

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: December 13, 2024, 2:00 pm ET

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of the ongoing opposition offensive in Syria. These maps are updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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.

The Iranian regime is still coming to terms with the fall of the Assad regime and reflecting on its former Syria policy.[1] Five unspecified Iranian officials, including Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps members, told the *New York Times* on December 13 that the Iranian regime is “disoriented” and “befuddled.”[2] The officials added that the regime is “trying to find a way forward with Syria” and will accept “any level of diplomatic presence” in Syria.[3] The *New York Times* also reported--citing a Tehran-based analyst--that a “Syria debate” is occurring in Iran “at all levels of society.”[4] Iranian civilians and media have openly criticized the regime for funding and bolstering the Assad regime for years at the expense of developing Iran.[5] Shia cleric Mohammad Shariati Dehghan recently stated that Iran should prioritize developing relations with other countries over supporting militias in the region.[6] Dehghan added that the regime should redirect money and resources “back to the people of Iran.” Dehghan’s statements could be indicative of a broader regime and Iranian conversation about how Iran should adjust its regional strategy after the fall of Assad, though Dehghan presumably does not have a large role in policymaking or the government. Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei recently described criticisms such as Dehghan’s as a “crime” during a speech on December 13.[7]

The Turkish Embassy in Damascus will resume operations on December 14 after remaining closed for 12 years.[8] The Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry appointed Turkish Ambassador to Mauritania Burhan Koroglu as the interim charge d’affaires to the Turkish Embassy in

Damascus.[9] Koroglu speaks Turkish, English, and Arabic.[10] Turkish media separately reported on December 13 that the Syrian General Consulate in Istanbul has also resumed operations.[11]

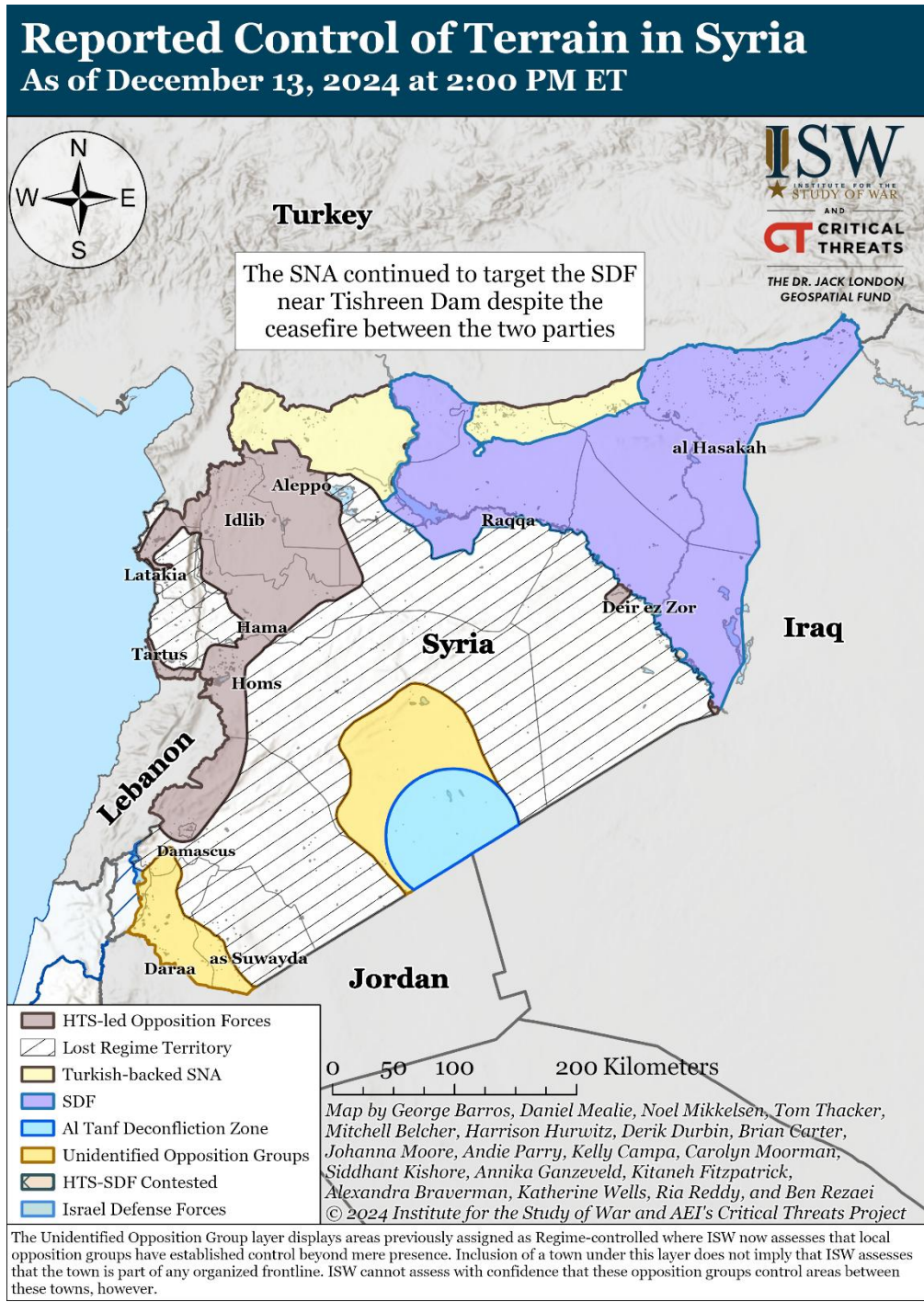
US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the situation in Syria with senior Turkish and Iraqi officials on December 12 and 13. Blinken met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara on December 12 and 13, respectively, to try to persuade Turkey “not to press [its] advantage” against the Kurdish-controlled, US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria.[12] The United States has backed the SDF in the Syrian Civil War to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.[13] The Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) launched an operation to take territory from the SDF in northern Syria on November 30 and captured Tel Rifat, north of Aleppo City, on December 1.[14] Fidan said on December 13 that the destruction of the YPG is Turkey’s objective in Syria.[15] Turkey frequently refers to the SDF as the YPG, suggesting that Fidan is referring to the US-backed partner force.

