



Iran Update, February 9, 2024

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Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm EST

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. For more on developments in Iran and the region, see our [interactive map of Iran and the Middle East](#).

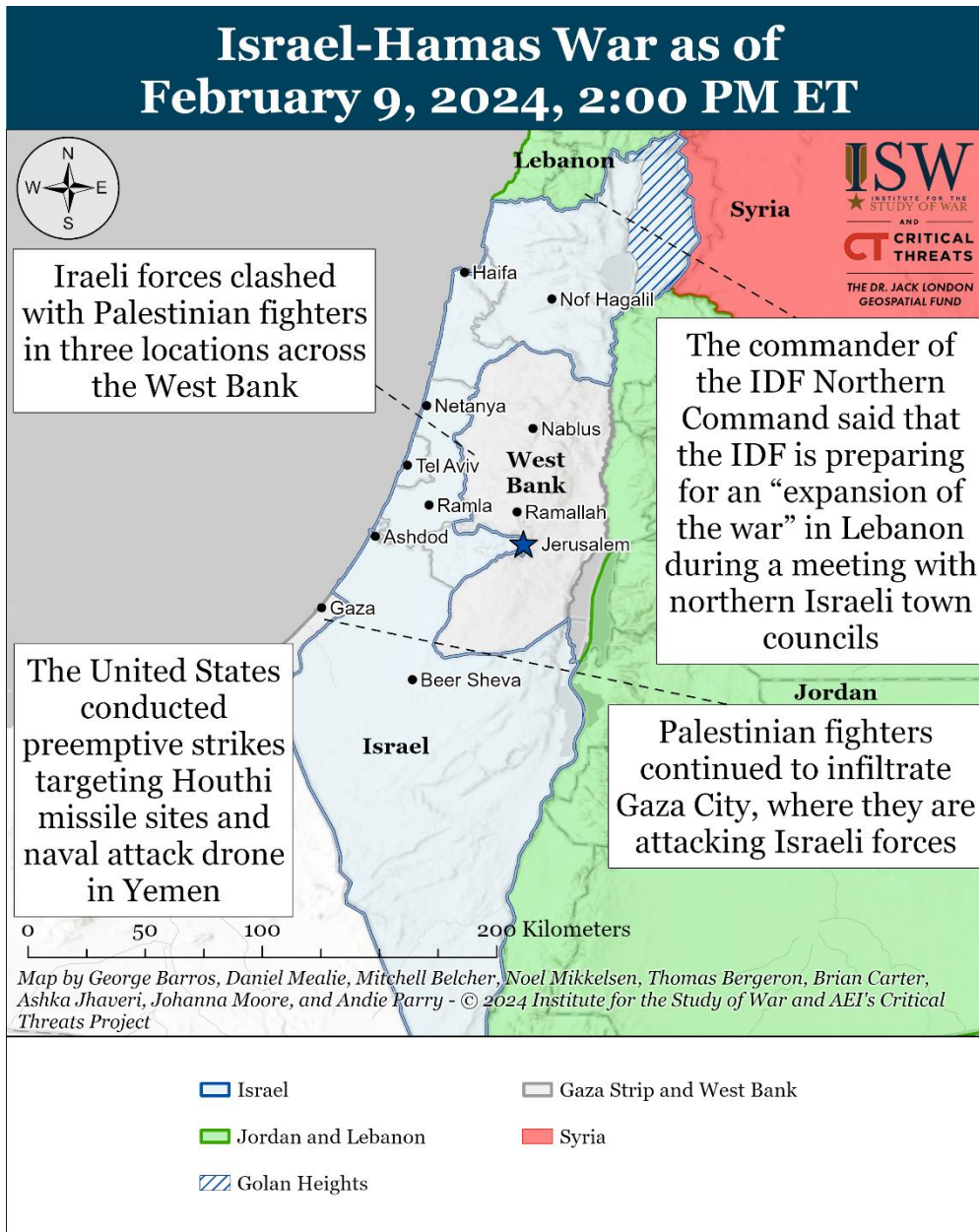
Note: CTP and ISW have refocused the update to cover the Israel-Hamas war. The new sections address developments in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, as well as noteworthy activity from Iran's Axis of Resistance. We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered 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.

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.

