

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

The Lebanese Council of Ministers took an early step on August 5 to attempt to disarm Hezbollah. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam announced on August 5 that the Lebanese Council of Ministers tasked the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) with creating a plan to establish a state monopoly on arms across Lebanon by the end of 2025.[1] The Lebanese Council of Ministers is Lebanon's executive body that sets and implements Lebanese government policy.[2] This plan would require Hezbollah to disarm. The LAF will submit the plan to the Council of Ministers by August 31 for the council to discuss and approve.[3] It is unclear whether this review period will provide opportunities for Hezbollah and its allies to push back against and postpone the approval of the proposed plan. Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajai posted on X on August 6 that the Lebanese government's decision to establish a state monopoly on arms is final and that there will be "no turning back." [4]

Hezbollah released a statement on August 6 that condemned the council's decision and deemed it a "major sin." [5] Hezbollah asserted that the decision is "a clear violation" of the Lebanese government's February 2025 ministerial statement, which states that the Lebanese government is committed to the 1989 Taif Agreement and adopting a domestic national defense strategy.[6] Hezbollah has consistently called for the implementation of the 1989 Taif Agreement, which calls for the disarmament of all Lebanese militias except Hezbollah.[7] Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem has repeatedly called on the Lebanese government and Hezbollah to coordinate a national defense strategy.[8] Hezbollah noted in its August 6 statement that it is open to dialogue and is prepared to discuss a strategy with the government, but not until Israel concludes its operations in Lebanon.[9] The Amal Movement, which is a close ally of Hezbollah, released a similar statement on August 5 condemning the council's decision.[10]

Hezbollah's inability to delay or veto the council's decision reflects Hezbollah's relative loss of political leverage within the Lebanese government. Several Hezbollah and allied Amal Movement ministers symbolically walked out of the council session on August 5, but neither group was able to prevent the council from tasking the LAF to establish a state monopoly on arms.[11] The council was rarely able to pass legislation without Hezbollah's approval between 2008 and 2019, given that Hezbollah held enough seats to have de facto veto power.[12] Hezbollah and the Amal Movement currently only hold five seats in the Council of Ministers, which is insufficient to veto a council decision.[13] Hezbollah has recently struggled to maintain its support base in the Lebanese government and Lebanese society, which has likely contributed to its waning political leverage. Notable Hezbollah allies have recently shifted their positions and expressed support for the state's monopoly on arms.[14]

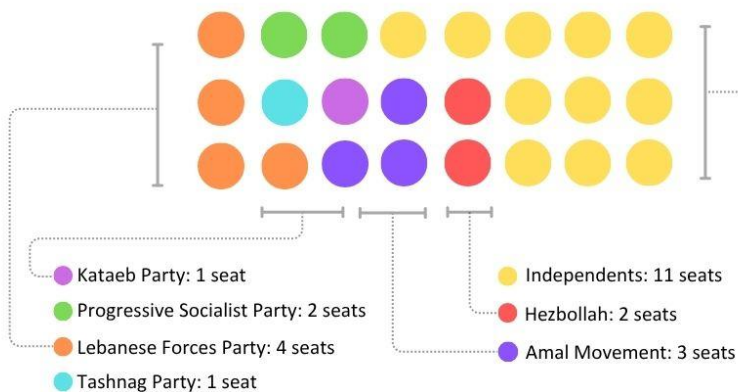
Lebanese media reported on July 28 that Lebanese Parliament Speaker and long-time Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri is “in agreement” with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on the state’s “approach toward the weapons file.”[15] The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and the Marada Movement, which are two Lebanese political parties that have historically supported Hezbollah’s retention of weapons, have also publicly declared their support for the state’s monopoly on arms.[16]



The Lebanese Council of Ministers

The 24-seat Council of Ministers is Lebanon’s executive body that sets and implements Lebanese government policy. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam heads the council.

Prime Minister Nawaf Salam appointed the 11 independent ministers.



Note: This information is based on open-source reports.

