

# Iran Update, October 4, 2026



**Nidal Morrison, Ben Rezaei, Benjamin Schmida, Brian Carter**

**Analyst Notes:** Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

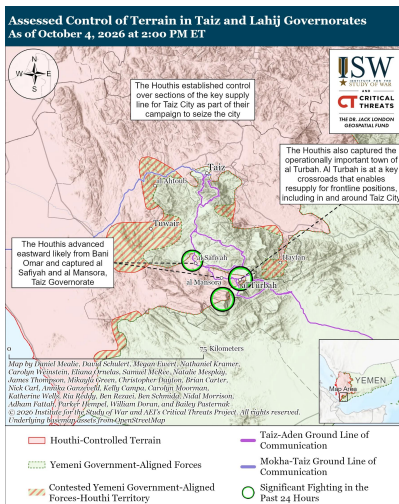
*The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing updates Monday through Friday to provide analysis on the war with Iran and the broader Middle East. Weekday updates cover events from the past 24-hour period, whereas weekend updates are abbreviated and cover the Houthi-Saudi conflict and major breaking developments related to the war with Iran.*

## Key Takeaways

1. The Houthis captured the key supply route between Taiz and Aden cities on October 4, which is part of the Houthi campaign to seize Taiz City.
2. The Yemeni government announced an offensive operation across all fronts against the Houthis, but ISW-CTP has not yet observed any offensive action.

## Toplines

**The Houthis captured the key supply route between Taiz and Aden cities on October 4, which is part of the Houthi campaign to seize Taiz City.** Houthi forces advanced eastward, likely from Bani Omar, and captured al Safiyah and al Mansora, Taiz Governorate, before advancing southeastward and capturing the strategically vital town of al Turbah on October 4, according to geolocated imagery and Yemeni sources.[1] Yemeni sources told Emirati media that the Houthi forces reportedly advanced into al Turbah on October 4 after the Yemeni government-aligned commander of the area fled to Aden City.[2] Al Turbah lies at the junction of the two main roads that connect front-line positions in Taiz Governorate to the Yemeni government's interim capital in Aden City. Houthi control of al Turbah will likely severely constrain Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to reinforce and resupply front-line positions across Taiz Governorate, including Taiz City. It is unclear whether the Houthis will seek to permanently control the roads into Taiz City. Disrupting resupply has military value, of course, but controlling all the roads in and out of areas to the north of al Turbah also prevents government forces from retreating out of the city. The Houthis may seek to weaken Yemeni government-aligned forces by denying them significant amounts of supply, which could make any subsequent military operations less costly for the Houthis and compel government forces to surrender.[3] Houthi forces previously attempted to capture or disrupt sections of the Taiz-Aden ground line of communication (GLOC) on September 23 and October 1, respectively.[4]



**The Yemeni government announced an offensive operation across all fronts against the Houthis, but ISW-CTP has not yet observed any offensive action.** Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Chairman Rashad al Alimi announced a counter-offensive to retake Houthi-controlled territory across Yemen on October 4 after Houthi forces captured the Taiz-Aden supply line.[5] ISW-CTP has not observed any offensive operations by the Yemeni government at this time.

Houthi capture of multiple sections of the Taiz-Aden supply line will likely impose multiple dilemmas for Yemeni government-aligned forces.[6] The seizure of this road network could:

- Enable further Houthi advances into Taiz City and the surrounding governorate along the road. Capturing additional ground in Taiz Governorate protects the eastern flank of recent Houthi gains along the Red Sea coast and would complicate government offensive efforts by exposing the government's flank if it attempted to recapture the Red Sea coast.
- Enhance the Houthis' ability to threaten Aden City. An operation against Aden City would likely follow the seizure of Taiz Governorate because the Houthis could not advance against Aden City without exposing their rear to government forces in Taiz Governorate.
- Secure a propaganda victory by capturing a governorate whose population has historically opposed Houthi rule, after many unsuccessful attempts to seize Taiz.[7]
- Reestablish most of the former pre-unification Yemen Arab Republic's borders, excluding parts of Marib and Jawf governorates.[8]
- Free up Houthi forces for other military objectives, including the seizure of oil resources in Marib Governorate and further expansion and consolidation along the Red Sea Coastal Plain.
- Strengthen the Houthis' negotiating position in potential peace settlement talks with the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia.

## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- *Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz*

- *Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war*
- *Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners*
- *Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states*

*Nothing significant to report.*

## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Domestic Affairs

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Lebanon

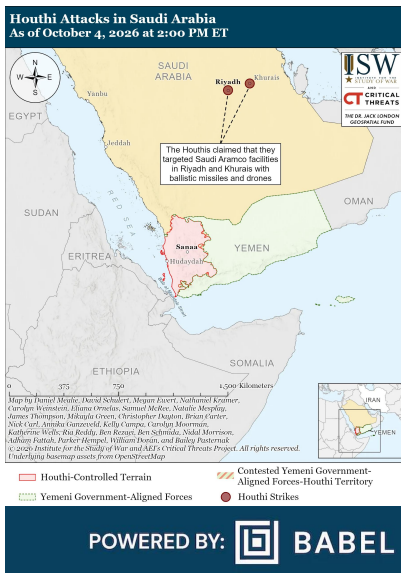
*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iraq

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Arabian Peninsula

**The Houthis claimed on October 4 that they conducted drone and ballistic missile attacks targeting two Saudi Aramco oil facilities in Riyadh and Khurais.**[9] Houthi and Western media reported fires and smoke plumes near a Saudi Aramco refinery in Riyadh on October 3, but it is unclear whether Houthi projectiles struck the facility again on October 4.[10] An independent geospatial analyst reported a fire near a pumping station in Khurais along the East-West pipeline on October 4.[11] This was the first Houthi attack on a Khurais oil facility since a September 2019 Houthi strike on a Saudi Aramco refinery there.[12] The Houthis likely conducted these attacks as part of the group's strike campaign against Saudi oil infrastructure to compel Saudi Arabia to meet Houthi demands.[13] These demands include ending Saudi military activity and support for anti-Houthi forces in Yemen, lifting Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports, paying war reparations and civil servant salaries, and granting the Houthis control over Yemen's oil and gas resources.[14]



## Endnotes

- [1] <https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2106703907544285257> ;  
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- [14] <https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-25-2026/>

# Iran Update, October 5, 2026



**Bailey Pasternak, Ben Rezaei, Nidal Morrison, Benjamin Schmida, Parker Hempel, Katherine Wells, Brian Carter**

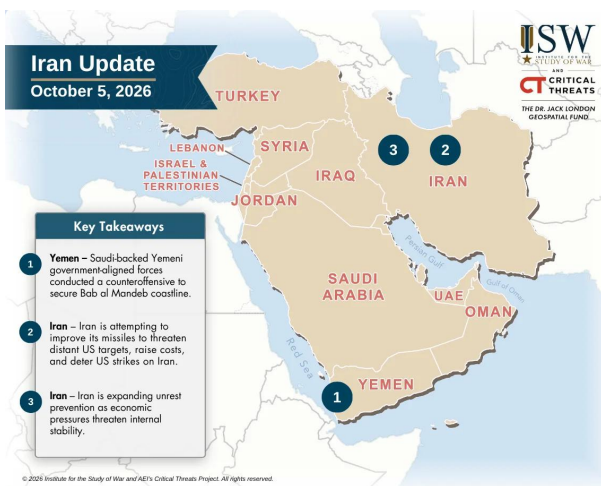
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## Key Takeaways

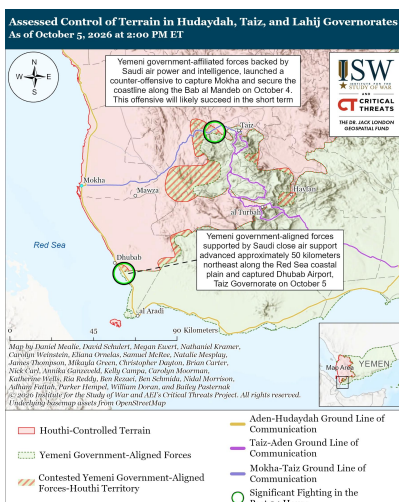
1. The Yemeni government, backed by Saudi air power and international coalition military support, launched an offensive to capture Mokha city and secure the coastline along the Bab al Mandeb Strait on October 4. This offensive will likely succeed in capturing Mokha in the short term. Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government likely launched the offensive to accomplish the limited objective of securing the Bab al Mandeb.
2. Yemeni government-aligned forces will likely stop offensive operations within the next seven to 14 days to rest, resupply, and consolidate their positions to prevent a Houthi counteroffensive.
3. The Yemeni government will need to secure its own defensible line before its offensive culminates in order to ensure it can repel Houthi attacks combining drones and ground forces, which the Houthis employed in early September.
4. Allied air and intelligence support almost certainly made this offensive possible. Over 100 Saudi aircraft provided air support to Yemeni government-aligned forces during the initial assault, and US intelligence is reportedly supporting the air campaign.
5. Saudi allies in the Mecca Pact are providing military aid to Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia announced on October 5 that Pakistan and Turkey are taking “practical measures” to defend Saudi Arabia pursuant to the Mecca Pact requirements.
6. The Iranian regime appears increasingly concerned that mounting economic pressure could threaten internal stability and is combining its attempts to manage its wartime economy with expanded efforts to deter and prepare to suppress possible unrest.
7. Iran is likely reconstituting and enhancing its ability to target distant US regional military targets and commercial shipping through improvements in missile accuracy, range, speed, and targeting capabilities.
8. Iran is likely aiming to increase its ability to deter US airstrikes targeting Iranian assets, impose costs on the United States, and preserve strategic initiative in the conflict by prioritizing

improvements to its missile capabilities.



## Toplines

**The Yemeni government, backed by Saudi air power and international coalition military support, launched an offensive to capture Mokha city and secure the coastline along the Bab al Mandeb Strait on October 4.[1] The government will likely succeed in capturing Mokha in the coming days.** Government-aligned forces are already at Dhubab Airport, which is 54km from Mokha, and some local media have published uncorroborated footage of government-aligned forces entering Mokha after reported Houthi withdrawals.[2] The retreat of Houthi lines at Mayyun (Perim) Peninsula northwards to at least Dhubab (a distance of approximately 30 km) suggests a major collapse, and there is no evidence currently that the Houthis have halted the collapse of their forces. This collapse indicates that Yemeni government forces will be able to push the routed Houthis further north rapidly, possibly to and beyond Mokha if conditions hold. Indications that the Houthis have successfully brought the collapse under control south of Mokha would include sustained fighting in the same locations over some period along the coast. ISW-CTP will continue to watch for indications that the Houthis have reestablished defensive positions. Local Yemeni media posted unverified footage reportedly showing Houthi fighters leaving Houthi-held positions north and east of Mokha city on October 5, suggesting that the collapse is ongoing and that the Houthis have not reestablished defensive positions after the initial collapse.[3]

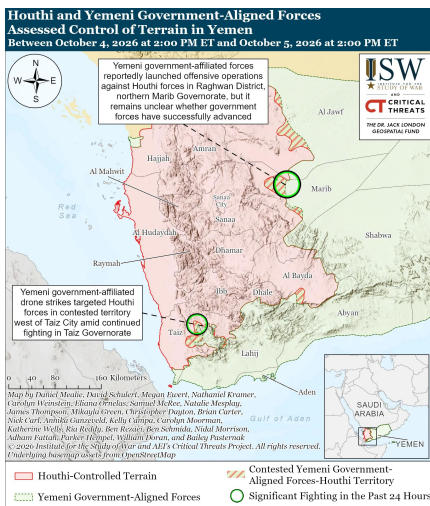


Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government likely launched the offensive to accomplish the limited objective of securing the Bab al Mandeb. Western and regional officials told Reuters on October 2 that Saudi Arabia was planning to coordinate ground operations and provide air support to Yemeni government-aligned forces in an offensive to recapture territory and ports on the Red Sea coast that the Houthis captured between September 9 and 11.[4] The sources implied that Saudi Arabia's primary goal is to reverse Houthi control of the Bab al Mandeb before entering any truce negotiations with the Houthis, which is significantly less expansive than the Yemeni government's stated objectives.[5] Other events, including engagements in and around Marib and Taiz cities, indicate that government-aligned forces are attempting to pressure the Houthis in multiple areas at once to prevent the movement of reserves — a possibility also implied in the Reuters article.[6] The Yemeni government announced on October 4 and 5 that it launched this offensive to recapture all Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen, but such an objective would require multiple successive campaigns over weeks, months, and possibly years.[7] ISW-CTP has observed no indications that the Yemeni government will attempt to recapture the whole country in one decisive battle, and doing so is almost impossible in any case.

