

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.

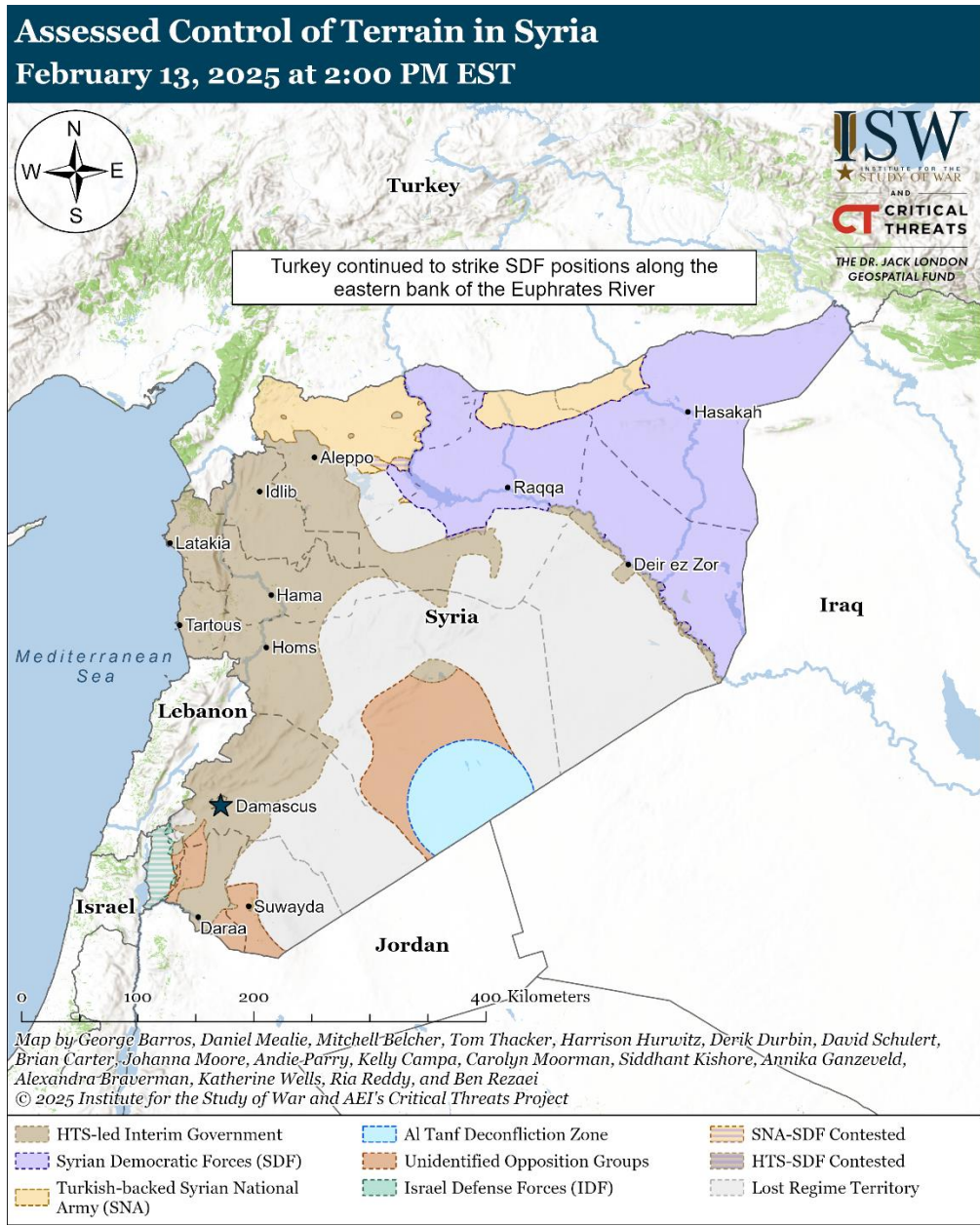
Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of the ongoing opposition offensive in Syria. These maps are updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report.

