



Unprecedented Iranian Regime Attack Against Israel

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On April 13-14, the Iranian regime launched an unprecedented strike against Israel, both in terms of scale and as Tehran's first-ever direct attack against Israeli territory. Despite concerted and commendable combined efforts by Israel, the United States, Arab partners, and others to render the massive barrage of over 300 drones and missiles largely ineffective, and despite Iran quickly signaling its desire to avoid further escalation, Tehran will only be encouraged to conduct further large-scale and potentially devastating attacks if American officials treat this as a one-off success for Israel's self-defense. The United States should publicly support Israel's and its other regional partners' ability to respond to such provocative aggression, including by providing military capabilities to bolster Israel's deterrence and by strengthening U.S.-led efforts on integrated regional air and missile defense.

What Happened?

- On April 13-14, the Iranian regime and its proxies launched [mass barrages](#) for a total of over 300 projectiles, including approximately 170 one-way attack drones, 120 surface-to-surface ballistic missiles (SSM), and 30 land-attack cruise missiles (LACM) at Israel, primarily from Iranian territory with minor additional projectile attacks launched from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen.
 - » The unprecedented attack was in response to an April 1 [airstrike](#), attributed to Israel, on an Iranian consulate facility in Damascus that killed seven Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers, including Mo-hamad Reza Zahedi, who oversaw Iran's proxy group activities in Lebanon and Syria.
 - » The attack lightly damaged Israel's Nevatim airbase in the Negev, home to Israel's advanced F-35 stealth fighter aircraft, and caused approximately twelve injuries, including critically wounding a seven-year-old girl.
 - » Israel, along with the United States, the United Kingdom, Jordan, France, and other partners intercepted roughly 99 percent of the incoming threats, and all of the interceptions took place outside of Israel's airspace, according to the IDF Spokesperson. The United States and regional partners, including Saudi Arabia, also provided early warning assistance to Israel.

Iranian retaliatory strikes on Israel



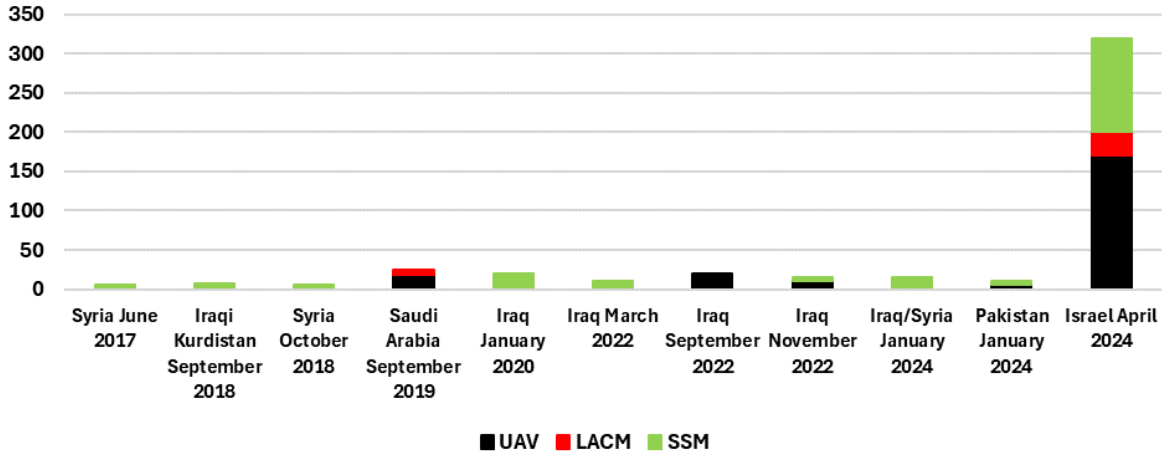
Location of strikes is not exact. As of 10 p.m. Eastern, April 13.

Source: [The Washington Post](#)

Why Is It Important?

