

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: August 17, 2024, 2:00pm 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 has rejected optimism from US and international mediators that a ceasefire-hostage agreement is close to being reached.[1] Hamas stated that there has been no progress on ceasefire-hostage talks and accused the United States of selling a “false positive atmosphere.”[2] Hamas restated its demand on August 16 that negotiations return to the Hamas’ July 2024 proposal after talks in Doha concluded. Hamas listed its demands for a full Israel Defense Forces (IDF) withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, a “real [hostage-prisoner exchange] deal,” and humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip. Unspecified sources “familiar with the matter” claimed that Hamas suggested that it is willing to speak with mediators if “significant progress” was made during the talks in Doha on August 15 and 16.[3] It is unclear whether the ceasefire talks met this threshold. Israeli mediators are “cautiously optimistic” that ceasefire negotiations will advance.[4] Israel, however, insists that Israeli forces retain control over the Philadelphi Corridor, which is incompatible with Hamas’ demand for a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.[5] Lower-level talks will continue into next week to resolve outstanding demands between Israel and Hamas ahead of a second round of talks in Cairo, Egypt.[6]

The United States and foreign mediators are maintaining pressure on Iran to delay an attack targeting Israel by threatening Iran and highlighting reported ceasefire progress.

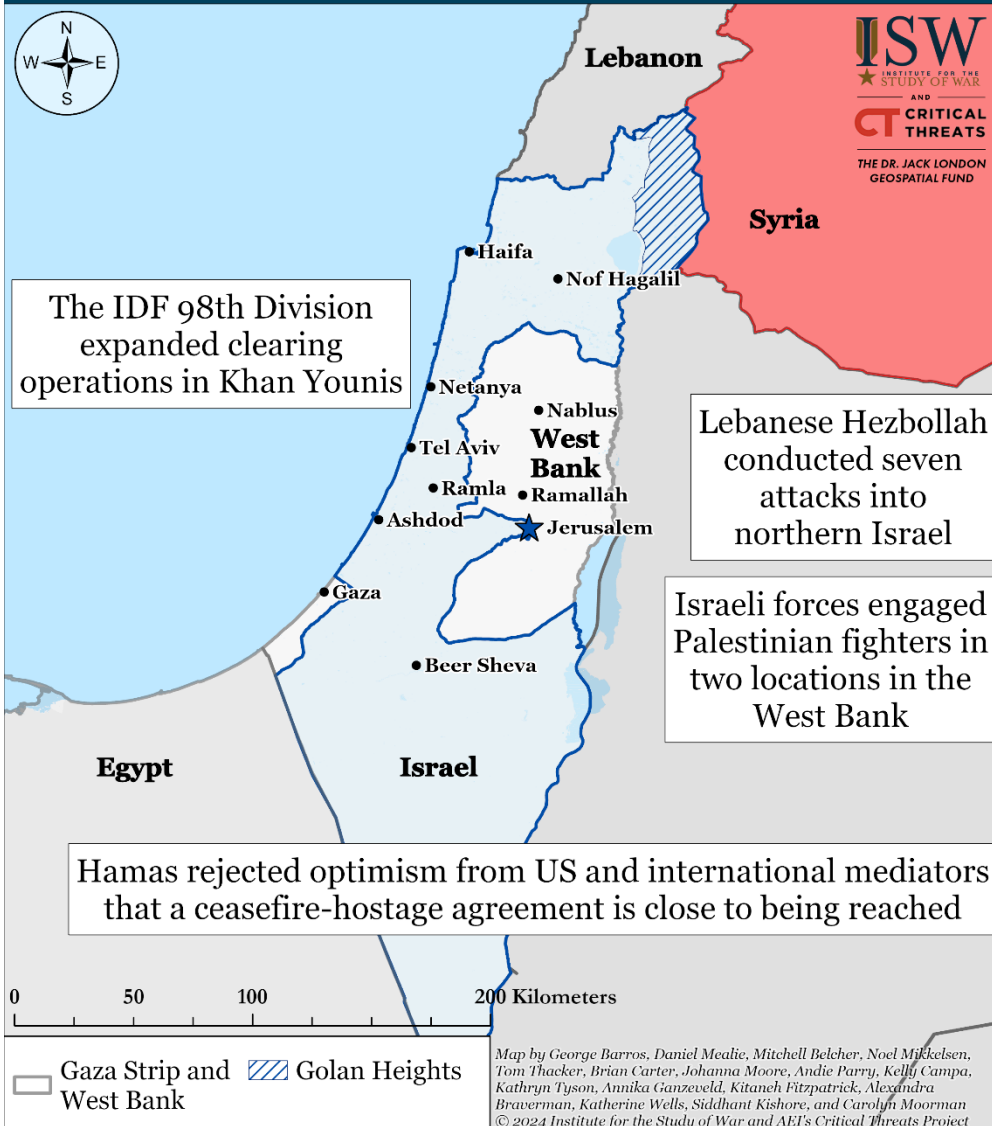
Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani highlighted progress in ceasefire-hostage negotiations during phone calls with acting Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Bagheri Kani following talks in Doha on August 15 and 16.[7] Al Thani warned Bagheri Kani of unspecified consequences if Iran attacked Israel during negotiations in retaliation for Israel killing Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. An unspecified US official speaking to reporters stated that Iran could face “cataclysmic” consequences if it derailed negotiations by conducting a retaliatory strike on Israel.[8] US, Israeli, and Iranian officials cited by the *New York Times* on August 16 said that Iran is expected to delay its retaliatory strike during ceasefire negotiations.[9] US President Joe Biden reportedly views the deal as the “key. . . to preventing a regional war,” and he said that he “expects” that Iranian leaders will delay or indefinitely postpone a strike if a ceasefire agreement is reached.[10] It remains unclear if “hold off” means that Iranian leaders would decline to mount any retaliatory strike on Israel or just that Iran would delay its strike.

Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Ceasefire-Hostage Negotiations:** Hamas has rejected optimism from US and international mediators that a ceasefire-hostage agreement is close to being reached.
- **Iranian Retaliation:** The United States and foreign mediators are maintaining pressure on Iran to delay an attack targeting Israel by threatening Iran and highlighting reported ceasefire progress.
- **Gaza:** The IDF 98th Division expanded its clearing operation in Khan Younis on August 17. Israeli forces located and destroyed Hamas infrastructure and engaged Palestinian fighters.
- **Lebanon:** Hezbollah launched at least 55 rockets into northern Israel on August 17 in retaliation for an IDF strike in Nabatieh that killed 10 civilians.
- **West Bank:** Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in at least two locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 16.
- **Yemen:** US Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed a Houthi naval attack drone in the Red Sea on August 16.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of August 17, 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 IDF announced new evacuation orders for Salah ad Din, al Farouk, and al Amal neighborhoods in al Maghazi area on August 17.[11] The IDF reported that Israeli forces will operate in these neighborhoods to target Palestinian fighters launching rockets from the area. CTP-ISW previously noted that the IDF has not conducted clearing operations in all the recent evacuation zones it has identified, suggesting the evacuation orders are no longer a reliable indicator for imminent Israeli

ground operations in a sector of the Gaza Strip.[12]

The IDF 252nd Division targeted Palestinian fighters during clearing operations around the Netzarim Corridor on August 17.[13] Israeli forces directed an airstrike targeting a fighter who fired on Israeli forces. Israeli naval forces struck multiple Palestinian fighters who posed a threat to the 252nd Division. Palestinian fighters launched rockets and mortars at IDF combat outposts around the Netzarim Corridor.[14]

