

# Iran's Lengthening Cyber Shadow

by [Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](/experts/michael-eisenstadt)

Jul 28, 2016

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](/experts/michael-eisenstadt)

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Senior Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program.

---



## In-Depth Reports

Cyber is emerging as Iran's weapon of choice for dealing with domestic opponents and foreign adversaries. Accordingly, Washington needs to better understand the dynamics governing cyber deterrence and escalation vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic.

In this Research Note, military expert Michael Eisenstadt explains why Tehran has come to rely increasingly on cyber in its interactions with foreign adversaries: It offers options not provided by the other legs of its deterrent/warfighting triad, and with far fewer risks. Cyber can be used in peacetime, since norms have not been established that would define cyberspying or cyberattacks as activities that may justify a military response. And because it may be difficult to attribute responsibility for an attack on a timely basis, and in a manner that would be convincing to American and foreign publics (since cyber forensics do not rely on physical evidence in the traditional sense), cyber holds special appeal for Tehran.

Finally, cyber allows Tehran to strike at adversaries and to project power globally, instantaneously, and on a sustained basis, in ways it cannot in the physical domain.

## THE AUTHOR

[Michael Eisenstadt \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/eisenstadt-michael\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/eisenstadt-michael) directs the [Military and Security Studies Program \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/about/research-programs/military-and-security-studies-program\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/about/research-programs/military-and-security-studies-program) at The Washington Institute. A specialist in Persian Gulf and Arab-Israeli security affairs, he has published widely on irregular and conventional warfare and nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East. Previously, he worked as a military analyst with the U.S. government and served for twenty-six years as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve. ❖

---

## RECOMMENDED

---



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,  
Amir al-Kaabi,  
Hamdi Malik

(/policy-analysis/tracking-anti-us-strikes-iraq-and-syria-during-gaza-crisis)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## Is Kataib Hezbollah Behind the Saraya al-Ashtar Claimed Attack on Israel?

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,  
Amir al-Kaabi,  
Hamdi Malik

(/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtar-claimed-attack-israel)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## Nuclear Agency Chief Visits Iran: Expectations and Next Steps

May 3, 2024



Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/nuclear-agency-chief-visits-iran-expectations-and-next-steps)

### TOPICS

Military & Security (/policy-analysis/military-security)

Terrorism (/policy-analysis/terrorism)

### REGIONS & COUNTRIES

