



Iran War Update: September 23, 2026

Ari Cicurel

Associate Director of Foreign Policy

Yoni Tobin

Senior Policy Analyst

Jonah Brody

Policy Analyst

Sarah Havdala

Policy Analyst

Rena Gabber

Research Associate

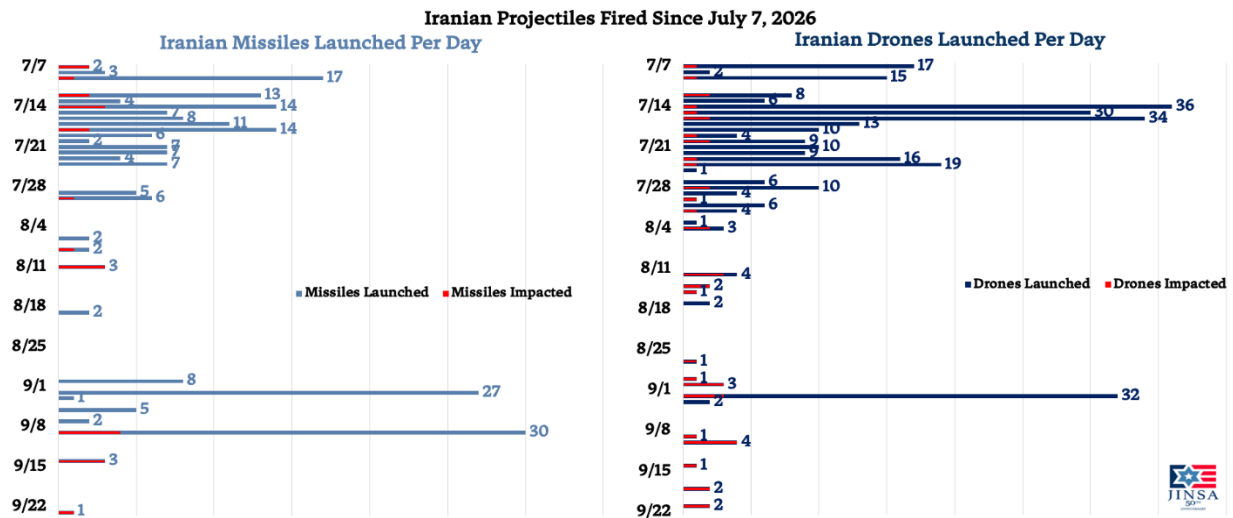
President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a now-expired Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 17, outlining terms to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz over a 60-day period of further negotiations. However, on July 8, President Trump [declared](#) the MOU to be “over,” and both sides have resumed exchanging fire. JINSA continues to release regular updates about the conflict. The update below includes information since [JINSA's last update](#) as of September 23 at 10:00 am ET.

Iranian missiles and drones launched since July 7: **At least 555** (1 on September 12–23)

Brent Crude Oil Price: **\$100.61 a barrel** as of 9:00 am ET ([day range](#): \$97.91–100.80)

1. Overview

- Despite new U.S. sanctions intended to cut Iranian airlines off from international services, a Mahan Air flight [landed](#) in Guangzhou, China, on September 23, the same day Chinese President Xi Jinping is set to [arrive](#) in Washington.
- During his speech at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 22, President Donald Trump [warned](#) that he has a “big decision to make” regarding the Iran war. Speaking rhetorically, he asked, “will a deal be made with Iran that lets them rebuild and create a far greater country than it ever was before? Or do I annihilate the Islamic Republic and do it quickly, never giving them a chance to kill and destroy people and countries again?”
 - » President Trump only directly [mentioned](#) Israel during his speech once, when discussing the “third anniversary of the October 7 attack in Israel,” and did not mention Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by name.
- After President Trump [claimed](#) that U.S. and Iranian officials met for three hours at the UNGA on September 22, U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff [indicated](#) that the conversations were not direct and instead there were “lengthy talks with the Iranian delegation through the [Qatari] mediators, who shuttled between the two sides throughout the day.”
 - » However, Iranian media [claimed](#) that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi conveyed to Witkoff that Tehran will only reopen the Strait of Hormuz if American forces lift the naval blockade on Iranian ports, release Iran’s frozen assets, and halt attacks targeting all of Iran’s “resistance” fronts.
- The Pentagon [announced](#) on September 22 that a 19th U.S. servicemember died in activities related to the Iran war. According to the Pentagon, a servicemember died on September 18 after experiencing a medical emergency while flying to the Middle East.



