# Iran Update, November 19, 2023

**Ashka Jhaveri, Brian Carter, Andie Parry, Amin Soltani, and Nicholas Carl**
**Information Cutoff: 2:00pm 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.*
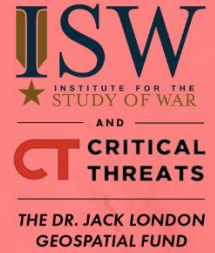
*Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel–Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are 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 Washington Post* reported that Israel and Hamas are nearing an agreement for a five-day pause in fighting.
2. Israel published CCTV footage showing Hamas militia fighters taking hostages to al Shifa Hospital during the October 7 attack. The IDF uncovered a tunnel system underneath al Shifa Hospital, which is consistent with Israel's repeated assertions that Hamas uses humanitarian infrastructure for military activities.
3. Israeli forces continued their advance from the coast eastward into Gaza City.
4. The al Qassem Brigades conducted a complex attack on an Israeli combat outpost in the Nasr neighborhood of Gaza City.
5. Palestinian militia fighters engaged Israeli forces in six small-arms clashes across the West Bank.
6. Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 21 cross-border attacks, including at least one infiltration, into northern Israel.
7. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed that it launched a one-way attack drone targeting US forces at al Harir airbase, Erbil province, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
8. Houthi fighters hijacked an Israeli-owned, Japanese-operated freighter transiting the Red Sea.
9. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei visited the IRGC Aerospace Force permanent exhibition at the Ashura Aerospace Science and Technology University in Tehran.
10. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held a phone call with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, to discuss the Israel–Hamas war.

# Israel-Hamas War as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

Lebanon

Syria

**ISW**
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR
AND
**CRITICAL THREATS**
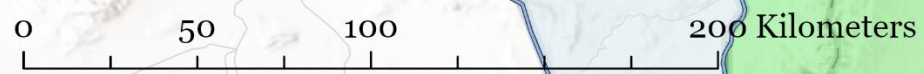THE DR. JACK LONDON GEOSPATIAL FUND

Haifa

Nof Hagalil

Israel and Hamas neared an agreement for a five-day pause in fighting

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 21 cross-border attacks, including at least one infiltration, into northern Israel

Netanya

Nablus

Tel Aviv

**West Bank**

Ramla

Ramallah

Ashdod

Jerusalem

Jordan

Gaza

Beer Sheva

Houthi fighters hijacked an Israeli-owned, Japanese-operated freighter transiting the Red Sea

**Israel**

Israeli forces seized IED stockpiles and manufacturing sites in raids of Jenin and Balata camps

0        50        100                    200 Kilometers

*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 and West Bank

Jordan and Lebanon

Syria

Golan Heights

**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 Washington Post* **reported on November 18 that Israel and Hamas are nearing an agreement for a five-day pause in fighting.** Sources familiar with the emerging terms said that the US-brokered deal would free dozens of women and children held hostage in the Gaza Strip, according to the *Washington Post* report.[1] The five-day pause would be the first sustained pause in conflict since the Israel–Hamas war began.[2] The six-page set of written terms would require all parties to the conflict to freeze combat operations for at least five days while Palestinian militias release 50 or more hostages in small batches every 24 hours.[3] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) estimated on November 17 that there are 237 hostages in the Gaza Strip.[4] US Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer said on November 19 that negotiations to secure the release of hostages are closer than at any point since negotiations began.[5] Qatar's prime minister said there is "good progress" on the issue of releasing hostages.[6]

**Israel published CCTV footage showing Hamas militia fighters taking hostages to al Shifa Hospital during the October 7 attack.** The footage shows Palestinian fighters transferring hostages to the hospital on October 7 after hundreds of Hamas fighters attacked civilian targets and took hundreds of hostages in southern Israel.[7] The IDF said there are Israeli military vehicles that Hamas took from Israel parked around al Shifa Hospital.[8] The IDF has repeatedly said that Hamas uses al Shifa Hospital and other civilian infrastructure for military activities.

**The IDF uncovered a tunnel system underneath al Shifa Hospital, which is consistent with Israel's repeated assertions that Hamas uses humanitarian infrastructure for military activities.** The IDF and Israeli Security Agency published drone footage on November 19 of a 55-meter-long tunnel 10 meters underneath the hospital.[9] Israeli forces located the tunnel underneath a shed near a vehicle full of weapons, including rocket propelled grenades (RPG), other explosives, and small arms.[10]

**Israeli forces continued their advance from the coast eastward into Gaza City.** Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in the Sheikh Ijlin and Rimal neighborhoods as part of an Israeli effort to locate and destroy militia infrastructure and assets.[11] The forces located and raided a Hamas military intelligence site and located weapons caches and seven rocket launchers.[12] The IDF said the forces have interrogated over a hundred fighters, including three members of Hamas' Nukhba special force, which took part in the October 7 attacks.[13] The IDF Nahal Brigade moved from al Shati refugee camp toward Jabalia city to support offensive operations in the area.[14]

Palestinian militias targeted Israeli forces advancing into Gaza City. Local media reported that Palestinian militia fighters are fighting with Israeli forces in the streets of Jabalia.[15] The al Quds Brigades—the militant wing of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)—and the al Qassem Brigades—the militant wing of Hamas—claimed several hit-and-run attacks on Israeli forces and military vehicles, including one combined operation.[16] These attacks primarily use small arms, RPGs, and tandem rockets against Israeli forces as they clear areas.[17] The al Qassem Brigades published footage of a cache of IDF military equipment including uniforms, helmets, an identification tag, and various weapons.[18] There is no indication of where or when the militia fighters obtained the items.

