



Iran Summary

January 2024

Anna Schaftel
Programs & Outreach Associate

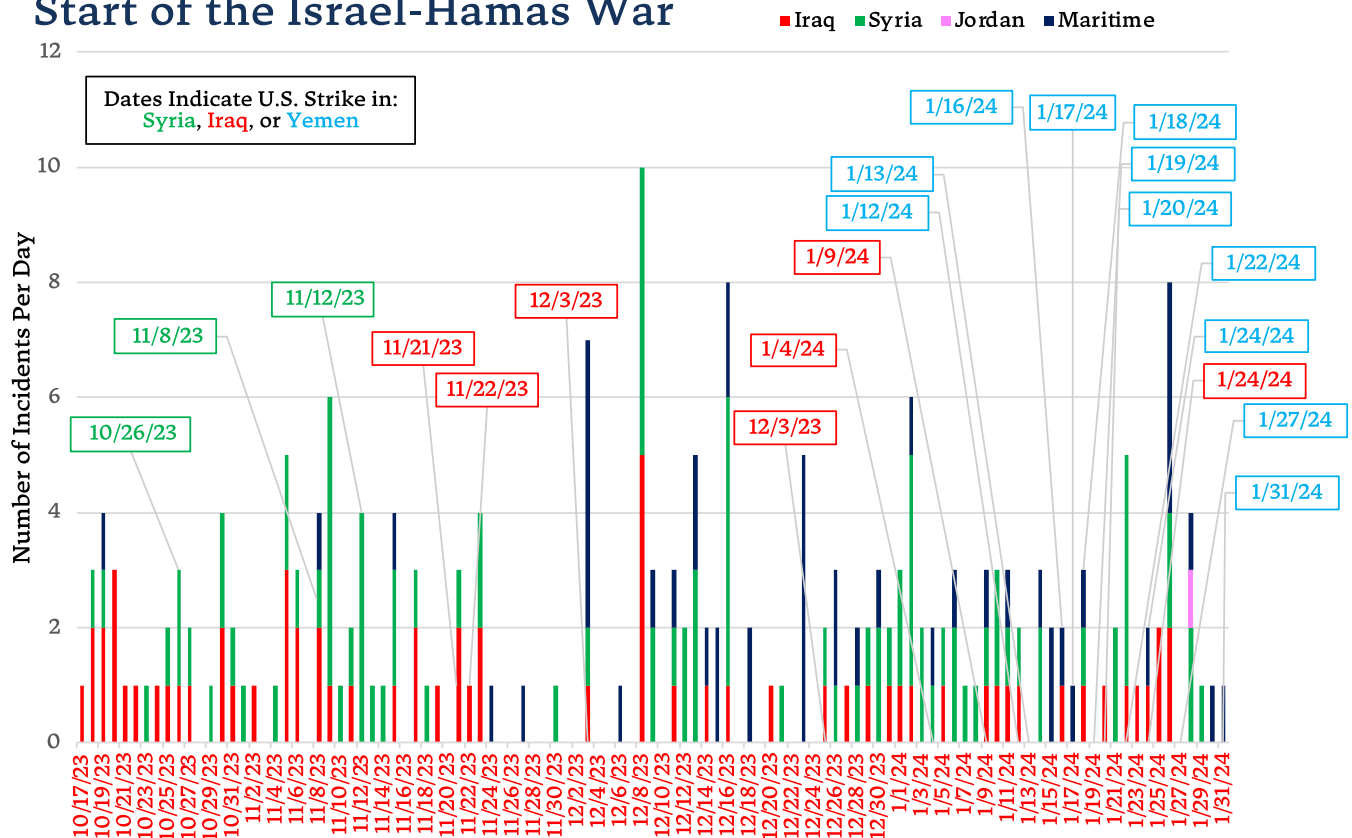
January 2024 Summary: Iran and its proxies continued to destabilize the region as the Iran-backed terror group Hamas waged war against Israel, following the brutal attacks it carried out on October 7. To view JINSA's work related to the Israel-Gaza War, [click here](#). Iran-backed groups carried out at least 166 attacks on U.S. forces in the region since the beginning of [the Israel-Hamas War](#). Iran's proxy groups escalated their attacks on U.S. troops and personnel in the region, [killing](#) three soldiers in a drone attack in Jordan. Amidst the ongoing Houthi maritime attacks, which have severely [disrupted](#) international trade, the United States, alongside the United Kingdom and other partners, began [conducting](#) strikes in Yemen against the Iran-backed group. The Islamic State in Afghanistan [carried out](#) a coordinated suicide bombing, killing at least 84 people and injuring more than 200 at a commemoration for the fourth anniversary of the U.S. assassination of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) General Qassem Soleimani.

