



# Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 3/23/26 Update

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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 23 at 11:00 am ET.

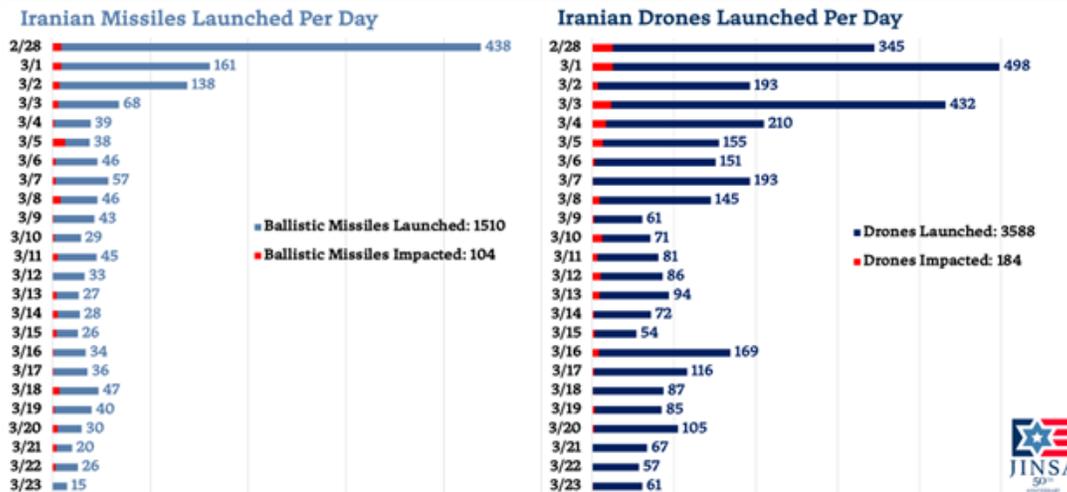
## 1. Overview

- President Donald Trump [stated](#) in a March 23 Truth Social post that he has “instructed the Department of War to postpone any and all military strikes against Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure for a five day period.”
  - » He added that over the past two days, U.S. negotiators and Iranian teams had “very good and productive conversations regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East.”
    - President Trump’s statement followed his March 21 post in which he [warned](#) that if Iran refused to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within the next two days, the United States would “hit and obliterate” Iranian power plants.
  - » Following President Trump’s March 23 post, Iran’s state-run *Fars News Agency* [reported](#) that Iranian leaders have not held ceasefire talks with the Trump administration despite being approached about the subject. The agency claimed that the U.S. desire to end the war is due to Iranian threats to escalate attacks on regional critical infrastructure.
    - In response, President Trump [stated](#) that the most recent U.S.-Iran talks took place Sunday night, and Iranian news was not updated accordingly due to the destruction of infrastructure in the country.
    - Later, President Trump [told](#) *CNBC* that “this is regime change,” after claiming to have held “great conversations” with Iranian representatives. He also [said](#) that the United States is “very intent on making a deal with Iran,” and “Iran wants to make a deal badly.”
- In a discussion with reporters on Monday, President Trump [outlined](#) U.S. demands, including Iran not obtaining a nuclear weapon, “not even close to it”; limits to Iran’s missile program; peace in the Middle East; no enrichment of uranium; and the U.S. seizing stockpiles of enriched uranium. He [suggested](#) that an agreement was reached for the United States to take possession of Iran’s uranium, adding that if there is such an agreement, “We’re going down

and we'll take it ourselves." According to President Trump, Iran has [agreed](#) to a framework of 15 points, but he did not elaborate.

