Iran Update, October 11, 2026

Bailey Pasternak, Ben Rezaei, Carolyn Moorman, 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 continued to attack Saudi airports as part of the group's campaign to impose increasing pressure on Saudi Arabia via attacks on Saudi critical infrastructure. Saudi Arabia announced on October 10 and 11 that unidentified projectiles struck near King Fahd International Airport in Dammam and a terminal at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, respectively.
2. The Houthi-Yemeni government frontlines have remained relatively stable since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff. The Southern Giants Brigades destroyed five Houthi armored vehicles that were traveling toward Yemeni government-held territory near Dhubab Airport on the Red Sea coastal plain on October 11.
3. Saudi Arabia continued to target Houthi positions and communications infrastructure across Yemen to support Yemeni government-aligned ground forces and degrade the Houthis' ability to attack Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia struck Houthi positions near Jabal Sabr on October 11. Houthi and local Yemeni media reported that Saudi Arabia conducted additional airstrikes on Houthi-controlled territory in Taiz Governorate on October 10 and 11.

Toplines

The Houthis have continued to attack Saudi airports as part of the group's campaign to impose increasing pressure on Saudi Arabia via attacks on Saudi critical infrastructure. Saudi Arabia announced on October 10 and 11 that unidentified projectiles struck near King Fahd International Airport in Dammam and a terminal at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, respectively.[1] The attack on King Khalid Airport sparked a fire.[2] The Houthis have targeted these airports repeatedly in recent days, including an October 10 missile attack on King Khalid Airport that killed over 10 people.[3] Saudi Arabia has also intercepted a drone and two missiles, almost certainly launched by the Houthis, since ISW-CTP 's last data cutoff.[4] Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree issued another warning on October 11 against using Saudi airports and airspace, threatening continued Houthi attacks on Saudi airports until the Houthis achieve their objectives.[5] Houthi objectives include ending Saudi support for

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

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. US President Donald Trump told reporters on October 10 that he is considering whether the United States will conduct strikes against the Houthis in response to recent Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia.[6]

The Houthi-Yemeni government frontlines have remained relatively stable since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff. The Southern Giants Brigades destroyed five Houthi armored vehicles that were traveling toward Yemeni government-held territory near Dhubab Airport on the Red Sea coastal plain on October 11.[7] Yemeni government-aligned forces previously advanced to Dhubab Airport on October 5 and have not advanced further north at the time of this writing.[8] Yemeni government-aligned forces separately intercepted a Houthi fixed-wing drone over Jabal Sabr, east of Taiz City, on October 11.[9] The drone interception followed heavy engagements near Jabal Sabr on October 10 amid ongoing Houthi efforts to fully encircle and capture Taiz City.[10]

Saudi Arabia continued to target Houthi positions and communications infrastructure across Yemen to support Yemeni government-aligned ground forces and degrade the Houthis' ability to attack Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia struck Houthi positions near Jabal Sabr on October 11.[11] Houthi and local Yemeni media reported that Saudi Arabia conducted additional airstrikes on Houthi-controlled territory in Taiz Governorate on October 10 and 11.[12] The Houthis, local, and regional media reported that Saudi Arabia separately conducted multiple strikes targeting Houthi military positions and communications infrastructure in Sanaa, Saada, and Ibb governorates, including Sanaa International Airport, on October 10 and 11.[13] Saudi forces have conducted numerous strikes targeting Houthi military positions and communications infrastructure in recent days to degrade the Houthis' ability to attack Saudi Arabia and conduct offensive operations against Yemeni government-aligned forces.[14]

US and Partner Military Operations

See topline section.

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*

Iran continues to attack commercial ships using "unauthorized" routes through the Strait of Hormuz as part of its effort to enforce its control over the strategic waterway.[15] United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported that unidentified projectiles struck two outbound tankers in the strait on October 10 and 11, causing a fire aboard the first vessel and damaging the second.[16] Supreme National Security Council Secretary Major General Mohsen Rezaei claimed on

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

October 11 that Iranian forces target five or six small vessels each night that transfer oil to larger tankers through Omani waters.[17] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy separately claimed on October 10 that a “rogue” supertanker struck a naval mine while attempting to exit the strait through an “unauthorized” route.[18] The IRGC Navy later claimed on October 11 that three tankers have struck mines and caught fire while using “unauthorized” routes since October 10 and warned that it will treat vessels that turn off their automatic identification systems (AIS) as “hostile.”[19] Trump announced on August 25 that the US Navy had cleared all mines from the strait.[20]

US Central Command (CENTCOM) stated on October 10 that a US fighter jet struck the stern of the *Ocean Molica*, also known as the *Arika SUN*, after its crew ignored warnings and attempted to violate the US naval blockade on Iranian ports.[21] UKMTO reported on October 10 that an incident involving an unidentified tanker and military forces took place in the Gulf of Oman, which likely refers to the CENTCOM strike.[22]

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.

Endnotes

[1]https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109024884403908840 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109290238975586694 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109024884403908840

[2] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109290238975586694 ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109290346480123951

[3] https://x.com/ksagaca/status/2108965535421489565 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109064095324422238 ;
https://x.com/MarioLeb79/status/2108171801209749758

[4] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109046213110604191 ;
https://twitter.com/Alsakaniali/status/2109072377157935471 ;
https://twitter.com/AlArabiya_Brk/status/2109290859317305768

[5] https://t.me/army21ye/3862

[6] https://apnews.com/article/saudi-yemen-houthi-riyadh-airport-f0e0e6105f33400e37bb20bb9a8130af

[7] https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2109022280189935812

[8] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-5-2026/

[9] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2108994272129126502

[10] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-10-2026/

[11] https://x.com/lichuanyuejjj/status/2109148382749204884?s=20 ;
https://x.com/w3376766/status/2109138592270541046?s=20

[12] https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96281 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96282 ;
https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96295 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96336 ; https://saba dot ye/ar/news3807604.htm?cid=1 ; https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2109269499694526526

[13] https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96291 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96300 ;
https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96301 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96339 ; https://saba dot ye/ar/news3807403.htm?cid=1 ; https://saba dot ye/ar/news3807524.htm?cid=1 ; ;
https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2109226595546534343 ;
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/strike-reported-yemeni-sanaa-airport-houthi-run-tv-says-2026-10-11/ ; https://x.com/AlArabiya_Brk/status/2109280485805355065

[14] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-10-2026/

[15] https://t.me/mehrnews/421235

[16] https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2109043547991089651 ;
https://twitter.com/UK_MTO/status/2109274490882392164

[17] https://tasnimnews dot ir/fa/news/1405/07/19/3720316

[18] https://t.me/mehrnews/421235

[19] https://t.me/Tasnimnews/450635 ;

https://t.me/Tasnimnews/450634

[20] https://www.axios.com/2026/08/25/hormuz-mines-remove-oil-iran-trump

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

[21] https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/2109073217176637447

[22] https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2109117194038624357

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Iran Update, October 12, 2026

Bailey Pasternak, Ben Rezaei, Carolyn Moorman, Nidal Morrison, Ria Reddy, 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 fully encircled Taiz City on October 12, which will impose multiple dilemmas on Yemeni government-aligned forces. A complete encirclement further restricts Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to reinforce and resupply their positions, withdraw forces, and sustain defensive operations in and around Taiz City.
2. The Houthis likely perceive Saudi Arabia's temporary closure of King Khalid International Airport and reports of Saudi Arabia's air defense constraints as indicators that the group is successfully mounting pressure on Saudi Arabia. Such a perception would incentivize the Houthis to sustain attacks on Saudi critical infrastructure. Saudi Arabia has not indicated any willingness to agree to Houthi demands at the time of this writing, however.
3. Iran appears to be targeting commercial vessels conducting ship-to-ship oil transfers in and near the Strait of Hormuz in order to try to undermine vessels' ability to move energy through the strait.
4. Iran has increased its threats against vessels in the strait, likely to reinforce the Iranian threat to shipping and reestablish control over the waterway by deterring vessels from using non-Iranian-approved routes.
5. Iran may be developing its anti-ship missile capabilities to improve its ability to target vessels.
6. Iran is threatening to attack US-linked digital infrastructure in response to potential future US strikes, likely in order to try to deter the United States from resuming military action against Iran. Iran likely seeks to threaten to expand the potential US targets for Iranian attacks in order to raise the United States' perceived costs of renewed conflict with Iran.

Toplines

The Houthis fully encircled Taiz City on October 12, which will impose multiple dilemmas on Yemeni government-aligned forces. TheHouthis captured al Misrakh District on October 12, which is approximately 13 kilometers south of Taiz City.[1] Geolocated footage indicates that the Houthis also

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

consolidated control over territory on October 12 that was previously contested by the Houthis and Yemeni government-aligned forces in eastern Jabal Habashi District, which connects to al Misrakh.[2] Taiz City is now fully encircled by either Houthi-held territory or Houthi-Yemeni government contested terrain. The Houthis' consolidation of control over territory in eastern Jabal Habashi will likely strengthen the Houthis' ability to defend al Misrakh and maintain the encirclement of Taiz City by establishing contiguous Houthi control over territory south of the city.

The encirclement of Taiz advances the Houthis' ability to pursue multiple military objectives in Yemen. The Houthis effectively encircled Taiz City on October 6 after severing the last Yemeni government ground line of communication (GLOC) into central Taiz Governorate.[3] A complete encirclement further restricts Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to reinforce and resupply their positions, withdraw forces, and sustain defensive operations in and around Taiz City.[4] ISW-CTP continues to assess that the encirclement of Taiz City could:

- Free up Houthi forces to pursue other military objectives, including recapturing territory along the Red Sea coastal plain, where the Houthis have failed to reverse Yemeni government advances to Dhubab Airport since October 5.[5]
- 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 currently advance against Aden City without exposing their rear to government forces in Taiz Governorate.[6]
- Secure a propaganda victory by capturing a governorate whose population has historically opposed Houthi rule.[7] The Houthis have historically made several unsuccessful attempts to seize Taiz Governorate.[8]
- Reestablish most of the former pre-unification Yemen Arab Republic's borders, excluding parts of Marib and Jawf governorates.[9]
- Strengthen the Houthis' negotiating position in potential peace settlement talks with the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia.[10]

The Houthis' encirclement of Taiz City will simultaneously impose multiple dilemmas on Yemeni government-aligned forces. Yemeni government-aligned forces face the dilemma of whether to redirect forces from other frontlines to break the Houthi encirclement of Taiz City or maintain their current positions and risk further Houthi advances in Taiz Governorate. Redirecting forces from the Red Sea coastal plain to Taiz Governorate would likely weaken Yemeni government positions near Dhubab Airport and create opportunities for the Houthis to reverse recent Yemeni government gains by the Bab al Mandeb Strait.[11] It is also uncertain how Yemeni government-aligned forces could effectively redeploy from other fronts to Taiz Governorate, given the Houthis' control of GLOCs into Taiz Governorate.[12]

The Houthis likely perceive Saudi Arabia's temporary closure of King Khalid International Airport and reports of Saudi Arabia's air defense constraints as indicators that the group is successfully mounting pressure on Saudi Arabia. Such a perception would incentivize the Houthis to sustain attacks on Saudi critical infrastructure. Saudi Arabia temporarily suspended operations at King Khalid Airport on October 10 following a Houthi attack on the airport that killed at least 12 people.[13] Saudi Arabia extended its temporary closure of King Khalid Airport on October 12 following another Houthi attack on the airport earlier that day.[14] The Houthis have repeatedly targeted the airport, along with other Saudi critical infrastructure, in recent weeks as part of the group's campaign to degrade Saudi willingness to sustain military operations against the Houthis and accept Houthi demands, which include lifting Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports and granting the Houthis control over Yemen's oil and gas resources.[15] Saudi Arabia may have extended the airport's

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

closure due to damage from the strikes or to reduce material and civilian risk from future Houthi strikes. The closure, nonetheless, demonstrates the Houthis' ability to impose costs on Saudi Arabia. Sources familiar with Saudi deliberations separately told the *Wall Street Journal* on October 12 that Saudi Arabia is facing challenges in defending the entire country from Houthi attacks and has repositioned its air defense batteries to prioritize the protection of palaces and energy infrastructure.[16] Saudi Arabia's reported air defense constraints likely further reinforce the Houthis' perception that their attacks are successfully increasing pressure on Saudi Arabia to concede to Houthi demands.

Saudi Arabia has not indicated any willingness to agree to Houthi demands at the time of this writing, however. Saudi leaders previously signaled that they were unwilling to enter any truce negotiations with the Houthis as long as the group controls the Bab al Mandeb Strait, according to Western and regional sources speaking to Reuters on October 2.[17] The Houthis will, therefore, almost certainly continue to attack Saudi critical infrastructure, including airports, to further degrade Saudi willingness to continue the conflict. Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree reiterated on October 11 that the group will continue to target Saudi airports until the Houthis achieve their objectives.[18]

Iran appears to be targeting commercial vessels conducting ship-to-ship oil transfers in and near the Strait of Hormuz in order to try to undermine vessels' ability to move energy through the strait. Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Major General Mohsen Rezaei claimed on October 11 that Iranian forces have attacked around five small vessels conducting ship-to-ship transfers with larger tankers each night over the past two to three months.[19] Rezaei likely exaggerated the number of vessels that Iran has struck, but his comments nevertheless suggest that Iran may specifically be targeting ship-to-ship transfers, which Gulf countries have increasingly relied on in recent months to evade Iranian detection and bypass Iranian control of the strait.[20] Energy firm Kpler separately told Reuters on October 8 that crude flow through the strait had fallen by 27 percent compared to the previous week, largely due to a decline in ship-to-ship transfers in the Gulf of Oman.[21] This data suggests that recent Iranian attacks may have caused the decline in such transfers and the subsequent drop in oil flow through the strait. United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) confirmed that a drone struck a tanker near Sohar, Oman, on October 11.[22] Sohar is a key hub for ship-to-ship transfers, although it is unclear if the tanker was involved in such a transfer when it was attacked.[23]

Iran has increased its threats against vessels in the strait, likely to reinforce the Iranian threat to shipping and reestablish control over the waterway by deterring vessels from using non-Iranian-approved routes. The IRGC Navy threatened on October 9 to attack vessels "throughout the region" if they pass through non-Iranian-approved routes in the strait.[24] IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Ali Ozmaei separately warned on October 11 that Iran will treat vessels that disable their navigation or identification systems to transit the strait as hostile and respond "severely and decisively."[25] The IRGC Navy simultaneously continues to claim that vessels using "unauthorized" routes have struck naval mines, likely to portray these routes as dangerous and deter shipping companies from using them.[26] The United States previously announced on August 25 that it had cleared the strait of mines.[27] Iran is likely increasing its threats to vessels in response to the United States' recent success in facilitating the flow of oil out of the strait, which has undermined Iran's claims of control over the waterway.

Iran may be developing its anti-ship missile capabilities to improve its ability to target vessels. IRGC Spokesperson Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi published an English-language image on October 11 that showed Iranian ballistic missiles, including the Kheibar Shekan and Paveh, as well as

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

the Abu Mahdi anti-ship cruise missile, targeting a US aircraft carrier.[28] Iranian Armed Forces General Staff-run outlet Defa Press assessed that the image suggests that Iran has developed an anti-ship variant of the Kheibar Shekan ballistic missile and implied that Iran may have used this variant in its September 5 attack on US naval forces.[29] Defa Press's assessment is consistent with a recent statement from Brigadier General Ali Balali, an adviser to the IRGC Aerospace Force commander, who claimed on October 1 that Iran had tested a "long-range ballistic missile against a moving target."[30]

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

See topline section.

Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

Iraq

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al Zaydi will likely discuss the Iraqi federal government's efforts to prevent Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attacks on neighboring countries during his upcoming visits to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other unspecified Gulf countries on October 14. Iraqi media reported on October 10 that Zaydi will visit several Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, on October 14.[34] Zaydi cancelled his planned trip to Saudi Arabia in July 2026 after the United States and Saudi Arabia struck several Iranian-backed Iraqi militia targets in Iraq in response to militia attacks on Saudi oil infrastructure.[35] Saudi Arabia has repeatedly urged the Iraqi federal government to punish the

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

perpetrators of attacks on Saudi Arabia and prevent Iranian-backed Iraqi militias from launching attacks on neighboring countries.[36] Zaydi's upcoming visit comes as the Iraqi federal government has taken limited steps to prevent such attacks, such as by forming a new Iraqi Security Forces operations command to enhance coordination between Iraqi forces deployed to the Muthanna desert near the borders with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.[37] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have repeatedly launched attacks on neighboring countries from the Muthanna desert.[38]

Arabian Peninsula

See topline section.

