



Iran Summary February 2024

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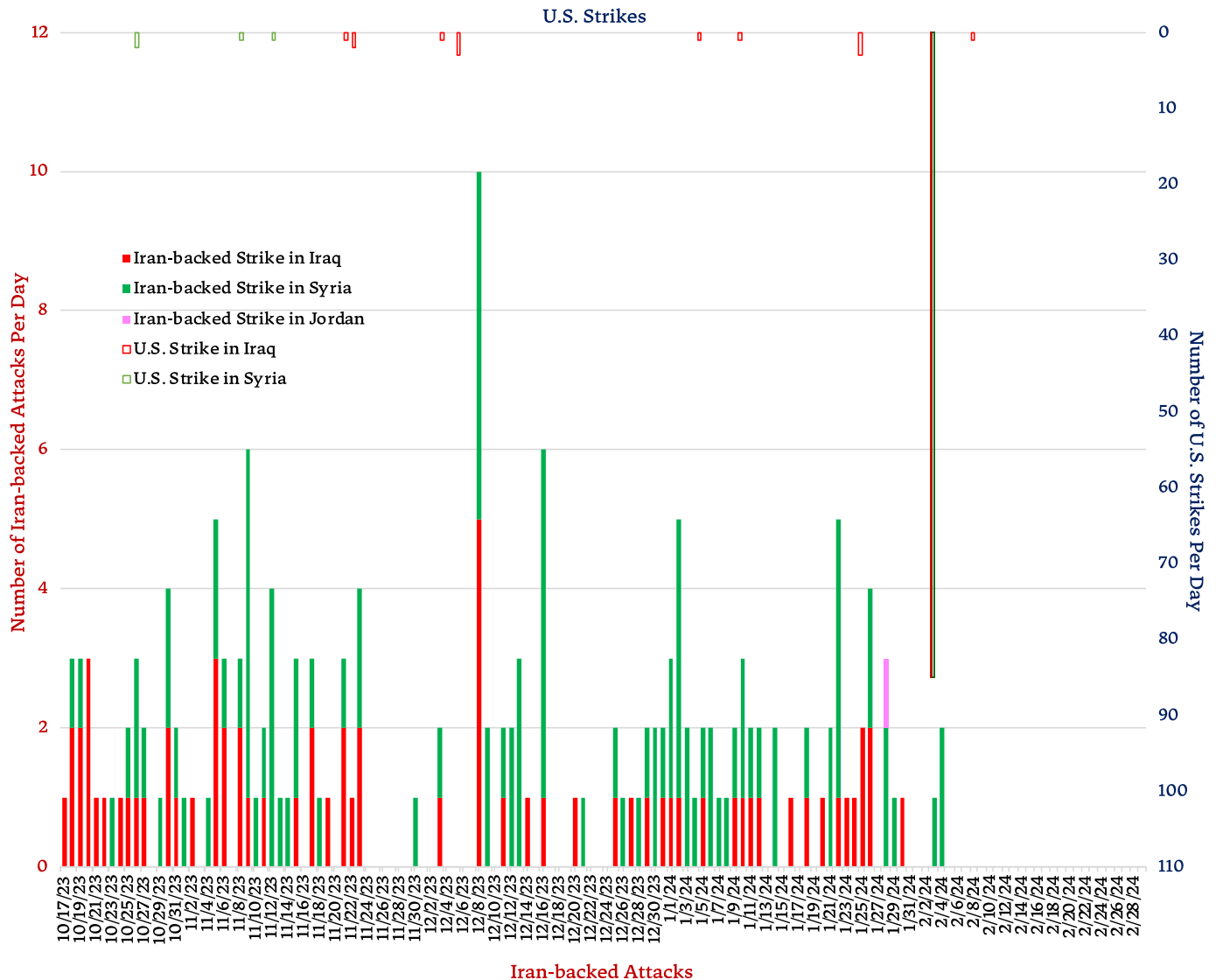
February 2024 Summary: To view JINSA's work related to the Israel-Gaza War, [click here](#). Since the United States struck Iran-linked targets in Syria and Iraq on February 2, Iran's proxy militias in those countries have only [launched](#) three attacks against U.S. personnel, with the latest on February 4. This marks the lowest amount of Iran-backed attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria since Tehran's proxies began their escalation on October 17, 2023. The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, however, continued to carry out maritime attacks and disrupt international trade, [conducting](#) 33 such attacks in February. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [reported](#) that Iran had slightly decreased its stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium, while its total stockpile of uranium enriched to any level had [grown](#) by roughly 23 percent since its last report in November. Iran-backed hackers [hijacked](#) TV news programming in the U.K., Canada, and the U.A.E. to broadcast an artificial intelligence (AI)-generated false news report on Gaza intended to incite viewers against Israel.