Blinken separately met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani in Baghdad on December 13.[16] Blinken emphasized the need to form an “inclusive, nonsectarian government” in Syria that “does not become, in any way, a platform for terrorism.”[17] Blinken and Sudani discussed ongoing efforts to prevent ISIS from “resurging and destabilizing” the Middle East.[18] Iraq has bolstered border security since the Syrian opposition offensive began in late November 2024. Iraqi Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh of Fayyadh stated on December 13 that the Popular Mobilization Forces will confront any security or terrorist threat to Iraq.[19]

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is facing two perceived existential threats in the wake of the fall of the Assad regime, which almost certainly caused the SDF to deprioritize the counter-ISIS mission. The United States helped create the SDF by binding together Kurdish and Arab forces in Deir ez Zor.[20] Arab communities in Deir ez Zor and Raqqa have begun defecting from the SDF and an end to SDF rule in Arab areas, which threatens to unravel the fragile Kurdish-Arab coalition that the United States helped establish.[21] Turkey is simultaneously threatening to destroy the SDF. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan threatened on December 13 to “eliminate” the SDF, Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and People’s Defense Units (YPG).[22] Fidan added that these groups must leave Syria. The SDF, given that it prioritizes these existential threats over the threat it faces from ISIS, has stopped all counter-ISIS operations. This reallocation of SDF resources creates opportunities for ISIS to reemerge and leaves the United States without a viable counter-ISIS partner in Syria, at least temporarily.

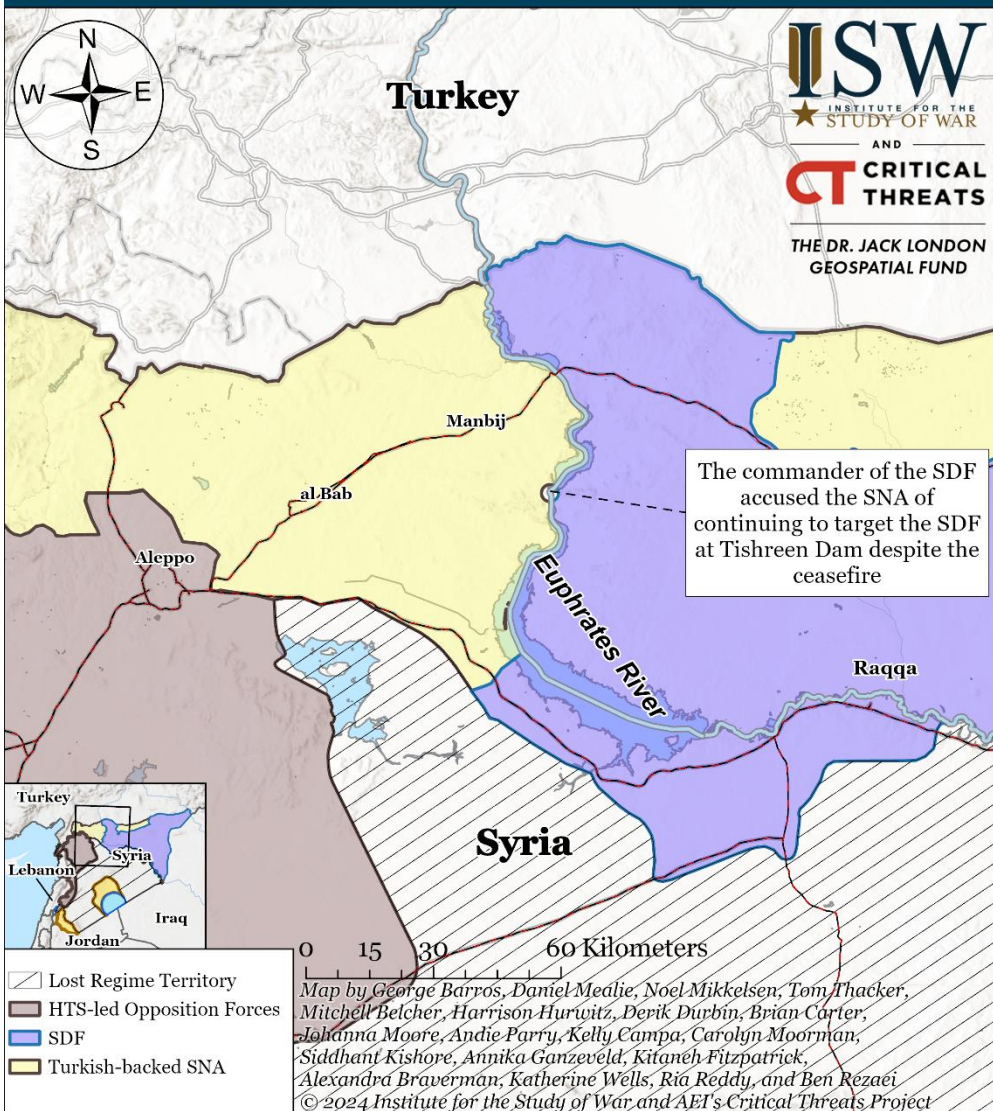
SDF commander General Mazloum Abdi announced that the SDF plans to negotiate its role in a future Syrian government, likely to prevent further unrest within Arab populations and militias under the SDF.[23] Abdi stated that the SDF seeks a “decentralized” Syrian administration in which the SDF is represented in the future government and armed forces.[24] The defection of Arab SDF formations and protests against SDF rule is probably contributing to Abdi’s decision to negotiate with the interim government. Arab citizens in SDF-controlled areas have long-standing grievances against the SDF which include limited reconstruction, repeated SDF abuses of the local populations, and a lack of representative Arab leadership.[25] Abdi probably calculates that by reaching out to the interim government, he can temper the unrest by expressing his willingness to integrate into the Syrian government. Abdi’s outreach to the interim government does not guarantee

the SDF's ability to control popular unrest. Even if he reaches a deal with the interim government. Arab communities are calling for an end to SDF rule, not just the SDF's integration into the rest of Syria. This implies that these groups do not seek to be a part of an SDF-led autonomous region.



Control of Terrain in North Syria

As of December 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Reports of Sunni Muslims harassing and threatening minority religious and sectarian groups in Syria continue to gain traction in the information space, which could create opportunities for extreme groups to incite further religious- or sectarian-based violence.