Israel urged civilians in several neighborhoods to evacuate the northern Gaza Strip using an evacuation corridor on the Salah al Din Highway.[19] The IDF said Hamas has lost control over the northern Gaza Strip and is trying to prevent civilians from moving southward.[20] The Israeli Army Radio said only 25 percent of residents in Jabalia have evacuated.[21]

**The al Qassem Brigades conducted a complex attack on an Israeli combat outpost in the Nasr neighborhood of Gaza City.** The group published a video of three militia fighters conducting a "martyrdom operation" at the Rantisi Specialist Hospital in the al Nasr neighborhood, where Israeli forces have established a combat outpost since November 13.[22] The militia fighters were armed with small arms and fired an RPG at the hospital.[23] A local media outlet said the fighters are part of "suicide squads."[24]
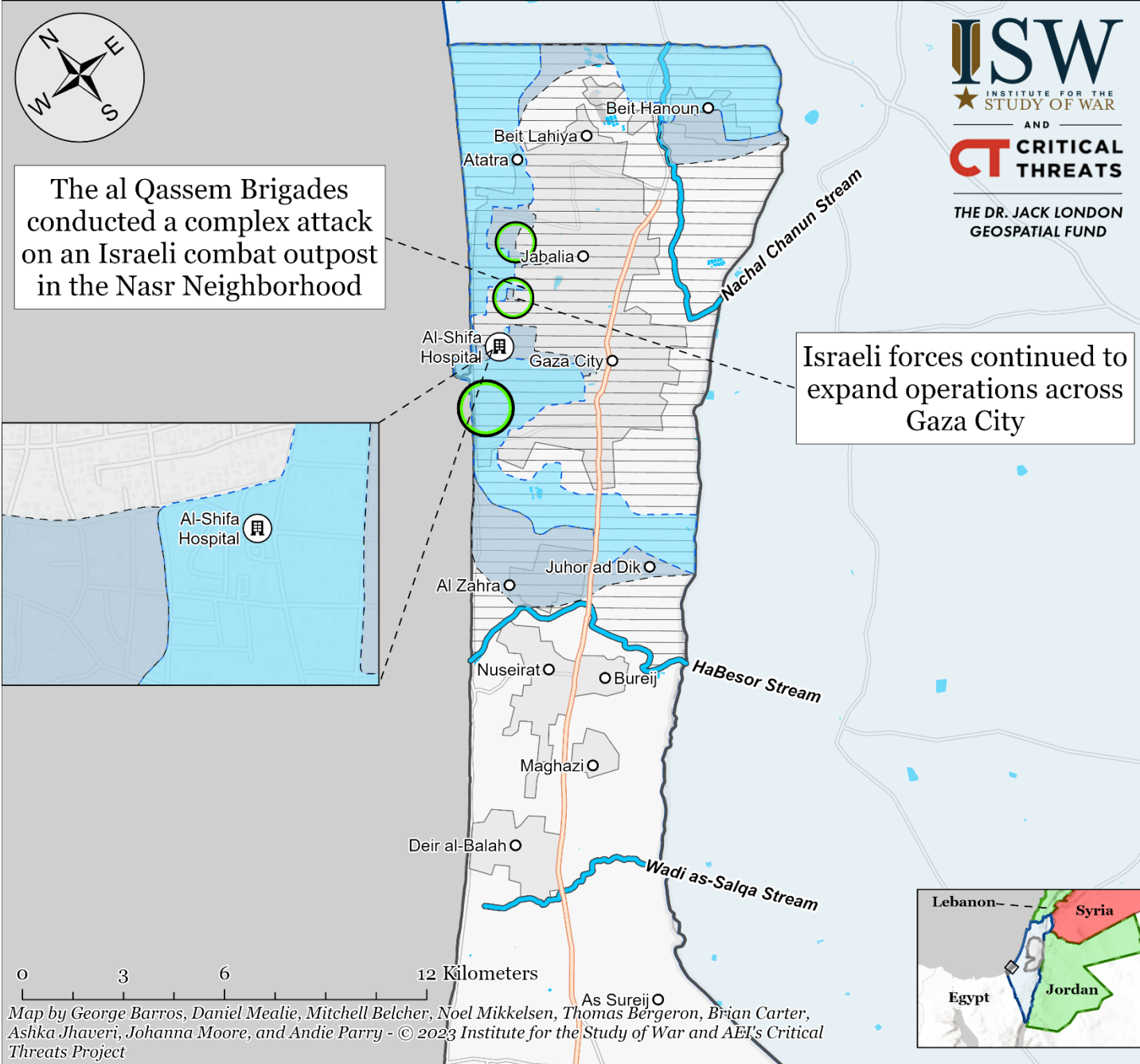
**Palestinian militia fighters continued attacks targeting Israeli forces behind the Israeli forward line of advance, which is consistent with the nature of clearing operations.** The al Qassem Brigades claimed to ambush and fire tandem charge, anti-tank rockets and small arms at Israeli forces near Juhor ad Dik.[25] The al Quds Brigades mortared Israeli positions at the al Nour resort near Juhor ad Dik.[26] The al Quds Brigades also clashed with Israeli forces in Beit Hanoun and mortared Israeli positions in Beit Lahia.[27]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



The al Qassem Brigades conducted a complex attack on an Israeli combat outpost in the Nasr Neighborhood