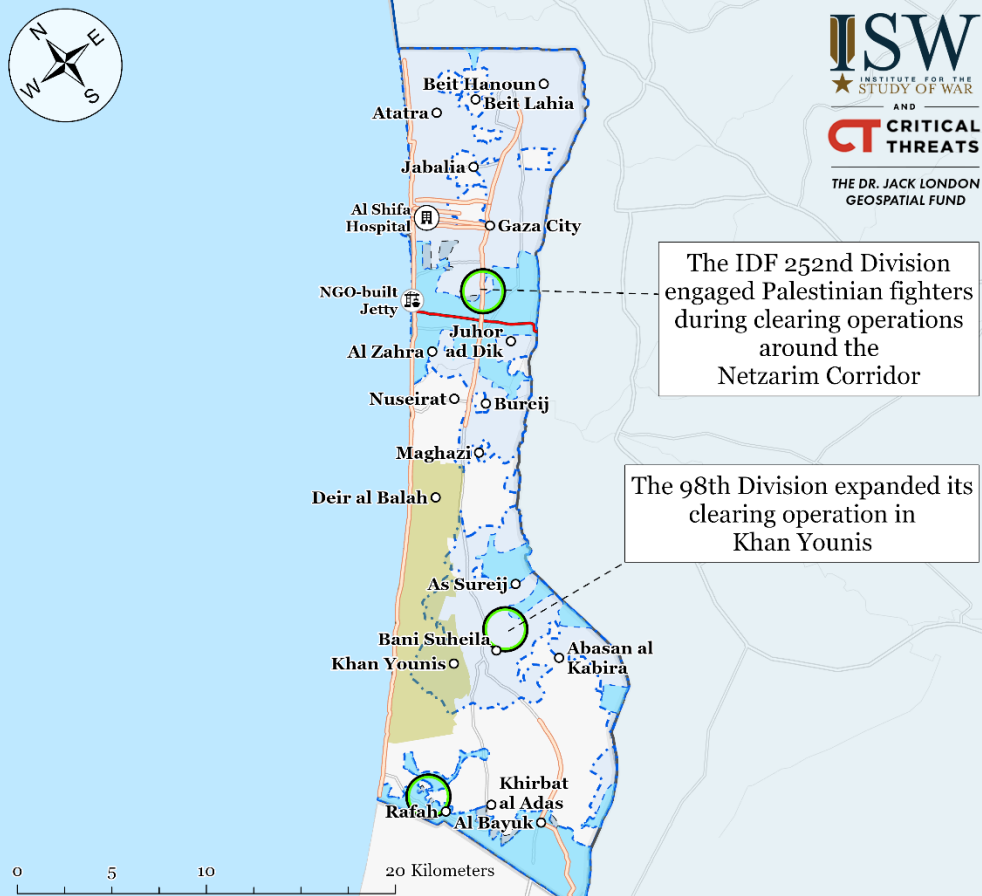
The IDF 98th Division expanded its clearing operation in Khan Younis on August 17.[15] Israeli forces located and destroyed Hamas infrastructure and engaged Palestinian fighters. The IDF Air Force killed the Hamas fighters in Khan Younis who launched the salvo of rockets at Nirim on August 16.[16] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—the self-proclaimed militant wing of Fatah—launched rockets and mortars at Israeli forces reportedly operating in Abu Hadaf neighborhood, northeast of Khan Younis.[17]

The IDF 162nd Division targeted militia infrastructure and killed Palestinian fighters during clearing operations in Tal al Sultan, Rafah on August 17.[18] The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine mortared Israeli forces west of Rafah in Tal Zoroub.[19] The National Resistance Brigades fired a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) at an IDF bulldozer in Saudi neighborhood, Tal al Sultan.[20]

The IDF Air Force struck approximately 40 militia targets, including militia buildings and weapons depots, in the Gaza Strip since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on August 16.[21]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

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The IDF 252nd Division engaged Palestinian fighters during clearing operations around the Netzarim Corridor

The 98th Division expanded its clearing operation in Khan Younis

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzefeld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Katherine Wells, Siddhant Kishore, and Carolyn Moorman - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

