



Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 3/20/26 Update

Ari Cicurel

Associate Director of Foreign Policy

Yoni Tobin

Senior Policy Analyst

Jonah Brody

Policy Analyst

Sarah Havdala

Policy Analyst

Rena Gabber

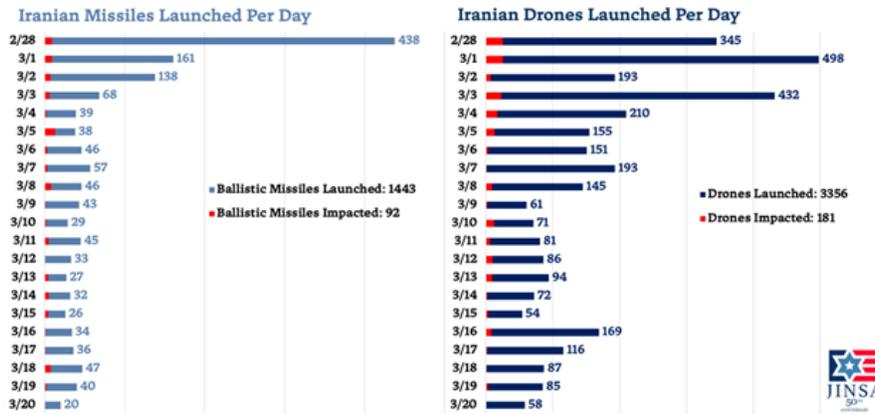
Research Associate

With the United States and Israel launching a joint campaign—Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion, respectively—against Iranian regime targets and Iran launching retaliatory missile and drone attacks against U.S. forces in the region, Israel, and Arab nations—dubbed Operation True Promise IV—JINSA will regularly release updates detailing the conflict. The update below includes information since [JINSA's last update](#) as of March 20 at 11:00 am ET.

1. Overview

- At a March 19 press briefing, President Donald Trump [claimed](#) that the United States is “substantially ahead of schedule” in its war timetable.
- According to Israel’s *Channel 12*, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir privately [stated](#) in recent days that Israel is less than halfway done with its Iran campaign, and that Israel’s top military brass unanimously opposes ending the war soon.
 - » Israeli security officials reportedly [assess](#) that stopping the war now would result in another war with Iran in a few months.
- So far in Operation Roaring Lion, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) has [conducted](#) more than 8,500 strikes on targets of the Iranian regime, deploying more than 12,000 munitions.
 - » A senior IAF official [remarked](#), “in 18 days, we flew as much as we would in a year.” Israel’s air campaign has [involved](#) more than 5,700 sorties, with 50 waves of strikes in eastern Iran and 540 in western and central Iran.
- On March 19, responding to a reporter’s question about Israeli strikes this week on Iran’s South Pars gas field, President Trump [said](#), “I told [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] ‘don’t do that,’ and he won’t do that [again].” He noted that “we get along great, it’s coordinated, but on occasion he’ll do something I don’t like.”
 - » Commenting on U.S.-Israel dynamics, that day, Prime Minister Netanyahu [disputed](#) reports that Israel pressured America into starting the war. Netanyahu said that President Trump “always makes his decisions on what he thinks is good for America. In this case, those interests are absolutely clear.”
- The Pentagon has [prepared](#) a request for Congress to provide it with over \$200 billion to finance ongoing operations and ramp up production of critical munitions.
- The Trump administration [approved](#) arms sales to Jordan, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) totalling approximately \$23 billion.

