

Iran Update



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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 Iraqi parliament voted to approve an amendment to the Iraqi budget law to provide salaries for Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) employees and resume oil exports from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region on February 2.[1] The Iraqi government will pay \$16 per barrel to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), an increase from the previous compensation of \$6 per barrel. An international consulting firm will determine the actual cost of oil extraction in the Kurdistan Region, according to the amended budget law. An Iraqi parliament's finance committee member said that the cost of oil extraction is not fixed and may reach \$22 per barrel, depending on the consulting firm's inspection.[2] The KRG spokesperson confirmed that the Iraqi parliament also resolved the issue of KRG employees' outstanding salaries.[3] Iraqi and Kurdish officials are discussing sending the salaries in the "coming few days."

Several Iraqi security and political officials have sought to delay the withdrawal of US-led international coalition forces from Iraq due to the situation in Syria. The Associated Press reported on January 31 that the fall of the Assad regime in Syria informed Iraqi officials' assessment to delay the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.[4] Iraqi security and political officials warned that the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq would create a vacuum for ISIS to reconstitute. A US defense official said that unspecified Iraqi government officials have asked "informally at the highest of levels" to delay the withdrawal of US forces citing the same reason. The United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024 that hundreds of US-led international coalition forces would withdraw from Iraq by September 2025 and that the remaining troops would withdraw by the end of 2026.[5]

Key Takeaways:

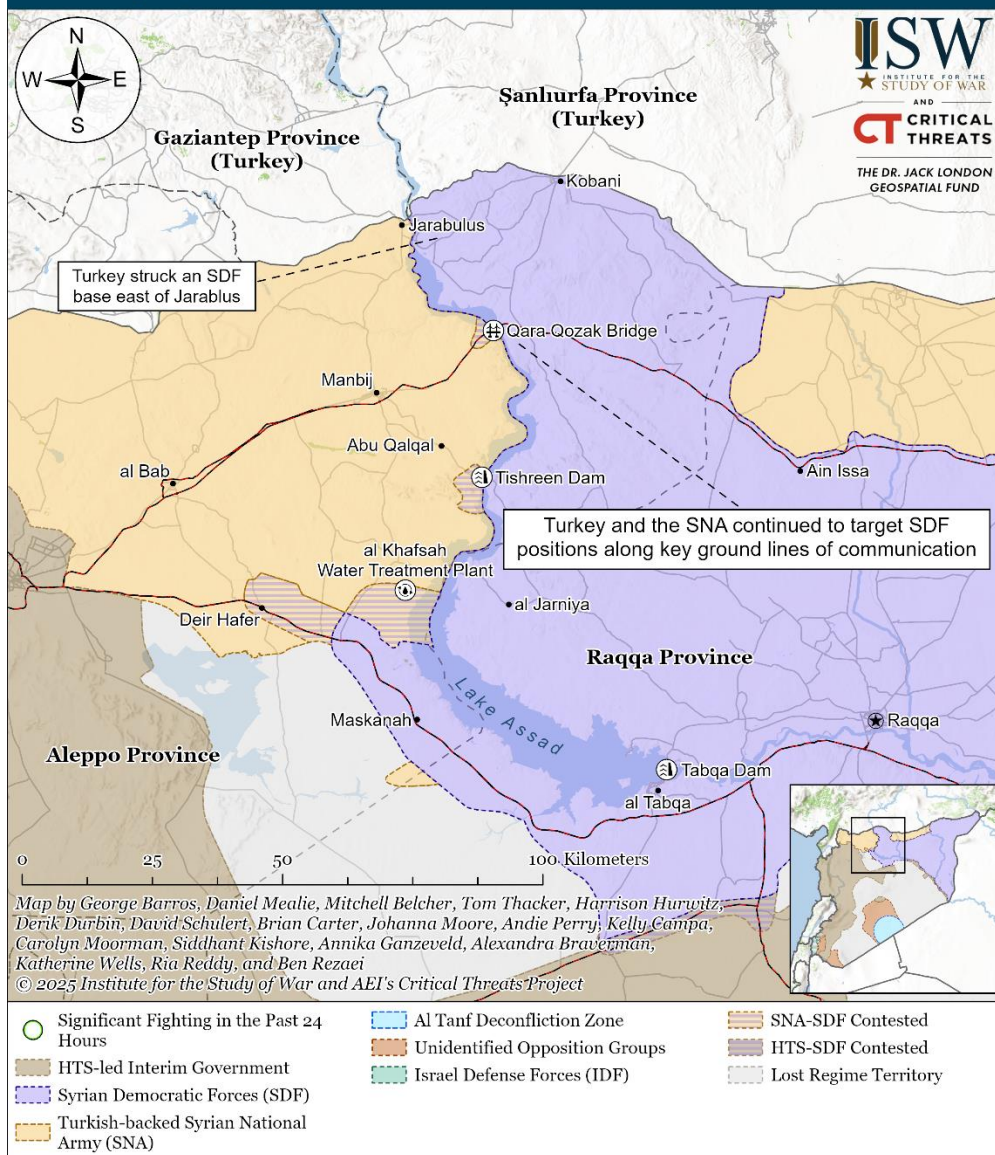
- **Iraqi Parliament:** The Iraqi parliament voted to approve an amendment to the Iraqi budget law to provide salaries for Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) employees and resume oil exports from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region on February 2.
- **US Presence in Iraq:** Several Iraqi security and political officials have sought to delay the withdrawal of US-led international coalition forces from Iraq due to the situation in Syria.
- **Turkey:** Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan reiterated Turkish threats against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in a press conference with his Qatari counterpart on February 2.

