Iran Update



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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. Click here to subscribe to the Iran Update.

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.

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami threatened to retaliate against Israel for the June 3 airstrike that killed IRGC Quds Force Gen. Saeid Abyar in Aleppo, Syria. [1] Abyar was a member of the IRGC Quds Force and had been stationed in Syria since 2012. [2] Salami stated that Israel must "wait" for Iran's response during the funeral ceremony for Saeid Abyar. The IRGC uses Syria as a regional hub for coordination among the larger Axis of Resistance. [3] Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Syria targeting weapons transfer lines through Syria to Iranian-backed fighters or proxy groups since the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. [4] Salami previously stated that Iran has adopted a new "equation" following its April 13 drone and missile attack. [5] Salami emphasized that this "new equation" means that should Israel attack Iran or Iranian targets abroad, Iran would launch attacks targeting Israel directly from Iranian territory. [6] Iran conducted the April 13 drone and missile attack targeting Israel in response to an

April 1 IDF airstrike targeting IRGC officials in Syria who played a critical role in the transfer of Iraniansourced weapons to Lebanese Hezbollah.[7] The June 3 airstrike in Aleppo represented the first Israeli attack on Iranian targets abroad since Salami threatened Israel with Iran's "new equation."[8]

A Syrian Arab Army (SAA)-affiliated source reported on June 4 that the Syrian Defense Laboratories Corporation manufactured rockets that Lebanese Hezbollah has used to conduct attacks against Israeli positions in northern Israel.[9] The Defense Laboratories Corporation works under the Syrian Ministry of Defense to produce equipment and supplies for the SAA.[10] The source suggested that Israel may be targeting Syrian industrial facilities to mitigate the transfer of Syrian-produced weapons to Hezbollah.[11] This statement is consistent with Israel's air campaign to disrupt the transfer of Iranian military material to its partners and proxies in the Levant, especially Hezbollah, by targeting Syrian weapons production facilities.[12]

Former IRGC Commander Mohsen Rezaei appears to be trying to promote an electoral consensus among hardliners ahead of the June 28 Iranian presidential election. Rezaei met with Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation President Amir Hossein Ghazi Zadeh Hashemi and Parliamentary Economic Committee Chairman Mohammad Reza Pour Ebrahimi on June 4 to promote a "consensus" among "revolutionary forces" ahead of the upcoming election.[13] The June 4 meeting comes shortly after Rezaei and Interim President Mohammad Mokhber met with Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and expressed support for his candidacy.[14] Hashemi is reportedly part of a political faction that supports Roads and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash for president.[15] It is possible that Rezaei is attempting to rally the hardline camp behind Ghalibaf.

Israeli officials are continuing to discuss an offensive into Lebanon amid an increase in Hezbollah drone attacks targeting northern Israel. Hezbollah doubled its drone attacks targeting northern Israel between April and May 2024.[16] These drone attacks have been more difficult for Israeli air defenses to intercept.[17] Several senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and War Cabinet member Benny Gantz, have said in recent days amid these attacks that they will "respond" to Hezbollah to restore Israeli security.[18] Gantz explicitly noted that Israel would respond to Hezbollah by either securing a diplomatic agreement or through military action.[19] Netanyahu seemingly implied that the diplomatic option remained on the table, noting that Israel would restore its security "one way or another." [20] Senior Israeli officials, including Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, have repeatedly said that Israel would attempt to force Hezbollah north of the Litani River through diplomatic measures before resorting to force.[21] Hezbollah is not allowed south of the Litani River per UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Lebanon War.[22] Three unspecified Israeli officials also told the Washington Post on June 5 that an Israeli offensive in Lebanon could be imminent if Hezbollah attacks continue in northern Israel.[23]

The Israeli government remains under domestic pressure to return Israeli citizens to northern Israel, who have been displaced from their homes by Hezbollah attacks since October. The discussions of an Israeli offensive in Lebanon follow demonstrations in May against the Israeli government for its inability to return displaced Israeli civilians to northern Israel.[24] Local officials in northern Israel 2

also threatened in May that communities in the area will permanently relocate if security concerns are not addressed and schools are not reopened by the fall.[25] Such a permanent departure would functionally allow Hezbollah to hold prime Israeli agriculture areas hostage for an indefinite period of time.[26]

Hezbollah began conducting near daily attacks into northern Israel on October 8 and will continue to pose a significant long-term threat to Israel even if Israel secures a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah has previously planned attacks like the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks.[27] Hezbollah has also established an elite commando arm—the Radwan Force—that is designed to conduct ground operations into Israel itself.[28] Hezbollah's patron, Iran, sees ground operations into Israel as the means through which it can destroy the Israeli state. [29] Iran and Hezbollah's aspirations to destroy Israel will not end with a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.[30]

