

Iran Update



Iran Update, July 22, 2024

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Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

The modified Houthi drone that struck Tel Aviv flew at least 2,600 kilometers, demonstrating how Iran and its partners have expanded the geographic range of their weapon systems to target the eastern Mediterranean and other areas.[1] The modified Sammad-3 drone traveled east-to-west from Yemen, crossing into Eritrea before turning north and flying through Sudan and Egypt and then turning east to target Tel Aviv from the west. A standard Sammad-3 can travel 1,500 kilometers. Israeli air defense operations failed to identify the drone as a threat because it traveled in civilian flight corridors and dropped off the Israeli radar system. The Houthi attack approached Israeli air space at the same time as a second drone that came from Iraq. The IDF concluded that there was no operational coordination between the Houthis and the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia. The Iraqi drone arrived near Israel at the same time, but it was not launched simultaneously, given the much shorter flight time from Yemen.[2]

Iran and the Houthis have both said that they aim to develop the ability to attack targets in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. The capability to strike a target over 2,500 kilometers from Yemen demonstrates that the Houthis can launch drones targeting areas as far north as Cyprus—ranging all of Israel—and as far south as the southeastern coast of Tanzania, ranging large portions of the Indian Ocean. The Houthis have expressed an intent to expand their targeting into both areas.[3]

This Houthi attack is part of a broader Axis of Resistance reconnaissance-in-force effort against Israeli air defenses, which aims to better understand the strengths and weakness of Israeli air defense, as CTP-ISW has previously assessed. These lessons can be shared across the Axis, given that the Houthis and Axis of Resistance almost certainly communicate about their attacks and lessons learned. The Houthi supreme leader, Abdulmalik al Houthi, noted that the Houthis and Iraqi groups continue to coordinate, for example.[4]

US and Iraqi officials began talks on July 22 in Washington, DC, to continue negotiations over the end of the International Coalition’s mission in Iraq.[5] Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Major General Pat Ryder announced that the Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue met at the Pentagon to discuss the future of the International Coalition’s mission in Iraq and security cooperation between the United States and Iraq.[6] Participants from US CENTCOM, the Joint Staff, the State Department, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and the National Security Council attended as part of the US delegation, and the Iraqi delegation included representatives from the Iraqi Defense Ministry, Iraqi Security Forces, Counterterrorism Service, and Kurdish Peshmerga.[7] Ryder said that Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue will consider recommendations from the US-Iraq Higher Military Commission (HMC).[8] The Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue will meet again on July 23.[9] The United States and Iraq have been evaluating a timeline to withdraw International Coalition forces from Iraq following the January 2024 Iranian-backed Iraqi militia attack that killed three US servicemembers.[10]

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) 98th Division launched a new clearing operation in Khan Younis on July 22 to disrupt Hamas’ efforts to reconstitute in the governorate.[11] The IDF issued evacuation orders for civilians in Khan Younis, including eastern portions of the humanitarian zone in Khan Younis, on July 22.[12] Approximately 400,000 civilians reside in the areas identified under the new evacuation orders.[13] The IDF reported that Hamas fighters had infiltrated into previously cleared areas of Khan Younis and had re-established militia infrastructure in the area.[14] The IDF reported that Hamas has also used areas within the humanitarian zone to launch indirect fire attacks into Israel.[15]

The 214th Artillery Brigade (98th Division) and the IDF Air Force struck over 30 militia infrastructure targets in Khan Younis on July 22.[16] The IDF Air Force struck Hamas military depots, observation posts, underground shafts, and

buildings used by Hamas.[17] An Israeli military correspondent and local Palestinian reports claimed Israeli armored vehicles advanced through Abasan al Jadida and reached Bani Suhaila.[18] A Palestinian journalist reported “violent clashes” and artillery shelling in Bani Suhaila and unspecified areas of eastern Khan Younis.[19] Hamas targeted Israeli tanks advancing in Bani Suhail with rocket-propelled grenades (RPG) and explosively formed penetrators (EFPs).[20]

