

Iran Update



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July 21, 2024, 2:00 pm 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.

The IDF reported that its airstrikes targeting Hudaydah, Yemen, on July 20 sought to disrupt the Iranian weapons supply route to the Houthis and damage dual-use infrastructure.[1] The IDF said that it intended to disrupt an Iranian weapons supply route to the Houthis and a critical source of Houthi financing by targeting dual-use energy infrastructure and the port's cargo unloading capabilities.[2] The IDF estimated that 70% of goods that enter the port of Hudaydah reach the Houthis.[3] Israeli F15s and F35s struck 20 fuel depots, large container cranes used to unload goods from ships, and unspecified energy infrastructure.[4] The strikes set fire to the port and the fire is expected to continue burning for several days.[5] Houthi-affiliated media reported that 84 people were wounded in the airstrikes.[6] An Israeli military correspondent reported that the IDF assessed that the port of Hudaydah's ability to receive goods has been “completely shut down” by the airstrikes.[7] The IDF stated that this operation was the longest-range operation conducted by the

IDF Air Force.[8] The IDF said that the Houthis did not attempt to shoot missiles at incoming Israeli aircraft.[9]

A senior security official told an Israeli Army Radio correspondent that Israel needs to “project power towards the entire region” after the Houthi drone hit Tel Aviv.[10] A senior security official told an Israeli Army Radio correspondent that the IDF may need to conduct further attacks in Yemen in the near future.[11] The IDF conducted the July 20 airstrikes in retaliation for the July 18 Houthi drone attack that targeted Tel Aviv and killed one Israeli citizen, but the IDF added that the airstrikes were also a response to “hundreds of [Houthi] aerial threats” targeting Israel in recent months.[12] US and coalition airstrikes have previously targeted military sites and targets within Houthi-controlled Yemen.[13] An Israeli military correspondent noted that Hudaydah port is also used to import humanitarian aid into Yemen.[14] The July 20 airstrike was the first Israeli strike targeting the Houthis.

Houthi supreme leader Abdulmalik al Houthi announced the start of the fifth phase of Houthi escalations against Israel known as “Operation Jaffa” in a speech on July 21.[15] Abdulmalik’s speech follows the IDF’s retaliatory strike on the port of Hudaydah, Yemen on July 20. Abdulmalik claimed that Israelis are no longer safe in main population centers of Israel, including Tel Aviv. Abdulmalik added that Israel will not re-establish deterrence vis-a-vis the Houthis by launching attacks on Yemen. Abdulmalik denied that the “Jaffa” drone that the Houthis used in its July 18 attack on Tel Aviv was foreign-made and referred to it as “purely” Yemeni made.[16] The Jaffa drone, however, appears to be a modified variant of the Iranian-designed Samad-3 drone.[17] The Houthis presumably modified the Samad-3 in order to extend its range. Abdulmalik denied that the Houthis are conducting operations to benefit Iran and reiterated that the Houthis are operating in support of the Palestinians.[18] Houthi spokesperson Brigadier General Yahya Sarea separately said in a televised statement on July 20 that the Houthis will respond to this “blatant Israeli aggression and will not hesitate to strike the enemy’s vital targets.”[19]

