



Spotlight on Iran

July 3 – 10, 2024

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Following the election of Masoud Pezeshkian as president of Iran, there has been a marked Iranian effort to emphasize Iran's commitment to continued support for the "resistance front" it leads: the Iranian media has highlighted the message of support sent by the president-elect to Hezbollah's secretary-general, in which he stressed Iran's continued support for Hezbollah and the "resistance" in the region against Israel; The Iranian ambassador to Lebanon declared that Iran would continue to support the "resistance" and the Palestinians under any circumstances, as it had done since the Islamic Revolution.
- ▶ Senior Iranian officials once again threatened Israel against the possibility of an offensive initiative against Hezbollah: the acting Iranian foreign minister warned that Lebanon would become hell for Israel in the event of an all-out confrontation with Hezbollah; the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Iran would not hesitate to support Lebanon if required.
- ▶ Iran's president-elect spoke with Syrian President Bashar Assad and stressed that Iran would continue to support Syria and the "resistance." He also spoke with Iraq's president and prime minister and stressed the importance of continuing and developing cooperation between the two countries. He was invited by the Iraqi prime minister to visit Iraq.
- ▶ The Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed joint responsibility for launching a drone at Eilat. The IDF Spokesperson reported the downing of a suspicious target over the Red Sea. In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for three attacks of its own against targets in Israel. The IDF Spokesperson confirmed that a drone had been downed.

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

- Representatives of the pro-Iranian militias reportedly agreed to act against American interests and targets in Israel if war broke out in Lebanon. A senior Iraqi official warned that the militias' involvement in the war in Lebanon would lead to an American response.
- The Houthis reported three attacks against civilian vessels in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden. There were no casualties or damage. A Greek warship intercepted two Houthi drones en route to a merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden.

Iranian involvement in the Palestinian arena

- Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned the IDF's continued operations in the Gaza Strip on the nine-month anniversary of the war. He said that "war crimes and the killing of Palestinians, especially oppressed children, by Zionist war criminals continue cruelly in the Gaza Strip." He added that supporters of the "Zionist regime" continued to shamelessly utter slogans about human rights and interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. According to him, "The shame of supporting all Zionist crimes in the Gaza Strip will forever remain on the foreheads of supporters of this regime" (Nasser Kanani's X account, July 7, 2024).
- After voting in the Iranian presidential elections at the Iranian embassy in Beirut, Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Mojtaba Amani said Iran would continue to support the "resistance" and "Palestine" under any circumstances, as it had done for the past 45 years. He stressed that support for them was a basic principle of Iranian policy and was enshrined in the constitution of the Islamic Republic and that it was not influenced by anything (Mehr, July 5, 2024).



Iranian ambassador to Beirut (Mehr, July 5, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Syria and Lebanon

- Speaking to journalists, Acting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri warned against an Israeli decision to launch an all-out confrontation with Hezbollah, saying Lebanon would definitely

become a “one-way hell for the Zionists.” He said the “resistance” was an active and deterrent player both on the battlefield and in the diplomatic arena (Tasnim, July 3, 2024).

►Nasser Kanani, the spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said Iran regarded defending Lebanon’s security as a fundamental principle and would not hesitate to support it at the appropriate time. At his weekly press conference, Kanani was asked about the possibility of an Israeli attack on Lebanon and replied that any aggression by the “Zionist regime” on Lebanon would lead to increased tension and instability in the region and around the world. He called on the international community to act decisively against Israel’s “adventurous actions.” He added that the Lebanese people, government, and military were fully capable of defending their national security with strength and that the “resistance” in Lebanon was stronger than ever and ready to protect the security of the country’s citizens (ISNA, July 8, 2024).

►Iran’s President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian sent a message to Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah, thanking him for the congratulations on his election. He stressed that Iran would continue to support the “resistance” in the region against the “illegitimate Zionist regime,” and that this support was a pillar of its fundamental policy. He said he was confident that the “resistance” in the region would not allow Israel to continue its “warlike and criminal” policy against the Palestinian people and the other peoples of the region (ISNA, July 8, 2024).