The IDF 98th Division established "operational control" over eastern Deir al Balah and eastern Bureij in the central Gaza Strip on June 5.[31] The IDF launched a re-clearing operation targeting Hamas in Bureij and a new operation in eastern Deir al Balah on June 4.[32] The IDF deployed one brigade to each sector, which is notably fewer soldiers than Israel has deployed for similar operations earlier in the war.[33] The IDF 7th Armored Brigade operating in Bureij located weapons, including loaded mortars.[34] The IDF Kfir Brigade is operating in eastern Deir al Balah. Both brigades are focused on destroying underground militia infrastructure after the IDF Air Force conducted strikes above militia ground sites June 4.[35]on

The IDF initially advanced into Bureij in December 2023, isolating Hamas' local battalion there.[36] The continued Palestinian militia activity in Bureij reflects that Palestinian militias remain combat effective there. Hamas has exploited the fact that Israeli forces do not consistently isolate and reduce Palestinian militias during clearing operations. Hamas may retain a presence in Bureij because elements of Hamas' Bureij Battalion were not fully reduced by the IDF, and some Hamas elements may have withdrawn from Bureij before becoming isolated. The IDF was active only in Bureij, eastern Nuseirat, and Maghazi previous clearing operations in the central Gaza Strip, which would have offered Hamas fighters ample areas to withdraw into. Israeli forces are only operating in eastern Deir al Balah. The IDF is not operating in western Deir al Balah because hundreds of thousands of civilians are sheltering in an IDF designated humanitarian zone there.[37]

Palestinian militias are embracing a more -guerilla-style tactical concept to defend against Israeli advances in the central Gaza Strip, according to an IDF officer. An IDF Lieutenant Colonel in the 7th Brigade in Bureij said that Hamas and other Palestinian militias now allow the IDF to rapidly advance into areas before engaging the IDF. It is notable that most of the IDF target areas are dense, urban areas that are conducive to guerilla-style tactics. The Lieutenant Colonel said these were "guerilla-style" tactics wherein enemy fighters use rocket-propelled grenades to target tanks and IDF-occupied buildings, set traps to target Israeli forces, and detonate improvised explosive devices.[38] Palestinian militias, including Hamas, have not yet decisively engaged the IDF in Deir al Balah and Bureij thus far, suggesting the Lieutenant Colonel could be referring to his experiences in 3

Jabalia, where the 7th Brigade fought earlier in May. Palestinian fighters have conducted at least four indirect fire attacks against Israeli advances.[39] Hamas has only conducted two "guerilla"-style attacks. Hamas fighters targeted Israeli armor with rocket-propelled grenades and other munitions in these attacks, both of which were east of Deir al Balah.[40] This is a low rate of attacks compared to recent IDF operations into Rafah and Jabalia.[41]

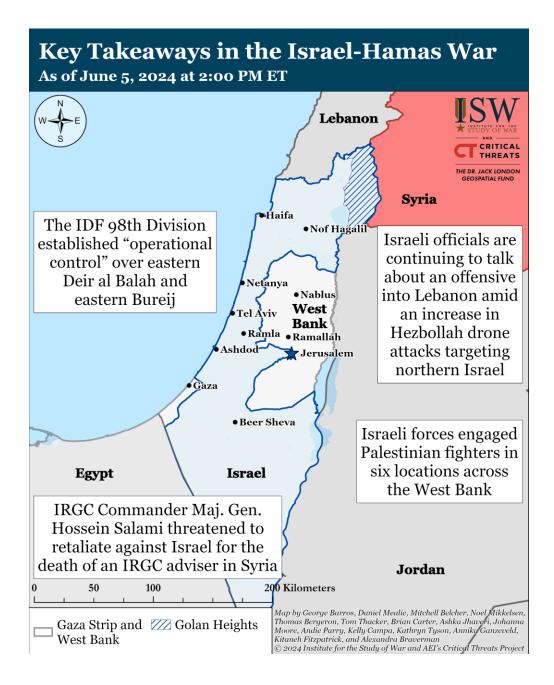
Hamas is continuing to discuss its desired political end state for the war, in which a Hamas-influenced government that includes Fatah governs the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Hamas and Fatah officials will meet for a second round of China-hosted "Palestinian unity" talks in mid-June. [42] China hosted talks between Hamas and Fatah aimed at achieving "Palestinian unity" in April 2024. [43] Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said that Hamas wants Fatah to agree to a "technocratic administration" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. [44] Naim claimed that Hamas is not using its participation in the technocratic government as a condition from reconciliation with Fatah. [45] Hamas officials cited by Reuters on June 5 indicated that Hamas is seeking to obtain an influential, rather than political, role in a post-war Palestinian government. [46] A technocratic government would allow Hamas to retain functional control of Palestinian institutions by enabling Hamas to appoint deputy ministers and directors-general who could undermine technocratic ministers at Hamas' behest.