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 newly-appointed Syrian Preparatory Committee provided some details about how it plans to select representatives to attend the National Dialogue Conference. This conference will reportedly facilitate the drafting of a new Syrian constitution, and therefore, the composition of its attendees will influence the trajectory of the post-Assad Syrian state.[1] The Preparatory Committee is mostly comprised of pro-Hayat Tahrir al Sham figures who are loyal to Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara.[2] Preparatory Committee member and spokesperson Hassan al Daghim said on February 13 that armed groups will not be allowed to participate in the conference.[3] This condition most notably bars the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) from participating in the conference but also bars southern Syrian armed groups, including the Southern Operations Room (SOR) and the Druze Men of Dignity militia, from participating. The Men of Dignity and SOR have not disarmed but have reportedly made progress toward doing so during negotiations with the interim government.[4] The SDF is also negotiating with the interim Defense Ministry, but CTP-ISW assesses that the SDF is unlikely to give up its ability to defend Kurdish areas against active Turkish-backed attacks by disarming.[5] The SDF's likely refusal to disarm does not preclude other Kurdish groups from participating in the conference, such as the Kurdish National Council (KNC), which is dominated by the Syrian wing of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).[6]

It remains unclear how the Preparatory Committee will ensure the diversity of conference attendees. The committee is comprised of five males and two females and does not appear to include representatives of the Alawite, Druze, Kurdish, and Shia communities.[7] The committee announced that "citizens" in each province will choose "national figures capable of representing the interests" of their province to participate in the National Dialogue Conference.[8] This

selection method could underrepresent minority groups in provinces with significant minority populations, including Aleppo, Homs, and Hama if the “citizens” who select “national figures” do not sufficiently represent minority ethnic and religious groups. The committee reiterated Shara’s opposition to quota systems that would ensure minority representation but promised that it would take “diversity into account.”[9] The committee has not set a date for the National Dialogue Conference and noted that the interim government has delayed the conference several times.[10]



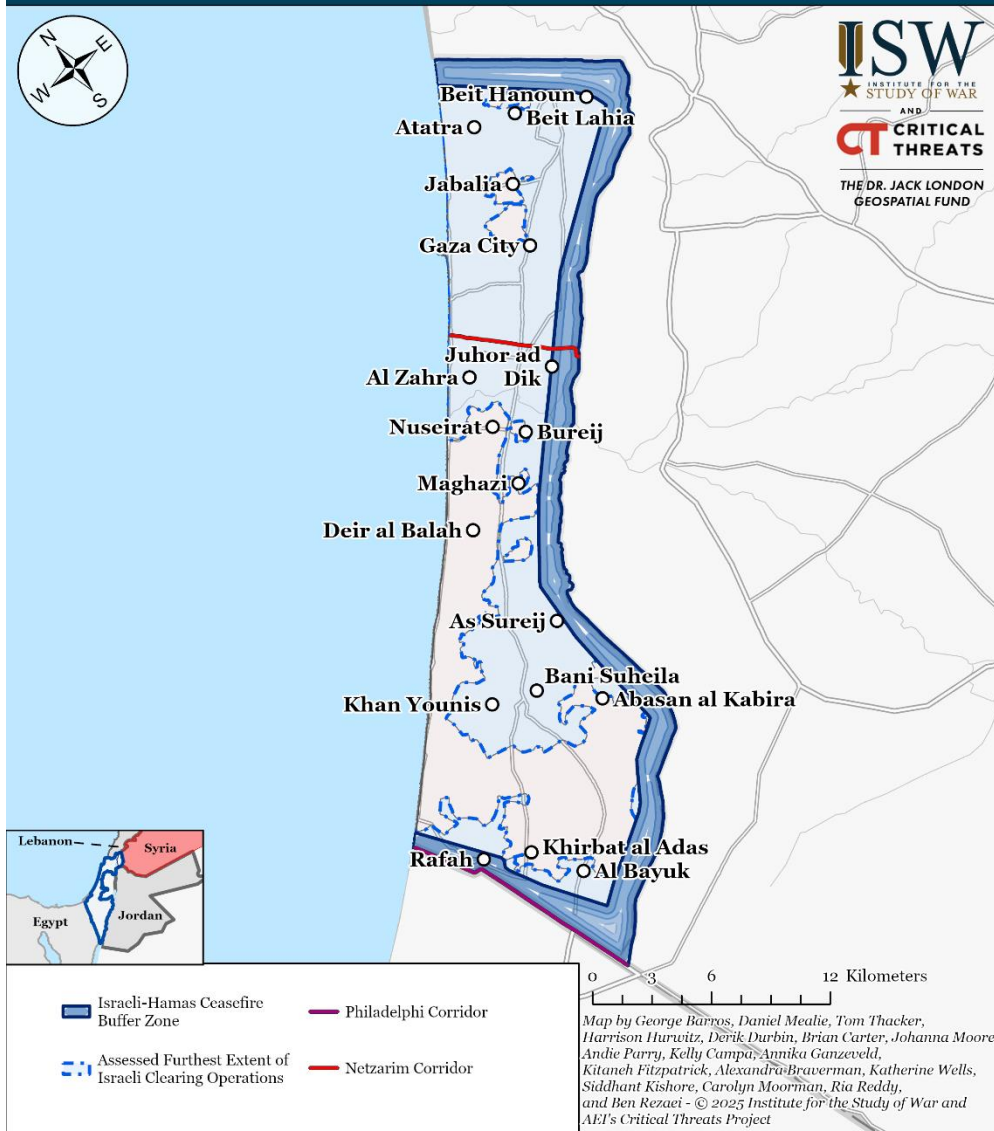
Iran likely pressured members of the Iraqi Shia Coordination Framework to support the General Amnesty Law in order to prevent conflict between Shia and Sunni parties in Iraq. The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Iranian-backed political parties. Parliament passed the General Amnesty Law on January 21, after which some parliamentarians, including members of the Shia Coordination Framework, submitted lawsuits to the Iraqi Federal