The Positions of Lebanese Political Parties on the State's Monopoly on Arms



Note: This graphic represents political parties that have seats in the Council of Ministers. This information is based on open-source reports.

Hezbollah's recent political losses and declining political leverage are unlikely to prevent Hezbollah from attempting to block efforts by the state to disarm it, however. Hezbollah has long used its military capabilities and political influence within other state institutions to sway the Lebanese government's decision-making.[17] Hezbollah has continued to reject calls to disarm, which suggests that it will oppose and challenge any LAF plan to establish a state monopoly on arms.[18]

Iranian media outlet Nour News suggested on August 6 that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian instructed newly appointed Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Ali Larijani to adopt a comprehensive security approach to counter hybrid threats. Nour News, which is affiliated with former SNSC Secretary and Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani, suggested on August 6 that Pezeshkian instructed Larijani to "monitor and prioritize emerging and technological threats" and "redefine security concepts with a people-based approach." Nour News stated that the "emerging" threats that Iran faces include cyberattacks, the spread of misinformation and disinformation exacerbated by artificial intelligence, international sanctions, climate-induced migration, and the "collapse of social capital and public trust." [19] These threats are consistent with the regime's understanding of hybrid warfare, which the regime defines as the use of all domains of power—including information, electronic, cultural, social, and military operations—by hostile actors to destabilize Iran. Nour News previously proposed on July 29 the creation of a "Strategic Command Center" to accelerate the Iranian regime's responses to hybrid threats in wartime.[20]

Pezeshkian's emphasis on a "people-based" security approach and Nour News's call for increasing social capital and public trust are consistent with recent calls by moderate and pragmatic regime officials to increase societal resilience and resolve disputes between the regime and the Iranian people. Shamkhani

called on the regime to resolve “disputes” with the Iranian population through a “process of understanding” in an interview on June 28.[21] Supreme Leader International Affairs Adviser Ali Akbar Velayati separately stated on July 21 that preserving national cohesion may require “revising social policies” and prioritizing public satisfaction.[22] Pezeshkian recently noted during a meeting with reformists on July 22 that the regime must engage in dialogue, not confrontation, to solve its problems.[23]

Some regime officials welcomed Larijani’s appointment as a necessary shift for Iranian national security. Velayati stated on X on August 5 that Larijani’s appointment demonstrates the regime’s “foresight” and described his appointment as an “effective step.”[24] Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi separately expressed his willingness to cooperate with Larijani.[25] Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh praised Larijani as a seasoned politician who will prove transformative in his new role.

Ultrahardliners criticized Larijani’s appointment as SNSC secretary, which likely reflects their broader dissatisfaction with the recent resurgence of moderates and pragmatists in the Iranian political sphere. Ultrahardline Paydari Front leader and Supreme Leader Representative to the SNSC, Saeed Jalili, criticized supporters of negotiations with the United States on August 6.[26] Larijani defended Iran’s agreement to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the United States against hardliners’ criticism while serving as parliament speaker in 2015.[27] Larijani also reportedly tried to contact Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei during the Israel-Iran War to advocate for “opening talks” with the United States.[28] A Larijani-affiliated outlet characterized Jalili’s criticism as resentment over his “diminished role” in the SNSC, highlighting the factional tensions surrounding Larijani’s appointment.[29] Jalili’s adviser, Amir Hossein Sabeti, also expressed pessimism about Larijani’s appointment on August 6, stating that Larijani’s approach to solving problems is “not fundamentally different” from those of moderate President Masoud Pezeshkian and former reformist President Hassan Rouhani.[30]

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appointed former Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian as the President’s Special Representative and Head of the Headquarters for National and Strategic Projects Development.[31] Pezeshkian stated that the new headquarters led by Ahmadian will help Iran accomplish its strategic goals and remove obstacles to domestic and foreign investors, including by mobilizing the Iranian public and Iranian intellectuals.[32] Pezeshkian said that Ahmadian’s role as the head of the “Progressive People’s Organization” will enable him to pursue these objectives. Ahmadian reportedly established the Progressive People’s Organization when he led the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Strategic Center between 2007 and 2023.[33] The organization was established to implement national projects outlined in the Iranian government’s seventh five-year development plan.[34]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Syria