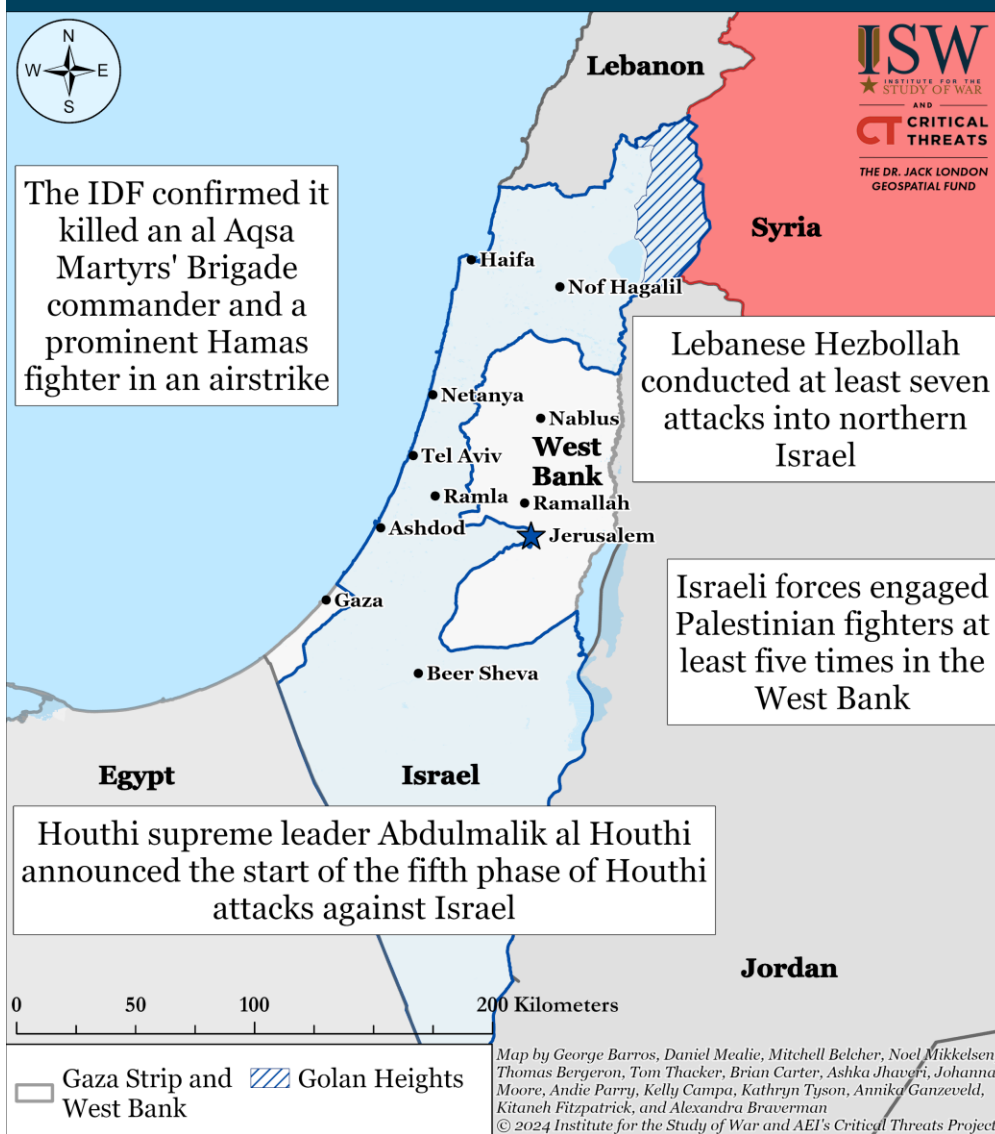
The IDF said it intercepted a surface-to-surface missile approaching Israeli territory from Yemen on July 21.[20] The missile did not cross into Israeli territory.[21] The Houthis have not claimed the attack as of this writing.

Key Takeaways:

- **Yemen:** Houthi supreme leader Abdulmalik al Houthi announced the start of the fifth phase of Houthi escalations against Israel known as “Operation Jaffa,” claiming that Israelis are no longer safe in Israel’s main population centers.
- **Gaza Strip:** The IDF confirmed on July 21 that it killed a prominent Hamas fighter and the Gaza Brigade commander in the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades in an airstrike on an unspecified date.
- **West Bank:** Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters at least five times in the West Bank since CTP-ISW’s last data cutoff on July 20.
- **Lebanon:** Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least seven attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW’s last data cutoff on July 20.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of July 21, 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 IDF confirmed on July 21 that it killed a prominent Hamas fighter and the Gaza Brigade commander in the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in an airstrike on an unspecified date.[22] The IDF said that the two fighters' deaths followed the IDF's airstrikes that killed two Hamas commanders, one PIJ commander, and 20 Shati Battalion members in the Gaza Strip.[23] The IDF said on July 21 that it also killed Hamas fighter Nimr Hamida.[24] Hamida planned and participated in an

October 2003 shooting attack that killed three IDF soldiers near Ein Yabrud in the West Bank.[25] Hamida was exiled to the Gaza Strip in the 2011 Gilad Shalit deal, in which Israel traded 1,000 Palestinian prisoners for an IDF soldier captured in 2006 by Palestinian militias.[26] Hamida served as a member of Hamas' West Bank Headquarters' Ramallah Committee.[27] The West Bank Headquarters is a Hamas unit based in the Gaza Strip that planned attacks against Israel from or within the West Bank.[28]

The IDF also confirmed on July 21 that it killed the Gaza Brigade commander of the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Izz al Din Akila on an unspecified date.[29] The IDF said that Akila had facilitated al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades attacks against the IDF throughout the war.[30] CTP-ISW previously reported that Akila was killed in an airstrike targeting Shati camp on July 13.[31]