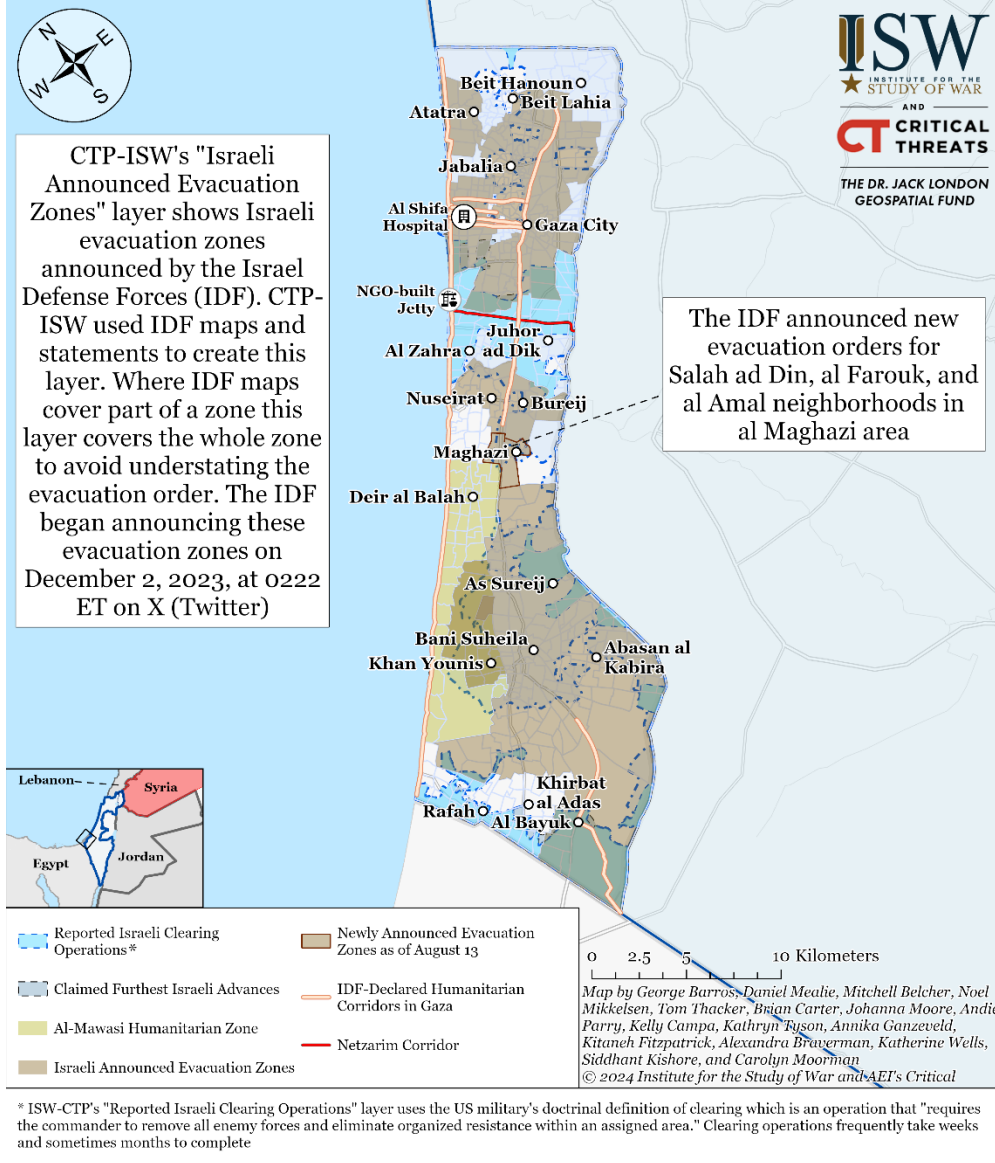
- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
- Netzarim Corridor
- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone



* 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

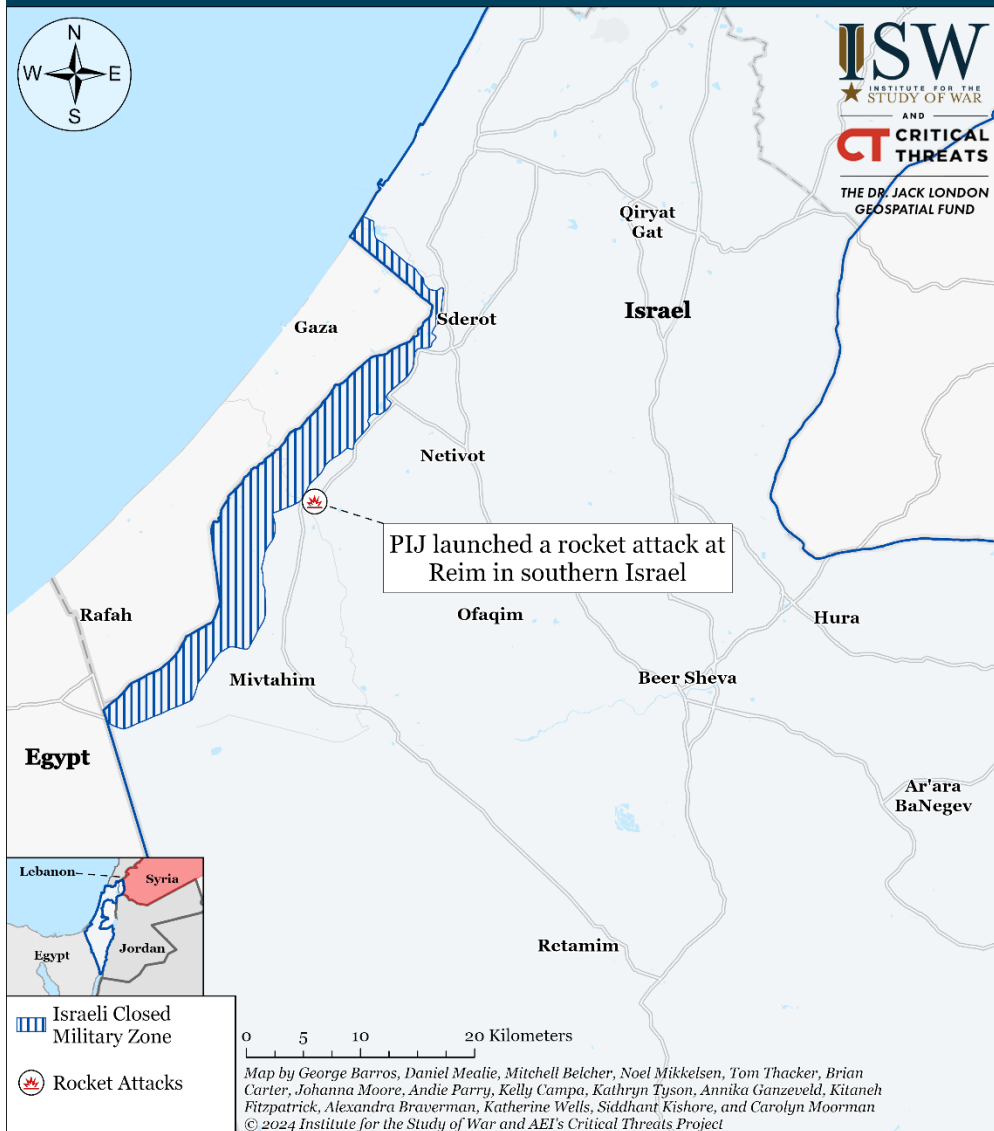
As of August 17, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) launched a salvo of rockets at Reim in southern Israel on August 17.[22]

Attacks into Israel from the Gaza Strip

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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 at least two locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 16.[23] The al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades fired small arms at the Avnei Hefetz settlement in the northern West Bank.[24]

Six Israeli settlers tried to enter Rujeib village, Nablus, on August 17.[25] Some settlers had masks and pepper spray. An IDF unit intercepted the settlers before they reached Rujeib. This incident

comes two days after dozens of armed Israeli settlers stormed a village near Nablus, killing one Palestinian individual.[26]



