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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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**Iran's Nuclear Weapons Capability and  
Terrorism Monitoring Act of 2022—Assessment  
Regarding the Regional and Global Terrorism of  
the Islamic Republic of Iran**

July 2024

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report is provided by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in response to Section 5593(e)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Pub. L. No. 117-263; the Iran Nuclear Weapons Capability and Terrorism Monitoring Act of 2022; 22 U.S.C. § 8701 note). This report includes a classified annex.

Iran remains the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world, providing financial aid, advanced weapons and tactics, and direction to militants, partners, proxies, and terrorist groups across the Middle East and around the globe. Tehran is committed to preserving the revolutionary principles of its Islamic Republic, strengthening the influence of its Shia partners and proxies in the Middle East, and projecting power through what Tehran terms its “Axis of Resistance.” Iran’s goal is to expel U.S. forces from the Middle East, weaken U.S. influence in the region, and, in the long run, displace the U.S.-led rules based international system. Iran is committed to attacking perceived threats from its primary foes, including the United States, Israel, and expatriate dissidents.

Iran provides aid to Lebanese Hizballah, Huthis in Yemen, Shia militant groups in Iraq, Syria, and the Persian Gulf, as well as Palestinian militant groups to build and strengthen a network which Tehran intends to leverage to advance its interests.

Iranian threats to U.S. interests are most pronounced in Iraq and Syria, where from October to February the Iranian military helped facilitate renewed Iranian-aligned Shia militant attacks against U.S. forces, using mostly rockets and uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAV). This effort, which was part of a strategy to bleed the United States and force a withdrawal, resulted in roughly 175 attacks, including a drone attack that killed three U.S. servicemembers in Jordan. The conflict in Gaza also prompted Iran to expand its “shadow war” with Israel to a more sustained, mainly proxy conflict. Hizballah, Iraqi Shia militants, the Huthis, and to a lesser extent Iranian forces have tried to strike Israeli targets since late 2023.

Iran uses naval and aerial forces as well as partners and proxies to threaten maritime domains in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Huthis have been particularly active during the Israel-HAMAS war, launching a consistent spate of attacks against commercial maritime and naval targets since late last year, sinking two commercial vessels and striking dozens of others. Iran has used UAVs to target ships, and it can disrupt the free flow of commerce with anti-ship cruise missiles, mines, special operations forces, and UAVs.

Iran uses information technology such as fake social media accounts to attack the electoral process of its adversaries through disinformation. Iran also works with its partners to assert its influence within the domestic political affairs of vulnerable states such as Iraq and Lebanon. Iranian-aligned militias and political organizations have secured significant influence in the Iraqi Government.

Iran has increased lethal support to Russia, most notably through the provision of UAVs, and is moving its relationship with Moscow toward a strategic partnership based on shared hostility toward the United States and the West.

Iran projects power through partners and proxies, leveraging what Tehran terms its “Axis of Resistance” to counter perceived threats, including from the United States, Israel, and the West.

## **LETHAL SUPPORT TO NONSTATE TERRORIST GROUPS AND PROXIES**

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Iran’s principal partners and proxies are Lebanese Hizballah; the Huthis in Yemen; Shia militant groups in Iraq, Syria, and the Persian Gulf; as well as Palestinian militant groups. This network allows Iran to maintain or expand influence throughout the Middle East at a relatively low cost while largely insulating itself from reprisals with a modicum of deniability. Iran supplies this network with weapons, training, and guidance, including advanced conventional weapons such as unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), which give Tehran the capability to strike throughout the region. Since the Israel-HAMAS conflict began in October 2023, Iran has continued to direct and support the plotting of its partners and proxies and encouraged them to focus on countering Israel, and these groups have actively targeted Israeli and U.S. interests, including U.S. military bases and personnel in Iraq and Syria, and international maritime vessels in the Red Sea.

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TERRORIST GROUPS AND PROXIES**

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Iran provides financial support to a number of foreign terrorist organizations, partners, proxies, and militias. Economic and military backing from Iran for a number of leading Shia militias in Iraq and the Huthis in Yemen—including provisions of advanced military systems—has been integral to the attacks against U.S. and Israeli interests. Iran remains a major contributor to Palestinian rejectionist groups such as HAMAS and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, using overseas front companies and financial institutions to transfer money that is increasingly important for HAMAS to sustain operations since October 2023.