“Strategic depth:” Tasnim News Agency emphasizes the message of support from the president-elect to the secretary-general of Hezbollah (Tasnim, July 9, 2024)

►On July 9, 2024, Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian spoke with Syrian President Bashar Assad and stressed that Iran would continue to support Syria and the “resistance,” and that it was striving to strengthen bilateral ties and implement the agreements signed between the two countries (Fars, July 9, 2024).

►A Syrian news channel reported that during the past week, the IRGC had transferred ammunition and logistic equipment from Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria to the city of Homs. According to the report, five trucks carrying ammunition, food, and logistic equipment that arrived in Syria from Iraq left the Iranian military base in the city of al-Mayadeen, heading towards Homs Governorate, possibly in preparation for a planned IRGC operation in the Homs region (North Press, July 3, 2024).

►Mohammad Mokhber, the acting president of Iran (until Masoud Pezeshkian is sworn in), submitted a bill to the Majles to approve an agreement for strategic economic cooperation between Iran and Syria for twenty years. The agreement, which requires the approval of the Majles in accordance with Iran's constitution, was approved by the government on June 16, 2024. Consisting of cooperation between the two countries in several economic and financial fields, it was formulated under the leadership of the Iranian Ministry of Transportation, which heads the Joint Iranian-Syrian Economic Committee (Nour News, July 9, 2024).

Iranian involvement in Iraq

►On July 8, 2024, Iran's President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian spoke with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, who congratulated him on his election victory. He emphasized the political, economic, cultural, and religious ties between the two countries and expressed hope for deepening and expanding them. He said Iran attached great importance to Iraq and that the two countries shared common positions in many areas (IRNA, July 8, 2024). He also spoke with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia' al-Sudani, who congratulated him on his election victory and invited him to visit Iraq (Tasnim, July 8, 2024).

►Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq said the "resistance" in Iraq was "independent." He admitted that "it is no secret that Iran supports the resistance" and noted that Iran had assisted the militias during the war against ISIS, with the consent of the Iraqi government. However, he added that the "resistance" had achieved its independence and was acting according to the circumstances, and Iran did not dictate anything to it (al-Awla TV Facebook page, July 4, 2024).

►On July 4, 2024, Masoud Barzani, chairman of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, met in Baghdad with Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq. The two discussed regional issues, the internal situation in Iraq, and bilateral relations between the countries (IRNA, July 4, 2024).



**Iranian ambassador to Iraq meets with Masoud Barzani
(the ambassador's X account, July 4, 2024)**

Activities of the Shiite militias

Joint attacks by the Iraqi militias and the Houthis

► On July 8, 2024, the Houthis in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a joint attack against a “vital target” in Eilat (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 8, 2024). The IDF Spokesperson said a fighter jet had intercepted a suspicious aerial target en route to Israel from the Red Sea. The target did not cross into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesperson’s Telegram channel, July 8, 2024).

New Houthi office in Iraq

► Iraqi media reported that Abu Idris al-Sharafi, the Houthi representative in Iraq, had opened a headquarters in the al-Jadriyah neighborhood of Baghdad, near the Green Zone and the headquarters of senior members of Iraqi parties and the Popular Mobilization. An advisor to Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia’ al-Sudani noted that this was not an official office or representative office but a headquarters for members of the movement after they had previously been forced to stay in a hotel in Baghdad. According to the advisor, Iraq does not want the Houthis to exploit the country to carry out hostile actions against any other country (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, July 8, 2024).



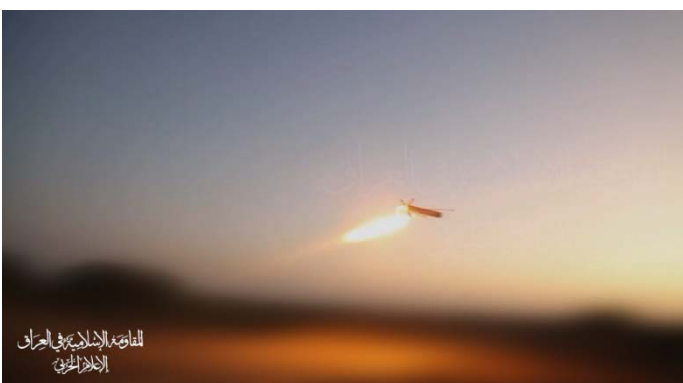
Abu Idris al-Sharafi (right) visiting the headquarters of the Popular Mobilization's Baghdad Strip operations (Ansar Allah in Iraq X account, July 4, 2024)

