

Iran Update Special Report, March 15, 2026



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Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: ISW-CTP will not publish morning updates covering the war with Iran on March 14 and 15. ISW-CTP will publish threads on its social media channels in the morning on these days that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.

Key Takeaways

1. Iran is reportedly using Russian-produced, possibly modified Shahed drones to target US bases and Gulf countries, according to Ukrainian intelligence. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told CNN on March 15 that he has seen intelligence which "100 percent" confirms that Iran has used Russian-produced Shahed drones "with Russian details" to attack US bases in the Middle East.
2. The US-Israeli combined force continued to target Iranian military and internal security infrastructure across Iran. CTP-ISW has observed strikes in six provinces since 3:00 PM ET on March 14.
3. IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Majid Mousavi and Iranian media claimed on March 15 that Iran launched a Sejil ballistic missile at Israel for the first time during the war.
4. Iranian officials are attempting to obscure Iran's responsibility for recent drone and ballistic missile attacks targeting Gulf states, likely to try to strain relations between the United States and Israel and Gulf countries.
5. US and Israeli intelligence reportedly assess that the IRGC is making decisions because Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is wounded. CBS News reported on March 15 that the US Government believes that the IRGC is "calling the shots."
6. Neither US nor Iranian officials currently appear to be seeking a ceasefire agreement. US President Donald Trump told NBC News on March 14 that "Iran wants to make a deal," but that he is not currently prepared to make a deal to end the war with Iran because "[Iran's] terms aren't good enough yet."

Toplines

Iran is reportedly using Russian-produced and possibly modified Shahed drones to target US bases and Gulf countries, according to Ukrainian intelligence. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told CNN on March 15 that he has seen intelligence that “100 percent” confirms that Iran has used Russian-produced Shahed drones “with Russian details” to attack US bases in the Middle East.[1] Zelensky added that Ukrainian intelligence assesses that Russia is sharing intelligence with Iran.[2] Russia began domestically producing Shahed drones in 2023 and has adapted them to increase their firepower and defensive capabilities.[3] These adaptations include equipping Shaheds with Verba shoulder-fired man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) to increase the Shahed’s capacity to target enemy aircraft.[4] Iran recently purchased 500 Verbas and 2,500 9M336 infrared homing missiles from Russia in December 2025, according to the *Financial Times* in February 2026.[5] Russia’s provision of Shahed drones to Iran would mark a notable shift in Russia’s support for Iran in the war. Russia has thus far shared targeting intelligence and advanced drone tactics with Iran, but it has not, up till now, provided material support to Iran.

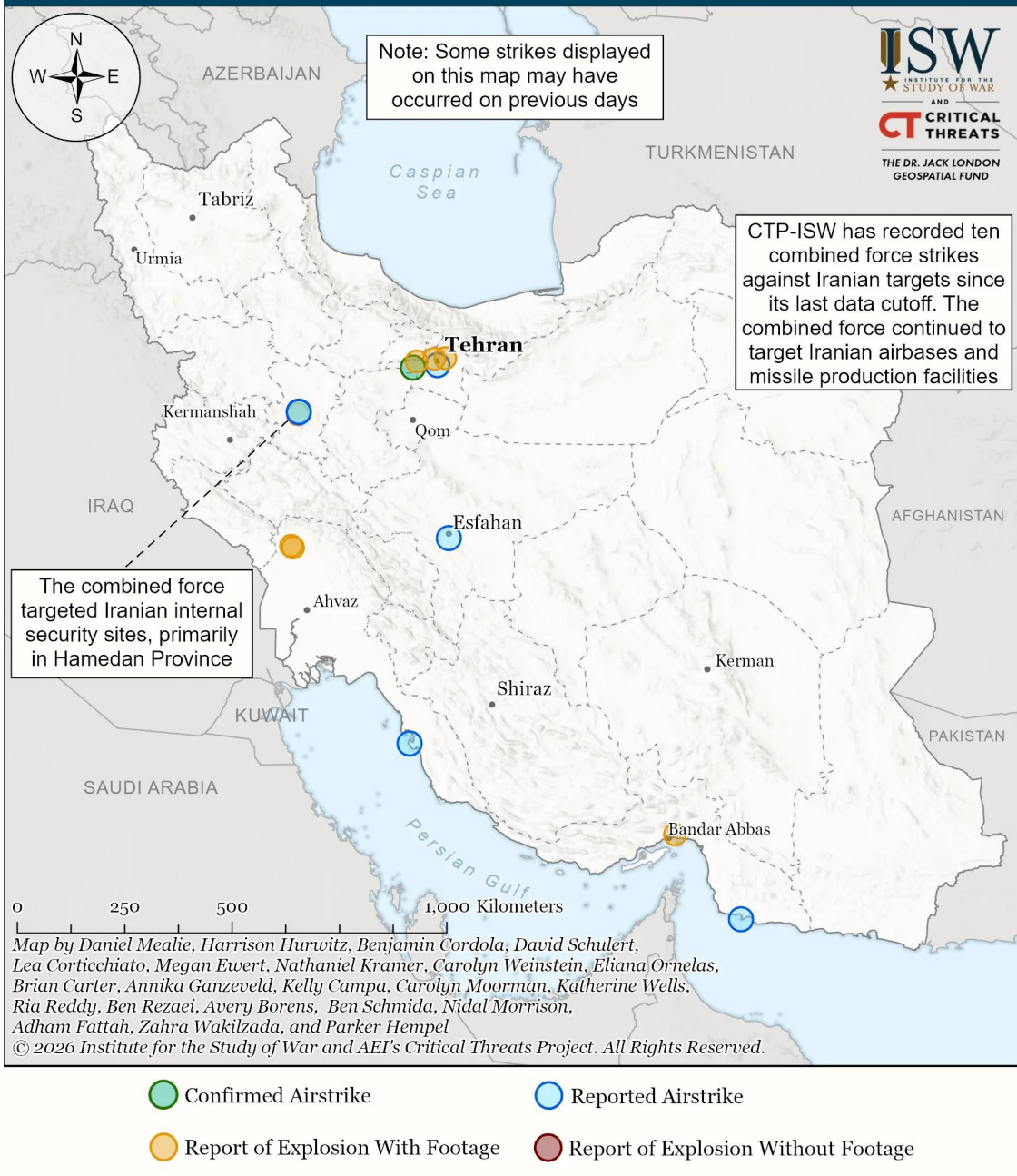
US and Israeli Air Campaign

The combined force continued to target Iranian military sites and missile production facilities. Anti-regime media reported on March 15 that the combined force struck the 4th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase in Dezful, Khuzestan Province, and the 9th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province.[6] An Israeli analyst reported on March 15 that the combined force struck buildings linked to ballistic missile production west of Tehran City, citing an Israel Defense Forces spokesperson.[7] The buildings are located near the Malard Missile Launch Site. An Iranian citizen told an Iranian open-source intelligence (OSINT) account that the combined force struck two sites in Malard.[8] Anti-regime media separately reported on March 14 that the combined force struck an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy ammunition depot in Bushehr Province and the Bandar-e Jask Port in Hormozgan Province.[9] The Artesh Navy 2nd Naval District is based in Bandar-e Jask.[10]

The combined force continued to target Iranian internal security sites. An OSINT account and an Israeli journalist reported on March 15 that the combined force targeted an unspecified IRGC site and Basij headquarters in Hamedan City, Hamedan Province.[11] The IRGC Ground Forces Ansar ol Hossein Provincial Unit is based in Hamedan City, and the IRGC Ground Forces 32nd Ansar ol Hossein Brigade is based north of Hamedan City. This brigade deployed to Syria to support the Assad regime during the Syrian civil war.[12] The combined force also struck the Hamedan City Law Enforcement Command (LEC) Headquarters.[13]

US and Israeli Strikes in Iran

Between March 14, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET

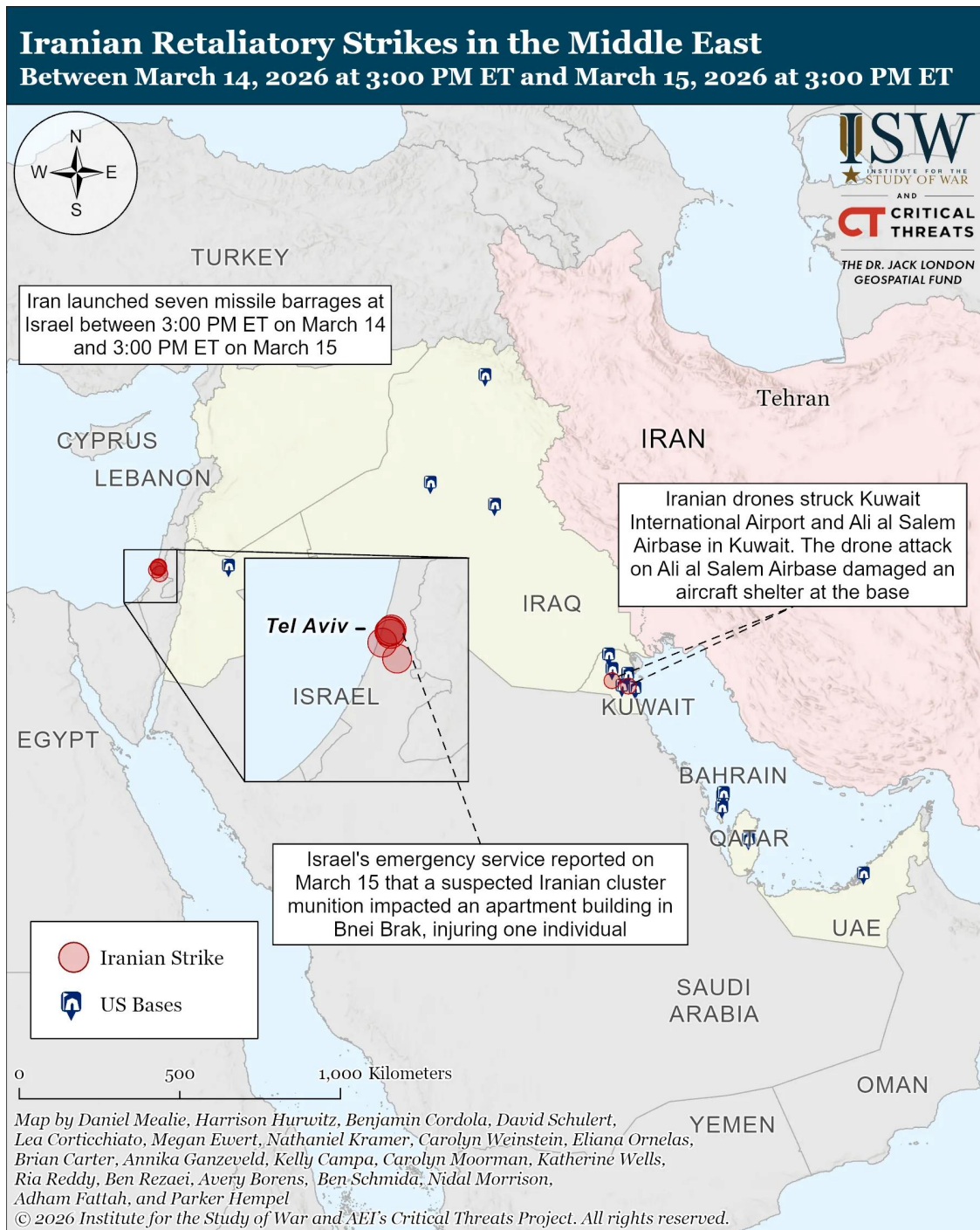


Iranian Retaliation

Iran launched seven missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 14 and 3:00 PM ET on March 15.[14] An OSINT account reported on March 14 that an Iranian missile impacted in Ramla, central Israel, causing a fire.[15] The same OSINT account reported on March 15 that an Iranian cluster munition impacted in Tel Aviv.[16] Israel's emergency service, Magen David Adom, reported on March 15 that a suspected Iranian cluster munition impacted an apartment building in Bnei Brak, central Israel, injuring one individual.[17] Magen David Adom also reported that an Iranian missile impacted in Ramat Gan, central Israel, injuring one individual.[18]

IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Majid Mousavi and Iranian media claimed on March 15 that Iran launched a Sejil ballistic missile at Israel for the first time

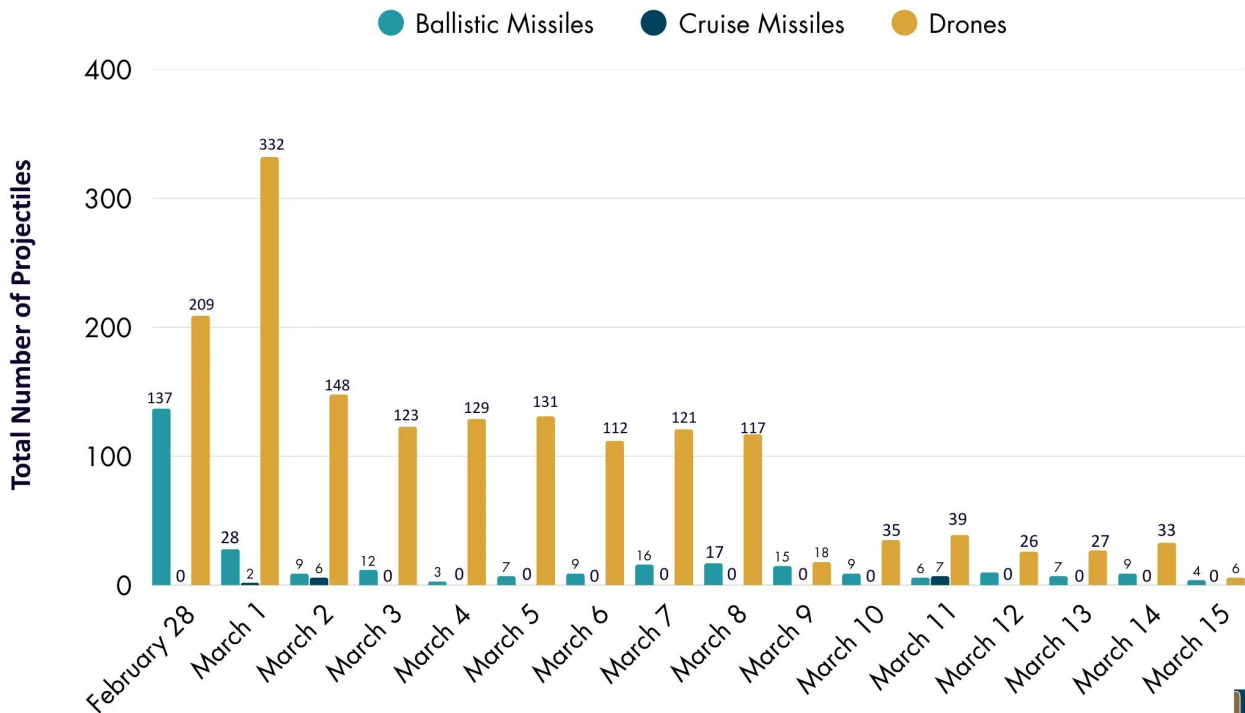
during the war.[19] The Sejil is a two-stage, solid-fueled medium-range ballistic missile with a range of around 2,000 kilometers.[20] Iran previously launched a Sejil ballistic missile targeting Israel during the June 2025 Israel-Iran War.[21]



Iran continued to attack the Gulf states on March 14 and 15, but Gulf air defense systems intercepted the majority of Iranian projectiles. ISW-CTP only observed reports of two impacts in the Gulf states between 3:00 PM ET on March 14 and 3:00 PM ET on March 15. Iranian drones struck Kuwait International Airport and Ali al Salem Airbase in Kuwait.[22] The Iranian drone attack on Ali al Salem Airbase damaged an aircraft shelter at the base.[23] Saudi air defenses intercepted six Iranian ballistic missiles and 32 Iranian drones between 3:00 PM ET on March 14 and 3:00 PM ET on March 15.[24] The Kuwaiti Army reported on March 15 that it detected 14 Iranian drones and intercepted eight Iranian drones, while three drones impacted infrastructure and three fell in open areas.[25] The Bahrain Defense Force announced that it intercepted nine Iranian drones on March 15.[26] The Emirati Defense Ministry

announced on March 15 that it intercepted four Iranian ballistic missiles and six Iranian drones.[27] Iranian drone and missile attacks targeting the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have significantly decreased since the start of the war on February 28.

Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 15, 2026



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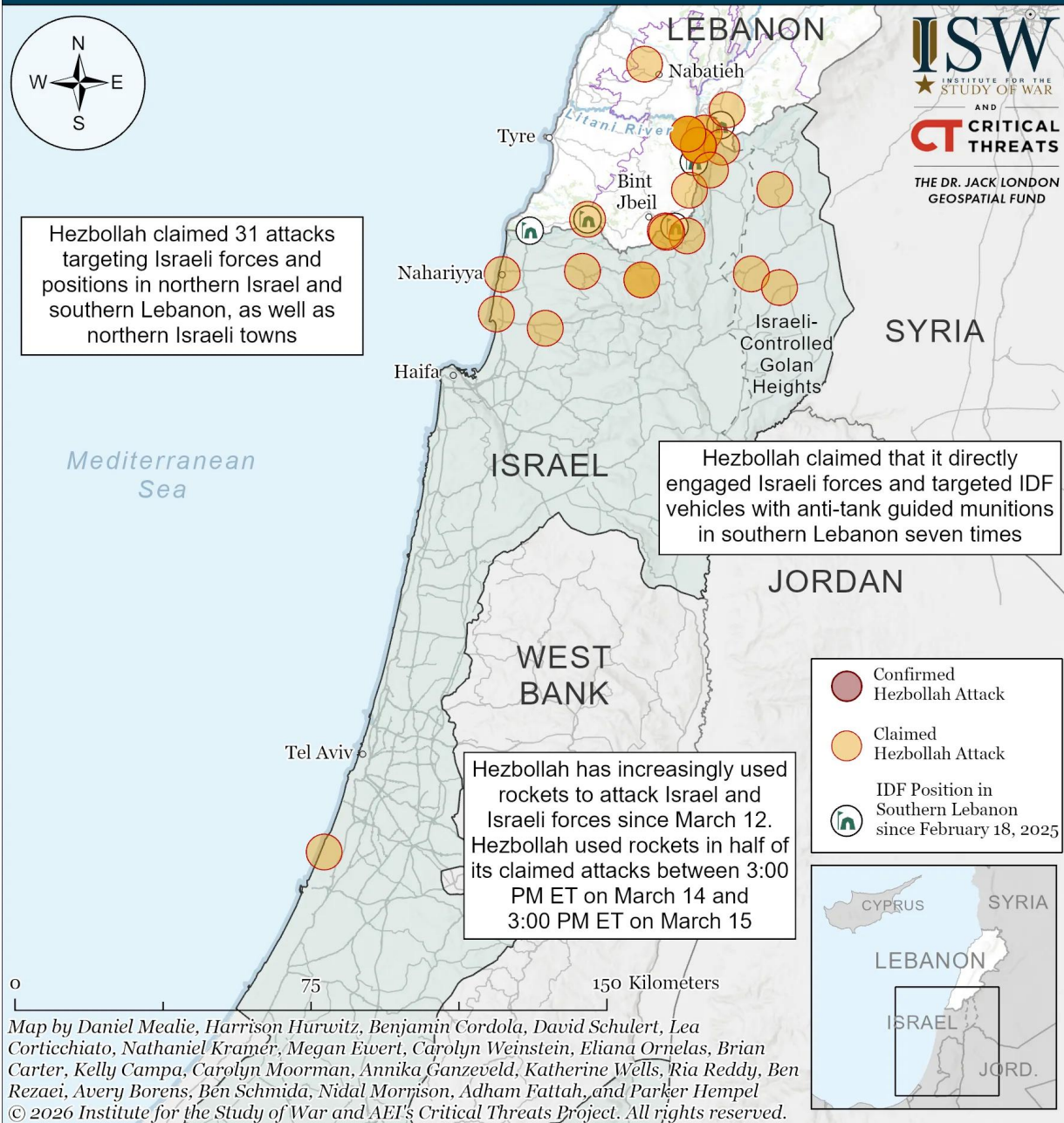
Iranian officials are attempting to obscure Iran's responsibility for recent drone and ballistic missile attacks targeting Gulf states, likely to try to strain relations between the United States and Israel and Gulf countries. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi implied to UK-based Arab media on March 15 that the United States and Israel have conducted false-flag drone attacks targeting Gulf countries.[28] Iran has launched thousands of drones at Gulf states since the start of the war to impose an economic cost on these countries to push them to pressure the United States and Israel to end their campaign against Iran.[29] Araghchi added that Iran is willing to form a committee to investigate whether or not recent Iranian attacks have targeted non-US-affiliated civilian infrastructure in Gulf countries.[30] Iran has attacked civilian infrastructure, such as residential buildings, in Gulf countries that have no relation to the United States' war effort against Iran.[31] The IRGC similarly denied that it conducted drone strikes on Saudi Arabia on March 15 and claimed that the drones originated from the UAE.[32] US Central Command (CENTCOM) dismissed Araghchi's claim on March 15 and stated that the United States has only used LUCAS drones to target sites in Iran.[33]

Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

Hezbollah claimed 31 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon, as well as northern Israeli towns, between 3:00 PM ET on March 14 and 3:00 PM ET on March 15.[34] Hezbollah claimed that it directly engaged Israeli forces and targeted Israel Defense Forces (IDF) vehicles with anti-tank guided munitions in southern Lebanon seven times.[35] This marks the highest number of direct engagements that Hezbollah has claimed in a 24-hour period since the start of the war. Hezbollah claimed that it either directly engaged or launched rockets at IDF forces in five Lebanese towns in the Marjaayoun District.[36] Hezbollah used rockets in half of its claimed attacks against Israeli forces and military sites in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.[37] Hezbollah also claimed that it launched a precision missile targeting the Palmachim Airbase in central Israel on March 15.[38] The Palmachim Airbase is approximately 140 kilometers from the Israel-Lebanon border, which suggests that Hezbollah likely used medium- or long-range rockets or missiles, such as the Khaibar-1 rocket, Fadi 6 rocket, or Fateh-110 ballistic missile, in this attack.[39] Hezbollah also claimed that it targeted Israeli defense industrial sites, including a Rafael industrial complex in northern Israel.[40] Rafael Advanced Defense Systems is an Israeli state-owned organization that develops weapons and military technology for the IDF.[41]

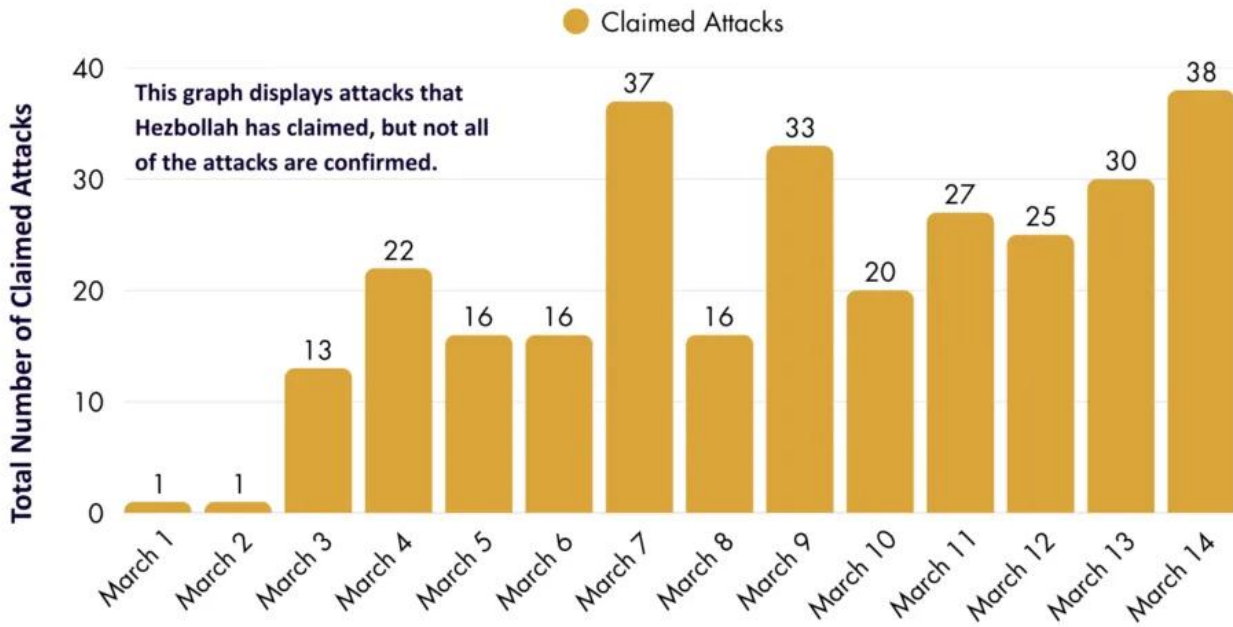
Hezbollah Attacks in Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon

Between March 14, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The rate of Hezbollah attacks has, on average, increased since the group joined the war on March 1, as illustrated below. Hezbollah has used a variety of weapons in its attacks against Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon. Hezbollah has increasingly used rockets to attack Israel and IDF targets since March 12.

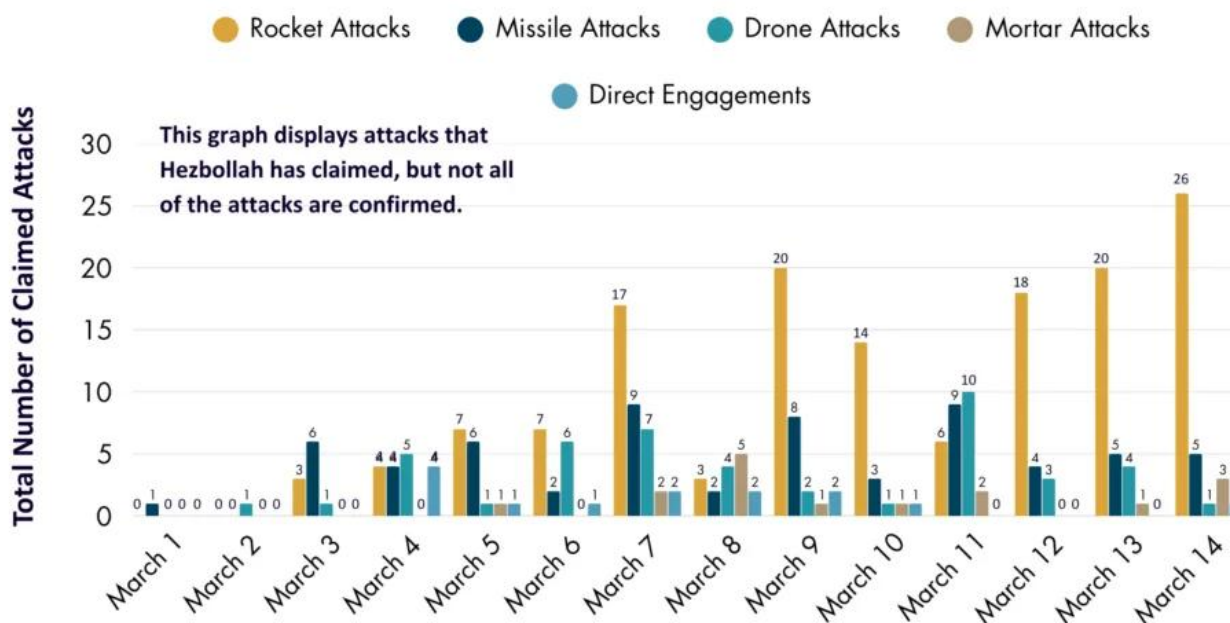
Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon Between March 1, 2026 and March 14, 2026



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 14, 2026 By Type



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used

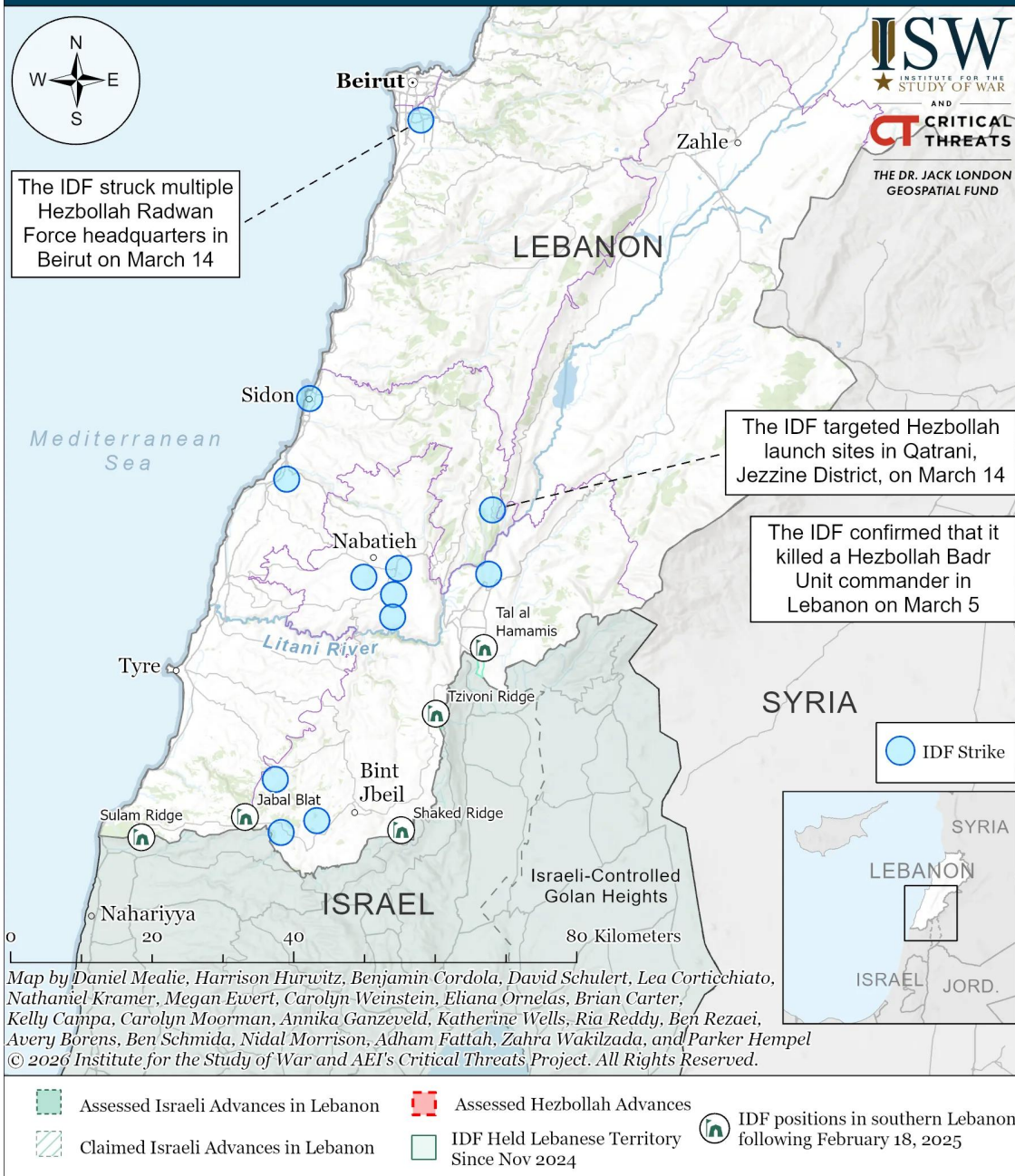


The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes targeting Hezbollah across Lebanon to degrade Hezbollah's ability to conduct retaliatory attacks against Israel. The IDF targeted Hezbollah launch sites in Qatrani, Jezzine District, on March 14.[42] The IDF also struck multiple Hezbollah Radwan Force headquarters in Beirut on March 14.[43] The IDF confirmed that it killed a Hezbollah Badr Unit commander, Ibrahim Mohammad Ghazali, on March 15.[44] The IDF said that Ghazali was responsible for "managing weapons operations" for the Badr Unit.[45] The IDF also confirmed that it killed a Palestinian "terrorist operative," Mohammad Majed Abdel Salam Tawfiq Zeidan, in Lebanon on March 13.[46] The IDF said that Zeidan worked with Iranian intelligence organizations and planned terror attacks in Israel.[47] A Hamas source told AFP that Israel killed a senior Hamas operative in Sidon on March 14.[48]

The IDF has continued to conduct ground operations in southern Lebanon. The IDF reported that the 769th Brigade (91st Division) identified a Hezbollah observation post in southern Lebanon and directed an airstrike to destroy the site on March 14.[49] The IDF said that the 769th Brigade also directed airstrikes against Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon earlier this week.[50]

Israeli Strikes in Lebanon

Between March 14, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) reported that “likely non-state armed groups” fired at three UNIFIL peacekeeper patrols near UNIFIL bases in Bint Jbeil and Tyre districts, southern Lebanon, on March 15.[51] UNIFIL said that the unspecified non-state armed actors fired within five meters from a UNIFIL patrol near Yater, Bint Jbeil District.[52] Two UNIFIL patrols returned fire at the non-state armed actors.[53] UNIFIL reported that the non-state armed groups did not inflict any casualties.[54]

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar rejected on March 15 that Israel plans to hold direct talks with Lebanon. Saar said that Israel rejects holding direct talks with the Lebanese government while Hezbollah launches attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory.[55] Saar said that the Lebanese government and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) must take “serious steps” to stop Hezbollah attacks against Israel before any talks can occur.[56] Two sources familiar with the matter told Israeli media on March 14 that Israeli and Lebanese delegations were expected to meet for direct talks in either Paris or

Cyprus “in the coming days.”[57] Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said on March 13 that he was willing to negotiate with Israel.[58] Aoun said that Israel had not responded to Lebanon’s calls to negotiate.[59]

Axis of Resistance Response

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continue to attack US forces and interests in Iraq. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah conducted two drone attacks targeting the former US Victory Base near Baghdad International Airport on March 14.[60] Footage of the attack indicates that one drone struck the entrance of what appears to be a fabric hangar, while another struck the side of a metal hangar.[61] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have repeatedly claimed attacks targeting the former US Victory base since the start of the war.[62]

Likely Iranian militia front group Saraya Awliya al Dam claimed that it conducted five “operations” targeting US bases in and outside of Iraq on March 14, including an attack against US forces in Erbil.[63] Saraya Awliya al Dam also claimed that it launched drones targeting the former US Victory Base near Baghdad International Airport.[64] Likely Iraqi militias also struck Baghdad International Airport with at least five missiles on March 15, injuring five airport staff.[65] Iraqi National Security Adviser Qassem al Araji warned that repeated drone and rocket attacks near Baghdad International Airport pose a direct threat to the nearby al Karkh Central Prison, which holds terrorism suspects, including Islamic State in Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) members.[66]

The combined force has struck additional Iraqi militia targets since CTP-ISW’s last data cutoff. The Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Harakat Ansar Allah al Awfiya-controlled 19th Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Brigade said that combined force airstrikes killed eight of its fighters in al Qaim, Anbar Province, near the Iraq-Syria border on March 15.[67] The combined force also reportedly struck multiple PMF positions in Babylon and Kirkuk provinces on March 15.[68]

Iranian Intra-Regime Dynamics

US and Israeli intelligence reportedly assess that the IRGC is making decisions because Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is wounded. CBS News reported on March 15 that the US Government believes that the IRGC is “calling the shots.”[69] Fox News similarly reported on March 15 that Israeli intelligence assesses that Mojtaba is injured and that IRGC personnel “are managing him.”[70] These assessments are consistent with previous reports that the IRGC had pushed for Mojtaba’s appointment because it views him as a “more pliant version of his father.”[71]

Iranian Internal Security

Iranian security forces have continued to arrest individuals accused of espionage, gathering intelligence, or conducting other anti-regime activities across Iran since CTP-ISW’s last data cutoff at 3:00 PM ET on March 14. LEC Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan announced that Iranian security forces have arrested 500 individuals for sending information to Iran’s adversaries and anti-regime media.[72] Iranian media reported the following arrests on March 14 and 15:

- Security forces in West Azerbaijan Province arrested 20 individuals
- IRGC forces in West Azerbaijan Province thwarted an “enemy and separatist attempt to infiltrate the country’s northwestern borders,” likely referring to Kurdish opposition groups that operate

along the Iranian border in Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey.[74]

- LEC forces arrested a 40-year-old woman in Bandar Anzali, Gilan Province, for sharing information with “hostile networks.”[75]
- Security forces arrested four individuals in Astaneh Ashrafiyeh, Gilan Province, whom they claimed were affiliated with the Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK).[76]
- Iranian security forces arrested 18 individuals accused of being “mercenaries” for Israel’s “media headquarters” and taking pictures of sites damaged in US and Israeli strikes.[77]
- The Intelligence Ministry stated that it has taken “necessary legal action” against 21 other “mercenaries.”[78]

Other Activity

Neither US nor Iranian officials currently appear to be seeking a ceasefire agreement. US President Donald Trump told NBC News on March 14 that “Iran wants to make a deal,” but that he is not currently prepared to make a deal to end the war with Iran because “[Iran’s] terms aren’t good enough yet.” Trump did not specify what terms he would accept but stated that any ceasefire terms would need to be “very solid.”[79] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi separately told CBS News on March 15 that Iran has neither requested a ceasefire nor negotiations with the United States and is prepared to defend itself “as long as it takes.”[80] Trump and Araghchi’s statements follow a March 14 Reuters report that the Trump administration rejected efforts by Middle Eastern allies, including Oman and Egypt, to start diplomatic talks to end the war with Iran.[81] Three Iranian sources denied the prospect of peace talks in the same Reuters article, underscoring that neither side currently appears willing to pursue diplomacy.[82]

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Endnotes

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The War in Iran: Operational Progress, but Challenges Remain

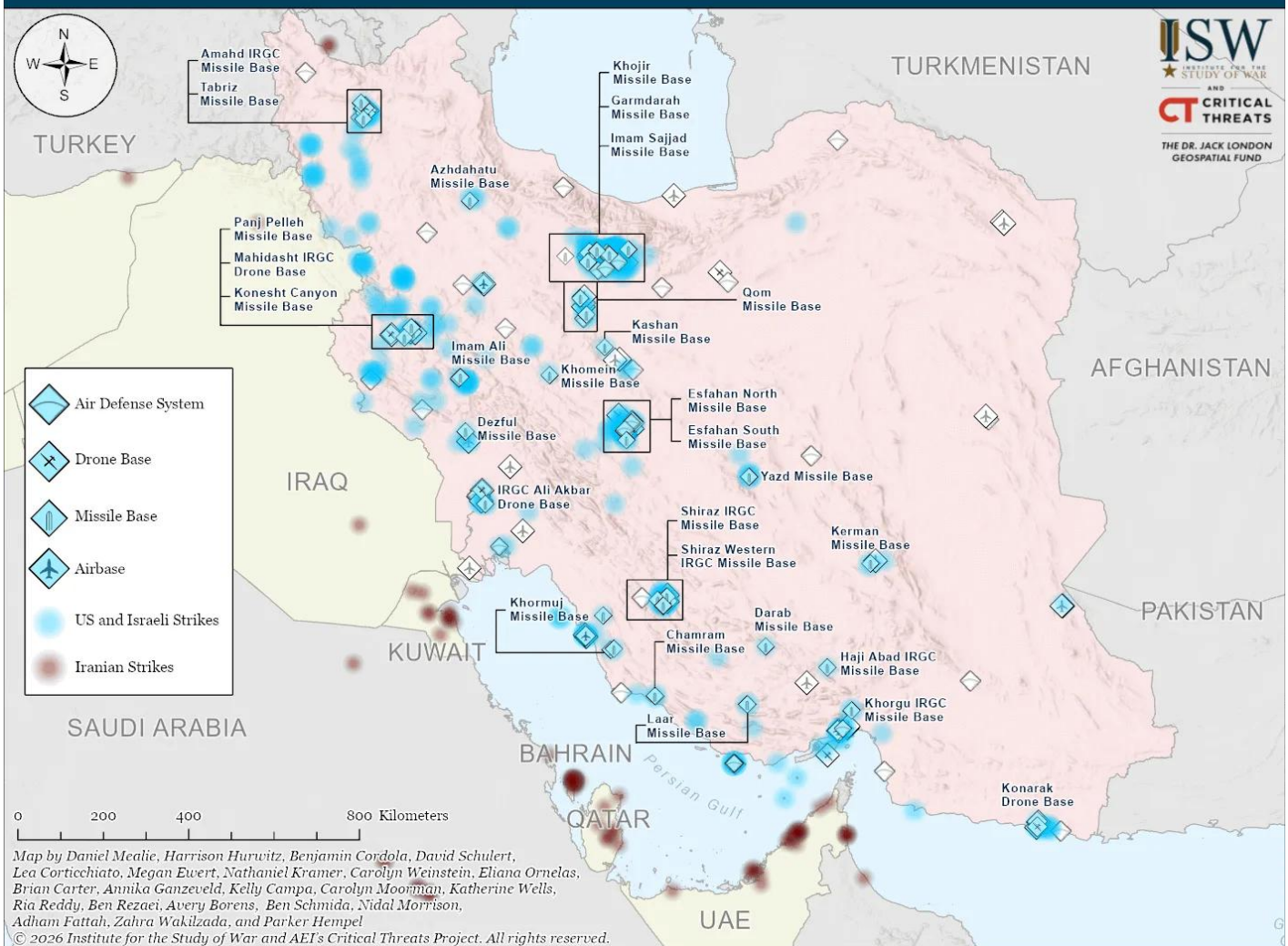


Brian Carter

The war in Iran is currently in a phase in which the military trajectory is relatively positive: the United States is steadily destroying Iran's ability to use its most essential tool in the war — drone and missile attacks — which in turn underpin the entire Iranian strategy. Iran has still done some damage to US forces, and it is still firing drones and missiles, though the overall attack rate is slowly decreasing. These attacks still pale in comparison to the major attacks Iran sought to conduct in an existential war and have caused neither operationally significant damage nor widespread casualties. The US-Israeli combined force will need time to achieve its military objectives and prevent Iran from inflicting further political and economic pain upon the United States and its allies in the region, but the campaign remains incomplete, and it is too soon to forecast its outcome. Declaring it an operational failure is unquestionably premature.

Iran has developed and sought to implement a multi-pronged theory of how it will defeat the United States and Israel in a major, existential conflict. This theory is that inflicting enough political and economic pain upon the United States, Israel, and America's Gulf allies will make the combined force cease its operations. The Iranians have developed five lines of effort to compel the United States and Israel to end the war: drone and ballistic missile attacks to inflict US and Israeli casualties and economic damage in the Gulf; drone, missile, and naval attacks including mines to disrupt shipping in the Persian Gulf; proxy attacks from Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed groups; global terrorism; and cyber attacks on critical infrastructure.[1] The US-Israeli combined campaign has focused on stopping drone, ballistic missile, and traditional naval attacks most urgently because these assets are the most essential Iranian tools that Tehran needs to execute its strategy.[2] Both aerial and naval drones remain a threat to shipping and oil infrastructure in the Gulf, and the threat of Iranian mining of the Strait remains real, if complex. The combined force will likely knock the drone and missile threat down to levels that would permit renewed maritime transit through the Strait if the current campaign succeeds in its aims, but oil and shipping prices depend in part on the risk-tolerance of third parties, so even an immediate end to the Iranian threat may not cause prices to drop quickly.

