

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: July 26, 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.

A new Iranian-backed Iraqi militia claimed two rocket attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria on July 25. The al Thawriyyun group took responsibility for attacking Ain al Asad Airbase in Iraq and the Conoco Mission Support Site in Syria.[1] US and Iraqi officials confirmed that the attack targeting Ain al Asad Airbase caused no damage.[2] CTP-ISW reported this rocket attack on July 25.[3] A BBC journalist said that unspecified officials confirmed that rockets targeted the Conoco Mission Support Site but did not reach the base.[4] CTP-ISW noted on July 17 that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias appear to have resumed their attack campaign targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria.[5]

The al Thawriyyun group asserted that it is connected to the Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias that has mounted attack campaigns against US forces and Israel since

October 2023.[6] The militia created a Telegram channel on the day of the attacks to claim responsibility for them.[7] Al Thawriyyun said that their attacks on US forces would persist and become more advanced until US forces withdraw from Iraq.[8] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq paused its attack campaign in February 2024 but militias within the coalition recently threatened to resume their attacks against US forces.[9] The Iranian-backed Iraqi militias threatened on or before June 5 to attack US forces in Iraq if the Iraqi prime minister failed to set a date for US troop withdrawal within 40 days, and the militias' coordinating body also threatened to resume attacks on June 19.[10]



Former US President Donald Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida on July 26.[11] They discussed ceasefire and hostage negotiations between Israel and Hamas.[12] Trump called for the immediate release of Israeli hostages in the Gaza Strip. Netanyahu said that Israel plans to send negotiators to Rome in the coming days. Netanyahu previously

met with US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris separately in Washington, DC on July 25.[13]

An anonymous Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force official told Kuwaiti media that Iran has delivered “electromagnetic bombs” to Lebanese Hezbollah.[14] It is unclear whether the report is accurate, but the claim is meant to deter Israel from launching a major military offensive into Lebanon. The Quds Force official told al Jarida that the munitions given to Hezbollah carry “explosive electromagnetic warheads” that could disable Israeli communication systems, electricity grids, and radars.[15] The Quds Force official also stated that Iran has tested “dozens” of such weapons through other members of the Axis of Resistance to create a database of weapons that could defeat Israeli air defenses.[16] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran and its Axis of Resistance are conducting an information operation through Western and international media to deter Israel from launching a major military offensive into Lebanon.[17] The IRGC has previously used al Jarida to message to external audiences, including about arms transfers to Hezbollah.[18]

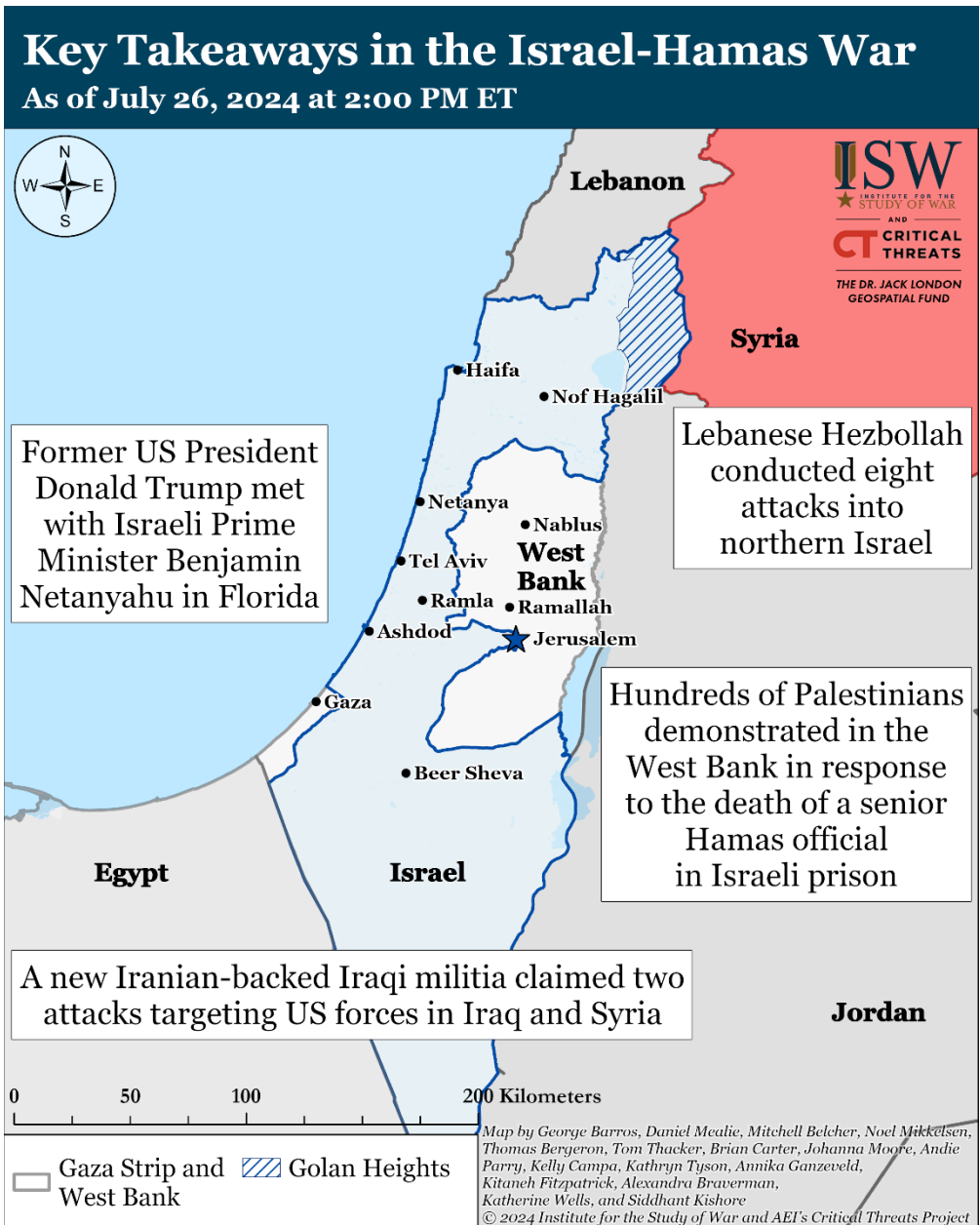
Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian gave an interview to the official website of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on July 25, in which Pezeshkian discussed regime responsibility in addressing cultural and economic issues.[19] Pezeshkian said that the regime is responsible for defining the national culture and that “we must start with ourselves” to fix cultural challenges. Pezeshkian also emphasized the need for the regime to rely on experts and technocrats to solve economic shortcomings. Pezeshkian also stressed the importance of relying on evidence and science to inform policy. The framing that Pezeshkian presented in his interview diverged notably from the attitudes that former President Ebrahim Raisi expressed in office. Raisi often used a less sympathetic tone in describing the cultural divide between the regime and its people. Raisi also populated his administration with deeply ideological hardliners who sometimes lacked the appropriate credentials for their offices. That Khamenei’s office published the interview with Pezeshkian indicates that Khamenei has endorsed the approach that Pezeshkian described.