Endnotes

[1] https://x.com/war_cube/status/2109600897907175660 ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/12/غارات-على-مواقع-حوثية-في-محافظات-تعز-وصنعاء-واب ; https://x.com/AB4_Ali3/status/2109367591412097228 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96415
[2] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2109705926546686108?s=20 ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/12/غارات-على-مواقع-حوثية-في-محافظات-تعز-وصنعاء-واب

[3] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-8-2026/ ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-9-2026/
[4] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-8-2026/ ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-9-2026/
[5] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-11-2026
[6] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-4-2026/
[7] https://www.aljazeera dot com/news/2026/9/14/why-the-houthi-advance-towards-yemens-marib-taiz-matters ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-4-2026/

[8] https://www.aljazeera dot com/news/2026/9/14/why-the-houthi-advance-towards-yemens-marib-taiz-matters ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-4-2026/
[9] https://ecfr dot eu/archive/page/-/Mapping_Yemen_(1).pdf ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-4-2026/
[10] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-4-2026/
[11] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-9-2026/ ; https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-11-2026
[12] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-7-2026/
[13] https://x.com/ksagaca/status/2108965535421489565 ; https://x.com/ksagaca/status/2109039231968383000
[14] https://x.com/ksagaca/status/2109564392455250075 ; https://x.com/ksagaca/status/2109320328388202840
[15] https://t.me/army21ye/3847 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3838 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3768
[16] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-backed-militants-are-tightening-the-screws-on-saudi-arabias-crown-prince-e7b9e789?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos2
[17] https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/saudis-plan-assault-houthis-break-red-sea-chokehold-2026-10

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

-02/
[18] https://t.me/army21ye/3862
[19] https://tasnimnews dot ir/fa/news/1405/07/19/3720316/
[20] https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-899598
[21]
https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/hormuz-transits-lowest-over-two-months-after-attacks-data-shows-2026-10-08/
[22] https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2109389244301205557?s=20
[23] https://www.aljazeera dot com/news/2026/9/18/oman-oil-escape-route-how-ship-to-ship-transfers-work-despite-big
[24] https://t.me/iribnews/365700 ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-9-2026/
[25] https://t.me/farsna/467820
[26] https://t.me/Tasnimnews/450634 ;
https://t.me/farsna/467970
[27]
https://www.reuters.com/world/trump-says-strait-hormuz-has-been-demined-warns-iran-not-plant-more-2026-08-25/
[28] https://x.com/Irgcspeaker/status/2109368992863273124
[29] https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/869399/
[30] https://www.iranintl.com/en/202610012937
[31] https://tasnimnews dot ir/fa/news/1405/07/19/3720316/
[32] https://www.presstv.co dot uk/Detail/2026/10/11/778085/Exclusive–Rezaei-says-%E2%80%98Powers-greater-than-US-tried-to-conquer-Iran,-but-ended-up-in-dustbin-of-history%E2%80%99 ;
https://x.com/PressTV/status/2109242170876346586?s=20
[33] https://t.me/Tasnimnews/450600
[34] https://en.964media dot com/53589/
[35]
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2026/07/zaidi-cancels-riyadh-trip-after-us-saudi-strikes-iran-backed-militias-iraq
[36]
https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2026/08/saudi-arabia-wants-iran-backed-militia-heads-roll-iraq-amid-talks-tehran ; https://today.lorientlejour dot com/article/1542629/saudi-calls-on-iraq-to-prevent-attacks-from-its-territory.html ; https://www.arabnews dot com/saudi-arabia/saudi-arabia-five-other-countries-demand-iraq-stops-attacks-by-pro-iran-groups-from-its-territory-2637665
[37] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-14-2026/ ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-august-10-2026/ ;
https://www.alaraby dot co.uk/politics/خاص-العراق-يشكل-قيادة-عمليات-البادية-لمنع-الهجمات-على-دول-الجوار
38]] https://www.alaraby dot co.uk/politics/خاص-العراق-يشكل-قيادة-عمليات-البادية-لمنع-الهجمات-على-دول-الجوار ;
https://ctc.westpoint.edu/standing-with-iran-the-integrated-combat-performance-of-iraqi-militias-during-operation-epic-fury/

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Iran Update, October 13, 2026

William Doran, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells, Parker Hempel, Nidal Morrison, Kelly Campa

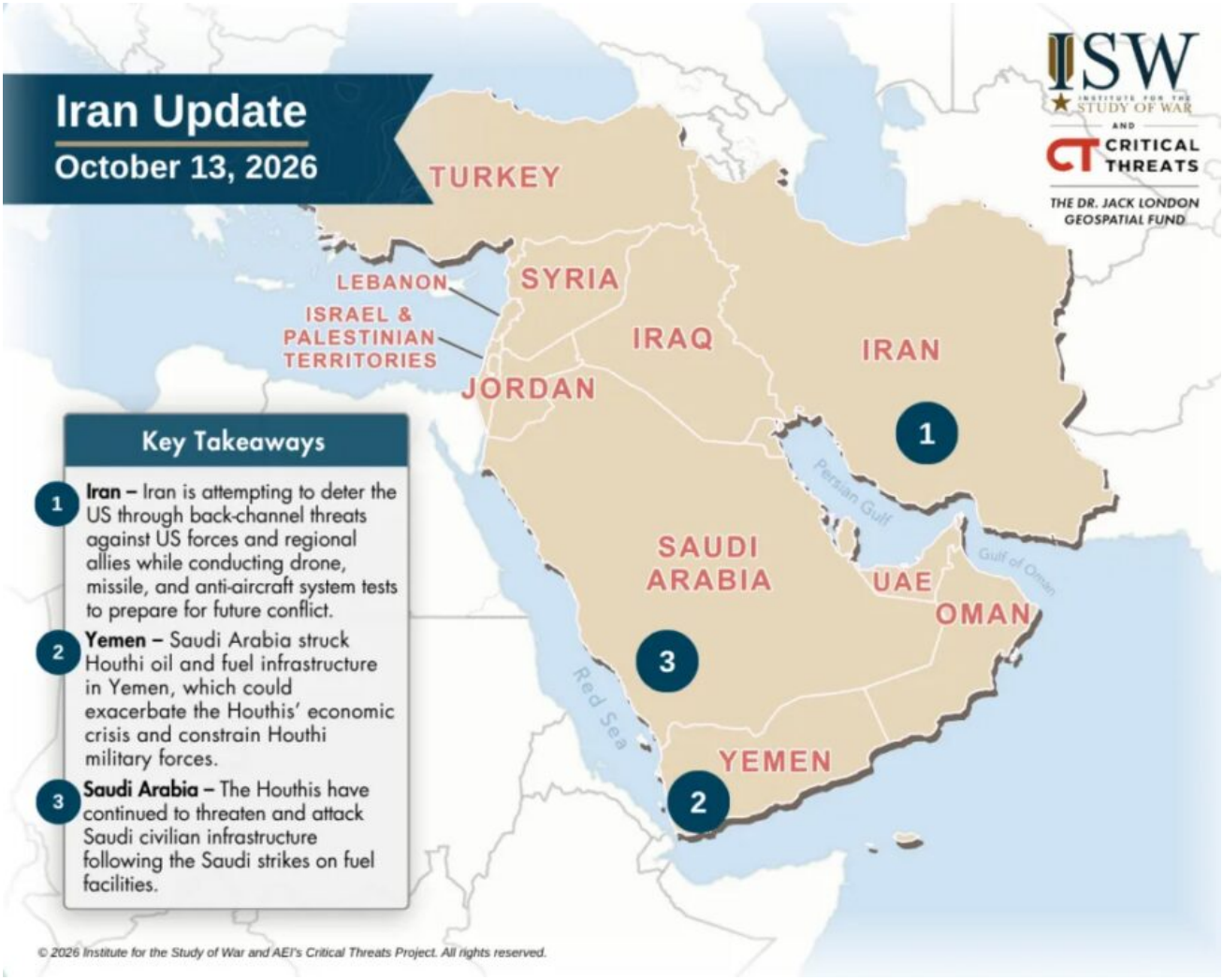
Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

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. Iran is attempting to deter renewed US military operations against Iran through back-channel threats against US forces and regional allies while simultaneously conducting drone, missile, and anti-aircraft system tests in preparation for future conflict.
2. Saudi Arabia struck Houthi oil and fuel storage and transport infrastructure in Yemen on October 13, which could exacerbate the Houthis' economic crisis and constrain Houthi military forces.
3. The Houthis have continued to threaten and attack Saudi civilian infrastructure following the Saudi strikes on fuel facilities.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Toplines

Iran is attempting to deter renewed US military operations against Iran by threatening attacks against US forces and regional allies while simultaneously testing drone, missile, and air defense systems in preparation for future conflict. Iranian officials warned Arab officials and mediators that it would "more aggressively" target US forces and naval vessels in the event of renewed conflict, according to people familiar with the warnings speaking to the *Wall Street Journal* on October 12.[1] Iranian officials also reportedly warned that Iran would target regional energy infrastructure, and some of the sources noted that Iran specified that Saudi oil facilities would be targets.[2] Iran repeatedly attacked energy and other critical infrastructure in the Gulf states during the war, citing the presence of US bases in these countries as justification for its attacks.[3] Iran targeted these facilities in order to drive up global energy prices as part of their broader effort to coerce the Gulf states to pressure the United States and Israel to halt their campaign against Iran.[4] Iranian threats against Gulf energy infrastructure at this time likely similarly aim to coerce Gulf states to pressure the United States to refrain from renewing major operations against Iran. The reported specific Iranian threat against Saudi oil facilities likely aims to increase pressure on Saudi Arabia at a time when the kingdom's oil industry is already under significant strain from persistent Houthi missile and drone attacks. The *Journal* also reported that some Iranian officials "hinted" that Iranian forces could conduct "land incursions into neighboring countries," citing people familiar with the matter.[5] The *Journal* described Iranian officials' threats of possible ground incursions as "an attempt to deter a potential attack."[6] Iranian threats against US forces and partners come amid Western media reporting that US President Donald Trump is considering

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

renewed airstrikes on Iran in an effort to reach a new diplomatic settlement with Iran.[7]

Iran has reportedly tested its drone, missile, and air defense systems in recent days, almost certainly in preparation for a possible renewed conflict with the United States. An independent Iran-based outlet reported that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) conducted more than 30 medium-range solid-fuel Emad and Kheibar Sheikan ballistic missile tests in the vicinity of multiple unspecified Iranian cities on October 11.[8] An Iran-based researcher also shared footage from the reported October 11 exercise.[9] The researcher claimed that Iran had launched approximately 30 ballistic missiles, including Emad and Khorramshahr variants, from Tehran Province, Alborz Province, and other sites in central Iran.[10] An open-source intelligence (OSINT) account similarly shared footage on October 11 that showed launches of Shahed-136 one-way attack drones and unspecified missiles.[11] An Israeli OSINT analyst separately reported that Iran launched several one-way attack drones from Kashan, Esfahan Province, and ballistic and surface-to-air missiles from Esfahan and Yazd provinces and Damanvand, Alborz Province.[12] ISW-CTP is unable to verify these reports of drone and missile tests, but it is notable that Iran is reportedly testing systems that it would presumably use to attack US forces and regional partners in the event of a renewed conflict. Iran is also reportedly testing air defense systems, likely in preparation for a possible future US attack. An Iranian regime outlet separately reported on October 11 that Iran tested its *Jaljaleh* anti-aircraft mine system.[13] The IRGC introduced the *Jaljaleh* system to target low-altitude targets such as drones and helicopters in November 2025.[14]

Saudi Arabia struck Houthi oil and fuel storage and transport infrastructure in Yemen on October 13, which could exacerbate the Houthis' economic crisis and constrain Houthi military capabilities. The Saudi Joint Forces Command (JFC) announced that Saudi forces conducted airstrikes targeting several Houthi oil and fuel facilities in Sanaa, Dhamar, and Hudaydah governorates on October 13.[15] The JFC issued a warning to Yemeni civilians on October 13 before attacking the al Sabahah fuel depot outside of Sanaa City, which a Yemen-based journalist described as one of the Houthis' most significant oil storage facilities.[16] Yemeni media and independent researchers also published reports and footage of fires and smoke plumes at several fuel depots in Houthi-controlled Yemeni territory on October 13.[17]

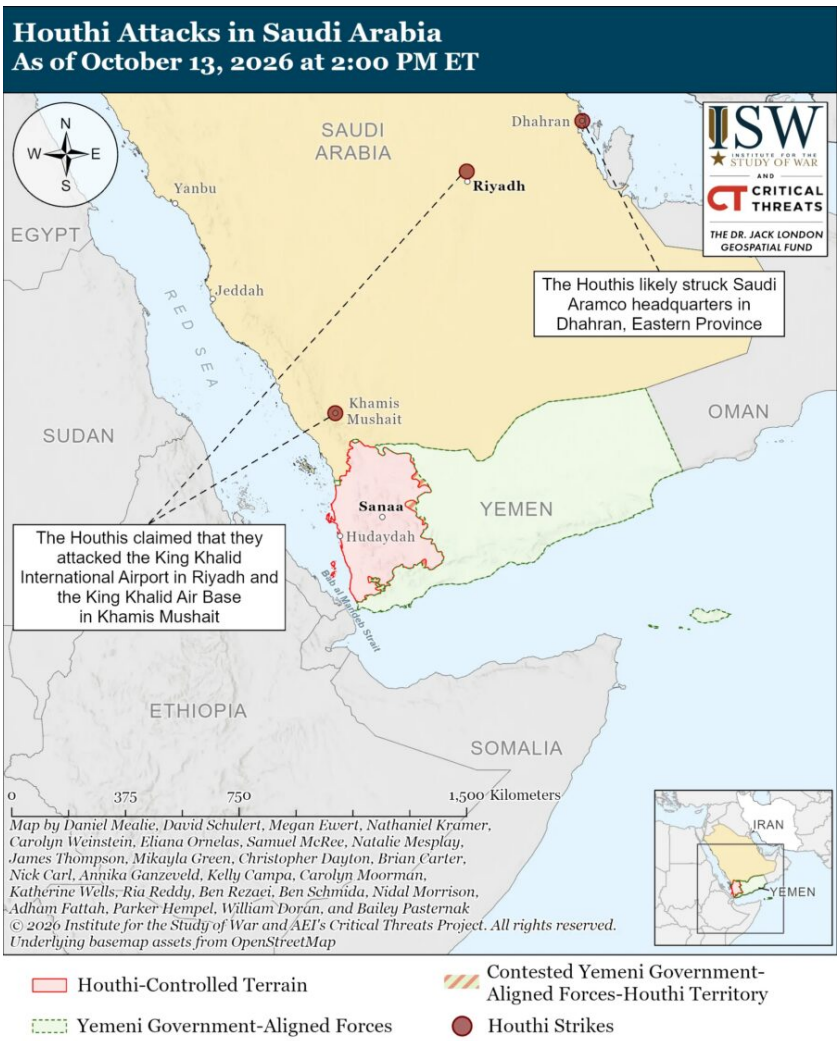
Saudi attacks on Houthi oil and fuel facilities likely intend to both maximize economic pressure on the Houthi political organization and constrain the Houthis' ability to sustain their military forces.[18] The Houthis currently lack access to Yemen's oil and gas resources and acquire a significant amount of annual revenue from the sale and distribution of imported oil products.[19]The JFC said that it struck fuel unloading berths as part of the strikes.[20] Attacks on Houthi oil storage facilities and transport infrastructure likely aim to reduce the Houthis' ability to fund their military operations, particularly given the worsening economic conditions in Houthi-controlled territory.[21] ISW-CTP has assessed that the Houthis resumed their war with Saudi Arabia in July 2026 to secure concessions that would alleviate the dire economic situation in Houthi-controlled areas, which poses a threat to Houthi rule over northern and western Yemen.[22] Saudi attacks on fuel facilities could also exacerbate ongoing fuel shortages in Houthi-controlled territory and may force the Houthis to raise fuel prices, which imposes constraints on the group's military and political efforts.[23] Fuel shortages further hinder the Houthis' combat capabilities and logistics because supply convoys, reinforcements, and frontline forces rely on vehicles that require fuel. The Houthis may increasingly requisition fuel from civilians to avoid logistical disruptions that could jeopardize the group's offensives, although this could heighten civilians' discontent with Houthi rule.[24] Saudi media reported on September 21 that the Houthis are already requisitioning fuel to sustain military operations in southwestern Yemen.[25]

Saudi Arabia almost certainly conducted these attacks in retaliation for Houthi strikes on Saudi territory in recent days and seeks to compel the Houthis to cease their attacks on Saudi military and civilian

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

targets. The JFC demanded that the Houthis immediately stop targeting Saudi airports, ports, oil facilities, and other civilian infrastructure when it announced Saudi forces' strikes on Houthi fuel facilities on October 13.[26] The Houthis have frequently launched missile and drone attacks targeting Saudi airports, oil infrastructure, and military bases in recent days, including an attack on King Khalid International Airport on October 10 that killed at least 13 people.[27]

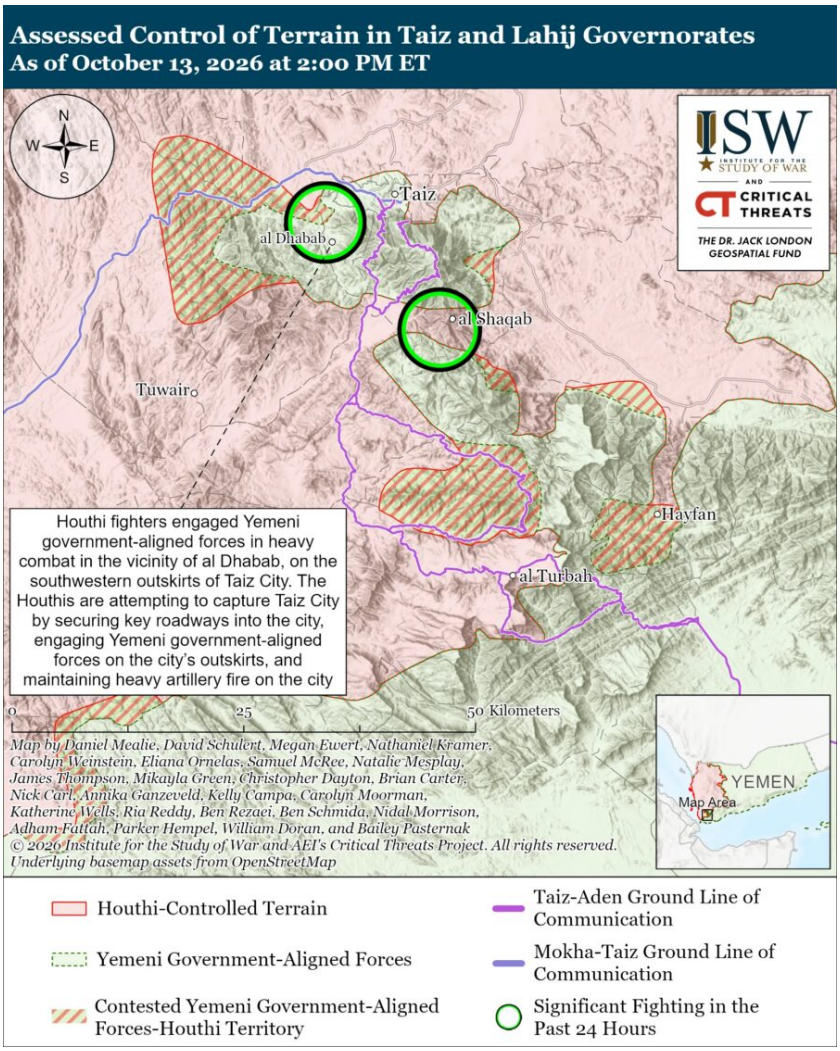
The Houthis have continued to threaten and attack Saudi civilian infrastructure following the Saudi strikes on fuel facilities, however. Unspecified sources told Reuters on October 13 that a missile or missile debris impacted and started a fire at the Saudi Aramco headquarters in Dhahran, Eastern Province, more than 1,100 kilometers from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen.[28] Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree issued a warning for civilians to evacuate the Dhahran headquarters on October 13, at about the same time that Yemeni media reported Saudi airstrikes on Houthi fuel facilities.[29] The Houthis claimed responsibility for a ballistic missile attack on King Khalid International Airport and a drone attack on King Khalid Air Base in Khamis Mushait, Asir Province, on October 12 but have not claimed responsibility for the attack in Dhahran at the time of this writing.[30]



The Houthis are attempting to capture Taiz City by securing a key roadway into the city. Houthi fighters engaged Yemeni government-aligned forces in heavy combat in the vicinity of al Dhabab, on the southwestern outskirts of Taiz City, on October 12 and 13.[31] The Houthis have attempted to capture the Hangar Checkpoint, on the main road leading into Taiz City from the southwest, although multiple videos of Houthi and Yemeni government-aligned forces at the site on October 12 and 13 suggest that control over the checkpoint remains contested.[32] The Houthis also launched several

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

rounds of heavy artillery fire on Yemeni government-controlled areas within Taiz City on October 12 and 13, according to Yemeni media and a DC-based Yemen analyst.[33] These combined military efforts are consistent with the Houthis' efforts to geographically isolate Taiz City in recent weeks and are likely intended in part to compel Yemeni government-aligned forces to surrender the city.[34]



The main concentration of Houthi and Yemeni government combat in the immediate vicinity of Taiz City comes amid continued engagements in other areas of central Taiz Governorate and a lack of reports of kinetic activity on the Red Sea coastal plain.[35] ISW-CTP has not observed reports indicating major combat developments or territorial changes on the coastal plain since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff on October 12. Local Yemeni sources purportedly told Iranian media on October 13 that the Houthis are launching an offensive south into Madaribah wa al Arah District in Lahij Governorate, immediately south of Taiz Governorate's Waziyah District.[36] The Southern Giants Brigades, which are a Yemeni government-aligned military faction, announced on October 12 that their forces have begun to reinforce tribal areas in Madaribah wa al Arah District to prevent Houthi attacks in the vicinity.[37]

US and Partner Military Operations

Nothing significant to report.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

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

See topline section.