- Global energy markets and the economy remain adversely [impacted](#) by the war. Brent crude benchmark prices rose by 10 percent on March 19, and that day the S&P 500 index dropped 0.9 percent to 6,565.60, while the Nasdaq Composite index fell 1.3 percent to 21,872.69.
 - » President Trump [stated](#) on March 19, “we will do whatever is necessary to keep the prices as low [as possible].”
- The regime has reached the point where it “has no ability to enrich uranium, and no ability to produce ballistic missiles,” Prime Minister Netanyahu [announced](#) on March 19.
- Iran’s political and military leadership are both showing signs of [breaking down](#), Prime Minister Netanyahu revealed on March 19.
 - » Prime Minister Netanyahu [stated](#), “I’m not sure who is running Iran right now” and described growing fractures and “a lot of tension” within the regime’s upper levels.
 - Echoing this assessment, a senior Israeli official [told](#) Israel’s *Channel 12* outlet that day, “the situation in Iran’s leadership is complete chaos. There is currently nobody receiving orders, and the political vacuum is growing.”
 - » Prime Minister Netanyahu added that while Israel and the United States “can create the conditions” for the regime to fall, it is incumbent upon the Iranian people “to [exploit those conditions](#), at a certain point.” He also cautioned that “you don’t want to replace one Ayatollah with another.”
 - He further stated, “there are many possibilities for [a] ground component, and I take the liberty of not sharing with you all those possibilities.”
 - » Referring to exiled Iranian Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, the U.S.-based son of the deposed Shah, Prime Minister Netanyahu [argued](#) that he is “a force for good. He’s been trying to get the people to unite for a transitional government, a democratic transitional government, or a moderate transitional government. I hope one comes to being.”
- Israel’s military now [assesses](#) that the majority of Iranian missile attacks against Israel involve cluster warheads.
 - » According to *The Times of Israel*, Israel is engaging the missiles themselves with its Arrow system, but is engaging the dispersed bombs—which can include 80 submunitions in a single missile—with its Iron Dome system.
 - » Since no individuals inside shelters have yet been killed by cluster bombs, and given resource constraints, Israel is reportedly not trying to intercept each of the dispersed munitions.
- Iran continues to launch far fewer missiles than it did during the opening days of the war, but it has escalated its attacks against Saudi Arabia, particularly through drones, in an effort to pressure Washington and the Gulf nations to end the war.
 - » After three consecutive days of Iran launching an increasing number of missiles per day, Iranian missile fire declined 15 percent on March 19, with 40 missiles fired compared to 47 on March 18. So far on March 20, Iran has fired 20 missiles.
 - » Iran has launched over 3,355 drones, 1,443 ballistic missiles, and 28 cruise missiles since the war began.
- Since the war began, Israel has [intercepted](#) around 90 percent of Iranian missiles on a trajectory to hit population centers or critical infrastructure, the IDF recently revealed. According to data seen by Israel’s *Walla News*, Israel has [intercepted](#) 270 out of 285 missiles that threatened these sensitive sites.



2. U.S. and Israeli Operations

- To force Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the Trump administration is reportedly [weighing](#) a possible seizure or blockade of Kharg Island.
 - According to four U.S. officials who spoke with Newsmax, roughly 2,500 Marines and around 1,500 sailors from the USS *Boxer* Amphibious Ready Group and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit are [deploying to the region](#) ahead of schedule.
- According to the IDF, Israeli strikes have [eliminated](#) about 85 percent of the air defense and detection systems in Iran, including 92 percent of advanced air defense systems.
 - The IDF has [hit](#) over 300 targets linked to Iran’s air defense systems.
- The IDF announced that around 60 percent of Iran’s ballistic missile launchers, out of an estimated 470 launchers, have been [destroyed](#) or rendered inoperable by Israeli strikes.
- In Lebanon, Israeli strikes have [hit](#) over 2,000 Hezbollah targets, including 100 weapons storage facilities, 120 command centers, and 130 missile launchers. In addition, more than 570 Hezbollah operatives have been killed by the IDF.