Iraq

Claims of responsibility of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq

► This week, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for three independent attacks against targets in Israel using UAVs (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, July 9–10, 2024):

- ◆ July 9, 2024 (morning): A “vital target” in Eilat. The IDF Spokesperson said a fighter jet had intercepted a suspicious aerial target en route to southern Israel from the east. The target did not cross into Israeli territory (IDF Spokesperson's Telegram channel, July 9, 2024).
- ◆ July 9, 2024 (evening): A “vital target” in Haifa. No verification has been received from other sources.
- ◆ July 10, 2024: Orot Rabin power plant near Caesarea. No verification has been received from other sources.



UAV being launched at a “vital target” in Eilat
(Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, July 9, 2024)

The militias' preparations for war in Lebanon

► Iraqi “sources” said meetings were held in Syria and Lebanon of members and representatives of Iraqi pro-Iranian militias between June 27 and 30, 2024. According to the sources, it was agreed to act together against American interests in Iraq and Syria and against strategic targets in Israel which have not been attacked so far if an all-out war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah. According to a source close to Kata’ib Hezbollah, preparations for a ground confrontation with Israel have been completed and all the weapons necessary for fighting are ready, including missiles, attack drones and anti-tank missiles (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, July 3, 2024).

► “A senior government official” in Iraq warned that if the pro-Iranian militias joined the fighting alongside Hezbollah in Lebanon, it would strain relations with the United States. The source noted that the Iraqi government was in a race against time to prevent a direct clash between the militias and the Americans (1news-iq, July 4, 2024). Security experts assessed that if war broke out in Lebanon, Iraq would also be part of it. The involvement of the militias could lead to a dangerous escalation within Iraq between the militias and the Americans, who might respond by eliminating the leadership (1news-iq, July 3, 2024).

Relations between the militias and the Palestinian organizations

► A Hamas delegation led by Khalil al-Haya, Yahya Sinwar’s deputy, met with a delegation of the leadership of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and with a delegation of the Houthi leadership in Yemen. According to Hamas’ statement, Hamas representatives presented the developments in the fighting and the ceasefire negotiations and praised the militias and Houthis for their support of the Gaza Strip. It was also agreed to continue communication and support between the sides at the leadership and on the ground (Hamas Telegram channel, July 5, 2024).

► Hadi al-Ameri, the chairman of the Fatah Alliance in the Iraqi parliament, secretary-general of the Badr Organization and deputy chairman of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), met with a delegation of the “Palestinian resistance,” which included members of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The participants discussed the latest developments in the Palestinian arena and the state of the “Palestinian resistance” fighting against IDF forces in the Gaza Strip. They also reviewed

Operation al-Aqsa Flood, the strategy for the continuation, and the results (Iraqi News Agency, July 8, 2024).

►Haidar al-Gharawi, secretary-general of Ansar Allah al-Awfiya (AAA), gave his greeting in honor of the Islamic New Year. He stressed their support for the Gaza Strip, “Palestine,” and all the weak peoples in the world who were struggling for their rights and freedom. He added that they would work for the victory of the oppressed throughout the world until they received justice and peace, and all the wishes of the weaker nations were fulfilled (Haidar al-Gharawi’s X account, July 8, 2024)

Yemen

Anti-vessel attacks

►On July 9, 2024, Yahya Saria, the spokesman for the Houthi armed forces, claimed responsibility for three attacks against civilian vessels: an attack on the American ship Maersk Sentosa in the Arabian Sea with cruise missiles and ballistic missiles. It was claimed that there was a direct and precise hit. Maersk confirmed that the ship was the target of a “flying object” attack in the northern Gulf of Aden, but there were no casualties, and no damage was caused (Reuters, July 9, 2024); Attack on the ship MARATHOPOLIS in the Arabian Sea using several drones. It was claimed that there was a precise hit. The claim has not been verified by other sources; Attack on the “Israeli” ship MSC Patnaree in the Gulf of Aden using several drones. It was claimed that the attack achieved its objective (Yahya Saria’s Telegram channel, July 9, 2024).