Key Takeaways:

- **Northern Gaza Strip:** Palestinian fighters continued to infiltrate Gaza City on February 9, where they are attacking Israeli forces.
- **Southern Gaza Strip:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the IDF to draft plans to evacuate civilians from Rafah and to “dismantle Hamas’ battalions in the Rafah area” on February 9.
- **Iraq:** The Central Bank of Iraq revoked the license that allows Iran’s largest bank to operate in Iraq on January 31, according to a Central Bank of Iraq document obtained by Reuters.

- **Iran:** Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian is engaging in political coordination with senior leaders in the Axis of Resistance during his visits to Lebanon, Syria, and Qatar.
- Two Western intelligence officials told Politico on February 8 that Iran used German financial institutions to funnel money to its regional proxy groups.
- **Syria:** Israel likely conducted missile strikes targeting Iran-affiliated targets in southwestern Damascus, Syria, on February 9.
- **Yemen:** The United States conducted preemptive strikes targeting Houthi missile sites and naval attack drones in Yemen on February 8.



Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and public to launch and sustain a major ground operation into the Gaza Strip
- Degrade IDF material and morale around the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian fighters continued to infiltrate Gaza City on February 9, where they are attacking Israeli forces. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Mujahideen Brigades fighters conducted a combined attack that targeted a group of Israeli soldiers and vehicles near Eastern Cemetery, between eastern Jabalia and the Israel-Gaza Strip border.[1] Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—a leftist group aligned with Hamas in the current war—fired rockets and mortars targeting Israeli forces operating in Gaza City.[2] Israeli forces also directed an airstrike targeting Palestinian fighters near a Hamas military position during clearing operations in the northern Gaza Strip.[3]

Palestinian fighters continued attacks targeting Israeli forces in the central Gaza Strip. Al Quds Brigades fighters launched rockets targeting Israeli vehicles in the central Gaza Strip.[4] The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades targeted an Israeli soldier with sniper fire east of al Maghazi refugee camp.[5] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades are a self-identified military wing of Fatah, a Palestinian nationalist organization.

Israeli forces continued clearing operations and targeted raids in Khan Younis on February 9. The Egoz Unit (assigned to the IDF 89th Commando Brigade) and the 35th Paratrooper Brigade (assigned to the 98th Division) seized several small arms caches during raids on Palestinian militia “compounds” in western Khan Younis.[6] The IDF 646th Brigade (assigned to the 99th Division) captured tunnel shafts, explosives, and small arms.[7] The brigade also captured a rocket launch site near a kindergarten.[8]

Palestinian fighters continued attacks targeting Israeli forces in Khan Younis on February 9. PIJ and Hamas fighters fired rocket-propelled grenades and other unspecified munitions at Israeli armored vehicles advancing in an unspecified area of Khan Younis City.[9]

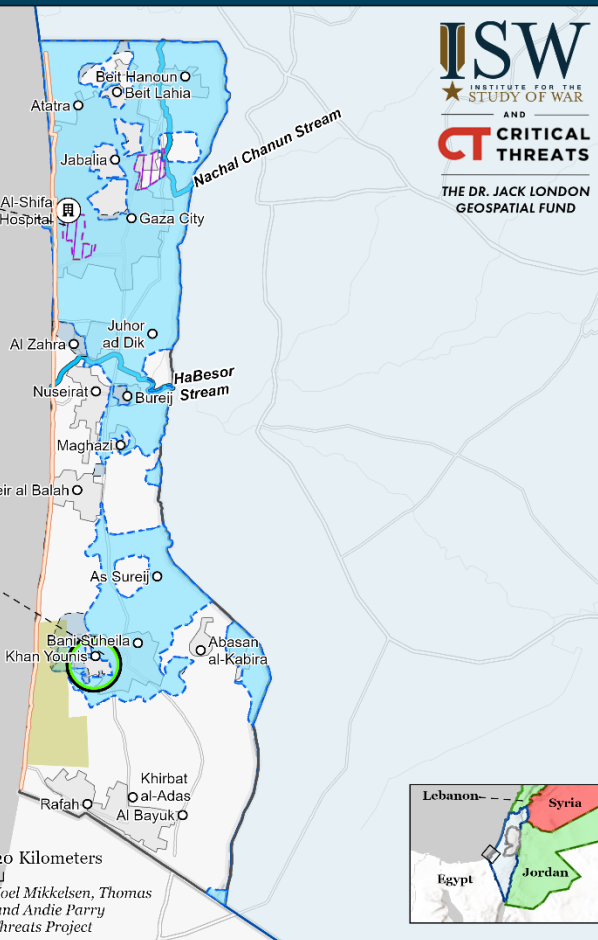
Palestinian fighters did not conduct any indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on February 9.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of February 9, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Palestinian fighters continued to infiltrate Gaza City, where they are attacking Israeli forces

