



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

October 15-30, 2024

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Senior Iranian officials expressed condolences for the deaths of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and senior Hezbollah figure Hashem Safi al-Din, stressing that their deaths would not harm the “resistance,” Hamas, and Hezbollah and that Iran would continue its support for them. Senior regime officials congratulated Naim Qassem on his appointment as Hezbollah secretary-general.
- ▶ The level of threats from Iran following Israel’s attack on Iran has increased over the past week. Senior Iranian officials, led by Supreme Leader Khamenei, threatened retaliation against Israel, although they did not commit to the timing or characteristics of the response.
- ▶ During the past two weeks, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has paid extensive regional visits, during which he met with senior Arab officials and discussed the Israeli attack on Iran and efforts to establish a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. The Lebanese prime minister protested the statement made by the speaker of the Iranian Majles that Tehran is willing to negotiate with France on the implementation of Resolution 1701.
- ▶ IRGC experts are reportedly supervising Hezbollah’s battles against IDF forces in southern Lebanon.
- ▶ The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for 36 attacks against targets in Israel. The Saraya Awliya al-Dam militia claimed responsibility for 14 additional attacks. The IDF Spokesperson said several drones had been intercepted. There were no casualties. The militias threatened to start a new phase of fighting against Israel, using new weapons.
- ▶ The Houthis claimed responsibility for two attacks against Israel with ballistic missiles and drones, with no casualties. At least five Houthi fighters were reportedly killed in the fighting in

¹ The weekly study includes the activities of Iran, the Shiite militias in Syria and Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen.

southern Lebanon alongside Hezbollah forces. The Houthis claimed responsibility for additional attacks against vessels in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. No casualties or damage have been reported. US aircraft attacked Houthi underground weapons depots.

►According to an unverified report, an unrecognized pro-Iranian militia in Saudi Arabia claimed responsibility for an attack against Israel and threatened further actions.

Reactions to the Israeli attack on Iran

►Senior regime officials in Tehran downplayed the success of the Israeli attack on Iran on the night of October 25-26, 2024, stressing that Iran retains its right to respond. The following are notable comments:

- ◆ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said at a meeting with families of shaheeds in Tehran that the hostility of the “Zionist regime” in the attack on Iran should not be exaggerated or underestimated. He said Israel had to understand the error in its judgment and the strength and determination of the Iranian nation. Khamenei added that senior Iranian officials should make clear to Israel Iran’s strength and determination and carry out what was right for the nation and the country (the Supreme Leader’s website, October 27, 2024).
- ◆ Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said at a cabinet meeting in Tehran that Iran was not interested in war but would defend the rights of the nation and the state and respond appropriately to the “aggression of the Zionist regime.” He warned that if the “aggression of the Zionist regime and its crimes” continued, tensions would increase (ISNA, October 27, 2024).
- ◆ IRGC commander Hossein Salami threatened that the consequences of the attack for the “occupiers” would be unimaginably bitter. He said the “Zionist aggression,” which he claimed had failed to realize its goals, proved the Zionists’ error in judgment and their inability to deal with the “resistance front” in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon on the battlefield (Tasnim, October 28, 2024).
- ◆ Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke separately with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and Syrian Foreign Minister Bassam al-Sabbagh. The talks reportedly condemned the “Zionist attack” on Iran, and the foreign ministers stressed the need to intensify efforts for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and “stop the Zionist war machine.” Araghchi said Iran would not hesitate to respond to the Israeli attack with

determination, proportionality, and at the appropriate time (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, October 26, 2024).

Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

► Senior Iranian officials continued to express condolences over the death of Yahya Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau, in a clash with IDF forces in the Gaza Strip on October 16, 2024, and expressed their confidence in the success of the Palestinian "resistance:"

◆ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that without leaders like Sinwar and Hassan Nasrallah, who fought until the last moment, the fate of the region would have been completely different. He noted that the "Zionists" thought they could easily eliminate the "resistance" groups, but despite killing more than 50,000 civilians and innocents and some of the leaders of the "resistance," and despite the support of the United States, they continue to fight against Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Hezbollah, and the other "resistance" groups, which is a great defeat for the "Zionist regime." Khamenei stressed that the "resistance" would win the campaign against the "evil front" (Tasnim, October 23, 2024).

