



Spotlight on Iran

July 24 – 31, 2024

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Highlights¹

- ▶ Iranian leaders condemned the attack in which the head of Hamas' political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in Tehran. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that “the criminal and terrorist Zionist regime prepared the ground through this operation for a heavy punishment for it.”
- ▶ The Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned the killing of senior Hezbollah operative Fouad Shukur in Lebanon. Before the operation, senior Iranian officials warned against a strong Israeli response in Lebanon following the rocket attack on Majdal Shams. According to them, an Israeli offensive initiative will lead to unexpected and severe consequences and expand the war in the region.
- ▶ Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian held a series of meetings with senior members of the “axis of resistance” who came to Tehran to participate in his swearing-in ceremony. He stressed Iran’s continued support for the “resistance front.” During their visit to Tehran, some senior Axis figures also met with Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.
- ▶ Iran strongly condemned Prime Minister Netanyahu’s invitation to address the US Congress.
- ▶ The Shiite pro-Iranian militias in Iraq continue their preparations for the possibility of a war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon and have threatened that the “axis of resistance” would use all its military capabilities.
- ▶ The US attacked a base of pro-Iranian Shiite militias in Iraq, killing at least four. Previously, American bases in Iraq and Syria had been attacked. There were no casualties.
- ▶ Senior Houthi officials continued to threaten retaliation against Israel following the attack on the port of al-Hudaydah.

▶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

► On the night of July 30-31, 2024, Iranian TV announced that the head of Hamas' political bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, had been killed along with one of his bodyguards in an attack on Haniyeh's residence in Tehran. Haniyeh was in Iran to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of the new Iranian president, Masoud Pezeshkian (IRIB, July 31, 2024). Iranian officials held emergency meetings and threatened to retaliate against Israel. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that "the criminal and terrorist Zionist regime prepared the ground through this operation for a heavy punishment for it" (Supreme Leader's website, July 31, 2024). President Pezeshkian said Haniyeh's death would strengthen the connection between Iran and "Palestine" and the path of "resistance" and that Iran would cause the "terrorist occupiers" to regret their "cowardly action" (Masoud Pezeshkian's X account, July 31, 2024).

► Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said in his speech at the swearing-in ceremony of the new president that the "Zionist regime" was not a government but "a criminal gang, murderers and terrorists." He said it was a "great shame" for the US Congress to sit and listen to the "criminal" Netanyahu's speech. According to Khamenei, the Palestinian issue has become a global one and has spread from the UN to the Olympics in Paris. He stressed that the world had to make serious decisions in light of the developments in the Gaza Strip and the "crimes of the Zionist regime." He added that the strength of the "resistance" was becoming more evident by the day and that the "Zionist regime" had not succeeded in subduing the "resistance forces" and Hamas despite the support of the United States and several "treacherous countries" (Supreme Leader's website, July 28, 2024).



The Supreme Leader and Iranian president at the swearing-in ceremony (Tasnim, July 28, 2024)

► On July 29, 2024, President Pezeshkian met with PIJ secretary-general Ziad Nakhalah, who arrived in Tehran to attend his inauguration ceremony. The Iranian president said Iran's positions and policies in supporting the Palestinians do not change following the change in government, and that this support would continue with full force. He stressed the need to

increase pressure on the “Zionist regime” to stop the “crimes and killings” in the Gaza Strip (Iranian Broadcasting Authority website, July 29, 2024). On July 30, 2024, Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas’ political bureau, and Nakhalah met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who praised the steadfastness of the Palestinians and said that the flag of Islam was currently raised highest by the Palestinian “resistance” and the people of the Gaza Strip. A few hours before he was killed in Tehran, Haniyeh also met with Pezeshkian, who stressed Iran’s support for the Palestinian people and expressed his confidence in the victory of the “resistance” and the liberation of “Palestine” (Fars, July 30, 2024).



Iran’s Supreme Leader meets with the heads of Hamas and the PIJ (Mehr, July 30, 2024)

►Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned the reception at the US Congress for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He said Netanyahu’s reception exposed the violent face of American politics to the entire world. He added that while Palestinian rights, including the right to life, security, water, food, and medicine, were being violated in the most horrific way before the eyes of the world, and Palestinian children were being “slaughtered” daily by the “butcher of Tel Aviv,” the US administration and Congress were greeting the “executioner” with applause and cheers (Nasser Kanani’s X account, July 25, 2024). President Pezeshkian said that the “crime of killing innocents and homeless children” could not be ignored and that the “criminal” could not be purified with applause (Masoud Pezeshkian’s X account, July 25, 2024).