Syria

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan reiterated Turkish threats against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in a press conference with his Qatari counterpart on February 2.[6] Fidan called for all armed groups in Syria to join the interim government Defense Ministry.[7] He also claimed that Turkey and Syria must continue to fight terrorism both from ISIS and armed Kurdish groups the “PKK/YPG” but noted that he hoped the “YPG problem” would be “resolved without bloodshed.”[8] Turkey often conflates the SDF and the PKK-linked Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) with the PKK and uses “PKK” to refer to the entire SDF. Fidan and the Qatari foreign minister also discussed strategies to help rebuild Syria.[9]

Turkey and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) continued to target Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) positions along key ground lines of communication in an effort to isolate SDF forces at the Tishreen Dam and Qara Qozak Bridge. The SNA shelled SDF positions near Qara Qozak Bridge and in Bir Hassou, approximately 3 kilometers east of the Qara Qozak Bridge on the M4 highway.[10] Turkey conducted airstrikes on SDF positions near the bridge.[11] Turkey also struck an SDF base in the mountains north of Qara Qozak Bridge near Jarablus.[12] The SDF and SNA separately exchanged artillery fire near western Tal Abyad, Raqqa Province on February 2.[13]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Manbij February 2, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST

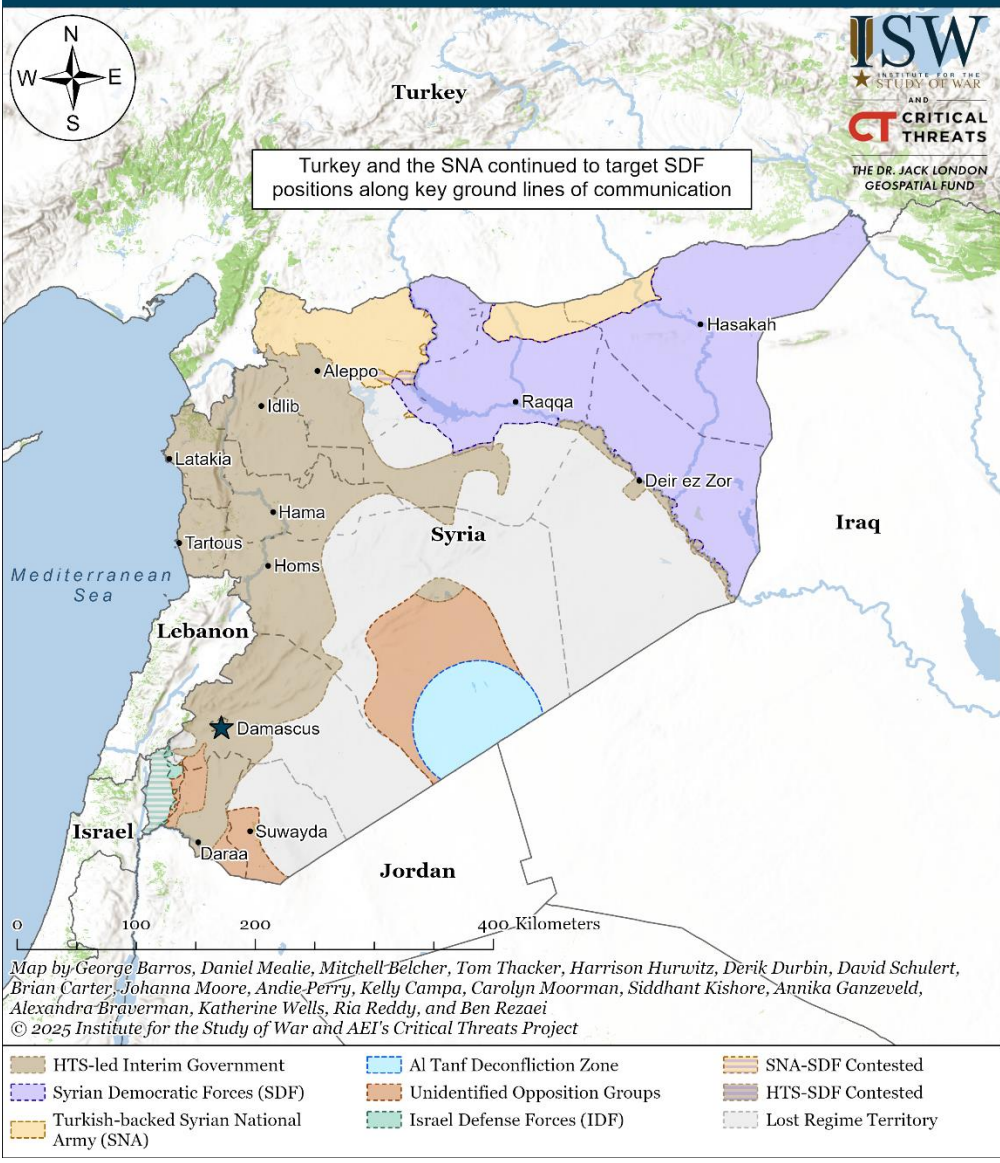


Syrian interim President Ahmed al Shara met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in his first foreign trip to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.[14] Syrian interim Foreign Minister Asaad Shaibani accompanied Shara to Saudi Arabia.[15] Shara and bin Salman held “extensive talks in all areas” including humanitarian and economic cooperation.[16]

The Syria interim government continued to reach out to Druze leaders in Suwayda Province on February 2.[17] The interim government’s official envoy to Suwayda Mustafa al Bakour and a Defense Ministry delegation met with Druze leader Sheikh Hikmat al Hijri in Suwayda.[18] They discussed the status of military units in Suwayda Province and how to organize the Druze forces within the Defense Ministry.[19] The Syrian interim government announced the planned dissolution of all former opposition parties in Syria on January 29.[20]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

