

Iran Update



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March 31, 2025

Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

Iran continues to threaten the United States with military action to dissuade the United States from a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities amid new US threats to strike the nuclear facilities. US President Donald Trump stated on March 30 that “there will be a bombing” if Iran does not make a new nuclear deal.[1] Trump added that he would impose secondary tariffs on Iran if Iran made no progress towards a deal.[2] Secondary tariffs would impose sanctions on countries that trade with Iran. US officials have previously threatened military action against Iran if there were no direct negotiations.[3] Iranian officials have said they are open to indirect negotiations, though they reject direct negotiations with the United States.[4] Senior Iranian officials have also repeatedly threatened to strike US interests in the region since at least January 2025, likely to shape US decision-making and discourage a US or Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear program.[5] An unspecified senior Iranian military official told *the Telegraph* on March 29 that Iran would attack any base “used by Americans” to attack Iran.[6] Iranian threats to attack US allies in the region may aim to discourage allies from allowing the United States to use their facilities out of fear of Iranian retaliation.

Iranian officials have recently threatened the following responses to a US-Israeli strike on Iran. These courses of action are not mutually exclusive.

- **Attack US bases and forces:** Iranian officials have repeatedly explicitly threatened to attack US bases and forces in the region in recent months.[7] An unspecified senior Iranian military official told Western media on March 29 that Iran would target Diego Garcia Island in the Indian Ocean if the United States attacked Iran.[8] The United States has recently increased its military presence at Diego Garcia Island, according to commercially available satellite imagery.[9] An anonymous official also told *Tehran Times* that Iran's missile launchers at its underground bases are loaded with missiles and “ready for launch.”[10] Iran's reported current maximum missile range is 2000 kilometers (km), and its reported maximum drone range is around 2500km.[11] Diego Garcia Island is located about 3700km from Iran's southernmost city, Pasabandar. Iran would need to significantly decrease the payload of the warhead on its medium-range missiles or otherwise decrease missile weight to launch a successful attack on Diego Garcia. Iran could target other US facilities in the region if it chose to do so. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Air Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh threatened on March 31 that US bases in the region are “sitting in a glass house” near Iran.[12]

Reported Maximum Range of Iranian Medium Range Ballistic Missiles



- **Disrupt international trade:** IRGC Navy Commander Admiral Alireza Tangsiri suggested on March 29 that Iran may close the Strait of Hormuz if the United States and Israel attack Iran.[13] Tangsiri also threatened to seize ships if Iranian ships were seized.
- **Conduct a direct attack on Israel:** Senior Iranian military commanders have recently resurfaced threats to conduct another missile attack on Israel.[14] Iran unveiled its latest precision-guided ballistic missile called the “Etemad” in February 2025.[15] Iranian media referred to the missile as the “Israeli ballistic missile” because it can reportedly hit key targets across Israel.[16] Iran's stockpile of medium-range missiles, or missiles that can reach Israel, has been severely depleted following the April and October 2024 Israeli airstrikes on Iran, however.

Iranian officials have publicly stated that they are unwilling to make concessions to reach a new nuclear deal with the United States under President Trump's desired timeline or terms. Iranian sources stated that Trump’s March 5 letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei included demands that Iran curtail its missile program and its role in supporting its proxies and partners in the Axis of Resistance.[17] A senior Iranian military official stated on March 29 that Iran will “never negotiate” on its missiles or the “capabilities” of the Axis of Resistance.[18] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran is unlikely to agree to curtail its missile program or the Axis of Resistance because to do so would cause it to lose the primary means with which it seeks to expel the United States from the region and establish itself as the regional hegemon. An unspecified senior Iranian source separately told a UK-based, Gulf-linked outlet that Trump's letter refers to the “zero enrichment” approach.[19] It remains unclear if Iran is willing to reverse significant progress on its nuclear program to meet the terms. Western media also reported in mid-March that Trump's letter set a two-month deadline to reach a new nuclear deal.[20] Prior negotiations for the 2015 nuclear deal, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), took 20 months to negotiate.

Iran is likely rebuilding its solid-fuel propellant stocks after Israeli strikes damaged key production sites in October 2024.[21] The sanctioned Iranian cargo vessel *Jairan*, which is carrying sodium perchlorate, a chemical used to make solid missile fuel, arrived near Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, around March 29.[22] Marine Traffic and Maritime Executive confirmed that the *Jairan*, one of two Iranian Shipping Lines (IRISL) vessels sanctioned for transporting missile materials, is waiting near the Gheshm and Hormoz islands. Western officials told *The Financial Times* in January 2025 that *Golbon* and *Jairan* would deliver over 1,100 tons of sodium perchlorate to Iran.[23] The IRGC’s Self Sufficiency Jihad Organization (SSJO), which partially oversees Iran’s missile research and development, received most of the shipment offloaded by *Golbon* on February 13.[24] Israeli strikes in October 2024 damaged three major long-range missile production sites in Iran, including the Shahroud Military Site in Semnan Province and the Khojir and Parchin complexes in Tehran Province.[25] The transfer of the *Jairan*’s cargo to one of these locations would suggest that Iran is trying to rebuild its long-range missile production capabilities after the Israeli strikes. Iran could also transfer the sodium perchlorate to a facility that produces short-range ballistic missiles.