Lebanon

Israeli media reported on October 12 that Hezbollah is attempting to improve its first-person view (FPV) drone capabilities.[38] Israel Public Broadcasting (Kann) reported that Hezbollah is working to increase the explosive payload of its FPV drones from 2.5 kilograms (kg) to between four and six kg. The broadcaster also reported that Hezbollah is attempting to extend the range of its drones from 20 kilometers (km) to 30 km.[39] Hezbollah increasingly deployed FPV systems in its asymmetric campaign against Israel between March and June 2026, likely as part of an early effort to integrate more precise FPV strike capabilities into its operations.[40] ISW previously assessed in late July that Hezbollah's early battlefield successes with tactical FPV systems against Israeli forces will almost certainly lead Hezbollah to invest further in its development of FPV systems.[41] ISW also assessed that Hezbollah would likely use the ceasefire in Lebanon to reconstitute its military forces and prepare for renewed fighting with Israel.[42] Israeli forces have only launched limited strikes against Hezbollah drone targets or launch positions in response to Hezbollah attacks against Israeli forces.[43]

Hezbollah announced a financial support program for displaced Lebanese civilians on October 13 that is almost certainly intended to compete with Lebanese government reconstruction efforts and recoup popular support.[44] Hezbollah Executive Council Head Ali Damoush announced that Hezbollah will initiate the "Promise and Commitment" housing allowance and reconstruction payment program for displaced families across Lebanon, which will offer both rent support payments and funds to replace damaged property.[45] Damoush said that families in Beirut and the southern suburbs could receive up to $14,000 USD based on the level of need. Families outside of Beirut and the suburbs could receive up to $12,000 USD, which would be divided into four installments paid over one year.[46] Hezbollah has offered multiple reconstruction and rent support payments to Lebanese citizens since 2024, but Hezbollah has also repeatedly been forced to halt these payments due to the group's liquidity challenges.[47]

Hezbollah's ability to provide financial support to Lebanese citizens is essential in order to rehabilitate

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

the group's image among the Lebanese population, particularly its Shia support base, as the group has grown increasingly unpopular after initiating two costly wars against Israel in the past two years.[48] Hezbollah relies upon public support to both justify its existence and resist Lebanese government disarmament efforts. Hezbollah has long framed itself as the primary and legitimate representative of Lebanese civilians and popular interests.[49] Hezbollah must also encourage civilians to not cooperate with Lebanese government and LAF efforts to disarm the group in order for the group to survive.

Hezbollah is likely simultaneously attempting to undermine recent Lebanese government efforts to initiate reconstruction projects in Lebanon. The Lebanese government announced 23 reconstruction programs to rebuild Nabatieh City and other areas in southern Lebanon on October 2.[50] Hezbollah officials have repeatedly attempted to portray the Lebanese government as unwilling and unable to provide reconstruction aid to Lebanese civilians.[51] Hezbollah's announcement of the program likely attempts to demonstrate to the Lebanese population that Hezbollah is more capable than the Lebanese government in providing reconstruction aid to further discredit and distract the government's recent reconstruction efforts.

The announcement of Hezbollah's new round of reconstruction payments comes amid reports that Iran transferred $200 million USD to Hezbollah in September 2026, according to two unspecified sources speaking to Reuters on October 7.[52] The sources did not specify how Iran allegedly transferred the funds to Hezbollah but claimed that Hezbollah planned to use $150 million USD of the total sum to provide $3,000 USD payments to 50,000 Lebanese families impacted by the Israel-Hezbollah war.[53] The US State Department denied Reuters' reporting and accused Hezbollah of "trying to save face with fake stories," however.[54]

Iraq

Shia Coordination Framework parties are resisting Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al Zaydi's ongoing efforts to frame himself as an independent decisionmaker. Unspecified government sources told Iraqi media on October 13 that framework actors are attempting to constrain Zaydi's actions by exploiting certain conditions that Zaydi must consult the framework on all matters. The Shia Coordination Framework instituted these preconditions, which include forbidding the prime minister from running in elections or establishing his own party, due to the framework's experience with former Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani.[55] Zaydi agreed to these conditions before becoming prime minister.[56] Framework actors are reportedly trying to limit Zaydi's independent decision-making due to some of his recent decisions, including his revival of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.[57] Zaydi merged several offices, including the Interior and Defense ministries and the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), into the Office of the Commander-in-Chief in July 2026.[58] CTP-ISW has previously assessed that Zaydi revived this office, last used under former Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki, as part of an effort to consolidate his personal power as prime minister, which framework actors expressed concern over in September 2026.[59] The unspecified governmental sources told Iraqi media on October 13 that framework actors also raised concerns over former Interior Minister Abdul Amir al Shammari running the office and the additional expenses that such an office would require.[60]

Zaydi has demonstrated his willingness to at least attempt to stand up to pressure from Iranian-backed Iraqi actors, including those in the framework, in recent months. Zaydi has continued to lead a government crackdown on the Iraqi militias, despite the relative strength of the militias and the Iranian infiltration of Iraqi institutions blunting the force of this effort, for example.[61] Zaydi has also pursued individual disarmament negotiations with the militias outside of the framework's negotiations and has considered avenues for PMF reform that would attempt to meet US demands regarding the militias.[62]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

The Iraqi Parliament scheduled a session on October 13, 2026, to complete Iraq's government formation.[63] The parliamentary session will include a vote to choose deputy prime minister candidates and to fill Iraqi ministries that have remained empty since Zaydi took office in May 2026 due to disputes between the framework and other Iraqi politicians.[64] Zaydi sent a letter to Parliament on October 13 requesting the session but did not specify which government ministries the session will seek to fill.[65] Parliament scheduling this session follows reports that the framework is planning to allocate deputy prime minister positions and control over new ministries to Iranian-backed Iraqi militia members.[66] The United States has firmly rejected any Iraqi militia member, even from disarmed militias, serving in any senior capacity in the Iraqi federal government.[67]

Arabian Peninsula

See topline section.

POWERED BY: BABEL STREET

Endnotes

[1] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-is-fortifying-nuclear-sites-and-rallying-its-people-for-a-return-to-fighting-c4cc3c28
[2] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-is-fortifying-nuclear-sites-and-rallying-its-people-for-a-return-to-fighting-c4cc3c28
[3] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-7-2026/; https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/gulf-states-had-a-strategy-of-playing-nice-with-iran-it-failed-8859f84e?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos1; https://x.com/modgovksa/status/2034546154902352232?s=20; https://x.com/ariel_oseran/status/2032201435060822439?s=20; https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthis-are-attacking-saudi-arabia-iraq-sources-say-2026-07-30/; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-april-30-2026/
[4] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-march-31-2026/
[5] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-is-fortifying-nuclear-sites-and-rallying-its-people-for-a-return-to-fighting-c4cc3c28
[6] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-is-fortifying-nuclear-sites-and-rallying-its-people-for-a-return-to-fighting-c4cc3c28
[7] https://www.theatlantic.com/national-security/2026/10/trump-iran-strike-midterms/688910/; https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-is-fortifying-nuclear-sites-and-rallying-its-people-for-a-return-to-fighting-c4cc3c28
[8] https://www.etelaabama dot ir/%D8%A2%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B4%DA%A9%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86/283433/

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

[9] https://x.com/IrclockM/status/2109540930529132575?s=20
[10] https://x.com/IrclockM/status/2109540930529132575?s=20
[11] https://x.com/MoloWarMonitor/status/2109237172607852950?s=20
[12] https://t.me/BenTzionM/8518
[13] https://www.tabnak dot ir/fa/news/1398098/; https://t.me/BenTzionM/8518;
[14] https://www.tabnak dot ir/fa/news/1398098/; https://t.me/BenTzionM/8518; https://militarnyi dot com/en/news/iran-developed-anti-drone-jumping-mines/
[15] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110063548936184029?s=20
[16] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109983110402019342?s=20 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96595 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110004847055347800?s=20 ; https://x.com/FaresALhemyari/status/2109989533144011133
[17] https://x.com/andynovy/status/2110032924968210775 ; https://x.com/hamed4343/status/2110005415593623642?s=20 ; https://x.com/acceladealer/status/2110037839488679974?s=20 ; https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2110010165336375435?s=20
[18] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110063548936184029?s=20
[19] https://almasdaronline dot com/articles/313991; https://aawsat dot com/-5126339/العالم-العربي-الحوثيون-يمنعون-العاملين-في-البنوك-التجارية-من-مغادرة-صنعاء ; https://ye.usembassy.gov/treasury-sanctions-houthi-illicit-revenue-and-procurement-networks/
[20] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110063548936184029?s=20
[21] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-18-2026/
[22] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-18-2026/
[23] https://www.alarabiya dot net/arab-and-world/yemen/2026/09/21/نقص-للوقود-في-صنعاء-والحوثي-يخصص-المخزون-لعملياته ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/09/21/نقص-للوقود-في-صنعاء-والحوثي-يخصص-المخزون-لعملياته
24]] https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/09/21/نقص-للوقود-في-صنعاء-والحوثي-يخصص-المخزون-لعملياته
25]] https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/09/21/نقص-للوقود-في-صنعاء-والحوثي-يخصص-المخزون-لعملياته
26]] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110063548936184029?s=20 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3851 ; https://x.com/tom_bike/status/2108172617110683766
[27] https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/saudis-probe-how-defense-systems-failed-to-stop-deadly-houthi-attack-on-riyadh-airport ; https://t.me/army21ye/3865 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3865
[28] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/loud-booms-heard-near-saudi-aramco-headquarters-dhahran-sources-say-2026-10-13/
[29] https://t.me/army21ye/3878 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3881 ; https://x.com/hamed4343/status/2110005415593623642?s=20 ; https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96594
[30] https://t.me/army21ye/3873
[31] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2109981735844770095?s=20 ; https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2109710087837135193?s=20 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2109752974423810088?s=20
[32] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2110062434044272700?s=20 ; https://x.com/zarGEOINT/status/2110011387833360882?s=20 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2109643014905921786
[33] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2109789764236808510?s=20 ; https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2109735244802957774?s=20 ; https://www.sabanew dot net/story/ar/153877
[34] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-24-2026/ ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-1-2026/ ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-4-2026/ ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-12-2026/
[35] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2109981735844770095?s=20 ;
https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2109752974423810088?s=20
[36] https://t.me/mehrnews/422218
[37] https://x.com/alamalikah/status/2109740058555089232?s=20
[38] https://www.kan dot org.il/content/kan-news/defense/live-1108366/
[39] https://www.kan dot org.il/content/kan-news/defense/live-1108366/
[40]
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/hezbollahs-pivot-to-fpv-drones-requires-israeli-overmatch/
[41]
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/hezbollahs-pivot-to-fpv-drones-requires-israeli-overmatch/
[42]
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/hezbollahs-pivot-to-fpv-drones-requires-israeli-overmatch/
[43] https://t.me/moriahdoron/33748 ; https://x.com/IDF/status/2092963187817615697 ;
[44]
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-outlines-financial-aid-plan-lebanese-with-destroyed-homes-2026-10-13/ ; https://www.almanar dot com.lb/article/1258612/
[45]
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-outlines-financial-aid-plan-lebanese-with-destroyed-homes-2026-10-13/ ; https://www.almanar dot com.lb/article/1258612/
[46]
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-outlines-financial-aid-plan-lebanese-with-destroyed-homes-2026-10-13/ ; https://www.almanar dot com.lb/article/1258612/
[47]
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-pay-total-77-million-rent-families-affected-by-war-2024-12-05/ ; https://x.com/AlakhbarNews/status/1876876096580235344 ;
https://t.me/alakhbar_news/61313 ; https://www.al-akhbar dot com/news/lebanon/878419/-جمعية–القرض
الحسن–تستأنف-صرف-بدلات-الإيواء-الجديدة ;
https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hezbollah-once-dominant-in-lebanon-shows-new-signs-of-weakness-5ecfc9bf?msockid=31724c4845486561027c583141486b0b ; https://www.annahar dot com/Lebanon/199155/أزمة-مالية-في-الأفق-لدى-حزب-الله-وملف-الإعمار-هو-الأثقل ; https://english.aawsat dot com/arab-world/5106700-hezbollah%E2%80%99s-qard-al-hasan-halts-payouts-technical-issues-or-cash-crunch ; https://www.nidaalwatan dot com/article/394086--تجفيف-تمويل-حزب-الله-التعويضات-لم-تصل-والمساعدات
تتراجع
48]] https://x.com/LizHurra/status/2110022102602437063
[49] https://t.me/sameralhajali/8936 ; https://english.alahednews dot news/72693/612
[50] https://aawsat dot com/العالم-العربي/المشرق-العربي/5325171-سلام-من-النبطية-قرار-الحرب-والسلم-للدولة-ولا-
انتظار-لتسوية ; https://aawsat dot com/العالم-العربي/المشرق-العربي/5325076-سلام-حاجات-إعادة-الإعمار-تفوق-إمكانات-
الدولة-اللبنانية
51]] https://t.me/sameralhajali/9527 ; https://t.me/sameralhajali/8936 ; https://almanar dot com.lb/article/1071857/?s=tg ;
[52]
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-gets-200-million-iran-help-displaced-sources-say-2026-10-07/
[53]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-gets-200-million-iran-help-displaced-sources-say-2026-10-07/
[54]
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-gets-200-million-iran-help-displaced-sources-say-2026-10-07/
[55] https://almadapaper dot net/456550/ ; https://baghdadtoday dot news/287296-.html
[56] https://almadapaper dot net/456550/
[57] https://almadapaper dot net/456550/
[58] https://www.shafaq dot com/ar/أمـن/افتتاح-مقر-مكتب-القا-د-العام-في-الخضرا-بتشكيل-جديد-يدمج-قيادات-منية-واستخبارية
59]] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-august-26-2026/ ; https://almadapaper dot net/451886/
[60] https://almadapaper dot net/456550/
[61] https://almadapaper dot net/449191/ ; https://almadapaper dot net/449222/ ; https://shafaq dot com/ar/أمـن/القضا-العراقي-يبر-قياديا-بالحشد-من-تهمة-اغتيال-ضابط-المخابرات-نبراس-الفيلي ; https://aawsat dot com/العالم-العربي/المشرق-العربي/5308585-الحشد-يمنع-التحقيق-مع-مسؤول-شبكة-تهريب-صواريخ-ومسيّرات
62]] https://www.alaraby dot co.uk/politics/خاص-أبرز-تعديلات-قانون-الحشد-الشعبي-في-العراق-تمهيداً-لإقراره ; https://www.kurdistan24 dot net/en/story/934749/iran-presses-iraq-against-disarming-armed-groups-sources-say
[63] https://baghdadtoday dot news/306575-.html
[64] https://baghdadtoday dot news/306575-.html
[65] https://x.com/alssaanetwork/status/2110057309799952476 ; https://x.com/alssaanetwork/status/2110057298001264643
[66] https://almadapaper dot net/456550/
[67] https://almadapaper dot net/437645/

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Iran Update, October 14, 2026

Adham Fattah, Parker Hempel, Benjamin Schmida, Bailey Pasternak, Nidal Morrison, Katherine Wells, Kelly Campa