A former HTS religious scholar, Abu Yahya al Shami, called upon Sunni Muslims to kill “Nusayri” who have participated in the killing of Muslims in Syria.[26] “Nusayri” is a highly derogatory term for Alawites.[27] Shami circulated an Arabic-language copy of the US-based nonprofit ProJustice’s 2019 report on violations committed by members of the Syrian regime and called upon Sunnis to track down former regime members.[28] Shami praised recent killings of former regime members, including “shabiha” members, referring to pro-regime militias recruited and armed by the Assad regime.[29] Shami called upon “every honorable free person” who knows the location of Shabiha members to target and kill them.[30] Shami is specifically calling for Sunni Muslims to target the regime, but his use of “Nusayri” indicates a sectarian angle to his calls that encourages sectarian violence. Reports of revenge

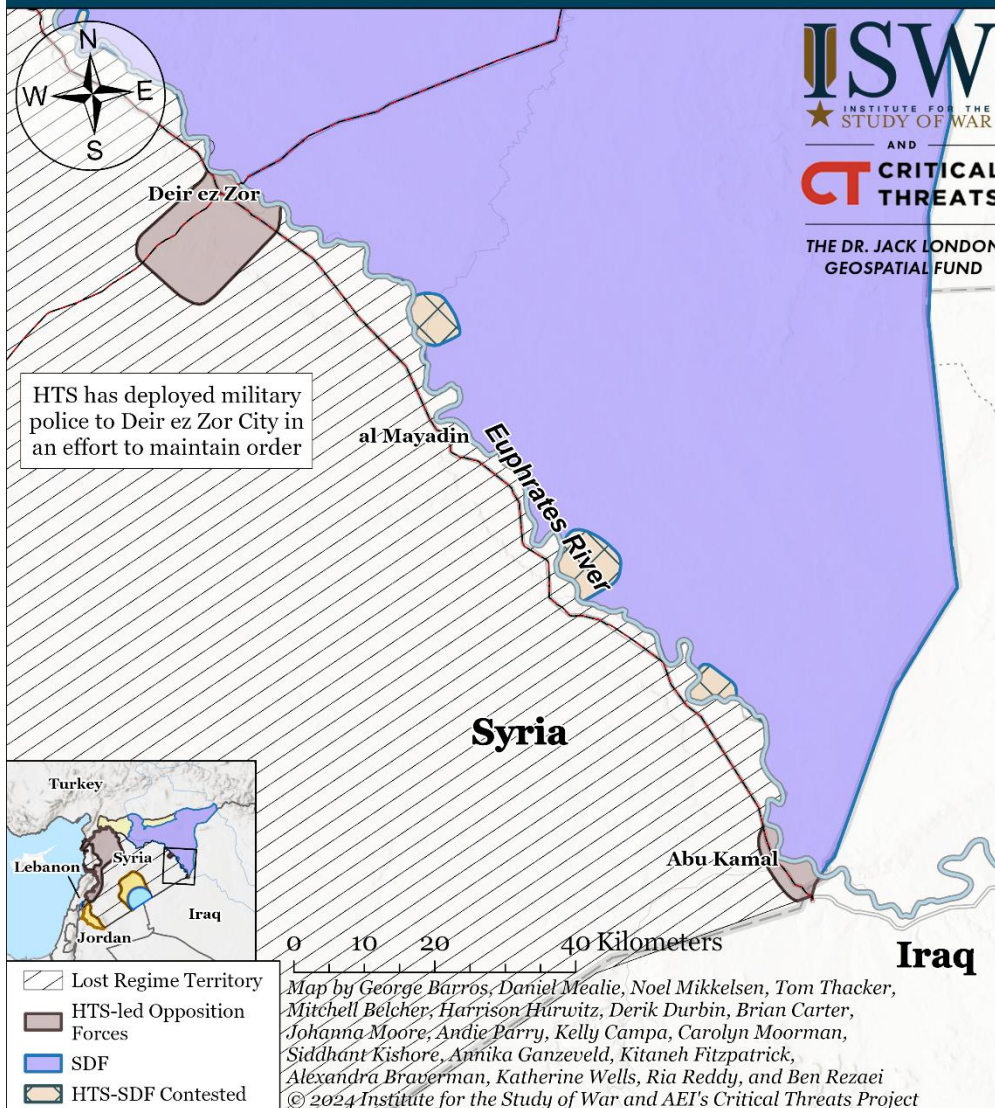
killings or violence against minority groups remain relatively isolated and relatively independent of each other at this time. **CTP-ISW will continue to report these indicators, however, given the serious nature of these crimes and the risk that revenge, sectarian, and interfaith killings and harassment could spark larger-scale cycles of violence.**

Iranian media is boosting reports of sectarian harassment, though it is unclear how widespread the harassment is currently. Iranian media claimed that HTS-led fighters interfered with holy Shia shrines in Damascus and that HTS ordered the removal of flags and religious items including prayer stones, and religious texts from Sayyidah Ruqayya Shrine in Damascus.[31] HTS has reportedly made an informal agreement with Iran to protect Shia sites in Syria and it is unclear at this time why HTS ordered the removal of religious items from the shrine. Iranian sources also reported that HTS members conducted a “respectful” visit to the shrine.[32] The prevalence of these reports in the information space could stoke sectarian tensions, particularly if the reports begin to gain traction in Arabic-language or Syrian media. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba warned Syrian opposition forces on December 13 not to “touch” the Sayyida Zeinab shrine after social media reports on December 12 claimed that HTS-led fighters “forcefully” entered the Sayyidah Zeynab shrine—a Shia site in Damascus—and chanted provocative slogans.[33]

The HTS-led operations room is taking steps to solidify its control over Deir ez Zor City following its recent capture from the SDF on December 11. HTS has deployed military police to the city in an effort to maintain order. These units will oversee security, manage the transition of key institutions, and ensure the transfer of government centers to the Syrian Transitional Government.[34] The deployment of additional forces strengthens HTS's control over Deir ez Zor City and its military airport.

Control of Terrain in Deir ez Zor, Syria

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The HTS-led interim government in Damascus continued to provide security and public safety services to residents. Thousands of Syrians in cities and villages across the country joined mass celebrations after Friday prayers on December 13 to celebrate the fall of the regime.[35] HTS leader Jolani called upon Syrians to celebrate in town squares “without firing bullets.”[36] HTS announced it would deploy “intensive security” during the celebrations in Damascus to maintain order and public safety.[37]

