

Iran Update



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The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. CTP-ISW publishes the Iran Update every weekday.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of the ongoing opposition offensive in Syria, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. The Syria map is updated daily alongside the static Syria maps in this report. CTP-ISW ended daily maps of Israeli ground operations in February 2025.

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.

Recent statements from senior Iranian officials about indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States may aim to appeal to several domestic audiences. Iran responded on March 26 to US President Donald Trump's letter proposing nuclear negotiations.[1] Iran signaled openness to indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States but rejected direct negotiations under the current conditions. Senior Iranian officials expressing support for indirect negotiations likely aim to reassure the Iranian public that the regime is willing to take steps to secure economic relief amid Iran's deteriorating economic situation. Senior Iranian officials have, however, heavily caveated that Iran should remain cautious in negotiations. Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani stated on March 28 that Iran's response to Trump's letter is "restrained" and emphasized Iran's readiness to "confront" threats.[2] Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf similarly criticized US attempts to "impose [its] demands" on Iran.[3] Iranian officials have also explicitly rejected any concessions on Iran's missile program or its role in leading the Axis of Resistance.[4] These statements likely aim to appease hardline elements within the regime that oppose negotiations with the West.

Senior Iranian officials who have expressed support for indirect nuclear negotiations may be trying to avoid snapback sanctions. The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reportedly gave Iran a June 2025 deadline to conclude a nuclear deal before the E3 imposes snapback sanctions.[5] The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism allows JCPOA

signatories to reimpose UN Security Council sanctions on Iran in the event of “significant non-performance by Iran of JCPOA commitments.”[6] The snapback mechanism expires in October 2025. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi asked the E3 to “reconsider its approach” towards Iran during a phone call with his British counterpart David Lammy on March 28.[7] A *Wall Street Journal* reporter also reported on March 28 that Iran and the E3 held “technical talks” in Geneva this week.[8] Iranian efforts to signal openness to indirect negotiations and discussions with the E3 likely aim to deter the E3 from triggering the “snapback” mechanism.

Some Iranian officials may also be signaling openness to indirect nuclear negotiations to deter a US-Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran has engaged in a concerted effort since at least January 2025 to shape US-Israeli decision-making and deter a potential military strike on Iran’s nuclear program. A senior Iranian military commander warned in February 2024 that Iran could attack facilities and bases that “assist” an Israeli attack on Iran, likely referring to US bases in Iraq and the Gulf countries.[9] Ghalibaf separately stated on March 28 that US allies and bases in the region “will be as vulnerable as a powder keg” if the United States and Israel threaten Iran.[10] Iran has recently unveiled new missile bases and conducted air defense exercises around nuclear sites, likely to highlight its missile capabilities and prepare for a potential conventional conflict with the United States or Israel.[11] Iran may be signaling a willingness to engage in indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States to further shape US-Israeli decision-making and avoid a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. A senior US official stated on March 25 that Trump’s letter said, “there would be military consequences if there were no direct negotiations.”[12] It is unclear if Iran’s openness to indirect negotiations will fulfill US conditions to avoid military action against Iran’s nuclear program.