Iran continues to coordinate with Russia and China on nuclear issues. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi met with Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexey Dedov in Tehran on March 31 to discuss nuclear talks and sanctions relief.[26]

Gharibabadi said Iran, Russia, and China will continue trilateral meetings and that Russia invited him to a UN Charter group meeting in Moscow in mid-April. The meeting follows a March 14 joint statement from Russia, China, and Iran that condemned US sanctions and described Iran's nuclear activities as "peaceful."^[27] It remains unclear what Iran hopes to gain from this coordination or how Russia and China plan to support Tehran under growing US pressure. CTP-ISW previously assessed that Russia is unlikely to secure US interests through mediation, particularly in talks on Iran's nuclear program and support of the Axis of Resistance.^[28]

Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara appointed loyalists to key cabinet positions in the new transitional government while nominally broadening his ruling coalition by appointing several minorities and technocrats to less-critical ministries. Shara announced the appointments of 23 transitional ministers to his cabinet during a press conference on March 29.^[29] These ministers are expected to remain in power until the transitional government cedes power to a new, elected government after a five-year interim period.^[30] Shara replaced the majority of former interim ministers with new appointments and appointed one woman, one Christian, one Alawite, one Druze, and two Kurds to lead ministries within his government.^[31] Shara also appointed nine "independent" ministers, including various professionals, former activists, and former Assad-era ministers who served in their positions before the civil war.^[32] He also dismissed the former interim justice minister, who was an ex-Jabhat al Nusra official.^[33] These are undoubtedly positive steps towards a representative transitional government, but Shara still prioritized maintaining his control over key ministries such as defense, interior, foreign affairs, and justice by appointing Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS)-affiliated officials or former HTS-controlled Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) officials to these posts.^[34] He also appointed former HTS and SSG officials to the less important ministries of energy, local administration and environment, public works and housing, youth and sports, and administrative development.^[35] The decision to expand his transitional cabinet to include minorities and "newcomers" follows widespread concern that Shara is personalizing power and appointing loyalists while blocking opportunities to represent Syria's various minority communities in the transitional government.^[36] Shara previously appointed a cabinet nearly entirely composed of bureaucrats that formerly served in the Idlib-based SSG.^[37]

Shara's appointments of long-time loyalists to key positions suggest Shara hopes to continue to maintain his own and HTS's influence within the transitional government. Shara has appointed or reappointed close advisers and allies from HTS to oversee portfolios directly concerning internal security and state stability. Shara has retained two of his most trusted advisers, Major General Marhaf Abu Qasra and Asaad al Shaibani, as ministers of defense and foreign affairs, respectively.^[38] Former al Qaeda in Iraq and Jabhat al Nusra member Anas Khattab has transitioned from intelligence chief to Interior Minister, where he will oversee the state's General Security Services, border control, and intelligence services.^[39] The United States and the UN sanctioned Khattab in 2012 and 2014, respectively, for his association with AQI.^[40] It is not clear if or who Shara will appoint to directly oversee Syrian intelligence services, given the expansion of Khattab's role. Shara also appointed "key HTS ideologue" and Sunni scholar Mazhar al Wais as his Justice Minister.^[41] Arab media has reported that Wais has served as a "senior legal figure" in HTS and has accompanied Shara to numerous high-level meetings without having been appointed to an official role.^[42] Shara's decision to position these loyalists in these roles will enable him to shape the trajectory of the Syrian government and its security services, which could allow him to maintain his rule well into the future. Qasra, Shaibani,

Khattab, and Wais's appointments suggest that Shara intends to maintain significant control over ministries that directly concern internal security and state stability, and it could enable him to sideline rivals as he did during his rule of Idlib.

Shara notably did not place visible loyalists in ministries that would allow Syrian Islamists to remake Syrian society in their image. Shara has allowed non-HTS officials to lead ministries that directly influence Syrian society, including education, information, communications, and religious endowments.[43] These ministries—particularly education—can be used to remake the next generation of a country by altering textbooks. The Assad regime and other Middle Eastern autocratic regimes—like the Houthis in Yemen and ISIS—have created educational materials to brainwash the next generation. Shara probably recognized that placing loyalists or ideologues in these roles would have earned him significant international blowback and created more challenges for his effort to remove sanctions. Shara could still employ a “supervisory” system in which deputy ministers make the decisions and hold the real power while the minister serves as a figurehead.

Shara's new transitional government is unlikely to assuage fears from minority communities about the future of minority representation in the transitional government and the trajectory of Shara's rule. Shara's clear preference for Sunni Arabs, the very few minorities, and the lack of appointees from other strong Syrian parties like the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) or Kurdish National Council (KNC) has already led several minority-dominated groups to condemn his “one-party government.”[44] The Alawite community, for its part, remains deeply fearful of the new transitional government after the recent coastal massacres. The SDC decried the new government as “largely homogenous.”[45] A KNC official told Kurdish media that the KNC “will not participate in a government that does not recognize the rights of the Kurdish people.”[46] The official warned that the Kurds have been ignored for the “third time,” likely referring to widespread Kurdish criticism over exclusion from the National Dialogue Conference, the drafting of the constitutional declaration, and the recent appointments.[47] Fear among key Kurdish powerbrokers that Shara will continue to exclude their parties from a voice in his government's formation risks disrupting the Syrian interim government's efforts to integrate the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) into the Syrian state.

