



Cooperation between the Shi'ite militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen

August 4, 2024

Overview¹

- ▶ The cooperation between the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen has intensified in recent weeks, as reflected in announcements of joint UAV and cruise missile attacks on Israel "in support of the Palestinians" and in response to Israel's [alleged] "massacres" in the Strip Gaza.
- ▶ Between June 6, 2024 and August 4, 2024, the Iraqi militias and the Houthis announced 12 joint attacks on Israel, most of them involving UAVs and some involving cruise missiles. The attacks purportedly targeted Haifa, Ashdod and Eilat, all port cities, and ships in the Mediterranean Sea. Apart from one incident in which the IDF confirmed the interception of a UAV, there has been no practical verification of the other claims of responsibility.
- ▶ The increasing cooperation between the Shi'ite militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen is part of the concept of the "unity of the arenas" against Israel promoted by the Iranian regime, especially since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip. However, it also reflects the interests of the Iraqi militias and the Houthis, who seek to establish themselves as influential regional and international factors.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, following the Israeli attack on the Houthi-controlled port city of al-Hudaydah in Yemen, carried out in response to the Houthis' ongoing attacks against Israel and the launching of the UAV that exploded in Tel Aviv, the cooperation between the Houthis and the Iraqi militias is expected to increase and escalate their joint attempts to attack Israeli territory. It is also expected to be reflected in the "resistance axis"² response to the killing of Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau in Tehran, attributed to Israel, and in response to Israel's elimination of Fuad Shukr, Hezbollah's most senior military commander, in Beirut.**

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

Joint Attacks on Israel

►After the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip (or Operation al-Aqsa Flood, as the "resistance axis" calls it), following the Hamas terrorist attack and massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023, the organizations and movements belonging to the Iranian-led "axis" announced the opening of the "support fronts" for Gaza as part of the "unity of the arenas" concept. On October 8, 2023, Hezbollah joined the fighting by firing rockets, launching anti-tank missiles and firing small arms at IDF forces and northern Israeli cities, towns and villages. On October 19, 2023, the Houthis began launching drones and firing missiles at Israel, and attacking ships sailing to Israel which the Houthis claimed had an Israeli connection. On November 2, 2023, the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq joined by launching cruise missiles and drones at Israel.³

►On June 6, 2024, the Iraqi and Houthi militias announced the first joint attacks on Israel in support of the Palestinian people and in response to Israel's "massacres" in Rafah and the American-British "aggression" against Yemen (Yahya Sarieh's X account and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 6, 2024). The leader of the Houthis, Abdelmalik al-Houthi, called it a deliberate escalation as part of the "fourth stage of the resistance" the beginning of a series of "important, strategic, advanced joint operations." He claimed the joint operations would have a "huge impact" on Israel (Houthi forces' X account, June 6, 2024). In ITIC assessment, Iran is behind the cooperation and fighting of the pro-Iranian militias and Houthis, part of its support for and management of the "resistance axis" as the IDF's fighting in the Gaza Strip progresses.