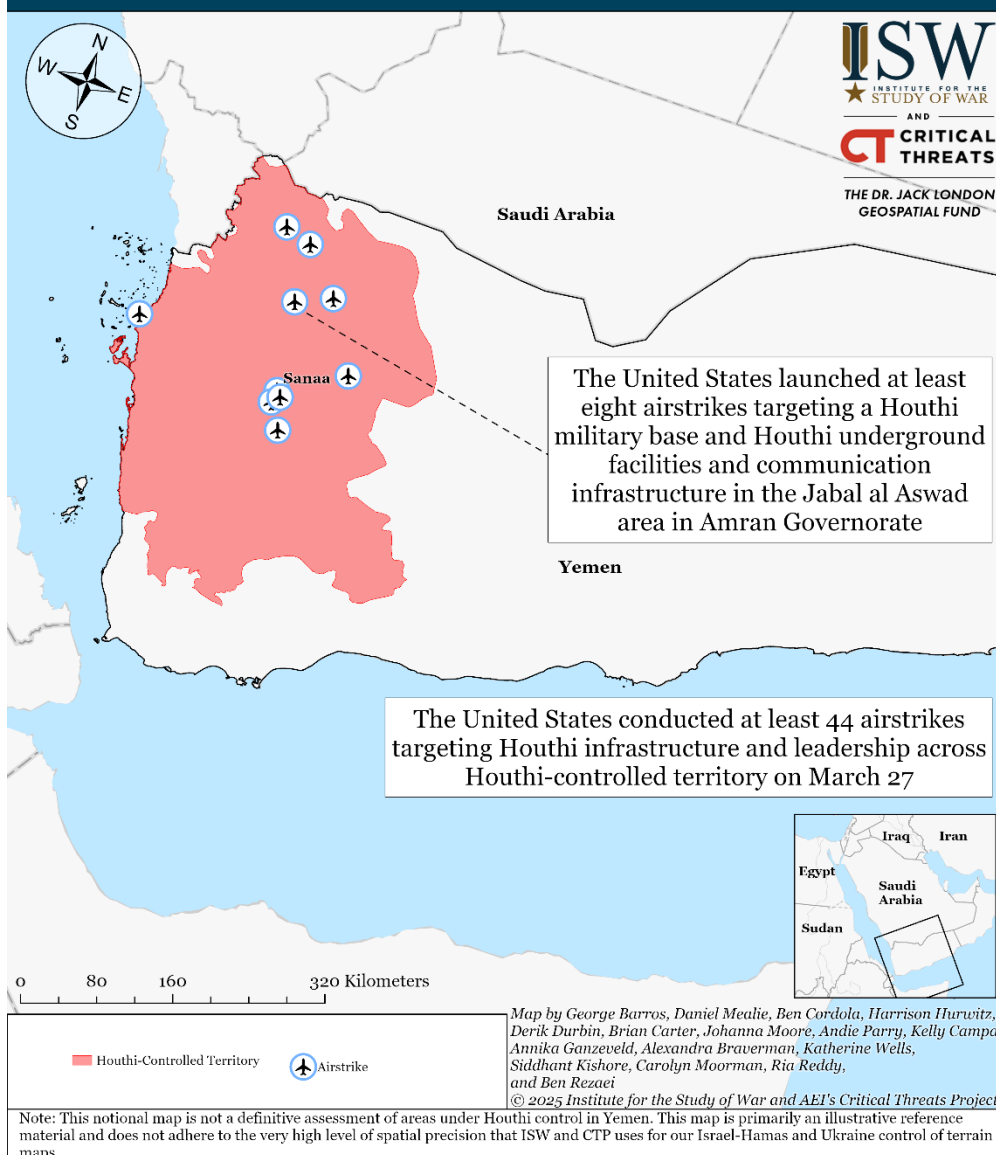
The Houthis recently imposed a travel restriction on all government and private banking employees to prevent them from leaving Houthi-controlled areas after Sanaa-based banks announced that they would relocate to the Yemeni government-controlled Aden, Yemen. [13] The government-controlled Yemeni Central Bank in Aden announced on March 16 that eight Sanaa-based banks will move to Aden to avoid being subject to sanctions after the United States designated the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in January 2025.[14] Remaining in Houthi-controlled areas would risk these banks coming under US sanctions.[15] The Houthis have already arrested five employees at checkpoints as of March 27, according to anonymous sources talking to a Saudi news outlet.[16] The relocation of banks will likely further damage the Houthis’ already unstable economy, which could lead to unrest and weaken the Houthis’ control over these areas in Yemen.