The separatist Druze-majority Suwayda Military Council (SMC) also rejected Shara's “one-color” government during a press conference on March 30.[48] The group called on Shara to form a government that “represents all Syrian components.”[49] The SMC is a group of Druze fighters who were previously aligned with the Assad regime.[50] A Western analyst recently reported that it is “well known” within the Druze community that the SMC has connections to Israel through members of the Israeli Druze community.[51] It does not appear that the SMC represents a majority of the Syrian Druze population. That multiple camps across Syria continue to reject Shara's transitional government will not help grow the government's legitimacy, however.

Shara appointed fifteen members to the Supreme Fatwa Council via presidential decree on March 28.[52] Shara's decree said that the council would issue new fatwas on new developments, explain Sharia rulings on cases that are referred to the council, appoint muftis and fatwa committees in Syrian provinces, and supervise fatwa centers in the provinces.[53] The Supreme Council of Fatwa will rule on decisions by majority vote, and Shara will vote as a tiebreaker if needed.[54] HTS established a

Supreme Fatwa Council in Idlib in 2019 that Shara effectively controlled and used to sideline his hardline Islamist rivals.[55] Shara's ability to use the council against his rivals will depend on his level of influence over a majority of its council members. Several notable HTS-affiliated scholars, including Sheikh Abdul Rahim Atun, former HTS-backed Supreme Fatwa Council member Anas Ayrut, and new Minister of Justice Mazhar al Wais, sit on the new council.[56]

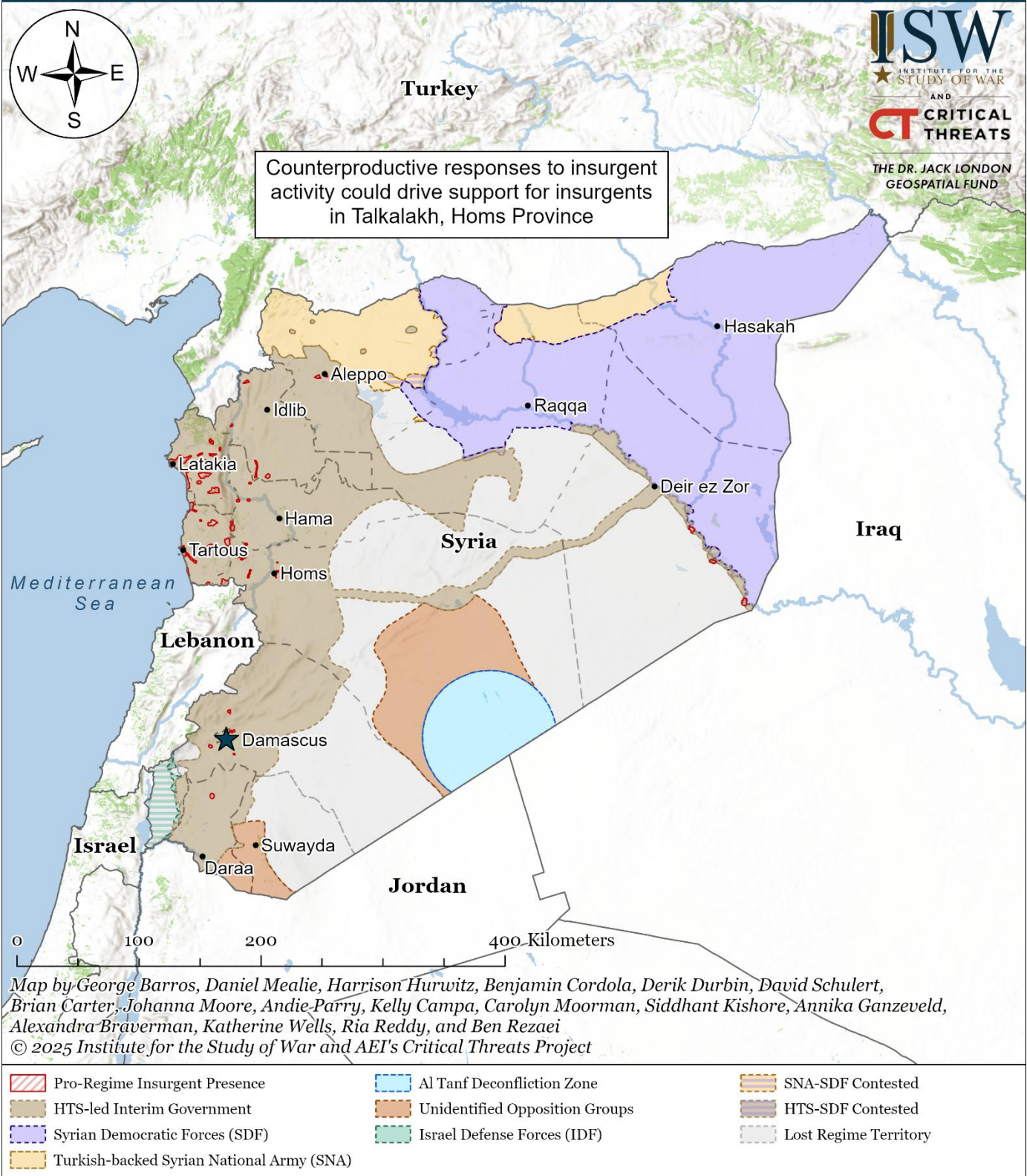
Shara appointed Sheikh Osama al Rifai as the council's chairman.[57] The Syrian Islamic Council, which was a body of Sunni Islamic scholars that opposed the Assad regime, appointed Rifai as the Grand Mufti in Syria in 2021 after the regime abolished the office.[58] Rifai has connections to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Muslim Brotherhood.[59]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iranian Nuclear Program:** Iran continues to threaten the United States with military action to dissuade the United States from a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities amid new US threats to strike the nuclear facilities. US President Donald Trump stated on March 30 that "there will be a bombing" if Iran does not make a new nuclear deal. Iranian officials also threatened to attack US allies enabling a strike, may aim to discourage allies from allowing the United States to use their facilities out of fear of Iranian retaliation. Iran has explicitly identified three possible responses to an attack on its nuclear facilities: retaliation against US bases and forces in the region, disruption of international trade in the Straits of Hormuz, and another attack on Israel.
- **Iranian Ballistic Missiles:** Iran is likely rebuilding its solid fuel propellant stocks after Israeli strikes damaged key production sites in October 2024. Iran will presumably need to transport new solid fuel precursors to its production facilities. The transfer of the Jairan's cargo to a production facility used to produce long-range missiles would suggest that Iran is trying to rebuild its long-range missile production capabilities after the Israeli strikes. Iran could also transfer the sodium perchlorate to a facility that produces short-range ballistic missiles.
- **Syrian Transitional Government:** Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara appointed loyalists to key cabinet positions in the new transitional government while nominally broadening his ruling coalition by appointing several minorities and technocrats to less-critical ministries. Shara notably did not place visible loyalists in ministries that would allow Syrian Islamists to remake Syrian society in their image. Shara has allowed non-HTS officials to lead ministries that directly influence Syrian society, including education, information, communications, and religious endowments.
- **Syrian Supreme Fatwa Council:** Shara appointed fifteen members to the Supreme Fatwa Council via presidential decree on March 28. Shara's decree said that the council would issue new fatwas on new developments, explain Sharia rulings on cases that are referred to the council, appoint muftis and fatwa committees in Syrian provinces, and supervise fatwa centers in the provinces.

