The Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Research Institute
At the Israeli Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center

Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

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Key Trends

- **Iran's Supreme Leader emphasized the importance of strategic support for Hezbollah.**
- **The Iraqi Prime Minister's visit to Iran underscored the current disagreements between the two countries.**
- **Iran is increasing its involvement in Yemen amid the renewed escalation between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia.**
- **The confrontation between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis is spilling over into the Iraqi arena.**

Highlights[1]

- Iran's Supreme Leader sent a letter to Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem, reaffirming Iran's support for Hezbollah and linking the ceasefire in Lebanon to the end of the war between Iran and the United States.
- An attempt by the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence to infiltrate an operational cell into Israel to carry out attacks against senior Israeli officials was foiled.
- The Iranian leadership used the Iraqi Prime Minister's visit to Tehran as an opportunity to address the repercussions of his visit to the United States and the growing pressure to disarm the Shiite militias in Iraq.
- Iran reportedly transported IRGC officers and equipment for manufacturing missiles and drones to the Houthis in Yemen.
- The Houthis claimed responsibility for attacks against Saudi oil tankers and energy facilities. They denied closing the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, asserting that they were only imposing a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia until it lifted the blockade on Yemen.
- Israeli assessments indicate that three drones intercepted near the Jordanian border were launched by the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

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

- The United States and Saudi Arabia struck targets belonging to the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq in response to dozens of attacks against US forces and Saudi energy infrastructure over a 72-hour period. The militias reported at least 20 fatalities.

Iran's Involvement in Lebanon

- Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei sent a letter to Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem emphasizing the need to continue the "resistance" and reaffirming the linkage between the ceasefire in Lebanon and the ceasefire between Iran and the United States. He stated that at a time when the peoples of the world have grown weary of the "oppression and tyranny" of the American administration and the "criminal Zionists" who are destroying humanity, there is no alternative but jihad and the "resistance," and that perseverance along this path will grant the fighters of truth the promised divine victory. Khamenei added that as Hezbollah in Lebanon stands like a solid rock against the "savage aggression of the Zionist regime" and its supporters, its steadfastness has become an inspiring message for the free peoples of the world in their struggle to liberate themselves from the oppression and tyranny of "global arrogance" and its agents. The Iranian Supreme Leader stressed that the Islamic Republic has adopted the defense of oppressed yet powerful fighters as its strategic policy and has made the preservation of Lebanon's territorial integrity and the complete and unconditional removal of the "aggression of the Zionist regime" the primary condition for any agreement ending the imposed war with the United States (Fars, July 26, 2026).
- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking at the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, condemned the continued Israeli strikes in Lebanon. He stated that the continuation of these actions threatens security and stability in the region (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 23, 2026).
- "Several sources" reported that the Iranian leadership is disappointed with Hezbollah's performance during the latest round of fighting, given the gap between Iran's long-term investment in the organization and Hezbollah's achievements on the battlefield. It was further claimed that Iranian officials believe the damage to Hezbollah's military infrastructure, weapons depots, and weapons systems has significantly reduced its ability to sustain a prolonged campaign. Against this backdrop, Iran is reportedly seeking to tighten its control over the organization by expanding the involvement of IRGC liaison officers in reconstruction efforts, force buildup, and decision-making processes. It was also claimed that the key military and political decisions are being made by officials directly linked to Tehran (Lebanon Debate, July 24, 2026).

Iran and the Developments in the Palestinian Arena

▶ Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, addressed developments in the Gaza Strip and stated that “the continuing humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip, the ongoing occupation, the killing of civilians, and the widespread destruction of vital infrastructure” are among the main threats to peace and security at both the regional and international levels. He emphasized the need for an immediate cessation of military operations against civilians, the lifting of the “siege,” unrestricted access to humanitarian aid, and support for the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 23, 2026).

Abbas Araghchi speaking at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 23, 2026)

Iran’s Threats Against Israel

▶ The Israeli Prime Minister’s Office announced that an Iranian Ministry of Intelligence plot to carry out a terrorist attack had been foiled. According to the statement, the Ministry sought to infiltrate an operational cell into Israel to facilitate attacks against senior Israeli officials inside Israel. The statement said that officers from the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence, acting through intermediaries, had recruited Israelis or individuals with the ability to enter Israel to collect intelligence on potential targets and methods for carrying out attacks. As part of the operation, the Ministry, through two criminal figures residing in Iran, recruited a French resident, Thurot Ozkur, known as “Philip,” and tasked him with recruiting members for a cell that would enter Israel and attack senior officials in exchange for payment (Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, July 23, 2026).