A Houthi-controlled Yemeni Central Bank in Sanaa source claimed on March 21 that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were encouraging Sanaa-based banks to relocate to Aden and that this effort was a violation of the ceasefire, which is an implicit threat to attack Saudi Arabia and the UAE.[17] The Houthis previously threatened to attack Saudi Arabia and the UAE in July 2024 if the two states did not pressure the Yemeni government to stop efforts to remove the Houthi-controlled Central Bank from the SWIFT international banking network.[18] The Houthis’ threats worked, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE convinced the Yemeni government to drop their campaign. The Houthis recognize that Saudi Arabia and the UAE fear a resumption of Houthi attacks targeting key Saudi and Emirati commercial centers.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) conducted at least 44 airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure and leadership in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on March 27.[19] CENTCOM conducted at least eight airstrikes on a Houthi military base and Houthi underground facilities and communication infrastructure in the Jabal al Aswad area, Amran Governorate.[20] CENTCOM also targeted the Houthis' military command headquarters in Sanaa City.[21] Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi denied that CENTCOM's airstrikes have impacted their capabilities in his Quds Day speech on March 27.[22] A published list of dead Houthi fighters released on March 26 indicated that CENTCOM airstrikes killed at least 41 Houthi fighters.[23] The Houthis are unlikely to report the real number of casualties in the CENTCOM airstrikes among their fighters or release the names of Houthi senior officials killed in action. An anonymous US defense official confirmed that CENTCOM has killed several Houthi leaders since the start of their airstrike campaign, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.^[24] The *Wall Street Journal* also reported that Abdulmalik has ordered Houthi leadership to not carry cellphones to avoid being tracked.^[25]

US Strikes Against Houthi Targets

As of March 28, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Some Houthi officials have already begun threatening Saudi Arabia and the UAE, likely as part of an effort to compel Saudi Arabia and the UAE to pressure the United States to halt its airstrikes. A senior Houthi political official condemned the UAE for their cooperation with the United States, threatening to attack Abu Dhabi and Dubai in a post on X on March 27.[26]

A Houthi delegation met with Egyptian intelligence officials in Cairo on March 26, at the Houthis' request, to discuss de-escalating regional tensions, according to anonymous sources speaking to a Saudi news outlet.[27] These Egyptian officials reportedly passed on a message from the United States requesting the Houthis not to pursue an offensive campaign targeting international shipping. The source added that it was unclear if the message mentioned anything about the Israel-Hamas ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The Houthis have consistently linked their attacks on

international shipping and Israel to their support for the Palestinian people.[28] The Houthis halted their attacks when the Israel-Hamas ceasefire was initially implemented in January 2025.[29]

Nationalist Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr announced on March 27 that his Shia National Movement will not participate in the Iraqi parliamentary elections in November 2025.[30] Sadr called on his followers to completely boycott the elections. Sadr urged Sadrists to update their voter registration on February 19, but had refused to announce whether his movement would participate in the elections.[31] Sadr's boycott of the elections is noteworthy given that his movement, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Mohammad al Halbousi's Progress Party previously allied following the 2021 Iraqi Parliamentary elections to exclude Iranian-backed Shia political parties from government formation.[32] The Sadrist political bloc's withdrawal from Parliament in 2022 enabled the Shia Coordination Framework to gain a majority in Parliament.[33] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which are backed by Iran. Sadr maintains significant support in the Iraqi Shia community. His return to politics could have threatened the Shia Coordination Framework's strength in Parliament.

Iraqi politicians are concerned that Sadr's non-involvement in the upcoming elections could destabilize Iraq. Multiple parliamentarians, including from the Iranian-backed Badr Organization, the KDP, and a Turkmen bloc, called on Sadr to reverse his decision on March 28.[34] These calls follow other recent calls for Sadr to participate in the elections from senior Iraqi politicians, including Badr Organization head Hadi al Ameri and Sunni Azm Alliance head Muthanna al Samarra'i.[35] Iraqi media reported on February 20 that the Shia Coordination Framework is publicly supporting Sadr's involvement in the parliamentary elections because Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani called for the participation of all Shia political parties in the political process.[36] Iraqi political leaders across the political spectrum are likely concerned that Sadr could call for protests against governmental corruption if his political party does not participate in the upcoming elections, which would risk destabilizing the country. Sadr has periodically called for protests, including after the 2021 elections.[37] Sadr's supporters and Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) fighters clashed following Sadr's withdrawal from politics in June 2022.[38] Sadr's Saraya al Salam militia also initially supported the October 2019 protests and continued to support the protesters until well after the protest movement caused the collapse of the Adel Abdul Mahdi government.[39]