- » President Trump [added](#) that the United States has yet to hear from the new Iranian Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, noting that "we don't know if he's living."
  - American and Israeli officials who spoke with the *Washington Post* [said](#) that Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is secluded, injured, and not replying to messages communicated to him.
- » President Trump also [stated](#) that "this will be peace for Israel. Long term peace, guaranteed peace — if this happens. And I can't guarantee it, but ... I think this is something that's going to happen."
- » President Trump [remarked](#) that if an agreement is reached with Iran, the Strait of Hormuz will be reopened "immediately," and that the Strait will be "jointly controlled, maybe [by] me and the Ayatollah."
- » Following President Trump's remarks, global energy prices [decreased](#), with Brent crude futures dropping over 10 percent to \$100.53. In addition, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq indexes both jumped by over two percent.
- U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Admiral Brad Cooper [assessed](#) in a March 22 interview that Iran's attacks on Middle East civilian targets—which he said numbered over 300 in the past two weeks—are "a sign of desperation."
  - » Admiral Cooper detailed the U.S. and Israeli successes in the war, stating, "our achievements are obvious, if you zoom out and look at the situation. The Iranian Navy is no longer at sea. The Iranian Air Force is no longer flying. The air defense is no longer shooting."
  - » Admiral Cooper further stated, "the large salvos of [Iranian] drones and missiles that you saw at the beginning of the war have now largely degraded into one and two [launched at a time] at this point."
  - » In Admiral Cooper's assessment, "the Strait of Hormuz is physically open to transit. The reason that ships are not transiting right now is not because the Islamic Republic [of Iran] is shooting at them with drones and missiles."
    - He added that more than 20 countries have joined a coalition to safeguard commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz.
  - » Directly addressing the Iranian people, Admiral Cooper said, "we are attacking the regime in the Islamic Republic, not the wonderful people [of Iran]." He added, "you need to stay inside for right now. There will be a clear signal at some point, as the President has indicated, for you to be able to come out."
- Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent [denied](#) any funding issues pertaining to the war, stating on March 22, "we have plenty of money to fund this war."
  - » Secretary Bessent also assured that there will be no tax increases to fund the war effort.
- Israeli Ambassador to the United States Yechiel Leiter [said](#) that the war in Iran will end when "there is not an entity in Tehran that's going to threaten the region." He added this will "probably take place, because the Iranian people have had enough."
  - » Ambassador Leiter noted that if the United States and Israel "degrade [the Iranian regime] enough, the people of Iran are going to say, 'we've had enough and we want a different regime.'"
- According to Israel's *Channel 12* outlet, which cited defense sources, Israel has [sufficient interceptors](#) to defend its homeland, even if Iran expended its whole missile arsenal in attacks on Israel over the coming days.

- Iran continues to launch far fewer missiles than it did during the opening days of the war, but missile fire increased 30 percent on March 22, rising to 26 missiles from 20 the previous day. Iran has shifted the focus of its missile and drone fire away from Saudi energy infrastructure—reportedly to [avoid](#) a Saudi military response—toward U.S. bases in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Bahrain.
  - » So far on March 23, Iran has fired 16 missiles and 60 drones, surpassing the total number of drones on March 22.
  - » Iran increased its drone attacks against Bahrain on March 23, launching 36 drones against Bahrain compared to just two drones on March 22.
  - » Iran has launched over 3,580 drones, 1,510 ballistic missiles, and 28 cruise missiles since the war began, with roughly 42 percent of total projectiles targeting the U.A.E.



## 2. U.S. and Israeli Operations

- The USS *Gerald R. Ford* aircraft carrier has [docked](#) at a naval base on the Greek island of Crete after being deployed to the Middle East to support Operation Epic Fury. The carrier was forced back to port for repairs following an onboard fire.
- Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir [stated](#) that Israel’s fight with Hezbollah “has only just begun,” adding that “Iran is our primary effort, and the northern arena is another central arena. They are interconnected.”
- IDF chief spokesman and former JINSA Visiting IDF Fellow Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin [announced](#) that Israel expects “to face several more weeks of fighting against Iran and Hezbollah.”
- In Iraq, south of Baghdad, members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) were [targeted](#) in three strikes.
- According to Israel’s *Channel 12*, Trump administration officials [expect](#) that it would take several weeks to reopen the Strait of Hormuz in a potential future U.S. operation.