- The combined scale and audacity of the Iranian regime’s attack on the one hand—firing over 300 projectiles in its first-ever direct attack on Israel from its own territory—and Tehran’s clear efforts to telegraph its attack (and its termination) both diplomatically and operationally on the other hand, suggest the Iranian regime sought to restore its recently-eroding deterrence against Israel and dissuade the United States from fulfilling its pledges to support Israel, while still trying to minimize the risk of a prohibitively costly Israeli and/or U.S. response.
 - » The size and nature of the Iranian regime’s attack likely was influenced by the dramatic successes of Israel’s [strategic shift](#) in recent months—culminating in the April 1 strike in Damascus—that imposed steadily greater costs directly on Iranian forces, in order to compel the IRGC to pull back from Israel’s borders, reduce its support for Hezbollah, and coerce Hezbollah to end its military attacks and threats to northern Israel from Lebanon.
 - In parallel, IRGC-backed attacks on U.S. targets in the region had [largely paused](#) since early February, after a significant escalation of U.S. airstrikes on Iran-aligned forces and personnel in response to a lethal proxy attack on American servicemembers in Jordan.
 - » By announcing publicly, via the United Nations, that it had terminated its response shortly after launching the massive projectile barrages, the Iranian regime sought to offer an implicit offramp for Israel and the United States, frame any future Israeli and/or U.S. action as escalatory and destabilizing, and coalesce international opinion around an immediate cessation of hostilities and against any military response to Tehran’s aggression—all while also demonstrating its appreciable offensive capabilities and conveying its willingness to cross unspoken redlines by attacking Israel directly and unmistakably from its own territory.
 - After the attack, IRGC Commander Hossein Salami [claimed](#), “we have decided to create a new equation, which is that if from now on the Zionist regime attacks our interests, assets, personalities, and citizens, anywhere and at any point we will retaliate against them;” the IRGC also [cautioned](#), “any threat by the United States and the Zionist regime will result in a proportional and reciprocal response from Iran.”
 - Despite the vast majority of its projectiles being intercepted, the Iranian regime likely will gain invaluable know-how and experience from this attack, both in terms of its own capacity to conduct mass long-range precision attacks and the existing abilities of Israel, the United States, and key Arab countries to counter its missile and drone capabilities.
 - The regime also likely sought to achieve a domestic win by successfully striking inside Israel and has launched a disinformation campaign to [claim](#) that its attacks hit their targets, despite Israel/partners intercepting roughly 99 percent of the projectiles.
- The Iranian regime’s attack represents the largest one-way attack drone operation in history, possibly the largest single LACM and SSM attacks in history, and the regime’s largest offensive military operation since at least the closing phase of the Iran-Iraq War in the late 1980s—all of which underscore the threats posed by its [encirclement](#) of Israel, U.S. bases, and Arab partners around the Middle East with a “[ring of fire](#)” of increasingly powerful, precise, and long-range attack drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles.

Projectile Attacks from Iranian Territory

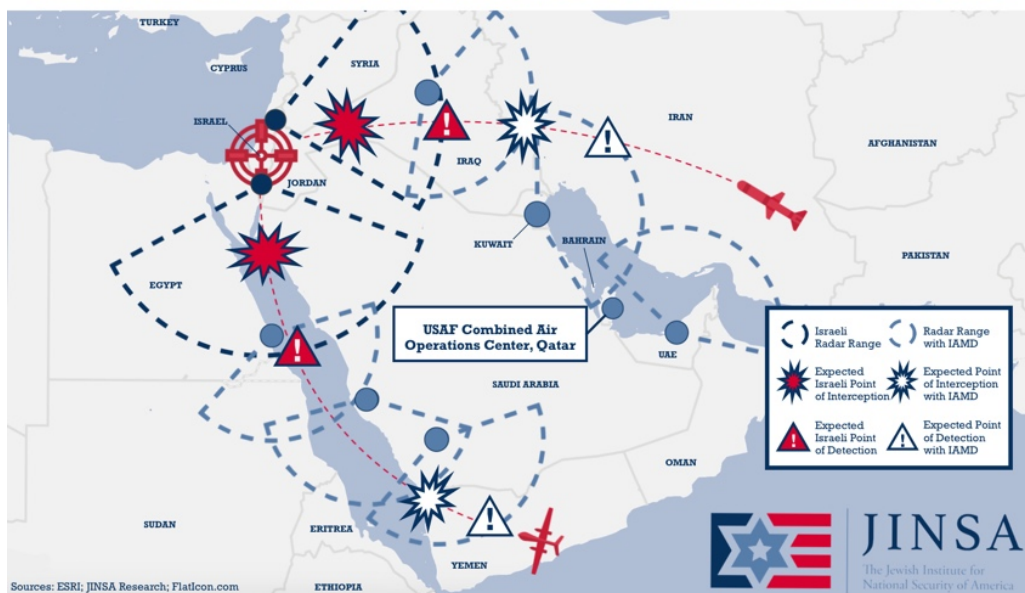


- The overall ineffectiveness of this attack in terms of impact on the ground in Israel should not obscure the serious dangers posed by drones and missiles in Iranian and proxy arsenals:
 - » Tehran’s telegraphing of the attack, which also occurred at an unprecedentedly long distance, offered appreciable early warning for Israel’s sophisticated multilayered air defense network, and also helped enable U.S. and other partner forces to identify, track, and intercept large numbers of projectiles well before they reached Israel.
 - » By contrast, the Iranian regime’s previous major projectile attacks—namely, on vital Saudi energy infrastructure in 2019 and on U.S. forces in Iraq in 2020—were much more

effective, despite being far smaller, because they occurred at much shorter range with significantly less early warning and were against little or no effective air defenses.

