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.

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 has increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels amid recent statements from Iranian officials about Iran's ability to procure a nuclear weapon. [1] The Associated Press reported on May 27 that Iran possesses 142.1 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, citing a confidential International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report. [2] This amount marks a 20.6 kilogram (16.95 percent) increase in Iran's stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium since the IAEA published its last quarterly report in February 2024. [3] Weaponsgrade uranium is uranium that is enriched to 90 percent purity. [4] The IAEA report follows repeated statements in April and May from senior Iranian officials, including a top foreign policy adviser to the Supreme Leader, that have begun to normalize discussions about Iran's ability to procure a nuclear weapon. [5] IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi recently expressed concern about Iran's nuclear program after visiting Tehran from May 6 to May 8, stating that Iranian cooperation with the agency is "not at the level it should be." [6]

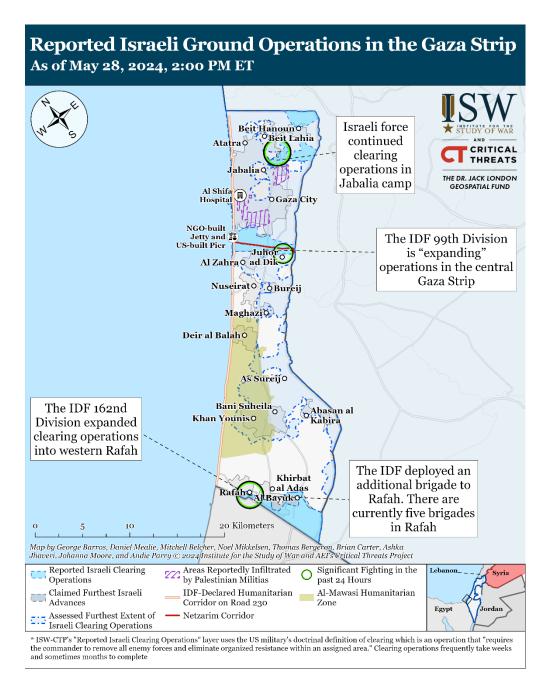
The IAEA report added that Iran's overall stockpile of enriched uranium is currently 6,201.3 kilograms, a 675.8 kilogram (12.23 percent) increase since February 2024 when Iran's total stockpile was 5525.5 kilograms.[7] A US expert noted on May 28 that, based on the confidential IAEA report, Iran could produce enough weapons-grade uranium (WGU) for almost eight nuclear weapons in the first month after breakout.[8]

Iranian Members of Parliament re-elected hardline politician Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf as parliament speaker on May 28.[9] Ghalibaf has served as parliament speaker since May 2020.[10] Ghalibaf received 198 out of 287 votes, while his competitors, former Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Mojtaba Zonnour and former Foreign Affairs Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, won 60 and five votes, respectively.[11] Ghalibaf will serve a one-year term.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) 162nd Division expanded clearing operations into western Rafah on May 28. The IDF Nahal and 401st Brigades operated overnight on the Philadelphi Corridor to target Palestinian fighters and militia sites based on "intelligence" of Palestinian fighters in the area.[12] Palestinian sources reported that Israeli armor advanced to Tel Zaroub and the southern Tel al Sultan neighborhoods, which are along the Philadelphi Corridor.[13] The IDF moved into western Rafah with its left flank against the Egypt-Gaza Strip border. Eyewitnesses speaking to *Reuters* indicated that the IDF may have used unmanned ground vehicles in the advance into western Rafah.[14] Local sources reported intense gunfire in western Rafah as Israeli forces advanced.[15] Palestinian civilians sheltering in western Rafah evacuated north into the al Mawasi humanitarian zone, according to video and journalist accounts. [16]

Palestinian militias continued to target Israeli forces operating in southern and central Rafah on May 28. Hamas fighters detonated a building that it rigged with explosives while Israeli forces were inside the building in Shuwat refugee camp in central Rafah.[17] Several Palestinian militias targeted Israeli forces with mortar and rocket fire along the Philadelphi Corridor.[18]