Pezeshkian also emphasized in the interview his subordination to and close alignment with Khamenei, highlighting Pezeshkian’s limited ability to make fundamental changes to regime policy without Khamenei’s backing.[20] Pezeshkian stated that he is working in close coordination and consultation with Khamenei in preparing his cabinet nominations for Parliament.[21] This statement is consistent with Pezeshkian’s repeated emphasis in recent months about his subordination to Khamenei.[22]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iraq:** A new Iranian-backed Iraqi militia claimed two rocket attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria. CTP-ISW previously reported that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias appear to have resumed their attacks targeting US forces.
- **Israel:** Former US President Donald Trump met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida. They discussed the ongoing ceasefire and hostage negotiations between Israel and Hamas.
- **Lebanon:** An anonymous IRGC Quds Force official claimed that Iran gave electromagnetic munitions to Lebanese Hezbollah. This claim is part of a larger effort by Iran and its Axis of Resistance to deter a major Israeli military offensive into Lebanon.

- **Iran:** Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian gave an interview to the official website of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Pezeshkian emphasized regime responsibility in addressing cultural and economic issues while reiterating his subordination to Khamenei.



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

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Gaza Division has conducted clearing operations in Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip in recent days.[23] The IDF Netzah Yehuda Battalion destroyed Hamas anti-tank positions and rigged-to-detonate buildings in Beit Hanoun. The IDF Northern Brigade destroyed a Hamas tunnel that was over one kilometer long in Beit Lahiya. An Israeli Army Radio report said that the tunnel was several hundred meters from the Israel-Gaza Strip border near the Netiv HaAsara area.[24] The Northern Brigade destroyed weapons in the tunnel as well as materials that would have enabled Palestinian fighters to stay underground for long periods.[25]

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) attacked Israeli forces with explosively formed penetrators, rocket-propelled grenades, and sniper fire in Tal al Hawa, south of Gaza City, on July 26.[26] Palestinian sources reported on July 26 that Israeli forces re-entered Tal al Hawa after withdrawing on July 12.[27]

PIJ mortared Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor on July 26.[28]