►Iranian leader Ali Khamenei told a meeting in Tehran that the pro-Palestinian movement around the world stemmed from the spirit of the Islamic revolution. He called the pro-Palestinian student demonstrations in the United States “an unprecedented phenomenon in contemporary history.” According to him, the flow of support for “Palestine” from students in the United States has spread to such an extent that the American administration violates all its

claims and slogans regarding human rights, and the police beat and arrest the students and lecturers (Supreme Leader’s website, July 25, 2024).



Iranian Supreme Leader at a meeting in Tehran (Supreme Leader’s website, July 25, 2024)

Iranian involvement in Lebanon and Syria

► In his first response to the July 30, 2024, killing of senior Hezbollah operative Fouad Shukr in Beirut, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned the operation, calling it “an evil measure by the Zionist criminal gang.” He said the operation would not prevent the “resistance” in Lebanon from continuing its support for the Palestinians against the “apartheid regime of Israel.” Kanani added that the government, army, and “resistance” in Lebanon had the right to respond to Israel’s measures. He blamed Israel and the American administration for the expansion of tension and crisis in the region and called on the international community and the UN Security Council to act against Israel’s threats to Lebanon’s security and regional stability (Iranian Foreign Ministry Telegram channel, July 30, 2024).

► On July 29, 2024, President Pezeshkian met with Hezbollah deputy secretary-general Naim Qassem, who arrived in Tehran to attend his swearing-in ceremony. Pezeshkian praised Hezbollah fighters in their struggle against “the aggression and crimes of the Zionist regime,” stressing that Iran’s support for the “resistance front” was a religious duty and a fundamental policy of the Islamic Republic (Fars, July 29, 2024). On July 30, 2024, Qassem met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who praised Hezbollah’s conduct since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip (Tasnim, July 30, 2024).



Iranian president meets with Hezbollah's deputy secretary-general (Fars, July 29, 2024)

► Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian spoke by phone with French President Emmanuel Macron and expressed deep concern over the escalation of tensions in southern Lebanon. The Iranian president warned that the “Zionist regime” would make a grave mistake if it attacked Lebanon and that such an attack would have serious consequences. Pezeshkian also addressed the situation in the Gaza Strip, accusing Israel of committing crimes and genocide. He called on the countries of the world to act in accordance with their responsibility towards the residents of the Gaza Strip (ISNA, July 29, 2024).

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani warned against any Israeli response to Lebanon following the Hezbollah attack in Majdal Shams that killed 12 children and teenagers on July 27, 2024.² He noted that Israel sought to divert public opinion and world attention from its “widespread crimes in Palestine” through a “false scenario” after ten months of “mass killings” in the Gaza Strip. He noted that any action by Israel could lead to an expansion of the war and undermine security and stability in the region, saying that in such a case the “Zionist regime” would be primarily responsible for the unexpected consequences of this “stupid behavior.” Kanani called on the United States to act in accordance with its international and moral responsibility and prevent Israel from igniting a new fire, whose flames will spread to the “Zionists,” instead of continuing to arm it after ten months of “ongoing crimes against Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank” (Iranian Foreign Ministry website, July 28, 2024).

► Kamal Kharrazi, head of the Strategic Foreign Policy Council, said Israel’s claims that Hezbollah was responsible for the attack on Majdal Shams were ridiculous because the

² For further information, see the ITIC’s study from July 29, 2024, [“Reactions to the Hezbollah Rocket Attack on Majdal Shams”](#)

residents of the “occupied Golan” themselves opposed the “Zionist regime.” He said Hezbollah, an ally of Syria, had no reason to bomb the residents of the Golan. Kharrazi added that Israel sought to expand the war with false arguments, and it had to know that if it did so, it would be met with severe responses. He said the best choice for Prime Minister Netanyahu was to end the war in the Gaza Strip because he would achieve nothing by continuing and expanding the war (Mehr, July 30, 2024).

►Iran’s ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, noted that Iran did not expect the threats regarding the expansion of the war in Lebanon to materialize in light of the existing equations of power. Commenting on the attack in Majdal Shams, Amani said that “regardless of the play that the Zionist regime created hours ago,” Iran was not interested in expanding the war but rather sought to ease tensions in the region; It was also not afraid of it, because its enemies could only imagine Iran’s strength and capabilities in defending the “resistance” (Mojtaba Amani’s X account, July 27, 2024).

►On July 29, 2024, Iranian President Pezeshkian met with Syrian Prime Minister Hossein Arnous, who arrived in Tehran to attend his swearing-in ceremony. Pezeshkian stressed the need to strengthen economic, commercial, cultural, and social ties between the two countries, noting that his government would take the necessary steps to accelerate the implementation of the agreements signed between the two countries (ISNA, July 29, 2024).