August 6, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST

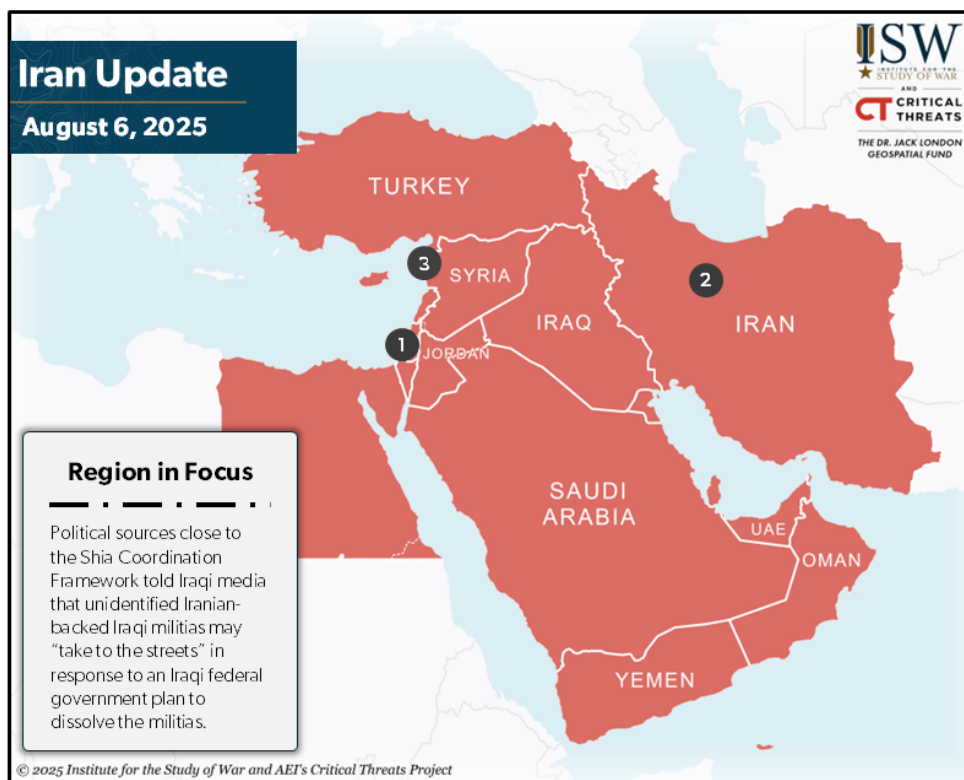


Assadist remnants likely attempted to conduct a false flag attack on a church in Tartous Province on August 6 to heighten fears in the local community and incite sectarian tensions in coastal Syria. The Syrian government announced on August 6 that the General Security Service (GSS) thwarted an attempt by two Assadist remnants to detonate a large improvised explosive device (IED) at the Mar Elias Maronite Church in al Khreibat, east of Tartous City.[35] The GSS also seized leaflets with threatening sectarian messages, a black flag commonly affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and weapons in the attackers' vehicle.[36]

The Assadist remnants likely intended to frame an attack on the church as an ISIS attack to incite sectarian strife. It is unlikely that the perpetrators were members of ISIS, despite the presence of an ISIS flag in their vehicle, given that the attackers were reportedly Alawite and ISIS has not historically sustained a presence in coastal Syria.[37] Unknown actors recently left threatening leaflets at a church

in Tartous on July 6 that claimed to be from ISIS-aligned Salafi-jihadi group Saraya Ansar al Sunnah.[38] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah denied placing the leaflets at the church, and local priests attributed the leaflets to Assadist remnants.[39]