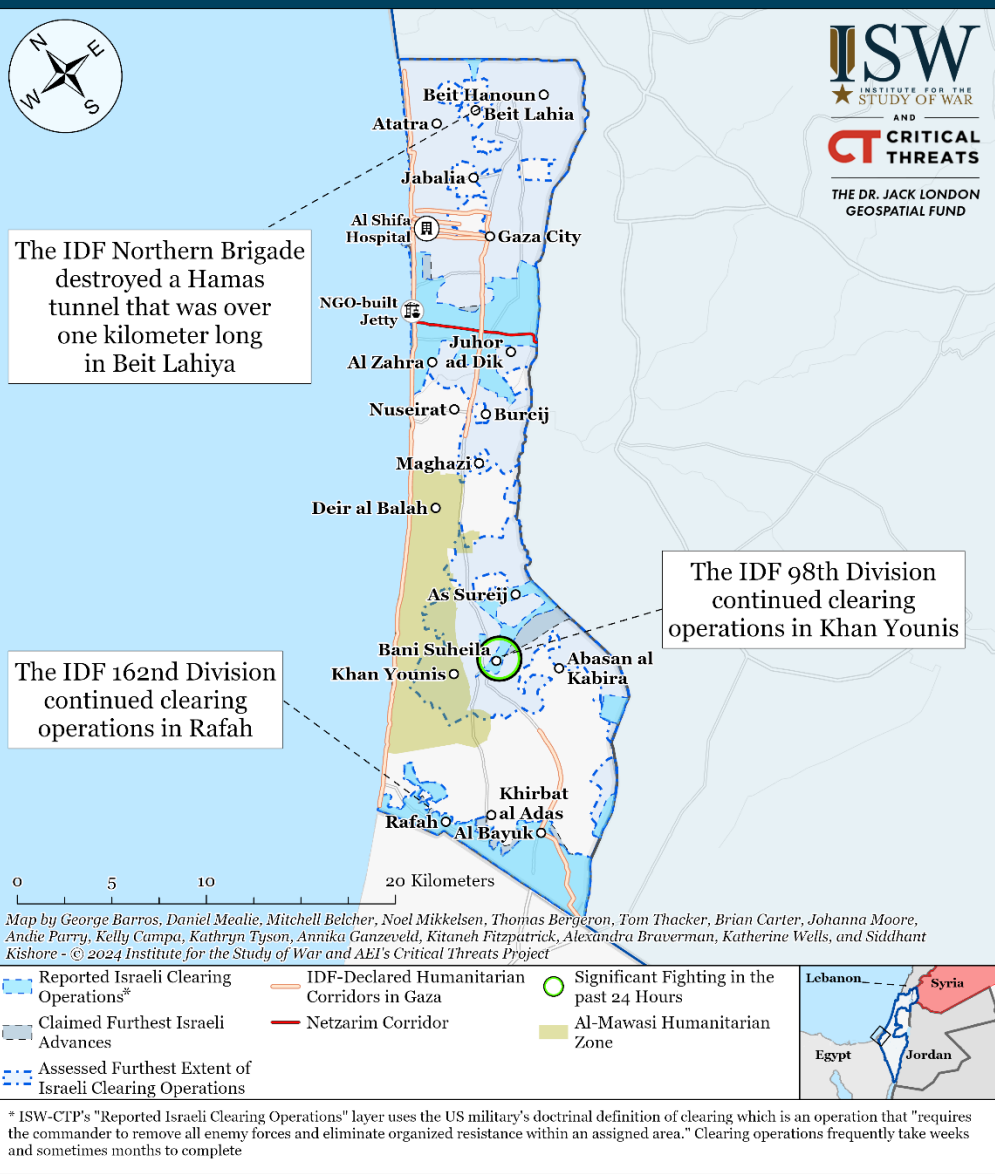
The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in Khan Younis on July 26. The IDF stated that the IDF 7th and Paratroopers brigades have killed about 100 fighters since the IDF launched a new clearing operation into Khan Younis on July 22.[29] The IDF Air Force struck Palestinian fighters who fired rockets targeting Israeli forces in Khan Younis.[30] Three Palestinian militias conducted mortar and small arms attacks targeting Israeli forces in Khan Younis.[31]

The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah on July 26. The IDF Givati and 401st brigades killed several Palestinian fighters and located tunnels and long-range rockets in Tal al Sultan.[32] Israeli forces killed three Palestinian fighters in airstrikes.[33]