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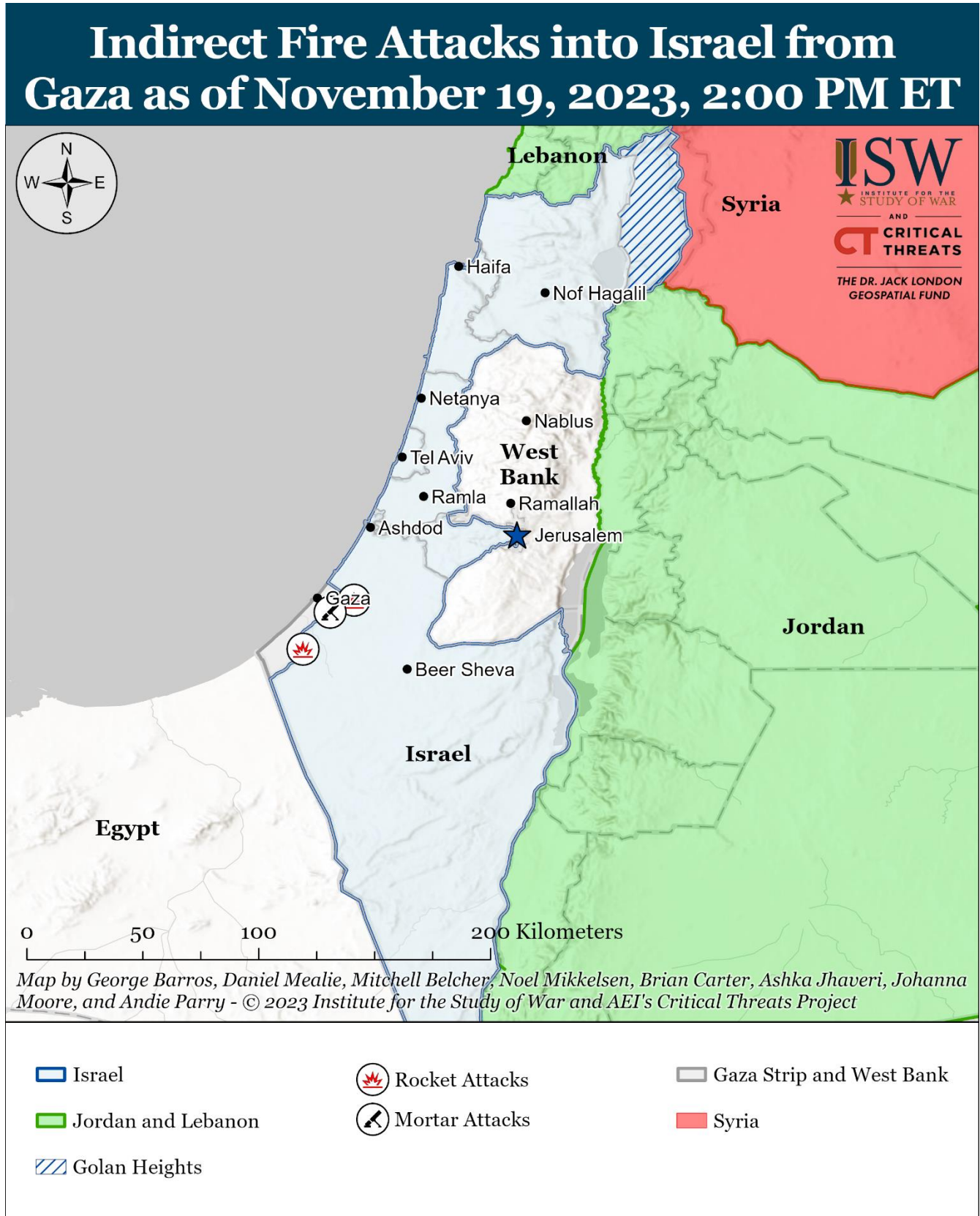
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

