Iran War Update: November 19–20, 2026

Ari Cicurel
Associate Director of Foreign Policy

Yoni Tobin
Senior Policy Analyst

Jonah Brody
Policy Analyst

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 November 20 at 10:30 am ET.

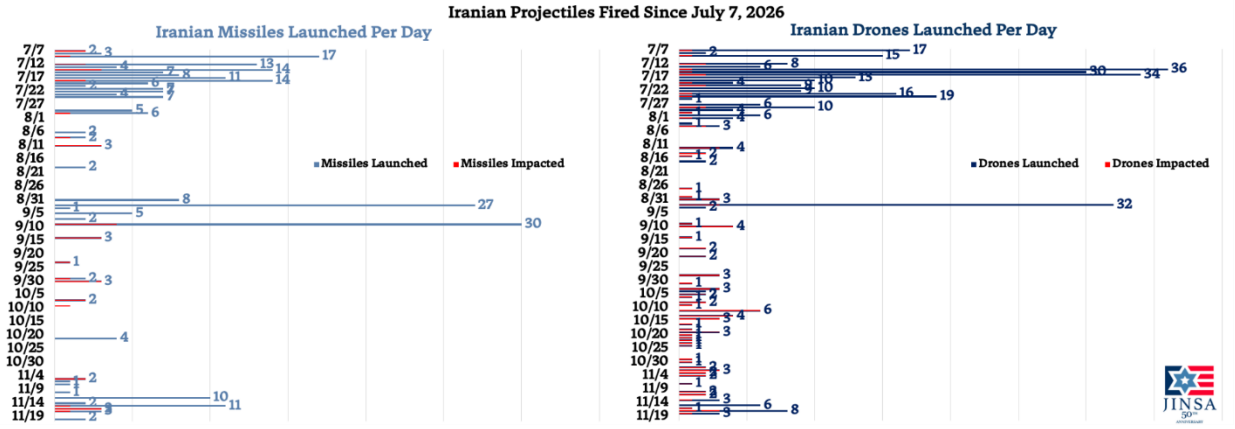
Iranian missiles and drones launched since July 7: **At least 677** (2 on November 19–20)

Brent Crude Oil Price: **$91.19 a barrel as of 9:00 am ET** (day range: $90.06–92.89)

1. Overview

- On November 20, CBS News reported that the United States and Israel are both considering new military action against Iran in the near term.
- President Trump told Barak Ravid of *Axios* on November 19 that he is "not rushing into a decision" regarding next steps on Iran, adding, "We will see what happens after the beginning of the year."
  - » That day, sources cited by Israel's Channel 12 said that the United States nearly conducted major strikes against Iran multiple times over the past month, but President Donald Trump cancelled the planned military action each time.
- President Trump claimed during a November 19 interview with Fox News that "Iran is looking at … biological weapons … and gas [weapons] … and other things."
  - » According to reporting in recent days from *Axios* and *The New York Times*, last week Mossad director Roman Gofman briefed senior U.S. officials about Israel's detection of Iranian chemical weapons advances in recent weeks, including instances of chemical weapons testing.
  - » Reuters also previously reported that Goffman had pushed for joint U.S.-Israel strikes against Iran during his meetings with U.S. officials.
- On November 19, Arthur Miller, the Pentagon's deputy comptroller, testified that the war with Iran had cost $48 billion, a roughly 26 percent increase from the Congressional Budget Office assessment on August 1.
  - » Miller added, "that number includes munitions, equipment replacement costs, and operational cost," but not damage to U.S. bases in the Middle East.
- On November 19, the Senate voted to reject a House-passed war powers resolution that aimed to restrict President Trump's authority to conduct military strikes on Iran. The vote—the first about the Iran war since the U.S. midterm elections—was 48-51, with three Republicans voting for the measure and one Democrat voting against it.

- On November 19, the USS *George Washington* aircraft carrier departed the Middle East after a four month deployment to the region. With the recent arrival of the USS *Theodore Roosevelt*, the United States currently has two aircraft carriers in the Middle East.
- Responding to a question during an interview with Newsmax on November 19 about how to get American troops home if Iran remains able to attack U.S. forces and partners, Israeli Ambassador to the United States Yechiel Leiter claimed, "you get American soldiers back here to the United States to their families when Iran is defeated."
  - » He added, "Trump, like Reagan, understands this is an evil empire that has to come down…. But once this regime comes down … the Houthis fall, Hamas falls, Hezbollah falls, Muslim Brotherhood falls…. We need a little bit more resilience to see it to the end."
- On November 18, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Admiral Brad Cooper met with IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir and Mossad director Roman Gofman in Israel.
  - » Cooper and Zamir also attended a joint assessment with senior commanders from both countries' militaries.



