

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: August 30, 2024, 2:00pm 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.

Israel and Hamas are reportedly reviewing a draft agreement for the hostage-prisoner exchange component of ceasefire talks after working group-level negotiations over the exchange.[1] The agreement states that Hamas should release 33 living hostages who are women, men over the age of 50, and hostages with serious medical conditions. If there are not 33 living hostages to return in these groups, the difference between the two should include the bodies of dead hostages. Israel has provided a list of 33 hostages to Hamas that Israel says meet these conditions. In exchange, Israel will release “several hundred” Palestinian prisoners, including 150 serving life sentences for killing Israelis. Those who were sentenced to life in prison will be exiled and barred from returning to

the Gaza Strip or the West Bank. Hamas has transferred a list of prisoners to Israel according to Israeli officials. Senior Israeli officials claimed that negotiations have made “significant progress” although no agreement has been reached yet.

Working-group talks have not resolved the issue of Israeli forces remaining along the Philadelphi Corridor.[2] An unspecified senior official from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office reported that the Israeli security cabinet voted on August 29 in favor of retaining Israel’s presence along the Philadelphi Corridor, thus cementing an Israeli presence in the corridor as official policy.[3] Israeli officials said on August 23 that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to withdraw Israeli forces from a one- to two-kilometer section of the Philadelphi Corridor during the first phase of the proposed ceasefire-hostage deal.[4] Netanyahu’s insistence on an Israeli military presence along the Philadelphi Corridor has been one of the most significant sticking points in the negotiations.[5] Netanyahu has said that retaining a presence in the corridor is required to achieve Israeli war aims.

Mediators are attempting to bridge the remaining gaps through “mediation formulas” before presenting a single draft proposal to Israel and Hamas to implement, according to unspecified senior Israeli officials cited by Walla.[6] Unspecified senior US and Israeli officials also claimed that the agreement should meet “most” of Hamas’ demands, including a minimum six-week ceasefire, the release of hundreds of prisoners, the return of displaced Palestinians to their homes, the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and rehabilitation and medical treatment in Egypt for wounded Hamas fighters.

An unspecified Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) official told Iraqi media that Iran is attempting to use its nuclear program to pressure Western countries as part of nuclear negotiations, which would be consistent with statements by the supreme leader and other Iranian officials indicating interest in renewed negotiations. It is not clear why this unspecified AEOI official would speak with Iraqi media before speaking to Iranian media. The level of access this official has within AEOI and Iranian policymaking is also unclear. The source told Iraqi media on August 30 that Iran does not aim to build a nuclear weapon but continues to pursue a nuclear program to pressure Western countries into reaching a new nuclear deal, which is consistent with statements from senior Iranian officials indicating the regime’s willingness to reengage in nuclear negotiations with the West to relieve sanctions pressure on Iran.[7] International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi indicated on August 30 that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has agreed to a bilateral meeting in the “near future.”[8]

Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Ceasefire Talks:** Israel and Hamas are reportedly reviewing a draft agreement for the hostage-prisoner exchange component of ceasefire talks after working group-level negotiations over the exchange. Working-group talks have not resolved the issue of Israeli forces remaining along the Philadelphi Corridor. Mediators are attempting to bridge the remaining gaps in ceasefire talks through “mediation formulas” before presenting a single draft proposal to Israel and Hamas to implement.
- **Philadelphi Corridor:** An unspecified senior official from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office reported that the Israeli security cabinet voted on August 29 in favor of

retaining Israel's presence along the Philadelphi Corridor, thus cementing an Israeli presence in the corridor as official policy.

- **Iranian Nuclear Program:** An unspecified Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) official told Iraqi media that Iran is attempting to use its nuclear program to pressure Western countries as part of nuclear negotiations, which would be consistent with statements by the supreme leader and other Iranian officials indicating interest in renewed negotiations. It is not clear why this unspecified AEOI official would speak with Iraqi media before speaking to Iranian media. The level of access this official has within AEOI and Iranian policymaking is also unclear.



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 IDF did not report that the 252nd Division conducted any clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor in the central Gaza Strip on August 30. CTP-ISW also did not observe any Palestinian media reports about IDF operations in the vicinity of the Netzarim Corridor.