The Assad regime often conducted false flag operations before it was overthrown in December 2024 to try to portray the Syrian opposition as jihadists.[40] The two regime remnants may have sought to employ a similar tactic to try to heighten fears in the local community, increase recruitment, and spread anti-government sentiment. Pro-Alawite insurgents, many of whom support the former regime, have participated in a low-level insurgency since the fall of the Assad regime to try to destabilize the Syrian transitional government.[41] The attempted attack resembles a recent ISIS-linked suicide bombing in a church in Damascus in June 2025 that instilled considerable fear in the Christian community.[42] Many prominent Syrian Christians criticized the transitional government's response to the attack.[43]



- 1 **BEIRUT.** The Lebanese Council of Ministers tasked the LAF with creating a plan to establish a state monopoly on arms across Lebanon by the end of 2025, which is an early step to attempt to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah's inability to delay or veto the council's decision reflects Hezbollah's relative loss of political leverage within the Lebanese government.
- 2 **TEHRAN.** Iranian media outlet Nour News suggested on August 6 that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian instructed newly appointed Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Ali Larijani to adopt a comprehensive security approach to counter hybrid threats.
- 3 **COASTAL SYRIA.** Assadist remnants likely intended to frame a planned attack on a church in Tartous Province on ISIS in order to heighten fears in the local community and incite sectarian tensions in coastal Syria. It is unlikely that the perpetrators were members of ISIS, given that the attackers were reportedly Alawite and that the Assad regime has historically used false flag operations to generate sectarian tensions.

Key Takeaways

- **Hezbollah Disarmament:** The Lebanese Council of Ministers tasked the LAF with creating a plan to establish a state monopoly on arms across Lebanon by the end of 2025, which is an early step to attempt to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah's inability to delay or veto the council's decision reflects Hezbollah's relative loss of political leverage within the Lebanese government.
- **Iranian Defense Apparatus:** Iranian media outlet Nour News suggested on August 6 that Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian instructed newly appointed Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Ali Larijani to adopt a comprehensive security approach to counter hybrid threats.

- **Security in Syria:** Assadist remnants likely intended to frame a planned attack on a church in Tartous Province on ISIS in order to heighten fears in the local community and incite sectarian tensions in coastal Syria. It is unlikely that the perpetrators were members of ISIS, given that the attackers were reportedly Alawite and that the Assad regime has historically used false flag operations to generate sectarian tensions.

Iran

Iran continues to contend with a severe water and energy crisis. Iran's Water Resources Management Company reported on August 3 that Iran's total water reserves have decreased by 26 percent in the last year.[44] The CEO of the Tehran Provincial Water and Wastewater Company said on August 4 that the dams that supply water to Tehran Province are only 12 percent full and urged Iranians to decrease their water consumption.[45] An official from Iran's Environmental Protection Organization told reporters on August 5 that Lake Urmia's water volume decreased from two billion cubic meters in August 2024 to half a billion cubic meters in August 2025, which marks Lake Urmia's lowest ever recorded water volume.[46] Lake Urmia, which is in northwestern Iran, was once the largest lake in the Middle East before it started to dry up.[47] The CEO of Iran's Electricity Network Management Company separately announced on August 4 that Iranians' electricity consumption has surpassed 77,000 megawatts.[48] Iran has a maximum production capacity of 62,000 megawatts.[49] The Iranian Energy Ministry has implemented daily electricity blackouts in cities across Iran for four hours to reduce energy consumption.[50] Iran closed public offices, government buildings, and banks in over 20 provinces on August 6 to reduce water and energy consumption amid a severe heatwave.[51]

It is unlikely that the regime will be able to improve the water and energy shortages without meaningfully addressing underlying issues that exacerbate these shortages, such as poor infrastructure and mismanagement. A Tehran City Council member stated on August 5 that nearly 30 percent of Tehran's water is wasted due to outdated infrastructure.[52] Iranian state media reported on August 5 that agriculture wastes 24 billion cubic meters of water per year.[53] State media reported on August 4 that Iranian parliamentarians submitted a motion to impeach Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi for mismanaging water resources and failing to address structural corruption within the Energy Ministry.[54]

