

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. CTP-ISW publishes the Iran Update daily.

Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of assessed control of terrain in Syria, and [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. The Syria map is updated daily alongside the static Syria maps in this report. CTP-ISW ended daily maps of Israeli ground operations in February 2025.

Click [here](#) to see ISW-CTP's interactive map showing the total strikes in Iran since June 12, as well as an interactive timelapse showing the strikes day-by-day.

A US media outlet reported on July 17 that US strikes in Iran on June 21 caused significant damage to only one of the three Iranian nuclear facilities that the United States struck.[1] CTP-ISW has previously assessed that the strikes caused significant damage to all three facilities and will likely set back Iran's nuclear program.[2] US airstrikes targeted the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant, Natanz Enrichment Complex, and Esfahan Nuclear Technology Center (ENTC).[3] NBC News reported on July 17 that the US strikes set back uranium enrichment at Fordow by up to two years but stated that "nuclear enrichment [at Natanz and the ENTC] could resume in the next several months," citing former and current US officials familiar with a recent US damage assessment.[4] A US weapons expert stated on July 17 that Iran does not conduct uranium enrichment at the ENTC.[5]

The strikes destroyed key infrastructure at all three facilities. US strikes destroyed the Uranium Metal Conversion Plant at the ENTC, which Iran could have used to transform uranium gas into dense metal in a process called metallization.[6] This process is one of the last steps required to form the explosive core of an atomic bomb. CIA Director John Ratcliffe reportedly said in a closed-door briefing that it would take "years to rebuild" this facility, according to a US official authorized to discuss the briefing.[7] The strikes also struck and sealed tunnel entrances to an underground complex at the ENTC that stores part of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile.[8] Ratcliffe said that the strikes buried the "vast majority" of enriched uranium at the ENTC and Fordow and that it would be "extremely difficult" for Iran to extract the material.[9] CTP-ISW previously reported that Iranian personnel have not made any visible attempts to access the ENTC or Natanz.[10] Senior Israeli officials have repeatedly warned that Israel would "almost certainly" detect any Iranian attempts to recover the material and conduct

