

Iran Update



**Alexandra Braverman, Kelly Campa, Johanna Moore,
Katherine Wells, and Nicholas Carl**

Information Cutoff: June 21, 2024, 2:00 pm ET

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events. Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

Iranian presidential candidates discussed government management and service provision during the second debate for the upcoming election.[1] The debate occurred on June 20. The candidates spoke in generalities without describing substantive policies to address domestic issues for much of the debate. Below are the key takeaways from what the three presumed frontrunners said in the debate.

- **Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf (pragmatic hardliner):** Ghalibaf presented the most discrete policy positions among the frontrunners. Ghalibaf reiterated readiness to negotiate with the West in order to secure relief from international sanctions.[2] He discussed increasing wages to match inflation and launching a “multi-layered” social security insurance program.[3] Ghalibaf also reiterated support for foreign currency investment in Iran.

Ghalibaf separately advocated for building a border wall dividing Iran from Afghanistan and Pakistan.[4]

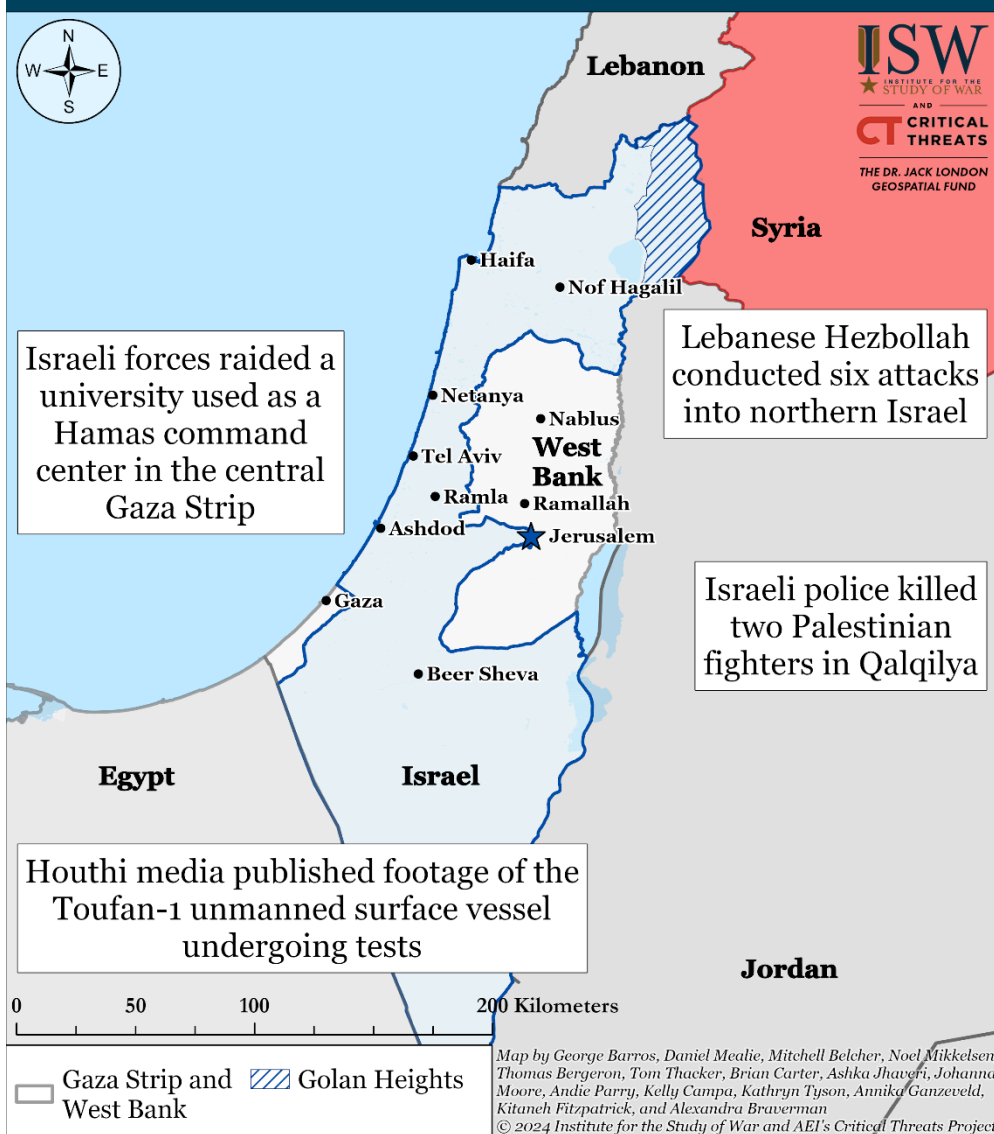
- **Saeed Jalili (ultraconservative hardliner):** Jalili discussed resolving domestic issues but downplayed the importance of external economic interaction. Jalili discussed increasing food subsidies, managing energy consumption, and preventing brain drain.[5] Jalili also hesitated to endorse negotiations with the West and dismissed the need for Iran to adhere to international anti-corruption and transparency standards. Jalili separately criticized the Iranian healthcare system.
- **Masoud Pezeshkian (reformist):** Pezeshkian emphasizes his subordination to the supreme leader, as he has done repeatedly throughout his campaign.[6] His rhetoric reaffirms that, if elected, he would be constrained by whatever political boundaries the supreme leader sets just as every Iranian president is. Pezeshkian expressed support for loans and public works projects for rural communities. He also emphasized the importance of countering corruption and promoting education.[7]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran:** Iranian presidential candidates discussed government management and service provision during the second debate for the upcoming election. The candidates spoke in generalities without describing substantive policies to address domestic issues for much of the debate.
- **Gaza Strip:** Israeli forces continued clearing operations in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. Palestinian fighters continued attacking Israeli forces throughout the area.
- **West Bank:** Israeli police located and disarmed an IED planted under a car in Lod—an Israeli city around five miles from the Israel-West Bank border.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese Hezbollah conducted six attacks into northern Israel, including with one-way attack drones.
- **Yemen:** The United States intercepted four Houthi unmanned surface vessels and two unmanned aerial vehicles in the Red Sea.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of June 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

