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Information Cutoff: June 28, 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.

Iran held its presidential election on June 28.[1] Iran will likely have to hold a runoff election on July 5 given that neither of the two hardline frontrunners—Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Saeed Jalili—withdrew from the election before the first round of voting on June 28. Four candidates—pragmatic hardliner Ghalibaf, ultraconservative hardliner Jalili, reformist Masoud Pezeshkian, and hardliner Mostafa Pour Mohammadi—participated in the June 28 election. The Iranian constitution stipulates that a candidate must win over 50 percent of the vote to become president.[2] Senior hardline Iranian officials have repeatedly called on the hardline candidates in recent weeks to coalesce around a single candidate.[3] These calls were driven by concerns that splitting the hardline vote across numerous candidates could inadvertently advantage the sole reformist candidate, Pezeshkian. Two unspecified Iranian officials confirmed to *The New York Times* on June 28 that Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani called on Jalili to withdraw from the race during an emergency meeting with Jalili and Ghalibaf in Mashhad, Iran, on June 26.[4] Ghaani reportedly stated that Ghalibaf is better qualified than Jalili to run the government because of his "military background and pragmatic outlook."[5] Ghaani's characterization of Ghalibaf as "pragmatic" is consistent with recent Western reports that some IRGC factions are trying to prevent Jalili from winning the election because they regard him as "too hardline."[6] Ghaani's intervention also highlights hardliners' concerns that Pezeshkian could pose a real threat to Jalili and Ghalibaf in the election. *The New York Times* later deleted its report about Ghaani's meeting with Jalili and Ghalibaf without providing an explanation.

Preliminary reports suggest that most Iranians did not participate in the June 28 election. The Iranian Election Headquarters extended the voting deadline twice until 2200 local time, likely to try to increase voter turnout.[7] This action is not unprecedented; the regime has previously extended voting hours during both presidential and parliamentary elections.[8] The decision to extend the voting deadline nevertheless highlights that voter turnout likely did not reach the regime's desired level during the regular voting hours. The Interior Ministry, which runs elections in Iran, reportedly estimated a voter turnout of less than 30 percent by 2000 local time.[9] A Tehran-based researcher similarly claimed that turnout only reached approximately 35 percent by 2115 local time.[10] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify these reports. Opposition media separately circulated videos of poll workers sleeping at empty voting centers and reported that the regime forced prisoners in Kurdistan Province to vote to boost voter turnout statistics.[11]

Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah discussed security developments in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip with Jamaa al Islamiya Secretary General Mohammed Taqoush on June 28.[12] Nasrallah and Taqoush discussed the importance of coordination between Iran's so-called Axis of Resistance to support Palestinian fighters in Gaza.[13] Jamaa al Islamiya has conducted attacks targeting northern Israel and the disputed Sheba Farms area since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023.[14] Jamaa al Islamiya was founded in 1964 as the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.[15]

Palestinian militias defended against Israeli forces advancing in Shujaiya. Palestinian fighters have conducted 24 attacks targeting Israeli forces advancing in Shujaiya since the IDF began its operation on June 27.[16] Palestinian fighters conducted 33 attacks targeting Israeli forces during the first 24 hours of re-clearing operations in Jabalia in May 2024.[17] IDF officers described the fighting in Jabalia during the May re-clearing operation as some of the most intense of the war.[18]

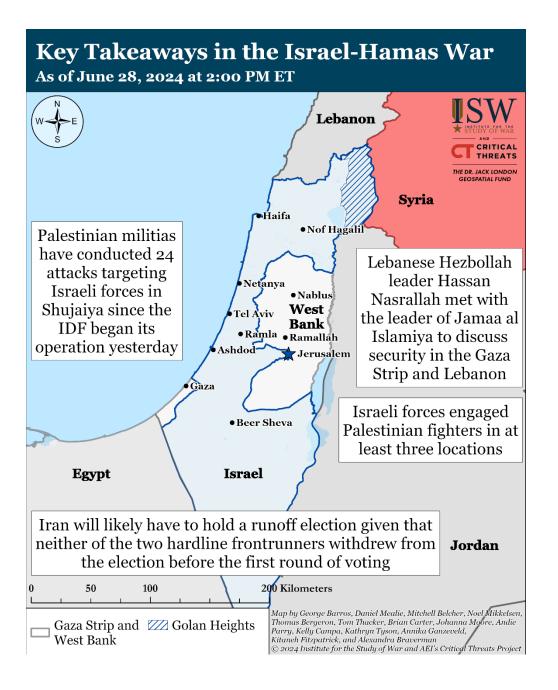
Reuters, citing an unpublished International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, reported that Iran installed four new cascades of IR-6 centrifuges in Unit 1 of the Fordow fuel enrichment facility on June 28.[19] Iran has not yet brought the four new cascades online. Iran previously informed the IAEA on June 13 that it planned to add eight total cascades of IR-6 centrifuges at Fordow within the next three to four weeks.[20]