**Legend:**
- 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
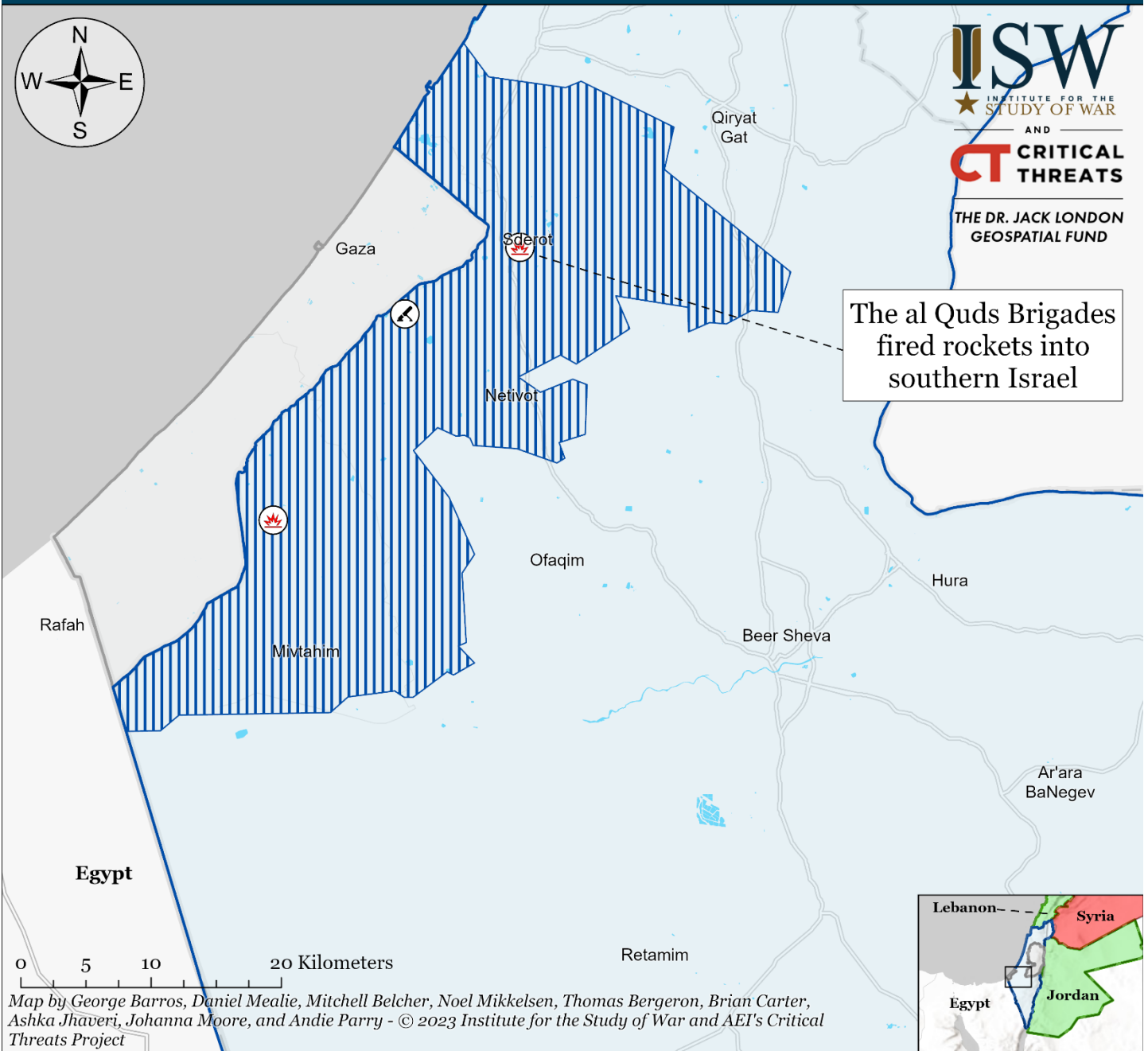- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Salah al Din Road

\* 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

**Palestinian militias continued their usual rate of indirect fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel.** The al Quds Brigades claimed to launch two rocket attacks into southern Israel. The al Qassem Brigades claimed to launch one rocket attack at an Israeli military base in southern Israel.[28]



# Indirect Fire Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

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

Legend:
- Israel
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Golan Heights
- Rocket Attacks
- Mortar Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

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

# Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET



The al Quds Brigades fired rockets into southern Israel

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

**Legend:**
- Israel
- Israeli Closed Military Zone
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Rocket Attacks
- Mortar Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

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

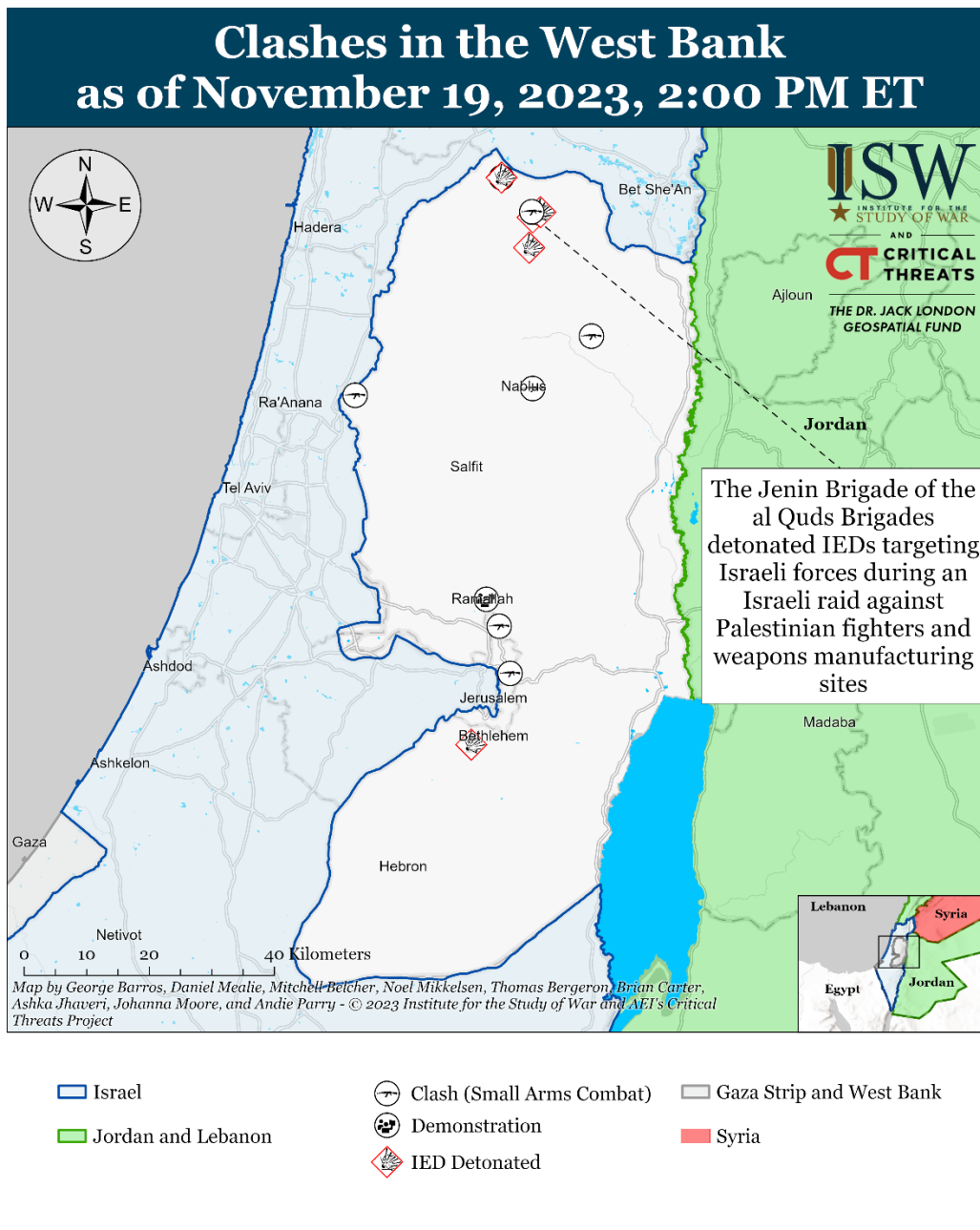Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2023