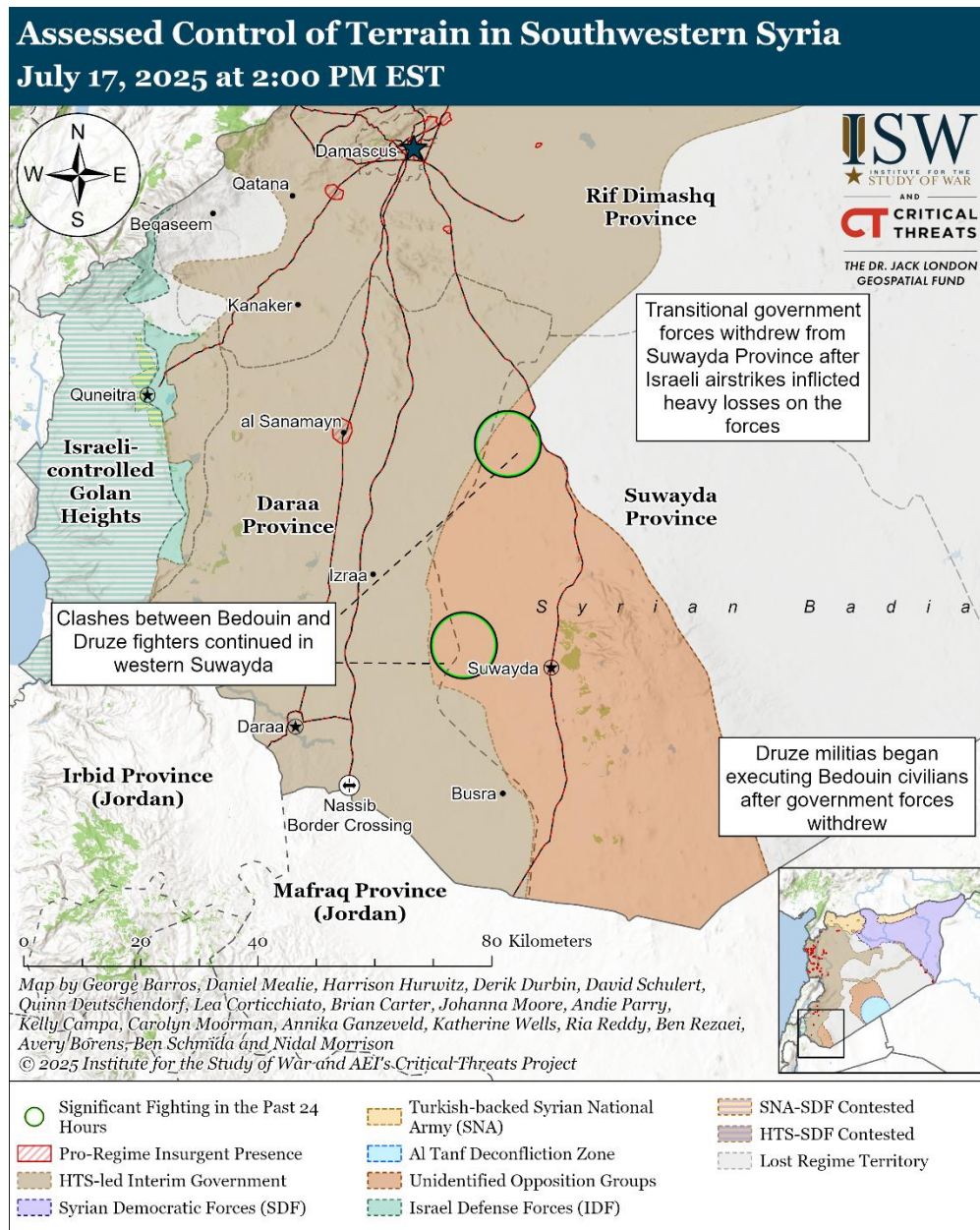
renewed strikes to prevent Iran from accessing the material.[11] The IAEA previously reported that US and Israeli strikes also rendered most, if not all, of the centrifuges at Natanz and Fordow inoperable.[12] Three sources told NBC News that US officials knew that some facilities at Natanz were “beyond the reach” of GBU-57 bunker buster bombs.[13] The destruction of centrifuges and facilities does not necessarily require bombs to “reach” all infrastructure, however. Grossi previously stated that centrifuges are “delicate” and that even small vibrations can destroy them.[14] The United States used two massive ordnance penetrator (MOP) bunker-buster bombs on Natanz, which would have generated a blast wave far more significant than small vibrations.[15]

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani reportedly withdrew the Popular Mobilization Authority Law from Parliament on July 17 following US concern over the legislation.[16] The Popular Mobilization Authority Law would integrate Iranian-backed Iraqi militias that operate outside of the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) into the PMF before the PMF integrates into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).[17] Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al Mashhadani implied that the United States had contacted several unidentified Iraqi leaders about the Popular Mobilization Authority Law in an interview with Iraqi media on July 14.[18] Shia Coordination Framework-aligned Deputy Parliament Speaker Mohsen al Mandalawi directed the Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee to complete all amendments to the law and submit the final version of the law to Mashhadani for a vote during the July 16 parliament session.[19] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. Kurdish and Sunni parliamentarians left the parliament session on July 16 in protest because they claimed that the reading of the law occurred without prior “political consensus” or discussion in relevant committees.[20]

The head of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq’s Sadiqoun political bloc implied to Asaib Ahl al Haq-controlled media on July 17 that US and Israeli pressure caused Sudani to withdraw the legislation.[21] The United States has pressured the Iraqi federal government to dissolve and disarm the PMF and has reportedly threatened to sanction PMF leaders in recent months.[22] Sudani withdrew the law after its first reading in Parliament in March 2025, likely to prevent political deadlock and the removal of Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh.[23] A previous version of the law would have required around 3,500 PMF leaders, including Fayyadh, to retire. The amended version of the law allows PMF leaders who entered their posts before the law’s passage to maintain their positions.[24]

The Popular Mobilization Authority Law includes several provisions that would likely further Iranian influence in the Iraqi security and political apparatus. The law stipulates that Fayyadh would receive a ministerial rank.[25] The United States sanctioned Fayyadh in 2021 for suppressing protests in Iraq in late 2019 with the support of the IRGC Quds Force.[26] The law would require PMF brigades to only carry out orders from the Iraqi prime minister, as already required under Iraqi law, and refrain from attacking US forces and interests and other unspecified targets outside of Iraq.[27] It remains unclear if PMF units that would merge into the ISF would be reflagged or distributed among existing ISF units. Reflagging units would enable them to largely retain their current command and control structures. The integration of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias into the Iraqi armed forces must be predicated on a commitment by the militias to stop abiding by Iranian orders and a commitment by the Iraqi federal government to respond to any militia attack on US or partner interests

in the Middle East.[28] The integration of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias into the armed forces in a way that does not meet these criteria would harm US interests in the region.