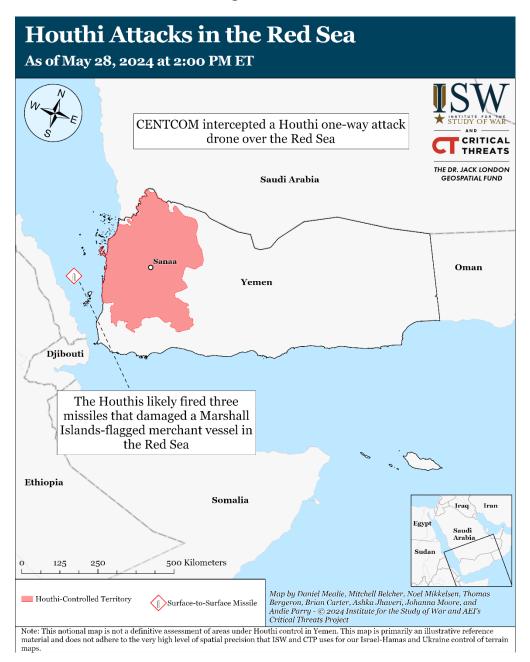
The IDF has uncovered over ten smuggling tunnels that cross into Egypt from the Gaza Strip, according to an Israeli Army Radio correspondent.[19] Israeli forces are in the process of destroying the tunnel routes.[20] The IDF 162nd Division uncovered additional tunnels in its overnight operations along the Philadelphi Corridor on May 28.[21] The IDF Nahal Brigade also seized hundreds of weapons, including long-range rockets, from Hamas warehouses in Rafah in the past week.[22]



Nationalist Iraqi Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr demanded that the Iraqi government expel US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski and close the US Embassy in Baghdad in retaliation for US support for Israel.[23] Sadr argued on May 28 that removing the United States from Iraq through diplomatic means would prevent any use of military force by the United States. He contrasted diplomatic efforts with the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia's attack campaign to expel the United States, which he said triggered a US response.

The Houthis damaged a Marshall Islands-flagged merchant vessel in the Red Sea on May 28.[24] United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) reported that a vessel was targeted with missiles and sustained damage approximately 31 nautical miles southwest of Hudaydah.[25] A British maritime security company separately stated that the vessel sustained damage to its cargo hold

and took on water approximately 54 nautical miles southwest of Hudaydah, Yemen. The damaged vessel sailed to a nearby port to assess the damage. The Houthis have not claimed the attack on the vessel at the time of this writing.

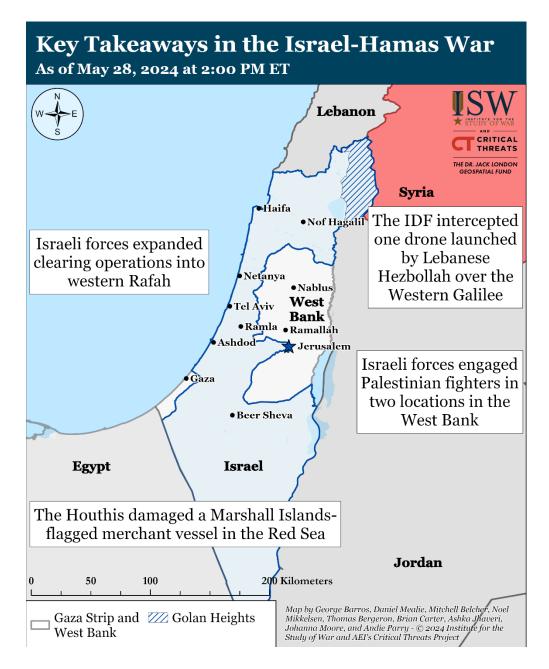


Israel submitted a new ceasefire and hostage-release proposal to international mediators on May 27.[26] Hamas negotiators were expected to receive the proposal from Qatar on May 28 but have not acknowledged the proposal at the time of writing.[27] The Israeli proposal offers "flexibility" on the number of living hostages released in the deal's first phase, according to sources with knowledge of the negotiations speaking to *Axios*.[28] The proposal also includes "a willingness" to discuss a "sustainable calm" in the Gaza Strip, a phrase that both Israel and Hamas included in the last round of ceasefire proposals.[29]