Israeli forces continued clearing operations and targeted raids in Khan Younis



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry
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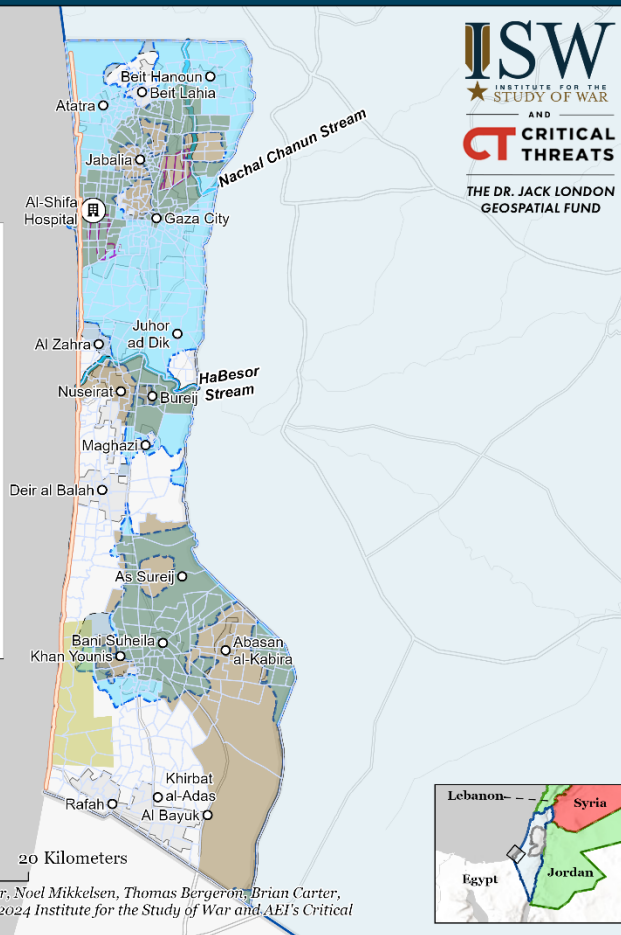
- Israel
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- Significant Water Obstacles
- Gaza Strip
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230
- Densely Urban Areas
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias
- Syria
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours

* 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 February 9, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

