

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: February 8, 2025, 2:00pm ET

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.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of the ongoing opposition offensive in Syria. These maps are updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

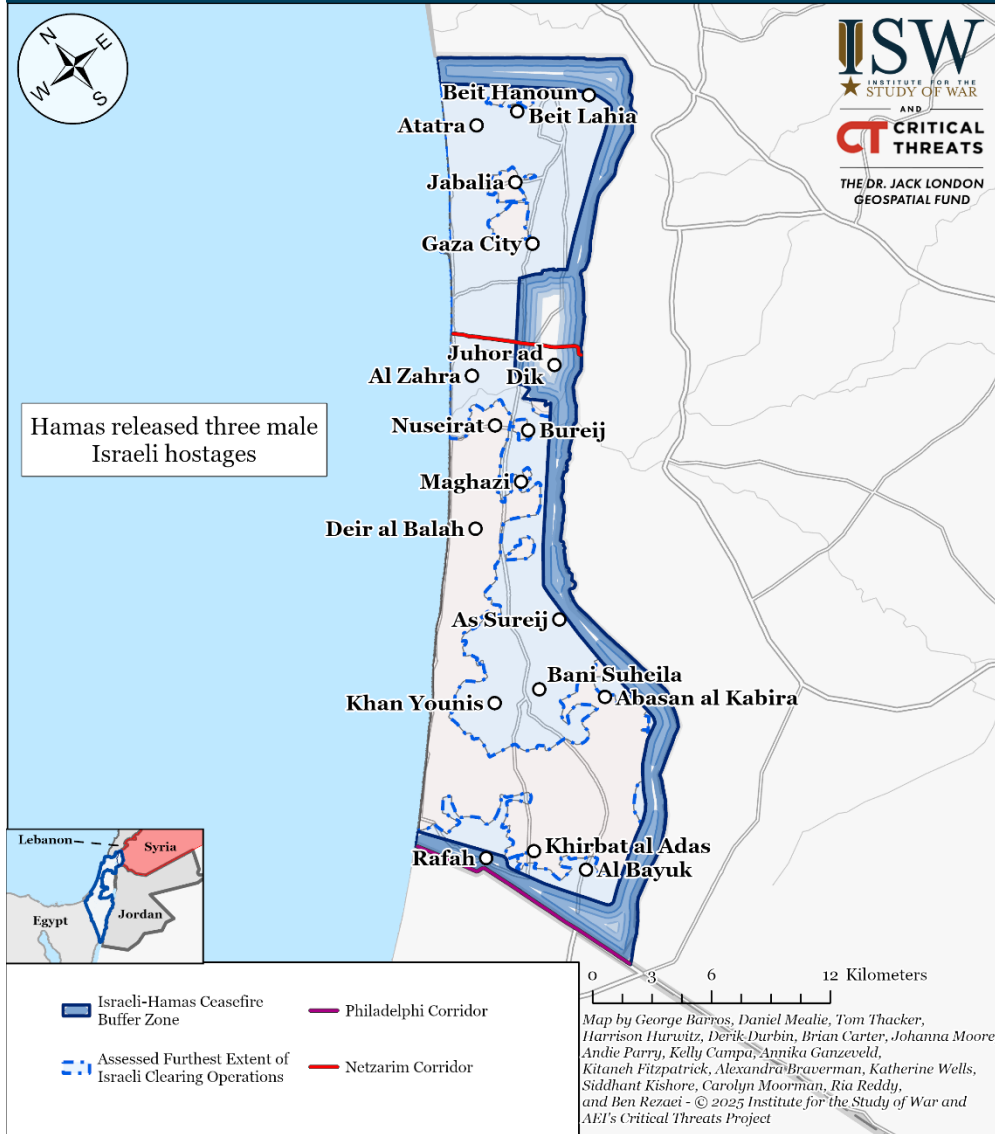
We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

NOTE: CTP and ISW publish abbreviated updates on Saturdays and Sundays as of February 8, 2025. We may publish full updates as events warrant, however.