Syrian transitional government forces withdrew from Suwayda Province on July 16 after Israeli airstrikes conducted in support of the Druze inflicted heavy losses on transitional government forces.[29] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) ceased conducting airstrikes targeting Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) members after MoD forces withdrew from Suwayda Province. The IDF conducted over 160 airstrikes across southern Syria between July 15 and 16, including a strike on the Syrian Presidential Palace and multiple strikes on the MoD headquarters in Damascus.[30] Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on July 17 that Israel would continue to enforce its demand for a demilitarized Syria south of Damascus. Netanyahu first articulated this demand in February 2025.[31] Israel has enforced this demand inconsistently, such as by permitting MoD and General

Security Service (GSS) forces to deploy in Daraa Province in southern Syria on multiple occasions since February 2025.[32]

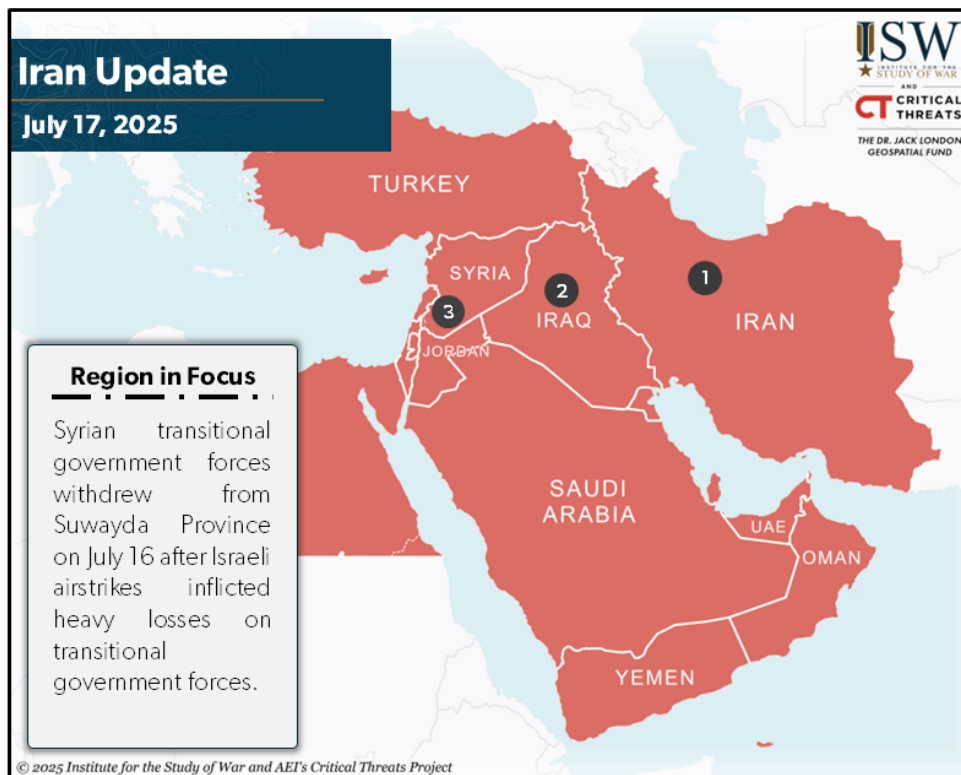
The withdrawal of government forces has not brought peace to Suwayda Province and has contributed to a security vacuum that risks generating further violence. Government forces initially deployed to Suwayda to quell intercommunal violence between Druze and Bedouin communities that included targeted killings and kidnappings of civilians.[33] The recent outbreak of violence has deepened the mistrust and poor intercommunal relations that characterize the relationship between the Druze community, the Sunni Bedouins, and the government. Likely anti-Damascus Druze factions began to torture and execute Bedouin civilians in several areas of Suwayda on July 17 after government forces withdrew.[34] Hundreds of Bedouins have fled Suwayda to neighboring Daraa Province.[35]

