanon or the Gaza Strip would not change Iran's decision to retaliate against Israel.[85]

Prominent Iranian Shia clerics Ahmad Khatami and Hashem Hosseini Bushehri lost their seats on the Supreme Qom Seminary Council.[86] The Supreme Qom Seminary Council is comprised of seven members who are recommended by the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom and approved by the Supreme Leader.[87] Bushehri is the current head of the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom and Khatami is a member of this organization.[88] Mahmoud Abdollahi and Mohammad Gharavi replaced Khatami and Bushehri in the Supreme Qom Seminary Council.[89] Khatami previously lost his seat on the Assembly of Experts leadership board in May 2024.[90] Iranian opposition media previously claimed that Khatami lost his seat on the Assembly of Experts leadership board due to his opposition to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, who is considered a top contender to become Iran's next supreme leader.[91]

The IDF intercepted a drone over the Golan Heights on November 25 that was entering Israeli airspace "from the east." [92]

Iranian Artesh Navy Commander Admiral Shahram Irani announced new Artesh Navy acquisitions.[93] Irani stated in an interview with Iranian media on November 26 that the Artesh Navy will introduce "advanced combat vessels" called *Zagros* and *Kurdistan*. [94] Irani claimed that the Artesh Navy restored the *Sabalan* destroyer and quadrupled its anti-ship missile capacity to 16.[95] Irani added that the Artesh Navy acquired long-range unmanned surface and subsurface vehicles, vertical-launch air defense missiles on naval ships, and new logistics drones.[96] Irani also highlighted the Artesh Navy's transformation from a coastal force to a global maritime power.[97]

A senior adviser to the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reiterated the Iranian regime's concern over growing Western influence in the southern Caucasus.[98] Foreign Policy Advisor Ali Akbar Velayati claimed in an interview with Iranian media on November 26 that the United States has attempted to extend its influence in the southern Caucasus "under the guise of NATO" to distract Russia from its war in Ukraine.[99] Velayati underlined that Iran opposes the building of the Zangezur corridor project, which is a Turkish-Azerbaijani project that seeks to connect Azerbaijan proper and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Velayati described the project as a NATO initiative that threatens Iran's borders.[100] Iranian officials have stated that such a corridor would sever Iranian land access to Russia and Europe via Armenia.[101] Velayati previously warned Russia in July 2023 about his concerns about possible NATO interference in the southern Caucasus.[102]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated Iran's support for the Lebanese government and the Axis of Resistance during a phone call with the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister's Special Envoy to West Asia, Mohammad Reza Sheibani, on November 26.[103] Sheibani briefed Araghchi on diplomatic efforts to halt the Israeli campaign and establish a ceasefire in Lebanon. Sky News Arabia reported on November 23 that Sheibani reportedly

held secret meetings with unspecified individuals and was involved in discussions that bypassed official Lebanese channels.[104]

Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri stated on November 26 that Israel crossed Iran's red lines, and it should be aware that the Iranian Armed Forces will deliver a “regrettable and different response at an appropriate time.”[105] Senior Iranian military officials have continued to signal that Iran will retaliate against Israel in response to Israel's attack on Iran on October 25.

US Central Command (CENCOM) commander General Michael Kurilla met with Yemeni Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Sagheer Hamoud Ahmed Aziz in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 20 and 21.[106] Kurilla and Aziz discussed efforts to combat Houthi attacks on military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. This is the first time Aziz has publicly met with US officials since the start of the Houthi's campaign against vessels in the Red Sea.

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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