Attacks on U.S. Troops and Personnel in the Region: Since the [U.S. strikes](#) against Iran-linked targets in Syria and Iraq on February 2, Iran's proxy militias have only [conducted](#) three attacks, with the latest on February 4. This marks lowest amount of Iran-backed attacks against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, but follows at least [170 attacks](#), since October 17, 2023.

- Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) Commander Esmail Qaani reportedly [met](#) with representatives of its proxy militias in Iraq on January 29, less than 48 hours after Iran-backed militias carried out an attack on a U.S. base in Jordan that killed three U.S. soldiers. Qaani reportedly told the representatives that the proxy groups should hold off on attacks to avoid risking a heavy U.S. response.
- On February 7, a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad [killed](#) Kataib Hezbollah commander Wissam Muhammad Sabir Al-Saadi, also known as Abu Baqir Al-Saadi, the commander in charge of Kataib Hezbollah's operations in Syria who was responsible for "directly planning and participating in attacks" on U.S. troops, according to the U.S. military.
- On February 7, Iran's President, Ebrahim Raisi, [said](#), "The presence of U.S. forces in our region has no justification ... in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and the region is in no way creating security. It disrupts the security in the region."
- On February 3, Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson, Nasser Kanaani, [said](#) U.S. airstrikes in Iraq and Syria on Tehran-linked targets are "another adventurous and strategic mistake by the United States that will result only in increased tension in instability in the region." He said they were designed "to overshadow the Zionist regime's crimes in Gaza," referring to Israel.
 - » Kanaani added, "the root cause of tensions and crises in the Middle East is Israel's occupation and genocide of Palestinians with America's unlimited support."
- On February 2, the United States [conducted](#) major airstrikes against 85 Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria, in response to the January 28 attack.

- » President Biden released a statement regarding the strikes, [saying](#), “This past Sunday, three American soldiers were killed in Jordan by a drone launched by militant groups backed by Iran’s IRGC...This afternoon, at my direction, U.S. military forces struck targets at facilities in Iraq and Syria that the IRGC and affiliated militia use to attack U.S. forces. Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing. The United States does not seek conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world. But let all those who might seek to do us harm know this: If you harm an American, we will respond.”
- On February 1, *Reuters* [reported](#), citing four U.S. officials, that Iran manufactured the drone used in the deadly January 28 attack on a U.S. base in Jordan that killed three U.S. soldiers and injured more than 40.