Key Takeaways:

• **Iran:** Iran held its presidential election on June 28. Iran will likely have to hold a runoff election on July 5 given that neither of the two hardline frontrunners—Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Saeed Jalili—withdrew from the election before the first round of voting on June

28. Preliminary reports suggest that most Iranians did not participate in the June 28 election.

- **Iran:** Reuters, citing an unpublished International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, reported that Iran installed four new cascades of IR-6 centrifuges in Unit 1 of the Fordow fuel enrichment facility on June 28.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah discussed security developments in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip with Jamaa al Islamiya Secretary General Mohammed Taqoush on June 28.
- **Gaza:** Palestinian fighters have conducted 24 attacks targeting Israeli forces advancing in Shujaiya since the IDF began its operation on June 27.



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

Hamas targeted Israeli forces and a combat outpost with rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fire south of Gaza City since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on June 27.[21]

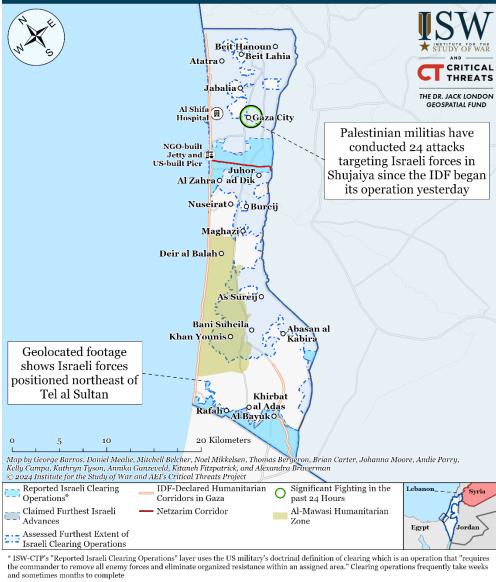
The IDF Air Force conducted an airstrike targeting a Hamas fighter operating from a humanitarian zone in Deir al Balah.[22] The IDF reported on June 28 that a Hamas fighter was using a building located in a humanitarian zone as a residence and as cover to conduct military activity. Israeli forces evacuated civilians from the area surrounding the building. Israeli officials said that the IDF took measures to reduce civilian casualties prior to the strike.[23]

The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—the self-proclaimed militant wing of Fatah—launched a simultaneous rocket and mortar attack targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor, al Rashid Street, and Salah ad Din Road on June 18.[24]

Geolocated footage posted on June 28 showed Israeli forces positioned northeast of Tel al Sultan.[25] Commercially available satellite imagery from June 27 confirmed that Israeli forces moved along Gush Katif Road between Tel al Sultan and the Mawasi humanitarian zone. The Nahal Brigade continued clearing operations in Rafah and located a cache of weapons in a home.[26]

Palestinian militias continued to defend against Israeli forces operating in Rafah City. Hamas and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades conducted separate rocket and mortar attacks targeting Israeli forces.[27] A Hamas sniper killed an Israeli soldier near al Shubaili Mosque, east of Rafah city.[28]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip As of June 28, 2024, 2:00 PM ET





Israeli Announced Evacuation Zone

Netzarim Corrido

IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires

Israeli-Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip

IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Amir Baram met with US military officials over the past week to discuss "operational plans" for the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and US weapons shipments to Israel.[29] Baram visited the United States alongside Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.[30] Baram and the officials discussed ways to accelerate the shipments of US weapons to the IDF.[31] The meetings come amid discussions between the United States and Israel over a shipment of 500-pound bombs that was suspended in May over concerns about IDF operations in Rafah.[32] Axios reported on June 27 that the United States was preparing to deliver the bombs, citing a US and an Israeli official.[33] An Israeli official added that the 500-pound bomb shipments are expected to be delivered after Israel's operation in Rafah ends in about two weeks. Senior Biden