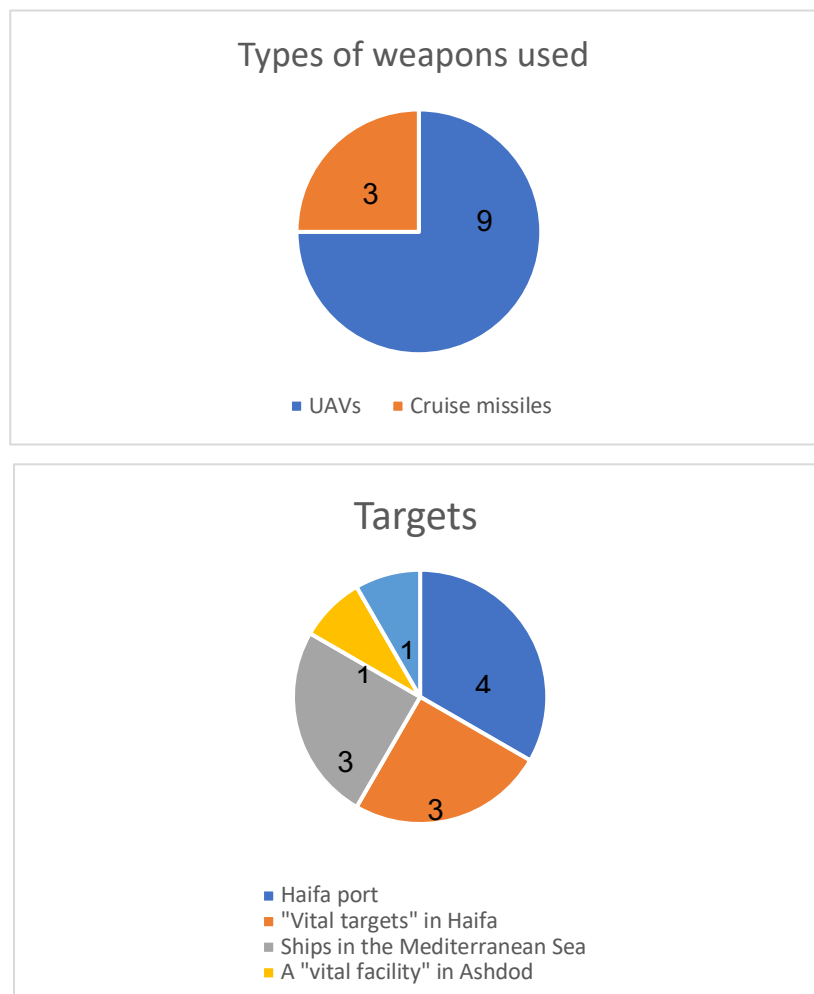
►The joint attacks include the coordinated launching of missiles and UAVs from Yemen and Iraq (or from eastern Syria, near the Iraqi border). The launches simultaneously attack either the same target or different areas in order to draw the Israeli Air Force defense systems to several locations, thereby increasing the chances of a successful attack.

►According to Lieutenant Colonel Aziz Rashad, a senior officer in the "morale directing department" of the Houthi armed forces, the joint attacks are coordinated through military operations rooms and carried out according to the selection of targets and the appropriate time for the UAVs and missiles to reach their targets. He said the Houthi army was familiar

³ Until February 2024, the Iraqi militias focused on attacking American targets in Syria and Iraq. Following an American attack on the militias, and the Iraqi government's promise to forge an agreement with the United States for the withdrawal of American forces from the country, the militias suspended attacks on American targets until July 2024 and focused on attacks on Israel.

with all the information and knew how to carry out precision operations (al-Jazeera website, July 13, 2024).

►According to the Houthi-Iraqi militia announcements, between June 6, 2024 and July 28, 2024, they had carried out 12 joint attacks. Nine employed UAVs and three used cruise missiles; seven targeted Haifa (four targeted the port itself and three targeted unspecified "vital targets" in the city. It can be assumed they were the refineries in Haifa and possibly the Karish gas rig). Three attacks targeted ships in the Mediterranean, one targeted a "vital facility" in Eilat.



Distribution of the Houthi-Iraqi militia attacks, as of July 26, 2024

►On July 8, 2024, the IDF spokesperson announced that an Israeli Air Force fighter jet had intercepted a suspicious aerial target flying towards Israel from the direction of the Red Sea, and that the target did not cross into Israeli territory. Meanwhile, the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced the launch of a UAV at a "vital target" in Eilat. It was the only instance so far in which confirmation was received of a joint Iraqi militia-Houthi attack.

Neither the IDF nor any international body verified the other claims, including the United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) and the British Maritime Trade Organization (UKMTO). Therefore, the reliability of the announcements about the attacks and the effectiveness of the joint operations is open to question.