- The 2020 attack, the largest-ever SSM barrage targeting U.S. forces, was a near-run disaster that could have killed dozens of American servicemembers and triggered a major U.S.-Iran conflict. As it was, the strike inflicted traumatic brain injuries on more than 100 American servicemembers and destroyed barracks, aircraft hangars, and equipment—an attack that Iranian forces thought was impactful enough to contribute to their reckless [shootdown](#) of a civilian airliner, which likely was mistaken for U.S. warplanes responding to the Iranian missile attack.
- » Moreover, an even larger projectile assault by Hezbollah, possibly in combination with Iran and/or other proxies, could overwhelm even Israel’s advanced air and missile defenses, given that Hezbollah could fire an estimated 6,000 or more [projectiles](#) per day at the outset of a major conflict—and with far less reliable early warning than the Iranian regime provided on April 13.
- Israeli, U.S., U.K., Jordanian, French, and Saudi countermeasures to intercept the salvos of attack drones and missiles underscores both the nascent potential—and more importantly, the acute need regionwide—for more truly integrated regional air and missile defenses through the auspices of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), as explained in a [major JINSA report](#) last year.
- » The Iranian regime’s attack represented the largest stress-test to date of Israel’s entire multilayered network and CENTCOM-led efforts to strengthen Middle East air defense cooperation, including developing a regional integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) network.
- IAMD would strengthen both the capacity and capability to neutralize projectile threats by providing distinct operational advantages in terms of enhanced early warning, tracking, and interception potential.

Individual vs Integrated Air and Missile Defense in the Middle East



- In terms of building out the IAMD architecture, the assets that the United States, Israel, and other regional partners used to thwart the Iranian regime’s attack demonstrated that there are already advanced U.S.-supplied platforms in the region.

- » The political and diplomatic benefits of enhanced IAMD efforts also were on display, as Israeli-U.S.-Arab coordination belies Iran’s claims that Israel was isolated over the Gaza conflict, underscores shared perceptions of threats from Tehran and its proxies, and reinforces the real benefits of clear U.S. leadership in encouraging its partners to help shoulder the growing burdens of regional defense.

Overview of Major Middle East Air Defense Systems That Could Form U.S.-led IAMD 

Country Location	U.S. Deployments	Currently Deployed by Regional Country	Awaiting Delivery to Regional Country	In Acquisition / Development Process
Bahrain	2 Patriot PAC-3		2 Patriot PAC-3	
Egypt		20 I-HAWK 25 Avenger		
Iraq	C-RAM Centurion	8 Avenger		
Israel		Arrow 2 & Arrow 3 Barak-8 David's Sling Iron Dome 4 PAC-2 "Yahalom" SPYDER		Iron Beam Laser-Guided Missile Defense System
Jordan		14 I-HAWK		
Kuwait		8 Patriot PAC-3 5 I-HAWK	NASAMS	
Oman		NASAMS		THAAD
Qatar	2 Patriot PAC-3	10 Patriot PAC-3	NASAMS	THAAD
Saudi Arabia	2 Patriot PAC-3	24 Patriot PAC-3 10 HAWK 6 I-HAWK	7 THAAD	
U.A.E.	2 Patriot PAC-3	9 Patriot PAC-3 2 THAAD 5 I-HAWK Barak-8		

- Though it should be commended for its strong signals of support for Israel in the run-up to the Iranian regime’s attack, and though it provided crucial early warning and helped intercept incoming barrages, the Biden administration already is undercutting the strategic and operational benefits of these moves and playing into Tehran’s hands by publicly calling for Israel to avoid any response.
 - » As the Iranian regime telegraphed its looming attack, top American officials reinforced their public warnings to Tehran, moved additional U.S. forces into the region, and coordinated directly with their Israeli counterparts on how to defend against any impending aggression.
 - On April 10 President Biden [said](#), “as I told Prime Minister Netanyahu, our commitment to Israel’s security against these threats from Iran and its proxies is ironclad. Let me say it again, ironclad. We’re going to do all we can to protect Israel’s security.”
 - On April 11, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [assured](#) his Israeli counterpart that Israel could count on full U.S. support to defend Israel against any Iranian attacks.
 - That same day, CENTCOM Commander General Michael “Erik” Kurilla publicly [visited](#) Israel and [extended](#) his stay to coordinate the two countries’ responses to any Iranian attack. GEN Kurilla’s presence in Israel ahead of the attack was a testament to Israel’s transfer from European Command (EUCOM) to CENTCOM’s area of responsibility in 2021, which [JINSA](#) had recommended [since 2018](#).