Continued rocket attacks by unknown actors in Lebanon likely reflect Hezbollah's degradation and its lack of command and control in southern Lebanon. Unknown actors in Lebanon launched two rockets at Kiryat Shmona, northern Israel, on March 28, which is the second rocket attack targeting Israel in the past week.[40] The March 28 attack did not strike Kiryat Shmona.[41] Both Hezbollah and the Lebanese president said that Hezbollah was not responsible.[42] Hezbollah's central leadership is unlikely to approve any attacks targeting Israel, which would risk major Israeli reprisals. Hezbollah faces serious threats to its control, including substantial reconstruction costs that it is having trouble meeting. Israeli airstrikes would only further imperil Hezbollah. The IDF conducted an airstrike that destroyed a Hezbollah drone storage facility in Beirut, Lebanon, in response to the rocket attack.[43] The Israeli campaign in Lebanon badly weakened Hezbollah's military wing in southern Lebanon, destroying approximately 80% of its 40-kilometer range rocket stockpiles and killing many senior commanders.[44]

Rogue Hezbollah fighters or smaller armed factions may have conducted the recent attacks. Attacks from either actor would indicate that Hezbollah is badly degraded in southern Lebanon and lacks command and control there. Hezbollah has historically maintained de facto security control over southern Lebanon and smaller armed factions operating there, and it would be able to prevent these attacks if it were not badly damaged. It has also historically maintained good command and control over its forces, as demonstrated by the carefully calibrated attack campaign into northern Israel between October 2023 and October 2024. That Hezbollah cannot control its fighters or prevent them from conducting these attacks, which risk drawing a devastating Israeli response contrary to Hezbollah's interests, suggests that Hezbollah lacks strong commanders who can discipline their forces.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iranian Nuclear Negotiations:** Recent statements from senior Iranian officials about indirect nuclear negotiations with the United States may aim to appeal to several domestic audiences. Senior Iranian officials who have expressed support for indirect nuclear negotiations may be trying to avoid snapback sanctions. Some Iranian officials may also be signaling openness to indirect nuclear negotiations to deter a US-Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities.
- **Houthi Economy:** The Houthis recently imposed a travel restriction on all government and private banking employees to prevent them from leaving Houthi-controlled areas after Sanaa-based banks announced that they would relocate to the Yemeni government-controlled Aden, Yemen. A Houthi-controlled Yemeni Central Bank in Sanaa source claimed on March 21 that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were encouraging Sanaa-based banks to relocate to Aden and that this effort was a violation of the ceasefire, which is an implicit threat to attack Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- **US Air Campaign Against the Houthis:** US Central Command (CENTCOM) conducted at least 44 airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure and leadership in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on March 27. Some Houthi officials have already begun threatening Saudi Arabia and the UAE, likely as part of an effort to compel Saudi Arabia and the UAE to pressure the United States to halt its airstrikes.
- **Iraqi Politics:** Nationalist Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr announced on March 27 that his Shia National Movement will not participate in the Iraqi parliamentary elections in November 2025. Iraqi politicians are concerned that Sadr's non-involvement in the upcoming elections could destabilize Iraq.
- **Rocket Attacks in Lebanon:** Continued rocket attacks by unknown actors in Lebanon likely reflect Hezbollah's degradation and its lack of command and control in southern Lebanon. Rogue Hezbollah fighters or smaller armed factions may have conducted the recent attacks. Attacks from either actor would indicate that Hezbollah is badly degraded in southern Lebanon and lacks command and control there.