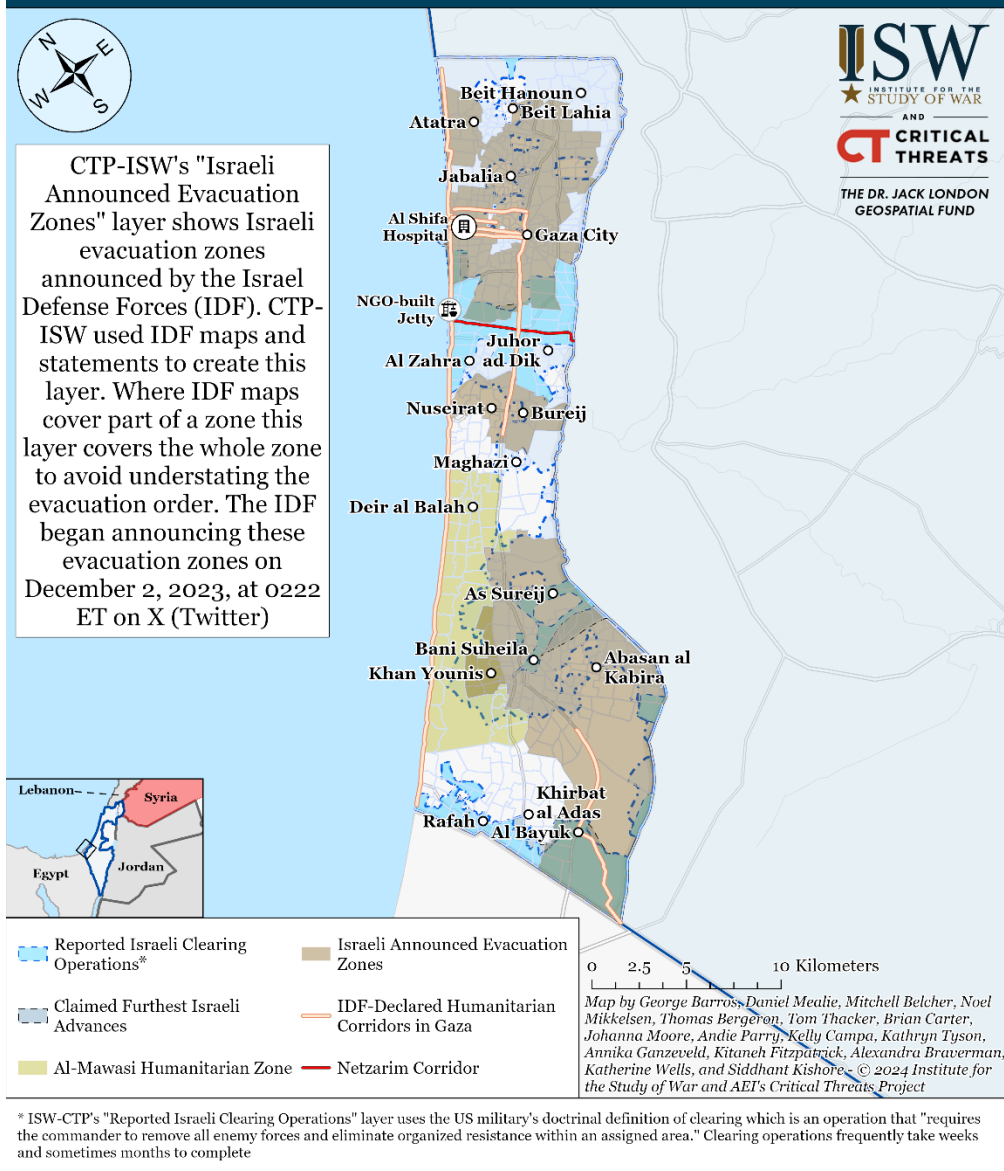
The IDF Air Force struck over 45 Palestinian militia targets in the Gaza Strip between July 26 and 27.[34]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of July 26, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip As of July 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

