



Spotlight on Iran

June 26—July 3, 2024

Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt

Highlights¹

- ▶ Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri spoke with foreign ministers in the region and around the world aiming to bring an end to the war in the Gaza Strip. He warned against the possibility of an Israeli offensive initiative against Hezbollah, which would lead to an expansion of the war. Meanwhile, Iran is intensifying its threats in light of the possibility of an all-out confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah. In addition, there are increasing reports of advanced weapons being transferred from Iran to Hezbollah in preparation for a possible confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah.
- ▶ The IRGC commander declared that the “resistance front” was destined for victory. The deputy commander of the Qods Force declared that the “resistance front” was in its best possible state and had global support.
- ▶ The Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed joint responsibility for four attacks against Haifa and against ships in Haifa Port and on their way to Haifa. In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for an attack on Eilat. However, no verification of the claims has been received from other sources.
 - ◀ The coordination committee of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq decided to escalate its actions against Israel in the event of an all-out war in Lebanon.
- ▶ The Houthis continued to report attacks against civilian vessels and unveiled new weapons intended to attack vessels. The Houthi leader threatened to attack the American aircraft carrier expected to arrive in the Red Sea.
- ▶ A senior Houthi official met with the Russian president’s special envoy. Russia is reportedly considering supplying missiles to the Houthis.

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

Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

►Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri spoke with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan to discuss issues related to relations between the countries, regional developments, and the situation in the Palestinian arena. Bagheri said Israel's threats against Lebanon were a continuation of its crimes against the residents of the Gaza Strip and that it was trying to compensate for its defeat in the Gaza Strip by expanding the scope of the war to other areas. He said the Islamic countries had to take all measures to stop the "crimes, threats, and aggression of the Zionists" (IRNA, June 28, 2024). He also discussed regional and Palestinian developments in his talks with the foreign ministers of Germany, Cyprus, and Russia, the UN secretary-general, and the EU High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs (Fars, June 28, 2024). Bagheri also spoke with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan about regional issues. He said the "resistance" in Lebanon was fully prepared to deal with Israel's threats and that any aggression would cost it dearly (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 1, 2024).

►Nasser Kanani, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, welcomed the decision of several European countries to officially recognize the state of "Palestine," saying that the new wave of support by governments around the world for the rights of the Palestinian people was clear evidence of the global isolation of the "Zionist regime." He stressed Iran's principled stance not to recognize Israel (ISNA, June 26, 2024).

►On July 1, 2024, a delegation of families of Palestinians killed in the war in the Gaza Strip arrived in Iran for a visit. Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Force, said Iran was looking forward to an opportunity to carry out another attack against Israel, as it did on April 13, 2024. He said there was no doubt about the final victory of the Palestinian people and that Iran would continue to stand by the "resistance" and the Palestinian people and would do everything in its power to support the Palestinians. He added that the conditions did not allow Iran to act directly against Israel (snn.ir, July 1, 2024).



Hajizadeh meets with families of those killed in the war in Gaza (snn.ir, July 1, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Syria and Lebanon

- ▶Iran’s mission at the UN headquarters in New York warned against an Israeli initiative to launch a full military campaign against Lebanon. A statement issued by the Iranian delegation threatened “obliterating war” if Israel launched a full military operation against Lebanon. It was also reported that although Iran saw Israel’s threats to attack Lebanon as psychological warfare, all possibilities, including the possibility of full involvement of all the “resistance fronts” in the campaign, were on the table (X account of the Iranian mission to the UN, June 29, 2024).
- ▶Kamal Kharrazi, head of Iran’s Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, warned that Iran and the “resistance front” would use all the means at their disposal in the event of an all-out military confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah. He said Iran was not interested in a regional war and called on the United States to exert pressure on Israel to prevent further escalation. However, he stressed that in the event of a confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah, all countries in the region, including Iran, would be involved, and Iran would have no choice but to support Hezbollah by all the means at its disposal (Financial Times, July 2, 2024).
- ▶In recent weeks, Iran has accelerated the smuggling of weapons to Hezbollah. These are reportedly air defense systems that Hezbollah needs following the Israeli Air Force airstrikes in southern Lebanon. In addition to the defense systems, Iran is also trying to transfer to Hezbollah long-range Almas TV-guided anti-tank missiles, developed in Iran based on Rafael’s

Spike missiles² that reached Hezbollah during the Second Lebanon War. The weapons were transferred to Hezbollah in large trucks and vans designed for camouflage purposes (Ynet, June 30, 2024).