2. Diplomatic Engagement

Iran

- On November 19, the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany jointly accused Iran of "stonewalling" International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections, urging Tehran to restore access to nuclear facilities damaged by U.S. and Israeli strikes in June 2025.
  - » The four countries warned that the IAEA had lost track of Iran's previously verified stockpile of highly enriched uranium for nearly 18 months.

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

- On November 19, CNN reported that the National Security Agency's internal network outage has disrupted operations at a facility in Georgia that is critical to cyber and intelligence operations in the Middle East.
- On November 19, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a study indicating that the Department of Defense "does not have an overarching plan that links munitions production and funding to requirements."
- Israel has upgraded its David's Sling air and missile defense system to enable it to be capable of intercepting a "wider variety of ballistic threats and withstand weeks of sustained attacks," according to *Bloomberg* reporting citing an Israeli defense official.

Iran

- Recent reports indicate that the United States and Israel, and potentially Arab partners, are making preparations for resumed strikes on Iran.

  - » On November 20, CBS News reported that Israeli leaders are concerned by how quickly Iran is rebuilding its missiles and moving nuclear and conventional assets underground, adding to the urgency of strikes.
    - – The outlet further reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu conducted national security briefings with his political rivals this week, an unusual move that could indicate imminent Israeli strikes against Iran.
  - » On November 19, the Israeli outlet *i24 News* quoted a senior Israeli defense official as saying, "we are approaching a renewed confrontation with Iran," while an American official told the outlet that "things are starting to heat up again."
  - » On November 19, Israel's *Walla News* reported that Israeli defense leaders believe that if war with Iran resumes, Arab countries are expected to participate as part of a "broad Middle East military coalition."
- On November 20, US. Treasury officials met with Singaporean and Malaysian officials to warn them of risks if they do not comply with U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Iraq

- On November 19, Iraq announced that government forces would deploy to Jurf al-Shakher, a stronghold of the Iran-backed Kataib Hezbollah militia south of Baghdad, beginning November 20, following the government's accusations that the group had operated an oil smuggling network in the area.
  - » Iraqi officials announced the establishment of a new military command headquarters in Jurf al-Shakher overseeing army, police, energy security, and Popular Mobilization Forces units.

Lebanon

- On November 20, *The Washington Post* reported that European countries are planning to create a new peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon led by European Union (EU) countries to replace the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), whose mandate expires later this year.
  - » The plan, which is being crafted by France, reportedly has encountered Israeli opposition but is backed by Lebanon's central government.
- On November 19, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted airstrikes against an underground Hezbollah missile production and weapons storage facility near Janta in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley, targeting its entrances after reportedly detecting Hezbollah operatives attempting to rehabilitate the site.
- In a separate November 19 incident, Lebanese media reported that Israeli airstrikes targeted the al-Sha'ra area of eastern Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. The IDF did not immediately comment on the reported strikes.

Yemen

- On November 20, the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthis announced that it had "targeted operational capabilities at Hodeidah port that were used in smuggling operations and the transport of weapons and ballistic missiles."
  - » Earlier that day, the Saudi-led coalition warned civilians to evacuate Yemen's Hodeida port for their safety, without specifying whether an attack on the port was imminent.
- On November 19, Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman met with CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper in Riyadh to discuss defense cooperation and regional security amid escalating hostilities between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis.

4. Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea Shipping

- On November 19, Israel's *i24 News* reported, citing a senior U.S. official, that approximately 28 million barrels of crude oil passed through the Strait of Hormuz that day, a single-day high since the war began in February and a volume exceeding even pre-war daily oil flows through the Strait.

5. Iranian and Proxy Operations

- On November 18, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Jay Clayton testified that Iranian threats to Americans have "substantially increased," both outside the United States and in the U.S. homeland. He also noted that "there are a suite of threats that are that we refer to as, you know, civilian mass destruction threats."