**Yemeni government-aligned forces will likely stop offensive operations within the next seven to 14 days to rest, resupply, and consolidate their positions to prevent a Houthi counteroffensive.** One of the operational dynamics that imperiled Houthi gains in early September was that the Houthi advance to the Bab al Mandeb lacked a defensible line that could not be attacked by a combined air-ground assault.[8] The Yemeni government will need to secure its own defensible line before its offensive culminates in order to ensure it can repel Houthi attacks combining drones and ground forces, which the Houthis employed in early September. A failure to secure a defensible line along the coast will enable successful Houthi counterattacks, both now and in the future.

**Allied air and intelligence support almost certainly made this offensive possible.** Over 100 Saudi aircraft provided air support to Yemeni government-aligned forces during the initial assault. These aircraft would have been essential to destroying Houthi defensive positions, like earthen berms, and disrupting the Houthis' ability to stop government breakthroughs.[9] Saudi AH-64 Apache attack helicopters are also providing air support to Yemeni government-aligned forces.[10] US intelligence is reportedly supporting the air campaign.[11] US and French air-to-air refuelers are also reportedly helping maintain the Saudi ability to conduct strikes over Yemen.[12]

**Saudi allies in the Mecca Pact are providing military aid to Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia announced on October 5 that Pakistan and Turkey are taking “practical measures” to defend Saudi Arabia pursuant to the Mecca Pact requirements.**[13] Pakistani and regional officials told Reuters on October 2 that Pakistan and Turkey have recently supplied military aid to Saudi Arabia to the Houthis.[14]



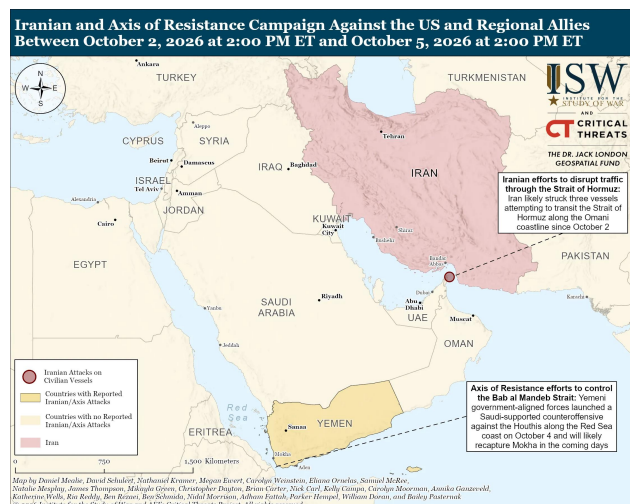
**Iran is likely reconstituting and enhancing its ability to target distant US regional military targets and commercial shipping through improvements in missile accuracy, range, speed, and targeting capabilities.** Iranian Artesh Spokesperson Brigadier General Mohammad Akraminia stated that Iran is improving the accuracy, range, and speed of all of its missiles in an interview with Iranian media on October 4.[15] Akraminia added that the Artesh should increase missile ranges to target US forces in the region and acknowledged that US forces had moved as far as 1,000 kilometers (km) farther away from Iran.[16] US officials assessed in July that Iran had deployed advanced variants of the Kheybar Shekan medium-range ballistic missile against US bases, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. [17] These US officials noted that Iran had adapted these missiles to evade US defenses through varied flight paths, speeds, and terminal-phase maneuvers, and that it was utilizing the missiles' mobile-launch capability to enhance their survivability and effectiveness.[18] Iran also launched missiles with cluster munition warheads in their last attack on US forces in Jordan on September 9.[19] Cluster munitions disperse over a wide area and are intended to maximize the spread of damage, though they minimize the impact of individual submunitions.[20] Iran has used cluster munitions in previous strikes against Israel, mostly to compensate for the lack of accuracy in Iranian ballistic missile attacks.[21]

Akraminia's comments also follow Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Major General Mohsen Rezaei's September 21 announcement that Iran had recently tested a new anti-ship missile with a cluster-munition warhead in an attack targeting the USS George Washington, saying the weapon struck near the carrier.[22] Cluster submunitions almost certainly could not sink a supercarrier, but they could damage the deck and thereby affect flight operations to some degree and for some period. Rezaei was likely referring to Iran's attack on the US aircraft carrier on September 9.[23] Iranian media reported at the time that Iran used a Qassem Basir medium-range ballistic missile, which has a 1,200-km range and a maneuverable reentry vehicle designed to evade air defenses.[24] People familiar with the matter separately described three Iranian ballistic missile attacks on US Navy warships in early September as "much closer calls" to the *Wall Street Journal* on September 9.[25]

Iran may be applying these missile adaptations to their missile attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has launched near-daily attacks on vessels transiting the strait since September 29.[26] A US official also told the *Wall Street Journal* on October 4 that Iran has improved its ability to target ships and increased the risk to shipping in the strait in recent weeks.[27] Iran may be receiving support from partners to improve its targeting capabilities, as Russia has reportedly provided targeting intelligence and the People's Republic of China has provided satellite imagery to Iran, likely aiding Iran's targeting throughout this conflict.[28]

## Iran is likely aiming to increase its ability to deter US airstrikes targeting Iranian assets,

**impose costs on the United States, and preserve strategic initiative in the conflict by prioritizing improvements to its missile capabilities.** The same US official also told the *Wall Street Journal* on October 4 that the United States stopped its campaign targeting Iranian oil tankers in response to Iranian attacks on commercial shipping after Iran launched the attack on the US air base in Jordan.[29] The official is likely referring to Iran’s cluster munition missile attack on Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan on September 9.[30]

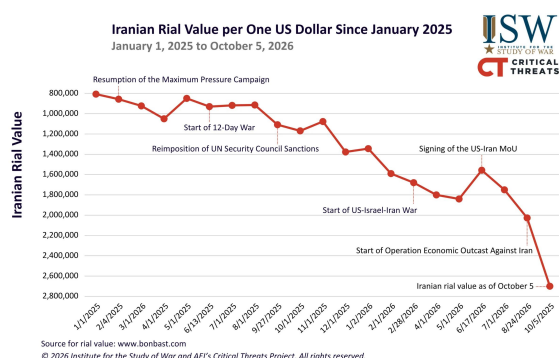


**The Iranian regime appears increasingly concerned that mounting economic pressure could threaten internal stability and is combining its attempts to manage its wartime economy with expanded efforts to deter and prepare to suppress possible unrest.** Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian acknowledged on October 3 that economic pressure had increased and said that his government had adopted unspecified measures to manage unspecified “special circumstances.”[31] Pezeshkian and SNSC Secretary Major General Mohsen Rezaei also attended an economic coordination meeting on October 3 that addressed currency volatility, government finances, and essential goods supplies.[32] Rezaei notably described Iran’s current economic period as its most difficult.[33] The last time ISW-CTP observed the SNSC meeting to discuss Iran’s economy was in April, when officials expressed their concern about dire conditions reigniting unrest after the Winter 2026 protests.[34] Pezeshkian separately met with Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei on October 4, likely to discuss the regime’s economic challenges and coordinate its response to mounting domestic pressure.[35] These senior-level meetings and the involvement of the SNSC — Iran’s highest formal national security body — suggest that the regime increasingly views economic deterioration as a national security issue and that some officials may see negotiations and economic relief as necessary to prevent further decline.[36]

The regime’s recent measures have not stabilized the economy and may be increasing concerns about public discontent, however. The Iranian Central Bank recently injected two billion US dollars on September 30 to support the rial amid ongoing foreign currency shortages due to the US blockade on Iranian ports and sanctions on air travel, among other things, hindering Iranian trade.[37] The Iranian rial continued to depreciate, reaching 2,7000,000 rials per US dollar on October 4 (see below), which suggests that the regime’s short-term measures have not restored confidence in the currency. Ejei warned on October 5 that Iran’s adversaries could exploit sanctions and domestic discontent and urged officials to avoid angering the public.[38]

Economic pressure may also affect the security force personnel whom the regime relies on to maintain internal security. A parliamentarian described some military and law enforcement salaries as “embarrassing” on October 4, which suggests that economic pressure may be affecting the personnel

whom the regime relies on to maintain internal security.[39]



The regime is simultaneously expanding the forces and networks that it could use not only to prepare to suppress renewed unrest but to deter potential protesters. One of these efforts is the Basij's recruitment and mobilization initiative, Janfada ("Those Who Sacrifice Their Lives") Campaign, designed to bolster domestic support for the regime during wartime.[40] The Janfada spokesperson claimed on October 2 that more than 500,000 people had registered for new neighborhood-based "national resistance battalions" and that the Basij and armed forces had begun organizing and training them.[41]

Security forces are simultaneously conducting preemptive arrests of potential protesters and publicizing these arrests, likely to deter Iranians from protesting. The Iranian Intelligence Ministry announced on October 3 that it arrested 31 members of four networks in Kerman Province that recruited young people for nationwide protests and prepared Molotov cocktails and tools to disable surveillance cameras.[42] Regime security forces also claimed on October 5 that they dismantled a cell in Fars Province connected to the Winter 2026 protests.[43] The regime may calculate that fear of renewed mass arrests and brutal suppression similar to their crackdown in the Winter 2026 protests, during which security forces likely killed thousands of people and arrested tens of thousands more, may deter Iranians from protesting.[44]

## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz
- Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war
- Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners
- Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states

*See topline section.*

## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

# Iranian Domestic Affairs

**The Mobarizoun Popular Front (MPF) — a coalition of Baloch anti-regime groups — continues to pose a threat to the Iranian regime by attacking regime security forces in southeastern Iran.** The MPF claimed responsibility for an attack targeting Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) personnel in Bampur, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on October 5.[45] The group attacked an LEC patrol on the Bampur-Iranshahr road, killing two officers and injuring another.[46] Iranian media separately reported on October 5 that regime security forces launched a counterinsurgency operation targeting alleged militants in Rask, Sistan and Baluchistan Province — another MPF attack zone.[47] A Baloch human rights organization reported on October 5 that unspecified gunmen attacked a vehicle carrying alleged plainclothes regime security personnel near the Jakigur Bridge in Rask.[48] It added that the attack killed at least three occupants, but Iranian media confirmed only one death.[49] These attacks are part of a recent uptick in armed anti-regime activity and regime counterinsurgency operations in southeastern Iran.[50] The recent MPF attacks demonstrate that the group retains the ability to target regime security forces despite increased security operations. The regime will likely intensify security operations in southeastern Iran in response.

## Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iraq

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Arabian Peninsula

*See topline section.*

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### Endnotes

[1]

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# Iran Update, October 6, 2026



**William Doran, Adham Fattah, Ben Rezaei, Bailey Pasternak, Benjamin Schmida, Annika Ganzeveld**

**Analyst Notes:** Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

*The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing updates Monday through Friday to provide analysis on the war with Iran and the broader Middle East. Weekday updates cover events from the past 24-hour period, whereas weekend updates are abbreviated and cover the Houthi-Saudi conflict and major breaking developments related to the war with Iran.*

## Key Takeaways

1. The Houthis have, at least for now, prevented further Yemeni government advances northward on the Red Sea coastal plain. ISW-CTP is adjusting its previous assessment that Houthi forces on the coastal plain are collapsing in light of evidence in the last 24 hours indicating that the Houthis have stopped Yemeni government-aligned advances.
2. A temporary pause in the Yemeni government ground advance provides both the Houthis and the Yemeni government with time to consolidate their combat forces and positions. The Houthis may use the current pause in government advances on the coastal plain to deploy more reinforcements to the operational area and strengthen defensive positions north of the front line.
3. A successful Yemeni government counteroffensive in the mountains east of the coastal plain could support Yemeni government-aligned forces' advances northward on the coastal plain.
4. Saudi naval and air forces targeted Houthi military and maritime assets on October 5 that the group could use to attack shipping in the Bab al Mandeb Strait, amid the broader Saudi and Yemeni air campaign to degrade Houthi strike capabilities and support Yemeni government-aligned forces.
5. The Houthis significantly expanded the scale of their attacks on Saudi military and civilian infrastructure on October 5, likely to compel Saudi Arabia to abandon its support for ongoing Yemeni government counteroffensives. The Houthis believe that they can maximize Saudi economic costs and compel Saudi Arabia to surrender to Houthi demands by striking civilian infrastructure, such as oil facilities and airports.



## Toplines

**The Houthis have, at least for now, prevented further Yemeni government advances northward on the Red Sea coastal plain.**[1] ISW-CTP is adjusting its previous assessment that Houthi forces on the coastal plain are collapsing in light of evidence in the last 24 hours indicating that the Houthis have stopped Yemeni government-aligned advances.[2] Two Yemen analysts reported on

October 5 and 6 that Yemeni government-aligned forces have not captured additional territory north of Dhubab Airport, which is 54kilometers southeast of Mokha.[3] Yemeni government-aligned forces had seized Dhubab Airport before ISW-CTP's last data cutoff on October 5.[4] A researcher at an Aden-based think tank reported on October 6 that Houthi forces withdrew from poorly defensible positions at the southern end of the coastal plain to fortified positions in favorable terrain in the vicinity of Mokha during the initial Yemeni government advance on October 5.[5] The Houthis then deployed reinforcements and engaged Yemeni government-aligned forces using sniper fire, first-person view (FPV) drone attacks, and hit-and-run tactics in order to halt the government advance and recapture terrain in the vicinity of Dhubab.[6] A US-based Yemen analyst also reported that the Houthis and Yemeni government-aligned forces conducted long-range strikes targeting one another's military assets and positions.[7] The Houthis conducted a sustained ballistic missile attack on Yemeni government-aligned forces gathering near Ras al Ara on October 6, which probably also inhibited government advances north past Dhubab Airport.[8] Houthi media reported on October 6 that Saudi and Yemeni government-aligned forces in turn struck the Houthi-controlled Al Omari Base, which is eight kilometers northeast of Dhubab.[9]



A temporary pause in the Yemeni government ground advance provides both the Houthis and the Yemeni government with time to consolidate their combat forces and positions. The Houthis may use the current pause in government advances on the coastal plain to deploy more reinforcements to the operational area and strengthen defensive positions north of the front line. The Red Sea coastal plain's wide, flat terrain is largely disadvantageous to defending forces except for some small, elevated areas, and the Houthis could try to develop stronger defenses than earthen berms that airstrikes can destroy relatively easily.[10] Yemeni government-aligned forces may also use the current pause in attempted advances to reorganize forces in the wake of Houthi missile attacks and develop plans to overcome Houthi defenses. Yemeni government-aligned forces may also request additional Saudi close air support (CAS) to damage Houthi forces and defensive positions on the coastal plain before attempting further advances north.

### **A successful Yemeni government counteroffensive in the mountains east of the coastal plain could support Yemeni government-aligned forces' advances northward on the coastal plain.**

The Yemeni Armed Forces announced on October 6 that Yemeni government-aligned forces, including the Homeland Shield Forces, have begun a counteroffensive to recapture Waziyah District, Taiz Governorate, from the Houthis.[11] Yemeni government advances in Waziyah District, which is located in mountainous terrain overlooking Yemeni government-aligned forces' operational area on the coastal plain, are limited at the time of this writing, however.[12] The counteroffensive in Waziyah District is probably a shaping operation that could support the Yemeni government's main combat effort on the coastal plain in various ways.[13] Yemeni government control over the district's elevated terrain is necessary to prevent Houthi forces from firing down on government-aligned forces' eastern flank.[14] The counteroffensive also fixes Houthi forces, preventing them from reinforcing forces in the coastal plain. Yemeni government success in Waziyah District, if coupled with similar combat efforts in other mountainous areas in northwestern Taiz Governorate, could also threaten the Houthi ground line of communication (GLOC) between Mokha and Taiz City.[15]

Geographic factors may pose challenges to the Yemeni government's effort to recapture Waziyah District, however. CAS from Saudi aircraft and Yemeni government drones is less effective in identifying and striking targets in rough, mountainous terrain, compared to the Yemeni government's clear CAS advantage on the coastal plain.[16] Yemeni government-aligned forces may also struggle to advance over this difficult terrain more than Houthi fighters, who are broadly capable of fighting as a light infantry force in mountainous areas similar to the group's "heartland" in northwestern Yemen.[17]



**Saudi naval and air forces targeted Houthi military and maritime assets on October 5 that the group could use to attack shipping in the Bab al Mandeb Strait, amid the broader Saudi and Yemeni air campaign to degrade Houthi strike capabilities and support Yemeni government-aligned forces.[18]**

The Saudi Joint Force Command (JFC) announced on October 5 that JFC naval forces struck Houthi military targets, including weapons depots, explosive fast attack craft storehouses, and naval mines, on the Red Sea coast in Hudaydah Governorate.[19] The JFC stated that the strikes, which marked the first Saudi naval bombardment of Houthi military targets since the current conflict began, prevented an “imminent” Houthi attack on waterways in the southern Red Sea.[20] Houthi officials have repeatedly said the group does not intend to attack shipping, although their public statements may not necessarily reflect actual Houthi military intentions.[21] Yemeni media additionally reported on October 5 that Saudi airstrikes targeted Kamaran Island and the port of al Salif, which are significant hubs for Houthi naval operations.[22] The Houthis may attack Saudi naval assets in the Red Sea in response to Saudi naval bombardments, rather than threaten international maritime traffic in a manner that could invite an international military response. The Houthis repeatedly conducted drone, missile, and unmanned surface vehicle (USV) attacks that targeted US Navy vessels in the Red Sea in 2024.[23]

The Saudi strikes on Houthi naval assets come amid continued Saudi and Yemeni government air operations to degrade the Houthis’ long-range strike capabilities and provide CAS to Yemeni government-aligned forces.[24] Yemeni media reported on October 5 that Saudi or Yemeni government-aligned forces conducted airstrikes targeting Houthi ballistic missile depots in Saada Governorate and unspecified targets in Sanaa City, Yemen’s Houthi-controlled capital.[25] These strikes align with recent Saudi and Yemeni government efforts to disrupt Houthi command-and-control and destroy long-range weapons in Houthi-controlled territory.[26] ISW-CTP continues to assess that the Saudi-Yemeni air campaign seeks to degrade Houthi long-range strike capabilities, provide CAS to government-aligned forces, and disrupt Houthi logistics and sustainment.[27]

**The Houthis significantly expanded the scale of their attacks on Saudi military and civilian infrastructure on October 5, likely to compel Saudi Arabia to abandon its support for ongoing Yemeni government counteroffensives.** Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree announced on October 5 that the Houthis fired cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and drones that targeted at least seven civilian and military sites in southern and central Saudi Arabia.[28] Saree claimed that the Houthis attacked King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, Abha International Airport, a Saudi Aramco oil refinery in Rabigh, the King Khalid Air Base in Khamis Mushait, and the Akfa military camp in Asir Province, as well as unspecified targets in Jizan and Najran.[29] International media later reported on October 6 that Houthi projectiles struck and damaged King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Jizan and Najran International Airport.[30] Saree also announced on October 6 that the Houthis conducted additional ballistic missile attacks on Abha International Airport and a military camp in al Dagharir.[31] The Houthis likely expanded the scale of their attacks in response to the Saudi-backed counteroffensives in southwestern Yemen and seek to compel Saudi Arabia to withdraw critical support for these operations.[32] The Houthis believe that they can maximize Saudi economic costs and compel Saudi Arabia to surrender to Houthi demands by striking civilian infrastructure, such as oil facilities and airports.[33] Saree also warned international airlines on October 5 to cease all flights within Saudi airspace amid the Houthi strike campaign, which Houthi military commentators referred to as a “ban” on civilian flights in Saudi Arabia.[34] The Houthis likely seek to deter international airlines from using Saudi airspace to isolate Saudi Arabia economically. The group previously warned international aircraft against entering Saudi airspace in July 2026.[35]



## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz
- Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war
- Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners
- Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states

*Nothing significant to report.*

## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Domestic Affairs

**Iran is developing alternative mechanisms to access its oil revenue in order to mitigate the effects of the US economic campaign.** Anti-regime outlet Iran International reported on October 6 that a senior Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) officer and his son have led efforts to develop an illicit financial network through which Iran receives its oil revenues from Russia instead of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), citing informed sources.[36] The regime relies on “trustees,” typically heads of oil firms or banks trusted by the regime, that repatriate Iran’s oil revenue using foreign banking systems like Russia’s Mir system.[37] Iran International asserted that nine such “trustees,” including high-ranking IRGC officials and their kin, failed to repatriate \$11 billion USD from oil sales over an unspecified period.[38] Iran International also linked Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad’s resignation on October 4 to the development of the financial network with Russia, noting that Paknejad resigned shortly after Russia transferred \$1.5 billion USD to Iran on October 4.[39] Some Iranian outlets speculated that Paknejad resigned because Iranian officials were dissatisfied with his inability to supervise “trustees” and return oil revenue to Iran.[40] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed Paknejad as a presidential adviser and promoted Deputy Oil Minister and former National Iranian Oil Company CEO Hamid Bovard as acting oil minister on October 4.[41]

The regime’s effort to shift its illicit financial network from the UAE to Russia is notable given the critical role the UAE has historically played in Iran’s sanctions evasion network.[42] Approximately 80 percent of Iran’s imported foreign exchange previously came through the UAE.[43] The UAE announced on August 18 that it would halt all trade and financial transactions with Iran, which has likely exacerbated Iran’s existing challenges with procuring adequate amounts of foreign currency and controlling inflation.[44]