**West Bank**
**Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:**
- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there

**Palestinian militia fighters engaged Israeli forces in six small-arms clashes across the West Bank on November 19.[29]** Palestinian militia fighters detonated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) four times targeting Israeli forces and an Israeli armored vehicle during an IDF raid in Jenin.[30] The Jenin Brigade of the al Quds Brigades said that its fighters clashed with Israeli forces in multiple areas in Jenin and detonated several IEDs.[31] The same group also claimed that the IEDs damaged several Israeli military vehicles. The Jenin Brigade of the al Qassem Brigades claimed that its members clashed with Israeli forces during the IDF raid.[32] The IDF confiscated over 10 small arms, located several IED warehouses, uncovered buried IEDs, an IED manufacturing site, and detained 20 people in its raids of Jenin and Balata camps.[33] Palestinian militia fighters also detonated one IED targeting Israeli forces in Dheisheh refugee camp.[34]

CTP-ISW separately recorded one demonstration against Israel in Ramallah.[35] The Palestinian Prisoners' and Ex-Prisoners' Affairs Authority stated Israeli forces arrested at least 70 Palestinians from the West Bank on November 19.[36] The IDF said that it arrested 38 "wanted persons" across the West Bank.[37]



Clashes in the West Bank as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

The Jenin Brigade of the al Quds Brigades detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces during an Israeli raid against Palestinian fighters and weapons manufacturing sites

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

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

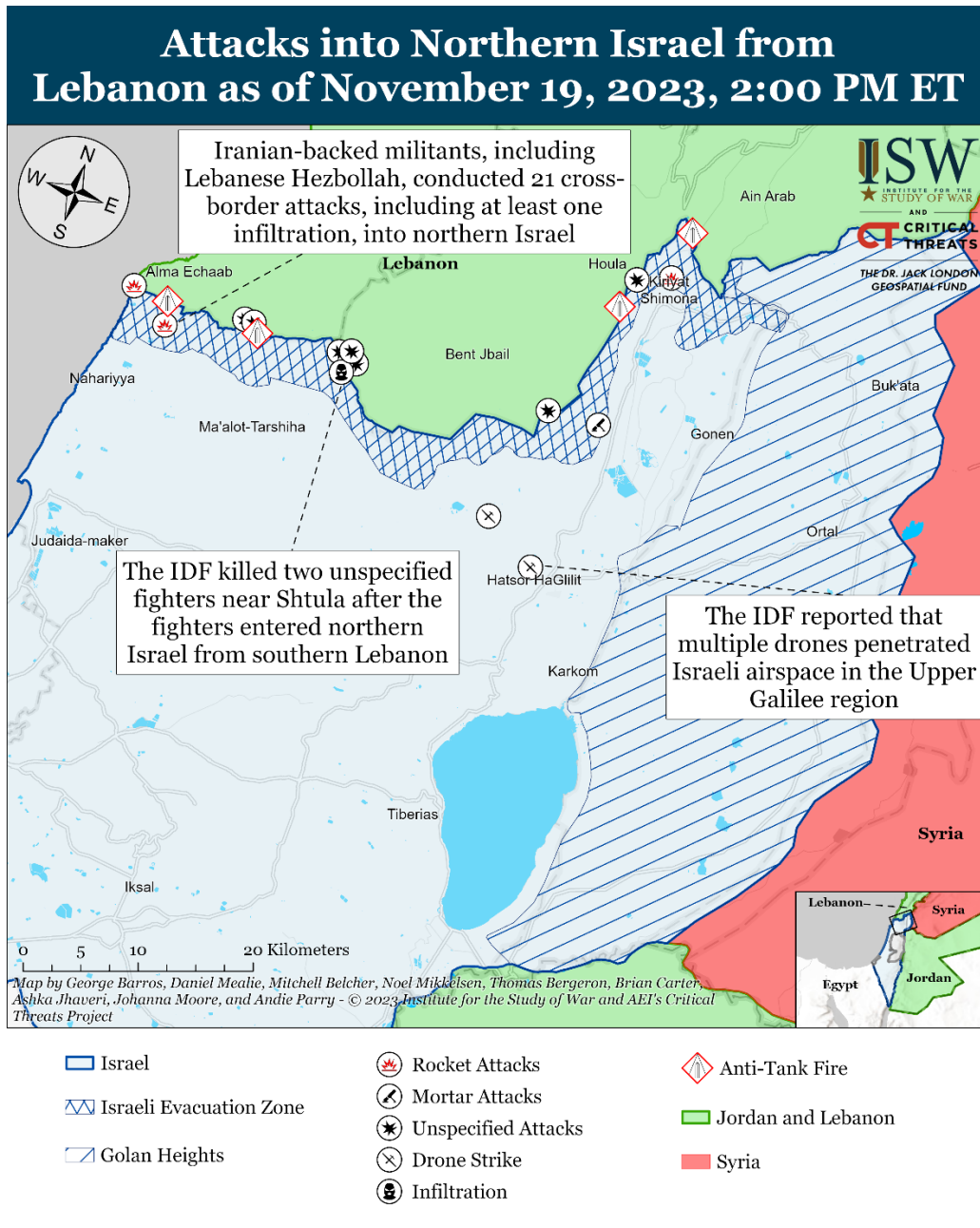Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2023