Drought at Lake Urmia, Iran August 7, 2024



Iranian authorities executed Iranian nuclear scientist Rouzbeh Vadi on August 6 for reportedly providing Israel with information about another nuclear scientist whom Israel killed during the 12-day Israel-Iran War.[55] Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-affiliated media claimed that Israel recruited Vadi online and that Vadi met with Mossad officers in Vienna five times.[56] Vadi reportedly received instructions to leak classified technical information and identify nuclear scientists in exchange for money.[57] Israel killed at least 14 nuclear scientists during the war.[58] Vadi's execution reflects the Iranian regime's ongoing concerns about Israeli infiltration.[59]

Iraq

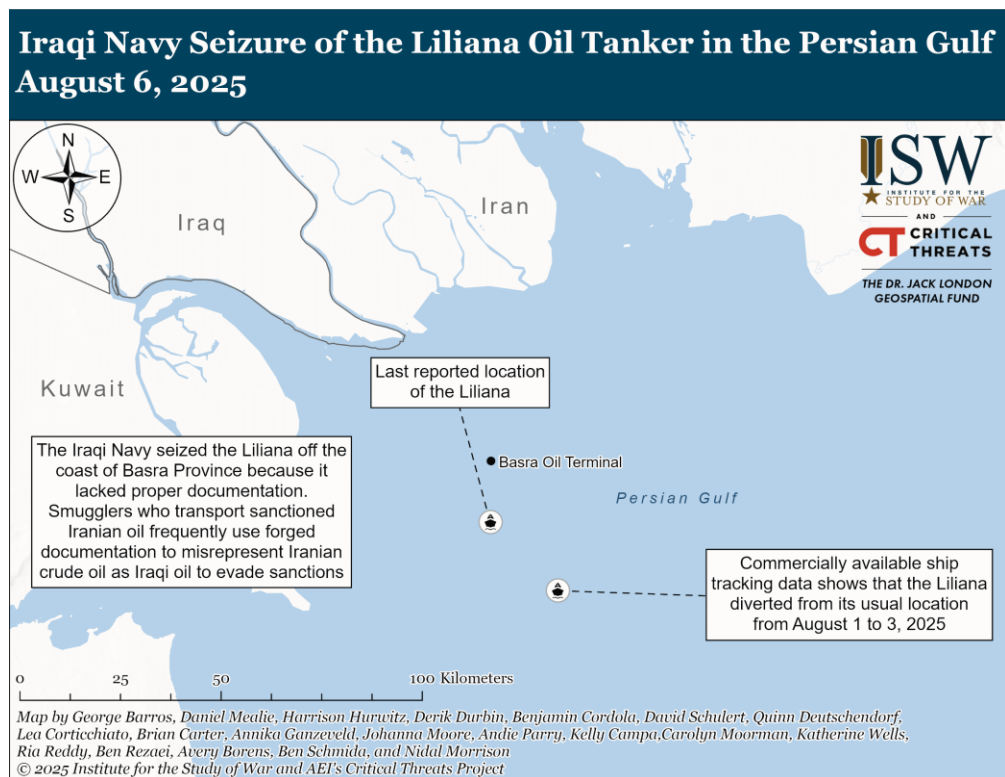
Political sources close to the Shia Coordination Framework told Iraqi media on August 6 that unidentified Iranian-backed Iraqi militias may “take to the streets” in response to an Iraqi federal government plan to dissolve the militias.[60] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which have armed wings. Unidentified “informed sources” stated that the Iraqi federal government intends to soon implement a 2022 plan to dissolve Iranian-backed militias.[61] CTP-ISW cannot verify the details of this reported plan. A Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)-affiliated journalist reported on July 20 that the Iraqi government drafted a new plan to dissolve the militias, integrate militia members into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and offer militia leaders key leadership positions in the next Iraqi cabinet.[62] The report about Iranian-backed Iraqi militias threatening to organize protests comes amid ongoing Iraqi discussions regarding the dissolution of the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), which includes many Iranian-backed Iraqi militias.