February 2, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Iraq

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Strengthen Iranian and Axis of Resistance influence over the Iraqi state and society
- Harden the Iraqi government against internal dissent
- See the topline section.

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi stated that the Houthis have a responsibility to support Palestinian people against Israeli operations in the West Bank on February 2.[21] Abdulmalik also stressed the Houthis’ readiness to “move immediately” against Israel if Israel escalates its operations in Gaza and Lebanon.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

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
- Rebuild and reestablish Hezbollah in southern Lebanon
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

The Gaza Strip

The IDF Air Force struck a vehicle on February 2 as it traveled toward the northern Gaza Strip on an unauthorized route.[22] Palestinian vehicles can only travel to the northern Gaza Strip on the Salah al Din Road after undergoing inspection at the Netzarim Corridor under the Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement.[23] US and Egyptian private security contractors started operating a checkpoint on Salah al Din Road at the Netzarim Corridor on January 27 to inspect vehicles.[24]

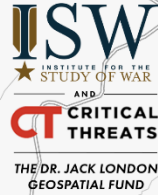
Geolocated footage posted on February 2 showed at least 20 Egyptian tanks and armored vehicles positioned at the al Areish-Rafah highway in Egypt, which is located 3 km from the Gaza-Egypt border.[25] This comes after Israel reopened the Rafah border crossing on February 1 to allow injured and sick Palestinians to travel outside the Gaza Strip for medical treatment.[26]

Israeli media reported on February 2 that the Israeli Border Police interdicted a weapons shipment from Jordan in Afula, northern Israel.[27] Israeli border police officials seized 34 pistols, two Kalashnikov-style rifles, and two M16 rifles from two trucks in Afula, which is located approximately 26 km from the Israel-Jordan border.