- Israel
- Gaza Strip
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias
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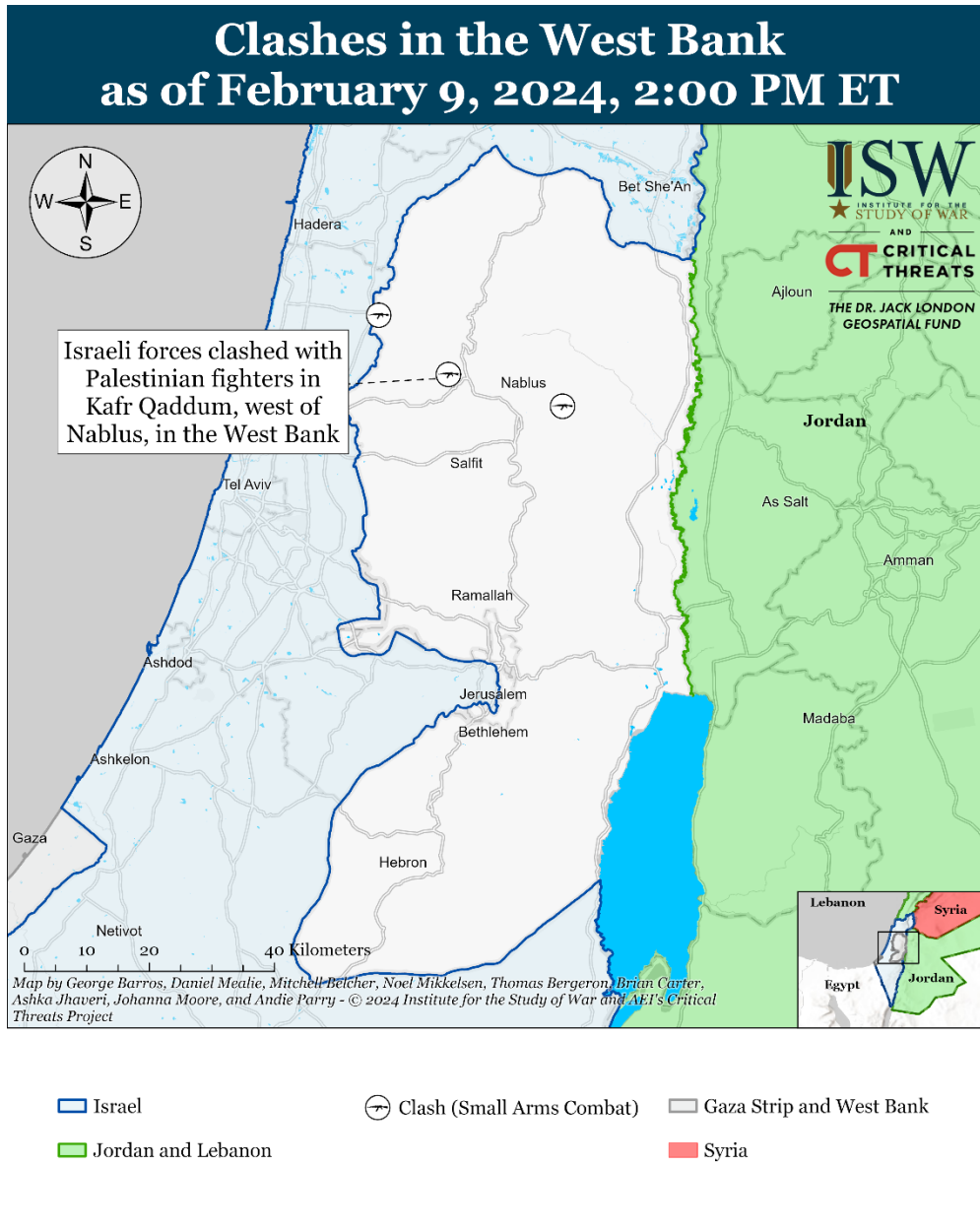
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the IDF to draft plans to evacuate civilians from Rafah and to “dismantle Hamas’ battalions in the Rafah area” on February 9.[10] Netanyahu said that the IDF must conduct clearing operations in Rafah to destroy Hamas. Destroying Hamas is one of Israel’s stated war aims.[11] He added that the civilian population must be evacuated from Gaza to achieve this objective. The US National Security Council spokesperson said that the White House is not aware of any “imminent” plans for the IDF to conduct operations in Rafah. He added that “absent any full consideration of protecting civilians at [the scale of the number of people in Rafah]“ the United States would not support a Rafah operation.[12]

West Bank

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward the West Bank and fix them there

Israeli forces clashed with Palestinian fighters in three locations across the West Bank on February 8 and 9.[13] Unspecified fighters conducted three attacks targeting Israeli forces in Beit Furik, Tulkarm, and Kafr Qaddum.