US and Israeli Strikes on Iranian Retaliatory Capabilities As of March 14, 2026 at 8:00 AM ET

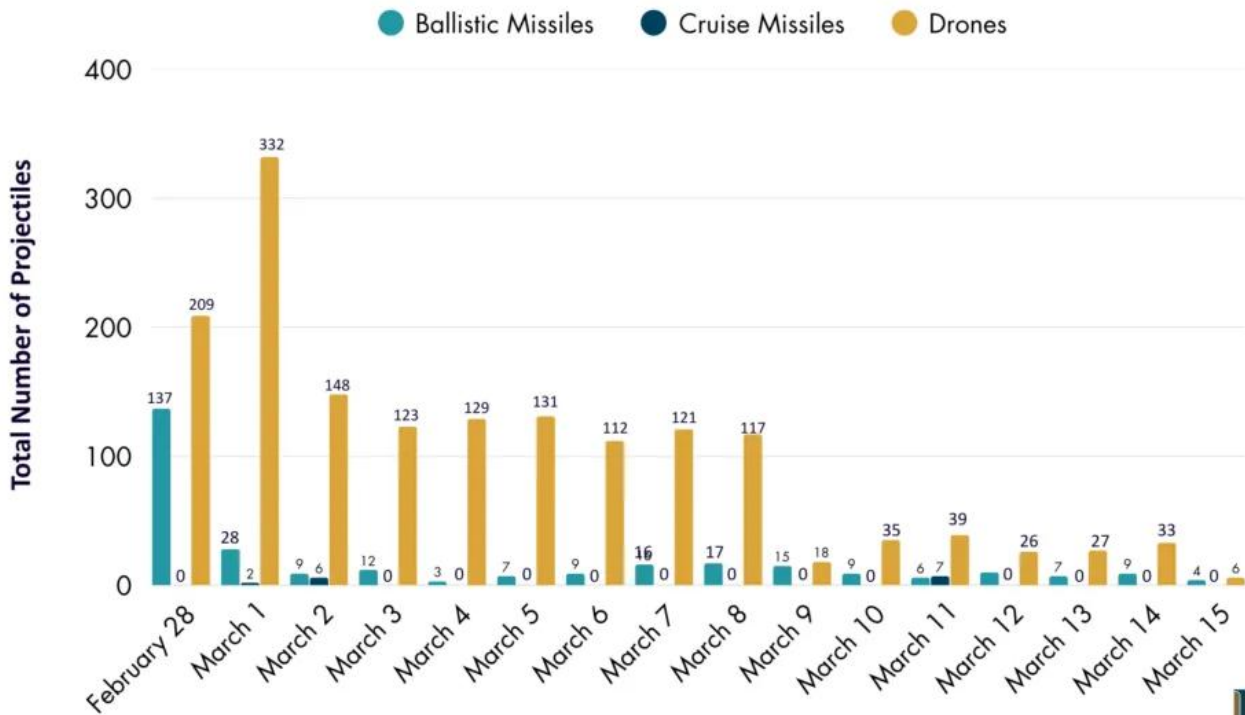


Iran's military weakness relative to the United States led it to adopt an asymmetric strategy against Washington that seeks to outlast Washington rather than to militarily defeat it outright.[3] The various lines of effort that comprise this strategy have changed over the years, but during this war, Iran has relied on the five key efforts outlined above. Iran has likely calculated that if these five prongs cause US casualties, drive up oil prices, and impose economic costs on both the US and its Gulf allies, the United States and Israel would make a political decision to end the war without achieving their objectives. Iran's naval and aerial drones, missiles, and fast attack craft are the critical requirements for its approach, however. These assets can cause the most lasting damage to oil markets and the most consistent and highest casualties and thus impose the most severe political pressure. Global terrorism, cyber attacks, and proxy attacks are less effective and impose only limited political pressure on the US government. Naval mines, which could close the strait, will be cleared in time.

The US-Israeli combined campaign, which has focused on stopping missile and drone attacks as soon as possible, is successfully limiting attacks on US partners and interests in the region. The combined force began this effort on the first day of the campaign, and it has gradually decreased Iran's ability to fire missiles and drones. A senior Israeli military official said that Israel has destroyed or rendered combat ineffective between 260 and 290 of an estimated 410 to 440 launchers.[4] The Iranian missile force troops are reportedly also demoralized, deserting, and refusing orders, according to Israeli intelligence.[5] The campaign has struck drone launchers, though neither the United States nor Israel has released information about the numbers or type of drone targets struck. Iranian ballistic missile and

drone launches have in any case decreased gradually since the beginning of the war.[6] Some individual drones have penetrated air defenses and caused politically unacceptable damage to oil infrastructure, but the overall trend in attacks is overwhelmingly positive.[7]

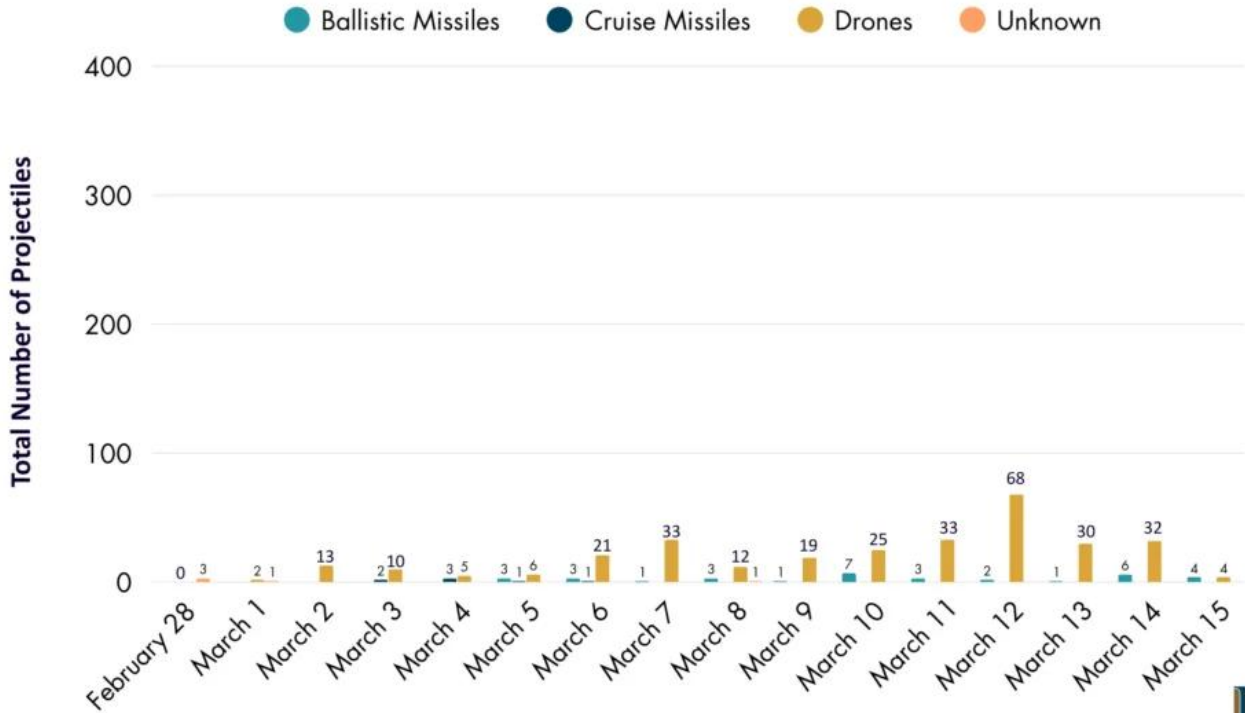
Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 15, 2026



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All data from the UAE Ministry of Defense.



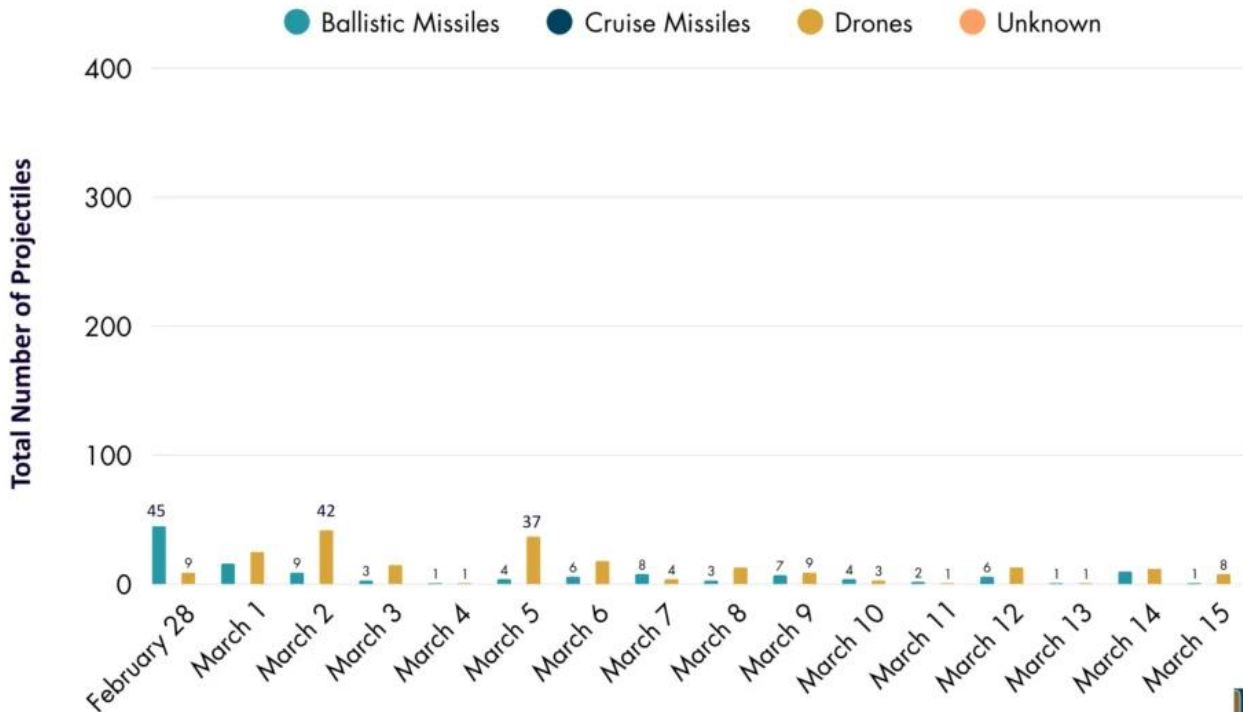
Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia between February 28, 2026 and March 15, 2026



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 Data from the Saudi Defense Ministry. March 15 data as of 12:15 PM ET.



Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at Bahrain between February 28, 2026 and March 15, 2026



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Data from the Bahrain Defense Force. March 15 data as of 1:15 PM ET.



There is little to no evidence that Iran is holding missiles or drones in reserve to expend after the U.S. and its allies run out of interceptors. Drones, of course, are intercepted by air-to-air missiles and machine guns, not expensive Patriot, THAAD, or Arrow ballistic missile interceptors.[8] Some commentators have alleged that Iran is hoarding advanced missile systems to fire after the United States and its allies are out of interceptors, but there is little to no evidence to support these assertions. Iran is using advanced missile systems, including the Sejil, the Khorramshar, and others, to target Israel.[9] There is no publicly available information at this time about the type of close range and short range ballistic missiles fired at the Gulf states or US bases, so it is impossible to assess whether Iran is using advanced missiles to target the Gulf.

Holding missiles in reserve would be a gamble that Iran cannot afford in any case. Such a gamble would assume that Iran will retain sufficient launchers to continue firing “advanced” missiles once the United States expends all its interceptors. The validity of this assumption is unclear because the United States and Israel are systematically rendering Iranian missile launchers combat ineffective. The gamble also assumes the United States will run out of interceptors before Iran runs out of missiles, and Iran has no obvious way of accurately assessing the US or Israeli interceptor stockpile. Hoarding missiles in reserve will do Iran no good if it cannot launch them or if they get shot down before they reach their targets.

The IRGC almost certainly lacks the command-and-control necessary to execute a centrally-directed operation that prioritizes certain munitions over others, even if it wanted to. Iranian officials in November 2025 said that they would launch thousands of missiles targeting Israel in any future war, indicating that IRGC commanders likely expressed a desire for mass attacks to their subordinates before the war.[10]

Tehran has repeatedly noted that it has decentralized its operations and adopted a “fire at will” approach in response to US and Israeli decapitation strikes, however.[11] Any change in strategy during the war to focus on cruder systems or intentionally withhold missiles for later strikes would require central direction to ensure the different elements of the organization respond as headquarters desires. The combined force attacks on Iranian command and control and military leadership have very likely disrupted Iran’s ability to manage such sophisticated central planning and direction of its missile operations.

The US Central Command clearly planned to suppress Iran’s maritime attacks, regardless of the administration’s reported surprise at the intensity of attacks in the Persian Gulf.[12] The campaign to suppress maritime attacks has multiple phases that mirror the phases of the overall campaign: suppression of enemy air defenses along the coast to enable additional strikes and helicopter patrols; suppression of Iranian ballistic missile and drone attacks; destruction of Iran’s navy; and ultimately, the defeat of Iran’s anti-ship missile and drone capabilities.[13] Suppressing air defenses, the ballistic missile and drone attacks, and destroying Iran’s navy will support successful operations to suppress Iranian maritime attacks. The completion of these three tasks will enable the US Navy to undertake defensive operations on behalf of merchant shipping with minimal interference. Meanwhile, air assets can undertake offensive operations to suppress Iran’s naval and aerial drones and anti-ship missiles targeting maritime shipping. The last Iranian attack on merchant shipping was on March 11, though it remains unclear if this is because there is less shipping transiting the strait or due to military operations that suppressed Iranian capabilities.[14] Iran may decide to mine the Straits if it has a much more limited ability to target shipping, but minesweeping operations will eventually clear the Strait and open it to traffic. Iran must also calculate the effects on its own ability to export oil of mining the Strait as mines, unlike missiles and drones, do not distinguish between ships Tehran wants to pass through and those it wishes to attack. It remains difficult to determine with any degree of certainty how the markets will react to future developments in the maritime situation, however. The US Navy can open the strait, but the risk-tolerance of the market will ultimately determine the length of the disruption in the Strait.

Coalition Strikes on Iranian Naval Facilities and Iranian Attacks on Maritime Vessels As of March 14, 2026 at 8:00 AM ET



Iran remains a relatively strong state adversary with substantial military capabilities that it is using to damage US and allied infrastructure and forces and impose political costs. Missile and drone attacks, while trending downwards, have not stopped, and even a single drone or missile attack could enable Iran to emerge victorious. An Iranian drone attack struck Omani oil facilities on March 11, and a missile attack most recently damaged five tankers in Saudi Arabia on March 13, for example.[15] Iran and its proxies have previously used small-scale drone attacks to achieve strategic victory, however. The Houthis, for example, fired a small number of drones at an oil facility in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in 2022, which ultimately forced Saudi Arabia to accept a ceasefire that was beneficial to the Houthis.[16] Military operations must prevent Iran from using economic damage and political pressure to amplify otherwise small and militarily insignificant tactical actions into strategic successes.

Iran's attacks have not yet affected US military operations and fallen far short of Iran's hopes for attacks with thousands of missiles and drones, however. The available evidence supports the assessment that the combined campaign is achieving its military objectives thus far but is not yet complete. Declaring the campaign a failure at this stage is therefore premature. The collapse of Iranian drone and missile attacks — down significantly since February 28 — presents a compelling picture that the military campaign is degrading ballistic missile and drone capabilities.[17] Continued drone and missile attacks — not to mention the remaining 150 launchers — indicate that these assets remain a threat and will need to be fully suppressed, of course. The maritime threat will need to be similarly suppressed. But the military campaign against both the missile and drone attacks and the maritime attacks must be evaluated based

on whether the evidence shows progress is being made towards the military objectives. It is far too early to forecast whether the current military campaign will achieve overall political objectives or how long disruptions to the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz will last. But declaring this operation a military failure is premature while the campaign remains underway and incomplete, particularly as the evidence clearly shows progress being made towards accomplishing its core objectives.

POWERED BY:  BABEL STREET

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Iran Update Evening Special Report: March 16, 2026



Katherine Wells, Avery Borens, Benjamin Schmida, Adham Fattah, Ria Reddy, Brian Carter

Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 03:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: ISW-CTP will not publish morning updates covering the war with Iran on March 14 and 15. ISW-CTP will publish threads on its social media channels in the morning on these days that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.

Key Takeaways

1. Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's reported inner circle is dominated by long-standing hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commanders. Their influence will almost certainly drive Iran toward more hardline, anti-Western policies and deepen existing patterns of regime corruption and securitization. All four of these IRGC commanders worked for decades under former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The first generation of Iranian revolutionaries and long-time IRGC leaders thus remain at the top of the Iranian regime's hierarchy despite decapitation strikes in recent years.
2. The Iranian regime has taken steps to further restrict the flow of information out of Iran, which will almost certainly limit ISW-CTP's ability to observe strikes in Iran. Internet monitor NetBlocks reported on March 16 that the regime has further tightened internet restrictions. A BBC reporter stated on March 15 that the regime has reportedly started to target individuals with Starlink access and reduced the availability of VPNs.
3. The combined force targeted a likely Iranian drone facility in South Khorasan Province in one of the combined force's easternmost strikes since the war began. The strike indicates that combined force aircraft can operate deep inside Iranian territory.
4. Iran has not attacked any vessels in the Strait of Hormuz since March 12. Anti-regime media also published footage on March 12 that shows a US Navy F/A-18 Hornet engaging targets with its auto cannon at extremely low altitude in Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, which is on the Iranian coast on the Gulf of Oman. This suggests that US forces have at least local air dominance along certain segments of the coast, which would enable US aircraft to engage drones and anti-ship cruise missiles at low altitudes to protect shipping if ordered to do so.

Toplines

Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's reported inner circle is dominated by long-standing hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commanders. Their influence will almost certainly drive Iran toward more hardline, anti-Western policies and deepen existing patterns of regime corruption and securitization. The *New York Times* reported on March 16 that former IRGC Intelligence Organization head Hossein Taeb, de facto IRGC Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, former IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, and Parliament Speaker and former IRGC Brigadier General Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf were the main campaigners to get the Assembly of Experts to elect Mojtaba as supreme leader.[1] All four of these IRGC commanders worked for decades under former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.[2] The first generation of Iranian revolutionaries and long-time IRGC leaders thus remain at the top of the Iranian regime's hierarchy despite decapitation strikes in recent years. The *New York Times* article cited interviews from five senior Iranian officials, two clerics, two Iranians affiliated with the supreme leader's office and three IRGC members with knowledge of the selection process.[3] Mojtaba also selected former IRGC commander Major General Mohsen Rezaei as his military adviser on March 16.[4] Mojtaba has had strong ties to the IRGC that date back to when he fought in the Iran-Iraq War in the Habib Ibn Mazahir Battalion within the IRGC 27th Mohammad Rasoul Ollah Division.[5]

- **Hossein Taeb** helped Mojtaba engineer the 2005 presidential election in favor of hardline candidate Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.[6] Taeb later led the Basij's suppression of subsequent protests in the 2009 Green Movement as the Basij commander.[7] The United States sanctioned Taeb in 2010 for his involvement in protest suppression.[8] Taeb went on to serve as head of the IRGC Intelligence Organization, the parallel organization to the Intelligence Ministry, from 2009 to 2022, and then served as adviser to the IRGC Commander.[9] Taeb reportedly pressured all 88 Assembly members to vote for Mojtaba as Supreme Leader, resulting in 59 members ultimately voting in his favor.[10]
- **Ahmad Vahidi** is a long-time hardliner who has held some of the regime's top security posts, including IRGC Quds Force commander, defense and armed logistics minister, interior minister, and Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS) deputy chief.[11] The United States sanctioned Vahidi for his role in directing Law Enforcement Command during the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests.[12] Vahidi's abrupt reassignment in December 2025 from AFGS deputy chief to the IRGC deputy commander followed reported clashes with Artesh leaders over post-June 2025 Israel-Iran War air defense priorities.[13]
- **Ali Jafari** similarly has consistently pursued an uncompromising hardline domestic policy, treating reformists and protest movements as "internal enemies" of the regime and deploying IRGC, Basij, and plainclothes units to suppress dissent and intimidate political rivals.[14] The United States also sanctioned Jafari in 2010 for his role in suppressing the 2009 Green Movement protests as IRGC commander.[15] Jafari adopted asymmetrical and extra-territorial warfare that positioned the IRGC to project power beyond Iran's borders.[16]
- **Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf** is a veteran IRGC hardliner whose deep ties to senior commanders – dating back to his service as IRGC Air Force chief, Law Enforcement Command (LEC) chief, and in the Iran-Iraq War – have anchored his aggressive approach to domestic security and regime preservation.[17] Ghalibaf reportedly assumed an emergency senior military command after Israeli killed top commanders at the start of the June 2025 Israel-Iran War, an unprecedented move for a sitting civilian parliament speaker that underscored his entrenched influence and the unprecedented damage Iran's command and control network suffered in June.[18]
- **Mohsen Rezaei** is a senior regime insider and long-standing member of the Supreme Leader-appointed Expediency Discernment Council, whose hardline worldview was shaped by his tenure as

IRGC commander from 1981 to 1997 – including through the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988 – and his continued role advising core strategic polices.[19] Rezaei is also implicated in the 1994 AMIA bombing in Argentina that killed 85 people. He remains the subject of an Interpol Red Notice.[20]

IRGC commanders reportedly view the conflict with the United States and Israel as a unifying national struggle that also reduces pressure on the regime to address Iran’s mounting economic problems. An informed source told anti-regime outlet Iran Wire on March 16 that an IRGC official told President Masoud Pezeshkian that the US and Israeli airstrikes have united the Iranian population behind the regime as the Iran-Iraq War once had, at a meeting where Pezeshkian had asked about the IRGC’s plans for post-war economic recovery.[21] Pezeshkian warned that such thinking amounted to planning for renewed repression rather than genuine post-war recovery or governance, according to the source.[22] The president’s question to IRGC about plans about domestic policy, if accurate, reinforces recent reporting on the command the IRGC holds in current foreign and domestic policy decision-making.[23]

US and Israeli Air Campaign

The Iranian regime has taken steps to further restrict the flow of information out of Iran, which will almost certainly limit ISW-CTP’s ability to observe strikes in Iran.[24] The regime has maintained a nationwide internet shutdown since the war started on February 28.[25] A BBC reporter stated on March 15 that the regime has reportedly started to target individuals with Starlink access and reduced the availability of VPNs.[26] The regime targeted Starlink devices during the Winter 2026 protests to prevent Iranians from circulating videos of protests and the regime’s brutal crackdown.[27] Internet monitor NetBlocks reported on March 16 that the regime has further tightened internet restrictions.[28] NetBlocks founder Alp Toker noted that Iranian state media accounts that usually post frequently on X abruptly stopped posting at 0700 AM ET, which coincided with a collapse in connectivity.[29] Iran’s worsening internet conditions coincide with other regime securitization measures. Residents of Tehran told the BBC that Iranian security forces have established new checkpoints across the city to stop and search individuals.[30] The regime has taken these steps to tighten internal security, at least in part, because it fears potential future unrest.

The combined force struck several internal security sites in Tehran. Anti-regime media reported on March 16 that the combined force struck six security force checkpoints across Tehran, including checkpoints in places where large gatherings could occur, such as Enghelab Square.[31] Anti-regime media separately reported on March 16 that the combined force struck a Basij base in northern Tehran.[32] OSINT accounts on X reported on March 16 that the combined force struck several Basij buildings in eastern Tehran.[33] The IDF said on March 16 that it struck an unspecified Iranian intelligence command center in central Tehran.[34] The combined force continued to strike LEC stations in Tehran. Anti-regime media reported on March 16 that the combined force struck the 123rd LEC station in Niavaran District, Tehran.[35] ISW-CTP has recorded combined force strikes against 16 of Tehran’s 69 LEC stations at the time of this writing.[36]

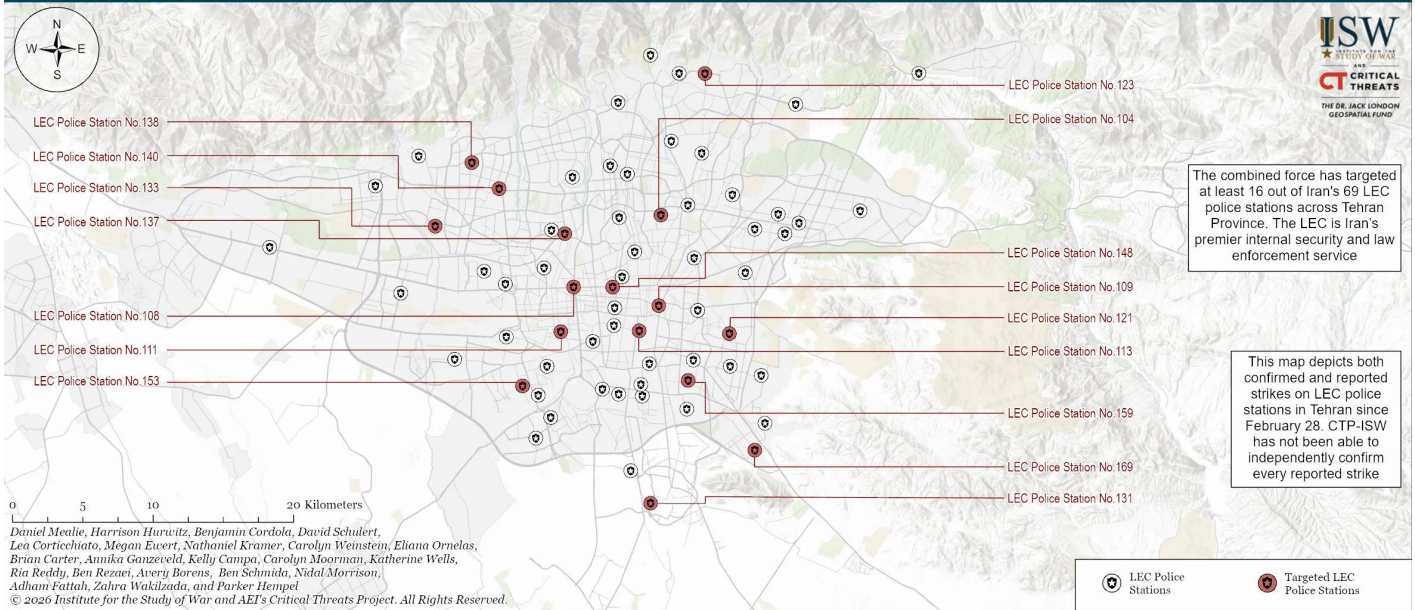
US and Israeli Strikes in Iran

Between March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



- Confirmed Airstrike
- Reported Airstrike
- Report of Explosion With Footage
- Report of Explosion Without Footage

US and Israeli Strikes Targeting LEC Police Stations in Tehran As of March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The combined force continued to strike Iranian defense-industrial sites. A BBC journalist reported on March 16 that the combined force struck a military depot site in Yazd, Yazd Province, on March 11, citing images from US Central Command (CENTCOM).[37] US CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper stated on March 16 that the military depot in Yazd was associated with “IRGC missile command infrastructure” and used to build “light and heavyweight torpedoes.”[38] Cooper added that US strikes have shifted from neutralizing immediate missile and drone threats to Iran’s “wider manufacturing apparatus” and defense industrial base.[39]

The combined force targeted a likely Iranian drone facility in South Khorasan Province in one of the combined force’s easternmost strikes since the war began. An Israeli analyst reported on March 15 that the combined force struck two buildings at a likely drone launch site near Bijrand, South Khorasan Province.[40] The drone launch site is within 1.5 kilometers of the IRGC Ground Forces’ 88th Ansar ol Reza Brigade base.[41] The strike aligns with a March 16 statement by US Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Admiral Brad Cooper, who said that US forces are targeting Iran’s military defense industrial base to prevent further threats from Iran.[42] The strike also indicates that combined force aircraft can operate deep inside Iranian territory. The strike occurred more than 800 kilometers inland from the Gulf of Oman and marked the one of the easternmost targets that the combined force has struck since the conflict began on February 28.

The combined force continues to degrade Iran’s air defense network through strikes on air defense sites and air bases across the country. An Israeli OSINT account reported on March 16 that the combined force struck the 11th Artesh Tactical Air Base, also known as Doshan Tappeh Air Base, in eastern Tehran.[43] The base is the second Artesh tactical air base in Tehran that the combined force has targeted since the war began, and, although it is hosting no air traffic, satellite imagery from March 2025 shows air defense systems near the runway. CENTCOM published footage on March 16 of US strikes on multiple Iranian air defense systems in unspecified areas of Iran.[44]

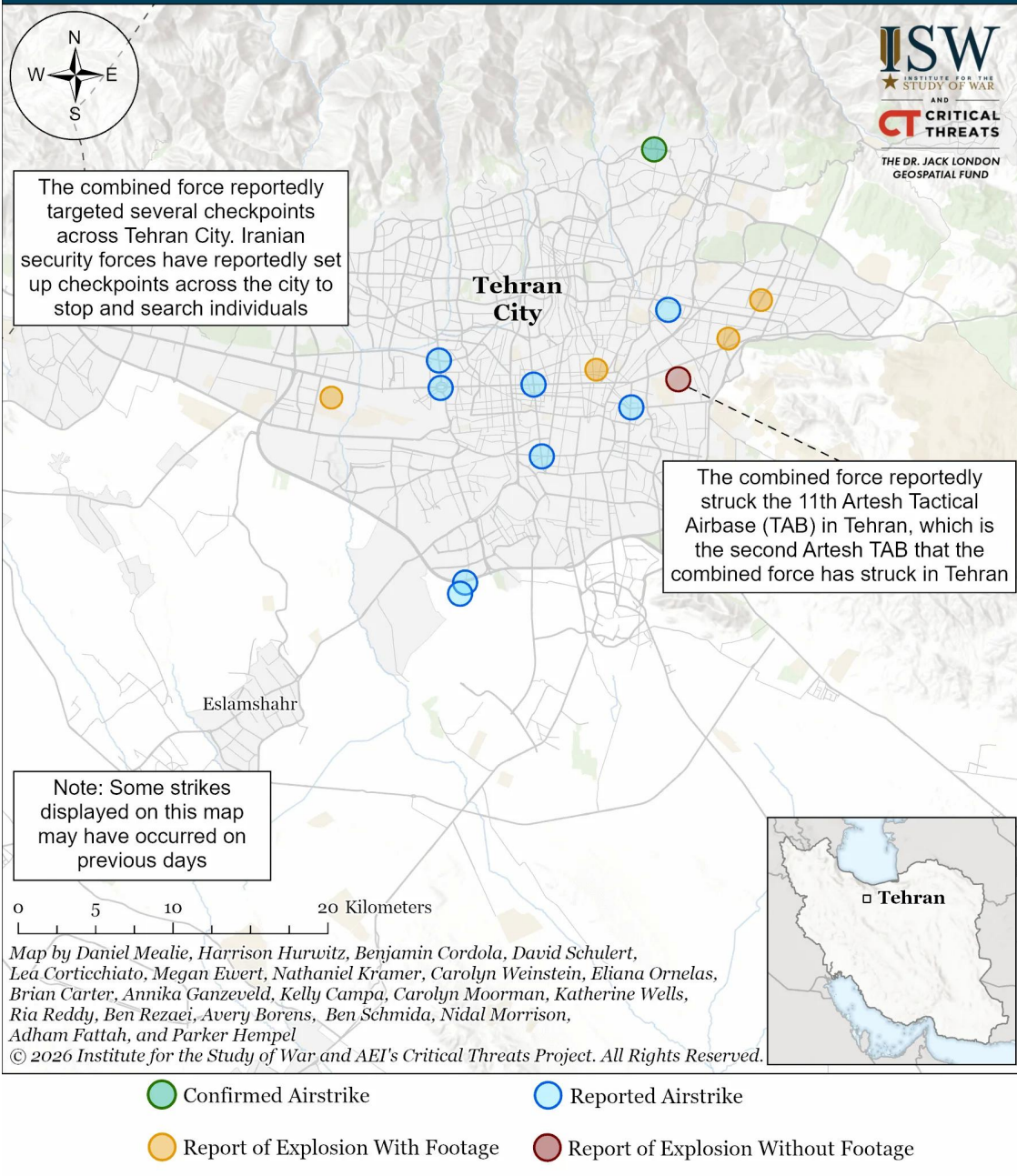
Iran has not attacked any vessels in the Strait of Hormuz since March 12. The Iranian regime appears to be offering safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz to certain oil-carrying vessels. The *New York Times*, citing unspecified US officials, reported on March 15 that Iran has allowed some tankers transporting oil to China and India to transit the strait.[45] CNN reported that Pakistani oil tankers have similarly been allowed to transit the Strait safely.[46] The *New York Times* reports follow a

March 13 Reuters report that Iran permitted two Indian-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carriers to sail through the Strait.[47] Reuters reported on March 16 that daily oil exports from the Middle East have still fallen by at least 60 percent, however.[48] The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization has reported over 20 maritime incidents in and around the Strait since March 1.[49] Senior Iranian officials have repeatedly emphasized that the regime continues to intend to disrupt commercial shipping and impose economic costs on the United States and Gulf states as part of a broader Iranian effort to pressure the United States and Israel to end their campaign against Iran.[50]

Anti-regime media also published footage on March 12 that shows a US Navy F/A-18 Hornet engaging targets with its auto cannon at extremely low altitude in Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, which is on the Iranian coast on the Gulf of Oman.[51] The combined force jet's ability to conduct such an attack at low altitude suggests that the combined force has severely suppressed or destroyed local Iranian anti-air capabilities, including anti-aircraft guns, and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) that could presumably return fire on a jet at low altitude.[52] Local air dominance would enable US aircraft operating over the coast to engage drones and anti-ship cruise missiles at low altitudes to protect shipping if ordered to do so.

US and Israeli Strikes in Tehran

Between March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Iranian Response

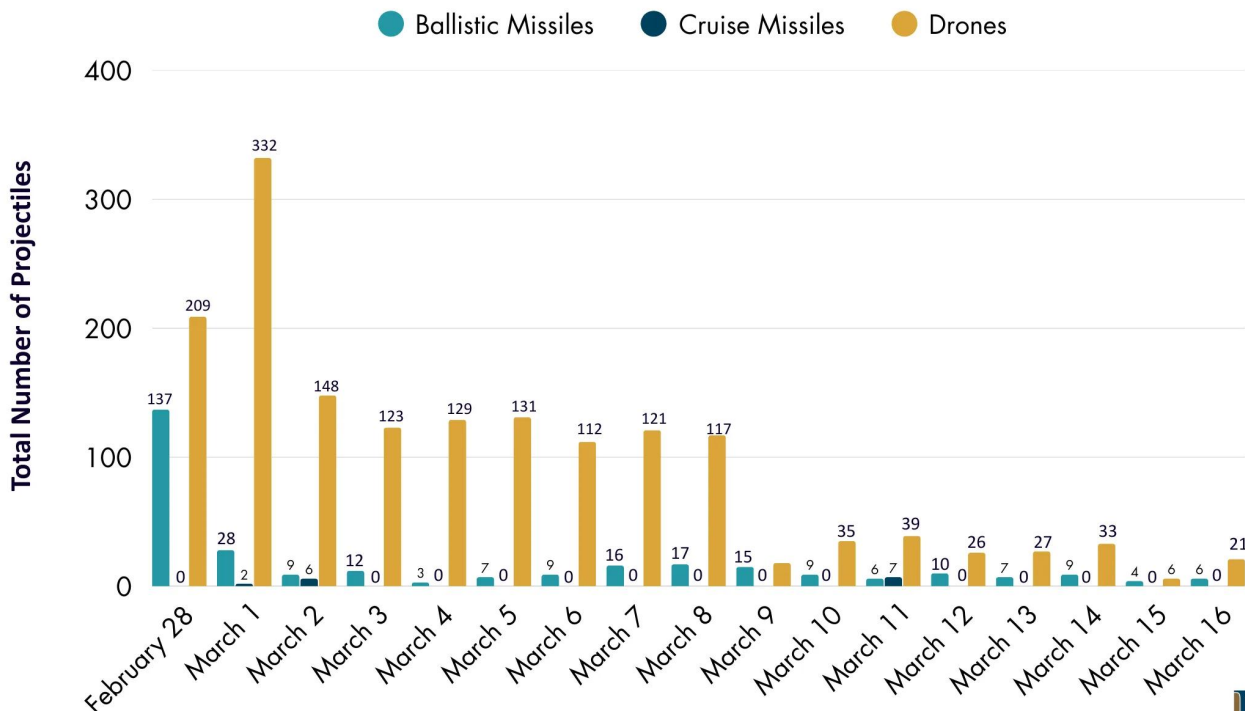
Iran launched six missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 15 and 3:00 PM ET on March 16.[53] An Israeli journalist reported that suspected cluster munitions or missile fragments impacted at least two sites in central Israel.[54] Israeli media reported an Iranian cluster munition impacted in Rishon Lezion, northern Israel, causing extensive damage.[55] Israeli media reported on March 16 that fragments from Iranian projectiles fell in several areas of Jerusalem and Beit Shemesh, central Israel.[56] An Israeli journalist reported on March 16 that a fragment struck the Boyan Hasidic Synagogue in Jerusalem, central Israel.[57]

Iran continued to fire at the Gulf states on March 15 and 16, but Gulf air defense systems have continued to intercept most Iranian projectiles. CTP-ISW observed four impacts in the Gulf

states between 3:00 PM ET on March 15 and 3:00 PM ET on March 16. An Iranian drone struck the Dubai International Airport, United Arab Emirates (UAE), on March 15, causing a fire at a nearby fuel tank.[58] Another Iranian drone struck a storage tanker and an oil pipeline at Fujairah Oil Industrial Zone, UAE, on March 16.[59] Fujairah is one of the largest oil storage facilities in the Middle East and the pipelines that flow to Fujairah enable oil shipments to bypass the Strait of Hormuz.[60] An Iranian missile struck a civilian vehicle in the al Bahyah area of Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, on March 16, killing one individual.[61] An Iranian drone struck the Shah oil field in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on March 16, causing a fire.[62] The Shah field is home to the world’s largest ultra-sour gas operations, which involve using high hydrogen sulfide concentrates to remove impurities so that the gas can be used for electricity production or fuel gas in refineries.[63] Iran has undertaken an effort to impose political pressure on the United States by striking oil infrastructure in the region and oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz.[64]

The Gulf states continued to intercept the bulk of Iran’s missile and drone attacks. Bahrain Defense Forces said it detected and intercepted three Iranian drones and four Iranian missiles on March 16 as of 3:00 PM ET.[65] The Kuwaiti Army reported that its air defense system detected four Iranian drones, one of which was intercepted, one fell outside the “threat zone,” and two fell in the north.[66] The Qatari Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted several Iranian drones and intercepted 13 Iranian ballistic missiles with one missile falling in open areas.[67] Saudi Defense Ministry reported that it detected and intercepted 43 Iranian drones on March 16 as of 3:00 PM ET.[68] The Emirati Defense Ministry reported that it detected and intercepted 21 Iranian drones and six Iranian missiles on March 16.[69] Iranian drone attacks targeting the UAE have relatively increased compared to March 15, as illustrated below.

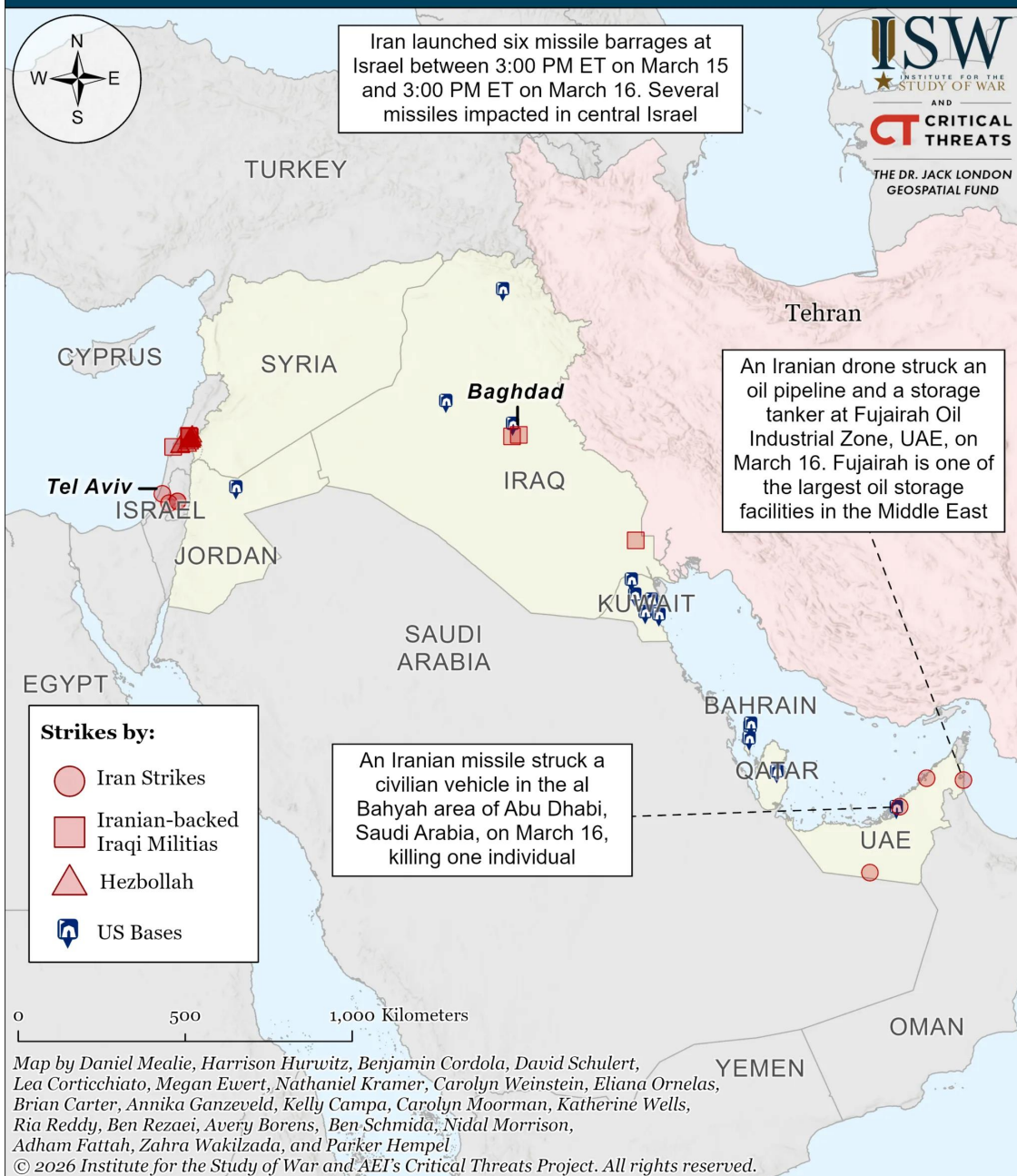
Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 16, 2026



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All data from the UAE Ministry of Defense.



Iranian and Axis Retaliatory Strikes in the Middle East Between March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM and March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM

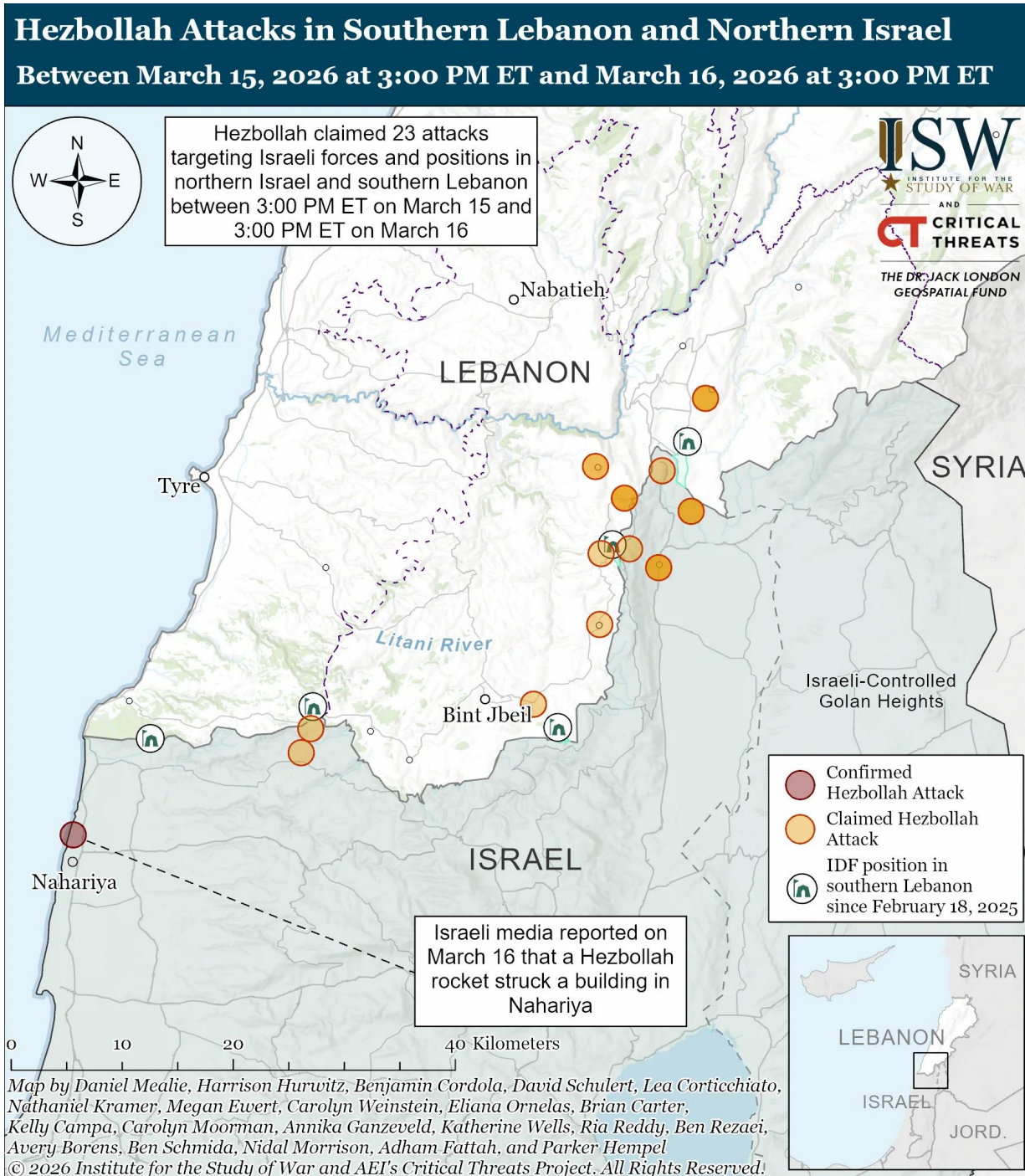


The combined force has severely degraded Iran's missile and drone capabilities, which has limited Iran's ability to launch retaliatory attacks in the region.