Supreme Court to challenge the constitutionality of the January 21 parliament session.[11] The Federal Supreme Court rejected the lawsuits on February 11. The General Amnesty Law would grant amnesty to many Iraqis, including many Sunnis, who were arrested under Article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Law.[12] Iran reportedly warned unspecified Iraqi officials not to “anger partners” in the country, possibly referring to Sunni parties.[13] Most members of the Shia Coordination Framework agreed to support the approval of the General Amnesty Law to “unify ranks” and avoid “provoking the Sunnis” after the overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria, according to unspecified political sources speaking to Iraqi media on February 13.[14] Iraqi media previously reported that some Iraqi Shia political parties are concerned about potential Sunni discord in Iraq following the overthrow of Assad by primarily Sunni groups in Syria in December 2024.[15]

Iranian-backed Iraqi State of Law Coalition head Nouri al Maliki has continued to try to prevent the implementation of the General Amnesty Law despite Iranian pressure and the rest of the Shia Coordination Framework's consensus to implement the law. Maliki described the January 21 parliament session as “incorrect” and warned on February 10 that previous unspecified violations of the Iraqi constitution caused “deterioration and bloodshed” in Iraq.[16] Maliki recently made anti-Sunni sectarian statements on February 1. Maliki emphasized that “we will not allow terrorists to leave prisons,” in reference to the individuals who would be released from prison under the General Amnesty Law.[17] A Shia Coordination Framework parliamentarian submitted a new lawsuit against the General Amnesty Law to the Federal Supreme Court on February 11.[18] Another Shia Coordination Framework-aligned parliamentarian said on February 11 that Federal Supreme Court President Jassem Mohammad Abboud disagreed with the majority decision to reject the recent lawsuits against the General Amnesty Law.[19] Abboud is affiliated with the Iranian-backed Badr Organization and Maliki.[20] Abboud’s reported support for the lawsuits could suggest that Abboud is closer to Maliki than the Badr Organization, although it is unclear to what extent the Badr Organization has complied with Iranian requests to support the General Amnesty Law. The Higher Judicial Council in Iraq also ignored the Federal Supreme Court’s decision to place a pause on the law as it reviewed the law’s constitutionality, which suggests that Higher Judicial Council chief Faiq Zaidan remains beholden to pro-Iranian militias rather than Maliki.[21]