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

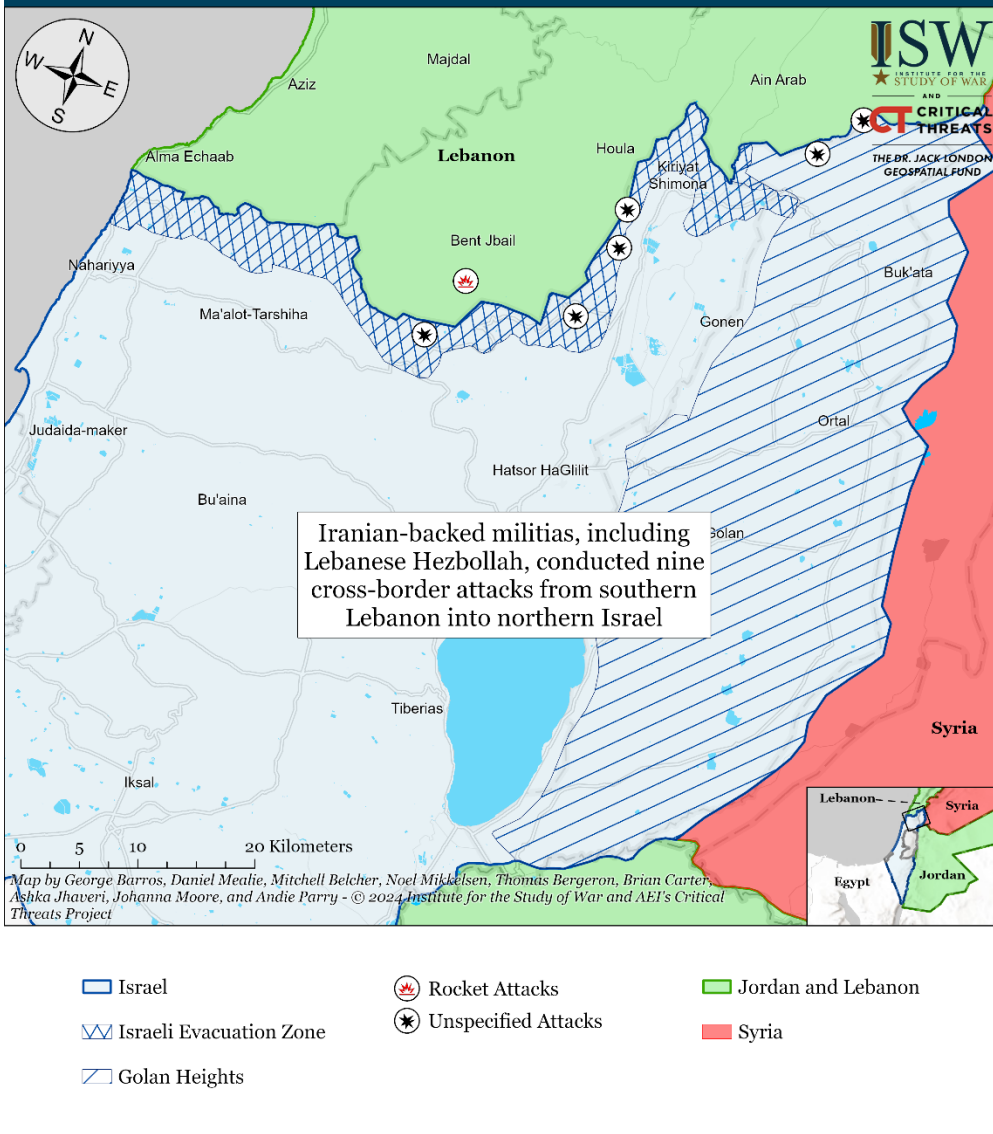
Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Draw IDF assets and resources toward northern Israel and fix them there
- Set conditions for successive campaigns into northern Israel

Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, conducted nine cross-border attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel on February 9.[14]

The commander of the IDF Northern Command said that the IDF is preparing for an “expansion of the war” in Lebanon during a meeting with northern Israeli town councils.[15] The councils represented Israeli towns that the IDF evacuated due to the threat of Lebanese Hezbollah attacks. The commander said that the IDF’s goal is to “change the security situation” to enable the return of northern Israeli residents.[16] The head of the Meta Asher town council said that he “told the commanding general that [he hopes] the political echelon will let the IDF act” against Hezbollah.[17] Israeli officials have said repeatedly that they are attempting to reach a diplomatic agreement wherein Hezbollah will withdraw north of the Litani River in Lebanon, but that Israel may need to resort to military action against Hezbollah in the absence of a diplomatic solution.[18] UNSC Resolution 1701, which ended the 2006 Lebanon War, stipulates that Hezbollah cannot maintain military positions south of the Litani.[19]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon as of February 9, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Axis of Resistance campaign objectives:

- Demonstrate the capability and willingness of Iran and the Axis of Resistance to escalate against the United States and Israel on multiple fronts
- Set conditions to fight a regional war on multiple fronts

Iraqi politicians continued to call for the expulsion of US forces from Iraq in response to the February 7 US strike in Baghdad that killed a senior Kataib Hezbollah commander.^[20] A Sadiqoun member of parliament called on Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad al

Sudani on February 9 to take "immediate action" to end the US presence in Iraq.[21] The Sadiqoun bloc is the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq's political arm in Iraq's Parliament.[22] Iraqi Deputy Parliament Speaker Shawkhan Abdullah called on the UN to prevent "military attacks" targeting Iraq during a February 9 UN session with other heads of parliament from around the world.[23] Abdullah said that the Iraqi government has the authority to take "all legal and diplomatic measures to stop attacks and protect [Iraqi] national sovereignty." [24] Abdullah is a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party from Sulaymaniyah, a province in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Kurdistan Regional Prime Minister and top KDP leader Masrour Barzani said on February 9 that the Kurdistan Region required greater US support to counter "threats," referencing Iran's January 15 drone and missile attack that targeted Erbil.[25]