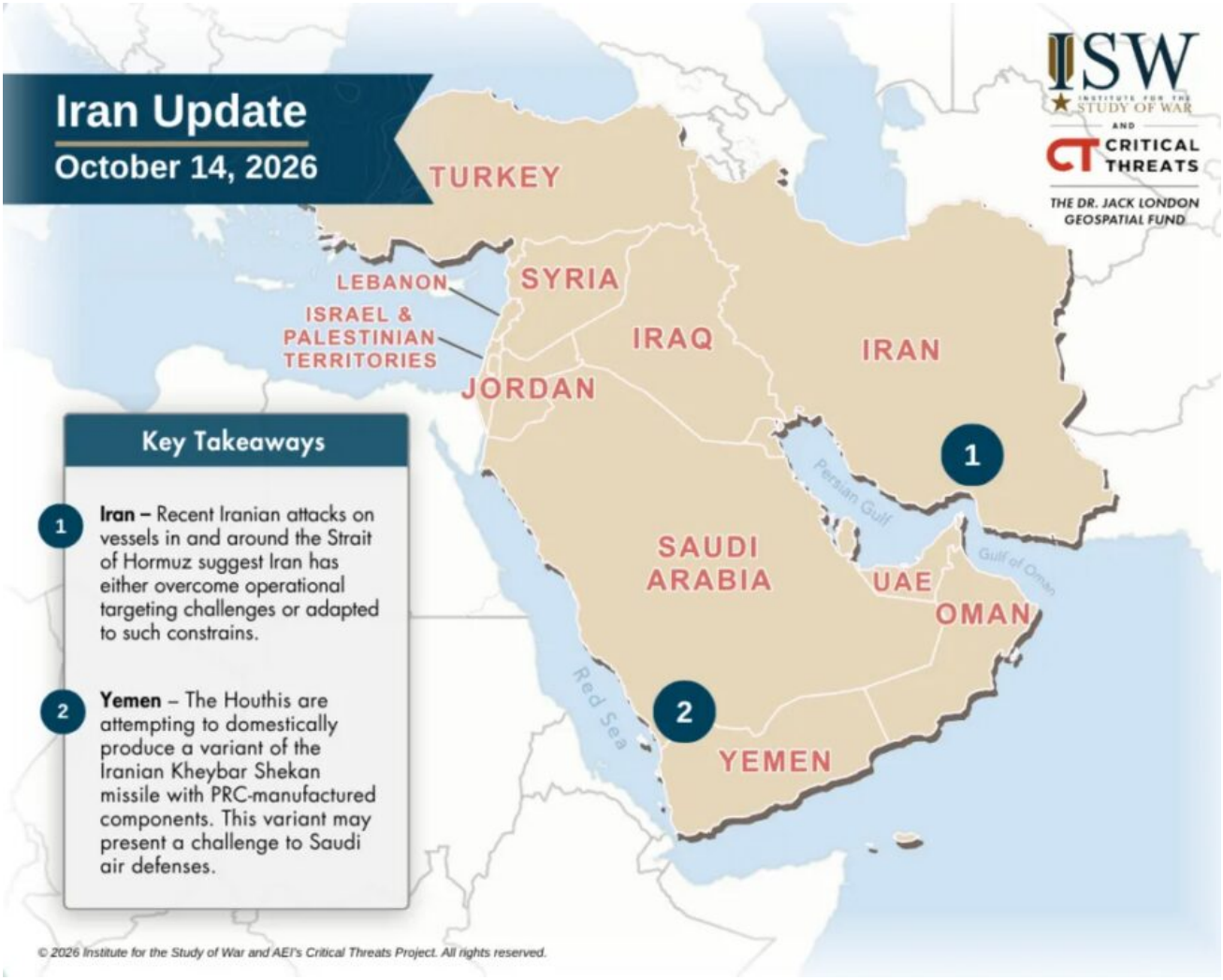
Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

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. Recent waves of Iranian attacks on vessels in and near the Strait of Hormuz indicate that Iran retains the ability to effectively target vessels in the strait, which suggests that Iran has either overcome previous operational challenges or is adapting to such constraints through new tactics or capabilities.
2. The Houthis are attempting to domestically produce a variant of the Iranian Kheybar Shekan missile with People's Republic of China (PRC)-manufactured components.
3. Houthi development and use of Kheybar Shekan variants with maneuverable re-entry vehicles that can change the missile's trajectory mid-flight present a challenge to Saudi air defenses as the Houthis continue to fire missiles and drones targeting Saudi critical infrastructure.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



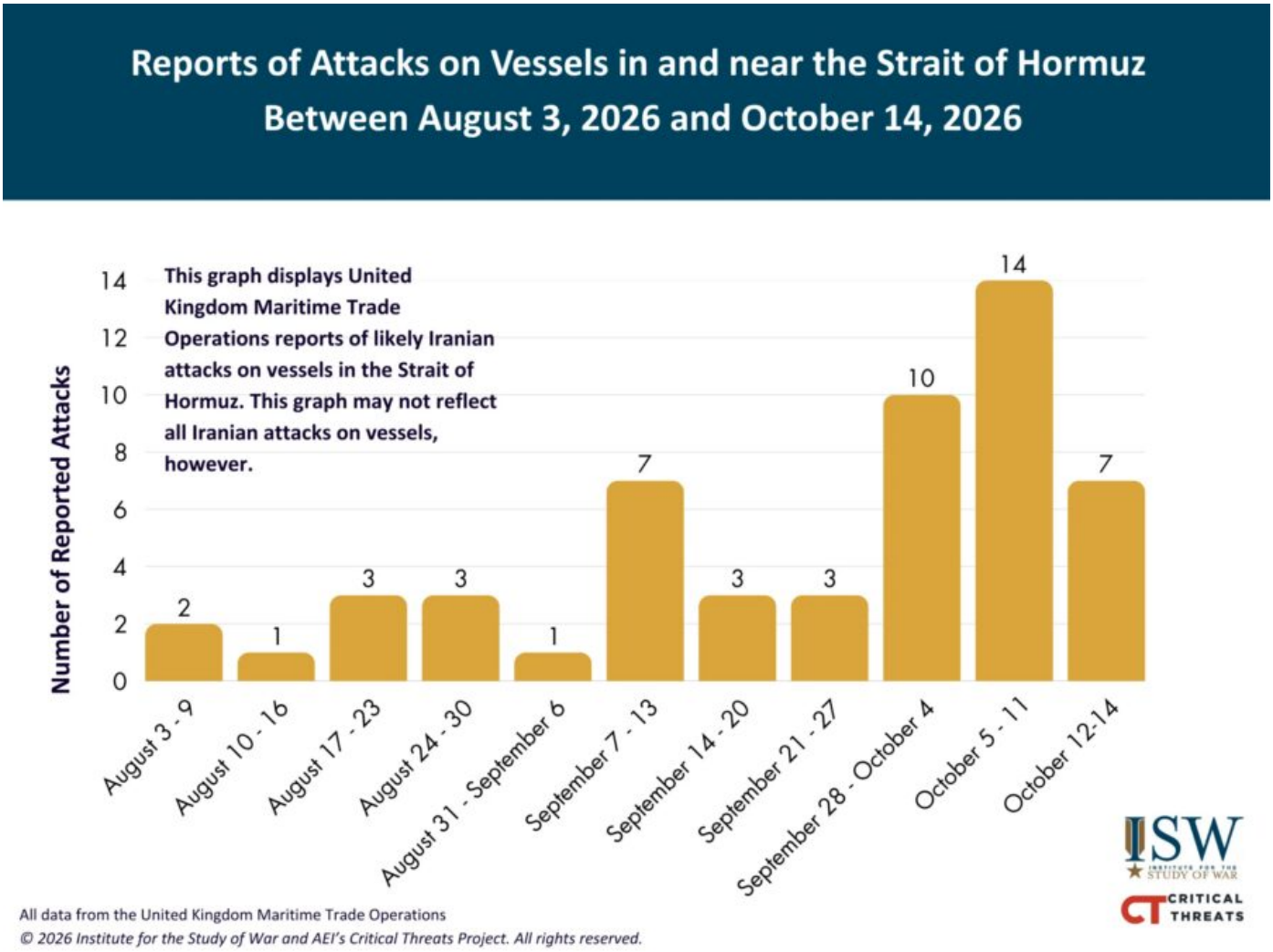
Toplines

Recent waves of Iranian attacks on vessels in and near the Strait of Hormuz indicate that Iran retains the ability to effectively target vessels in the strait, which suggests that Iran has either overcome previous operational constraints or is adapting to such constraints through new tactics or capabilities. ISW-CTP assessed in early September 2026 that recent US efforts, including airstrikes on Iranian coastal radars, appeared to have some success in disrupting Iran's ability to attack ships in the strait.[1] Iran's employment of suboptimal methods to attempt to maintain Iranian control in the Strait of Hormuz — such as using shore-based rocket launchers instead of fast attack craft (FAC) to deploy mines and using FAC to physically identify vessels — suggested that recent US strikes had degraded Iran's maritime surveillance and mine-laying capabilities.[2] A US military official noted to Reuters on October 13 that Iranian naval forces have continued to use small boats with spotters to identify targets and inform the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[3]The US military official said that Iran pursued this method of target identification after the United States "destroyed" a significant part of Iranian radar capabilities.[4] The US military official cited an example from the past seven to fourteen days in which the US military identified Iranian spotters calling in targets from a small vessel in the strait, which suggests that Iran may still be contending with somewhat degraded coastal radar systems.[5]

Iran's recent waves of increased attacks on civilian vessels indicate that Iran is still able to conduct damaging attacks on vessels transiting through the strait and Persian Gulf, regardless of any remaining operational constraints.[6] Iran has struck at least 24 vessels between September 28 and October 11.[7]

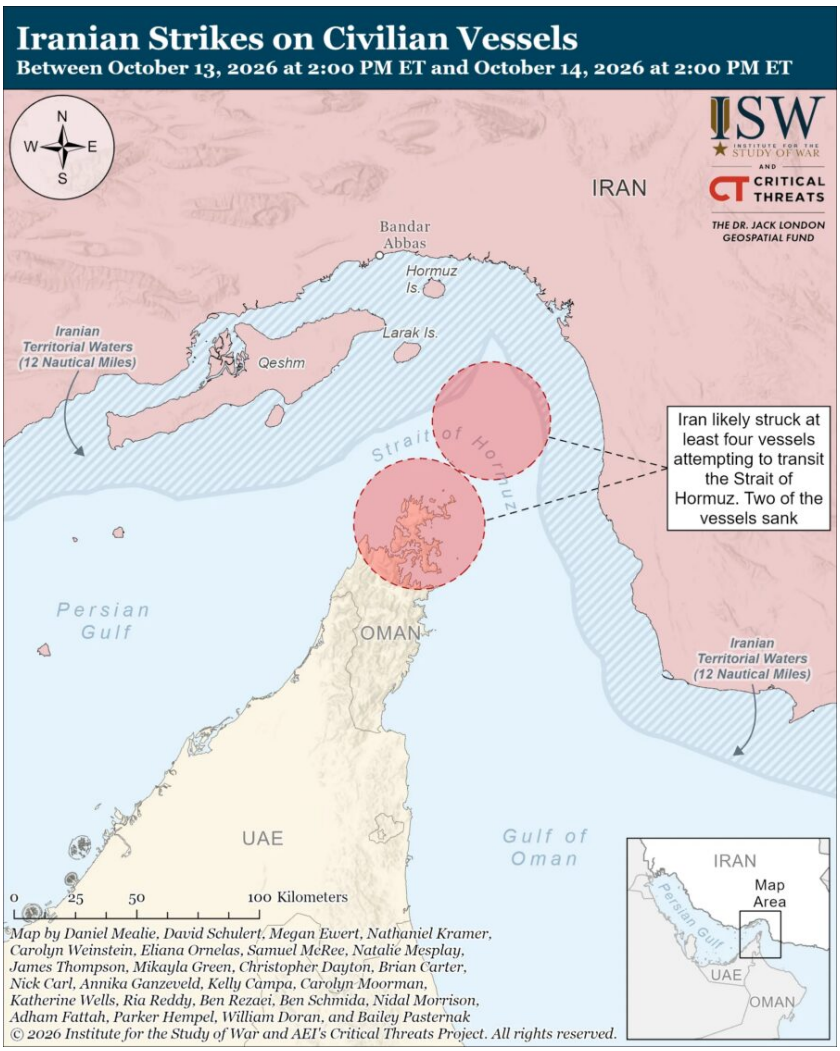
© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) additionally reported at least seven maritime incidents involving vessels between October 12 and 14.[8] Iranian attacks also sank two Emirati cargo vessels in the strait on October 14.[9] Iran has not sunk a vessel since March 2026.[10]



Iran may have partially reconstituted some of its maritime targeting capabilities, which could be supporting Iran's ability to conduct recent waves of attacks on commercial vessels.[11] Iran previously attempted to rebuild radars struck by the United States in previous rounds of strikes, for example.[12] A US official told the *Wall Street Journal* on October 4 that Iran improved its ability to target ships in recent weeks but did not provide any more details.[13] The official's comment could refer to reconstituted Iranian capabilities, but it is also possible that Iran has adopted alternative tactics or developed new capabilities to adapt to its targeting constraints. Two Iranian officials told Reuters on October 13 that Iran is "deploying new tactics," including by changing the "type" and "pace" of attacks in the strait.[14] One of the Iranian officials added that Iran started using these new tactics around October 4 and that doing so has led to an increase in attacks on vessels, which is consistent with observed incidents in the strait.[15] The official noted that Iran seeks to keep oil prices high in order to pressure US President Donald Trump ahead of the US midterm elections in November.[16]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



The Houthis are attempting to domestically produce a variant of the Iranian Kheybar Shekan missile with People's Republic of China (PRC)-manufactured components. A UK-based investigative organization reported that the Houthis procured a range of custom-made missile components, tools, and testing equipment from an unspecified Chinese supplier.[17] Yemeni authorities interdicted a shipment bound for Houthi-controlled Hudaydah port in July 2026 that contained Chinese-manufactured missile components, including components of a Kheybar Shekan variant's airframe and solid-propellant rocket motor.[18] An independent missile analyst told the *Wall Street Journal* on October 14 that it is unclear if the Houthis have already begun to manufacture the missile or if they are still testing assembly techniques.[19]

The Houthis have unveiled several domestically-produced variants of the Kheybar Shekan in recent years, at least one of which possesses MaRV capabilities.[20] A maneuverable reentry vehicle can be used to evade anti-ballistic missile systems or to improve the accuracy of ballistic missiles by altering their trajectory during the terminal stage of flight.[21] It is unclear which domestically produced Kheybar Shekan variant the Houthis sought to produce with the interdicted Chinese-manufactured components. Some Kheybar Shekan variants have a detachable nosecone armed with a warhead that can adjust its trajectory during the terminal phase at speeds of up to 6,000 miles per hour.[22] Iran has fired advanced variants of the Kheybar Shekan missiles at regional US bases during the current conflict that have evaded US defenses, including a July 17 Iranian attack on the Muwaffaq Salti Airbase in Azraq, Jordan, that killed multiple US servicemembers.[23]

Houthi investment in maneuverable ballistic missiles poses a particular threat to Saudi air

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

defenses as the Houthis continue to fire missiles and drones targeting Saudi critical infrastructure. Recent Houthi ballistic missile and drone attacks have damaged Saudi infrastructure across the kingdom since July 24, including Saudi Aramco's base in Dhahran on October 13.[24] Saudi air defenses have intercepted multiple Houthi projectiles since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff, however. The Saudi Joint Forces Command reported on October 13 that Saudi air defenses intercepted at least eight Houthi missiles and multiple drones targeting Riyadh, Dhahran, Haradh, and al Kharj districts.[25] Saudi Civil Defense reported that intercepted Houthi missile debris injured four people in Riyadh.[26] Regional officials warned the Associated Press in mid-September that Saudi Arabia is running low on interceptor missiles.[27] Saudi Arabia's vast 1,300-kilometer border with Yemen poses a further challenge to Saudi Arabia's ability to defend critical infrastructure from drone and missile attacks.[28]

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

Nothing significant to report.

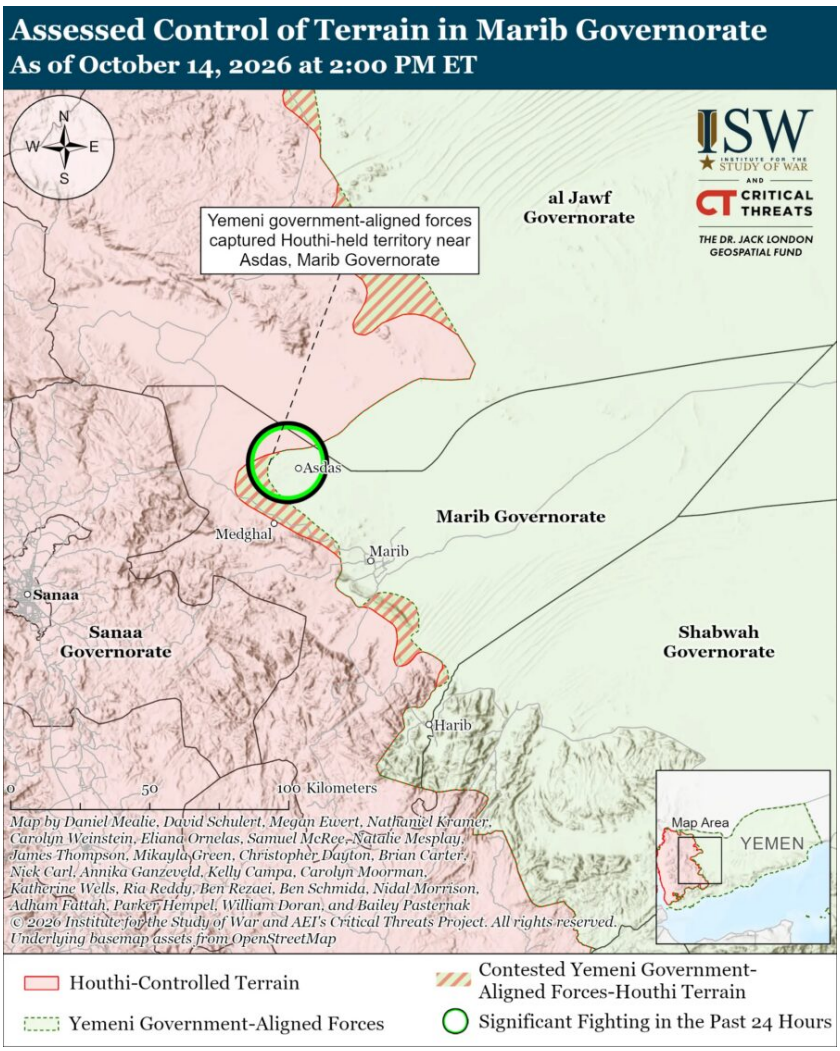
© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis published footage on October 14 that depicted Houthi fighters at key positions near the Bab al Mandeb Strait.[29] Geolocated footage shared by the Houthis on October 14 showed Houthi fighters and convoys near the towns of Murad and Ghurayrah on the Red Sea coastal plain.[30] The footage showed the Houthis destroying or disabling multiple Yemeni government-aligned vehicles along the coastal plain.[31]Yemeni government-aligned forces reportedly recaptured territory immediately east of the Bab al Mandeb area from Houthi forces on October 9.[32] It is unclear at the time of this writing whether the Houthi footage predates Yemeni government forces' seizure of the area on October 9. The footage also depicts scenes near Dhubab Airport, which Yemeni government forces have held since October 5.[33] The Houthis claimed to have expelled Yemeni government forces from their position at the airport.[34] The Homeland Shield Forces, which is a faction aligned with the Yemeni government, claimed to have repelled a Houthi infiltration attempt at Dhubab Airport on October 10.[35] Yemeni government media separately released footage on October 14 that purportedly showed the Homeland Shield forces present at Dhubab Airport to dispute the Houthi claims of recapture, though it is unclear when the footage was filmed.[36]