2. Diplomatic Engagement

Iran

- Speaking on September 22 at UNGA, President Trump [stated](#), “I believe we’ll make a deal right after the [midterm] election.”
 - » He also repeated earlier assertions that “I give absolutely no credence and will not give credence to the election when it comes to Iran,” emphasizing that “The only thing that does [matter] is that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon.”
 - » As President Trump spoke about potentially annihilating Iran, the majority of Tehran’s delegation [left](#) the room in protest.
- On September 22, Iranian state media [claimed](#) that during a sideline meeting at UNGA, Iran’s foreign minister conveyed to Special Envoy Witkoff that Tehran would reopen the Strait of Hormuz if the United States lifted its naval blockade on Iranian ports, released Iran’s frozen assets, and suspended attacks targeting all of Iran’s “resistance” fronts.
- While speaking to reporters on September 22 about the “very productive” meeting that envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff held with Iranian representatives, President Trump [stated](#) that “We will see what happens with that. I think there’s a lot of momentum for them to make a deal. That’s what we are hearing from everybody.”
 - » He once again suggested that the United States may strike Iran’s alleged nuclear site at Pickaxe Mountain, but also insisted that “we’re not seeing a lot of activities there.”
- On September 22, President Trump [hosted](#) a meeting with officials from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) while they were all in attendance for the UNGA in New York.
 - » During the meeting, President Trump acknowledged each country’s partnership with the United States and thanked them for helping secure the hostage release-ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas last October.

3. U.S., Israeli, and Arab Partner Operations

Iran

- Speaking on September 22 at the United Nations, President Trump [asserted](#) that Iran was “the bully of the Middle East, but they are the bully no more.” He also [stated](#) that Iran is “behaving badly—not because they are strong and confident, but because they are weak and desperate.”

- » Discussing the risk of Iran ever being “empowered to carry out large-scale terror attacks from behind a nuclear shield,” President Trump [stated](#), “after giving Iran every chance for a deal, I took action to ensure that neither the United States nor any nation in this hall would ever have to face such a nightmare.”
- » In his speech, President Trump [pushed](#) other countries to join forces with the United States in “enforcing the complete economic isolation of Iran until they stop their attacks on commercial shipping, relinquish their nuclear ambitions, and cease their support of terror.”
 - He added, “If we stand united, we will soon see a world free of the last 51-year menace of Iranian terror and oil prices will come plummeting down, even lower than they were at the start of the conflict.”
- » President Trump [stated](#) that, “As a result of Operation Epic Fury, all 159 ships of their navy are now lying at the bottom of the sea. Likewise, their air force is gone, their radar is gone, their anti-aircraft equipment is gone, their missiles and drone manufacturing capacity is almost gone.”
- » President Trump [reiterated](#) earlier claims that the United States has “more munitions than we could ever possibly even think of using, and we’re building them at levels that we have never done before.”
 - He [added](#), “We’ll be able to supply our allies [with weapons] at a much faster rate than we’re doing right now.”
 - On September 22, President Trump had [posted](#) on Truth Social that, “The cowards and traitors would love to say the United States is low on munitions. It’s not true. We have more munitions than we could ever possibly think of using, and are building them up now at levels we have never seen before.”

Yemen

- On September 22, Saudi-backed fighters in Yemen [seized](#) control of Mount Qarfan following a battle with Houthi fighters in the country’s western Taiz governorate.

4. Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea Shipping

- During his September 22 address at UNGA, President Trump [stated](#), “The United States Navy has recently escorted more than 1 billion barrels of oil out of the Strait of Hormuz, and more oil is flowing than at any point since the start of the war.”
- On September 22, Reuters [reported](#), citing Kpler data, that three vessels transited the Strait of Hormuz, down from four the previous day and below the 10-day average of 15 vessels. All three ships were exiting the Persian Gulf.
- On September 21, Saudi Arabia [loaded](#) approximately 12 million barrels of crude oil at their main Persian Gulf export terminals, indicating a major surge of Saudi oil exports through the Gulf rather than through its Red Sea ports on the other side of the country.
 - » This shift follows recent Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia’s East-West Pipeline. That pipeline transports crude oil to the Saudi port of Yanbu, which is then shipped out through the Red Sea.