Iran's continued support for Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and provision of lethal aid to Russia is bolstering Russia's technological output and military capabilities on the battlefield in Ukraine. The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) published a report on May 28 detailing Russian efforts to produce Shahed-136/131 drones at the Alabuga Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the Republic of Tatarstan using Iranian-provided technologies and a labor force recruited largely from eastern Africa.[30] WSJ cited the international hacking group Prana Network, which reportedly hacked an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) email server in February 2024 and revealed that Russia intends to produce 6,000 Shahed drones at the Alabuga SEZ in 2024 alone. The Institute for Science and International Security (IISS) assessed that the Alabuga SEZ has already produced 4,500 Shaheds as of the end of April 2024, ahead of schedule, and could produce all 6,000 by mid-August 2024.[31] WSJ found that Russia is currently producing more advanced models of Iranian Shaheds domestically and intensively using them to strike Ukraine.[32] WSJ also noted that Russian authorities are recruiting from African countries, particularly Uganda, and especially enticing young women to participate in work-study programs at Alabuga to produce Shahed drones. Russia would not be able to operate the Alabuga SEZ without Iran's consistent support for the Russian war effort—Iranian production models for Shahed drones and Iranian drone technologies are at the center of the entire Alabuga enterprise.[33] German outlet BILD similarly reported on May 27 that Iran has also likely supplied Russia with Qaem-5 television-guided air-to-ground bombs, which Iran started producing as recently as 2019.[34] BILD noted that an Iranian-provided Mohajer-6 drone carrying the Qaem-5 bombs crashed in Kursk Oblast for an unknown reason but that Russian forces may have intended to strike Sumy Oblast. ISW has not yet observed confirmation that Russia has used these projectiles in Ukraine, but their use would be consistent with the pattern of continued and intensified Iranian military support to Russia.[35]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran's Nuclear Program:** Iran has increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels amid recent statements from Iranian officials about Iran's ability to procure a nuclear weapon.
- **Iranian Parliament:** Iranian parliamentarians re-elected hardline politician Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf as parliament speaker, with Ghalibaf receiving 198 of 287 votes.
- **Rafah:** The IDF expanded operations into Western Rafah. IDF units moved deeper into Rafah along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border overnight on May 27 and 28. The IDF has so far identified ten smuggling tunnels that cross into Egypt from the Gaza Strip.
- **Iraq:** Nationalist Iraqi Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr demanded that the Iraqi government expel US Ambassador to Iraq Alina Romanowski and close the US Embassy in Baghdad in retaliation for US support for Israel.
- Yemen: The Houthis damaged a Marshall Islands-flagged merchant vessel in the Red Sea.
- **Ceasefire Negotiations:** Israel submitted a new ceasefire proposal that offered "flexibility" on the number of living hostages to be released in the deal's first phase. Hamas has not acknowledged the proposal as of the data cutoff.
- **Russo-Iranian Cooperation:** Iran's continued support for Russia's defense industrial base (DIB) and provision of lethal aid to Russia is bolstering Russia's technological output and military capabilities on the battlefield in Ukraine.