◆ President Pezeshkian visited the Hamas office in Tehran and expressed condolences over Sinwar's death. During the visit, the president met with Khaled Qaddoumi, Hamas' representative in Iran. Speaking to journalists, the president criticized Western support for Israel (IRNA, October 22, 2024). Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani also visited the Hamas office in Tehran to express condolences over Sinwar's death (ISNA, October 23, 2024).



Right: The Iranian president visits the Hamas office in Tehran (IRNA, October 22, 2024).

Left: Esmail Qaani in the Hamas office in Tehran (ISNA, October 23, 2024)

◆ Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces, said that Sinwar's blood would boil in the veins of Hamas fighters and make the Palestinian "resistance" stronger and more determined. He said the heroic Palestinian fighters would continue to act with

greater determination like a sword against the occupiers, to liberate Jerusalem and cleanse the geography of Islam from “Israel’s cancerous tumor.” Bagheri added that the “Zionist enemy” must know that it is nearing the end of its miserable life and that its fate has been sealed (Tasnim, October 18, 2024).

► Acting IRGC commander Ali Fadavi said on the sidelines of the memorial ceremony for senior IRGC commander Abbas Nilforoushan, who was killed in an airstrike in Beirut on September 27, 2024, in which Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah was killed, that geographically, the “occupied territories” [i.e. Israel] are not even as large as one of the smallest provinces in Iran, and if Iran so desires, it can destroy all the “Zionists.” He noted that the Islamic revolution is getting stronger year by year and the enemies are weakening more and more. According to him, the “resistance front” is expanding throughout the region, advancing rapidly, and acting as one in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Yemen (snn.ir, October 15, 2024).



Acting IRGC commander Ali Fadavi (snn.ir, October 15, 2024)

► Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi continued his diplomatic tour of the Middle East. He discussed regional developments, especially in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, with his hosts and called for an end to Israeli “aggression” and to prevent a deterioration into all-out war:

◆ During his visit to Jordan, Araghchi met with King Abdullah and Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi. Araghchi reportedly stressed the need for collective action by the countries of the region to stop the “war machine of the Zionist regime” and prevent the war from expanding in the region (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, October 16, 2024).



**The meeting of the foreign ministers of Iran and Jordan
(Iranian Foreign Ministry website, October 16, 2024)**

- ◆ During his visit to Egypt, Araghchi met with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and his Egyptian counterpart, Badr Abdelatty. Araghchi expressed Iran’s appreciation for Egypt’s efforts to achieve stability and security in the region (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, October 17, 2024).



The Iranian foreign minister meets with the Egyptian president (Fars, October 17, 2024)

- ◆ During his visit to Turkey, Araghchi met with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. They stressed the need for international cooperation to put an end to the “crimes of the Zionist regime” and stop the “genocide” in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon (IRNA, October 19, 2024).
- ◆ During his visit to Turkey, Araghchi also met in Istanbul with Muhammad Ismail Darwish, head of Hamas’ Shura Council, and with members of Hamas’ political bureau, Khalil al-Hayya and Musa Abu Marzuq, to discuss developments in the region and the Gaza Strip. Araghchi told the senior Hamas leaders that Iran would continue to provide the “resistance” in “Palestine” and Lebanon with all forms of support (IRNA, October 19, 2024).



The Iranian foreign minister meets with a delegation of senior Hamas figures (IRNA, October 19, 2024)