Iran’s Involvement in Iraq

▶ Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian met with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Faleh al-Zaidi, who arrived in Tehran for an official visit, and signed a joint economic memorandum of understanding with him (IRNA, July 23, 2026). During his visit, the Iraqi Prime Minister also met with Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei. During the meeting,

Qalibaf stated that the “Zionist regime” is the enemy of all Islamic countries and stressed that cooperation between Iran and Iraq contributes significantly to the stability of the region and the Muslim world. He added that such cooperation is of great importance in preserving the unity of Islamic countries against the “Zionist regime” and that the two countries can solve many of the region’s problems through this cooperation. The Iraqi Prime Minister conveyed the greetings of the Iraqi people and government to Qalibaf and the Iranian people, stating that the two countries are not only neighbors but also partners sharing a common destiny (ISNA, July 23, 2026).

Signing of the memorandum of understanding between the President of Iran and the Prime Minister of Iraq (IRNA, July 23, 2026)

- A “senior Iraqi official” stated that the Iraqi Prime Minister concluded his visit to Tehran with the impression that there was no possibility of maintaining close or friendly relations with Iran after receiving what was described as “harsh rhetoric” that came close to outright rejection. According to the report, Tehran regards al-Zaidi as having deviated from the Iranian line since announcing in May 2026 the formation of a government perceived as aligned with the “American spirit.” The Iraqi source added that al-Zaidi was surprised when Iranian officials demanded that Iraq fully repay its outstanding debts to Iran for gas supplies (Al-Modon, July 28, 2026).
- An “Iraqi security source” reported that IRGC Qods Force Commander Esmail Qaani had recently visited Iraq, where he met with several leaders of the pro-Iranian militias and informed them that the coordination mechanism between the parties had come to an end. According to the report, Qaani stated that each organization would henceforth operate independently in accordance with evolving circumstances. The Iraqi source explained that Iran assesses that continued coordination is no longer suited to the new reality, given the differing positions among the militias regarding disarmament and the future of the US-led international coalition mission, with some of the militias expressing support for disarmament and integration into state institutions. The Coordination Committee, which claimed attacks under the name “The Islamic Resistance in Iraq,” included Kata’ib

Hezbollah, Harakat al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and several other militias (Aram News, July 22, 2026).

The Houthis in Yemen

Iranian involvement

- It was reported that on July 13, 2026, Iran transported IRGC officers and equipment used to manufacture short- and medium-range missiles and drones on a flight from Tehran to Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen. According to two Iranian sources, between 10 and 21 IRGC personnel, including senior commanders, were aboard a Mahan Air aircraft that had been scheduled to land in Sana'a but was diverted to al-Hodeidah following a Saudi strike on Sana'a Airport. The officers were reportedly sent to support Houthi operations in Yemen and provide training on new missile systems. The report also stated that Iran had sent gold aboard the aircraft to finance Houthi activities (Reuters, July 23, 2026).

The Houthi-Saudi conflict

- Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam denied that the Houthis had "closed" the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, stating that their actions were limited to imposing a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia in response to Saudi Arabia's blockade of Yemen and its refusal to accept any "fair approach" to a solution that would guarantee the security, sovereignty, and independence of the "Yemeni people." In a separate statement, Abdulsalam argued that Saudi Arabia's policy of preventing the operation of Sana'a Airport while simultaneously claiming to defend Yemen's sovereignty resembled Israel's conduct in its "wars of aggression," characterized by lies, arrogance, and hatred (Mohammed Abdulsalam's X account, July 24–25, 2026).
- During the week, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for attacks on three Saudi oil tankers using missiles and drones, as well as two "high-quality" attacks against Saudi Aramco facilities in Jizan and Yanbu using dozens of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones (Yahya Saree's Telegram channel, July 22–29, 2026). A "Houthi military source" stated that the attacks demonstrate that Saudi Arabia's vital oil facilities are now part of the Houthis' target bank. The source further claimed that Saudi Arabia is incapable of protecting its oil and gas facilities from Houthi attacks and that no "military alliances" established with the United States, regional states, or other countries would protect it from "Yemeni wrath." According to the same source, the Houthis are capable of striking anywhere in Saudi Arabia, and therefore the Kingdom will continue to suffer "painful" attacks unless it unconditionally accepts the Houthi demands, foremost among them lifting the naval and air blockade, resolving the issue of salaries for Houthi government employees,

paying compensation, withdrawing from Yemeni territory, dismantling militias supported by Saudi Arabia, and ending funding for “terrorist organizations” (Al-Akhbar, July 28, 2026).