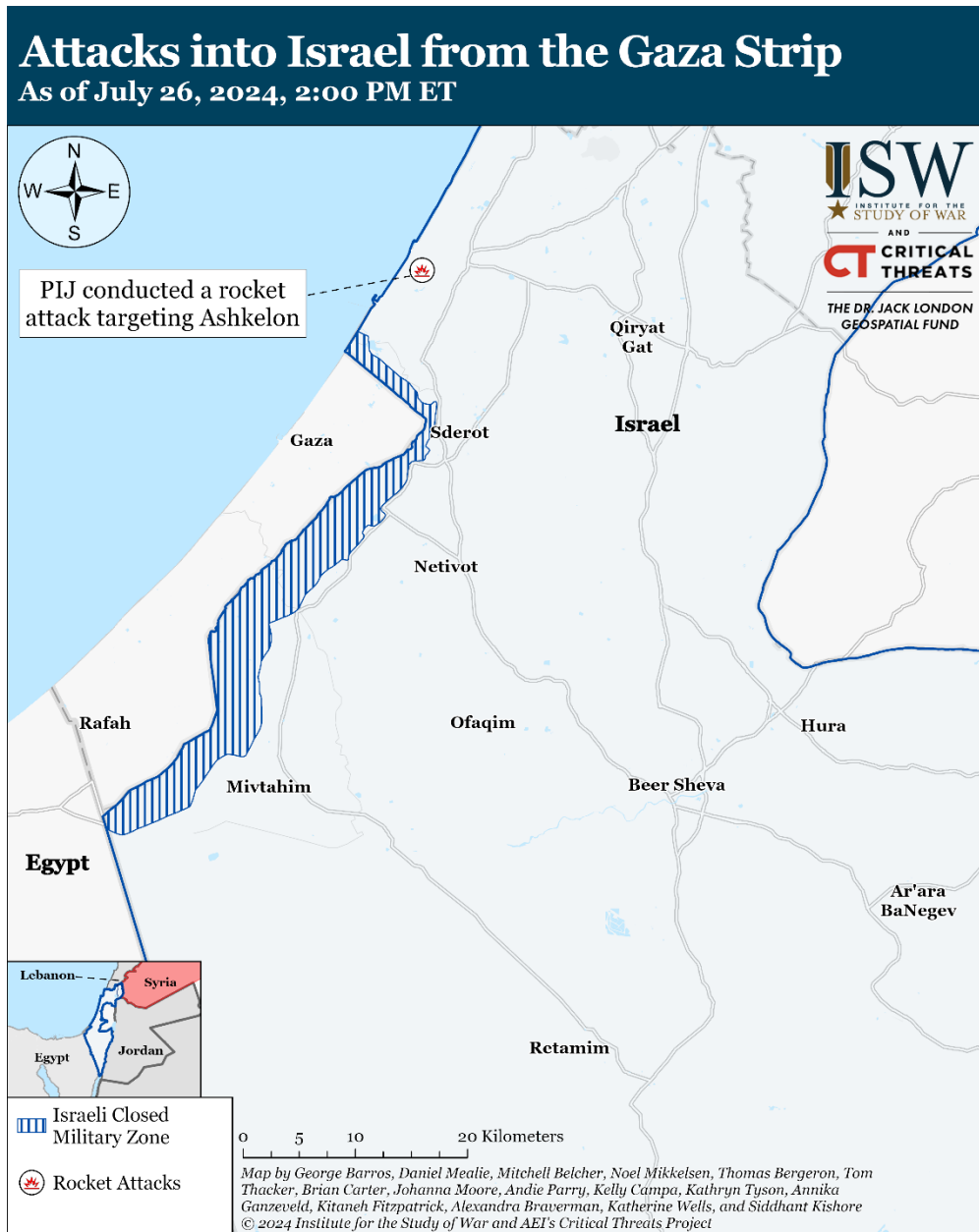


Israel is pushing in the ceasefire and hostage negotiations for a vetting mechanism to facilitate the return of displaced Palestinians to the northern Gaza Strip.[35] Israel said that Palestinian civilians should be screened as they return to the north during any ceasefire, according to Western, Egyptian, and Palestinian sources speaking to Reuters. The Egyptian and Palestinian sources said that Hamas rejected this new Israeli demand but added that Hamas had not yet seen the latest Israeli proposal. The sources said that Hamas was expected to receive the latest proposal "in the coming hours."

IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant Colonel Herzi Halevi met with several IDF commanders in Khan Younis on July 25.[36] Halevi met with several commanders, including Southern Command

Commander Major General Yaron Finkelman and 98th Division Commander Brigadier General Dan Goldfuss. Halevi discussed the July 24 operation to retrieve hostages' remains from Khan Younis. Halevi said that "we are pressing to bring about an agreement for the release of abductees" and said that the IDF will not stop fighting Hamas until it destroys "the last battalion."

PIJ launched rockets from the northern Gaza Strip targeting Ashkelon on July 26.[37] The IDF said that it intercepted one rocket and that the rest fell in open areas.



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

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least four locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on July 25.[38] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms targeting Israeli forces in Askar al Jadeed refugee camp, Nablus.[39] PIJ's Jenin Battalion also fired small arms targeting Israeli forces in Jenin.[40] Palestinian fighters detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) targeting Israeli forces in Jenin.[41]