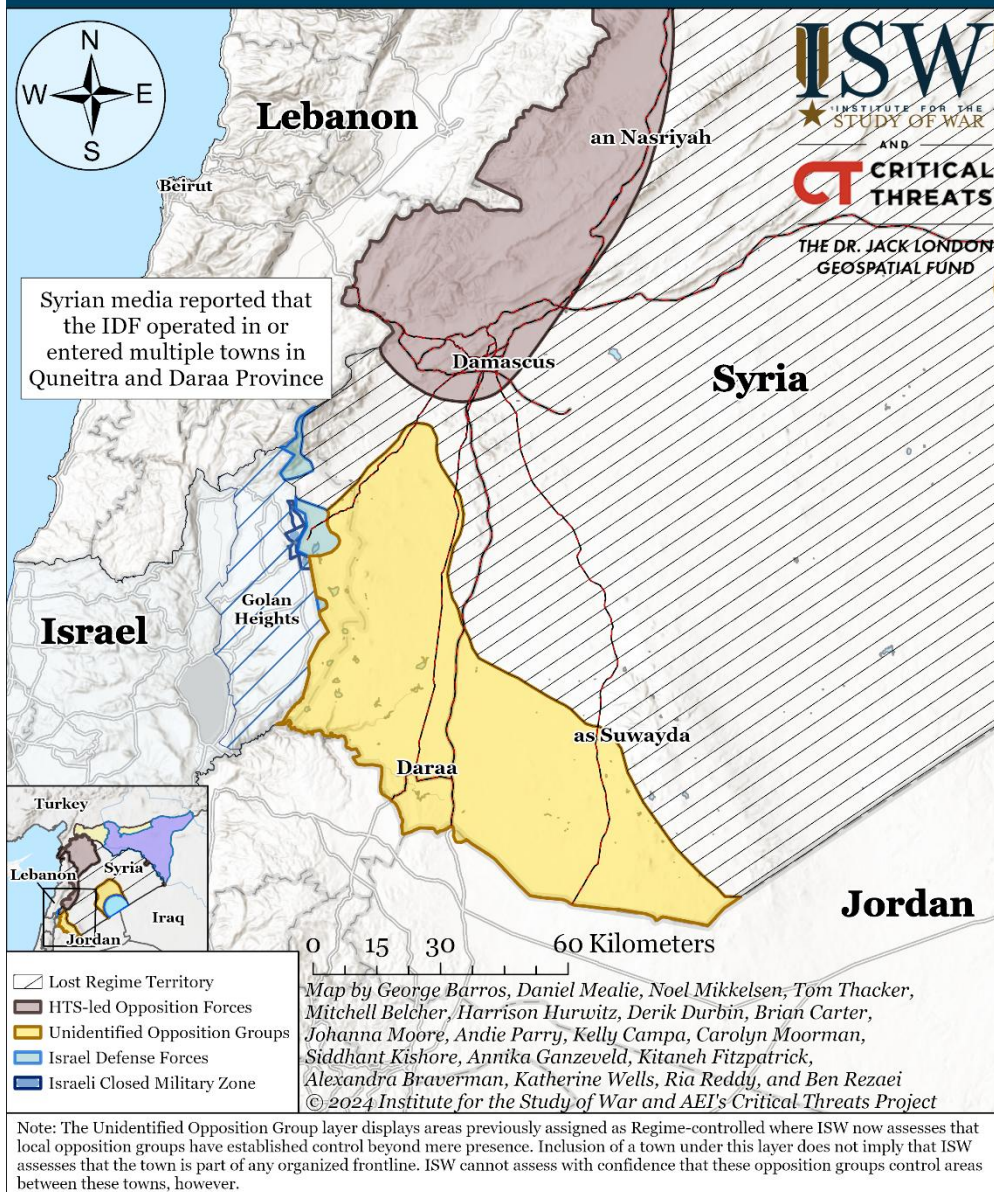
The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) 474th Territorial Brigade (210th Division) continued to operate in the Israel-Syria disengagement zone and on the Israel-Syria border on December 13.[38] The IDF located anti-tank missiles, vests, ammunition, and other weapons during searches in unspecified areas of the Israel-Syria disengagement zone. The IDF reiterated its mission is to protect the citizens of Israel and not to interfere in Syria. Syrian media and a Syria-focused analyst

reported that the IDF operated in or entered multiple towns and villages in Quneitra and Daraa Province, just east of the disengagement zone, since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on December 12.[39] The IDF is not maintaining a presence in these towns, suggesting that it is conducting raids. Raids include a planned retrograde from the target area. The IDF has not commented on its activities outside of the disengagement zone at this time of writing.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz announced on December 13 that he ordered the IDF to prepare to stay on Syrian Mt. Hermon during the coming months.[40] The IDF seized the Syrian side of Mt Hermon on December 8.[41] Mt Hermon is a strategic site as it allows a full view of the entire surrounding Syrian plain. Israel and Syria agreed that Mt Hermon would be part of the 235 square kilometer demilitarized buffer zone that ended the Yom Kippur War in 1974, which Israel considers void until order is restored in Syria.[42] Katz ordered this decision following an assessment on December 12 with IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi and other senior IDF officials.[43]

Opposition Advances in Southwest Syria

As of December 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The IDF has likely conducted airstrikes in at least three locations in Syria since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on December 12. Local Syrian media reported on December 13 that the IDF conducted airstrikes targeting the Mezzeh military airport, an IRGC headquarters, and various unspecified warehouses near Damascus.[44] Fox News' foreign correspondent also reported airstrikes in Damascus.[45] Geolocated footage posted on X on December 12 showed a recent IDF targeting the Shayrat airbase, southeast of Homs city.[46] The IDF has conducted an air campaign targeting military capabilities of the former Assad regime in Syria in recent days.[47] Syrian media reported separate IDF airstrikes targeting SAA warehouses near Latakia.[48] The IDF has not commented on the latest reported airstrikes at this time of writing.

Russia is evacuating elements of its force grouping in Syria while continuing negotiations with select Syrian groups about Russia's longer-term military presence in the country. Kremlin newswire *TASS* reported on December 13 that an unspecified source familiar with the matter stated that Russia is currently negotiating with unspecified new Syrian "authorities" about maintaining Russia's military presence at Hmeimim Air Base and the Port of Tartus.[49] The source reportedly stated that Russia has only secured "temporary security guarantees" but that the two military bases are "functioning as usual." Russian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Mikhail Bogdanov stated on December 12 that Russia has established contacts with Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS), which currently controls the areas at Hmeimim and Tartus, and the *TASS* source is likely referring to ongoing Russian talks with HTS.[50]

