

The Consequences of the IDF Strikes into Iran

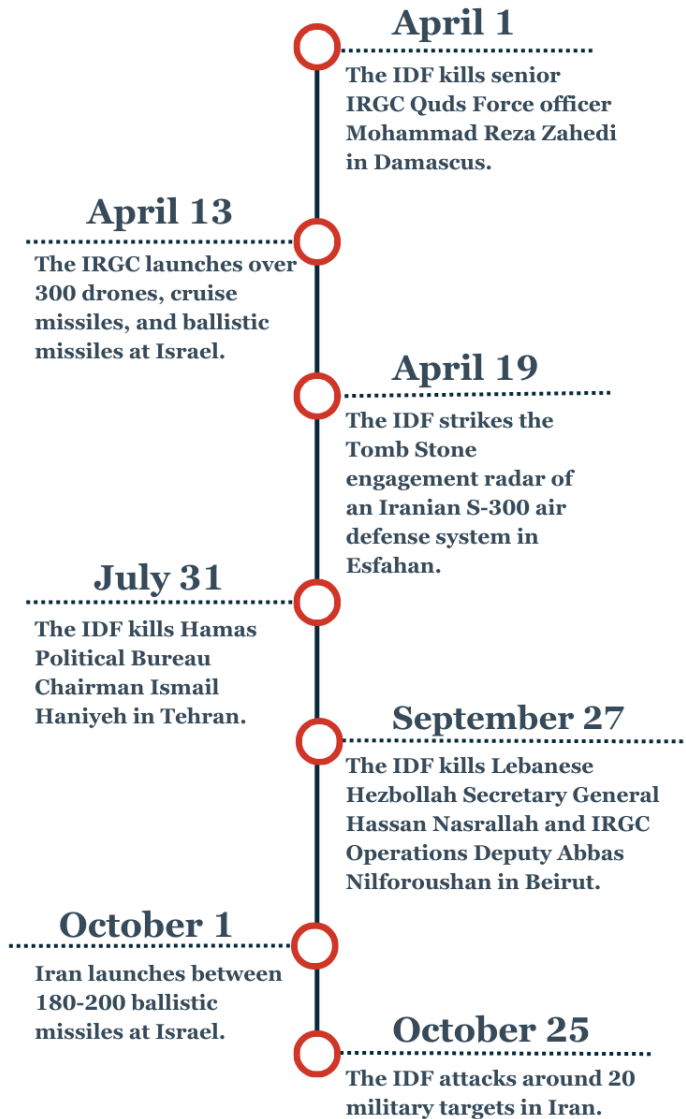
Author: Annika Ganzeveld

The precise nature of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) strikes into Iran on October 25 has obscured the significant damage inflicted on critical Iranian military infrastructure. The IDF conducted precision strikes targeting around 20 locations across Iran, including facilities tied to the Iranian drone and missile programs and air defense network.[1] The strikes initially appeared to cause very little collateral damage and casualties. Even though the strikes caused relatively little visible destruction, they will likely have significant and long-lasting consequences by disrupting Iran's ability to produce certain kinds of ballistic missiles for itself and its partners as well as by severely degrading Iran's ability to defend against future air attacks.

The recent IDF strikes into Iran followed months of Iranian escalation against Israel. Iran conducted its first-ever direct attack on Israel from Iranian territory in April 2024 after the IDF killed one of Iran's senior-most Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commanders in Syria.[2] Iran fired over 300 drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles targeting the IDF Nevatim airbase in the Negev desert and an IDF intelligence center in Mount Hermon.[3] Israel and its allies intercepted the vast majority of the projectiles that Iran fired at Israel.[4] Israel responded to the April 2024 Iranian attack by striking a Tomb Stone target engagement radar that was part of an Iranian S-300 air defense system in central Iran.[5] Eliminating a target engagement radar renders a surface-to-air missile battery unable to track and engage targets.

Iran conducted its second-ever direct attack on Israel in October 2024 after the IDF killed former Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, former Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, and former IRGC Operations Deputy Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan in Summer and early Fall 2024.[6] Iran fired around 180 ballistic missiles at Israel, causing minor damage to Israeli military and civilian infrastructure.[7] The IDF responded to the most recent Iranian attack on Israeli territory by launching three waves of strikes into Iran on October 25.[8]

Iran-Israel Escalation Since April 2024



The recent IDF strikes will likely disrupt Iran’s ability to manufacture some advanced ballistic missiles. The IDF targeted mixing equipment used to produce solid fuel for ballistic missiles in order to limit Iran’s ability to manufacture the kinds of long-range ballistic missiles that Iran fired at Israel in April and October 2024.[9] Iran has at least 12 solid-fuel ballistic missile systems, including the Kheybar Shekan, which the IRGC used in both its April and October 2024 attacks on Israel.[10] Iran cannot domestically produce solid fuel mixers and must purchase new mixers from China.[11] Acquiring new mixers could take at least a year, highlighting how the IDF strikes impeded, at least temporarily, the progress of the Iranian ballistic missile program.[12]



The disruption to Iran's production of ballistic missiles could hamper Iranian ballistic missile shipments to the Axis of Resistance and Russia. Iran has for years provided ballistic missiles to its partners in the Axis of Resistance, including Hezbollah and the Houthis, and recently began supplying Russia with ballistic missiles, including solid-fuel Fateh-360 missiles, in September 2024.[13] The IDF struck Iranian military sites, such as the Khojir complex, that are involved in producing missiles and missile components for Iran’s partners. An unspecified Iranian official stated in July 2024, for example, that Iran planned to ship missiles and missile components produced at the Khojir complex to the Houthis and Russia, respectively.[14]

The recent Israeli strikes will also likely leave Iran more vulnerable to future air attacks.