5. Iranian and Proxy Operations

Maritime

- On September 23, the United Kingdom Trade Operations (UKMTO) Center [reported](#) that a cargo vessel transiting the Strait of Hormuz was struck by an unidentified projectile, sparking

a fire onboard and leaving the ship adrift. The vessel's crew was evacuated, and two casualties were reported.

Yemen

- On September 23, the Associated Press [reported](#), citing regional officials, that Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) advisors had helped direct the Houthis' recent offensive along Yemen's Red Sea coast, marking what the outlet described as Iran's most direct intervention on behalf of the Houthis since Yemen's civil war began in 2014.

6. Internal Iranian Dynamics

- According to Iran's IRGC-affiliated *Fars News*, Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Ahmad Zeraatkar [claimed](#) that about half of the production capacity damaged at the South Pars gas field has been restored.

7. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian and Proxy Officials

- On September 23, IRGC Ground Forces coordinating deputy commander Ahmad Akhavan [announced](#) that the Ground Forces will launch a "special plan" aimed at improving combat capabilities throughout the country.
 - » He also revealed that the Ground Forces had prepared plans for confronting American and Israeli forces and that Iran would deliver a "crushing and decisive response," if either country attacked.
- In response to President Trump's speech at the UNGA, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei [claimed](#) on September 23 that "the impression among diplomats and delegations from many countries here was that these remarks did not stem from strength, but from desperation... Threatening a country with military attack is an admission of the nature of the current U.S. ruling establishment."
- On September 23, Houthi military adviser Abed Mohammed al-Thawr [threatened](#), "if America dares to intervene militarily with its fleets or tries to take control of Bab el-Mandeb, it is a red line for them and anyone else ... we will fight over it."

8. International Response

- On September 23, a Mahan Air flight from Tehran [landed](#) in Guangzhou, China, despite U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent claiming earlier in the week that starting that day "all the Iranian airlines will be shut down around the world" because of U.S. sanctions on Iranian airlines. The flight was not listed on the Guangzhou Baiyun airport website.
 - » According to Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency, China [stated](#) it will continue to operate Iranian flights to China.
 - » On September 22, the first flights from Iran to Baghdad and Muscat were [canceled](#) due to U.S. sanctions.

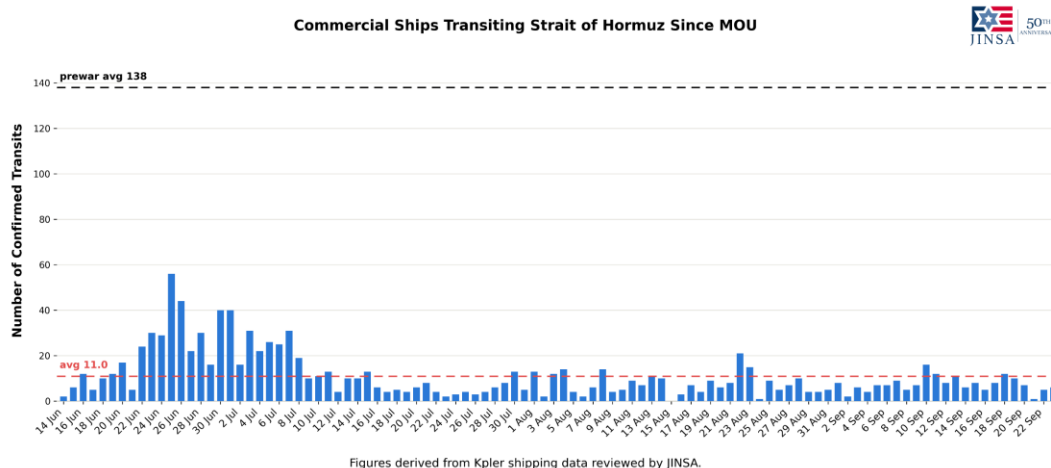
9. JINSA Resources

- VADM Jeff Trussler, USN (ret.) and Sarah Havdala, [The US Needs an Information-Warfare Strategy for Iran — And Beyond](#), September 21, 2026
- Jonah Brody, [The Houthis Close in on the Gulf's Oil Export Lifeline](#), September 17, 2026
- Sarah Havdala, [Iran in the Wake of Women, Life, Freedom](#), September 16, 2026
- Giran Ozcan, [The United States Cannot Afford to Abandon the Kurdistan Region](#), September 14, 2026