Iran’s efforts to secure access to its oil revenue also come as Iran has increasingly struggled to export oil due to the US naval blockade. Reuters reported on October 6, citing three traders familiar with the deals, that Chinese independent refiners increased purchases of Iraqi and Qatari crude oil for October and November as Iranian supplies declined and Gulf exports through the Strait of Hormuz recovered.[45]

**Iranian security forces conducted multiple operations against anti-regime groups in southern and southeastern Iran on October 6, which highlights the continued threat that anti-regime groups pose to the regime.** Regime media reported on October 6 that security forces dismantled three anti-regime cells across the cities of Iranshahr, Sarbaz, Saravan, and Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, and in Qeshm City in Hormozgan Province.[46] The Sistan and Baluchistan General Intelligence Directorate reported that security forces killed two anti-regime fighters and arrested ten others.[47] These latest operations follow a recent uptick in regime security operations and anti-regime attacks in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, which has historically been a hotspot for such activity.[48] The security operation in Qeshm is notable because anti-regime militant activity typically occurs in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.[49] Iranian security forces have in rare instances arrested anti-regime militants on Qeshm Island, such as in March 2024.[50]



**Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian proposed Defense Industries Organization (DIO) head Mehrdad Akhlaghi as Iran's next defense minister on October 5.[51] Akhlaghi has extensive experience in missile technology development, which is notable given Iran's ongoing efforts to reconstitute its ballistic missile program.** The DIO is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL) and is heavily involved in the development of Iran's conventional ground weapons capabilities, including armored vehicles, heavy artillery, and ammunition.[52] Akhlaghi was appointed as the Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO) head in 2014 under then-Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan.[53] The AIO is also a MODAFL subsidiary that focuses on the development of Iran's missile technology, space launch vehicles, and rocket propulsion systems.[54] The UN Security Council listed Akhlaghi in 2007 as head of the Shahid Bagheri Industrial Group, which is involved in the development and production of Iran's solid-propellant ballistic missiles.[55] The United States sanctioned Akhlaghi in 2008 for his involvement in developing Iran's ballistic missile program.[56] The Iranian Parliament will vote in the coming weeks on whether to approve Akhlaghi as defense minister.[57]

**Iran reportedly planned a drone attack against Royal Air Force (RAF) Fairford in the United Kingdom, which prompted the United States to evacuate 12 Rockwell B-1 Lancers from the base.[58]** US officials told Axios on October 5 that intelligence suggesting a possible Iranian drone attack prompted the evacuation.[59] US President Donald Trump confirmed that the United States moved the bombers because of a security threat but did not provide further details.[60] The evacuation came after British counterterrorism police arrested six individuals, including a dual British-Iranian national, in connection with the RAF Fairford incident on September 27.[61] British counterterrorism police separately arrested a seventh suspect on October 6 who was suspected of planning "terrorist acts" in connection with the RAF Fairford incident.[62]

**Iran may be trying to rebuild nuclear weapons development capabilities at the Minzadayi compound in northeastern Tehran Province, according to the Institute for Science and International Security.** The Institute reported on October 6 that satellite imagery from September and October indicates renewed vehicle and earth-moving activity at the Minzadayi compound.[63] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck the compound in March 2026 and stated that Iran used the compound to covertly develop a "key component" for nuclear weapons.[64] The Institute noted that the compound has previously been linked to nuclear warhead research and development.[65] The Institute's recent report comes as Iran has also taken steps to reinforce the Taleghan 2 site, which Iran previously used for nuclear weapon-related explosive testing.[66] Iran has also recently hardened its Pickaxe Mountain site, where Iran reportedly stores some of its highly enriched uranium (HEU), according to an Israeli source speaking to CNN in July 2026.[67] These activities suggest that Iran is trying to rebuild facilities associated with possible nuclear weapons development and protect sensitive nuclear equipment and

material against future strikes.

## Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iraq

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Arabian Peninsula

*Nothing significant to report.*



### Endnotes

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# Iran Update, October 7, 2026



**Parker Hempel, Carolyn Moorman, Ben Rezaei, Annika Ganzeveld**

**Analyst Notes:** Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

*The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing updates Monday through Friday to provide analysis on the war with Iran and the broader Middle East. Weekday updates cover events from the past 24-hour period, whereas weekend updates are abbreviated and cover the Houthi-Saudi conflict and major breaking developments related to the war with Iran.*

## Key Takeaways

1. Ongoing Houthi advances in Taiz Governorate demonstrate that the Yemeni government's recent counteroffensives failed to sufficiently pull Houthi reserves to relieve pressure around Taiz Governorate and enable Yemeni government offensive operations in other areas of the country. Houthi forces have advanced north and eastward in Taiz Governorate since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff on October 6, seizing territory that encircles Yemeni government-aligned forces in Taiz City.
2. The Yemeni government and its partners did not set sufficient political conditions before initiating the recent counteroffensives, hindering their effectiveness. The recent, sudden collapse of Yemeni government-aligned forces at multiple points along the frontline in Taiz Governorate is indicative of a lack of coordination among the various Yemeni government-aligned groups and their commanders operating in the area.
3. The Houthis targeted reported Saudi and international efforts to supply the Yemeni government with materiel to sustain the government's operations against the Houthis. The Houthi strike on Aden Airport comes amid a recent increase in the scale of Houthi strikes on Saudi Arabia since October 5.
4. Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al Zaydi is attempting to assuage US concerns over Iranian-backed Iraqi militias by amending existing draft legislation as part of a broader effort to balance between Iran and its Iraqi allies and the United States. Qatari-funded, UK-based media reported on October 7 that Zaydi-affiliated Iraqi federal government officials have drafted multiple amendments to the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) law that reduce the PMF's powers and prevent it from competing with the Iraqi Army.
5. Multiple Shia Coordination Framework members are fighting Zaydi's attempts to meet US demands about militias. Iraqi media reported on October 6 that Zaydi and several unidentified framework members disagree on several amendments to the draft PMF law, despite Zaydi's office claiming on September 29 that the government had sent the bill to Parliament.
6. A parliamentarian from the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq's (AAH) political wing appeared to downplay the gravity of Zaydi's reported amendments to the PMF law, which could reflect AAH support for some of Zaydi's PMF efforts.



# Toplines

**Ongoing Houthi advances in Taiz Governorate demonstrate that the Yemeni government's recent counteroffensives failed to sufficiently pull Houthi reserves to relieve pressure around Taiz Governorate and enable Yemeni government offensive operations in other areas of the country.** Houthi forces have advanced north and eastward in Taiz Governorate since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff on October 6, seizing territory that encircles Yemeni government-aligned forces in Taiz City and severing the last remaining Yemeni government-aligned ground line of communication (GLOC) connecting Taiz City to the rest of Yemeni government-controlled territory, including Aden City.[1] The Houthis seized the town of Najd al Nashamah, which is located along the GLOC, according to geolocated imagery from October 7.[2] Houthi forces have also advanced in al Maafir and Mawasit districts, further contesting segments of the Taiz-Aden GLOC and consolidating Houthi control over former Yemeni government territory in Taiz Governorate.[3] The Houthi seizure of the last remaining GLOC will severely constrain Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to reinforce and resupply front line positions in the remaining Yemeni government-controlled territory within Taiz Governorate, particularly Taiz City. Houthi pressure on other Yemeni government GLOCs in Taiz Governorate has likely already reduced the government's ability to resupply its forces in the governorate in recent days.[4]

The Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia designed their counteroffensives to include simultaneous attacks across multiple Yemeni frontlines to stretch Houthi bandwidth.[5] Yemeni government-aligned forces, led particularly by the Southern Giants Brigade, launched a counteroffensive along Yemen's western Red Sea coastal plain on October 5, capturing recently seized Houthi territory and pushing Houthi forces back to Dhubab.[6] The Houthis have prevented further Yemeni government advances since October 6.[7] Yemeni government-aligned forces have slightly advanced against Houthi forces and seized some positions along the Marib frontline. Yemeni government-aligned forces reportedly seized the Umm Rish Military Camp in Marib Governorate on October 7, for example.[8] The counteroffensives in the coastal plain and in Marib Governorate have not caused the Houthis to draw extensive reserves to those areas, enabling the Houthis to continue operating and even advance in areas of Taiz Governorate. The limited territorial gains of Yemeni government-aligned forces in Yemen's western coastal plain and in Marib Governorate may come at the cost of potentially larger strategic setbacks, such as the possibility of the Houthis capturing Taiz City, because the various Yemeni government counteroffensives failed to sufficiently pull Houthi reserves to multiple frontlines and thereby stretch Houthi bandwidth.



**The Yemeni government and its partners did not set sufficient political conditions before initiating the recent counteroffensives, hindering their effectiveness.** Yemeni government-aligned forces are not a cohesive, unified national military but rather a collection of loosely aligned anti-Houthi militias with varying objectives and command structures.[9] Previous successful Yemeni government offensives against the Houthis required the Yemeni government and international partners, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to put political pressure on the commanders of these various government-aligned groups to enforce coordination during broad counteroffensive efforts.[10] Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to advance along the western coastal plain to Dhubab demonstrates Yemeni government-aligned groups' ability to recapture Houthi territory with sufficient political coordination.[11] The Southern Giants Brigades and the Homeland Shield Forces are participating in the ongoing Yemeni government counteroffensives along Yemen's western plain and in Waziyah District, Taiz Governorate, despite historic rivalries between the two groups. Saudi Arabia originally supported the creation of the Homeland Shield Forces as a counterweight to the Emirati-backed National Resistance Forces (NRF).[12]

The recent, sudden collapse of Yemeni government-aligned forces at multiple points along the frontline in Taiz Governorate in recent days is indicative of a lack of coordination among the various Yemeni government-aligned groups and their commanders operating in the area. The Houthis rapidly advanced from al Turbah, Taiz Governorate, on October 4 along the main GLOC to the group's current position at Najd al Nashamah (see above), which indicates that Yemeni government forces were unable to effectively confront the Houthi breakthrough and establish an effective defense.[13] Yemeni sources told Emirati media on October 4 that the Yemeni government-aligned commander of the area fled to Aden City, the Yemeni government's de facto capital, almost certainly degrading coordination among Yemeni government-aligned forces.[14]

Yemeni government-aligned forces also did not effectively coordinate during efforts to reorganize after the Houthi offensive along Yemen's western coastal plain in early September due to longstanding political grievances between the various Yemeni government-aligned groups. The *New York Times* (NYT) and a DC-based Yemen analyst separately reported that southern Yemeni government-aligned factions refused to allow the northern Yemeni government-aligned NRF to enter Aden City.[15] Southern Yemeni government-aligned groups, many of which seek to establish an independent southern Yemeni state, also reportedly attempted to disarm NRF soldiers who withdrew to Aden Governorate following the NRF's retreat from the western coastal plain.[16]

**The Houthis targeted reported Saudi and international efforts to supply the Yemeni government with materiel to sustain the government's operations against the Houthis.** The Houthis struck Aden International Airport on October 6 with ballistic missiles and drones, according to the Yemeni government's Transportation Ministry.[17] Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree claimed that the Houthis targeted Saudi forces unloading military equipment for the Yemeni government at the Camp Badr military camp, which is collocated at the airport.[18] Local Aden City-based sources reported that the Houthis also potentially struck Pakistani-provided military equipment at the airport.[19] A Pakistani official told Reuters on October 2 that Pakistan dispatched four cargo aircraft carrying military equipment, including light artillery and drones, to Yemeni government-aligned forces in Aden in September.[20]

