

# Iran Update



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**June 25, 2024, 2:00 pm 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. Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Iran Update.*

*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.*

**Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei expressed foreign and nuclear policy views on June 25 that closely align with ultraconservative hardline presidential candidate Saeed Jalili's views, possibly indicating that Khamenei endorses Jalili in the upcoming election. Khamenei's views also signal the supreme leader's opposition to reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian.** Khamenei expressed strong opposition to mending ties with the United States during a speech on June 25, which mirrored similar statements made by Jalili in a foreign policy debate on June 24.[1] Jalili defended Iran's “nuclear rights” and criticized the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) during the debate.[2] Khamenei also indirectly criticized Pezeshkian, stating that politicians who are “attached to America” cannot be “good managers.”[3] Pezeshkian expressed support for improving relations and resuming nuclear negotiations with the West during the June 24 foreign policy debate.[4] Pezeshkian stated that “no country in history has been able to achieve prosperity and

growth by closing its borders and wanting to work alone.”[5] Khamenei’s criticisms of Pezeshkian may also stem from the fact that Pezeshkian has closely coordinated his presidential campaign with Mohammad Javad Zarif, who served as Iran’s foreign affairs minister under former moderate President Hassan Rouhani. Pragmatic hardliner Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf also expressed support for nuclear negotiations during the June 24 debate, which is consistent with recent reports from Iranian opposition outlets that advisers to Ghalibaf have approached Western diplomats in recent weeks.[6]

**Khamenei’s possible endorsement of Jalili would diverge from some Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) factions’ support for pragmatic hardline candidate Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.** The Telegraph reported in early June 2024 that some senior IRGC commanders, including former IRGC Air Force Commander Hossein Dehghan, are supporting Ghalibaf.[7] An IRGC member told the Telegraph that some IRGC factions are trying to prevent Jalili from winning the election because they regard him as “too hardline.”[8] IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Amir Ali Haji Zadeh separately stated on June 24 that Iran’s next president must have “strong executive management” experience.[9] Some Western commentators and analysts have interpreted Haji Zadeh’s statement as an implicit endorsement of Ghalibaf given Ghalibaf’s experience serving as Iran’s parliament speaker since 2020.[10] Ghalibaf has decades-old ties to many senior IRGC officers dating back to their time fighting in the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.[11] Ghalibaf is also part of a close circle of current and former IRGC officers who have repeatedly come together in times of domestic crisis to interfere in Iranian domestic politics.[12]

**Khamenei’s explicit opposition to engagement with the West also challenges recent Western reports that incorrectly suggested that Iran is seeking to renew nuclear talks with the West.** Iranian Permanent Representative to the UN Saeed Iravani stated that the JCPOA is “not perfect” but is the “best option” during a UN Security Council meeting on June 24.[13] Some Western media outlets incorrectly interpreted Iravani’s statement as signaling the Iranian regime’s readiness to renew nuclear negotiations. Iravani’s statements were instead consistent with repeated statements by regime officials blaming the current state of the JCPOA on the United States and E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany). Iravani accused the United States of “unilaterally and illegally” withdrawing from the JCPOA and accused the E3 of “failing” to fulfill their JCPOA obligations.[14] Jalili additionally accused the United States and the E3 of lacking “sincerity and determination” to revive the JCPOA.

**Israel assesses that it will complete the intense phase of ground operation in the Gaza Strip within a few days.**[15] Israeli Army Radio reported on June 25 that the IDF will fully transition to conducting raids after it declares that it has defeated Hamas’ Rafah Brigade.[16] The IDF raids will require two divisions in the Gaza Strip.[17] The IDF will remain along the Philadelphi Corridor to locate and destroy smuggling tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, a process that will take several more months to complete.[18] The IDF similarly transitioned to a raid system in the northern Gaza Strip in early January 2024.[19]

Hamas will very likely exploit the Israeli raid system to reconstitute its combat units and reassert its governing authority across the Gaza Strip. Hamas has rebuilt itself elsewhere in the Gaza Strip after Israeli drawdowns elsewhere in Strip, which began in January 2024. The IDF has subsequently re-cleared the areas that it withdrew from and has found reconstituted Hamas forces there.[20] Hamas exploits these Israeli raids—which by definition include a planned retrograde—to subsequently reorganize and regenerate themselves. The IDF currently assesses that it will soon destroy Hamas’