Palestinian fighters have continued to attack Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor, south of Gaza City, since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on June 20. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—the self-proclaimed militant wing of Fatah—claimed multiple mortar and rockets attacks targeting Israeli forces.[8] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reported that its 99th Division directed a

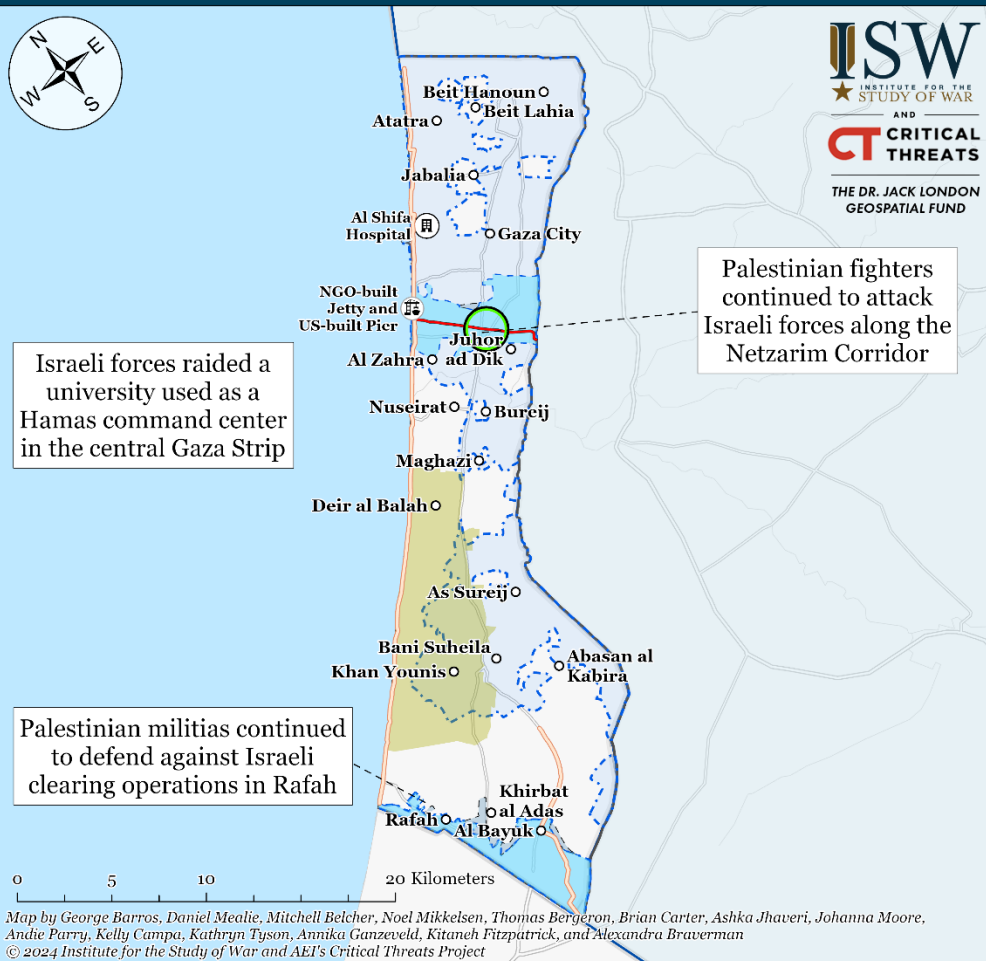
drone strike targeting Palestinian fighters near their forces along the Netzarim Corridor.[9] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighters also mortared Israeli forces near Nuseirat, south of the Netzarim Corridor.[10] Hamas claimed a separate mortar attack targeting Israeli forces near Juhor ad Dik.[11]