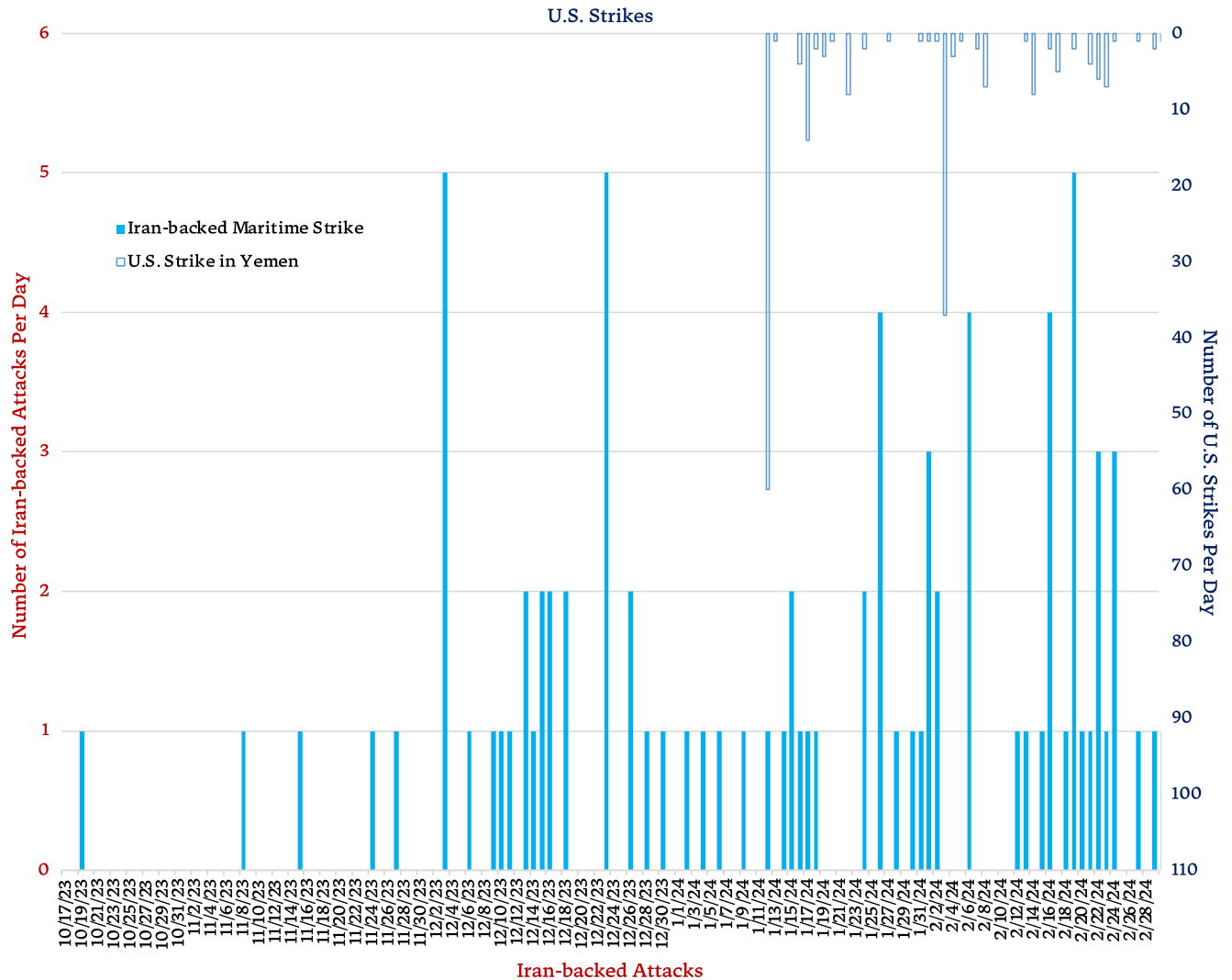
Iran-linked Projectile Attacks Against U.S. Personnel and U.S. Strikes Since the Start of the Israel-Hamas War



Maritime Aggression: Despite the United States, alongside the United Kingdom and other partner nations, conducting at least 91 airstrikes against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen during February, the terror group [conducted](#) 33 attacks during February on vessels in nearby waters, in particular the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, disrupting international trade.

- On February 28, *Iran International* [reported](#), citing an FBI affidavit, that an unflagged ship smuggling weapons to the Houthis had been communicating via satellite phone with the IRGC. The ship was interdicted in the Arabian Sea by the U.S. Navy in January.
- On February 27, a Houthi spokesperson [said](#) that the group's Red Sea attacks will only stop when Israel's "aggression" in Gaza ends.
- On February 26, Israeli news site *Globes* [reported](#) that four underwater communications cables between Saudi Arabia and Djibouti had been rendered inoperable due to damage incurred in recent months, likely due to the Houthi attacks.
- On February 25, Kanaani [said](#), in response to the latest round of U.S. and U.K. strikes against the Houthis, "With such attacks, America and Britain seek to escalate tensions and crises in the region, and expand the scope of war and instability."
- On February 22, the Houthis [said](#) that ships wholly or partially owned, or sailing under the flags, of Israel, the U.S., or the U.K. are banned from the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea.
- On February 15, *NBC News* [reported](#) that the United States had conducted a cyberattack against an Iranian warship, the *MV Beshad*, that had been providing intelligence to the Houthis.
- On February 12, the IRGC [successfully fired](#) a long-range ballistic missile from a warship for the first time. IRGC Chief Maj Gen Hossein Salami said, "This new achievement has increased the range of our maritime influence and power to any point we want ... Nowhere is safe for those powers who seek to threaten our security."
- On February 4, Iran [issued](#) a warning to the United States against targeting the *Behshad* and *Saviz*, cargo ships that have [loitered](#) near the Red Sea and are suspected of being forward operating bases. In a video released by the Iranian regime, a narrator described the ships as "floating armories" on a mission to "counteract piracy in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden."
- On February 4, Kanaani [said](#) that the latest U.S. and U.K. strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen are "in clear contradiction with the repeated claims of Washington and London that they do not want the expansion of war and conflict in the region. "
 - » Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree [said](#) these strikes "will not pass without response and punishment" and "will not deter us from our ... stance in support of the steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip."
- The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen [carried out](#) 33 maritime attacks in waters around Bab el Mandeb over the course of the month, including at least 22 attacks on targets in the Red Sea and 11 in the Gulf of Aden.