- Ari Cicurel and Jonah Brody, [All Is Not Quiet on the Houthi Front](#), September 11, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, [Why Iran Fears Israel, But Not America](#), September 9, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, and Blaise Misztal, [How to Win the Iran War](#), September 3, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, John Hannah, Blaise Misztal, and Jonathan Ruhe, [Shifting the Center of Gravity: Transforming the U.S.-Israel Security Partnership](#), August 18, 2026
- Gen Charles Wald, USAF (ret.), VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), and VADM John W. Miller, USN (ret.), [“U.S. Must Reopen the Strait of Hormuz,”](#) *The Washington Times*, August 3, 2026
- Yoni Tobin, [Not Bottlenecks, But Strategic Opportunities: Making Room for More U.S. Refueling Tankers in Israel](#), August 3, 2026

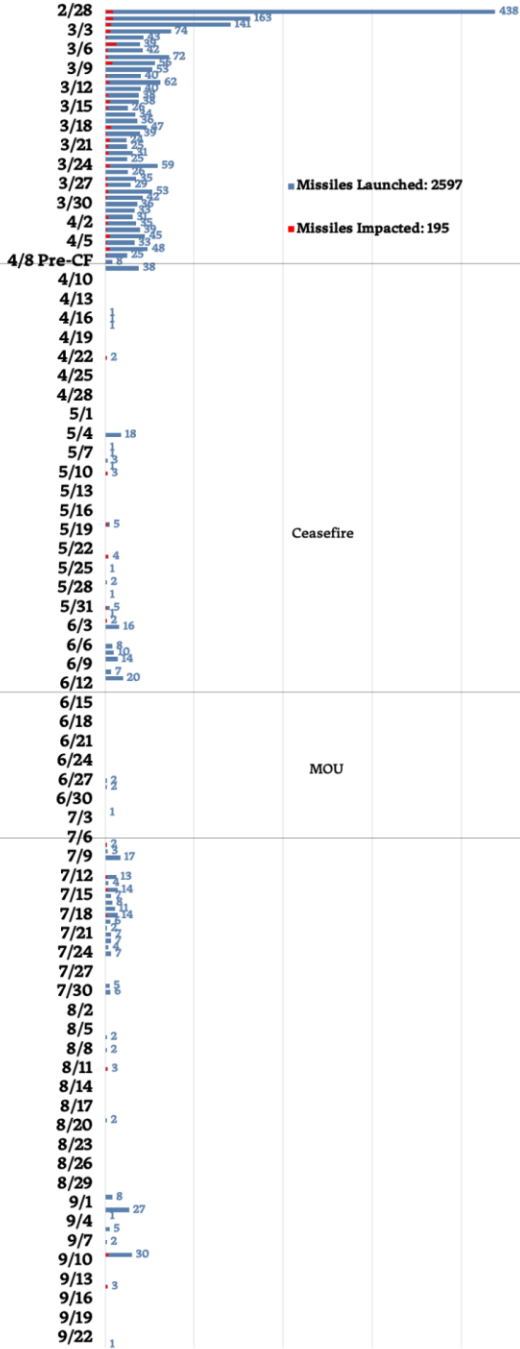
Estimated Casualties of Iran War Operations			JINSA
Country	Killed	Injured	Notes
United States	19	500+	1 missing; 10 seriously wounded; 100 wounded in July; 358+ returned to duty
Israel	67+	7,800+	Killed include 26 civilians and 41 troops killed fighting Hezbollah (40 soldiers, 1 contractor)
Iran	3,724+	26,580+	Includes 1,221+ military; Iran International reports 4,700+ security personnel killed
Azerbaijan	—	4	All civilians
Bahrain	3	46	Killed include a Moroccan contractor; injured include 5 Emirati soldiers
Iraq	127	Several	Includes 28 in Iraqi Kurdistan
Jordan	—	31+	
Kuwait	9	161+	Injured includes 90 soldiers
Lebanon	4,386	12,407	Figures do not distinguish Hezbollah operatives from civilians
Oman	3+	17+	
Qatar	7	23	Killed occurred in March 22 helicopter crash
Saudi Arabia	3	47	Killed include 1 Saudi national and 2 foreign nationals
Syria	4+	Several	
United Arab Emirates	12	230	
International Waters	22	Several	

Data compiled by JINSA from various sources.



Iranian Projectiles Fired During 2026 War

Iranian Missiles Launched Per Day



Iranian Drones Launched Per Day