Maritime

- According to a senior U.S. official who spoke with Israel's *i24 News*, Iran has begun regularly using cruise missiles, rather than drones, to target commercial ships.
- On November 20, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Center reported that a bulk carrier traveling eastbound through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), approximately 95 nautical miles southwest of Al Mukalla, Yemen, was approached by a skiff carrying six armed individuals who fired four shots at the vessel.
  - » The ship's armed security team returned warning shots, prompting the skiff to withdraw. No injuries or damage were reported.
- On November 18, UKMTO reported that a tanker transiting outbound through the Strait of Hormuz was struck by an unidentified projectile in its engine room approximately six nautical miles north of Khasab, Oman. All crew members were reported safe, while the extent of vessel damage and potential environmental impact remained unknown.

Outside the Middle East

- On November 20, a judge determined that two men arrested by British authorities for plotting an attack on behalf of Iran against the U.K.'s Fairfield Air Force Base will stand trial in November 2027.
- Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Hezbollah directed a sophisticated plot to attack the Israeli embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, which was recently thwarted, *Iran International* reported on November 17. The plot was years in the making and involved at least six different Thai nationals being recruited to stage the attack, per Western intelligence officials cited by *Iran International*.

Saudi Arabia

- On November 19, the Saudi-led coalition reported intercepting Houthi missiles targeting Riyadh and southern Saudi Arabia and confirmed that debris from an attack damaged a tower housing the Public Investment Fund in Riyadh's financial district. No casualties were reported.
  - » Saudi aircraft also conducted airstrikes against the Houthi-controlled Yemeni capital Sanaa, according to Houthi-run media.
- On November 18, the Houthis claimed to have launched a large number of cruise missiles targeting King Khalid International Airport and the King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh, according to Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree. Saudi authorities did not immediately confirm the attacks.

6. Internal Iranian Dynamics

- Israel's Channel 12 reported on November 19 that Iran's nuclear program is active and advancing, as are its chemical and biological warfare programs, according to unnamed high-ranking Western officials.

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

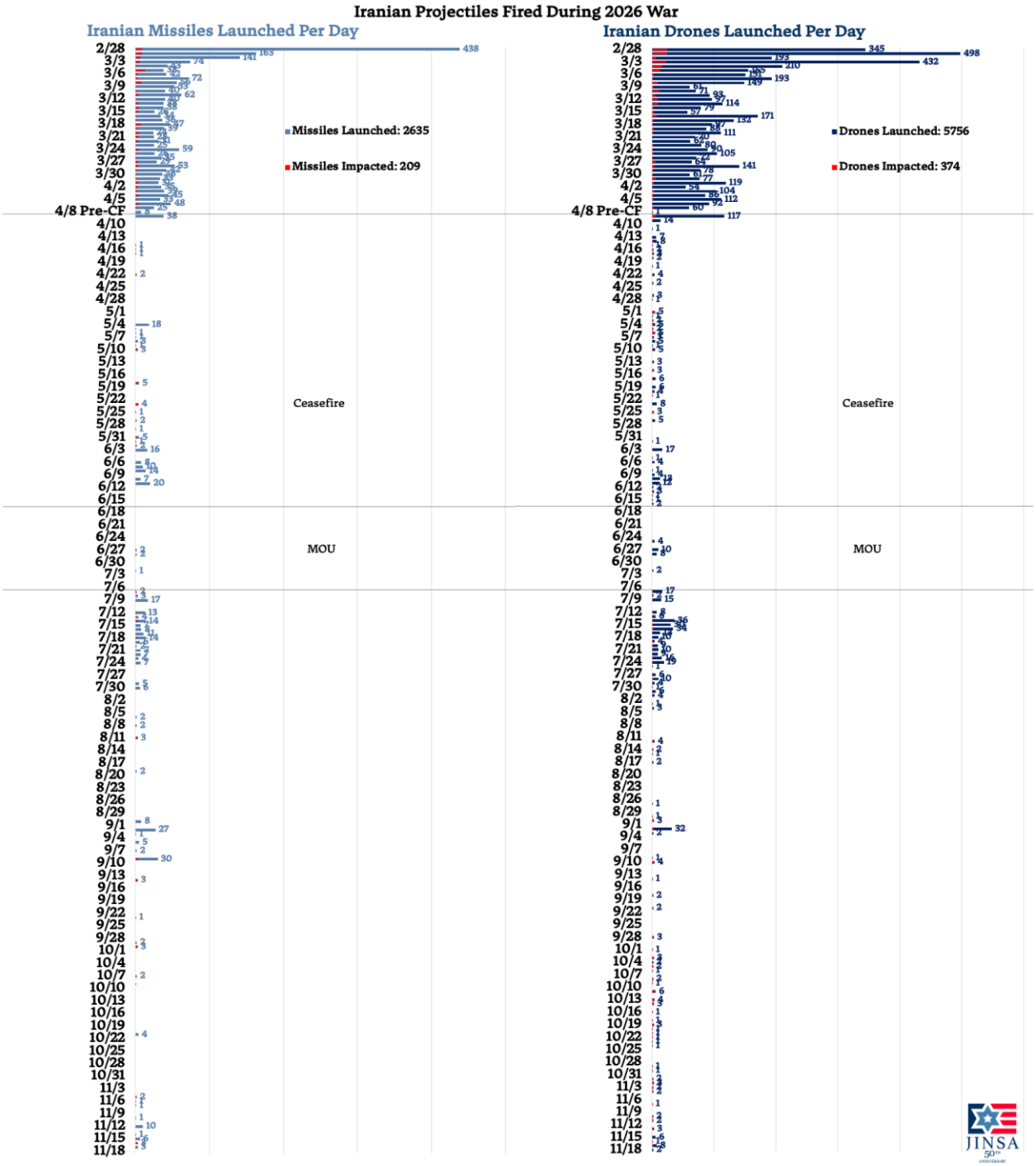
- On November 20, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi mocked Israeli Ambassador to the United States Yechiel Leiter's assertion that American troops could return home once Iran was defeated, stating, "We did not know that the Israeli Ambassador to Washington was the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Military."
- On November 20, Iranian lawmaker Amir Hayat-Moqaddam, a member of parliament's National Security Commission, said "a pre-emptive attack on American warships is an absolute necessity" to break the military and diplomatic deadlock between Tehran and Washington.
- On November 20, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree warned that "the port of Jeddah and all enemy Saudi ports along the Red Sea coast will be targets" if the Saudi-led coalition attacked Yemen's Hodeida port.
- On November 19, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei dismissed reports that Iran was developing chemical or biological weapons as "fraudulent," accusing Washington of manufacturing a pretext for further military action.

