

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: June 7, 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.

Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar indicated opposition to the latest Israeli ceasefire proposal, according to unspecified Arab officials. Sinwar stated that Hamas will only accept a proposal that guarantees a permanent ceasefire, which is one of the maximalist demands that Hamas has maintained since December 2023.[1] The current Israeli proposal provides provisions to meet Hamas’ demands but does not guarantee them. Sinwar’s comment comes amid international pressure on Hamas to accept the Israeli proposal. The United States has urged Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey to pressure Hamas to accept the proposal. An Israeli official indicated that “there will not be a better offer.”[2] US officials similarly said there is no backup plan if Hamas refuses the proposal.[3] Hamas has not delivered an official response to the proposal at the time of this writing.

Hamas seems unlikely to accept a proposal that does not meet its maximalist demands, which include a permanent ceasefire, the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, and a hostage-

for-prisoner exchange. Hamas likely remains confident that it will survive Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip and can therefore maintain its maximalist demands without granting major concessions.

Some senior members of the Ebrahim Raisi administration are backing Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Esmaili in the upcoming Iranian presidential election. They have framed their support for Esmaili as meant to continue Raisi's agenda.

Fifteen senior officials signed a letter on June 7 urging the Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting and approving electoral candidates, to allow Esmaili to compete in the election.[4] The officials praised Esmaili's "intellectual, political, and managerial abilities and qualifications." [5] The letter's signatories include the following:

- Vice President for Executive Affairs Mohsen Mansouri
- Vice President for Women's Affairs Ensieh Khazali
- Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani
- Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian
- Oil Minister Javad Owji
- Industry, Mines, and Trade Minister Abbas Ali Abadi
- Agricultural Jihad Minister Mohammad Ali Nikbakht
- Information and Communications Technology Minister Issa Zareh Pour
- Environmental Protection Organization Director Ali Salajegheh
- Administration and Employment Organization Director Meysam Latifi

Esmaili leads a faction affiliated with Raisi's son-in-law, Mekdad Nili.[6] Mekdad's brother, Meyshem Nili, and Mohsen Mansouri accompanied Esmaili when he registered for the presidential election on June 2.[7] Esmaili's faction also includes Planning and Budget Organization Director Davoud Manzour and Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Minister Solat Mortazavi.[8] Esmaili's faction is reportedly competing against another faction in the Raisi administration that is led by Roads and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash.[9] Bazrpash has also registered as a candidate in the presidential election. Bazrpash's faction includes Martyrs and Veterans Affairs Foundation President Amir Hossein Ghazi Zadeh Hashemi and is affiliated with Presidential Office Cultural Deputy Mehdi Mojahed.[10] Bazrpash, along with Interim President Mohammad Mokhber, did not sign the letter to the Guardian Council endorsing Esmaili.[11] Mortazavi, who is part of Esmaili's faction, also notably did not sign the letter.[12]

Some elements in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) appear to be supporting Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf in the upcoming Iranian presidential election.

IRGC-affiliated Tasnim News Agency published an article on June 4 indirectly criticizing Ghalibaf's competitor, Vahid Haghanian.[13] The article accused Haghanian of "unethically" using his relationship with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to advance his presidential campaign. The article was referencing that Haghanian has long worked in the Office of the Supreme Leader as a senior adviser to Khamenei. Haghanian responded to the article by vowing to end Iranian media's "interference in internal politics" if he becomes president.[14] Reformist and opposition media attributed the attack on Haghanian to Tasnim News Agency supporting Ghalibaf in the upcoming election.[15] These reports are consistent with other reports that Tasnim News Agency has defended Ghalibaf against corruption allegations in recent months.[16]

Tasnim News Agency's support for Ghalibaf could indicate that the top echelons of the IRGC also support him. Hamid Reza Moghadam Far, who is one of the outlet's founders and current chairman of its board of directors, serves as a cultural and media adviser to IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami.[17] The close relationship between Moghadam Far and Salami suggests that there is a broader IRGC effort to help Ghalibaf win the presidency. Tasnim News Agency has notably left an article of Salami congratulating Ghalibaf on his reelection as parliament speaker on its politics home page since May 28.[18]

It would be unsurprising for significant elements in the IRGC to support Ghalibaf in the presidential race. Ghalibaf has decades-old ties to many senior IRGC officers dating back to their time fighting Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the 1980s. Ghalibaf is moreover part of a close circle of current and former IRGC officers who have repeatedly come together in times of domestic crisis to interfere in Iranian domestic politics.