Hamas released three male Israeli hostages on February 8.^[1] Hamas gave the hostages to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Deir al Balah in the central Gaza Strip.^[2] Israel, in exchange, released 183 Palestinian prisoners, including 111 whom the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) detained in the Gaza Strip during the October 7 War.^[3] The Israeli Prime Minister's Office vowed that it would take unspecified "actions" in response to the frail and weak condition of the Israeli hostages.^[4]

Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Lines

As of February 8, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

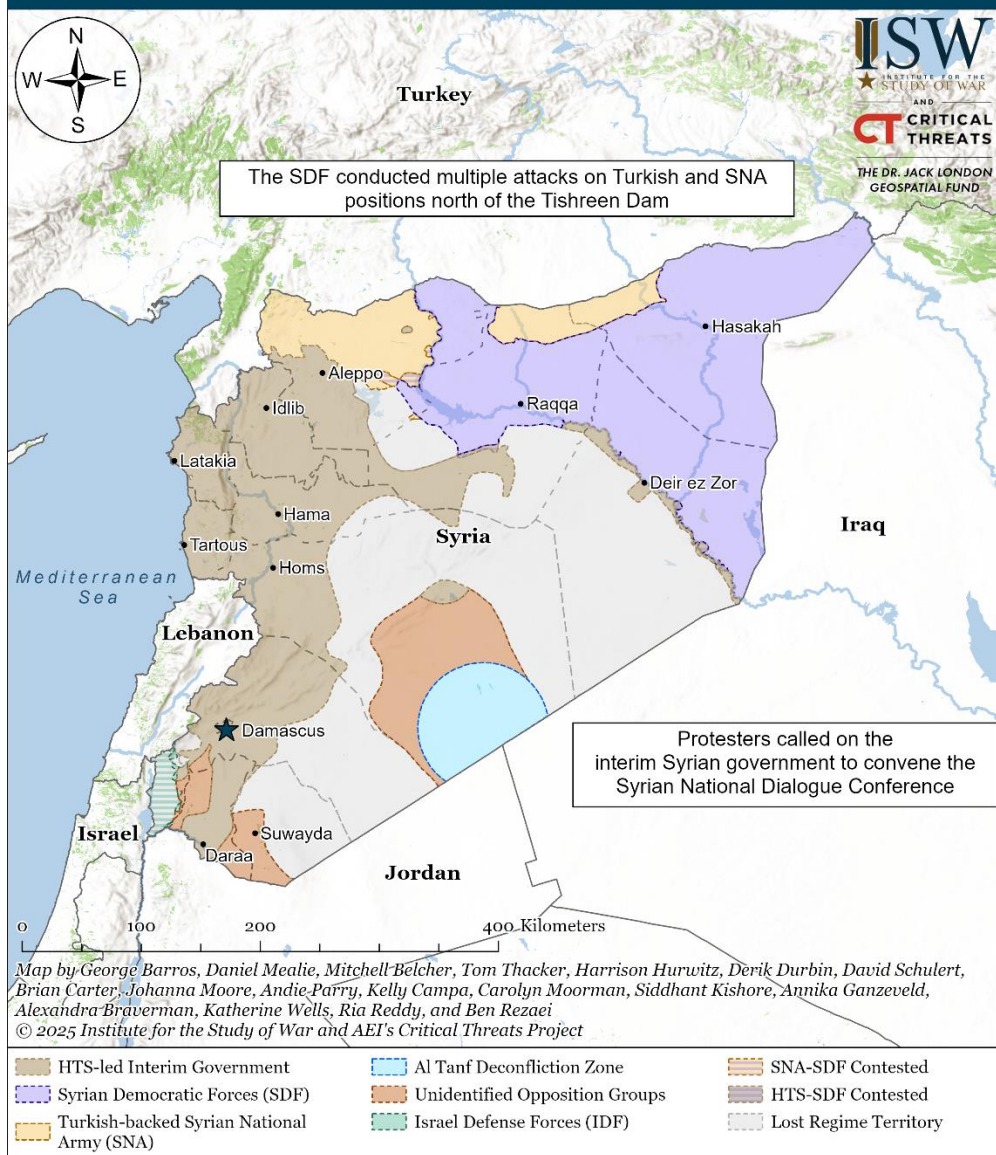
As of February 8, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Strip:** Hamas released three Israeli hostages. Israel, in exchange, released 183 Palestinian prisoners.
- **Syria:** The US-backed SDF attacked Turkish and Turkish-backed SNA positions north of Tishreen Dam.
- **Iran:** Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei met with senior Hamas officials in Tehran and discussed fighting in the Gaza Strip.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria February 8, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST

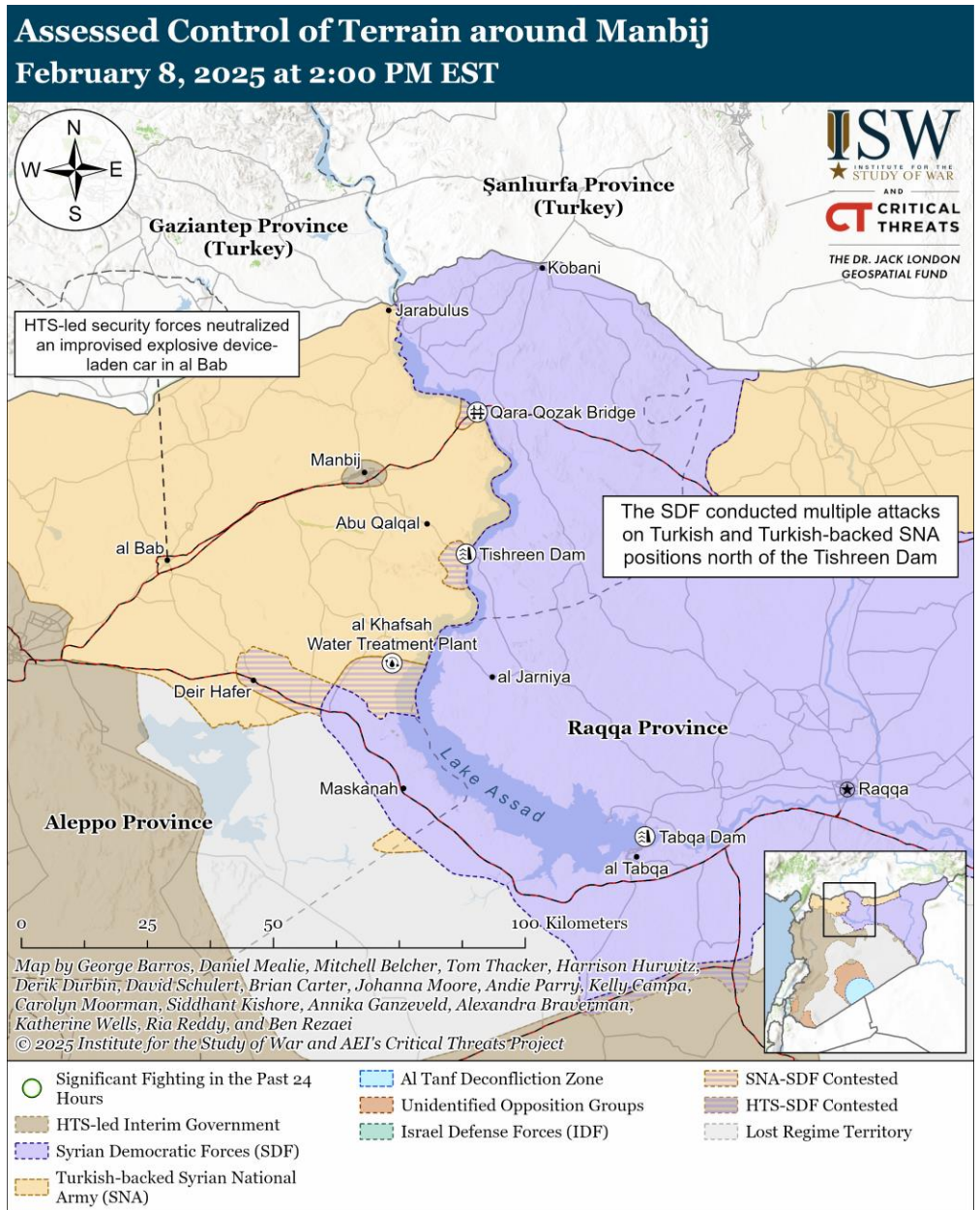


The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have attacked Turkish and Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) positions north of Tishreen Dam since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on February 7. The SDF conducted a drone attack targeting Turkish forces on Qara Qozak Hill, causing casualties.[5] The Women's Protection Units (YPJ) fired an anti-tank guided munition targeting a Turkey-SNA position on Qara Qozak hill, killing 10 SNA fighters and wounding 14 SNA fighters and three Turkish soldiers.[6]

The SDF conducted a drone attack targeting an SNA transport vehicle near Deir Hafer on February 7.[7] The SDF reported that the attack led to an unknown number of SNA casualties.