Attacks on U.S. Troops and Personnel in the Region: Iran-backed groups escalated their attacks on U.S. troops and personnel in the region, [carrying out](#) a drone strike that killed three and injured at least 40 U.S. service members in Jordan.

- Since October 17, there have been 166 [attacks](#) against U.S. troops and personnel in Iraq and Syria.
 - » At least 110 American troops have been injured, about half of whom sustained traumatic brain injuries during the Iran-backed attacks since October 17.
- On January 15, the IRGC [launched](#) ballistic missiles at multiple sites in Iraq and Syria. Iran claimed it was targeting “one of the main [Israeli] espionage headquarters” in Iraq, without any evidence to substantiate it. At least four civilians were killed, and six others injured in the attack.
- In January alone, Iran-backed groups [carried out](#) at least 51 such attacks: 33 in Syria, 17 in Iraq, and one in Jordan.
 - » On January 28, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella organization of Iran-backed militias, [launched](#) a drone attack that killed 3 U.S. soldiers and injured at least 40 others at the Tower 22 facility in Jordan.
 - President Biden [said](#), “we know it was carried out by radical Iran-backed militant groups operating in Syria and Iraq” and vowed to “hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner of our choosing.”
 - On January 30, the Iran-back Kataib Hezbollah militia in Iraq [said](#) it would halt its attacks on U.S. troops, “We’re announcing the suspension of our military and security operations against the occupying forces to avoid any embarrassment for the Iraqi government.”

- The announcement comes after the U.S. promised a “very consequential” response to a January 28 drone strike that killed three U.S. soldiers.
- » The 33 attacks on U.S. troops and personnel in Syria included attacks on [Patrol Base Shaddadi](#) and [Mission Support Site Euphrates](#).
- » Of the 17 attacks against U.S. troops and personnel in Iraq, the majority were directed at Ain al-Assad airbase, Erbil airport in northern Iraq, and al- Harir Airbase.

Iran-backed Projectile Attacks Against U.S. Personnel and Maritime Targets Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War



Maritime Aggression: Despite the United States, alongside the United Kingdom and other partner nations, [conducting](#) twelve airstrikes against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, the terror group conducted seventeen attacks during January on vessels in nearby waters, in particular the Red Sea, [disrupting](#) international trade

- On January 12, the United States and the United Kingdom [launched](#) the first of a series of strikes against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, in response to the terror group’s ongoing maritime harassment and attacks on ships in the region.
 - » On January 30, Houthi commander Mohamed al-Atifi [said](#), “We are prepared for a long-term confrontation with the forces of tyranny. The Americans, the British, and those who coordinated with them must realize the power of the sovereign Yemeni decision and that there is no debate or dispute over it.”
 - » On January 20, the Houthis [ordered](#) all U.S. and British staff of the United Nations (UN) to leave Yemen within the month.