- ◆ During his visit to Kuwait, Araghchi said Iran wanted a ceasefire in the entire region, both in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, and that there could be different ways to achieve a ceasefire. He noted that Iran is in contact with countries working on this issue and that his special representative is in Beirut and meets daily with all sides in Beirut. He said decisions regarding the ceasefire are made by the Lebanese and the Palestinians themselves, and that Iran is only trying to help them (Tasnim, October 22, 2024).
- ▶ Foreign Minister Araghchi called on the UN Security Council to intervene to prevent Israel's continued operations in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and to impose sanctions on Israel under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. Meeting with heads of foreign missions in Iran, Araghchi said the international community must take immediate and decisive steps to stop the "crimes of the Zionist regime," and that as long as the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon does not stop, it will not be possible to achieve calm in the region (ISNA, October 29, 2024).
- ▶ Iranian President Pezeshkian spoke with the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tariq, and discussed developments in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Pezeshkian noted that if the Islamic countries joined hands, the "Zionist regime" would not have the courage to continue its "crimes" with the support of the United States and Western countries. He called for increased pressure on Israel's supporters to stop its "killing machine and crimes" (ISNA, October 16, 2024).

Iranian involvement in Lebanon

- ▶ Senior Iranian regime officials congratulated Naim Qassem on his appointment as Hezbollah's new secretary-general, replacing Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in the Israeli attack in Beirut on September 27, 2024. Senior Iranian regime officials also sent condolences after Hezbollah confirmed that the head of its Executive Council, Hashem Safi al-Din, had been killed in an Israeli strike in early October 2024. The following are prominent statements:

- ◆ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei praised Safi al-Din's actions over the years, stressing that Hezbollah remains Lebanon's strongest defender and continues to fulfill its historic role, and that Iran will continue to support the "fighters of Jerusalem and the resistance against the occupation" (Tasnim, October 24, 2024).
- ◆ Iranian President Pezeshkian congratulated Qassem on his appointment, saying that in the current sensitive situation, it is historically important to defend Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the values of the "resistance front" and the Palestinian people. He added that Qassem's election would strengthen the resolve on the battlefield. He expressed hope that the unity of the Islamic nation would lead to the cessation of the "aggressive actions of the Zionist regime" and the establishment of peace and security in the Gaza Strip, in Lebanon, and the entire region (Iranian president website, October 29, 2024). In a message of condolences he sent on the death of Safi al-Din, he stressed that the senior Hezbollah official had bravely dedicated his life to defending the peoples of "Palestine" and Lebanon and strengthening the "resistance front" (al-Alam, October 23, 2024).
- ◆ IRGC commander Salami said Qassem's election guarantees the continuation of the glorious path of the Islamic "resistance" in Lebanon and the determination of Hezbollah fighters to save the Palestinian people. He said the continuation of the struggle against Zionism would lead to more great victories on the battlefield, the liberation of Jerusalem, and cleansing the region of the existence of the "fake and evil regime" (Tasnim, October 29, 2024). Referring to the death of Safi al-Din, Salami noted that the strategic events in the region, especially in Lebanon and "Palestine," prove that "the world of infidels and arrogance" aspires to eliminate the "resistance." He said his death would strengthen the unity of the Muslim world around Palestine (al-Alam, October 23, 2024).
- Majles speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Iran is prepared to negotiate with France on the steps necessary to implement Resolution 1701 (Le Figaro, October 17, 2024). In response to these remarks, Lebanese interim Prime Minister Najib Mikati said he was surprised by Qalibaf's remarks and that it was blatant interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. He stressed that the negotiations to implement Resolution 1701 must be carried out by Lebanon itself and that everyone must support Lebanon and not try to force external decisions on it (al-Nashra, October 18, 2024). Following that, a "source close to the Majles speaker" said that the

statements attributed to Qalibaf were incorrect and that he stressed that Iran would support everything that the Lebanese government and the “resistance” would support regarding the ceasefire. The source added that the objective of cooperation with Europe is to help reach a ceasefire (al-Mayadeen, October 18, 2024).

►Mohammad Reza Sheibani, the Iranian foreign minister’s special representative for West Asian affairs, met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to discuss the latest developments in the region, especially in Lebanon. Sheibani stressed Iran’s support for Lebanon and the “resistance,” and presented Berri with Iran’s diplomatic activity regarding the situation in Lebanon and its humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people (ISNA, October 25, 2024).