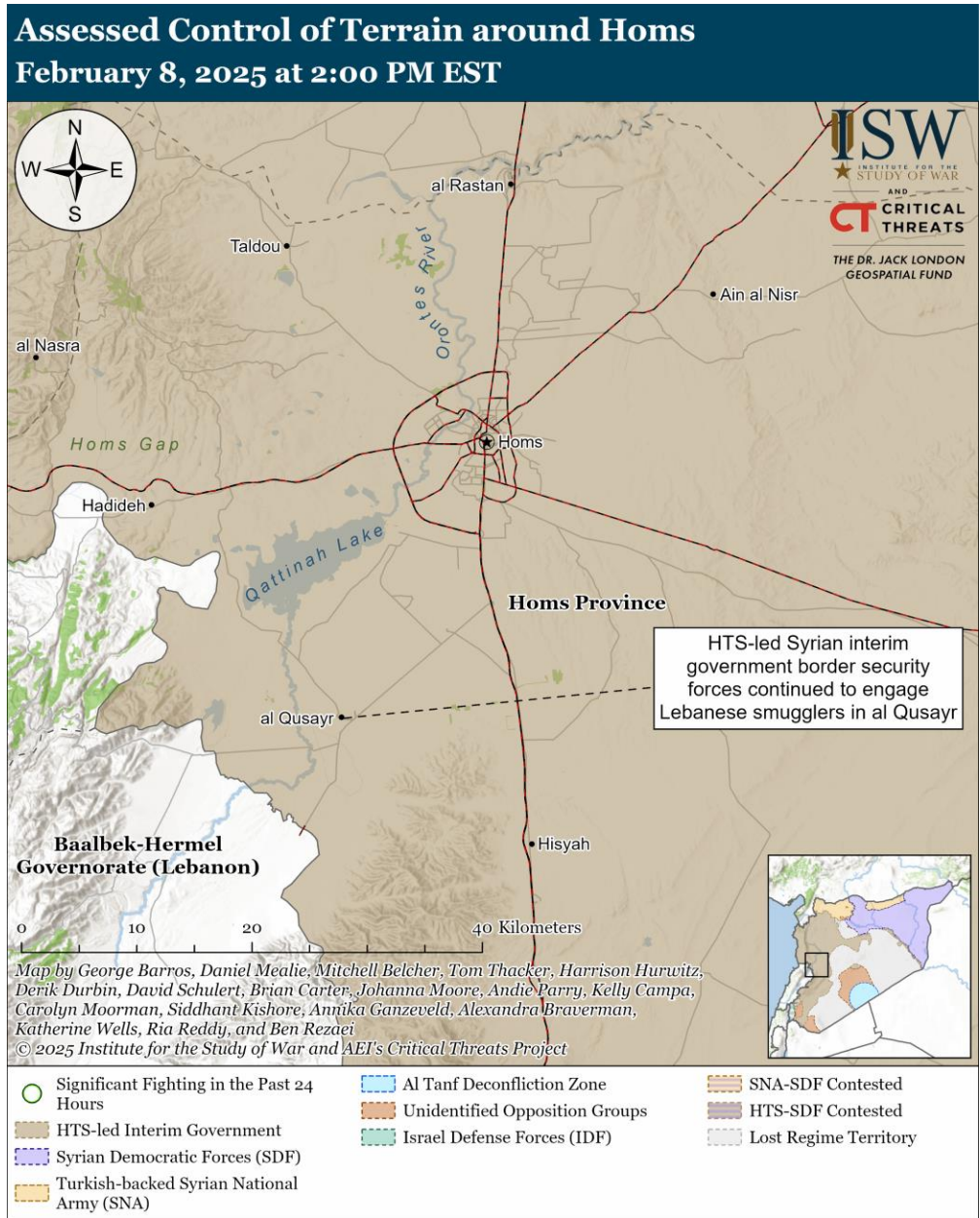
Turkey and the SNA have conducted indirect fire attacks targeting the SDF on the eastern bank of Euphrates River since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on February 7.[8]

Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS)-led forces neutralized an improvised explosive device (IED)-laden car that was prepared to detonate at a market in al Bab, northeast of Aleppo, on February 8.[9] CTP-ISW has recorded several vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks in SNA-controlled territory since late December 2024.[10]



The pro-Assad Syrian Popular Resistance claimed on February 7 that it fired small arms at an HTS checkpoint in al Haffah, Latakia countryside.[11] The Syrian Popular Resistance has claimed several attacks over the past several weeks targeting HTS forces in Latakia Province.[12] It remains unclear whether the group has any real involvement in these attacks beyond the claims on social media, however.