The Central Bank of Iraq revoked the license that allows Iran's largest bank to operate in Iraq on January 31, according to a Central Bank of Iraq document obtained by Reuters.[26] Reuters reported that the Central Bank of Iraq canceled the license due to international sanctions on the bank, the bank's losses accrued in Iraq, and its limited activities in Iraq. The US Treasury Department sanctioned Bank Melli Iran in 2018 for transferring funds to Iranian-backed Iraqi militia groups via the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).[27] The Central Bank of Iraq dated this document January 31, two days after US Treasury Department Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian Nelson discussed US sanctions on Iraqi actors and companies with Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council President Faiq Zaidan on January 29.[28]

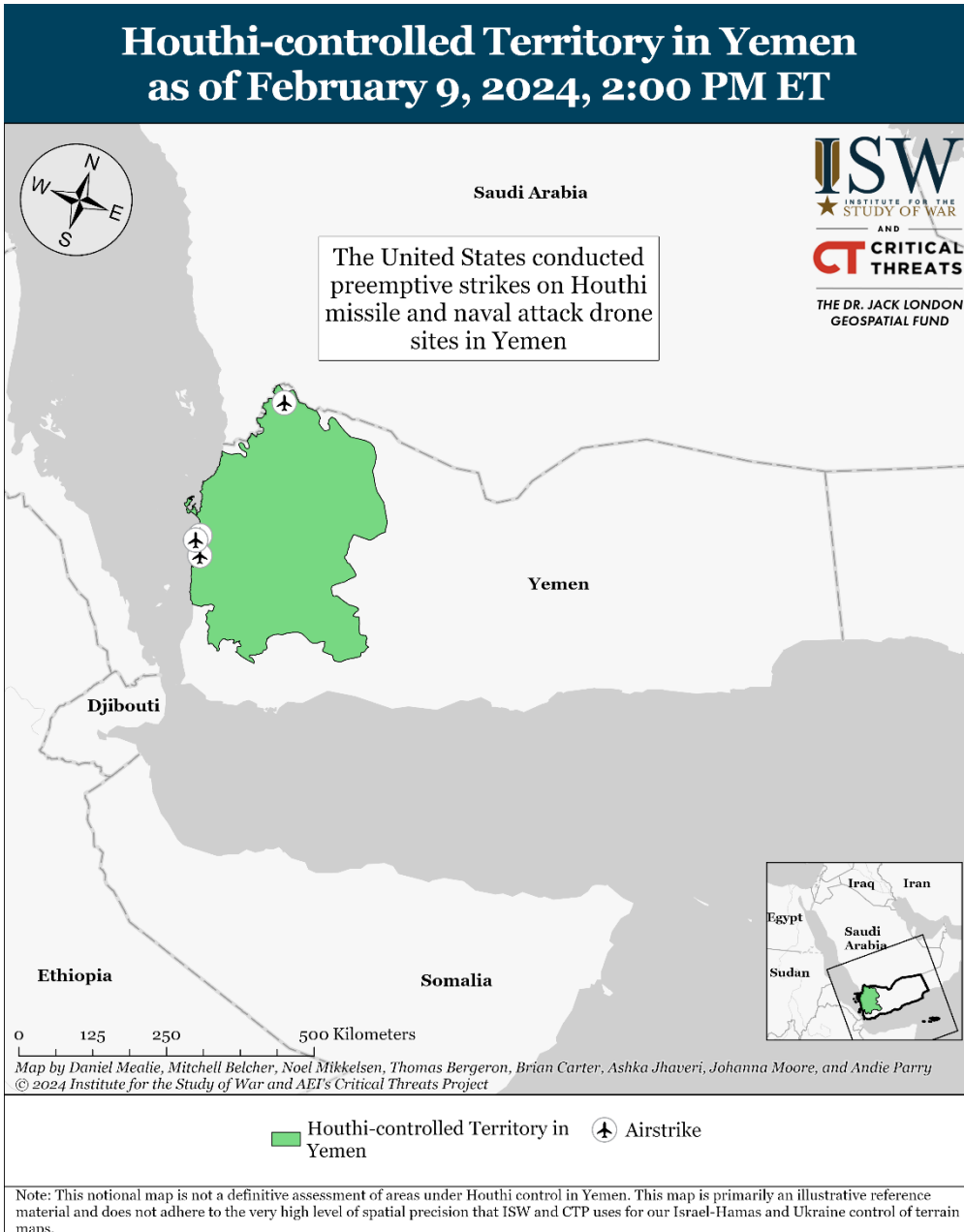
Two Western intelligence officials told Politico on February 8 that Iran used German financial institutions to funnel money to its regional proxy groups.[29] Politico reported Western intelligence officials notified German financial authorities that Iran used Varengold Bank AG in Hamburg, Germany, to transfer funds to Iranian proxy groups, including Lebanese Hezbollah and the Houthis, for an unspecified number of years. The unspecified Western intelligence officials also said that the IRGC Quds Force-linked front companies used the German bank. The IRGC Quds Force is responsible for providing financial and material support to Iranian proxy groups across the Middle East. Politico reported that the US Treasury Department had previously sanctioned the unspecified Iranian front companies for their connections to the IRGC Quds Force. The IRGC Quds Force routinely utilizes international money laundering and oil smuggling networks to financially support Iranian proxy groups.[30]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian is engaging in political coordination with senior leaders in the Axis of Resistance during his visits to Lebanon, Syria, and Qatar.[31] Abdollahian arrived in Beirut on February 9 to meet with unspecified "senior Lebanese officials" and "resistance" leaders.[32] Abdollahian will travel to Damascus, Syria, and Doha, Qatar, in the coming days.[33] Abdollahian met with Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh during his last visit to Doha.[34] Abdollahian repeatedly engaged in political coordination with senior Axis of Resistance leaders during similar visits to Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Qatar between October 12 and November 3, 2023, as CTP-ISW reported.[35]

