



Operation Iron Swords The fighting on the Israel-Lebanon border

November 24, 2023

Overview¹

► On October 8, 2023, a day after Israel's Operation Iron Swords against Hamas in the Gaza Strip began, Hezbollah opened another front against Israel from Lebanon. The Palestinian terrorist organizations in Lebanon and pro-Iranian militias operating from the Syrian-Israeli border also participate in the fighting.

► In recent weeks, Hezbollah has escalated its attacks. **Since the beginning of the fighting, Israel has been subjected to 324 attacks from Lebanon, 309 carried out by Hezbollah and 15 by other terrorist organizations.** The attacks mainly include the firing of anti-tank missiles, rockets and mortar shells. Recently, Hezbollah began using other weapons, such as heavy Barkan rockets and armed UAVs. Most of cities, towns and villages and IDF posts attacked are along the border or within a few kilometers of it. **Since the beginning of the fighting, 86 Hezbollah terrorist operatives and 14 operatives from other terrorist organizations have been killed. Nine Israelis have been killed, six soldiers and three civilians.**

► Hezbollah has rarely mentioned the concept of "the unity of the arenas," which Nasrallah often referred to in speeches during the months leading up to the war. In ITIC assessment, the basic premise of the concept was that Israel would stand alone in an all-out war against many fronts manipulated by Iran, a vision that has been partially realized. Nasrallah has emphasized that it is the Palestinians' war, and Hezbollah's activity against Israel is part of the "support front" of Iran and its various affiliates for Hamas. For now, Hezbollah is helping Hamas with attacks against Israel that are forcing Israel to evacuate its population, stretch the IDF's capabilities and allocate many resources to the northern border.

► During the fighting Hezbollah is making an effort to learn how the IDF operates, gauge its capabilities and make adjustments for its current and future activities. At this stage,

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

Hezbollah is operating "below the threshold of war" and has not significantly expanded the boundaries of the conflict and the variety of its weapons.

►In ITIC assessment, Hezbollah will continue its activities at the current level with local escalations according to events. However, it is possible that as the IDF's fighting against Hamas progresses and intensifies, and Hezbollah senses a danger to Hamas' survival, it may consider significantly expanding the fighting against Israel, but only in coordination with Lebanese internal constraints and Iran's position.