Yemeni government-aligned forces advanced slightly northwestward toward Baramish in northwest Marib Governorate on October 13 amid ongoing fighting in Taiz Governorate as part of the Yemeni government's multi-front counteroffensive. Geolocated footage from October 13 indicates that Yemeni government-aligned forces advanced their positions near Asdas, Marib Governorate.[37] This advance is likely part of the Yemeni government's counteroffensive in Marib Governorate, which seeks to stretch Houthi bandwidth over multiple fronts.[38] The advance also comes amid reports of continued intense fighting between the Houthis and encircled Yemeni government-aligned fighters in Taiz City.[39] Houthi forces fully encircled Taiz City on October 12.[40] ISW-CTP has not observed evidence of Yemeni government or Houthi advances or withdrawals near Taiz City since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



The Houthis appear to be retaining their maximalist demands amid reports that third-party countries are pushing for negotiations between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia.[41]Houthi Political Bureau spokesperson Mohammed al Bukhaiti told the Associated Press on October 14 that the Houthis "would welcome" mediated negotiations with Saudi Arabia.[42] Bukhaiti reiterated Houthi maximalist demands that Saudi Arabia must end its military operations in Yemen and lift Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports, however.[43] Saudi leaders have previously signaled that they are unwilling to enter any truce negotiations with the Houthis as long as the group controls the Bab al Mandeb.[44]

Bukhaiti told the Associated Press that multiple countries, including Oman, Russia, and China, have attempted to encourage the Houthis and Saudi Arabia to resume negotiations on a ceasefire deal.[45] Previous reports noted that China and Pakistan have urged Iran to pressure the Houthis to stop attacks on Saudi Arabia, but Iran rejected such offers on the basis that it could not dictate Houthi operations.[46] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi told Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan on October 11 that Iran is ready to facilitate dialogue between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, however.[47]

POWERED BY: BABEL STREET

Endnotes

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

[1] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-2-2026/
[2] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-4-2026/
[3] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-shifting-tactics-step-up-attacks-shipping-before-us-vote-officials-say-2026-10-14/
[4] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-shifting-tactics-step-up-attacks-shipping-before-us-vote-officials-say-2026-10-14/
[5] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-shifting-tactics-step-up-attacks-shipping-before-us-vote-officials-say-2026-10-14/
[6] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-august-31-20266-6a9622f2e0757
[7] https://www.ft.com/content/a4ab83d4-81b5-4336-9569-a0708b41e894?segmentId=2c1df321-36a4-1206-2c08-112c059dd69d&syn-25a6b1a6=1
[8] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-shifting-tactics-step-up-attacks-shipping-before-us-vote-officials-say-2026-10-14; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2109711318684983582?s=20; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2109714992542925198?s=20; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2109720455502590274?s=20; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2110084067349959033; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2110084775260151888; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2110314165013492051; https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2110315543110541500
[9] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/two-cargo-ships-sink-near-hormuz-as-iranian-attacks-spike-0591887d
[10] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/two-cargo-ships-sink-near-hormuz-as-iranian-attacks-spike-0591887d
[11] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-october-8-2026
[12] https://x.com/TreyYingst/status/2094854875154731098?s=20
[13] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/oil-was-pouring-through-the-strait-of-hormuz-again-then-attacks-on-shipping-resurged-fe9f0dd9?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos5
[14] Iran shifting tactics to step up attacks on shipping before US vote, officials say | Reuters
[15] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-shifting-tactics-step-up-attacks-shipping-before-us-vote-officials-say-2026-10-14/
[16] https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-shifting-tactics-step-up-attacks-shipping-before-us-vote-officials-say-2026-10-14/
[17] https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1637a6eef3d2418abbcdd3efa47c256b
[18] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2026-09-23/houthi-s-war-efforts-iran-support-sustained-with-chinese-imports ; https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1637a6eef3d2418abbcdd3efa47c256b
[19] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/houthi-missile-china-parts-5c2b2516?mod=hp_lead_pos5
[20] https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military_Power_Publications/Iran_Houthi_Final2.pdf ; https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/houthi-arsenal ; https://www.ynetnews dot com/article/hyoknlilc ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthi-missile-arsenal-iran-israel-hamas-ed74174915e301d30c50493f2c629a1a ; https://www.saba dot ye/en/news3372733.htm ; https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/1637a6eef3d2418abbcdd3efa47c256b
[21] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-july-18-2026/
[22] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-kheibar-shekan-missile-5776a6e4
[23] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-kheibar-shekan-missile-5776a6e4 ; https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-shows-its-ballistic-missiles-are-still-a-force-to-reckon-with-42b18204?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos2
[24] https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/yemens-houthis-vow-more-attacks-saudi-airports-oil-facilities-after-aramco-hq-2026-10-14/ ; https://x.com/tom_bike/status/2109268657872204192?s=20 ; https://x.com/tom_bike/status/2108172617110683766 ; https://x.com/acceladealer/status/21071313135635598675?s=20 ; https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-strikes-target-yemens-hodeidah-says-houthi-run-al-masirah-tv-2026-07-24/
[25] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110077856260694126 ; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110078150256234555 ; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110088743373963572 ; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110088960194101322; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110093804292489344 ; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110105507273015468 ; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110131464604102913 ; https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110274605768155532 ;
[26] https://x.com/SaudiDCD/status/2110354392927088672
[27] https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-yemen-strikes-mideast-conflict-riyadh-c81a91347c00b17097c8fafde7e4eeec ; https://apnews.com/article/yemen-saudi-houthis-shipping-oil-war-mecca-895320bde6dc589cebb628b63832c38a
[28] https://apnews.com/article/saudi-houthi-yemen-iran-d5c0345968e682ac551e9cb99ecfeec6
[29] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289
[30] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289
[31] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289
[32] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-9-2026/ ; ttps://x.com/alrougui/status/2108550388999758039 ; https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2108502496675287207 ; https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/2108560752206655991 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2108527956507390239 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2108525588252434535 ; https://aawsat dot com/-5327697/العالم-العربي-الحوثيين-بقايا-من-وجزره-المندب-باب-تطهر-اليمن-فجر ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2108525588252434535
[33] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289 ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-5-2026/
[34] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289
[35] https://x.com/diralwatan/status/2108925546637766726
[36] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2110398197457621408
[37] https://x.com/LoLManya/status/2110136817010028887
[38] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-7-2026/ ; https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/saudis-plan-assault-houthis-break-red-sea-chokehold-2026-10-02/

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

[39] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110364440654717039
[40] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-12-2026/
[41] https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-yemen-strikes-mideast-conflict-riyadh-c81a91347c00b17097c8fafde7e4eeec
[42] https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-yemen-strikes-mideast-conflict-riyadh-c81a91347c00b17097c8fafde7e4eeec
[43]https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-yemen-strikes-mideast-conflict-riyadh-c81a91347c00b17097c8fafde7e4eeec
[44]https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/saudis-plan-assault-houthis-break-red-sea-chokehold-2026-10-02/
[45]https://apnews.com/article/saudi-arabia-yemen-strikes-mideast-conflict-riyadh-c81a91347c00b17097c8fafde7e4eeec
[46]https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-presses-iran-help-rein-houthis-after-saudi-appeal-sources-say-2026-09-17/ ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-22-2026/
[47] https://t.me/defapress_ir/69624 ; https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/saudi-iranian-foreign-ministers-discuss-regional-tensions-state-news-agency-says-2026-10-11/

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Iran Update, October 15, 2026

William Doran, Bailey Pasternak, Nidal Morrison, Benjamin Schmida, Annika Ganzeveld

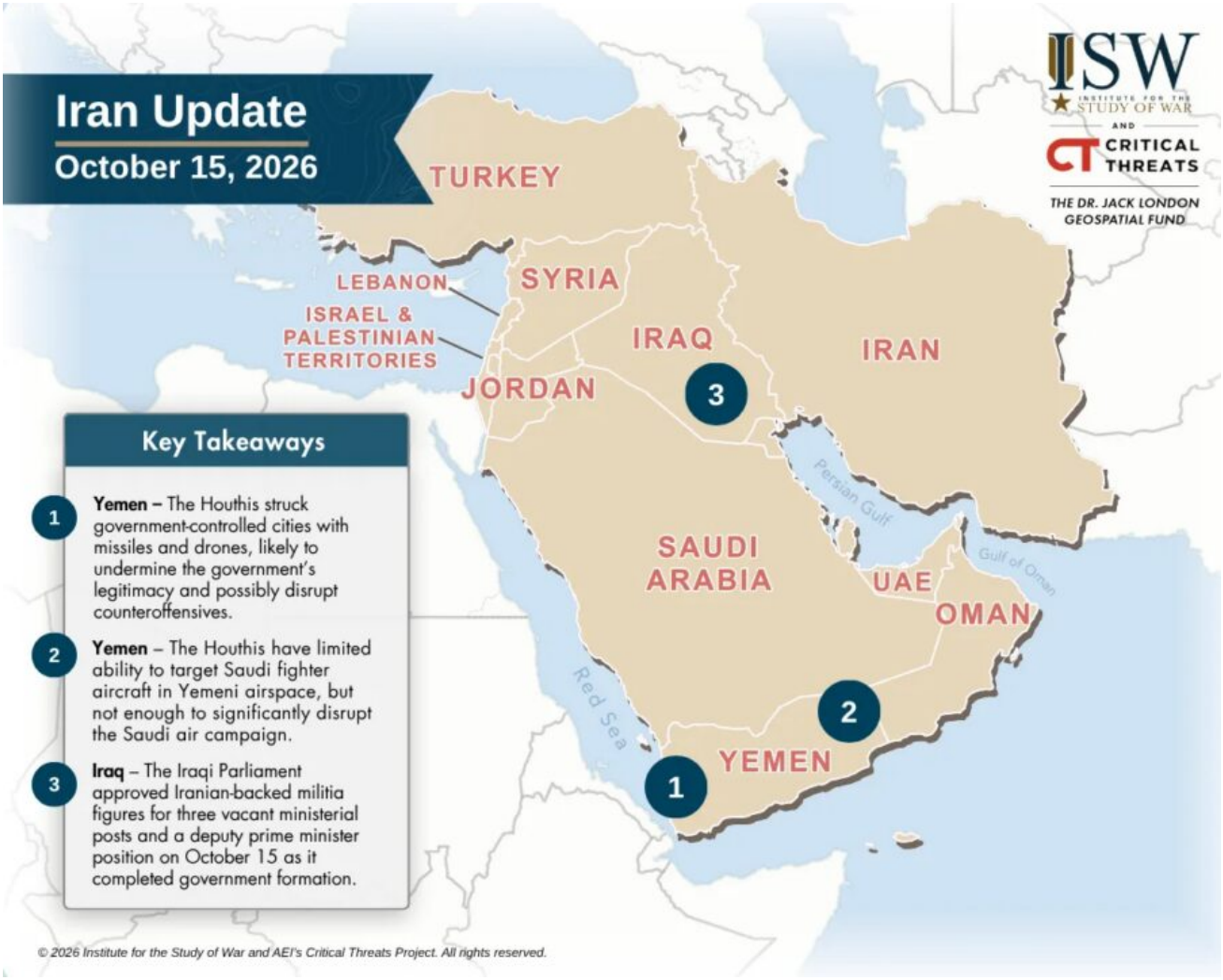
Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

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 attacked Yemeni government-controlled cities with missiles and drones, likely to weaken the Yemeni government's legitimacy and possibly to disrupt government counteroffensives. The Houthis' strikes in Aden likely sought to generate an informational effect and undermine Yemen's already weak, fractured government.
2. The Houthis have demonstrated limited capabilities to target Saudi fighter aircraft in Yemeni airspace, but these capabilities are currently insufficient to significantly disrupt the ongoing Saudi air campaign. Houthi forces fired a surface-to-air missile (SAM) that struck a Saudi-operated fighter jet, but the SAM does not appear to have destroyed the aircraft.
3. The Houthis have continued their attempts to capture Taiz City by securing positions on advantageous terrain and roadways on the city's western outskirts.
4. The Iraqi Parliament voted on October 15 to approve some Iranian-backed Iraqi militia actors to fill three vacant ministerial roles and a deputy prime minister position during its session to complete Iraq's government formation.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Toplines

The Houthis attacked Yemeni government-controlled cities with missiles and drones, likely to weaken the Yemeni government's legitimacy and possibly to disrupt government counteroffensives. The Houthis fired large barrages of missiles and drones that struck the Yemeni Presidential Palace and other residential areas in Aden, the Yemeni government's de facto capital, on October 15.[1] The Houthis' strikes in Aden likely sought to generate an informational effect and undermine Yemen's already weak, fractured government, despite Houthi claims that they targeted Saudi command centers and weapons depots.[2] The Houthis understand that high-volume missile and drone attacks on the de facto capital are reputationally damaging and demoralizing for the Yemeni government amid major military setbacks for the government in Taiz Governorate. The Houthis seek to assert themselves as a capable military and polity in the government's place.[3] The Houthis believe that they hold a divine right to rule over all of Yemen and beyond and exclusively refer to themselves as the real Yemeni government.[4]

The Houthis also attacked Marib City in eastern Yemen, possibly to hinder Yemeni government-aligned forces' ability to prepare and assemble for ongoing counteroffensives in Marib Governorate.[5] A Marib-based Yemeni journalist and a DC-based Yemen analyst reported that at least 16 Houthi ballistic missiles and one-way attack drones struck Marib City on October 15.[6] The Houthis may have attacked Marib to disrupt Yemeni government efforts to organize and prepare forces for combat on fronts in northwestern and southern Marib Governorate, where Yemeni government-aligned forces have steadily recaptured

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

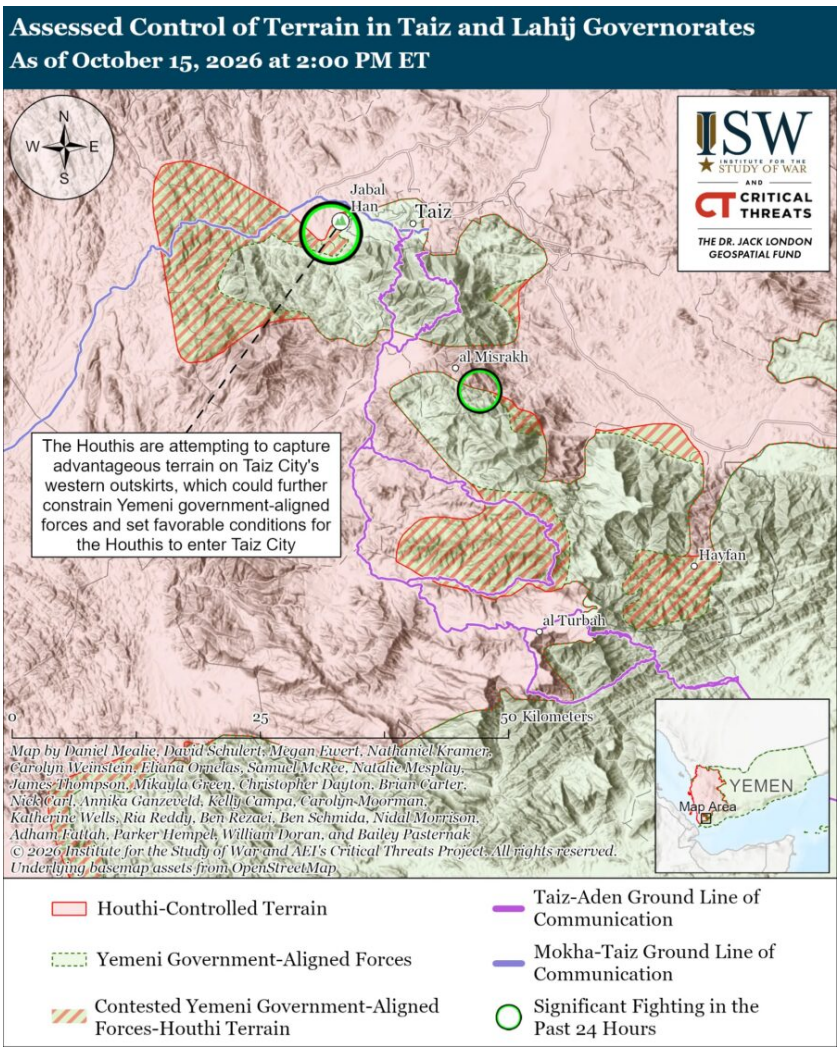
territory from the Houthis in recent weeks.[7] Yemeni government-aligned forces most recently advanced toward Baramish in northwestern Marib Governorate on October 13 amid ongoing combat near Houthi military camps in the vicinity.[8] The Houthis have repeatedly conducted attacks on Yemeni government-aligned forces' staging areas, including near Ras al Ara, Lahij Governorate, in recent days to disrupt the government's efforts to mount a successful counteroffensive on the Red Sea coastal plain.[9]

The Houthis have demonstrated limited capabilities to target Saudi fighter aircraft in Yemeni airspace, but these capabilities are currently insufficient to significantly disrupt the ongoing Saudi air campaign. Houthi forces fired a surface-to-air missile (SAM) that struck a Saudi-operated Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jet on October 14 over Saada Governorate, where Saudi aircraft conduct frequent airstrikes on Houthi missile depots and other military infrastructure.[10] Houthi footage of the attack suggests that the SAM did not destroy the aircraft, however.[11] The Houthis may have used both radar-guided and infrared targeting systems, both of which the Houthis possess, to strike the aircraft, given that the aircraft only deployed flares after the SAM struck the aircraft.[12] This strike indicates that the Houthis possess low-level capabilities to interfere with the Saudi air campaign in Yemen, which has provided close air support to Yemeni government-aligned forces and attacked the Houthis' long-range strike capabilities.