The IDF reported on June 21 that its 99th Division raided a university that was used as a Hamas command center in the central Gaza Strip.[12] Hamas fighters fired a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) from the university targeting approaching Israeli forces. Israeli forces located a cache of weapons and several barrels filled with explosives.

Palestinian militias continued to defend against Israeli clearing operations in Rafah on June 21. PIJ fighters mortared Israeli forces in an unspecified area of Rafah.[13] PIJ fighters also targeted an Israeli helicopter evacuating Israeli casualties from Rafah with an SA-18 Grouse surface-to-air missile.[14] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades mortared Israeli forces conducting clearing operations in the Saudi neighborhood, in western Rafah.[15] Hamas fighters mortared Israeli forces at the Kerem Shalom border crossing.[16] The IDF 162nd Division located tunnel openings during raids and directed an airstrike on a building from which Palestinian fighters attacked Israeli forces in Rafah.[17]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of June 21, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli forces raided a university used as a Hamas command center in the central Gaza Strip

Palestinian fighters continued to attack Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor

Palestinian militias continued to defend against Israeli clearing operations in Rafah

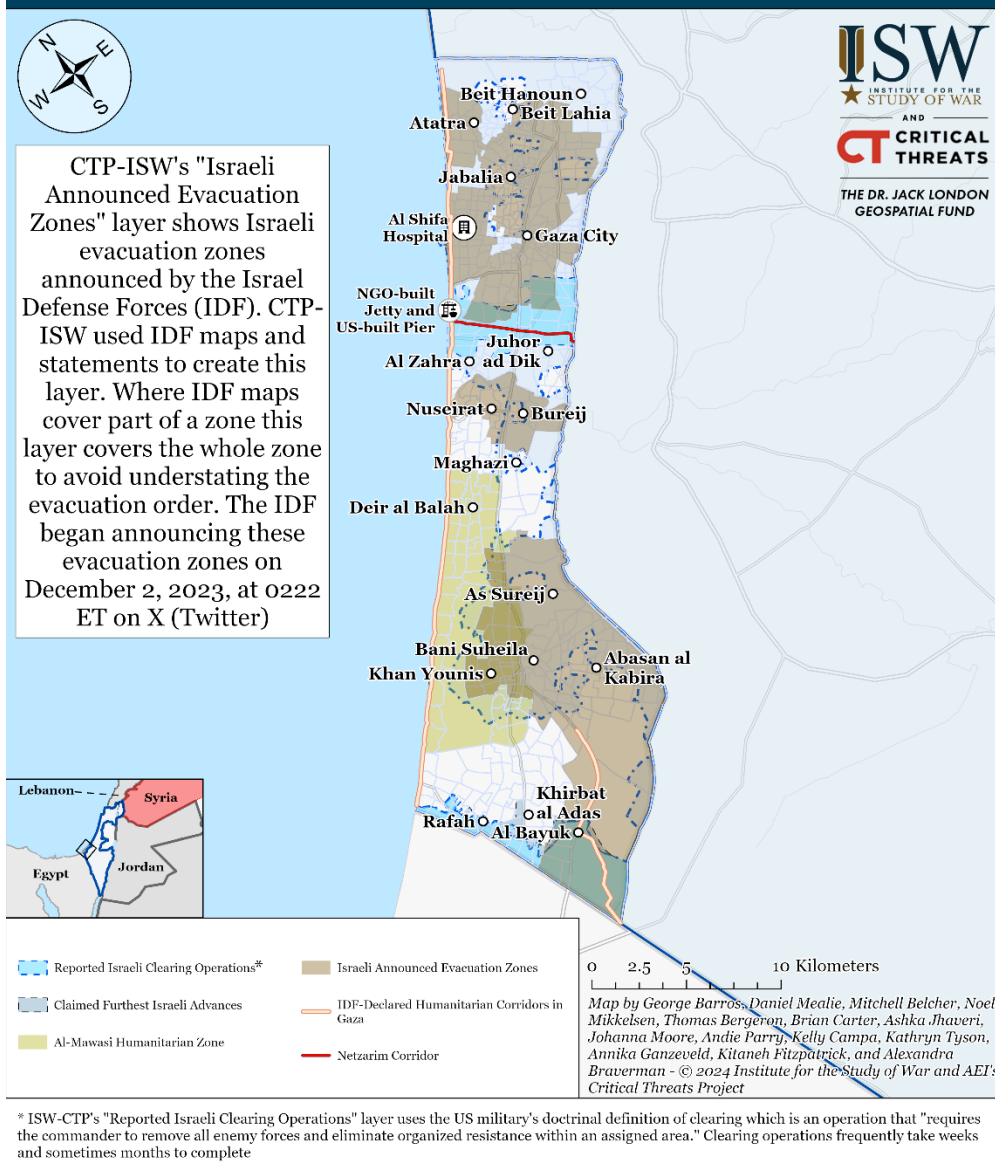
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, and Alexandra Braverman
 © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations		



* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

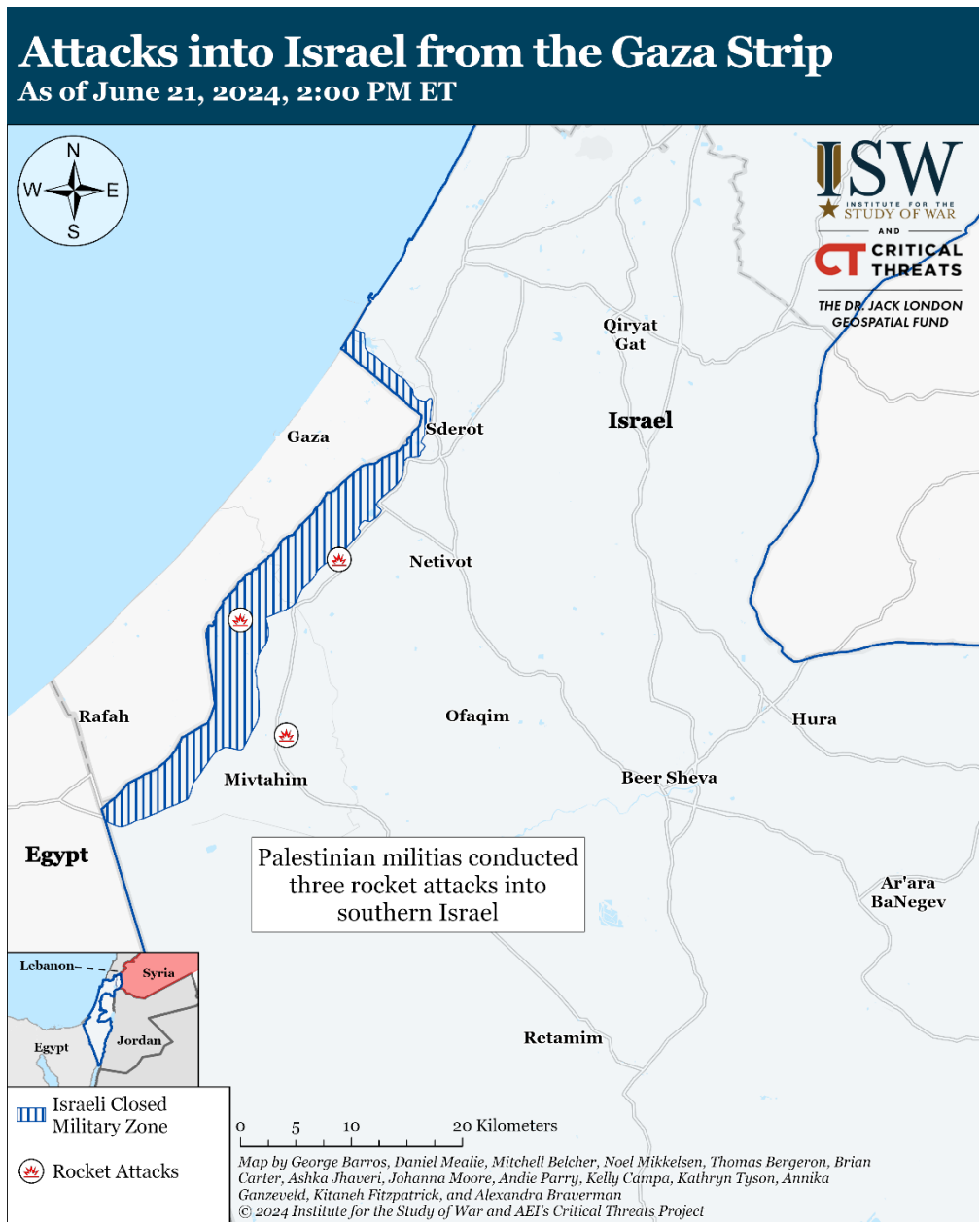
Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of June 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Qatari Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad bin Abdulrahman al Thani stated on June 21 that progress has been made “to some extent” in ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas.[18] Al Thani conceded that there are still "gaps" between Israel and Hamas in the negotiations. Al Thani said that mediators have held “successive meetings” with Hamas leadership to bridge those gaps and push Hamas to accept a ceasefire agreement. White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan previously stated on June 15 that Egyptian and Qatari mediators planned to engage Hamas leaders to find a way to move forward with the latest US-backed proposal.[19]

Palestinian militias conducted at least three rocket attacks into southern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on June 20.[20] The IDF reported on June 21 that Palestinian

fighters launched three rockets from Nuseirat into southern Israel.[21] All three rockets fell in open areas. The IDF Air Force destroyed a PIJ rocket launch site next to a shelter in a humanitarian zone in Khan Younis.[22] The IDF reported that it took precautions to reduce civilian casualties.



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in Qalqilya and Jaba, south of Jenin, on June 21.[23] Israeli police shot and killed two PIJ fighters in Qalqilya on June 21 while attempting to arrest the fighters.[24] The police reported that Palestinian fighters attacked them during the attempted

arrest, which led the police to return fire.[25] Palestinian media reported that three Palestinians were killed.[26] The police stated that one of the PIJ members planned to conduct an attack in the area.[27] Hamas, the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and the al Quds Brigades—PIJ's military wing—released statements mourning the two Palestinian fighters.[28]

Israeli police located and disarmed an IED planted under a car in Lod—an Israeli city around five miles from the Israel-West Bank border—on June 21.[29] Israeli police are investigating the incident.