The representative of the Iranian foreign minister meets with the speaker of the Lebanese parliament (ISNA, October 25, 2024)

►Iran’s mission to the UN rejected claims of Iranian involvement in launching the drone from Lebanon that struck Prime Minister Netanyahu’s residence in Caesarea on October 19, 2024. According to the mission’s statement, Iran has already responded to the “Israeli regime” and it was Hezbollah that launched the drone from Lebanon (IRNA, October 19, 2024). Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei also rejected the claims about Iranian involvement, saying that “the Zionist regime was created on the basis of lies and distortion of facts.” He added that spreading lies is a regular practice of this regime and its “criminal leaders” (Tasnim, October 19, 2024).

►Senior IRGC official Mohammad-Ali Jafari said Iran would continue supporting Hezbollah on all possible levels “until the final victory.” The former commander of the Revolutionary Guards noted that it is a miracle that a popular guerrilla group equipped with weapons of faith and a large number of missiles is capable of standing alone against an army equipped with advanced American weapons. He added that even after the deaths of several of its commanders, the organization managed to maintain and strengthen its management and command force and

stand forcefully against the “enemy,” as in the Second Lebanon War, thanks to its cohesion and talented personnel (Fars, October 23, 2024).



Mohammad-Ali Jafari (Fars, October 23, 2024)

- ▶ IRGC Coordination Deputy Mohammad Reza Naqdi said in a speech marking Hassan Nasrallah’s death that in the coming days, the “Zionist regime” would be dealt further crushing blows and that the Zionists would be surprised by new actions and would suffer greater defeats (SNN, October 29, 2024).
- ▶ According to a “political source” in Lebanon close to Hezbollah and the Amal movement, IRGC experts are supervising Hezbollah’s battles in southern Lebanon, alongside senior Hezbollah military commanders. However, the source denied that Iranian fighters were participating in the battles (Asharq al-Awsat, October 29, 2024).
- ▶ Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei condemned the death of Masoumeh Karbasi, an Iranian woman, the wife of a Lebanese Hezbollah operative, in an airstrike on a car in Jounieh, Lebanon on October 19, 2024. He said Iran would use all the means at its disposal to monitor the issue and hold the “Zionist regime” responsible for the “crime.” He added that the “murder” was further proof of the “Zionist regime’s” hostility towards Iran and the Iranians and demanded that human rights institutions not remain silent in the face of the “murder,” which was part of the “genocide and killing in occupied Palestine and Lebanon” (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, October 20, 2024).

Operations of the Shiite militias

Iraq

Militia operations against Israel

- ▶ During the reporting period, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq issued **36 claims of responsibility for attacks against 30 targets** in Israel (some of the targets were allegedly attacked twice), all using drones (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, October 15-30, 2024). In addition,

the Saraya Awliya al-Dam militia issued **13 claims of responsibility for 14 attacks against targets** in Israel, all using drones (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, October 15-30, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson reported the interception of eight drones that made their way into Israeli territory or penetrated Israeli airspace. In addition, another drone fell in the Red Sea before entering Israel, and four drones that penetrated Israel fell in open areas. There were no casualties (IDF Spokesperson, October 15-30, 2024).



Right: Launching a drone at southern Israel (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, October 24, 2024). Left: Saraya Awliya al-Dam operatives preparing to launch drones (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, October 26, 2024)

- ▶ A “source close to the militias” said the Iraqi resistance had managed to increase the number of its attacks against Israel by nearly 30 percent during October 2024, noting that the militias intend to double their attacks again next month. According to the source, the map of the “resistance” attacks is spread over 11 different areas in Israel, including strategic ports (baghdadtoday.news, October 29, 2024).
- ▶ “Sources in the Iraqi resistance” reported that a new phase of military operations would soon be announced, which would include attacking strategic targets of the “Israeli enemy,” such as airports, economic facilities, and strategic military bases. They added that the “resistance” would increase the level of response to a level that would reach even as far as the “factories” in Dimona, although only in the next stages. The sources said the weapons in the current stages are different from the weapons that will be used in the next stages, and that the quality of the targets will also be different (al-Akhbar, October 18, 2024).
- ▶ “A source close to the militias” in Iraq said that the “resistance” continues to develop its deterrence capabilities against Israel, such as missiles and drones, and today, it can reach many targets deep inside Israel, especially strategic targets, including military airports, economic facilities, and even the “nuclear plant in Dimona” (baghdadtoday.news, October 17, 2024).

