

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: August 13, 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.

Iran is likely trying to expand divisions within Israel and between Israel and the United States ahead of a possible Iranian drone and missile attack. Three anonymous senior Iranian officials speaking to Reuters on August 13 claimed that Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah would refrain from attacking Israel if it reached a ceasefire-hostage agreement with Hamas.[1] One of the senior Iranian officials claimed that Iran and Hezbollah would attack Israel if ceasefire-hostage talks fail or if Israel delays negotiations.

These comments from senior Iranian officials come as Hamas has expanded its negotiating demands, making an agreement harder to reach. Hamas has refused to participate in the next round of negotiations scheduled for August 15 on the grounds that Israel is “deceiving and evading. . . to prolong the war and even expand it at the regional level.”[2] Hamas asked international mediators on August 11 to “oblige” Israel to accept “a plan to implement” a previous ceasefire proposal that Hamas submitted in July 2024—instead of conducting further negotiations.[3] This Hamas ceasefire proposal reportedly

compromised on one of Hamas' maximalist demands by allowing a partial IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip during the first phase of a three-phase ceasefire agreement. Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar separately told Arab mediators on August 12 that Israel must stop military operations in the Gaza Strip if "[Israel] wants Hamas to participate" in further negotiations.[4] Sinwar has effectively required Israel to commit to a unilateral ceasefire before Hamas will engage in actual ceasefire discussions.

Iran likely calculates that conditioning its attack on Israel on whether Israel and Hamas reach a ceasefire-hostage deal forces Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to choose between two bad options. Iran could calculate that, if Netanyahu accepts the ceasefire proposal, then he could lose the support of his political coalition. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir have previously threatened to leave Netanyahu's coalition if a ceasefire is reached before Hamas is destroyed.[5] Iran may also calculate that, if Netanyahu were to reject Hamas' proposal, then Netanyahu would be blamed by Israeli society and allies for the ensuing Iranian-led attack on Israel. Either course of action would serve the Iranian objectives of expanding divisions within Israel and isolating Israel from its allies, particularly the United States. Iran may miscalculate the likely responses in Israel and the United States to a successful Iranian strike that causes significant damage or loss of life.

The anonymous Iranian officials who spoke to Reuters likely meant to achieve the informational effect described above rather than to provide accurate information about the circumstances in which Iran would attack Israel. Senior Iranian officials and Iranian armed forces leaders speaking by name on the record have continued to indicate that they will attack Israel regardless of whether a ceasefire is reached in the Gaza Strip. That the Iranian regime is not suggesting the possibility of refraining from a strike in return for a ceasefire in its own domestic information space reinforces CTP-ISW's assessment that the Iranian officials spoke to Reuters to generate informational effects in the West. It is unclear, moreover, whether the Iranian officials speaking to Reuters have any role in the Iranian military chain of command. The Iranian president and his government, for context, has no control over the Iranian armed forces.

The United States has deployed the USS Laboon guided-missile destroyer to the eastern Mediterranean Sea, according to an anonymous US defense official.[6] The official said that the USS Laboon arrived in the eastern Mediterranean from the Red Sea as part of US force posture changes ahead of Iran's and Iranian-backed groups' expected attack on Israel. The US Department of Defense previously announced on August 2 that it would deploy air- and sea-based cruise missile defenses, ballistic missile defense-capable cruisers and destroyers, and additional fighter jets to the Middle East.[7] The United States recently deployed F-22 Raptors and the USS Georgia guided-missile submarine to the region and ordered the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to accelerate its transit to the region.[8]

The Artesh—the conventional Iranian military—appears to be preparing for a possible Iranian attack on Israel. Artesh Air Force Commander Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi visited the Shahid Nojeh Airbase in Hamedan Province on August 13.[9] Vahedi stressed that the Artesh Air Force is ready for "any dangerous task" during his visit.[10] The visit comes as Iran issued on August 11 a notice to airmen that covers the Shahid Nojeh Airbase until August 14.[11] The Artesh Navy has separately conducted a military exercise in the Caspian Sea near the port city of Astara.[12] This flurry of Artesh activity could be part of preparations to defend against an Israeli retaliation if Iran launches another large-scale drone and missile attack on Israel.