The IDF reported that Hamas fighters planned to take control of a humanitarian aid route in Rafah. An Israeli military correspondent posted IDF footage on July 22 that showed a group of Palestinian fighters hijacking a humanitarian aid truck along a designated aid route in Rafah.[21] The military correspondent reported that the IDF Nahal Brigade (162nd Division) raided a school adjacent to the humanitarian corridor in the past week and identified several fighters planning to hijack vehicles and “take control” of the aid convoy route.[22] The Nahal Brigade directed drone strikes against the fighters and identified a tunnel shaft in the school’s courtyard.[23] CTP-ISW cannot verify the location of the video or the school. This incident likely took place along an IDF-designated aid corridor that stretches from the Kerem Shalom crossing to southern Khan Younis, however. The IDF established the corridor in June 2024 to facilitate aid convoys’ safe travel through the Gaza Strip.[24] The United Nations and international aid groups have alleged that the IDF has not protected its designated aid route, creating a corridor that is unstable and vulnerable to frequent hijacking by armed groups.[25] The IDF acknowledged that Hamas fighters often attempt to stop and hijack aid convoys along the designated route.[26]

Key Takeaways:

- **Yemen:** The modified Houthi drone that struck Tel Aviv flew at least 2,600 kilometers, demonstrating how Iran and its partners have expanded the geographic range of their weapon systems to target the eastern Mediterranean and other areas.
- **Iraq:** US and Iraqi officials began talks on July 22 in Washington, DC, to continue negotiations over the end of the International Coalition’s mission in Iraq.
- **Gaza Strip:** The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) 98th Division launched a new clearing operation in Khan Younis on July 22 to disrupt Hamas’ efforts to reconstitute in the governorate.
- **West Bank:** The Shin Bet said on July 22 that it uncovered a plot by Palestinian fighters to kidnap IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians in the West Bank.
- **Lebanon:** A Wall Street Journal report on July 22 highlighted challenges that Israel faces intercepting drones targeting northern Israel.

Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of July 22, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Bravenman, Siddhant Kishore and Katherine Wells
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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 3rd “Alexandroni” Infantry Brigade (Res.) (99th Division) continued clearing operations along the Netzarim Corridor on July 22.[27] Three Palestinian militias conducted separate rocket attacks targeting Israeli forces along the Netzarim Corridor.[28]

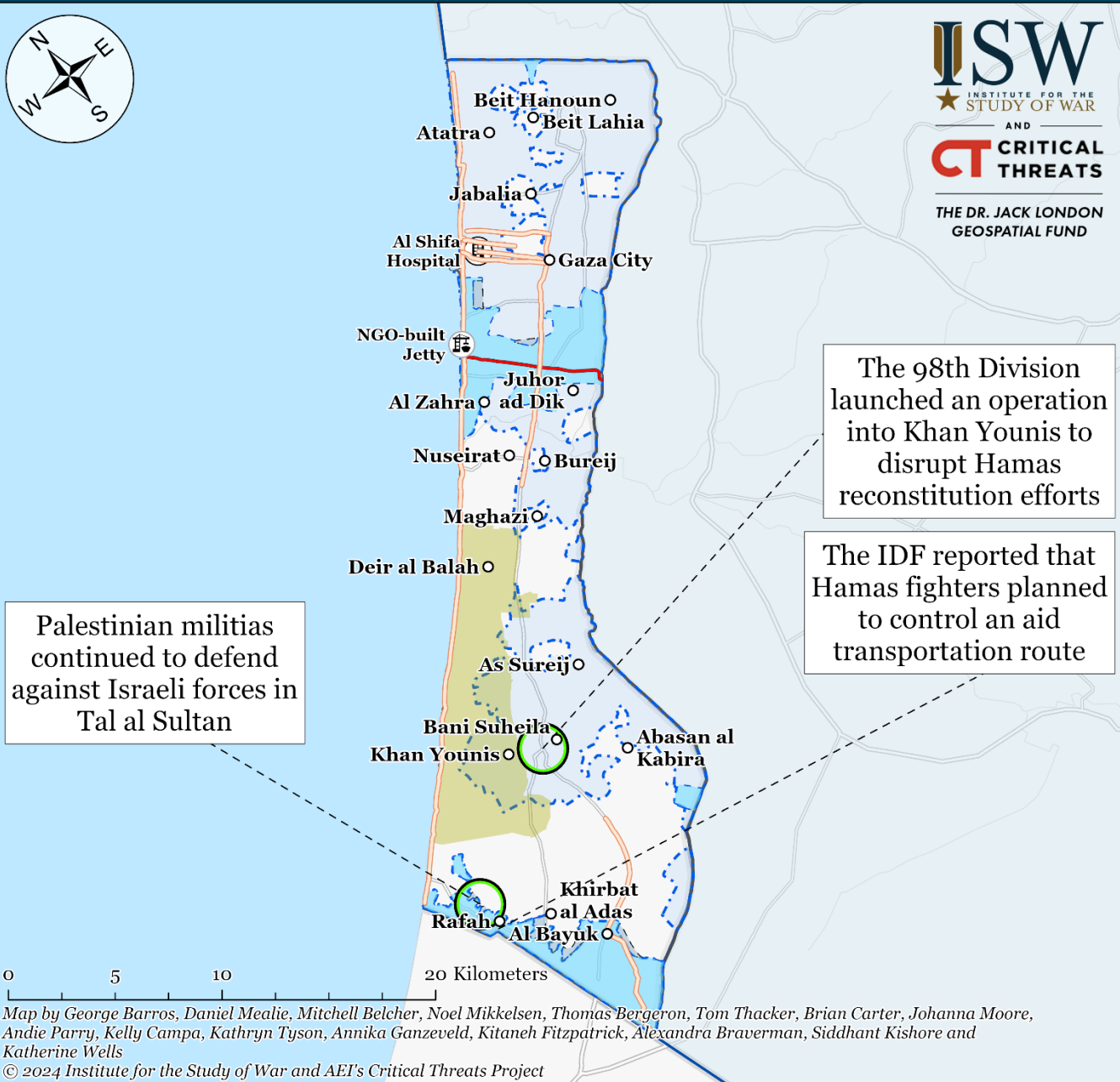
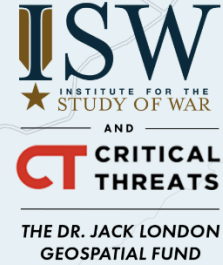
Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine mortared Israeli forces northeast of Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip.[29]