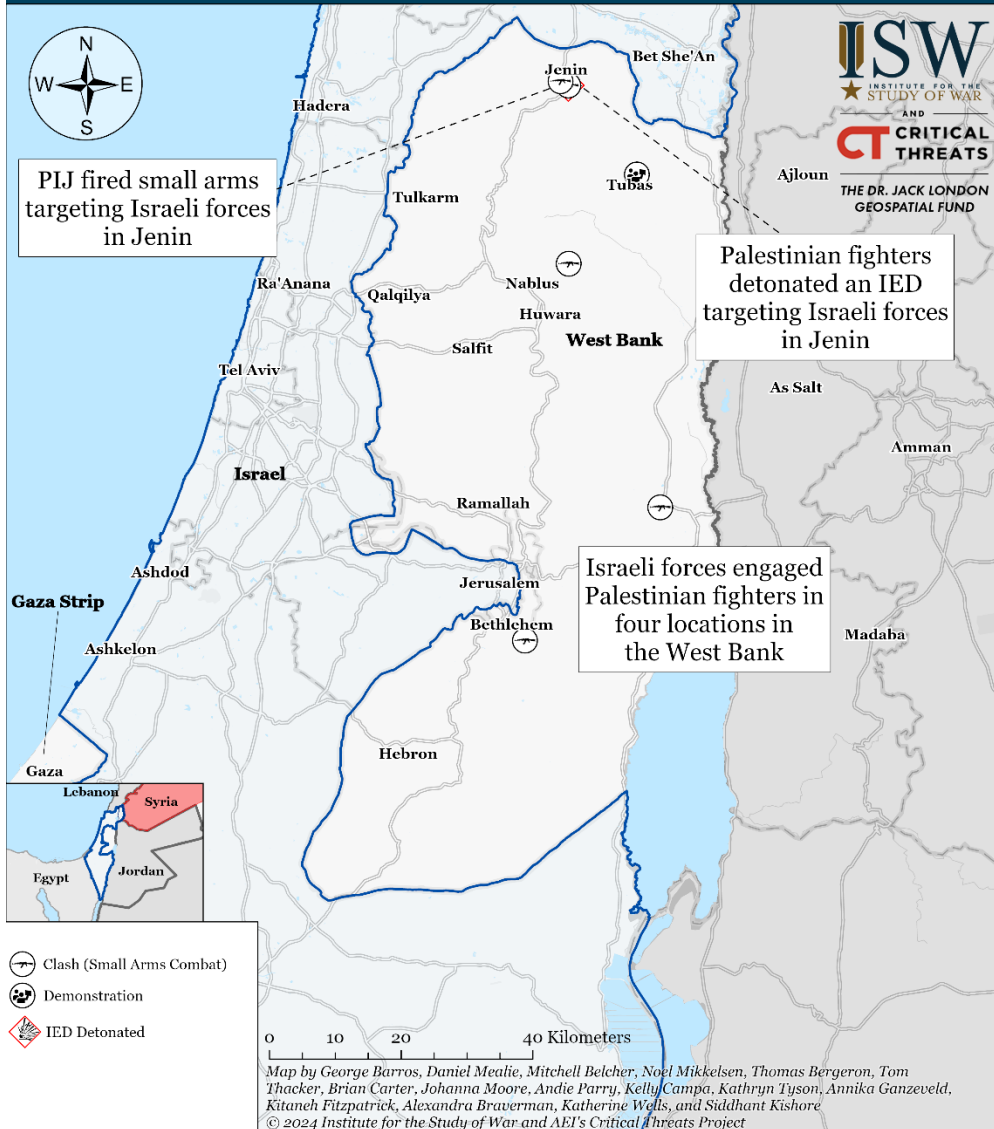
Israeli forces "mapped" the house belonging to a Palestinian fighter on July 25 in al Ram, near Jerusalem.[42] The Palestinian fighter who owns the house had carried out a complex attack that injured several Israeli soldiers in the Nir Zvi intersection, on July 14. The IDF separately issued a notice to destroy the house of another Palestinian fighter Mahmoud Salit living in Tulkarm for his involvement in an attack near the Einav settlement that killed an IDF officer in November 2023.[43] The IDF has previously destroyed houses of Palestinian fighters who have attacked Israeli forces and civilians in the West Bank. [44]

Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces tried to arrest al Quds Brigades' Tulkarm Battalion Commander Muhammad Jaber (Abu Shuja) in Thabet Thabet Hospital, Tulkarm, on July 26.[45] Hamas released a statement condemning the PA for arresting Jaber.[46] Hamas said that the PA's attempt to arrest Jaber violates the recent Beijing agreement that calls for a "unified national position" embracing "resistance of all forms." The PA located Jaber at Thabet Thabet Hospital as he received medical treatment for injuries sustained from a premature IED explosion in Nour Shams refugee camp, Tulkarm.[47] Jaber avoided PA custody after local Palestinians gathered in the hospital to prevent his arrest.[48]

Senior Hamas leader Mustafa Abu Arra died in an Israeli prison on July 25. Hamas issued a statement condemning Abu Arra's death and celebrated him as one of the most prominent Hamas members in the West Bank.[49] Hamas blamed Israeli prison authorities for the alleged medical negligence that led to Abu Arra's death.[50] Hamas called on Palestinians across the West Bank to attack Israeli forces and civilians with "bullets and explosive devices" to avenge Abu Arra's alleged "assassination".[51] Palestinians demonstrated to condemn Abu Arra's death in Tubas with Hamas' organizational help.[52]

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of July 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

