



-All Sectors Bulletin- Israel/Hamas War - Impact to Virginia

Intelligence Cut-off Date - October 12th 2023 | 13:00hrs



Hamas Terror Attack Overview

On October 7, hundreds of Hamas militia fighters, accompanied by allied forces from Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), conducted a combined arms land, sea, and air attack from Gaza into Israel. The groups simultaneously launched several thousand rockets and short-range missiles firing on cities in southern Israel. The attackers named their operation “Al Aqsa Storm,” after the Al Aqsa

Mosque in Jerusalem. The attack succeeded initially in occupying several Israeli towns, taking hundreds of Israeli residents as well as Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) personnel as hostages. The attack killed several hundred Israelis, with that number expected to rise. The hostages will present a complicated situation for the IDF as it puts together an operational response. Hamas militants overran Israeli military outposts, seized weapons and equipment, and established logistical lines from within Israeli territory. The Biden Administration and Israel have stated publicly that they do not have evidence that the Iranian government had a planning role, but are looking at the question. Iranian officials however, have praised the assault publicly.

Additional heinous terrorist acts are being reported including the killing, beheading, and burning of civilians including children. Despite released and leaked videos showing such atrocities, Hamas has denied these claims.

Current estimates are that 1,200 lives, including at least 25 Americans have been lost in the attack with and additional 2,800 people wounded.



Israeli Response

Israel has formally declared war on Hamas, setting the stage for major military operations. Since the attacks, Israeli jets have been pounding Gaza – the densely-inhabited coastal strip that Hamas controls – with hundreds of airstrikes. The IDF has also bolstered troops and tanks along the border as speculation of a possible Israeli ground incursion into Gaza grows. An IDF spokesperson said Wednesday that it has massed 300,000 reservists near the border. Palestinian authorities report more than 1,100+ people have been killed thus far. According to Netanyahu, Israel’s “first phase” of retaliation has ended with the “destruction of the majority of the enemy forces that penetrated our territory.” It will be followed by an “offensive formation,”

Along with increased airstrikes on Gaza, Israel has ordered a “complete siege” on the enclave, including halting supplies of electricity, food, water and fuel. On Wednesday, Gaza’s only power station stopped working after running out of fuel.

US Response

In response to Hamas’ surprise attack on Israel a carrier strike group, which comes equipped with advanced intelligence and communication capabilities, was ordered into eastern Mediterranean. A secondary carrier is reportedly to soon follow. These assets can provide valuable analytic and collection support to Israel. Deploying a carrier strike group the Middle East sends a clear strategic signal that the United States is fully supporting Israel, a commitment reiterated by U.S. President Joe Biden in his recent speech. In this address, President Biden denounced Hamas as a terrorist organization and announced the provision of extra military assistance to replenish Israel's Iron Dome rocket interceptor system. He also emphasized the intention to request "urgent action" from the U.S. Congress to fund the national security interests of its partners.

Hezbollah Threatening

The risks of escalation in the conflict are severe, with Israel concerned that Lebanese Hezbollah could join the fray. In recent days, Hezbollah militants launched numerous rockets at Israeli positions close to the Golan Heights, a region that Israel aims to prevent from becoming a battleground. The Golan Heights continues to be a source of significant tension, and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) reported yesterday that they were looking into reports of an aerial breach in the area.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said, "Let me be clear, we did not move the carrier for Hamas. We moved the carrier to send a clear message of deterrence to other states or non state actors that might seek to widen this war." U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III added that the aircraft carrier is intended to "strengthen [the] Department of Defense['s] posture in the region to bolster regional deterrence efforts." The message is aimed at Iran and Hezbollah to remain on the sidelines of this conflict or risk being attacked.

Day of General Mobilization for the "Al-Aqsa Flood" Operations

On October 10, 2023, Hamas issued a statement^[1] designating the upcoming Friday, October 13, 2023, as a day of general mobilization for the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operations. In the statement, it urged Palestinians in the West Bank and within Israel to participate in large-scale rallies and confront Israeli soldiers at every opportunity. Additionally, the statement called upon Arabs, Muslims, and Palestinians in refugee camps worldwide to converge in massive gatherings near the borders of Palestine, showcasing their unwavering solidarity with Palestine, Jerusalem, and Al-Aqsa. Those living farther away from Jerusalem were urged to assemble at the nearest point leading to the city.

A full transcript of the statement can be read [here](#).

Social Media Executions Threat

A Hamas spokesperson has warned that the organization will post murders of civilians it has captured if Israel targets people in Gaza without warning. Many Israeli and American schools are urging parents to restrict or remove children's social media access to prevent them from inadvertently viewing such atrocities. While some examples exist of tech companies quickly removing murderous content, social media companies have had limited success in preventing such content from being initially uploaded.

