



Iran Summary

May 2024

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May 2024 Summary: Iran's President, Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, [died](#) in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [reported](#) that Iran continued increasing its stockpile of near weapons-grade, 60% enriched uranium. The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen continued to escalate maritime attacks and disrupt international trade, [conducting](#) 30 attacks in May alone. Tehran and Moscow continued to [deepen](#) their military ties, as Israeli officials reportedly [raised](#) concerns that Russia may provide Iran with its advanced cyberwarfare capabilities. Israeli and Swedish security services [said](#) that Iran was behind recent attempted terror attacks against Israel's embassies in Europe.

Maritime Aggression:

- Despite the United States and other partners conducting approximately 28 airstrikes against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen during May, the terror group conducted 30 attacks on vessels in nearby waters, in the waters around Bab el Mandeb, one of the world's most vital maritime chokepoints, disrupting international trade. Click [here](#) to view JINSA's updated Iran Projectile Tracker.
- Overnight on May 31, the United States and the United Kingdom [carried out](#) strikes on multiple Houthi targets, including underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, and a Houthi vessel, reportedly [killing](#) 16 Houthis and injuring 40 more.
 - » The United States [used](#) a 5,000-pound bunker-buster bomb, the GBU-72, as part of the joint strike, according to a *CBS News* report citing three unnamed officials.
 - » In response to the strikes, the Houthis [threatened](#) "escalation," with one Houthi official, Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, saying, "the American-British aggression will not prevent us from continuing our military operations in support of Palestine...We will meet escalation with escalation."
 - » The Houthis also [claimed](#) to have launched a retaliatory attack against a U.S. aircraft carrier, the *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower*, in the Red Sea.
- On May 29, the Islamic Republic's semi-official *Tasnim* news agency [reported](#) that Iran had made its Gadr sea-launched ballistic missile available to the Houthis, describing the missiles as "a weapon capable of presenting serious challenges to the interests of the United States and its main ally in the region, the Zionist regime."
- On May 29, the Houthis [claimed](#) to have shot down a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper drone over Yemen, marking the third time the Iran-backed group had claimed to have [shot down](#) a U.S. drone in May alone. The United States has [not confirmed](#) or denied these claims.
- On May 28, the Houthis [attacked](#) a Greek-owned, Marshall-Islands flagged bulk carrier, the *Laax*, which was carrying a cargo of grain bound for Iran. The Houthis gave no prior warning to the ship before carrying out an hours-long attack during which five missiles struck the carrier, damaging the vessel.

- On May 3, the Houthi-controlled Sana'a University in Yemen [offered](#) a place at the school to any U.S. students suspended from their universities for participating in anti-Israel protests and encampments, releasing a statement that said, "we are serious about welcoming students that have been suspended from U.S. universities for supporting Palestinians. We are fighting this battle with Palestine in every way we can."
- On May 3, the Houthis military spokesman, Yaha Sarea, [said](#), "we will target any ships heading to Israeli ports in the Mediterranean Sea in any area we are able to reach."

Malign Activities Abroad:

- On May 30, Israel's Mossad intelligence agency [said](#) that Iran was behind the recent string of attempted terror attacks by criminal networks against Israel's embassies in Europe since October 7. According to the report, Iran had approached criminal networks in Europe to carry out attacks on their behalf, which have included an explosive device found inside the grounds of the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm in January and two airsoft grenades thrown at the Israeli embassy in Belgium in mid-May.
 - » Sweden's Säpo security service confirmed the report and said there is a significant risk that Iran will attempt to carry out attacks in Sweden again.
- On May 29, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, [wrote](#) a letter on X directed at American college students who have participated in anti-Israel protests, in which he wrote, "Dear university students in the United States of America, you are standing on the right side of history... You have now formed a branch of the Resistance Front and have begun an honorable struggle in the face of your government's ruthless pressure – a government which openly supports the usurper and brutal Zionist regime."
- On May 28, *Iran International* reported that YouTube [deleted](#) the account of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs after it released a video called "Resistance, the Only Option for Palestine," that called for the "punishment of Israel."
- On May 23, Ayatollah Khamenei [met](#) with Hamas's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, in Tehran and told him "the elimination of Israel is feasible."
- On May 22, General Esmail Ghaani, commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, [held a meeting](#) in Tehran to discuss the situation in Gaza with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Naim Qassem, Houthi spokesperson Mohammed Abdul Salam, and IRGC Commander in Chief, Hossein Salami.

