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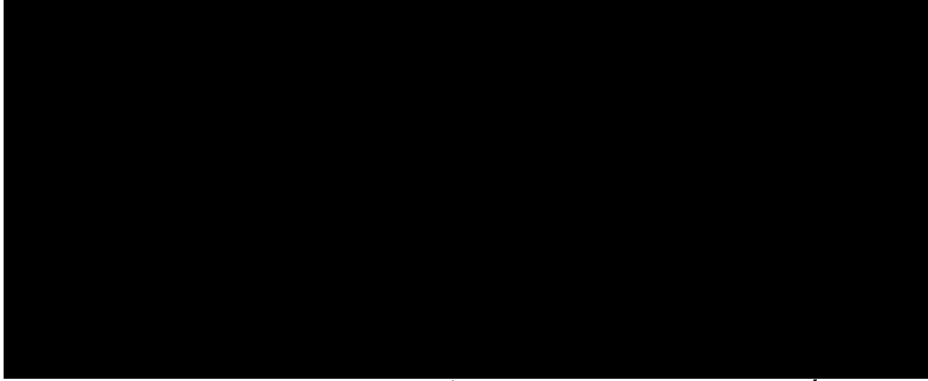
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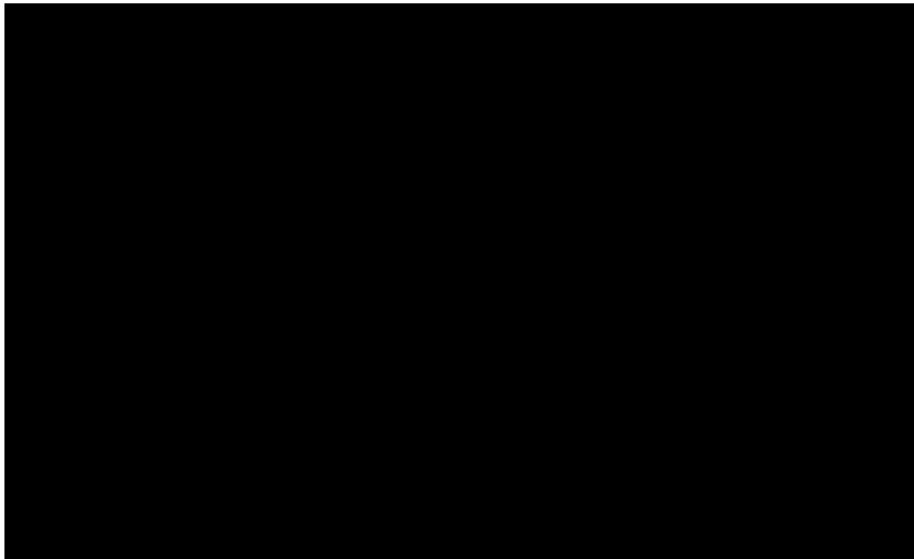
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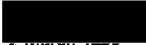
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Iran-Iraq: Trends in Ship Attacks



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IRAN-IRAQ:

Trends in Ship Attacks

The number of ship attacks in the Persian Gulf fell markedly last month, with Iran and Iraq each attacking six ships. There were 17 ship attacks in January and 37 in December. The last half of February was unusually calm; no ship was attacked after an Iraqi attack on a tanker on the 15th. Baghdad continued to fly two or three ship-attack missions per day throughout the month, but struck no targets. [Redacted]

Tehran attempted no ship attacks after 15 February but kept a high level of defensive fighter patrols and kept air defense forces on alert in response to Iraqi aircraft flying over the Gulf. On 9 February, Iran shot down an Iraqi fighter on a ship-attack mission.
[Redacted]

Comment: The Iraqi Air Force's failure to hit Iranian shipping after midmonth can be attributed to intermittent bad weather; efforts to avoid neutral ships, both commercial and military; mechanical difficulties; and concern over Iranian patrols. Baghdad continues to fly several missions each day and a strike is possible at any time [Redacted]

Tehran generally has adhered to its policy of responding to Iraqi attacks in the Gulf rather than initiating ship attacks. It appears content to live with the reduced number of attacks in part because it undercuts US arguments for a UN arms embargo against Tehran. Nonetheless, Tehran will respond in kind to successful Iraqi attacks in the future. [Redacted]

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