Rafah Brigade.[21] Thousands of Palestinian fighters fled the Rafah area prior to the Israeli operation, however.[22] This cadre of surviving Hamas fighters assigned to the Rafah Brigade could provide Hamas commanders in Rafah or elsewhere sufficient human resources to reorganize themselves into composite, fully combat effective units by combining assets from various degraded Hamas units.[23] Hamas commanders are also engaging in regenerative tasks, such as recruiting personnel and replenishing stockpiles of military equipment and weapons.[24] Hamas is capable of regrouping in the Gaza Strip in the absence of sustained military pressure and a viable alternative to its rule. Raids can temporarily disrupt but will not stop a reconstitution process.[25]

**Hamas is disrupting Israeli efforts to create nascent governing authorities that exclude Hamas' political wing. Hamas reportedly killed two clan leaders in the central and southern Gaza Strip as part of this effort.**[26] A Palestinian journalist reported on June 25 that members of the Hamas-controlled Interior Ministry's Internal Security Forces, which employs fighters from the Hamas military wing, killed the clan leaders.[27] The leaders were coordinating with Israel and forming "criminal armed groups," presumably to counter Hamas' control in the Gaza Strip.[28] Hamas has not claimed responsibility for the killings at the time of writing. Hamas similarly killed the head of a local clan in Gaza City in March 2024, after which the clans signed a letter refusing to coordinate with Israel.[29] Israel was working with the clan leader in an attempt to create a nascent governing authority.[30]

Hamas will likely continue to suppress Israeli-organized political alternatives. The lack of security for Palestinians involved in Israeli-organized alternatives to Hamas makes establishing a non-Hamas governing authority more difficult. Hamas has a long history of killing and suppressing dissidents and political alternatives, including members of local Gazan clans.[31] An attempt to use these clan leaders to form a nascent alternative to Hamas will necessitate the provision of security to protect the clan members from Hamas. The Israeli national security adviser said on June 25 that the IDF will replace Hamas in the northern Gaza Strip "in the coming days," suggesting confidence that an unspecified force will take over despite Hamas' continued presence.[32] Hamas responded to the national security adviser's statement, threatening that it would "cut off any hand" of Israel attempting to decide Gaza's political future.[33]

**Iranian-backed groups are continuing to recruit members and smuggle and manufacture weapons, likely to destabilize Jordan and facilitate Iranian efforts in the West Bank.** Jordanian police discovered and detonated two separate caches of unspecified explosives in east Amman on June 21 and June 24.[34] An initial explosion tipped police off to the first cache of explosives in Marka, a dense residential neighborhood.[35] Former Jordanian officials said the explosion may have been a failed attempt to manufacture more explosives.[36] Police discovered a second cache of explosives tied to the Marka suspects in a car repair shop in an industrial area of Abu Alanda, Amman, on June 24.[37] Jordanian police are still investigating the incidents and have not released the suspects' identities.[38] However, anonymous Jordanian security officials told Reuters the quantities of discovered explosives indicated that the incidents are "terror-related." [39]

These explosive caches and other security incidents in Jordan, including weapons smuggling, are part of a possible Iranian effort to destabilize Jordan and use it as a springboard to increase Iranian influence in the West Bank. The Jordanian security officials said that the Marka and Abu Alanda incidents are linked to Iranian efforts to recruit agents within Jordan to destabilize the Kingdom.[40] Jordanian territory offers multiple ground routes through which Iran could move military materiel into the West

Bank. Tehran has sought to develop its militia capabilities and infrastructure in the West Bank in recent years, but the Israel-Hamas war has highlighted Iranian shortcomings there.[41] Iran and Iranian-backed groups have shown a recently shown greater interest in developing networks in Jordan, including by threatening to equip thousands of “Islamic Resistance in Jordan” fighters with weapons.[42] This threat is likely aspirational at present, but Jordanian police disrupted an attempt by Iranian-backed militias in Syria to smuggle weapons to a Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood cell in late March 2024.[43] Both Jordanian and Israeli police have thwarted several attempts in recent months by Iran and its partners to conduct attacks within the kingdom or smuggle weapons into the West Bank.[44]