US State Department spokesperson Mathew Miller said on June 6 that the United States is concerned that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani does not control fully the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF).[19] Miller's statement is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that Iran has infiltrated the PMF extensively and uses it to exert significant influence in Iraq.[20] The PMF and the Iranian-backed Iraqi militias that comprise it answer to Iran—not the Iraqi prime minister. Iranian-backed militias under the PMF paused attacks targeting US forces in January 2024 after IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani ordered them to stop.[21] Iraqi Kurdish media reported on June 5 that some Iranian-backed Iraqi militias plan to renew their attacks targeting US forces in Iraq if Sudani does not set a deadline for a full US military withdrawal by the end of a 40-day deadline.[22]

Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Strip:** Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar indicated opposition to the latest Israeli ceasefire proposal. Hamas seems unlikely to accept a proposal that does not meet its maximalist demands.
- **Iran:** Some elements in the IRGC appear to be supporting Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf in the upcoming Iranian presidential election. This support is unsurprising given Ghalibaf's deep connections to the IRGC.
- **Iraq:** The US State Department said that it is concerned that the Iraqi prime minister does not control fully the Iraqi PMF. Iran has infiltrated the PMF extensively and uses it to exert significant influence in Iraq.
- **Yemen:** US CENTCOM destroyed two Houthi uncrewed surface vessels and intercepted eight Houthi drones in the Red Sea.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of June 7, 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 Israel Defense Forces (IDF) 99th Division destroyed Palestinian militia infrastructure and engaged Palestinian fighters along the Netzarim Corridor, south of

Gaza City, on June 7.[23] The IDF 35th Paratroopers Brigade is now operating along the corridor.[24] Several Palestinian militias mortared Israeli forces in the area.[25]

The IDF Air Force struck a container in a UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) school in al Shati refugee camp.[26] Hamas used the UNRWA school to direct militia activity. The IDF said that the container served as a “concentration point” for Hamas’ internal security forces. Hamas said that the school was designated for sheltering displaced civilians and that the Israeli strike killed three and injured 15 others.[27] The IDF stated that it used precise munitions for the attack and took steps to reduce civilian casualties.[28] Hamas continues to use civilians as human shields to protect Hamas’ militia infrastructure, personnel, and weapons.

The IDF 98th Division continued re-clearing operations in eastern Bureij and eastern Deir al Balah on June 7.[29] The IDF Air Force cooperated with ground forces to kill the head of a Hamas squad overseeing rocket attacks.[30] Hamas fighters fired a thermobaric rocket targeting Israeli forces in a house east of Deir al Balah.[31] The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades mortared Israeli forces in eastern Bureij and eastern Deir al Balah.[32]