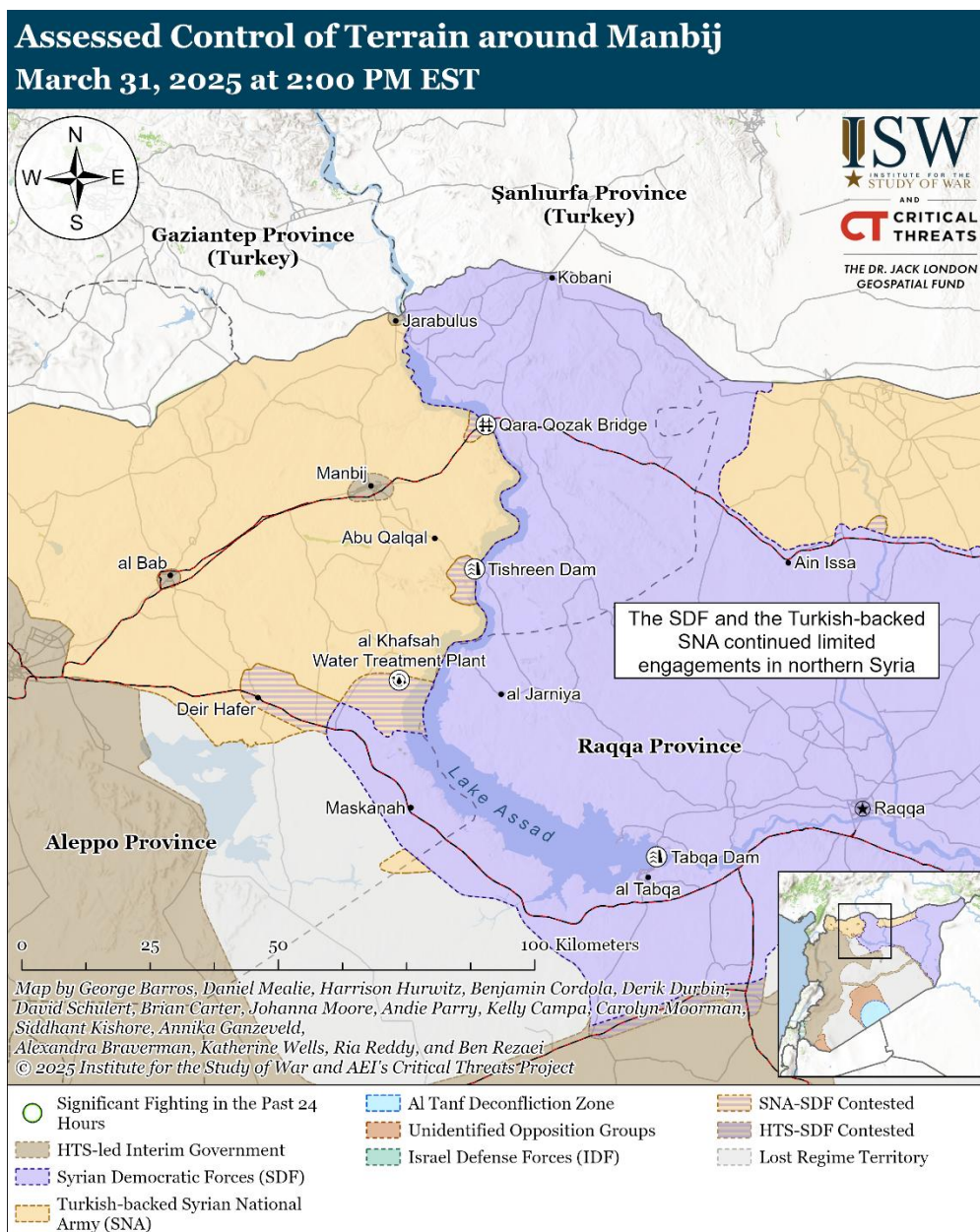
Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