## 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

**Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah (LH), conducted 21 cross-border attacks, including at least one infiltration, into northern Israel on November 19.[38]** LH claimed 14 attacks using anti-tank munitions, rockets, and mortars targeting Israeli forces and military infrastructure.[39] The IDF killed two unspecified fighters near Shtula on November 19 after the fighters entered northern Israel from southern Lebanon.[40]

The IDF reported that multiple drones penetrated Israeli airspace in the Upper Galilee region on November 19.[41] The IDF intercepted two drones.[42] Israeli media reported that "it was suspected" the drones carried explosives.[43] IDF- and LH-affiliated media reported drone intercepts near Dalton and Hatzor Haglilit on November 19.[44]



**Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET**

Iranian-backed militants, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted 21 cross-border attacks, including at least one infiltration, into northern Israel

The IDF killed two unspecified fighters near Shtula after the fighters entered northern Israel from southern Lebanon

The IDF reported that multiple drones penetrated Israeli airspace in the Upper Galilee region

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

**Legend:**
- Israel
- Israeli Evacuation Zone
- Golan Heights
- Rocket Attacks
- Mortar Attacks
- Unspecified Attacks
- Drone Strike
- Infiltration
- Anti-Tank Fire
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria

*Note: CTP-ISW refined its data layer in northern Israel to account for unspecified attack types. Lebanese Hezbollah regularly claims attacks with "appropriate weapons." This data is insufficient to determine the method of attack. Attack claims citing "appropriate weapons" will be tracked as "unspecified" until CTP-ISW can verify the type of attack.*

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**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 Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed that it launched one-way attack drone targeting US forces at al Harir airbase, Erbil province, Kurdistan Region of Iraq on November 19.[45]** This attack marks the eighth Iranian-backed attack on al Harir airbase that CTP-ISW has recorded since the Israel–Hamas war began.
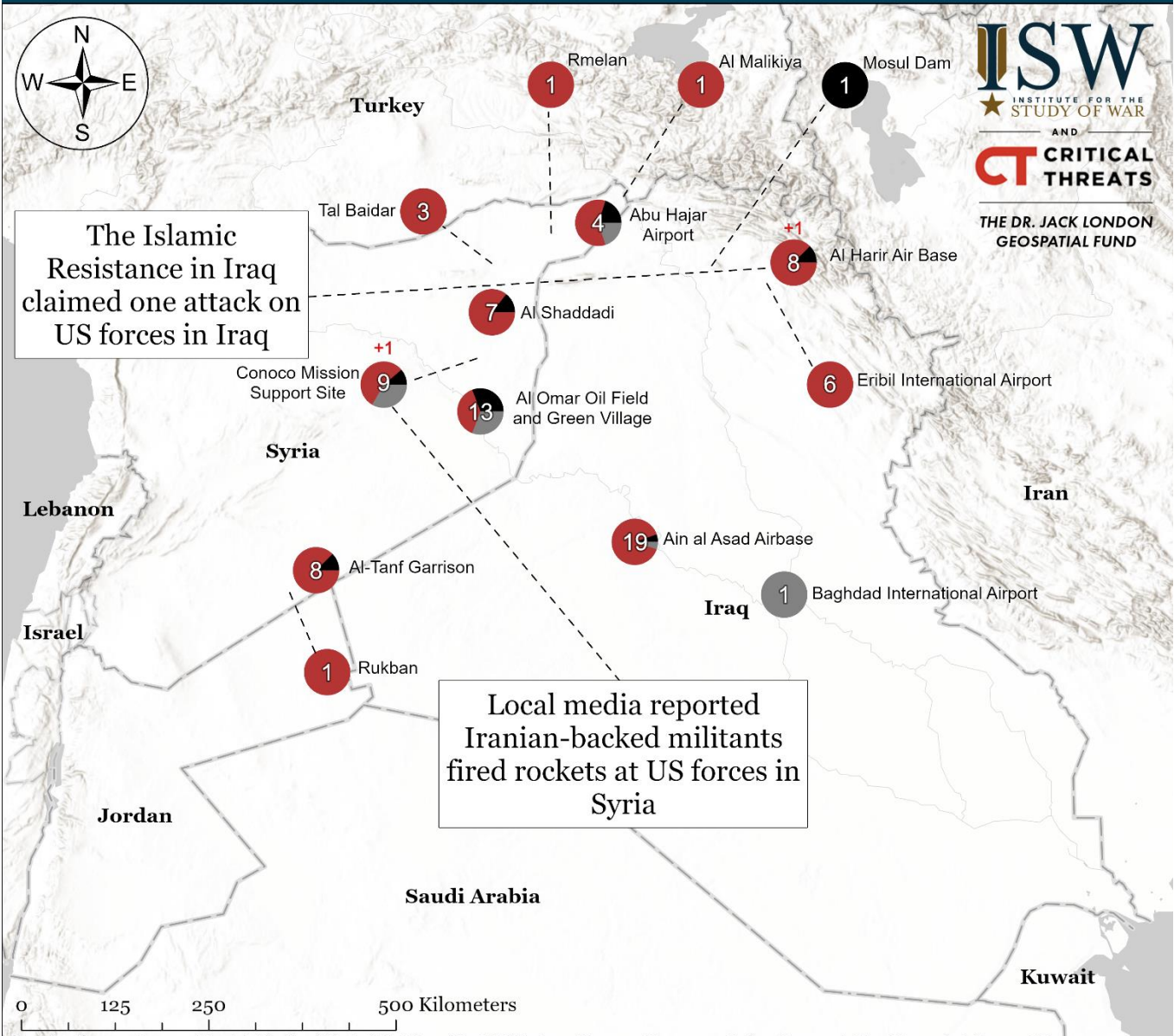
**Houthi fighters hijacked an Israeli-owned, Japanese-operated freighter transiting the Red Sea on November 19.[46]** Houthi fighters fast roped onto the deck of the *Galaxy Leader* from a helicopter.[47] The Houthi fighters took 25 crew members hostage.[48] The IDF spokesperson confirmed that there were no Israelis aboard.[49] Israeli billionaire Rami Ungar owns the ship.[50] Senior Houthi officials have repeatedly threatened to target Israeli shipping in the Red Sea in recent weeks.[51] This attack marks the first instance in which the Houthis have acted on these recent threats. The Israeli government said that the Houthis hijacked the ship under Iranian "guidance."[52] The IRGC Quds Force maintains a minor naval presence off Yemen's coast in the Red Sea that it uses to surveil maritime traffic in support of Houthi attacks on commercial tankers and "to facilitate smuggling of personnel and materials into Yemen."[53]