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Moscow on August 13.[13] Putin reaffirmed Russian support for Palestinian statehood and said that an independent Palestinian state is essential to peace in the Middle East.[14] Putin also pledged to continue to support Palestine amid the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.[15] Abbas welcomed Russian support and called on the UN Security Council to “stop the actions that Israel is taking” in the Gaza Strip.[16]

Iran showcased its drone and missile technologies at a Russian military exhibition in Moscow on August 12.[17] The display included the Iranian Mohajer-10 drone, which was first unveiled in August 2023.[18] The Mohajer-10 has a range of around 2,000 kilometers, can fly for up to 24 hours, and can carry a payload of 300 kilograms.[19] Iranian Brigadier General Ali Shadmani claimed at the exhibition that Iranian drones are “world famous.”[20] Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu and Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation Director Dmitry Shugayev visited the Iranian booth at the exhibition.[21] Iran has sold Mohajer-6 drones to Russia in recent years to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine and may hope to soon sell the more advanced Mohajer-10s. There is precedent for Russia buying Iranian systems presented at this exhibition. Iran previously showcased the Ababil close-range ballistic missile for the first time at the same Russian military exhibition in August 2023.[22] Tehran and Moscow later signed an agreement in December 2023 for the sale of Ababil missiles to Russia.[23]

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) seized ground east of al Tanf along the Iraq-Syria border, according to a pro-Syrian regime observer on X (Twitter).[24] The area east of al Tanf is unpopulated desert. The Syrian regime redeployed elements of two key units to the nearby central Syrian desert in early Summer 2024 in order to counter growing ISIS activity there.[25] The border area around al Tanf, especially in Iraq’s Anbar Province, is critical terrain for ISIS. ISIS leaders, including former so-called Caliph Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, used the region in the early 2010s to meet with key leaders.[26] The area is also important for smuggling of weapons, goods, oil, and people—all resources ISIS has historically exploited to advance its agenda.[27]

Key Takeaways:

- **Israel:** Iran is likely trying to expand divisions within Israel and between Israel and the United States ahead of a possible Iranian drone and missile attack.
- **Iran:** The Artesh—the conventional Iranian military—appears to be preparing for a possible Iranian attack on Israel.
- **West Bank:** Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.
- **Russia:** Iran showcased its drone and missile technologies, including the new Mohajer-10 drone, at a Russian military exhibition in Moscow.
- **ISIS:** The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) reportedly seized ground east of al Tanf along the Iraq-Syria border.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of August 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

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

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) 252nd Division continued to operate around the Netzarim Corridor on August 13.[28] Israeli forces cleared militia infrastructure near the corridor, including mortar and rocket launch positions, sniper positions, military sites, and observation posts.[29] A Palestinian journalist reported that IDF vehicles operated near Wadi Gaza south of the corridor.[30] The Mujahideen Brigades separately mortared Israeli forces along the corridor.[31]