This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

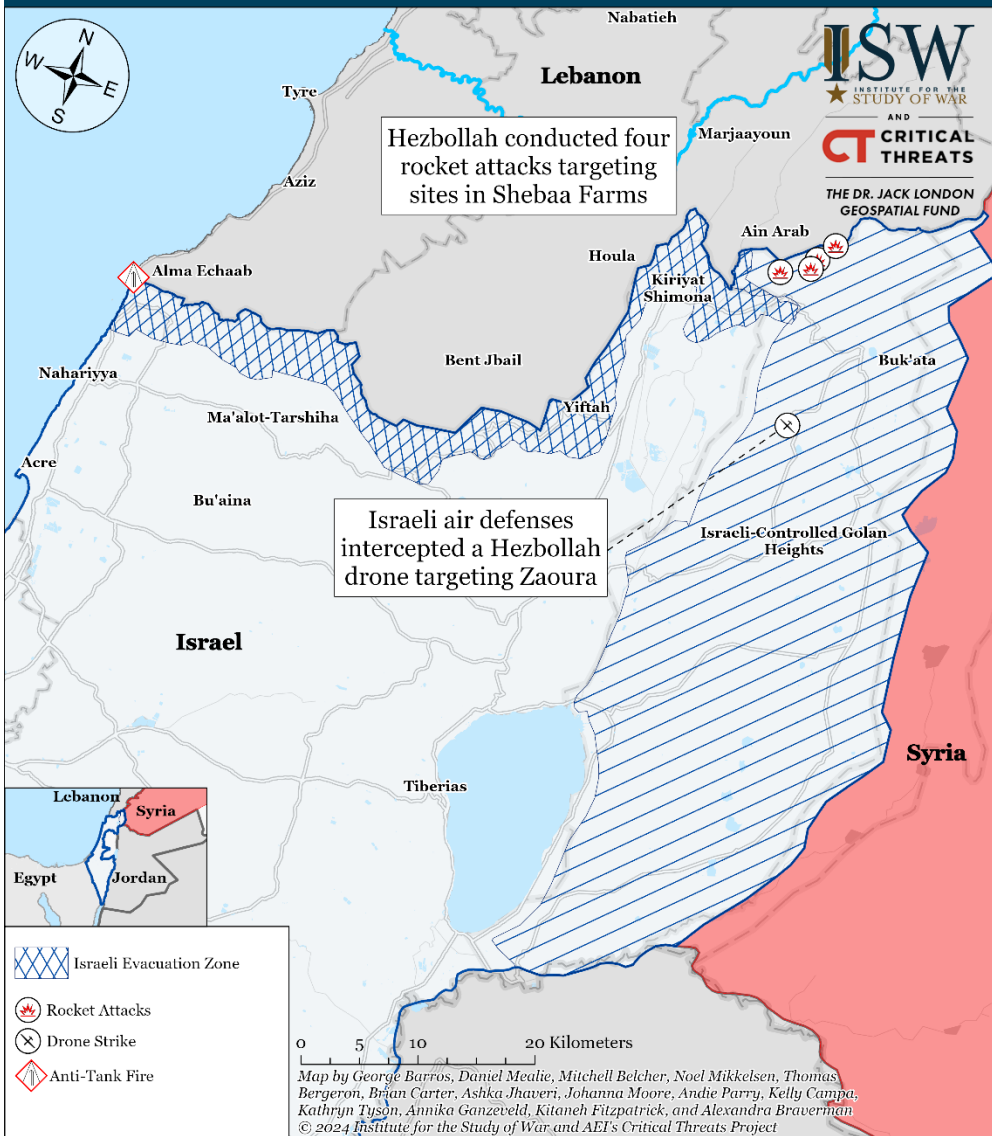
Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah conducted at least six attacks into northern Israel on June 21.[30] Hezbollah launched two separate one-way attack drone attacks targeting IDF artillery positions near Zaoura in the Golan Heights and Israeli forces at Ruwaisat al Qarn.[31] Israeli air defenses intercepted a “suspicious aerial target“ over the Golan Heights.[32] The IDF said that it detected “a number of launches” from Lebanon that crossed into northern Israel on June 21.[33] The IDF said that it shelled Kfarhamam and Labbouneh in southern Lebanon with artillery in retaliation for the drone attacks.[34]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of June 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Houthi media published footage on June 21 of the Toufan-1 unmanned surface vessel (USV) undergoing tests.[35] A senior research analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies suggested that the Houthis likely used Toufan-1 USV to attack the Greek-owned *Tutor* on June 12.[36]

US Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed four Houthi USVs in the Red Sea on June 20.[37] CENTCOM additionally intercepted two Houthi drones over the Red Sea.