The HTS-led Homs Security Directorate arrested Duraid Ahmad Abbas--a key figure in the Assad regime--on February 7.[13] Abbas reportedly participated in the Kafr Shams massacre in al Houla, Homs Governorate, where Assad forces besieged and bombarded the town in 2012.[14] His arrest follows an ongoing campaign targeting former regime elements in Idlib Governorate, focusing on those who refused to settle their status with the interim government.[15]



The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) deployed to northern and eastern Lebanese borders on February 8 in response to recent fighting between Lebanese smugglers and HTS-led forces.[16] The LAF stated that it responded to gunfire and shelling into Lebanese territory. The Syrian Department of Military Operations deployed to Hawik, northeast of Qusayr, on February 6 after smugglers kidnapped HTS fighters during a counter-smuggling operation.[17] Geolocated footage posted to X (Twitter) showed HTS-led forces firing an anti-tank guided missile from a rooftop in

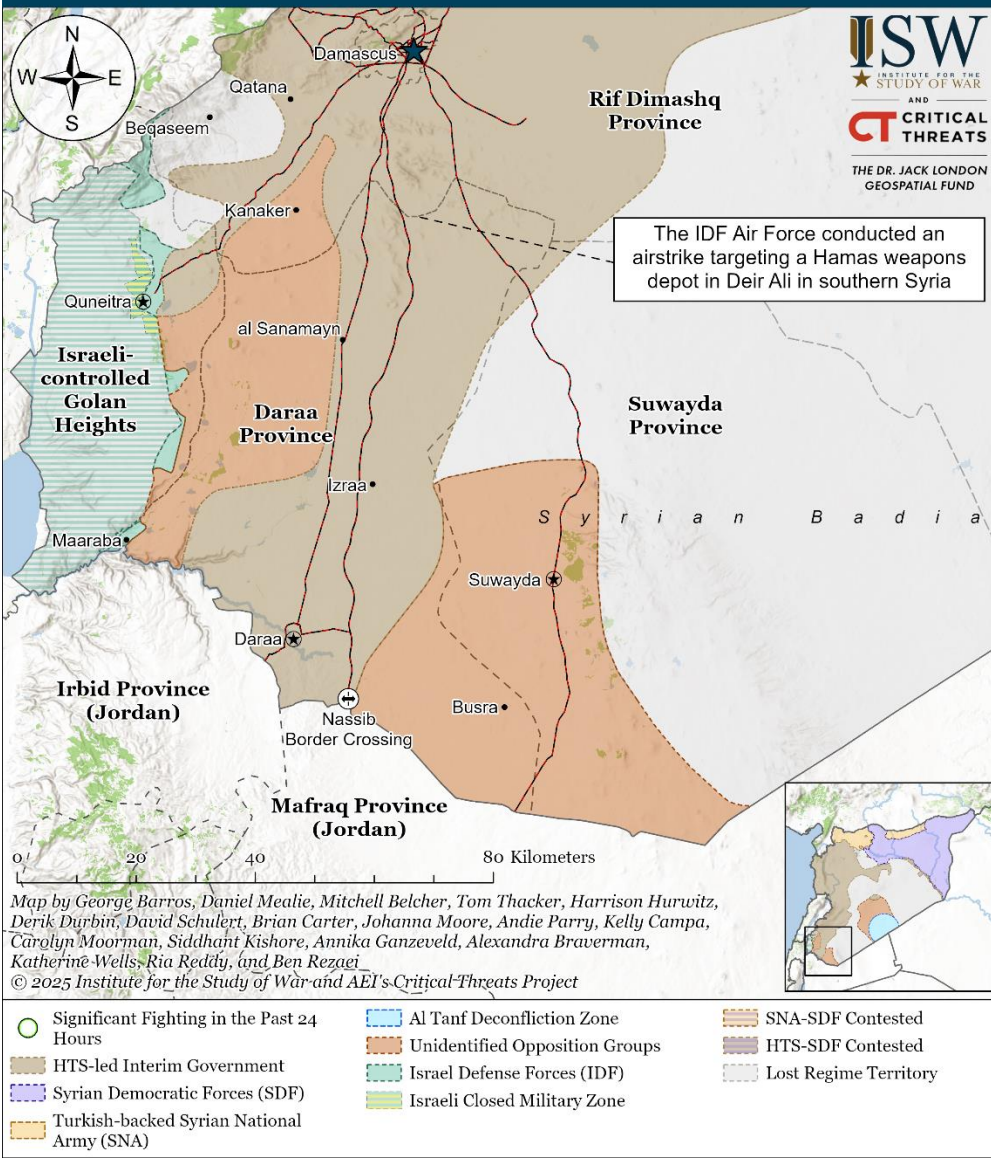
western Hawik on February 6.[18] Lebanese media reported that HTS-led forces fired artillery and rockets into Lebanon near the Syria-Lebanon border.[19]