Syria

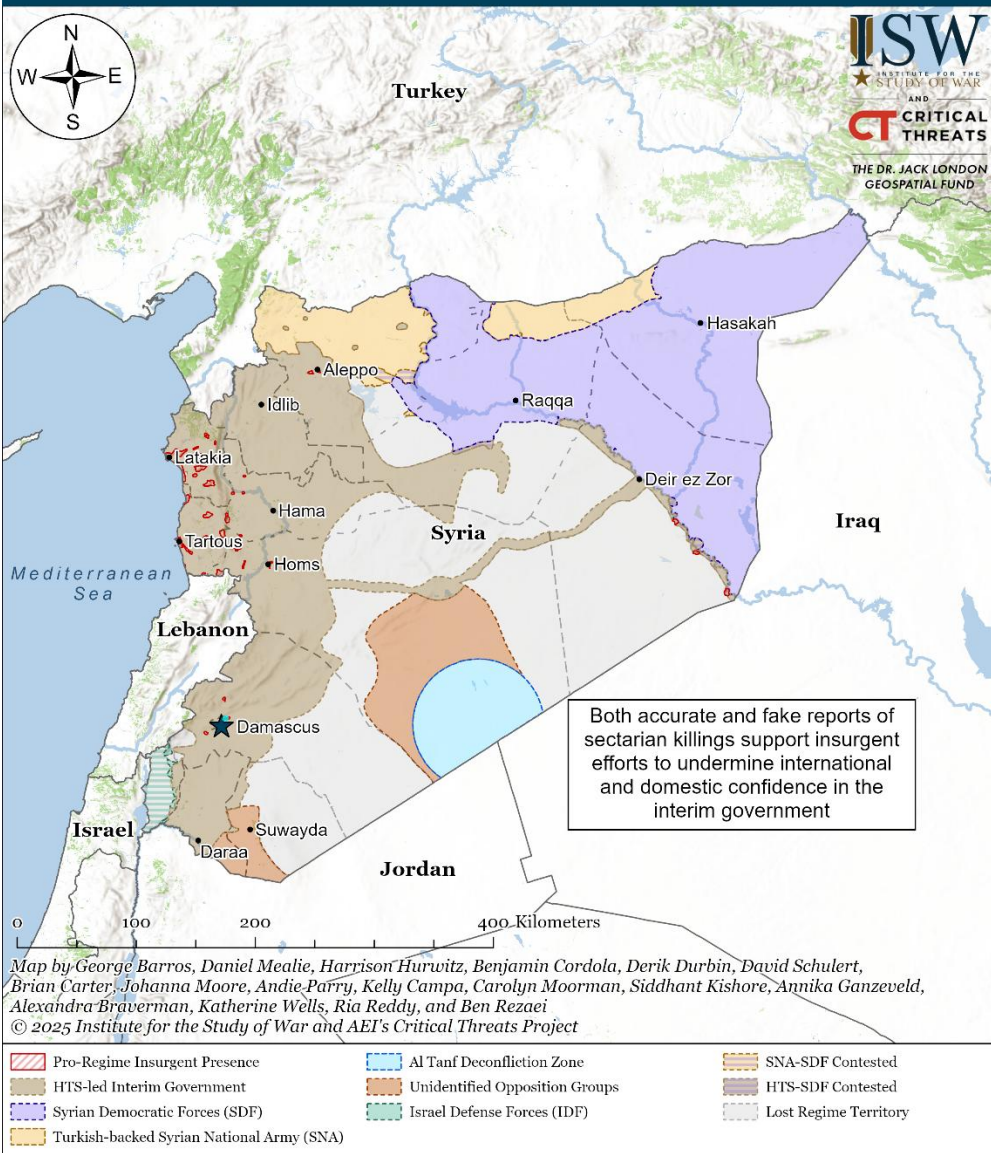
Alawite social media pages are circulating reports of sectarian killings, which knowingly or unknowingly support insurgent efforts to undermine international confidence in the

interim Syrian government. Alawite media reported that interim government forces have conducted multiple attacks on Alawite and Christian civilians in western and southern Syria.[45] Miqdad Fatiha, a key Alawite insurgent leader, said on March 18 that the insurgents sought to conduct sectarian attacks that would trigger reprisals to undermine international confidence in and support for the interim government. It is not immediately clear how many reports about sectarian killings are accurate. Syrian media watchdogs have indicated that some reports are disinformation, while CTP-ISW has verified other sectarian killings.[46]