The meeting between the Iranian president and the Syrian prime minister (ISNA, July 29, 2024)

►IRGC advisors, Hezbollah operatives, and commanders of pro-Iranian militias reportedly held three meetings recently at the al-Dab’a military airbase near Homs to discuss regional military developments in light of Israeli attacks against militias in Syria and southern Lebanon. The first meeting, held on July 20, 2024, was attended by eight operatives from Hezbollah, the IRGC, and the Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas militia. They discussed reinforcing military positions in Homs’ western rural area with advanced air defense systems. At another meeting, taking place the next day, two IRGC commanders met with Jamal Dabul, Hezbollah’s military commander in

Homs' western rural area, to discuss the work mechanisms of the pro-Iranian militias in the region. The third meeting, held on July 22, 2024, was attended by 12 commanders from the IRGC, Hezbollah, the Palestinian al-Quds Brigade, the Afghan Fatemiyoun Brigade, and the Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah. At the end of the meeting, it was decided to change the military deployment in Homs' western rural area, especially in the border areas with Lebanon, to strengthen the capabilities of the pro-Iranian militias along the border, and to establish new military positions (politicalkeys.net, July 24, 2024).

Iranian involvement in Iraq and Yemen

► On July 30, 2024, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia' al-Sudani, who arrived in Tehran to participate in the swearing-in ceremony of President Pezeshkian (IRNA, July 30, 2024).

► BBC correspondent Nafiseh Kohnavard reported that Iran had given the Iraqi militias the green light to fully resume attacks against American bases in the event of a significant Israeli attack on Hezbollah in Lebanon. According to a "senior source" in the Iraqi militias, in such a case, militias that did not take part in previous attacks against American bases will also join the attacks. It was also reported that senior Iraqi militia officials came to Tehran to participate in President Pezeshkian's inauguration ceremony and met with the Supreme Leader and senior IRGC officials (@nafisehkBBC X account, July 30, 2024).

► On July 29, 2024, Iranian President Pezeshkian met with Yemeni Houthi spokesman Mohammad Abdeslam and praised the Houthis for their support for the Palestinians. He stressed that all Islamic countries had to cooperate to prevent harm to Muslims and that cooperation between Iran and Yemen would continue and strengthen (IRNA, July 30, 2024). Abdeslam said they discussed relations between Houthi Yemen and Iran and ways to develop them for the benefit of both peoples. They also discussed the Gaza Strip and "Palestine" and the responsibility of all Muslims to support the Gaza Strip by all possible means to help it deal with Israel, the United States, and the West (Mohammed Abdeslam's X account, July 30, 2024). On July 30, 2024, the Houthi spokesman met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (Fars, July 30, 2024).



The meeting between the Iranian president and Houthi spokesman (IRNA, July 30, 2024)

► Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani welcomed the announcement by UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy to Yemen Hans Grundberg on the agreement reached between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis to resume flights from Sana’a airport and resolve Yemen’s financial and banking problems. Kanani noted that Iran considered any agreement that reduces economic pressures and lifts the air, sea, and land blockade of Yemen to be in the interests of Yemenis and a step towards strengthening stability in the country. He said he hoped a lasting peace agreement would be signed in Yemen in the near future (Fars, July 25, 2024).

Activities of the Shiite militias

Iraq

► This week, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq did not claim responsibility for attacks against targets in Israel.

The militias’ preparations for escalation in Lebanon

► “Sources close to the axis of resistance” reported that the joint operations room of the “axis of resistance” discussed the possibility of opening a front from Syria against Israel in case “the occupation” decided to start a war against Lebanon. The sources made it clear that “Hezbollah will not be left alone in this campaign if it escalates into a war.” A “senior official” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq said, “We have been interested in participating in the campaign and standing by Hezbollah from the first moment, but the operations room has decided that this is not the time yet.” He added that the rules of the conflict were still under control but stressed that “if the enemy seeks an adventure in Lebanon, it will result in a broad war, in which the Axis will use all its military capabilities” (Baghdad al-Youm, July 29, 2024).