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

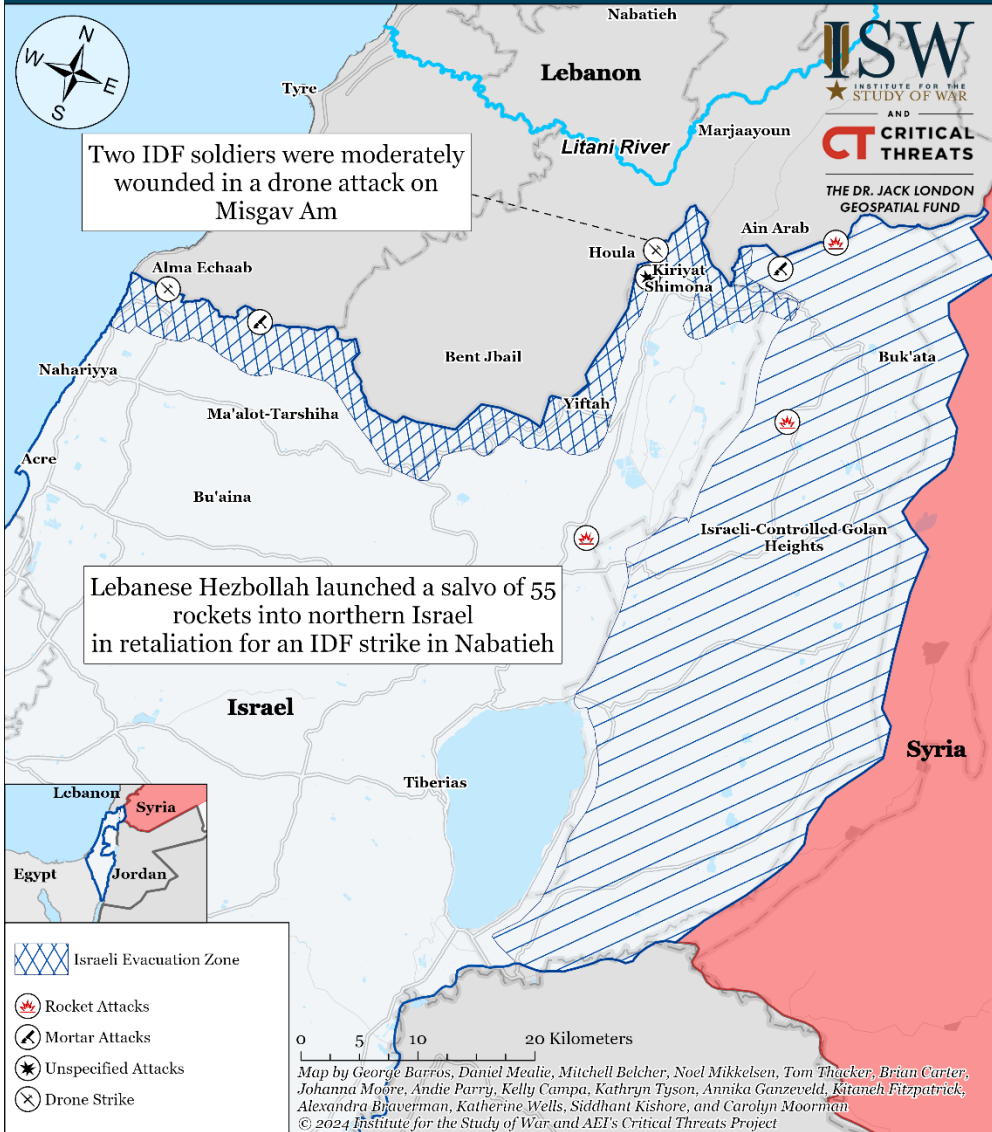
Iranian-backed militias, including Lebanese Hezbollah, have conducted at least seven attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on August 16.[27] Hezbollah launched at least 55 rockets into northern Israel on August 17.[28] Hezbollah targeted kibbutz Ayelet HaShahar approximately 10 kilometers from the border.[29] Israeli media reported that this kibbutz has not been evacuated, but that no injuries were reported following the barrage of rockets.[30] Hezbollah claimed it launched the attack in response to an IDF airstrike on a weapons storage depot in Nabatieh, Lebanon, on August 16 that killed at least 10 Syrian nationals in Lebanon.[31]

The IDF killed Hezbollah Radwan commander Hussein Ibrahim Kassab in an airstrike in Tyre, Lebanon, on August 17.[32] The Radwan unit is Hezbollah's elite commando force and is designed to conduct ground operations into Israel.[33]

Likely Iranian-backed militants conducted a drone attack on Misgav Am on August 17, moderately wounding two IDF soldiers.[34]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

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Iran and the Axis of Resistance

US Central Command (CENTCOM) destroyed a Houthi naval attack drone in the Red Sea on August 16.[35]

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