Russia/China Ties:

- On May 28, *Newsweek* [reported](#) that Iran supplied Russia with a guided aerial bomb to be used against Ukraine.
 - » According to the report, a drone of Iranian origins, employed by Russia in Ukraine, crashed in Russia's Kursk region, "carrying the latest Iranian guided aerial bombs, the Qaem-5, which were put into service in Iran in 2019."
- On May 26, the Islamic Republic's official state-run *IRNA* news agency [reported](#) that Iran had purchased 15 helicopters from Russia, including 12 with night vision capabilities.
- On May 20, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, had a [phone call](#) with Iran's new interim president, Mohammad Mokhber, to express his condolences for the deaths of Iran's President, Ebrahim Raisi. According to the Kremlin's readout of the call, "Both sides

emphasized their mutual desire to further consistently strengthen comprehensive Russian-Iranian interaction for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries.”

- On May 11, *Iran International* [reported](#) that sanctioned Iranian oil was offloaded at Dongjiakou port in China.

Nuclear:

- On May 22, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director Rafael Grossi [said](#) that present talks with Iran regarding rebuilding its nuclear safeguards compliance were paused indefinitely after the unexpected deaths of the country’s president and foreign minister in a May 19 helicopter crash.
 - » In the first week of May, Grossi had [traveled](#) to Iran for these talks, during which, he [criticized](#) their unwillingness to cooperate with the nuclear watchdog agency, saying, “I want results and I want them soon. The present state is unsatisfactory.”
- On May 11, the IAEA [reported](#) that Iran continued to increase its stockpiles of 20% and 60% enriched uranium, giving it the [capability](#) to enrich 12 nuclear bombs’ worth of material within three months of initiating a breakout attempt.

Domestic/Human Rights:

- According to Oslo-based Iran Human Rights, as of June 1, the Islamic Republic had [executed](#) 237 people in 2024.
 - » On May 3, *Iran International* [reported](#) that in the period between April 16 to April 30 alone, the regime executed 63 people, averaging one execution every five hours.
- On May 28, Iran’s parliament [re-elected](#) Mohammad Bagher Qalibef as its speaker. Qalibef is a hard-liner who previously served as a general in the IRGC.
- On May 26, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that a Jewish Iranian man, who was set to be executed earlier in May, was again at “imminent risk of execution” after Iran’s Supreme Court rejected his appeal. Arvin Nathaniel Ghahremani, 20, was sentenced to death for retributive killing (*Qisas*) after he allegedly killed a man in self-defense.
- On May 26, the Islamic Republic’s semi-official *Tasnim* news agency [reported](#) that Iran has approved a plan to increase its oil output from 3.6 million barrels per day to 4 million barrels per day.
- On May 24, Iran’s President, Ebrahim Raisi, [died](#) in a helicopter crash. Iran’s regime said they did not suspect foul play involved.
 - » Iran’s Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and the governor of East Azerbaijan province, [Malek Rahmati](#), were also killed in the crash, as were two other officials and the helicopter’s three crew.
 - » The helicopter crashed while returning from a dam inauguration on Iran’s border with Azerbaijan.
 - » Mohammad Mokhber was [appointed](#) acting president of Iran by Ayatollah Khamenei until an election is held on June 28, 2024.
- On May 16, Iranian police [arrested](#) more than 260 people, including three European citizens, in Shahryar County, west of Tehran. Iran’s state-run *IRNA* news agency said the

mass arrests were carried out on charges of “spreading the culture of satanism and nudity,” without elaborating.

- On May 13, prominent Iranian film director Mohammad Rasoulof [said](#) he fled the country on foot after he was sentenced to eight years in jail over his new film “The Seed of the Sacred Fig.” The court convicted him of alleged “collusion against national security.”

Cyber:

- On May 26, *Israel Hayom* [reported](#) that Israeli officials were concerned that Russia may provide Iran with advanced cyber warfare capabilities to be used against Israel.
- On May 15, *CNN* [reported](#), citing current and former US officials, that operatives working for Iran’s regime created fake, AI-generated content ahead of the United States’ 2020 elections. The content, aimed at influencing U.S. voters, was not disseminated. However, according to *CNN*’s report, the attempted influence campaign has raised alarm among U.S. officials that deepfake technology could be employed to disrupt or influence the upcoming U.S. elections.
- On May 3, Israel’s National Cyber Directorate [said](#) that Iran-backed hacking groups had launched around 800 significant cyberattacks against Israel since October 7.
- On May 1, Mandiant and Google Cloud [reported](#) that an IRGC-linked hacking group impersonated journalists, think tank staffers, and human rights activists as part of a social engineering campaign in order to carry out phishing attacks and steal information.

Recent JINSA Publications on Iran:

- June 3: [Snapback Is the Way Forward Against Iran’s Nuclear Violations](#), Jonathan Ruhe
- June 1: [“Why Does Iran Still Have Operatives in Washington?”](#) *The Hill*, Gabriel Noronha
- May 29: [“Israel’s Great Strategic Failure,”](#) *Tablet Magazine*, Michael Makovksy, PhD
- May 28: [“I Carried Out The Strike That Killed Soleimani. America Doesn’t Understand the Lesson of His Death.”](#) *The Atlantic*, General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., USMC (ret.)