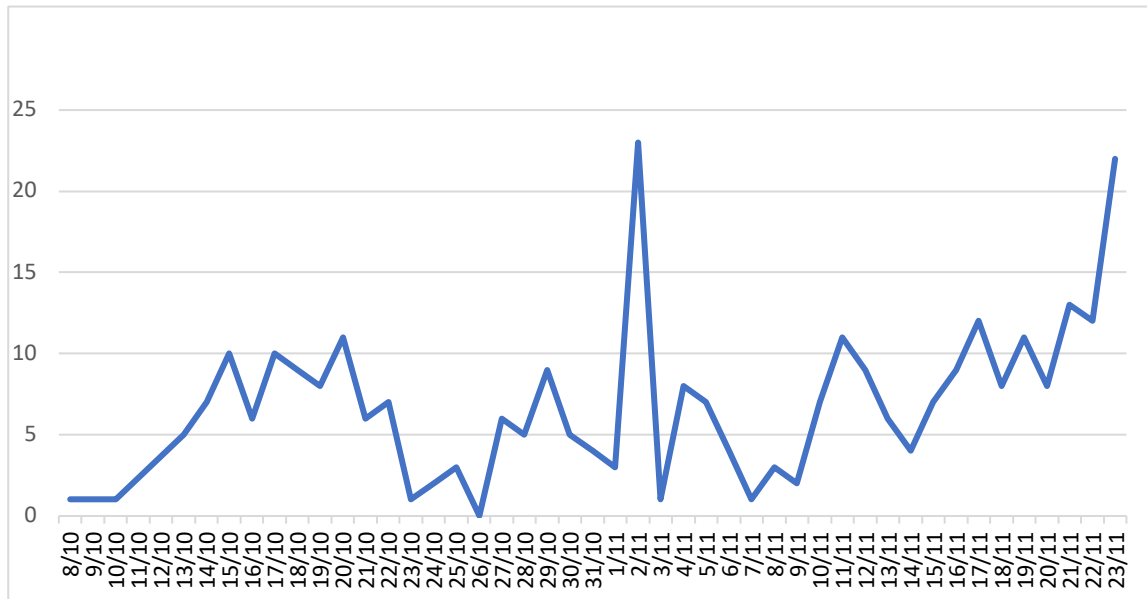
Hezbollah Activity²

►On October 8, 2023, a day after the start of Operation Iron Swords, Hezbollah opened another battle front along the Israel-Lebanon border. During the first weeks of the maneuver in the Gaza Strip, for the most part Hezbollah's terrorist operatives carried out sniper fire and artillery fire, launched mortar shells, standard Grad rockets and various types of guided anti-tank missiles. The organization's activity focused on IDF posts to damage its intelligence information collection and by doing so, in Hezbollah's understanding, blind the IDF to what was happening on the battlefield. After about three weeks of fighting Hezbollah escalated its activities, and in addition to attacking IDF positions, it also began attacking civilian targets and expanding the range of its activity by using other weapons such as heavy Burkan rockets and armed UAVs. Even so, its attacks did not exceed a range of a few kilometers beyond the border and it operates below the "threshold of war."