8. International Response

- On November 19, International Energy Agency (IEA) Executive Director Fatih Birol warned that the Iran war and shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz had created the "largest threat to energy security in history," surpassing the oil shocks of the 1970s and potentially accelerating a global shift toward nuclear power and electrification.

9. JINSA Resources

- LTG Karen Gibson, USA (ret.), LtGen Sam Mundy, USMC (ret.), and MajGen Robert Sofge, USMC (ret.), *Closing Iran's Second Front: A U.S. Strategy for the Houthi Threat*, November 17, 2026
- Jonah Brody, *To Stop Iran's Rearmament, Trump Must Confront Russia and China*, November 16, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe, "How the Iran War Exposes Cracks in America's Foundation," *The Dispatch*, November 13, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, and Blaise Misztal, "President Trump: Forget the Midterms and Finish the Job in Iran," *The Hill*, November 7, 2026
- Hussein Aboubakr Mansour, *The Yemen–Horn of Africa Corridor: Houthi Expansion and the Gap in American Red Sea Strategy*, October 22, 2026
- Ari Cicurel, *Iran Escalates Before U.S. Midterm Elections*, October 19, 2026
- LtGen Michael Groen, USMC (ret.) and Sarah Havdala, "Iranian Cyber Operations," *RealClearDefense*, October 17, 2026
- John Hannah and Rena Gabber, "Iran 'Blew the Hell Out of Bahrain' — And Trump's Gulf Strategy With It," *The Washington Examiner*, October 12, 2026
- Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.), LTG Karen Gibson, USA (ret.), LtGen Sam Mundy, USMC (ret.), and MajGen Robert Sofge, USMC (ret.), "How to Keep the Houthis Out of the Red Sea," *The National Interest*, October 5, 2026


Iranian Projectiles Fired During 2026 War
Iranian Missiles Launched Per Day
Missiles Launched: 2635
Missiles Impacted: 209
Ceasefire
MOU
Iranian Drones Launched Per Day
Drones Launched: 5756
Drones Impacted: 374
Ceasefire
MOU
JINSA