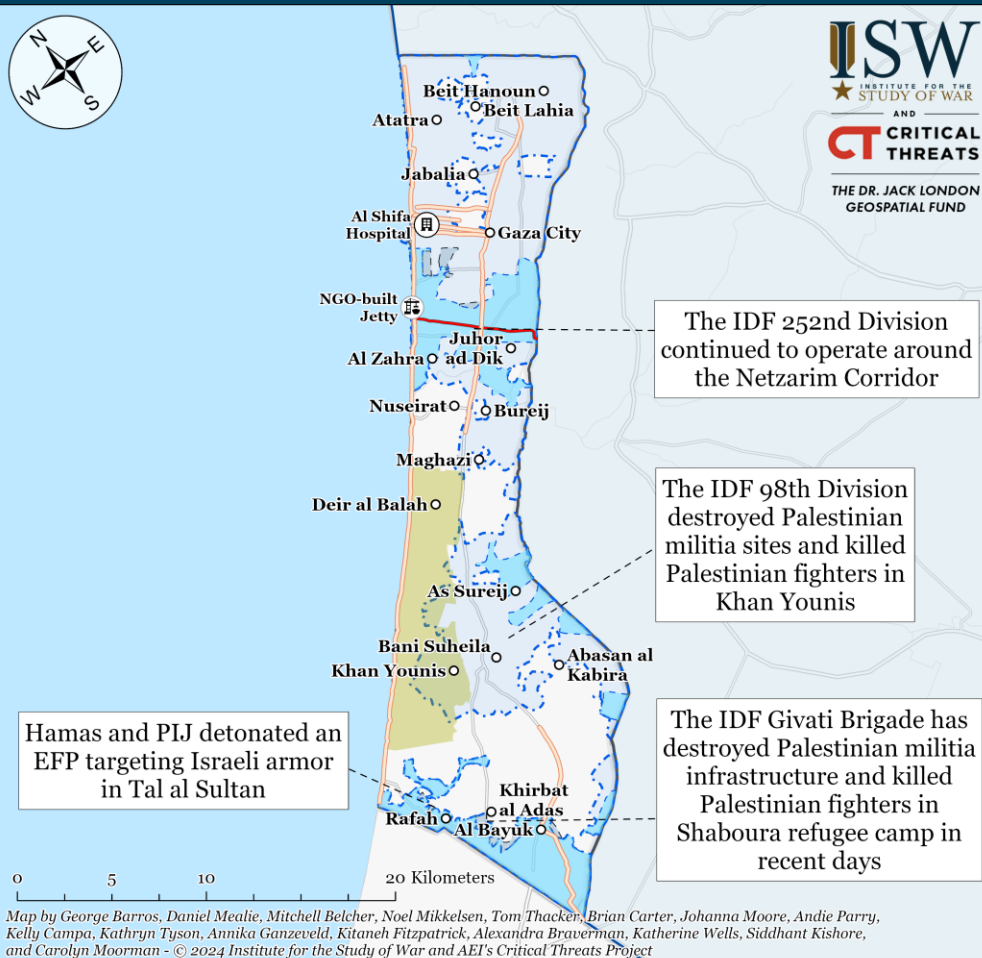
The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in Khan Younis on August 13.[32] Israeli forces located and destroyed militia sites and other infrastructure and killed Palestinian fighters, including fighters in Hamas rocket fire units.[33] The 98th Division directed an airstrike on a Palestinian militia cell that fired a rocket at Ein HaShlosha on August 12 and destroyed militia infrastructure around the rocket launch site.[34] Palestinian militias attacked Israeli forces that were re-clearing areas in eastern and northeastern Khan Younis. Hamas detonated an improvised explosive device targeting IDF armor in al Zana, east of Khan Younis.[35] Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Mujahideen Brigades mortared Israeli forces in eastern and northern Khan Younis, including in Abu Hadaf neighborhood.[36]

The IDF 162nd Division continued to operate in Rafah on August 13.[37] The IDF Nahal Brigade located explosive devices, intelligence materials, and unspecified combat equipment in Rafah.[38] Palestinian fighters targeted Israeli forces with anti-tank fire, and the IDF Air Force struck and killed the fighters.[39] Palestinian militias engaged Israeli forces in several sectors of Rafah.[40] Hamas and PIJ targeted IDF armor with an explosively formed penetrator in Tal al Sultan, west of Rafah.[41] Hamas also detonated three tunnel shafts targeting Israeli forces there.[42] Hamas fired a rocket-propelled grenade targeting IDF armor in Zalata, east of Rafah city.[43]