- » On January 18, a Houthi official [said](#), “We will continue to target Israeli ships heading to the ports of occupied Palestine, no matter how the American-British aggression tries to prevent us from doing so.”
- » On January 15, Houthi leader Al al-Qahoum [said](#), “We tell the Americans that your actions against Yemen will be defeated and we will confront you with all of our power. After this aggression, Yemen will turn into the graveyard of the Americans and they will leave the region in humiliation.”
 - He added that the U.S. and its allies should expect “strategic blows and a more painful response,” and the Yemeni people and their leaders are “fully prepared to enter a direct and all-out war with the Great Satan to defend Palestine.”
- » Referring to the U.S./U.K. strikes, on January 14, Iran’s President, Ebrahim Raisi, [said](#) such actions “are rejected and condemned by the freedom-seeking nations of the world.”
- » On January 12, Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Nasser Kanaani [said](#) he “strongly condemns” the strikes, and “We consider it a clear violation of Yemen’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a breach of international laws, regulations, and rights.”
- » On January 11, the leader of the Houthis, Abdulmalik al-Houthi, [said](#), “Any American aggression will never go without a response. The response to any American attack will not only be at the level of the operation that was recently carried out... but it will be greater than that.”
- On January 23, European Union (EU) trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis [said](#) that trade through the Red Sea had fallen by 22 percent in a month due to Houthi attacks.
- On January 20, *Reuters* [reported](#) that commanders from the IRGC and Iran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah were on the ground in Yemen directing and overseeing the Houthis maritime attacks.
- On January 17, Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam [told](#) *Reuters* that the U.S. re-designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group would not affect its ability to carry out maritime attacks.
- On January 11, Iran [confirmed](#) it seized an oil tanker, the Marshall Islands-flagged *St Nikolas*, which was carrying Iraqi crude oil bound for Turkey, while it transited the Gulf of Oman.
- On January 7, the head of the Houthi’s supreme revolutionary committee, Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, [posted](#) on X, that ships approaching the Bab El-Mandeb Strait which broadcast the sentence “We have no relation with Israel,” would not be attacked. He threatened that ships that falsely made the broadcast would be “blacklisted” and seized upon reentering the Red Sea.
- On January 1, Iran [sailed](#) a frigate, *The Alborz*, into the Red Sea. The Iranian warship has been helping the Houthis conduct their attacks.
- The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen carried out seventeen maritime attacks in waters around Bab el Mandeb over the course of the month, including:
 - » At least 10 attacks on targets in the Red Sea, and another five in the Gulf of Aden.
 - » On January 24, an armed drone [targeted](#) a U.S.-flagged container ship in the Bab al-Mandab Strait, exploding 100 yards from the vessel.

Other Malign Activity and Involvement in Israel-Hamas War:

Iranian regime officials continued to [threaten](#) a broader conflict and [promised](#) reprisals to U.S./U.K. and Israeli strikes against the regime's proxy terror groups in Yemen and [Lebanon](#), respectively.

- On January 31, IRGC chief Hossein Salami [said](#), "We hear threats coming from American officials. We tell them that they have already tested us and we now know one another. No threat will be left unanswered."
- On January 17, Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, [said](#), "an end to the genocide in Gaza will lead to an end of military actions and crises in the region. The security of the Red Sea is tied to the developments in Gaza, and everyone will suffer if Israel's crimes in Gaza do not stop."
- On January 16, in an interrogation video released by Israel's Shin Bet security agency, captured Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) commander Basil Mahadi said he had been trained as a sniper in Iran.
- On January 10, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, [posted](#) in Hebrew on X, "the crimes of the Zionist entity will not be forgotten. Even after the disappearance of this entity from the face of the earth, these crimes and the murder of thousands of children and women will be recorded in the books."
- On January 10, *Politico* [reported](#), citing four U.S. intelligence officials, that there was an increased risk Lebanese Hezbollah would attack Americans in the Middle East or even inside the United States.
- On January 7, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) [said](#) its troops operating in Gaza found, "components proving terrorists of the Hamas terror organization learned under Iranian guidance how to operate and build precision components and strategic weapons," including guided missiles.
- On January 5, Raisi [said](#), "we know that 'Al-Aqsa Flood' operation will bring about the end of the Zionist regime," referring to Hamas's October 7 attack. He added, "Our enemies can see Iran's power and the whole world knows its strength and capabilities. Our forces will decide on the place and time to take action."
- On January 2, an Israeli air strike [killed](#) Hamas' deputy leader abroad, Saleh Al-Arouri, in Beirut, Lebanon.
 - » Amir-Abdollahian [called](#) the strike a "cowardly terrorist operation" that proves "that the Zionist regime has not achieved any of its goals after weeks of war crimes, genocide and destruction in Gaza and the West Bank despite the direct support of the United States."
 - » Kanaani [said](#), "The martyr's blood will undoubtedly ignite another surge in the veins of resistance and motivate the fight against the Zionist occupiers, not only in Palestine but also in the region and among all freedom-seekers worldwide."