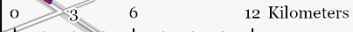
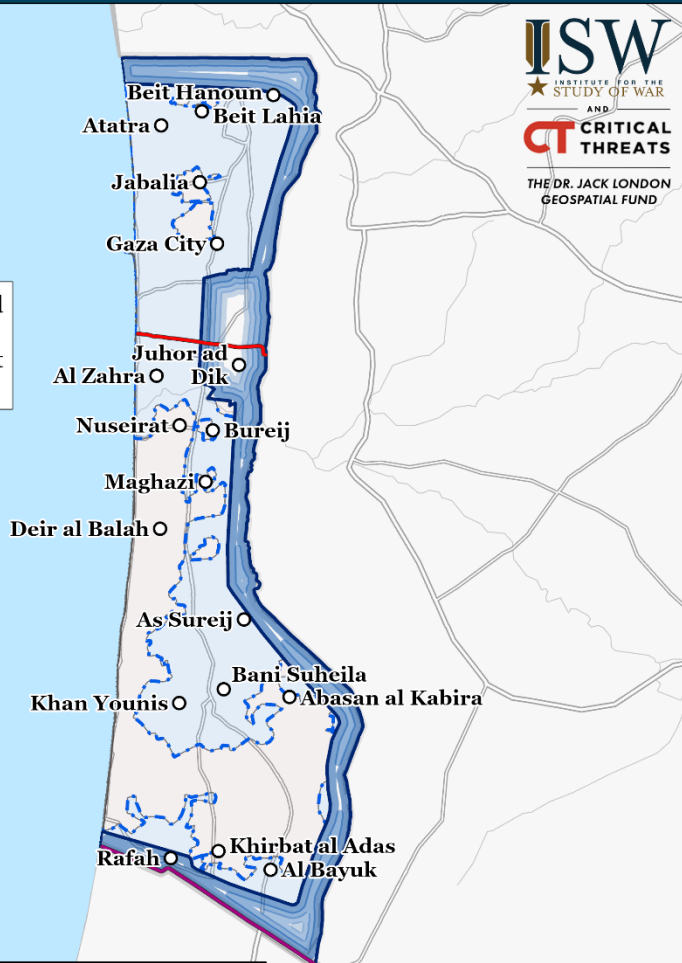
CTP-ISW has recorded no verifiable reports of kinetic activity in the Gaza Strip or attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel since the last data cutoff on February 1.

Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Lines

As of February 2, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



CTP-ISW has not observed any ceasefire violations in the Gaza Strip since its last data cutoff