The Houthi strike on Aden Airport comes amid a recent increase in the scale of Houthi strikes on Saudi Arabia since October 5. These strikes are part of a Houthi effort to compel Saudi Arabia to end its support for the Yemeni government's counteroffensive. Saree claimed that the Houthis launched six additional strikes on Saudi airports and military bases since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff.[21] Saudi coalition spokesperson Major General Turki al Maliki announced that Saudi air defenses intercepted a Houthi ballistic missile north of Riyadh on October 6.[22]



**Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al Zaydi is attempting to assuage US concerns over Iranian-backed Iraqi militias by amending existing draft legislation as part of a broader effort to balance between Iran and its Iraqi allies and the United States.** Qatari-funded, UK-based media reported on October 7 that Zaydi-affiliated Iraqi federal government officials have drafted multiple amendments to the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) law that reduce the PMF's powers and prevent it from competing with the Iraqi Army.[23] The same outlet previously reported many similar details about the PMF law on August 25 but did not specifically attribute the amendments to Zaydi.[24] The Iraqi federal government has not published the text of the draft law at the time of this writing. ISW-CTP assessed on August 26 that Zaydi was pursuing the amendments to consolidate his individual power as prime minister.[25] Zaydi's efforts to amend this legislation, which former Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani withdrew in August 2025 reportedly due to US concerns, come amid increased US economic pressure on the Iraqi

federal government to disarm the Iraqi militias.[26] Zaydi likely seeks to assuage US concerns regarding the PMF, given that the government's reported plan to disarm the militias stipulates that the Iraqi militias would hand over their weapons to the PMF.[27]

**Zaydi may also be attempting to frame himself as an independent Iraqi leader, given a September 29 statement by his office that his government sent the draft law to Parliament despite reports that the Shia Coordination Framework is still discussing key aspects of the law.** This order of events suggests that Zaydi may have attempted to send a version of the PMF law, probably with his amendments, to Parliament without the framework's approval. The framework has preferred to directly manage previous Iraqi prime ministers, particularly former Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani.[28] Zaydi has recently proven his willingness to at least attempt to stand up to pressure from Iranian-backed Iraqi actors, including those in the framework.[29] Zaydi's potential bypassing of the framework would be consistent with this pattern of activity and efforts to consolidate his own personal authority.

**Multiple Shia Coordination Framework members are fighting Zaydi's attempts to meet US demands about militias.** Iraqi media reported on October 6 that Zaydi and several unidentified framework members disagree on several amendments to the PMF draft law, despite Zaydi's office claiming on September 29 that the government had sent the bill to Parliament.[30] The October 6 Iraqi media report stated that disputed amendments include those that address term limits for the Popular Mobilization Commission (PMC) chairman, who leads the PMF's administrative body.[31] The framework has debated current PMC Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh's position since 2025.[32] Zaydi reportedly wants a non-renewable term limit of two years for the position, while unspecified framework members prefer a five-year, renewable term.[33] The Iraqi media report added that unspecified framework leaders and Zaydi disagree about amendments concerning the creation of a special unit in each PMF "formation," likely referring to PMF brigades, to receive militia weapons.[34] The militias would likely attempt to use the establishment of such units to transfer their weapons to PMF brigades they control, which would allow them to effectively remain armed. A parliamentarian from Nouri al Maliki's State of Law Coalition told Iraqi media that the framework also has "sharp disagreements" on the draft law's clauses regarding the PMF's structure, privileges, and mechanisms.[35] The parliamentarian also referred to the "restriction" of weapons, instead of disarmament, further indicating the differences between framework members and Zaydi, who has expressed support for genuine militia disarmament.[36] Multiple Iraqi militias, including Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, condition their disarmament on the passage of the PMF law, almost certainly without Zaydi's amendments.[37]

**A parliamentarian from the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq's (AAH) political wing appeared to downplay the gravity of Zaydi's reported amendments to the PMF law, which could reflect AAH support for some of Zaydi's PMF efforts.[38]** The Sadiqoun parliamentarian called the amendments to the PMF law "simple" and "limited," and added that they do not affect the interests of PMF fighters.[39] The parliamentarian could have been attempting to calm concerns from PMF members and the Iraqi parliamentarians who represent them, who have advocated for legislation to grant the members more rights and privileges in recent years.[40] There are multiple reasons why AAH could support some of Zaydi's efforts regarding the PMF law. AAH head Qais al Khazali has prioritized political and economic engagement over kinetic activity in recent years, hence the AAH announcement that it would disarm on June 2.[41] US economic pressure on Iraq has the potential to hurt the investments of figures like Khazali, thus making it in his interest to support Zaydi's efforts to assuage US concerns over the militias. Khazali has also long pushed for Fayyadh's replacement as PMC chairman and could support Zaydi's efforts to set term limits for the PMF chairman position.[42] It is also possible, however, that the parliamentarian is not aware of the full extent of Zaydi's proposed amendments.

**Iran may have partially reconstituted its maritime targeting capabilities or adopted alternative methods that have enabled it to increase attacks against commercial vessels and tankers in and around the Strait of Hormuz.** Iran attacked at least 12 tankers in and around the strait between September 28 and October 5, according to three maritime security sources speaking to Reuters on October 7.[43] This represents the highest weekly total of Iranian attacks in the strait since the US-Israel-Iran War began on February 28.[44] The Joint Maritime Information Center separately reported on October 4 that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) has continued to attack and harass commercial vessels with drone overflights, targeted surveillance, and occasional radio warnings.[45] Iran's increased rate of attacks suggests that the regime may have begun to overcome some of the operational constraints that previously limited its ability to disrupt shipping.[46] ISW-CTP assessed in September that US strikes on Iranian coastal radars had likely constrained Iran's ability to detect and fix maritime targets.[47] The United States has not struck Iran since September 8, however, and Iran may have used the pause in strikes to try to rebuild coastal radars and other assets used in its attacks on shipping.[48] A US official told the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* on October 4 that Iran's ability to target vessels has improved in recent weeks, but the official did not explain how Iran has improved its targeting ability.[49] Iran has also recently tested new weapons systems in its attacks in the Strait of Hormuz. A senior Iranian official recently announced that Iran tested a new anti-ship missile against US naval forces, for example.[50] The recent increase in Iranian attacks on vessels could therefore possibly be explained by Iran's adoption of new technology and capabilities.



## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- *Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz*
- *Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war*
- *Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners*
- *Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states*

*See topline section.*

## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Domestic Affairs

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iraq

*See topline section.*

## Arabian Peninsula

*See topline section.*



### Endnotes

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# Iran Update, October 8, 2026



**William Doran, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells, Bailey Pasternak, Adham Fattah, Ria Reddy, Kelly Campa**

**Analyst Notes:** Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

*The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing updates Monday through Friday to provide analysis on the war with Iran and the broader Middle East. Weekday updates cover events from the past 24-hour period, whereas weekend updates are abbreviated and cover the Houthi-Saudi conflict and major breaking developments related to the war with Iran.*

## Key Takeaways

1. Forces aligned with the internationally recognized Yemeni government seized mountainous terrain that overlooks the Red Sea coastal plain on October 8, which could set favorable conditions for government-aligned forces to continue their counteroffensive and advance northward on the coastal plain.
2. The Houthis are still capable of threatening Yemeni government control over the Jabal Kahbub area and government-aligned forces deployed on the coastal plain, however. The Houthis are simultaneously reinforcing their positions on the coastal plain and attempting to disrupt Yemeni government efforts to organize and deploy forces for continued advances up the coastal plain.
3. Yemeni government-aligned forces appear to have stalled additional significant Houthi advances in central Taiz Governorate on October 7 and 8 amid Houthi efforts to encircle Taiz City and defeat government-aligned forces throughout the governorate. The Houthis' effective encirclement of Taiz City poses logistical and positional challenges for Yemeni government-aligned forces that will likely limit the forces' ability to continue to hold terrain, however.
4. The Houthis are continuing to attack and threaten Saudi critical infrastructure as part of a Houthi effort to degrade Saudi willingness to sustain military operations against the Houthis and accept Houthi demands. The Houthis also warned international flights to avoid Saudi airspace and urged Saudi oil industry employees to evacuate oil sites as part of this Houthi effort to degrade Saudi willingness. These warnings, and the implicit threats that they carry, suggest that the Houthis' current strike campaign on Saudi critical infrastructure has failed to achieve Houthi objectives.



## Toplines

**Forces aligned with the internationally recognized Yemeni government seized mountainous terrain overlooking the Red Sea coastal plain on October 8, which could set favorable conditions for government-aligned forces to continue their counteroffensive and advance northward on the coastal plain.** The Homeland Shield Forces, which is a Saudi-backed, Yemeni government-aligned military faction that is fighting the Houthis in southwestern Yemen, announced on

October 8 that the group's forces established full territorial control over the Jabal Kahbub front.[1] Jabal Kahbub sits within a small, moderate-elevation mountain range on the southeastern edge of the Red Sea coastal plain. Houthi and Yemeni government-aligned forces have fought for control over the area surrounding the range since the Houthis seized a significant amount of territory along the Red Sea Coast and near the Bab al Mandeb in early September.[2] The Yemeni government, backed by Saudi air power and international coalition military support, launched an offensive to capture Mokha city and secure the coastline along the Bab al Mandeb Strait on October 4.[3]

Sustained control of Jabal Kahbub could support government-aligned advances northward along the coastal plain. Jabal Kahbub's elevated terrain overlooks current Yemeni government and Houthi positions further west, which makes it a favorable position for firing artillery at Houthi forces concentrated on the flat, exposed coastal plain.[4] Government positions on favorable terrain could support advances along the coastal plain north toward Houthi positions near Dhubab City and the al Omari Base, east of the city.[5] The Homeland Shield Forces' control over Jabal Kahbub also protects Yemeni government-aligned forces from potential Houthi attempts to outflank and overwhelm Yemeni government positions at Dhubab Airport, which is located about 17 kilometers to the southwest.[6]

The Houthis are still capable of threatening Yemeni government control over the Jabal Kahbub area and government-aligned forces deployed on the coastal plain, however. Yemeni government-aligned forces, including the Homeland Shield Forces, have made little observed progress in recapturing territory in Waziyah District since announcing their counteroffensive in the district on October 6.[7] Government control over this district is critical to protecting Yemeni government-aligned forces at Jabal Kahbub and on the coastal plain because of its high-elevation, mountainous terrain that overlooks the plain and Jabal Kahbub from the northeast.[8] Houthi control over this district exposes advancing Yemeni government-aligned forces' eastern flank to Houthi artillery fire and potential light infantry attacks.

The Houthis are simultaneously reinforcing their positions on the coastal plain and attempting to disrupt Yemeni government-aligned forces' staging with ballistic missile attacks.[9] A US-based Yemen analyst reported on October 8 that the Houthis have constructed a new earthen berm stretching four miles between Dhubab and the al Omari Base, several kilometers north of Yemeni government-aligned forces' furthest advances.[10] Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree announced on October 8 that the Houthis fired ballistic missiles targeting Yemeni government bases and staging areas near Ras al Ara and al Suqayyan, Lahij Governorate.[11] Such strikes could disrupt Yemeni government efforts to organize and deploy forces for continued advances up the coastal plain. Saudi forces conducted airstrikes targeting various Houthi ballistic missile positions and depots in Houthi-controlled Yemeni territory on October 8, which is consistent with recent Saudi-Yemeni government efforts to destroy long-range, high-payload weapons that the Houthis use to strike Yemeni government-aligned forces and Saudi civilian targets.[12]

**Yemeni government-aligned forces appear to have stalled additional significant Houthi advances in central Taiz Governorate on October 7 and 8 amid Houthi efforts to encircle Taiz City and defeat government-aligned forces throughout the governorate.** The Houthis have effectively encircled Taiz City since October 6. The Houthis continue to attempt to capture territory that might further consolidate Houthi forces' encirclement of the city.[13] Yemeni government-aligned forces reportedly repelled Houthi attacks in Jabal Habashi and al Salu districts while heavy combat has continued in other areas across the governorate, according to a US-based Yemen analyst on October 7 and 8.[14] ISW-CTP has not observed significant Houthi or Yemeni government advances in central Taiz Governorate as of this writing.