Both the disinformation and the actual killings support insurgent objectives to erode international and domestic trust in the interim Syrian government. The insurgents likely seek to erode international and domestic trust in the interim government as a way to both build local support among Alawites and limit the government's ability to secure sanctions relief from the West. This would enable the insurgents to replace the government as a legitimate authority, at least in western Syria.[47]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

March 28, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The Syrian interim government reportedly appointed Syrian opposition journalist Mohammad Amin as the new Minister of Information on March 27.[48] Amin previously worked for the pro-Assad newspaper *al Watan* but left Syria in 2011 due to his opposition to the Assad regime and support for the revolution.[49] Amin founded two of his outlets and has contributed to *al Araby al Jadeed*, a Qatari-funded, London-based news outlet.[50] Amin’s appointment, although not yet confirmed by the interim government, is notable given his non-HTS background. At least 18 of the 22 ministers that Syrian interim president Ahmad al Shara appointed in December 2024 have close ties to HTS or deep experience working with Shara.[51]

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the Trump administration hopes to cooperate with Turkey on Syria.[52] Turkey has recently expanded its support for the interim Syrian defense ministry ahead of a possible defense agreement between the two countries.[53] Turkey

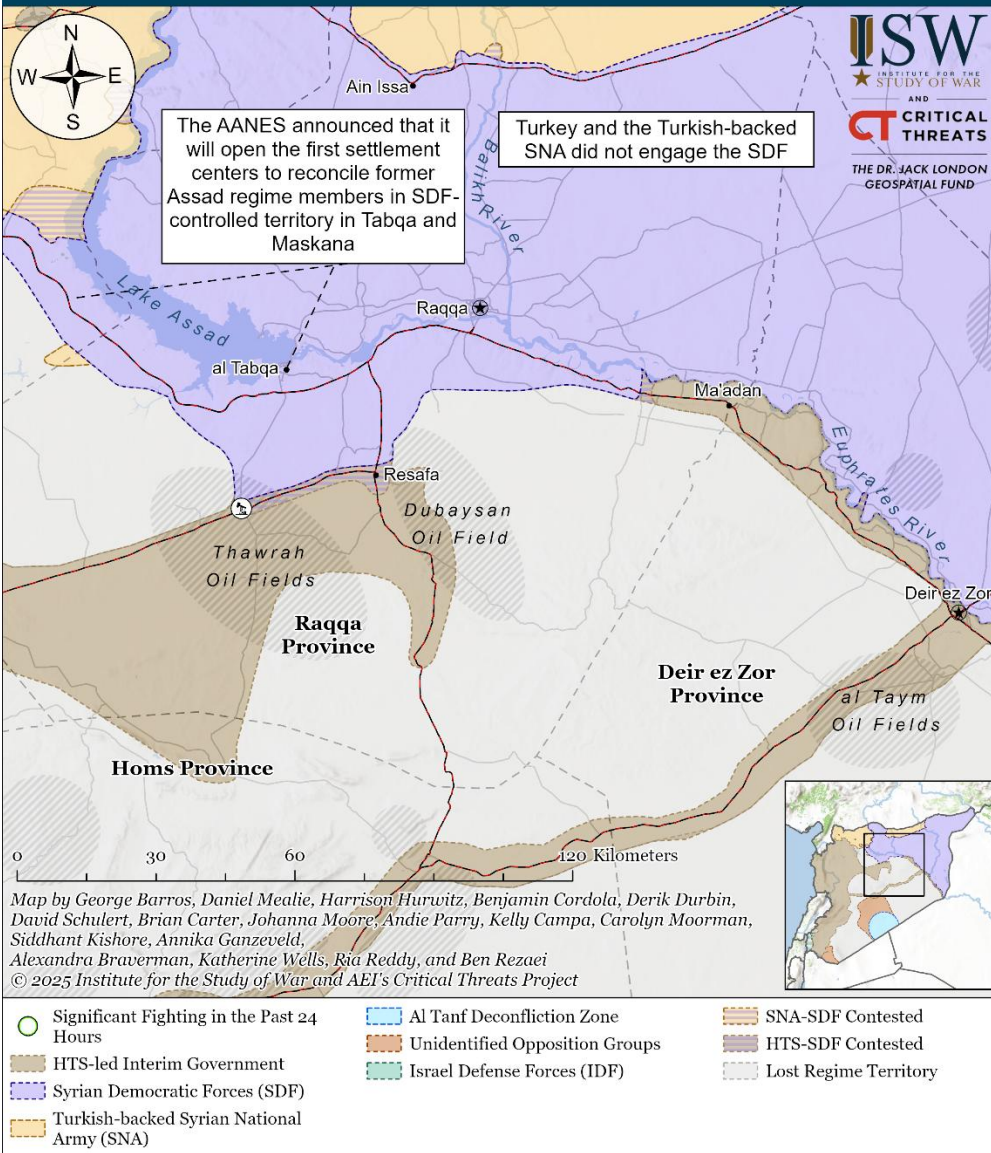
reportedly seeks to establish airbases in Syria to assist the Syrian government for training and capacity-building purposes.[54] Turkey has also transported military equipment and building supplies to construct military positions in areas of Syria held by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA).[55] US support for the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, the bulk of which are People's Defense Units (YPG) fighters, has been a serious sticking point in US-Turkey relations in Syria since the mid-2010s. Turkey has launched multiple military operations against the SDF using the SNA supported by Turkish forces.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed cooperation with Russia to support Syrian stability in a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on March 28.[56] Erdogan and Putin discussed the importance of Turkish-Russian cooperation to ensure Syria's unity, stability, and territorial integrity. A Turkish state media readout of the meeting reported that Erdogan stressed that Russia and Turkey could work together in order to create "lasting peace" in Syria, including by cooperating to lift sanctions on Syria.[57] Turkey and Russia are currently the two countries publicly maneuvering to maintain an active military presence in Syria. Turkey's significant influence within the Syrian interim government, and particularly within the growing Syrian army, will likely require Russia to at least coordinate its efforts to secure Syrian basing rights with Erdogan and Turkey.