The IDF reported on March 16 that it has destroyed approximately 70 percent of Iran's missile launchers since the conflict began on February 28.[70] IDF spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told reporters on March 16 that the number of Iranian missile launches has decreased significantly.[71] The combined force's strikes on Iranian missile launchers could be limiting Iran's ability to retaliate, but there may be other factors that are also limiting Iran's ability to retaliate. A senior IDF official recently noted that Iranian missile crews are reportedly afraid to go out and that there are desertions as well as refusals to follow orders.[72] The official added that Iranian security force casualties are estimated to be at least 10,000.[73] Anti-regime media, citing informed sources, previously reported that the IRGC attempted to mobilize reserve forces earlier this week, but several individuals did not report to military centers.[74]

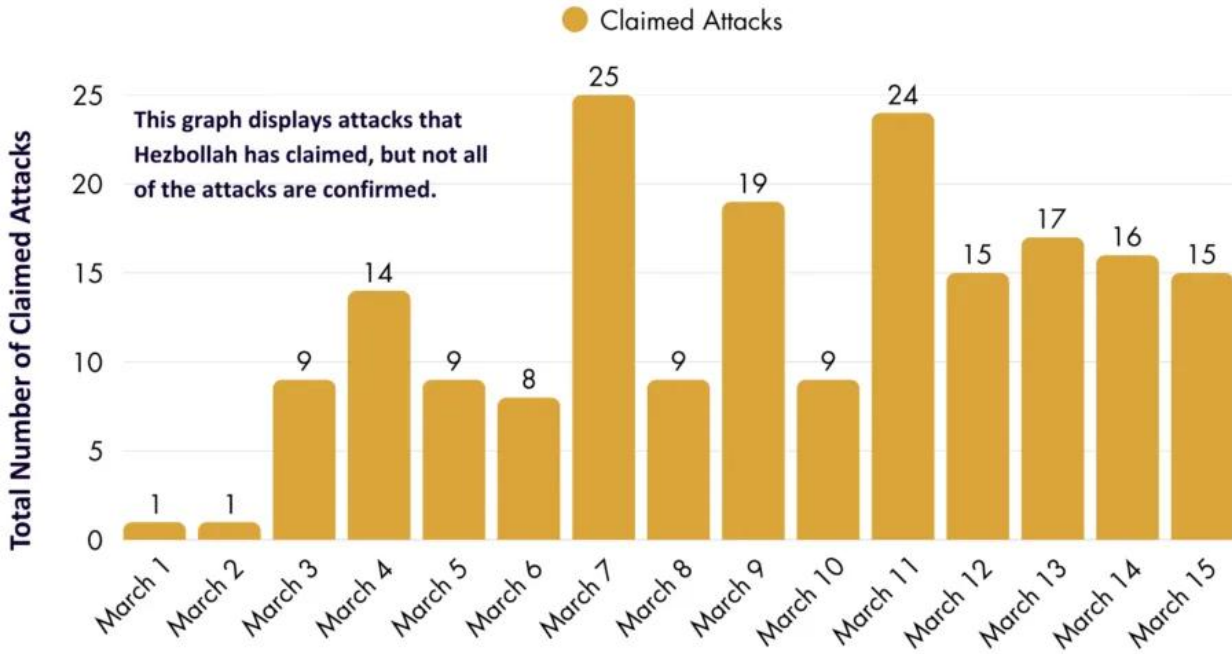
Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

Hezbollah claimed 23 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon between 3:00 PM ET on March 15 and 3:00 PM ET on March 16.[75] Hezbollah claimed several rocket and drone attacks targeting IDF positions and forces along both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border.[76] Hezbollah claimed that it launched a rocket barrage and a “squadron” of drones targeting the town of Nahariya in northern Israel on March 16.[77] Israeli media and an Israeli journalist reported on March 16 that a Hezbollah rocket directly impacted a structure in Nahariya.[78]



The rate of Hezbollah attacks targeting Israel have varied since the group joined the war on March 1, as illustrated below.

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Israel Between March 1, 2026 and March 15, 2026

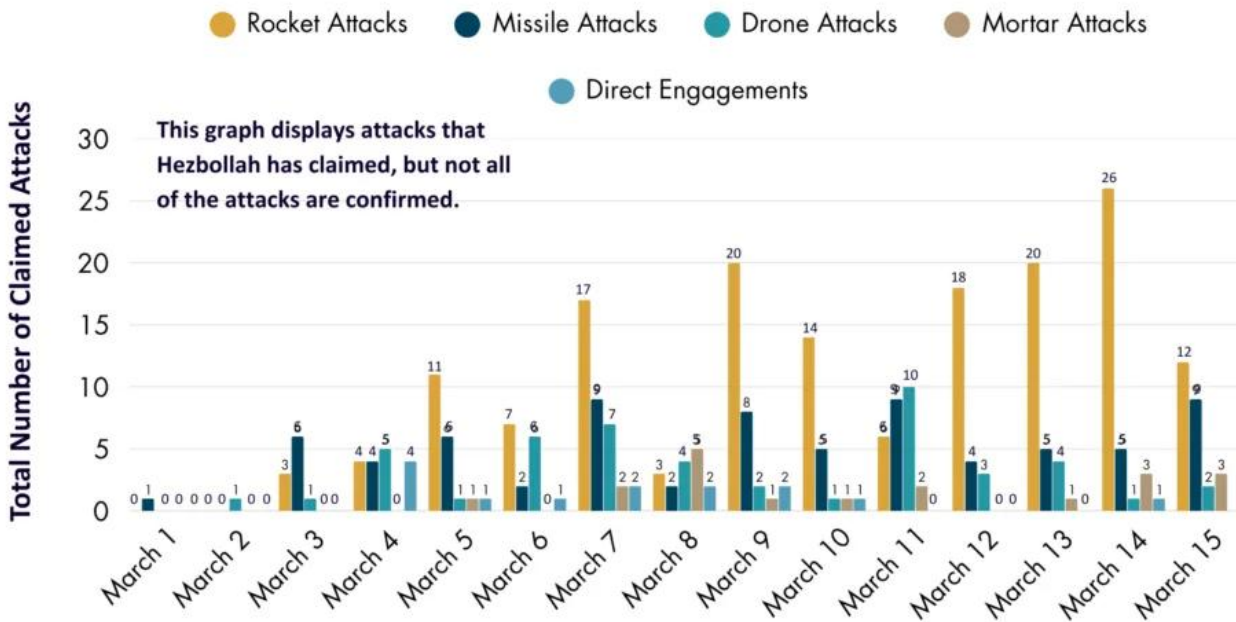


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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



Hezbollah has also employed a variety of weapons in its attacks against Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon (see below).

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 15, 2026 By Type



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

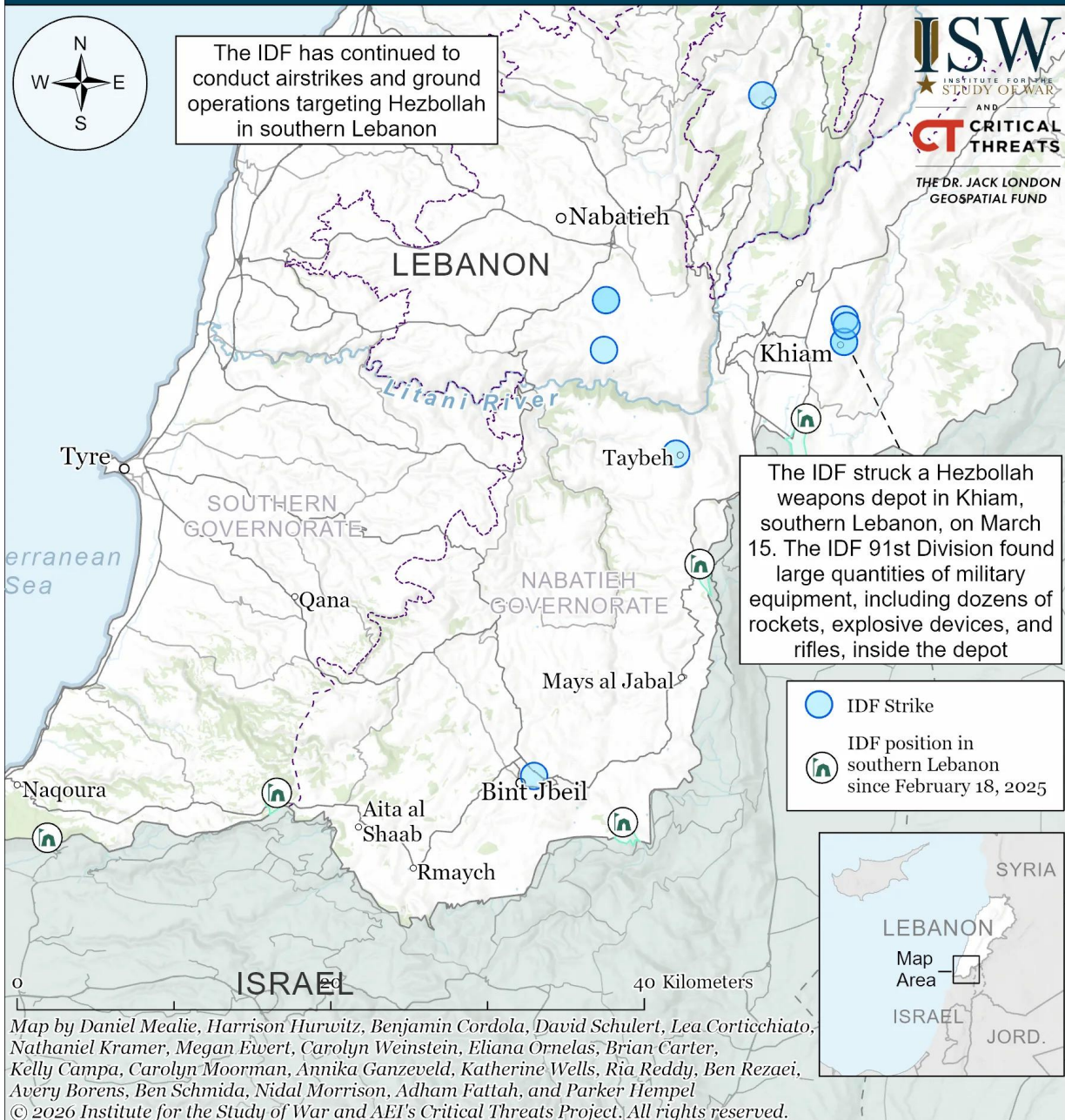
Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used



The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has continued to conduct airstrikes and ground operations targeting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The IDF struck a Hezbollah weapons depot in Khiam, southern Lebanon, on March 15.[79] IDF ground forces had previously discovered the depot.[80] The IDF 91st Division previously found large quantities of combat equipment, including dozens of rockets, explosive devices, and rifles, inside the depot.[81] The IDF 401st Armored Brigade (162nd Division) also destroyed a weapons depot and discovered Hezbollah weapons in southern Lebanon on March 16.[82]

Israeli Strikes in Lebanon

Between March 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The IDF announced the start of a targeted ground operation in southern Lebanon on March 16.[83] The IDF reported on March 16 that the IDF 91st Division begun a targeted ground operation targeting key locations in southern Lebanon in order to solidify "the forward defense zone," destroy Hezbollah infrastructure, and kill Hezbollah fighters.[84] IDF spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told reporters on March 16 that the IDF was operating in new areas of southern Lebanon and described the Israeli operation as "limited and targeted." [85] Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz stated on March 16 that the operation in Lebanon is meant to resemble the IDF's operations in the Gaza Strip during Israel's war against Hamas and noted that the operation will continue until Hezbollah no longer poses a threat.[86]

Axis of Resistance Response

The combined force has likely killed multiple Iranian-backed Iraqi militia commanders, including Kataib Hezbollah security chief Abu Ali al Askari, on March 16.[87] Kataib Hezbollah announced on March 16 that its security commander and spokesperson, Abu Ali al Askari, died but did not provide details.[88] Kataib Hezbollah added that Abu Mujahid al Assaf will replace Askari as the group's security chief.[89] The Iranian-backed Badr Organization similarly announced on March 16 that one of its commanders, Abu Muntadhar al Muhammadawi, died but did not provide details of his death.[90] CTP-ISW will provide more in-depth analysis on the deaths of both commanders on March 17.

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continue to attack US forces and interests in Iraq and may be attacking US interests and partner states in the region. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI) said on March 15 that it carried out 24 operations that targeted “enemy bases” inside Iraq and elsewhere in the region.[91] The IRI's claim that it is attacking US facilities “elsewhere in the region,” if true, would mean that Iran is not conducting all the attacks targeting the Gulf that are currently being attributed to it. The IRI also published two videos of purported rocket and drone attacks on US bases on March 15.[92] Likely militia front group Saraya Awliya al Dam also claimed on March 15 that it launched a barrage of rockets at the former US Victory Base near Baghdad International Airport.[93] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have repeatedly claimed attacks targeting the former US Victory base since the start of the war.[94] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah similarly conducted a FPV drone attack on the Victory Base on March 15.[95] No US forces are at Camp Victory. An IRI front group said on March 15 that it launched a drone attack against US interests in northern Iraq, likely referring to US bases in Erbil City.[96] Multiple local sources also reported on March 16 that an Iraqi militia drone likely targeted the US embassy in Baghdad, but Iraqi air defense systems intercepted it.[97] Two likely Iraqi militia drones separately targeted the Majnoon oil field in Basra Province, southern Iraq.[98] One drone struck a communications tower inside the field, while the other hit an office belonging to the US company KBR, according to Iraqi media.[99] A likely Iranian or Iranian-backed militia drone previously struck a power generator at the US-operated Sarsang oil field in Duhok, Iraqi Kurdistan, on March 5, causing a fire and forcing the facility to close temporarily.[100]**The combined force has struck additional Iraqi militia targets since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff.** Iraqi media reported on March 16 that a combined force airstrike killed or wounded 20 PMF members of the 18th and 19th PMF brigades in al Qaim, western Anbar Province, along the Iraq-Syria border.[101] The Iranian-backed Badr Organization announced on March 16 that likely combined force airstrikes killed eight of its fighters.[102] An Iraqi source also reported that a combined force strike at the Kataib Hezbollah-controlled facility that now occupies Jurf al Sakhr, Babylon Province, wounded six PMF members.[103] A separate combined force strike wounded three other PMF members near the Badush Dam, north of Mosul, on March 16, according to Iraqi media.[104]

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[73] <https://x.com/AmitSegal/status/2032365394451694063?s=20>
[74] <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202603127596>
[75] Data upon request.
[76] <https://t.me/mmirleb/11271> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/11282> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/11305>
[77] <https://t.me/mmirleb/11294>
[78] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/2033582016197763583> ;
<https://x.com/GLZRadio/status/2033582900495499580>
[79] <https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/2033521165684416745> ;
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[83] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/29110> ; <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/2033423488334061982>
[84] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/2033423488334061982>
[85]
<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-troops-launch-limited-operations-against-hezbollah-south-lebanon-2026-03-16/>
[86] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/katz-on-lebanon-ground-op-displaced-lebanese-wont-return-home-until-north-israel-is-safe/
[87] <https://t.me/platformB/4402>
[88] <https://t.me/centerkaf/5595>
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[95] <https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/2032963872693563531?s=20>
[96] https://t.me/Jaysh_ALGhadab/77
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[98] <https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/2033587296482824656?s=20> ; <https://www.shafaq.com/en/Security/Drone-strikes-hit-Majnoon-oil-field-in-Basra>
[99] <https://www.shafaq.com/en/Security/Drone-strikes-hit-Majnoon-oil-field-in-Basra>
[100]
<https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-evening-special-report-march-5-2026/> ;
<https://www.rudawarabia.net/arabic/kurdistan/0503202610>
[101] <https://www.shafaq.com/en/Security/Around-20-PMF-fighters-killed-in-strikes-in-western-Iraq>
[102] <https://t.me/platformB/4401>
[103] https://x.com/Tammuz_Intel/status/2033456951628062972
[104] <https://www.shafaq.com/en/Security/PMF-members-wounded-in-airstrike-near-Mosul-dam>

Iran Update Special Report, March 17, 2026



Ria Reddy, Carolyn Moorman, Adham Fattah, Benjamin Schmida, Avery Borens, Nidal Morrison, Samuel Shafiro, Brian Carter

Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 03:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: *ISW-CTP will no longer publish morning updates covering the war with Iran. ISW-CTP will instead publish threads on its social media channels in the morning that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.*

Key Takeaways

1. The United States and Israel are currently attempting to use force to prevent Iran from disrupting shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. A weakened regime that remains in power after this war would be able to disrupt shipping whenever and for however long it pleases with little effort if its current, relatively limited, strike campaign on shipping proves sufficient to cause the US and Israel to surrender.
2. A failure to demonstrate the will and ability to deny Iran the ability to disrupt traffic will make it enormously harder to deter Iran from future disruptions. Stopping the war in current conditions would thus represent a major strategic challenge that the United States or Israel would need to contend with in future rounds of conflict with a regime that will continue to be a committed adversary.
3. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that it struck the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy headquarters in Tehran on March 16. It stated that commanders used the headquarters to direct IRGC Navy forces and plan operations against Israel and other regional countries.
4. The IDF confirmed that it killed Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Larijani, who was a long-time regime insider and had held many senior posts, in airstrikes in Tehran overnight on March 16 and 17. Larijani's death likely weakens a key faction in competition with the Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei-IRGC nexus, but it will not end the ongoing competition.
5. A long-time observer of drone operations in Ukraine suggested on March 17 that the drone footage posted by likely Iranian-backed Iraqi militia front group Saraya Awliya al Dam is consistent with a fiber optic first-person view (FPV) drone. The Iranian proxy group's decision to advertise its

possession of such a weapon would be an explicit threat aimed at the United States.

Toplines

The United States and Israel are currently attempting to use force to prevent Iran from disrupting shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Such an operation will also demonstrate that the regime cannot hold the strait hostage in the future to secure strategic victories at relatively limited cost. A “very senior Israeli political source” enumerated a series of war aims to Israeli Channel 12 that included preventing Iran from disrupting shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and denying Iran’s ability to do so in the future.[1] Accomplishing this objective would demonstrate that Israel and the United States have the ability to prevent Iran from trying again in the future. The US objectives are consistent with the Israeli objectives regarding the Strait of Hormuz. US Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Admiral Brad Cooper said on March 11, for example, that the United States aims to degrade Iran’s ability to interrupt shipping in the Strait and “end their ability to project power and harass shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.”[2]

A weakened regime that remains in power after this war would be able to disrupt shipping whenever and for however long it pleases with little effort if its current, relatively limited, strike campaign on shipping proves sufficient to cause the US and Israel to surrender. A failure to demonstrate the will and ability to deny Iran the ability to disrupt traffic will make it enormously harder to deter Iran from future disruptions. Stopping the war in current conditions would thus represent a major strategic challenge that the United States or Israel would need to contend with in future rounds of conflict with a regime that will continue to be a committed adversary. Iranian Parliament Speaker and former military official Mohammed Bagher Ghalibaf, for example, said that the strait will never return to its pre-war state.[3] Ghalibaf is presumably suggesting that Iran will continue to use the Strait of Hormuz and threats against it to coerce its adversaries and deter future military action. Ending Iran’s ability to disrupt shipping would demonstrate to Tehran that the United States and its partners can and will stop Iran by force if needed. It remains unclear whether military action will stop Iran from threatening the Strait. But ending the war without taking all feasible action to destroy Iran’s ability to disrupt traffic would communicate Iran that it can use threats to the strait to defeat its adversaries, including the United States, in any future conflict.

The list of objectives also included “creating conditions for regime change.” It does not follow that “conditions for regime change” will create regime change.[4] The conditions for regime change may or may not exist after the war, but executing regime change would require a sufficiently strong, large, and organized force to topple the regime nationwide and then take control nationwide in order to avoid chaos or a large-scale indigenous movement to overthrow the regime. It is premature to forecast the likelihood of such an uprising, as the air campaign is not complete, and people are very unlikely to rise against the regime in the midst of an active air campaign.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed that it struck the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy headquarters in Tehran on March 16.[5] It stated that commanders used the headquarters to direct IRGC Navy forces and plan operations against Israel and other regional countries. The IRGC Navy is primarily responsible for the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.[6] Iranian leaders have historically viewed the IRGC Navy as their main tool to disrupt commercial traffic near Iran’s coast and around the Strait of Hormuz. IRGC Navy Commander Alireza Tangsiri implicitly threatened on March 1 to attack any vessels that transit the strait without permission from Iran.[7] The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Organization has reported more than 20 maritime incidents in and around the strait since March 1.[8] The IRGC Navy also transports military equipment and other resources to Iranian proxy

groups.[9]

NOTE: A version of the following text will also appear in the Institute for the Study of War's March 17 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment:

Russia continues to expand its intelligence sharing and military cooperation with Iran to facilitate Iranian strikes on US and Israeli forces in the Middle East. The *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) reported on March 17, citing sources familiar with the matter, that Russia has been providing Iran with satellite imagery and drone technology and advice to support Iran's strike campaign against Israeli and the US forces.[10] Anonymous sources familiar with the matter, including a senior European intelligence officer, told the WSJ that Russia provided Iran with modified Shahed drone components meant to improve communication, navigation, and targeting, and specific advice for conducting drone strikes, including at what altitude and how many drones Iran should launch. A senior European intelligence officer and a Middle Eastern diplomat reported that Russia provided Iran with satellite imagery, which another official said came from satellites the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) manage, to assist recent Iranian strikes on US forces in the Middle East and US allies in the region. ISW continues to assess that Russia sees aiding Iran's strike campaign as an opportunity to weaken the US, as Russia has self-defined the US as one of its primary geopolitical adversaries.[11]

The IDF conducted a strike in Tehran killing Ali Larijani. Larijani has long been a major figure in the Iranian ruling establishment as a member of the powerful Larijani family and key player in the inner circle of recently killed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.[12] He has held numerous key posts over decades, including parliament speaker and most recently Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) secretary. The SNSC is the seniormost foreign and defense policy decision-making body. In that capacity, Larijani has overseen Iranian strategy in the current war and the brutal crackdown that killed 30,000 protesters in January 2026.[13] The *New York Times* reported in February 2026 that Larijani had "effectively been running the country" by that time.[14]

Larijani was a relative pragmatist, occasionally supporting more restrained behaviors compared to the more uncompromising hardliners. Larijani supported the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action championed by moderate President Hassan Rouhani, for instance. Nevertheless, Larijani was a long-time regime operative who had long endorsed and helped implement some of the regime's most aggressive and authoritarian policies.

Larijani's death likely weakens a key faction in the intra-regime competition with the Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei-IRGC nexus but will not end the ongoing competition. The *New York Times* reported on March 17 that Larijani had been lobbying the Assembly of Experts, the body responsible for selecting the supreme leader, to change their vote in favor of a more moderate choice.[15] Anti-regime media reported on March 6 that Larijani had wanted his brother, Sadegh Amoli Larijani, to become the next Supreme Leader.[16] Anti-regime media reported in September 2025 that Ali Larijani was maneuvering to secure his influence in the regime after Khamenei dies.[17]

Competition within the regime over its future trajectory will continue despite Larijani's death. Key factions continue to disagree over succession and governance after the combined force killed Ali Khamenei. Anti-regime media, citing unspecified sources, reported on March 13 that some clerics in Iran have raised concerns about Mojtaba's physical condition and capacity to govern, for example.[18] Larijani's death is also unlikely to be the last casualty from among Iran's top leaders as decapitation strikes continue. Each loss will alter the nature of the competition and the power of the various factions. Mojtaba will likely face several immediate challenges even after the war and after the decapitation strikes stop or slow. These challenges will include establishing his legitimacy and attempting to unite and

gain the support of various regime factions.[19]

Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)

As of 3:00 PM ET on March 17, 2026



President
Masoud Pezeshkian



Armed Forces General
Staff Chief
Abdol Rahim Mousavi



Minister of Intelligence
Esmail Khatib



Islamic Revolutionary
Guards Corps Commander
Mohammad Pakpour



Minister of Foreign Affairs
Abbas Araghchi



Minister of Interior
Eskander Momeni



Speaker of the Parliament
Mohammad Bagher
Ghalibaf



Supreme National Security
Council (SNSC) Secretary
Ali Larjani



Supreme Leader
Representative to the SNSC
Saeed Jalili



Judiciary Chief
Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei



Artesh Commander
Amir Hatami



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The IDF also killed Basij Organization Commander Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani and his deputy Ghassem Ghoureishi during strikes on a “makeshift headquarters” in Tehran where, according to anti-regime media, they were reportedly coordinating protest suppression efforts.[20] The strike occurred overnight on March 16 and 17. Sources told anti-regime media that senior Basij commanders held a meeting that night to discuss plans to counter potential protests during the Iranian Chaharshanbe Suri holiday on March 17.[21] The report added that the Israeli strikes overnight killed around 300 Basij commanders and field officers.[22] Israeli strikes targeting senior Basij commanders are part of a broader US-Israeli effort to degrade repressive institutions in Iran. The Basij is a paramilitary organization that the Iranian armed forces use to recruit, indoctrinate, organize, and control regime loyalists.[23] The Basij focuses largely on producing and disseminating propaganda, social policing, suppressing domestic dissent, and conducting civil defense activities. The

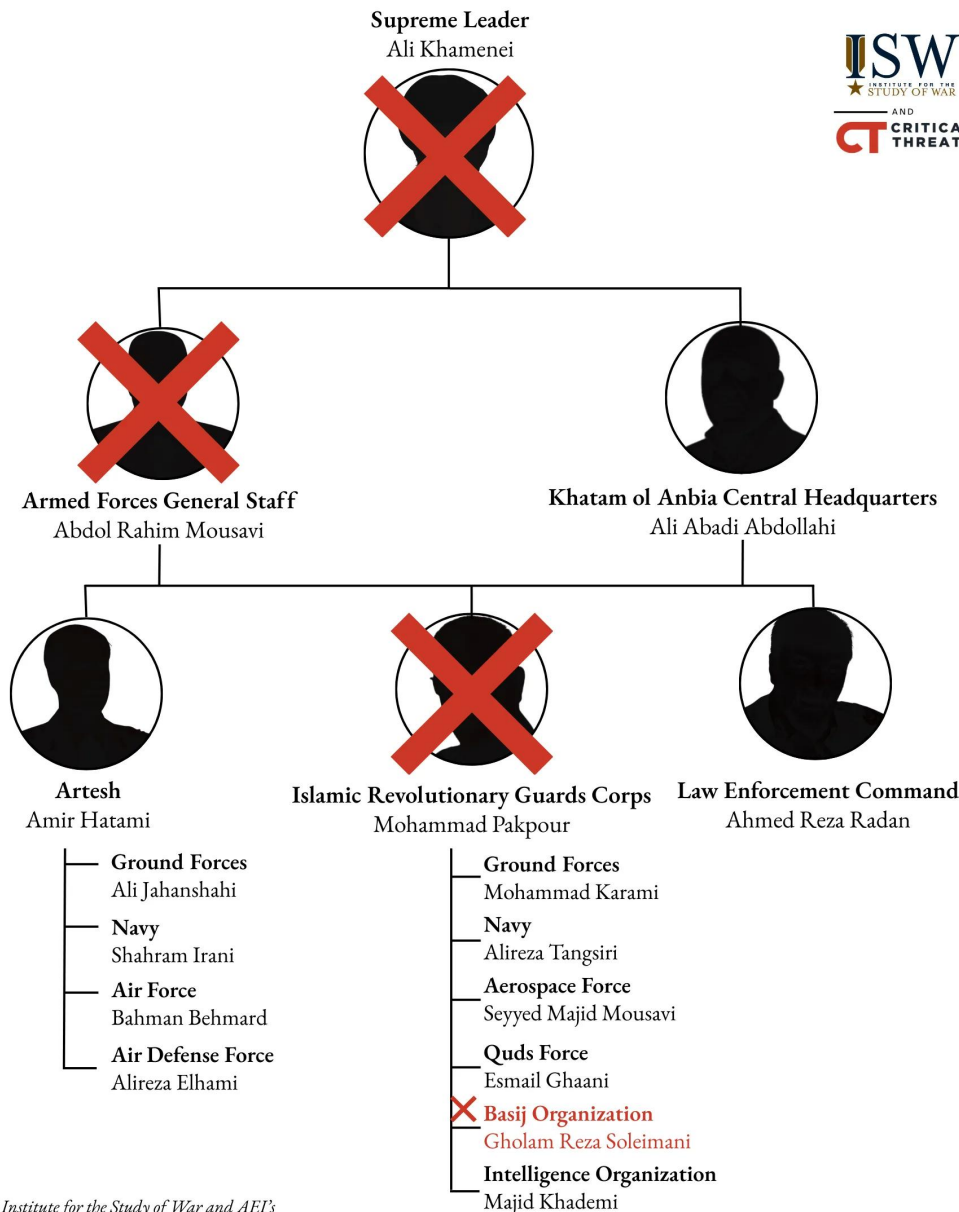
Basij maintains elite units that receive advanced military and “ideological-political” training and function as a manpower reserve for the IRGC Ground Forces. The IRGC Ground Forces incorporates these Basij units into its ranks, especially during times of war or domestic crisis. The Basij also cooperates extensively with the IRGC Intelligence Organization to monitor the Iranian population. Israeli airstrikes overnight killed the following individuals, among others:

- **Gholamreza Soleimani.** Former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei appointed Soleimani as Basij Organization commander following the 2019 protests as part of a broader reshuffling of internal security leadership.[24] The United States sanctioned Soleimani in January 2020 for the Basij’s involvement in recruiting and sending child soldiers to fight in regional conflicts.[25] Soleimani previously commanded IRGC Ground Forces units and has an extensive history of repression.[26]

- **Ghassem Ghoureishi.** Former IRGC Commander Hossein Salami appointed Ghoureishi in 2021 during the same reshuffling period of internal security officials.[27] He previously served as the coordination deputy to the supreme leader’s representative to the IRGC.[28] The European Union sanctioned Ghoureishi on March 16 for his role in protest suppression and human rights violations.[29]

Hierarchy of the Iranian Armed Forces

As of 3:00 PM ET on March 17, 2026



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A long-time observer of drone operations suggested on March 17 that the drone footage posted by a likely Iranian-backed Iraqi militia front group, Saraya Awliya al Dam, is consistent with a fiber optic first-person view (FPV) drone.[30] The Iranian proxy group's decision to advertise its possession of such a weapon would be an explicit threat aimed at the United States. Saraya Awliya al Dam claimed that it launched a reconnaissance drone inside the perimeter of the US Embassy in Baghdad and posted the drone's video footage.[31] Fiber optic FPV drones are immune to jamming and can be used for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or outfitted with strike capabilities to conduct precise targeting.[32] Russia and Ukraine have extensively used FPV drones in the Russia-Ukraine War.[33] Iran possesses FPV drones and could share this technology with its partners in Iraq.[34] Russia has also recently shared drone tactics with Iran, but disseminating these tactics to Iraqi groups from Iran would take time, especially during a war. An Iraq analyst reported on March 17 that Saraya Awliya al Dam is a front group for Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada.[35] CTP-ISW continues

to assess that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are using front groups to conduct attacks to obfuscate responsibility. Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada is a US-designated terrorist organization and conducted attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria under the Islamic Resistance in Iraq coalition during the Gaza War.[36]

A US official and source with knowledge told Axios on March 16 that Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi and US envoy Steve Witkoff have reactivated a direct communications channel in recent days.[37] The US official claimed that Araghchi reached out to Witkoff to find ways to end the war, adding that the US side “is not talking to Iran.”[38] Araghchi denied on March 16 having any contact with Witkoff since the war started on February 28.[39]

US and Israeli Air Campaign

The combined force has continued to strike Iranian ballistic missile infrastructure to degrade Iran’s missile capabilities. The IDF said on March 17 that it struck a ballistic missile and storage site located in underground facilities at an IRGC drone and missile base south of Shiraz, Fars Province.[40] The combined force has struck this missile base several times since the war began on February 28, based on satellite imagery of the site, including likely strikes on March 2 and March 6.[41] The combined force likely struck the facility with ground-penetrating munitions based on satellite imagery from March 7.[42] The IDF previously struck the base during the 12-Day War after Iran launched missiles at Israel from the site.[43] The facility also includes underground silos for drone launches, according to an Israeli think tank.[44] The combined force likely struck the Imam Hussein Strategic Missile base located south of Yazd City on March 17.[45] An OSINT account geolocated photographs of reported strikes published by anti-regime media on March 17 to the Imam Hussein Strategic Missile base in Yazd.[46] The combined force has similarly struck this facility multiple times on March 1 and March 6, according to satellite imagery from an Israeli analyst.[47] The Imam Hussein Strategic Missile Base previously stored long-range Khorramshahr ballistic missiles in underground tunnels and used the site to launch approximately 60 ballistic missiles at Israel during the 12-Day War, according to an Israeli military correspondent.[48] These included ballistic missiles with cluster munition warheads, which Iran has launched toward Israel several times since the war began on February 28, and previously used them during the 12-Day War.[49] Repeated strikes on these facilities suggest a continued effort to degrade Iran’s ability to store, launch, and sustain ballistic missile operations.

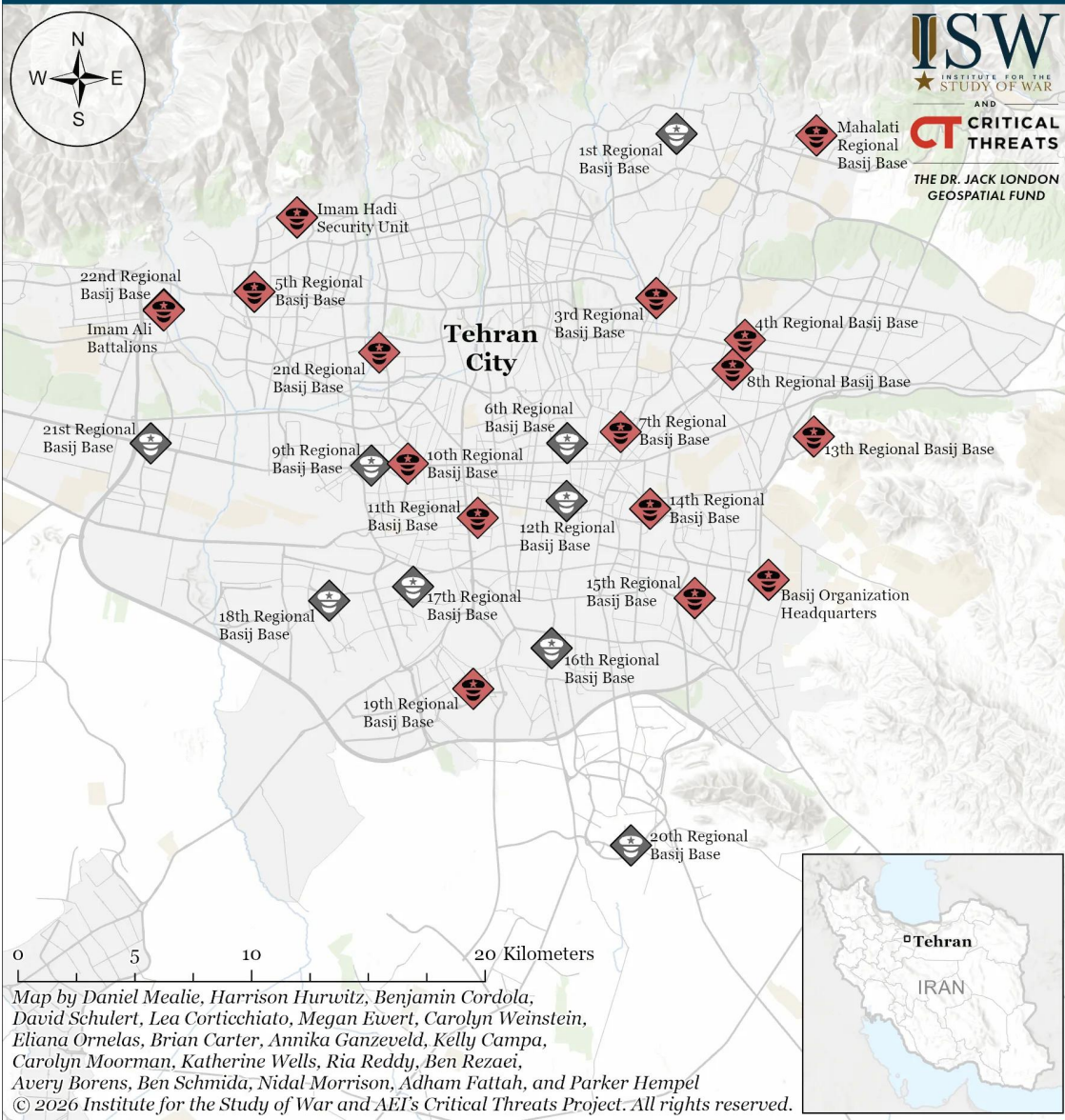
The combined force has continued to degrade Iranian air capabilities in order to maintain air superiority over parts of Iran. An Israeli analyst published satellite imagery on March 17 that shows that the combined force struck the 7th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase in Shiraz, Fars Province.[50] The combined force struck two C-130 transport aircraft, an Ilyushin Il-76 transport aircraft, and ten nearby hangars.[51] US CENTCOM previously published a video of strikes on similar aircraft types in Iran on March 11.[52] Iran reportedly maintained a fleet of around 28 C-130’s prior to the war, which it acquired from the United States before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.[53] This is likely the fourth strike on the 7th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase, which is co-located with the Shiraz International Airport. The combined force previously struck the Airbase on March 1 and March 6.[54] CENTCOM also released footage on March 17 showing strikes on multiple Iranian air defense systems in unspecified locations.[55]

The combined force continued to strike Iranian defense industrial sites. Anti-regime media reported on March 16 that the combined force struck an ammunition depot in Sirjan, Kerman Province.[56] US CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper stated on March 16 that US forces struck a drone production facility in Tehran on March 11.[57] Cooper added that the US efforts have begun to focus more on Iran’s defense industrial sites and “wider manufacturing apparatus.”[58] The IDF stated on


March 17 that it struck an unspecified regime defense site in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province, which commercially available satellite imagery showed to be a missile production site.[59]

The combined force struck a number of internal security targets. The IDF stated on March 17 that the combined force struck multiple Basij checkpoints and bases across Tehran, including a Basij base in Kamraniyeh District.[60] Anti-regime media reported that these strikes killed around 300 Basij commanders and field officials on March 17.[61] The IDF also struck the Imam Hadi security unit, which consists of Basij and IRGC forces, and one of Tehran's most important units for enforcing internal security under the IRGC Ground Forces Mohammad Rasoul Ollah Corps.[62] The Imam Hadi unit is reportedly stationed at a football stadium, which is a tactic the regime uses for protective cover or in times of emergency.[63] Anti-regime and regime media reported on March 17 that the combined force struck the IRGC Quds Force Imam Ali unit, which is one of the regime units responsible for training proxy militias.[64] It has open-air shooting ranges, underground ammunition depots, and residences for security units.[65] The IDF also announced on March 17 that it struck the Fars LEC Provincial headquarters.[66]

Targeted Basij Headquarters in Tehran City As of March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET

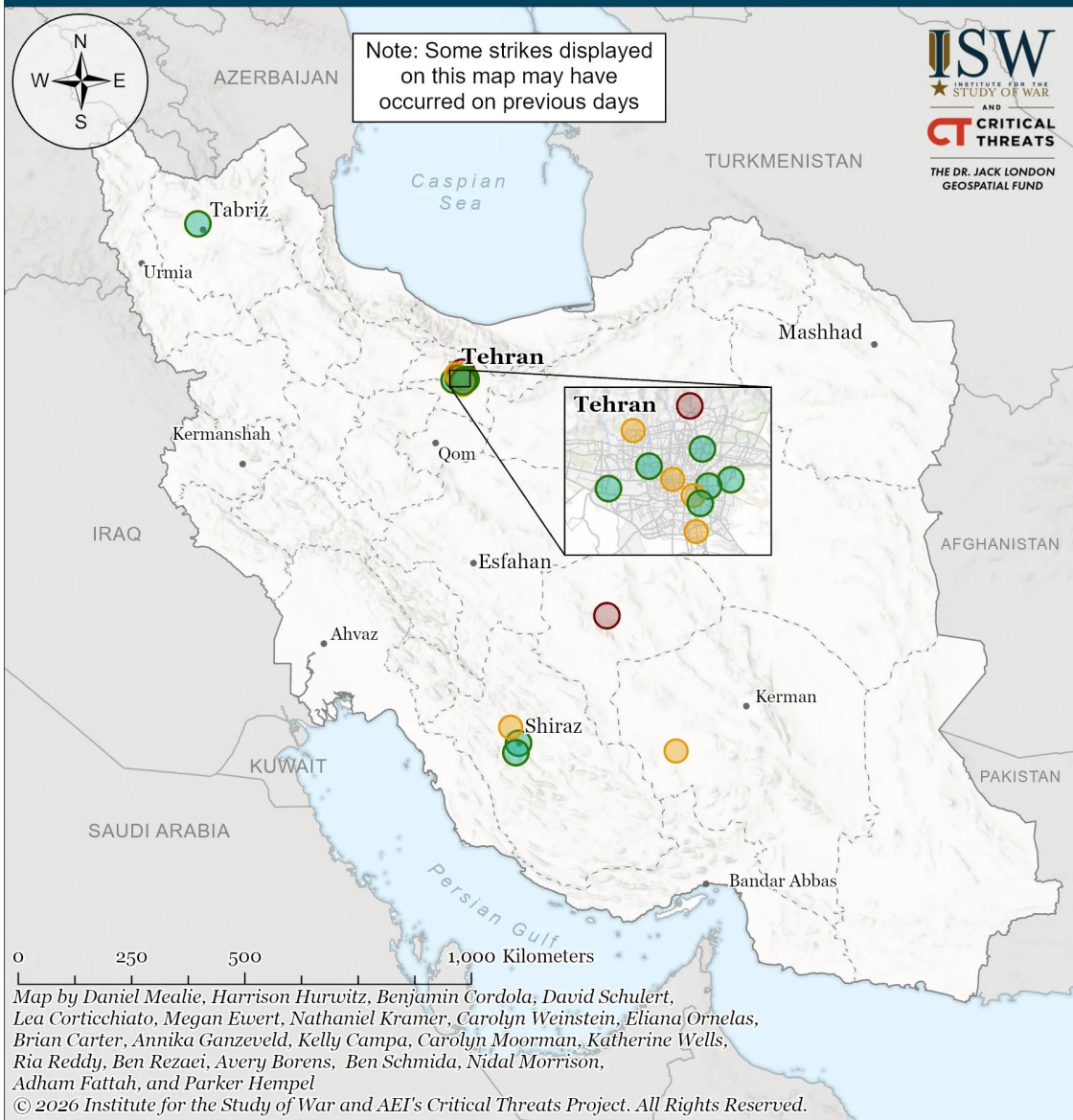


 Targeted Basij Headquarters in Tehran

 Basij Headquarters in Tehran

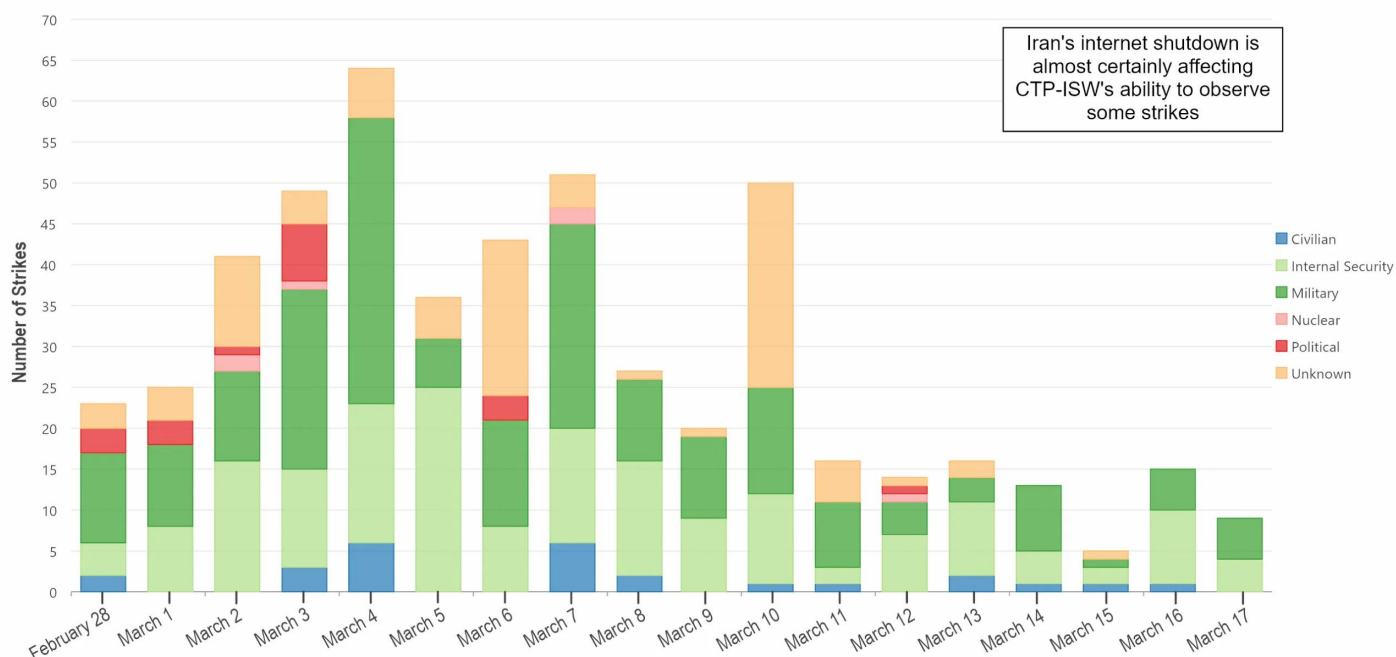
US and Israeli Strikes in Iran

Between March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



- Confirmed Airstrike
- Reported Airstrike
- Report of Explosion With Footage
- Report of Explosion Without Footage