The IDF 98th Division "completed" operations in Khan Younis and on the outskirts of Deir al Balah on August 30.[9] The IDF 98th Division has operated in Khan Younis and Deir al Balah since early August.[10] Israeli forces have killed over 250 Palestinian fighters and destroyed Palestinian militia infrastructure since the operation began.[11]

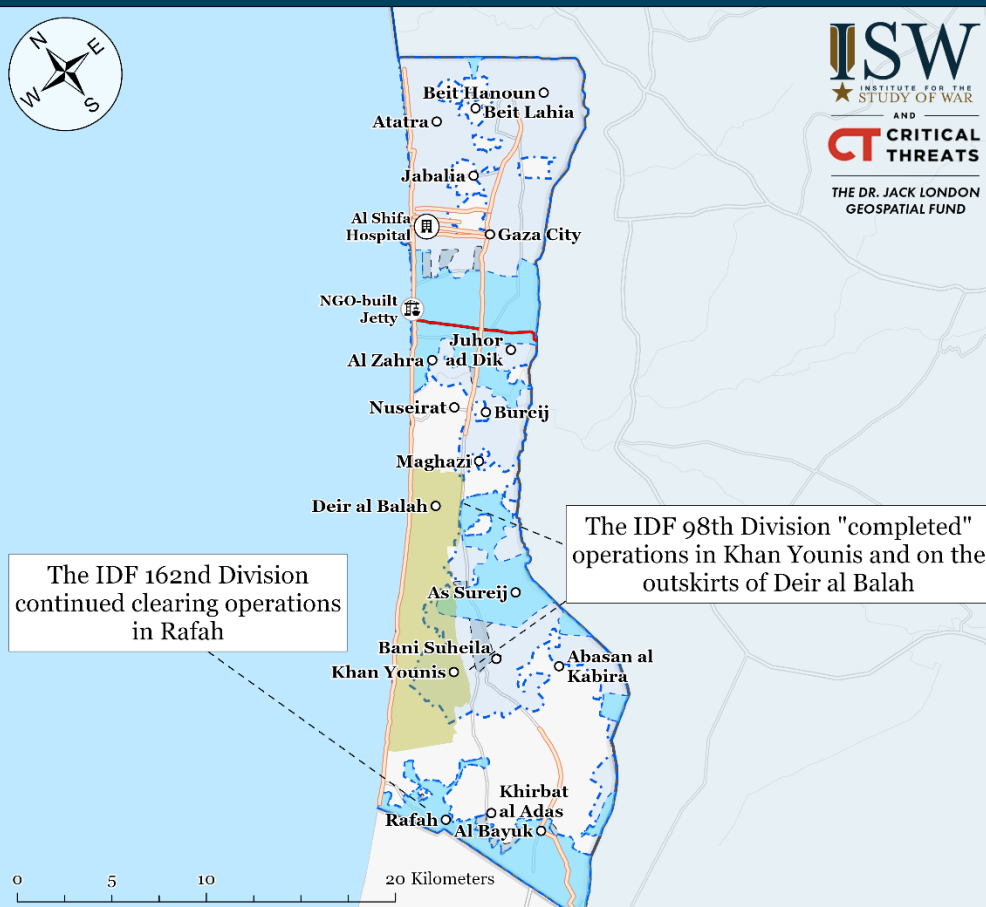
The IDF also reported the outcome of the 98th Division's operations in Khan Younis and the Deir al Balah vicinity over the last 24 hours. Yahalom combat engineers and the 7th Brigade destroyed six tunnels in the area measuring about six kilometers long in total and located safe houses and weapons in some of the tunnels. The 7th Brigade also located weapons and destroyed infrastructure in Khan Younis and Deir al Balah. The 7th Brigade's 77th Battalion conducted a raid targeting a Hamas outpost in Deir al Balah and located weapons and "intelligence documents." Palestinian Islamic Jihad mortared Israeli forces in eastern Khan Younis on August 29.[12]

The IDF said on August 30 that civilians may return to Hamad, al Jalaa, and al Qaraa neighborhoods in Khan Younis following the conclusion of Israeli operations in the area.[13] The IDF said that these areas will be considered part of the al Mawasi humanitarian zone.