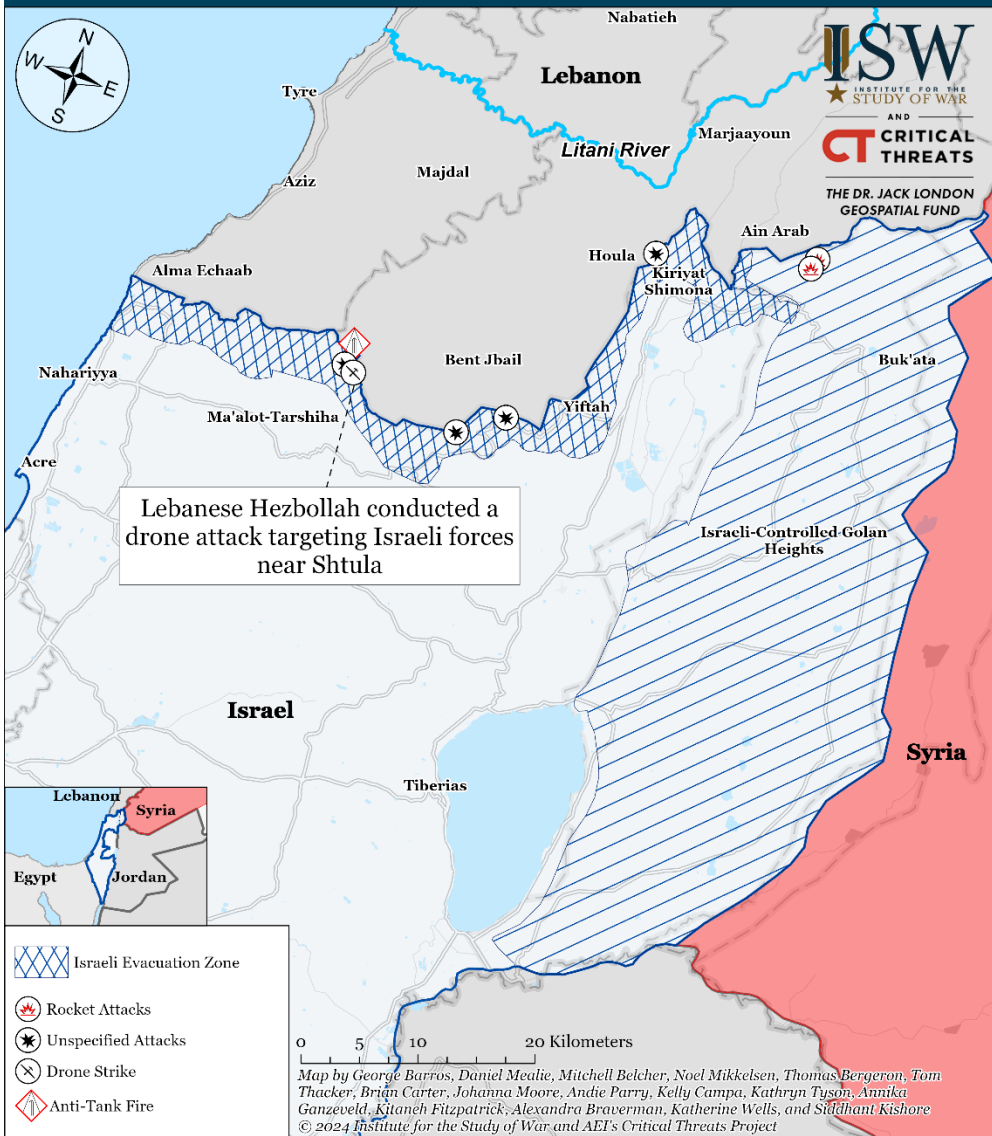
- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least eight attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on July 25.[53] Lebanese Hezbollah launched one-way attack drones targeting Israeli forces near Shtula.[54]

IDF Northern Command Commander Major General Ori Gordin visited the Golani Brigade's combat team and spoke with the brigade commanders stationed in northern Israel.[55] Gordin said that the IDF is committed to changing the security situation in northern Israel and that all displaced residents will be able to return to their homes. Gordin said that Israel will launch a “decisive attack” when the time comes. Gordin further claimed that IDF has eliminated more than 500 Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon and destroyed “thousands” of Hezbollah sites. Gordin’s visit comes after IDF Air Force Commander Major General Tomer Bar discussed a potential Israeli offensive in Lebanon during a meeting with Air Force and Northern Command commanders at the Ramat David airbase on July 25.[56]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of July 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Iraqi Army Lieutenant General Hamed Mohammad Qamar led a military delegation to Iran's Supreme National Defense University (SNDU) in Tehran on July 22.[57] Qamar claimed during his visit that senior Iraqi officers graduating from Iranian command and staff courses are more effective than officers taught through NATO military education systems.[58] Qamar discussed increasing Iranian-led training of Iraqi forces with SNDU President Brigadier General Esmail Ahadi Moghaddam.[59] Moghaddam stated that Iran and the SNDU are ready to offer national defense courses to all neighboring Muslim countries.[60] Moghaddam previously traveled to Baghdad, Iraq in December 2023 to discuss security and exchange information between the SDNU and Iraqi security

forces with Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh.[61] The United States sanctioned Moghaddam in 2011 for human rights abuses.[62]