Bedouin clans across Syria, including in Deir ez Zor, Idlib, and Daraa provinces, began mobilizing to deploy to Suwayda to fight Druze militias that are conducting retaliatory killings against Bedouins after the transitional government withdrew from the province.[36] It is unclear at the time of writing how many groups, if any, have successfully deployed to Suwayda. The arrival of Bedouin clans from across Syria would likely increase intercommunal violence in Suwayda, given the absence of a neutral force to prevent intercommunal violence. Attacks targeting the Druze between July 14 and 16 largely stemmed from a lack of control over undisciplined MoD units and not official orders from the transitional government.[37] While these official units have now withdrawn due to Israeli airstrikes, informal and even less disciplined fighters have threatened to mobilize to protect Bedouin communities.

Bedouin fighters from Daraa and Suwayda provinces have continued to fight in western Suwayda Province amid the reprisal killings.[38] Bedouin fighters seized several towns in Suwayda Province near the Suwayda-Daraa border from Druze militias on July 17.[39] Prominent Druze Sheikh Hikmat al Hijri, who has led much of the fighting against the transitional government, called on Druze fighters to avoid harming “the peaceful Bedouin tribes” and to treat prisoners well.[40] A Bedouin military commander told Reuters on July 17 that the withdrawal and truce only apply to government forces and that his fighters seek to free Bedouins detained by Druze armed groups.[41] Sunni residents of Sasa in Rif Dimashq Province targeted Druze in a neighboring town in response to Druze militia attacks on Bedouins in Suwayda, demonstrating that intercommunal violence has the potential of expanding geographically.[42]

Syrian President Ahmed al Shara portrayed his government’s failed campaign to impose control over Suwayda Province as the result of Israeli attempts to fracture Syria and to start a war in a July 17 speech.[43] Shara claimed that his “efforts to restore stability and expel outlawed factions succeeded, despite Israeli interventions.”[44] Violence has continued in Suwayda, however. Shara accused Israel of seeking to “dismantle” Syrian unity and to weaken Syrian reconstruction and advancement by drawing Syria into another war.[45] He said that Syria can overcome all Israeli attempts to tear Syria apart.[46] Shara said that “building a new Syria requires” all Syrians to “place the nation's interests above all individual or limited interests.” Shara attempted to reassure the Druze community that the transitional government would prioritize Druze rights and freedoms and announced that he assigned “some local factions and religious elders the responsibility of maintaining security in Suwayda” upon the government’s withdrawal. [47] The local factions that

Shara assigned to maintain security in Suwayda have not established control over the province, however.[48] Anti-Damascus Druze militias have returned to positions in Suwayda and have taken advantage of the security vacuum to settle scores with pro-Damascus Druze factions by desecrating gravesites of former pro-Damascus Druze faction leaders and looting the factions' weapons stockpiles.[49] Violence will likely continue absent a strong security guarantor. The Druze factions that Shara put in charge of security in Suwayda have not demonstrated that they are capable of establishing security thus far.



- 1 **Iran.** A US media outlet reported on July 17 that US strikes in Iran on June 21 caused significant damage to only one of the three Iranian nuclear facilities that the United States struck. CTP-ISW has previously assessed that the strikes caused significant damage to all three facilities and will likely set back Iran's nuclear program.
- 2 **Iraq.** Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani reportedly withdrew the Popular Mobilization Authority Law from Parliament on July 17 following US concern over the legislation. The Popular Mobilization Authority Law includes several provisions that would likely further Iranian influence in the Iraqi security and political apparatus.
- 3 **Syria.** Syrian President Ahmed al Shara portrayed his government's failed campaign to impose control over Suwayda Province as the result of Israeli attempts to fracture Syria and to start a war in a July 17 speech.