March 31, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Syria

The SDF and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army have continued limited engagements in northern Syria since March 28. The SDF reportedly attempted to advance on SNA positions along the western bank of the Euphrates River near Tishreen Dam on March 29.[60] The pace of engagements has declined between Turkish-backed forces and the SDF along these lines of contact since early March. Turkish airstrikes targeting the SDF have also declined. A Democratic Union Party (PYD) foreign relations co-chair said on March 30 that "serious efforts" are ongoing to reach a ceasefire between the SDF and Turkey.[61] The SDF and Syrian interim government reached an initial ceasefire in early March that would place the SDF under the Defense Ministry.[62] Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Russian President Vladimir Putin on March 28 that he supports integrating the SDF into the Syrian Defense Ministry.[63]



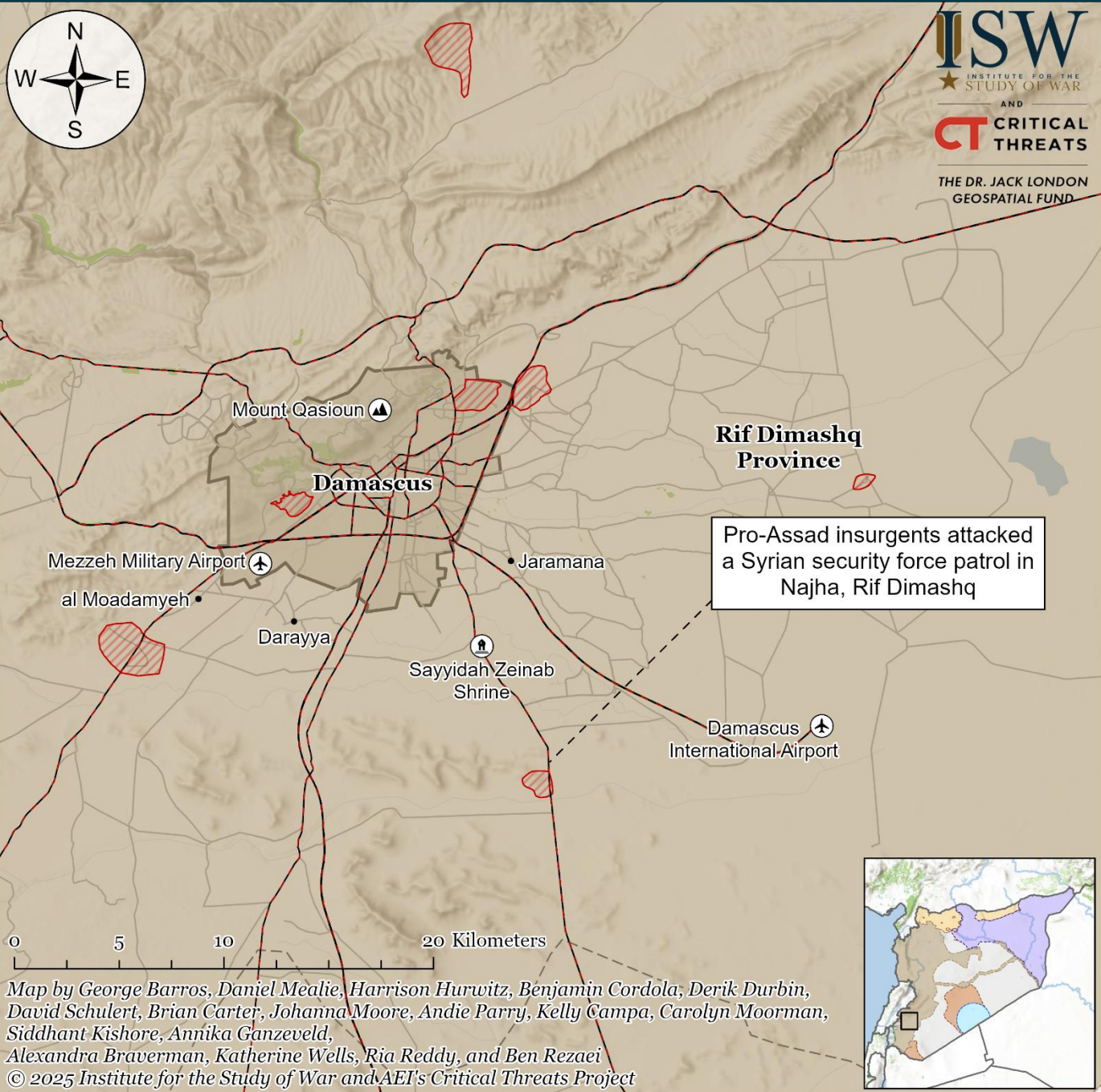
The Suwayda Military Council (SMC) announced its objectives and various units on March 30, indicating that the SMC is developing a formalized, organized structure.[64]