US and Israeli Strikes Against Iran Reported and Confirmed Airstrikes Aggregated by Target Type From February 28, 2026 to March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Graphic by Daniel Mealie and David Schulert

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Iranian Retaliation

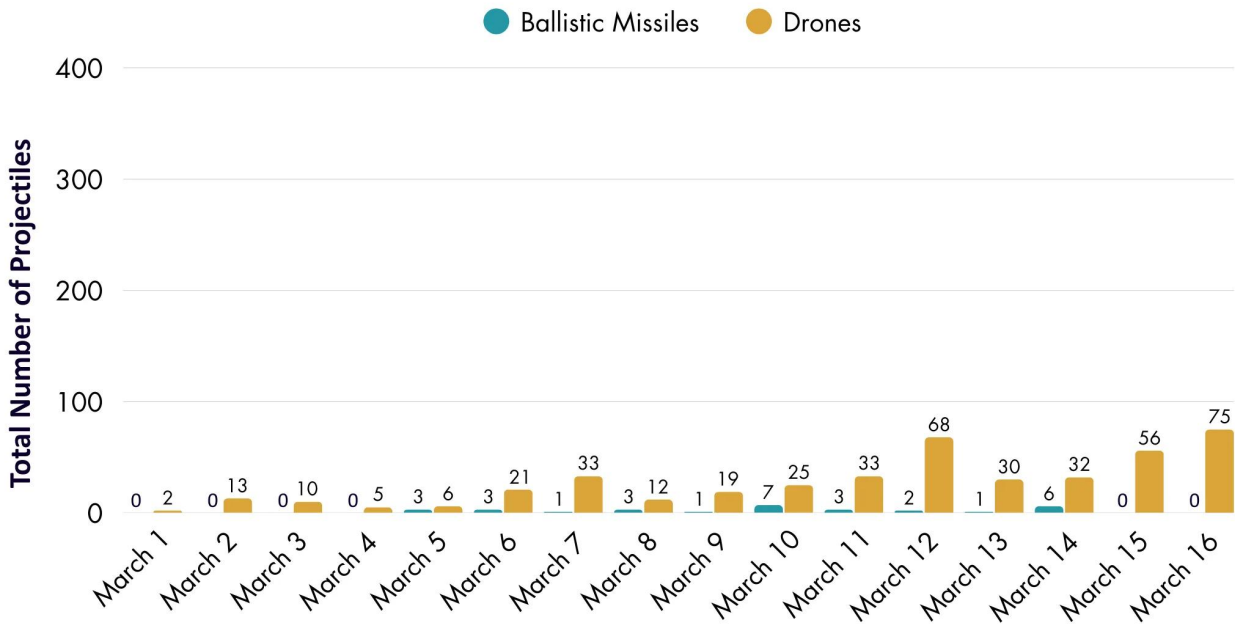
Iran launched nine missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 16 and 3:00 pm ET on March 17.[67] Israeli media reported on March 17 that an Iranian cluster munition impacted in Rishon Lezion and at least six other sites in central Israel.[68] Iranian missile fragments also hit a train station in Holon.[69]

Iranian and Axis Retaliatory Strikes in the Middle East Between March 16, 2026 at 3:00 ET and March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Iran continued to conduct drone and missile attacks against the Gulf states on March 16 and 17, but Gulf air defense systems have continued to intercept most Iranian projectiles. The Saudi Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted 35 Iranian drones and one ballistic missile on March 17 as of 3:00 PM ET.[70] The Kuwaiti Defense Ministry said that it intercepted 13 Iranian drones and two ballistic missiles.[71] The Qatari Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted several Iranian drones and 15 Iranian ballistic missiles, with one missile landing in an uninhabited area.[72] The Bahrain Defense Forces also intercepted two Iranian drones.[73]

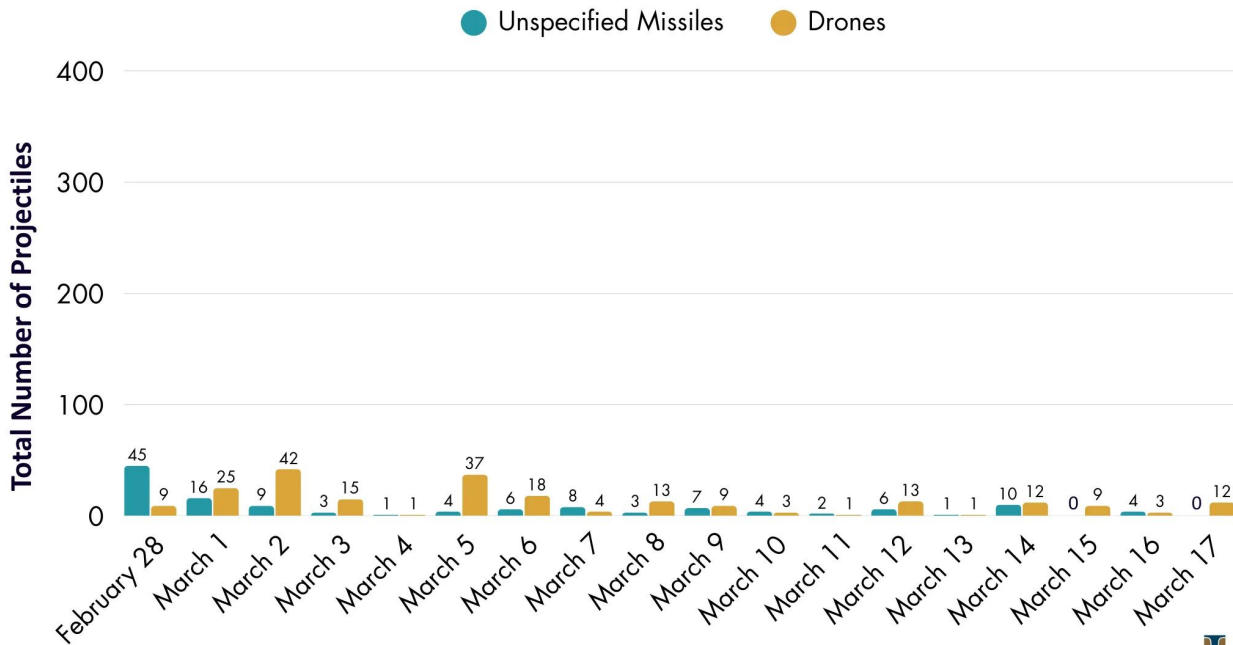
Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 16, 2026



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 All data from the Saudi Defense Ministry.



Iranian Missiles and Drones Launched at Bahrain Between February 28, 2026 and March 17, 2026

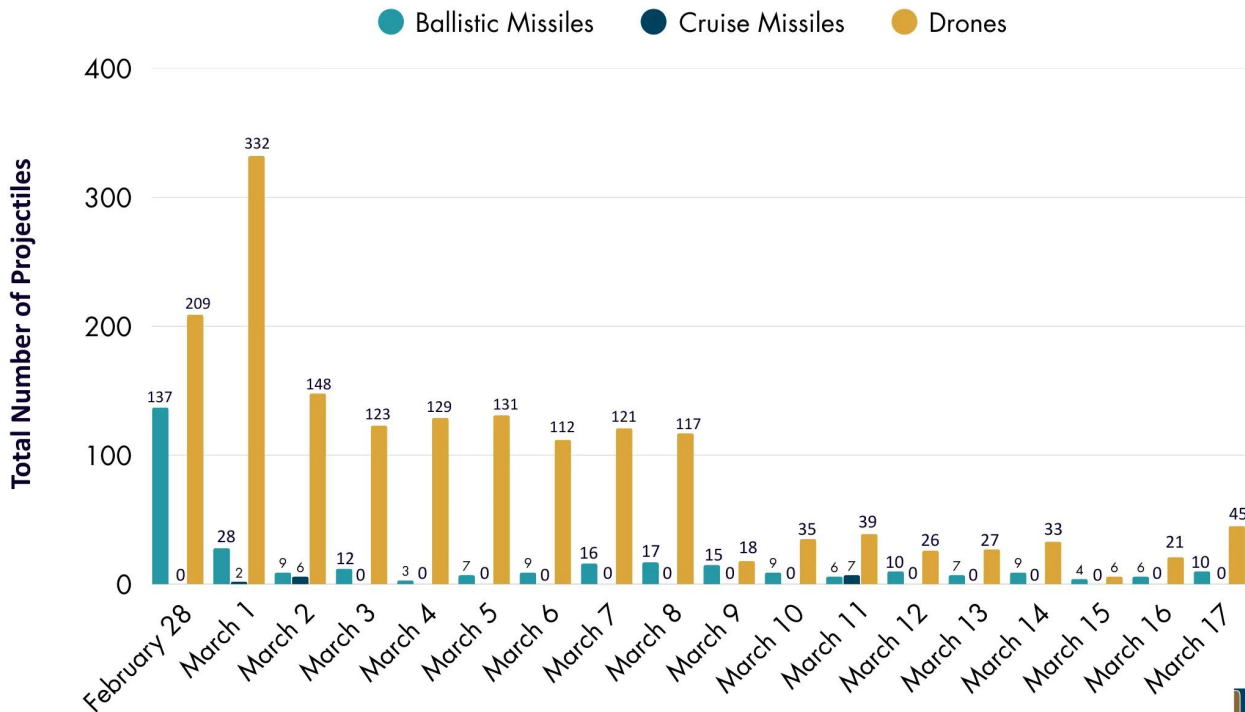


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All data from the Bahrain Defense Force.



The Emirati Defense Ministry reported that it detected and intercepted 45 Iranian drones and 10 Iranian ballistic missiles on March 17.[74] An Iranian drone attack targeted Fujairah Port, UAE, on March 17, and caused a fire at the export terminal.[75] Unspecified industry sources told Western media on March 17 that the port suspended oil loadings.[76] Emirati authorities also reported on March 17 that debris from a missile interception killed one Pakistani national in Bani Yas, Abu Dhabi.[77]

Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 17, 2026



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All data from the UAE Ministry of Defense.



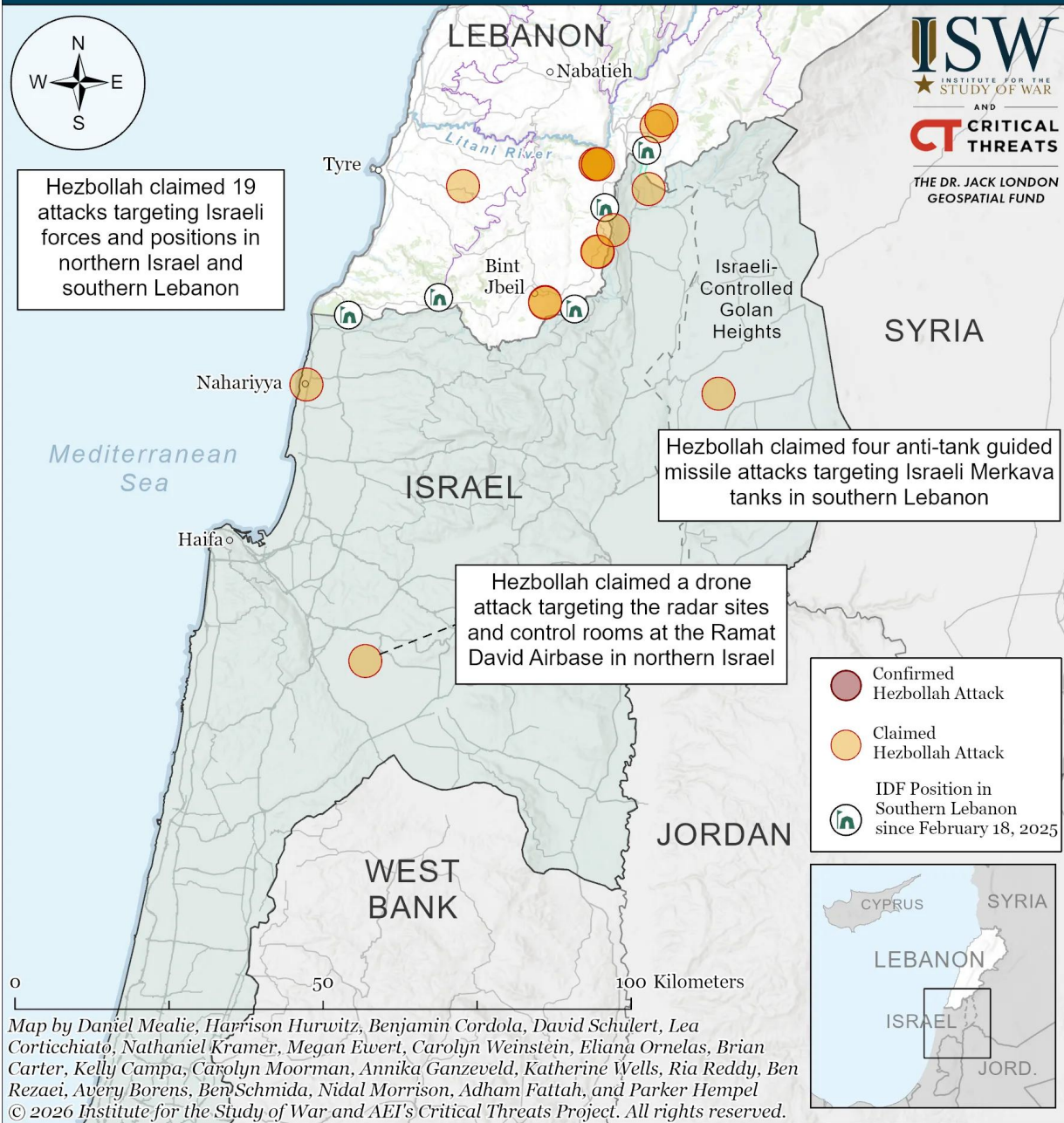
Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

Hezbollah claimed 19 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon between 3:00 PM ET on March 16 and 3:00 PM ET on March 17.[78]

Hezbollah claimed several rocket and drone attacks targeting IDF positions and forces along both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border.[79] Hezbollah claimed four anti-tank guided missile attacks targeting Israeli Merkava tanks in southern Lebanon.[80] Hezbollah claimed two separate drone attacks targeting the radar sites and control rooms at the Ramat David Airbase in northern Israel and the IDF Katsavia barracks in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.[81] The size of Hezbollah's rocket barrages appears to be decreasing. Hezbollah launched a barrage of rockets on March 16, which contained approximately 40 rockets.[82] Hezbollah has launched about 100 rockets per day, with its largest rocket barrage containing 200 rockets.[83] The IDF warned on March 17 that Hezbollah is planning to launch a large overnight rocket attack and has taken precautionary measures.[84]

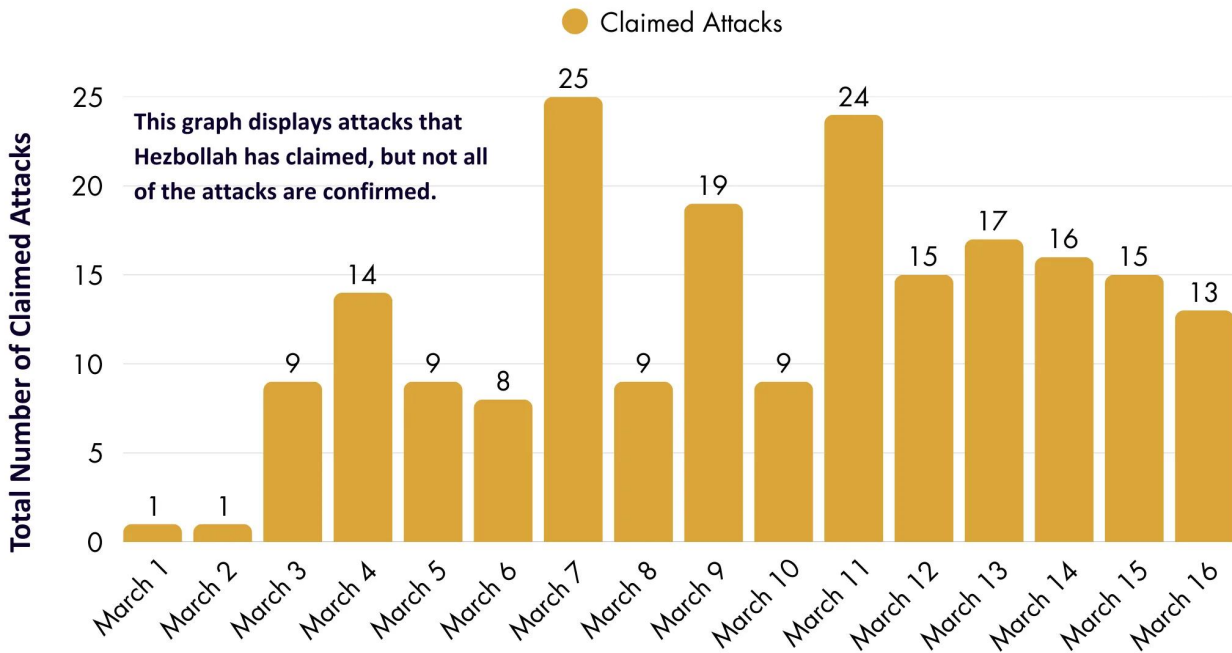
Hezbollah Attacks in Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon

Between March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The rate of Hezbollah attacks targeting Israel has varied since the group joined the war on March 1, as illustrated below.

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Israel Between March 1, 2026 and March 16, 2026

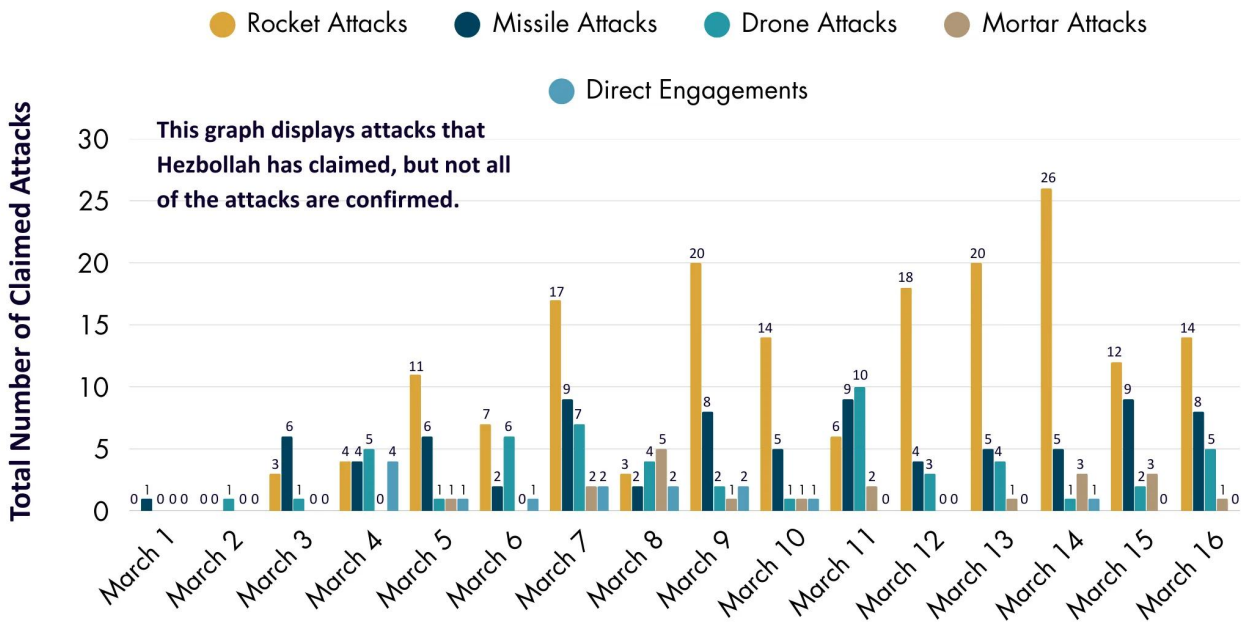


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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



Hezbollah has also employed a variety of weapons in its attacks against Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon (see below).

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 16, 2026 By Type



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used



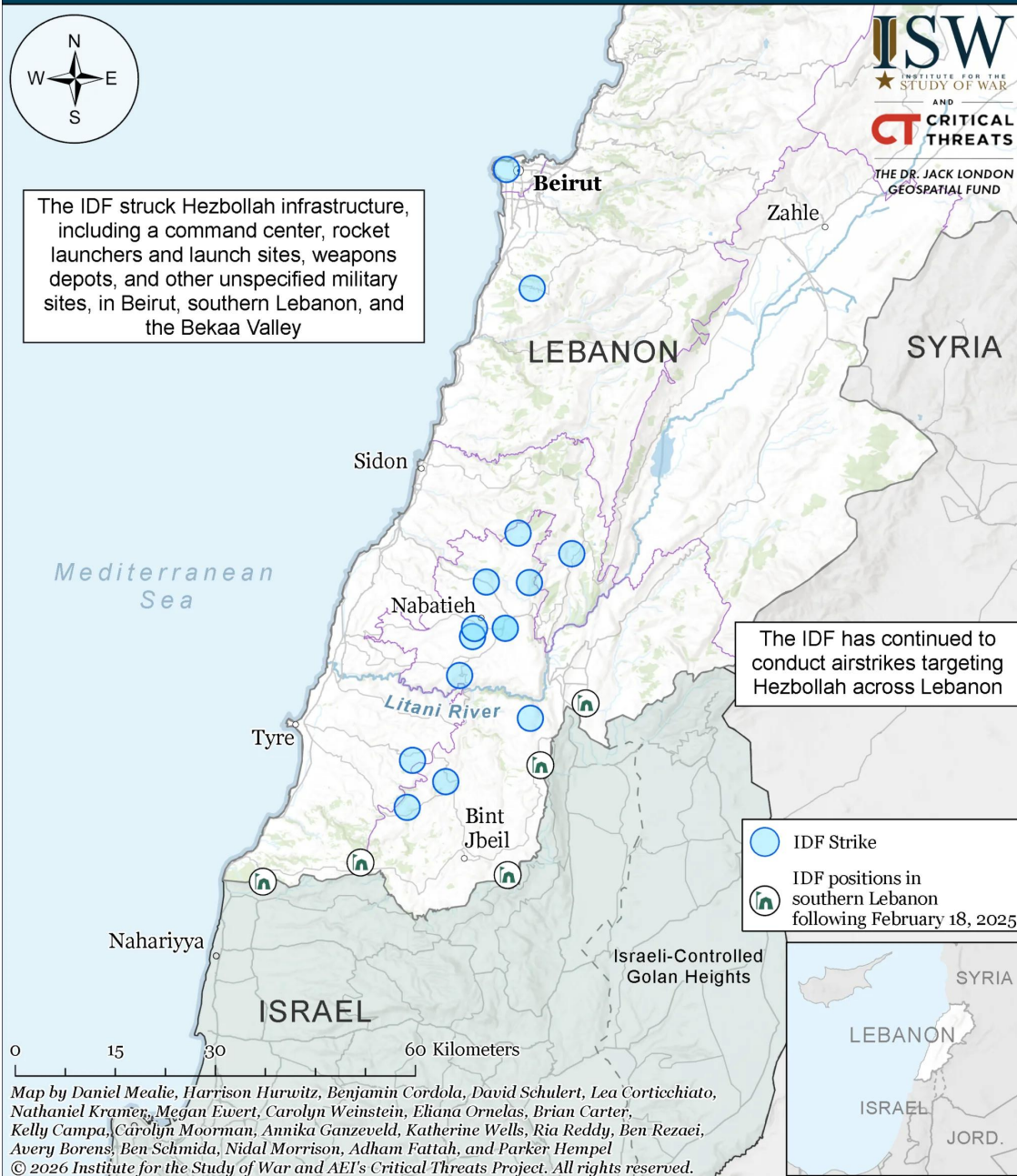
Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem commended Hezbollah fighters on March 17.[85]

Qassem applauded Hezbollah fighters in their “confrontation with the Israeli-American aggression.”[86] Qassem noted that the “available solution” is to stop Israeli operations, an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory, the release of Lebanese prisoners held in Israel, and the commencement of reconstruction in Lebanon.[87] Qassem’s stated solution mirrors Hezbollah’s long-standing demands that the group stated must be met before the group discusses its weapons.[88]

The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes and ground operations targeting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The IDF struck Hezbollah infrastructure, including a command center, rocket launchers and launch sites, weapons depots, and other unspecified military sites, in Beirut, southern Lebanon, and the Bekaa Valley.[89] The IDF also killed several Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon.[90] The IDF 36th Division continued to conduct “focused ground activity” in southern Lebanon on March 17.[91] IDF Chief of Staff Major General Eyal Zamir stated on March 17 that the IDF continues to mobilize forces and expand its ground operation in Lebanon.[92] The IDF also continued to issue evacuation warnings for Lebanese residents in Beirut’s southern suburbs and southern Lebanon.[93]

Israeli Strikes in Lebanon

Between March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 17, 2026, at 3:00 PM ET



US Special Envoy Tom Barrack rejected reports that the United States is encouraging Syria to send forces into Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah.[94] Barrack called the reports “false and inaccurate.”[95]

Kuwaiti authorities arrested a 16-member Hezbollah cell and seized various weapons in Kuwait on March 16.[96] The cell comprised 14 Kuwaiti citizens and two Lebanese nationals.[97] Kuwaiti authorities seized weapons and equipment, including firearms, encrypted communication devices, drones, maps, cash, and Hezbollah flags.[98] Hezbollah stated on March 17, in which it declared that it has no cells, individuals, or networks in Kuwait.[99]

Other Axis Of Resistance RESPONSE

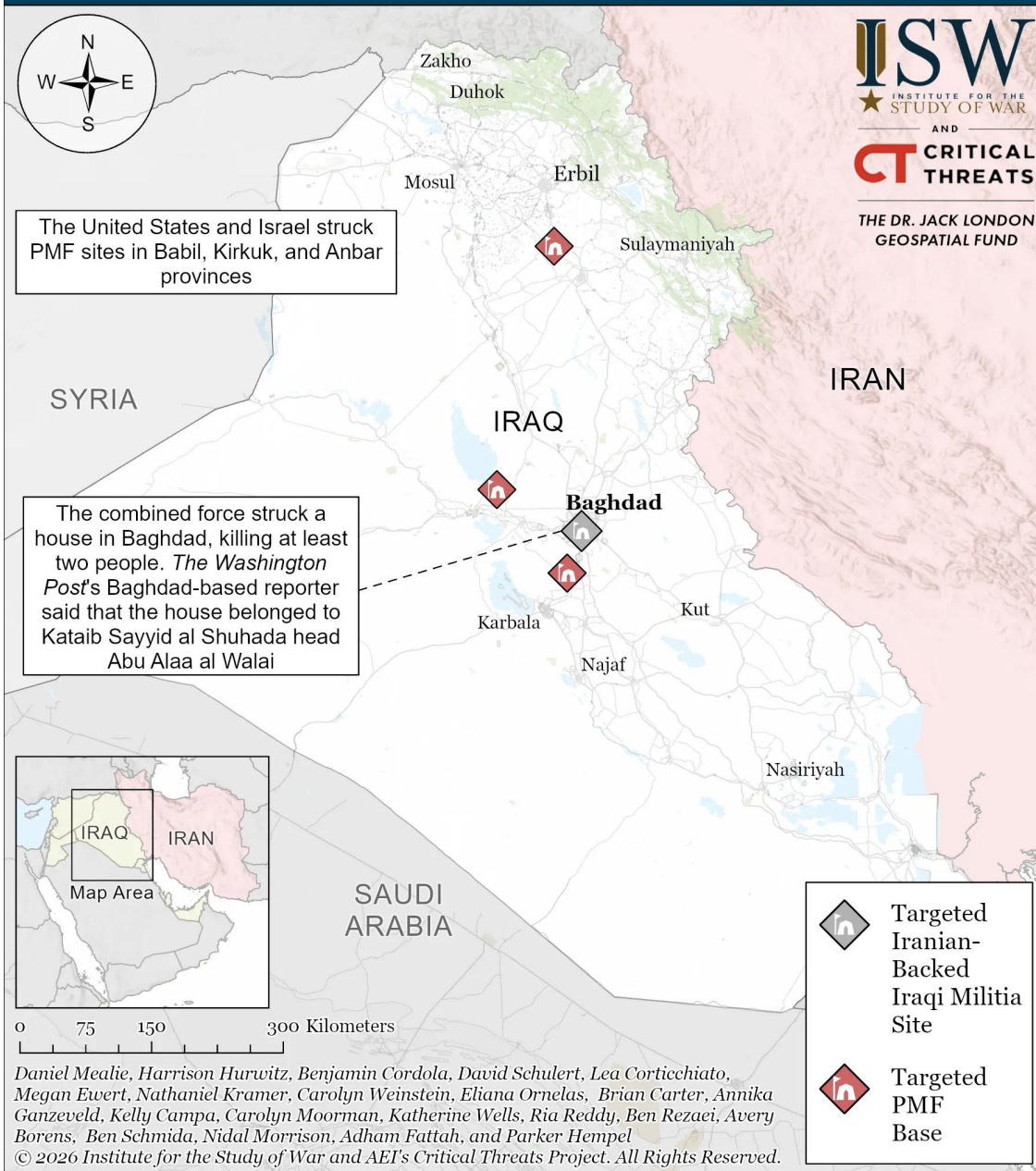
US and Israeli combined force strikes continue to target Iranian-backed Iraqi militia positions, including those affiliated with Kataib Hezbollah. The combined force conducted multiple strikes targeting Kataib Hezbollah's Jurf al Sakhr stronghold since 3:00 PM ET on March 16.[100] Kataib Hezbollah is an Iranian proxy that is closely ideologically bound to the regime, and the combined force has conducted multiple strikes targeting the group during the war.[101] The combined force also struck multiple sites in Baghdad on March 13, reportedly targeting Kataib Hezbollah head Abu Hussein al Hamidawi.[102] Kataib Hezbollah announced the death of its security chief and spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari on March 16 and said that Abu Mujahid al Assaf will replace Askari as the group's next security chief.[103] Askari was a senior commander in Kataib Hezbollah.[104] Askari's death will likely impose operational constraints and potentially command and control disruptions on Kataib Hezbollah.

An airstrike on a house in Baghdad's Jadriya neighborhood on March 16 killed at least two people.[105] The *Washington Post's* Iraq reporter said the house belongs to Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada's head, Abu Alaa al Walai.[106] A security source told Iraqi media that the combined force strike in Baghdad targeted an Iranian advisor for Iraqi economic affairs and an IRGC official responsible for Iraq.[107]

Other combined force airstrikes targeted PMF positions in Baghdad, Anbar, and Kirkuk provinces. Airstrikes targeted the headquarters of the 12th PMF Brigade of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), which is affiliated with Iranian partner militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, in the Nabai area, north of Baghdad, injuring three PMF members.[108] A security source told Iraqi media on March 17 that a strike targeted the headquarters of the 65th PMF Brigade, injuring the commander of the brigade's Tribal Mobilization Forces-affiliated 2nd regiment.[109] The Tribal Mobilization Forces are usually Sunni-dominated components of PMF brigades.[110] CTP-ISW is unable to certify the affiliation of the 65th PMF brigade. A security source separately told Iraqi media that a drone strike targeted a 40th PMF Brigade site in Kirkuk Province.[111] The 40th PMF brigade is affiliated with Kataib al Imam Ali.[112]

US and Israeli Strikes in Iraq

Between March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continued to launch drone attacks targeting US forces and interests in Iraq. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have launched multiple drones targeting the US Embassy in Baghdad since 3:00 PM ET on March 16, with at least one impact.[113] Geolocated footage shows a Shahed drone striking near the entrance of the US Embassy in Baghdad.[114] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias operating under the Islamic Resistance in Iraq launched Shahed drones targeting Israel and US bases in Iraq and Syria during the Gaza War.[115] Other footage shows the embassy's air defense system intercepting another drone.[116] Iraqi media reported additional instances on March 16 of the embassy's air defenses intercepting both drones and rockets, and an Iraq-focused OSINT analyst reported that the embassy's air defenses intercepted another drone on March 17.[117] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias almost certainly launched a drone attack that struck the Royal Tulip al Rasheed Hotel in Baghdad's Green Zone.[118] The Ministry of Interior said that a projectile fell on the hotel's roof but did not cause any human casualties or material damage.[119] Iraqi media reported on March 17 that more

than 10 drones targeted the US Consulate in Erbil and the Erbil International Airport.[120] CTP-ISW did not observe any impacts at these sites. The US base near Erbil city is co-located with the airport.[121] The Islamic Resistance of Iraq claimed on March 17 that it had conducted 21 attacks with dozens of missiles and drones against “occupation” bases in Iraq and the region in the past 24 hours.[122] CTP-ISW has not yet observed proof of the militias firing missiles in this war.

Likely Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Saraya Awliya al Dam claimed it fired drones at Victory Base, which is a former US facility at Baghdad International Airport.[123] Iraqi militias have repeatedly claimed attacks since the start of the war targeting the former US Victory base at the airport, although the United States withdrew from the base in 2011.[124]

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- [115] <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/2024-09-26/ty-article/.premium/skilled-and-armed-with-iranian-weapons-these-are-the-shiite-groups-attacking-israel/00000192-2e27-d324-afdf-2fe7e99d0000> ;
<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/tripling-iraqi-militia-claimed-attacks-israel-october> ;
https://www.fdd.org/analysis/op_ed/2024/06/04/the-islamic-resistance-in-iraq-increases-its-drone-attacks-on-israel/ ;
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- [116] <https://x.com/sentdefender/status/2033697406773010798>

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<https://t.me/Extremedistress/879> ; <https://t.me/awlialdm/281>

Iran Update Special Report, March 18, 2026



Avery Borens, Nidal Morrison, Ben Rezaei, Benjamin Schmida, Parker Hempel, Katherine Wells, Kelly Campa, Brian Carter

Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: ISW-CTP will no longer publish morning updates covering the war with Iran. ISW-CTP will instead publish threads on its social media channels in the morning that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.

Key Takeaways

1. The IDF struck critical Iranian energy infrastructure on March 18, including facilities linked to the South Pars natural gas field and the Asaluyeh processing hub in Bushehr Province. These facilities are central to Iran's domestic natural gas supply and broader energy system, which supports a significant portion of Iran's economic activity and regime revenue. Iran exports a small share of its natural gas, primarily to Iraq and Turkey, meaning disruptions will also affect regional energy consumption.
2. The IDF killed Iranian Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib in an airstrike on March 18. Khatib was responsible for coordinating the regime's repression of the Iranian population in his role within the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, including overseeing the regime's crackdowns on the Winter 2025-2026 protests and the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests.
3. The combined force's decapitation campaign and targeting of security services is reportedly causing paranoia among Iranian regime officials and members of Iranian security services. Israeli strikes targeting internal security services are reportedly hurting "rank-and-file morale" and are driving security forces to sleep in vehicles, mosques, or sports facilities in order to avoid targeting.
4. Hezbollah claimed 57 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon since CTP-ISW's last data cut off. The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes targeting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, including strikes targeting Hezbollah's social and financial service network in Lebanon.

Toplines

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck Iran's most important energy infrastructure, including facilities linked to the South Pars natural gas field and the Asaluyeh processing hub in Bushehr Province on March 18.

[1] These facilities are central to Iran's domestic natural gas supply and broader energy system, which supports a significant portion of Iran's economic activity and regime revenue.[2] Iran consumes roughly 94 percent of its natural gas production internally, according to data by the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, meaning disruptions will primarily strain domestic supply.[3] Damage to these facilities will likely disrupt Iran's electricity generation capacity, given their role in supplying fuel to the power sector. Over 90 percent of Iran's electricity is generated by gas-powered thermal plants.[4] Israeli media reported on March 18 that the strikes reportedly damaged up to one-fifth of Iran's gas processing capacity.[5] Israel previously struck Iranian energy infrastructure, including gas processing facilities linked to the South Pars field and the Fajr-e Jam Gas Refinery in Bushehr Province, during the June 2025 Israel-Iran War.[6]

Iran exports a small share of its natural gas, primarily to Iraq and Turkey, meaning disruptions will also affect regional energy consumption.[7] An Iraqi official reported that Iranian gas flows to Iraq stopped completely following the strikes.[8] Disrupting natural gas supplies accounts for more than one-third of Iraq's gas and electricity needs, according to Iraq's electricity ministry.[9] Iran has repeatedly reduced gas exports to Iraq due to domestic shortages, which have previously caused electricity crises that contributed to unrest and protests in Iraq.[10] The United States has issued sanctions waivers since 2018 to allow Iraq to continue importing Iranian gas and electricity to mitigate such instability.[11] An unspecified Israeli official told Axios on March 18 that the strike was meant to signal that Israel could expand attacks on Iran's energy sector if Iran continues disrupting maritime trade and energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz.[12]

Reported Strikes on Energy Infrastructure in Southern Iran March 18, 2026



The IDF killed Iranian Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib in an airstrike on March 18.[13] Both Iranian officials and the IDF confirmed his death on March 18.[14] Khatib was responsible for coordinating the regime's repression of the Iranian population in his role within the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, including overseeing the regime's crackdowns on the Winter 2025-2026 protests and the 2022 Mahsa Amini protests.[15] The United States sanctioned both Khatib and the ministry in 2022 for engaging in cyber attacks against the United States and allies.[16] Khatib's killing follows Israel's March 17 assassinations of prominent regime officials, Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Larjani and Basij Commander Gholamreza Soleimani.[17] It is unclear how or where the IDF targeted Khatib, but the *Wall Street Journal* reported on March 18 that tips from Iranian civilians led to the strikes that killed Soleimani.[18]

The combined force's decapitation campaign and targeting of security services is reportedly causing paranoia among Iranian regime officials and members of Iranian security services.

Israeli strikes targeting internal security services are reportedly hurting “rank-and-file morale” and are driving security forces to sleep in vehicles, mosques, or sports facilities in order to avoid targeting.[19] Israel reportedly learned of an Iranian effort to shield security forces in local sports complexes in the event of targeting, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. [20] Israeli strikes on sports complexes hosting security forces have reportedly been among the “deadliest” of the war and killed hundreds of security services and military personnel.[21] Some residents also reported that some Tehran police stations have been abandoned.[22] Tips from Iranian civilians have contributed to Israeli targeting of locally positioned security personnel as the war has continued.[23] Unspecified sources told the *Wall Street Journal* on March 18 that Israeli intelligence officers have been placing individual calls to Iranian commanders to threaten them to stand aside during civil uprisings.[24] Israel employed a similar tactic during the June 2025 12-Day War.[25]

Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)

As of 3:00 PM ET on March 18, 2026



President
Masoud Pezeshkian



Armed Forces General Staff Chief
Abdol Rahim Mousavi



Minister of Intelligence
Esmail Khatib



Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander
Mohammad Pakpour



Minister of Foreign Affairs
Abbas Araghchi



Minister of Interior
Eskander Momeni



Speaker of the Parliament
Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf



Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary
Ali Larijani



Supreme Leader Representative to the SNSC
Saeed Jalili



Judiciary Chief
Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei



Artesh Commander
Amir Hatami

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US and Israeli Air Campaign

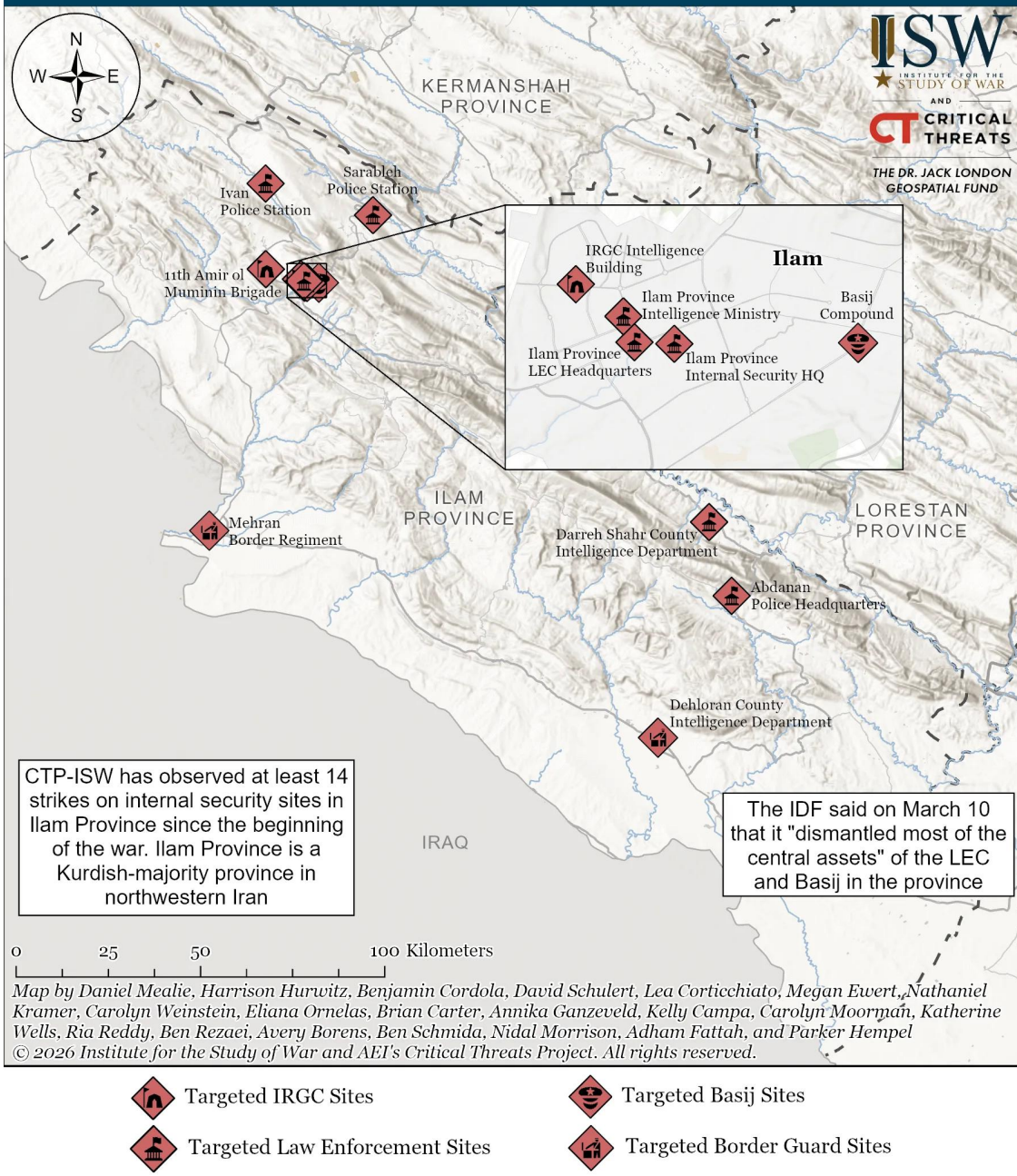
The combined force struck multiple Iranian internal security targets on March 18, including Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Basij, and Law Enforcement Command (LEC) facilities in Tehran, Alborz, and Lorestan Provinces.[26] The LEC is Iran's primary uniformed police force responsible for law enforcement and crowd control.[27] The Basij is a paramilitary organization subordinate to the IRGC that the regime uses extensively to suppress protests and enforce internal security. The IDF stated on March 18 that Israeli aircraft struck the LEC logistics and support division and an IRGC security unit headquarters responsible for suppressing protests in western Tehran Province.[28] The LEC logistics and support division is responsible for sustaining police operations, including equipment supply, vehicle maintenance, storage, distribution of riot-control gear, and general logistical support to internal security forces. The combined force previously struck the main building on March 3.[29] These strikes will likely degrade the regime's internal security capabilities by disrupting the sustainment, mobility, and operational readiness of forces responsible for protest suppression. An unspecified Israeli official told anti-regime media on March 18 that Israeli drones targeted Basij and LEC patrols attempting to approach locations where Chaharshanbe Suri celebrations were taking place.[30] The official added that the attacks disrupted Iran's repression apparatus and effectively created "an air umbrella" for civilians during the celebrations.[31] Footage circulating on social media shows LEC and Basij personnel taking cover under bridges or establishing checkpoints in tunnels in order to avoid aerial surveillance and drone strikes.[32]

The combined force has widely targeted elements of Iran's internal security apparatus that contribute to the repression of the Iranian population, as CTP-ISW has extensively documented. The IDF has reportedly dropped at least 2,200 munitions on targets affiliated with the IRGC, Basij, and other internal security forces.[33] The combined force has targeted internal security institutions at the highest level - such as the Basij Organization Headquarters - down to Basij street checkpoints and local police stations, particularly in Tehran, since the war began. An Israeli targeting list seen by the *Wall Street Journal* included LEC computer equipment, vehicles, and police gear, for example.[34] The IDF reportedly targeted motorcycle units involved in protest suppression on an unspecified date, likely referring to the Imam Ali Battalions.[35] The Imam Ali Battalions are Basij security units trained and equipped to suppress urban protests and conduct anti-riot operations and intimidate and arrest protesters under IRGC direction.[36]

Israeli strikes on Iran's internal security apparatus have not only been concentrated in Tehran, however. The combined force has targeted numerous internal security installations throughout Iran's northwestern provinces, which are home to Kurdish-populated areas and are also hotspots for protests and civil unrest. Documents reviewed by the *Wall Street Journal* confirmed that the IDF has recently struck around 34 distinct internal security targets in Ilam Province.[37] CTP-ISW has observed at least 14 strikes on internal security sites in Ilam Province in northwestern Iran since the beginning of the war (see below).[38]

Strikes on Internal Security in Ilam Province

Between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The Iranian regime is continuing mass arrests and information control measures as part of its securitization efforts. Iranian authorities arrested dozens of individuals across multiple provinces between March 17 and 18 for alleged espionage and anti-regime activities.[39] The regime also continues to disrupt internet connectivity.[40] Iranian media reported the seizure of 350 Starlink satellite internet devices to restrict access to independent communications, while nationwide internet disruptions have persisted.[41]

The combined force continued to target Iranian naval capabilities on March 17 and 18. US forces targeted an anti-ship cruise missile site along the Iranian coastline on the Strait of Hormuz with multiple 5,000-pound bunker-buster munitions.[42] US Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Admiral Brad Cooper said on March 11 that the United States aims to "end their ability to project power and harass shipping in the Strait of Hormuz." [43]

Israeli officials confirmed that Israel conducted strikes targeting at least five Iranian Navy missile boats in the Caspian Sea on March 18.[44] This is the first time that the combined force has conducted airstrikes in the Caspian Sea since the conflict began on February 28. The Artesh Navy 4th Naval District is headquartered in Bandar Anzali, Gilan Province, which is on the Caspian Sea.[45]

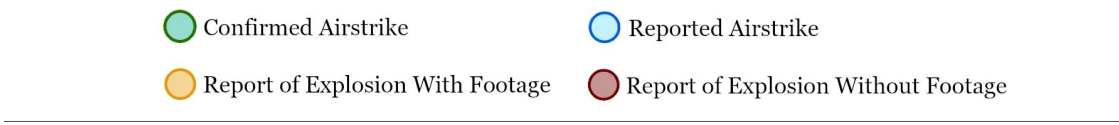
A maritime intelligence organization, TankerTrackers, reported on March 18 that the combined forces' strikes targeting Bandar Abbas Port damaged an additional three Iranian vessels.[46] The combined force has struck Bandar Abbas Port several times since the conflict began on February 28.[47] Bandar Abbas Port is home to the IRGC Navy Headquarters, the IRGC Navy 1st Naval District, and the Artesh Navy Southern Forward Naval Headquarters.[48] TankerTrackers reported that combined forces' strikes damaged the Artesh Navy IRIS *Kurdistan*, which Iran unveiled and inaugurated in November 2025.[49] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on March 2 shows that the combined force also struck the Artesh Navy IRIS *Kurdistan*. [50] TankerTrackers reported that the combined forces' strikes damaged the IRIS *Shahid Mahdavi*, which is a retrofitted cargo ship that has two helicopter landing pads and anti-ship missiles.[51] TankerTrackers reported that the combined forces' strikes damaged the IRIS *Makran*, which was a former oil tanker that Iran converted into a floating base in 2020.[52] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on March 2 showed the vessel on fire at the Bandar Abbas Port.[53] TankerTrackers also reported that the combined forces' strikes damaged the IRGC Navy IRIS *Shahid Bagheri*, which CTP-ISW reported on March 6.[54]

The combined force continued targeting air defense systems across Iran. Geolocated satellite imagery shows several destroyed buildings at Fath Air Base, a military base operated by the IRGC Aerospace Force, in Tehran.[55] Some open-source intelligence (OSINT) analysts assessed that these damaged structures served as hangars. Fath Air Base hosts an attack helicopter squadron.[56] The IRGC Aviation School is also located near Fath Air Base.