►Iran reportedly supplied Hezbollah with uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs), including long-range unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs, or drone submarines) capable of approaching Israel's shores and hitting targets there. These unmanned vehicles are built of materials that cannot be detected by radars, such as carbon fiber. This is the most advanced technology Iran has succeeded in developing. In addition, Iran supplied Hezbollah with low-flying surface-to-sea missiles and torpedo missiles to attack naval targets, such as submarines, warships, and floating bases. These weapons were developed at Hezbollah's request to hit Israeli naval facilities, including their gas rigs and security ships in the Mediterranean Sea (al-Modon, June 25, 2024).

►Iran's ambassador to the UN, Amir Saeed Iravani, told a UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Syria that some Western countries were responsible for the continuation of the crisis in Syria because they sought to impose their will on the Syrian people through occupation, sanctions, and denial of international support for Syria's reconstruction. He said all foreign forces whose presence in Syria was considered by the Syrian government as illegal had to withdraw from the country. He also condemned "the ongoing aggression by the Israeli regime against Syrian sovereignty" (Fars, June 26, 2024).

►On June 29, 2024, the International Congress of Shaheeds of the Resistance and Defenders of the Holy Shrines opened in the city of Mashhad. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said at a meeting with the participants, which was also attended by Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani, that the "enemy" had planned to take over the region and exert economic, political, and religious pressure on Iran to topple the Islamic regime, but the plan was thwarted by a group of young people of faith from various countries, led by Iran. He said the defenders of the holy shrines had saved Iran and the region from the "great danger" of establishing a new Middle East under American dominance (the Supreme Leader's website, June 29, 2024).

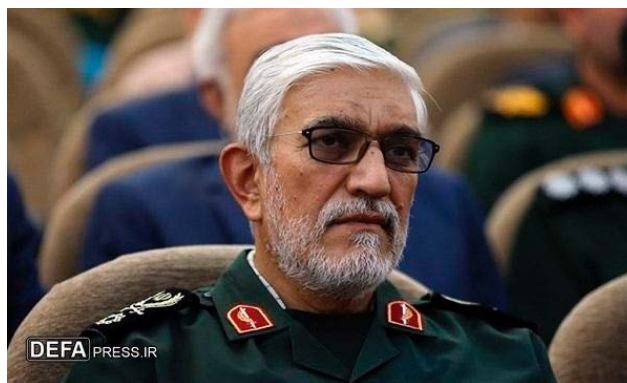
² Spike is a series of anti-tank missiles with fully automatic self-guidance capability. The operator of such missiles can view an image that the missile "sees" in flight and, if necessary, change the target on which the missile is homing after the missile has been launched.



The International Congress of Shaheeds of the Resistance and Defenders of the Holy Shrines meets with the Supreme Leader of Iran (the Supreme Leader’s website, June 29, 2024)

► IRGC commander Hossein Salami told a meeting of the International Congress of Shaheeds of the Resistance and Defenders of the Holy Shrines that the “resistance” had gained great strength and would respond to any aggressive move in the region and that the “axis of resistance” was destined for victory. He noted that Muslims were no longer willing to accept Western hegemony. Referring to the pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the United States and Europe, Salami said that “Palestine” had won the hearts of all freedom seekers in the world (Tasnim, June 29, 2024).