### Days 24 of Operations: March 23

#### Iran

- The IDF [carried out](#) widespread strikes throughout Tehran, targeting government locations and infrastructure, including [regime safe houses](#).
- Strikes also [targeted](#) the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) Al-Ghadir Corps headquarters in Yazd and Iranian State Broadcasting Center transmitter in Bandar Abbas, as well

as regime sites in the cities of Tabriz, Zahedan, Karaj, and Garmdarreh, according to IranWire.

#### *Lebanon*

- The Israeli military [conducted](#) a precise strike in Beirut, targeting a member of the IRGC's Quds Force.

#### *Iraq*

- An unattributed strike [hit](#) a base belonging to the PMF in Al Anbar Governorate, while an additional unclaimed strike [targeted](#) PMF fighters in Kirkuk Governorate.

### **Days 23 of Operations: March 22**

#### *Iran*

- Iran's *Fars News Agency* reported that U.S.-Israeli strikes last week [killed](#) Ebrahim Mor-tazavi-Nasb, the commander of a Shiraz Basij unit.
- According to *Iran International*, strikes [targeted](#) several regime sites throughout Iran in the cities of Bandar Abbas, Bandar Khamir, and Bushehr.

#### *Lebanon*

- The Israeli military [struck](#) the Qasmiya Bridge on the Litani River, across which Hezbollah transported weapons and fighters to attack Israel from southern Lebanon.

## **3. Iranian Operations**

- Iran and Hezbollah continue to target Israel with an array of drone, missile, and rocket attacks. Over the past 24 hours:
  - » An Iranian ballistic missile carrying cluster munitions on its warhead [impacted](#) several sites in central Israel, resulting in damage to buildings in Petah Tikva, but no injuries.
  - » Several Hezbollah rockets [crashed](#) in Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel, causing damage and [injuring](#) two people—including one seriously—after sirens sounded at least five times within an hour throughout the small village.
  - » An Iranian ballistic missile targeting northern Israel [crashed](#) into Lebanese territory, the first instance in the ongoing conflict.
- Arab countries continue coming under Iranian and proxy fire. Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. each reported attacks on their country over the past two days:
  - » Bahrain:
    - Bahrain's Defense Force [announced](#) it intercepted two ballistic missiles and 36 drones.
  - » Iraq:
    - A drone strike [targeted](#) a U.S. diplomatic compound near Baghdad International Airport.
  - » Kuwait:
    - In the early hours of March 23, Kuwait's Army General Staff [announced](#) that its air defense systems were actively intercepting an unspecified number of missiles and drones.

- » Saudi Arabia:
  - Between March 22–23, the Saudi Ministry of Defense [reported](#) it intercepted at least 27 drones, launched primarily toward the eastern region, and six ballistic missiles launched toward Riyadh, all of which were destroyed or landed in uninhabited areas.
  - Greek officials [confirmed](#) that a Greek-operated Patriot air defense system deployed in Saudi Arabia intercepted two Iranian ballistic missiles on March 19, believed to be targeting oil refineries near Yanbu on the Red Sea coast.
    - This interception marked the first time Greek military personnel have fired weapons in combat since the battery was deployed under a bilateral agreement with Riyadh in 2021.
- » U.A.E.:
  - The U.A.E. [intercepted](#) seven ballistic missiles and 16 drones over various parts of the country, with falling shrapnel from a missile interception [injuring](#) one person near Abu Dhabi.
- Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah [extended](#) its five-day pause in attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for an additional five days, having originally announced the halt on March 18.
- Iran [decided](#) to decrease its attacks on Saudi Arabia out of fear of retaliation, and likewise has chosen to cease attacks on Qatar, according to the *Jerusalem Post*.
- The Iranian government-aligned Islamic Movement of the People of the Right Hand group [claimed](#) responsibility for firebombing four ambulances belonging to a Jewish emergency service outside a London synagogue.
  - » The group also claimed responsibility for setting fires in Belgium, Greece, and the Netherlands.
  - » British police are treating the incident as a hate crime and are searching for three suspects caught on security cameras near the scene.
- Reuters reported on March 23 that Iran is now [implementing](#) many criminal sentences against protesters arrested in January.