The 3rd Alexandroni Infantry Brigade (Res.) (99th Division) continued clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor on July 21. Israeli forces raided militia infrastructure and located weapons near the corridor.[32] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired rockets and mortars targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor.[33]

The 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on July 20. The IDF Givati Brigade identified and killed an armed cell of Palestinian fighters approaching Israeli forces.[34] The Givati Brigade also located and destroyed mortar shells that were ready to be launched at Israeli forces.[35] The IDF 401st Brigade destroyed tunnel shafts and underground infrastructure in Tal al Sultan.[36] Hamas fighters targeted Israeli armor with rocket propelled grenades and anti-personnel improvised explosive devices east of Rafah city.[37]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

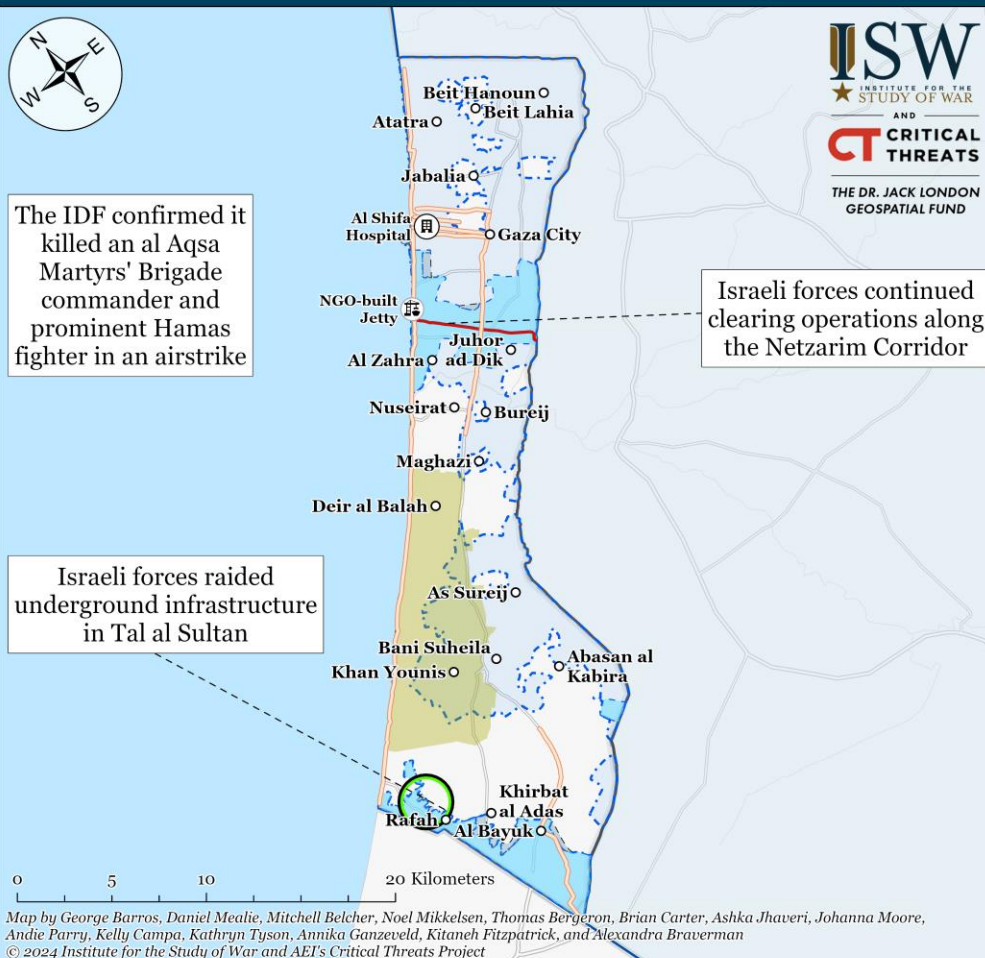
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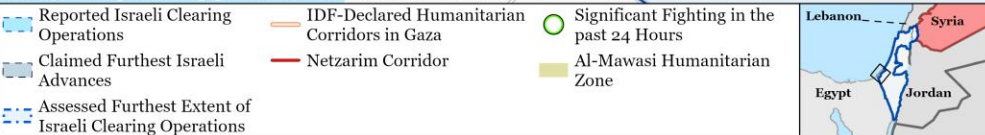
The IDF confirmed it killed an al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade commander and prominent Hamas fighter in an airstrike