Iranian efforts to manufacture weapons, arm Jordanian agents, and undermine the Jordanian state are consistent with CTP-ISW's previous assessments that Iran is adopting a more confrontational approach towards Jordan in its regional strategy.[45] An expanding Axis of Resistance network in Jordan could destabilize a major Western partner in the region and facilitate Iranian efforts in the West Bank by providing a ground line of communication over which Iran could transport weapons and other capabilities to its allies in the West Bank. It is notable in this context that Iranian-linked actors were reportedly manufacturing weapons in Jordan. Weapons smugglers—Iranian-linked and otherwise—continue to face significant difficulty in moving weapons and other materiel into the West Bank.[46] These smugglers will continue to attempt to move weapons into the West Bank, however, and a destabilized Jordan could facilitate an Iranian effort to accelerate this process.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Iran:** Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei expressed foreign and nuclear policy views on June 25 that closely align with ultraconservative hardline presidential candidate Saeed Jalili's views, possibly indicating that Khamenei endorses Jalili in the upcoming election. Khamenei's views also signal the supreme leader's opposition to reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian.
- **Gaza Strip:** Israel assesses that it will complete the intense phase of ground operation in the Gaza Strip within a few days. Hamas will very likely exploit the Israeli raid system to reconstitute its combat units and reassert its governing authority across the Gaza Strip.
- Hamas is disrupting Israeli efforts to create nascent governing authorities that exclude Hamas' political wing. Hamas reportedly killed two clan leaders in the central and southern Gaza Strip as part of this effort
- **Jordan:** Iranian-backed groups are continuing to recruit members and smuggle and manufacture weapons, likely to destabilize Jordan and facilitate Iranian efforts in the West Bank.
- **West Bank:** Hamas and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades infiltrated Israeli territory near Tulkarm and fired at IDF soldiers.
- **Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights:** US presidential envoy Amos Hochstein warned Hezbollah that the group cannot rely on the United States to prevent Israel from conducting an attack into Lebanon.
- **Iraq:** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a drone attack targeting an unspecified “military target” in Haifa, Israel.

# Key Takeaways in the Israel-Hamas War

As of June 25, 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 reported that its June 22 airstrikes in al Shati Camp and Tuffah neighborhoods, Gaza City, targeted Hamas fighters who participated in the October 7, 2023, attack.[47]** The IDF said the fighters were also involved in holding hostages.[48] Israeli Army Radio reported following the strike that the IDF was targeting a Hamas leader that it assesses as the fourth most important senior Hamas military commander, Raad Saad.[49] The outlet said that Saad evaded

Israeli targeting at al Shifa Hospital when the IDF returned to al Shifa in March 2024 to clear Hamas forces who had regrouped there.[50] The IDF reporting suggests that the airstrikes did not kill Saad.

**The IDF Air Force struck a university in Sabra, Gaza City on June 24 that Hamas fighters were operating from.**[51] The IDF said Hamas fighters used the university building to launch anti-tank missiles, observe Israeli forces, and plan other attacks.[52] The IDF said it carried out “many steps” to mitigate the potential harm of civilians.[53] The strike killed several of Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Ismail Haniyeh’s family members.[54] Haniyeh condemned the attack.[55] Palestinian sources reported that the strike killed 11 people including women and children.[56]

**The IDF 162nd Division continued clearing operations in Rafah.** Israeli Army Radio reported that the IDF is still fighting Hamas’ battalions in Shaboura and Tal al Sultan, where Israeli forces are encountering significant resistance during above-ground engagements.[57] An IDF commander in Rafah recently said that Hamas fighters in the area are primarily hiding below ground.[58] The IDF Nahal Brigade located many weapons during recent operations in Rafah, as well as a tunnel entrance that Palestinian fighters had rigged to explode.[59] Palestinian militias engaged Israeli forces in several sectors of Rafah.[60] Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters detonated an improvised explosive device targeting Israeli vehicles and a supply line in Tal Zorob, southwest of Rafah.[61] The fighters simultaneously mortared Israeli forces in the area.[62]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip

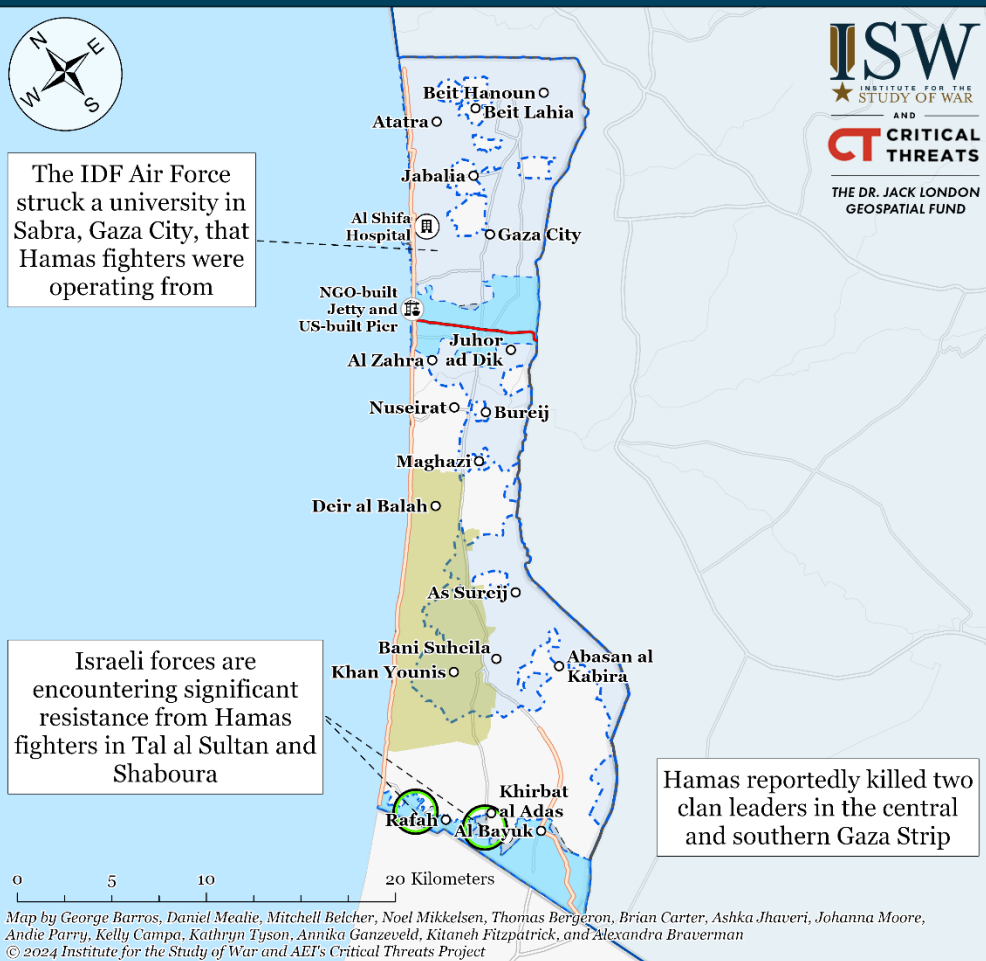
As of June 25, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



The IDF Air Force struck a university in Sabra, Gaza City, that Hamas fighters were operating from

Israeli forces are encountering significant resistance from Hamas fighters in Tal al Sultan and Shaboura