Russia Ties: Tehran and Moscow continued to deepen their military cooperation.

- On January 19, a senior Houthi official [promised](#) safe passage to Russian and Chinese vessels transiting the Red Sea.
- On January 4, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that Russia was planning to buy short-range ballistic missiles from Iran.
 - » One of the unnamed U.S. officials quoted said, "The United States is concerned that Russian negotiations to acquire close-range ballistic missiles from Iran are actively advancing. We assess that Russia intends to purchase missile systems from Iran."

Domestic/Human Rights: Two coordinated suicide bombings at a commemoration for Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, an IRGC general killed in a U.S. airstrike in 2020, [killed](#) at least 84 people. Iran [executed](#) a ninth person in connection to the 2022 nationwide protests.

- According to Oslo-based Iran Human Rights, as of February 1, the Islamic Republic had [executed](#) 72 people in 2024.
- On January 29, Iran [executed](#) four men it accused of conspiring with Israel's Mossad intelligence agency.
 - » According to Iran's state media, the men were accused of planning to target an Iranian missile and defense equipment factory in Isfahan in 2022 and received training and direction from the Mossad.
 - » Director of Iran Human Rights NGO Mahmoud Amiry-Moghaddam [said](#), "the execution of these four prisoners was based on confessions obtained under torture and without a fair trial, and are considered extrajudicial killings for which Khamenei and the corrupt judiciary of the Islamic Republic must be held accountable."
- On January 23, the Islamic Republic [executed](#) a ninth protester in connection to the 2022 nationwide protests, hanging 23-year-old Mohammad Ghobadlou.
- On January 3, two bombs exploded at a commemoration for Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, an IRGC general who was killed in a U.S. drone strike four years prior. At least 84 people were [killed](#), and at least an additional 210 people were [injured](#) in the blasts in Soleimani's hometown of Kerman.
 - » According to a January 4 *NBC News* report, Raisi initially [blamed](#) the attacks on the U.S. and Israel.
 - » On January 5, the U.S. [confirmed](#) that the Islamic State's Afghanistan branch had carried out the attack.
 - » On January 5, Iran's security forces [announced](#) they had arrested 11 people in connection to the blasts.
 - » *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) on January 26 that the U.S. had secretly alerted Iran's regime that the Islamic State was planning the attack. Iran [denied](#) this report.

Cyber: Iranian intelligence [created](#) false websites that pose as groups advocating for the release of the hostages taken by Hamas to steal personal information from Israelis.

- On January 15, Israel's Shin Bet security agency [said](#) that Iran is using fake online profiles and websites to gather intelligence in Israel, targeting families of the hostages taken by Hamas with fake online expressions of grief and sending false surveys and volunteer forms to gather information on Israelis.
 - » The websites, such as "BringHomeNow" and "Tears of the War," present themselves as groups advocating for the release of the hostages taken by Hamas to coerce Israelis into disclosing personal information on fake volunteer and job postings.
 - » The Shin Bet also said the fake websites were spreading disinformation in Israel aimed at inciting its citizens against the government.

Recent JINSA Publications on Iran:

- January 29: [“Deadly Iran-backed Attack Requires Response Against Iranian Regime Targets,” Blaise Misztal and Ari Cicurel](#)
- January 12: [“Strikes Against the Houthis Should Not Be a One-Off,” Ari Cicurel](#)
- January 10: [“Iran Accelerates into the Nuclear Gray Zone,” Jonathan Ruhe and Yoni Tobin](#)