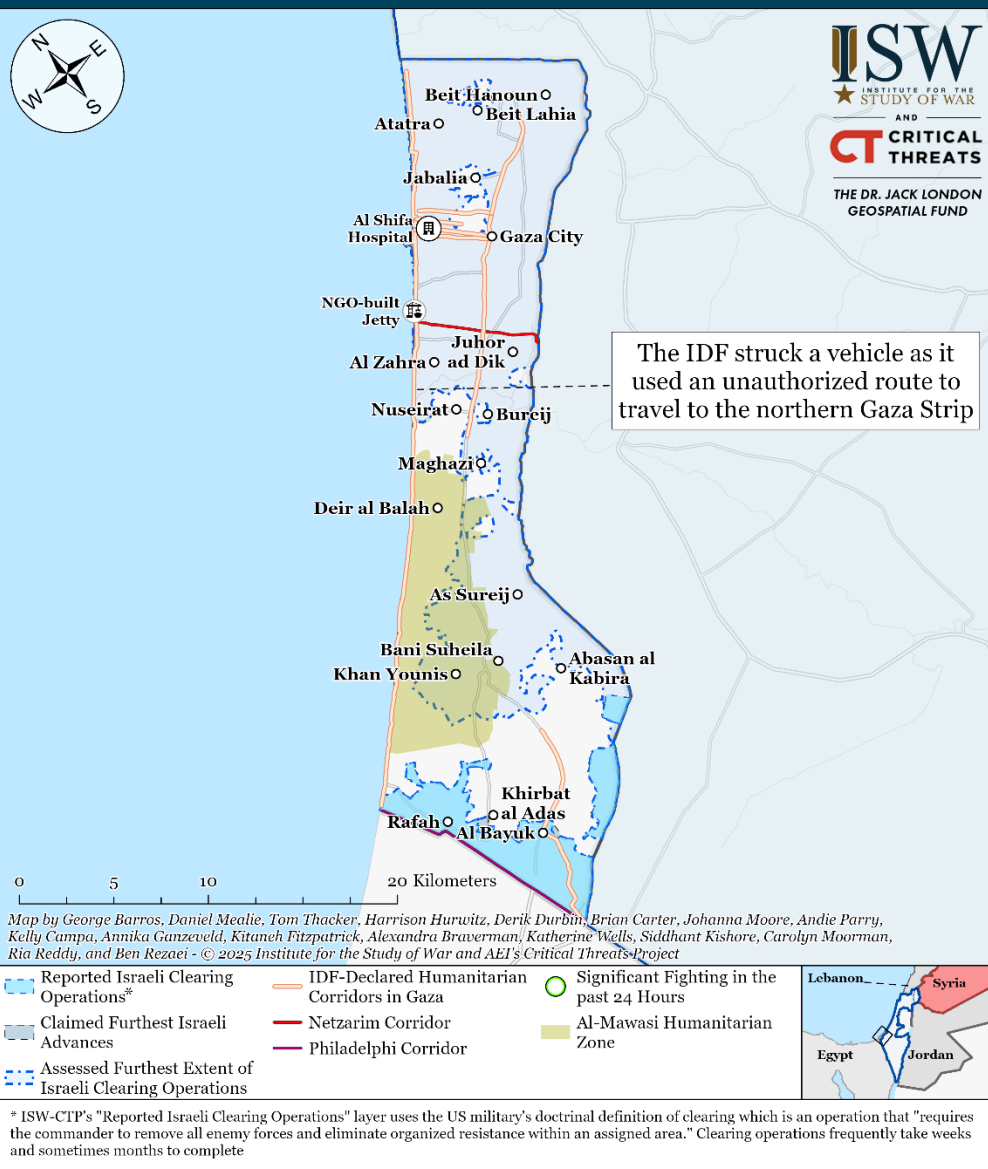


- Israeli-Hamas Ceasefire Buffer Zone
- Philadelphi Corridor
- Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations
- Netzarim Corridor

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Tom Thacker, Harrison Hurwitz, Derek Durbin, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Camp, Annika Gunzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandros Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, and Ben Rezaei - © 2025 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of February 2, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Lebanon

Some Lebanese civilians returned to Mays al Jabal, Houla, Aitaroun, Yaroun, and Deir Mimas-Kfar Kila on February 2.[28] The LAF recently backfilled IDF positions in Aitaroun, Yaroun, and Deir Mimas.[29] Lebanese media reported that the IDF fired shots at civilians attempting to return to Yaroun on February 2.[30] The IDF Arabic language spokesperson reiterated warnings to Lebanese civilians not to return to southern Lebanon until permitted to do so by the IDF.[31] The IDF Arabic language spokesperson accused Hezbollah of trying to facilitate the premature movement of civilians to southern Lebanon.