Houthi SAMs and anti-aircraft fire have yet to pose a serious threat to Saudi air superiority or the Saudi air campaign, as the Houthis rarely strike manned aircraft successfully. The Houthis have only destroyed one Saudi fighter aircraft during the current conflict, when a Houthi SAM shot down a Saudi F-15 fighter jet over Marib Governorate on September 15.[13] The Houthis themselves have claimed that Saudi forces have conducted thousands of airstrikes and missile attacks on Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen during the current conflict, indicating that Houthi anti-aircraft fire has made minimal impact on Saudi air capabilities.[14] The Houthis are far more capable of disrupting adversaries' drone warfare, as the Houthis have more frequently shot down drones during both the US and Saudi air campaigns against the group in 2025 and 2026.[15]

The Houthis have continued their attempts to capture Taiz City by securing positions on advantageous terrain and roadways on the city's western outskirts. Houthi fighters attempted to capture Jabal Han, a mountain on the western outskirts of Taiz City, on October 14 and 15.[16] Various international media and analysts have reported that either the Houthis or the Yemeni government currently controls Jabal Han, which suggests that the area remains highly contested.[17] The Houthis seek to control Jabal Han because the position overlooks all of Taiz City from the west, which would provide the Houthis with a favorable position for observation and indirect fire in support of Houthi forces attempting to enter the city. The Houthis have made several unsuccessful attempts to capture Jabal Han in recent weeks.[18] The Houthis also continued to engage Yemeni government-aligned forces in al Dhabab, immediately southwest of Taiz City and along a key roadway into the city, on October 14 and 15.[19] Houthi fighters have in recent days engaged Yemeni government-aligned forces at the Hangar Checkpoint, about 600 meters east of al Dhabab, in attempts to secure an entryway into Taiz City from the southwest.[20]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



The Iraqi Parliament voted on October 15 to approve some Iranian-backed Iraqi militia actors to fill three vacant ministerial roles and a deputy prime minister position during its session to complete Iraq's government formation.[21] The ministers include:

- Senior US-sanctioned Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq member Laith al Khazali as one of four deputy prime ministers.[22]
- Asaib Ahl al Haq political wing member, Mohammad al Moussawi, as labor minister.[23]
- Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada-affiliated Dhi Qar Investment Authority head Ali al Dakhili as tourism minister.[24]
- Kataib Imam al Ali-affiliated Services Alliance parliamentarian Mohammad Sahib al Daraji as digital economy and governance minister.[25]

These appointments appear to confirm earlier reports that the Shia Coordination Framework, which is a loose coalition of Iraqi Shia political parties, planned to allocate deputy prime minister positions and control over some ministries to Iranian-backed Iraqi militia members.[26] The United States has firmly rejected any Iraqi militia member, even from disarmed militias, serving in any senior capacity in the Iraqi federal government, however.[27] ISW-CTP will provide further analysis about Iraqi government formation in the coming days.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

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

Iran reportedly instructed Hezbollah to prepare to participate in an "imminent" regional conflict with the United States and Israel, according to unspecified Lebanese military sources speaking to Emirati media on October 15.[28] The sources said that Iran recently instructed Hezbollah to raise the group's military readiness to "advanced levels."[29] ISW-CTP has recently reported on Iranian officials' heightened concern about renewed US strikes on Iran and assessed that Iran is attempting to deter renewed US military operations against Iran by threatening attacks against US forces and regional allies.[30] Hezbollah previously attacked Israel in March to support Iran against the US-Israeli combined force and would likely do so again in the event of a renewed large-scale military conflict between Iran and the United States.[31]

This report comes amid ongoing Hezbollah efforts to reconstitute its military capabilities in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese military sources speaking to Emirati media added that Iran is restructuring Hezbollah's command under its "Mosaic Doctrine," which uses geographically dispersed, decentralized commands that can operate independently after decapitation strikes.[32] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) reportedly began reorganizing Hezbollah's command structure to become more decentralized in late 2024 after extensive Israeli decapitation strikes that killed former Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and other senior leaders.[33] Hezbollah simultaneously seeks to reconstitute its military arsenal. Lebanese security forces seized 780 kilograms of explosives, including 250 kilograms of C-4 plastic explosives, that Hezbollah attempted to smuggle into Lebanon from Syria on October 5.[34] This smuggling attempt is consistent with Hezbollah efforts to smuggle weapons and

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

weapons components, such as first-person view (FPV) drones and drone components, into Lebanon in recent months.[35]

Lebanon's central bank revoked US-sanctioned Iranian Bank Saderat's local license this week, barring it from the Lebanese financial system.[36] The Lebanese government's decision to expel a US-sanctioned Iranian bank from Lebanon comes amid ongoing US pressure to block Iran's financial access to Lebanon and other international markets.[37] The US and Lebanese governments have sanctioned numerous Hezbollah-linked financial networks and restricted Hezbollah's access to formal and informal banking institutions in Lebanon since 2025.[38]

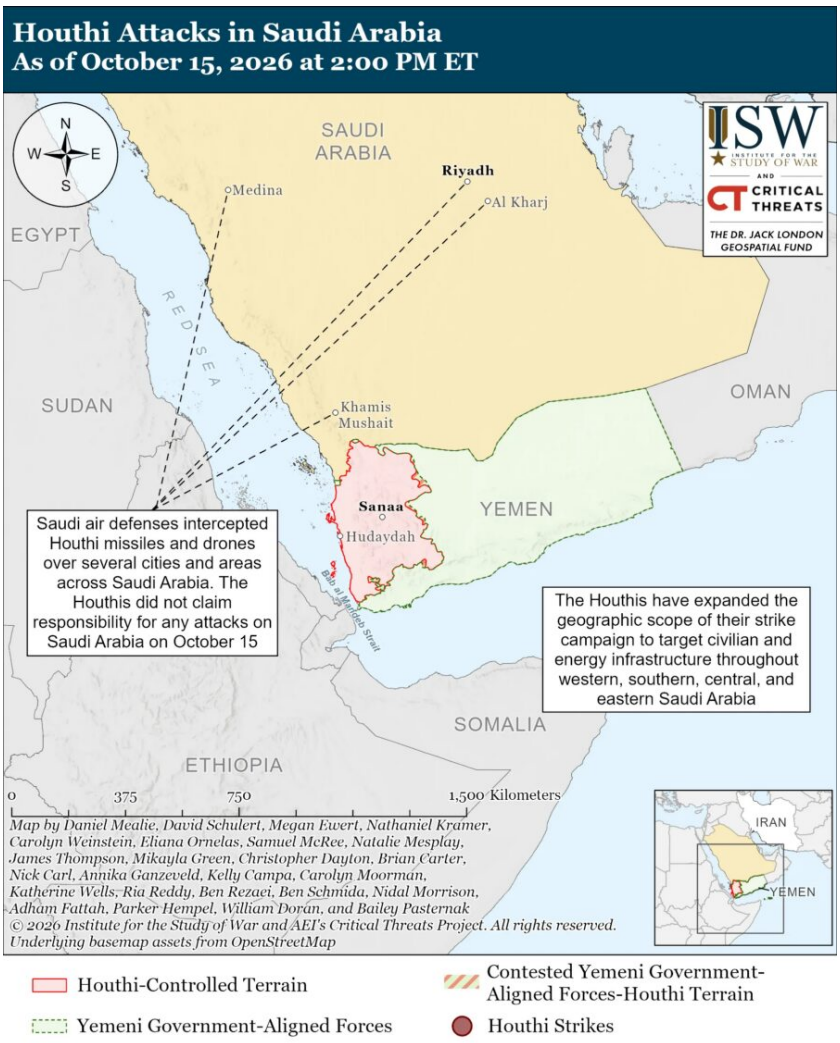
Iraq

See topline section.

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis have continued to attack a wide range of targets across Saudi Arabia to impose economic and political costs on the kingdom and compel Saudi Arabia to capitulate. Saudi media and the Saudi Joint Forces Command (JFC) reported that Saudi air defenses intercepted numerous missiles and drones in the vicinity of several major cities, including al Kharj, Khamis Mushait, Riyadh, and Medina, on October 14 and 15.[39] The Houthis denied that they attacked Medina on October 15 in response to the JFC's report, although the group previously attacked a power station in Medina on September 29.[40] The geographic scope of these targets indicates that the Houthis continue to attack sites throughout western, southern, central, and eastern Saudi Arabia as part of their expanded strike campaign.[41] The Houthis likely calculate that they can degrade Saudi Arabia's will to continue striking the Houthis and supporting the Yemeni government by attacking oil facilities, airports, and other civilian infrastructure.[42] The JFC announced on October 15 that the Houthis have attacked King Khalid International Airport 20 times since October 1 as part of this expanded strike campaign, for example.[43]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Map by Daniel Mealie, David Schulert, Megan Ewert, Nathaniel Kramer, Carolyn Weinstein, Eliana Ornelas, Samuel McRee, Natalie Mesplay, James Thompson, Mikayla Green, Christopher Dayton, Brian Carter, Nick Carl, Annika Ganzeveld, Kelly Campa, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Ben Schmida, Nidal Morrison, Adham Fattah, Parker Hempel, William Doran, and Bailey Pasternak
© 2026 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project. All rights reserved.
Underlying basemap assets from OpenStreetMap

POWERED BY: BABEL STREET

Endnotes

[1] https://t.me/army21ye/3899 ; https://x.com/FaresALhemyari/status/2110744833912664124?s=20 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110744206884946286?s=20
[2] https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96825 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3899 ; https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/houthi-blitz-leaves-saudi-arabia-exposed-iran-emboldened-2026-09-16/
[3] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-12-2026/
[4] https://mei.edu/publication/ideological-underpinnings-houthis-red-sea-attacks/ ; https://x.com/abdusalamsalah/status/2098067706738032801?s=20 ; https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110289811391328751?s=20
[5] https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2110783198594785524 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110744717780529363?s=20 ; https://x.com/Yem_army_media/status/2110744208474620162
[6] https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2110783198594785524 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110744717780529363?s=20
[7] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-14-2026/ ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-7-2026/ ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-18-2026/
[8] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-14-2026/
[9] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-8-2026/ ;
https://t.me/army21ye/3829 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3895
[10] https://t.me/army21ye/3896 ; https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110717465051427297 ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-11-2026/ ;
https://t.me/Almasirah_En/96569
[11] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110717465051427297
[12] https://www.twz.com/news-features/what-air-defenses-do-the-houthis-in-yemen-actually-have ;
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/irans-support-houthi-air-defenses-yemen
[13] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-september-16-2026/ ;
https://x.com/MenchOsint/status/2100630302393544940?s=20 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3728
[14] https://t.me/army21ye/3898
[15] https://www.npr.org/2025/04/25/nx-s1-5377192/houthis-reaper-drones-us-military-yemen ;
https://t.me/army21ye/3845 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3808 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3758
[16] https://x.com/alsahilnet/status/2110789665091453084?s=20 ; https://www.skynewsarabia dot com/middle-east/1898352-اليمن-معارك-عنيفة-تعز-تتسبب-بنزوح-آلاف-الأسر ;
https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2110502072408055902 ;
https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110548669069983789?s=20
[17] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110548669069983789?s=20 ; https://www.skynewsarabia dot com/middle-east/1898352-اليمن-معارك-عنيفة-تعز-تتسبب-بنزوح-آلاف-الأسر ;
https://x.com/war_cube/status/2110709797938966656?s=20
[18] https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/2108463909665697956 ;
https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2107908744546042338?s=20 ;
https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2106298528901607598?s=20 ;
https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/2106328042897572045
[19] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110548669069983789?s=20 ;
https://x.com/Yem_army_media/status/2110787039872319732?s=20
[20] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-13-2026/ ;
https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2109643014905921786 ;
https://x.com/zarGEOINT/status/2110011387833360882?s=20 ;
https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2107132881264857278
[21] https://ina dot iq/ar/political/276282-.html ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-13-2026/
[22] https://almadapaper dot net/456811/ ; ina dot iq/ar/political/276283-3.html ;
https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm847
[23] https://964media dot com/725767/ ; https://ina dot iq/ar/political/276282-.html
[24] https://nasiriyah dot org/ar/post/82625/الذكاء-الاصطناعي-يتوقع-الصداع-النصفي/ ; https://ina dot iq/ar/political/276282-.html ; https://almadapaper dot net/456811/ ; https://thiqarinvest dot gov.iq/?p=14980
[25] https://ina dot iq/ar/political/276282-.html ; https://964media dot com/725767/
[26] https://almadapaper dot net/456550/
[27] https://almadapaper dot net/437645/
[28] https://www.eremnews dot com/news/arab-world/o1llqbw
[29] https://www.eremnews dot com/news/arab-world/o1llqbw
[30] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-13-2026/
[31] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-june-18-2026/ ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-february-20-2026/ ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-july-29-2026/
[32] https://www.eremnews dot com/news/arab-world/o1llqbw ;
https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Pivot-to-Offense-How-Iran-Is-Adapting-for-Modern-Conflict-and-Warfare.pdf
[33] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-june-12-2026/ ;
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-irans-irgc-rebooted-lebanons-hezbollah-be-ready-war-2026-03-21/ ; https://www.mako dot co.il/pzm-magazine/Article-d68bcf56b36be91026.htm
[34]
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/10/15/lebanon-hezbollah-explosives-truck-israel-assassinations/708fc3b8-c886-11f1-aefb-abe4112d087e_story.html
[35] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-special-report-july-16-2026/
[36]
https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-10-15/lebanon-revokes-license-of-iran-s-bank-saderat-amid-us-pressure?srnd=homepage-americas
[37] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-august-24-2026 ;
https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/09/world/europe/lebanon-hezbollah-iran-us-finances.html
[38] https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/09/world/europe/lebanon-hezbollah-iran-us-finances.html
[39] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110539557846302955 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110654133938069888 ; https://aawsat dot com/-العالم-العربي/الخليج/5329972-كفاءة-الدفاع-الجوي-السعودي-تُحبط-تهديدات-كروز ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2110760841377145221
[40] https://t.me/army21ye/3897 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2105694231394140238
[41] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-10-2026/
[42] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-september-22-2026
[43] https://english.alarabiya dot net/News/middle-east/2026/10/15/saudiled-coalition-to-hold-briefing-on-riyadh-airport-attack-yemen-operation

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Iran Update, October 16, 2026

William Doran, Adham Fattah, Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Parker Hempel, Brian Carter

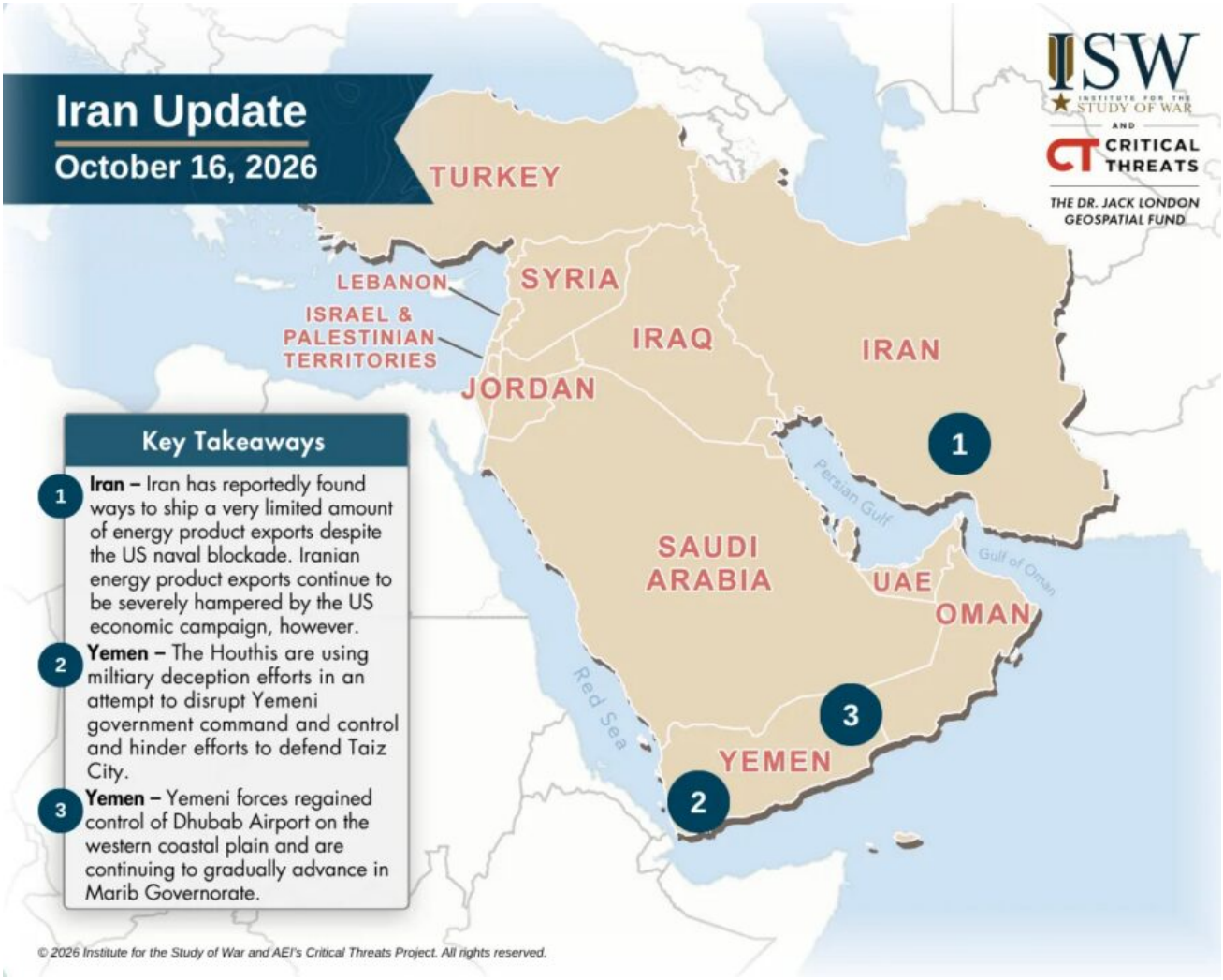
Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

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 Iranian regime has reportedly found ways to ship a very limited and relatively inconsequential amount of petroleum product exports via maritime routes despite the US naval blockade. Iran's ability to export energy products continues to be severely hampered by the US economic campaign, however.
2. The Houthis are using imitative communications deception in an attempt to disrupt Yemeni government-aligned forces' command and control and hinder government efforts to defend Taiz City.
3. Yemeni government-aligned forces regained control of Dhubab Airport on the southern Red Sea coastal plain by October 15.
4. Yemeni government-aligned forces are likely continuing to gradually advance further north and west in Marib Governorate along a major ground line of communication (GLOC) extending to Sanaa, Yemen's capital.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Toplines