#### 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 Khorak, 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](#) in 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 Ashley 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 CENTCOM Capt. Tim Hawkins.
- Since the war began, 26 people [have been killed in](#) Israel, while over 4,000 people have been [hospitalized](#).
  - » Two Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#) in southern Lebanon.

- » According to the *Times of Israel*, in the past day:
  - Four Israeli soldiers were [injured](#) during an operation in southern Lebanon; one soldier was wounded by a Hezbollah drone attack; and two soldiers were injured after a “work accident” in northern Israel.
  - Two people were [hurt](#), including one seriously, after a Hezbollah rocket impacted the northern town of Kiryat Shmona.
- Since the war’s outbreak, numerous other casualties have been reported:
  - » Iran:
    - At least 3,231 people, including at least 1,167 military personnel, have been [killed](#), with at least 20,000 [wounded](#). However, *Iran International* reported that at least 5,000 military personnel have been [killed](#).
  - » Azerbaijan:
    - Four civilians have been [injured](#).
  - » Bahrain:
    - Two people have [been killed](#), and 35 people have [been injured](#).
  - » Iraq:
    - At least 64 people have been [killed](#), including
      - 47 Iran-backed militia fighters;
      - Five Iranian Kurdish militants;
      - Five members of Iraq’s Counter-Terrorism Service;
      - Four individuals, reported to be Iranian, in a targeted airstrike in Baghdad;
      - One French soldier in Iraqi Kurdistan;
      - One airport security guard in Erbil; and
      - One civilian southeast of Baghdad.
  - » Jordan:
    - At least 29 people have been [injured](#).
  - » Kuwait:
    - 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](#).
  - » Lebanon:
    - At least 1,029 people have been [killed](#), and more than 2,786 have been wounded—figures that do not distinguish between Hezbollah operatives and civilians.
  - » Oman:
    - At least [three people](#) have been killed, and at least 10 people have been [wounded](#).
  - » Qatar:
    - Around 20 people have been [wounded](#), and seven people were [killed](#) on March 22 in a helicopter crash in Qatari territorial waters due to a technical issue.

- » Saudi Arabia:
  - Two foreign nationals have been [killed](#), and at least 16 others have [been injured](#).
- » Syria:
  - At least four people have been [killed](#) in Syria, and several others have been [injured](#).
- » U.A.E.:
  - Eight people have been [killed](#), and at least 161 have been [injured](#).

## 5. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian Officials

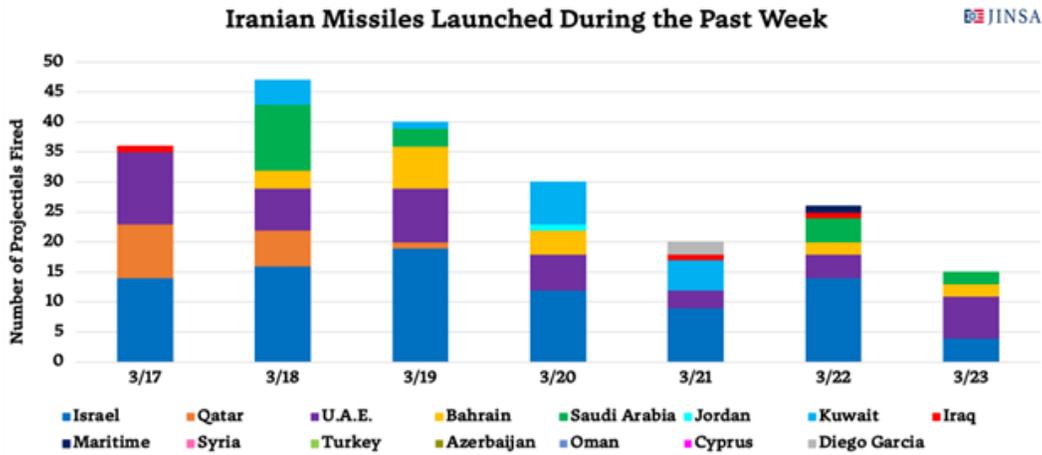
- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [attributed](#) the halt in maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz to insurance companies' concerns over America's "war of choice" rather than Iranian actions.
- Iran's Defense Council [warned](#) that any attack on its southern coast or islands would prompt the mining of all Gulf access routes, including with floating mines released from the coast.
- The IRGC [stated](#) it would retaliate against any attack on Iran's electricity sector by targeting Israeli power plants and facilities supplying electricity to U.S. bases in the region, while also appearing to walk back earlier threats against Gulf desalination plants.