►On the night of July 18, 2024, a UAV launched by the Houthis exploded in Tel Aviv, killing an Israeli civilian and injuring eight others.⁴ The IDF spokesperson said that concurrently, a UAV approaching Israeli territory from the east was intercepted. Although the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq published separate claims of responsibility for the launches (according to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, a cruise missile was launched at a "military target" in Haifa), it can be assumed it was a coordinated launch designed to make it difficult to identify the UAV as coming from Yemen.

Development of Connections between the Iraqi Militias and the Houthis

►The Houthis established their presence in Iraq in an office representing them (al-Khanadiq, July 23, 2024; Amwaj, June 21, 2024). In 2014, following the Houthis' takeover of Sana'a, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Iraq's foreign minister at the time, began to pave the way for Iraqi government recognition of the Houthi movement (Amwaj, June 21, 2024), enabling the Houthis to operate freely in Iraq.

►As part of expanding their activities in Iraq, the Houthis cultivated ties with local communities to explain their positions and their Shi'a-Yazidi faith to other Iraqis. A prominent example is the Basra-based organization called the Mohammadiyah, which spreads Houthi religious and cultural teachings, apparently in coordination with the Hezbollah Brigades militia. Similar Houthi institutions operate in Najaf, Diyala and Kirkuk, and now an attempt is being made to expand the activity to the Kurdish region (Amwaj, June 21, 2024).

⁴ For further information, see the July 24, 2024 ITIC report, "[Escalation of the Confrontation Between Israel and the Houthis: Background and Significance](#)"



Hezbollah Brigade operatives with Abu Idris al-Sharafi, the Houthi representative Iraq (fourth from the right), at the Mohammadiyun in Basra (Mohammadiyun YouTube channel, July 28, 2023)

- ▶According to journalist Adnan al-Jabarni, in 2015 Abdelmalik al-Houthi appointed a personal representative in Iraq whose job is to focus on political and financial relations in Iraq, establishing the Houthis' ties in the country. Thus during the past decade Iraq has become an essential source of donations for the Houthis, both at the popular level and through affiliated groups such as the militias and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) operating in Iraq (sanaacenter.org, July 15, 2024).
- ▶The connections between the militias and the Houthis gained media attention in January 2022, when Abu Ali al-Askari, the spokesman for the Hezbollah Brigades, announced a fund-raising campaign for the Houthis. Later, other Iraqi militias, including the Nobles' Movement (al-Nujaba), Sayyed al-Shuhadaa', Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and the Badr organization, frequently expressed public support for the Houthis (Amwaj, June 21, 2024).
- ▶The coordination between the Houthis and the Iraqi militias has increased since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip. According to a military expert close to the Yemeni defense ministry, the Houthis operate a coordinating office in Iraq, and coordination between the Houthis and the Iraqi "resistance" has been at a high level for several months, with daily communication (al-Akhbar, July 13, 2024).

►On July 8, 2024, to further establish Houthi-Iraqi militia ties, Abu Idris al-Sharafi, the Houthi representative in Iraq, opened a headquarters in the al-Jadiriya neighborhood in Baghdad, near the Green Zone, the area of the Iraqi government institutions), and the headquarters of the senior Iraqi parties and the Popular Mobilization, the umbrella organization of the pro-Iranian Iraqi militias. Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, advisor to the Iraqi prime minister, claimed it was not an official or a representative office, but a headquarters for the members of the Houthi movement after previously they had been forced to stay in a hotel in Baghdad (al-Araby al-Jadeed, July 8, 2024).



Abu Idris al-Sharafi (second from the right) with two representatives of the Houthis in Iraq, visits Iraqi tribesmen (al-Hadath, July 16, 2024)

►On August 4, 2024, "Yemeni sources" reported that senior Houthi officer Hussein Abdullah Mastoor al-Sha'bal, known as Abu Jihad, was killed in an American attack on July 30, 2024 (al-Alam, Iran, August 4, 2024). The Hezbollah Brigades confirmed that a commander and three operatives who dealt with UAVs were killed in an attack on the Popular Mobilization headquarters in Jurf al-Nazar (Sabarin News, July 31, 2024).