The 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah on July 22.[30] The IDF 401st Brigade engaged and killed Palestinian fighters in close quarters combat and directed IAF airstrikes against fighters in Tal al Sultan.[31] The IDF Givati Brigade also engaged and killed Palestinian fighters, including an armed cell.[32] Hamas fighters engaged Israeli forces in several complex attacks in al Furqan neighborhood in Tal al Sultan.[33] Hamas fighters detonated a pre-rigged tunnel that Israeli forces and engineers were attempting to clear.[34] Hamas fighters also targeted Israeli armor with an EFP and RPGs.[35]

The Israeli Air Force struck approximately 35 militia targets in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours.[36] The IDF targeted military buildings, Palestinian fighters, and a rocket launcher in Khan Younis aimed at southern Israel.[37] A Palestinian journalist reported on July 22 that the IDF issued evacuation orders to residents on a residential block of Jaffa Street in Deir al Balah.[38] The IAF conducted airstrikes on the block shortly after.[39]

Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

As of July 22, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Palestinian militias continued to defend against Israeli forces in Tal al Sultan

The 98th Division launched an operation into Khan Younis to disrupt Hamas reconstitution efforts

The IDF reported that Hamas fighters planned to control an aid transportation route

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Siddhant Kishore and Katherine Wells
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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			

* 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 July 22, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



- Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*
- Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances
- Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
- Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
- Newly Announced Evacuation Zones as of July 22
- IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza
- Netzarim Corridor

0 2.5 5 10 Kilometers

Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Tom Thacker, Brian Carter, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Garzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, Alexandra Braverman, Siddhant Kishore and Katherine Wells
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Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and National Resistance Brigades fighters mortared three Israeli military sites in southern Israel on July 22.[40] Israeli military correspondents reported that unspecified fighters also launched at least two rockets into southern Israel from the Khan Younis area.[41] The rockets set off warnings in Nir Izhak and Sufa but landed in open areas.[42]



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 have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least four locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on July 21.^[43] The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms and detonated improvised explosive devices (IED) in Tulkarm.^[44]

The Shin Bet said on July 22 that it uncovered a plot by Palestinian fighters to kidnap IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians in the West Bank.^[45] Israeli forces detained two individuals in the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp near Jericho who the IDF suspected of planning the attack.^[46] The IDF reported that the two fighters recruited other unspecified individuals to support the planned kidnapping. The fighters dug a hole underground near one fighter's house where they planned to hide the hostages. The IDF confiscated small arms and military gear during the arrests.^[47]

The IDF said on July 21 that it thwarted a Hamas shooting in the West Bank.^[48] The IDF detained five individuals near Ramallah suspected of planning the attack. The IDF also confiscated weapons and funds.^[49] The IDF said that a Hamas cell in Turkey provided the Hamas fighters with instructions and funds.

Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of July 22, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

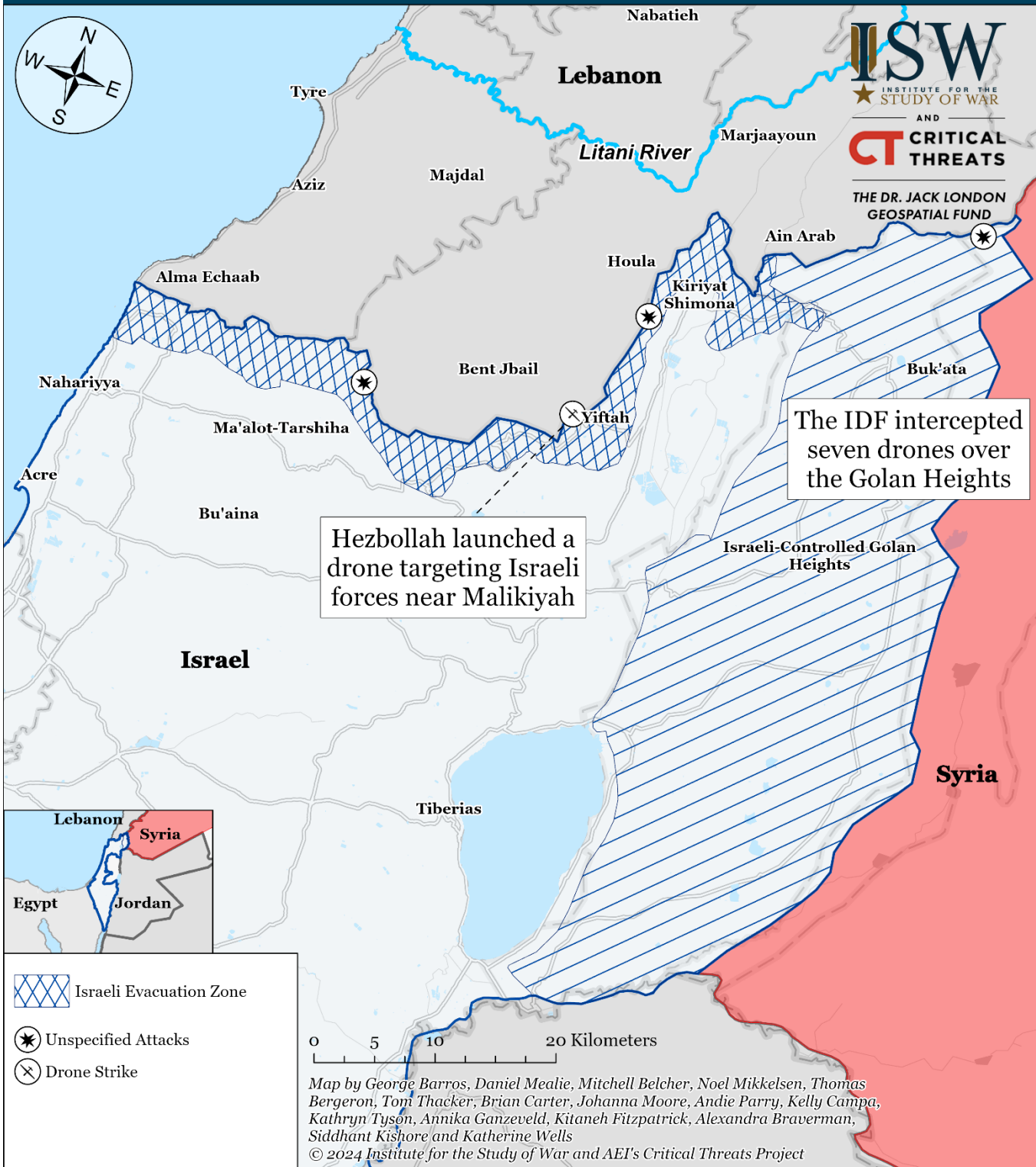
- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah conducted at least four attacks into northern Israel on July 22.^[50] The IDF intercepted seven drones over the Golan Heights on July 22.^[51] Hezbollah said that it launched a drone targeting Israeli forces at a position near Malikiyah in northern Israel on July 22.^[52] The IDF intercepted a drone over the Upper Galilee area, likely referring to the Hezbollah drone attack on near Malikiyah.^[53]