## 6. International Response

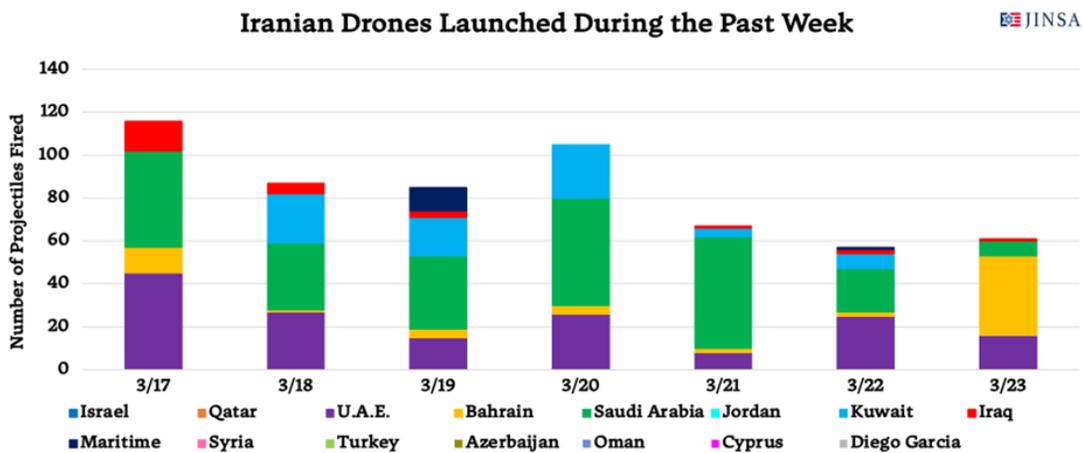
- Prime Minister of Lebanon Nawaf Salam [stated](#) that the Lebanese government will not give up on its plan of disarmament of Hezbollah.
- Lebanese President Joseph Aoun [denounced](#) Israel's strikes on infrastructure and critical facilities in Lebanon, including the recent targeting of bridges across the Litani River, stating, "these aggressions constitute a dangerous escalation and a flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty."
- China's foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian [stated](#) that the use of force will cause a "vicious cycle," adding, "should the hostilities continue to spread and intensify, the entire region will be plunged into chaos."
- Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan have reportedly been [mediating](#) between the United States and Iran in recent days. The three countries' foreign ministers have reportedly met separately with U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.
- Unnamed senior Gulf officials [told](#) the *Times of Israel* that Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E., who originally opposed the war and still maintain qualms about its execution, are encouraging the United States and Israel to continue their operations against the Iranian regime to ensure its military capacity is weakened.
- Saudi Arabia is [reducing](#) crude exports to Asian customers in April, per Reuters.
  - » Riyadh has moved towards a new export model: shipping energy out of Yanbu, on its Red Sea coastline, given the present disruption to Strait of Hormuz maritime traffic.
- Reza Pahlavi, Iran's Crown Prince and son of the former Shah, [stated](#) that he "ask[s] President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu to continue targeting the regime and its apparatus of repression, while sparing the civilian infrastructure Iranians will need to rebuild our country."