Israel and Hamas reportedly reached an agreement on February 13 to continue the implementation of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement. Egyptian and Qatari mediators said on February 12 that they succeeded in preventing a breakdown of the ceasefire agreement.[22] Hamas agreed to release three Israeli hostages on February 15 after mediators confirmed that Israel would allow the entry of tents and engineering equipment into the Gaza Strip.[23] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent reported that the ceasefire agreement requires Israel to permit the entry of these materials to enable the construction of makeshift housing for Gazans and the removal of rubble.[24] Several trailers and trucks loaded with heavy machinery gathered near the Rafah border crossing on February 13.[25] Hamas announced on February 10 that it would postpone the release of Israeli hostages, citing alleged Israeli violations of the ceasefire agreement.[26] Israel responded by threatening to resume military operations in the Gaza Strip.[27]

Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Lines As of February 13, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Key Takeaways:

- Syrian Constitution:** The newly-appointed Syrian Preparatory Committee provided some details about how it plans to select representatives to attend the National Dialogue Conference. This conference will reportedly facilitate the drafting of a new Syrian constitution, and therefore, the composition of its attendees will influence the trajectory of the post-Assad Syrian state. A spokesperson for the committee said that armed groups would not be allowed to participate in the conference, which bars the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces but not other Kurdish parties. It remains unclear how the Preparatory Committee will ensure the diversity of conference attendees.

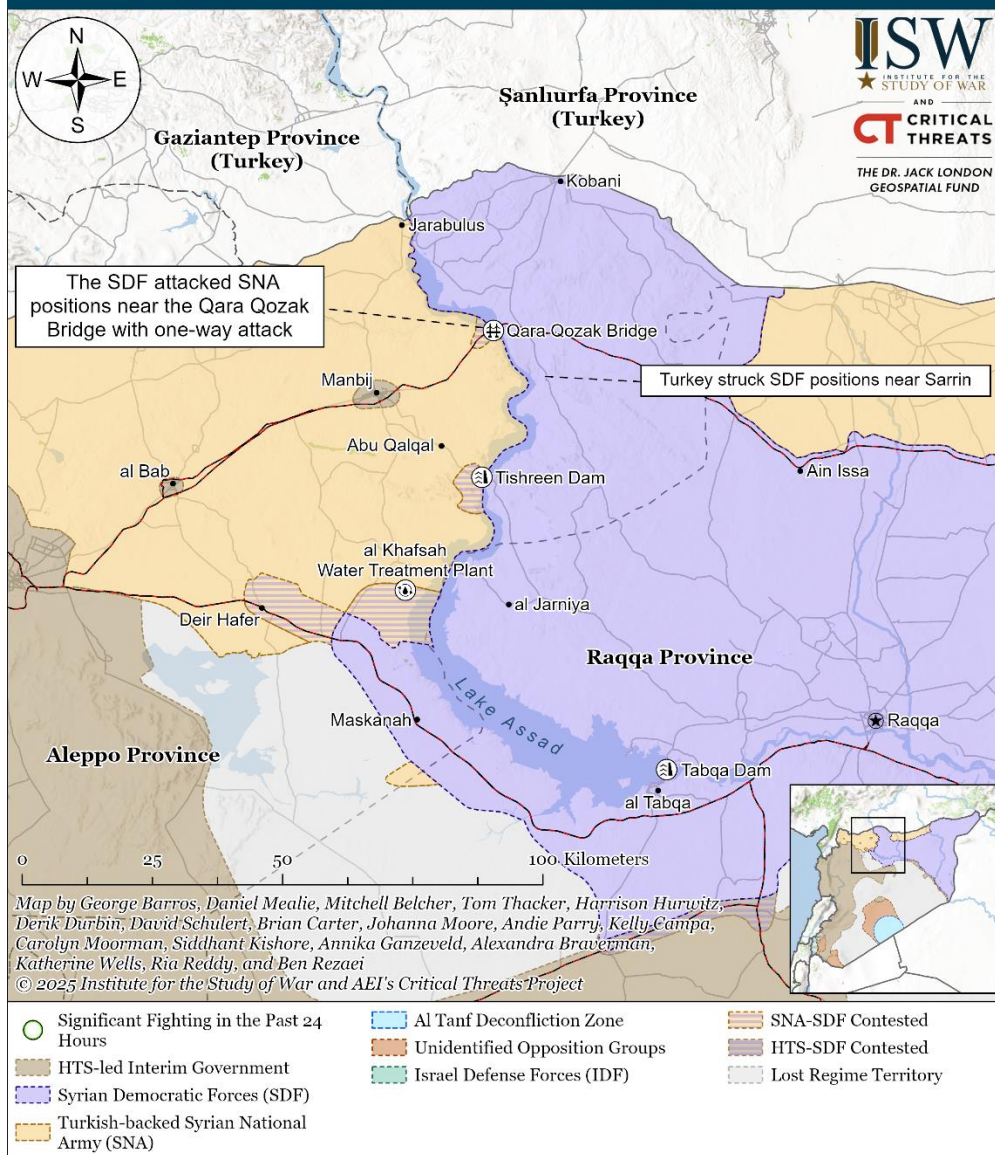
- **Iraqi Judiciary:** Iran likely pressured members of the Iraqi Shia Coordination Framework to support the General Amnesty Law to prevent conflict between Shia and Sunni parties in Iraq. Iranian-backed Iraqi State of Law Coalition head Nouri al Maliki has continued to try to prevent the implementation of the General Amnesty Law despite Iranian pressure and the rest of the Shia Coordination Framework's consensus to implement the law.
- **Israel and Hamas:** Israel and Hamas reportedly reached an agreement on February 13 to continue the implementation of the first phase of the ceasefire agreement.