A Wall Street Journal report on July 22 highlighted challenges that Israel faces intercepting drones targeting northern Israel.^[54] The deputy security officer of Kiryat Shmona told the Wall Street Journal that drone attacks are the “main threat” that the IDF is facing in northern Israel. The Wall Street Journal reported that Israel’s Iron Dome has struggled to intercept drones and that the IDF has relied on fighter jets to destroy the drones instead, which forces pilots to fly low in mountainous terrain and exposes them to Hezbollah’s anti-aircraft systems. It is unsurprising that the drone threat forces the IDF Air Force to use fighter aircraft to intercept the drones. Saudi Arabia frequently employed aircraft to intercept Houthi drones during the Saudi involvement in Yemen.^[55] Israeli soldiers are instructed to use rifles to destroy the drones when other interception methods fail, according to anonymous Israeli military and defense officials. Israeli officials have discussed in recent months an offensive into Lebanon amid an increase in Hezbollah drone attacks targeting northern Israel.^[56] Hezbollah doubled its drone attacks targeting northern Israel between April and May 2024.^[57]

Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of July 22, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The spokesperson for the Asaib Ahl al Haq’s parliamentary bloc criticized the international community for ignoring US, Turkish, and Israeli violations against Iraqi sovereignty on July 21.^[58] The spokesperson, Mohammad al Baldawi, blamed “American interference” for Turkey’s recent operation in northern Iraq and claimed that the International Coalition should be responsible for patrolling Iraq’s borders.^[59] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias, including Asaib Ahl al Haq, have demanded that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al Sudani set a timeline for the withdrawal of all US forces from Iraq.^[60] US military personnel are currently in Iraq at the invitation of the Iraqi government under Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) in an advisory role to support Iraqi security forces conducting counter-ISIS operations.^[61]

Iran and Sudan restored diplomatic relations on July 21 after an eight-year hiatus.^[62] The new Iranian Ambassador to Sudan, Hassan Shah Hosseini, presented his credentials to Sudan’s de-facto leader Sudanese Army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan in Port Sudan on July 21.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) intercepted the *Betelgeuse*, a Togo-flagged, UAE-managed products tanker, on July 21.^[63] The tanker was carrying 1,500 tons of marine gas oil according to British maritime security firm Ambrey.^[64] Iranian media claimed that the IRGC seized a 74-meter-long oil tanker smuggling approximately 1,400 tons of diesel fuel and its 12 Indian and Sri Lankan crew members.^[65] The incident occurred approximately 61 nautical miles southwest of Iran’s Bushehr port.^[66] Ambrey assessed that the IRGC likely intercepted the tanker as part of a counter-smuggling operation.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) intercepted four Houthi naval attack drones in the Red Sea on July 21.^[67]



[1] https://x.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1814895997358645295 ; <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1815023848313549042>

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[3] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-march-20-2024>; <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-may-3-2024>

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[5] <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3845967/us-iraqi-officials-hold-pentagon-meeting-to-discuss-security-cooperation>; <https://x.com/USAmbIraq/status/1815291590610501836>

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[7] <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3845967/us-iraqi-officials-hold-pentagon-meeting-to-discuss-security-cooperation/>

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- [13] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-orders-evacuation-part-gazas-khan-younis-after-renewed-rocket-fire-2024-07-22/>
- [14] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1815428708175671787>
- [15] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/12038>
- [16] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1815428711409504420>
- [17] <https://x.com/idfonline/status/1815428714567475304>
- [18] <https://t.me/moriahdoron/12063> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/272648> ;
- [19] <https://t.me/hamza20300/272655> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/272703> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/272642> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/272623> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-orders-evacuation-part-gazas-khan-younis-after-renewed-rocket-fire-2024-07-22/> ; <https://t.me/hamza20300/272636> ; <https://t.me/moriahdoron/12062>
- [20] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/2742>
- [21] <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1815393952045961501>
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- [29] <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/2731>; <https://t.me/qassam1brigades/2735>
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