Political sources close to the Shia Coordination Framework also told Iraqi media on August 6 that some Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are “almost at odds” with the Shia Coordination Framework.[63] This report likely refers to the disillusionment of some Iranian-backed Iraqi militias toward elements of the Shia Coordination Framework, rather than toward all of the parties that comprise the framework. This report comes after Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah Spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari implicitly criticized Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and called on the Shia Coordination Framework to assume its “historical responsibilities.” These responsibilities likely include efforts to remove US forces from Iraq, among other policy issues.[64] Sudani recently delayed a vote on a law from the parliamentary agenda that likely would have increased Iran's influence in the Iraqi political and security spheres by formalizing the structure and responsibilities of the PMF.[65] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias may also oppose other members of the Shia Coordination Framework. National Wisdom Movement head Ammar al Hakim and former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi are both members of the framework despite attempting to form a political party in 2020 that would have opposed Iranian-backed groups.[66] The Iranian-backed Badr Organization recently announced that it will run independently in the November 2025 parliamentary elections, which may reflect current divisions in the Shia Coordination Framework.[67]

The Iraqi Navy seized the Liberian-flagged oil tanker *Liliana* in the Persian Gulf off the coast of Basra Province on August 6 because it lacked proper documentation.[68] An unspecified security official told Iraqi and Arab media on August 6 that the Iraqi Navy seized the vessel near the Basra Oil Terminal after its crew failed to provide official documents verifying the origin and ownership of its cargo. The vessel was transporting 250,000 tons of crude oil of unknown origin.[69] Smugglers who transport sanctioned Iranian oil frequently use forged documentation to misrepresent Iranian crude oil as Iraqi oil to evade sanctions.[70] Iran oversees an oil smuggling network in Iraq that generates about one billion dollars annually for Iran and its Axis of Resistance.[71]

An unidentified senior Iraqi Oil Ministry official told *al Araby al Jadeed* on August 6 that the seizure was part of a broader Oil Ministry effort to combat Iranian oil smuggling.[72] The seizure comes after the Iraqi State Organization for Marketing Oil (SOMO) issued a document on July 28 calling on Iraqi authorities to halt “widespread” oil smuggling in Iraqi territorial waters.[73] The United States threatened in July 2025 to sanction SOMO and thereby block \$350 million of Iraqi oil revenue if the Iraqi federal government failed to prevent Iranian oil smuggling.[74] The United States sanctioned six

entities and four vessels on July 3 that are involved in smuggling Iranian oil, including a network of companies run by an Iraqi businessman.[75]



Syria

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani met with US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack in Damascus on August 6.[76] The Syrian Ministry of Interior reported that the two officials discussed recent Syrian political and security developments and ways to advance the Syrian “political process” to ensure Syria’s “territorial integrity.”[77] The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Syrian transitional government, France, and the United States are scheduled to meet in Paris soon to negotiate the integration of the SDF into the Syrian Defense Ministry.[78]

Arabian Peninsula

Nothing significant to report.

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed a Hezbollah fighter in the Bekaa Valley on August 6 who oversaw attacks against Israel from Syria.[79] The IDF said that the Hezbollah fighter directed cells in Syria to launch rocket attacks targeting the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.[lxxx] Hezbollah fighters operated openly and in large numbers in Syria under the Assad regime.[80]

The LAF has continued to dismantle Hezbollah-linked smuggling networks along the Syria-Lebanon border. The LAF engaged and killed three Hezbollah-linked smugglers in Baalbek, northeastern Lebanon.[82] The LAF killed a smuggler named Ali Zaiter (Abu Sala), who was a prominent member of the al Zaiter clan.[lxxxiii] The al Zaiter clan has reportedly been involved in drug

and weapons smuggling and reportedly has ties to Hezbollah.[84] The LAF has shut down several known smuggling routes and increased its presence along the Lebanon-Syria border to curb Hezbollah-linked smuggling in recent months.[85]

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