The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike targeting a Hamas weapons depot in Deir Ali in southern Syria on February 8.[20] The IDF stated that Hamas planned to use weapons at the site to attack Israeli forces. The IDF stated that it will continue to attack Hamas “wherever it establishes itself.”

Syrian media footage posted on February 8 showed a small protest in Damascus City calling on the HTS-led interim government to quickly convene the National Dialogue Conference.[21] Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara announced the formation of a preparatory committee for the National Dialogue Conference, which will reportedly represent “different points of view.”[22]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Southwestern Syria

February 8, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



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

Nothing significant to report.

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

Nothing significant to report.

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 Gaza Strip

See topline section.

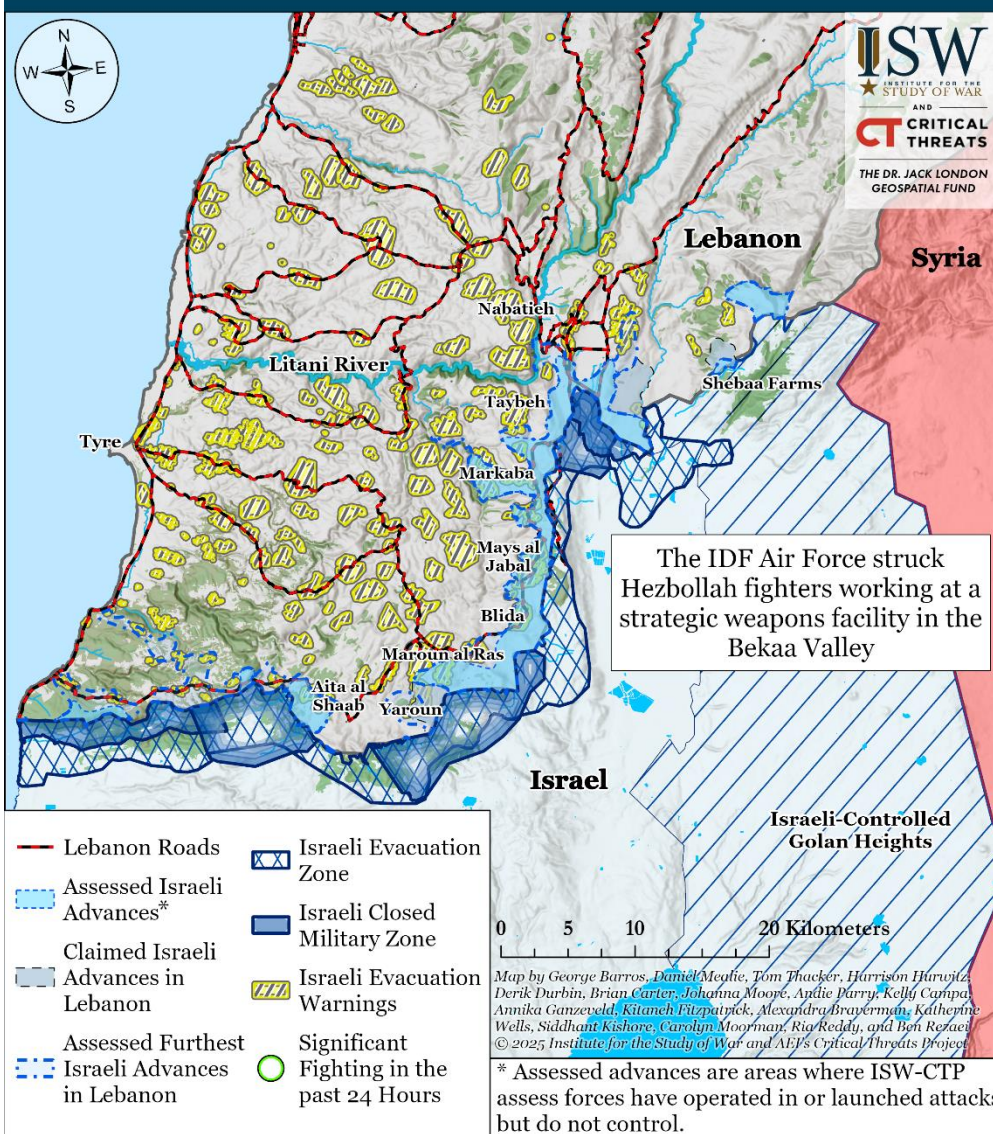
Lebanon

Lebanese Hezbollah media reported on February 8 that the IDF demolished houses in Aadaysit Marjaayoun, southeastern Lebanon.[23] Lebanese media last reported Israeli demolition in the area on January 29.[24]

The IDF Air Force struck Hezbollah fighters in Bekka Valley on February 8.[25] The IDF stated that the fighters were working at a production and storage site for unspecified “strategic” weapons.[26]

Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

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West Bank

The IDF continued its counterterrorism operation in the northern West Bank on January 8.[27] The IDF destroyed explosives in a building in Nablus.[28] Israeli forces also arrested a Palestinian fighter and seized a weapon. The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) attacked Israeli forces in Tulkarm and Jenin governorates with IED and small arms.[29] Hamas, PIJ, and the "Youth of Revenge and Liberation" claimed to fire small arms in a combined attack targeting the IDF in Tulkarm on January 7.[30] PIJ announced the formation of joint operations rooms in the West Bank on January 22 with Hamas and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fighters.[31]

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei met with senior Hamas officials in Tehran on February 8.^[32] Hamas Shura Council head Mohammad Darwish called the fighting in the Gaza Strip a “great victory” for the Axis of Resistance. Hamas Deputy Political Bureau Chairman Khalil al Hayya described the victory as “shared” between Iran and Hamas. Khamenei reiterated his commitment to supporting Palestinian militias against Israel. Hamas Deputy Leader in the West Bank Zaher Jabarin briefed Khamenei on the situation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank and expressed appreciation for continued Iranian support.