Maxar satellite imagery from December 13 shows two Russian An-124 military transport aircraft preparing to load cargo while a Ka-52 helicopter and elements of an S-400 air defense system are likely undergoing preparations for transport at Hmeimim Air Base (see embedded imagery below). The Maxar imagery also shows two Russian frigates still offshore of the Port of Tartus. Drone footage reportedly of Hmeimim Air Base shows An-72, An-26, and Il-76 transport aircraft; Ka-52 and Mi-8 or Mi-17 helicopters; and at least four Su-34, seven Su-24M2, and four Su-35S fighter jets under hangars.[51] Geolocated footage published on December 13 shows a Russian military convoy moving from Hisyah (south of Homs) along the M5 highway.[52] Additional footage published on December 13 reportedly shows Russian military convoys moving from Talkalakh (west of Homs), Homs, and Damascus.[53] It is unclear if the convoys are heading toward the Port of Tartus or Hmeimim Air Base, but the reported movement of Russian military assets indicates that Russia is pulling some of its forward assets in southern Syria to the western coast. At least four Russian landing ships and cargo ships are reportedly heading from Russian ports to the Port of Tartus but will likely not reach Syria for weeks.[54]

Russia is likely evacuating forces from its two main bases in Syria while negotiations are ongoing with new Syrian authorities as the outcome of these negotiations and Russia's longer-term presence at the bases are still unclear. Russia would be able to relatively quickly reestablish its military presence in Syria after evacuating from Hmeimim and Tartus should Moscow be able to secure more permanent agreements with the current Syrian authorities.



Overview of the Russian naval base at Tartus on December 13, 2024. Source: Satellite image ©2024 Maxar Technologies



Overview of the northern section of Russian Hmeimim Air Base on December 13, 2024. Source: Satellite image ©2024 Maxar Technologies

The status of Russia's helicopter base at Qamishli in northeastern Syria remains unclear, however. A Kurdish journalist stated on December 11 that Russian forces were withdrawing from the Qamishli base after unspecified authorities granted them safe passage out of Syria.[55] However, photos from December 12 show Russian equipment, helicopters, and personnel at the Qamishli base, and a Russian source claimed on December 12 that Russia maintains a presence at Hmeimim Air Base, the Port of Tartus, Qamishli, and other unspecified sites in Syria.[56] It is unclear if Russia is preparing to withdraw assets from Qamishli in the near future. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) currently control Qamishli, and Russian officials have only stated that Moscow has established contacts with

HTS, which controls the area of the Hmeimim Air Base and Port of Tartus.[57] ISW has not observed reports that Russia is trying to separately negotiate with the SDF about Russia's continued presence at the Qamishli base, and it is unclear if Russian forces intend to or will be able to remain at the base.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iranian Reactions to Syria:** The Iranian regime is still coming to terms with the fall of the Assad regime and reflecting on its former Syria policy.
- **Blinken in the Middle East:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the situation in Syria with senior Turkish and Iraqi officials on December 12 and 13. Blinken met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara on December 12 and 13, respectively, to try to persuade Turkey “not to press [its] advantage” against the Kurdish-controlled, US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** The SDF is facing two perceived existential threats in the wake of the fall of the Assad regime, which almost certainly caused the SDF to deprioritize the counter-ISIS mission. SDF commander General Mazloum Abdi announced that the SDF plans to negotiate its role in a future Syrian government, likely to prevent further unrest within Arab populations and militias under the SDF.
- **Religious and Sectarian Tension in Syria:** Reports of Sunni Muslims harassing and threatening minority religious and sectarian groups in Syria continue to gain traction in the information space, which could create opportunities for extreme groups to incite further religious- or sectarian-based violence. CTP-ISW will continue to report these indicators of any interfaith or sectarian violence given the serious nature of these crimes and the risk that revenge, sectarian, and interfaith killings and harassment could spark larger-scale cycles of violence.
- **Israel in Syria:** The IDF continued to operate in the Israel-Syria disengagement zone and on the Israel-Syria border on December 13. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz announced on December 13 that he ordered the IDF to prepare to stay on Syrian Mt. Hermon during the coming months.
- **Russia in Syria:** Russia is evacuating elements of its force grouping in Syria while continuing negotiations with select Syrian groups about Russia's longer-term military presence in the country. The status of Russia's helicopter base at Qamishli in northeastern Syria remains unclear, however.

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 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Jabalia and Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip, on December 13.[58] The IDF 900th Infantry Brigade located and destroyed “dozens” of rocket launchers in Beit Lahia that Palestinian fighters had aimed at southern Israel.[59] The IDF also destroyed weapons while operating in Beit Lahia. A Palestinian journalist reported that the IDF conducted a controlled demolition of infrastructure in Jabalia and Beit Lahia on December 13.[60] Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades detonated IEDs and fired mortar shells targeting Israeli soldiers and vehicles in Jabalia refugee camp.[61] Hamas claimed that its sniper shot two Israeli soldiers in Jabalia refugee camp.[62]

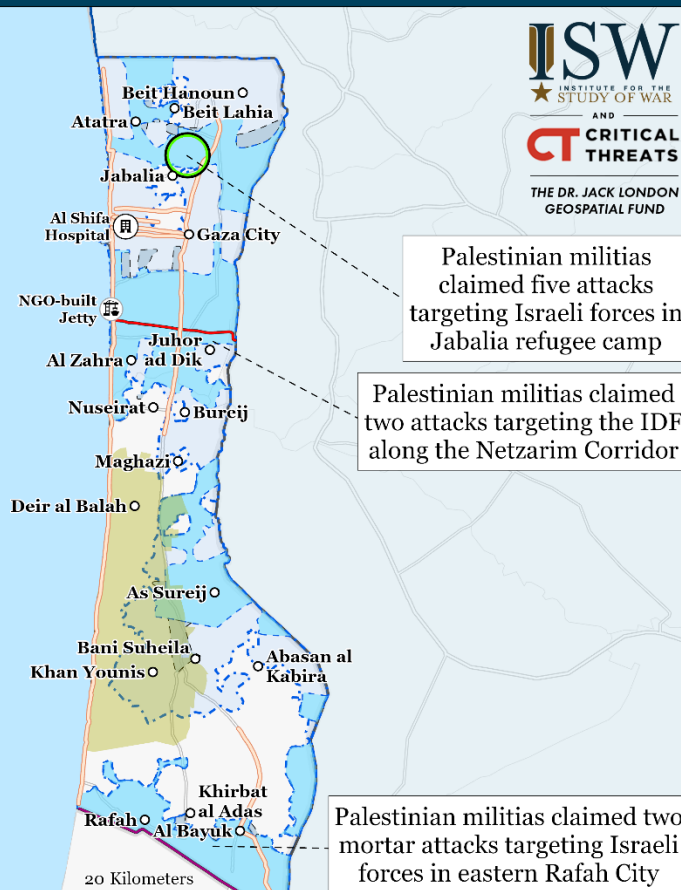
Palestinian militias claimed two attacks targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on December 12.[63]