A liquefied natural gas (LNG) tanker successfully sailed through the Bab al Mandeb strait on June 18, marking the first transit through there since January 2024.[38] The Palau-flagged *Asya* tanker is owned by the United Arab Emirates-based Lule One Services.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Raphael Grossi stated on June 20 that the IAEA can no longer verify the civilian nature of the Iranian nuclear program. Grossi said that Iran has prevented the IAEA from getting insight into key aspects of Iran’s nuclear activities.[39] Grossi also said that threatening rhetoric from Iranian officials recently about building a nuclear weapon is “unacceptable.”[40] Grossi suggested that Russia is preventing the UN Security Council from responding to Iranian misconduct presented by the IAEA.[41] Grossi’s comments come as Iran has expanded its nuclear program in recent months, as CTP-ISW has reported.[42]



[1] <https://mizanonline dot ir/fa/news/4779107>

[2] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/03/31/3107890>

[3] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/03/31/3107890>

[4] www.iranintl.com/202406202538

[5] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/03/31/3107870>

[6] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/03/31/3107431> ; <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/03/31/3107890>

[7] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/03/31/3107900>

[8] <https://t.me/nedalps/4204> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6653

[9] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1804036731613622538>

[10] <https://t.me/sarayaps/18140>

[11] <https://t.me/hamaswestbank/52141>

[12] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804137841703711107> ; https://www.timesofisrael dot com/liveblog_entry/idf-ends-raid-on-gaza-university-used-as-hamas-command-center/ ; <https://www.idf dot il/210303>

[13] <https://t.me/sarayaps/18141>

- [14] <https://t.me/sarayaps/18144> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/18139>
- [15] <https://t.me/AymanGouda/6178>
- [16] https://t.me/kataeb_moqawma/4314
- [17] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1804036731613622538>
- [18] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/qatari-foreign-minister-says-hostage-truce-talks-making-progress-to-some-extent/
- [19] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/white-house-qatar-egypt-plan-talks-with-hamas-gaza-ceasefire-2024-06-15/>
- [20] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/2514> ; <https://t.me/mojahdeenpal/4603> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/18142>
- [21] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804117115391140011>
- [22] <https://x.com/AvichayAdraee/status/1804036731613622538> ; <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804032072970883420>
- [23] <https://t.me/QudsN/424127> ; <https://t.me/sarayajneen/1351> ;
<https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804136835792150706>
- [24] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804124648080027716> ; <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804136835792150706>
- [25] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804136835792150706>
- [26] <https://t.me/QudsN/424098>
- [27] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804136835792150706>
- [28] <https://t.me/kataebaqsapalestine/3181> ; <https://t.me/sarayatulqarm/468> ;
<https://t.me/hamaswestbank/52136>
- [29] <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-807153>
- [30] <https://t.me/mmirleb/5042> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/5031> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/5032> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/5033> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/5034> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/5035>
- [31] <https://t.me/mmirleb/5042>
- [32] <https://t.me/idfficial/8596>
- [33] <https://t.me/idfficial/8596>
- [34] <https://t.me/idfficial/8596> ; <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1804149155176095950>

[35] <https://x.com/TvAlmasirah/status/1804202258021679242>

[36] <https://x.com/JoeTruzman/status/1804202658934460450> ;
<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/salvage-firm-confirms-sinking-greek-owned-tutor-struck-by-houthis-2024-06-19/>

[37] <https://x.com/CENTCOM/status/1803922258529763458>

[38] [https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/rare-lng-vessel-sails-through-red-sea-amid-houthi-attacks-data-shows-2024-06-21/#:~:text=SINGAPORE%2C%20June%2021%20\(Reuters\),in%20attacks%20begun%20last%20November](https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/rare-lng-vessel-sails-through-red-sea-amid-houthi-attacks-data-shows-2024-06-21/#:~:text=SINGAPORE%2C%20June%2021%20(Reuters),in%20attacks%20begun%20last%20November)

[39] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1403/04/01/3108028>; <https://www.nzz.ch/international/iran-die-anziehungskraft-von-atomwaffen-waechst-sagt-iaea-chef-grossi-ld.1835792>

[40] <https://www.nzz.ch/international/iran-die-anziehungskraft-von-atomwaffen-waechst-sagt-iaea-chef-grossi-ld.1835792>

[41] <https://www.nzz.ch/international/iran-die-anziehungskraft-von-atomwaffen-waechst-sagt-iaea-chef-grossi-ld.1835792>

[42] <https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Iran%20Update%2C%20June%2018%2C%202024%20PDF.pdf>