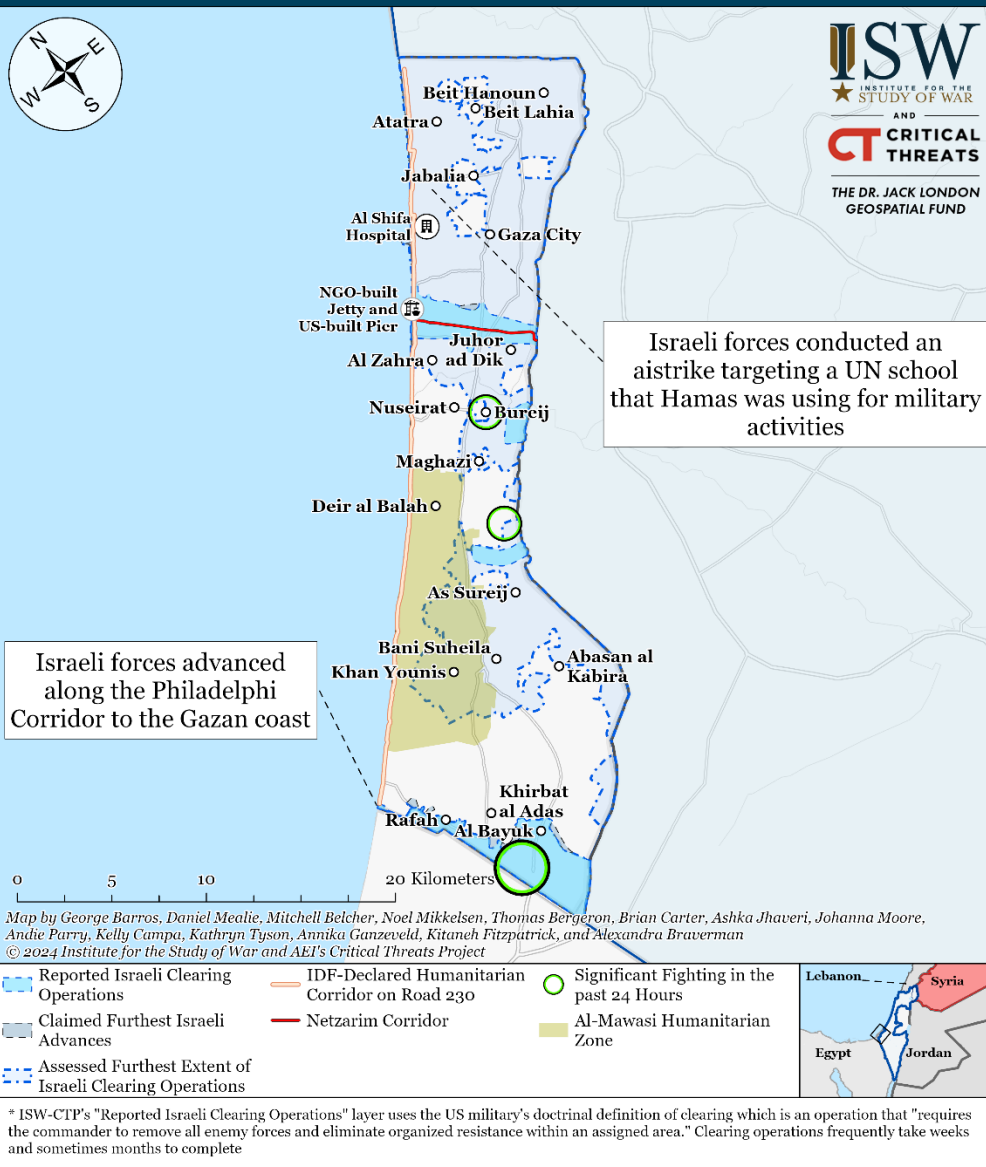
The IDF advanced further along the Philadelphi Corridor, reaching the Gazan coast around Rafah on June 7. The IDF announced on May 29 that it established “operational control” of the corridor and said that Israeli forces were operating along most of it, excluding a small area near al Qarya as Suwaydiya on the coast.[33] Local and regional sources reported on June 7 the presence of Israeli forces along the coast and the evacuation of civilians in western Rafah.[34] Israeli officials expect that controlling the Philadelphi Corridor will prevent Hamas from smuggling weapons into the Gaza Strip.[35] Hamas will continue its efforts to reconstitute throughout the Gaza Strip, despite these efforts.

The IDF continued clearing operations in Rafah on June 7. The IDF Nahal Brigade located Palestinian militia tunnels and engaged Palestinian fighters above and below ground.[36] Hamas fighters fired a rocket-propelled grenade at an Israeli tank in Yabna refugee camp.[37]

The IDF Air Force struck and killed a senior member of Hamas’ general security forces in Rafah on June 6.[38] The general security forces support Hamas’ military wing and work to ensure Hamas’ survival and disrupt Israeli forces’ ability to move in the Gaza Strip, according to the IDF.[39] The IDF also killed the mayor of Nuseirat, whom it said had a long history with Hamas, including involvement in its West Bank headquarters, which directs attacks against Israel.[40]

