Explosive drone from Yemen hits Tel Aviv apartment, killing man, wounding others

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An explosive-laden drone launched by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen struck an apartment building in central Tel Aviv in the pre-dawn hours of Friday morning, killing an Israeli man and wounding several others.

According to an initial investigation carried out by the Israeli Air Force, the unmanned aerial vehicle had been identified, but due to a human error, it was not engaged by air defenses.

As no action was taken against the identified target — later confirmed to be a large long-range attack drone — no warning sirens had sounded.

The drone directly impacted an apartment building in Tel Aviv at 3:12 a.m. After reaching Israel from Yemen, the drone made its way to Tel Aviv from the direction of the sea, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said in a press conference.

The drone, identified by the IDF as an Iranian-made Samad-3 which had been modified to have an extended range, had flown to the country for several hours at a low altitude, according to the probe.

A man in his 50s was killed by shrapnel from the explosion, Magen David Adom said. According to the ambulance service, the man was found lifeless in a building.

The victim was later named as Yevgeny Ferder. According to Hebrew media reports, he moved to Israel from Belarus two years ago with the start of the Russia-Ukraine war.

MDA also said eight people were taken to local hospitals, four of whom were wounded by shrapnel or the shock waves from the blast. The other four are being treated for acute anxiety.

The impact site was adjacent to several hotels and the United States’ Tel Aviv Embassy Branch Office. The Israeli military, as of Friday morning, had no intelligence indicating that the drone attack was aimed at the embassy building.

Many of the hotels in the area are currently housing displaced Israelis who have had to leave their homes on the northern and southern borders amid the ongoing war.

A man who lives near the impact site said that the massive blast came out of nowhere.

“I went to bed and suddenly I heard an explosion like I’ve never heard before. I thought maybe I hadn’t heard the sirens,” the man, named as Aviel, told the Kan public broadcaster. “After seven months serving in the reserves, I thought we had left the country in a better state. The whole building is covered in dust and things fell on us in the apartment”

A video filmed by a beachgoer showed the buzzing explosive-laden drone flying at a low altitude into Tel Aviv from the direction of the sea, flying by the US embassy compound, before impacting an apartment building.

Other surveillance camera footage also showed the impact.

The IAF believed the drone came from Yemen, Hagari said in his press conference. The Houthis in Yemen took responsibility for the attack earlier in the day.

Yemen’s Houthis’ military spokesperson said the group attacked Tel Aviv with a drone and would continue to target Israel in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza war.

The spokesman said that Tel Aviv will continue to be a primary target for the terror group “within the range of our weapons.”

The group claimed it had launched a drone that could bypass radar detection systems.

Meanwhile, according to the IAF, a US Central Command announcement on Friday describing Houthi missiles and drones being destroyed, referred to incidents on Thursday morning and was not directly related to the overnight attack.

Also overnight, one drone heading toward Israel from the eastern direction, likely originating from Iraq, was shot down by fighter jets outside of Israeli airspace, according to the IAF.

And on Friday morning, a suspected drone that entered Israeli airspace from Lebanon was shot down by air defenses, the Israel Defense Forces said. Sirens had sounded in the Galilee over fears of falling shrapnel.

**‘Shouldn’t have happened’**

The IAF said the incident in Tel Aviv “shouldn’t have happened” and it took full responsibility for the failure that led to the deadly attack.

In a statement, the IDF said the attack was under “thorough investigation.”

The military also said the IAF would increase patrols by fighter jets “to defend Israeli skies”

“There is no change in the Home Front Command’s orders,” it added.

Hagari said the military was to hold assessments on the attack in the coming days to understand what it needs to adjust to better defend, and “what the required offensive response will be against those who threaten Israel.”

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, meanwhile, said Israel would respond.

“The defense establishment is working to immediately strengthen all defense systems, and will settle the score with anyone who harms the State of Israel or directs terror against it,” he said in remarks provided by his office following an assessment held with IDF officials on the Houthi drone attack.

Gallant met with IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, head of the Operations Directorate Maj. Gen. Oded Basiuk, head of the Intelligence Directorate Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva, the Israeli Air Force’s chief of staff Brig. Gen. Omer Tischler, and the head of the Intelligence Directorate’s research division, Brig. Gen. Ofir Mizrahi Rosen.

Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai said in a statement that the city was “moving to a higher state of alert” following the attack.

“The war is still here, and it is difficult and painful,” Huldai added. “We are prepared for developments if there are any,” he said, calling on the public to follow all instructions.

**Numerous Houthi attacks in past months**

Yemen’s Houthis have fired dozens of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones at Israel — mostly toward the southernmost city of Eilat —  in solidarity with the Gaza Strip, where Israel is battling Hamas terrorists.

The vast majority of the Iran-backed group’s projectiles have been intercepted by US forces stationed in the Red Sea and Israeli air defenses and fighter jets, or missed their target. Previously, only one Houthi projectile, [a cruise missile](https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-first-idf-confirms-houthi-cruise-missile-hit-open-area-near-eilat-on-monday/), struck Israel, hitting an open area near Eilat in March.

In an apparent policy, Israel has so far not responded to any of the Houthi attacks.

The Iran-backed Houthis, who seized Yemen’s capital Sanaa in 2014 and control large swaths of the country, are “part of the axis of resistance” against Israel along with Hamas — which is also sponsored by Tehran.

Houthi rebels have expressed support for the Palestinians and threatened Israel amid the Israel-Hamas war. The Iranian-backed group’s slogan is “Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse the Jews, Victory to Islam.”

In the Red Sea, the Houthis have fired on commercial and military ships dozens of times since November.

The Houthis say they are targeting ships over Israel’s offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for global trade between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

Other Iran-backed groups, in Iraq and Syria, have also claimed to have launched dozens of drones and cruise missiles at Israel during the ongoing war sparked by Hamas’s devastating October 7 terror onslaught, while Lebanon’s Hezbollah has attacked communities and IDF positions in northern Israel on a near-daily basis.

Iran itself also carried out an unprecedented attack on Israel in April with hundreds of drones and missiles.