The SMC is a group of Druze fighters who were previously aligned with the Assad regime, and some Druze sources in Suwayda claim that Israel is supporting the SMC.[65] An unspecified SMC commander announced on March 30 that the SMC is comprised of sixteen units, including a Special Tasks Brigade, a Political Bureau, an Artillery Department, an Administrative and Financial Department, an Organizational Department, and an Anti-Terrorism Battalion.[66] The unidentified commander stated that the Military Council's tasks are "clear and fixed," including ensuring security in Suwayda, preserving unity, establishing a safe environment that guarantees freedoms, and coordinating with all national and international forces that "seek to achieve the interest of Syrians." [67] This announcement follows the March 21 attack by SMC members on Military Council leader Colonel Tariq al Shoufi's home in Suwayda Province due to delayed salary payments.[68] Shoufi stated that he did not agree to pay salaries and that the SMC has not fully formalized into a structure that would require him to compensate members.[69] The SMC does not have a formal relationship with the interim Syrian government and rejected the interim government cabinet announced on March 29.[70]

Pro-Assad insurgents have continued attacks on interim Syrian government forces since March 28. Former Assad regime members attacked a police station in Latakia City on March 29.[71] Former Assad regime members separately attacked a Syrian security force patrol in Najha, south of Damascus, on March 30.[72] Security forces killed two of the attackers.[73] Interim Syrian government forces then executed a cordon-and-search operation in Najha.[74]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Damascus

March 31, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Harrison Hurwitz, Benjamin Cordola, Derik Durbin, David Schulert, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Carolyn Moorman, Siddhant Kishore, Annika Ganzeveld, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei
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Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours	Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA)	SNA-SDF Contested
Pro-Regime Insurgent Presence	Al Tanf Deconfliction Zone	HTS-SDF Contested
HTS-led Interim Government	Unidentified Opposition Groups	Lost Regime Territory
Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)	Israel Defense Forces (IDF)	

Intelligence from local informants enabled a government raid targeting a weapons and explosives storage site in al Waer, Homs City, suggesting that the insurgents have little to no support in al Waer.[75] Forces acting on the tip from locals raided a weapons warehouse used by pro-Assad insurgents.[76] Forces seized small arms ammunition and RPGs that insurgents could have used in an attack.[77] The Assad regime besieged al Waer during the Syrian Civil War, so, unsurprisingly, local residents would be unwilling to support insurgents who support the former regime or its structures. Accurate, actionable intelligence from the locals suggests that al Waer is a relatively non-permissive environment for the insurgents, who would need to secure at least tacit acquiescence to their activities to establish a base of operations. The insurgents' ability to investigate the leak and track down the informant will be a strong indicator of their relative power in western Homs City.

The insurgents may have been using al Waer as a temporary way station to move weapons into the city rather than a long-term stockpile. The seized cache was relatively small, and al Waer is located on the western outskirts of Homs City just north of the M1 Highway that connects Homs and the Alawite-majority coastal provinces. This would make it a logical waypoint between the Alawite-majority areas and Homs City's center, and the small cache is likely reflective of a small shipment designed to be moved quickly.

Counterproductive government operations could threaten to drive support for insurgents in Talkalakh, Homs Province. Syrian government security forces deployed to Talkalakh, west of Homs City, on March 30 in response to an insurgent attack that killed two Syrian soldiers.[78] Local footage circulated on Syrian media appeared to show individuals who had been beaten or killed by government forces during clearing operations in Talkalakh.[79] Pro-Assad insurgents have conducted attacks on interim government forces in Talkalakh since the Assad regime fell in December 2024.[80] Heavy-handed operations will further alienate and inspire fear within the local population. Insurgents very likely seek to trigger violent government reprisals to generate support for the insurgency.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Syria

March 31, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Harrison Hurwitz, Benjamin Cordola, Derik Durbin, David Schulert, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Carolyn Moorman, Siddhant Kishore, Annika Ganzeveld, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei
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| Significant Fighting in the Past 24 Hours | Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) | SNA-SDF Contested |
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| HTS-led Interim Government | Unidentified Opposition Groups | Lost Regime Territory |
| Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) | Israel Defense Forces (IDF) | |

Reports of violence against Alawites continue to permeate across Syrian media, fueling distrust and fear among the Alawite community. These reports will continue to fuel support for the majority Alawite insurgent movements regardless of their veracity. Two interim Syrian government soldiers assassinated the chief of Harf al Benmira and five other men present in his home on March 31.[81] The local Syrian security force commander reported that the perpetrators were from a police unit and that they had been arrested.[82] Arrests are insufficient to maintain the trust of the population unless the perpetrators are also charged and imprisoned through a fair and transparent judicial process. Locals separately discovered the bodies of 11 executed Alawites dumped in the Jouber River, Baniyas City, Tartous Province, on March 31.[83] Pro-Alawite media accused interim government forces of the sectarian attack.[84] The informational effect generated by these reports fuels a cycle of distrust among the Alawite community, which discourages cooperation with the interim government. This would enable the insurgents to replace the government as a legitimate authority, at least in western Syria.[85]