►“A source close to Kata’ib Hezbollah” told the Lebanese daily al-Akhbar, which is affiliated with the “axis of resistance,” that a squadron of “advanced drones” has been deployed within the militia ranks in its operations against the “Israeli enemy.” The source added that the militia possesses drones for gathering intelligence, noting that the new technologies in the field of UAVs and the weaponry held by Kata’ib Hezbollah are likely equivalent to those of Lebanese Hezbollah (al-Akhbar, October 21, 2024).

► Akram al-Kaabi, secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, criticized many Islamic countries for merely observing the events in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon without providing adequate help. According to him, if each of these countries were to launch one missile every day against the “Zionist entity,” a total of 1,500 missiles would be fired within a month, forcing the “entity” to cease its “aggression.” He added that the “American enemy” claims to be working to stop the war while supplying Israel with money, weapons, intelligence, operational methods, satellites, and bombs that are prohibited under international law. Al-Kaabi threatened that if the “Zionist enemy” attempted to penetrate Iraqi airspace, they would respond forcefully against the United States. He also claimed that although the “axis of resistance” has suffered significant casualties, its strength remains robust with excellent coordination among its members. After more than a year of conflict, he stated that Israel has failed, and the “Palestinian resistance” still holds the reins (al-Amid Telegram channel, October 22, 2024).

► The Iraqi militias reportedly feel that they operate less effectively than Hezbollah in Lebanon and that they take fewer risks than the Houthis, and therefore fear for their status among the other Iranian axis organizations (1news-iq.com, October 17, 2024). It therefore can be assessed that the increase in the militias’ activity also stems from their desire to establish their status within the framework of the “axis of resistance.”

► According to a “knowledgeable source,” the Iraqi militias sent hundreds of fighters, rockets, and drones to Syria to prepare for a long campaign against Israel. In addition, the militias reportedly have an orderly plan to attack American bases in Syria if the United States attacks the headquarters and senior militia officials in Iraq (1News.com, October 23, 2024).

Reactions to the Israeli attack on Iran

► The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq condemned the Israeli attack on Iran and warned that they would retaliate against the United States, accusing it of allowing Israeli air force planes to pass through Iraqi airspace. The following are notable comments:

- ◆ According to a statement issued by Kata'ib Hezbollah, using Iraqi airspace to direct attacks against Iranian facilities and carrying them out in waves lasting hours sets a dangerous precedent that Iran has not encountered before. The statement also noted that such actions would not have been possible without an agreement with the Americans, who control Iraqi skies. The militia threatened that the Americans must “pay the price for not respecting Iraq’s airspace” and that the response would be carried out “at the appropriate time and place, and the Zionists will not be excluded from this” (Kaf Telegram channel, October 27, 2024).
- ◆ Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq, said the Israeli attack was “aggression that exposes the fragility of the entity and its inability to cope with the Islamic resistance” (Qais al-Khazali’s Telegram channel, October 26, 2024).
- ◆ Hadi al-Ameri, secretary-general of the Badr militia, accused the United States of full responsibility for violating the sovereignty of Iraq’s airspace. According to him, the United States has proven anew its “stubbornness” to control Iraq’s airspace and use it against Iraq’s interests and sovereignty, and to serve the “Zionist entity” and provide it with everything it needs so that it will threaten peace and stability in the region and implement its “aggression” actions (Taghridat al-Hashd Telegram channel, October 27, 2024).

Militias’ involvement in the fighting in Lebanon

- ▶ Two Iraqi fighters were reportedly killed in IDF airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon: Ali al-Hadi As’ad Atia al-Salami, who belonged to the Popular Mobilization (Haidar al-Qurayshi’s X account, October 25, 2024); and Abbas Abd al-Hussein Ali al-Khafaji, resident of Karbala (QalaatM X account, October 29, 2024).
- ▶ The militias welcomed the appointment of Naim Qassem as Hezbollah’s new secretary-general and expressed support for the “resistance” in Lebanon. A statement from the Nujaba Movement said, “We are at this important and sensitive stage of the blessed Islamic resistance. We emphasize our stubbornness and our boundless support for the sacred jihad, and we reiterate our promise for your cherished victory” (Saberin News Telegram channel, October 29, 2024).