The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah on August 30.[14] Israeli forces killed dozens of Palestinian fighters and located weapons over the past day in Rafah. The Nahal Brigades directed an airstrike that killed Palestinian fighters in the area.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of August 30, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah

The IDF 98th Division "completed" operations in Khan Younis and on the outskirts of Deir al Balah

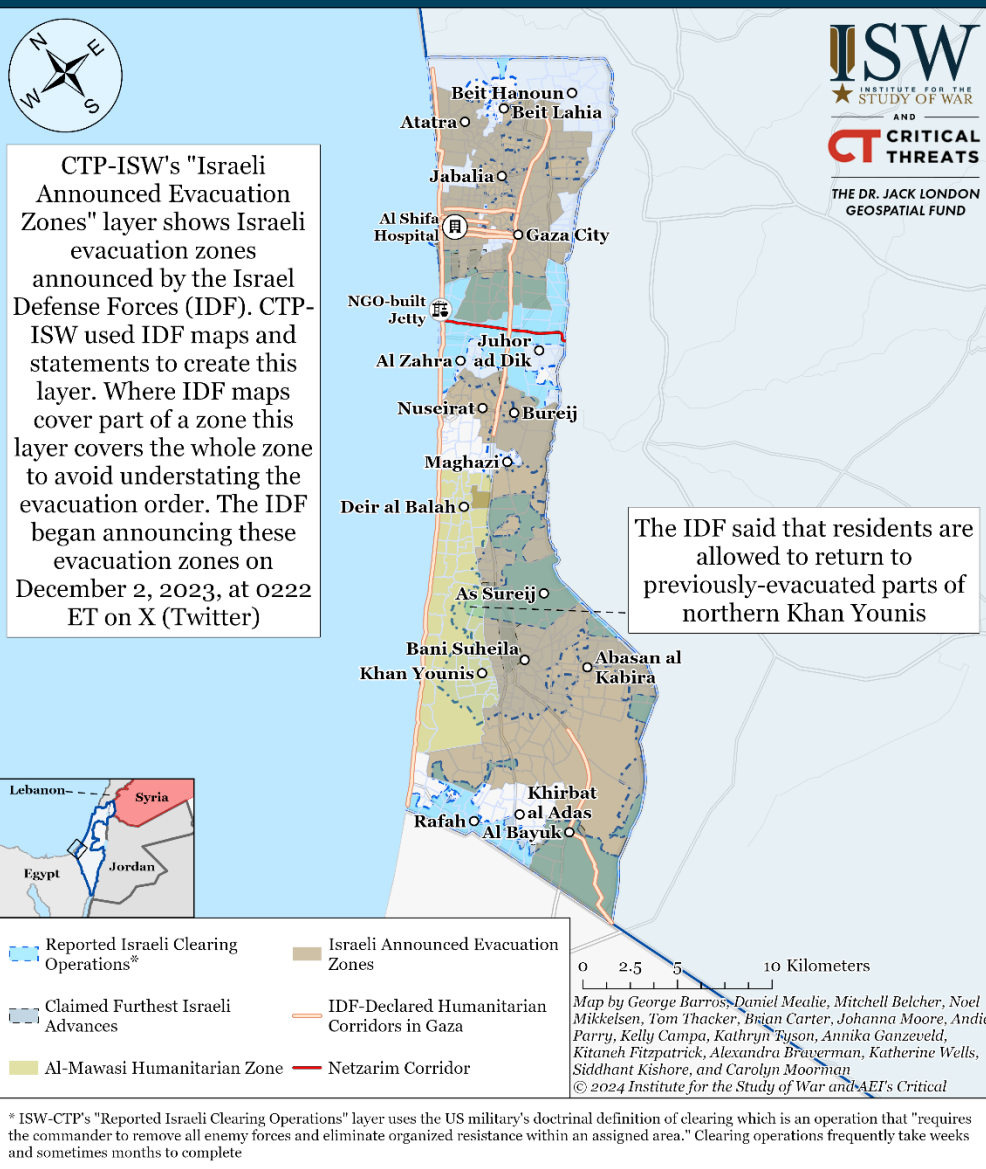
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzefeld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, and Carolyn Moorman - © 2024 Institute for the Study 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 August 30, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The IDF killed at least four people in an aid convoy in the southern Gaza Strip that the IDF said was hijacked by Palestinian fighters on August 29.[15] The IDF conducted an airstrike targeting individuals in the lead vehicle of an American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) convoy traveling in southern Rafah.[16] The IDF said that "armed men" had taken over the lead vehicle in the convoy.[17] The IDF said that it did not damage any other vehicles in its strike and the IDF said that the rest of the ANERA members were safe. ANERA said that the IDF had cleared the convoy and that the IDF did not give any warning of the strike. ANERA confirmed that the strike did not harm any staff members.[18] ANERA said in a statement on August 30 that Palestinian community members who had worked with ANERA's transit company previously stepped in to lead the convoy following concerns