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

Several Iraqi Shia tribes have announced that they will boycott the November 2025 parliamentary elections after Iraqi nationalist Shia cleric Muqtada al Sadr announced on March 27 that his Shia National Movement would not participate in the elections.[86] The Bani Tamim, Bani Kaab, Bani Lam, and al Sawaed tribes, among others, announced on March 28 and 29 that they would boycott the elections.[87] Some of these tribes, including Bani Tamim and Bani Kaab, previously participated in pro-Sadr demonstrations in Baghdad in August 2022.[88] Sadr withdrew from politics in August 2022 amid political deadlock after the October 2021 parliamentary elections.[89] CTP-ISW previously assessed that some Iraqi politicians are concerned that Sadr's boycott of the upcoming elections could destabilize Iraq.[90]

The leader of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq, Qais al Khazali, called on the Iraqi federal government to confront the “events in Syria,” likely referring to recent sectarian violence in coastal Syria.[91] Khazali was likely referring to attacks committed by Syrian interim government forces against Alawites, although the recent sectarian violence in Syria was committed by both Alawites and Sunnis and began when pro-Assad insurgents attacked interim government forces in early March 2025.[92] Khazali claimed that Israel, the United States, and an unspecified Arab country seek to divide Syria and warned that the situation in Syria poses a “direct and dangerous threat” to Iraq.[93] CTP-ISW previously assessed that sectarian violence in Syria could spill over into Iraq.[94]

Khazali separately criticized Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani for removing the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Law from the parliamentary agenda on March 12, describing the removal of the law as a “crime.”[95] The PMF Law would remove Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh from his post. Khazali accused Sudani of removing the law from parliament to protect Fayyadh.

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

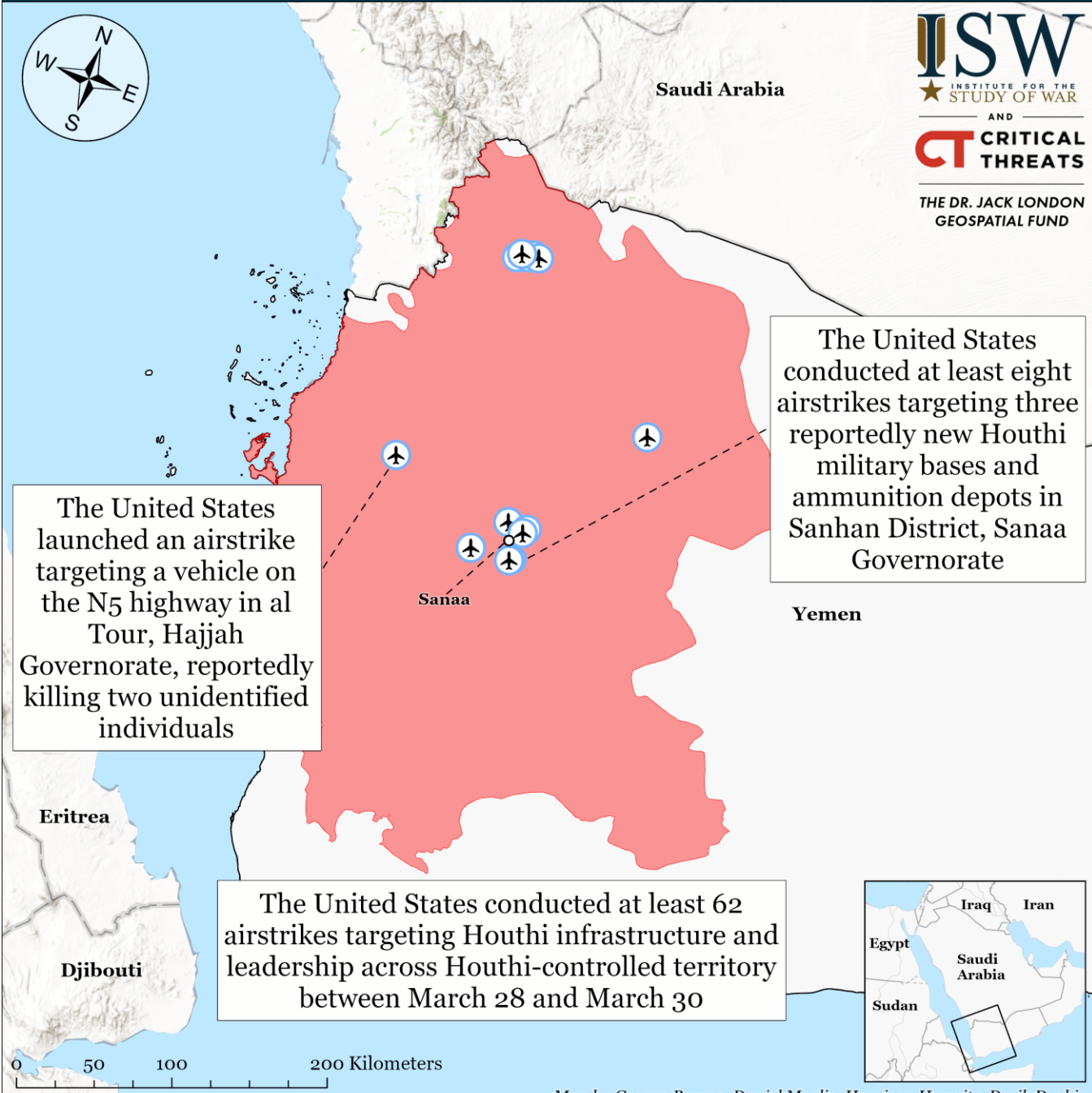
US Central Command (CENTCOM) conducted at least 62 airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure and leadership in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on March 28.[96] CENTCOM conducted at least eight airstrikes targeting three reportedly new Houthi military bases and ammunition depots in Sanhan District, Sanaa Governorate, on March 28.[97] CENTCOM also targeted the Houthis' government complex in Hazm City, al Jawf Governorate, on March 28.[98]