The IDF Givati Brigade (162nd Division) has operated in Shaboura, central Rafah, over the past few days.[44] Israeli forces killed approximately 100 Palestinian fighters in the Shaboura area.[45] Israeli forces located and destroyed militia infrastructure, including rigged buildings.[46] Israeli forces engaged and killed a cell of Palestinian fighters in an apartment.[47] Israeli forces raided the apartment and located short range anti-tank shell launchers, combat vests, and a tunnel shaft.[48]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of August 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



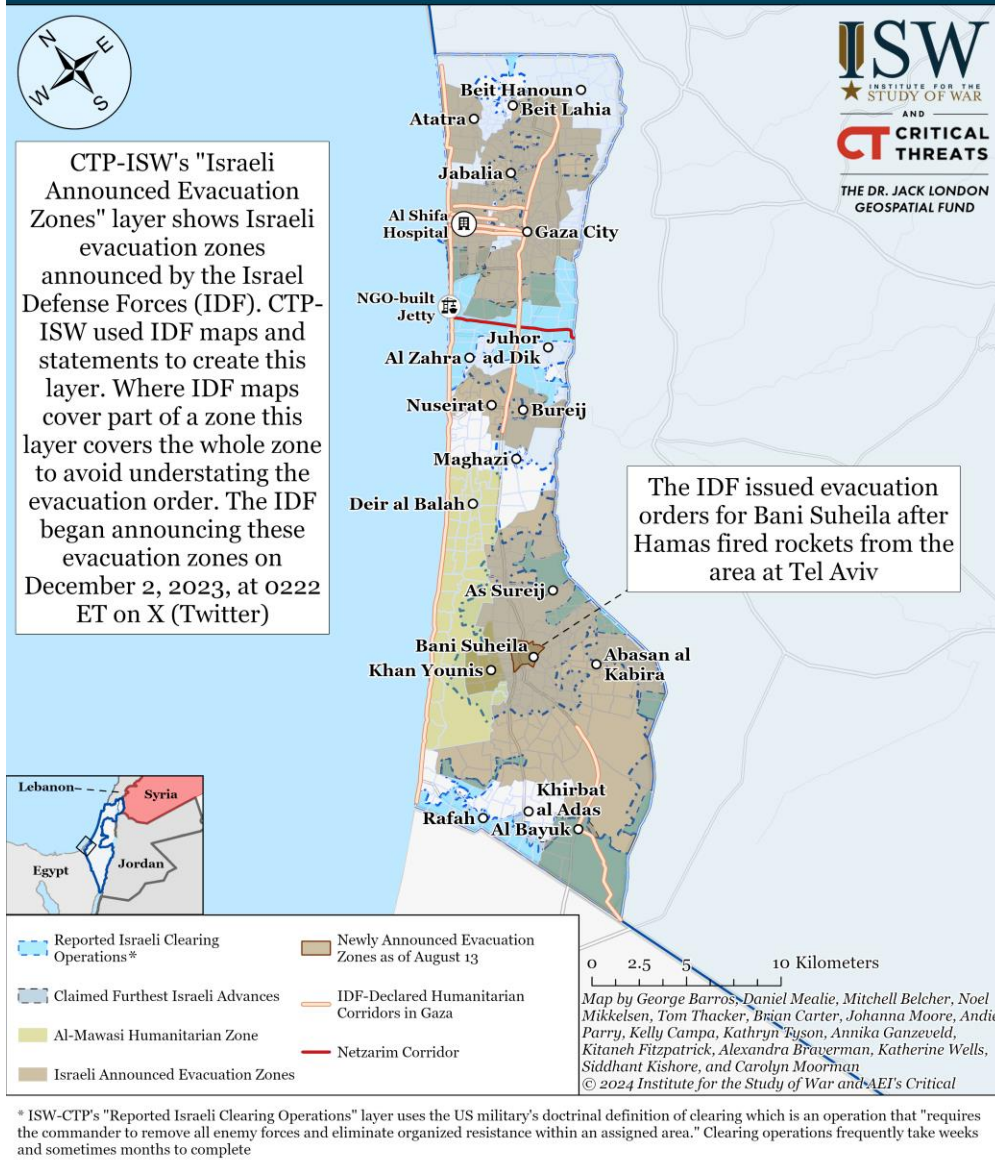
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, and Carolyn Moorman - © 2024 Institute for the Study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