of looting along the route.[19] ANERA reported that the IDF cleared the convoy before the Palestinians stepped in to lead the convoy.[20]

West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

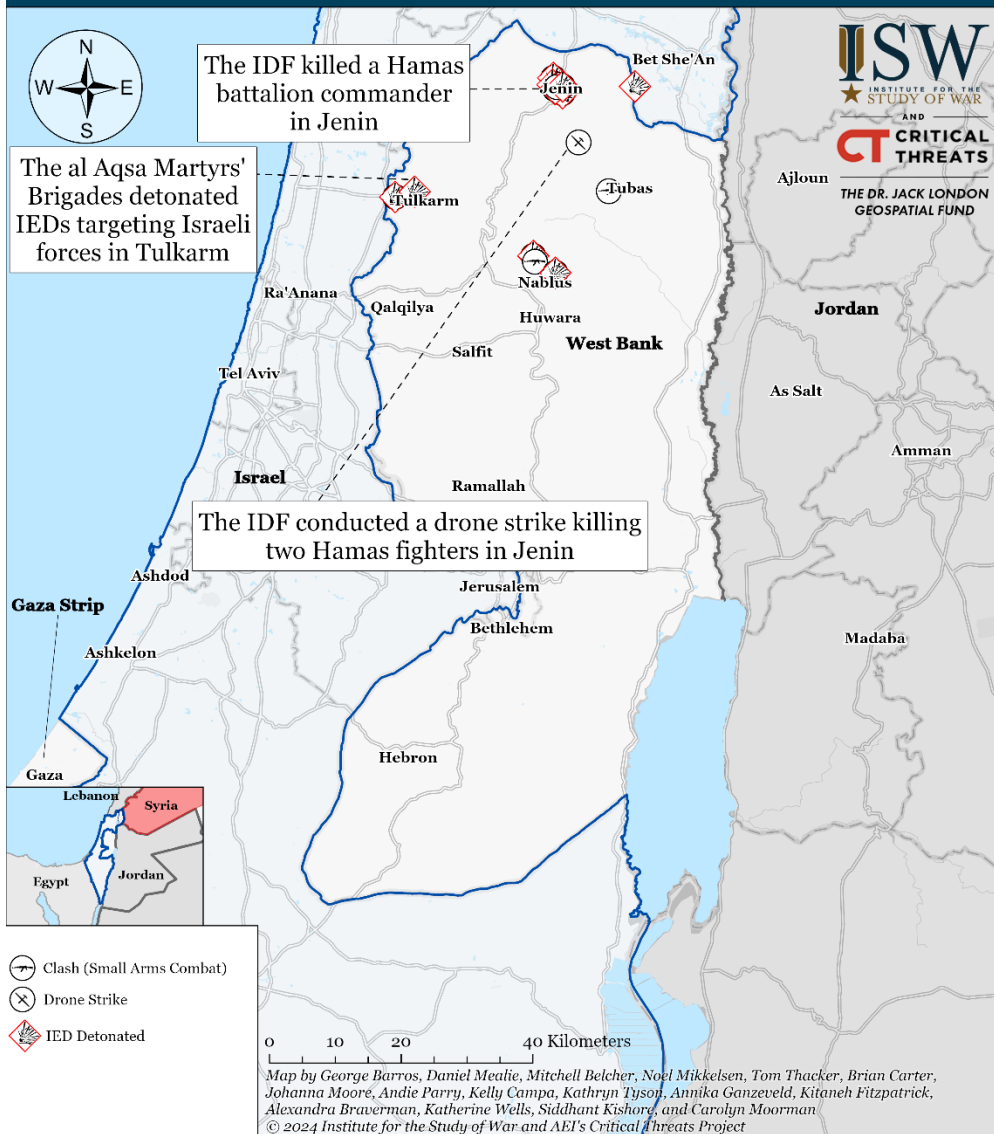
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

