



About GTTAC

The Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC) was created by Development Services Group, Inc., and our partner TraCCC of George Mason University to support our work for the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism (No. GS10F-0166K, 19AQMM18F2561). The GTTAC Record of Incidents Database (GRID) collects and classifies open-source data on terrorism incidents globally and is used to support the development of the Annex of Statistical Information for the Country Reports on Terrorism. Data used in this report are from the GRID. Views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the United States government.

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Tracking the Iran-Backed Militias During the Gaza Conflict

Iran, officially designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism by the United States in 1984, has been using proxy nonstate violent groups in the Middle East and beyond. The October 7, 2023, Hamas attack, which resulted in 1,200 Israeli deaths and the taking of 200 hostages, has shaken up the regional dynamics, initiated an Israeli ground military offensive and airstrikes in Gaza, led to more than 35,000 civilian deaths in Gaza, and wrecked the normalization process between Israel and Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

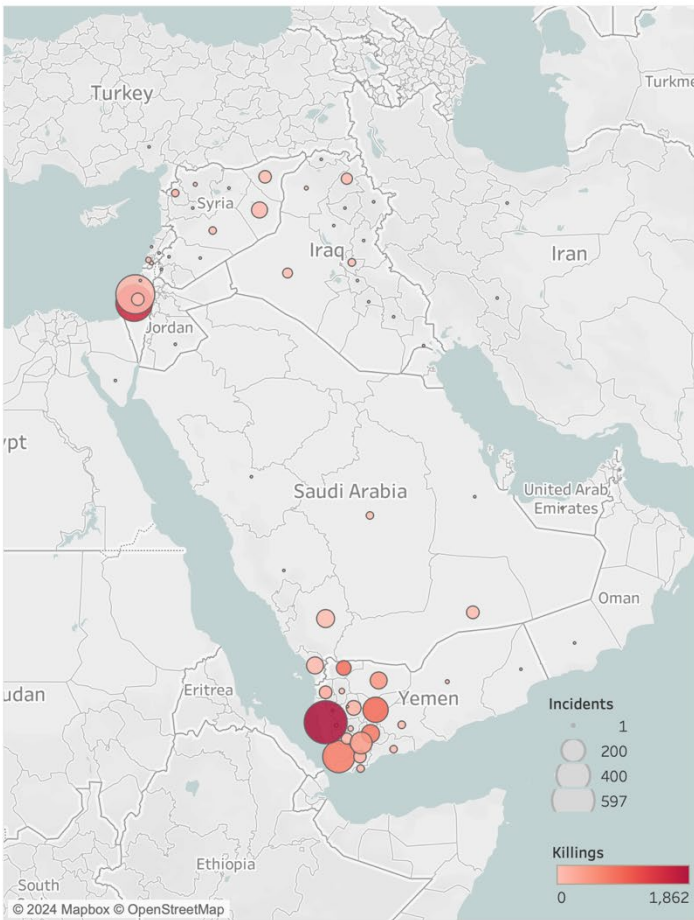
Iran sees itself as the leader of the Shia world. It uses the sectarian divide between Sunni and Shia populations to reach and connect with Shia populations and proxy groups, primarily Shia organizations such as Hizballah and the Houthis. Despite Hamas's mainly Sunni makeup, its shared hostility toward Israel and the United States aligns it with Iran.

Iran used the October 7 Hamas attack and Israel's military campaign in Gaza as leverage to mobilize its proxies across the region – Hizballah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Islamic Resistance in Iraq – to challenge Israel and the United States military.