Syria

Turkey continued to target SDF positions along the eastern bank of the Euphrates River on February 13. Turkish aircraft struck several SDF positions, including headquarters and tunnels, near Sarrin, the Tishreen Dam, and Kobani.[28] Turkish aircraft also struck an SDF site at the former Syrian Arab Army 93rd Brigade headquarters south of Ain Issa.[29]

The SDF engaged the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) east of Aleppo on February 13. The SDF attacked SNA positions near the Qara Qozak Bridge with one-way attack drones.[30] Anti-SDF media reported that the SNA and SDF conducted mutual artillery shelling north of Raqqa near the M-4 highway.[31]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Manbij February 13, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The Syrian interim government is continuing to try to secure sanctions relief. Syrian Interim Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani attended an international conference in Paris on February 13 to discuss Syria's political transition.[32] French President Emmanuel Macron stated that the Syrian interim government should "fully integrate" the SDF into the new Syrian army and that France will not abandon the SDF.[33] Macron also called for immediately lifting sanctions on Syria and announced that France will provide \$50 million in aid to Syria.[34] The French foreign minister said that France is working with European counterparts to lift some sanctions on Syria.[35] The minister added that the European Union requires unspecified "guarantees" before it will lift sanctions on Syria.[36]

Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara held a phone call with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on February 13.[37] Shara and Trudeau discussed efforts to lift

sanctions on Syria, and Trudeau said that he would send a special envoy to Syria in the near future.[38] Trudeau appointed a special envoy for Syria on February 7.[39]

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

A Shia politician whom Iranian-backed militias perceive to be a supporter of the United States spoke out against the presence of Iranian-backed militia fighters in Iraq who recently fled Syria.[40] Adnan al Zurfi described the presence of these fighters in Iraq as a threat to Iraqi national security. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy reported on February 11 that Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) members and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia fighters have helped facilitate the movement of hundreds of Afghan Fatemiyoun and Pakistani Zainabiyoun fighters from the Abu Kamal-al Qaim border crossing between Iraq and Syria to PMF and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia bases throughout Iraq.[41]

A State of Law Coalition member of parliament told Iraqi media on February 13 that the Iraqi federal government's efforts to disarm and integrate Iranian-backed Iraqi militias into the Iraqi military establishment have "stalled." Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki leads State of Law. The parliamentarian said that the efforts stalled due to the militias' "continuous contact and coordination" with Iran and unwillingness to listen to the Iraqi federal government.[42] Unspecified sources similarly told Iraqi media on February 11 that the Iraqi federal government is "facing difficulties" in its efforts to disarm the militias due to militia demands for senior positions in the government.[43]

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Nechirvan Barzani met with Sovereignty Alliance head Khamis al Khanjar to discuss political and security developments in Iraq.[44] Khanjar met with KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani on February 8.[45]

The PMF Ninewa Operations Command Engineering Directorate built new "military fortifications," security checkpoints, and trenches along the Iraq-Syria border on February 13.[46] PMF Ninewa Operations Commander Khadir al Matrohi is affiliated with the Badr Organization.[47]