Israel likely conducted missile strikes targeting Iran-affiliated targets in southwestern Damascus, Syria, on February 9. Local Syrian sources reported that Israel targeted IRGC-affiliated positions near the Mezzeh Military Airport in southwestern Damascus.[36] Pro-Syrian Regime sources claimed that Syrian air defense systems shot down the drones.[37] A UK-based Syrian outlet claimed that the strikes targeted Lebanese Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed militia positions and an Iranian

cargo plane that landed at the airport several hours before the strike.[38] The IDF has conducted a series of airstrikes targeting Syrian airports and other facilities in Syria to degrade Iran’s ability to move weapons to Hezbollah.[39] Hezbollah uses these weapons to support attacks into northern Israel.

Lebanese Hezbollah said on February 8 that an Israeli airstrike killed three of its fighters in Homs City, Syria, on February 7.[40] Hezbollah claimed that Israel struck a residential building in which the three fighters were planning to hold a meeting.



The United States conducted preemptive strikes targeting Houthi missile sites and naval attack drones in Yemen on February 8.[41] The United States conducted seven strikes targeting four Houthi naval attack drones and seven Houthi mobile anti-ship cruise missiles that Houthi fighters

had prepared to launch at ships in the Red Sea. Houthi and other regional sources reported that US forces targeted al Jabanah, al Durayhimi, and al Kathib in Hudaydah Governorate and al Qutaynat in Saada Governorate.[42] Houthi leader Abdulmalik al Houthi said on February 8 that the US strikes will not deter the Houthis.[43] The US previously conducted strikes against Houthi missile sites in Yemen on February 7.[44]

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[1] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17415>

[2] <https://t.me/hamasps/19478> ; <https://t.me/pflpgaza1/13807>

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[10] <https://www.timesofisrael dot com/pm-says-idf-must-operate-in-rafah-but-will-let-civilians-evacuate-first> ; https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-02-09-24/h_a2a8d5dcdbf2e6c4d461652590457519

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https://t.me/C_Military1/45526

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[16] https://x.com/kann_news/status/1755931176311611901?s=46&t=EGYcIyXosW6lVJmixq2r5Q

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[18] [https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/gallant-well-push-hezbollah-beyond-litani-river-before-residents-of-northern-israel-return-home;](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/gallant-well-push-hezbollah-beyond-litani-river-before-residents-of-northern-israel-return-home)
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[21] <https://www.alahad dot iq/?page=article&itemId=186468>

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