Israeli forces continued clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor

Israeli forces raided underground infrastructure in Tal al Sultan

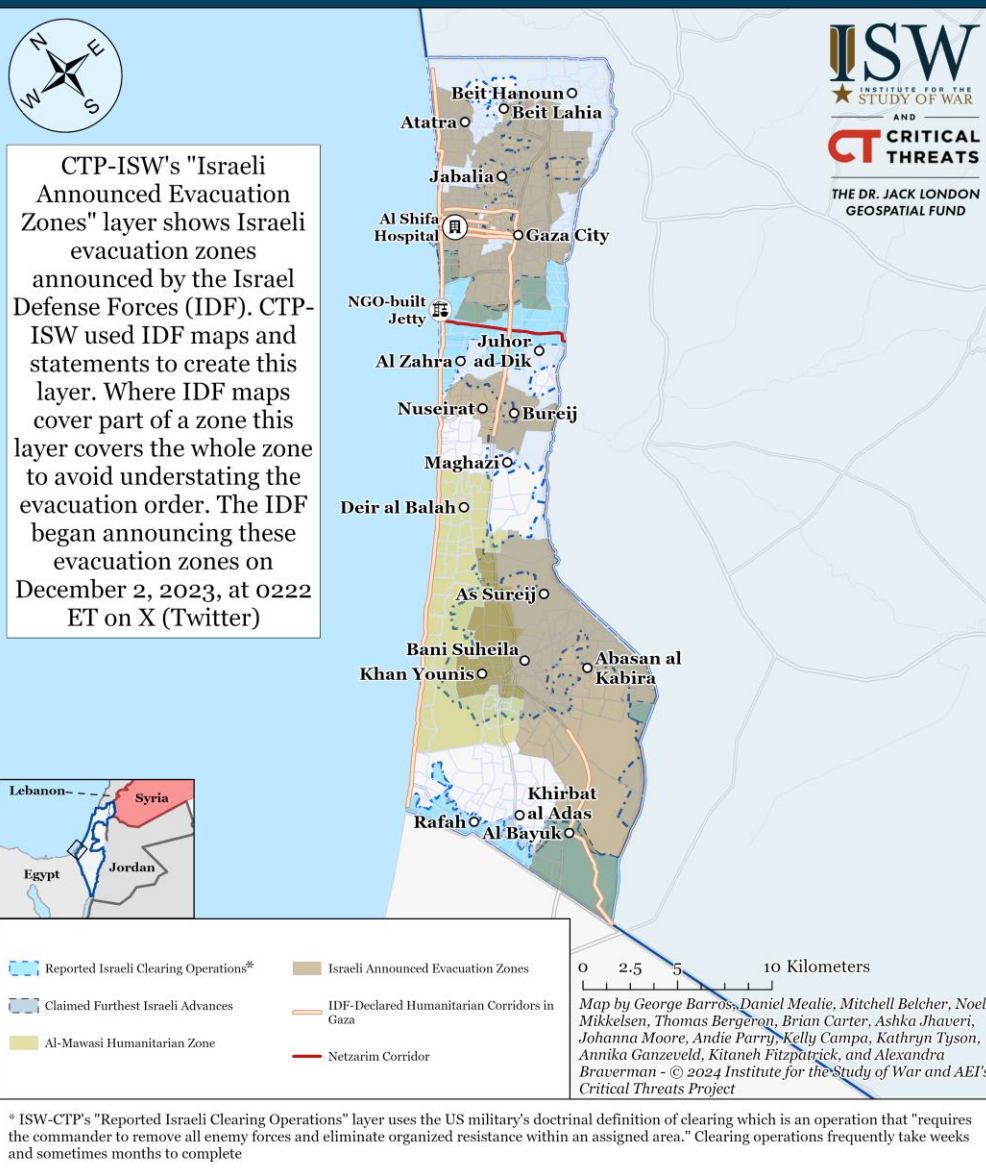


Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, and Alexandra Braverman
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* ISW-CTP's "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 July 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters at least five times in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on July 20.[38] All clashes occurred within Tubas. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) detonated an IED targeting IDF vehicles in Tayasir in the West Bank on July 21.[39] The IDF did not report any injuries.[40]

A video reportedly showing masked Israeli settlers attacking Israeli activists, foreign volunteers, and Palestinian civilians with clubs near Nablus circulated on social media on July 21.[41] Israeli media reported the settlers attacked the civilians while they were planting trees. The settlers injured an unknown number of civilians, including American volunteers.[42] The settlers fled when the IDF arrived at the scene.[43]

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated that the Israeli Air Force may increase its activities to combat terrorism in the West Bank during a situational assessment with IDF Central Command on July 21.[44] Gallant stated that terrorism in the West Bank is increasing.