- ▶Ja'far al-Husseini, spokesman for the Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah, said that if the “Zionist entity” dared to raise the threshold of its actions against one of the elements of the “axis of resistance,” the new rules of confrontation against it would be contrary to its interests and those of the United States (Kaf Telegram channel, July 29, 2024).
- ▶Mahdi al-Kaabi, a member of the political bureau of the Nujaba Movement, said that if war broke out in Lebanon, it would have a great impact on Iraq and that “the resistance in Iraq is coordinated with all the other fronts” (al-Ahed, July 30, 2024).
- ▶The Shiite militias in Iraq condemned the Israeli attack in Beirut on July 30, 2024, in which senior Hezbollah operative Fouad Shukr was killed. Akram al-Kaabi, the secretary-general of the Nujaba Movement, said it was an attack against the entire “axis of resistance” (Saberin News Telegram channel, July 30, 2024). The militia’s statement said, “The attack is a flagrant violation and a sign of stupidity that the entity will regret. Supporters of the entity, including the United States, should know that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq continues to attack the Zionist-American entity in support of Palestine and Hezbollah” (Nujaba Movement Telegram channel, July 30, 2023). Qais al-Khazali, secretary-general of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, said the attack was “proof that the Zionist enemy continues to be arrogant” (Qais al-Khazali’s X account, July 31, 2024).
- ▶Pro-Iranian militias reportedly evacuated their positions in the Damascus area as part of precautions they took in preparation for a possible attack by Israel (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 28, 2024; Syria TV, July 28, 2024).
- ▶Three buses, carrying about 150 operatives from the Iraqi Popular Mobilization, the umbrella organization of pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, reportedly arrived in Albukamal on the Syria-Iraq border on July 28, 2024. Several Shiite pilgrims accompanied militia operatives inside the buses for disguise. The buses were escorted from the Iraqi border crossing to the town of Albukamal by off-road vehicles carrying anti-aircraft machine guns. It was noted that the operatives would be dispatched to the Quneitra area after being trained in firing rockets and flying suicide drones (explosive drones). The operatives will join about 200 Popular Mobilization armed operatives who have already been transferred to southern Syria in recent days through the transport system of the 17th Infantry Division of the Syria Army (Ayn al-Furat, July 28, 2024).

Escalation between the militias and the United States

► On the evening of July 30, 2024, an airstrike was reported against the Popular Mobilization headquarters in Jarf al-Nasr and al-Saidat, in the Babil Governorate, south of Baghdad (Popular Mobilization website and Reuters, July 30, 2024). The attack reportedly targeted a factory for the production of UAVs (al-Hadath, July 30, 2024). Saber News, which is affiliated with the militias, reported that four Popular Mobilization operatives had been killed in the attack (Saber News Telegram channel, July 31, 2024). “An American official” confirmed that the US Army had carried out an airstrike in Iraq against operatives who planned to launch a drone and that the attack was carried out due to a threat to the international coalition forces (Reuters, July 31, 2024).

► Kata'ib Hezbollah confirmed that three of their operatives had been killed in the attack. In a statement, the militia said that “the American enemy attacked with drones from the Ali al-Salam base in Kuwait a group of drone experts who worked to optimize the organization’s patrol drones to improve security capabilities in Karbala at the Imam Hussein’s memorial ceremony.” The militia called on Iraq to end the American presence in the country and warned the Kuwaiti authorities against continuing to allow the United States to use its lands to “carry out attacks against our country” (Kaf Telegram channel, July 31, 2024).

► The attack on the Popular Mobilization headquarters came amid an escalation in militia attacks against American forces. The Ain al-Assad base in the al-Anbar Governorate in western Iraq, which houses US forces, was reportedly attacked twice – with four Grad rockets on July 26, 2024, and with three rockets and a drone on July 27, 2024. It was noted that there were no casualties in either incident (al-Arabiya, July 26, 2024; 1news-iq.com and al-Arabiya, July 27, 2024).

► In addition, the US Koniko base in eastern Deir ez-Zor in eastern Syria and near the Iraq-Syria border was attacked three times between July 26-27, 2024. In total, ten rockets were fired at the base. No casualties were reported (Sky News, July 26, 2024; Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 27, 2024). In response to the attack on the Koniko base, US forces reportedly attacked sites belonging to Iranian militias in the Deir ez-Zor area in northeastern Syria (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 27, 2024).

◄ An organization that identified itself as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq – al-Thawriyun (The Revolutionaries) claimed responsibility for the attacks in Ain al-Assad and Koniko. The claim of responsibility stated that the organization would continue its activity until the last

American soldier left Iraq. It is believed that this is a cover name to maintain a “low signature,” as the Iranian regime and its proxies often do in cases of attacks against American targets in Iraq and Syria (1news-iq.com, July 27, 2024).