The combined force continued to target Iran's defense industrial base to degrade its ability to rebuild its missile, drone, and air defense programs. Geolocated satellite imagery confirms damage to several unidentified buildings in Pasargad Industrial Town in Tehran.[57] The Saba Battery Factory, a subsidiary of the Defense Industries Organization, is located within this complex.[58] Several countries have sanctioned the factory for producing power units for the Iranian Armed Forces, including missile systems.[59] The combined force also reportedly struck facilities at the Shahid Qadiri Factory in Tehran, which produces air defense systems.[60] The factory is located at the IRGC Aerospace Force Shahid Qadiri base. Iran reportedly expanded the base in May 2025 and added new hangars and other structures.[61]

US and Israeli Strikes in Iran

Between March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 18, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Iranian Retaliation

A maritime intelligence organization, TankerTrackers, reported on March 18 that the Egyptian-owned, Maltese-flagged container ship, *Safeen Prestige*, is on fire.[62] It is unclear if Iran targeted the *Safeen Prestige* again. A likely Iranian unmanned surface vessel (USV) struck the *Safeen Prestige* on March 4, which caused a fire in the engine room and forced the crew to abandon ship.[63] Iran may be attempting to demonstrate its ability to target vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, assuming it targeted the *Safeen Prestige* a second time, as part of the ongoing effort to threaten merchant shipping.

United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported on March 18 that there have been no confirmed attacks on vessels since March 12.[64] UKMTO has reported more than 20

maritime incidents in and around the strait since March 1.[65]

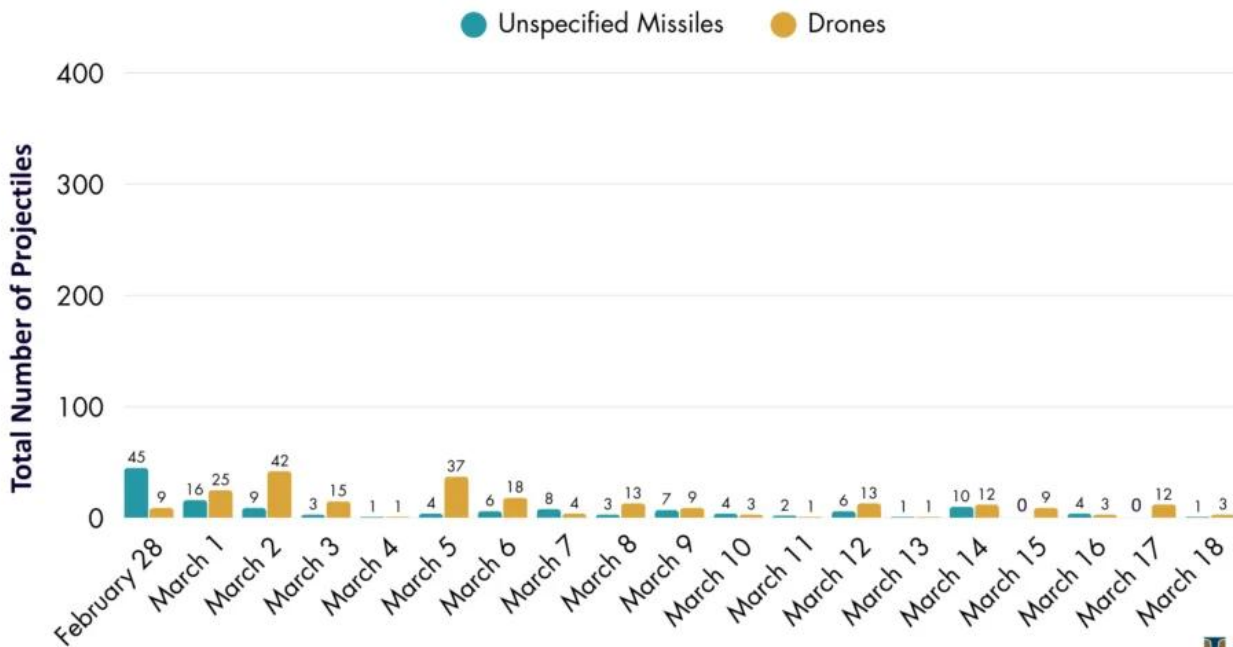
PBS reported on March 18 that at least 89 vessels, including 16 oil tankers, have transited the Strait of Hormuz between March 1 and 15.[66] PBS, citing a maritime data firm, reported that many of these vessels were "dark" transits attempting to evade Western government sanctions and oversight and may have had links to Iran.[67] The Iranian regime has appeared to be offering safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz to certain oil-carrying vessels. Iran has allowed some tankers transporting oil to China and India to transit the Strait, for example, according to unspecified US officials speaking to the *New York Times* on March 15.[68] Iran also allowed Pakistani oil tankers and two Indian-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carriers to cross the strait.[69]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi stated on March 18 that countries bordering the Persian Gulf should draft a new Strait of Hormuz protocol once the conflict concludes.[70] Araghchi said this new protocol should align with regional and Iranian interests to ensure safe passage through the strait.[71]

Iran launched ten missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 17 and 3:00 pm ET on March 18.[72] IDF Home Front Command Commander Major General Shai Klepper reported that an Iranian missile strike killed two civilians in Ramat Gan, Central Israel, on March 18.[73] Israel's national emergency service, Magen David Adom, reported that Iranian projectile shrapnel injured one person in Bnei Brak, Central Israel, on March 18.[74] Magen David Adom also reported damage to Tel Aviv's Savidor Central railway station in Tel Aviv, Central Israel.[75] IRGC's Public Relations Office claimed that Iran used Khorramshahr-4, Ghadr, Emad, and Kheibar Shekan ballistic missiles, some of which were armed with cluster munitions, in its strikes on Israel.[76] A cluster munition warhead contains submunitions that disperse over a wide area and are intended to maximize damage.[77]

Iran has continued to conduct drone and missile attacks against the Gulf states on March 17 and 18, including targeting Gulf energy facilities. IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri stated on March 18 that Iran will begin targeting oil facilities linked to the United States and warned civilians and workers to stay away from these sites.[78] Iranian regime media said on March 18 that Iran would target five Gulf energy facilities, including the Samerf Refinery and al Jubail Petrochemical Complex in Saudi Arabia, the Mesaiyd Petrochemical Complex and Ras Laffan Refinery in Qatar, and the al Hosn Gas Field in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), "in the coming hours." [79] Qatar reported that one ballistic missile hit the Ras Laffan Industrial City on March 18.[80] Qatar's state-owned oil company QatarEnergy reported that the Iranian strike caused "extensive damage" at the industrial site.[81]

Iranian Missiles and Drones Launched at Bahrain Between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026

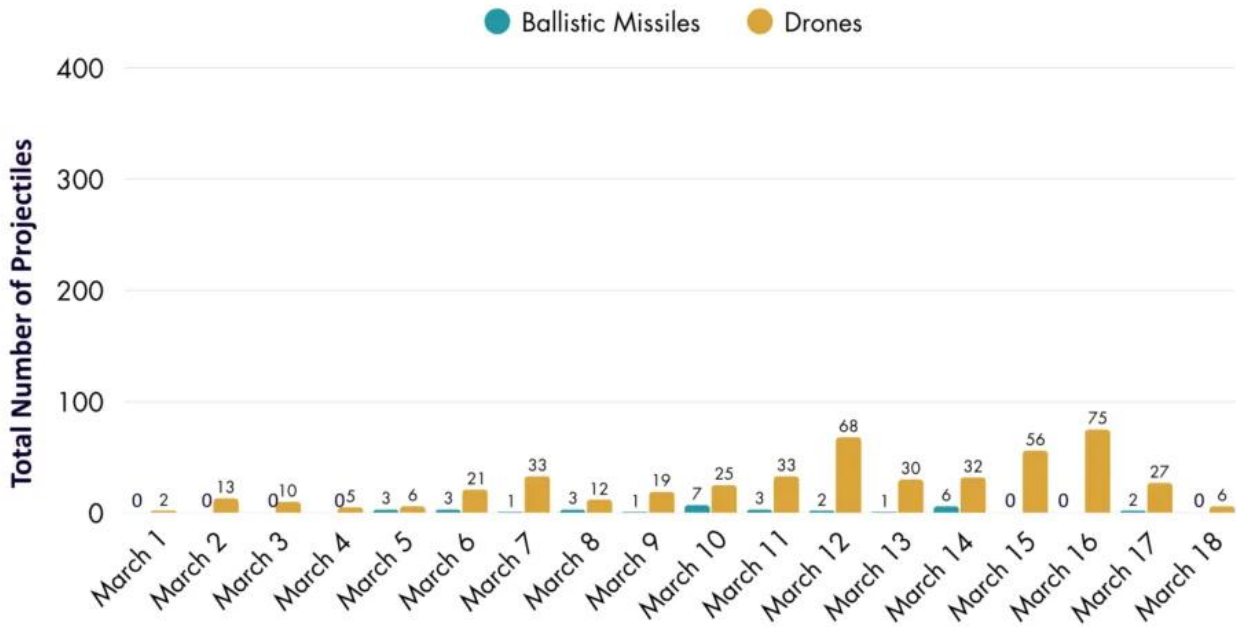


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All data from the Bahrain Defense Force.



The Bahrain Defense Force reported that it intercepted one Iranian ballistic missile and one drone on March 18.[82]

Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 18, 2026

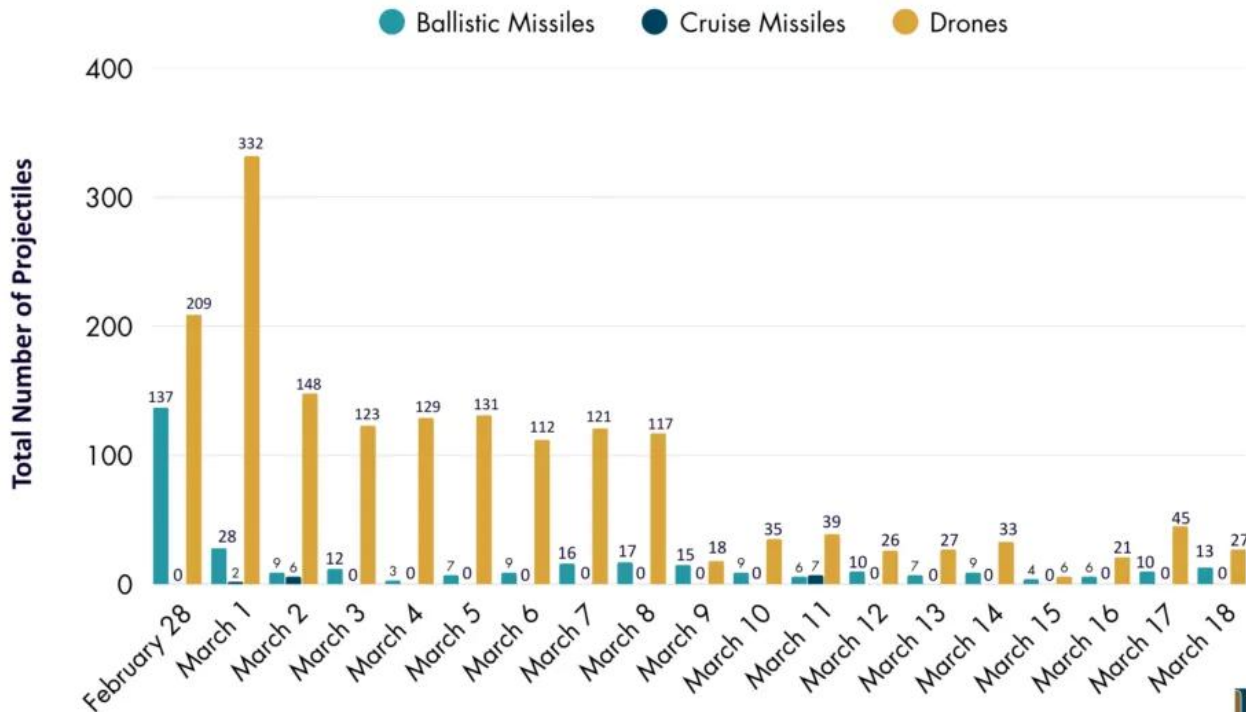


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 All data from the Saudi Defense Ministry.
 Data Cutoff: 8:00 AM ET



The Saudi Defense Ministry reported Saudi air defenses intercepted seven Iranian ballistic missiles and 19 drones between 3:00 PM ET on March 17 and 3:00 pm ET on March 18.[83] The Saudi Defense Ministry reported that Iranian ballistic missile debris fell near the Prince Sultan Air Base on March 17.[84] The Saudi Defense Ministry also reported that Saudi air defenses intercepted an Iranian drone that attempted to approach an unspecified Saudi natural gas facility in eastern Saudi Arabia.[85] Saudi air defenses reportedly intercepted four ballistic missiles over Riyadh on March 18.[86] Saudi Arabia was planned to host a meeting on March 18 with foreign ministers from Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Qatar, Syria, Turkey, and the UAE to discuss regional stability and security, according to a Turkish diplomatic source speaking to Reuters.[87]

Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026



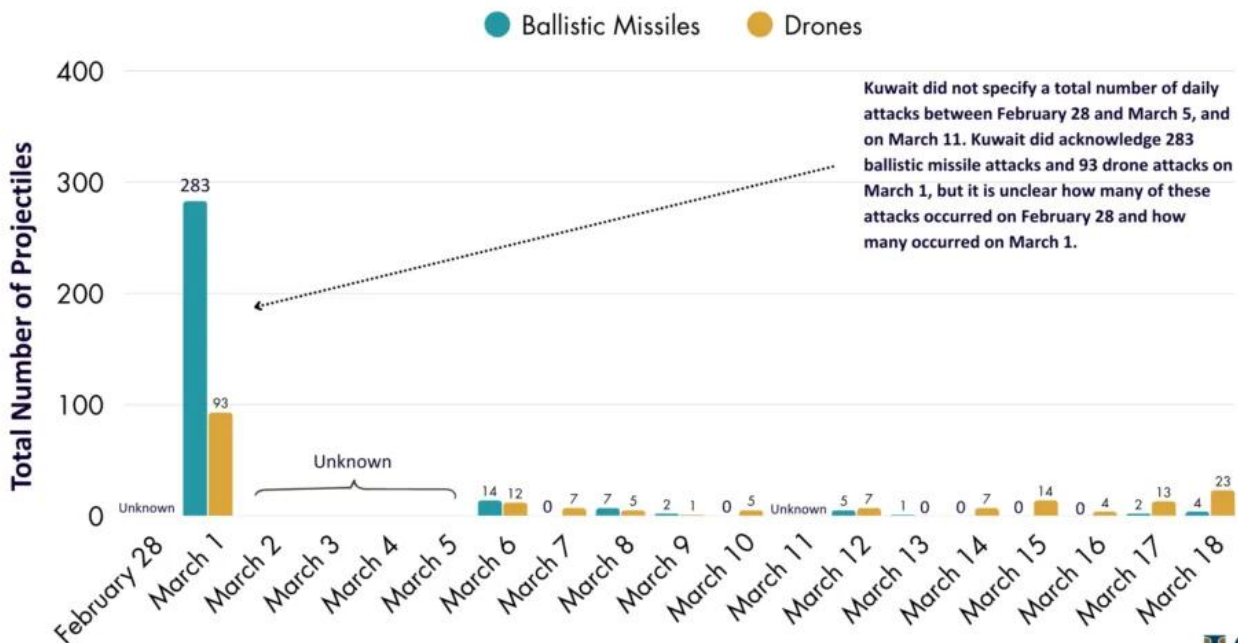
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All data from the UAE Ministry of Defense.



The Emirati Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted 13 ballistic missiles and 27 drones from Iran on March 18.[88] Emirati air defenses have intercepted 327 ballistic missiles, 15 cruise missiles, and 1,699 drones since the conflict started.[89] The Emirati Defense Ministry also reported that Iranian attacks killed two Emirati soldiers and 6 civilians of Pakistani, Nepalese, Bangladeshi, and Palestinian nationalities, and injured 158 individuals since the start of the conflict.[90] The Emirati soldiers are the first recorded Emirati military deaths during the conflict. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese reported that an unspecified projectile hit a road leading up to the Al Minhad Air Base in the UAE, which is the headquarters for Australia's Middle East Area of Operations command.[91] Albanese stated that the strike started a fire that caused no casualties and minor damage to an accommodation block and medical facility.[92]

The Kuwaiti Army reported that it detected and intercepted four Iranian ballistic missiles within the past 24 hours.[93] The army reported it detected 23 drones, 20 of which were intercepted, and 3 fell outside the threat area.[94]

Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Kuwait Between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026



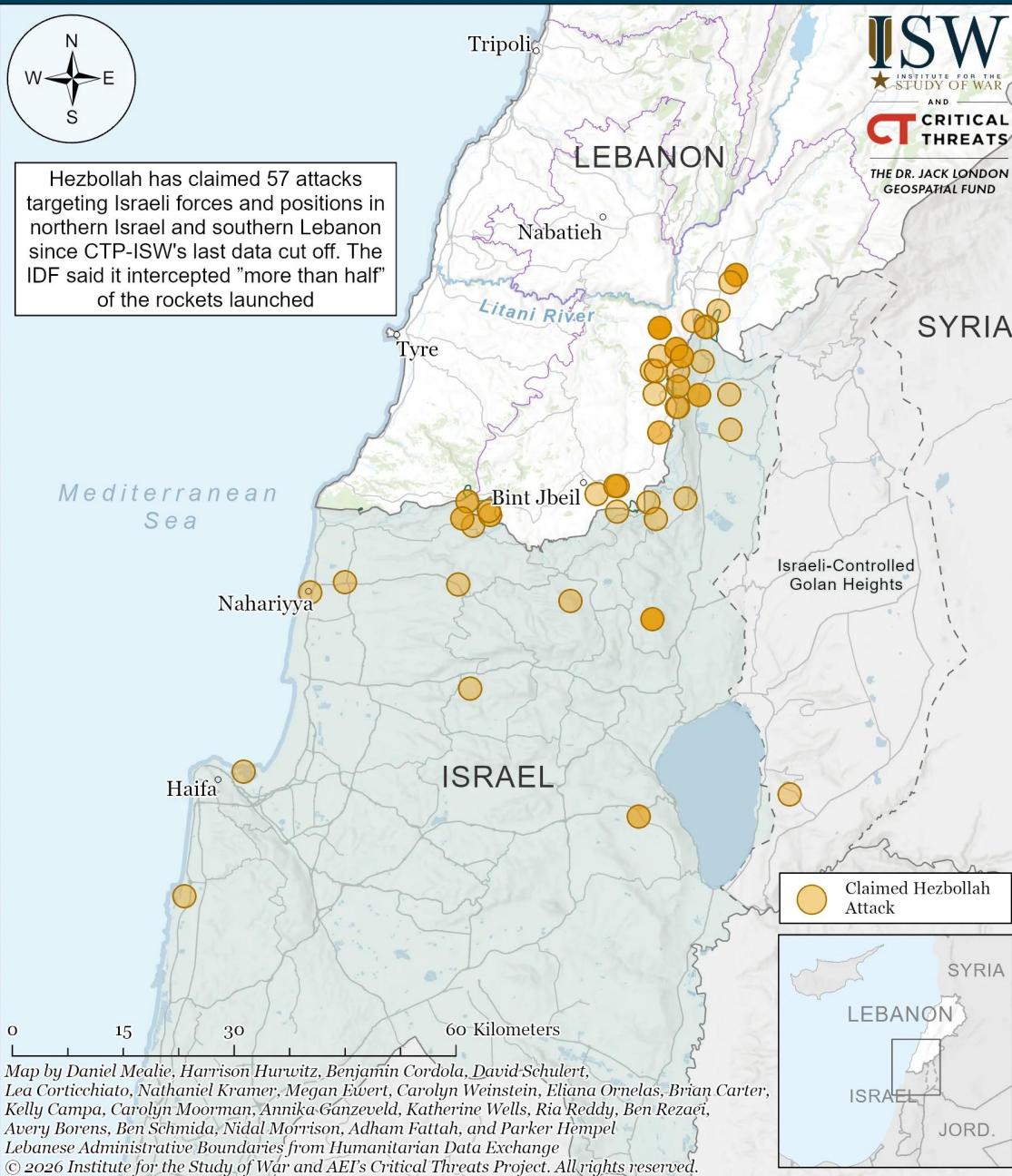
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All data from the Kuwaiti Army.



Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

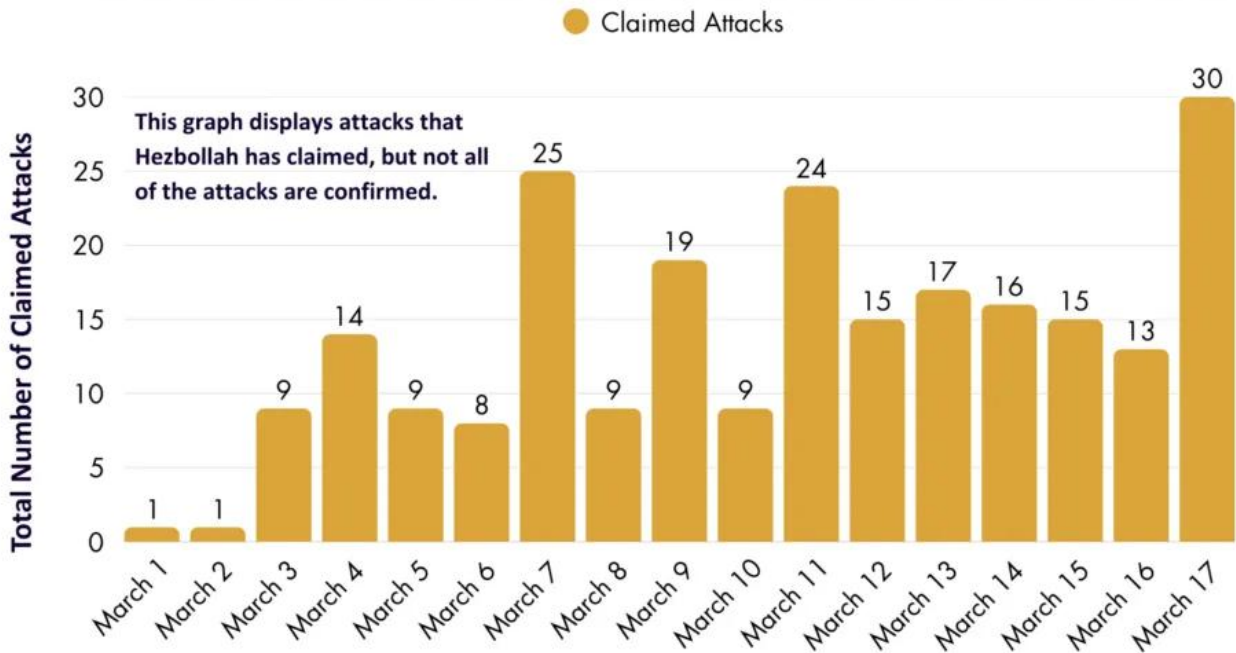
Hezbollah claimed 57 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon between 3:00 PM ET on March 17 and 3:00 PM ET on March 18.[95] Hezbollah claimed several drone, mortar, rocket, and missile attacks targeting IDF positions and forces along both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah claimed it separately launched “high-quality missiles” targeting the “Shayetet 13” headquarters and Haifa Naval Base, both in northern Israel, on March 17.[96] The “Shayetet 13” is an IDF Navy special operations unit.[97] Hezbollah launched the start of “Operation Khyber 1” on March 17. Hezbollah claimed it fired rockets targeting [98] towns in northern Israel on March 17.[99] The IDF said it intercepted “more than half” of the rockets, according to an Israeli journalist on March 18.[100] Hezbollah previously increased attacks after launching a new operation.[101]

Hezbollah Attacks in Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon Between March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 18, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The rate of Hezbollah attacks targeting Israel has varied since the group joined the war on March 1, as illustrated below.

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Israel Between March 1, 2026 and March 17, 2026

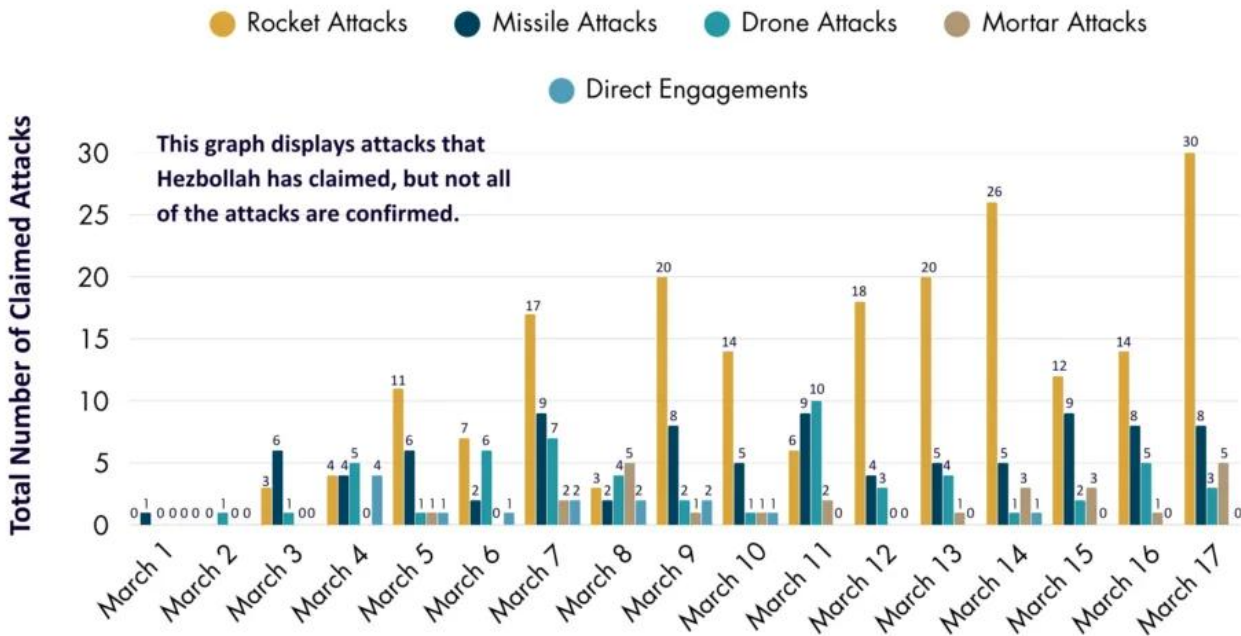


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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



Hezbollah has also employed a variety of weapons in its attacks against Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon (see below).

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 17, 2026 By Type



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used



The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes and ground operations targeting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The IDF said it struck Hezbollah infrastructure, including weapons depots, operational headquarters, and rocket launchers, in Beirut and southern Lebanon on March 17 and 18.[102] The IDF also struck and destroyed two bridges over the Litani River on March 17.[103] The IDF stated that Hezbollah used the bridges to move its fighters from northern to southern Lebanon to fight against Israeli forces.[104] Israeli strikes reportedly killed three Amal Movement-affiliated individuals and Hezbollah-controlled al Manar TV Political Programming Department Director Mohammad Sherri on March 17.[105] The IDF also confirmed it killed newly appointed Imam Hussein Division Commander Hassan Ali Marwan in an airstrike on Beirut on March 17.[106] The IRGC Quds Force uses the Imam Hussein Division to carry out attacks against the IDF and Israel.[107] The IDF stated that Marwan was responsible for coordinating between the Imam Hussein Division, the IRGC Quds Force, and Hezbollah.[108] The IDF 36th Division "deepened" its "focused ground activity" in southern Lebanon on March 18.[109] The IDF 869th Combat Intelligence Collection Unit (91st Division) and 410th Armored Brigade (91st Division) are also operating in southern Lebanon on March 18.[110] The IDF 300th Regional Brigade (146th Division) carried out several raids to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon over the past week.[111]

The IDF has also continued to target Hezbollah organizations that provide financial and social services. The IDF reportedly struck a NewPharm Company drug store in Aaqbiyeh, Sidon District, on March 17 following an evacuation order.[112] The NewPharm Company has been linked to Hezbollah since at least 2021.[113] The IDF also said it struck unspecified al Qard al Hassan branches, Hezbollah's main financial arm, in Beirut on March 18.[114] Hezbollah uses funds via al Qard al Hassan to finance its military

operations, pay its fighters, and purchase weapons.[115] The IDF has destroyed at least 30 al Qard al Hassan sites since the start of the conflict.[116] The IDF reported on March 13 that al Qard al Hassan has completely stopped its activities due to the IDF's recent strikes.[117] The IDF also said it struck several Amana Fuel Company-owned gas stations in southern Lebanon on March 18.[118] The Amana Fuel Company is owned by Hezbollah, operates a network of gas stations in Lebanon, and also manages Hezbollah's fuel supplies.[119] The United States sanctioned the Amana Fuel Company in February 2020 for its role in Hezbollah's support network.[120] The United States stated in 2020 that Hezbollah profits from the sale of essential goods, such as pharmaceuticals and gasoline.[121] NewPharm Company, al Qard al Hassan, and Amana Fuel Company are all part of Hezbollah's social and financial service network in Lebanon that is essential to the group's efforts to maintain the support of its Shia base.

The IDF reiterated evacuation orders for southern Lebanese residents to move north of the Zahrani River on March 17 and 18.[122] The Zahrani River is further north than the Litani River and is located approximately 56 kilometers north of the Israel-Lebanon border.[123]

The IDF said on March 17 that Israeli tank fire hit a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) position in southern Lebanon on March 6, injuring three UNIFIL peacekeepers.[124] UNIFIL forces are stationed across southern Lebanon to monitor hostilities along the Blue Line, which stretches approximately 120 kilometers along the Israel-Lebanon border.[125] The IDF told Reuters on March 17 that it had responded to Hezbollah anti-tank guided missile fire and had misidentified UNIFIL troops as the source of the anti-tank fire.[126] An unspecified Western military source told Reuters that an initial internal UN investigation suggested that Israel carried out the attack.[127] UNIFIL Spokesperson Kandic Ardiel said that UNIFIL's investigation is not yet complete.[128]

Other Axis of Resistance Response

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continued to launch drone attacks targeting US forces and interests in Iraq. The combined force conducted several airstrikes targeting the Badr Organization, Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al Haq, and several Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) positions across Iraq since 3:00 PM ET on March 17.[129] The PMF told Iraqi media that a combined force airstrike targeted the PMF Anbar Operations Command headquarters in al Qaim, Anbar Province, on March 18, and killed at least three fighters and wounded several others.[130] PMF Anbar Operations Command Commander Qasim Muslih al Khafaji ordered the headquarters evacuated on March 13 to avoid combined force strikes, but the March 18 strikes that killed three fighters and wounded others [131] that the PMF did not fully evacuate the facility.[132] Muslih leads Liwa al Tafuf, a PMF group that is closely tied to Kataib Hezbollah.[133] The combined force has consistently struck PMF positions in al Qaim since March 1.[134] The combined force likely struck several Iranian-backed militia positions in Kirkuk on March 18, including an Asaib Ahl al Haq headquarters, according to Iraqi media.[135] Asaib Ahl al Haq said a combined force drone strike at the headquarters injured four fighters.[136] The combined force also struck the headquarters of the Badr-affiliated 16th PMF Brigade and the Badr Organization in Kirkuk on March 18.[137] Kataib Hezbollah announced the deaths of three fighters on March 18 who were likely killed in combined force strikes.[138]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continued to launch drone attacks targeting US forces and interests in Iraq. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are almost certainly responsible for another reported drone attack on the US Embassy compound in Baghdad on March 17.[139] Iraqi media reported that air defenses at the US embassy intercepted one drone targeting the embassy, but a second drone struck in the vicinity of the embassy compound.[140] An Iranian-backed Iraqi militia previously struck the US embassy compound on March 17.[141] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias separately targeted US forces at the Erbil International Airport with two drones, but air defenses at the airport intercepted the drones.[142]

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI) claimed that it conducted 47 operations using dozens of missiles and drones targeting occupation bases in Iraq and the region in the past 24 hours on March 17, but provided no evidence for the number of claimed operations.[143] A senior diplomatic official told Iraqi media on March 18 that the Saudi Arabian and Qatari diplomatic missions are leaving Iraq, citing security concerns.[144]

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[139] <https://www.shafaq dot com/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%80%D9%86/%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF>

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[141] [https://www.shafaq dot com/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%80%D9%86/%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85-](https://www.shafaq dot com/ar/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%80%D9%86/%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B7-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF)

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[142] <https://www.shafaq dot com/ar/كوردستانيات/حباط-هجوم-جديد-بمسيرتين-قرب-مطار-رييل>

[143]] <https://t.me/ElamAlmoqawama/1591>

[144] <https://shafaq dot>

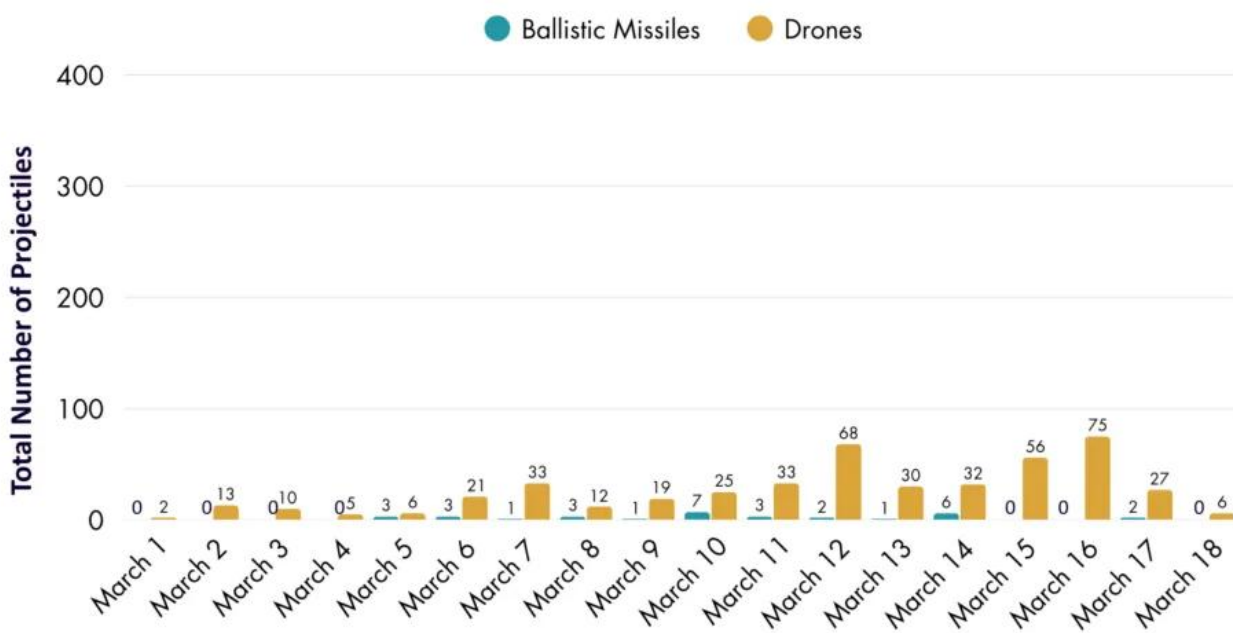
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Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026



The United States and Israel have degraded Iran’s ability to conduct retaliatory attacks across the Middle East. This graphic shows the decrease in Iranian ballistic missile, cruise missile, and drone attacks targeting the Saudi Arabia since the start of the US-Israeli combined force’s war against Iran on February 28, 2026.

Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 18, 2026



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 All data from the Saudi Defense Ministry.
 Data Cutoff: 8:00 AM ET

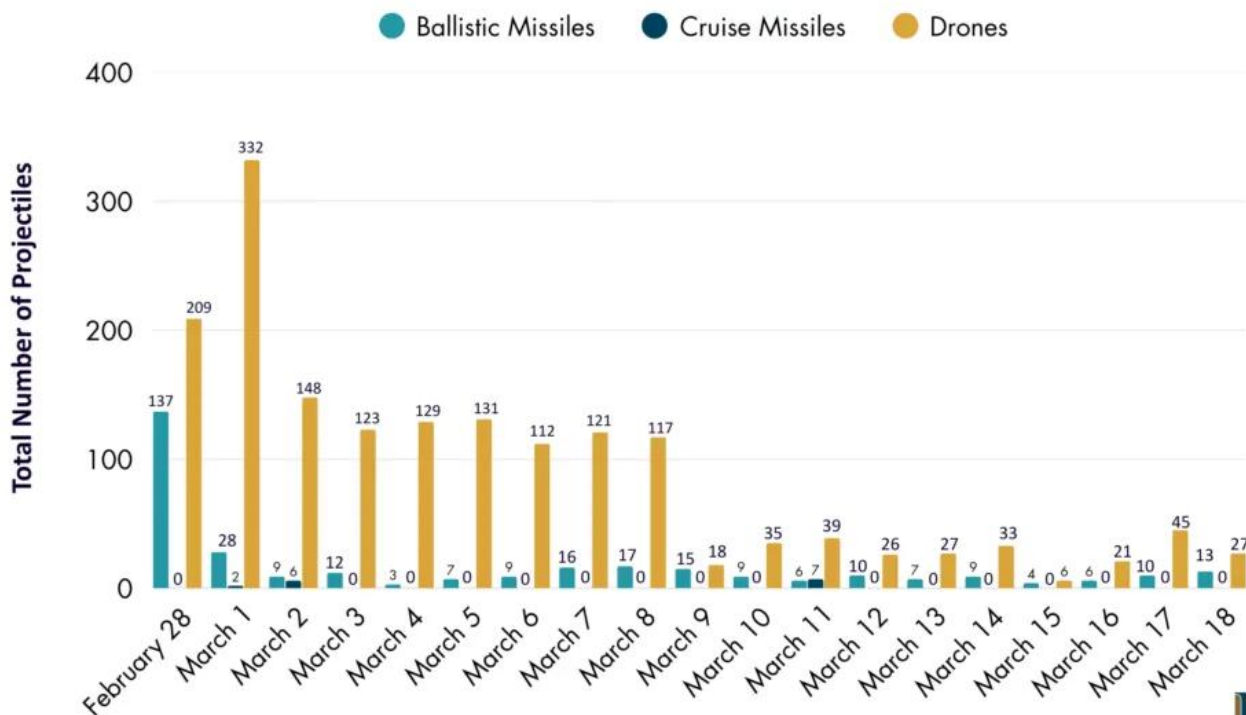


Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026



The United States and Israel have degraded Iran’s ability to conduct retaliatory attacks across the Middle East. This graphic shows the decrease in Iranian ballistic missile, cruise missile, and drone attacks targeting the United Arab Emirates since the start of the US-Israeli combined force’s war against Iran on February 28, 2026.

Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates between February 28, 2026 and March 18, 2026



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All data from the UAE Ministry of Defense.