A possible Islamic State gunman attacked the US embassy in Beirut on June 5 before being wounded by the Lebanese army in a shootout and arrested.[47] One Lebanese guard was injured in the attack.[48] US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said that the gunman did not kill or injure any Americans at the embassy. [49] There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but a Lebanese security official told Reuters that the Lebanese army is investigating possible links to the Islamic State. [50] The attacker was wearing clothing with the words "ISIS" in English and "Islamic State" in Arabic, according to Lebanese security sources.[51] The attacker is a Syrian national and a resident of the Sunni-majority town of Majdal Anjar in Lebanon's central Bekaa Governorate. [52] The Islamic State is a Sunni Salafi-jihadi group and maintains small attack cells in Lebanon.[53] Lebanese security forces have arrested several Islamic State-linked individuals across Lebanon since 2022, including an 8-person cell on May 31.[54] The Islamic State last claimed an attack targeting Lebanese security forces in Tripoli in 2019.[55]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran:** The IRGC commander threatened to retaliate against Israel for the June 3 airstrike that that killed in IRGC Quds Force general in Syria. The general was a member of the IRGC Quds Force and had been stationed in Syria since 2012.
- **Iranian Presidential Elections:** Former IRGC Commander Mohsen Rezaei appears to be trying to promote an electoral consensus among hardliners ahead of the June 28 Iranian presidential election.

- **Syria:** A source close to the Syrian Arab Army said that a Syrian government corporation manufactured rockets for Hezbollah. This is notable given the repeated Israeli airstrikes targeting weapons sites in Syria.
- **Lebanon:** Israeli officials are continuing to talk about an offensive into Lebanon amid an increase in Hezbollah drone attacks targeting northern Israel.
- **Gaza Strip:** An IDF lieutenant colonel highlighted Palestinian militias' use of "guerilla-style" tactics in the Gaza Strip, in which Palestinian militias allow IDF units to enter their target areas before Palestinian militias engage the IDF troops.
- **Post-War Palestine:** Hamas is continuing to discuss its desired political end state for the war, in which a Hamas-influenced government that includes Fatah governs the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Islamic State: A possible Islamic State gunman attacked the US embassy in Beirut on June 5 before being wounded by the Lebanese army in a shootout and arrested. No Americans were killed or injured.



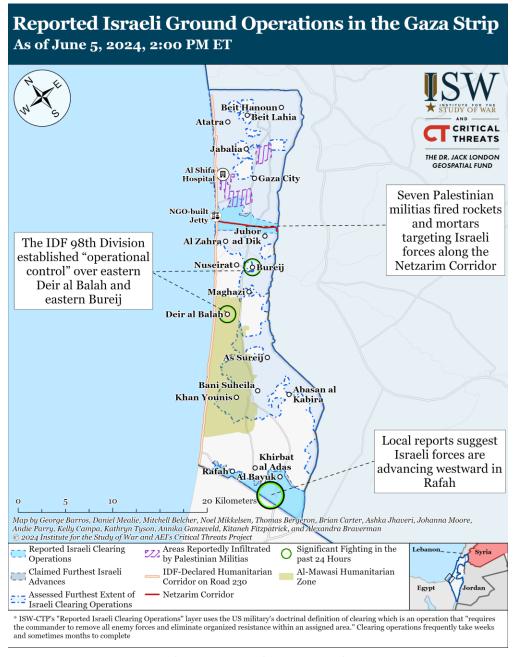
Gaza Strip

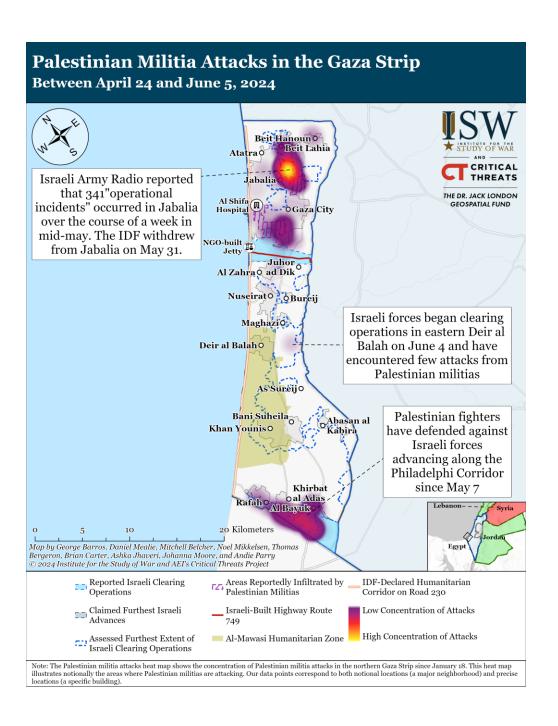
Axis of Resistance objectives:

- 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

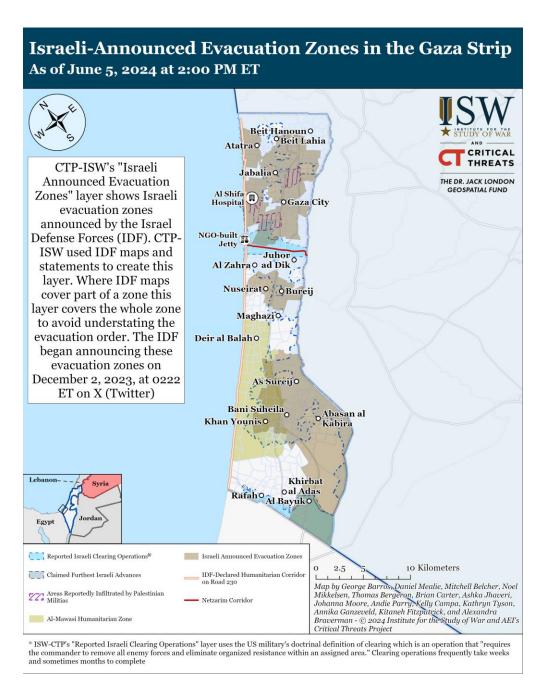
The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued operations along the Netzarim Corridor on June 5. The IDF 99th Reserve Division directed strikes on a Palestinian cell and a Palestinian sniper operating near Israeli forces. [56] An Israeli military correspondent reported on June 4 that Israeli forces returned to the Netzarim Corridor after operating in Sabra, north of the corridor. [57] Seven Palestinian militias launched rocket and mortars targeting Israeli forces and an IDF site along the Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project 2024

The IDF continued clearing operations in Rafah on June 5.[59] Israeli forces located weapons in the area and engaged Palestinian fighters operating near Israeli forces.[60] Israeli forces also located and destroyed a 2km-long tunnel that ran along the Philadelphi Corridor and connected to several other tunnel branches.[61] The IDF seized various weapons, including an explosively formed penetrator (EFP), from the tunnel.[62] A Palestinian journalist reported that Israeli forces advanced into western Rafah's "Saudi neighborhood."[63] Three Palestinian militias claimed attacks targeting Israeli forces in central and eastern Rafah.[64]





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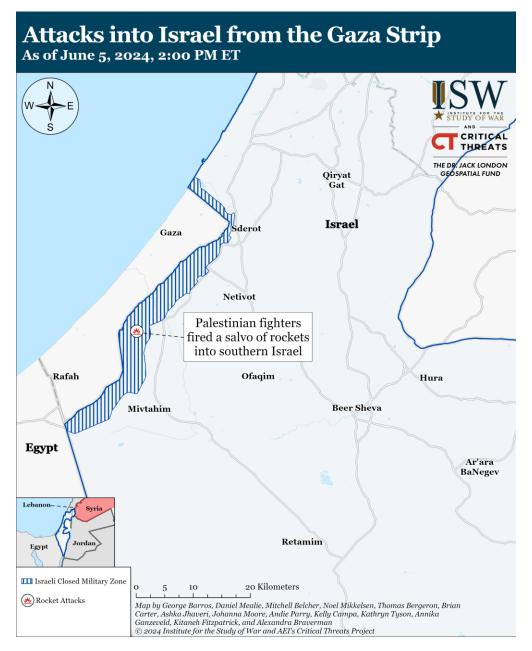


The IDF announced on June 5 that it will increase the maximum active reservists by 50,000 soldiers.[65] The previous quota restricted active reservists to 300,000. The IDF said that the increase in manpower is related to the ongoing operation in Rafah, not part of preparations for an operation into southern Lebanon against Lebanese Hezbollah.[66]

The IDF established a new rapid-response unit to respond to "terrorist incidents" in the Gaza Strip.[67] The new unit, LOTAR Otef, reports to the IDF 143rd Gaza Division. The unit will be comprised of reservists and veterans of elite IDF units from the areas surrounding the Gaza Strip. The IDF formed the LOTAR Otef unit in response to findings from an investigation into the events of October 7.