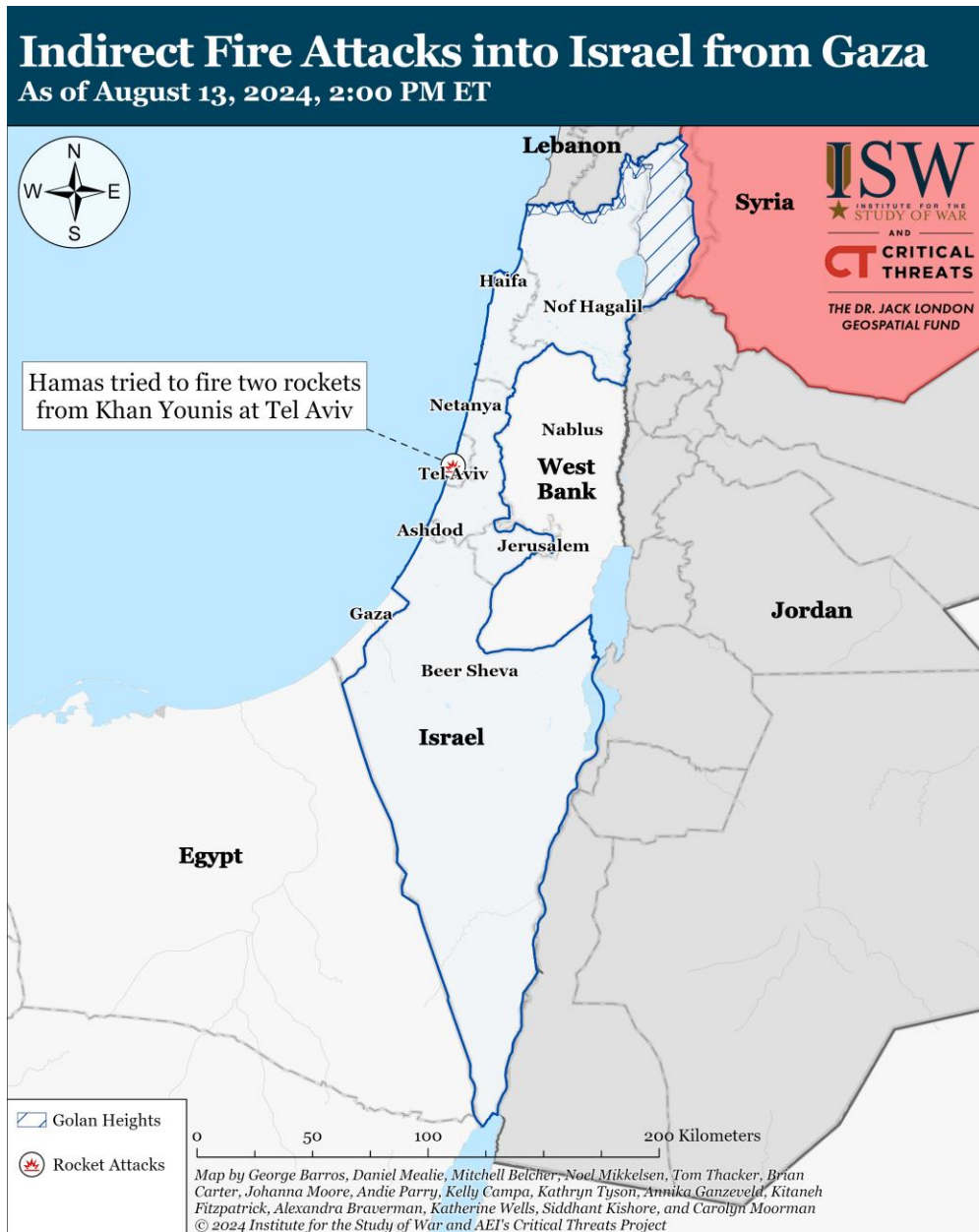
Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