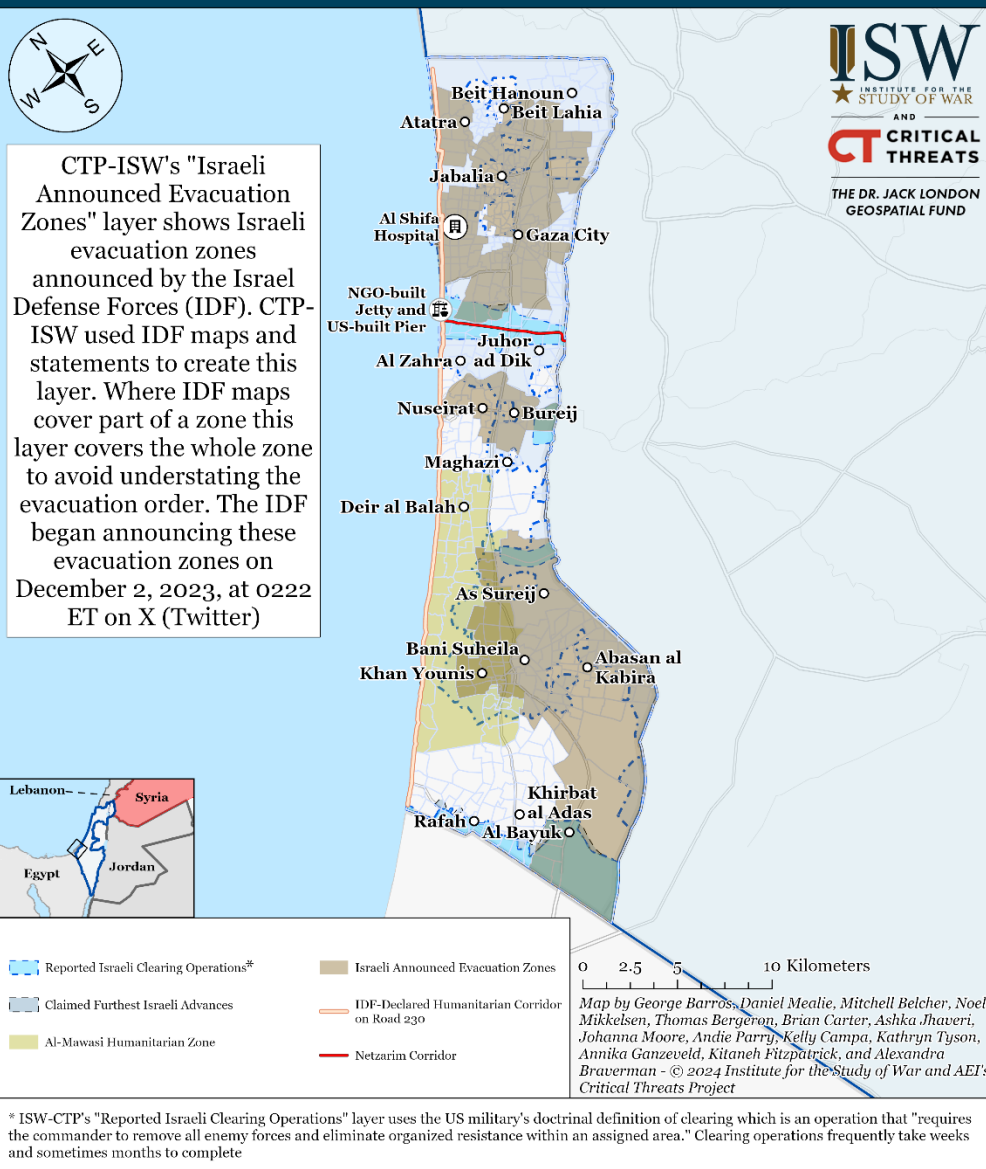
Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of June 7, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

As of June 7, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



We removed the Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias layer on June 7, 2024, given that ISW-CTP cannot independently or precisely verify where Palestinian militias have infiltrated in the northern Gaza Strip. The Israel Defense Forces have launched several raids in the northern Gaza Strip targeting areas with a Palestinian militia presence. Militias other than Hamas—including but not limited to Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade—also operate in these areas. ISW-CTP continues to assess that the Palestinian militias are exploiting the withdrawal of Israeli forces from many areas of the Gaza Strip to reconstitute Palestinian militia units. June 7, 2024, is an arbitrary date and does not mark the beginning or end of any reported Israeli clearing operation in the Gaza Strip. ISW-CTP has reindexed and revised its map layers before and similarly revised shapefiles from its Ukraine catalog.