2.5

s and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks

10 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Malp by George Dat Inst. Tomas Bergerich, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kalhyyn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Phreats Project

Egypt

Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*

the commander to remove all enemy forces and sometimes months to complete

Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances

Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone

administration aides told Gallant that the United States was maintaining a pause on a shipment of the bombs for Israel while the issue is under review, according to an unspecified US official.[34]

<u>West Bank</u>

Axis of Resistance objectives:

• Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least three locations since CTP-ISW's data cut-off on June 27.[35] Unspecified fighters fired small arms targeting Israeli forces near Hebron.[36]

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said on June 27 that the Israeli Security Cabinet legalized five Israeli West Bank outposts and imposed new sanctions on the Palestinian Authority (PA).[37] Smotrich said that the sanctions will include restrictions on PA officials' movements and access to exit visas.[38] Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not commented on the announcement at the time of writing. The announcement about the outposts comes after Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant expanded the scope of a law that allows Israeli settlers to return to three settlements that Israel previously dismantled in the West Bank in May.[39] The newly legalized outposts are Evyatar in the northern West Bank, Givat Assaf and Sde Efraim in the central West Bank, and Heletz and Adorayim in the southern West Bank.[40] Smotrich added that the cabinet approved plans to build thousands of new settlement homes in the West Bank. A senior Israeli official told Israeli media that Smotrich will unfreeze three months of tax revenues that Israel has withheld from the PA "in return for the measures."



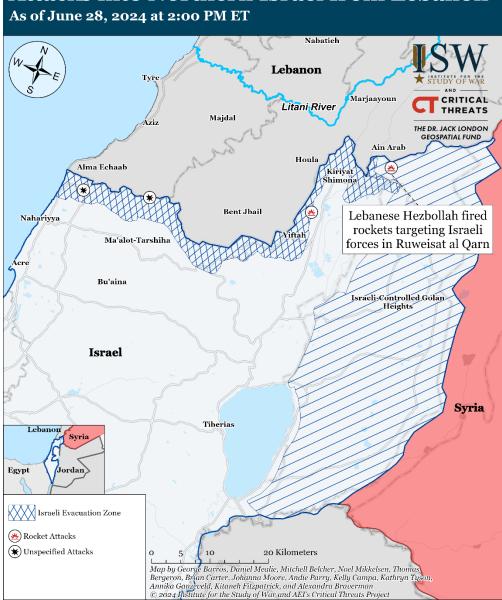
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

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, conducted at least five attacks into northern Israel on June 28.[41]



Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

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

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iran blackmailed and threatened the Iraqi government to secure the relocation of Hamas' political leadership to Baghdad, according to an unnamed Iraqi **politician.**[42] The politician told an independent Iraqi news outlet on June 26 that the decision to allow Hamas to relocate to Iraq "did not take place amicably."[43] Unspecified sources told Emirati media on June 24 that the Iraqi federal government approved a Hamas plan in May 2024 to relocate to Baghdad.[44] The sources claimed that Hamas political leaders requested the Iraqi federal government to move to Iraq. Western countries and Qatar have been increasing pressure on Hamas to show greater flexibility in ceasefire negotiations with Israel, which drove Hamas' desire to relocate from

Doha.[45] The Emirati report followed the opening of a Hamas political office in Baghdad on June 11.[46] Members of the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Imam Ali visited the office on June 11 and met with a member of Hamas' Office for Arab and Islamic Relations, Mohammad al Hafi.[47] Iraqi media reported that members of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization also visited the office.[48]

A Lebanese Hezbollah-affiliated outlet reported on June 28 that Iran has stepped up its training of Iranian-backed Iraqi militants inside Iraq and Iran since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023.[49] Members of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—told al Akhbar that Iran is training militants in 10 training camps across Iraq and inside Iran.[50] Iranian advisers are training the militants to use "new advanced weapons, rockets, and high-tech drones" from Iran and Russia.[51] Al Akhbar framed Iran's training of Iraqi militants within the context of a possible Israeli offensive into Lebanon. A member of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba told al Akhbar that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias would likely "strategically strike" US bases "across the region" if Israel attacks Lebanon.[52] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq similarly threatened on June 24 that it would attack US interests in the Middle East if the United States supported a major Israeli offensive into Lebanon.[53]