Hamas reportedly killed two clan leaders in the central and southern Gaza Strip



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Kelly Campa, Kathryn Tyson, Annika Ganzeveld, Kitaneh Fitzpatrick, and Alexandra Braverman  
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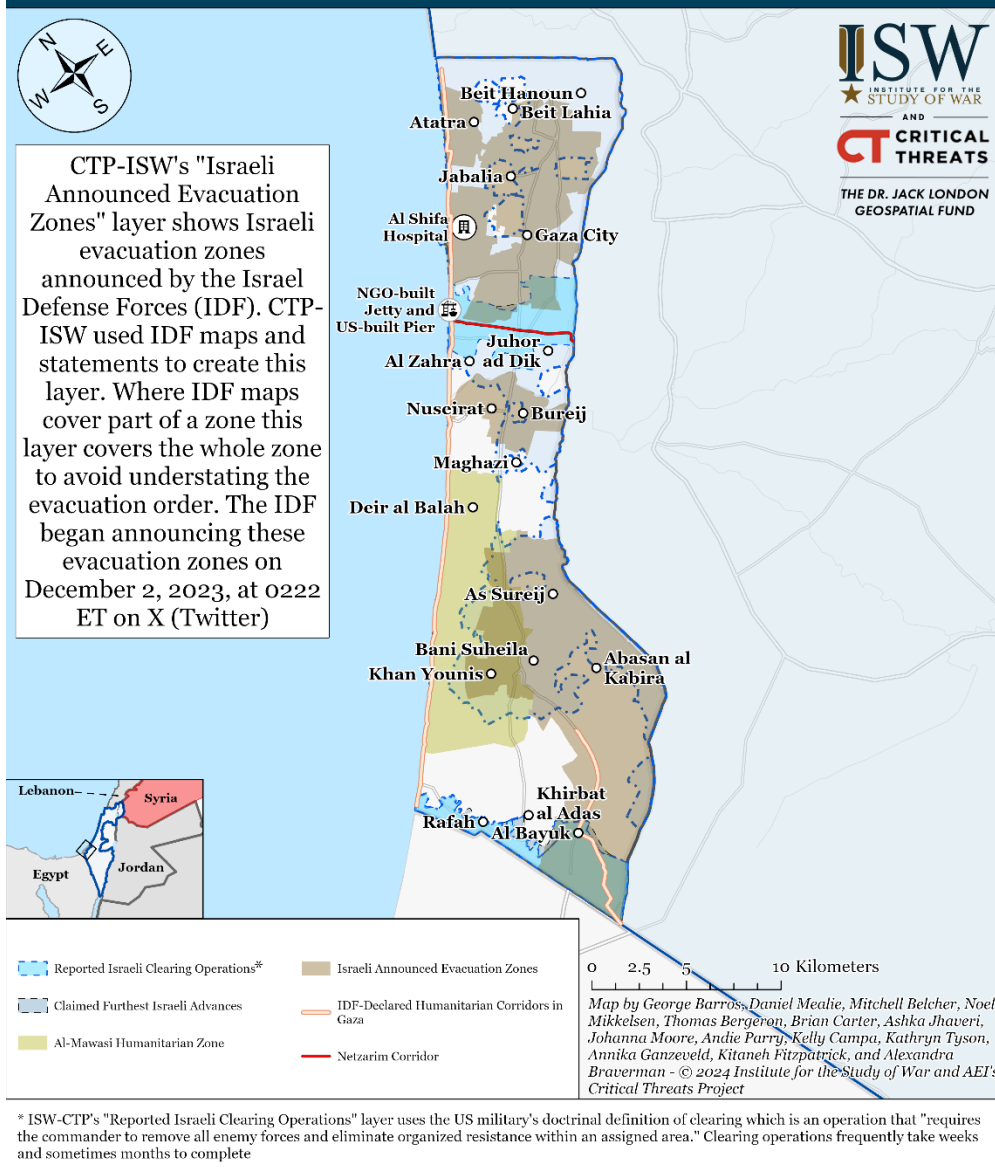
Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridors in Gaza	Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	Netzarim Corridor	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone
Assessed Furthest Extent of Israeli Clearing Operations		



\* 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 June 25, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



**The Israeli Supreme Court ruled on June 25 that the IDF must begin drafting ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students for compulsory service.[63]** The IDF is expecting approximately 3,000 ultra-orthodox recruits and prepared to open a “designated recruit base” for the ultra-orthodox recruits along with other adjustments.[64] The IDF expects the number of ultra-orthodox recruits to increase exponentially in coming years.

**Hamas leaders reiterated the groups’ maximalist demands for ceasefire negotiations.** Hamas Political Bureau Chairman Haniyeh stated that any hostage deal that does not also contain a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities “is not an agreement.”[65] Hamas Deputy Chairman in the Gaza Strip Khalil al Hayya said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not want to



reach a ceasefire.[66] Hayya emphasized that Hamas is ready to enter “real and serious negotiations” if Israel adheres to the US-backed proposal.[67] Hamas issued new demands in response to the latest US-backed Israeli ceasefire proposal, which has since stalled negotiations.[68] Hayya was responding to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said that he will only accept a partial ceasefire deal under which Israel can continue the war after a pause.[69]

**Senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov in Moscow on June 24.**[70] Marzouk told Russian media that Hamas will release two Russian citizens as part of the first hostage exchange with Israel during a potential ceasefire in a gesture to Russia.[71] Hamas released a hostage with Russian citizenship ahead of the first hostage-for-prisoner exchange in November 2023.[72] Marzouk said in late October 2023 that Russia sent it a list of hostages with dual citizenship and that Hamas would “process it carefully.”[73]