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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[1] https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israeli-hostages-freed-by-hamas-appear-frail-after-long-captivity-596749c1?mod=middle-east_news_article_pos1

[2] <https://x.com/MiddleEastBuka/status/1888132629628645458>

[3] <https://www.timesofisrael dot com/israel-frees-183-palestinian-security-prisoners-including-18-serving-life-sentences/>

[4] <https://www.timesofisrael dot com/pms-office-action-will-be-taken-as-needed-after-hostages-released-looking-emaciated/>

[5] https://t.me/sdf_press/3782 ; https://t.me/sdf_press/3781

[6] https://t.me/sdf_press/3783 ; https://t.me/sdf_press/3781

[7] https://t.me/sdf_press/3781 ; <https://x.com/SiyamandAli/status/1888247874581877237>

- [8] https://t.me/sdf_press/3781 ; <https://x.com/SOHEB2019/status/1887964431050559636> ;
<https://x.com/SOHEB2019/status/1888239432928493971>
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- [10] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-january-2-2025>
- [11] https://t.me/syria_mukawama/5816
- [12] https://t.me/syria_mukawama/5772 ; https://t.me/syria_mukawama/5697 ;
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- [13] <https://t.me/SyrianArabNewsAgency/122681>
- [14] <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2025/2/8/%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%83%D9%81%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D9%87%D8%AF> dot
- [15] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-january-25-2025> ;
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- [16] <https://x.com/LebarmyOfficial/status/1888247822018900193>
- [17] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-february-6-2025>
- [18] <https://x.com/Me1Ray/status/1887740042547810422>
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- [24] <https://t.me/bintjbeilnews/128725>
- [25] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1888259487078781427> ; <https://www.manar.com.lb/13124586> dot al
- [26] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1888259487078781427>
- [27] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1888271825043390824>

[28] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1888271825043390824>

[29] https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/8249 ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/8250 ;
<https://t.me/sarayajneen/2086> ; <https://t.me/sarayajneen/2087> ; <https://t.me/sarayajneen/2088>

[30] <https://t.me/sarayatulkarm/954> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/8248

[31] <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/iran-update-january-22-2025>

[32] <https://www.leader dot ir/fa/content/27965>