The IDF conducted an airstrike targeting a building in Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip and killed a PIJ commander on December 13.[64] The IDF reported that Palestinian militias stored weapons in the building. The weapons inside the building caused secondary explosions that collapsed nearby buildings.[65] Palestinian medical personnel claimed that the airstrike killed 33 Gazans.[66] The IDF is investigating these claims.[67]

The IDF 143rd Division conducted clearing operations in Rafah, in the central Gaza Strip on December 13.[68] The IDF 933rd Infantry Brigade located and destroyed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and militia infrastructure in Rafah. The IDF Air Force also struck and destroyed a Palestinian militia cell that was moving toward Israeli forces in Rafah. A Palestinian journalist reported that the IDF conducted a controlled demolition of infrastructure in Rafah City.[69] PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades mortared Israeli forces in eastern Rafah City on December 13.[70]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of December 13, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



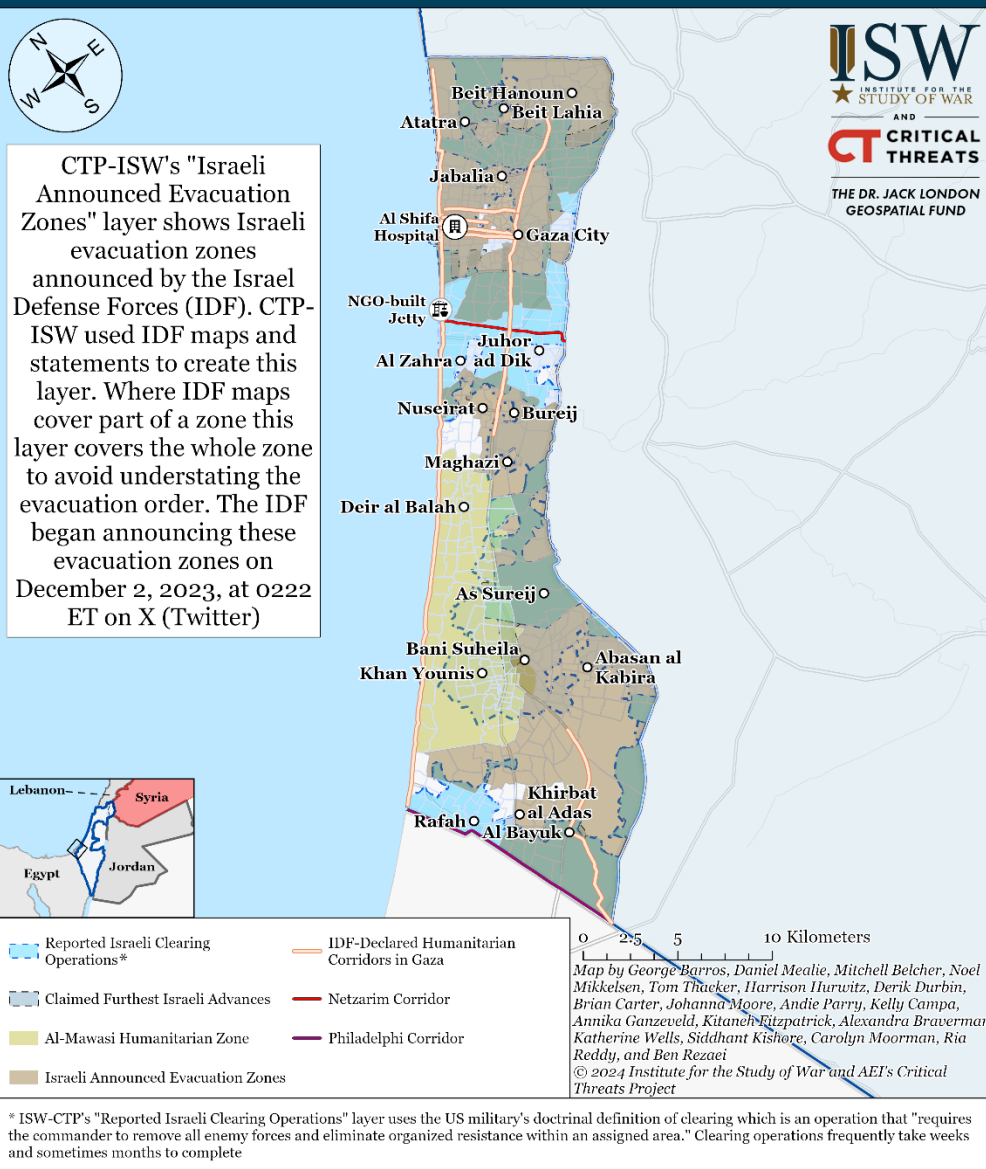
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, Derik Durbin, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEL's Critical Threats Project

Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours	
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone	
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations	Philadelphi Corridor		

* 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 December 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



West Bank

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Nothing significant to report