- IRGC Qods Force Commander Esmail Qaani called on Saudi Arabia to lift the blockade on Yemen. In a statement issued following the escalation between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, Qaani wrote that lifting the 11-year blockade on Yemen is a just and humanitarian demand on behalf of the “oppressed people” of that country. He added that Muslims around the world expect Saudi Arabia, which regards itself as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, to devote its capabilities and resources to supporting the Palestinian people and confronting the “crimes of the Zionist regime” instead of continuing war and pressure against an “oppressed” Muslim nation. According to Qaani, efforts to save Gaza are a source of pride, whereas continuing the blockade of the Yemeni people is not (Sepah News, July 25, 2026).
- Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei called for efforts to achieve a just solution to the crisis in Yemen. He stated that Iran supports every initiative promoting dialogue and a political settlement aimed at restoring peace, security, and stability in Yemen. He further argued that US policy in the region has exacerbated the situation and that security and stability must instead be achieved through dialogue, cooperation, and understanding among the countries of the region (Mehr, July 25, 2026).

The Pro-Iranian Militias in Iraq

- On July 27, 2026, two drones were intercepted near the Jordanian border before entering Israeli territory. A day later, another drone was intercepted near the Jordanian border before crossing into Israel. The source of the launches was reported to be under investigation (IDF Spokesperson, July 27–28, 2026). Israeli media reported that the assessment in Israel is that the drones were launched by the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq (Israeli media, July 28, 2026).
- On the night of July 28–29, 2026, the United States and Saudi Arabia carried out precision airstrikes against the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq after the militias had conducted more than 30 drone attacks against US forces and Saudi energy infrastructure within 72 hours, under the direction of the IRGC. According to a statement issued by US Central Command (CENTCOM), the strikes targeted logistics centers and weapons storage facilities in eastern Iraq. The statement also noted that between February and April 2026, the militias carried out more than 600 attacks against US personnel and facilities (CENTCOM X account, July 29, 2026). The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the umbrella organization of the militias, announced that at least 20 operatives were killed and 32 others wounded in strikes that hit PMF sites in the provinces of Baghdad, Wasit, Nineveh, Basra, Kirkuk, Karbala, and

Diyala. It was assessed, however, that the actual number of casualties was higher (Sabereen News, July 29, 2026).

One of the sites targeted in the strikes (Unews Agency Telegram channel, July 29, 2026)

- Earlier, Saraya Awliya al-Dam, which is considered a front organization linked to Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, denied responsibility for any attacks in Iraq, Kuwait, or elsewhere in recent days, contrary to media reports. The militia also asserted that it is not subordinate to any entity or organization and does not function as a front organization for any group, as has been alleged (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, July 25, 2026).
- Abu Alaa al-Wala'i, the Secretary-General of Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, commented on the developing confrontation between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia, stating that the "philosophy of deterrence" is not limited to nuclear weapons and that the geographical location of the "peoples of the resistance" gives them unique influence over global trade routes. He further argued that if the "gates of life" have been closed to the Houthis, they have the right to close the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. He called on Saudi Arabia to lift the blockade imposed on the Houthis, thereby reopening the strait (Abu Alaa al-Wala'i's X account, July 24, 2026).
- An "Iraqi security source" reported that Iraqi security forces had raided a compound believed to have served as a headquarters for Kata'ib Hezbollah and as a workshop for manufacturing drones in Baghdad Province. According to the source, unknown actors had previously used the compound to launch drones toward the US Embassy in Baghdad and the city's international airport (Shafaq News, July 24, 2026).
- A "senior commander in the pro-Iranian militias" claimed that militia fighters had been deployed in Iran in preparation for a possible US ground attack on Iranian territory. No details were provided regarding the size of the force or its deployment locations (Iran International, July 27, 2026).