The IDF continued raids in Jenin for the fourth consecutive day on August 30 as part of the IDF effort to degrade Palestinian militia networks in the West Bank.[21] The IDF killed Hamas' Jenin battalion commander Wissam Khazem during engagements with Hamas fighters.[22] The IDF conducted a drone strike that killed two of Khazem's subordinates in Jenin as they attempted to escape in a vehicle after the engagement.[23] The IDF stated that the Khazem-led Hamas cell was responsible for conducting shooting and IED attacks in the West Bank and along the West Bank-Israel barrier.[24] The IDF also recovered M4/M16-style rifles, pistols, ammunition, explosive devices and "tens of thousands" of Israeli shekels from the fighter's vehicle.[25] The IDF has killed 20 Palestinian fighters and detained 17 wanted persons in Jenin and Tulkarm in the past 72 hours.[26]

Senior Hamas official Abdel Hakim Hanini confirmed that Hamas is shifting its tactics to conduct suicide attacks targeting Israeli forces and civilians.[27] Hanini claimed that Hamas' return to suicide attacks is a response to Israeli forces and settlers "crossing red lines." [28] Hamas has primarily used rocket attacks to impose costs on the Israeli population over the last two decades. The dwindling Hamas rocket stockpile in the Gaza Strip makes this option less viable, however.[29] Hamas claimed responsibility for the attempted suicide bombing in Tel Aviv on August 18, marking the first such claim since 2008.[30] Senior Hamas official Khaled Meshaal responded to the Israeli counterterrorism operation in the West Bank on August 28 by threatening future suicide bombings in Israel.[31]

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of August 30, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

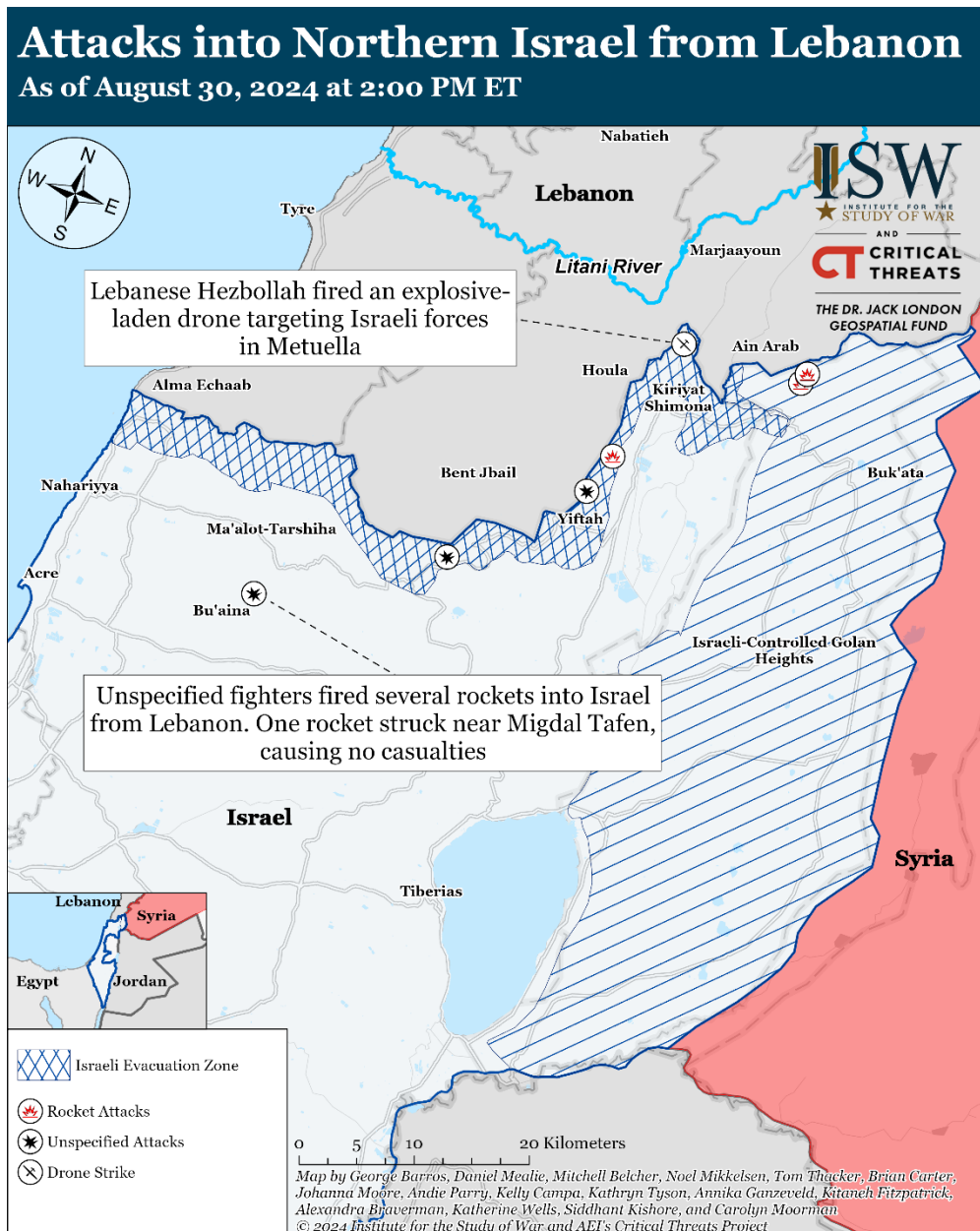
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