VFC Shield will be release more information and guidance in the coming days in regards to this issue. In the meantime, be very cognizant of you and your children's social media usage and content. Consider limiting or removing access.

IMPACT TO VIRGINIA AND AMERICA AT LARGE

- **There have been several large gatherings throughout the nation with various groups. To date, the protests and demonstrations have been peaceful with no outbreak of violence.**
- **Anti-Semitism is a prevalent element in various violent extremist ideologies and often acts as a key motivator behind attacks carried out by a range of violent extremists. These extremists pose a continuous threat to Jewish communities and institutions in the United States and internationally. Foreign terrorist organizations have taken advantage of**

past conflicts between Israel and HAMAS, utilizing media and online channels to urge their supporters in the United States to engage in acts of violence. During periods of heightened tensions, certain violent extremists have exploited the situation to encourage violence against religious minority groups, affecting both Jewish and Muslim Americans.

- **The Virginia Fusion Center has received no threats to the Commonwealth in relation to this escalation; however, the situation remains dynamic. We will continue to carefully assess these events and provide any updates or resources relevant to the safety and security of our members. Please remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity.**

SECURITY POSTURE FOR FAITH-BASED FACILITIES AND MEMBERS

- Limit entrance points. Have a single point of entry and establish access control measures (including checking every guest or visitor). Ensure all windows, doors, and other entry points are secure. Test alarm systems.
- Make sure exits and entrances are clearly marked and unobstructed.
- Ensure trusted individuals have access to floor plans, necessary keys, or passwords to physically access the building; the ability to operate alarm systems; and access to online platforms in use (e.g. Zoom, Facebook Live).
- Enable caller ID on phones, place an incident checklist near every phone, and train staff on what to say – and not say – when answering the phone (e.g., do not give out security information related to your facility).
- Have first aid kits, Stop the Bleed® kits, and functional AEDs strategically located throughout the facility. Make sure individuals are trained on how to use these.
- Conduct trainings regularly. Contact your Jewish security initiative or SCN to facilitate training such as BeAware: Introduction to Situational Awareness; Countering Active Threat Training; and Stop the Bleed®.
- Invite local law enforcement agencies to conduct a walkthrough of your facility. Ensure they have copies of relevant floor plans and are aware of events and general operating times.
- Convene a security committee to review plans, processes, and procedures.
- Establish ways to quickly communicate with staff, faculty, students, guests, and parents in the event of an incident – both inside the facility and elsewhere

in the community. Test and update these systems regularly.

- Always report incidents, suspicious activity, or other concerns to local law enforcement and also the [Virginia Fusion Center](#).

Sources

- Memri - [Hamas Declares Friday, October 13, As General Mobilization Day For 'Al-Aqsa Flood Operation,' Urges West Bank, Jerusalem Palestinians To Join Massive Rallies And Confront Israeli Soldiers](#)
- CBS News - [Israel prepares for ground offensive in Hamas-ruled Gaza as war's death toll soars](#)
- Miami Herald - [US aircraft carrier sent toward Israel is world's largest warship. What can it do?](#)
- CNN - [Israel formally declares war against Hamas as it battles to push militants off its soil](#)
- NBC News - [Parents told to delete social media apps to prevent kids from seeing Hamas atrocities](#)
- The Soufan Center - [Complex Attack by Hamas Into Israel Has Altered the Dynamics of the Conflict](#)
- The Soufan Center - [Israel Struggles to Contain the Conflict as Adversaries Seek to Open New Fronts](#)
- Congressional Research Service - [Israel and Hamas: Major Conflict After Surprise Attacks](#)
- Secure Community Network - [Resources](#)

This is an [open-source](#) product. Redistribution is encouraged.

- Tools and Resources -



Resource | First Responder's Toolbox

Threat of Terrorism and Hate Crimes Against Jewish Communities in the United States

While faith-based communities across the country face varying levels of discrimination, there is a persistent threat of violence and hate crimes against Jewish communities, primarily by domestic violent extremists. State and local law enforcement can build strong and ongoing working relationships with Jewish community leaders and members to help identify, mitigate, and respond to anti-Semitic terrorist attacks and hate crimes.

[View Resource](#)

Resource | First Responder's Toolbox

Threats Against Houses of Worship Highlight the Importance of Religious Community Outreach

Houses of worship, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and faith leaders will probably continue to be targets for violent extremists adhering to different violent extremist ideologies, some of whom may be hate crime perpetrators.

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