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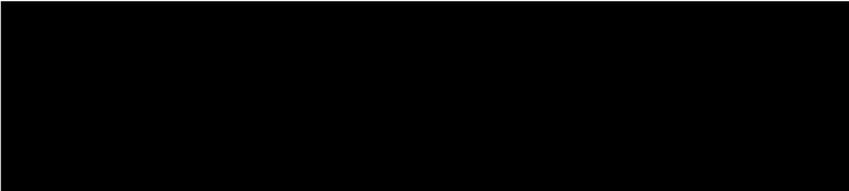
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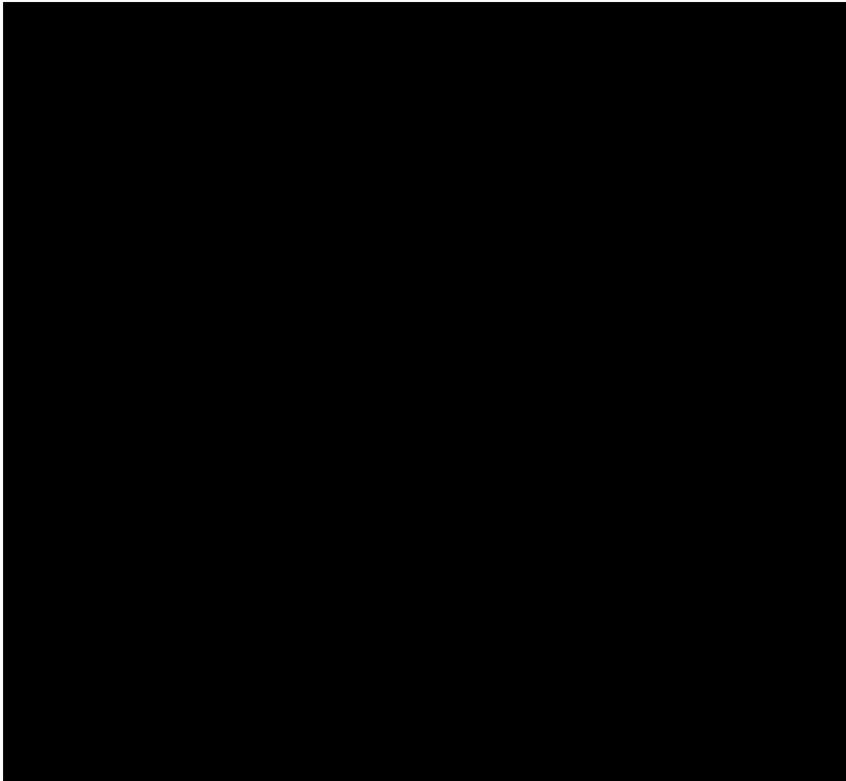
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Persian Gulf: The Missile War



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PERSIAN GULF: The Missile War

Iraq launched at least three missiles yesterday—two at Tehran and one at Qom—and Iran retaliated by hitting the outskirts of Baghdad with at least three Scud missiles.

Iraq has now launched at least 27 missiles—24 toward Tehran and three at Qom—and Iran has launched at least 10, all toward Baghdad.

Comment: Iraq's missile campaign seems intended to deter Iranian missile attacks on Baghdad and to satisfy Iraqi popular demands for retribution. In October, Iraqi Foreign Minister Aziz told that Iraqi citizens were demanding retaliation for an Iranian missile attack on a Baghdad school that killed 30 children. Aziz indicated he opposed a "war of the cities," but another senior Iraqi official suggested to US officials that Iraq was exploring its options and had sufficient numbers of long-range missiles to attack Tehran. Iran's missile attacks on Baghdad early Monday were its first since October.

Baghdad probably delayed using its long-range missiles until it could respond massively to an Iranian attack. It hopes its strikes will damage Iranian morale and deter future attacks. Iraq may also calculate that its missile attacks will provoke Iran into launching a ground offensive prematurely. Tehran's failure to launch a major ground offensive this year and Iraqi military preparations probably have helped build up Baghdad's confidence that it can defeat an Iranian offensive.

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