Turkey and the Turkish-backed SNA did not engage the SDF on March 28.

Syrian media reported that the AANES announced on March 27 that it will open the first reconciliation centers for former Assad regime members in SDF-controlled territory in northern Syria.[58] The AANES circular stated that reconciliation centers in three neighborhoods in Tabqa, Raqqqa Province, and one center in Maskana, eastern Aleppo Province, will receive former regime members from April 5 to April 25.[59] The interim government has established a reconciliation program under which former regime elements are granted amnesty in exchange for disarmament and registering with the interim government.[60] These centers have also required former regime members to turn in their weapons. The opening of centers in Tabqa and Maskana in SDF-controlled territory comes as the SDF takes steps to integrate the northeast into the central Syrian state.

Assessed Control of Terrain around Raqqa March 28, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



A team from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) visited Syria between March 12 and 21 to prepare to identify and destroy remnants of Assad’s chemical weapons stockpiles.[61] OPCW stated that Syrian authorities provided all possible support and cooperation at short notice and gave inspectors unrestricted access to previously undisclosed production and storage sites.[62] An unidentified diplomatic source stated that the visit confirmed the Syrian interim government’s commitment to working with the international community to destroy any remains of the Assad regime’s chemical arsenal.[63] This visit comes amid recent reports that the United States asked Syria to destroy remaining chemical weapons stockpiles as a condition for easing US sanctions on Syria.[64]

France hosted a presidential summit via Zoom on March 28 that included Syrian President Ahmed al Shara, French President Emmanuel Macron, Lebanese President

Joseph Aoun, Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.[65] The summit covered shared security challenges such as Syrian reform efforts, border security, economic sanctions, and Israeli military action.[66] Shara highlighted Syria's security concerns on its southern border and warned that Israeli presence on Syrian territory poses a "permanent threat to peace in the region." [67] Shara also stressed the importance of lifting economic sanctions on Syria.[68] Macron emphasized the need to support Syrian efforts to combat terrorism.[69]