Israeli War Cabinet member Benny Gantz will hold a press conference on June 8 during which he is expected to resign from the coalition government.[41] Gantz threatened in May 2024 to leave the government if the three-member war cabinet (Netanyahu, Gantz, and Yoav Gallant) does not approve a new strategy for the war in the Gaza Strip by June 8.[42] Israeli media reported that a recent meeting between Gantz and Netanyahu was unproductive.[43]

Israel released additional information on Hamas' attempted infiltration into Israel from Rafah on June 6.[44] The Hamas fighters used a tunnel that the IDF had identified during Operation Protective Edge in 2014.[45] The Hamas fighters went through an opening in the fence that Israeli forces had been using.[46] IDF spokesperson Rear Admiral David Hagari said that Rafah is one of the most complex areas in the world to handle and that “taking care of Hamas takes time.”[47] Hagari said that the IDF has already cut off Hamas' supply lines by seizing control of the Philadelphi Corridor and is now destroying underground tunnels.[48]

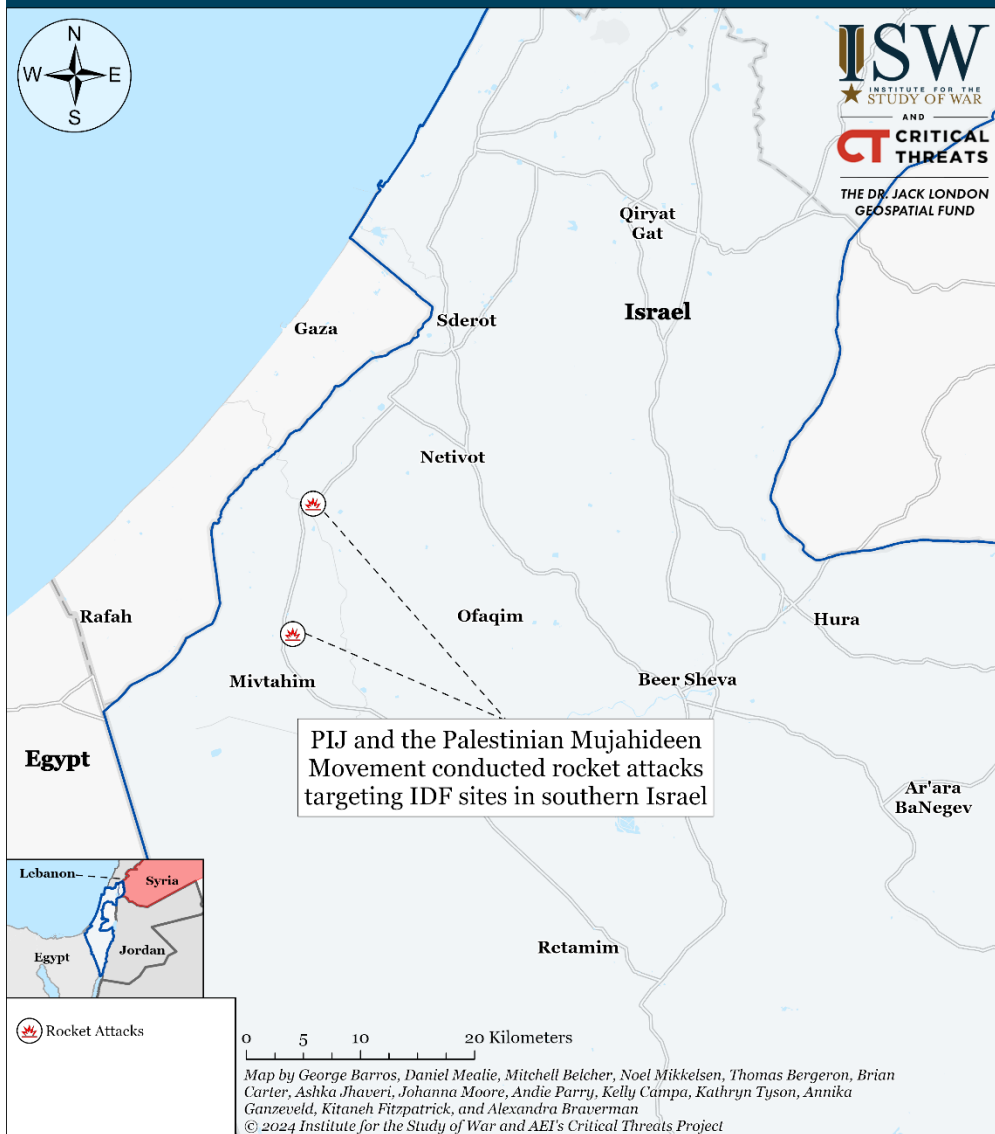
Unspecified US and Israeli officials told Axios on June 7 that recent discussions between the United States, Israel, and Egypt failed to make progress on reopening the Rafah crossing.[49] Representatives of the countries discussed the crossing in Cairo on June 2.[50] Israel refused to allow the Palestinian Authority (PA) to operate the site, which aligns with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long-held position.[51] The Israeli War Cabinet recently approved a policy allowing any government entity other than Hamas, including the PA, to operate the crossing, however.[52] Israel is currently reviewing a list of PA-proposed workers for the crossing and is open to accepting Palestinians affiliated with Fatah.[53] The Egyptians reportedly “played down” the issue of cross-border tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.[54] US officials said reopening the Rafah crossing could be the first step toward stabilizing and reconstructing the Gaza Strip after the war.[55]