**Palestinian militias did not conduct any indirect fire attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel on June 25.** The IDF Air Force struck an area from which Palestinian fighters recently fired into southern Israel.[74]

## **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 three locations in the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on June 24.**[75] Israeli forces detained 24 wanted individuals in the West Bank during overnight raids.[76] Israeli forces detained 14 Palestinians, seized various weapons, and destroyed explosives in the Balata refugee camp, Nablus.[77]

Hamas and the Al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades claimed a possible infiltration into Israeli territory from the northern West Bank on June 24. The fighters infiltrated Israeli territory from Shweikah and al Jarushiyya in the West Bank and shot at a car carrying IDF soldiers.[78] The IDF reported that unspecified Palestinian fighters hit a military vehicle near Tulkarm with small arms fire without suggesting that the attack occurred in Israel.[79] Unarmed Palestinians have previously attempted to cross the Israel-West Bank border in this area, and Palestinian fighters have also attacked Israeli civilian and military targets in this area. The al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades Special Unit shot at Bat Hefer on May 31 shortly after 17 Palestinians attempted to cross into Israeli territory near the same area.[80] CTP-ISW is considering whether these reports of unarmed border crossings and Palestinian militia activity in the same vicinity are related.

# Significant Activity in the West Bank

As of June 25, 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 has conducted at least six attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on June 24.[81]** Hezbollah targeted the IDF 91st Division Headquarters in Nahal Gershom with a "squadron" of one-way attack drones on June 25.[82] Israeli air defenses intercepted two Hezbollah one-way attack drones near the base.[83]

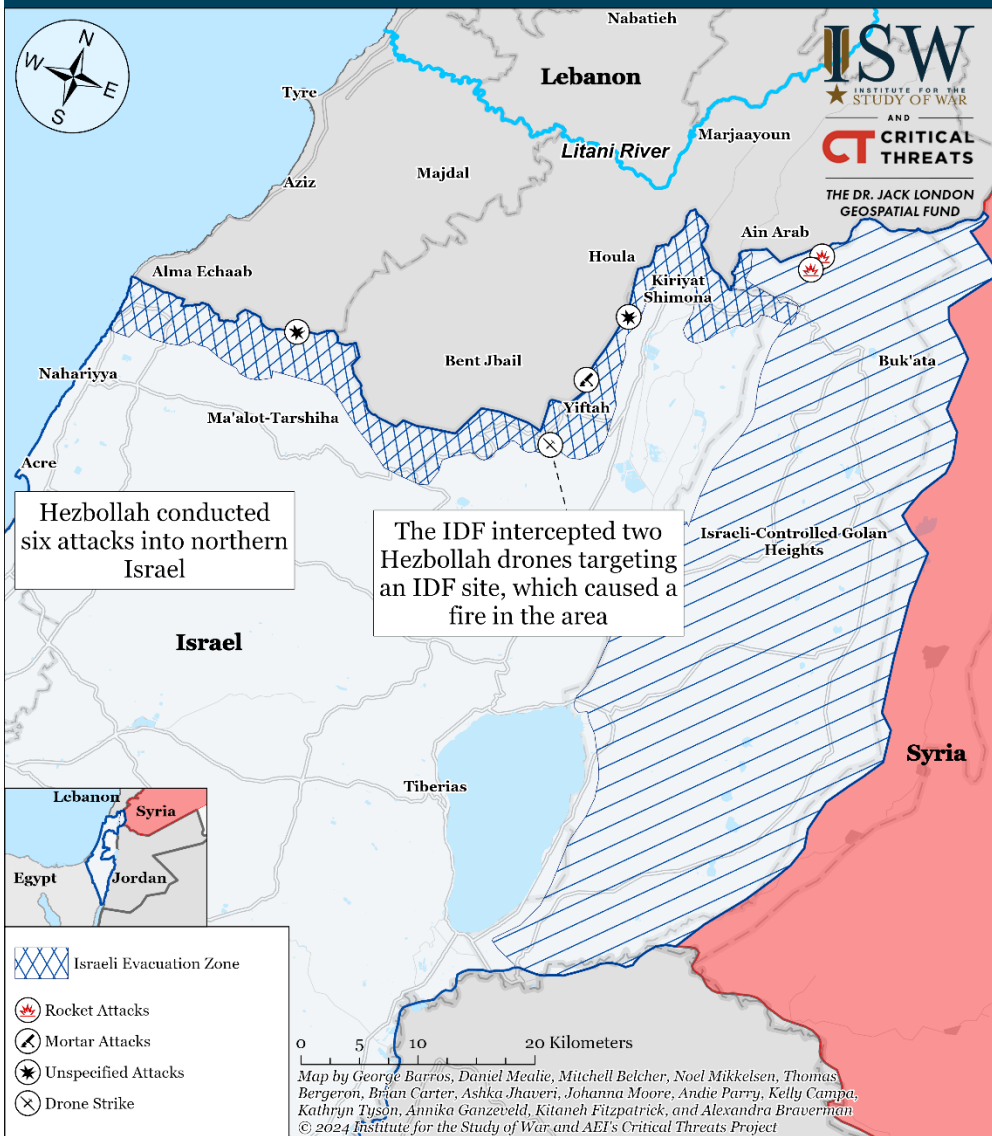
**IDF Air Force Commander Major General Tomer Bar and other senior Air Force commanders met with Northern Command commanders to discuss defending towns along Israel’s northern border and preparing for a possible operation in Lebanon.[84]**