The IDF strikes into Iran in April and October 2024 rendered Iran's four S-300 air defense systems inoperable.[15] It is unclear how, precisely, the IDF strikes did so, but strikes targeting components of these systems--like the Tombstone radars discussed above--would render the S-300 batteries incapable of completing their mission. Russia supplied Iran with these systems in 2016, and the S-300 is the most advanced air defense system that Iran operates.[16] Russia's need for S-300s for its war with Ukraine could limit Iran's ability to acquire new S-300 components in the near future. Russia has furthermore historically wavered in its commitments to provide Iran with advanced military equipment, which could further extend the timeline on which Iran could resuscitate its S-300s.[17] The IDF strikes also damaged two Iranian Ghadir passive array detection radar sites in southwestern Iran.[18]

Iran has vowed to retaliate against Israel for the recent IDF strikes into Iran. Senior IRGC officials have suggested that Iran may conduct a direct attack on Israel similar to the ones that Iran conducted in April and October 2024. A direct Iranian attack would be noteworthy given that Iran has already sustained significant damage from the last two rounds of Israeli retaliatory strikes into Iran. The decision to conduct such an attack would highlight how more aggressive voices, such as those at the top of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), remain able to persuade the supreme leader to escalate. Recent reports also suggest that Iran may conduct a combined attack with Iranian-backed Iraqi militias from Iraqi territory. Such an attack would risk further expanding the conflict into Iraq, which could draw in US forces there. Regardless of how Iran ultimately responds, the fact that Iranian officials are vowing a response indicates that the current escalation between Iran and Israel is not over.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/27/israel-strikes-iran-air-defence-systems-energy-sites> ;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/29/iran-israel-strikes-missiles-air-defense/> ;

<https://www.aei.org/articles/israeli-retaliatory-strikes-on-iran/> ;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/26/israel-attacks-iran-retaliation-analysis/> ;

<https://apnews.com/article/iran-israel-attack-shahroud-guard-base-satellite-photos-b9cdb18b252d6dd9014dc4dcb3dd4b2f>

[2] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/04/17/iran-israel-attack-drones-missiles/> ;

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/13/middleeast/iran-drones-attack-israel-intl-latam/index.html>

[3] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/iran-says-nevatim-mount-hermon-bases-were-targets-of-attack/ ;

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/04/17/iran-israel-attack-drones-missiles/>

[4] <https://apnews.com/article/strait-of-hormuz-vessel-33fcffde2d867380e98c89403776a8ac>

[5] <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/assessment-of-israeli-strike-on-iran-near-esfahan> ;

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2024/05/01/israels-iran-strike-bore-some-similarities-to-tehrans-2019-saudi-arabia-attack/>

[6] <https://apnews.com/article/iran-hamas-israel-30968a7acb31cd8b259de9650014b779> ;
<https://apnews.com/article/iran-revolutionary-guard-general-dead-hezbollah-israel-airstrike-46d2133e594b9c4ce448a6b683802995> ;
<https://www.axios.com/2024/10/01/iran-missile-attack-israel>

[7] <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/01/iran-missile-attack-israel> ;
<https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-assesses-damage-from-irans-missile-barrage-27c26e5e>

[8] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/26/idf-strikes-military-sites-in-iran-what-we-know-so-far>

[9] <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/26/israel-strike-iran-missile-production> ;
<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/satellite-photos-show-israel-hit-iran-missile-fuel-mixing-facilities-researchers-2024-10-26/>

[10] <https://www.iiss.org/research-paper//2021/04/iran-missiles-uavs-proliferation> ;
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/04/17/iran-israel-attack-drones-missiles/>

[11] <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/26/israel-strike-iran-missile-production>

[12] <https://www.axios.com/2024/10/26/israel-strike-iran-missile-production>

[13]
https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military_Power_Publications/Iran_Houthi_Final2.pdf ;

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidaxe/2024/09/10/russia-just-got-200-ballistic-missiles-from-iran-its-an-escalation-of-the-war-in-ukraine-and-it-might-backfire-on-russia/>

[14] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/satellite-photos-show-iran-expanding-missile-production-sources-say-2024-07-08/>

[15] <https://www.foxnews.com/world/israels-strike-iran-took-missile-defense-systems-islamic-republic-is-essentially-naked>

[16] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/why-you-cant-be-an-iran-hawk-and-a-russia-dove>

[17] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/why-you-cant-be-an-iran-hawk-and-a-russia-dove>

[18] https://x.com/dex_eve/status/1851000042708222012 ;
<https://x.com/BenTzionMacales/status/1851006118136361143>