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

Anti-Houthi media reported on February 13 that the Yemeni National Resistance Front (NRF) Coast Guard intercepted an Iranian weapons shipment to the Houthis from Djibouti.[48] The NRF Coast Guard arrested at least five sailors affiliated with the Houthis for smuggling an unspecified number of cruise missile bodies, missile and drone engines, reconnaissance drones, naval devices, an electronic jamming system, and a wired communication system.[49] The NRF is an anti-Houthi paramilitary group that is commanded by former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh’s nephew, Brigadier General Tariq Saleh. Saleh is one of seven vice presidents on the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council.[50]

Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi stated on February 13 that the Houthis will respond with “military force” if Israel and the United States implement US President Donald Trump’s plan to displace Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.[51] Houthi President Mahdi al Mashaat emphasized that the Houthis are “alert” and ready to conduct military action.[52]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Axis of Resistance objectives:

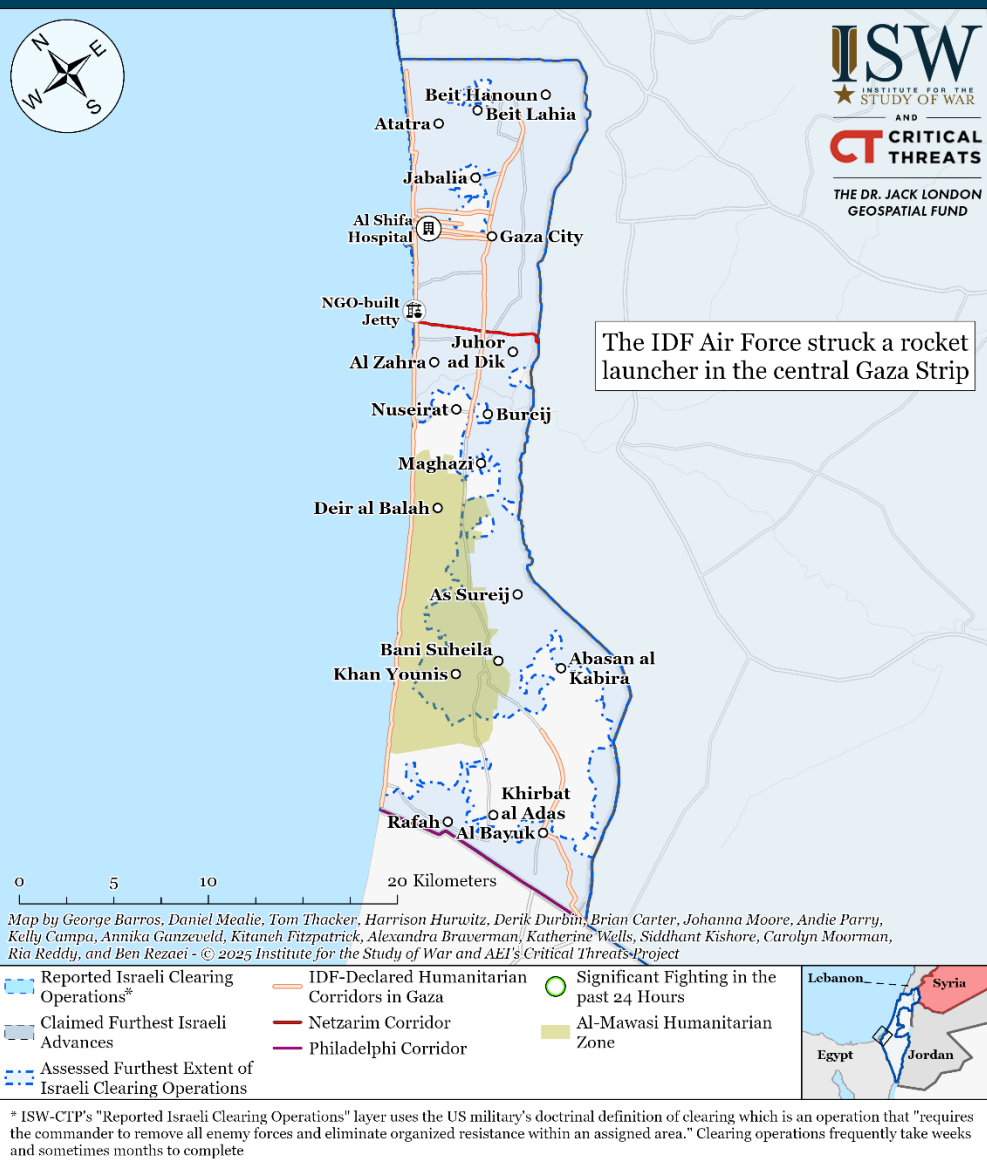
- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and the public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip
- Rebuild and reestablish Hezbollah in southern Lebanon
- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