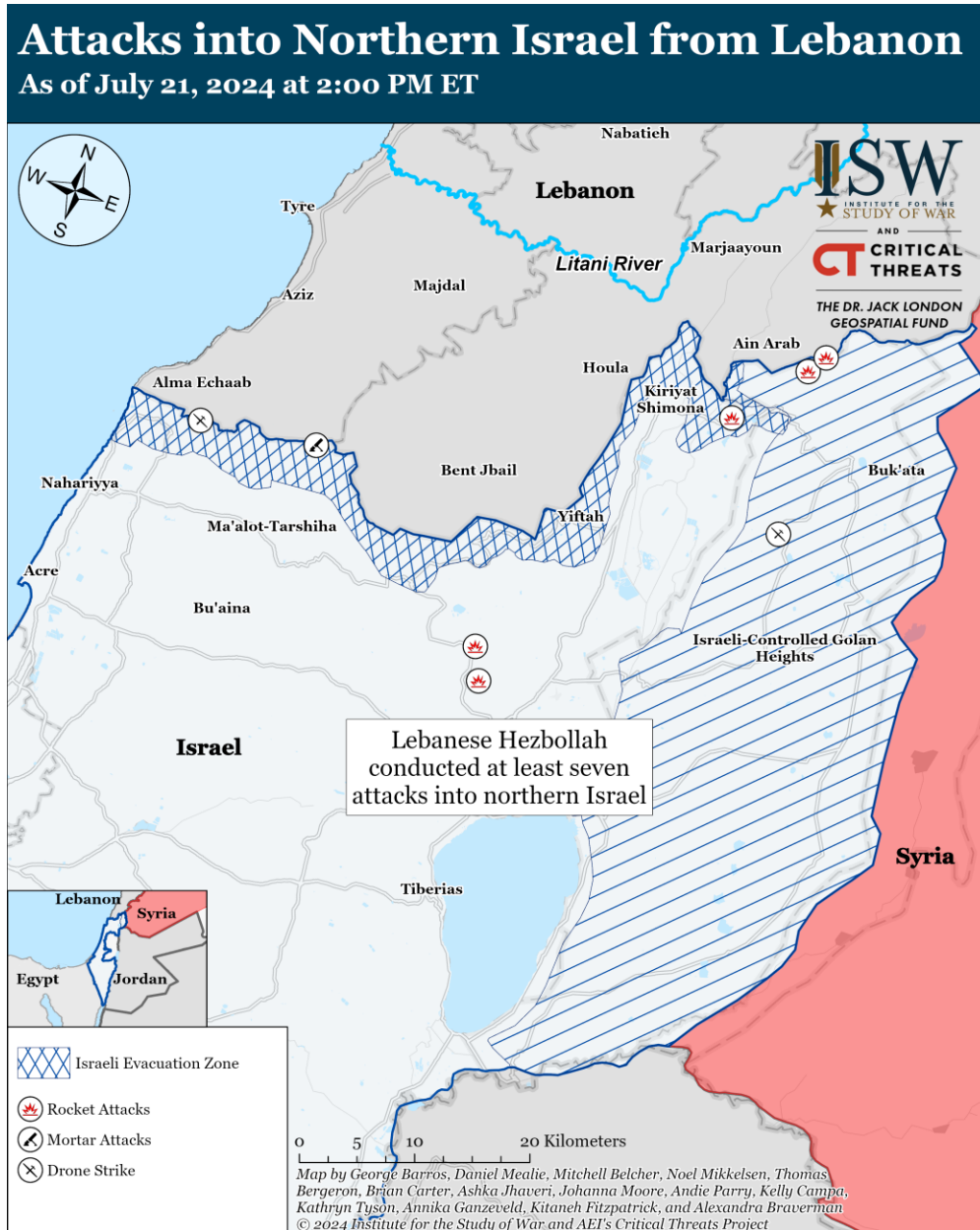
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

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

Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least seven attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on July 20.[45]



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed that it conducted a drone attack targeting a “vital target” in Eilat, Israel on July 21.[46] The IDF has not acknowledged the incident at the time of writing.