Day 21 of Operations: March 20

Iran

- The U.S. Air Force [conducted strikes](#) overnight on a major Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) tunnel complex underneath Qeshm Island used to store—and potentially produce—drones, missiles, and naval assets, according to Israel’s *Maariv* outlet.
- An overnight IAF airstrike [eliminated](#) IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini.
- Israel announced that Israeli strikes earlier this week killed the IRGC’s Basij force chief of intelligence, [Ismail Ahmadi](#), and [Mehdi Rastami Shamastan](#), a senior official in the Iranian Intelligence Ministry.
- Iranian media [reported](#) that prior U.S.-Israeli strikes on Isfahan killed Mehdi Qureishi, a commander in the IRGC Aerospace Force.
- Strikes also targeted several other regime sites throughout Iran, including:
 - [Bandar Lengeh port](#);
 - [An airbase in Bandar Abbas](#);
 - [Basij and IRGC bases in Semnan](#); and
 - [A missile site in Chamran](#).
- According to an *Iran International* report, an Israeli strike on an Iranian senior leadership gathering on February 28 likely [disrupted](#) their meeting regarding the regime’s “final deliberations over building a nuclear weapon.”

Syria

- The IDF struck Syrian government targets in southern Syria overnight, including a command center and weapons stockpiles, in response to attacks on Druze civilians in Suwayda.
 - » Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz [warned](#) that Israel will not allow the Syrian regime to exploit our war against Iran and Hezbollah to harm the Druze,” adding that Israel would strike with greater force if necessary.

Iraq

- An unattributed strike [hit](#) positions belonging to the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Babil and Salahaddin governorates.

Day 20 of Operations: March 19

Iran

- The IDF [struck](#) more than 130 drones, missile launchers, air defense systems, and other targets in central and western Iran.
- An attack on a Basij checkpoint in Tabriz [resulted](#) in the deaths of 13 Basij members and caused injuries to 18 others in the paramilitary force.

Iraq

- An unclaimed airstrike [targeted](#) a PMF position in Nineveh Governorate, killing two militants, and a separate airstrike [hit](#) a PMF position in Saladin Governorate, killing one and wounding several others.

U.S. Rationale and Policy Objectives

- President Trump [stated](#) on March 19, “Iran is a serious threat to the world — to the Middle East, and to the world. And everybody agrees with me. I think virtually every country agrees with me on that.”
 - » Secretary Bessent [noted](#) the same day, “Iran is the head of snake for all global terrorism. They are the leading state sponsor of terrorism.”
- U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth [stated](#) at a press conference that the United States has not determined a “definitive time frame” for concluding Operation Epic Fury.

3. Iranian Operations

- Prime Minister Netanyahu [claimed](#) on March 19 that there have been defections from Iranian military forces, and that, “we’re seeing fear and trepidation in the IRGC units that are manning the ballistic missiles. ... We’re seeing cracks.”
- President Trump, on March 19, discussed a previously unreported incident in which Iran launched a barrage of over 100 projectiles.
 - » President Trump [stated](#), “the other night, they had 114 rockets shot at a certain location. And out of 114 highly sophisticated rockets, every single one of them was shot down with our equipment.”
 - » He further commented, “it’s amazing, actually, how good [U.S. defense technology] is.”
- Iran and Hezbollah continue to target Israel with an array of drone, missile, and rocket attacks. Over the past 24 hours:
 - » Iran [fired](#) at least [eight waves](#) of missiles, with some carrying cluster munitions, at northern, central, and southern Israel.
 - One [impacted](#) a home in Rehovot, causing a fire and lightly injuring two people, and one [impacted](#) Jerusalem's Old City, causing damage, but no injuries.

- Additional missiles were also [launched](#) towards southern Israel.
- » Hezbollah [fired](#) several rockets at northern Israel.
- » The Israeli military also [revealed](#) that Hezbollah fired a Scud D missile towards the Negev Desert, a distance of at least 135 miles, with a half-ton of explosives in its war-head. Hezbollah retains additional missiles with this range and payload, according to Israeli intelligence estimates.
 - It is unusual for Hezbollah rockets and missiles to travel such distances, and the launch may have been among Hezbollah’s longest in history.
- Arab countries continue coming under Iranian fire. Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. each reported attacks on their country over the past day:
 - » Iraq:
 - Two waves of drone and missile attacks [targeted](#) bases belonging to the Iranian Kurdish opposition group, the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), causing four casualties.
 - » Kuwait:
 - Kuwait’s Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery was [targeted](#) in multiple drone strikes, causing fires in several units and prompting precautionary shutdowns.
 - » Saudi Arabia:
 - So far today, Saudi Arabia has [intercepted](#) at least 24 drones, with the majority of drones shot down over Eastern Province, home to the kingdom’s major oil refineries
 - » U.A.E.:
 - The U.A.E. [intercepted](#) four ballistic missiles and 26 Iranian drones.
- According to Israeli officials, between 13 and 20 IAF drones have been [shot down](#) over Iran during the conflict.
 - » Israeli policy is that the loss of unmanned aircraft is an [acceptable cost](#) to sustain, given the drones’ use in operations thwarting missile attacks on Israel.
- Emirati authorities [announced](#) they dismantled a Hezbollah- and Iran-linked terrorist network operating under a fictitious commercial cover, and arrested its members on charges of money laundering, terrorism financing, and threatening national security and financial stability.