Attack on Israel attributed to a pro-Iranian militia in Saudi Arabia

► A militia called “Islamic Resistance from the Land of the Two Holy Places [i.e., Mecca and Medina]” (*Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya fi Bilad al-Haramayn*), which claims to operate from Saudi territory, announced “the beginning of its jihad activities.” It claimed responsibility for attacking “a vital site in occupied Palestine” with a drone on the afternoon of October 25, 2024. It added that the operation was carried out “as a sign of support for Palestine and Lebanon.” The militia stressed that the launch, which it claimed was carried out from Saudi territory, was the desire of the country’s residents, and that additional actions against Israel are expected until the end of the “aggression” against the Gaza Strip and Lebanon (Saberin New Telegram channel, October 26, 2024).

► It was claimed that it was a fictitious organization and that a video circulated on social media purportedly documenting the launch was actually a video released on July 15, 2024, by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and digitally edited (Bilal al-Bukhari’s X account, October 26, 2024).



**The original video (right) and the fabricated one (left)
(Bilal al-Bukhari’s X account, October 26, 2024)**

► This may be a renewal of the activity of Hezbollah Hejaz, an arm of Iran in eastern Saudi Arabia, an area characterized by a Shiite population.² It can be assumed that this is an Iranian attempt to create friction between the Saudi government and Israel to prevent any chance of a peace agreement between the countries.

² Hezbollah Hejaz, established in 1987, had carried out terrorist attacks since the 1980s against the Saudi regime and the Saudi oil infrastructure and against Saudi diplomats abroad. The most famous attack attributed to the organization (and at the same time to Al-Qaeda) was the bombing of the Khobar Towers in 1996, which claimed the lives of 19 American soldiers and wounded hundreds more. Since the attack, many of the organization’s operatives had been imprisoned, and the organization ceased its practical activities (Toby Matthiesen, “Hizbullah al-Hijaz: A History of the Most Radical Saudi Shi’a Opposition Group,” *The Middle East Journal*. 64 (2), (Spring 2010): 179-197).

Attacks against US targets in Syria

- ▶ On October 27, 2024, an attack was reported against the American base in the al-Omar oil field, east of Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria. In response, the Americans fired artillery at militia positions located near the Deir ez-Zor military airbase (Sky News, October 27, 2024). A day later, pro-Iranian militias reportedly attacked the base with several drones. According to the report, explosions were heard from inside the base (al-Mayadeen, October 28, 2024).
- ▶ According to a report from October 27, 2024, an attack was carried out against the al-Tanf base in southeastern Syria, which houses US forces, using explosive drones (al-Mayadeen, October 27, 2024). According to another report, explosions were heard at the base (Saberin News Telegram channel, October 27, 2024). No casualties have been reported.
- ▶ On October 21-23, 2024, several attacks were reported against the US base in the Conoco gas field in eastern Syria. No casualties have been reported (Saberin News Telegram channel, October 24, 2024; OALD24 X account, October 21-22, 2024).

Yemen

The direct confrontation between Israel and the Houthis

- ▶ Houthi forces military spokesman Yahya Saria issued statements claiming responsibility for attacks against Israel:
 - ◆ October 22, 2024: An attack on an Israeli military base east of the city of Jaffa (Tel Aviv) with a Filastin 2 hypersonic ballistic missile. Saria claimed that the missile hit its target while evading Israeli and American interception systems (Yahya Saria's X account, October 22, 2024). The claim has not been verified.
 - ◆ October 29, 2024: An attack on Ashkelon's industrial zone using several drones. Saria claimed that the objectives of the attack had been successfully achieved (Yahya Saria's X account, October 29, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson said a drone launched from Yemen fell in an open area in the Ashkelon area. There were no casualties, and no damage was reported (IDF Spokesperson, October 29, 2024).
- ▶ At least five Houthi fighters were reportedly killed last month in southern Lebanon while fighting against Israel in the ranks of Hezbollah. According to the report, the fighters came from Yemen's Saada Governorate, considered one of the Houthi strongholds and where many of the organization's senior leadership come from (Alsakaniali X account, October 27, 2024)