Iran Update Special Report, March 19, 2026



Avery Borens, Katherine Wells, Ben Rezaei, Benjamin Schmida, Parker Hempel, Carolyn Moorman, Nidal Morrison, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld

Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: *ISW-CTP will no longer publish morning updates covering the war with Iran. ISW-CTP will instead publish threads on its social media channels in the morning that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.*

Key Takeaways

1. Israeli strikes on Iranian internal security forces, including decapitation strikes, have likely caused shock and confusion within the Iranian internal security apparatus and disrupted internal security operations to some degree. It remains impossible to assess based on the available open-source evidence to what degree internal security operations have been disrupted.
2. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck vessels at a major Caspian Sea port in northern Iran that Iran uses to conduct trade with Russia. The IDF targeted “dozens” of vessels, including the Artesh Navy Moudge-class frigate IRIS Deylaman, at the 4th Artesh Naval District Headquarters at Bandar Anzali Port, Gilan Province, on March 18. The IDF’s March 18 airstrikes on Bandar Anzali follow reports that Russia is providing Iran with Russian-produced and possibly modified Shahed drones.
3. Israeli strikes on Iranian internal security forces, including decapitation strikes, have likely caused shock and confusion within the Iranian internal security apparatus and disrupted internal security operations.
4. The combined force has continued to strike Iranian ballistic missile infrastructure and air capabilities to degrade Iran’s ability to conduct retaliatory attacks and maintain air superiority over parts of Iran. Israeli Army Radio, citing the IDF, reported on March 19 that the combined force has destroyed around 85 percent of Iran’s surface-to-air missiles.
5. Iran continued to conduct drone and missile attacks targeting the Gulf states and Gulf energy infrastructure, including the Ras Laffan Industrial City in Qatar, on March 18 and 19. US President Donald Trump threatened on March 18 to “blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field” if Iran launches another drone or missile attack targeting Qatar following Iran’s missile attacks targeting the Ras Laffan Industrial City.

6. Israeli media reported that Hezbollah conducted a long-range missile attack targeting southern Israel, marking the group's longest-range attack since the group was founded. The attack triggered sirens in Ashkelon and several areas near the Gaza Strip, which is located approximately 200 kilometers from the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah has several long-range missiles, including the Fateh-110, Scud, and Zelzal-2, that it could have used in this attack.

Toplines

Israeli strikes on Iranian internal security forces, including decapitation strikes, have likely caused shock and confusion within the Iranian internal security apparatus and disrupted internal security operations to some degree. It remains impossible to assess based on the available open-source evidence to what degree internal security operations have been disrupted. The IDF has targeted internal security and political figures at every echelon, from senior leaders such as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Ali Larijani, and Basij Organization Commander Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani to low-ranking Basij members manning checkpoints.[1] The IDF has also shifted from targeting high-level headquarters to smaller sites, including checkpoints, roadblocks, and local police stations.[2] Some of the strategic-level strikes are unlikely to have immediate effects on tactical units. It remains unclear, for example, how much Soleimani's death will affect Basij forces' ability to operate. But all strikes have both kinetic and psychological effects. The psychological effects include shock and fear caused by a sense that Israel can target any Iranian servicemember at any time and for any reason. Mossad has amplified this sense of fear in some cases by calling individual Iranian officers, but the strikes also generate this effect on their own. Fear and shock have caused some Iranian internal security personnel to abandon established headquarters and bases, set up improvised facilities, and adapt command-and-control structures under pressure, for example.[3] Some Iranian security forces are hiding under bridges, and Soleimani was reportedly operating from a tent in a wooded area before he was killed, for example.[4] Allowing overpasses to dictate one's tactical deployments rather than determining deployments based on tactical realities is certainly suboptimal. Running a headquarters out of a tent rather than an established facility is certainly suboptimal, though not necessarily wholly ineffective. These reports indicate a notable level of operational shock across the regime's coercive apparatus, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Basij, and Law Enforcement Command (LEC), and suggest that elements of Iran's internal security system are functioning suboptimally at this time.

Israel would need to sustain these psychological effects by continuing to target Iranian security officers in order to achieve its objective of "creating conditions for regime change." [5] The operational-level disruption caused by this shock and demoralization could "create the conditions for regime change" over time and if desertions or refusal to obey orders spread. But the disruption will not cause regime collapse without an indigenous force to exploit the disruption.[6] The current level of disruption appears limited and is likely insufficient to meet Israel's objectives at this time. Shock will dissipate, potentially quickly, if strikes on internal security targets subside.

These operational-level effects are not causing strategic-level consequences at this time. Strategic-level decapitation strikes, including the killing of senior leaders such as Ali Khamenei, have caused political tensions and infighting within the regime. This infighting has not led to a breakdown within the regime, however, and largely represents ongoing political fights over succession that will persist. The strategic level could become less relevant if shock and disruption become severe enough at the operational level that internal security forces can no longer function and opposition groups exploit the security forces' shock. CTP-ISW has not observed any evidence that opposition groups are exploiting security forces' shock or that opposition forces believe it is possible to exploit the disruption of security forces at this

time. Such evidence may be difficult to detect in the open source, however.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck vessels at a major Caspian Sea port in northern Iran that Iran uses to conduct trade with Russia. The IDF targeted “dozens” of vessels, including the Artesh Navy Moudge-class frigate IRIS *Deylaman*, at the 4th Artesh Naval District Headquarters at Bandar Anzali Port, Gilan Province, on March 18.[7] Israeli officials stated that more than five of the targeted vessels possessed anti-aircraft capabilities that could threaten combined force aircraft.[8] An IDF spokesperson confirmed that the IDF also hit a command center and a shipyard.[9] The Bandar Anzali governor stated on March 19 that Israeli airstrikes also targeted a customs building and an unspecified shipping organization.[10] The shipping organization was likely Shahid Tamjidi Offshore Industries, which an Israeli open-source intelligence (OSINT) account reported on March 18 that Israeli airstrikes had targeted.[11] Shahid Tamjidi Offshore Industries is a subsidiary of the Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry.[12]

Israeli media reported on March 19 that the Israeli strikes in Bandar Anzali “shut down” a critical supply line between Iran and Russia for both basic goods, such as wheat imports, and military equipment.[13] An Israeli journalist separately amplified reports that the IDF may have targeted a vessel that had returned from Russia in the past 24 hours and was suspected of carrying drone-related technology.[14] CTP-ISW is unable to verify this report. Iran and Russia have previously traded military equipment through this Caspian Sea route, however. Former US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby previously announced in June 2023 that Russian ships were transporting Iranian Shahed drones from Amirabad Port, Mazandaran Province, in northern Iran to Makhachkala, Russia, via the Caspian Sea.[15]

Combined Force Strikes Along the Caspian Sea As of March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



The IDF's March 18 airstrikes on Bandar Anzali follow reports that Russia is providing Iran with Russian-produced and possibly modified Shahed drones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told CNN on March 15 that he has seen intelligence that "100 percent" confirms that Iran has used Russian-produced Shahed drones "with Russian details" to attack US bases in the Middle East.[16] Russia began producing Shahed drones domestically in 2023 and has since upgraded them in several ways, including by equipping them with Verba shoulder-fired man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS).[17] Iran purchased 500 Verbas and 2,500 9M336 infrared homing missiles from Russia in December 2025, according to the *Financial Times* in February 2026.[18]

US and Israeli Air Campaign

The combined force has continued to strike Iranian ballistic missile infrastructure to degrade Iran's ability to conduct retaliatory attacks. An Israeli analyst published satellite imagery on March 19 that shows that the combined force struck a launch pad at the IRGC Shahroud Missile Facility in Semnan Province, northeastern Iran, between March 11 and 19.[19] The IDF previously struck the missile facility at the beginning of the war, causing damage to a mixing building, casting building, and “warhead production line,” according to an analyst at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.[20] Two OSINT accounts published satellite imagery from March 18 showing damage to multiple munition bunkers and multiple support buildings at the Khorgu Missile Base north of Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province.[21] The combined force has struck the Khorgu Missile Base several times since March 2.[22] An Israeli journalist also reported on March 19 that the combined force struck multiple unspecified IRGC missile sites near Borazjan, Bushehr Province.[23] The IRGC Navy 26th Salaman Missile Group is based near Borazjan.[24] It is unclear if the 26th Salaman Missile Group was one of the targets of these strikes, however.

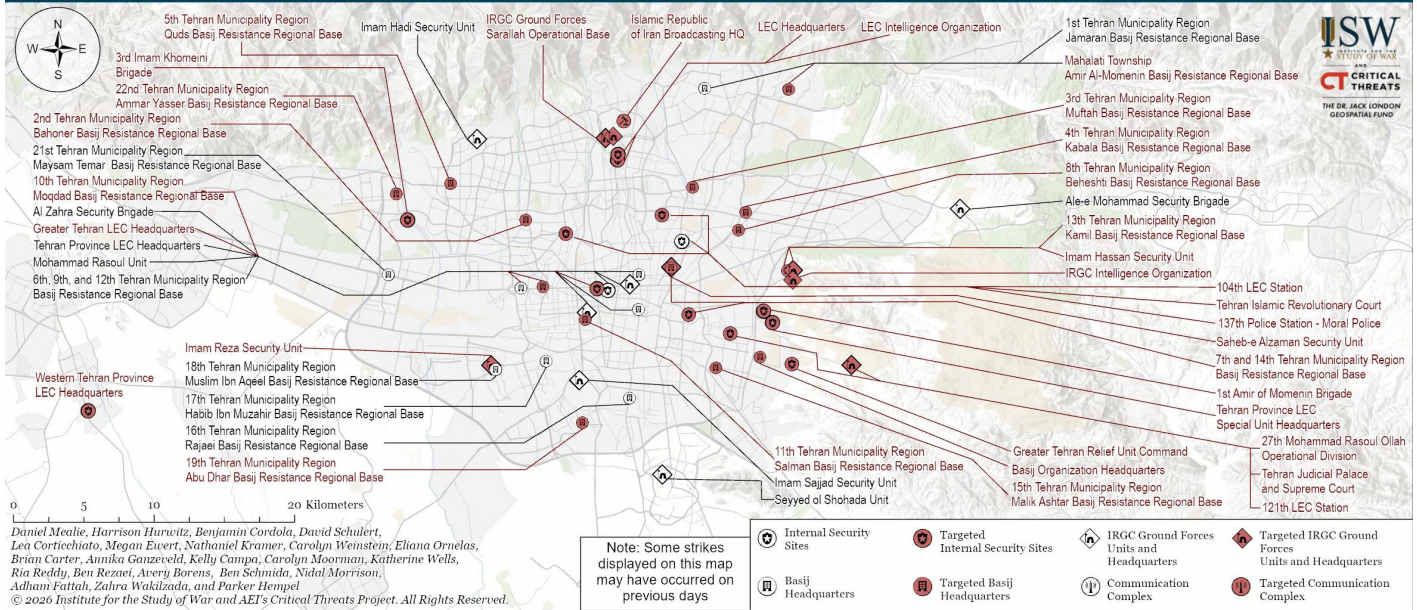
The combined force has continued to degrade Iranian air capabilities in order to maintain air superiority over parts of Iran. Israeli Army Radio, citing the IDF, reported on March 19 that the combined force has destroyed around 85 percent of Iran's surface-to-air missiles.[25] Israeli Army Radio reported that unspecified Iranian military personnel have refused to report to their positions.[26] An Iranian OSINT account reported on March 19 that combined force airstrikes targeted either aircraft or fuel storage facilities at the Yazd Airport in Yazd Province.[27] An Israeli journalist reported “loud explosions” near the Mehrabad International Airport in Tehran on March 19.[28] The 1st Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase is co-located at the Mehrabad Airport.[29] The combined force has repeatedly struck the Mehrabad International Airport and 1st Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase since the start of the war.[30]

Two informed sources told CNN on March 19 that unspecified Iranian anti-aircraft fire struck a US F-35 fighter jet, forcing the jet to make an emergency landing at an unspecified US base.[31] US Central Command (CENTCOM) Spokesperson Captain Tim Hawkins said that the F-35 was “flying a combat mission over Iran” before it had to make an emergency landing.[32] The combined force has made significant progress in degrading Iran's air defense capabilities, as evidenced by the fact that the combined force has destroyed around 85 percent of Iran's surface-to-air missiles.[33] The degradation of Iran's air defenses does not make US or Israeli aircraft completely invulnerable to Iranian anti-aircraft systems, however.

The combined force struck the Shiraz Electronic Industries (SEI) in Fars Province on March 18 after previously striking the complex on March 13.[34] SEI is a subsidiary of Iran Electronics Industries (IEI), which is a subsidiary of the Iranian Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics. The United States sanctioned SEI in 2008 for producing military electronics, including radars, avionics, missile-guidance technology, and other electronic systems, for the Iranian armed forces.[35] Repeated combined force strikes on SEI likely aim to disrupt Iran's ability to produce missiles and other military equipment.

The combined force has continued to strike Iranian internal security institutions. Anti-regime media posted footage on March 19 of an explosion at a police station in Tehran's Tehranpars neighborhood.[36] An OSINT account published satellite imagery on March 18 of a destroyed police station in Javanrud, Kermanshah Province.[37] Anti-regime media reported a strike on the same police station on March 5.[38] The IDF also said on March 19 that it struck a Basij member who was guarding a Basij base in western Tehran.[39] The Basij is a paramilitary organization that the regime uses extensively to suppress protests and maintain internal security.

US and Israeli Strikes Targeting Internal Security in Tehran As of March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



US CENTCOM has deployed aircraft to target Iranian fast attack craft that Iran uses to attack commercial vessels and lay mines around the Strait of Hormuz.[40] US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Dan Caine announced that CENTCOM has deployed A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft to target and destroy “watercraft.”[41] CENTCOM confirmed on March 10 that it had destroyed 16 Iranian mine-laying vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.[42] Caine added that CENTCOM has also deployed AH-64 Apache helicopters on the “southern flank,” referring to Iran’s southern coast.[43] CENTCOM has reportedly used Apache helicopters to intercept Shahed drones targeting shipping and the Gulf states.[44] Caine stated that CENTCOM has deployed Apache helicopters to attack Iranian-backed Iraqi militias as well.[45]

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant’s reactor did not sustain damage after a projectile recently landed near the facility.[46] Iran notified the International Atomic Energy Agency of a “projectile incident” near the plant on March 17.[47] The Institute for Science and International Security reported that satellite imagery from March 18 shows an impact crater about 350 meters from the power plant’s reactor.[48] The IAEA previously warned that any strike that destabilizes power to the facility could cause the reactor’s core to melt and release radioactivity into the environment.[49] About 480 Russian technicians currently operate the plant on behalf of Rosatom State Corporation.[50] None of the technicians was injured in the March 17 incident.[51]

US and Israeli Strikes in Iran

Between March 18, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



- Confirmed Airstrike
- Reported Airstrike
- Report of Explosion With Footage
- Report of Explosion Without Footage

Iranian Retaliation

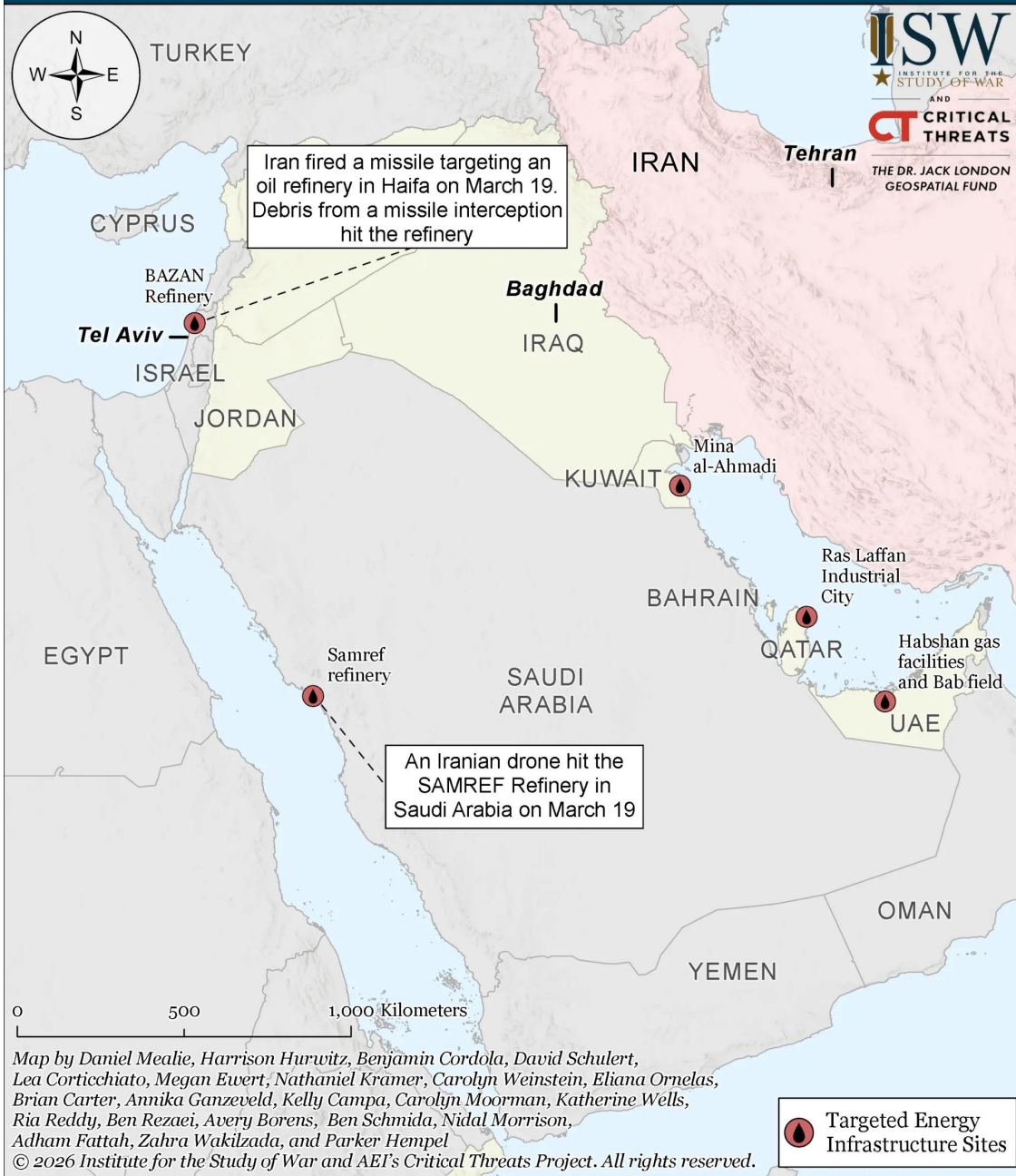
Iran launched 12 missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 18 and 3:00 PM ET on March 19.[52] Israeli media reported on March 18 that an Iranian cluster munition killed one individual and injured four others in Moshav Adanim, central Israel.[53] An Israeli journalist also reported on March 18 that an Iranian cluster munition hit a house in southern Israel.[54] An Iranian missile attack also killed four Palestinians in the West Bank on March 18, according to Israeli media.[55] Iran also conducted a missile attack targeting the Bazan oil refinery in Haifa, northern Israel, on March 19.[56] The IDF stated that debris from a missile interception hit the refinery.[57] Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen said that the attack did not cause “significant damage” to the refinery.[58]

Iran continued to conduct drone and missile attacks targeting the Gulf states and Gulf energy

infrastructure on March 18 and 19. An Iranian drone hit the SAMREF Refinery in Saudi Arabia on March 19.[59] Unspecified sources told Reuters on March 19 that the attack caused a temporary halt to oil loadings at the nearby Yanbu Port.[60] Iranian regime media previously threatened on March 18 that Iran would target the SAMREF Refinery.[61] The Qatari Defense Ministry reported that two Iranian missiles hit the Ras Laffan Industrial City on March 18.[62] Iran conducted three missile attacks on the Ras Laffan Industrial City within several hours on March 18.[63] Qatar intercepted several of the missiles that Iran fired at the site. QatarEnergy CEO Saad al Kaabi said that the missiles damaged two liquefied natural gas (LNG) trains and one gas-to-liquid facility, reducing Qatar’s LNG export capacity by 17 percent.[64] Saadi added that repairs will take up to five years.[65] Qatar is the third-largest LNG exporter.[66] Qatar declared several Iranian diplomats as personae non gratae on March 18 in response to the missile attacks.[67] Kuwait’s national oil company also said on March 19 that two Iranian drones hit the Mina al Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries, causing small fires at operation units at both facilities.[68]

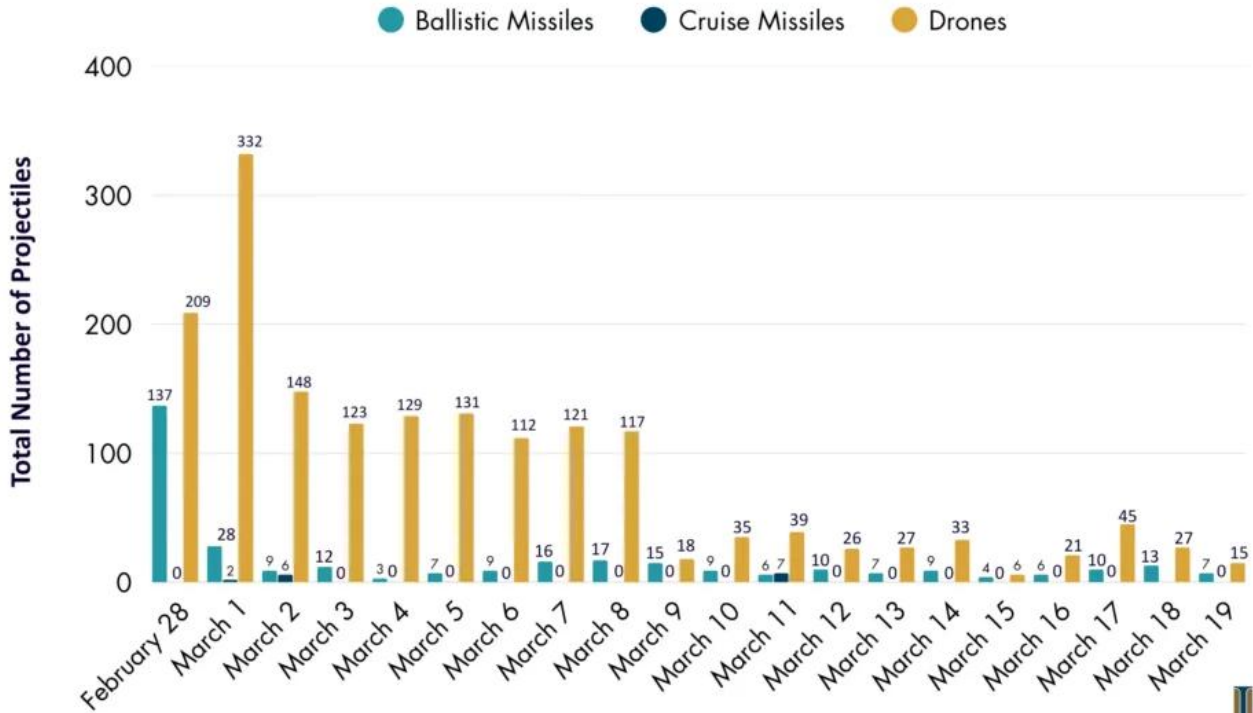
US President Donald Trump threatened on March 18 to “blow up the entirety of the South Pars Gas Field” if Iran launches another drone or missile attack targeting Qatar following Iran’s missile attacks targeting the Ras Laffan Industrial City.[69] Trump stated that the US Government “knew nothing about” Israel’s attack on the South Pars Gas Field on March 18 and stated that Israel will not conduct further attacks on the gas field if Iran does not attack Qatar.[70]

Iranian Strikes on Energy Infrastructure in the Middle East Between March 18, 2026 at 3:00 ET and March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Gulf air defense systems have continued to intercept most Iranian projectiles. The Emirati Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted seven Iranian missiles and 15 drones on March 19.[71] The Abu Dhabi Media Office reported on March 18 that debris from intercepted Iranian missiles that were targeting the Habshan gas facilities and Bab oil field caused unspecified “incidents” but no injuries.[72] The Kuwaiti Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted 18 Iranian drones on March 19.[73] The Saudi Defense Ministry said that it intercepted seven Iranian missiles and 34 drones on March 19.[74] The Bahrain Defense Force reported that it intercepted two Iranian missiles and four drones on March 19.[75]

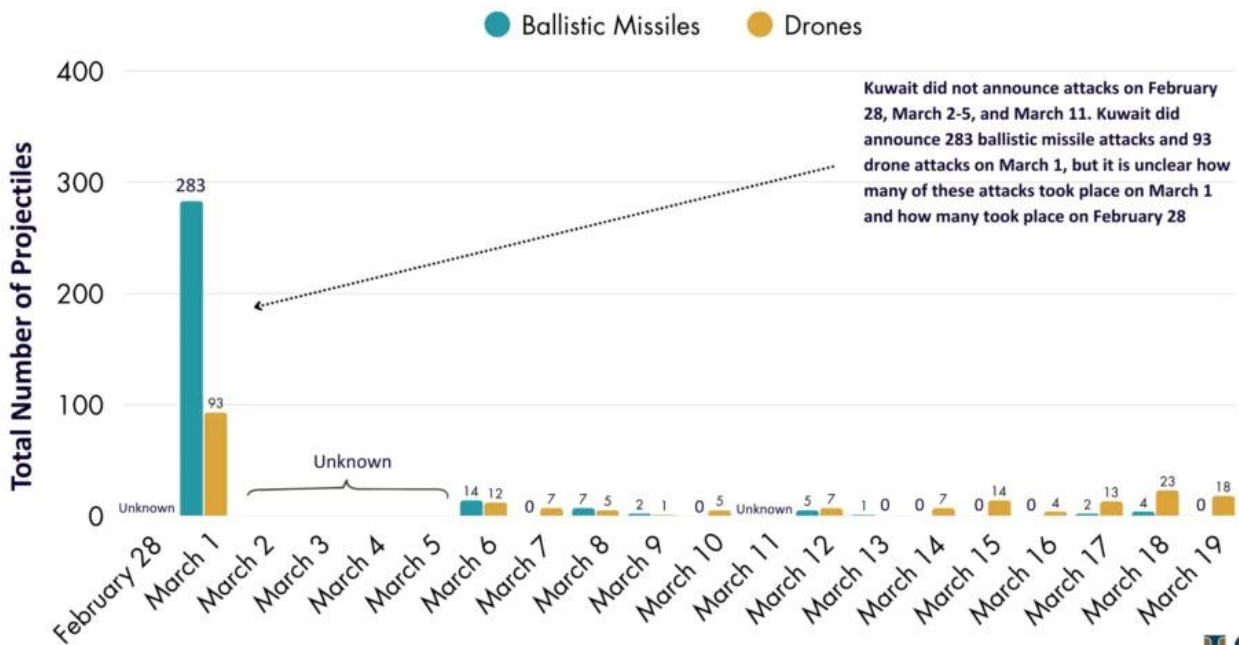
Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates Between February 28, 2026 and March 19, 2026



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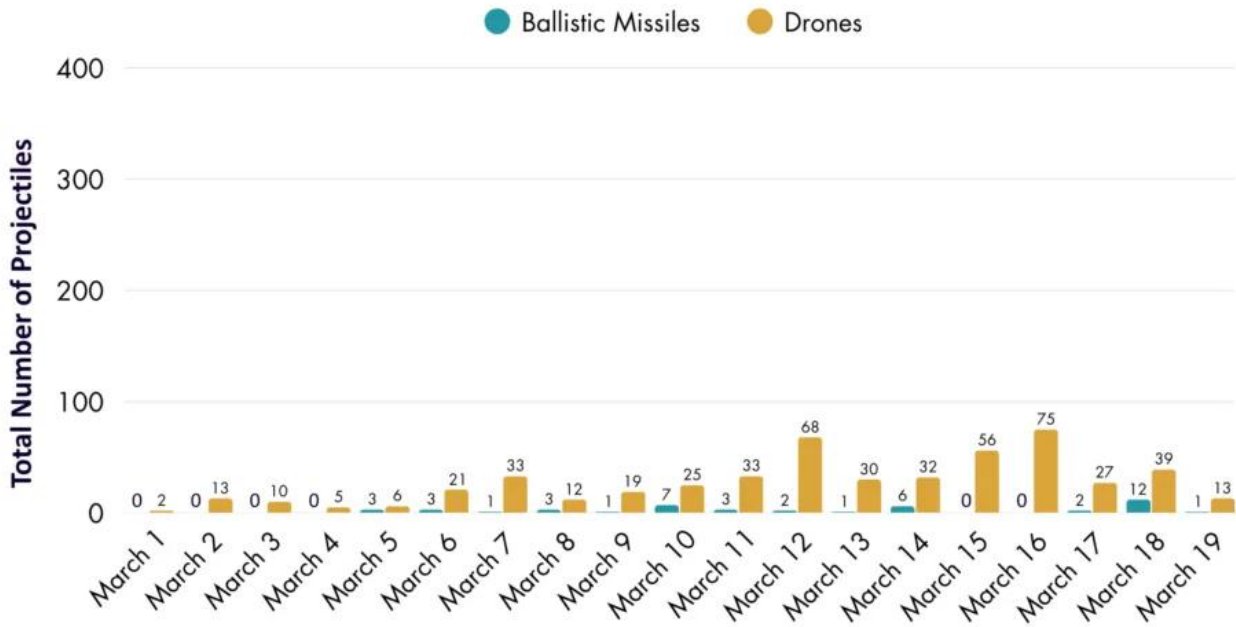
Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Kuwait Between February 28, 2026 and March 19, 2026



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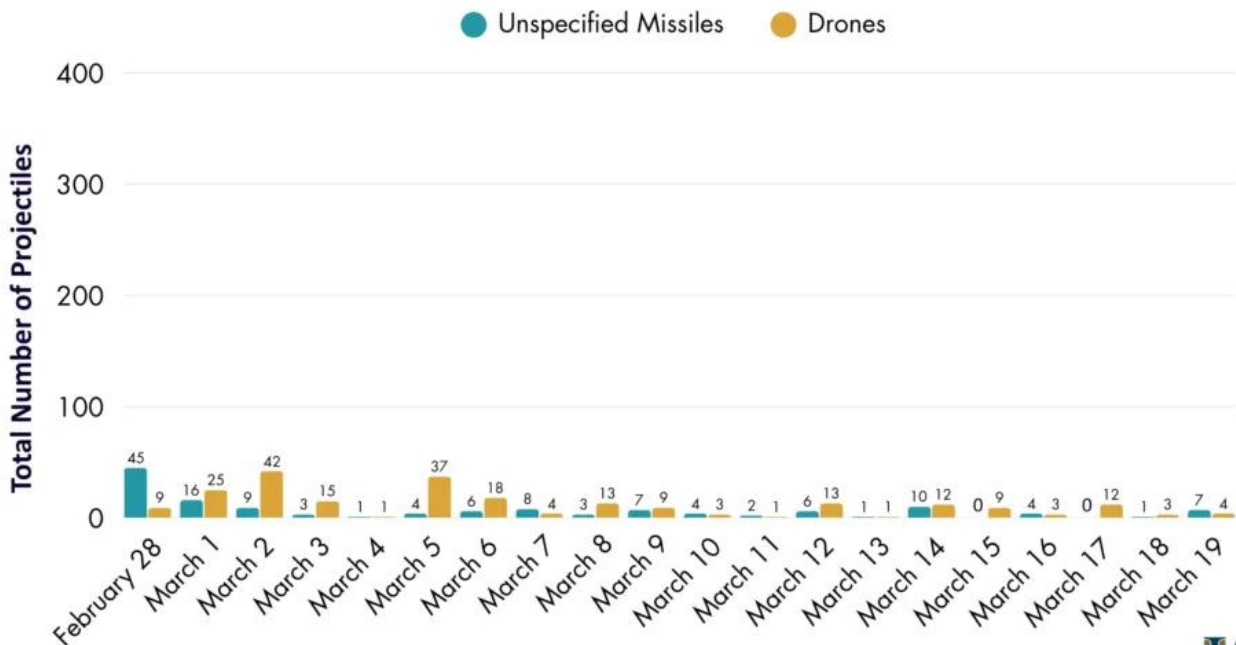
Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 19, 2026



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 Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET



Iranian Missiles and Drones Launched at Bahrain Between February 28, 2026 and March 19, 2026



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UKMTO reported that an unknown projectile struck and caused a fire on an unspecified vessel 11 nautical miles east of Khawar Fakkan, United Arab Emirates (UAE), on March 18.[76] The vessel may have been struck by debris from missile interceptions, given that it was close to the UAE coast. CTP-ISW did not observe reports of attacks on infrastructure near Khawar Fakkan on March 18, however. Iran did not claim any attacks on commercial vessels on March 18.

Debris from missile interceptions also likely struck a vessel off the coast of Qatar.[77] United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported that an unknown projectile struck an unspecified vessel four nautical miles east of Ras Laffan, Qatar, on March 18.

India, Pakistan, Iraq, Malaysia, and China are negotiating with Iran to allow their vessels to transit through an IRGC-managed “safe corridor” in the Strait of Hormuz, according to sources “with direct knowledge of the transits” speaking to UK-based shipping intelligence firm Lloyd’s List on March 18.[78] Nine vessels have reportedly used this corridor so far, including two Indian-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tankers, six unspecified bulk carriers, a Pakistani-flagged oil tanker, and three US-sanctioned LPG tankers.[79] Lloyd’s List reported that, in one instance, a vessel paid \$2 million USD to transit the Strait of Hormuz. Ships are required to submit detailed ownership and cargo data through IRGC-linked intermediaries before being approved to transit through the “safe corridor.”[80] Lloyd’s List also identified IRGC naval activity on Larak Island in the Strait of Hormuz, where vessels are being diverted around, on satellite imagery.[81] Lloyd’s List reported that overall traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has dropped sharply, with only 15 transits taking place between March 15 and 17. Ninety percent of these transits involved Iranian-linked vessels.[82] UKMTO

has recorded 21 maritime attacks and incidents since March 1, but the last confirmed Iranian attack on a commercial vessel took place on March 11.[83]

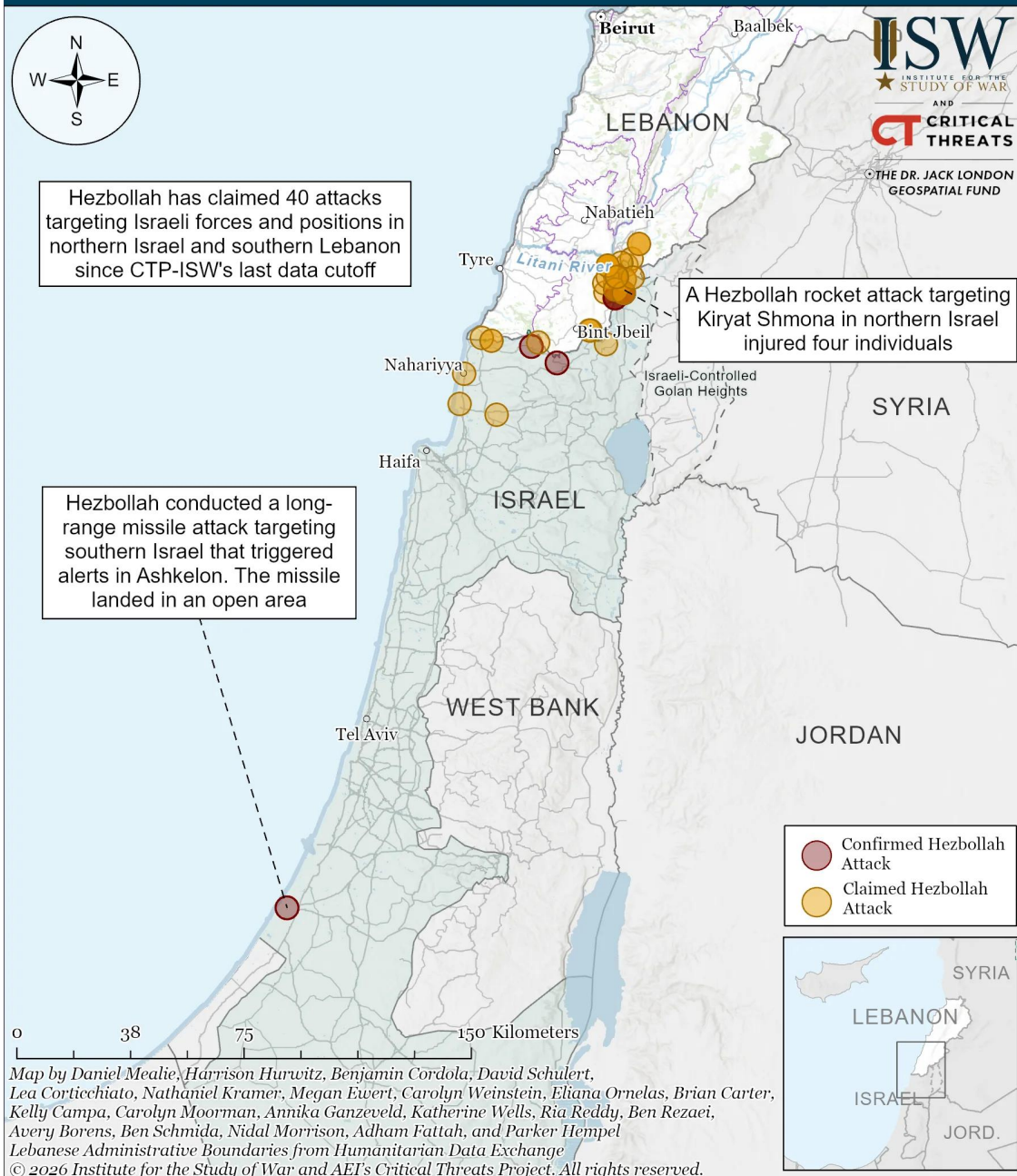
Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

Hezbollah claimed 40 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon between 3:00 PM ET on March 18 and 3:00 PM ET on March 19.[84] The majority of Hezbollah's attacks targeted Israeli towns.[85] A Hezbollah rocket attack targeting Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel injured four individuals.[86] Hezbollah is likely continuing to attempt to displace northern Israeli residents from their homes by targeting northern Israeli towns in order to increase political pressure on the Israeli government to halt its war effort.

Hezbollah also claimed several drone, mortar, rocket, and missile attacks targeting IDF positions and forces along both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border.[87] Hezbollah conducted eight attacks and clashed with IDF forces in Taybeh, Marjaayoun District.[88] Hezbollah claimed that it launched rockets targeting the Yodfat Military Industries Company north of Haifa, northern Israel, on March 18.[89] Yodfat Military Industries Company is an Israeli missile production facility operated by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, which is an Israeli state-owned organization that develops weapons for the IDF.[90] The IDF reported that Hezbollah has launched approximately 700 rockets, missiles, and drones at Israel from areas south of the Litani River since it joined the war on March 2.[91] Israeli media noted that Hezbollah has increased the number of projectiles it has fired at Israel in recent days from approximately 100 rockets to 150 rockets per day, 60 percent of which have fallen in Israeli territory.[92]

Hezbollah Attacks in Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon

Between March 18, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



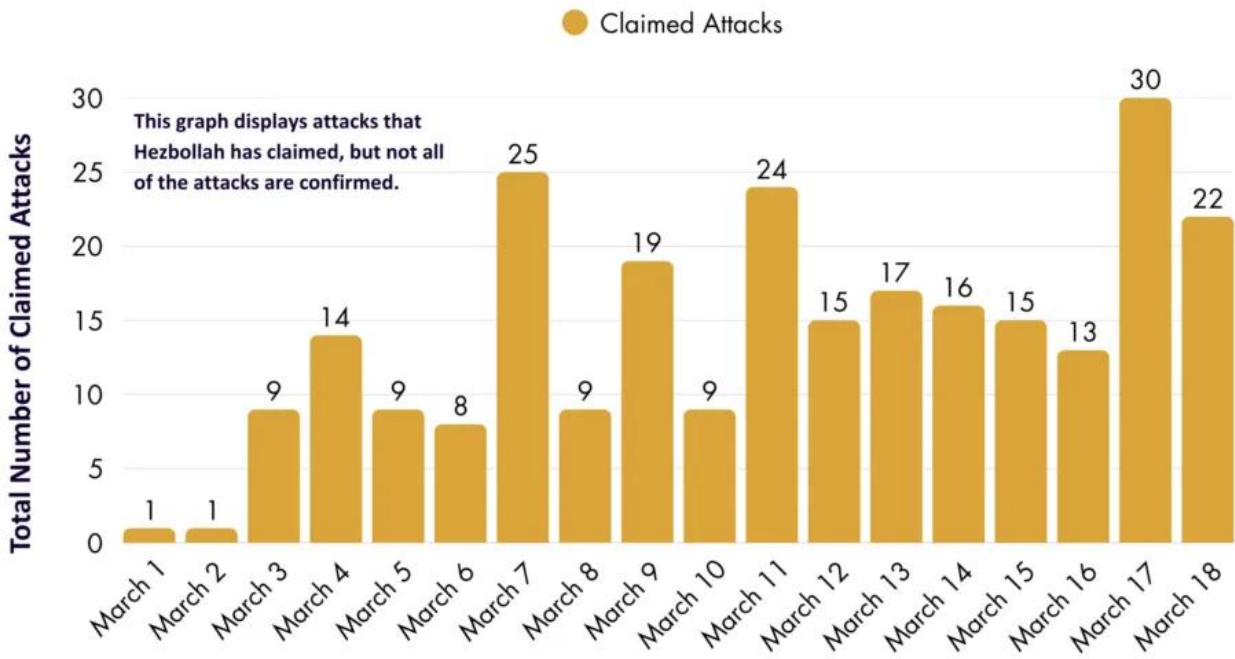
Israeli media reported that Hezbollah conducted a long-range missile attack targeting southern Israel, marking the group's longest-range attack since the group was founded.[93]

The attack triggered sirens in Ashkelon and several areas near the Gaza Strip, which is located approximately 200 kilometers from the Israel-Lebanon border.[94] The missiles impacted open areas in southern Israel.[95] Hezbollah has several long-range missiles, including the Fateh-110, Scud, and Zelzal-2, that it could have used in this attack. The Fateh-110 ballistic missile is an Iranian-made missile with a range of 250 to 300 kilometers and a payload of 450 to 500 kilograms.[96] Scud missiles are Russian-made, liquid-fueled ballistic missiles that have a range of 300 to 550 kilometers with a payload of 600 to 985 kilograms.[97] The Zelzal-2 is an Iranian variant of the Soviet FROG 7 artillery ballistic missile, which has a range of 210 kilometers and a payload of 600 kilograms.[98] Hezbollah has not claimed this attack at the time of this writing.

The rate of Hezbollah attacks targeting Israel has varied since the group joined the war on March 1, as

illustrated below.

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Israel Between March 1, 2026 and March 18, 2026

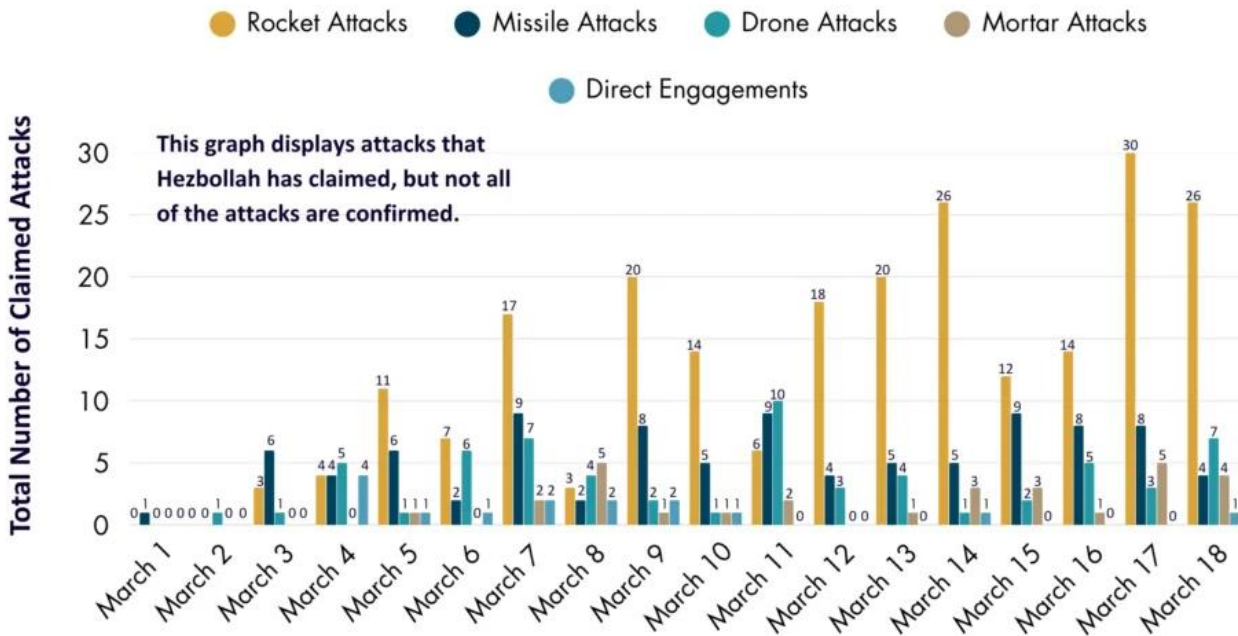


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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



Hezbollah has employed a variety of weapons in its attacks against Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon (see below).

Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 18, 2026 By Type



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used



Israeli media reported on March 18 that Hezbollah is employing new tactics that make its rockets harder to track and its Radwan unit more elusive.[99] Israeli media reported that Hezbollah is dispersing its short-range rockets across Lebanon, which makes them more difficult for Israeli intelligence agencies to track.[100] The IDF has noted that this Hezbollah tactic has diminished the group's ability to launch large rocket barrages.[101] The IDF also estimates that Hezbollah has hundreds of Radwan Force fighters operating in small cells in approximately 200 villages south of the Litani River.[102] The Radwan Force is Hezbollah's elite special operations unit that Hezbollah, with Iranian support, built to conduct major ground attacks into Israel.[103] Israeli media, citing the IDF, noted that Hezbollah fighters are not engaging in close combat with the IDF and are rather dispersed among Lebanese villages and launching attacks on Israeli forces from these villages.[104] Hezbollah's claimed attacks are consistent with this Israeli media report. Hezbollah's claimed direct engagements with Israeli forces suggest that Hezbollah fighters are only directly engaging Israeli forces after Israeli forces attempt to advance.[105]

An Iranian-affiliated group conducted cyberattacks targeting Lebanese government websites and Lebanese media outlets. Lebanese media reported that an Iranian-affiliated group briefly hacked the Lebanese foreign affairs and information ministries' websites on March 18.[106] The Fatemiyoun Electronic Team claimed responsibility for the hacks.[107] The Fatemiyoun Electronic Team is a pro-Iranian hacktivist group that is reportedly controlled by Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah and has previously conducted cyberattacks in support of Iran.[108] The Fatemiyoun Electronic Team claimed responsibility for a March 15 cyberattack on the website of Lebanese television station MTV Lebanon.[109] These cyberattacks came shortly after the hacked entities took action against Hezbollah

and Iran. Information Minister Paul Morcos instructed Lebanese state-run media outlets on March 16 to stop using the term “resistance,” which commonly refers to Hezbollah.[110] Lebanese Foreign Minister Joe Rajji recently summoned the Iranian Charge d’Affaires in Lebanon.[111] MTV Lebanon separately broadcast the alleged locations of Hezbollah detention centers in Beirut’s southern suburbs shortly before it was hacked.[112] The IDF reportedly struck the detention centers after MTV Lebanon’s broadcast.[113]

The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes and ground operations targeting Hezbollah across Lebanon. The IDF reported that it has struck approximately 2,000 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, including 100 high-value targets and 220 time-sensitive targets, with over 2,200 munitions and 1,000 sorties since March 2.[114] The IDF has also killed at least 500 Hezbollah fighters since March 2.[115] The IDF reportedly struck a building in Beirut that was owned by al Boyan CEO Hussein Ali Salah al Moussawi on March 18.[116] Al Boyan for Engineering and Contracting Company is one of Hezbollah’s construction organizations.[117] The IDF reportedly struck the Qannayat bridge in southern Lebanon on March 19. The IDF previously struck the bridge on March 18.[118] The IDF stated on March 18 that Hezbollah used the bridge to move fighters from northern to southern Lebanon to fight against Israeli forces.[119] Lebanon’s state electricity provider, Electricite du Liban (EDL), reported that Israeli strikes struck its main power transmission network in Sultaniyeh, Bint Jbeil District, which put the station “completely out of service.”[120] This strike marks the first time that the IDF has struck national Lebanese energy infrastructure.

The IDF reported that the IDF 36th Division has killed more than 20 Hezbollah fighters and destroyed dozens of Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon in the past 24 hours.[121] The IDF reported that the IDF 1st (Golani) Infantry Brigade identified two separate Hezbollah cells in southern Lebanon, one of which IDF forces engaged.[122] IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir ordered the IDF 1st (Golani) Infantry Brigade to move from the Southern Command to the Northern Command on March 11.[123] The IDF also reported that Israeli forces found and confiscated large quantities of weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank guided missiles, ammunition, a hunting rifle, and other military equipment.[124]

Israeli forces have recently attempted to advance into Marjaayoun District in southeastern Lebanon.[125] A geospatial intelligence analyst reported on March 18 that the IDF continues to advance deeper into Khiam and is advancing toward the town’s northernmost neighborhood.[126] The analyst’s report of Israeli advances through Khiam is consistent with claimed Hezbollah attacks on March 17 targeting Israeli forces near the Khiam Detention Center, which is located on the highest hill in southern Khiam.[127] Israeli forces would presumably seek to take control of the town’s high points before advancing further. Lebanese residents told the *New York Times* on March 16 that Israeli forces had not completely seized Khiam and noted that Israeli forces have faced resistance from Hezbollah fighters.[128]

Hezbollah is attempting to defend against Israeli advances into Khiam. Hezbollah has claimed several attacks targeting advancing Israeli forces in recent days and claimed on March 18 that it clashed with Israeli forces in Khiam.[129] Hezbollah previously conducted defensive operations against Israeli forces in Khiam during the Fall 2024 Israel-Hezbollah conflict.[130] Khiam is located on high ground from which Hezbollah can fire into northern Israel.[131] Khiam, moreover, grants Hezbollah a vantage point from which it can observe Israeli forces and other targets around the Galilee Panhandle.[132] Hezbollah attacked Metula—likely from southern Khiam and Kfar Kila, based on Hezbollah footage—with more rockets and anti-tank guided missiles than any other town in northern Israel between October 2023 and November 2024 and caused extensive damage in the town.[133] This fire almost completely stopped once the IDF began operations in the area in Fall 2024.[134] Khiam also sits along main roads that connect towns in central Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon, which makes it a key hub for moving forces and transporting supplies across Lebanon.[135]

Hezbollah-affiliated individuals in Kuwait on March 18.[136] The Kuwaiti Interior Ministry stated that the 10 Kuwaiti nationals had provided coordinates for various sites in Kuwait to foreign operatives.[137] The ministry noted that the individuals had trained in Hezbollah camps abroad.[138] Kuwaiti authorities previously arrested a 16-member Hezbollah cell and seized various weapons in Kuwait on March 16.[139] Hezbollah issued a statement on March 17 in which it claimed that it has no cells, members, or networks in Kuwait.[140]

Axis of Resistance Response

Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah offered on March 18 to temporarily and conditionally halt attacks on the US Embassy in Baghdad, likely in response to recent combined force strikes that targeted senior Kataib Hezbollah leaders.[141] Kataib Hezbollah Spokesperson Abu Mujahid Aasaf stated on March 18 that Kataib Hezbollah would cease its attacks on the US Embassy in Baghdad for five days if Israel stops striking the Hezbollah stronghold of Dahiyeh in southern Beirut, Lebanon, the combined force ceases strikes on Iranian-backed militias in residential areas of Iraq, and CIA officers across Iraq withdraw from their stations to the US Embassy in Baghdad.[142] Kataib Hezbollah threatened to resume attacks if the combined force fails to meet these conditions.[143] The timing of the proposal suggests that it is a response to recent strikes that targeted senior militia figures, including a March 16 strike that killed Kataib Hezbollah spokesperson and security head Abu Ali al Askari and a March 13 strike in Baghdad that reportedly nearly killed the group's leader, Abu Hussein al Hamidawi.[144] A separate strike on March 16 targeted the residence of Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada leader Abu Alaa al Walaei and reportedly killed six individuals, but it is unclear if Walaei was present at his residence at the time of the strike.[145]

Iranian-backed Badr Organization Secretary General Hadi al Ameri said on March 19 that combined force strikes have killed more than 60 Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) fighters and wounded over 100 more.[146] The combined force has conducted several airstrikes targeting PMF positions across Iraq since 3:00 PM ET on March 18. The combined force struck the Badr Organization-affiliated 30th PMF Brigade base in Khazna Tapa village, Ninewa Province, on March 19. The attack killed one PMF fighter and wounded three others, according to Iraqi media.[147] The combined force also conducted two airstrikes targeting the Badr Organization-affiliated 63rd PMF Brigade base in Tuz Khurmatu, Salah al Din Province, on March 19.[148] A likely combined force airstrike targeted the PMF Ninewa Operations Command headquarters in Mosul on March 19.[149] The commander of the Ninewa Operations Command is affiliated with the Badr Organization.[150]

An Iraq-focused OSINT analyst reported that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) arrested several PMF members on March 18. Unspecified militia leaders subsequently met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani to try to secure their release.[151] **Iranian-backed Iraqi militias continued to conduct drone attacks targeting US forces and interests in Iraq and the region.** Saraya Awliya al Dam, which is considered a front group for Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, claimed that it launched drones targeting an unspecified US base in Jordan.[152] The group also claimed that it conducted six "qualitative operations" against US bases in and outside of Iraq but provided no evidence of the "operations." [153] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias were likely responsible for launching four drones at the Umm Qasr Naval Base in Basra Province on March 19.[154] The drones landed in the vicinity of the base but did not cause significant material damage, according to Iraqi media.[155] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias also likely launched three drones from Basra Province targeting an observation post in Kuwait.[156] Kuwaiti diplomats previously said on March 9 that Iranian-backed militia attacks on Kuwait "threaten relations" between Iraq and Kuwait.[157] US aircraft separately intercepted a likely Iranian-backed militia drone that targeted the Baghdad Airport on March 19.[158] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), which is a

coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, claimed on March 18 that it had conducted 29 operations using dozens of missiles and drones targeting US bases in Iraq and the region in the past 24 hours. IRI did not provide evidence for this claim.[159]

Iranian Internal Security

The Iranian regime is continuing to take steps to securitize Iranian society. Iranian authorities arrested dozens of individuals across multiple provinces on March 18 and 19 for allegedly spying for Israel and engaging in other anti-regime activities.[160] The Iranian Intelligence Ministry and IRGC Intelligence Organization claimed that they have arrested over 200 individuals since the start of the war.[161] Security forces in Sistan and Baluchistan Province arrested 13 individuals reportedly linked to anti-regime militant groups on March 19.[162] Iranian authorities claimed that the arrested individuals were collecting intelligence on military movements, security facilities, and air defense sites, and were preparing to conduct “terrorist attacks.”[163] The regime separately executed three individuals in Qom Province on March 19 who had participated in the December 2025-January 2026 protests.[164] The Iranian regime has sustained its internet shutdown and continued to seize Starlink devices to restrict the flow of information.[165]

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Iran Update Special Report, March 20, 2026



**Parker Hempel, Nidal Morrison, Ben Rezaei, Adham Fattah, Ria Reddy, Carolyn Moorman,
Nicholas Carl**

Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: ISW-CTP will no longer publish morning updates covering the war with Iran. ISW-CTP will instead publish threads on its social media channels in the morning that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.

Key Takeaways

1. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is still badly injured or otherwise incapacitated. The regime could easily dispel these rumors with a simple video but has not, despite having many incentives to do so. This comes as US officials have stated that Mojtaba was seriously wounded.
2. Iranian leaders have said that they will continue to impede international shipping around the Strait of Hormuz after the war ends. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on X on March 17 that "the Strait of Hormuz situation won't return to its pre-war status."
3. Hezbollah claimed 55 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon, as well as targeting northern Israeli towns between 3:00 PM ET on March 18 and 3:00 PM ET on March 19. Most of Hezbollah's claimed attacks targeted Israeli forces and military sites in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.

Toplines

Circumstantial evidence suggests that Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is still badly injured or otherwise incapacitated. Mojtaba has yet to appear in public or in any new images or videos since becoming the supreme leader on March 8.[1] The regime has instead recycled old images and videos of him and issued only written statements.[2] This continued absence has fueled rumors about Mojtaba's status. The regime could easily dispel these rumors with a simple video, but has not, despite having many incentives to do so. This comes as US officials have stated that Mojtaba was

seriously wounded.[3]

Mojtaba emphasized narrative control, economic resilience, and regional policy in his Nowruz written statement on March 20.[4] Mojtaba claimed that Iran's adversaries had tried to exploit economic grievances and target senior leaders in order to "create fear" and collapse the regime.[5] Mojtaba warned that adversaries used media operations to target the "minds and psyches of people" and undermine national unity.[6] Mojtaba also urged domestic media to avoid emphasis on internal weaknesses.[7] Mojtaba announced the Iranian New Year slogan as "Resistance Economy in the Shadow of National Unity and National Security" and reinforced the regime's emphasis on economic self-sufficiency and resilience.[8] Mojtaba also emphasized relations with neighboring states, highlighted shared religious, cultural, and strategic ties, and called on Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve relations.[9] Mojtaba also falsely claimed that Iran and the Axis of Resistance did not conduct their recent attacks into Turkey and Oman.[10] He described the attacks as part of an Israeli "false flag tactic" meant to create division between Iran and its neighbors.[11]

Iranian leaders have said that they will continue to impede international shipping around the Strait of Hormuz after the war ends. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on X on March 17 that "the Strait of Hormuz situation won't return to its pre-war status." [12] Expediency Discernment Council member Mohammad Mokhber stated on March 19 that there will be a "new regime for the Strait of Hormuz" following the war.[13] He said that Iran can use its position along the strait to "sanction [the West] and prevent their ships from passing through this waterway" even after the war ends.[14] Iran has recently allowed certain vessels to transit the strait through an IRGC-managed "safe corridor." [15] A Tehran parliamentarian said on March 19 that the Iranian parliament is considering a proposal to impose fees on vessels that seek to transit the Strait of Hormuz.[16] Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei wrote in his first statement since becoming the supreme leader that Iran will forcefully "extract reparations from the enemy" and will "take" or destroy US and Israeli assets.[17] Daily oil exports from the Middle East have fallen by at least 60 percent since the start of the war.[18]

US and Israeli Air Campaign

The combined force has continued to strike Iranian missile and drone infrastructure to degrade the Iranian ability to retaliate. An Israeli OSINT account reported on March 20 that the combined force conducted three strikes targeting the IRGC Chamran missile base in Jam, Bushehr Province.[19] The combined force previously struck and damaged above-ground structures at the missile base, according to commercially available satellite imagery from March 6.[20]

US and Israeli Strikes in Iran

Between March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 20, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



- Confirmed Airstrike
- Reported Airstrike
- Report of Explosion With Footage
- Report of Explosion Without Footage

The combined force has continued to suppress and degrade Iranian air defense capabilities.

An Iranian OSINT account reported on March 19 that the combined force struck the 4th Artesh Ground Forces Aviation base in Esfahan City, Esfahan Province.[21] The combined force previously struck the base on March 7.[22] Anti-regime media separately reported smoke rising from multiple explosions near Shiraz International Airport, Fars Province, on March 20.[23] The 7th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase is co-located at Shiraz International Airport.[24] The combined force has repeatedly struck the 7th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase since the start of the conflict.[25] The combined force separately struck the 9th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, according to an Iranian OSINT account on March 20.[26] The combined force previously struck the 9th Artesh Air Force Tactical Airbase on March 10.[27]

The combined force has continued to strike Iran's defense industrial base to prevent it from rebuilding its missile, drone, and air defense capabilities. The IDF struck unspecified weapons

production and long-range ballistic missile component and launcher production sites in Tehran Province on March 20.[28] An Israeli analyst published US Central Command footage on March 20 that shows the combined forces striking a ballistic missile production site at Simin Dasht Industrial Town in Alborz Province on March 11.[29]

An Israeli OSINT account citing FIRMS data assessed on March 19 that the combined force struck the IRGC Shahid Borujerdi logistics support headquarters in Tehran City, Tehran Province.[30]

The combined force has continued to strike Iranian internal security sites across Iran. The combined force reportedly targeted the IRGC Ground Forces 41st Sarallah Division headquarters in Kerman City, Kerman Province, on March 20.[31] The headquarters is co-located with the division's 38th Zolfaghar Independent Armored Brigade. This brigade deployed to Syria to support the Bashar al Assad regime.[32] An OSINT account posted a photo of an explosion on March 20 and claimed that a strike targeted the Kolahtouz IRGC base in Shahmirzad, Semnan Province.[33] The user could be referring to a Basij base in the area. The combined force separately struck a Basij base in Semnan City, Semnan Province, as well as an IRGC intelligence building on Kakh Street in Tehran.[34]

An Israeli outlet reported on March 19 that the combined force conducted “heavy” strikes targeting IRGC positions on Qeshm Island.[35] Satellite imagery from March 17 shows that strikes have destroyed at least 19 buildings at the IRGC Navy base and Basij base on the island since the start of the war.[36] An OSINT account geolocated FIRMS data from March 5 and claimed that the combined force struck a military port, likely referencing the port at the IRGC Navy base.[37]

The IDF reportedly killed Basij Organization Intelligence Chief Esmail Ahmadi.[38] ISW-CTP assessed on March 19 that Israeli strikes targeting the Iranian internal security services, including decapitation strikes, have likely caused shock and confusion within the internal security apparatus and disrupted internal security operations to some degree.[39] The IDF also killed Basij Organization Commander Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani and his deputy Ghassem Ghoreyshi in airstrikes in Tehran on March 17.[40] The Basij is a paramilitary force generally designed for social control and civil defense.

The IDF also killed the following individuals in its ongoing decapitation strikes:

- **IRGC Spokesperson Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini.[41]** Naeini played a key role in spreading regime propaganda and disinformation. Naeini repeatedly issued threats to attack US and Israeli interests in the region. The United Kingdom sanctioned Naeini following the October 2024 Iranian missile attacks on Israel.[42]
- **IRGC Aerospace Force Commander in Esfahan Mehdi Ghoreyshi.[43]** The IRGC Aerospace Force is the principal operator of the Iranian missile and drone arsenals. The combined force has targeted several missile, drone, and air defense sites in Esfahan Province since February 28 to degrade Iranian capabilities there.

The IDF also killed an Iranian Intelligence and Security Ministry official, Mehdi Rostami Shamestan.[44] Shamastan played a role in promoting attacks against Israeli and Jewish civilians across the world.

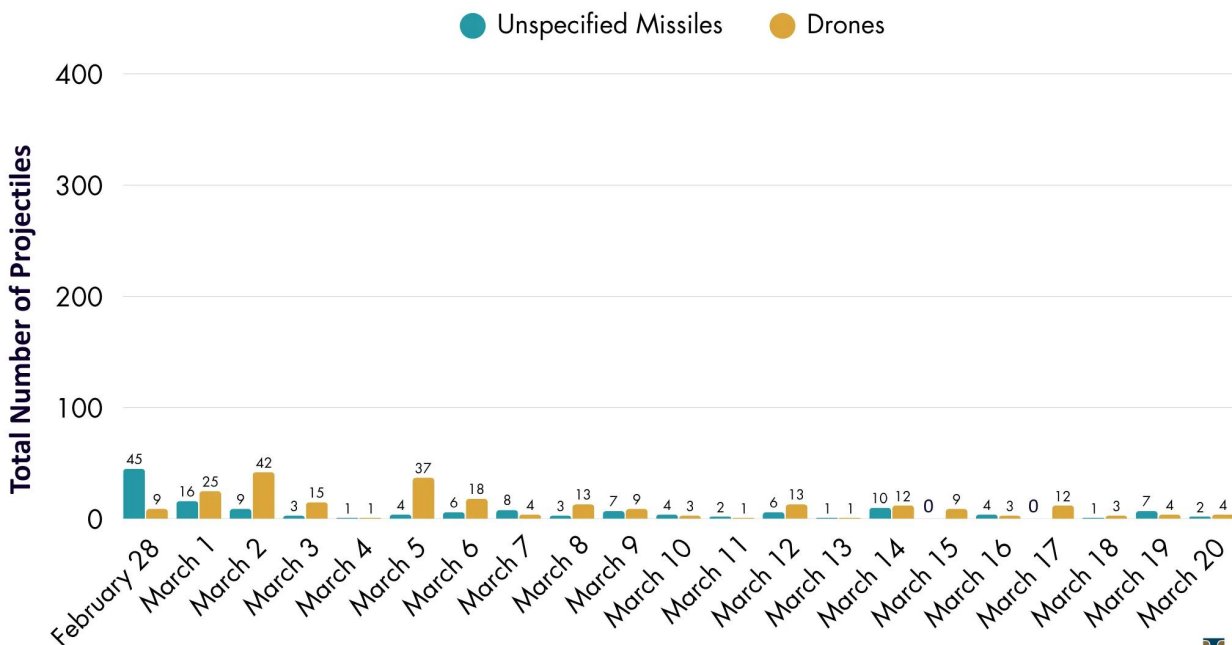
Iranian Response

Iran launched 11 missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 19 and 3:00 PM ET

on March 20.[45] One Iranian ballistic missile landed in an open area of Beit Shemesh, Central Israel, on March 20 but did not cause casualties or damage.[46] A previous Iranian missile strike on Beit Shemesh on March 1 killed at least nine people.[47] An Israeli OSINT account on X reported on March 20 that ballistic missiles landed in Ramallah in the West Bank, Rehovot, and Jerusalem.[48] Israeli media reported on March 20 that 70 percent of Iran’s launches against Israel have used cluster munitions and that the percentage is increasing.[49] ISW-CTP previously assessed that Iran likely began using cluster munition warheads to maximize the damage inflicted by its ballistic missiles, given their relatively low accuracy when fitted with standard warheads.[50] The IDF stated on March 20 that Iran is firing mostly from central Iran after Israel destroyed most of Iran’s missile launchers in western Iran, a process that began during the June 2025 Israel-Iran War.[51] An Israeli analyst stated on March 20 that Iran fired its latest barrage of missiles from Esfahan Province in central Iran.[52]

Iran continued to conduct drone and ballistic missile attacks against the Gulf states, which the Gulf states mostly intercepted. The Emirati Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted four Iranian missiles and 26 drones on March 20.[53] The Kuwaiti Defense Ministry reported that it intercepted 15 of 25 Iranian drones on March 20, with eight of them landing harmlessly and two of them hitting Kuwait’s national oil company, which ISW-CTP reported on March 19.[54] The Saudi Defense Ministry said that it intercepted 38 Iranian drones on March 20.[55] The Bahrain Defense Force reported that it intercepted two Iranian missiles and four drones on March 20.[56] Regime-affiliated media stated on March 20 that Iran targeted a US Patriot defense system in Bahrain.[57]

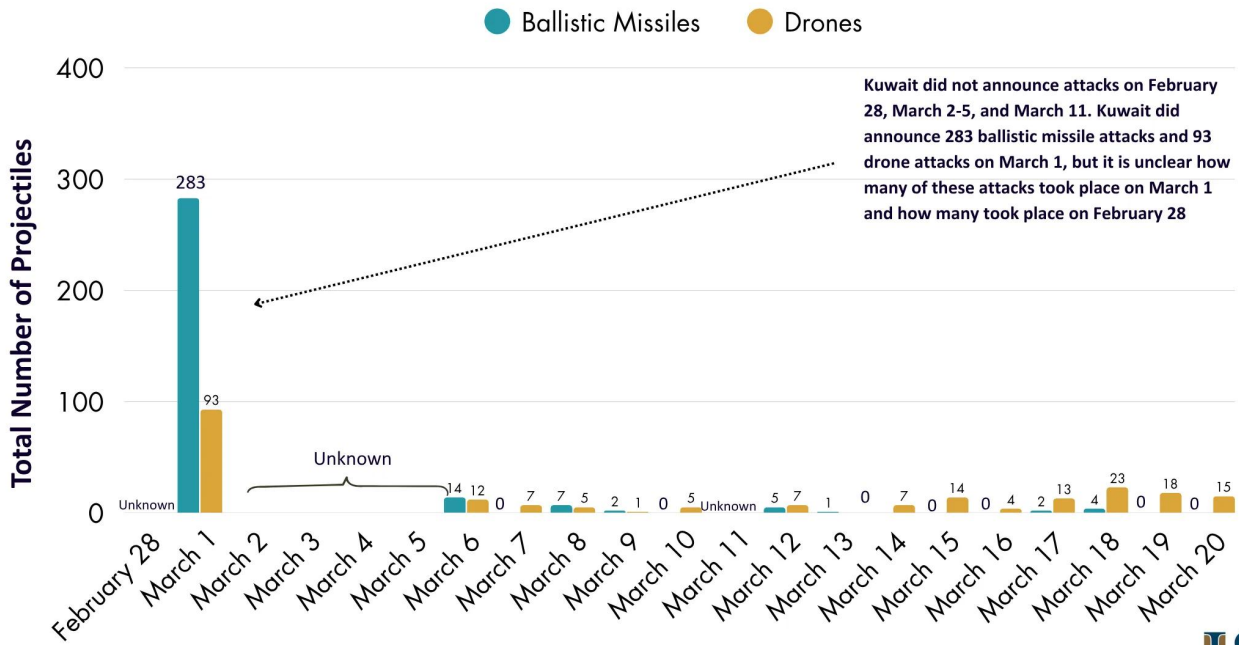
Iranian Missiles and Drones Launched at Bahrain Between February 28, 2026 and March 20, 2026



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All data from the Bahrain Defense Force.



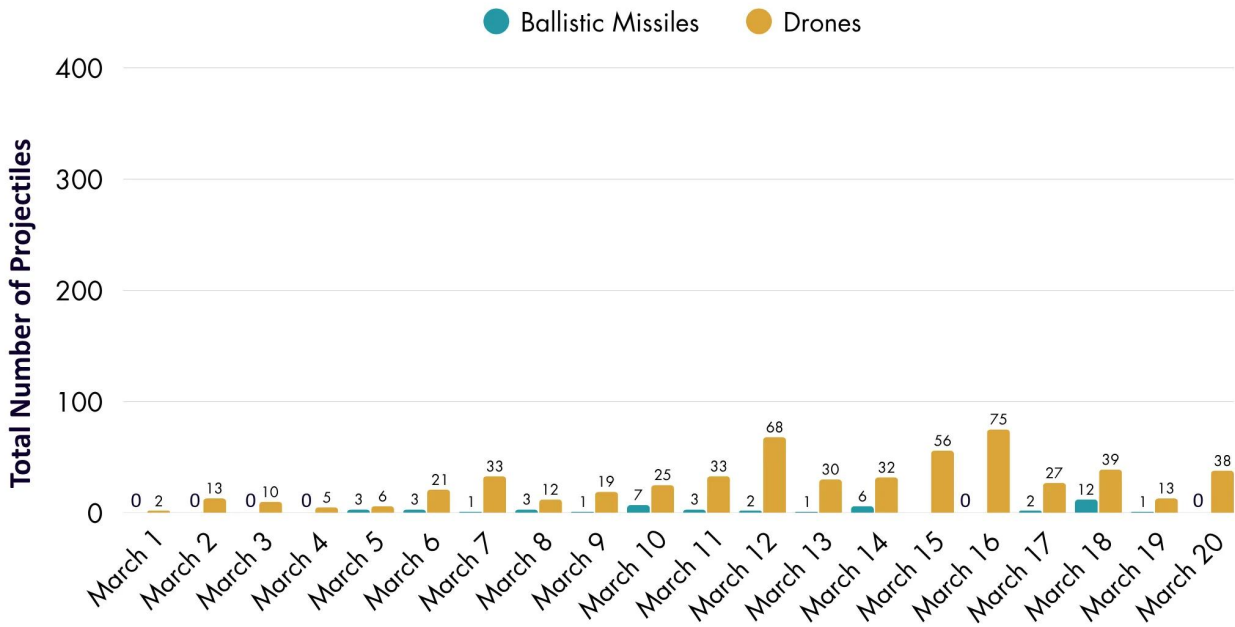
Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Kuwait Between February 28, 2026 and March 20, 2026



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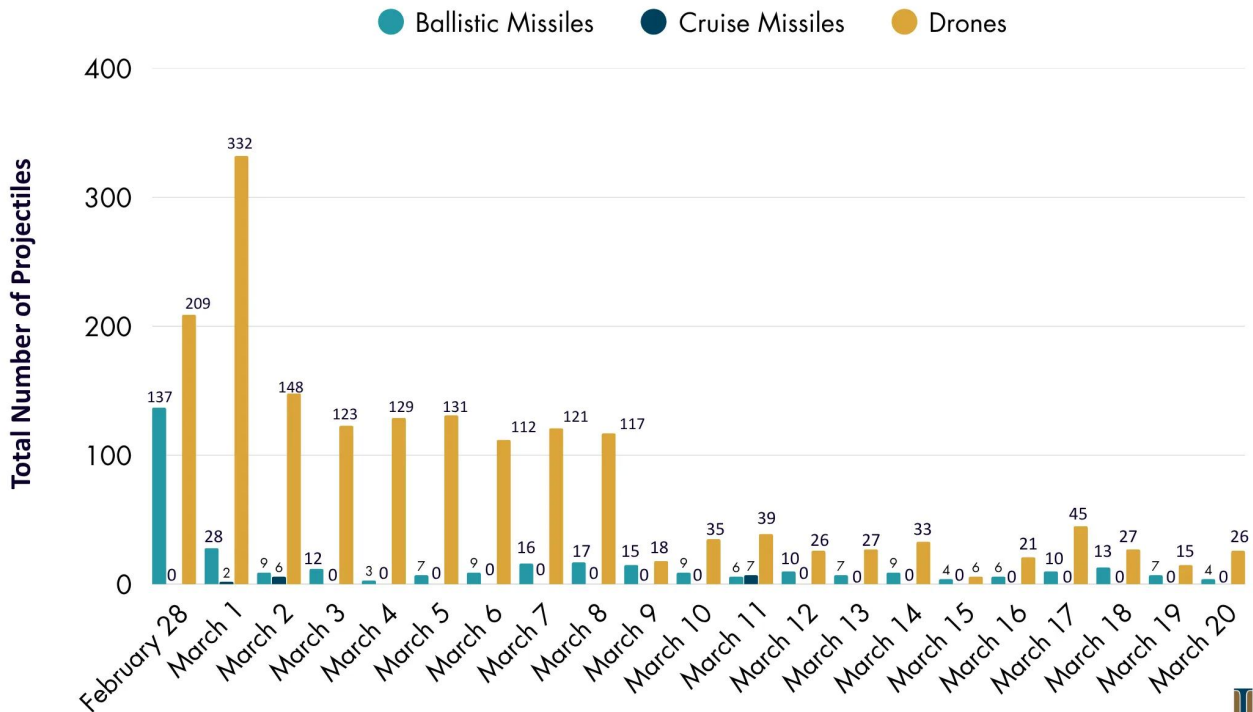
Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 20, 2026



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 Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET



Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates Between February 28, 2026 and March 20, 2026



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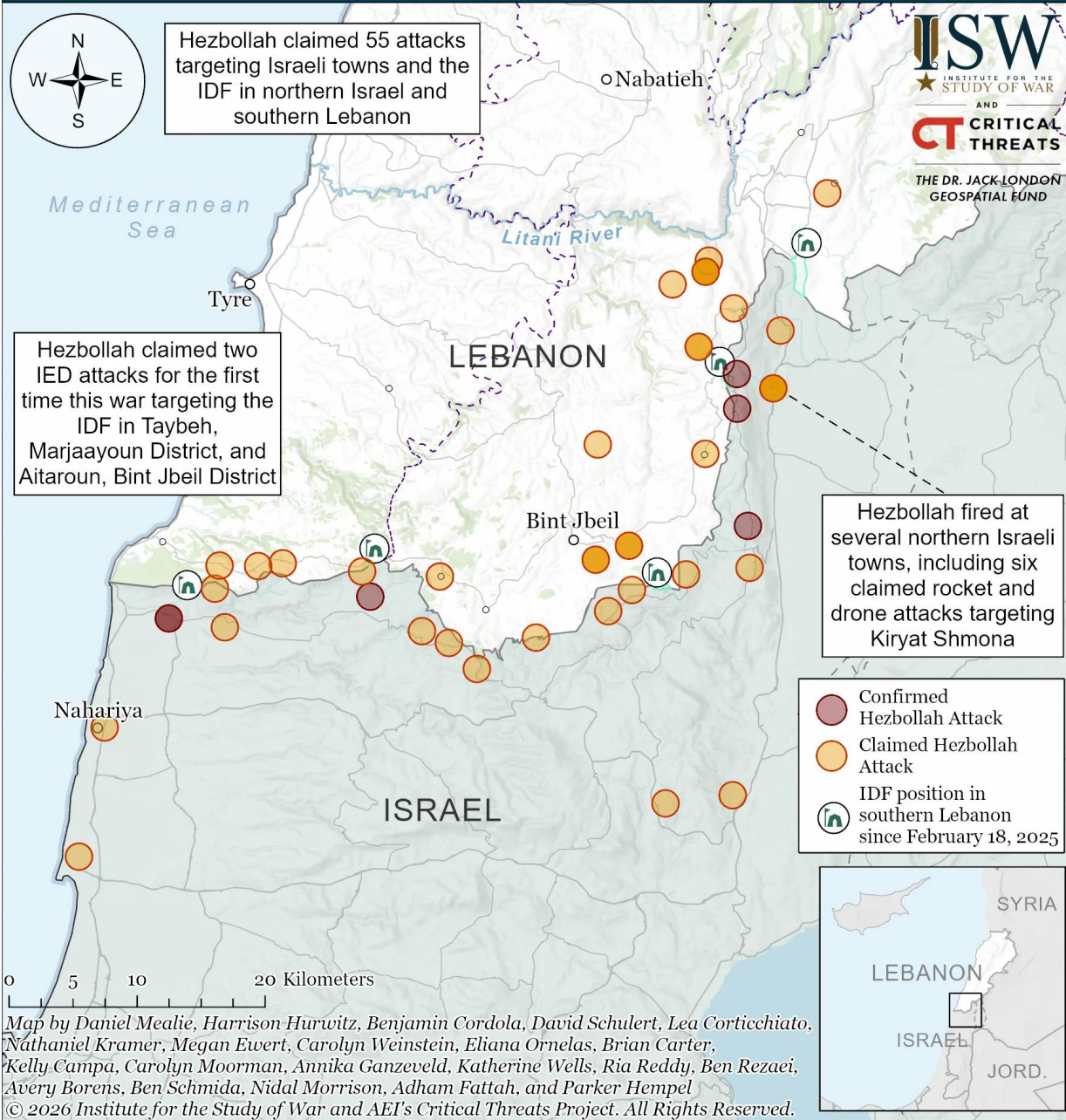


Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

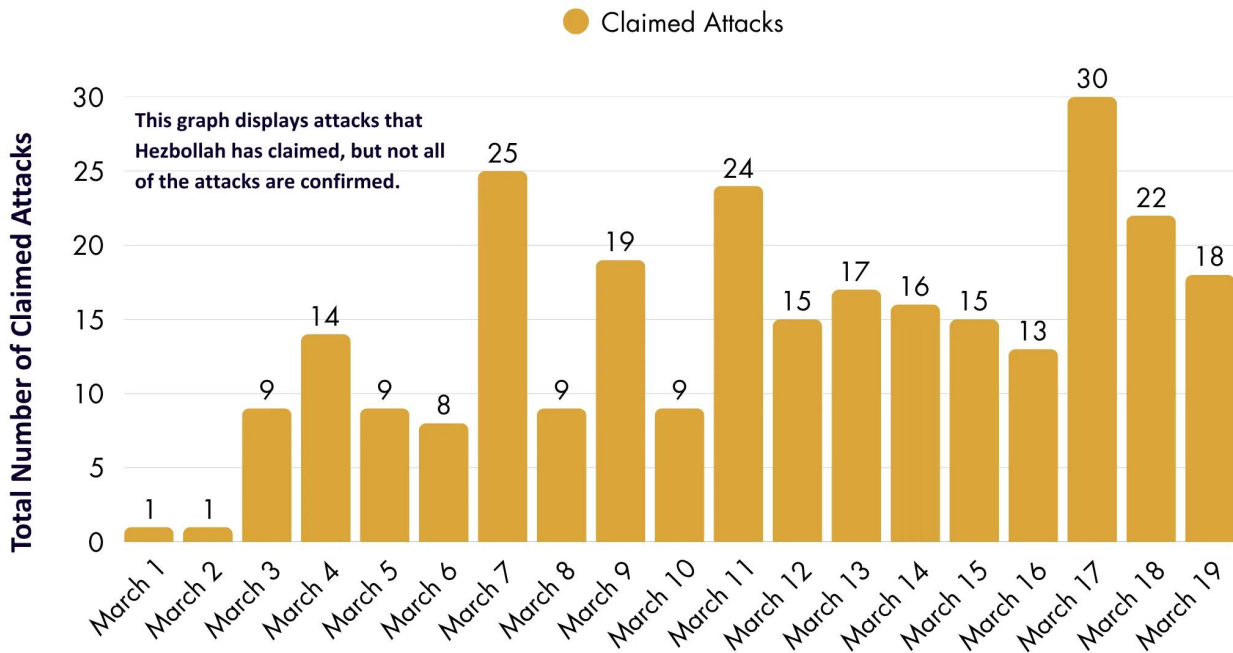
Hezbollah claimed 55 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon as well as targeting northern Israeli towns between 3:00 PM ET on March 18 and 3:00 PM ET on March 19.[58] Most of Hezbollah’s claimed attacks targeted Israeli forces and military sites in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.[59] Hezbollah claimed three direct attacks against IDF forces in southern Lebanon.[60] Hezbollah claimed among these direct engagements that the group conducted two attacks using improvised explosive devices for the first time since the start of the conflict in Taybeh, Marjaayoun District, and Aitaroun, Bint Jbeil District.[61] Hezbollah also claimed seven rocket and drone attacks targeting Israeli military sites in northern Israel, including the IDF 91st Division headquarters.[62] Hezbollah previously claimed that it targeted the 91st Division headquarters on March 7.[63] Hezbollah also targeted several northern Israeli towns, including six claimed rocket and drone attacks targeting Kiryat Shmona.[64] Israel issued “Red Alert” warnings for many of these northern Israeli towns on March 18 and 19.[65] Hezbollah is likely continuing to attempt to displace northern Israeli residents from their homes by targeting northern Israeli towns in order to increase political pressure on the Israeli government to halt its war effort against Iran.

Hezbollah Attacks in Southern Lebanon and Northern Israel

Between March 19, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 20, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



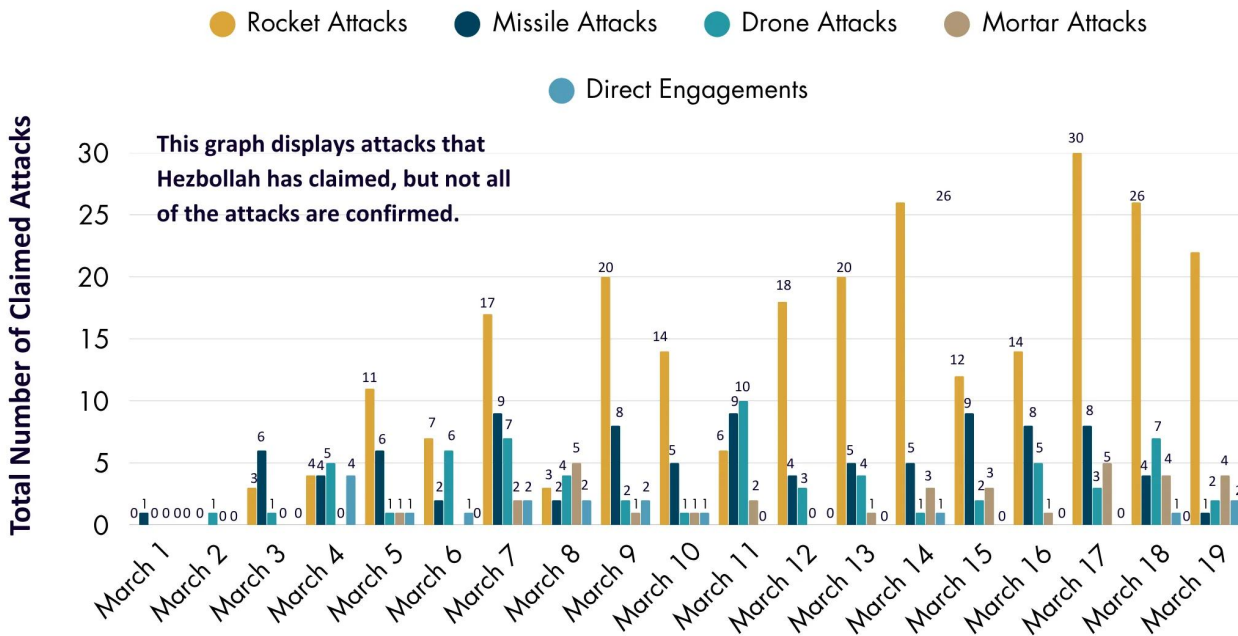
Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Israel Between March 1, 2026 and March 19, 2026



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 19, 2026 By Type



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used



The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes and ground operations targeting Hezbollah across Lebanon. The IDF said that it has targeted and destroyed over 2,000 Hezbollah sites in Lebanon since March 2, including around 120 headquarters, over 100 weapons depots, and 130 rocket launchers.[66] The IDF said that it has also eliminated over 570 Hezbollah fighters, including about 220 Radwan Force members, about 150 rocket unit fighters, two “major general”-equivalent commanders, four “brigadier general”-equivalent commanders, and 22 “battalion commanders.”[67] The IDF said that the 36th, 91st, and 146th divisions are continuing to conduct raids against Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon.[68]

The United States and the UAE tried to disrupt Hezbollah-affiliated money laundering networks on March 20.[69] The United States sanctioned 16 individuals and entities on March 20, connected to Hezbollah financier Alaa Hassan Hamieh that fundraised and laundered over 100 million US dollars for Hezbollah since 2020.[70] The Hezbollah network operated front companies in Lebanon, Syria, Canada, Poland, and Slovenia.[71] One Hamieh affiliate, Hamdan Ali al Lakis, established a money exchange operation in Lebanon where Hamieh collected most of the profits for Hezbollah from his international laundering and fundraising network.[72] The US Treasury reported in early November 2025 that the IRGC Quds Force had transferred over one billion US dollars to Hezbollah using Lebanese money exchanges.[73] Emirati state media reported that Emirati authorities dismantled a Hezbollah and Iran-funded and operated “terrorist network” on March 20 that used commercial cover to launder money for Hezbollah.[74] Lebanon’s government strongly condemned this “terrorist plot” against the UAE and offered cooperation by Lebanese authorities to ensure that those responsible were held accountable.[75]

Other Axis of Resistance Response

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias' front groups continued to conduct drone attacks targeting US forces and interests in Iraq and the region. Saraya Awliya al Dam, which is considered a front group for Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, claimed it conducted three “qualitative” operations targeting American bases inside Iraq within the past 24 hours.[76] Likely Iranian-backed Iraqi militia front group Jaysh al Ghadab reported that the Islamic Resistance conducted a drone attack on the US Victory Base near Baghdad International Airport.[77] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have repeatedly claimed attacks targeting the former US Victory base since the start of the war.[78]

The combined force has continued to target Iranian-backed Iraqi militia positions. A security source told Iraqi media on March 19 that the combined force launched airstrikes targeting a 6th PMF Brigade base in northeast Salah al Din Province.[79] The source said that it was unclear whether the strikes caused casualties or damage to the base.[80] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Jund al Imam controls the 6th PMF Brigade.[81]

The United States, NATO, and European countries reportedly applied “intense pressure” on Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani to compel Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah to temporarily and conditionally halt attacks on the US Embassy in Baghdad.[82] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah offered on March 18 to temporarily and conditionally halt attacks on the US Embassy in Baghdad.[83] An unspecified Iraqi security official told a Kurdish journalist that Kataib Hezbollah issued its statement after unspecified US, NATO, and European actors applied “intense pressure” on Sudani.[84] Sudani received a phone call from NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte on March 19 to discuss the security situation in Iraq and the “dangerous escalation” in the conflict.[85] Sudani reportedly shared the US and European concerns with senior Shia Coordination Framework leadership.[86] An unspecified coordination framework adviser confirmed to the Kurdish journalist that a majority of Shia Coordination Framework leaders “pushed for an immediate halt” to Kataib Hezbollah attacks.[87] Kataib Hezbollah’s political wing is notably a member of the Shia Coordination Framework.[88] ISW-CTP previously assessed on March 19 that Kataib Hezbollah’s statement likely came in response to recent combined force strikes that targeted senior Kataib Hezbollah leaders, including a March 16 strike that killed Kataib Hezbollah spokesperson and security head Abu Ali al Askari and a March 13 strike in Baghdad that reportedly nearly killed the group’s leader, Abu Hussein al Hamidawi.[89]

NATO announced the withdrawal of NATO forces from Iraq on March 20. NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe US Air Force General Alexis Grynkewich reported that NATO has withdrawn all its forces from its advisory mission in Iraq.[90] The NATO mission in Iraq was originally established in 2018 to advise Iraqi security forces.[91] An unspecified NATO official told Reuters that “several hundred” NATO soldiers have withdrawn from the Middle East to Europe.[92] NATO said it will continue to advise Iraqi security forces from NATO’s headquarters in Naples, Italy.[93] An Iraqi Joint Operations Command official told Iraqi media that the NATO mission left the Union III base in Baghdad “temporarily” due to the current security situation.[94]

Iranian Internal Security

The Iranian regime is continuing to try to securitize the internal environment amid ongoing conflict and perceived instability. The IRGC Intelligence Organization is reportedly sending text messages to Iranian citizens, warning that their activity on opposition Telegram channels and Instagram

pages is under surveillance and threatens prosecution for continued engagement.[95] The Iranian Intelligence and Security Ministry and Law Enforcement Command separately reported multiple waves of arrests across Iran targeting individuals accused of links to opposition networks, information dissemination, or coordination with anti-regime actors.[96] Persistent internet disruptions and blackouts further support this effort by limiting communication and enabling tighter state control over the information space.[97]

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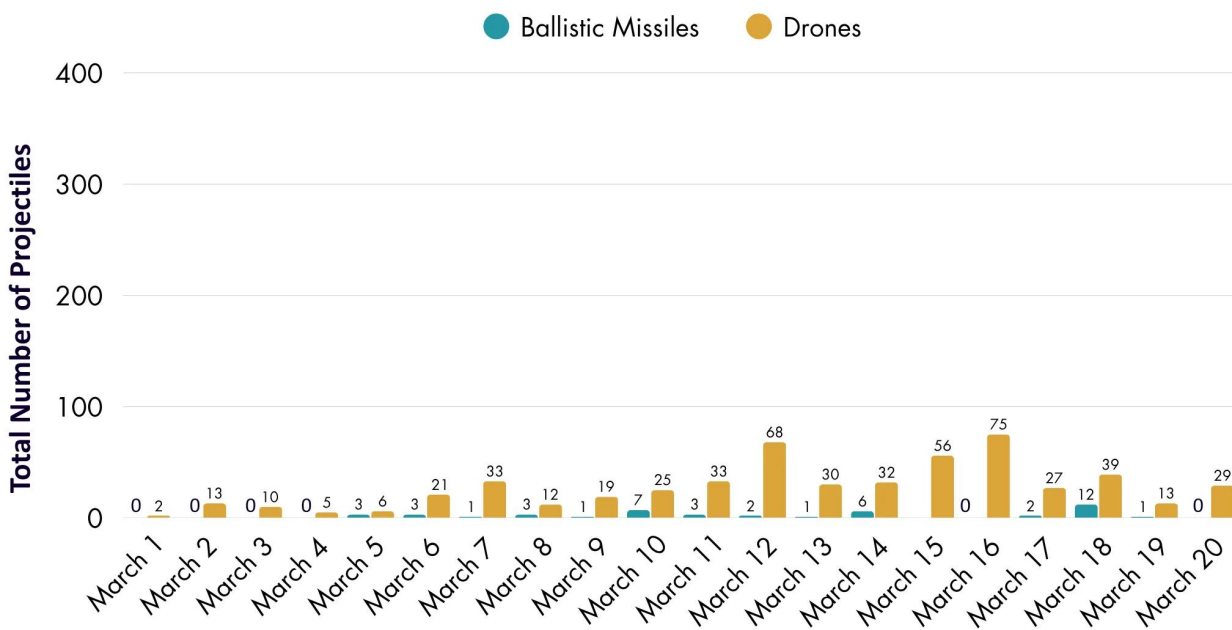
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Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 20, 2026



The United States and Israel have degraded Iran’s ability to conduct retaliatory attacks across the Middle East. This graphic shows the decrease in Iranian ballistic missile, cruise missile, and drone attacks targeting Saudi Arabia since the start of the US-Israeli combined force’s war against Iran on February 28, 2026.

Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Saudi Arabia Between March 1, 2026 and March 20, 2026



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 All data from the Saudi Defense Ministry.
 Data Cutoff: 8:00 AM ET



Iran Update Special Report, March 21, 2026



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Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 3:00 PM ET

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing daily updates to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The updates focus on US and Israeli strikes on Iran and Iran and the Axis of Resistance's response to the strikes. The updates cover events from the past 24-hour period.

NOTE: ISW-CTP will no longer publish morning updates covering the war with Iran. ISW-CTP will instead publish threads on its social media channels in the morning that cover the latest developments in the war and include relevant maps.

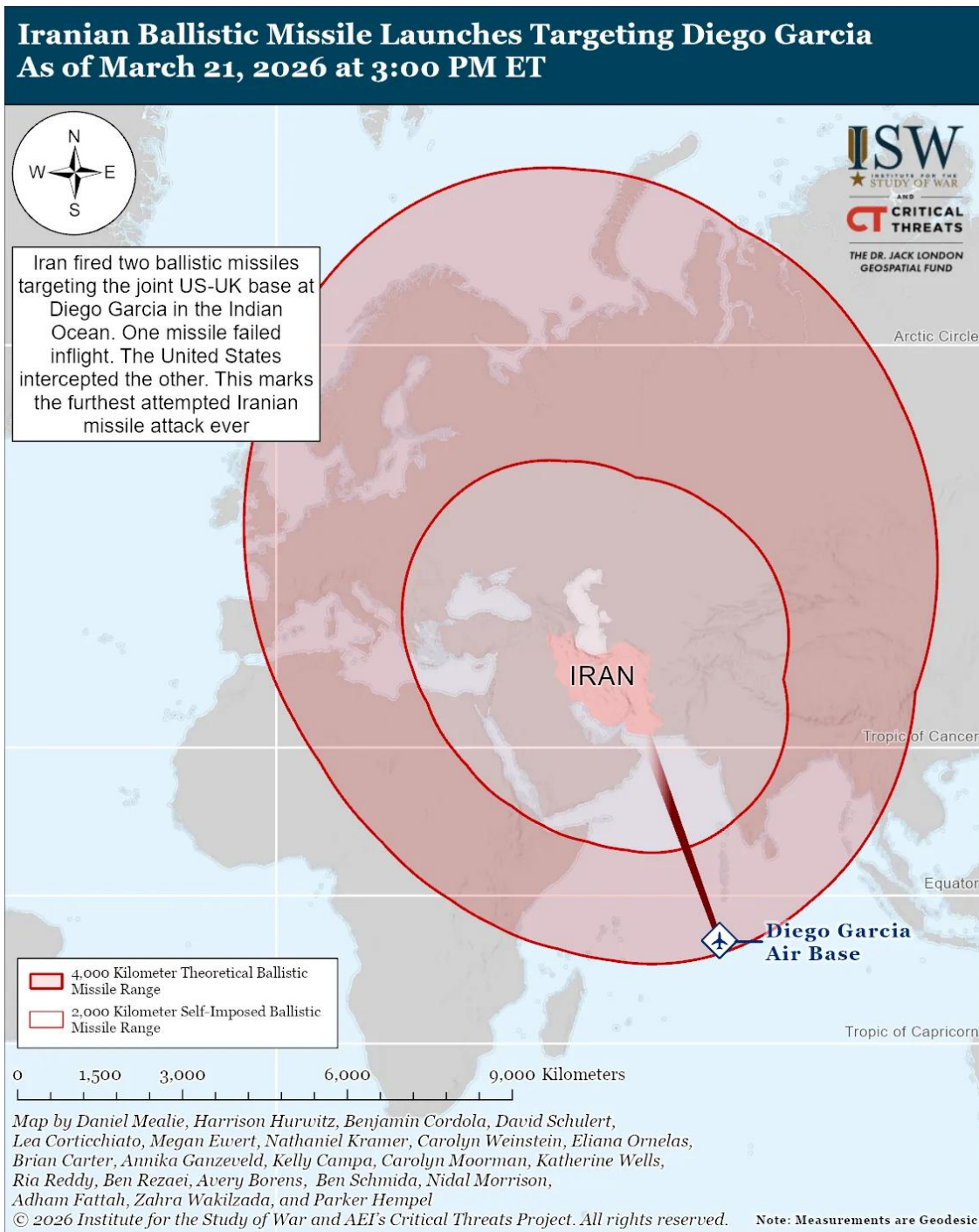
Key Takeaways

1. Iran launched two ballistic missiles targeting the US-UK base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean on March 21, marking the furthest ever attempted Iranian missile strike. The attack demonstrated that Iranian missiles can reach beyond the 2,000-kilometer limit that the regime has long claimed to have self-imposed. One missile failed in flight, and the United States intercepted the other.
2. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has reportedly expanded its influence over regime decision-making amid a growing power vacuum caused by leadership losses and Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's apparent inability to exercise full authority. Some of the officials who have likely expanded their influence are among the most aggressive and repressive elements within the IRGC.
3. The United States Treasury Department issued a short-term waiver on March 20, permitting the sale of Iranian oil already in transit. The waiver does not allow for new purchases of oil.
4. The combined force continued to degrade Iran's missile production capabilities. The IDF struck at least five missile production sites in Tehran.

Toplines

Iran launched two ballistic missiles targeting the US-UK base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean on March 21, marking the furthest ever attempted Iranian missile strike.[1] The attack demonstrated that Iranian missiles can reach beyond the 2,000-kilometer limit that the regime has long claimed to have self-imposed. One missile failed in flight, and the United States intercepted the other.[2] Diego Garcia is located just over 4,000 kilometers from southern Iran. It is

unclear exactly what system Iran used in the attack. It could have been a modified version of one of its longer-range missiles or a previously unknown capability. The attempted attack upends some assumptions about the Iranian missile program, and especially the threat that they may pose to Europe. The nature of that threat depends on the system Iran used and how reliably it can hit targets beyond the 2,000-kilometer range, however.



The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has reportedly expanded its influence over regime decision-making amid a growing power vacuum caused by leadership losses and Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's apparent inability to exercise full authority.[3] Two senior Israeli officials told Axios on March 21 that the IRGC has mainly filled the power vacuum that has formed in the regime as a result of Israeli decapitation strikes.[4] Israel has conducted several decapitation strikes since the war began, which have likely disrupted centralized command and control to some extent and created uncertainty around senior decision-making.[5] US and Israeli officials reportedly

assess that Mojtaba remains alive, but they have not observed clear evidence that he is personally giving orders, which is consistent with ISW-CTP's assessment that circumstantial evidence suggests that Mojtaba Khamenei is still badly injured or otherwise incapacitated.[6] The loss of key leadership and Mojtaba's reported inability to govern at least partially explain the rising role of the IRGC, and specifically hardline IRGC figures close to Mojtaba, such as IRGC Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, and former IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari. These IRGC officers were reportedly among the individuals who pushed to get Mojtaba selected as the next supreme leader.[1] All three have historically held senior positions across Iran's military, political, and internal security institutions.[7] They represent a network of influential and highly ideological actors with deep ties to the regime's coercive apparatus.[8] These individuals are among the most aggressive and repressive elements within the IRGC.

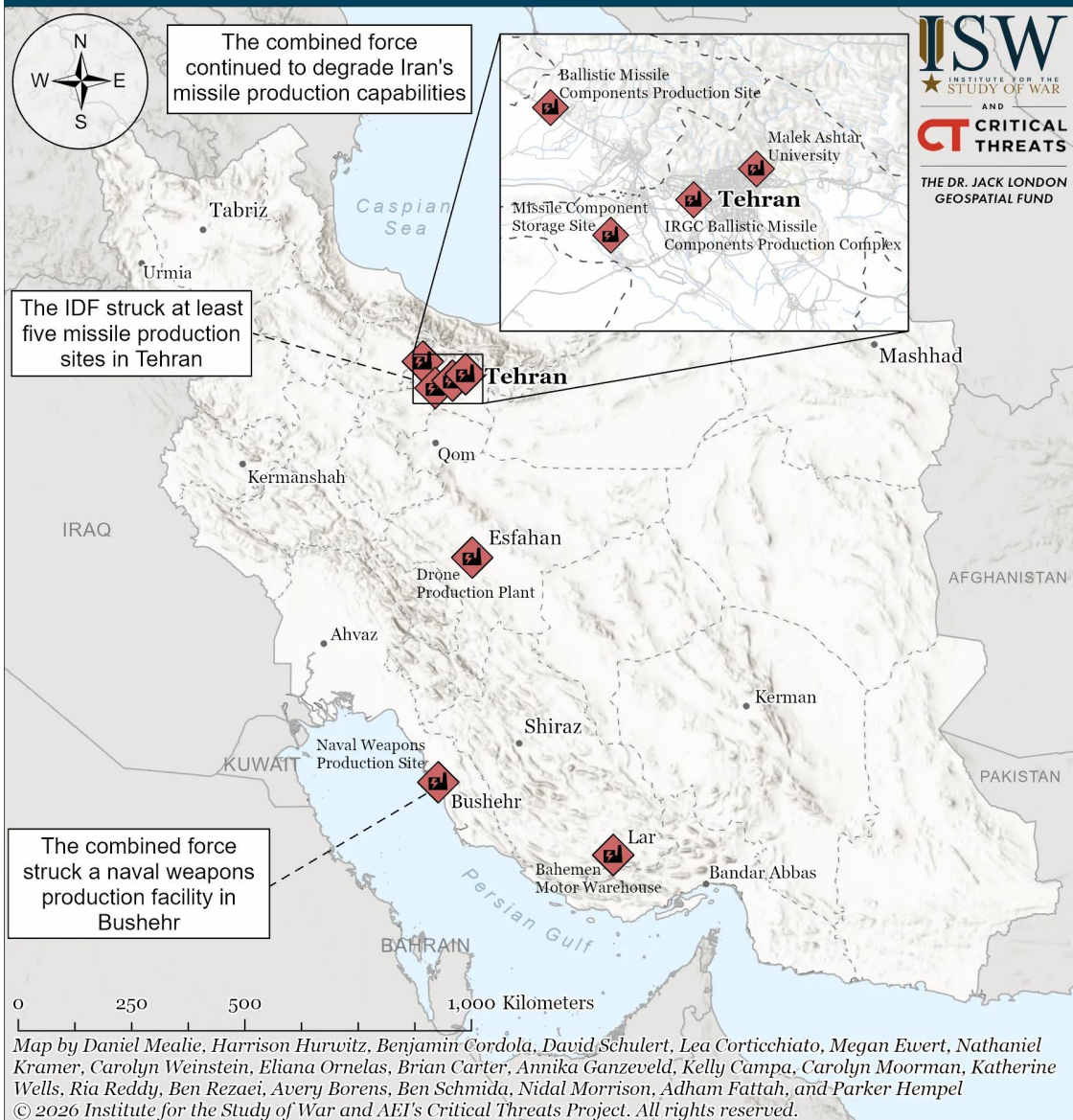
The United States Treasury Department issued a short-term waiver on March 20, permitting the sale of Iranian oil already in transit.[9] The waiver does not allow for new purchases of oil. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that the waiver will inject around 140 million barrels of oil into the global market. Daily oil exports from the Middle East have fallen by at least 60 percent since the war began.[10] Bessent added that the United States will continue to maintain maximum pressure on Iran to limit its access to the international financial system and, therefore, any revenue generated from the oil sales.[11]

US and Israeli Air Campaign

The combined force continued to strike Iranian defense industrial sites. The IDF struck ballistic missile production sites, including an IRGC missile components complex, a missile components storage site, and a Defense Ministry-linked missile fuel production complex, around Tehran on March 21.[12] An OSINT account on X stated on March 21 that the combined force struck an IRGC ammunition depot in Dezful, Khuzestan Province.[13] The IDF separately struck Malek Ashtar University in Tehran on March 21.[14] The United States sanctioned Malek Ashtar University in 2022 for conducting research to develop Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs.[15] An OSINT account on X reported on March 21 that the combined force struck the Research Institute of Petroleum in Tehran, which functions as the National Iranian Oil Company's research wing.[16]

US-Israeli Strikes on Defense Industrial Sites

Between March 20 2026, at 3:00 PM ET and March 21 2026, at 3:00 PM ET



 Targeted Defense Industrial Sites

The United States struck the Natanz Nuclear Facility in Esfahan Province on March 21.[17]

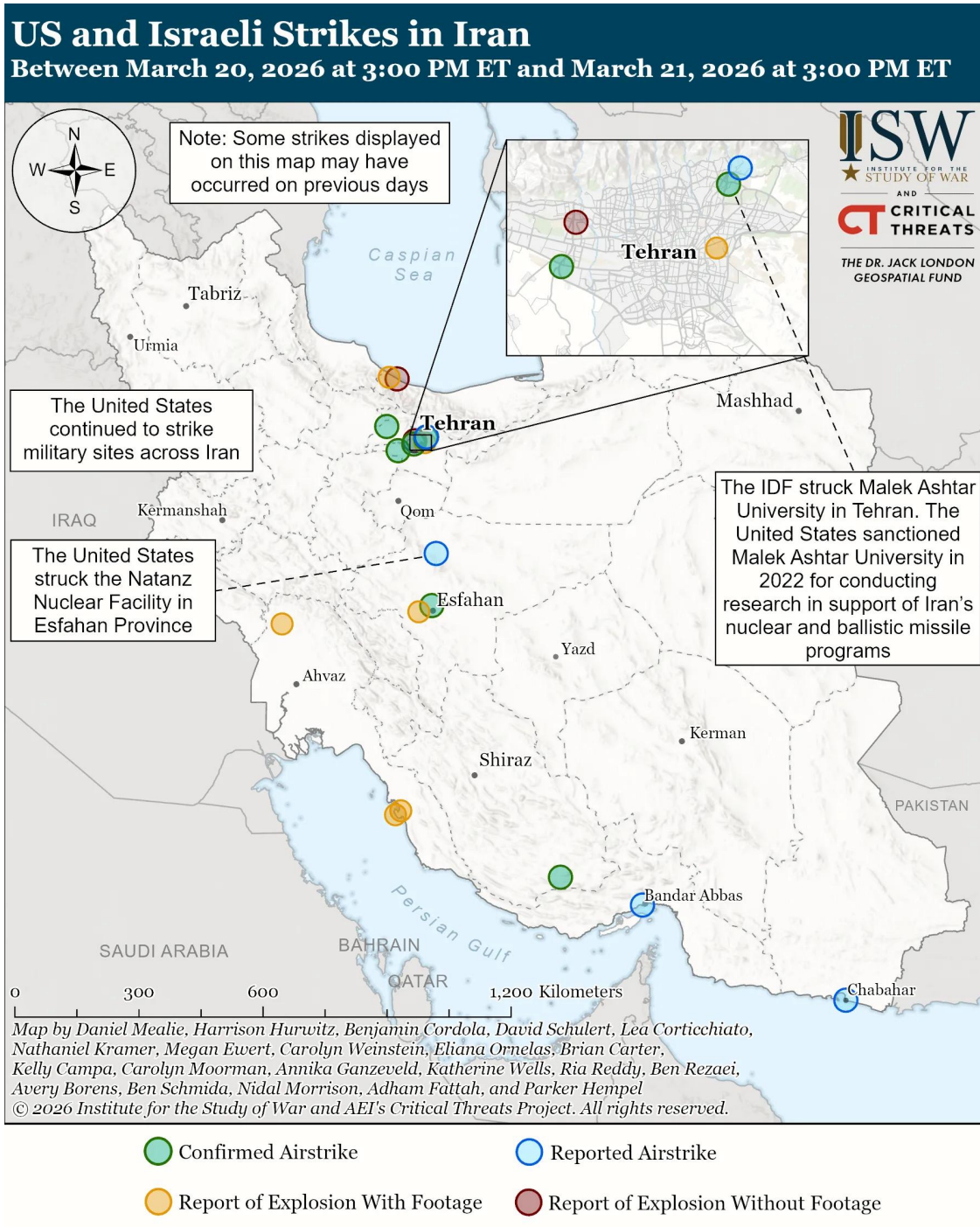
Anti-regime media stated that the United States used a bunker buster bomb.[18] Armed Forces General Staff-affiliated media stated on March 21 that no nuclear material had leaked after the strikes.[19] The combined force previously struck the Natanz Nuclear Facility on March 2, and during the 12-day war.[20] The Associated Press, citing an unreleased IAEA report, reported on February 27 that the IAEA had observed activity at Natanz and the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant but could not verify the purpose or nature of the activity.[21]

The IDF has reportedly killed IRGC Aerospace Force Drone Unit Commander Brigadier General Saeed Agha Jani on March 21.[22]

Agha Jani's death would remove a key figure responsible for Iran's drone operations and disrupt the chain of command of the drone force. That disruption will only be temporary, however. Agha Jani directed planning, equipment, and training for IRGC Aerospace Force drone operations and oversaw Iran's provision of drones to partners, including Russia and other Iranian

allies.[23] Agha Jani was also reportedly involved in previous drone attacks, including the attack on MT Mercer Street in 2021 and drone strikes on Saudi energy infrastructure in 2019.[24] The United States sanctioned Agha Jani in October 2021 for his role in Iran’s drone program.[25] The United States identified Agha Jani on March 20 as a key IRGC leader and offered 10 million US dollars for information about him.[26]

The IDF also targeted scientists involved in an “electromagnetic bomb project” and Fars Province Law Enforcement Command (LEC) Special Unit Commander Kavous Darvishi.[27] The LEC Special Unit is an elite riot control force that the regime deploys to suppress protests and maintain internal security, especially in urban areas.[28]

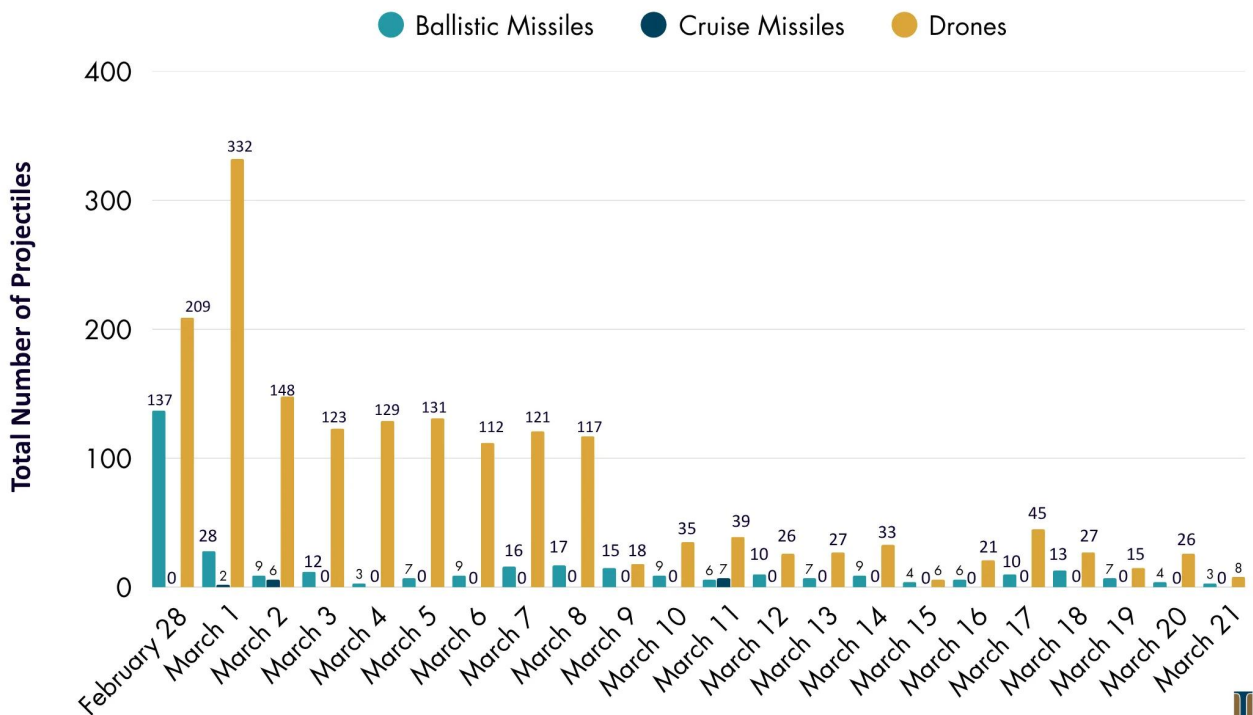


Iranian Retaliation

Iran launched eight missile barrages at Israel between 3:00 PM ET on March 20 and 3:00 PM ET on March 21.[29] The IDF sent recovery and rescue teams to impact sites in northern and southern Israel.[30] One Iranian missile impacted around Dimona in southern Israel and injured at least 47 people.[31] An Israeli journalist reported that an Iranian missile equipped with a cluster munition damaged at least three sites in Rishon Lezion in central Israel.[32] Israeli media reported on March 20 that 70 percent of Iran’s launches against Israel have used cluster munitions and that the percentage is increasing.[33]

Gulf countries continued to intercept Iranian missile and drone attacks. The Saudi Defense Ministry said that Saudi Arabia intercepted 68 drones from 3:00 PM ET on March 20 to 3:00 PM ET on March 21.[34] The Emirati Defense Ministry said on March 21 that it intercepted three ballistic missiles and eight drones.[35] Kuwait’s Defense Ministry said on March 21 that Kuwait had intercepted nine ballistic missiles and four drones in the past 24 hours.[36] Bahrain intercepted two ballistic missiles between 3:00 PM ET on March 20 and 3:00 PM ET on March 21.[37]

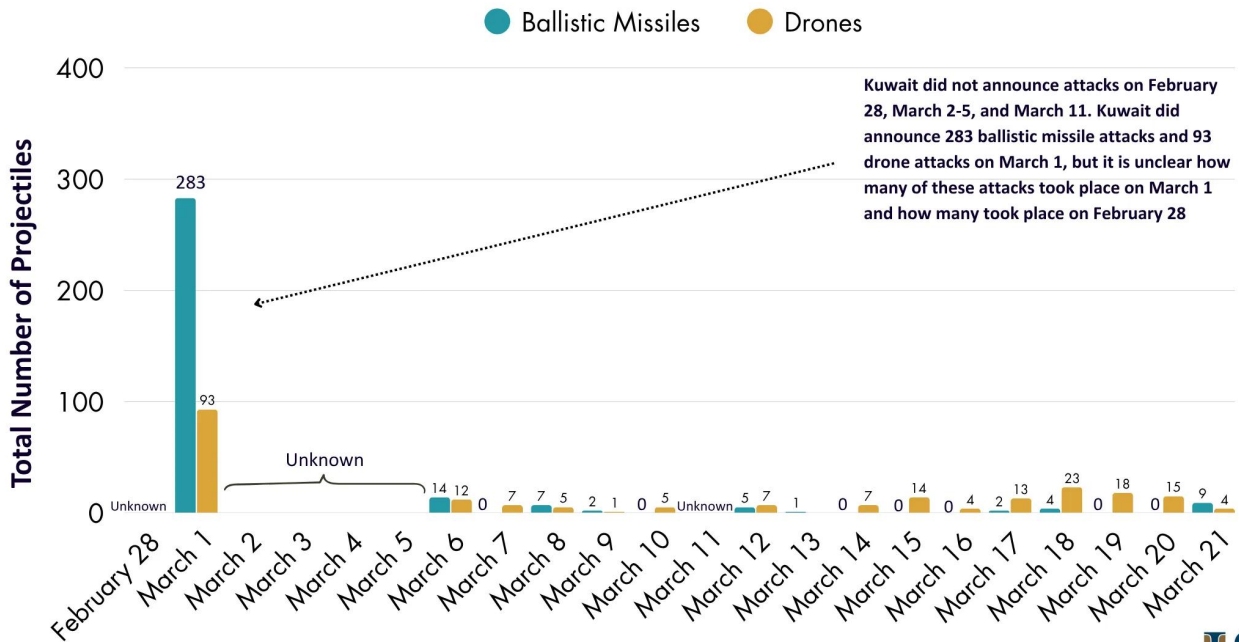
Iranian Ballistic Missiles, Cruise Missiles, and Drones Launched at the United Arab Emirates Between February 28, 2026 and March 21, 2026



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All data from the UAE Ministry of Defense.



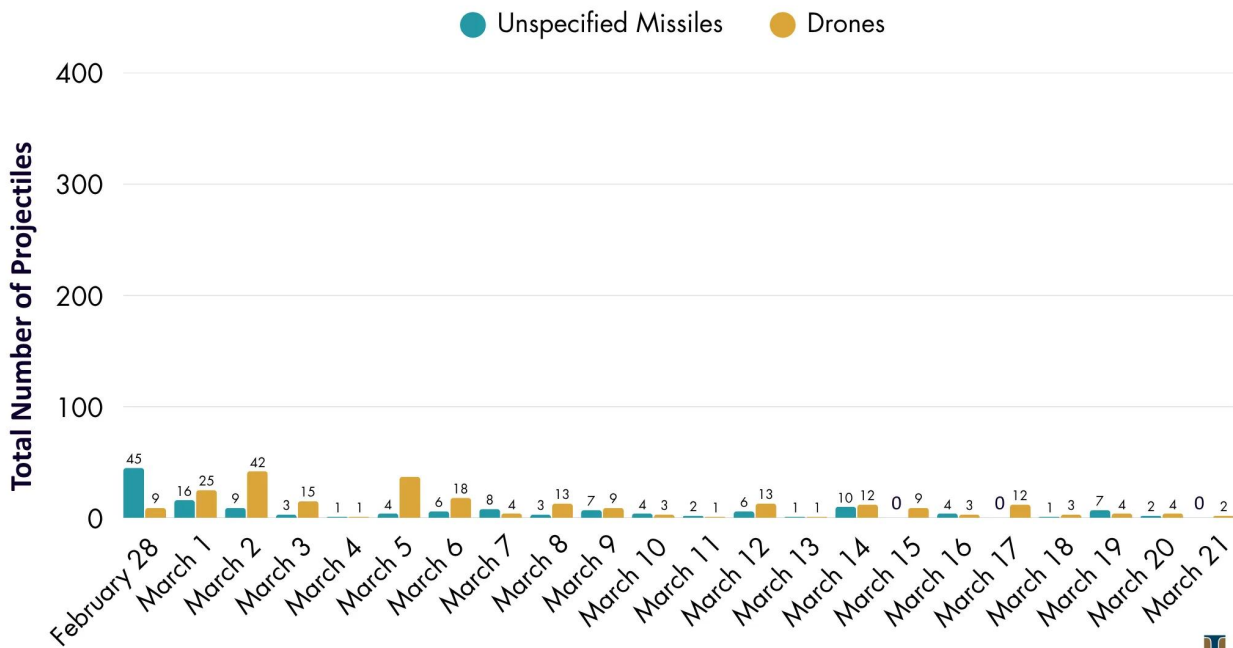
Iranian Ballistic Missiles and Drones Launched at Kuwait Between February 28, 2026 and March 21, 2026



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Iranian Missiles and Drones Launched at Bahrain Between February 28, 2026 and March 21, 2026



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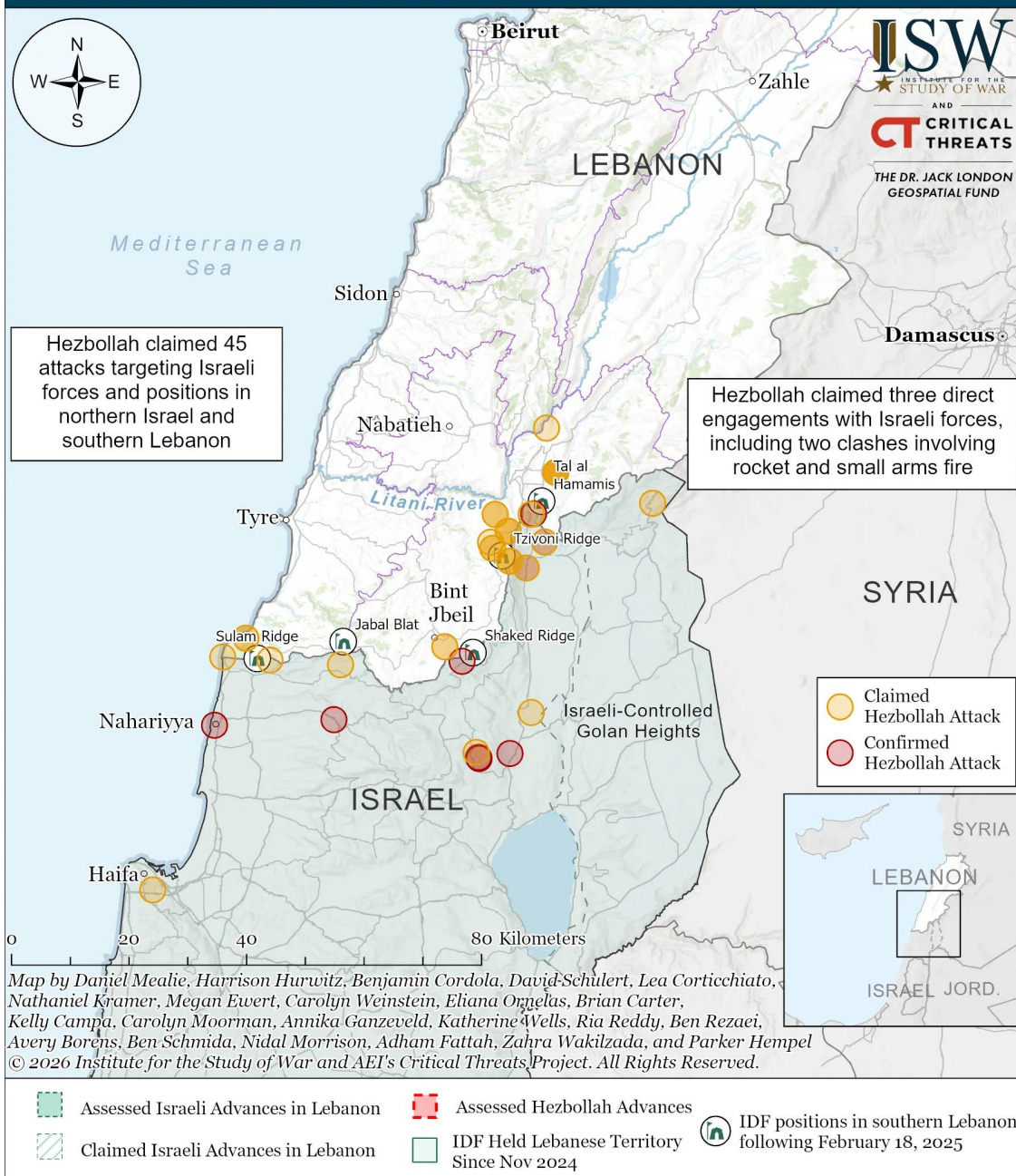


Israeli Campaign Against Hezbollah and Hezbollah Response

Hezbollah claimed 45 attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon, as well as northern Israeli towns, between 3:00 PM ET on March 20 and 3:00 PM ET on March 21.[38] Most of Hezbollah's claimed attacks targeted Israeli forces and military sites with rockets.[39] Hezbollah claimed two direct engagements with Israeli forces in Marjaayoun District, southern Lebanon.[40] Hezbollah also claimed that it clashed with Israeli soldiers attempting to infiltrate into Naqoura, Tyre District.[41] Hezbollah claimed four drone attacks targeting Israeli forces and positions in northern Israel and southern Lebanon.[42] Hezbollah claimed four rocket attacks targeting northern Israeli communities, including two separate attacks on Kiryat Shmona.[43] Hezbollah is likely continuing to attempt to displace northern Israeli residents from their homes by targeting northern Israeli towns in order to increase political pressure on the Israeli government to halt its war effort against Iran. Hezbollah rockets separately impacted in Safed and Maalot Tarshiha, northern Israel, causing only material damage and minor injuries, respectively.[44] Israeli media reported on March 21 that Hezbollah mortar fire injured two IDF reservists.[45]

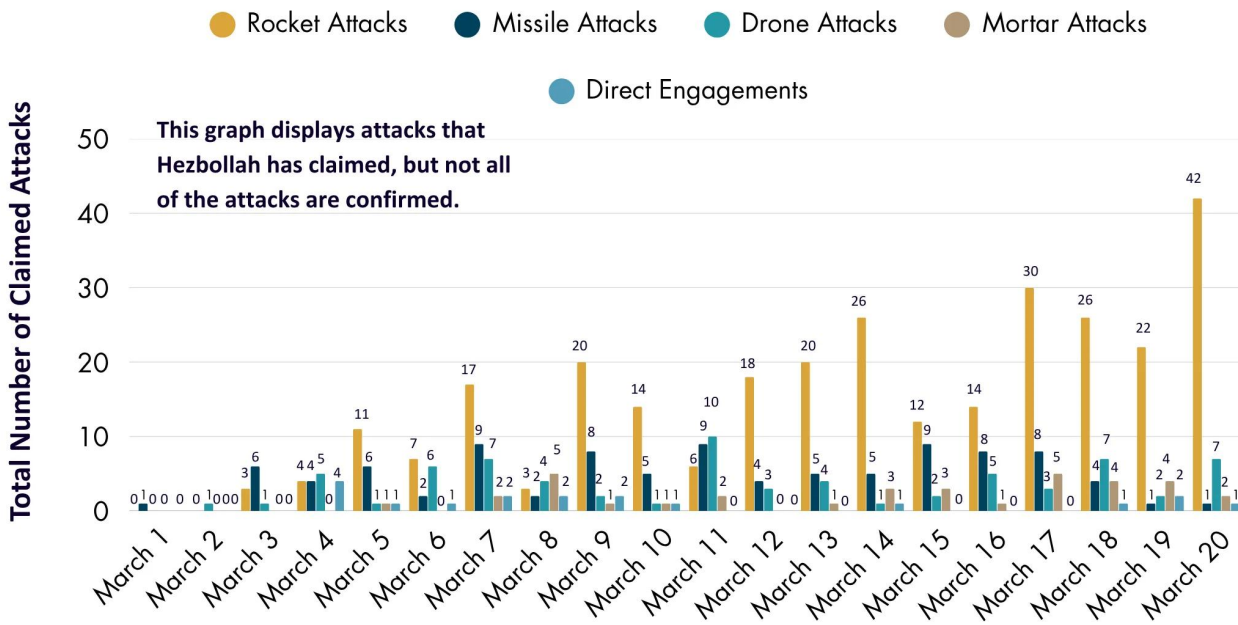
Hezbollah Attacks in Northern Israel and Southern Lebanon

Between March 20, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET and March 21, 2026 at 3:00 PM ET



Map by Daniel Mealie, Harrison Hurwitz, Benjamin Cordola, David Schuler, Lea Corticchiato, Nathaniel Kramer, Megan Ewert, Carolyn Weinstein, Eliana Ongelas, Brian Carter, Kelly Campa, Carolyn Moorman, Annika Ganzeveld, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Avery Borens, Ben Schmida, Nidal Morrison, Adham Fattah, Zahra Wakilzada, and Parker Hempel
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Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Between March 1, 2026 and March 20, 2026 By Type



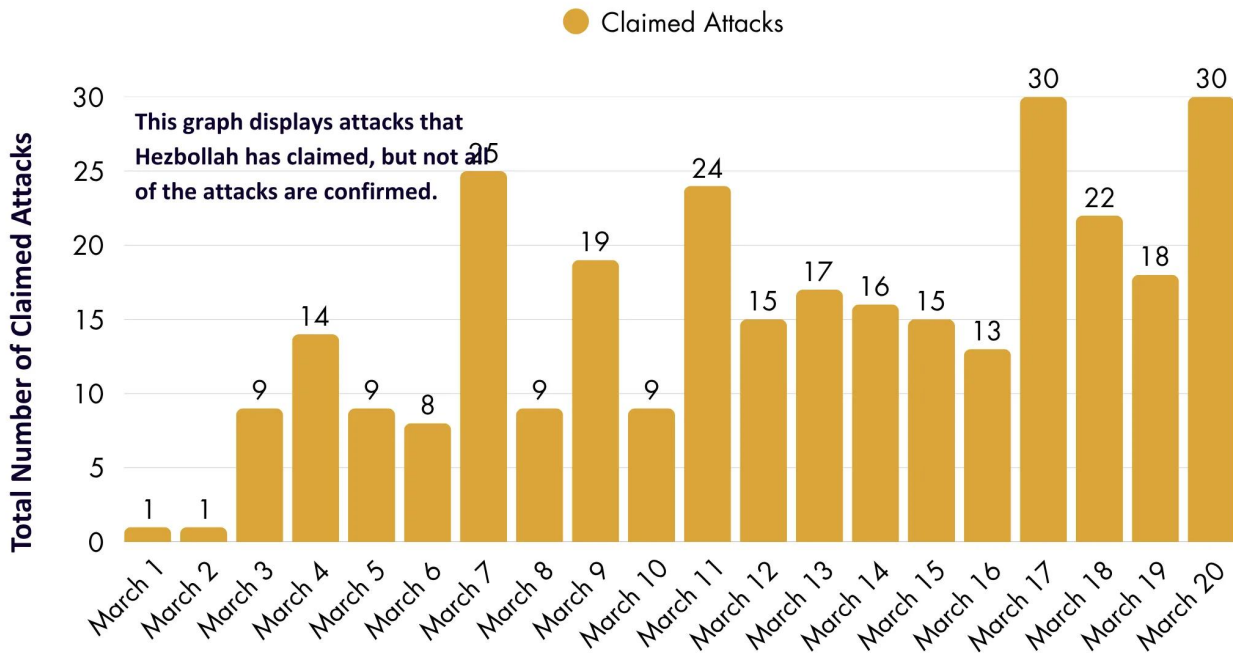
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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.

Note: There are some attacks in which Hezbollah did not specify the type of weaponry it used



Hezbollah-Claimed Attacks Targeting IDF Forces and Positions in Israel Between March 1, 2026 and March 20, 2026



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All data from the official Hezbollah media channel.



The IDF has continued to conduct airstrikes targeting Hezbollah across Lebanon. The IDF issued evacuation warnings for multiple neighborhoods in Beirut's southern suburbs, which are a Hezbollah stronghold, before striking Hezbollah command centers in the area overnight.[46] The IDF said on March 21 that it completed two waves of attacks in Beirut and other areas of Lebanon over the weekend and struck central Hezbollah headquarters, which included separate sites that served as the headquarters of Hezbollah's intelligence unit and air defense system.[47] The IDF also reportedly struck unidentified sites in the Tyre and Bint Jbeil districts since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff.

The 84th (Givati) Infantry Brigade (162nd Division) killed several Hezbollah members during a clash in southern Lebanon overnight.[48] Israeli soldiers exchanged fire with and killed a Hezbollah fighter and then directed an Israeli drone to strike additional Hezbollah members who had fired on Israeli forces.[49] Israeli tank fire killed three additional Hezbollah fighters.[50]

IDF 36th Division and 91st Division forces also continue ground operations in southeastern Lebanon.[51] The IDF said on March 21 that IDF 36th Division forces located weapons caches and killed several Hezbollah members.[52] The Israeli forces also attacked and destroyed observation points that Hezbollah fighters use to threaten Israeli soldiers.[53] IDF 91st Division forces engaged and killed Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon and destroyed Hezbollah infrastructure and weapons.[54] The IDF said on March 21 that the IDF 162 Division has completed its preparations ahead of its deployment to southern Lebanon.[55]

Hezbollah is continuing to attempt to defend against Israeli advances into Khiam, Marjaayoun

District. Hezbollah claimed two rocket attacks and one missile attack targeting IDF forces in Khiam between March 20, 2026, at 3:00 PM ET and March 21, 2026, at 3:00 PM ET.[56] Hezbollah also claimed two clashes with Israeli forces, with one instance involving small arms and rockets and the other instance involving small arms, rockets, and light artillery.[57] A geospatial intelligence analyst reported on March 18 that the IDF continues to advance deeper into Khiam and is advancing towards the town's northernmost neighborhood.[58] Lebanese residents told the *New York Times* on March 16 that Israeli forces had not completely seized Khiam and noted that Israeli forces have faced resistance from Hezbollah.[59] Khiam is located on high ground from which Hezbollah can fire into northern Israel, and it also grants Hezbollah a vantage point to observe Israeli forces and other targets around the Galilee Panhandle.[60] Hezbollah previously conducted defensive operations against Israeli forces in Khiam during the Fall 2024 Israel-Hezbollah conflict.[61]

Other Axis of Resistance Response

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias' front groups continued to conduct drone attacks targeting US forces and interests in Iraq and the region. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia front group Saraya Awliya al Dam claimed on March 20 that it conducted six "qualitative operations" against US bases in Iraq.[62] Likely front group Kataib Sarkhat al Quds separately claimed on March 21 that it conducted a drone attack targeting the base.[63] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have repeatedly claimed attacks targeting the former US Victory base since the start of the war.[64] Likely front group Jaysh al Ghadab also claimed on March 21 that it conducted a drone attack targeting an unspecified US base in Bahrain.[65]

The combined force has continued to strike Iranian-backed Iraqi militia positions. The combined force conducted two strikes targeting a 52nd Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Brigade base in Salah al Din Province on March 20 and 21, killing a PMF member.[66] Multiple Iranian-backed Iraqi militias control PMF brigades that answer to Iran instead of the Iraqi prime minister.[67] The Iranian-backed Badr Organization controls the 52nd PMF Brigade.[68] The combined force previously struck this brigade on March 14.[69] The combined force also struck PMF positions in Anbar Province on March 21.[70]

A likely Iranian-backed Iraqi militia conducted a one-way drone attack targeting the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) headquarters in Baghdad City on March 21, killing an Iraqi intelligence officer.[71] The Shia Coordination Framework and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq's political wing condemned the attack.[72] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias view the INIS as a US intelligence "cut-out," according to the Washington Post Baghdad Bureau chief.[73] The United States helped create the INIS in 2004, but Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani has purged several US-trusted INIS officers and replaced them with Iranian-aligned figures since 2022.[74]

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Endnotes

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