**Claim of responsibility for the attack in Koniko
(Islamic Resistance in Iraq – al-Thawriyun Telegram channel, July 27, 2024)**

►“Sources” in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq told the Lebanese daily al-Akhbar that all American interests and bases had become targets for military operations, and that the attack on the Ain al-Assad base was a message aimed at forcing the Iraqi government to announce as part of the negotiations with the United States that American forces must leave the country within two months. The sources added that the inability of the Iraqi government to bring about results at the negotiating table was forcing the “resistance” to take the steps in question (al-Akhbar, July 27, 2024).

Yemen

►This week, Houthi forces did not claim responsibility for attacks against vessels or other targets.

►US Central Command (CENTCOM) reported during the week that its forces had destroyed three Houthi unmanned vessels (USVs) in the Red Sea. In addition, eight drones and two missiles on launchers were destroyed in attacks in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen. Two additional USVs were attacked off the coast of Yemen (CENTCOM X account, July 24-31, 2024).

►The British insurance corporation Lloyd’s reported that in light of Houthi attacks against military and commercial vessels, there has been an increase in the number of incidents in which vessels turn off automatic identification systems (AIS), not only while passing through areas prone to attacks in the Red Sea but also in more remote areas of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea for fear of harm (Lloyd’s website, July 25, 2024).

►The Lebanese al-Mayadeen TV, affiliated with the “axis of resistance,” broadcast a film dealing with Houthi activity since the beginning of the war, with an emphasis on their actions against

vessels, especially the operation to take over the Galaxy Leader on November 19, 2023. The film incorporates documentation of the takeover of the ship and other actions of the Houthi forces, as well as interviews with senior Houthi officials and crew members of the captured ship (al-Mayadeen, July 24, 2024).

Escalation in Houthi statements against Israel

► On July 25, 2024, Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi referred to the drone attack in Tel Aviv on July 18, 2024.³ He claimed that the “Zionist leaders” were shocked by the attack, saying that “Israel’s security has been lost and red lines have been crossed.” He added that the Israeli attack on al-Hudaydah was for showcase purposes and was 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 inevitably follow. Al-Houthi praised the “Palestinian resistance organizations” for their steadfastness despite the destruction in the Gaza Strip and for the reconciliation agreement signed between the Palestinian organizations at the meeting in China. He also praised Hezbollah’s actions against Israel and promised that the cooperation between the Houthis and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would continue and that there would be important developments as part of the “fifth stage” (al-Masirah, July 25, 2024).

► “Military sources” in Sana'a said that Yemen’s response to the attack on al-Hudaydah would not be limited to one or two operations but would be an “open war without red lines.” They added that the war would not end unless “the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip is stopped and the siege is lifted” (al-Akhbar, July 26, 2024).

► Mohammad Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi Political Council, said, “The applause of the American Congress for the Zionist terrorist Netanyahu proves and confirms that it is the United States that is killing Gaza” (Mohammad Ali al-Houthi’s X account, July 24, 2024). In another statement, he threatened that “more actions against Tel Aviv are coming, Allah willing, according to the [Houthi] leader [Abd al-Malik al-Houthi]” (Mohammad Ali al-Houthi’s X account, July 26, 2024).

► Houthi Political Council member Hezam al-Asad issued several posts in Hebrew. Following are the translations of those posts from the Hebrew original: “The enemy must be concerned and expect the Yemeni response at any moment. There may not be enough time for settlers to enter shelters;” “The Yemeni response is coming. Millions of people flooded the Yemeni capital

³ For further information, see the ITIC's study from July 24, 2024, “[Escalation of the Confrontation Between Israel and the Houthis – Background and Significance](#)”

Sana'a and the various provinces of Yemen today, threatening to attack deep inside Israel and renewing the alliance to continue supporting our brothers in Gaza;" "A flood of millions of Yemenis came from the land of courage to eradicate the cancerous tumor, Israel; The Yemeni answer is coming" (Hezam al-Asad's X account, July 25-26, 2024).

◀ Nasr al-Nusayri, a senior official in the Houthi Red Sea Ports Corporation, said that the losses following the Israeli attack on the al-Hudaydah port were estimated at \$20 million, not including oil losses. He noted that the attack had caused a fire that lasted several days and significant damage to the port and oil facilities and that the docks sustained damage which caused a temporary halt in port operations (AFP, July 29, 2024).

◀ On July 26, 2024, a march was held by the Houthis in support of the Palestinian people, which according to its organizers was attended by more than a million people. A statement issued by the organizers of the march said they congratulated "the jihad fighters of the Houthi armed forces, who have deprived the Zionists of sleep and instilled fear in their hearts. The enemy ignited anger in our hearts when it bombed al-Hudaydah for a fake victory, and our actions continue and the response will inevitably come" (al-Masirah, July 26, 2024).



Participants in the march in Sana'a (al-Masirah X account, July 26, 2024)