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

Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least seven attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 29.[32] The IDF detected “several” rockets targeting Israel from Lebanon, one of which landed in the Upper Galilee region.[33] The IDF reported that there were no casualties. The remaining rockets did not enter Israeli territory. Lebanese Hezbollah has not claimed the attack at the time of this writing.

The IDF 91st Division completed military exercises in the eastern Galilee region on August 26 to increase force readiness on Israel’s northern border.[34] The IDF coordinated the exercise with Israeli police forces, the settlement defense departments, and other unspecified security services.



Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian officials continue to report developments in Iran’s nuclear program. Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) head Mohammad Eslami praised Iran’s nuclear program during his visit to the uranium conversion facility in Esfahan on August 28.[35] Eslami announced Iran will construct two new nuclear plant sites in Khuzestan and Hormozgan provinces.[36] Eslami claimed Iran’s nuclear industry is “excellent and has a world rank.”[37] The Associated Press, citing an unreleased International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, reported on August 29 that Iran’s stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium has increased by 22.6 kilograms (15.90 percent) since the IAEA’s last report in May 2024.[38] These developments follow continued statements from senior Iranian officials since early 2024 that have begun to normalize discussions about Iran’s ability to procure nuclear weapons.[39]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi met with senior Iranian military officials in Tehran on August 29.[40] Araghchi met with Artesh Commander Abdol Rahim Mousavi and IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani to discuss strengthening cooperation between the IRGC and Artesh.

Senior Iranian commanders and officials highlighted Iran’s defensive capabilities against Israel. Semnan Province Artesh Air Defense Commander Colonel Mehdi Fadaei Bashi stated during Friday prayers on August 30 that Iran’s Sayyed 3 long-range surface-to-air missile and new Nasser 40 and Moin 40 radar systems are some of Iran’s “most important [air defense] capabilities.”[41] Assembly of Experts Vice Chairman Hashem Hosseini Bushehri claimed on August 29 that Israel wouldn’t dare to target Iranian skies and stated that Iranian air defenses have a “heavy responsibility.”[42] The Artesh Air Defense Force’s Chief Commander Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard stated that Iran has “upgraded” its air defense capabilities in response to global threats and added that the Air Defense Forces are “carefully monitoring” Israel.[43]

US and coalition forces conducted a live fire training exercise in Deir ez Zor Province in eastern Syria on August 29 and 30.[44] Unverified local Syrian sources separately reported an attack targeting the Conoco Mission Support Site (MSS) in Deir ez Zor Province in eastern Syria on August 30.[45] A Syrian regime-affiliated social media user claimed that unspecified militias fired rockets targeting Conoco MSS, while a Syrian opposition source reported that coalition forces intercepted a one-way attack drone over Conoco MSS.[46] CTP-ISW cannot verify the veracity of these Syrian reports, which are likely misreporting the live fire training exercise.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed a Houthi missile system and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen on August 29.[47]

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