The Gaza Strip

An unspecified Palestinian militia launched a rocket that killed a Gazan civilian in the Nusierat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on February 13.[53] It is unclear if the militia attempted to fire the rocket toward southern Israel or the buffer zone. The IDF Air Force located and struck the militia rocket launcher that fired the rocket in the central Gaza Strip.[54] CTP-ISW has not recorded any claimed Palestinian militia attacks since the Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement went into effect on January 19.

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of February 13, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST

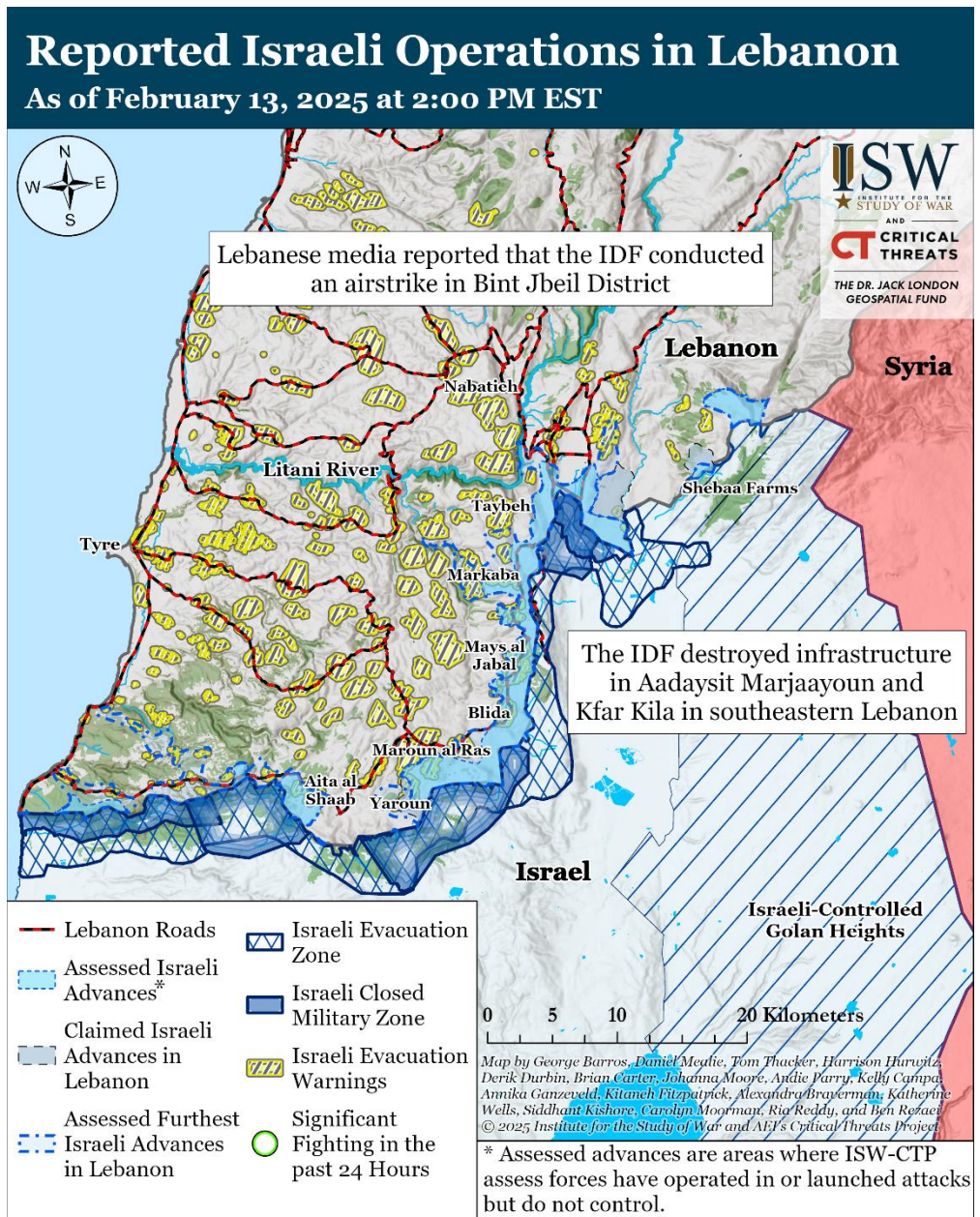


Lebanon

The IDF reported on February 13 that the 769th Territorial Brigade (91st Division) located and destroyed a Hezbollah weapons depot in southern Lebanon.[55] The IDF located caches of missiles, rockets, mortars, grenades, and improvised explosive devices in the weapons depot.

Lebanese and Hezbollah media reported that the IDF destroyed infrastructure in Aadaysit Marjaayoun and Kfar Kila in southeastern Lebanon on February 13.[56] Geolocated footage posted on February 13 shows Israeli bulldozers and heavy machinery in Aadaysit Marjaayoun.[57] The IDF deployed armored vehicles to Aadaysit Marjaayoun on February 9.[58]

Lebanese media reported an Israeli strike targeting an unspecified location in Bint Jbeil District in southern Lebanon on February 13.[59]



Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer said on February 13 that the IDF will remain in several positions in southern Lebanon “until Lebanon complies with [its] ceasefire commitments.”[60] Israeli media reported on February 12 that the United States approved an Israeli request for the IDF to extend its deployment in five strategically significant locations in southern Lebanon by ten days, which would be until February 28.[61] The IDF was previously set to withdraw from southern Lebanon by February 18.[62] Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri rejected Israel’s decision to delay the IDF withdrawal from southern Lebanon.[63]

Lebanese authorities denied an Iranian Mahan Air flight permission to land at Beirut International Airport on February 13 after Lebanese authorities received unspecified warnings from Israel.[64] Tehran International Airport chief Saeed Chalandari said that Lebanese authorities have not yet issued a permit for a Mahan Air flight to Beirut scheduled for February 14.