Additional Houthi military activity

►The Houthi military spokesman claimed responsibility for new attacks against vessels that he claimed violated the “ban on entry to the ports of occupied Palestine:”

- ◆ October 18, 2024: An attack on the ship Megalopolis in the Arabian Sea using several drones. It was claimed that the attack succeeded and its objectives were achieved (Yahya Saria’s X account, October 18, 2024). The claims have not been verified.
- ◆ October 28, 2024: An attack on the SC Montreal in the Arabian Sea using two drones. It was claimed that the attack succeeded and its objectives were achieved. The claims have not been verified; an attack on the ship Maersk Kowloon in the Arabian Sea using a cruise missile. It was claimed that the missile hit was accurate. The claims have not been verified; an attack on the tanker Motaro in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait using several ballistic missiles. It was claimed that the attack succeeded and its objectives were achieved (Yahya Saria’s X account, October 28, 2024). The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) confirmed that the ship reported three missile impacts in nearby waters. However, the tanker continued on its way, and no casualties were reported (UKMTO X account, October 28, 2024).

US airstrikes against the Houthis

►On October 16, 2024, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that its forces conducted several precision strikes on weapons depots in Houthi-controlled areas, where advanced equipment used by the Houthis to attack military and civilian vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden was stored. According to the statement, the airstrikes were carried out against underground facilities, with the aim of degrading Houthi capabilities that would enable continued attacks on vessels in these maritime areas. B-2 long-range bombers with stealth capabilities reportedly also participated in the airstrikes, showcasing the global strike capabilities of the United States (CENTCOM X account, October 16, 2024). Reliable reports regarding the outcomes of the strikes have not yet been provided.

►In response to the American airstrike, the Houthis’ political bureau said that the “aggression” was a grave violation of Yemen’s sovereignty and a clear violation of all international laws and agreements and that it took place as part of the escalation by Israel and the United States against “Palestine,” Lebanon, and Yemen. According to the announcement, the American “aggression” will not go unanswered, and the attacks will not divert Yemen from its support

for the Gaza Strip and Lebanon in their struggle against “Israeli oppression supported by the United States” (al-Masirah X account, October 17, 2024).

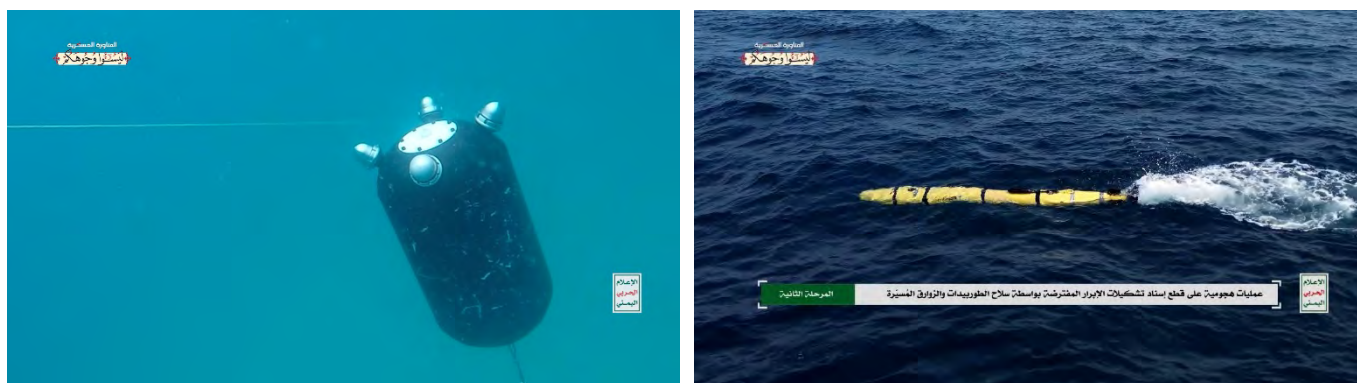
► On October 18, 2024, CENTCOM reported that in the past week, its forces also successfully attacked several targets in Houthi-controlled areas, besides the October 16 strike. The targets included an anti-aircraft missile battery and several ground control system facilities that direct Houthi drones in their attacks against vessels (CENTCOM X account, October 18, 2024).