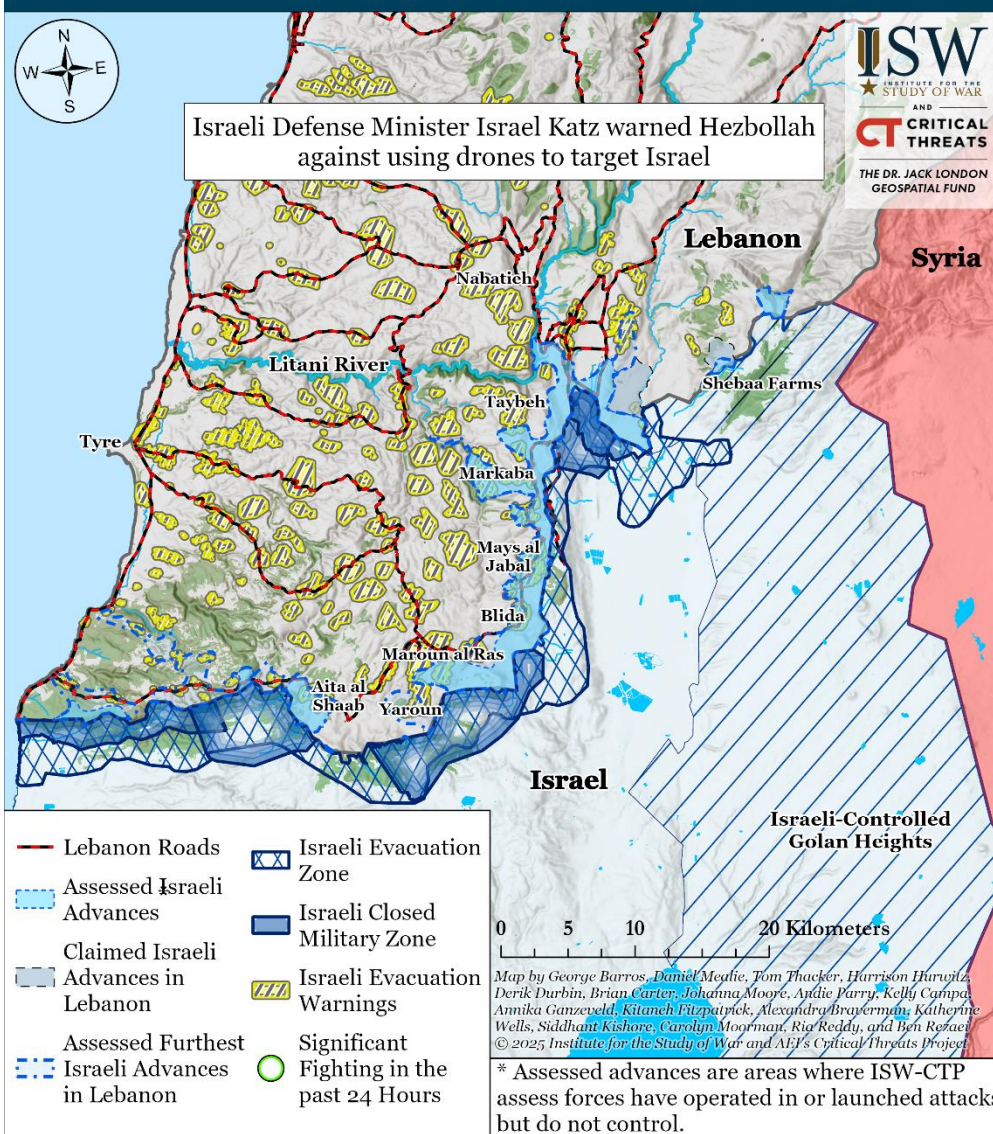
Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz warned Hezbollah against launching drones to target Israel during a visit to IDF positions in southern Lebanon on February 2.[32] Katz directly threatened Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem and stated Qassem should not “underestimate Israel’s determination” to avoid the region’s return to a pre-war status quo. Katz confirmed a recent uptick in Hezbollah's attempted drone launches targeting Israel. CTP-ISW observed two possible Hezbollah drone flights, including one unarmed reconnaissance drone, in January 2025.[33] Katz toured IDF positions and met with IDF commanders in southern Lebanon.[34]

Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem stated in a speech on February 2 that Hezbollah will not change its “direction and convictions.”[35] Qassem acknowledged that “our people” have suffered losses, but acknowledged that Hezbollah’s achieved a significant victory by preventing Israel from destroying Hezbollah altogether. Qassem stated that the people of southern Lebanon reject the IDF presence there. Qassem stated that “popular resistance is integrated” with the Lebanese army and “armed jihadist resistance.” Qassem reiterated that the Lebanese state, rather than Hezbollah, is responsible for responding to Israeli violations of the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire agreement. Qassem denied recent IDF allegations that Hezbollah has encouraged the premature return of civilians to southern Lebanon.[36]