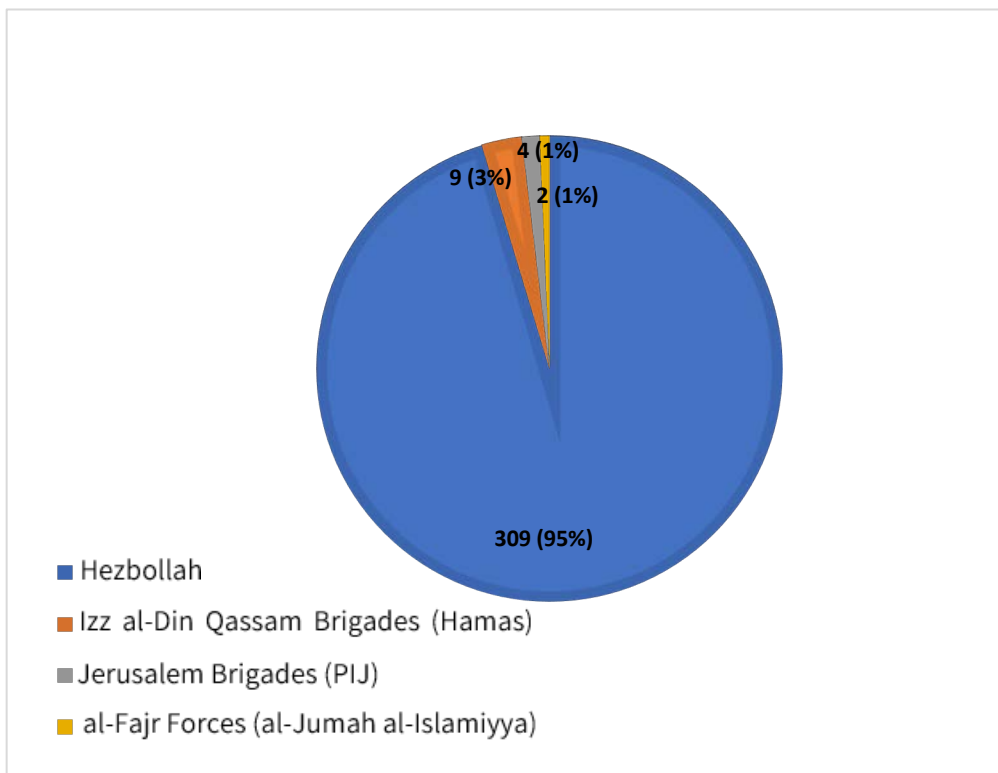
The scope of the attacks against Israel

►So far, **Hezbollah has carried out 309 attacks, or 95% of all attacks from the territory of Lebanon. Hamas (Izz Al Din al-Qassam Brigades) carried out nine attacks, or 3%. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) carried out four attacks (1%) and the al-Fajr Forces of al-Jumah al-Islamiyya, a Salafi-Jihadist organization operating in Lebanon, carried out two attacks, (1%).** PIJ terrorist operatives made two attempts to infiltrate Israeli territory.

² The data about Hezbollah's activities and the number of casualties are mostly based on the organization's own announcements, mainly Hezbollah's combat media information, therefore the source will not appear next to each item. Regarding data and information based on other sources, the name of the source will be indicated as usual in ITIC publications.



The daily distribution of attacks carried out by Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations along the Israel-Lebanon border (as of November 23, 2023)

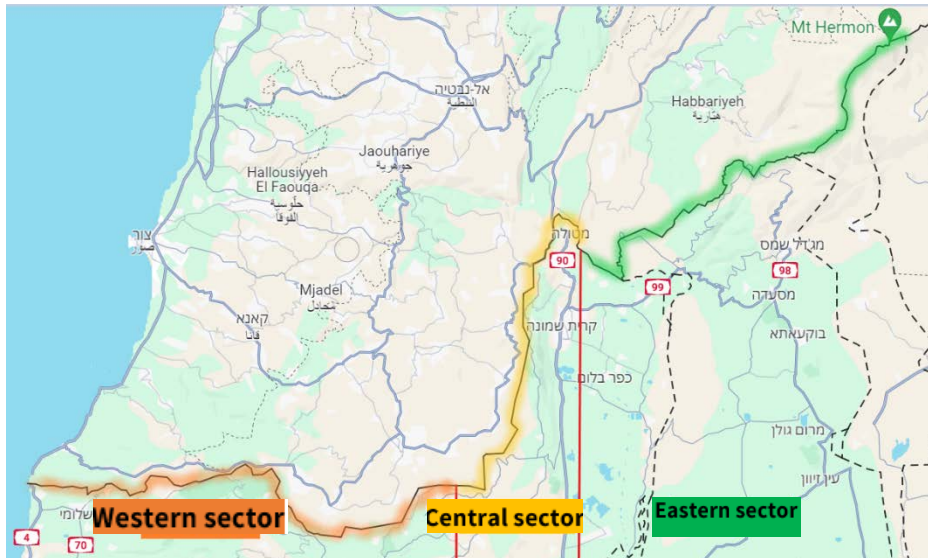


Hezbollah's activity in relation to other terrorist organizations operating on the Israel-Lebanon border (as of November 23, 2023)