## 7. Charts and Trends

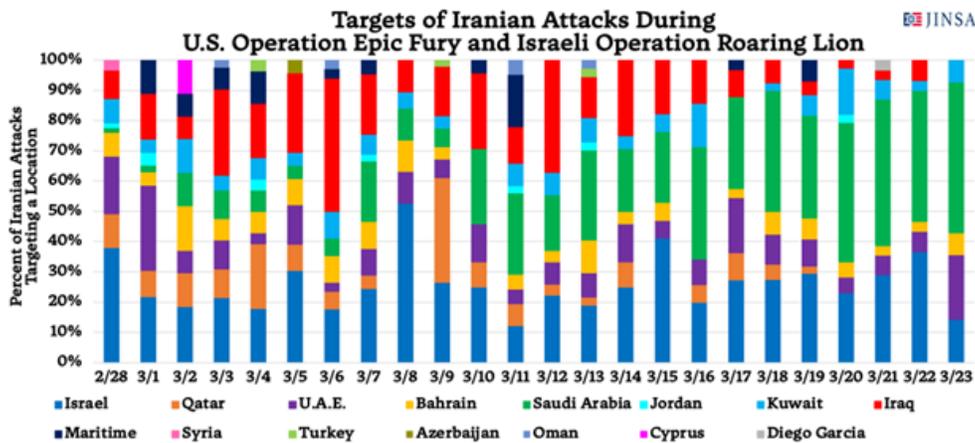
- Overall, Iranian missile fire increased on March 22, with 27 missiles fired, a 30 percent increase from 20 on March 21. So far on March 23, Iran has fired 16 missiles, including seven at the U.A.E., nearly double its fire against the country on March 22.



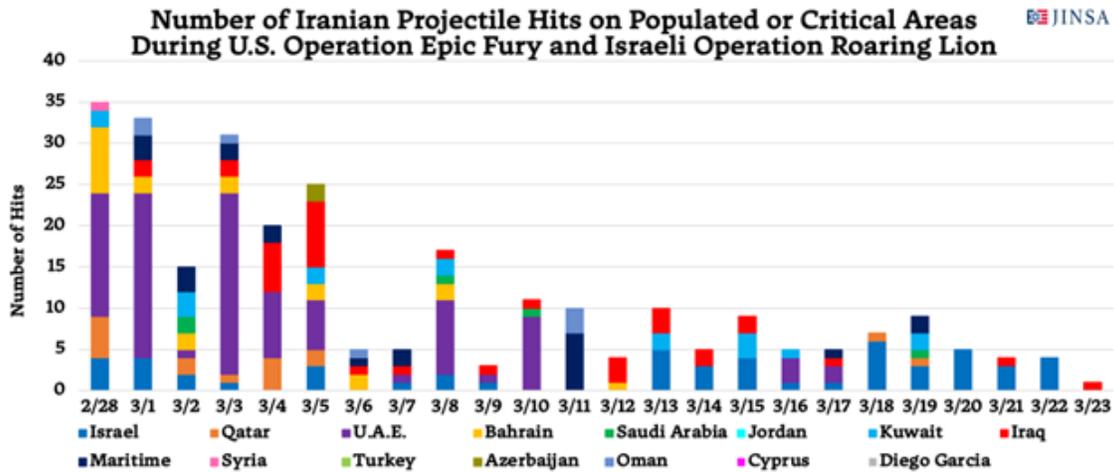
- Iran sharply escalated drone attacks against Bahrain, launching 36 drones so far on March 23, up from just two drones on March 22. Meanwhile, drone attacks against Saudi Arabia declined sharply, dropping from 52 drones on March 21 to 20 on March 22 and just seven so far on March 23.



- On March 23, Iran shifted a larger share of attacks toward the U.A.E. and Bahrain, with 21 percent of attacks targeting the U.A.E. and seven percent targeting Bahrain, up from seven percent and three percent, respectively, on March 22. So far on March 23, the percentage of Iranian attacks targeting Israel dropped to 14 percent from 37 percent on March 22.



- So far on March 23, the only Iran-linked projectile impacts occurred during an attack against the U.S. diplomatic facility at the Baghdad International Airport and Hezbollah attacks that impacted areas in northern Israel, including Kiryat Shmona, causing injuries and damage.



## 8. JINSA Resources

- Jonathan Ruhe, [Scared Strait: Ending Iran's Threat to Hormuz and the Gulf](#), March 19, 2026
- 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
- 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