Gaza Strip

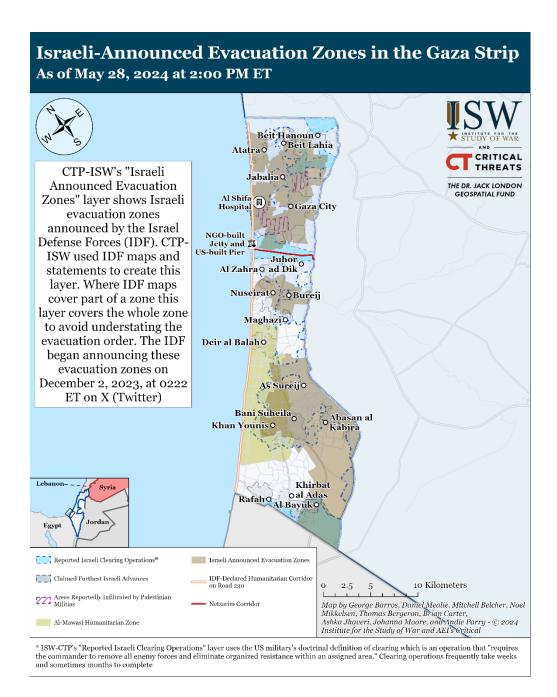
Axis of Resistance objectives:

- 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 deployed an additional brigade to Rafah on May 28.[36] The IDF 828th Brigade will operate under the command of the 162nd Division.[37] There are currently five IDF brigades operating in Rafah.[38]

The IDF 98th Division continued clearing operations in Jabalia on May 28. The IDF 7th Armored, 460th Armored, and 35th Paratroopers Brigades destroyed dozens of militia sites in the Jabalia area, including tunnel shafts, reconnaissance sites, and a weapons depot.[39] Israeli forces also engaged Palestinian fighters, including a Palestinian mortar cell.[40] Several Palestinian militias targeted Israeli forces with mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, and thermobaric rockets in and around Jabalia camp.[41]

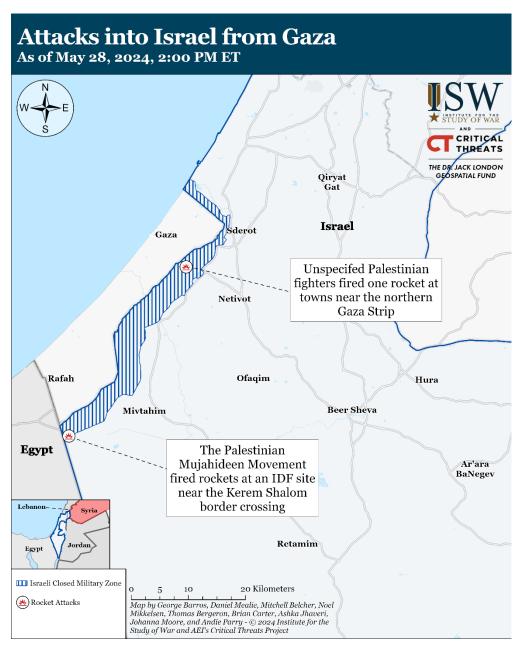
The IDF 99th Division is "expanding" operations in the central Gaza Strip.[42] The IDF did not specify how the two brigades operating under the 99th Division would alter their areas of responsibility under the expansion. The IDF 2nd Reservist Infantry Brigade and 679th Reservist Armored Brigade deployed to the Netzarim corridor on April 25 to hold the corridor, provide protection for the US-built temporary pier, and conduct short-term raids in the northern Gaza Strip.[43] The IDF reported on May 28 that the 2nd Reservist Infantry Brigade has operated in Juhor ad Dik on the eastern end of the Netzarim corridor over the past week.[44] The 679th Reservist Armored Brigade raided a weapons warehouse and directed strikes on Palestinian fighters operating in the central Gaza Strip.[45]



IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi appointed an "advisory committee" on May 28 to examine the conditions of Palestinian detainees and the IDF's detention facilities' compliance with international law.[46] The IDF said that an "unprecedented number of detainees and the shortage of" detention sites have led to Palestinian detainees being held in IDF custody for longer periods.[47] A *CNN* report from mid-May exposed alleged overcrowding and abuse in the IDF Sde Teiman detention facility.[48] The Sde Teiman facility houses Palestinians detained in the Gaza Strip for up to 45 days under Israeli law.[49]