The European Union Council placed "restrictive measures" on six individuals and three other companies for supporting, facilitating, or enabling Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad activity. The EU placed these measures on Sudan-based Zawaya Group for Development and Investment Co Ltd, Spain-based Al Zawaya Group for Development and Investment Sociedad Limitada, and Sudan-based Larrycom for Investment Ltd. The EU also placed measures on the following individuals:[54]

- Ali Morshed Shirazi, a senior IRGC-QF official. The EU described Shirazi as the IRGC-QF "Bureau Chief of the Palestine Branch" that operates out of Lebanon. Shirazi works alongside IRGC-QF Palestine Branch Chief Said Izadi on the Cyber Unit operations. This Cyber Unit supports Hamas's operations involving data extraction from Israeli soldiers' phones. Shirazi also requested technical assistance from IRGC-QF Unit 340 to support PIJ.
- Jamil Yusuf Ahmad Aliyan, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad official and Muhjat al Quds Foundation leader. The Muhjad al Quds Foundation is an Iran-funded organization that provides financial support to PIJ fighters' families. Aliyan is also on PIJ's executive committee and oversees PIJ's finances.
- Ahmed Sharif Abdallah Odeh, a Jordanian involved in Hamas' foreign investment portfolio.
- Zuheir Shamlakh, a Palestinian Hamas moneychanger and financial facilitator for transfers between Iran and Hamas. Shamlakh sends funds to the Izz al Din al Qassem Brigades, Hamas' military wing.
- Ismail Barhoum, a member of Hamas' Political Bureau in Gaza and a member of Hamas' Shura Council. Barhoum also runs Hamas' Charitable Institutions Association. This association supervises 400 charities that channel funds to Hamas.
- Maher Rebhi Obeid, A Hamas Political Bureau member since 2010 and leader in Hamas' West Bank Headquarters. The EU said that this headquarters is responsible for directing Hamas' terrorist activities in the West Bank.

The US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on three entities and 11 vessels involved with the transportation of Iranian petrochemical products and petroleum on June 27.[55] The US Treasury also sanctioned 11 vessels connected to these UAE-based companies.

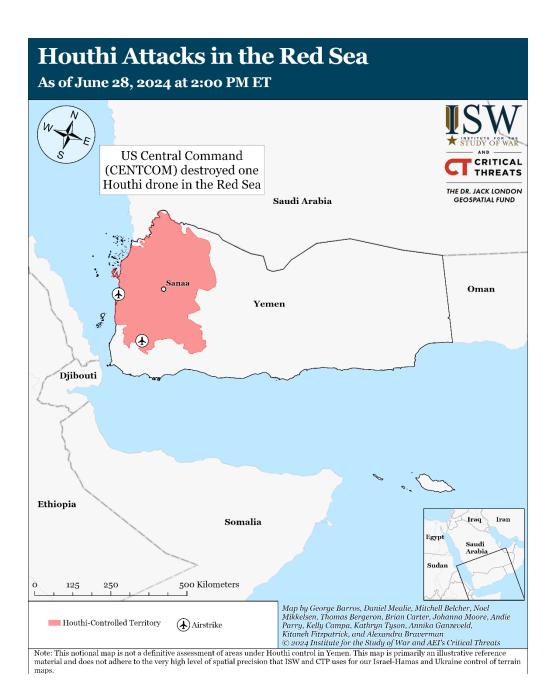
• UAE-based Sea Route Ship Management FZE

- UAE-based Almanac Ship Management, LLC
- UAE-based Al Anchor Ship Management FZE

US Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed one Houthi drone in the Red Sea on June 27.[56]

Houthi-controlled media reported four US-UK airstrikes targeting Hudaydah International Airport, Yemen, on June 28.[57]

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations reported that five missiles landed close to a vessel 150 nautical miles northwest of Hudaydah, Yemen, in the Red Sea on June 28.[58] The vessel reported no damage and continued on its journey.[59] The Houthis presumably launched the five missiles from Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen.[60]





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