US CENTCOM reattached its temporary pier off the coast of the Gaza Strip on June 7 to resume facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid.[56] The United States suspended operations at the pier on May 27 due to damage sustained at sea.[57] US CENTCOM said it will resume the delivery of humanitarian aid in “the coming days.” Vice Admiral Brad Cooper said that the goal is to deliver 500,000 pounds over the beach initially and then increase output soon thereafter.[58]

Palestinian militias conducted two indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on June 7.[59]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

As of June 7, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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 engaged Palestinian fighters in al Ain refugee camp in Nablus on June 7.[60] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms and detonated IEDs targeting Israeli forces in the camp.[61]

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian residents and set fire to Palestinian property in two Palestinian villages in the West Bank on June 6 and 7. Israeli media reported that “extremists” clashed with Palestinian residents in Qusra, south of Nablus, on June 6.[62] The rioters threw stones at Palestinian residents, set fire to agricultural fields, and tried to burn down a house.[63] Palestinian residents threw stones at the Israeli individuals and at IDF soldiers who arrived to disperse the crowd. Israeli Army Radio reported on June 7 that a group of Israeli individuals entered Beitin, northeast of Ramallah, and set fire to fields before the IDF removed the individuals from the area.[64] The IDF has not commented on the incidents at this time of writing. An Israeli Army Radio correspondent noted an uptick in arson attacks in the West Bank in recent weeks.[65]



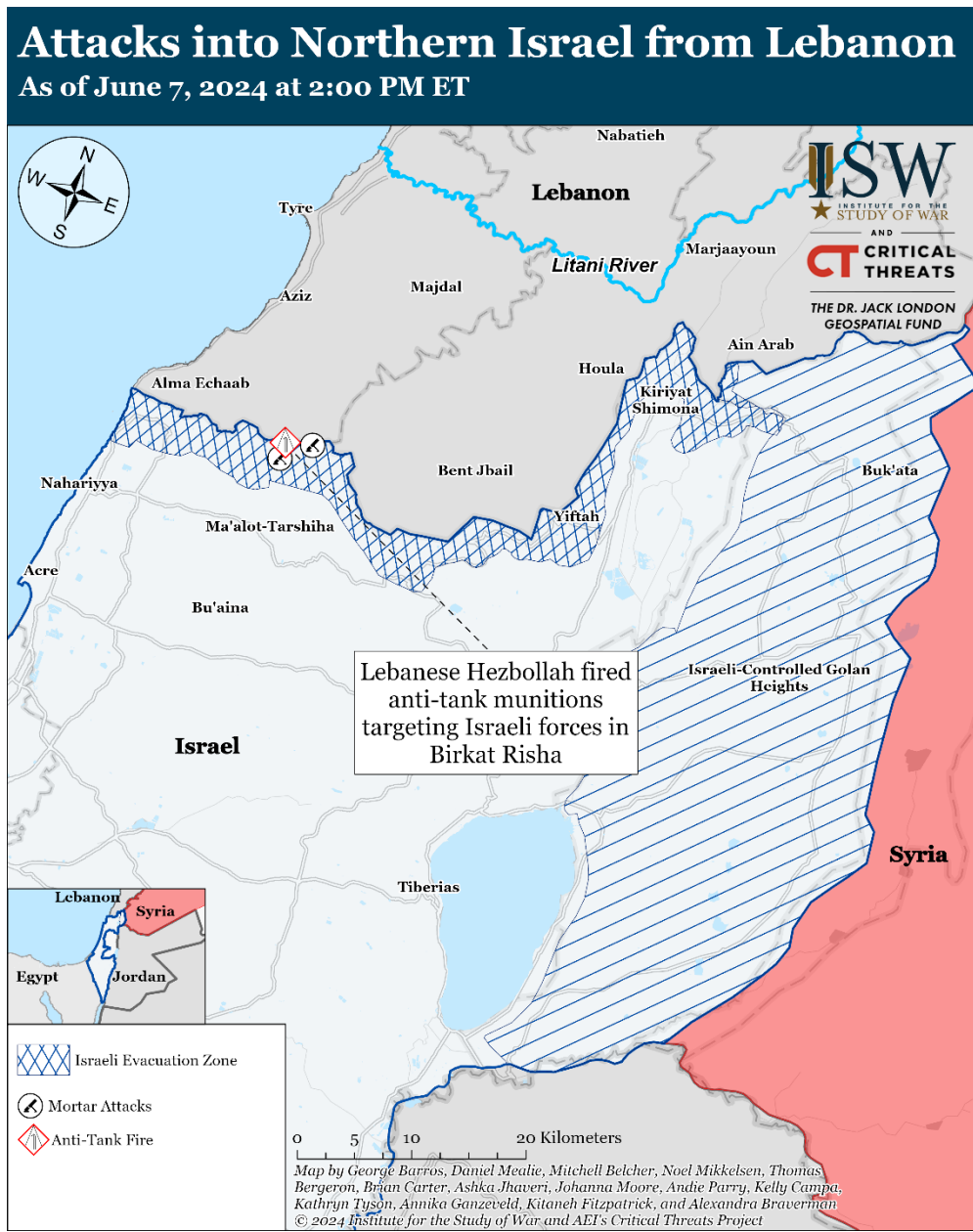
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least three attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on June 6.[66]