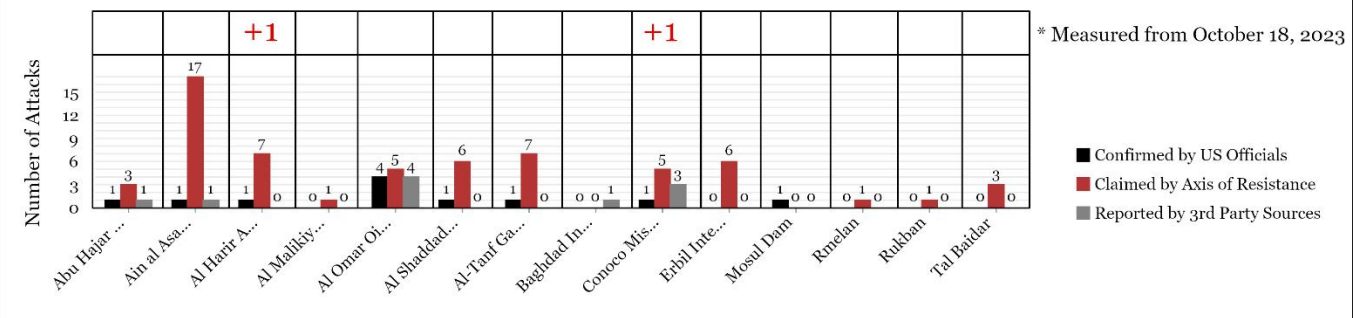# Attacks against US Bases in the Middle East as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed one attack on US forces in Iraq

Local media reported Iranian-backed militants fired rockets at US forces in Syria
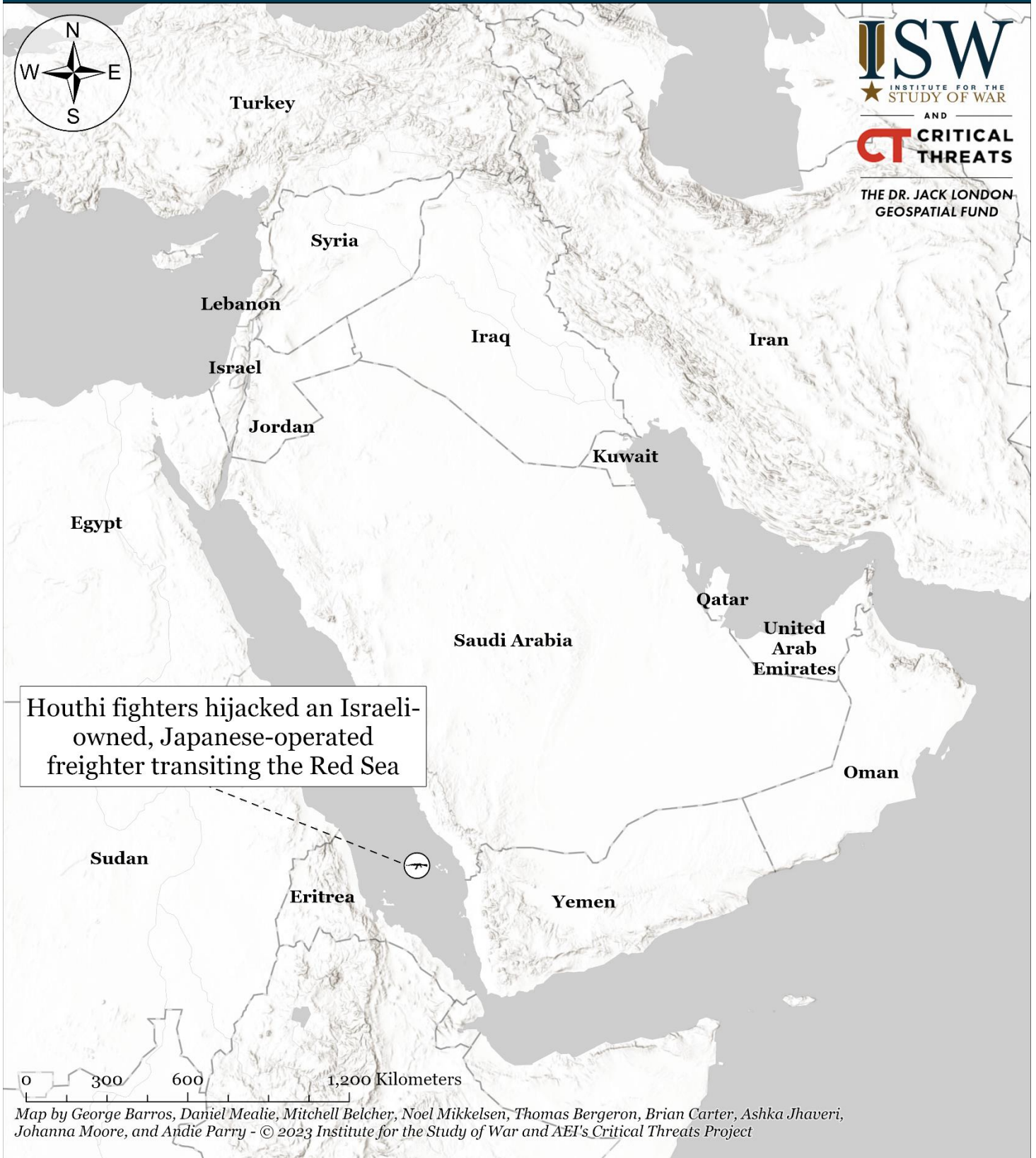
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2023 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project