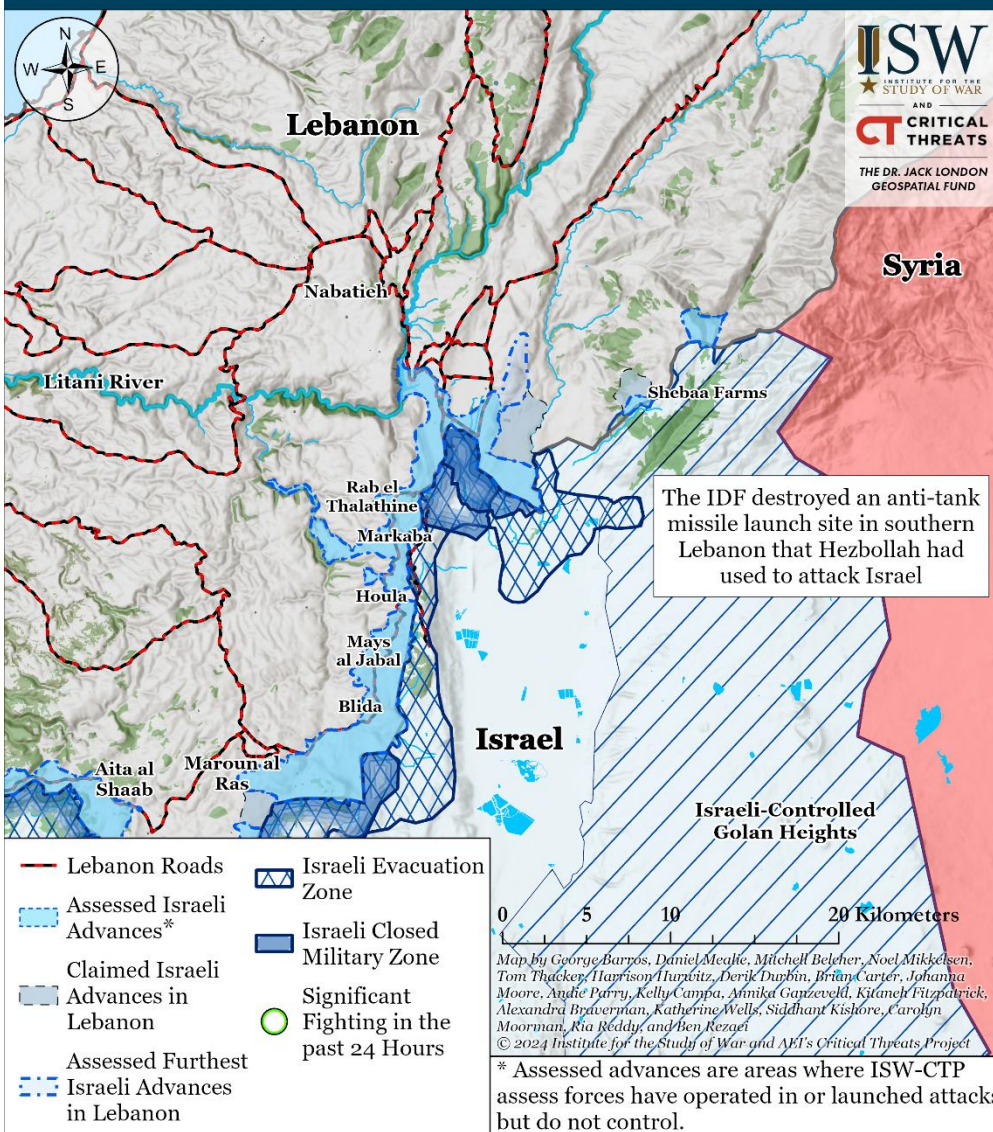
Northern Israel and Lebanon

Lebanese Hezbollah objectives:

- End Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip
- Survive the October 7 War as a capable political and military organization with control over Lebanon

The IDF 769th Territorial Brigade (91st Division) continued operations in southeastern Lebanon throughout the past week.[71] Israeli forces seized an anti-tank missile launcher and Kornet missiles located in southeastern Lebanon. The IDF separately located anti-tank missiles, assault rifles, RPGs, mortars, and other weapons during patrols in other areas of southern Lebanon.[72] The IDF located an anti-tank missile launch site previously used by Hezbollah to attack towns in northern Israel and the Upper Galilee region.[73] The Israel-Lebanon ceasefire deal allows the IDF to operate in southern Lebanon until the end of January 2025.[74]

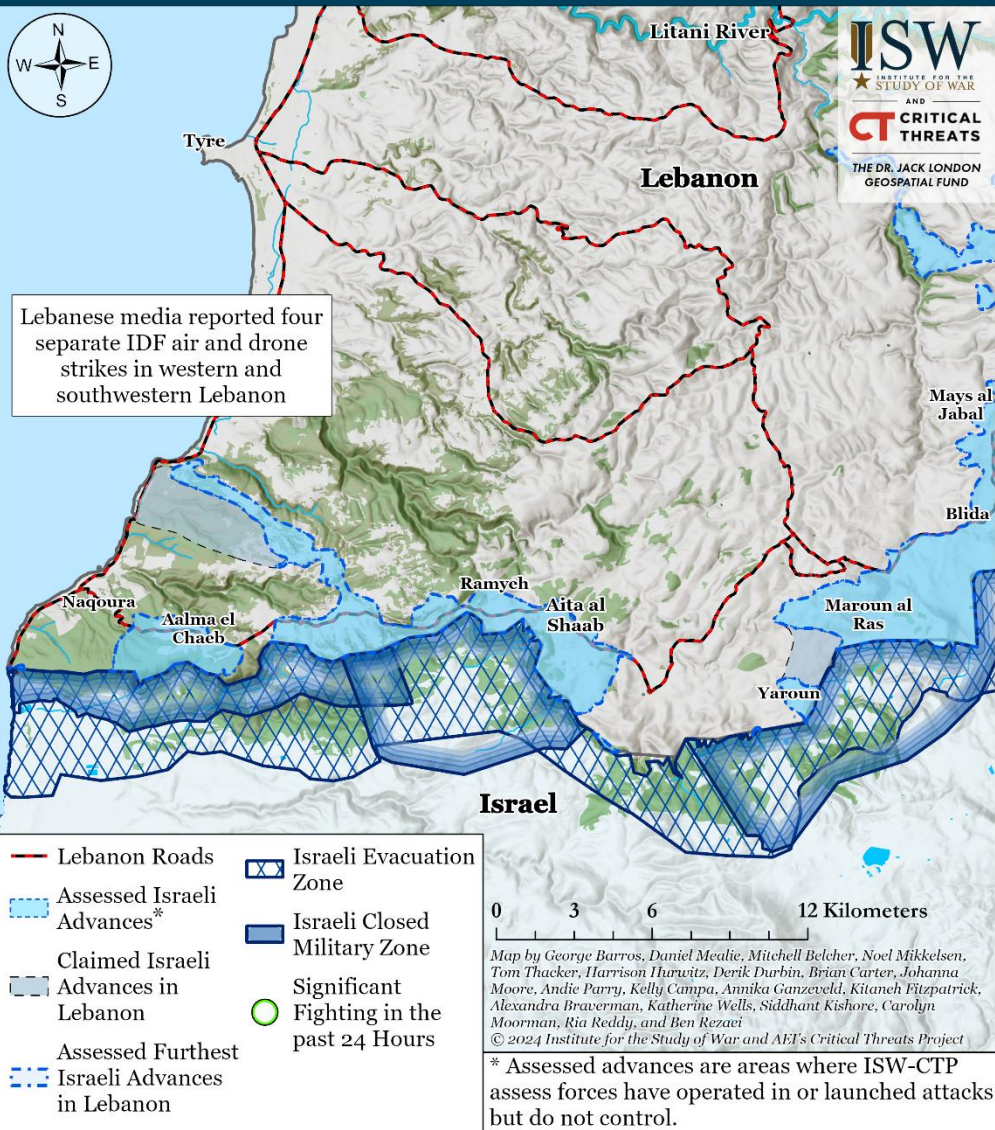
Reported Israeli Operations in the Eastern Sector As of December 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Lebanese media reported separate IDF air and drone strikes on Naqoura, Tebna, Baisariyeh, and ZraiyeH in western and southwestern Lebanon.[75] The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson emphasized on December 13 that the IDF evacuation orders barring Lebanese civilians from returning to southwestern Lebanon areas are still in place.[76]