As of August 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The Hamas Khan Younis Brigade fired two rockets from Bani Suheila, east of Khan Younis, at Tel Aviv on August 13.[49] The IDF said that one of the rockets landed in the Mediterranean Sea.[50] The rocket did not trigger any warning alerts, but Israeli Army Radio reported loud explosions near Tel Aviv.[51] The IDF said that the second rocket failed during its flight and never crossed into Israeli airspace.[52] Israeli Army Radio reported that Hamas launched the rockets from a site along Salah ad Din Road in Bani Suheila, approximately 1.5 kilometers from where the IDF is currently operating.[53] The IDF designated Salah ad Din Road, which extends from the northern Gaza Strip to the south, as a humanitarian corridor and evacuation route in November 2023.[54] An Israeli military correspondent reported that the IDF has assessed that Hamas still maintains the capability to conduct attacks targeting central Israel or Jerusalem.[55] The IDF also assessed that Hamas' long-range rocket and launcher supply is dwindling.[56]

The IDF issued evacuation orders for Bani Suheila and al Mahta, east of Khan Younis, three hours after the Hamas rocket attack targeting Tel Aviv.[57] The IDF Arabic spokesperson said that the IDF will act forcefully against Palestinian militias due to continuous Hamas and militia rocket fire from the area.[58] The IDF also stopped the entry of aid trucks onto Salah ad Din Road in Khan Younis and suspended the coordination of humanitarian aid entry.[59]



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 cutoff on August 12.[60] A Hamas fighter conducted a small

arms attack in Qalqilya on August 12, injuring an Israeli and two Palestinians. Israeli forces killed the fighter.[61] Hamas acknowledged the death of the fighter on August 13.[62]

The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms from the West Bank at civilians in Bat Hefer, Israel.[63]



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

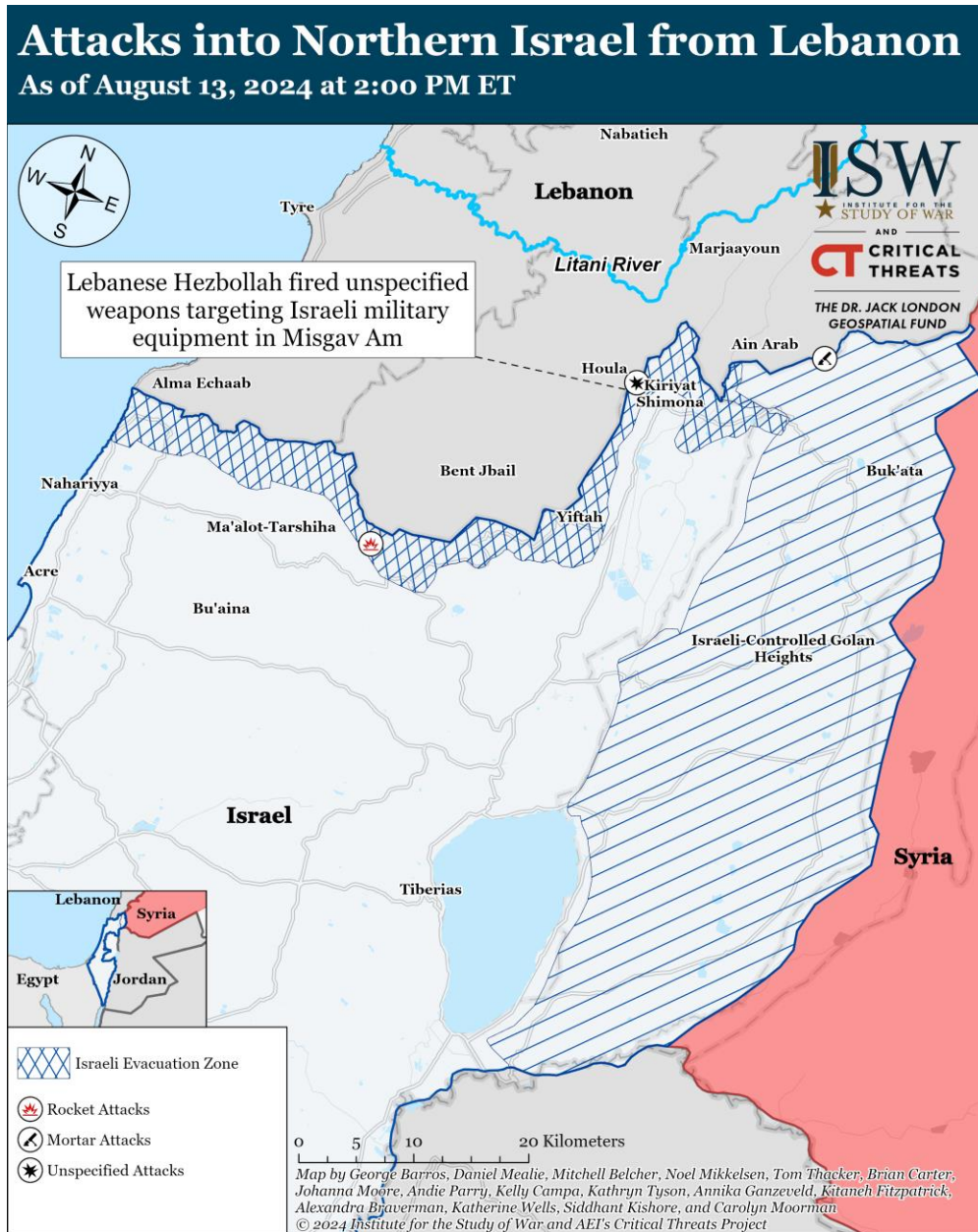
Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