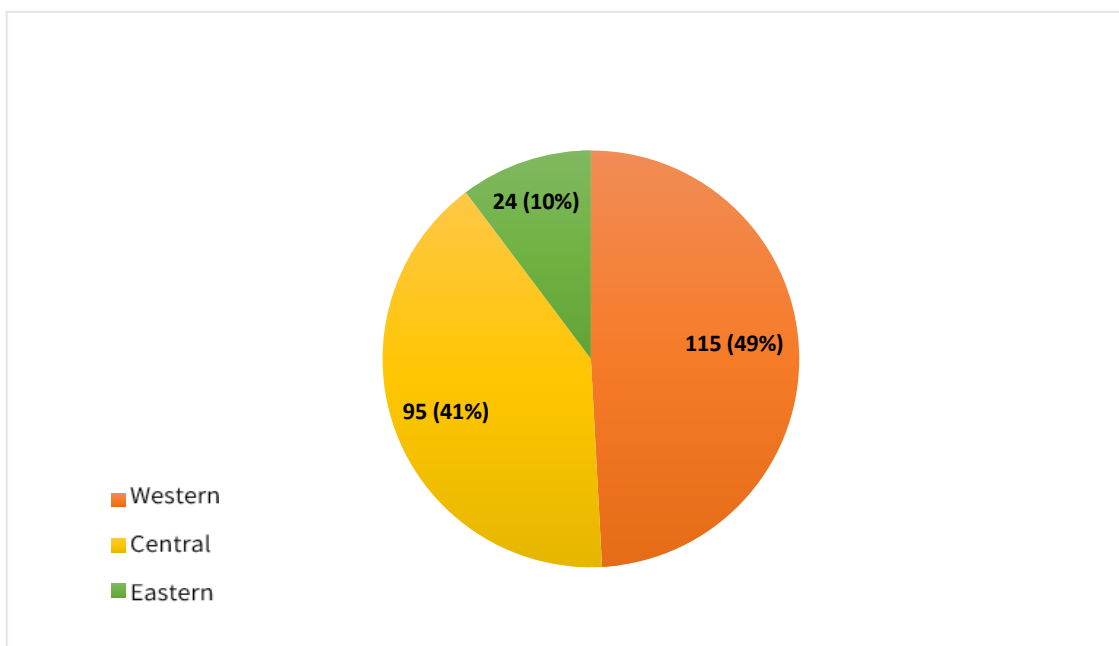
Active sectors

►The Israel-Lebanon border is usually divided into three sectors (see map): the western sector, from the seashore to the Avivim area (orange), the central sector (the Ramim ridge) (yellow), from the Avivim area to Metulla; and the eastern sector (green), from the Metulla

area to Mount Dov. According to the data, 115 attacks were carried out from the western sector, or 49% of all attacks, 95 from the central sector, or 41%, and 24 from the eastern sector, or 10%.



The distribution of the sectors along the Israel-Lebanon border
(map based on Google Maps)



Activity of Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations activity on the Israel-Lebanon border,
divided into areas of activity (as of November 23, 2023)

Weapons

► Hezbollah attacks Israel with a variety of weapons, most prominently rockets, mortar shells and guided anti-tank missiles. Other weapons include sniper rifles, armed anti-aircraft

missiles (as of November 2, 2023), heavy Barkan rockets with warheads weighing between 300-500 kilograms (660 to 1,100 pounds) (as of November 4, 2023) and surface-to-air missiles (as of October 29, 2023). Another weapon which Hezbollah apparently uses, is an anti-tank missile launcher whose barrels launch two projectiles less than a second apart. It was used for the first time on November 16, 2023, to attack a Merkava tank near the IDF Biranit camp.