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



Other Malign Activity and Involvement in Israel-Hamas War:

Iran’s regime continued to [provide](#) weapons and intelligence to its proxy groups across the region. Qaani reportedly [told](#) Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah that Iran would support the terror group “with whatever weapons it needs” if it chose to enter a war with Israel.

- On February 28, the Kuwaiti daily *al-Jarida* [cited](#) a source close to the Quds Force as saying that Qaani told Nasrallah, “a decision of whether to enter a war with Israel rests with Hezbollah and that Iran would support it with whatever weapons it needs.”
 - » The source also confirmed that Iran approved new weapons shipments to Hezbollah, including anti-aircraft shoulder-launched missiles, drones, and vehicles.
- On February 27, *Iran International* [reported](#), citing the U.S. State Department, that Iran’s Regime has knowledge of Al-Qaeda activities within their borders and allows them to operate.

- » The report also cited the U.S. special coordinator for the State Department's Global Engagement Center, James Rubin, who recently spoke of "a new partnership between Iran and al-Qaeda."
- On February 17, Iran [unveiled](#) two new vehicle-mounted weapons it said were the locally made Arman anti-ballistic missile system and the Azarakhsh low-altitude air defense system.
 - » Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said, "the Arman missile system "can simultaneously confront six targets at a distance of 120 to 180 km," while the Azarakhsh missile system "can identify and destroy targets ... up to a range of 50 km with four ready-to-fire missiles."
- On February 11, Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, [arrived](#) in Damascus, Syria, to discuss the Gaza conflict with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.
- In a televised speech marking 45 years since the Islamic Revolution, on February 11, Raisi [called](#) on the United Nations to expel "the Zionist regime" from the United Nations, as the crowd chanted "Death to Israel."
- On February 10, Amir-Abdollahian [met](#) with Nasrallah in Lebanon. According to a statement from Hezbollah, the two discussed developments in Gaza and the situation in southern Lebanon.
- According to a February 9 *Daily Mail* report, Iran is [attempting to recruit](#) British Shiite Muslims visiting religious sites in the Middle East to spy on Jews and Iranian dissidents in the United Kingdom, and provide information regarding prominent targets such as synagogues. The report cites unnamed Israeli and British officials.
- On February 9, Meta permanently [banned](#) Iran's Supreme Ayatollah Ali Khamenei from Facebook and Instagram for violating its "Dangerous Organizations & Individuals policy," which prohibits users who proclaim a violent mission or are engaged in violence, including those who glorify, support, or represent U.S. designated terror groups.
- On February 6, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [announced](#) that the IDF had discovered "official documents of Hamas from 2020, including the details of the funds transferred from Iran to Hamas and [Yahya] Sinwar, between 2014 and 2020. More than 150 million dollars were transferred from Iran to Hamas."
- A February 6 *NBC News* report, citing several U.S. and one Middle Eastern official, [said](#) Iran continued providing weapons and intelligence to its proxies despite U.S. strikes against Iran-backed militants.
- On February 6, Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, [told NBC News](#), when asked about the Iranian regime's support for proxies, "in the case of Palestine, we're sending arms, we're training them and empowering them. But with the other parts of the region, the resistance parts in the region, we have some coordination, cooperation, consultation, and maybe some financing also."
 - » Despite clear evidence that Iran sent military advisors and weapons to the Houthis, Iravani [denied](#) that the regime supplies the Houthis with weapons and claimed the group acts independently.
- On February 4, the Houthis [released](#) a propaganda video showing their fighters training to carry out a raid on a mock Israeli base and taking soldiers hostage.
- On February 2, President Raisi [said](#) during a speech, "we will not start any war, but if anyone wants to bully us they will receive a strong response."
- On February 1, *Reuters* [reported](#) that the IRGC had begun withdrawing its senior officers and "dozens of mid-ranking officers" from Syria after a series of Israeli airstrikes killed half a

dozen IRGC officers, [including](#) the IRGC's intelligence chief for Syria, Gen. Sadegh Omidzadeh.

Nuclear: The IAEA [reported](#) that Iran had slightly decreased its stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium since the last quarterly report in late 2023, while its overall stockpile of uranium enriched to any level had [grown](#) by roughly 23 percent.