4. Estimated Casualties of Iranian Operations

- Thirteen U.S. service members have died during Operation Epic Fury.
 - » An Iranian drone attack [killed](#) six U.S. servicemembers at Port Shuaiba in Kuwait on March 1: Maj. Jeffrey O’Brien, 45; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan, 54; Capt. Cody Khork, 35; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Amor, 39; Sgt. 1st Class Noah Tietjens, 42; and Sgt. Declan Coady (posthumously promoted from specialist), 20.
 - » A U.S. servicemember, Sgt. Benjamin Pennington, 26, was [killed](#) during a March 8 Iranian attack targeting U.S. troops at the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.
 - » Six U.S. servicemembers were [killed](#) when a KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft crashed over western Iraq on March 12: Major John A. Klinner, 33; Captain Ariana G. Savino, 31; Technical Sergeant Ashle B. Pruitt, 34; Captain Seth R. Koval, 38; Captain Curtis J. Angst, 30; and Technical Sergeant Tyler H. Simmons, 28.

- At least 200 members of the U.S. military have been [injured](#) thus far in the war, 10 of whom have been “seriously wounded,” according to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Capt. Tim Hawkins.
- Since the war’s outbreak, numerous other casualties have been reported:
 - » 24 people [have been killed](#) in Israel, while over 4,000 people have been [hospitalized](#).
 - Two Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#) in southern Lebanon.
 - » In the U.A.E., eight people have been [killed](#), and at least 158 have been injured.
 - » Two [Kuwaiti navy sailors](#), two [Kuwaiti interior ministry officers](#), and a [Kuwaiti civilian](#) have been killed, over 70 Kuwaiti military personnel have [been injured](#), and two medical staff have been [wounded](#).
 - » Four people have been [killed](#) in Syria, and several have been [injured](#).
 - » Two foreign nationals have been [killed](#) in Saudi Arabia, and 16 others have [been injured](#).
 - » In Qatar, around 20 people have been [wounded](#).
 - » In Oman, at least [three people](#) have been killed, and at least 10 people have been [wounded](#).
 - » In Bahrain, two people have [been killed](#), and 35 people have [been injured](#).
 - » At least 58 people have been [killed](#) in Iraq, including:
 - 46 Iran-backed militia fighters;
 - 5 Iranian Kurdish militants;
 - 4 individuals, reported to be Iranian, in a targeted airstrike in Baghdad;
 - 1 French soldier in Iraqi Kurdistan;
 - 1 airport security guard in Erbil; and
 - 1 civilian southeast of Baghdad.
 - » In Azerbaijan, four civilians have been [injured](#).
 - » In Lebanon, at least 1,001 people have been [killed](#), and more than 2,584 have been wounded—figures that do not distinguish between Hezbollah operatives and civilians.
 - » In Iran, at least 3,100 people, including at least 1,153 military personnel, have been [killed](#). However, *Iran International* suggests at least 5,000 military personnel have been [killed](#), with over 15,000 wounded.

5. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian Officials

- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [warned](#) that Tehran will show “zero restraint” if its energy infrastructure is struck again, saying its previous response had used only a fraction of its capabilities and that prior restraint had only been shown solely out of respect for de-escalation requests.
- Spokesman for the Iranian Armed Forces Abolfazl Shekarchi [threatened](#) U.S. and Israeli government and military officials, noting that Iran will target them at “promenades, resorts and tourist and entertainment centres” globally.
- IRGC Spokesman Gen. Ali Mohammad Naeini [said](#) that Iran continues to produce missiles and has “no particular problem in stockpiling.” The previous day, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu claimed that Iran is no longer able to produce missiles.

6. International Response

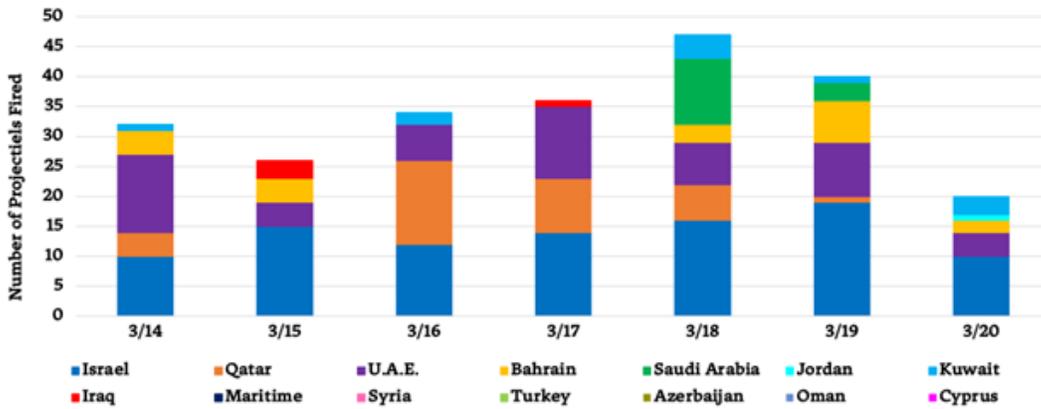
- In response to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies declining to contribute to efforts to secure the Strait of Hormuz, President Trump [wrote](#) on Truth Social that “Without the USA., NATO IS A PAPER TIGER!”
 - » He also condemned these countries for “complain[ing] about the high oil prices,” calling them “COWARDS,” and noting that the United States will “REMEMBER” their actions.
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Emirati President Mohammed bin Zayed reportedly [asked](#) President Trump to make sure that the threat posed by Iran will be eliminated in the long term.
- Emirati police have [detained](#) more than 100 people for photographing and publishing false and “misleading” information on the internet related to the current Iran conflict.
- Ukraine has [deployed](#) 228 military specialists to Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. to help them defend civilian sites and critical infrastructure from Iranian drone attacks.
- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [warned](#) during his Eid al-Fitr address that Israel “will pay the price” for what he described as the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people and added that Israel is why the Middle East is “boiling right now.”
- Switzerland [ceased](#) its weapons exports to the United States due to U.S. military operations in Iran.
- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres [called](#) on the United States and Israel to end hostilities with Iran before it spirals “out of control,” warning of tragic consequences for civilians and the global economy.
- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) [held](#) a meeting, requested by Bahrain, to discuss Iran’s attacks on Gulf energy infrastructure.
 - » Bahrain and numerous Council members [emphasized](#) the importance of Iran implementing a March 11 UNSC resolution calling on Iran to halt attacks on Gulf states and civilian infrastructure.
- Following a joint statement yesterday by several European countries, Canada, and Japan on efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, signatories Italy and Germany [clarified](#) that they do not intend to provide immediate military assistance, instead planning to participate in a multi-lateral effort post-ceasefire.
- Two people, including one Iranian national, were [arrested](#) after attempting to enter the UK Clyde Naval Base; the base houses submarines armed with Trident II submarine-launched ballistic missiles, which serve as Britain’s nuclear deterrent.
- The Alliance of Political Parties of Iranian Kurdistan [issued](#) a statement condemning Iran’s repeated missile and drone attacks on refugee camps and Kurdish opposition party headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan, calling on the United States, its allies, and the Iraqi government to take immediate action to protect civilians and provide air defense systems for refugee-populated areas.

