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Iran

Digest

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IRGC carries out missile strikes against targets in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan

On 16 January, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) carried out a series of missile and drone strikes against targets in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan. The Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force, [Amir Ali Hajizadeh](#) noted that “four Kheibar Shekan rockets (missiles) were launched from southern Khuzestan at ISIS's headquarters in Idlib, and an additional four rockets were fired from Kermanshah, along with seven rockets from East Azerbaijan, targeting the Zionist headquarters in Erbil.” Iranian military leaders have claimed that advanced versions of long-range precision strike Kheibar Shekan (castle buster), named after Jewish fortress conquered by Muslim armies in the beginning of Islam, can reach Israel undetected by its defense system. In Pakistan targets were two [bases of Jaish ul-Adl](#), in border town of Panjgur in Baluchistan. Jaish-ul-Adl, an extremist Salafist terror group, had claimed responsibility for attacking a police station in Rask County in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan province on 15 December 2023, killing eleven policemen. Iranian-state media described the strikes as ‘anti-terrorist operations’ and Iranian Foreign Ministry called them as part of ‘just punishment’ against perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Kerman. On 18 January Pakistan made retaliatory air strikes against seven ‘terrorist hide-outs’ of Pakistani-origin Baloch separatists in Iran's Sistan and Balochistan. The very next day Foreign Ministers of the two countries had a phone call where they stressed bilateral cooperation in combating terrorism and border security. Subsequently, on 29 January, Iranian Foreign Minister, Hossein [Abdollahian visited Islamabad](#), where the two sides agreed to “establish a high-level constructive mechanism at the level of foreign ministers, which would “meet alternatively in both Iran and Pakistan

regularly to oversee the progress that is being made in various areas of cooperation.”

Iran's Special Envoy on Afghanistan attends Regional Conference in Kabul

On 29 January, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan attended the first meeting of a regional contact committee working group entitled “Afghanistan's Regional Cooperation Initiative” held in Kabul. Calling on Taliban authorities to take a region-based approach to security, Qomi said the “objective should be based on the security of Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries to prepare a collective plan against terrorist organisations, which guarantees common interests as well.” Qomi argued that the committee should strive for consensus on dealing with the “[long-standing threats](#)” mainly originating from more than two decades of the US occupation of the country,” namely the issues of cultivation, processing and trafficking of traditional and industrial drugs, human trafficking, displacement and unsheltered people, combatting roots of extremism and upholding equal rights, including those in education and employment, for various walks of life regardless of their gender, race, language, and religion. Earlier on 15 January, Kazemi Qomi had travelled to Islamabad, where he held talks with his Pakistani counterpart [Asif Ali Khan Durrani](#) and Pakistani Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on creating regional initiatives centred on Afghanistan's neighbours. Notably, in the last meeting of [Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan](#) held in Kazan, Russia in December 2023, Iran had made a proposal for strengthening regional cooperation on Afghanistan by establishing a regional contact group.

President Raisi visits Turkiye

On 24 January, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi made a one-day visit to Turkiye, where he held talks with Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdoğan focussing on regional repercussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and strengthening bilateral economic ties. In their [joint press conference](#), Raisi stated that both countries “agree on supporting Palestine, the Islamic resistance, the realisation of the rights of the Palestinian people, lifting the 75-year occupation of the occupiers and they believe that the continuation of the crime will neither legitimise nor bring ownership.” Erdogan noted that the ‘two leaders agreed on the need to contain the war on Gaza and to step up their fight against terrorism.’ He said that “we agreed on the importance of avoiding steps that would further threaten the security and stability of our region.” The two leaders also co-chaired the 8th meeting of the Supreme Council of Iran-Türkiye Cooperation. Erdogan noted that the two sides have set a target of US\$30 billion of annual trade from current US\$9.5 of non-oil trade, and attach special importance to the development of [infrastructure in the border regions](#), especially modernisation of existing border gates and opening new border crossings with Iran. They agreed to set-up a [free trade zone](#) in the Iranian city of Khoy, and another agreement was signed connecting power grids by linking of the 400-kilovolt BtB HVDC line from Khoy to Van in Türkiye.

Prime Minister of Niger visits Iran

On 24 January, Prime Minister of Niger Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine visited Iran. Zaine was appointed Prime Minister and Minister of Finance by Niger's military junta in August 2023 a month after successful coup, where military leaders rallied people around demanding withdrawal of the French troops from the country. In his meeting with Lamine Zeine, [President Raisi](#) appreciated Niger's efforts in the path of independence and freedom, as he argued that “the United States and Western countries have a disastrous record of plundering other countries' resources and assets, while proclaiming

commitment to human rights.” Iran's [First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber](#) in a joint press conference with Lamine Zeine noted that Niger had opened an embassy in Tehran, and that Iran is ready to cooperate in sharing technical and engineering services in energy and infrastructure development with Niger. Earlier in October 2023, [Niger's Foreign Minister](#) Bakary Yaou Sangare had visited Tehran with the aim of deepening cooperation with Iran.

Guardian Council rejects Hassan Rouhani's nomination for Assembly of Experts

Former Iranian President Hassan Rohani's nomination for the election to the Assembly of Experts was rejected by the Guardian Council responsible for vetting of candidates in all elections in the country. The Assembly consists of 88 Islamic jurists and is responsible for electing, supervising, and dismissing the Supreme Leader, It is scheduled for a vote together with parliament elections on 1 March. Rouhani, belonging to moderate faction, had been a member of the Assembly for 24 years.

Simorgh Satellite Launching Vehicle successfully placed three satellites in space

On 28 January, [Simorgh](#), a satellite carrier with two stages of liquid fuel built by the Iranian Ministry of Defense successfully placed three satellites including Mahda research satellite, and Keyhan-2 and Hatef-1 nanosatellites into low earth orbit. In 2009, Iran had successfully used Safir rocket to place a satellite in the low earth orbit, but Simorgh (Safir 2) [failed](#) to reach required speed five times between 2017 and December 2021. Earlier on 20 January, a research satellite was launched and placed in the 750-km orbit above the Earth's surface using the [Qaem-100](#) satellite carrier built by the Aerospace Unit of the IRGC. The launch was aimed to verify the performance of Qaem 100, which is equipped with an engine working on solid fuel and is designed for launches at higher orbits.