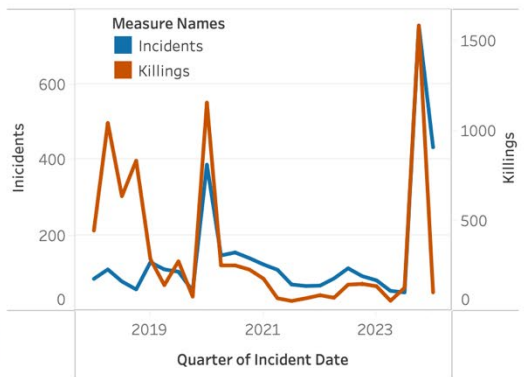
Since 2018, GTTAC has been monitoring the region closely and recording the violent campaigns and attacks of terrorist and militia groups. We have recorded 3,631 incidents from Iran-backed groups, which led to 8,441 fatalities in 13 different countries and also in the West Bank and Gaza. Beginning with the October 7 attack, the violence by Iran-backed groups has surged dramatically, and the violent campaign against Israeli and American targets by Iran-backed groups has intensified (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Incidents by Iran-Backed Military Groups (Jan. 1, 2018, to March 31, 2024)

Attacks from Iran-backed groups (2018 - March 31, 2024)



Perpetrator Name	Country	Incidents	Killings
Houthi extremists (Ansar Allah)	YEMEN	1,870	6,342
	ISRAEL	9	0
	SAUDI ARABIA	312	81
	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	4	3
	EGYPT	4	0
	JORDAN	1	0
HAMAS	ISRAEL	539	1,535
	GAZA STRIP	45	98
	WEST BANK	51	67
	LEBANON	1	0
Hizballah	YEMEN	1	41
	ISRAEL	479	30
	SYRIA	14	121
	LEBANON	19	3
The Islamic Resistance in Iraq	ISRAEL	3	0
	SYRIA	119	7
	IRAQ	50	1
	JORDAN	1	0
Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)	SYRIA	3	5
	IRAQ	13	19
	IRAN	3	0



Though relatively quiet militarily before October 7, Hizballah since then has been involved in 459 attacks in Israel, leading to 25 fatalities (see Figure 2). In 185 of these attacks, Hizballah launched rockets. In 166 incidents, Hizballah used missiles equipped with remote guidance technology. Forty-six incidents involved mortars (nonrocket artillery). Most of Hizballah’s attacks are conducted using rockets and explosives, with only a few incidents (six in total) involving firearms.

The Houthi rebels have increased and diversified their violent campaign in response to Israel’s military operations in Gaza. GTTAC recorded nine attacks from the Houthis on Israel, all conducted through rockets or drones. We also recorded 137 attacks in Yemen and the Red Sea, where the Houthis launched anti-ship cruise missiles and bomb-laden drones targeting international commercial ships transiting the Red Sea.

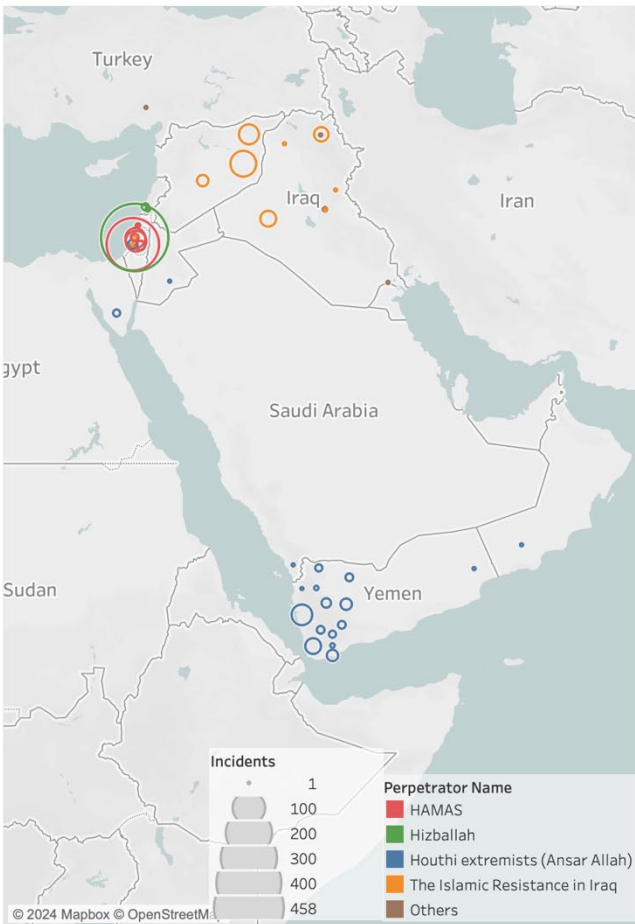
The Islamic Resistance in Iraq (IRI), a newly formed umbrella group of Iran-backed Shia militia groups, emerged in the aftermath of Israel’s military campaign in Gaza. The group has carried out several retaliatory attacks against U.S. bases in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. For example:

- On January 20, 2024, the IRI targeted U.S. troops stationed at al-Asad air base in Iraq, using ballistic missiles and rocket artillery and injuring four U.S. soldiers.
- On January 26, 2024, the IRI launched drone strikes on the U.S. military base in Syria, injuring three U.S. servicemembers.
- On February 5, 2024, in al-Omar Oil Field, Syria, the IRI launched a drone strike on the U.S. military base, killing six members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and injuring 18 others.

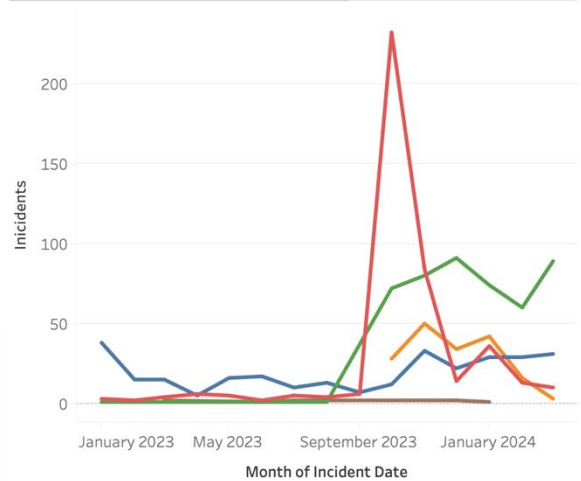
However, we observed a notable decrease in the frequency of IRI attacks following U.S. military strikes, including an operation that resulted in the deaths of two leaders of Kata'ib Hizballah, a group aligned with the IRI movement. In March 2024, we documented only three IRI attacks, marking a substantial decline compared with the 170 attacks in the four months following its emergence.

Figure 2. Incidents by Iran-Backed Military Groups (Oct 7, 2023, to March 31, 2024)

Attacks from Iran-backed groups (Oct 7, 2023 - March 31, 2024)



Perpetrator Name (..	Country	Incidents	Killings
HAMAS	ISRAEL	374	1,503
	GAZA STRIP	1	0
	WEST BANK	14	14
Hizballah	ISRAEL	459	25
	LEBANON	7	0
Houthi extremists (Ansar Allah)	YEMEN	138	123
	ISRAEL	9	0
	SAUDI ARABIA	1	4
	EGYPT	4	0
	JORDAN	1	0
	OMAN	1	0
	Others	ISRAEL	3
The Islamic Resistance in Iraq	SYRIA	119	7
	IRAQ	50	1
	JORDAN	1	0
	IRAQ	4	7
Others	TURKEY	1	0



As the Tehran regime fueled the tension through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and proxy forces, on April 1, 2024, Israel targeted Iran's embassy in Damascus, Syria, with an

airstrike, killing seven Iranian officers, including two senior generals from IRGC. This attack triggered direct attacks from Iran on Israel, with more than 200 drones and missiles, which were intercepted by Israeli, American, and allied air defenses. Israel considered launching a much-broader counterstrike against Iran but scaled back its response after diplomatic pressure from the United States and its European allies to avoid escalation into a wider war. Instead, on April 19, Israel launched a limited retaliatory missile attack targeting a military site near Isfahan, Iran's third-largest city.

Israel has been planning to initiate a full-scale ground invasion of Gaza and expand its military operation to Rafah. This could potentially escalate tensions and provoke retaliation from Iranian-backed militant groups like Hizballah, the IRI, and the Houthis. The U.S. is opposed to Israel's plan for Rafah. However, the extension of Israel's military offensive and a surge in civilian casualties could still put the U.S. military in the region into a much more vulnerable situation.