[65] Lebanese civilians waving Hezbollah flags blocked the road outside Beirut International Airport to protest the authorities' decision.[66] The Lebanese Armed Forces deployed forces to disperse the protestors and reopen the road.[67] The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson said on February 12 that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force had used Beirut International Airport in recent weeks to transfer funds to Hezbollah.[68] Saudi media reported on February 10 that Lebanese authorities are monitoring air traffic from Iran and Iraq into Beirut to prevent Iranian cash transfers to Hezbollah.[69] Lebanese airport security forces searched a Mahan Air flight in Beirut in early January 2025 on suspicion that it was transporting funds to Hezbollah.[70]

West Bank

The IDF continued its counterterrorism operation in the northern West Bank on February 13. The IDF killed a Palestinian militia fighter who approached an IDF military base in Nablus.[71] Israeli forces killed three fighters in Nour Shams refugee camp on February 12.[72] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed that it and other unspecified Palestinian militias conducted a combined small arms attack targeting Israeli forces in Nour Shams refugee camp.[73] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) announced in late January 2025 that it formed a joint operations room in the West Bank with Hamas and al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fighters.[74] The IDF also destroyed a "car bomb" in Jenin.[75] The IDF has detained at least 90 fighters and destroyed and seized several weapons and vehicles in the northern West Bank since February 9.[76] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent stated that the IDF will likely continue its counterterrorism operation in the West Bank for several more weeks.[77]

An Israeli military correspondent reported that Israeli Police and Shin Bet detained two Israeli citizens who were planning attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians.[78] The individuals were reportedly planning to conduct shooting attacks targeting an unspecified IDF facility and civilians. An Israeli Army Radio correspondent reported that one of the suspects purchased materials for Molotov cocktails and attempted to build an explosive device to attack Israeli soldiers on a bus.[79]

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Nothing significant to report.

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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BABEL STREET

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