Key Takeaways:

- **US Strike Damage:** A US media outlet reported on July 17 that US strikes in Iran on June 21 caused significant damage to only one of the three Iranian nuclear facilities that the United States struck. CTP-ISW has previously assessed that the strikes caused significant damage to all three facilities and will likely set back Iran's nuclear program.
- **Iraqi PMF Legislation:** Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani reportedly withdrew the Popular Mobilization Authority Law from Parliament on July 17 following US concern over the legislation. The Popular Mobilization Authority Law includes several provisions that would likely further Iranian influence in the Iraqi security and political apparatus.
- **Southern Syria:** Syrian transitional government forces withdrew from Suwayda Province on July 16 after Israeli airstrikes conducted in support of the Druze factions inflicted heavy losses on transitional government forces. The withdrawal of government forces has not brought peace to Suwayda Province and has contributed to a security vacuum that risks generating further violence.

Iran

Iran is increasing securitization measures in response to concerns about infiltration. Judiciary Chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei called on July 17 for accelerating the resolution of cases against individuals accused of having ties to Israel, calling any delays “unacceptable.”[50] Ejei’s directive follows Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei’s July 16 call for the judiciary to pursue “recent crimes” with precision and vigilance.[51] Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib separately stated on July 16 that the judiciary is processing espionage cases and that “some [accused individuals] have already been executed, and the rest will also receive their punishment.”[52] Khatib briefed Iranian lawmakers on counterintelligence operations against “spies” and anti-regime groups both during and before the recent war during a closed parliament session on July 15.[53] The Judiciary spokesperson separately stated on July 12 that the judiciary has filed 50 cases in Tehran Province against individuals accused of collaborating with Israel.[54] Parliament previously introduced a nine-article law on June 29 that labels any intelligence, espionage, or cooperation with Israel, the United States, or other “hostile” actors as “corruption on earth,” which is a crime punishable by death.[55]

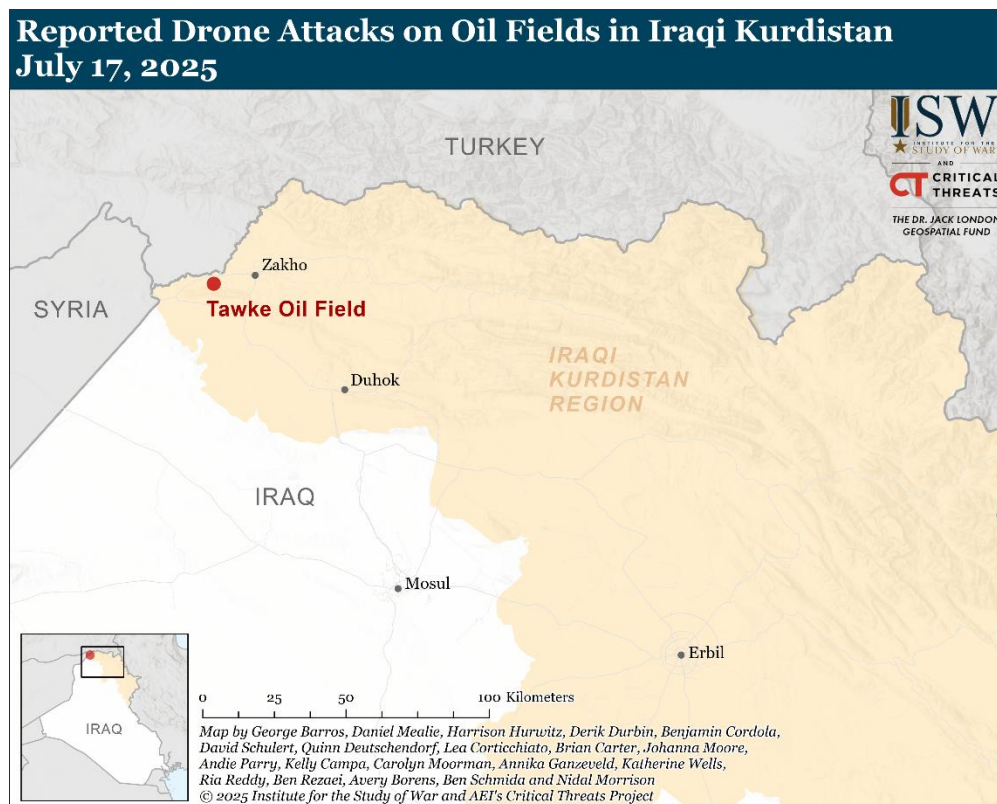
Senior Iranian commanders are likely establishing relationships across military branches following the introduction of a new generation of military leadership during the Israel-Iran War. Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Major General Mohammad Pak Pour met with Artesh Commander Major General Amir Hatami on July 17, marking the first public meeting between Iran’s new IRGC and Artesh commanders since the war.[56] Pak Pour praised the IRGC’s “high morale” and Iran’s unity during the war.[57] Pak Pour replaced Major General Hossein Salami, while Hatami replaced Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi.[58] Pak Pour and Hatami’s meeting followed a July 14 meeting between Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi and IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Hossein Mousavi.[59] Abdol Rahim Mousavi replaced Major General Mohammad Bagheri, and Hossein Mousavi replaced Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajji Zadeh.[60] These engagements likely reflect efforts