7. Charts and Trends

- After three consecutive days of increasing missile fire, the number of missiles that Iran launched on March 19 declined 15 percent, with 40 missiles fired, down from 47 on March 18. So far on March 20, Iran has fired 20 missiles.
 - » Overnight on March 19 and 20, Iran launched missiles at Israel in pairs roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour apart—often using cluster munitions—to maintain pressure on Israel, forcing civilians to return to shelters repeatedly.

Iranian Missiles Launched During the Past Week

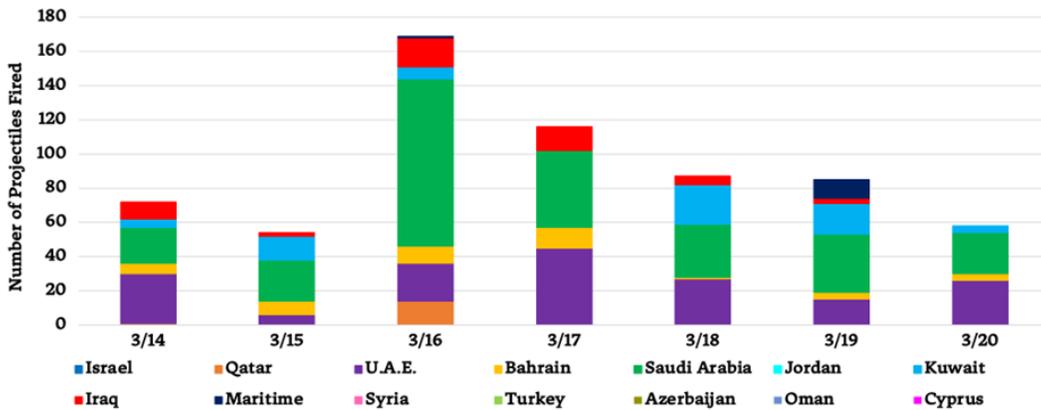
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- Iran’s overall drone fire and drone attacks have declined since March 16, but on March 19, Iran increased drone attacks against Saudi Arabia, launching 34 drones, up from 31 on March 18. So far on March 20, Iran has launched 24 drones against Saudi Arabia.
 - » So far on March 20, Iran has launched 26 drones against the U.A.E.