**US Presidential Envoy Amos Hochstein warned Hezbollah that the group cannot rely on the United States to prevent Israel from invading Lebanon if Hezbollah continues cross-border attacks.[85]** Hochstein asked Lebanese Parliamentary Speaker and Amal Movement member Nabih Berri to pass this message to Hezbollah during his trip to Beirut, according to unspecified US, Israeli, and Western diplomats. Hezbollah responded to the warning, saying that it is confident it can deal a “significant” blow against Israel if Israel invades Lebanon, according to an unidentified Western diplomat.

**The leader of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada warned on June 24 that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—would directly participate in a war between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah.[86]** Abu Ala al Walai claimed that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq currently conducts attacks targeting Israel from a distance of over 800 kilometers, but that this group would fight Israel “from a distance of zero [kilometers]” if Israel launches a major offensive into Lebanon.[87] Walai’s statement follows an Associated Press report on June 24 in which Iranian-backed Iraqi and Lebanese officials claimed that thousands of Iranian-backed fighters would join Lebanese Hezbollah if war erupted between Israel and Lebanon.[88] Two Iraqi officials said that some Iraqi advisers are already in Lebanon to support Hezbollah.[89]

# Attacks into Northern Israel from Lebanon

As of June 25, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET



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

## Iran and Axis of Resistance

**The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—claimed a drone attack targeting an unspecified “military target” in Haifa, Israel, on June 24.[90]** Israeli officials and media have not commented on the attack at the time of this writing.

**Russian Ambassador to Iraq Elbrus Kutrashv is continuing to meet with senior Iraqi military and political officials.** Iranian-backed Badr Organization Secretary General Hadi al Ameri discussed Russo-Iraqi relations and the Israel-Hamas War during a meeting with Kutrashv in Baghdad on June 25.[91] Kutrashv separately met with former Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi on June 23.[92] Kutrashv has met with numerous senior Iraqi political and military officials, including

Popular Mobilization Commission Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh, since January 2024.[93] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Russia may be setting conditions to supplant the United States as a security partner in Iraq in anticipation of the United States possibly reducing its military presence there.[94]

**Hamas denied on June 25 that it plans to relocate its political leadership to Baghdad.[95]** Emirati media reported on June 24 that the Iraqi federal government approved in May 2024 a Hamas plan to relocate to Baghdad.[96] The report claimed that Hamas plans to relocate its political leadership to Iraq due to increasing pressure from Western countries and Qatar on Hamas to show greater flexibility in ceasefire negotiations with Israel.

**Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani has allocated approximately 2.3 billion US dollars of the 2024 Iraqi federal budget to developing and modernizing the Iraqi armed forces' armament.[97]** Iraqi media reported on June 25 that Iraq seeks to acquire combat aircraft and air defense and radar systems from Russia, France, and unspecified Asian countries.[98] Iraqi media specified that the Iraqi federal government is considering purchasing Rafale fighter aircraft from the French defense and aerospace company Thales.[99]

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