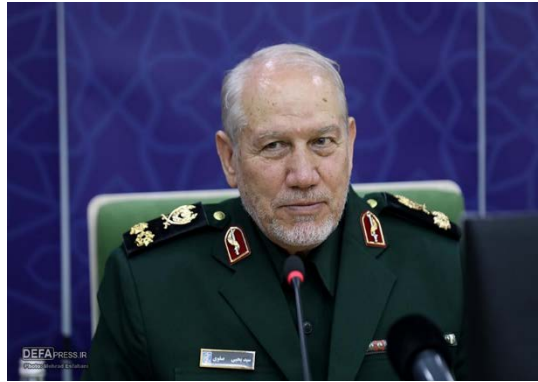
► Qods Force deputy operations commander Gen. Mohsen Chizari said the “resistance front” was in its best possible state. He said that Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the Iranian attack on Israel on April 13, 2024, and the “resistance” of the Palestinian people had turned the “resistance front” into a global one, and that the entire world was looking at the issue of the “resistance” from a new perspective. Referring to the death of IRGC officer Saeed Abyar in an attack attributed to Israel in Syria on June 3, 2024, Chizari said that the “criminal Zionists” were receiving responses from all directions, but only some of them could be published (defapress.ir, June 29, 2024).



Qods Force deputy operations commander (defapress.ir, June 29, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Iraq

► On June 30, 2024, Yahya Rahim Safavi, the Supreme Leader’s senior military advisor, met with Iraqi Science Minister Dr. Naim al-Aboudi and stressed the need to expand scientific and academic ties between the two countries. He noted that the two countries complemented each other geopolitically, geostrategically, geoeconomically, and geoculturally, and that they both shared a common strategy of supporting the people of Gaza. He added that more than 80,000 Iraqi students were currently studying at universities in Iran and that Iran was prepared to provide Iraq with knowledge and experience in various scientific fields, including technology, economics, and defense, and to assist it in peaceful nuclear technology (defapress.ir, June 30, 2024).



Yahya Rahim Safavi, the Supreme Leader’s senior military advisor (defapress.ir, June 30, 2024)

► On July 1, 2024, a delegation of Iraqi media and press officials met with the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad, Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq, to discuss expanding cultural and media cooperation between the two countries (IRNA, July 1, 2024).



Iraqi media and press officials meet with the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad (IRNA, July 1, 2024)

Activities of the Shiite militias

Joint attacks by the Iraqi militias and the Houthis

► The Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for four joint attacks against Israeli-linked targets between June 26 and July 3, 2024 (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 26—July 3, 2024). However, no verification of the claims has been received from other sources. The targets of the attacks were as follows:

- ◆ **June 26, 2024:** A joint UAV attack against the “Israeli” ship MSC Manzanillo in Haifa Port.
- ◆ **June 27, 2024:** A joint attack against a “vital target” in Haifa using cruise missiles. It was claimed that the objective of the operation was successfully achieved.
- ◆ **June 28, 2024:** A joint UAV attack against the oil tanker Waler in the Mediterranean Sea while en route to Haifa Port.
- ◆ **July 2, 2024:** An attack against a “vital target” in Haifa using several cruise missiles. It was claimed that the operation achieved its objectives successfully.



Launching a cruise missile at a “vital target” in Haifa (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 27, 2024)

Iraq

Claims of responsibility of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq

► This week, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for **one independent attack**: On June 30, 2024, a “vital target” in Eilat was attacked by a drone (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, June 30, 2024). However, no verification of the claim has been received from other sources.



