



Escalation in the Gulf: Saudi Arabia breaks the hesitation and bombs, while China supplies weapons to Tehran

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The Middle Eastern fault line undergoes a dramatic and unpredictable twist. While international diplomacy struggles to keep up with global dossiers – with U.S. President Donald Trump engaged in Washington in talks with Volodymyr Zelensky and Benjamin Netanyahu –, the **Gulf War dangerously expands its boundaries**. For the first time since the beginning of the conflict, **Saudi Arabia has broken its traditional line of caution**, emerging as a direct belligerent and striking, in a joint operation with the United States, pro-Iranian militias in Iraqi territory.

An epochal turning point that coincides with an increasingly exposed military axis: according to intelligence and international press sources, **China is preparing to supply Iran with hundreds of portable anti-aircraft missile launchers (MANPADS)**, openly challenging

Washington's warnings.

The raids in Iraq and Iran's missile response: Jordan hit

The escalation of the crisis exploded in the early hours of the night. The United States Central Command and the Riyadh government confirmed a combined air raid in eastern Iraq. The action came as a reaction to over thirty drone attacks conducted in the previous seventy-two hours by Iraqi Shiite militias against vital Saudi oil facilities. The provisional toll reports **about twenty pro-Iranian fighters killed**.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry justified the military action by emphasizing that the Kingdom does not seek escalation but will not hesitate to defend its energy security. A radical change of posture that shatters years of political balancing and shadow attacks. Tehran's reaction was not long in coming: the Revolutionary Guards responded by launching a salvo of missiles against U.S. military targets in neighboring **Jordan**, where the local army confirmed the interception and downing of five ballistic carriers. At the same time, Iranian forces hit three tankers in the Strait of Hormuz deemed on an "illegal" route.



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The Beijing factor: a 70 million missile deal between Beijing and Tehran

The strategic framework is further inflamed by the economic-military axis with China. In the same heated hours of the conflict, rumors confirmed by intelligence sources and Reuters revealed a contract worth between **60 and 70 million dollars**, through which **China will send**

Iran between 300 and 400 portable anti-aircraft missile launchers (models QW-12 and FN-16).

The supply, channeled through intermediaries based in Hong Kong, aims to fill the gaps in Tehran's short-range air defense. Despite formal denials by the Chinese Foreign Ministry and Donald Trump's warnings that Beijing would face "big problems" in case of military support to the Pasdaran, the operation confirms the logistical and technological support that the People's Republic continues to provide to Iran to bolster its defenses.

The Yemeni front and diplomatic repercussions

The geopolitical pincer around Saudi Arabia also tightens to the south. From Yemen, the stronghold of the Houthi Shiite insurgents, came the claim of shooting down another Saudi reconnaissance drone (a Karayel model aircraft) in the skies of the Saada province. This is the third unmanned aircraft shot down in a few days, demonstrating how the Yemeni scenario and the control of the strategic maritime landing of Bab al-Mandeb remain a thorn in Riyadh's side.

The diplomatic repercussions are immediate and severe:

- **Iraq:** The Baghdad government condemned the joint U.S.-Saudi operation on its national territory, leading to the cancellation of the Iraqi prime minister's official visit to Riyadh.
- **Europe and Italy:** In Rome, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani received the Saudi counterpart, reaffirming the firm "closeness to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries for the attacks they suffer from Iran" and confirming the strategic centrality of the Kingdom in euro-Asian connectivity projects like the IMEC corridor.

While the U.S. security umbrella — ranging from advanced fighters to civilian nuclear agreements — pushes Riyadh into the fray, it remains to be seen whether the alliance with Washington will be enough to protect the Kingdom from a total and multidimensional conflict fueled by Asian arms flows.