►Ahmed Ahmed Muhammad al-Sharafi, aka Abu Idris al-Sharafi, who has been the Houthi representative in Iraq since 2023, is considered one of the movement's most influential figures. He previously oversaw its military production and managed the passage of Iranian experts to and from Yemen before the Houthi movement took control of Sana'a in 2014. In 2015, he was commander of the Houthis in the provinces of Haja (in northwestern Yemen) and al-Hudaydah (in western Yemen). He is involved in coordinating joint military activity with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and formally meets with representatives of the militias, senior figures in the Iraqi government and representatives of other "resistance" movements, such as Hamas. He also meets with tribal leaders and local officials, participates in political and religious events and enlists support and donations for the movement. He meticulously

documents his actions on social media (al-Khanadeq, July 23, 2024; sanaacenter.org, July 15, 2024).



Al-Khazali (left) next to Abu Idris al-Sharafi, the Houthi representative in Iraq (al-Khazali's X account, July 21, 2024)

IRGC Role IRGC in Promoting Houthi-Iraqi Militia Ties

- ▶The IRGC's Qods Force has important roles as mediators, financiers, armorers and guides of both the Houthis and the Iraqi militias.
- ▶According to reports on October 29, 2023, as part of realizing the concept of the "unity of the arenas," Iran decided to establish a joint operations room which would be responsible for coordination and overall military, logistical and intelligence planning between Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the pro-Iranian militias in Syria, the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen (Tabnak, October 29, 2023). A joint operations room under Iranian supervision made it possible to promote the ties between the Houthis and the Iraqi militias.
- ▶On May 23, 2024, representatives of the Houthis and the Iraqi militias met with the IRGC and Qods Force commanders on the sidelines of the funeral held in Tehran for Ibrahim Raisi, the former president of Iran. Abdelmalik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthis, and Ahmad al-Hamidawi, secretary general of the Hezbollah Brigades, agreed to continue bilateral coordination (Hezbollah Brigades Telegram channel , May 24, 2024).
- ▶According to "a source" in Sana'a knowledgeable about Houthi activities, in March 2024 the IRGC oversaw the establishment of a joint Houthi-Iraqi militia operations committee in Iraq (Hezbollah Brigades and the Kata'ib Sayyed al-Shuhadaa') which would coordinate regional naval operations "in response to the war in the Strip Gaza" (sanaacenter.org, July 15, 2024).

►According to reports on June 2, 2024, the Popular Mobilization (the umbrella organization of the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq) and the Houthis held a training session with the participation of the organizations' operatives and leadership. "Yemeni sources" said that more than 80 Houthi operatives were deployed to Iraq for training in the Jurf al-Sakhar area south of Baghdad, and the Houthi representative in the Popular Mobilization coordinated visits of the Houthi leaders to Tehran (al-Hadath, June 2, 2024) .

►According to reports on July 24, 2024, hundreds of Houthis arrived in Iraq over a period of a few weeks to be trained by Iranians and experts in the production of drones and missiles at bases located in the suburbs of Baghdad and other sites in Iraq. It was also reported that the Iraqi government, under direct instructions from the pro-Iranian militias, allocated funds for the Houthis and their families. According to reports, the operation, whose objective is to deploy Houthi operatives from Yemen to Iraq, train and equip them, will continue under Iranian supervision, with some of the Houthis remaining in Iraq and others returning to Yemen (Newseast7 X account, July 24, 2024).

►After the killing of Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, in Tehran, attributed to Israel, and the elimination of Fuad Shukr, Hezbollah's most senior military commander, the Houthis and the militias in Iraq are reportedly expected to participate in the Iranian-led retaliation, and their representatives participated in coordination meetings in Tehran chaired by Iranian leader Ali Khamenei, and attended by senior IRGC operatives (al-Akhbar, August 1, 2024).⁵

►In ITIC assessment, despite Iranian involvement, the increased cooperation of the Iraqi militias and the Houthis largely also reflects the bilateral interests they seek to promote, such as strengthening their position within the "resistance axis." The Iraqi militias want to lead the fight against Israel, in addition to their activities to eliminate the American presence in Iraq and Syria, while the Houthis want to increase their regional influence, including against Saudi Arabia. It is possible that when the war in the Gaza Strip ends, both sides will cooperate against Saudi Arabia and the United States.