A drone being launched at Eilat (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 1, 2024)

The militias' preparations for war in Lebanon

- ▶ The Iraqi Militia Coordination Committee announced that if an all-out war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, it would escalate its activities against Israel and see American interests in the region as a legitimate target for members of the “resistance.” The committee added that a firm stance had to be taken against the “normalization countries” and noted the oil pipeline between Aqaba and Basra, which, it claimed, emptied Iraq without any compensation (Telegram channel of the Iraqi Militia Coordination Committee, June 30, 2024).
- ▶ “Sources” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq revealed that hundreds of fighters belonging to “various armed factions,” especially to Kata'ib Hezbollah, were being trained in camps in Iraq and abroad under the supervision of Iranian experts. The “sources” added that the training was being held in preparation for the scenario of a comprehensive regional war, in the shadow of the recent escalation between Hezbollah and Israel. According to the “sources,” the training is necessary because advanced weapons, including missiles and drones, arrived in Iraq from Iran and Russia. It was also reported that the training was not only military but was intended to prepare the fighters ideologically and “towards jihad” (al-Akhbar, June 28, 2024).
- ▶ Political analyst and commentator Ghanem al-Abed noted that senior Iraqi militia officials were currently in Lebanon, and that in his opinion, three militias would take part in the fighting against Israel in the event of an all-out war. According to him, these would be Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Kata'ib Hezbollah, and the Nujaba movement (Sky News, June 26, 2024).

Yemen

Anti-vessel activity

►Over the past week, the Houthis have continued to claim responsibility for carrying out attacks against civilian vessels. Houthi Armed Forces spokesman Yahya Saria reported on the attacks (Yahya Saria’s X account, June 26—July 3, 2024):

- ◆ **June 27, 2024:** An attack on the ship Seajoy in the Red Sea using an uncrewed surface vehicle (USV), missiles, and drones. It was claimed that there was a direct and precise hit. However, no verification of the claim has been received from other sources.

- ◆ **June 28, 2024:** An attack on the “American” oil tanker Delonix in the Red Sea using ballistic missiles. It was claimed that there was a direct hit; An attack on the Johannes Maersk in the Mediterranean Sea using a cruise missile. The operation reportedly achieved its objective; An attack on the ship Ioannis in the Red Sea using USVs. However, no verification of the claims has been received from other sources.

- ◆ **July 1, 2024:** An attack on the “Israeli” ship MSC Unific in the Arabian Sea using several cruise missiles. It was claimed that there was a direct hit; A second attack against the “American” tanker Delonix in the Red Sea using several ballistic missiles and cruise missiles; An attack on the British cargo ship Anvil Point in the Indian Ocean using several cruise missiles. It was claimed that there was a direct hit; An attack against the Lucky Sailor in the Mediterranean Sea using several cruise missiles. No verification of the claims has been received from other sources.

►During the past week, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that its forces had intercepted a UAV and three USVs launched by the Houthis towards the Red Sea. At the same time, during the past week, coalition forces carried out airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, including radar sites, seven UAVs and a vehicle used as a ground control station (CENTCOM X account, June 26–July 3, 2024).

Houthi armament efforts

►On June 26, 2024, the Houthis unveiled the Hatem 2 ballistic missile, which they claimed was used in the attack against the “Israeli” MSC SARAH V in the Arabian Sea. According to the Houthi announcement, it is a self-made, solid-propulsion hypersonic missile with advanced maneuverability and a smart control system (Yahya Saria’s X account, June 26, 2024).



Right: Technical data of the Hatem 2 ballistic missile, from the video unveiling the missile. Left: The missile being launched en route to an alleged hit on the MSC SARAH (Houthi forces X account, June 26, 2024)

► On June 30, 2024, the Houthis unveiled the Tufan al-Mudammer (Destructive Flood) USV, which they claimed was used in the attack on the Transworld Navigator on June 23, 2024. They also released a video purportedly documenting the hit. According to the Houthi announcement, the USV can carry one to one and a half tons of explosives, reach a speed of 72 km/h (45 miles per hour), and can be controlled remotely or manually operated (Yahya Saria's X account, June 30, 2024).



Right: Technical data from the video unveiling the USV. Left: Documentation of the alleged hit by the USV on the Transworld Navigator (Houthi forces X account, June 26, 2024)

► In his weekly speech, Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi referred to the new weapons. He noted that the Tufan USV could carry a ton and a half of explosives and cause a huge explosion that would cause serious damage to “enemy” ships. He also said that the Hatem was an important missile “in name, deed, and in every sense of the word” and that the entry of the “destructive” missile would have great consequences (al-Masirah TV Telegram channel, June 27, 2024).