The World Central Kitchen (WCK) reported on June 4 that the organization is bringing food aid into the Gaza Strip at a "fairly good" rate in coordination with the Coordination of Government Activities and Territories (COGAT).[68] The WCK Middle East Activation Manager John Torpey said that the organization moved approximately 100 trucks of aid into the Gaza Strip last week. WCK also reported that it can distribute food aid through its community kitchen locations in the Gaza Strip. UN and international aid agencies have previously reported challenges distributing aid to Palestinians due to ongoing fighting.[69]

Palestinian fighters conducted a single rocket attack from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel on June 5. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades conducted a combined rocket attack targeting an IDF site east of Deir al Balah. [70] Israeli forces are conducing clearing operations in eastern Deir al Balah. [71]



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 six locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on June 4.[72] Hamas, PIJ, and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fighters engaged IDF forces operating in Jenin using small arms and detonated IEDs during overnight Israeli raids.[73]

The IDF and Shin Bet detained 18 wanted men throughout the West Bank during overnight raids on June 5.[74] Israeli forces conducted a "large-scale operation" in Beit Ummar, northwest of Hebron, to detain "illegal immigrants" and suspects carrying out "sabotage activities." The IDF also seized small arms, IEDs, and "incendiary materials" belonging to Hamas.

The IDF and Israeli Border Police killed a wanted al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fighter in Balata refugee camp, Nablus on June 3.[75] Israeli Public Broadcasting and Israeli media reported that undercover IDF troops conducted a daytime operation in Balata refugee camp to kill the wanted fighter.[76] The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades mourned the fighter's death.[77]

IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, Israel Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai, and Border Police Commander Brig. Gen. Brik Yitzchak visited the Israeli Border Police's undercover Yamas unit on June 4.[78] Shabtai noted that Israel faces a "challenging security period" in the West Bank.[79]



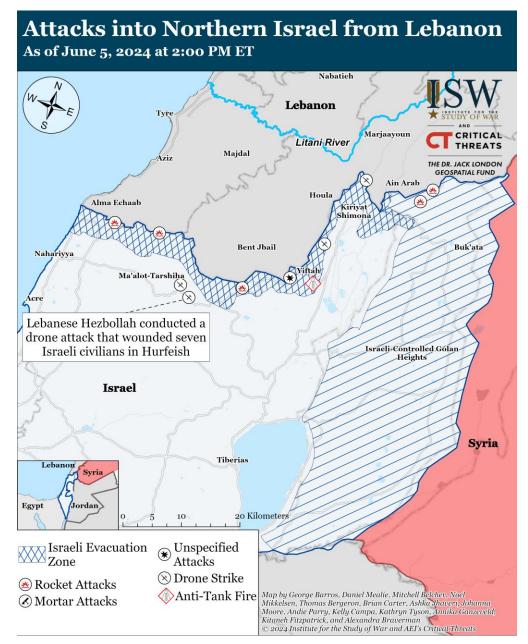
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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 13 attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on June 4.[80] Hezbollah conducted a drone attack that wounded seven Israeli civilians in Hurfeish in northern Israel.[81]



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

The International Atomic Energy Agency censured Iran on June 5 for advances in its nuclear program. [82] The E3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) proposed the resolution on June 3 and voted on the resolution during the IAEA Board of Directors Meeting on June 5 after Iran failed to resolve an IAEA probe into uranium particles detected at undeclared locations. [83] According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the resolution called on Iran to allow more IAEA inspectors to visit Iranian nuclear sites, provide missing design plans for future facilities, and fully answer the agency's questions

about the undisclosed uranium.[84] The resolution demanded that the IAEA produce an updated assessment about the possible presence of undeclared nuclear materials should Iran fail to clarify current suspicions.[85] The resolution did not state that Iran was formally in noncompliance of its IAEA obligations. China and Russia voted against the resolution.

Faylaq al Waad al Sadiq Secretary General Mohammad al Tamimi expressed his support on June 4 for Kataib Hezbollah's call to boycott US and UK companies in Iraq.[86] Tamimi claimed that it is now "forbidden" to buy from or work for US, UK, or any other companies that support Israel. Kataib Hezbollah spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari released a statement on June 3 calling on Iraqis to boycott US businesses in Iraq.[87] Askari accused US businesses of working as fronts for US intelligence services. Askari's statement came amid a series of attacks on US and UK companies in Iraq since

late

May.[88]

US CENTCOM said on June 4 that the Houthis launched two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Houthi-controlled Yemen into the Red Sea.[89] CENTCOM said that there were no injuries or damage reported by US, coalition, or commercial ships.



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