►On July 7, 2024, a Greek naval frigate belonging to the European Union Red Sea Task Force intercepted two Houthi drones launched at a Cypriot merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden. Two more drones withdrew. There were no casualties or damage (eKathimerini, July 7, 2024).

►The US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported during the week that its forces had intercepted two UAVs over the Gulf of Aden and four unmanned surface vehicles (USVs) in the Red Sea. In addition, airstrikes were carried out against Houthi targets in Yemeni territory, and two radar sites were reportedly destroyed (CENTCOM X account, July 3-10, 2024).



The interception of one of the UAVs by the Greek frigate (Royal Netherlands Navy X account, July 8, 2024)

Houthi military exercise against “Israeli and British camps”

►On July 6, 2024, the Houthi forces released documentation of the “Destructive Flood” maneuver (al-Tufan al-Mudammer) that took place in the Fourth Military District on July 1, 2024, with the participation of the Air Force, artillery, anti-tank, snipers, infantry, armored and engineering forces. The maneuver included two main stages: practicing a combined attack against Israeli and British “enemy camps,” including the use of tunnels, and then practicing defensive capabilities against an attack by the “enemy” (al-Masirah, July 6, 2024).



Footage from the Houthi military exercise (Yahya Saria’s X account, July 6, 2024)

►Houthi Political Council member Hezam al-Asad issued a statement in Hebrew along with a video documenting the exercise. The statement reads, “Yemen: scenes from the “destructive tsunami” maneuver carried out by sergeant units from the forces of the Fourth Military Region, simulating infiltration and control of Israeli sites. That is why we are coming to uproot you and help our brothers in Gaza” (Hezam al-Asad’s X account, July 7, 2024).

Statements by senior Houthi officials

►On July 7, 2024, Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi gave a speech on the occasion of the Hijri New Year. He acknowledged that there were ongoing conflicts with “external aggressors, including the Americans, British, Israelis, and their allies, and that the struggle is not only military but also economic, political and social.” However, he claimed that the Houthis’

maritime operations had disrupted half of Israel's shipping traffic and had affected the economies of Israel, the United States, and Britain (al-Masirah, July 7, 2024).

►On July 4, 2024, in his weekly speech, the Houthi leader warned the Arab states against interfering in the American war against the Yemeni people. He warned that if any regime were to join the Americans in serving the “enemy,” the Yemeni people had the right to take whatever action was necessary to respond. Al-Houthi lashed out against the Arab regimes for expressing themselves in a manner that “does not offend the feelings of the Zionist enemies” and criticized the fact that these regimes “still consider jihad fighters in Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen as terrorists.” He boasted that the battle waged by the Americans against the Houthis “exposed the incompetence and weakness of the American aircraft carriers,” claiming that the Yemeni actions “forced the aircraft carriers to flee” (al-Manar, July 4, 2024).

►Houthi Political Council member Hezam al-Asad issued two posts in Hebrew. The first was issued along with a letter sent by several international organizations opposing sea shipments of animals from Europe to Israel “as long as the fighting in this area continues.” The post reads, “Zionist animals should not sacrifice the safety of imported animals” (Hezam al-Asad's X account, July 7, 2024). The second post was issued along with a video allegedly documenting a destroyed IDF APC on a street in the Gaza Strip. The post reads, “When the tiger turns into a cat, the pride of the armor, the Israeli soldiers' armored personnel carrier, becomes a group coffin. Indeed, it is not the machine that creates victory, but Almighty God, the just struggle, and the loyal hands of the loyal people” (Hezam al-Asad's X account, July 8, 2024).



A Hebrew tweet by Hezam al-Asad (Hezam al-Asad's X account, July 7, 2024)