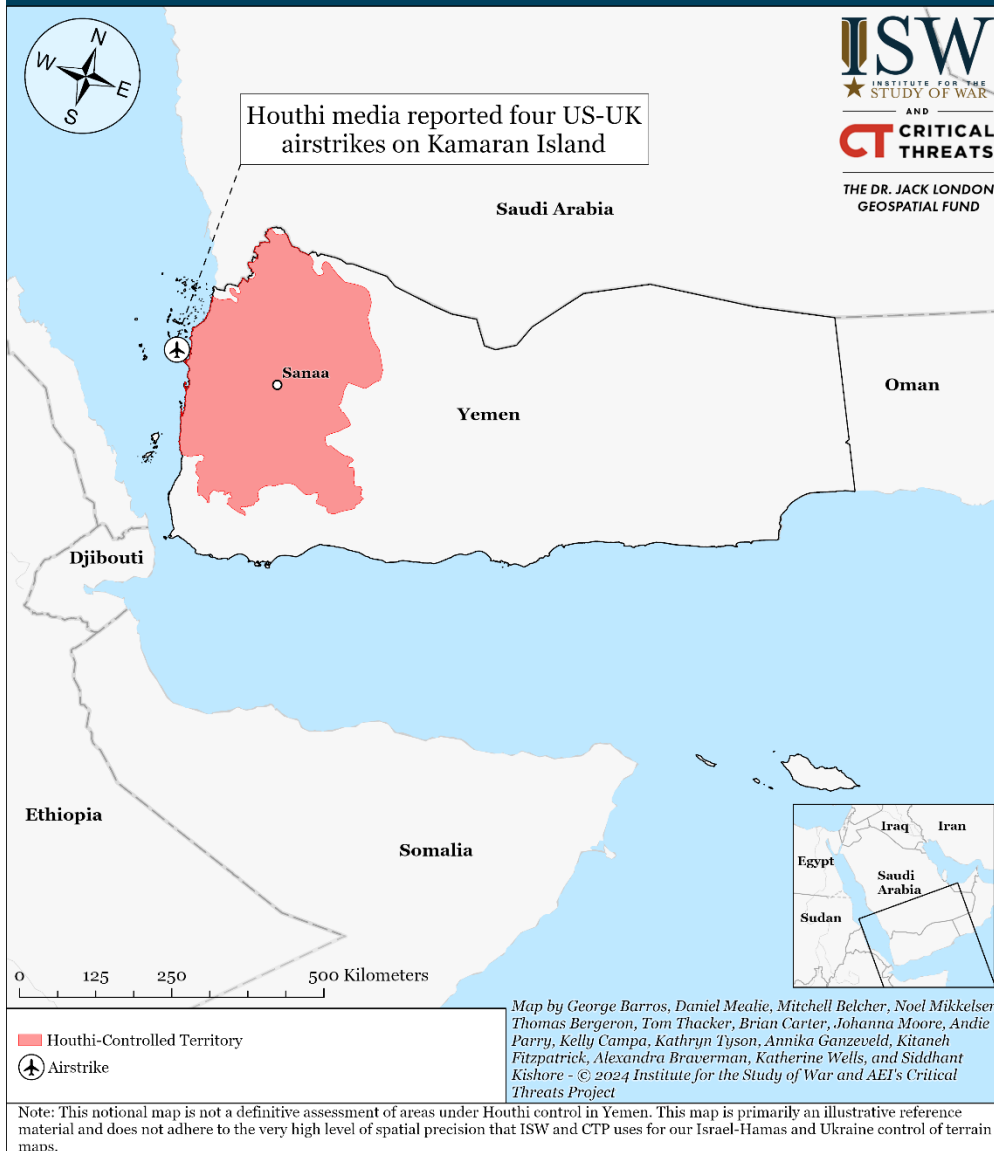
An Iran-focused Israeli social media account claimed on July 26 that Somaliland forces recently arrested two Houthi members in Somaliland near the Gulf of Aden.[63] The social media account reported that the two Houthi members were part of an IRGC Quds Force-linked smuggling network that moves weapons and people between Iran and Yemen. The report claimed that, based on the passports of the two individuals, the smuggling network is based in Hudaydah, Yemen. US intelligence previously claimed in June 2024 that the Houthis and al Shabaab have discussed a deal for the Houthis to provide weapons to al Shabaab.[64]

US Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed a Houthi drone launcher in Yemen on July 25.[65] CENTCOM determined that the drone launcher presented an imminent threat to US and coalition forces as well as merchant vessels in the area.

Houthi-affiliated media claimed that the United States and United Kingdom conducted four combined airstrikes targeting unspecified sites in Karaman island, Yemen, on July 26.[66]

Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

As of July 26, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Reuters reported that China has been importing and refining Iranian crude oil since late 2023. A freight analytics suite Vortexa confirmed on July 26 that unidentified personnel discharged 23 Iranian oil cargoes, equivalent to 45 million barrels, at Dalian port in northeast China between October 2023 and June 2024.[67] Vortexa reported that Changxing Island, approximately 53 miles northwest of central Dalian, received approximately 28 million of the 45 million barrels of Iranian oil. Another data analytics firm, Kpler, estimated that Dalian port had transferred 34 million barrels of Iranian oil between October 2023 and June 2024.[68] China has continued to serve as Iran's top oil consumer since 2019 Chinese customs have not officially recorded any Iranian oil imports since June 2022. The Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry informed Reuters that Beijing and Tehran "have always maintained normal and legitimate trade under the international legal framework." Reuters reported, citing tanker tracking firms, that traders rebrand Iranian oil routed to China with a different origin

location, such as Malaysia, Oman, or the United Arab Emirates. Reuters named Hengli Petrochemicals, Liaoning Port Group, and PetroChina as three Chinese companies connected to these Iranian oil shipments. The US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Petro China Pars Co., PetroChina's subsidiary registered in Tehran, in 2013.[69] Bloomberg reported on June 7 that Iran had exported 1.54 million barrels of crude oil per day to China in May 2024, marking the highest level of Iranian exports to China since October 2023.[70] Bloomberg's data, citing Kpler, confirmed that over half of these exports in May 2024 went to independent refiners in Qingdao city, eastern China, opposite Dalian city in the East China Sea.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

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