⁵ For further information, see the August 4, 2024 ITIC report, "Reactions to the Deaths of Fuad Shukr and Isma'il Haniyeh."

Threats to Attack Israel, the United States and Saudi Arabia

- ▶ Given the killing of Isma'il Haniyeh attributed to Israel and Israel's elimination of Fuad Shukur, "knowledgeable military sources in Sana'a" claimed that the "response" would include the Yemeni, Lebanese, Iraqi and Palestinian "resistance movements." They added that the response would be "an open war which will damage the depth of the entity [Israel] and the interests of its regional supporters" (al-Akhbar, August 2, 2024).
- ▶ Abdelmalik al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi movement in Yemen, said the position of the "axis of Jerusalem, jihad and the resistance" was that there had to be a military response to "the serious crimes and the significant Israeli escalation" (al-Masirah, August 1, 2024).
- ▶ Al-Houthi claimed that the Israeli attack on al-Hudaydah was for purposes of display and intended to deter the Houthis from continuing their support for the Palestinians, but it only created another incentive for revenge, and the Houthi response would be inevitable. He also promised that the cooperation between the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would continue and that there would be important developments in the "fifth phase" (al-Masirah, July 25, 2024).
- ▶ After the Houthi UAV attack on Tel Aviv, Hazem al-Assad, a member of the movement's political council, claimed the attack was the first of many "escalating actions" to come. He said Yemen had entered "a new strategic phase" in its attacks on Israel and there was "a combined resistance front in Lebanon, Iraq and occupied Palestine." He added that "what is coming will be greater as long as there is aggression against the Gaza Strip" (al-Mayadeen, July 19, 2024).
- ▶ "Sources" in Yemen said that the "fifth stage" in the campaign against Israel (following the Israeli attack on al-Hudaydah) would be different from the previous stages, adding that the Houthis' goal was to establish "new rules" of conflict, which would surprise the "enemy" and affect its capabilities. They claimed there would also be a "sixth stage" but did not specify what it would be. The "sources" claimed that some of the Houthi operations would be conducted in cooperation with the "resistance" in the Pakistan, Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi arenas, adding that a joint operations room would be established for the exchange of information and data. They added that the forces would expand the scope of their operations to stop supplies from reaching Israel via the Cape of Good Hope and would escalate their

attacks in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, while adding additional targets, such as the ports of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Haifa. In addition, the "sources" said that the Israeli attack on the oil tankers in the port of al-Hudaydah caused the Houthis to add many gas fields in Israel in their list of targets, including Leviathan in the Mediterranean Sea, and added that the energy and power plants throughout Israel as well as the supply of oil to Israel through the Mediterranean Sea would be targeted (al-Akhbar, July 23, 2024).

►An "Iranian military source" claimed he expected the Iraqi militias to enter the conflict against Israel "in force" after the attack on al-Hudaydah. According to the "source," the Houthis requested that the militias join their direct campaign against Israel (news-iq.com, July 21, 2024).

►On July 25, 2024, al-Houthi announced that the combined operations of the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would "escalate significantly in the near future."

►A "military expert" close to the Yemeni defense ministry said that the Houthis wanted the United States and Saudi Arabia to know that they were about to carry out "deep and wide-ranging regional operations, not only against Israel, but against its defenders in the region, especially the American bases." He added that "the message is also directed at Saudi Arabia" and that "any future operation will come from more than one direction and one side" (al-Akhbar, July 13, 2024).

►According to reports, in the near future the Iraqi militias will increase their cooperation with the Houthis to pressure Saudi Arabia to end its support for Israel. The Houthis and the Hezbollah Brigades threatened Saudi Arabia, the result of their bilateral coordination, and according to reports the Houthis asked the militias to threaten Saudi Arabia so it would be under pressure from two directions (@OALD24 Twitter account, July 14, 2024).

