



Spotlight on Iran and the Shiite Axis

February 25 – March 4, 2026

Editor: Dr. Raz Zimmt



Highlights¹

- ▶ On February 28, 2026, Israel and the United States launched a combined military offensive against Iran, during which more than 1,500 military, security, and regime targets were struck. In the opening strike, senior figures in the Iranian leadership were killed, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the secretary of the Supreme Defense Council, the chief of staff of the Armed Forces, the minister of Defense, and the IRGC commander.
- ▶ As part of IDF strikes in Iran and Lebanon, senior Qods Force officials responsible for liaison with Hezbollah and for assisting the organization's military buildup were eliminated.
- ▶ It was reported that contact between Iranian officials responsible for the "Palestinian portfolio" and Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Palestinian factions has been severed.
- ▶ According to reports, the Houthi leadership is continuing to monitor developments before deciding whether to join the fighting alongside Iran.
- ▶ Pro-Iranian militias in Iraq claimed responsibility for approximately one hundred attacks using missiles and drones against American bases and facilities in Iraq, Jordan, and the Gulf states.

The Military Campaign between Israel and the United States and Iran²

▶ On February 28, 2026, Israel and the United States launched a joint preemptive offensive against Iran, targeting more than one thousand military, security, and regime facilities in Tehran and across the Islamic Republic. In the opening phase of the attack, senior figures in the Iranian leadership were killed, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei; Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of the Supreme Defense Council and adviser to the Supreme Leader; Abdolrahim Mousavi, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces; Aziz Nasirzadeh, Minister of Defense; and Mohammad Pakpour, Commander of the IRGC. In the following days, strikes continued against military, security, and government targets across Iran, including the Ministry of Intelligence, facilities associated with the nuclear program, the building of

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

² For further information, see the ITIC's study from March 2, 2026, "[The Resistance Axis Reacts to the Israel-US War against Iran and the Elimination of Ali Khamenei](#)"

the Assembly of Experts, which appoints the country's leader, IRGC and Basij headquarters, and missile launch sites (Israeli, American, and Iranian media, February 28–March 4, 2026).

► Following the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, a temporary leadership council was established under Article 111 of the Iranian constitution, consisting of President Masoud Pezeshkian, Chief Justice Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejei, and Ayatollah Ali-Reza Arafii, representative of the Guardian Council. The council will serve until a new leader is elected by the Assembly of Experts. The IRGC announced the launch of Operation "True Promise 4" and claimed responsibility for launching missiles and drones toward Israel, as well as toward American bases and vessels in the region (including British bases in Cyprus) and various targets, including civilian targets, in the Gulf states, including the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. The IRGC also announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz (Iranian media, February 28–March 4, 2026).

► As part of the strikes in Iran and Lebanon (following Hezbollah's entry into the campaign),³ **the IDF also targeted Iranian officials responsible for liaison with Hezbollah.** Reza Khazaei, chief of staff of the Lebanon Corps in the IRGC Qods Force, was eliminated in a strike in Beirut. He led the military buildup portfolio for Hezbollah on behalf of the Qods Force, focusing on adapting Iranian resources to the organization's needs. He also helped establish weapons transfer routes from Iran to Lebanon and oversaw Hezbollah's weapons production programs inside Lebanon (IDF Spokesperson, March 2, 2026). Davoud Alizadeh, commander of the Lebanon Corps in the Qods Force, was eliminated in a strike in Tehran. Alizadeh replaced Hassan Mahdavi, who was eliminated in Damascus in April 2024. He previously served as commander of the Qods Force Strategic Weapons Corps and oversaw Hezbollah's acquisition of strategic weapons. After the November 2024 ceasefire in Lebanon, he reportedly worked to rebuild Hezbollah's capabilities and encouraged the organization to carry out terrorist activity against Israel (IDF Spokesperson, March 3, 2026). On March 3, 2026, in the evening, the IDF ordered representatives of the Iranian regime in Lebanon to leave the country within 24 hours or face attack (IDF Spokesperson, March 3, 2026).

► "Sources knowledgeable about the Palestinian factions" reported that following the Israeli-American strikes in Iran, contact has been severed between IRGC commanders responsible for the "Palestinian portfolio" and senior leaders of Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip and abroad. According to the report, it is unclear whether the commanders, who belong to the Qods Force or other branches maintaining contact with Hamas, PIJ, and other armed factions, were

³ For further information, see the ITIC's information bulletin "[Spotlight on Terrorism: Hezbollah and Lebanon \(February 23–March 2, 2026\)](#)."

eliminated or are taking security precautions. No messages have been received from them since the beginning of the campaign (Asharq Al-Awsat, March 3, 2026).