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and French President Emmanuel Macron spoke on the phone with Syrian President Ahmed al Shara during a meeting between Aoun and Macron in Paris to discuss regional developments on March 28.[70] Aoun requested French assistance in developing a plan to facilitate the return of displaced Syrians from Lebanon to Syria.[71]

The Syrian and Lebanese Defense Ministers signed an agreement on March 28 to demarcate the Syria-Lebanon border following negotiations in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.[72] Lebanese media reported that the agreement also establishes specialized committees to develop security coordination mechanisms to deconflict between Lebanese and Syrian forces.[73] Syrian forces fought Hezbollah-affiliated smugglers in Hawsh al Sayyid Ali, Homs Province, on the Syria-Lebanon border between March 16 and 18.[74] Syrian forces reportedly conducted clearing operations in border towns and shelled Lebanese villages during the operations along the border.[75] The Lebanese Armed Forces have reportedly closed 17 illegal crossings on the Lebanon-Syria border since March 18.[76]

Iraq

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Strengthen Iranian and Axis of Resistance influence over the Iraqi state and society
- Harden the Iraqi government against internal dissent

Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Mohammad Kazem al Sadiq said in an interview on March 27 that US President Donald Trump's recent letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei urged Iran to dissolve the Iranian-backed Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and other Iranian-backed groups in the region.[77] Sadiq added that this request was "unacceptable" to both Iran and Iraq. Sadiq is a former member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force.[78] Khamenei told Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani that the PMF must be "further strengthened and preserved" during a meeting in Tehran on January 8.[79] Sudani separately denied in an interview on March 27 that the US told the Iraqi federal government to dissolve the PMF.[80] The United States has repeatedly pressured the Iraqi federal government to dissolve and disarm the PMF and has reportedly threatened to sanction PMF leaders.[81] Sadiq and Sudani's interviews come as the Iraqi parliament debates the Popular Mobilization Authority Law, which designates the PMF as a "parallel military force" alongside the Iraqi army and stipulates that senior PMF officials will receive high-level positions in the Iraqi federal government.[82]

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

Omani customs detained a Yemeni citizen at Sarfait crossing on the Yemen-Omani border on March 27, attempting to smuggle three drones and drone equipment, possibly for the Houthis.[83] Yemeni media also reported on March 24 that Yemeni border customs seized 800 Chinese-made drone propellers in a shipment bound for the Houthis at the Sarfait border crossing with Oman in southeastern Yemen.[84] The Houthis traditionally smuggle these shipments through the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and through land borders, particularly from the Omani-Yemeni border via the Yemeni government-controlled Mahra and Hadramawt governorates in eastern Yemen.[85]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

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
- Rebuild and reestablish Hezbollah in southern Lebanon
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned five Lebanon-based individuals and three companies associated with Hezbollah's "finance team" on March 28.[86] Hezbollah's finance team manages numerous commercial projects and oil smuggling networks likely "in conjunction" with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force to generate and transfer revenue for Hezbollah, according to the Treasury readout.[87]

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas's military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

The Iranian rial depreciated from 1,032,000 rials to one US dollar on March 27 to 1,042,000 rials to one US dollar on March 28.[88]

Jaish al Adl fighters killed an Iranian Law Enforcement Command officer during a clash in Iran Shahr, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on March 28.[89] Jaish al Adl is a Salafi-

jihadi Balochi armed group in southeastern Iran and Pakistan that has been behind an uptick in anti-regime militancy in southeastern Iran since December 2023.

Senior Iranian officials delivered speeches on March 28 for the annual Quds Day rally, repeating anti-Israel rhetoric and framing the event as a show of internal unity and defiance against Israel and the United States.[90] Quds Day is an annual Iranian-established anti-Israel celebration that occurs on the last Friday of Ramadan.[91] Senior officials, including President Masoud Pezeshkian, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri, and IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani, attended the rally.[92] Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei separately stated that Quds Day shows Iran’s unity and firm support for its objectives, including supporting Palestine.[93]

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.

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.

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