Qassem confirmed that former Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and his successor Hashem Safieddine will be buried in Lebanon on February 23, five days after the expiration of the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire agreement on February 18.[37] A senior Hezbollah official previously stated that Nasrallah would be buried on January 25, which was the last day of the ceasefire agreement prior to the extension.[38] Israel killed Nasrallah in an airstrike on September 27, 2024, and Safieddine in a separate airstrike on October 3, 2024.[39]

Reported Israeli Operations in Lebanon

As of February 2, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



West Bank

The IDF continued counterterrorism operations in Jenin on February 2. The IDF destroyed 23 buildings that it said Palestinian militias had been using for unspecified purposes in Jenin on February 2.[40] The IDF located weapons caches, weapons laboratories, observation points, and explosives during operations.[41] The IDF conducted airstrikes targeting militia cells in three locations in Jenin Governorate.[42] The IDF killed two Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighters in a strike in Qabatiya, Jenin Governorate.[43] Israel previously released the two PIJ fighters as part of a ceasefire-hostage deal in November 2023.[44] The IDF assessed the two fighters were preparing for an imminent attack.[45] PIJ separately detonated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and fired small arms targeting the IDF in Jenin.[46] The IDF has killed over 50 militia fighters in operations in the West Bank since it began its operation on January 21.[47]

The IDF expanded operations in the West Bank on February 2 and began operating in Tamun, Tubas Governorate. Tamun is located approximately 25 kilometers southeast of Jenin. The IDF confiscated small arms in Tamun on February 2.[48] Elements of the 828th Bislamach Infantry Brigade, 431st Territorial Brigade, and 421st Ephraim Territorial Brigade are operating in three areas of the northern West Bank.[49]

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Iranian Supreme Leader’s adviser Ali Larijani continued to signal a lack of clarity on whether Iran is willing to re-engage with Western powers over nuclear negotiations.[50] Larijani stated that “now is the time to smooth the atmosphere through [nuclear] diplomacy,” but added that “it is too early to be eager for negotiations” with the United States during an interview with Iranian media on February 1. Larijani also stated that during previous nuclear negotiations, Iran did not have the unspecified technology but now Iran has “acquired nuclear knowledge in an atomic way.” Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi mentioned that there is a debate among Iranian officials about whether Iran should revise its nuclear doctrine and pursue a nuclear weapon as an alternative to a nuclear agreement in an interview with Sky News on January 28.[51]

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei praised Iranian youth and Iran’s progress “in all fields” at the 41st International Quran Competition on February 2.[52] Khamenei also called the Israel-Hamas ceasefire a “victory” for the people of the Gaza Strip.

The Iranian Defense Ministry unveiled new air defense equipment during Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian’s visit to the Defense Ministry’s aerospace complex on February 2.[53] The Defense Ministry introduced their latest precision-guided ballistic missile called the “Etemad,” which has a range of 1,700 kilometers and is 14 meters long with a diameter of 1.25 m.[54] The Defense Ministry also displayed an updated version of the Bavar 373 air defense system, which has a detection radar, and six transporter, erector, launcher, and radar platforms. The air defense system has a detection range of 320 km, a tracking range of 260 km, a missile launch range of 200 km, and an engagement range of 300 km, according to Iranian media.[55] The updated Bavar 373 system is reportedly capable of tracking 60 targets while engaging with six targets simultaneously. The new system launches Sayyad 4B missiles. The Space organization also unveiled the Navak satellites and upgraded versions of Pars 1 and Pars 2, all with higher altitude capacities and better telecommunications coverage, on National Space Technology Day on February 2.[56] Iran is displaying new air defense equipment likely to replace Iranian air defense systems that Israel destroyed in its precision strikes on over 20 locations in Iran on October 25, 2024.[57]

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.



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- [2] <https://www.rudaw dot net/sorani/middleeast/iraq/020220255> ; <https://almadapaper dot net/394952/>
- [3] <https://shafaq dot com/ar/%D9%83%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B3%D9%80%D9%80%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA/%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AB%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B3%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%B4-%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1>
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