The Houthis' effective encirclement of Taiz City poses logistical and positional challenges for Yemeni

government-aligned forces that will likely limit the forces' ability to continue to hold terrain, however. The analyst added that Yemeni government-aligned forces and civilians in Taiz City are facing food, fuel, medicine, and other resource shortages after the Houthis severed the last Yemeni government ground lines of communication (GLOC) into central Taiz Governorate on October 6.[15] The Yemeni government's inability to resupply and sustain forces in Taiz City and central Taiz Governorate would significantly challenge the capabilities of these forces to sustain organized defenses of these areas. Houthi control over the Taiz-Aden GLOC also permits Houthi forces to carry a high volume of forces and supplies north toward Taiz City along more established roadways, which allows the group to concentrate its forces on remaining Yemeni government-aligned positions.[16]

Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni government likely continued to disrupt Houthi C2 and logistics on October 7 and 8.[17] Saudi and Yemeni government-aligned forces conducted airstrikes targeting Houthi bases, communications infrastructure, and other sites on the Sanaa-Taiz highway on October 7 and 8, possibly to disrupt the Houthis' ability to reinforce units in Taiz or communicate between Houthi command in Sanaa and combat units operating in Taiz Governorate.[18]



**The Houthis are continuing to attack and threaten Saudi critical infrastructure as part of a Houthi effort to degrade Saudi willingness to sustain military operations against the Houthis and accept Houthi demands.**[19] The Houthis fired two ballistic missiles targeting Saudi Arabia's King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff. Debris from one interception impacted multiple sites in Riyadh, while the other missile hit the airport and sparked a fire.[20] The Houthis also claimed to have fired two cruise missiles at the same airport on October 8.[21] The Houthis significantly expanded the scale of their attacks on Saudi military and civilian infrastructure on October 5.



The Houthis also warned international flights to avoid Saudi airspace and urged Saudi oil industry employees to evacuate oil sites as part of this Houthi effort to degrade Saudi willingness.[22] These warnings, and the implicit threats that they carry, suggest that the Houthis' current strike campaign on Saudi critical infrastructure has failed to achieve Houthi objectives, which include degrading Saudi oil production and imposing costs on civilian transportation infrastructure to compel Saudi Arabia to abandon its support for the Yemeni government counteroffensive and concede to other Houthi demands.[23] These demands include lifting Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports, paying war reparations and civil servant salaries, and granting the Houthis control over Yemen's oil and gas resources.[24] Saudi Arabia has successfully repaired damage from recent Houthi strikes on Saudi oil infrastructure, especially the East-West Pipeline.[25] Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said on October 6 that the pipeline's oil flow has returned to 5.8 million barrels per day.[26] Saudi Arabia also continues to strike Houthi targets in Yemen and provide close air support to Yemeni government-aligned forces (see above).[27]

## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

# Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- *Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz*
- *Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war*
- *Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners*
- *Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states*

**Continued Iranian attacks on vessels in and near the Strait of Hormuz are consistent with ISW-CTP's assessment that Iran may have partially reconstituted its maritime targeting capabilities or may have adopted alternative methods to increase attacks on shipping in the Persian Gulf.[28]** Iran likely conducted two attacks on tankers in the Persian Gulf since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff.[29] Iran likely fired "multiple projectiles" that targeted a tanker outside of the Strait of Hormuz, approximately 51 nautical miles off the northern coast of Qatar, in one of the attacks.[30] Western media and ISW-CTP have observed an increase in Iranian attacks on commercial shipping within the past 10 days, but all of these attacks appear to have taken place within the Strait of Hormuz.[31] A US official told the *Wall Street Journal* on October 4 that Iran has improved its ability to target ships in recent weeks, but the official did not specify how Iran improved this capability.[32] Iran may be developing new weapons systems to attack maritime targets. A senior Iranian official recently told regional media that Iran recently tested a new anti-ship missile equipped with a cluster munition warhead on an attack targeting US forces in September, for example.[33]



## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Domestic Affairs

**Anti-regime fighters in southeastern Iran have maintained a heightened rate of armed attacks against regime security forces despite ongoing regime counterterrorism operations.** The Mobarizoun Popular Front (MPF) — a coalition of anti-regime Baloch fighters — claimed responsibility for three attacks on regime security forces since CTP-ISW's last data cut off.[34] An unspecified number of armed MPF fighters detonated an improvised explosive device at a Law Enforcement Command (LEC) station in Jalgh, southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on October 7 and fired upon fleeing LEC personnel.[35] The LEC claimed that its forces killed one of the fighters and injured several other fighters in the engagements that followed.[36] Local authorities separately reported on October 8 that several fighters fired at a LEC vehicle patrolling in the Nusrat Abad area in Zahedan, eastern Sistan and Baluchistan Province, and killed an LEC officer.[37] The Artesh separately announced on October 8 that fighters fired at an Artesh Ground Forces 88th Armored Division convoy near Makran in southern Sistan and Baluchistan Province, killing one Artesh soldier and injuring three others.[38] These attacks are part of the recent uptick in anti-regime attacks on regime security forces in southeastern Iran since early September 2026.[39]



## Lebanon

**Two unspecified sources told Reuters on October 7 that Iran transferred \$200 million USD to Hezbollah in September 2026.**<sup>[40]</sup> The sources did not specify how Iran allegedly transferred the funds to Hezbollah but claimed that Hezbollah plans to use \$150 million of the reported \$200 million to provide \$3,000 payments to 50,000 Lebanese families affected by the Israel-Hezbollah war.<sup>[41]</sup> Hezbollah has historically relied on Iranian financial support.<sup>[42]</sup> A senior Lebanese source told Reuters in June 2026 that Iran had promised to send funds to Hezbollah that Iran sought to acquire through the US-Iran memorandum of understanding.<sup>[43]</sup> The transfer would also constitute the first publicly acknowledged large-scale Iranian payment to Hezbollah since the US Treasury Department reported that Iran transferred at least \$1 billion to the group in 2025.<sup>[44]</sup> The US State Department denied Reuters' reporting and accused Hezbollah of "trying to save face with fake stories."<sup>[45]</sup> The sources that the report cited may seek to portray Iran and Hezbollah as capable of sustaining mounting international economic pressure.<sup>[46]</sup> Hezbollah is facing ongoing US and Lebanese government pressure to disarm amid ongoing US-mediated Israel-Lebanon negotiations.<sup>[47]</sup>

Hezbollah has a strong incentive to secure Iranian funds to restore public support for the group in southern Lebanon and support its military reconstruction efforts, regardless of the veracity of the report, however. Hezbollah's ability to provide financial support and social services to its constituents is one of the primary ways that it maintains its popularity and authority in Lebanon, which is particularly notable given that Hezbollah has become increasingly unpopular in its traditional support base in southern Lebanon.<sup>[48]</sup> This constituency has historically provided critical political and operational support to Hezbollah and is especially vital amid the Lebanese government's efforts to disarm the group.<sup>[49]</sup> Recent Lebanese government efforts to provide government assistance undermine Hezbollah's longstanding claim that it alone serves Lebanese interests.<sup>[50]</sup> Providing financial assistance would allow Hezbollah to reinforce its narrative to the Lebanese people and compete with the Lebanese government's reconstruction efforts. Hezbollah is also actively attempting to reconstitute its military capabilities.<sup>[51]</sup>

## Iraq

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Arabian Peninsula

*See topline section.*



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# Iran Update, October 9, 2026



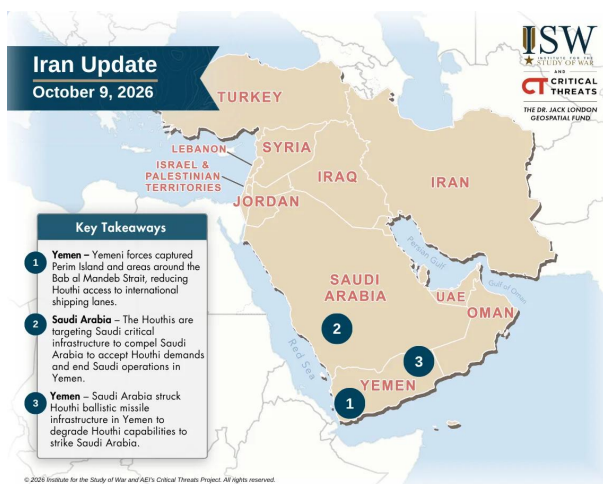
**Benjamin Schmida, William Doran, Adham Fattah, Parker Hempel, Kelly Campa**

**Analyst Notes:** Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

*The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing updates Monday through Friday to provide analysis on the war with Iran and the broader Middle East. Weekday updates cover events from the past 24-hour period, whereas weekend updates are abbreviated and cover the Houthi-Saudi conflict and major breaking developments related to the war with Iran.*

## Key Takeaways

1. Yemeni government-aligned forces reportedly captured Perim Island and recaptured areas around the Bab al Mandeb Strait from Houthi forces on October 9, which reduces Houthi access to territory nearest the Bab al Mandeb and international shipping lanes.
2. Yemeni government-aligned forces have continued to stall Houthi advances in central Taiz Governorate on October 9 amid Houthi efforts to encircle and capture Taiz City.
3. The Houthi campaign targeting Saudi critical infrastructure aims to impose increasing pressure on Saudi Arabia in an effort to compel Saudi Arabia to accept Houthi demands and end Saudi operations in Yemen.
4. Saudi Arabia struck Houthi ballistic missile infrastructure in Yemen as part of an effort to degrade Houthi capabilities central to the group's strike campaign against Saudi Arabia.

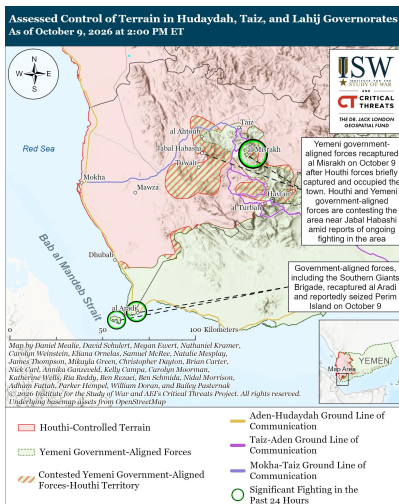


# Toplines

**Yemeni government-aligned forces reportedly captured Perim Island and recaptured areas around the Bab al Mandeb Strait from Houthi forces on October 9, which reduces Houthi access to territory nearest the Bab al Mandeb and international shipping lanes.** Government-aligned forces, including the Southern Giants Brigade and Homeland Shield Forces, secured al Aradi, which is located along a peninsula that juts out into the Bab al Mandeb in Lahij Governorate, and reportedly seized Perim Island on October 9, according to anti-Houthi Yemeni sources and geolocated footage.[1] Unverified reports previously indicated that some Houthi forces were operating in al Aradi on October 6.[2] A DC-based Yemen analyst reported on October 9 that Yemeni government-aligned forces are continuing to clear al Aradi and the Bab al Mandeb area of remaining Houthi pockets in the area.[3] Yemeni government advances on Perim Island follow government-aligned forces' seizure of Jabal Kahbub, which is strategic high ground that overlooks both al Aradi and Perim Island on October 8.[4] The capture of Jabal Kahbub may have enabled government forces to recapture both areas.[5]

Yemeni government control over Perim Island and al Aradi denies the Houthis key positions near the Bab al Mandeb, though the Houthis retain significant territory along the Red Sea coast that can facilitate Houthi attacks on international shipping. Houthi positions on Perim Island, which is located within the Bab al Mandeb, and in al Aradi, which is approximately 16 kilometers from the center of the waterway, would enable the Houthis to use a broader range of weapons systems to threaten shipping in the Bab al Mandeb, including artillery.[6] Positions on Perim Island also placed the Houthis in range to use tactical weapons systems, such as tactical drones, against vessels transiting the waterway.[7] Government control over territory close to the Bab al Mandeb does not limit the Houthis' abilities to target international shipping from other positions along the Red Sea coast, however, including from the Hanish Islands or from positions near Mokha.