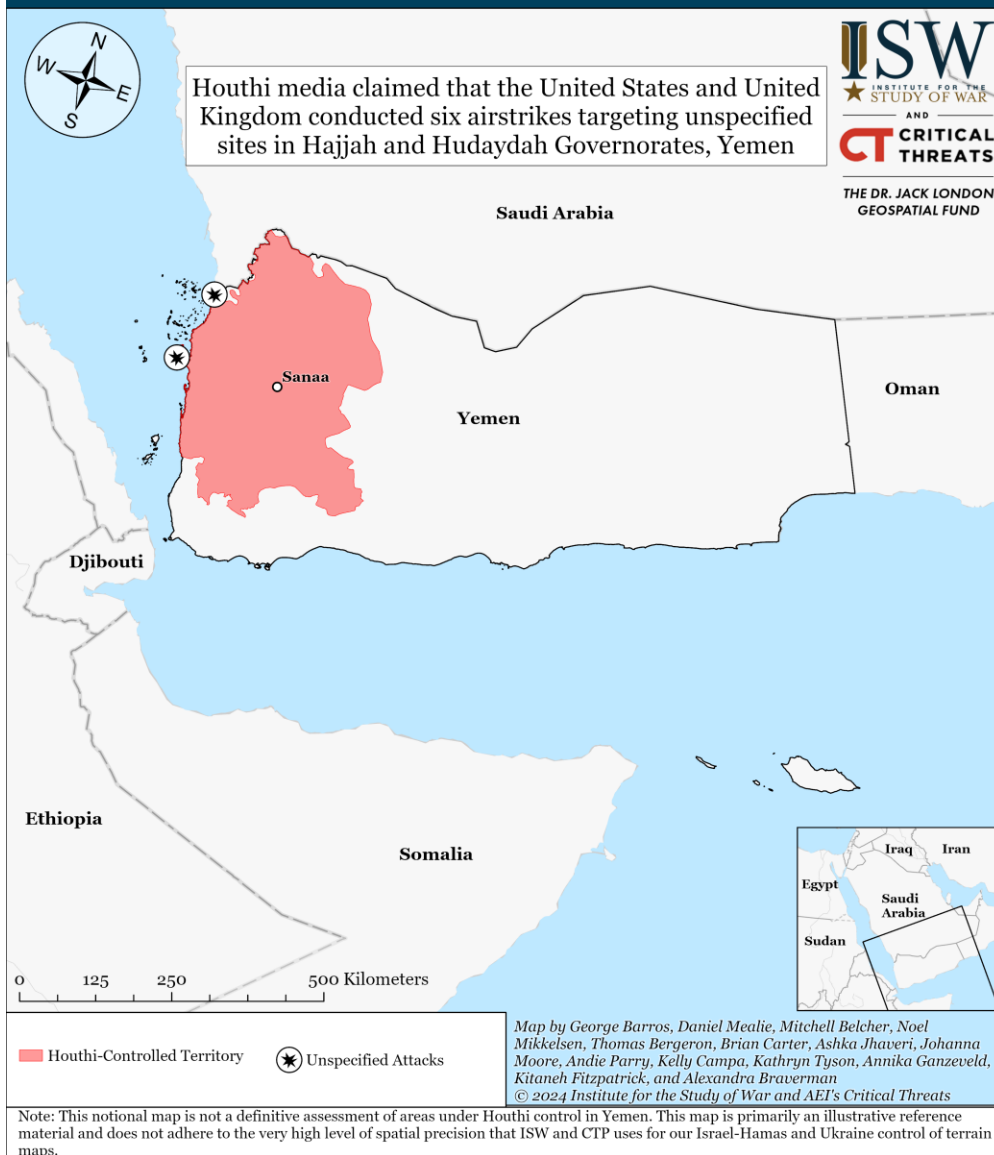
Houthi-affiliated media claimed that the United States and the United Kingdom conducted six joint airstrikes targeting unspecified sites in Hajjah and Hudaydah Governorates, Yemen on July 21.[47] Houthi-affiliated media claimed that the United States and the United Kingdom conducted two airstrikes in Midi district, Hajjah Governorate. Houthi-affiliated media also claimed that the United States and the United Kingdom conducted four joint airstrikes targeting Ras Isa, Salif District, Hudaydah Governorate.

United States Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed one Houthi drone over the Red Sea on July 21.[48] CENTCOM determined that the drone presented an imminent threat to US and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region.

The Houthis claimed a drone and missile attack on the Liberian-flagged container ship *Pumba* in the Red Sea on July 21.[49] CTP-ISW cannot verify that the attacks occurred at the time of writing.

Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

As of July 21, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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