Iranian Drones Launched During the Past Week

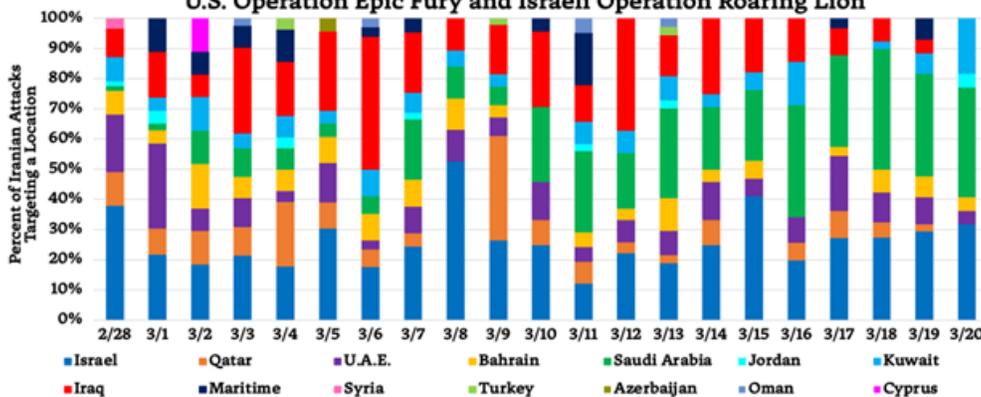
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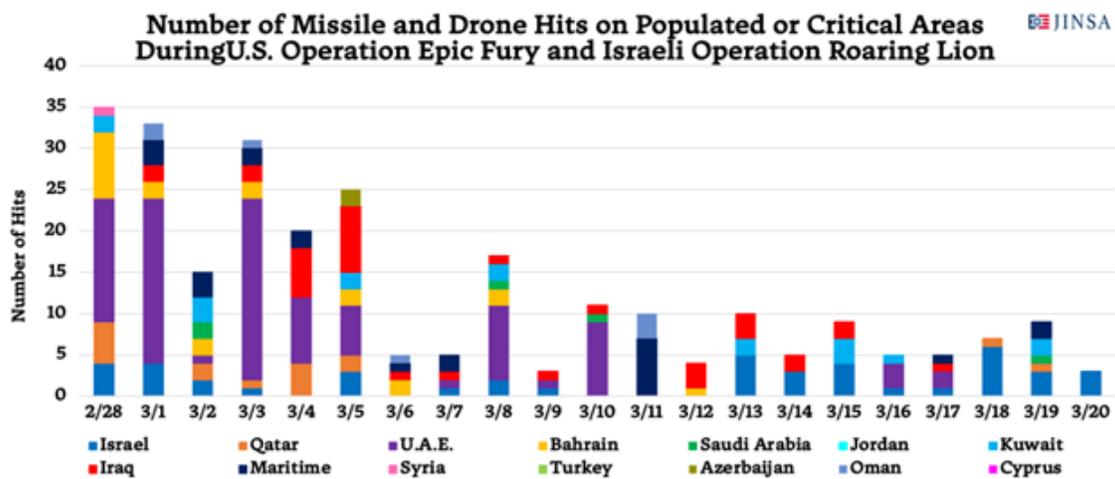
- Iran has continued its focus on targeting Saudi Arabia, with 38 percent of attacks so far on March 20 targeting Saudi Arabia, up from 34 percent on March 19.

Targets of Iranian Attacks During U.S. Operation Epic Fury and Israeli Operation Roaring Lion

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- On March 19, nine Iranian projectiles hit targets, up from seven on March 18, with hits also dispersing across more sites, including Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and maritime vessels. So far on March 20, three Iranian missiles have hit targets in Israel.



8. JINSA Resources

- Jonathan Ruhe, [Scared Strait: Ending Iran’s Threats to Hormuz and the Gulf](#), March 20
- Giran Ozcan and Jonah Brody, [Iran’s Kurdish Coalition and the Future of the Opposition](#), March 18, 2026
- Hussein Mansour, [If Tehran Falls: How Iran’s Collapse Reshuffles Arab Gulf Relations](#), March 16
- Infographic: [Operation Epic Fury—What is the Aim Point?](#), March 13, 2026
- VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, and Jonathan Ruhe, “[Webinar: Washington and Jerusalem’s Next Moves](#),” March 12, 2026
- Meriem Mokhtari, [How the Muslim Brotherhood Funds Iran’s Proxies](#), March 11, 2026
- Robert McNally and Michael Makovsky, PhD, “[Webinar: Iran War Energy Disruption: Short-Term or Here To Stay?](#)” March 10, 2026
- Blaise Misztal, [Principles for U.S.-Kurdish Partnership](#), March 6, 2026
- Hussein Mansour, [Gulf Situation Assessment: Iran’s Attacks on Arab States Will Backfire](#), March 5, 2026
- Ari Cicurel, [Iran’s Missile Fire Has Almost Run Out](#), March 5, 2026
- Blaise Misztal, [Iran is Not Iraq](#), March 4, 2026
- Giran Ozcan and Jonah Brody, [The Kurdish Moment in Iran](#), March 4, 2026
- Gen. Frank McKenzie, USMC (ret.), IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, IDF MG (ret.) Oded Bassiuk, and John Hannah, “[Webinar: Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion](#),” March 1, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, [U.S.-Israel Joint Operations Against Iran’s Regime](#), February 28, 2026
- Blaise Misztal, Giran Ozcan, and Jonah Brody, [The Rise of Iran’s Kurdish Coalition](#), February 27, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, [Israel: America’s Third Aircraft Carrier in the Middle East](#), February 25, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, [Iran’s Evolving Missile and Drone Threat](#), February 20, 2026