**Yemeni government-aligned forces have continued to stall Houthi advances in central Taiz Governorate amid Houthi efforts to encircle and capture Taiz City.** The Houthis effectively encircled Taiz City on October 6 and have continued efforts to seize territory to consolidate the encirclement.[8] Geolocated footage indicates that Yemeni government-aligned forces recaptured al Misrakh, Taiz Governorate, on October 9 after Houthi forces briefly captured and occupied the town.[9] Geolocated footage and anti-Houthi media reports from October 8 and October 9 also indicate that Houthi and Yemeni government-aligned forces continue to engage each other near Jabal Habashi, which lies 15 kilometers south of Taiz City.[10] Houthi control over the Jabal Habashi area would represent a complete encirclement of Taiz City, given the Houthis' recent capture of al Misrakh.[11] The Houthis' effective encirclement of Taiz City will likely continue to constrain Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to hold terrain in areas such as Jabal Habashi and al Misrakh by restricting Yemeni government-aligned forces' capability to reinforce and resupply frontline positions in the remaining Yemeni government-controlled territory.



**The Houthi campaign targeting Saudi critical infrastructure aims to impose increasing pressure on Saudi Arabia in an effort to compel Saudi Arabia to accept Houthi demands and end Saudi operations in Yemen.** The Saudi Civil Aviation Authority reported that the Houthis conducted two ballistic missile attacks targeting the King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh on October 8. The attack killed three Saudi civilians, injured multiple other civilians, and damaged a plane.[12] The Houthis have repeatedly targeted other Saudi airports in recent days, including in Jizan and Najran, and have continued to warn international airlines to avoid Saudi airports and airspace.[13] Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree warned on October 9 that only Houthi-approved airlines would be allowed to land in Riyadh for "humanitarian" purposes.[14] The Houthis have also targeted Saudi oil infrastructure as part of their campaign in order to impose increasing pressure on the Saudi economy.[15] Houthi spokesperson Omar al Buakhiti reiterated Houthi warnings on October 8 to Saudi oil industry employees to evacuate oil sites.[16] The Houthis will likely continue to conduct attacks on Saudi critical infrastructure in the coming days given that the Houthis have not yet achieved their objectives, which include ending Saudi support for the Yemeni government counteroffensive, lifting Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports, paying war reparations and civil servant salaries, and granting the Houthis control over Yemen's oil and gas resources.

The Houthis have also threatened Saudi Arabia's international partners in order to isolate Saudi Arabia and prevent Saudi partners from supporting operations against the Houthis. Saudi Arabia has increasingly relied on support from partners, including the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, and Turkey, to defend against Houthi attacks and support Saudi operations against the Houthis in Yemen.[17] Saudi Arabia announced on October 5 that Pakistan and Turkey are taking "practical measures" to defend Saudi Arabia pursuant to the Mecca Pact requirements.[18] Pakistani and regional officials told Reuters on October 2 that Pakistan and Turkey have supplied military aid to Saudi Arabia to combat the Houthis in Yemen. Houthi officials, including Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi, have warned Turkey and Pakistan against supporting Saudi Arabia.[19]

**Saudi Arabia struck Houthi ballistic missile infrastructure in Yemen as part of an effort to degrade Houthi capabilities central to the group's strike campaign against Saudi Arabia.** Saudi coalition spokesperson Major General Turki al Maliki announced on September 9 that coalition aircraft destroyed three Houthi ballistic missile launchers in Yemen.[20] Saudi media reported on September 9 that Saudi aircraft targeted Houthi missile launch sites, missile depots, and a radar station in Sanaa Governorate.[21] Saudi Arabia also reportedly struck Houthi military fortifications and weapons depots in Amran Governorate.[22] Houthi missile sites, depots, and radar equipment in Sanaa and Amran governorates lie far north from active frontlines, which suggests that the Houthis use these positions to attack Saudi Arabia rather than government forces to the south. Saudi Arabia targeted Houthi missile

launch sites and military infrastructure in northern Houthi-controlled Saada and Amran governorates in 2018 and 2021 in order to prevent Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia.[23] Houthi media also reported that Saudi airstrikes targeted communications infrastructure in Saada and Sanaa governorates on October 9.[24] These strikes may have been intended to degrade the Houthis' ability to attack Saudi Arabia given their concentration in northwestern Yemen.

## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

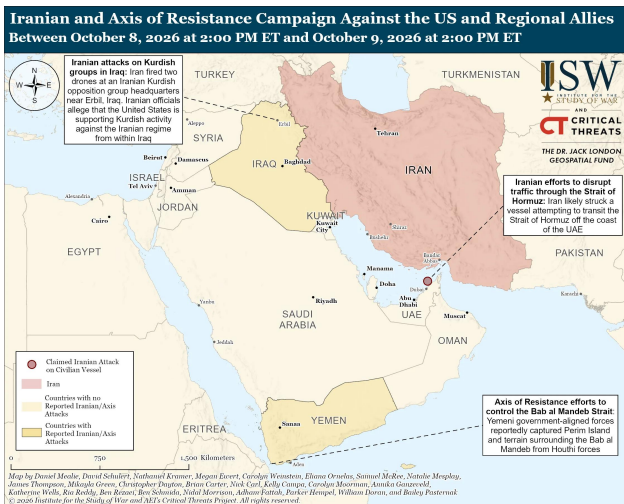
## Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- *Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz*
- *Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war*
- *Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners*
- *Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states*

**The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy threatened on October 9 to attack vessels “anywhere in the region” that attempt to pass through “unauthorized” passages in and out of the Strait of Hormuz, likely as part of an effort to deter shipping companies from violating Iranian procedures.[25]** The Iranian threat suggests that Iran will attack vessels that pass through routes not approved by Iran regardless of whether these vessels remain in the Strait of Hormuz. Iran likely aims to intimidate shipping companies into abiding by Iranian transit regulations by suggesting that ships that transit safely through the Strait of Hormuz are still under threat. Iran likely struck a tanker about 51 nautical miles off Qatar's northern coast in the Persian Gulf with “multiple projectiles” on October 8.[26] It is unclear if this tanker had previously transited the strait along an “unauthorized” route. Iranian efforts to intimidate vessels and shipping companies aim to compel shipping companies to comply with Iranian regulations for the strait and legitimize Iranian “control” over the strait. Iranian attacks on vessels also aim to increase pressure on the United States by disrupting international shipping and raising oil prices.

Iran has continued to attack vessels attempting to transit through the strait's “southern route,” which passes through Omani waters. The IRGC Navy claimed to have attacked the Vietnamese-flagged tanker *NV SUNSHINE* as it transited the Strait of Hormuz through Omani waters on October 9, for example.[27] The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported an attack on a vessel about 13 nautical miles west of Al Jazeera, UAE, that may refer to the *NV SUNSHINE*.[28]



## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Domestic Affairs

**Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's meetings with the leaders of littoral Caspian Sea and Caucasian states on October 8 highlight the regime's efforts to mitigate the effects of the US economic campaign against Iran.** Pezeshkian met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedow, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the sidelines of the Caspian Sea Environmental Summit in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan, on October 8 to discuss expanding trade and countering Western "unilateralism." [29] Pezeshkian likely spoke to these leaders about expanding Iran's ability to import goods from littoral Caspian Sea and Caucasian states in order to offset the impact of US sanctions and the naval blockade on Iran. Iran has used the Caspian Sea and overland transit routes to try to offset reduced maritime trade caused by the US blockade on Iranian ports, particularly in trade with Russia. [30] Iran also relies on countries such as Armenia and Azerbaijan to import goods via rail and roadways. [31] Pezeshkian's likely attempts to expand Iran's trade routes via land come as the United States' economic campaign has constricted Iran's options to import goods via air and sea in recent months. [32]

**Iranian regime security forces participated in a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) counterterrorism exercise on October 7 and 8. [33]** Regime media reported on October 7 that IRGC Ground Forces participated in the exercise in Minsk, Belarus, involving 14 SCO member countries, including the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia. [34] IRGC-affiliated media published footage of regime security forces simulating raids on insurgent positions. [35] Iran has previously participated in similar exercises, such as the Sahand exercise in 2025. [36] This latest exercise comes amid an increase in militant activity in southeastern Iran. [37] IRGC-affiliated media reported that Mobarizoun Popular Front (MPF) fighters, which is a Baloch, anti-regime group, detonated an improvised explosive device that killed a Law Enforcement Command (LEC) social deputy chief in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on October 9. [38] IRGC-affiliated media separately reported that an unknown gunman killed an LEC officer in Faryab, Kerman Province, on October 9. [39]

# Lebanon

**The European Union (EU) is preparing to approve a multinational military support mission that will assist Lebanese military and security forces in strengthening internal and border security.** European Commission Vice President Kaja Kallas announced during a joint press conference with Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji on October 8 that the EU is expected to formally establish a three-year military support mission to Lebanon on October 12.[40] Kallas said that the EU mission will train and advise the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) to strengthen Lebanese border and internal security measures.[41] An EU official told Saudi media on October 9 that the mission's initial contingent will include at least 100 French, Italian, and Spanish military personnel and will deploy to Beirut no later than December 25, 2026.[42] The official clarified that the EU military personnel will not deploy in southern Lebanon.[43]

Non-combat advisory support from professional multinational military personnel could most directly challenge Hezbollah's reconstitution efforts by strengthening Lebanese security forces' discipline and readiness to interdict Hezbollah smuggling. The EU support mission's declared focus on strengthening Lebanese internal and border security could support the production of cadres of highly professional LAF and ISF units that are willing and able to disrupt Hezbollah's weapons and funding shipments.[44] The Lebanese government will be unable to permanently dismantle Hezbollah so long as the LAF is unwilling or unable to fully implement the June 26 Trilateral Framework Agreement.[45] Kallas added that Lebanon must implement economic reforms and achieve progress in disarming Hezbollah under the framework agreement in tandem with the EU support mission.[46]