CENTCOM likely killed Houthi leaders in an airstrike that targeted a vehicle in the Hajjah government on March 30. An airstrike targeting a lone vehicle is usually intended to eliminate a significant enemy leader rather than individual low-ranking fighters. CENTCOM struck the vehicle on the N5 highway in al Tour, Hajjah Governorate, northwestern Yemen, reportedly killing two unidentified individuals.[99]

Senior Houthi officials recently acknowledged that CENTCOM airstrikes have killed Houthi fighters but also denied that CENTCOM's airstrikes have impacted their missile and drone production capabilities.[100] The Houthis conducted three combined missile and drone attacks targeting the USS *Harry S. Truman* aircraft carrier and US destroyers in the Red Sea between March 29 and March 30.[101] The attack did not succeed, and CENTCOM did not acknowledge the attacks.

US Strikes Against Houthi Targets

As of March 31, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Legend: ■ Houthi-Controlled Territory Airstrike

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Harrison Hurwitz, Derik Durbin, Benjamin Cordola, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, and Faris Almaari
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Note: This notional map is not a definitive assessment of areas under Houthi control in Yemen. This map is primarily an illustrative reference material and does not adhere to the very high level of spatial precision that ISW and CTP uses for our Israel-Hamas and Ukraine control of terrain maps.

The Houthis launched a ballistic missile at Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel on March 30.[102] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted the missile before it entered Israeli territory.[103]

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

Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem implicitly threatened to resume attacks targeting Israel or Israeli forces in a speech on March 30.[104] Qassem has previously failed to attack after making threats against Israel. Qassem reiterated that the Lebanese state is responsible for implementing the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire agreement but warned that Hezbollah's patience with Lebanon's diplomatic efforts "has a limit." [105] Qassem warned that when that limit is reached, Hezbollah will "have no choice but to resort to other options." Qassem may be speaking to appease hardline Hezbollah elements who feel that Hezbollah needs to act in response to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) airstrike on March 28 that targeted a Hezbollah drone storage facility in Beirut.[106] Qassem previously implicitly threatened Israel, but Hezbollah has not fulfilled those threats.[107] CTP-ISW continues to assess that Hezbollah's central leadership is unlikely to approve any attacks targeting Israel at this time as it would almost certainly risk major Israeli reprisals.[108]

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 appreciated from 1,042,000 rials to one US dollar on March 28 to 1,033,000 rials to one US dollar on March 31.[109]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed future opportunities for economic cooperation in a phone call on March 29.[110] Pezeshkian expressed a willingness to discuss various unspecified regional and international issues to strengthen relations between the two countries. This phone call follows recent statements from other senior Iranian officials in which they criticized Turkish regional policy, especially in Syria.[111]

Approximately 100 Iranian farmers protested over water shortages in Esfahan Province on March 29 and 30.[112] Anti-regime media circulated footage of Iranian security forces firing tear

gas at protesters in Esfahan Province on March 30.[113] The same outlet also published a video that showed that protesters had set fire to a water pumping station that diverts water from the Zayandeh Rud River before the water reaches Esfahan.[114] The Zayandeh Rud River, which is one of the main sources of water for Esfahan Province, runs dry for the majority of the year due to water extraction before the water reaches Esfahan.[115] Iranian farmers previously protested water scarcity in Esfahan for over two weeks in 2021 before Iranian security forces cracked down on the protests.[116]

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

[1] <https://www.axios.com/2025/03/30/trump-iran-nuclear-deal-bombing>

[2] <https://x.com/RapidResponse47/status/1906514897933934770>

[3] <https://www.c-span.org/program/senate-committee/dni-director-gabbard-fbi-director-patel-and-other-national-security-officials-testfy-on-global-threats/657476>

[4] <https://www.irna.ir/news/85788832> ; <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1404/01/10/3283431>

[5] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1403/12/06/3264097> ; https://farsnews.ir/Rahgozar_b/1743156850902814441/Iran-Parliament-Speaker%3A-Palestine-Litmus-Test-for-West's-Double-Standards

[6] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/03/31/iran-urged-to-strike-diego-garcia-base-immediately/>

[7] <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1403/12/06/3264097> ; https://farsnews.ir/Rahgozar_b/1743156850902814441/Iran-Parliament-Speaker%3A-Palestine-Litmus-Test-for-West's-Double-Standards

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