◄ On October 24, 2024, CENTCOM announced that in the past week, US Air Force and Navy forces destroyed 15 drones, cruise missiles, and anti-aircraft missiles in CENTCOM's area of operations (CENTCOM X account, October 24, 2024).

Houthi armament efforts

► “Senior security sources” reported that Russia had provided Houthi forces with target data that assisted them in attacking vessels in the Red Sea over the past year. According to the sources, Russia transferred satellite data on the vessels to Iran, and subsequently, this data was passed on by officials in Iran’s Revolutionary Guards to the Houthis (Wall Street Journal, October 24, 2024).

► The Houthi forces carried out a large-scale exercise, which included tactical maneuvers by ground and naval forces. It was reported that the exercise simulated a defensive battle against a large-scale attack by “hostile forces” and that scenarios of attack from the sea, landing on the beach, dropping enemy forces, and fighting in mountainous areas, desert, and urban areas were practiced. During the exercise, various weapons were used, including drones that dropped munitions from the air, tanks and anti-tank missiles, and new weapons, such as suicide and unmanned naval and underwater vessels, were introduced for the first time but no details were given about their characteristics. No technical details were provided about the new weapons presented (the Houthi forces’ media arm X account, October 27-28, 2024).



New weapons presented in the exercise: a suicide underwater unmanned vessel (right) and an underwater mine (the Houthi forces' media arm X account, October 28, 2024)

Statements by senior Houthi officials

- ▶ On October 24, 2024, Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Houthi Movement, delivered his weekly speech, pledging that Houthi forces would continue their military operations against Israel. He praised the activities of Hezbollah and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, noting that they had significantly increased their attacks against Israel. In addition, al-Houthi praised the Hezbollah drone attack that hit the home of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on October 19, 2024 (Saba News Agency, October 24, 2024).
- ▶ Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Houthi supreme political council, appealed to the UN secretary-general to protest that the UN Security Council was not taking the necessary steps to stop the “massacre” of civilians in the Gaza Strip, claiming UNRWA was unable to carry out its mission. According to him, because of this, the peoples of the world have lost faith in the UN. He demanded that the UN demonstrate a firm stance to stop the “aggression” against the Palestinian people and Lebanon and recognize “the Israeli entity as a terrorist entity” (Mahdi al-Mashat’s X account, October 24, 2024).
- ▶ The Houthis’ political bureau expressed its condolences over the death of Hezbollah’s Executive Council chairman Hashem Safi al-Din in an Israeli attack in Beirut. According to the bureau’s announcement, they appreciate Hezbollah’s precise attacks deep into the “Israeli enemy” and the heroism of its jihad fighters on the battlefield. It was also noted that the Houthis express full solidarity with the Islamic “resistance” in Lebanon and with the Lebanese people and their legitimate right to respond to all the “crimes of the Zionist enemy” (al-Masirah X account, October 23, 2024).
- ▶ Senior Houthi officials condemned the Israeli attack on Iran and expressed support for the regime in Tehran. The following are notable examples:

- ◆ The Houthis' political bureau said that "the aggression against Iran is a continuation of the wild behavior of the Zionists against the peoples of the region." In their announcement, they emphasize the Houthis' solidarity with Iran and its right to respond against "Zionist aggression" (al-Masirah X account, October 26, 2024).
- ◆ The Houthi Foreign Ministry condemned the "Zionist aggression" against Iran, claiming that it violated Iran's sovereignty, its independence, and the peace of its land, and contravened the UN Charter. It was also reported that the "Israeli enemy" is striving to drag the region into the flames of war. The statement also included a call to the international community to "condemn this severe aggression and restrain this oppressive entity" (al-Masirah X account, October 26, 2024).