The EU support mission comes amid ongoing Lebanese security forces' efforts to strengthen internal security and disrupt Hezbollah's smuggling and reconstitution activities. A Lebanese security source told Saudi media on October 9 that security forces arrested two Hezbollah members who were transporting 500 kilograms of high explosives along the Beirut-Damascus Highway at Dahr al Baydar, Baabda District.[47] Hezbollah would likely have used these explosive materials to manufacture improvised explosive devices (IED), which the group has repeatedly used to attack Israeli forces in southern Lebanon in recent months.[48] The LAF also interdicted a shipment of rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and 24 kilograms of high explosives entering Lebanon from Syria in the vicinity of Qasr, Hermel District, on October 9.[49] Qasr lies along a major Hezbollah smuggling route between Syria and the Bekaa Valley, although it is unclear whether Hezbollah was responsible for the shipment.[50]

# Iraq

**Unspecified Iraqi militias are reportedly only relinquishing some of their weapons to the Iraqi government through the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), which is consistent with militias' recent efforts to circumvent disarmament.** An Iraqi security official told UAE-based media on October 9 that three Iraqi militias that agreed to disarm have only relinquished some heavy and "specialized" weapons, along with militia bases, to the PMF.[51] The official did not specify which militias have relinquished weapons to the PMF. The official claimed that the PMF has begun to integrate some militia fighters into PMF units that are entirely separate from their original militia affiliations, as part of the government's efforts to incorporate fighters into Iraq's state security apparatus.[52] Iraqi militias have attempted to circumvent Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al Zaydi's disarmament initiatives in recent weeks by forming new Iranian-backed breakaway militias, attempting to condition disarmament on additional political demands, and brokering agreements with the federal government that would permit the groups to access their weapons while integrating into the PMF.[53]

Iraqi militias' forfeiture of weapons and incorporation into the PMF would not inherently satisfy US expectations for militia disarmament. The PMF consists of numerous militias that control their own brigades and answer to Iran, rather than the Iraqi prime minister.[54] ISW-CTP previously assessed on October 2 that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias' extensive infiltration of the PMF renders it very likely that militias surrendering their weapons to the PMF would retain access to these arms.[55]

**Iran conducted its first drone attack targeting Iranian Kurdish opposition groups in Iraq since the US formally withdrew from Iraq on September 30.** Iraqi media and independent open-source intelligence (OSINT) analysts reported on October 8 that Iran fired two drones targeting a camp belonging to the Khabat Organization of Iranian Kurdistan, an Iranian Kurdish anti-regime group based in Iraq, near Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan.[56] Iranian Consul-General in Erbil Faramarz Asadi told Kurdish media on October 8 that Iran considers anti-regime Kurdish groups in Iraq to constitute "American interests and targets," and claimed that US intelligence and security personnel remain in Iraqi Kurdistan following the withdrawal on September 30.[57] Faramarz's remarks indicate that Iran will use unsubstantiated claims of US presence in Iraq as pretexts for future attacks on Kurdish opposition groups in Iraq. Iran has repeatedly attacked Iranian Kurdish opposition groups based in Iraq in recent months because the Iranian regime views these groups as a threat to regime control over Kurdish areas within Iran.[58]

## Arabian Peninsula

*See topline section.*

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### Endnotes

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# Iran Update, October 10, 2026



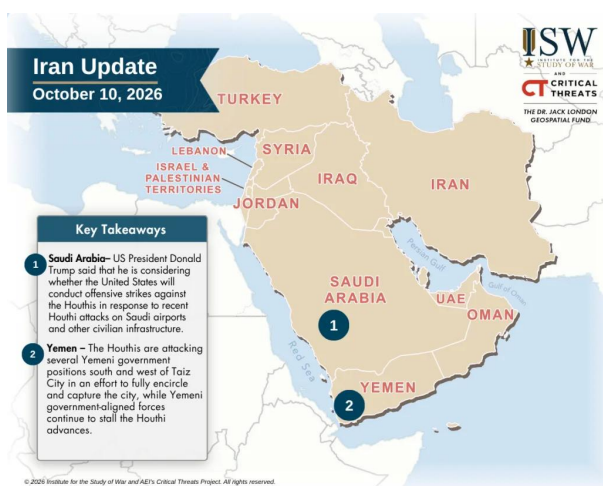
**William Doran, Parker Hempel, Katherine Wells, Kelly Campa**

**Analyst Notes:** Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

*The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute are publishing updates Monday through Friday to provide analysis on the war with Iran and the broader Middle East. Weekday updates cover events from the past 24-hour period, whereas weekend updates are abbreviated and cover the Houthi-Saudi conflict and major breaking developments related to the war with Iran.*

## Key Takeaways

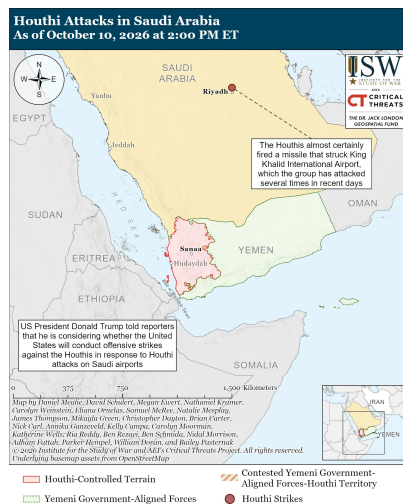
1. US President Donald Trump told reporters on October 10 that he is considering whether the United States will conduct offensive strikes against the Houthis in response to recent Houthi attacks on Saudi airports and other civilian infrastructure.
2. The Houthis are attacking several Yemeni government positions south and west of Taiz City in an effort to fully encircle and capture the city, while Yemeni government-aligned forces continue to stall the Houthi advances.



## Toplines

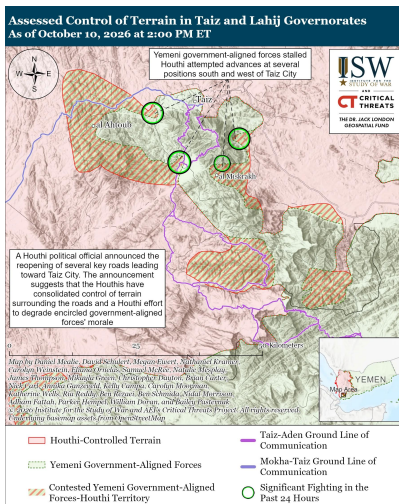
**US President Donald Trump told reporters on October 10 that he is considering whether the**

**United States will conduct offensive strikes against the Houthis in response to recent Houthi attacks on Saudi airports and other civilian infrastructure.[1]** The Houthis almost certainly conducted a missile attack on October 10 targeting King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, which the group has attacked several times in recent days.[2] A regional official told the Associated Press on October 10 that a missile struck a terminal complex at the airport and wounded many people.[3] The Houthis have expanded the scale of ballistic missile, cruise missile, and drone attacks targeting Saudi civilian airports since Yemeni government-aligned forces launched a counteroffensive to retake territory on the Red Sea coastal plain on October 4.[4] The Houthis' frequent attacks on Saudi civilian infrastructure, particularly airports, are currently motivating Saudi efforts to degrade Houthi ballistic missile capabilities and other long-range strike platforms.



Potential US involvement in the Saudi-Yemeni government air campaign to degrade Houthi ballistic missile capabilities would mark the first direct US military action against the group since the conclusion of Operation Rough Rider in May 2025.[5] US strikes during Operation Rough Rider degraded Houthi missile and other strike capabilities that the group used to attack civilian vessels in the Red Sea and Bab al Mandeb Strait.[6] The United States and other partner forces have expanded military assistance, including intelligence, targeting, and air defense support, to Saudi Arabia in recent weeks.[7] These forms of military assistance support Saudi efforts to inhibit Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia by exposing Houthi strike capabilities to Saudi air assets and protecting civilian infrastructure from Houthi missiles and drones.

**The Houthis are attacking several Yemeni government positions south and west of Taiz City in an effort to fully encircle and capture the city, while Yemeni government-aligned forces continue to stall the Houthi advances.** Yemeni military sources told joint UK-Emirati media on October 10 that Yemeni government-aligned forces repelled an attempted Houthi advance in the vicinity of Wadi al Dhabab, which is a valley located on the southwestern outskirts of Taiz City.[8] The sources also reported that Houthi fighters have engaged Yemeni government-aligned forces in heavy combat in the vicinities of Jabal Sabr and Najd Qasim, which are both located less than 10 kilometers south of Taiz City.[9] Yemeni media also reported on October 10 that Yemeni government-aligned forces repelled an attempted Houthi advance in the vicinity of al Shaqab, which is located about 12 kilometers south of Taiz City.[10] The Houthis claimed on October 10 that the group is securing control over central Taiz Governorate's Mawasit, Sama, and al Salu districts.[11] ISW-CTP has not observed verifiable reports that corroborate the Houthis' claim at the time of this writing. The Houthis' attempted advances on several fronts south and west of Taiz City indicate that the group is preparing to fully encircle and attempt to capture the city, which is Yemen's third largest city.[12]



These attempted Houthi advances come amid Houthi efforts to consolidate and secure ground lines of communication (GLOC) leading into Taiz City from peripheral areas of Taiz Governorate. Houthi Taiz “Governor” Ahmed al Masawi announced on October 9 that the group has reopened several roadways in Taiz Governorate for civilian use, including the Mokha-Najd al Nashamah roadway and other roads in central and southern Taiz Governorate.[13] This official announcement indicates that the Houthis assess that they have secured sufficient control over the roadways and surrounding terrain to permit relatively normal civilian and economic activity to resume. Masawi also characterized the Houthis’ decision to reopen roads to Taiz City as a humanitarian issue and urged civilians in government-held areas to reopen remaining roads and permit the flow of civilian necessities into Taiz City.[14] Masawi’s comments are likely intended to weaken Yemeni government-aligned forces’ and anti-Houthi civilians’ will to resist Houthi control over Taiz City, particularly as the group’s encirclement of central Taiz Governorate is exacerbating critical supply shortages in government-held areas.[15]

Houthi control of terrain surrounding key GLOCs leading to Taiz City does not insulate the group’s logistics from Saudi and Yemeni government attacks, however. Saudi and Yemeni government drones and warplanes have targeted Houthi reinforcements, weapons depots, and logistical centers behind Houthi lines in Taiz Governorate in recent weeks in order to deprive Houthi frontline forces of necessary sustainment.[16] The high volume of recent Saudi and Yemeni government airstrikes and drone strikes on Houthi targets attests to these forces’ air superiority throughout Yemen, which the Houthis have largely failed to disrupt.[17]

The Saudi-Yemeni government air campaign also intends to degrade the Houthis’ long-range strike capabilities and support Yemeni government-aligned forces on frontlines across Yemen. Saudi Joint Forces Command (JFC) spokesperson Major General Turki al Maliki announced on October 9 that Saudi forces have recently destroyed 136 Houthi military targets in Yemen and that JFC intends to destroy the Houthis’ ballistic missile capabilities.[18] Saudi forces have conducted numerous airstrikes targeting Houthi ballistic missile launchers and missile storage sites, which are critical to the group’s ability to target Saudi civilian infrastructure and Yemeni government-aligned forces’ staging areas, across Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen in recent days.[19] Maliki added that the JFC is providing 24-hour close air support coverage to Yemeni government-aligned forces.[20]

## US and Partner Military Operations

*Nothing significant to report.*

# Iranian Strike Campaign

*Assessed Iranian War Aims:*

- *Secure international recognition of Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz*
- *Degrade the US ability and willingness to continue the war*
- *Restore deterrence vis-à-vis the United States and its regional partners*
- *Divide the United States and Israel from the Arab states*

*Nothing significant to report.*

## US-Iran Negotiations

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iranian Domestic Affairs

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Iraq

*Nothing significant to report.*

## Arabian Peninsula

*See topline section.*

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