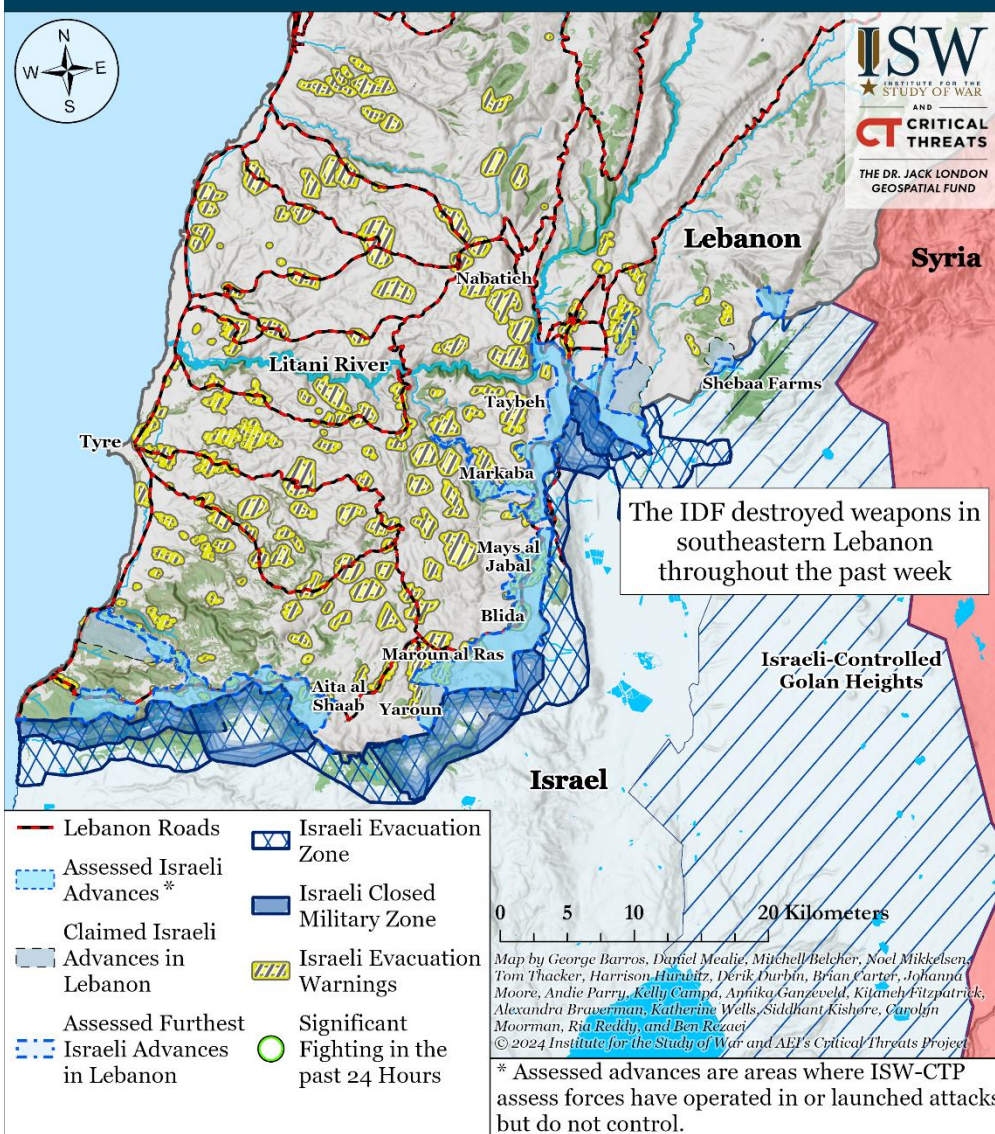
Reported Israeli Operations in the Western Sector

As of December 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

As of December 13, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



The head of the Hezbollah Coordination and Liaison Unit, Wafiq Safa, recently met with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) Commander Joseph Aoun in Yarzeh, southeast of Beirut.[77] Safa and Aoun met to discuss coordination on the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire.[78] Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri’s security adviser, Ahmad Baalbaki, also attended the meeting. Aoun and Safa reportedly agreed to continue the relationship between the LAF and Hezbollah to implement the ceasefire agreement and Resolution 1701.[79] Arab media reported that Safa assured Aoun that Hezbollah would support the LAF’s mission as outlined in the ceasefire agreement.[80] There have been no confirmed meetings between Safa and Aoun since September 2023.[81] This is also Safa’s first official and publicly announced activity since the IDF Air Force targeted him in an airstrike in Beirut on October 10.[82]

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

Tehran Interim Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Khatami emphasized Syria's resilience during his sermon on December 13.[83] Khatami echoed Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's recent remarks about Syria, emphasizing that Iran will support "Syrian youth...thwart the plans of the United States and [Israel]."[84] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran may support militias in Syria to combat opposition forces and US-Israeli "interference" while undermining any new government in Syria.[85]

Iranian opposition media reported that Iranian officials instructed the IRGC to sell sanctioned oil stored at the Port of Dalian, China, through intermediary companies.[86] The directive reflects Tehran's concerns that the incoming Trump administration could prevent Iranian access to the oil reserves.[87] CTP-ISW cannot confirm this report.

Satellite images obtained on December 12 reveal Iran's new drone carrier ship, Shahid Bagheri, undergoing sea trials in the Persian Gulf near Bandar Abbas. The drone carrier was originally a commercial container vessel which was modified with a ski-jump ramp and angled flight deck for drone operations.[88] The Shahid Bagheri drone carrier departed in late November and is currently undergoing its initial sea trial, with Maxar reporting a net-covered drone visible on its deck.[89]

The Houthis claimed three separate drone attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on December 12. The Houthis conducted two separate drone attacks targeting Ashkelon and the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area.[90] The Houthis claimed a separate, combined drone attack on December 13 with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—targeting an unspecified "vital target" in southern Israel.[91] The IDF intercepted a drone likely launched from Yemen near Eilat, Israel, on December 12.[92]

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.

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.



- [1] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/13/world/middleeast/iran-syria-assad.html>
- [2] <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/13/world/middleeast/iran-syria-assad.html>
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