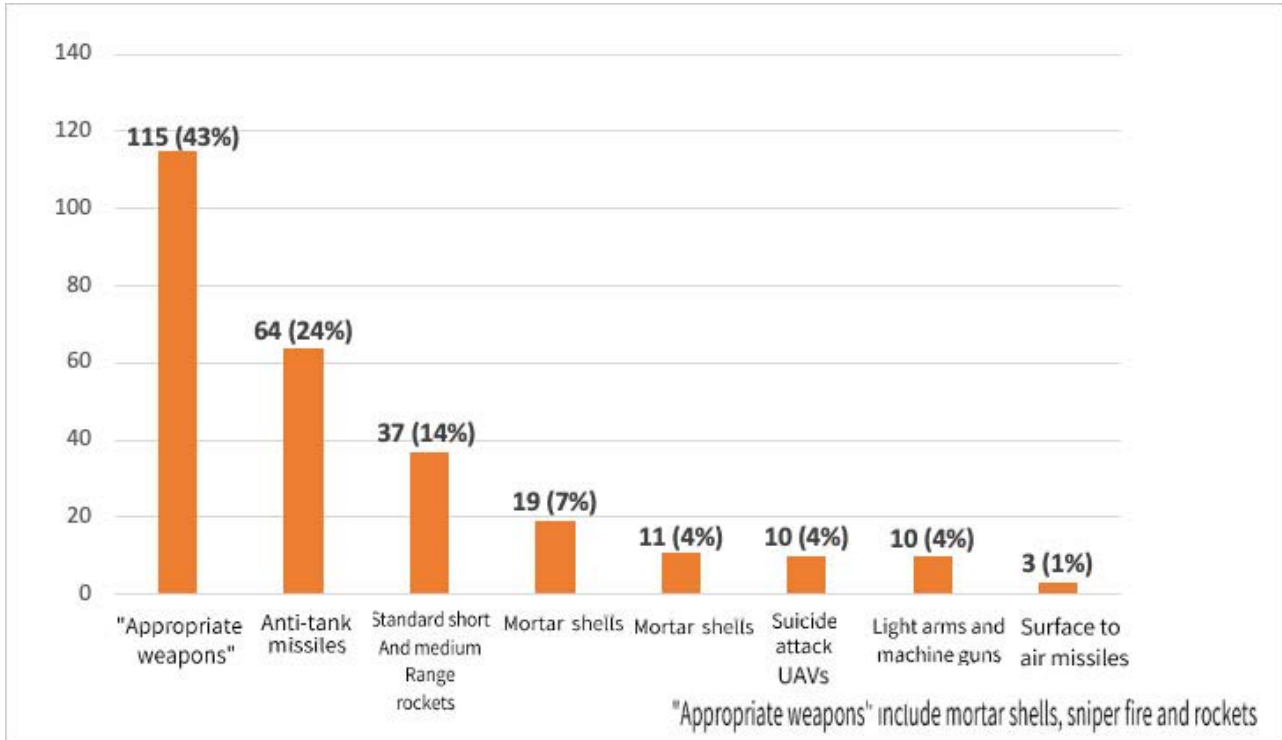
Targets

► During the first weeks of fighting, the targets were mainly the IDF posts deployed along the border. One of Hezbollah's objectives was apparently to deprive the IDF of its intelligence collecting capabilities, especially its observation posts, cameras and antennas. Later, the range of attacks into Israeli territory increased, civilian targets were attacked and Hamas and the PIJ participated. In most cases, the range of activity was a few kilometers from the border, but there were several attacks in areas deeper into Israeli territory, such as Haifa and the Safed area.

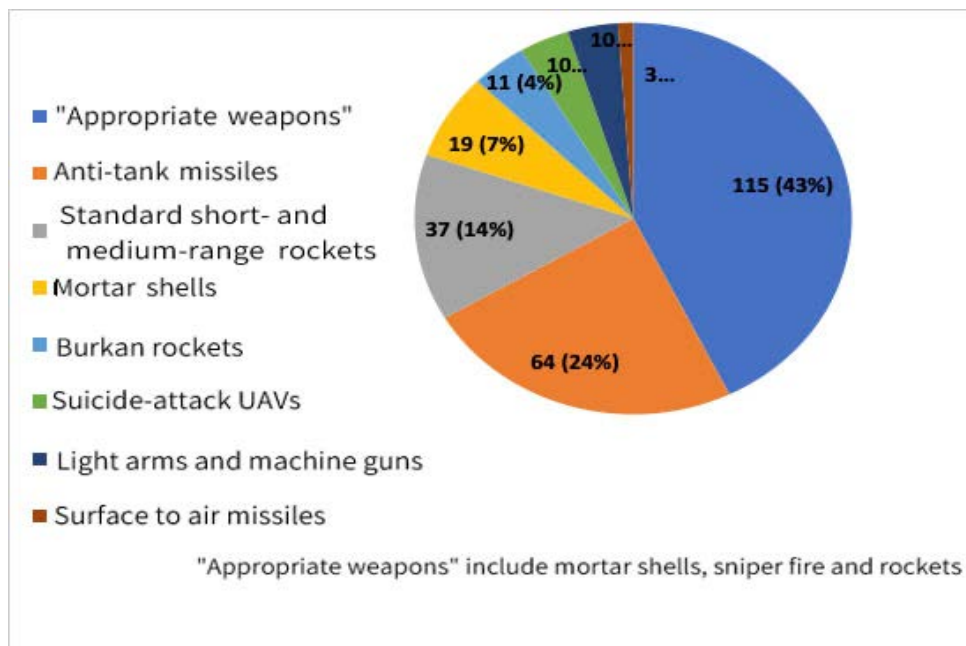
► For example:

- ◆ On November 5, 2023, standard military-quality Grad (Katyusha) rockets were launched at Kiryat Shemonah, damaging houses of residents who had evacuated, vehicles and businesses.
- ◆ On November 12, 2023, Hamas' military-terrorist wing launched rockets from Lebanese territory at Haifa, apparently in coordination with Hezbollah, most likely with the objective of expanding the scope of the fighting, and possibly to hint to Israel that it aspired to damage strategic facilities, such as Haifa Port and the gas rigs.
- ◆ On November 17, 2023, Nabil Qaouq, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general, claimed the UAVs of the "resistance" [the terrorist organizations] had reached Haifa and beyond (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 17, 2023). The alleged attack was not identified by Israel and Hezbollah did not report it in its claims of responsibility for terrorist attacks in Israeli territory.
- ◆ On the morning of November 23, 2023, **Hezbollah launched its heaviest barrage of rockets into Israeli territory since the beginning of the war, firing 48 rockets at the Ein Zeitim base (Safed area).** The IDF spokesperson reported that only 35 launches had entered Israeli territory (the rest fell inside Lebanon). The reason for the massive attack might have been the killing of six terrorist operatives from the Radwan Force, Hezbollah's elite unit, in an Israeli airstrike on November 22, 2023, while they

were in Beit Yahoun. Among the dead were the son of Muhammad Ra'ed, the chairman of the Hezbollah faction in the parliament, and Khalil Jawad Shahimi, a senior Radwan Force commander.



The types of weapons used in attacks from Lebanon (as of November 23, 2023)



Distribution of the types of weapons used by Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations in attacks against Israel (as of November 23, 2023)

Anti-Tank Fire



Photos from a video released by Hezbollah documenting the firing of an anti-tank missile at the Malkiya post (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 18, 2023)



Anti-tank fire at the Tsiporen post on October 19, 2023 (Telegram channel of Hezbollah's combat information wing, October 20, 2023)



Anti-tank fire at the Tsiporen post (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 29, 2023)

Rocket and Mortar Shell Fire



Firing mortar shells at the Gladiola post (Har Dov) on October 22, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 22, 2023)



Firing mortar shells at the Dvoranit post on November 19, 2023 at 12:45 p.m. (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 21, 2023)



Firing 107 mm rockets at the Gladiola post (Har Dov) on October 22, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 22, 2023)