The Iranian regime has reportedly found ways to ship a very limited and relatively inconsequential amount of petroleum product exports via maritime routes despite the US naval blockade. Iran's ability to export energy products continues to be severely hampered by the US economic campaign, however. Reuters reported on October 16 that Iran has used ship-to-ship transfers off the coast of Oman to conceal the movement of its tankers carrying liquified petroleum gas (LPG) and jet fuel, citing four people in maritime security who track Gulf oil movements.[1] Reuters added that at least eight LPG tankers and one jet fuel tanker have exited the Gulf of Oman — violating the US naval blockade — since mid-July, citing United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI) and maritime intelligence group SynMax.[2] The United States reinstated its naval blockade of Iranian ports and ships on July 14 and **has severely curtailed Iranian exports, even assuming the Reuters reporting is accurate**.[3] UANI reported in January that Iran exported around 46.9 million barrels of oil per month. Reuters noted, also citing UANI, that the total volume of the LPG shipments across about three months was 4.1 million barrels, or an average of 1.36 million barrels per month. This is 2 percent of the export amount in January.[4] Assuming the Reuters report is accurate, it is notable that Iran is unsuccessfully making efforts to offset the impact of the US economic campaign against its energy exports, which are the lifeblood of Iran's economy.[5]

It is impossible to validate whether these vessels successfully ran the blockade from independent open sources available to ISW-CTP, and US Central Command (CENTCOM) maintains that no vessels have

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

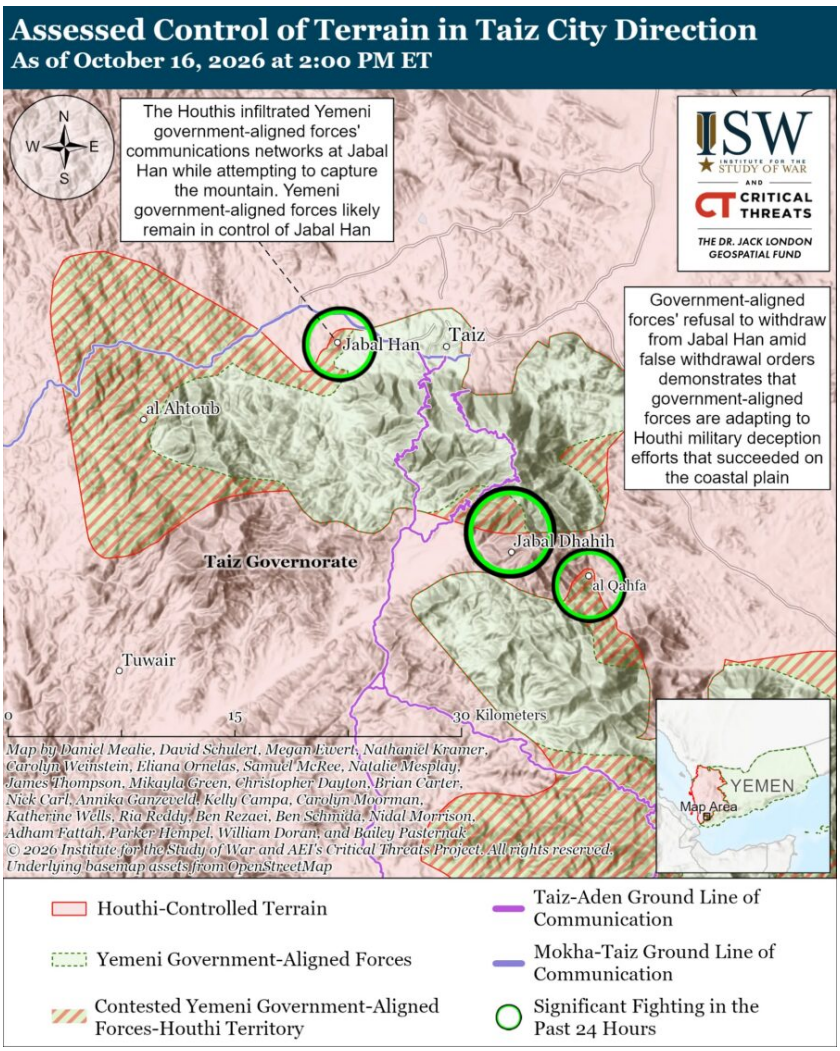
successfully run the blockade.[6] A US military official told Reuters on October 16 that a vessel transiting the strait does not necessarily mean it had evaded the blockade, as the ships could have been allowed through for various logistical and humanitarian reasons.[7] A US Treasury Department spokesperson noted that Iran has been using various tactics to obscure its blockade running, such as shutting off automatic identification systems (AIS) on vessels and falsely identifying vessels — neither tactic should be effective against a US Navy blockade, in principle.[8] US Navy destroyers and aircraft can detect vessels with their radars and other sensors, which makes AIS irrelevant. The blockade is also enforced against exports from and imports to Iranian ports in accordance with US Navy legal guidance related to blockades, not individual vessels. A vessel conducting a ship-to-ship transfer or transiting from or to an Iranian port would be detectable, assuming no human or technical errors in the tactical process of doing so.

The Houthis are using imitative communications deception in an attempt to disrupt Yemeni government-aligned forces' command and control and hinder government efforts to defend Taiz City. Imitative communications deception is a mode of military deception in which a military force introduces false but plausible messages into an adversary's communications network to induce the adversary to react in a manner contrary to its own objectives.[9] Yemeni military sources told a Marib-based Yemeni journalist on October 15 that the Houthis infiltrated and broadcasted false evacuation orders on government-aligned force commanders' radio communication channels during a Houthi ground attack on Jabal Han, immediately west of Taiz City.[10] Yemeni government-aligned forces and commanders refused to withdraw from Jabal Han despite the Houthis' false withdrawal orders and reports that friendly forces' withdrew, however.[11]

The Houthis are supplementing their kinetic efforts to capture Jabal Han with imitative communications deception because the group's ground attacks have repeatedly failed in recent days.[12] Successful military deception enables a military force to achieve discrete objectives, such as capturing advantageous terrain on a frontline, with less force than the operational environment would otherwise require. The Houthis previously used imitative communications deception to successfully disrupt government-aligned forces' coordination during the Houthi Red Sea coastal plain offensive between September 9 and 11.[13] Yemeni government-aligned forces' apparent refusal to withdraw from Jabal Han indicates that these forces have likely strengthened their command-and-control networks and learned from the coastal plain offensive in order to adapt to Houthi deception efforts.

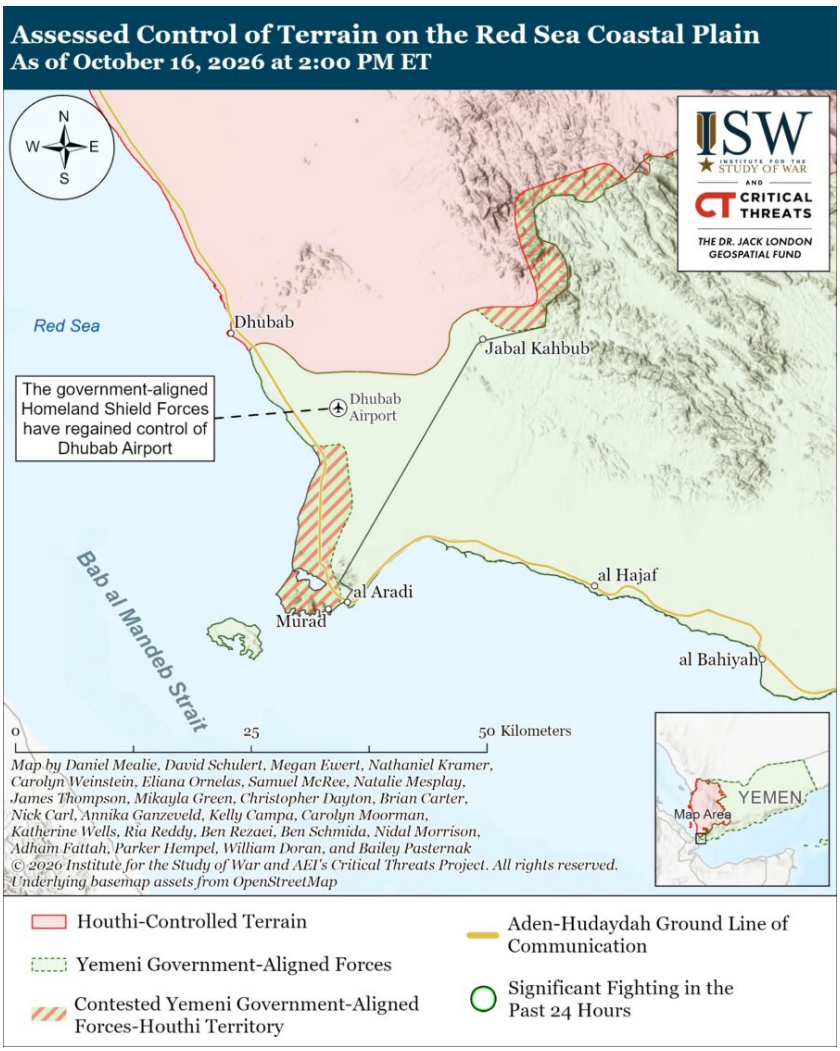
The Houthis are concurrently reportedly attempting to secure a Yemeni government surrender in Taiz City to avoid the significant military costs in casualties, time, and resources implicit in a protracted urban combat campaign for the city. An Israeli open-source intelligence (OSINT) analyst reported on October 16 that the Houthis have offered Yemeni government-aligned forces the option to withdraw safely from Taiz City and return to Aden with their vehicles and small arms.[14] The Houthis likely recognize that a military campaign to capture Yemen's third-largest city and defeat or destroy all remaining government-aligned forces and anti-Houthi partisans would require significant manpower, equipment, logistics, and heavy combat. Yemeni government-aligned forces have previously demonstrated their ability to mount successful urban warfare operations against the Houthis, such as in Aden in 2015.[15] Even a weakened Yemeni government-aligned force in 2026 poses a serious obstacle for the Houthis in the favorable urban and human terrain of Taiz City, where much of the population detests the Houthis.[16] The Houthis seek to avoid such a campaign because it could exhaust significant military resources amid continued combat on various other fronts.

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Yemeni government-aligned forces regained control of Dhubab Airport on the southern Red Sea coastal plain by October 15. The Homeland Shield Forces, which are a Yemeni government-aligned military faction, published a recorded statement dated October 15 that shows government-aligned forces at a recognizable site at the airport.[17] This footage is a near-certain indicator of government control over Dhubab Airport, following recent conflicting Yemeni government and Houthi claims of control over the area.[18] This does not indicate that Yemeni government-aligned forces have consolidated control over remaining areas on the coastal plain south of this position, however, as the front line remains porous due to flat terrain that permits combat units to move with relative ease. Geolocated footage shared by the Houthis on October 14 showed Houthi fighters and convoys near the towns of Murad and Ghurayrah, south of Dhubab Airport on the coastal plain, although it is unclear whether the footage predates Yemeni government-aligned forces' advances in the vicinity on October 9.[19]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Yemeni government-aligned forces are likely continuing to gradually advance further north and west in Marib Governorate along a major ground line of communication (GLOC) extending to Sanaa, Yemen's capital. Saudi and Yemeni media published reports and images on October 16 that strongly suggest that government-aligned forces are advancing northwestward into Majzar district along the main GLOC between Marib City and Sanaa City.[20] Saudi media reported that government-aligned forces have advanced to their furthest positions northwest of Marib City since 2021.[21] Steady government advances in northwestern Marib Governorate in recent weeks do not necessarily indicate future government successes, particularly as the Houthis are likely better prepared to defend positions along the GLOC nearer to Sanaa City and will strengthen that defense if it comes under threat.[22]

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*

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

- *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

See topline section.

Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

Iraq

Nothing significant to report.

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis have continued to attack targets across Saudi Arabia to compel Saudi Arabia to surrender to Houthi demands. Saudi Joint Forces Command reported on October 16 that Saudi air defenses intercepted three Houthi missiles and four drones targeting Yanbu, Riyadh, and an unspecified location in Saudi's Eastern Province since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff on October 15.[23] The Houthis have repeatedly targeted Saudi oil facilities, airports, and other civilian infrastructure in these locations throughout the Houthi strike campaign on Saudi Arabia, which has increased in geographic scope since October 5.[24] The Houthis likely calculate that continuing to strike Saudi critical infrastructure will decrease Saudi willingness to sustain military operations against the Houthis and compel Saudi Arabia to accept Houthi demands, which include lifting Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports and granting the Houthis control over Yemen's oil and gas resources.[25]

POWERED BY: BABEL STREET

Endnotes

[1] https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/iran-ships-some-lpg-jet-fuel-despite-us-blockade-data-shows-20

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

26-10-16/
[2]
https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/iran-ships-some-lpg-jet-fuel-despite-us-blockade-data-shows-2026-10-16/
[3]
https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PUBLIC-RELEASES/Article/4542098/us-forces-to-resume-naval-blockade-against-iran/ ;
https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-blockade-keeps-iranian-crude-exports-zero-october-report-says-2026-10-13/
[4]
https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/analysis/january-2026-iran-tanker-tracker#:~:text=For%20the%20month%20of%20January%202026%2C%20UANI,exported%20in%20January%202026%20is%20%243.05%20billion. ;
https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/iran-ships-some-lpg-jet-fuel-despite-us-blockade-data-shows-2026-10-16/
[5]
https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/irans-oil-dollars-are-drying-upand-plunging-it-deeper-into-crisis-21bae4bd
[6] https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1d7ZW6TWaM/?mibextid=wwXIfr
[7]
https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/iran-ships-some-lpg-jet-fuel-despite-us-blockade-data-shows-2026-10-16/
[8]
https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/iran-ships-some-lpg-jet-fuel-despite-us-blockade-data-shows-2026-10-16/
[9] https://jitc.fhu.disa.mil/jitc_dri/pdfs/jp1_02.pdf , p. 252
[10] https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2110889541363998883?s=20
[11] https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2110889541363998883?s=20
[12] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-15-2026/ ;
https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/16/فجر-اليمن-القوات-المسلحة-اليمنية-تدخل-مديرية-المجزر-شمال-مارب ; https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/2108463909665697956 ;
https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2107908744546042338?s=20 ;
https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2106298528901607598?s=20 ;
https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/2106328042897572045
[13]
https://apnews.com/article/yemen-houthis-iran-war-red-sea-battle-e32ed78eb9b528642d043d4303192927 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2097862335494795579 ;
https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/the-seven-day-lightning-offensive-that-changed-yemens-war/ ;
https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2110889541363998883?s=20
[14] https://x.com/david_lisovtsev/status/2110975828729250216?s=20
[15]
https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/saudi-uae-war-effort-yemen-part-1-operation-golden-arrow-aden
[16] https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2101969511293345979 ;
https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/yemens-besieged-taiz-families-take-shelter-houthis-close-2026-10-16/ ; https://www.thenationalnews dot com/news/mena/2026/10/14/under-siege-taiz-isolated-and-afraid-as-houthis-and-yemeni-forces-fight-over-city/
[17] https://x.com/diralwatan/status/2110816582452834424
[18] https://x.com/diralwatan/status/2110780283238879269 ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289
[19] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2110355176284713289
[20] https://x.com/AlArabiya/status/2111070332844986564?s=20 ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/16/فجر-اليمن-القوات-المسلحة-اليمنية-تدخل-مديرية-المجزر-شمال-مارب ;
https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2111076345346416887
[21] https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/16/فجر-اليمن-القوات-المسلحة-اليمنية-تدخل-مديرية-المجزر-شمال-مارب
22]] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-14-2026/ ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-7-2026/ ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/07/; العربية-تدخل-الجبهة-الجنوبية-لمحافظة-مارب-برفقة-القوات-الحكومية
23]] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111094895893188901 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111095052353380513 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111095237183426637 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111095052353380513
[24] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-8-2026/ ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-15-2026/ ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109972323080270317 ;
https://x.com/tom_bike/status/2109268657872204192?s=20 ;
https://x.com/MoEnergy_Saudi/status/2110126636666359909 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109024884403908840 ;
https://x.com/war_cube/status/2106331861140070673?s=20 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3768
[25] https://t.me/army21ye/3847 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3838 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3768

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Iran Update, October 17, 2026