The Houthis

► “Military sources in Sana’a” reported that the Houthi leadership is closely monitoring regional developments and will decide accordingly whether to enter direct confrontation alongside Iran. The sources noted that the Houthis believe Iran is currently in a “stronger position than ever,” but hinted that if it comes under a “brutal attack,” the Houthis will enter the confrontation to support it. The report came amid American intelligence flights over Houthi-controlled territory in recent days, during which a US MQ-9 drone was reportedly shot down in Abyan Province (Al-Akhbar, March 4, 2026).

► Regarding Israeli activity against Hezbollah following the organization’s entry into the war alongside Iran, the Houthi political bureau condemned the “Zionist aggression” against Lebanon, claiming that violations of the ceasefire agreement had continued since the first day without a response from the Lebanese government or the states guaranteeing the agreement. The political bureau emphasized Lebanon’s right to respond to this “aggression” and confront the “Zionist-American plan,” and praised Hezbollah’s commitment to internal stability and its efforts to thwart “malicious intentions” against the Lebanese people, stating that the “Zionist enemy understands only the language of force” (Houthi Military Media Telegram channel, March 3, 2026).

The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq

► Since the beginning of the campaign, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed responsibility for at least 97 attacks between February 28 and March 3, 2026, using missiles and drones against “enemy headquarters” in Iraq and the region. The attacks mainly targeted American facilities in Baghdad, the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, and neighboring countries (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Military Media Telegram channel, February 28–March 3, 2026).⁴ “Sources within the militias” stated that halting operations against American and Israeli targets is not under consideration, and that developments in the region are actually encouraging the militias to intensify their attacks, despite pressure from political actors in Iraq to contain the situation and prevent escalation (Shafaq News, March 3, 2026).

► Saraya Awliya al-Dam, a front militia linked to Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq and affiliated with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, has claimed responsibility since the beginning of the campaign for seven attacks using missiles and drones. Most attacks reportedly targeted military headquarters and soldiers’

⁴ These are the first claims of responsibility by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq since the militias suspended their attacks against Israel on November 24, 2024.

residential compounds in Erbil in the Kurdish region. The militia also claimed responsibility for attacks against Victoria Base at Baghdad International Airport and against a “vital target” in Jordan (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, February 28–March 4, 2026).



The launch of the drones at a "vital target" in Jordan (Saraya Awliya al-Dam Telegram channel, March 4, 2026)

► The Kata’ib Sarkhat al-Quds militia, a front organization affiliated with the Nujaba movement, released footage documenting the launch of at least three drones allegedly directed at American and Israeli targets. The militia also asserted that it had attacked every country hosting “enemy bases,” particularly in northern Iraq (Kata'ib Sarkhat al-Quds Telegram channel, February 28–March 2, 2026).

► Since the beginning of the campaign, attacks – for which neither the United States nor Israel claimed responsibility – were also carried out against bases and assets of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the umbrella organization of pro-Iranian militias in Iraq. At least ten militia members were reportedly killed, most of them Kata'ib Hezbollah operatives (Shafaq News; Al-Arabiya; Sabereen News, March 1–3, 2026). Kata'ib Hezbollah stated that it is aware that the aircraft and drones that attacked Iraq took off from American bases in Jordan. The militia added that it “eagerly awaits” the deployment of American ground forces to the region and warned Saudi Arabia and the UAE to “adjust their statements to reflect their true size, as they are merely a logistical rear serving the Zionist-American project” (Kata'ib Hezbollah Telegram channel, February 28–March 3, 2026).

Militias in Syria

► The group “The Islamic Resistance Front in Syria – Possessors of Might” claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on the al-Shaddadi base in northeastern Syria (Islamic Resistance Front in Syria Telegram channel, March 2, 2026). This base was evacuated by American forces in February 2026 and is apparently empty today.

Iran and the Lebanese Arena (Before the Outbreak of the Campaign)

► Iran's new ambassador to Lebanon, Rauf Sheibani, met with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and presented his proposed plan to strengthen relations and cooperation with Lebanon in various areas of mutual interest. During the meeting, the foreign minister emphasized the importance of relations between Iran and Lebanon and the need to develop and expand bilateral ties (Nour News, February 26, 2026).



The new Iranian ambassador in Beirut meets with the Iranian foreign minister (Nour News, February 26, 2026)