* Measured from October 18, 2023

- Confirmed by US Officials
- Claimed by Axis of Resistance
- Reported by 3rd Party Sources

Note: The numbers placed inside the pie charts denote the total number of attacks. Locations that include an addition to its total number of attacks have red numbers above the bar graph and pie chart to represent new attacks against that location within the past 24 hours.

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# Iranian-sponsored Attacks in the Middle East as of November 19, 2023, 2:00 PM ET

Turkey

Syria

Lebanon

Israel

Jordan

Iraq

Iran

Kuwait

Egypt

Qatar

United Arab Emirates

Saudi Arabia

Houthi fighters hijacked an Israeli-owned, Japanese-operated freighter transiting the Red Sea

Oman

Sudan

Eritrea

Yemen

0    300    600    1,200 Kilometers

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

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**Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei visited the IRGC Aerospace Force permanent exhibition at the Ashura Aerospace Science and Technology University in Tehran on November 19.[54]** Khamenei condemned Western support for Israel's "racial discrimination" of Palestinians and called on Muslim states to cut ties with Israel.[55] Iran has been attempting to rally Arab and Muslim states against Israel since the Israel–Hamas War began, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[56]

Khamenei also inspected newly unveiled military equipment at the facility, including the Shahed-149 combat drone and the Fattah-2 hypersonic cruise missile. The Shahed-149, labeled "Gaza" in published photos, resembles the American MQ-9 Reaper drone, according to observers.[57] Iranian state media separately emphasized the Fattah-2's purported ability to penetrate and target high-altitude ballistic missile defense systems.[58] Israel used its Arrow-3 ballistic missile defense system to intercept incoming Houthi missiles on November 9.[59] Western media reported on October 24 that the United States will deploy Terminal High Altitude Area Defense systems to Iraq, Syria, and the Gulf Arab states.[60] CTP-ISW cannot verify the veracity of Iranian claims about the Fattah-2. Iran has previously made false or exaggerated claims about its military capabilities.

**Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held a phone call with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov to discuss the Israel–Hamas war on November 19.[61]** The two officials emphasized the need for an immediate ceasefire and the importance of delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Iranian and Russian officials have engaged in political coordination vis-a-vis the Israel–Hamas war since at least October 26, as CTP-ISW previously reported.[62]

[1] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/11/18/us-israel-hamas-reach-tentative-deal-pause-conflict-free-dozens-hostages/
[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/11/18/us-israel-hamas-reach-tentative-deal-pause-conflict-free-dozens-hostages/
[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/11/18/us-israel-hamas-reach-tentative-deal-pause-conflict-free-dozens-hostages/
[4] https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-11-19-23/h_864fde42353448f90a28396670775da2
[5] https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-11-19-23/h_7a37add3f1c2ea1b88b1a7827a14f5a9
[6] https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-11-19-23/h_12894120b04085692695d192f8974060
[7] https://www.idf dot il/153391
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[14] https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726135945530097810; https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1726216373922046372
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[23] https://t.me/qassam1brigades/498
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[26] https://t.me/sarayaps/16710
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[39] https://t.me/C_Military1/39785; https://t.me/C_Military1/39789; https://t.me/C_Military1/39805; https://t.me/C_Military1/39813; https://t.me/C_Military1/39815; https://t.me/C_Military1/39812; https://t.me/C_Military1/39825; https://t.me/C_Military1/39827; https://t.me/C_Military1/39833; https://t.me/C_Military1/39843; https://t.me/C_Military1/39845; https://t.me/C_Military1/39847; https://t.me/C_Military1/39847
[40] https://hidabroot dot org/article/1188559; https://t.me/beitlahiaNews/7544; https://twitter.com/gaza_report/status/1726247288711082128
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[46] https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/rcna125883
[47] https://www.nbcnews.com/news/amp/rcna125883
[48] https://apnews.com/article/israel-houthi-rebels-hijacked-ship-red-sea-dc9b6448690bcf5c70a0baf7c7c34b09
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