## **THE IRANIAN THREAT TO U.S. MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC TARGETS**

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Iran views terrorism as an effective state instrument to project power in the region, defend Shia Islam, and export its Islamic revolution. Iran employs threats and supports partner and proxy threats to deter and counter perceived enemies—including the United States, Israel, Gulf States, and expatriate dissidents—which has only become more pronounced since the start of the Israel-HAMAS conflict. During the past four years, the Iran-aligned threat to U.S. interests has been most acute in Iraq and Syria, where Iran-supported Shia militant groups conduct UAS, indirect fire, and incendiary explosive device attacks against U.S. military and diplomatic facilities—including the Baghdad Diplomatic Support Center, 'Ayn al Asad Air Base, Bashur Air Base, the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, At Tanf Garrison, Mission Support Site (MSS)

Green Village, and MSS Conoco in Syria. Iran and its proxies aim to sustain pressure on the United States to withdraw from the region.

## **IRANIAN-SPONSORED ATTACKS AGAINST U.S. MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC TARGETS**

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From October 2023 through February 2024, Iraqi Shia militants conducted a campaign of near-daily attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, probably to punish the United States for supporting Israel, to press the United States to restrain Israel's operations in Gaza, and to encourage U.S. forces to vacate the region. The Israel-HAMAS conflict almost certainly was a catalyst and opportunity for these groups to increase attacks against the U.S. presence. Since February, Iran-aligned militant groups in Iraq have adhered to an Iranian-ordered pause on attacks against U.S. military and diplomatic targets in Iraq and Syria but are eager to restart operations.

- From October 2023 through February 2024, Iraqi Shia militants conducted more than 160 attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. Several of these attacks have injured dozens of U.S. persons.
- In addition, on 28 January 2024, Iran-aligned Shia militants attacked Tower 22 in Jordan, killing three U.S. soldiers and injuring at least 40.
- Iraqi Shia militant groups Kata'ib Hizballah and Harakat al-Nujaba remain closely tied to Iran and were the most active militant groups during the attack campaign.

Separately, from late October 2023 through mid-June 2024, the Huthis have conducted at least a dozen attacks targeting U.S. and Coalition naval vessels to retaliate for the U.S.-led counter-Huthi maritime operations and air strikes in Yemen.

## **IRAN AND IRANIAN-SPONSORED ATTACKS AGAINST U.S. PARTNERS**

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Iran has expanded its efforts in what has been its longstanding shadow war with Israel. Since October 2023, Iran has retaliated for several perceived Israeli provocations, including the killings of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) personnel in Syria, air strikes against Iranian lethal aid shipments and facilities in Syria, and UAV attacks against Iranian military and diplomatic facilities. Iranian partners and proxies also have their own calculus for attacks against U.S. partners that go beyond Iran's animosity for Israel, including Hizballah's desire to prevent Israel from invading Lebanon.

- On 13 April 2024, Iran fired missiles and UAVs at Israeli territory for the first time in response to an Israeli strike against an Iranian diplomatic building in Damascus earlier that month. Hizballah, the Huthis, and Iraqi Shia militants also launched multiple strikes against Israel, probably as part of Iran's retaliatory strike.
- Since 8 October 2023, Hizballah has conducted near-daily cross-border attacks against Israel to stress Israeli's defenses and support HAMAS without escalating to a full-scale conflict.

- From late October 2023 through mid-June 2024, the Huthis have conducted nearly two dozen missile and UAV attacks against Israel and at least 100 attacks against commercial vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden that are owned or operated by dozens of allied countries.

Separately, Iranian security services continue to plot against dissidents that they view as a threat to the regime in several U.S.-allied countries worldwide. Since 2014, Iran's IRGC Intelligence Organization and Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) have successfully abducted or assassinated at least eight Iranian dissidents in Iraq, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the UAE and plotted against dozens of others worldwide.

## **IRANIAN PLOTS AGAINST FORMER U.S. OFFICIALS**

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Iran is waging a multipronged campaign—including threats of lethal action, international legal maneuvering, and the issuance of Iranian arrest warrants and sanctions—against select U.S. officials to avenge the death of then-Commander of the IRGC-Qods Force (QF) Qasem Soleimani in January 2020. Tehran publicly vows to conduct lethal operations inside the United States and continues to identify the former U.S. President, former Secretary of State, and former Commander of U.S. Central Command as among its priority targets for retribution.