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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Unspecified “Iranian parties. . . recommended” that Iraqi Prime Minister Sudani run in the 2025 Iraqi parliamentary election on a Shia Coordination Framework list, according to two Iraqi political sources cited by an Iraqi Kurdish news outlet on June 7.[67] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Iraqi Shia parties, many of which are Iranian-backed. Sudani received this recommendation after other unspecified Iraqi parties tried to ally with Sudani in the parliamentary elections in exchange for a second term in office. London-based al Sharq al Awsat reported in February 2024 that the Shia Coordination framework conducted a study that found that Sudani’s faction could win around 60 seats in the next parliamentary vote.[68]

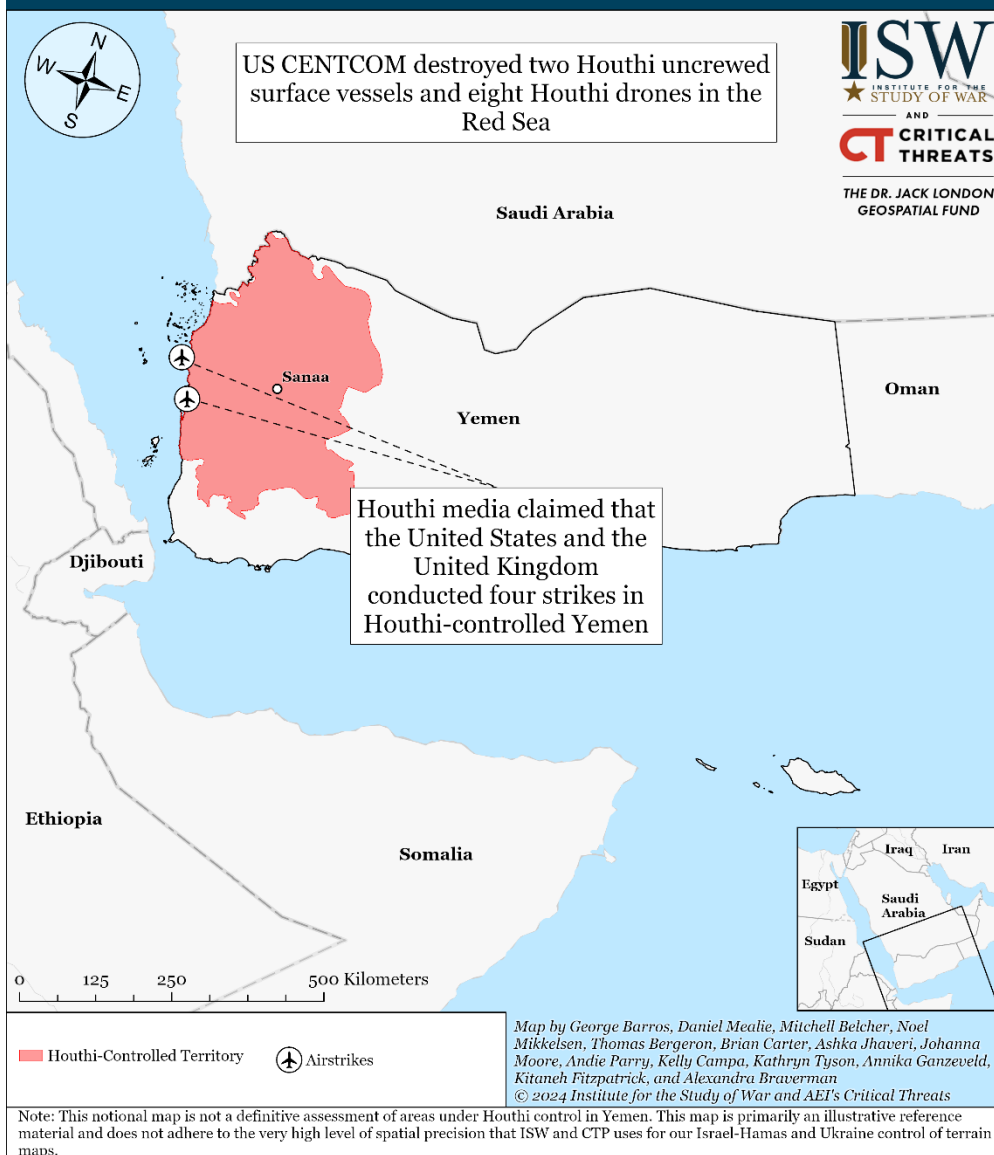
US CENTCOM destroyed two Houthi uncrewed surface vessels and intercepted eight Houthi drones in the Red Sea on June 6.[69] One coalition vessel separately intercepted a Houthi drone over the Red Sea.[70] CENTCOM reported that the Houthis also launched an anti-ship ballistic missile toward the Red Sea on June 6.[71]

UK maritime security firm Ambrey reported on June 6 that an explosion occurred near a merchant vessel approximately 19 nautical miles west of al Mokha, Yemen.[72] The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) separately reported on June 6 two explosions near a vessel approximately 27 nautical miles south of al Mokha.[73] It is unclear whether the Ambrey and UKMTO reports were referring to the same incident.

Houthi spokesperson Yahya Sharee claimed on June 7 that the Houthis conducted multiple drone and missile strikes targeting the Maltese-flagged Elbella and Cypriot-flagged AAL Genoa in the Red Sea.[74] Houthi media claimed that the United States and the United Kingdom conducted four strikes targeting Hudaydah International Airport and Salif Port in Hudaydah Province, Yemen, on June 7.[75]

Houthi Attacks in the Red Sea

As of June 7, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Acting Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani traveled to Istanbul on June 7 to participate in a D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation meeting.[76] Iranian media reported that D-8 member states will adopt a unified position against Israeli military “aggression” in the Gaza Strip during the meeting.[77] The D-8 is comprised of Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh.[78]

Iran exported 1.54 million barrels of crude oil per day to China in May 2024, marking the highest level of Iranian oil exports to China since October 2023.[79] Over half of the Iranian oil exports in May 2024 went to independent refiners in Qingdao in eastern China.[80]

Iranian state outlet Nour News called on the Guardian Council to exercise “flexibility” while reviewing presidential candidates in order to increase voter participation in the election on June 28.[81] The Guardian Council has historically disqualified moderate and reformist figures to advantage hardline candidates. Nour News suggested that the Guardian Council’s mass disqualification of reformist and moderate candidates in the 2021 presidential election and 2024 parliamentary elections discouraged voter participation.[82] Nour News also warned that conducting a third consecutive election with voter turnout below 50 percent would have unspecified “unpleasant” consequences.



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[2] https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/senior-israeli-official-there-will-not-be-a-better-hostage-deal-offer-than-one-we-made-last-week/

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