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

Lebanese Hezbollah conducted at least three attacks into northern Israel on August 13.[64]

The IDF conducted a drone strike killing two Lebanese Hezbollah fighters near Baraachit, southern Lebanon, on August 13.[65] Hezbollah acknowledged the deaths of the fighters.[66]

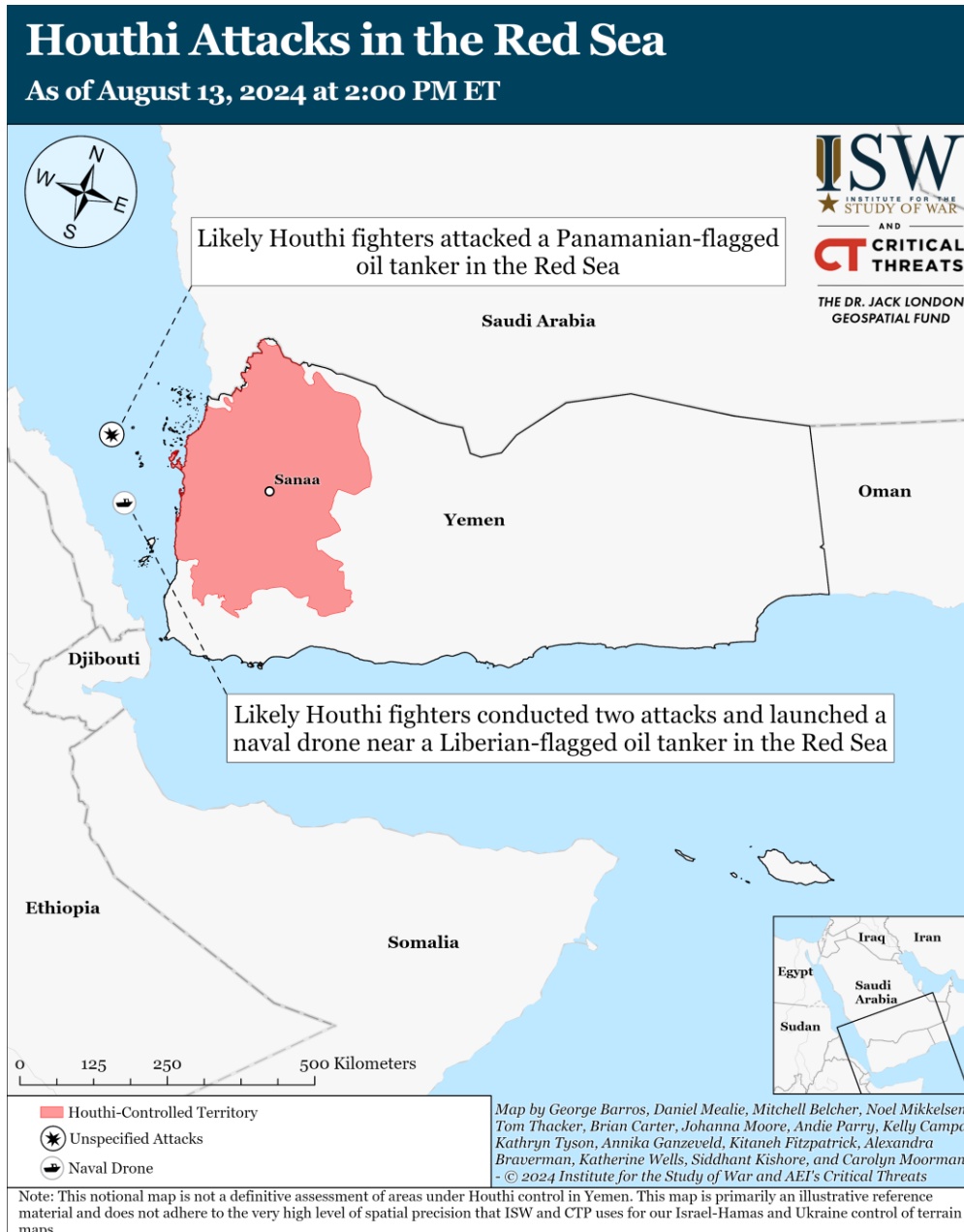


Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are likely trying to obfuscate exactly which of them are involved in attacks on US forces. These militias conducted an attack that injured five US personnel at Ain al Asad airbase in Iraq on August 5 and claimed responsibility for the attack under the name of a new group called al Thawriyyun.[67] The Iraqi Joint Operations Command later arrested five individuals involved in the attack.[68] The individuals claimed that they do not have any organizational affiliations. This claim is consistent with a Lebanese report on August 12 saying that Iranian-backed

Iraqi militias are developing “new mechanisms” to attack US forces and Israel.[69] The report claimed that these mechanisms involve the militias claiming attacks under front groups in order to obfuscate militia involvement.

Likely Houthi fighters conducted two separate attacks targeting Liberian-flagged *Delta Atlantica* and Panamanian-flagged *On Phoenix* on August 12.[70] The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) received a report of two explosions near the *Delta Atlantica* oil tanker 64 nautical miles southwest of al Hudaydah, Yemen.[71] Unspecified fighters subsequently attacked the *Delta Atlantica* with an unmanned surface vessel (USV). UKMTO also reported an explosion near the *On Phoenix* oil tanker around 97 nautical miles northwest of al Hudaydah, Yemen.[72]



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian’s interior minister nominee, Eskandar Momeni, claimed during a meeting with the Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy

Committee on August 12 that he met Pezeshkian while working at Tabriz University and emphasized that “no one introduced [him] to Pezeshkian.”^[73] Momeni may have made this statement in response to reports that he received the nomination due to his connections to Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.^[74] Momeni stated that he would prioritize public security as interior minister. Momeni also said that he would focus on deporting illegal immigrants from Iran, which echoes a statement from Law Enforcement Commander Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Radan on August 7 that Iran plans to deport all illegal migrants by the end of the current Persian calendar year, which ends in March 2025.^[75]

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