- In February 2023, the IRGC Aerospace Forces Commander speaking publicly about his force's strike against Iraq's Ain al-Assad Air Base in 2020—Iran's contemporaneous response to Soleimani's killing—reiterated the threat to kill former senior U.S. officials and any other military leaders involved.
- In August 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice charged an Iran-based IRGC member and an IRGC-QF associate with hiring an unidentified U.S. person to assassinate the former U.S. National Security Advisor.

## **IRANIAN PLOTS AGAINST U.S. CITIZENS**

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For decades, Iranian security services have used their capabilities and those of proxies, partners, and affiliates to plan attacks globally against Jewish and Israeli individuals, Iranian dissidents, and Western interests. This includes U.S. persons both abroad and within the United States.

- In 2022, members of an East European criminal organization with ties to Iran attempted to use a firearm to assassinate a U.S. person who is a vocal antiregime activist at her home in New York City.
- In July 2020, the MOIS abducted an Iranian opposition figure who was a German-Iranian-U.S. person while he was transiting Dubai and took him to Iran. In February 2023, an Iranian court sentenced him to death on terrorism charges, and he remains detained in Iran awaiting execution.

## **MARITIME IMPACTS FOR COMMERCE AND U.S. INTERESTS**

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Iran uses naval and aerial forces as well as partners and proxies to threaten maritime domains in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the Red Sea, and the eastern Mediterranean. Since shortly after the start of the Israel-HAMAS war, Iranian partners—most notably the Huthis in Yemen—have demonstrated the capability to threaten commercial maritime and naval targets and have sunk two commercial vessels. Iran and its partners can disrupt the free flow of commerce with domestically produced anti-ship cruise missiles, coastal defense cruise missiles, mines, special operations forces, UAVs, and unmanned surface vehicles.

## **INTERFERENCE IN FOREIGN ELECTIONS AND POLITICS**

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We assess that Iran seeks to expand its influence in the Middle East and beyond in part by using operations designed to coerce political leaders, undermine political systems, and shape the political landscape in ways that favor its national security objectives. Iran continues to demonstrate a willingness and capability to conduct covert influence operations aimed at U.S. interests. Ahead of the U.S. presidential election in 2020, Iranian cyber actors sought to intimidate and influence American voters, undermine voter confidence, and sow discord. These Iranian actors obtained or tried to obtain U.S. voter information, sent threatening e-mails to voters, and disseminated disinformation about the election. During the 2022 election cycle, Iran continued to try to fuel distrust in U.S. political institutions, increase social tension, and advocate for its preferred policy positions.

- Iran also tried to influence recent elections in Israel and Bahrain, which included using fake social media accounts to spread divisive messages, damage the image of some politicians, and otherwise undermine the electoral process. We further assess that Iran maintains a persistent focus on the internal power dynamics of vulnerable states such as Iraq and Lebanon, including ways in which Tehran can promote its interests through their domestic politics.

## **LETHAL SUPPORT TO STATES**

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Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Iran has advanced its relationship with Moscow toward a strategic partnership. Tehran views this as an opportunity for a long-term relationship of cooperation with Russia, based on shared hostility toward the United States and the West. Iran has transferred thousands of UAVs to Russia and probably is training and assisting Russian soldiers in UAV operations. Moscow and Tehran also have agreed to establish a joint production line in Russia for lethal UAVs. Iran also is moving forward with sales of ballistic missiles to Russia to help further the war effort in Ukraine.

## **IRAN ADVANCED CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS**

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Iran fields the region's largest arsenal of UAVs and missiles, and supplies Iranian-produced weapons including UAVs to proxies and partners in the Middle East and Russia. Iran employed hundreds of these systems in a retaliatory attack against Israel in April, although it still retains a substantial arsenal in reserve.

## **PROVIDING ADVANCED CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS TO THIRD PARTIES**

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In Iraq, Iran provided advanced conventional weapons, including UAVs and ballistic missiles, to Shia proxies and partners, which were used in many of the roughly 175 attacks against U.S. forces from October 2023 to February, including a drone strike that killed three U.S. servicemembers at Tower 22 in Jordan in January. In Yemen, Iran provided ballistic and cruise missiles, UAVs, and explosive boat technology to the Huthis, which the group has used extensively since October 2023 for attacks against maritime vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Oman and against Israel.