Hezbollah's Suicide Attack UAVs

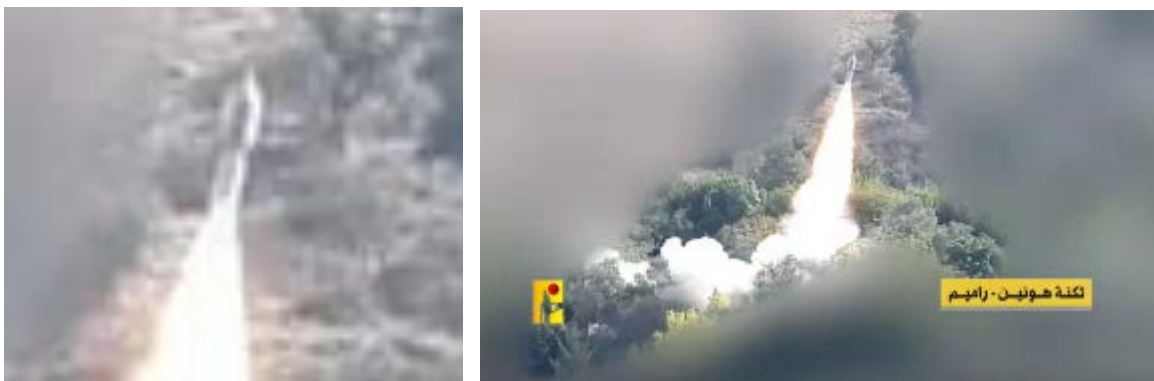


Three Hezbollah suicide attack UAVs which were launched towards the Yiftach area and Ramot Naftali (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 10, 2023)

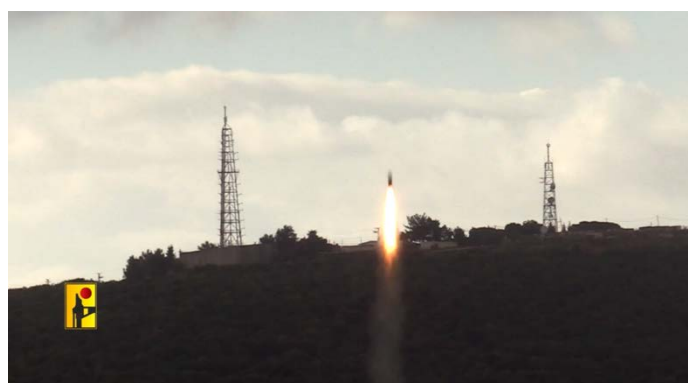


One of three suicide attack UAVs launched at an IDF assembly area in western Kiryat Shemonah on November 20, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 20, 2023)

Barkan Rockets



The launch of a Barkan rocket with a warhead weighing 300-500 kilograms (660 to 1,100 pounds) to attack Ramim camp on November 11, 2023, at 9:45 a.m. (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 11, 2023)



Hezbollah Barkan rocket launch attack the IDF Biranit camp on November 20, 2023, at 8 or 8:20 a.m. (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 20, 2023)

Hezbollah announces its "achievements" in combat against Israel

►Hezbollah's combat information wing published an infographic summarizing the organization's activities between the beginning of Operation Iron Swords (October 8) and November 22, 2023. According to the infographic, the organization's operatives carried out 275 attacks against 40 IDF posts as well as firing artillery at five cities, towns and villages ("settlements"), in which they claimed that more than 354 people had been killed and wounded (soldiers, officers and civilians). According to the infographic, they destroyed armored personnel carriers (21), positions (15), cameras (170), radars (47), UAVs (3), communication systems (77), intelligence systems (35) and jamming [electronic warfare] systems (21) (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 23, 2023).



An infographic summarizing Hezbollah's activities between October 8, 2023, and November 22, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, November 23, 2023)³

The confrontation with the IDF

►The Lebanon 24 news website reported that according to "knowledgeable sources," Hezbollah was able to quickly learn how to deal with the IDF and thereby reduce the number of casualties among its operatives by adopting new military tactics. According to the report, "that is in addition to a change in the methods of Israel's military operations." The sources also claimed that Hezbollah changed its methods of operation daily (Lebanon 24, November 18, 2023). No details were given about the changes made on the ground. However, Hezbollah is still suffering losses on the ground.

►There were two notable days of escalation: on November 2, 2023, Hezbollah carried out a record number of 23 attacks. On November 23, its heaviest rocket barrages were launched into Israeli territory. The November 2, escalation may have been the result of the deeper penetration of Operation Iron Swords into the Gaza Strip, and the escalation on November 23, to the large number of Hezbollah casualties (at least five dead) on November 22.