- The day before the Iranian regime’s attack, the president [repeated](#) his message to Iran from right after October 7: “don’t.” Biden also noted, “we are devoted to the defense of Israel. We will support Israel. We will help defend Israel and Iran will not succeed.”
- In the immediate aftermath of the Iranian attack, however, administration officials intermixed continued [strong backing](#) for Israel’s self-defense with equally unequivocal concerns about the potential for further escalation and pressure on Israel to view its defense against the attack as a strategic success that merits no Israeli response.
 - » Shortly after the [attack](#), President Biden reportedly told Prime Minister Netanyahu: “You got a win. Take the win,” as he announced his intention to convene leaders from the Group of Seven (G-7) to coordinate a [diplomatic](#) response to the Iranian regime’s aggression.

What Should the United States Do Next?

- Building on its strong support for Israel in the run-up to the attack, the Biden administration must proceed on the basis that the Iranian regime’s actions represent a major escalation in its long-running efforts to threaten the entire region. Consequently, any efforts to treat Tehran’s strike as a one-off retaliation, and the downing of most of the projectiles as sufficient success for Israel, actually will encourage further Iran-backed attacks and escalation against Israel, U.S. forces and bases in the region, and Arab partners.
 - » Rather than continuing to advertise their [overriding concerns](#) to avoid escalation at all costs, as they did yet again right after the Iranian regime’s attack, administration officials must make clear that America’s “ironclad” support includes Israel’s right to respond to such attacks and to prevent further aggression by Tehran and its proxies in the future.
 - » In tandem, President Biden should strengthen joint deterrence by stating plainly that such actions from the Iranian regime pose unacceptable threats to U.S. forces and interests in the region and end unnecessary public declarations that letting Tehran’s largest-ever attack and brazen escalation go unpunished is somehow a major win for Israel.
 - » The United States also must make abundantly clear to its Arab partners who took accepted risks of Iranian or proxy retaliation by openly helping to mitigate the attack, foremost Jordan, that it will support their efforts to bolster shared defenses against Iran-backed aggression.
- The scale of the Iranian regime’s attack and of the joint efforts to mitigate its effectiveness underlines the increasingly munitions-intensive nature of conflicts involving Tehran’s “axis of resistance” and should prompt expedited and expanded U.S.-led efforts to resupply Israel, including:
 - » Transferring interceptors for Israel’s various air and missile defense systems, including Iron Dome, David’s Sling, and Arrow, all of which are co-produced with the United States.
 - » Expediting the transfer to Israel of key aerial platforms and munitions—namely, F-35 and F-15 multirole combat aircraft, KC-46A aerial refueling tankers, and air-to-air missiles—like those which played key roles in helping defend against the Iranian regime’s April 13 attack.
 - Israel already has arranged payments to the United States for many of these platforms.

- » Replenishing and updating the prepositioned U.S. munitions stockpile in Israel (WRSA-I) with appropriate munitions and materiel, from which either country can draw in wartime.
- » Congress also finally must pass its [long-stalled bill](#) to fund vital military assistance to Israel.
- CENTCOM must [accelerate](#) efforts establish a common operating picture (COP) with Middle East partners as part of its larger work to develop more coherent regional IAMD, and the Biden administration should send clear messages of the importance it attaches to this project in light of the Iranian regime's increasingly acute threats to longstanding U.S. partners and regional stability.
 - » To support these efforts, the United States also must ensure that its assets in the region, and those of its partners, have adequate air and missile defenses to help deter or deny future projectile attacks from Tehran and its proxies.
- The Biden administration's pursuit of [more robust](#) multilateral diplomacy should include working with its G-7 partners, particularly Britain, France, and Germany, to "snap back" UN Security Council sanctions against Iran's drone and missile proliferation, and to press the European Union to finally designate the IRGC in its entirety as a terrorist organization.
 - » The administration also must seriously enforce statutory U.S. sanctions on Iran, particularly its oil exports to China, both to signal stronger U.S. resolve to punish Iranian aggression and to cut off key revenue sources for Iran's drone and missile programs.