►In recent weeks, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has escalated its threats against Saudi Arabia. Faras al-Yasser, a member of Nobles Movement political bureau, said that the Iraqi "resistance" had recently focused on Saudi Arabia, and that during the war in the Gaza Strip ("Operation al-Aqsa Flood") "sufficient, comprehensive information" had been revealed about the extent of the support Saudi Arabia gave Israel, despite the siege imposed by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the Houthi forces in Yemen (al-Akhbar, July 15, 2024). The Hezbollah Brigades blamed the countries which had normalized their relations with Israel, and the "malicious role" of the leaders of Saudi Arabia in particular, for "utilizing their land routes to continue the campaign against the Palestinians, as an alternative to the sea routes."

The militia added that "the evil kingdom will pay the price for its action" (al-Maaluma, July 13, 2024).

►Senior Houthi figures have also threatened attack Saudi Arabia. Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarieh accused the Saudi Arabian regime of "carrying out the American instructions and serving [the interests of] the Israeli enemy" (Yahia Sarieh's Telegram channel, July 12, 2024). Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of Houthi political council, called on the Saudis to "think carefully about their hostile measures towards us, as we will not hesitate to act legitimately against such aggression" (Mohammed Ali al-Houthi's X account, July 13, 2024). Houthi figure Yasser al-Khoury said that "everyone will understand that any direct or indirect action aimed at Saudi Arabia will be considered a continuation of the defense of Palestine" (al-Mayadeen Telegram channel, July 13, 2024).

Appendix: Joint Houthi-Iraqi Militia Attacks

►The joint attacks announced by the Iraqi militias and the Houthis so far:

- ◆ **June 6, 2024:** First two joint attacks by the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. Yahya Sarieh, spokesman for the Houthis' armed forces, claimed they used UAVs to attack ships carrying military equipment to the port of Haifa and a ship that "violated the ban on entering the port of Haifa" (Yahia Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 6, 2024). There was no verification from other sources for the claims of attack.
- ◆ **June 12, 2024:** A cruise missile attack on a "vital target" in Ashdod and a UAV attack on a "vital target" in Haifa (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 12, 2024). There was no verification for the claims.
- ◆ **June 22, 2024:** UAV attack on four ships carrying general cargo and concrete for the port of Haifa; UAV attack on the Shorthorn Express sailing to the port of Haifa (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 22, 2024). There was no verification for the claims.
- ◆ **June 26, 2024:** Drone attack on the "Israeli" ship MSC Manzanillo in the port of Haifa (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 26, 2024). There was no verification for the claims.
- ◆ **June 27, 2024:** Cruise missile attack on a "vital target" in Haifa (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 27, 2024). There was no verification for the claims.

◆ **June 28, 2024:** Drone attack on the WALER oil ship in the Mediterranean Sea sailing to the port of Haifa (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, June 28, 2024). There was no verification for the claims.

**Launching a cruise missile towards a "vital target" in Haifa on June 27, 2024
(Telegram channel of the Islamic resistance in Iraq, June 28, 2024)**

◆ **July 2, 2024:** Cruise missile attack on a "vital target" in Haifa. It was claimed that the



operation successfully achieved its goals (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, July 2, 2024). There was no verification for the claims.

◆ **July 8, 2024:** A joint UAV attack on a "vital target" in Eilat (Yahya Sarieh's Telegram channel and the Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, July 8, 2024). The IDF spokesperson said that a fighter jet intercepted a suspicious aerial target flying towards Israel from the direction of the Red Sea. The target did not cross into Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson' Telegram account, July 8, 2024).

◆ **July 15, 2024:** UAV attack on the Olvia in the Mediterranean Sea. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that "the operation achieved its goal" and published a video on its Telegram channel of the UAV launch at the ship (Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, July 15-16 2024; al-Masirah network, July 15, 2024).



The UAV launched at the Olvia
(Telegram channel of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, July 15, 2024)