Parker Hempel, Ben Rezaei, Ria Reddy, Annika Ganzeveld

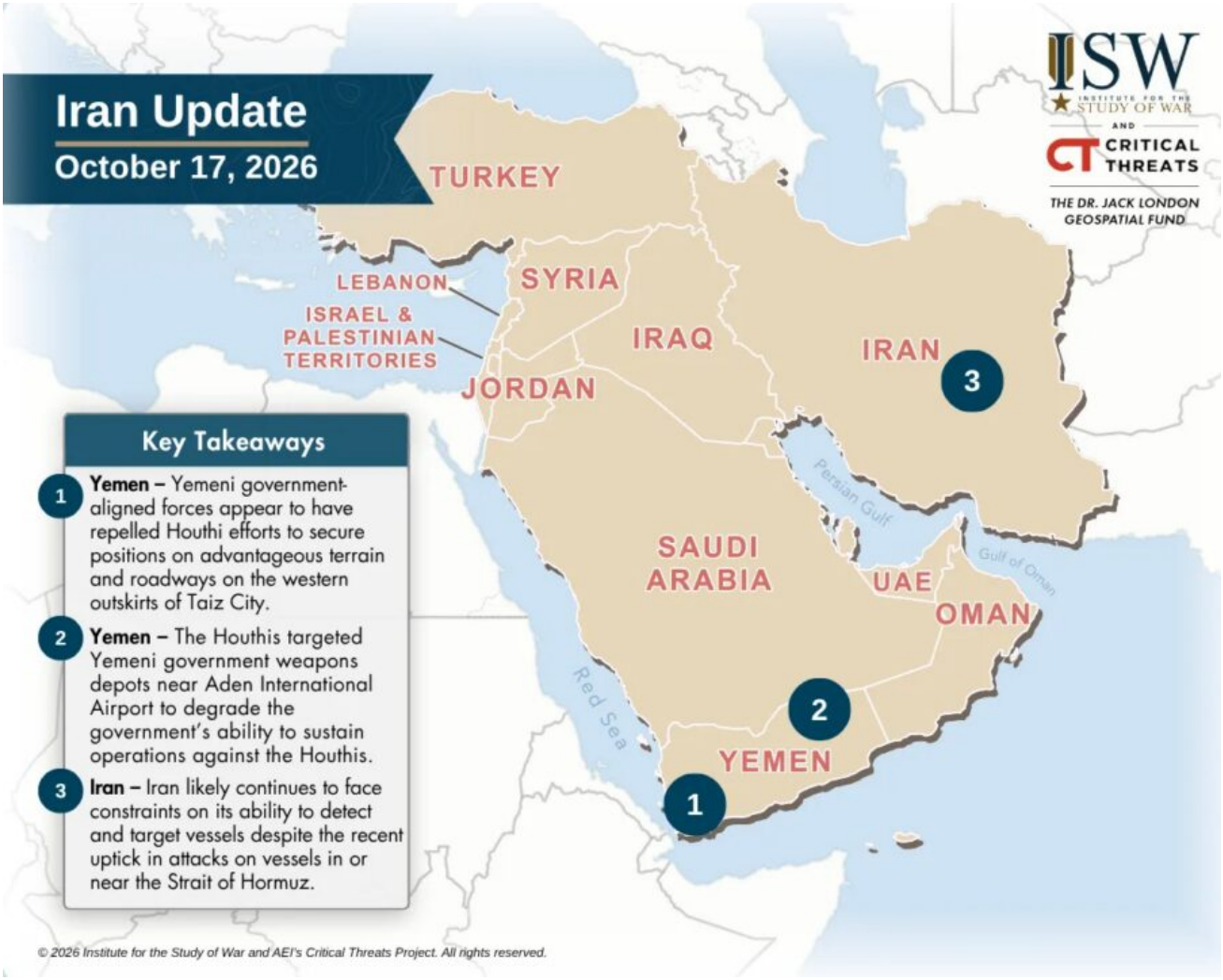
Analyst Notes: Data Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

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. Yemeni government-aligned forces appear to have repelled Houthi efforts to secure positions on advantageous terrain and roadways on the western outskirts of Taiz City.
2. Yemeni government-aligned forces have also engaged Houthi forces on high ground in Taiz and Lahij governorates that overlooks Yemen's Red Sea coastal plain. Yemeni government-aligned forces must retain and recapture territory in Waziyah and Madaribah districts to prevent potential Houthi attempts to outflank and overwhelm Yemeni government positions at the recently recaptured Dhubab Airport.
3. The Houthis targeted Yemeni government weapons depots near Aden International Airport to degrade the government's ability to sustain operations against the Houthis.
4. Iran likely continues to face constraints on its ability to detect and target vessels despite the recent uptick in attacks on vessels in or near the Strait of Hormuz.

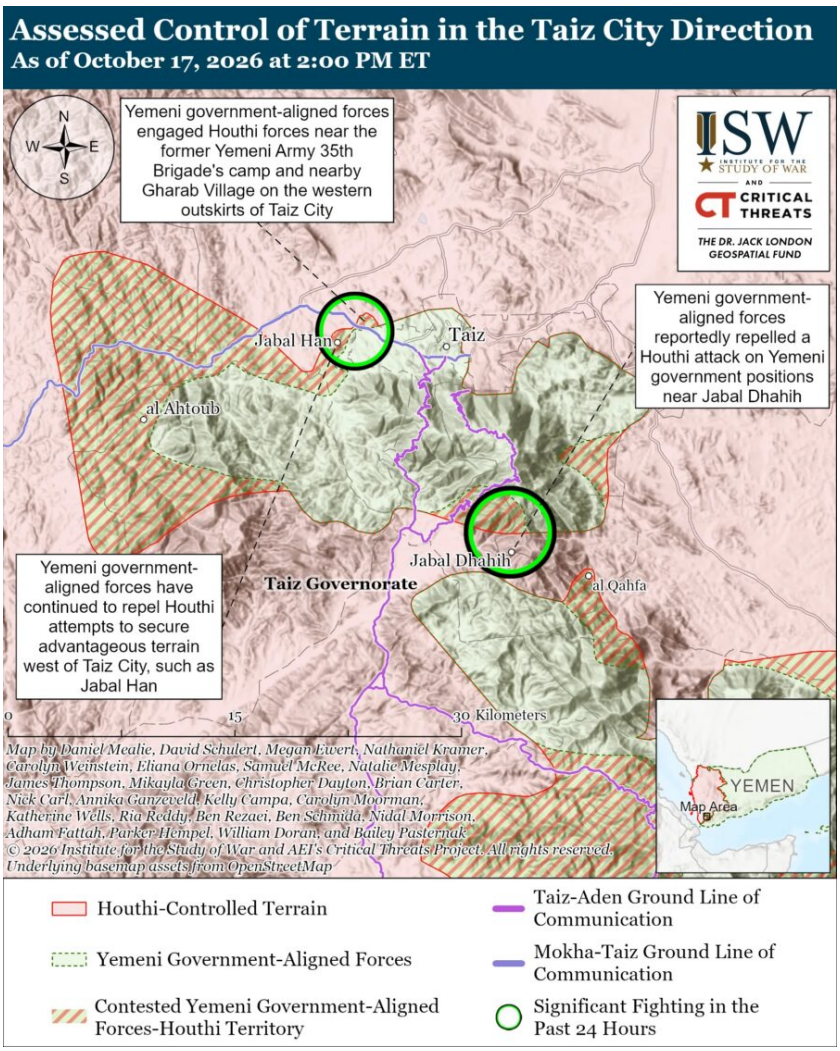
© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Toplines

Yemeni government-aligned forces appear to have repelled Houthi efforts to secure positions on advantageous terrain and roadways on the western outskirts of Taiz City. Yemeni media and an independent Yemen-based journalist reported on October 17 that Yemeni government-aligned forces engaged Houthi forces near the former Yemeni Army 35th Brigade's camp and nearby Gharab Village on the western outskirts of Taiz City.[1] Houthi forces have attempted to secure advantageous terrain west of Taiz City after completing their encirclement of Taiz City on October 12.[2] The Houthis have attempted to capture Jabal Han, which is located immediately southwest of the 35th Brigade camp and Gharab Village, for example.[3] Yemeni government forces have continued to repel Houthi attacks to seize Jabal Han since October 16, however.[4]

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.



Map by Daniel Mealie, David Schulert, Megan Ewert, Nathaniel Kramer, Carolyn Weinstein, Eliana Ornelas, Samuel McRee, Natalie Mesplay, James Thompson, Mikayla Green, Christopher Dayton, Brian Carter, Nick Carl, Annika Ganzeveld, Kelly Campa, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Ben Schmida, Nidal Morrison, Adham Fattah, Parker Hempel, William Doran, and Bailey Pasternak
© 2026 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project. All rights reserved.
Underlying basemap assets from OpenStreetMap

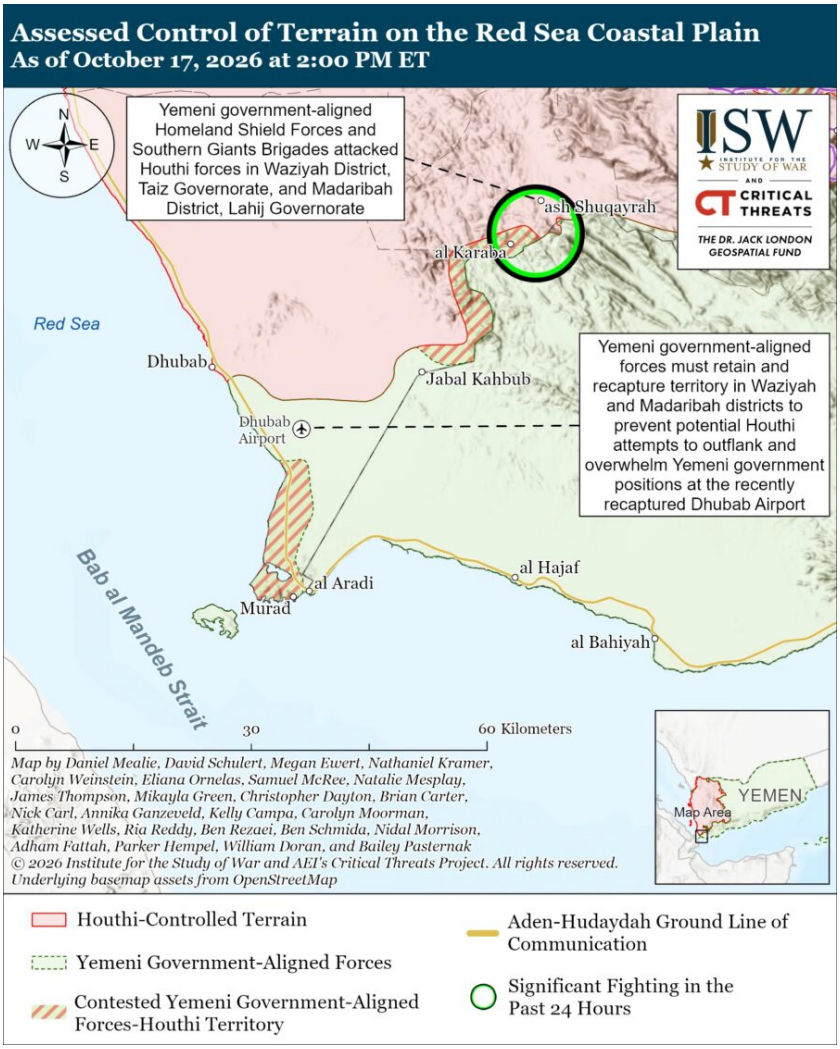
Yemeni government-aligned forces also continue to engage Houthi fighters in other areas of Taiz and Lahij governorates and on high ground located above the Red Sea coastal plain. Yemeni media reported on October 17 that Yemeni government-aligned forces repelled a Houthi attack on Yemeni government positions on Jabal Dhahih in central Taiz Governorate.[5]

Yemeni media and an independent Yemen-based journalist separately reported engagements in Sabr al Mawadim District, central Taiz Governorate, on October 17.[6] The Houthis reportedly shelled Al Aradha, Sabr al Mawadim District, on October 17.[7] Yemeni media separately reported Saudi airstrikes targeting Houthi telecommunications infrastructure in Sabr al Mawadim District, likely to disrupt Houthi command-and-control (C2) networks in the district.[8]

Yemeni government-aligned forces have also engaged Houthi forces on high ground in Taiz and Lahij governorates that overlooks Yemen's Red Sea coastal plain. The Homeland Shield Forces and Southern Giants Brigades, which are Yemeni government-aligned military groups, attacked Houthi forces in Waziyah District, Taiz Governorate, and neighboring Madaribah District, Lahij Governorate.[[9]] The Homeland Shield Forces and Southern Giants Brigades have engaged Houthi forces in Waziyah and Madaribah districts since the start of the Yemeni government counteroffensive on October 5 to regain territory on the Red Sea coastal plain.[10] The Southern Giants Brigades moved reinforcements to this area on October 12, but the Southern Giants Brigades and Homeland Shield Forces have not made any significant territorial advances along this front in recent days.[11] Yemeni government-aligned forces must retain and recapture territory in Waziyah and Madaribah districts to prevent potential Houthi attempts to outflank and overwhelm Yemeni government positions at the recently recaptured Dhubab

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Airport.[12]



The Houthis targeted Yemeni government weapons depots near Aden International Airport to degrade the government's ability to sustain operations against the Houthis. The Houthis struck Aden International Airport on October 16 with two ballistic missiles, according to the Yemeni government's Transportation Ministry.[13] A Houthi military source told Houthi media that the Houthis targeted the headquarters and weapons depots at the Yemeni government Camp Badr military base, which is located at the airport.[14] The Houthis previously attacked Aden International Airport on October 6. The Houthis claimed at the time that the group had targeted Saudi forces unloading military equipment for the Yemeni government at Camp Badr.[15]

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*

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

- *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*

Iran likely continues to face constraints on its ability to detect and target vessels despite the recent uptick in attacks on vessels in or near the Strait of Hormuz. TheIslamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy likely attacked two tankers northeast of al Jubail, Saudi Arabia, on October 16.[16] United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported that an unknown projectile struck the first tanker approximately 68 nautical miles northeast of al Jubail.[17] UKMTO separately reported that a small boat, likely an IRGC fast attack craft (FAC), attacked a second tanker with a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) approximately 78 nautical miles northeast of al Jubail.[18] The IRGC Navy claimed that the vessels struck sea mines.[19] Iran has repeatedly made similar claims, likely to reinforce the perception that routes outside Iranian control remain unsafe. The United States previously announced on August 25 that it had cleared the strait of mines.[20]

The IRGC Navy's reported use of a small boat and RPGs suggests that Iran continues to face maritime targeting constraints after US strikes against Iranian coastal radar and communication towers degraded Iran's ability to detect and fix vessels.[21] A risk advisory firm director previously reported in August that the IRGC has been using FAC to help detect vessels going through the strait by visual recognition, which is an extremely suboptimal method to find and fix a target at sea compared to radars and other purpose-built sensors.[22] The October 16 attacks, which occurred outside of the Strait of Hormuz, also come after the IRGC Navy threatened on October 9 to strike vessels "throughout the region" if they pass through non-Iranian-approved routes in the strait.

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 have likely launched attacks on targets in Saudi Arabia since ISW-CTP's last data cutoff on October 16. Saudi Civil Defense issued alerts for Khamis Mushait, Abha, and Jizan in southern Saudi Arabia on October 16 and 17.[23] The Saudi Joint Forces Command reported on October 17 that

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

Saudi air defenses intercepted four likely Houthi drones in Saudi Arabia's Riyadh, Eastern, and Southern provinces.[24] The Houthis have repeatedly attacked military and civilian infrastructure in these locations throughout the Houthi strike campaign on Saudi Arabia.[25] The Houthis likely calculate that strikes on Saudi military and civilian infrastructure will decrease Saudi willingness to sustain military operations against the Houthis and compel Saudi Arabia to accept Houthi demands, which include lifting Saudi controls on Houthi-controlled ports and airports and granting the Houthis control over Yemen's oil and gas resources.[26]

The Saudi Joint Forces Command reported on October 16 that Saudi coalition aircraft destroyed two missile launch sites in Houthi-controlled Saada Governorate.[27] Saudi Arabia has attempted to degrade the Houthis' ability to launch missiles at Saudi Arabia by targeting Houthi missile launch sites and missile depots in recent weeks.[28]

POWERED BY: BABEL STREET

Endnotes

[1] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2111430466838639026 , https://x.com/FaresALhemyari/status/211142887658061042 0?s=20

[2] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-12-2026/ ; https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-15-2026/ ; https://x.com/alsahilnet/status/2110789665091453084?s=20 ; https://www.skynewsarabia dot com/middle-east/1898352-اليمن-معارك-عنيفة-تعز-تتسبب-بنزوح-آلاف-الأسر ; https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2110502072408055902 ; https://x.com/BashaReport/status/2110548669069983789?s=20

[3] https://x.com/alsahilnet/status/2110789665091453084?s=20 ; https://www.skynewsarabia dot com/middle-east/1898352-اليمن-معارك-عنيفة-تعز-تتسبب-بنزوح-آلاف-الأسر ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2110801855047762385?s=20 ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/16/فجر-اليمن-القوات-المسلحة-اليمنية-تدخل-مديرية-المجزر-شمال-مارب

[4] https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/16/فجر-اليمن-القوات-المسلحة-اليمنية-تدخل-مديرية-المجزر-شمال-مارب

[5] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2111347306196803737

[6] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2111332322289279140 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2111329817501331849?s=20

[7] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2111332322289279140 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2111329817501331849?s=20

[8] https://x.com/ALyemennow/status/2111365520733917387

[9] https://x.com/BobMilOSINT/status/2111434595749302341 ; https://x.com/diralwatan/status/2109281557647102400 ;

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

https://x.com/alamalikah/status/2111198308458733968 ;

https://twitter.com/alamalikah/status/2111370599721476430

[10] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-5-2026/

[11] https://x.com/alamalikah/status/2109740058555089232?s=20

[12] https://x.com/diralwatan/status/2110816582452834424 ;
https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-16-2026/

[13] https://www.mot-ye dot net/news/15246

[14] https://saba dot ye/ar/news3811557.htm?cid=1

[15] https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-october-7-2026/

[16] https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2111343387395919930 ;
https://twitter.com/UK_MTO/status/2111358532528591354

[17] https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2111343387395919930

[18] https://x.com/UK_MTO/status/2111358532528591354

[19] https://tasnimnews dot ir/fa/news/1405/07/25/3724538/ ; https://tasnimnews dot ir/fa/news/1405/07/25/3725136/

[20]
https://www.reuters.com/world/trump-says-strait-hormuz-has-been-demined-warns-iran-not-plant-more-2026-08-25/

[21] https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-september-4-2026 ;

https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-september-7-2026

[22] https://x.com/_MartinKelly_/status/2094129711483891783?s=20

[23] https://x.com/SaudiDCD/status/2111136411684352137 ;

https://x.com/SaudiDCD/status/2111178425528447456 ;

https://x.com/SaudiDCD/status/2111227668720910820 ;

https://x.com/SaudiDCD/status/2111227780142637555 ;

https://x.com/SaudiDCD/status/2111363232220750076 ;
https://twitter.com/SaudiDCD/status/2111363400584360018

[24] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111462281431126150

[25] https://x.com/MMY1444/status/2109721780026040818?s=20 ;
https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2109749350813360481 ;
https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/yemens-houthi-rebels-strike-two-airports-in-saudi-arabia-072f4dd

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.

3?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos1 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2105735714457420012

[26] https://t.me/army21ye/3847 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3838 ; https://t.me/army21ye/3768

[27] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111243028757193177

[28] https://x.com/CJFCSpox/status/2111515473762517399 ; https://www.alhadath dot net/yemen/2026/10/12/فجر-اليمن-تفاصيل-مواقع-حوثية-استهدفها-الطيران-الحربي-بغاراته ; https://x.com/ariel_oseran/status/2108164667566588182 ; https://ara dot tv/yc6u4 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2107897318796050892?s=20 ; https://x.com/Alsakaniali/status/2108169702207787326?s=20

© 2026 Institute for the Study of War. All rights reserved.