Palestinian militias have conducted at least two indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on May 27.[50] The Palestinian

Mujahideen Movement, which is a Palestinian faction aligned with Hamas that has expressed close ties with Iran, fired rockets at an IDF site near the Kerem Shalom border crossing.[51] The IDF separately said that Palestinian fighters launched one rocket from the Gaza Strip toward Nahal Oz.[52] Palestinian militias did not claim responsibility for the attack which struck an open area.[53]



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 two locations across the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on May 27.[54]

Israeli forces detained eight wanted persons in the West Bank during overnight raids on May 28.[55] Israeli forces also seized explosive components in Burka.

Hamas and the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades released separate statements on May 27 calling on Palestinian civilians and fighters to take up arms and attack Israeli forces and settlers. [56] Hamas said that Palestinians should seek out Israeli targets to attack instead of waiting for Israeli forces to enter Palestinian towns. [57] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades similarly called on members of the militia in the West Bank to attack Israeli forces and settlers "wherever they are found." [58] These calls to action follow eight Palestinian militia attacks in the West Bank on May 27 that exclusively targeted Israeli checkpoints, settlements, and towns. [59] Palestinian militias have previously called for Palestinian civilians in the West Bank to take up arms against Israelis in the West Bank. [60]

Approximately 30 unarmed Palestinians attempted to cross the Israel-West Bank border wall from an area near Tulkarm into the Bat Hefer settlement on May 27.[61] Footage shows Palestinians climbing over a border wall near Shuweika, which is 1.5km north of Tulkarm. Israeli security forces arrested 19 Palestinians and two Israeli Arabs who security forces suspected of helping the group cross into Israel.[62]

An Israeli Army Radio correspondent called the incident "serious" and said that Tulkarm is the most dangerous area in the West Bank.[63] The correspondent suggested that Israeli forces have deprioritized the task of defending the border wall due to Israeli deployments in the Gaza Strip and the Israel-Lebanon border. The correspondent added that the IDF also believes that it requires fewer Israeli forces to guard the border area because of an expansion of the border wall. Israeli media reported that "special units" have been created to defend the wall in recent years.[64]

Hamas fighters fired small arms in the general direction of Bat Hefer, an Israeli town west of Tulkarm outside of the West Bank on May 27.[65] A video published by Hamas claims to show two Hamas fighters firing two M4/M16-pattern rifles in the general direction of Bat Hefer, but the town is not visible in the footage. The two fighters are seen on the West Bank side of the Israel-West Bank security wall. Hamas said that the attack was in response to Israeli "massacres" in Rafah in the Gaza Strip.



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

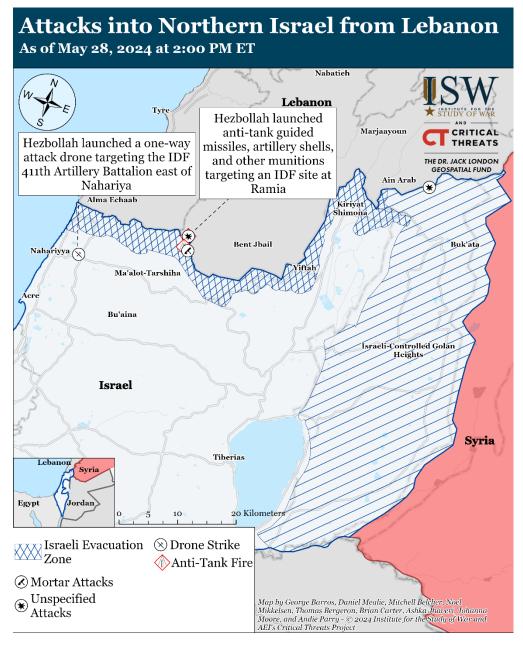
Axis of Resistance objectives:

- 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 six attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on May 27.[66] Hezbollah launched an unspecified number of drones targeting the IDF's 411th Artillery

Battalion east of Nahariya, Western Galilee, on May 27.[67] The IDF reported shortly after that it intercepted one drone, adding that another fell over Western Galilee.[68]

The Israeli government approved a plan to allocate NIS 6.5 billion (1.7 billion USD) to rehabilitate northern Israel and assist evacuees on May 27.[69] The relief plan applies to towns within nine kilometers of the border that have been evacuated due to Hezbollah attacks.[70] The plan allocates NIS 3.5 billion (951 million USD) to immediate relief needs, including providing aid to evacuated communities, supporting businesses and industry, and providing employment security.[71] The plan also devotes NIS 3 billion (815 million USD) to multi-year objectives including strengthening the northern region's businesses, universities, and tourism industry.[72]



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Rear Adm. Ali Akbar Ahmadian held a phone call with Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu on May 28.[73] Ahmadian congratulated Shoigu on his recent appointment as Secretary of the Russian Security Council. Russian President Vladimir Putin replaced Shoigu with Andrei Belousov as Russian Defense Minister on May 12, moving Shoigu to the position of Security Council Secretary to replace Nikolai Patrushev.[74] Shoigu expressed condolences for the death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and emphasized that Iran and Russia will continue to engage in "high-level cooperation" despite Raisi's death.[75]

Iranian acting Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani and interim President Mohammad Mokhber met with Sudanese Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Awad Ali on May 25 and 26, respectively. [76] Awad Ali is affiliated with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). [77] Mokhber emphasized Iran will "spare no effort" to help Sudan achieve "independence, progress, and peace." [78] Bagheri Kani and Awad Ali agreed to expedite the reopening of the Iranian and Sudanese embassies in Khartoum and Tehran. [79] Iran and Sudan reestablished diplomatic ties in October 2023. [80]

The meetings between Awad Ali and Iranian officials come amid growing military cooperation between the two countries. Iran has supplied the SAF with drones, such as the Mohajer-6, to use against the Emirati-supported Rapid Support Forces (RSF).[81] The Mohajer-6 has a range of 2,000 km and uses Almas guided anti-tank missiles and Ghaem guided glide bombs.[82] Iran has also reportedly supplied the SAF with Ababil drones which have a range of 120-480 km and use Almas anti-tank guided missiles and Ghaem guided glided bombs.[83] An unspecified senior Sudanese army source told *Reuters* in April 2024 that Iranian drones have helped the SAF "turn the tide of the war" by halting the progress of the RSF and enabling the SAF to regain territorial control in areas surrounding the capital.[84]

Russia may separately be increasing its support of the SAF in order to acquire a Red Sea naval base.[85] Deputy Commander-in-Chief Yasser al Atta stated on May 25 that an SAF delegation will travel to Russia to conclude an agreement exchanging "vital weapons and munitions" for Russian logistics.[86] Atta described the planned Russian hub as "not exactly a military base."[87]

Iranian acting Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani met with IRGC Quds Force Commander Brig. Gen. Esmail Ghaani at the Foreign Affairs Ministry in Tehran on May 28.[88] Ghaani praised former Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian's frequent diplomatic engagements with Axis of Resistance leaders.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) intercepted a Houthi one-way attack drone over the Red Sea on May 27.[89] CENTCOM assessed that the drone presented a threat to merchant vessels in the area.

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—conducted two separate drone attacks targeting Eilat on May 27. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that it fired one drone targeting an unspecified "vital target" in Eilat.[90] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that it fired three drones in a second attack on Eilat targeting multiple "military

targets."[91] The IDF reported on May 27 that Israeli fighter jets and air defenses intercepted two drones before they crossed into Israeli territory.[92]





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