Contacts between the Houthis and Russia

► On July 2, 2024, Houthi Political Bureau member Mohammad Abdeslam, who also serves as Houthi representative for meetings abroad, announced that he had met with the Russian president's special envoy to the Middle East and Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov. During the meeting, the two discussed developments in the war in the Gaza Strip and the need to stop Israeli "aggression" against the Gaza Strip and the American-British "aggression" against the Houthis. Abdeslam claimed that the operations in the Red Sea were not intended to threaten maritime traffic and transport in the region but rather to help the Palestinians and that they were a response to the American-British attacks on Yemeni territory. Abdeslam also stressed the importance of the actions of the Russian position, which "understands" the Houthis' position (Mohammad Abdeslam's X account, July 2, 2024).

► The Russian embassy in Sana'a said Abdeslam and Bogdanov had discussed the political and military crisis in Yemen and the need to step up international actions to achieve the conditions that would enable a solution to the crisis. It was also reported that the meeting discussed the issue of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and its impact on the Red Sea region. In this context, the Russians strongly condemned the American-British airstrikes on Yemeni territory (X account of the Russian Embassy in Yemen, July 2, 2024).

► On July 1, 2024, it was reported that "senior sources" in the US had claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin was considering supplying the Houthi forces with anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles. The report claims that since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022, the Kremlin has been striving to strengthen its relations with Iran and its proxies to act against the United States, European countries and their allies around the world. It is also claimed that there are assessments that the Houthis are already using Russian-made anti-ship missiles and that the Houthis are working to produce missiles of that type in areas under their control (Newsweek, July 1, 2024).

Statements by senior Houthi officials

► Following the departure of the American aircraft carrier Eisenhower from the Red Sea after eight months and its expected replacement with the aircraft carrier Roosevelt, Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi threatened that any new aircraft carrier that arrived in the region would become a target and be attacked with advanced missiles. He added that the operations would continue until the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip stopped (al-Masirah TV Telegram channel,

June 27,2024). The Houthis then released a video combining their threats with photos of the aircraft carrier Roosevelt and shots of Houthi missiles (Houthi forces X account, July 2, 2024).

►In light of the Houthi claim that an “Israeli” ship was hit by the new Hatem 2 ballistic missile, Houthi Political Council member Mohammad al-Bukhaiti said that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was dragging the United States and Britain to lose the war. He added that the Houthis would defeat them “not with the power of our weapons, but with the degree of justice of our cause and the atrocities they commit, which only give us strength to continue to cling to our cause” (Mohammad al-Bukhaiti’s X account, June 27, 2024).

►On July 1, 2024, Houthi Political Council member Hezam al-Asad issued a post in Hebrew saying: “65,000 ultra-Orthodox Jews refuse to accept the High Court’s decision to enlist; In their opinion, the chances of continuing the occupation in Palestine are slim, and they fear for their lives after the previous experience of the [Israeli] soldiers in Gaza” (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, July 1, 2024).

Security Council debate on the Houthis

►On June 27, 2024, the UN Security Council held a meeting on Yemen. Council members condemned the Houthi attacks on vessels and reiterated their demand for an end to the attacks and the release of the Galaxy Leader and her crew, who have been held by the Houthis since November 2023. In addition, the Council’s resolution emphasized that active steps had to be taken to prevent the supply of weapons and equipment to the Houthis, especially missiles and drones used for attacks in the maritime space (UN Security Council website, June 27, 2024).

►Houthi Political Council member Mohammad al-Bukhaiti said in response that the UN Security Council’s condemnation and demand to lift the naval blockade of Israel without requiring Israel to lift its siege on the Gaza Strip proved the need for a new international organization based on true justice. He added that such decisions “leave us with no choice but to step on them with our feet” (Mohammad al-Bukhaiti’s X account, June 28, 2024).