- On February 26, the IAEA [reported](#) that Iran had reduced its stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium by 6.8 kilograms to 121.5 kilograms since late October, a roughly five percent reduction.
 - » As of February 10, the IAEA [said](#) that Iran's total uranium stockpile, enriched to any level, was 5,525.5 kilograms, a 1,038.7 kilogram increase from the IAEA's November 2023 report.
 - » In JINSA's recent NatSec Brief, "[Don't Fall for Iran's Empty Nuclear Gesture](#)," Jonathan Ruhe and Yoni Tobin expand on why this slight reduction of Iran's stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium does not reduce the threat level posed by the regime's nuclear weapons program.
- On February 21, U.S. federal prosecutors [charged](#) Takeshi Ebisawa, a leader of Japan's Yakuza organized crime syndicate, with trafficking uranium and plutonium after he tried to smuggle the weapons-grade nuclear material from Myanmar to sell to Iran.
- On February 5, Mohammed Eslami, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, [announced](#) the construction of a new nuclear reactor in Isfahan.

Domestic/Human Rights: Iran's security services [detained](#) several people it accused of planning sabotage and terrorism, including several Azerbaijani nationals.

- According to Oslo-based Iran Human Rights, as of February 29, the Islamic Republic had [executed](#) 82 people in 2024.
- On February 14, a natural gas pipeline that runs 790 miles from Asaluyeh, a hub for Iran's offshore South Pars gas field, to the Caspian Sea [exploded](#). The manager of Iran's gas network control center, Saeed Aghli, told Iranian state television that a "sabotage and terrorist" action caused the explosion.
- On February 11, Iran's Deputy Interior Minister Majid Mirahmadi [announced](#) that security forces had detained an ISIS fighter attempting to cross into Iran from Iraq.
- On February 9, Khomeini [approved](#) amnesty or reduced sentences for over 2,800 prisoners. The regime periodically does so to reduce prison overcrowding.
- On February 7, Iran's security forces [arrested](#) several Azerbaijanis whom they accused of planning sabotage operations.
- On February 6, Iran's state media [reported](#) that two terrorists who were allegedly planning an attack had been detained in southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan province. According to the report, one was a member of ISIS, and the other was a member of the Ansar al Furqan, a Sunni extremist group comprised of ethnic Baluch.
- On February 6, senior police commander Colonel Kourosh Bazayr was [killed](#) in a deliberate hit-and-run. According to *Iran International*, Bazayr was a key figure in suppressing Fars Province during the 2022 nationwide protests.
- On February 4, reports [emerged](#) indicating that Iran's regime seeks to execute Swedish EU diplomat Johan Floderus on charges of espionage for Israel and "corruption on earth." Floderus was detained in April 2022 and has since been held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison.

Cyber: Iran-backed hackers continue to target Israel and other adversaries and [hacked](#) TV news programming in the U.K., Canada, and U.A.E. to broadcast an AI-generated message intended to incite viewers against Israel.

- On February 28, Google-owned cybersecurity firm Mandiant [reported](#) that IRGC-linked hackers created a fake site in support of the hostages taken by Hamas in order to carry out cyberattacks against and spread malware to Israeli targets.
- On February 27, Google Cloud's Mandiant [reported](#) that IRGC-linked hackers were targeting aerospace and defense firms in Israel and the U.A.E., as well as other countries in the Middle East.
- On February 8, Microsoft's Threat Analysis Centre (MTAC) [reported](#) that Iran-backed hackers had interrupted *BBC News* programming and other European TV networks in the U.K., Canada, and U.A.E. to broadcast a false news report on Gaza, with an AI-generated news anchor, that included unverified, graphic images of alleged Palestinian casualties.

Recent JINSA Publications on Iran:

- March 1: [Monthly Iran Projectile Tracker: February 2024, Ari Cicurel](#)
- February 28: JINSA-Vandenberg Gaza Futures Task Force [Report: *The Day After: A Plan for Gaza*](#)
- February 27: ["Don't Fall for Iran's Empty Nuclear Gesture," Jonathan Ruhe and Yoni Tobin](#)
- February 9: ["U.S. Should Leverage Middle East Partners to Boost Space Capabilities," Yoni Tobin](#)
- February 7: ["Iran Projectile and Malign Activity Tracker Update 2/7/24," Ari Cicurel](#)
- February 6: ["Stop Letting Iran Hide Behind its Proxies and Strike Them Head-on," *The Hill*, VADM John W. Miller, USN \(ret.\) and Ari Cicurel](#)
- February 1: [Infographic: Iran's Wide Variety of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle \(UAV\) Capabilities](#)