³ <https://t.me/mmirleb/415>

The Reasons behind Hezbollah's Escalation

► On November 11, 2023, in his most recent speech, Hassan Nasrallah stated that the organization had recently escalated its activity by using additional weapons in accordance with the "equation" of his previous speech (November 3, 2023), where he said an Israeli escalation in the Gaza Strip or Lebanon would lead to a Hezbollah escalation.⁴ In ITIC assessment, a number of reasons were behind the escalation:

► **To give Hamas more effective aid to help offset the IDF's successes:** Following the start of the IDF's integrated ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip at the end of October 2023, Hezbollah realized Hamas was being hit hard in the Gaza Strip and needed massive help from its supporters, one of which was Hezbollah. In his most recent speech, Nasrallah claimed the campaign was becoming more difficult for Israel because of changes in global public opinion, international political pressure and the strength of the "resistance", therefore Hezbollah was escalating its attacks to continue the pressure on Israel. The fear of a Hamas collapse in the Gaza Strip might cause Hezbollah to escalate its attacks on Israel along the border but still keep them below the threshold of war.

► **Frustration at the lack of its own achievements:** Nasrallah previously announced two "equations" for acting against Israel: one, as Israel escalated the fighting in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, Hezbollah would escalate its fighting, and two, for every death in Lebanon, from the ranks of the organization or a civilian, Hezbollah would exact a similar "price" from Israel. In practice, the number of Hezbollah deaths is far higher than the number of Israeli deaths. In ITIC assessment, that motivated Nasrallah to escalate the fighting against the IDF to increase the number of Israel casualties. At the same time, to counter the claim of an "imbalance in the equation," Nasrallah continues to claim that the number of casualties in Israel is higher than what Israel publishes, which [allegedly] hides the data from its public.

► "Knowledgeable sources" allegedly told the Lebanese daily al-Joumhouria that "Hezbollah's actions against Israel will continue at an increasing pace as long as its aggression against the Gaza Strip continues." The sources stated Hezbollah had accelerated its operations "with the understanding that any delay will lead Israel to intensify its aggression." The sources added that "it seems recently that Israel violated the rules of engagement and tried to impose new rules by attacking deep in Lebanon at a distance of

⁴ For further information, see the November 14, 2023, ITIC report, "[Nasrallah announces escalation and calls for pressure on Israel](#)"

about 40 kilometers [about 25 miles] from the border." According to the sources, "the 'resistance' sent a message understood by the enemy about the equation: an attack on a Lebanese civilian would result in an attack on an Israeli civilian, an attack on a house in Lebanon would result in an attack on a house in Israel, an attack on a military target in Lebanon would result in an attack on a military target in Israel, and an attack deep in Lebanon result in a response deep inside Israel" (al-Joumhouria, November 16, 2023). Additional details about Hezbollah's escalation strategy were revealed by Nabil Qaouq, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, who noted on November 17, 2023, that "the resistance imposed a real, unprecedented and continuous war of attrition [on Israel] and developed its operations in terms of quantity, quality and depth [of penetration] (al-Quds al-Arabi, November 17, 2023).

► Since the beginning of the war, Nasrallah and other senior Hezbollah terrorists have rarely mentioned the concept of "the unity of the arenas," which Nasrallah mentioned in his speeches in the months leading up to the war, as did the heads of other organizations in the "axis of resistance."⁵ In ITIC assessment, according to the concept, Israel would stand alone in an all-out war against many arenas manipulated by Iran, starting with the Houthis in Yemen and ending with Hezbollah in Lebanon and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq. In practice, so far, the vision has been partially realized, and therefore for now Hezbollah prefers to act against Israel according to a principle of calibrated escalation, waging a war of attrition on the brink of war, with the aim of stretching the IDF's capabilities and causing it to divert resources to the northern border at the expense of the Gaza Strip.

► If, in Hezbollah's assessment, Hamas is facing collapse and the destruction of the movement's capabilities in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah may escalate the fighting against Israel, and will also consider a broader campaign, considering its range of its interests in Lebanon and Iran's position.

⁵ Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.