to build relationships between top Iranian military commanders after Israeli strikes eliminated key Iranian military leaders.[61]

Assembly of Experts member Mohsen Araki warned on July 17 that any attack on Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei would trigger a full-scale war.[62] Araki declared that the United States and its allies, including the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, would face attacks on their “military bases, economic assets, political forces, and affiliated companies.”[63] Senior Iranian clerics issued a fatwa on June 30 that described US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as “mohareb” (enemies of God) and called for their assassination.[64] Araki was among 400 Qom clerics who signed a statement on July 13 in support of the fatwa.[65]

Iraq

Likely Iranian-backed Iraqi militias conducted a one-way drone attack targeting the Norwegian-operated Tawke oil field in Duhok Province on July 17.[66] Unidentified militants previously conducted at least six one-way drone attacks targeting four oil fields, including the Tawke oil field, in Iraqi Kurdistan and Kirkuk Province on July 16.[67] No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks at the time of this writing.



Several oil firms that operate in Iraqi Kurdistan, including some that haven't been targeted, suspended oil production due to the attacks.[68] The Association of the Petroleum Industry of Kurdistan (APIKUR) announced on July 16 that most of its eight member companies suspended oil production.[69] British oil company and APIKUR member Gulf Keystone Petroleum said on July 16 that it temporarily suspended production at its Shaikan oil field in Erbil Province as a precaution due

to the recent attacks targeting other oil fields in Iraqi Kurdistan.[70] Two unspecified officials told Reuters on July 17 that the attacks have decreased the Iraqi Kurdistan region's oil output by half.[71]

The attacks on oil fields coincide with Iraqi federal government-Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) negotiations regarding oil exports. The Iraqi federal government announced on July 17 that the KRG will resume exporting oil to Turkey through the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline.[72] The KRG halted oil exports through the pipeline in March 2023 after the International Chamber of Commerce ruled that the Iraqi federal government had the right to control loading at Turkey's Ceyhan Port. [73] The Iraqi federal government and the KRG have conducted negotiations since February 2025 to reach an oil export agreement, despite Iraqi Oil Minister Hayan Abdel Ghani's announcement in mid-February 2025 that oil exports would resume by the end of February.[74] Unspecified sources told Reuters in late February 2025 that the United States threatened to sanction the Iraqi federal government if it prevented the KRG from resuming oil exports.[75] A Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) member accused Iranian-backed Iraqi militias on July 16 of conducting the recent attacks targeting oil fields in Iraqi Kurdistan.[76] The KDP member implied that the resumption of gas and oil exports from Iraqi Kurdistan would threaten Iranian economic interests. KRG oil exports through the Ceyhan Pipeline would likely curb crude oil smuggling from Iraqi Kurdistan to Iran.[77]

Syria

See topline section.

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis launched one ballistic missile and one drone at Ben Gurion Airport, two drones targeting an unspecified "sensitive" site in the Negev Desert, and one drone targeting Eilat Port in southern Israel on July 16.[78] The Israeli Air Force intercepted a Houthi missile before it crossed into Israeli territory on July 16.[79] The Houthis have launched hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles targeting Israel since the Houthis began their campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel in October 2023.[80]

A Yemeni journalist assessed on July 16 that a recently seized Iranian weapons shipment to the Houthis included equipment that the Houthis can use to strengthen their air defense capabilities.[81] **The equipment includes systems that the Houthis can use to shoot down US MQ-9 Reaper drones and other slow-moving drones.** The National Resistance Front (NRF) seized a weapons shipment on July 16 that included Iranian-made Ghaem-118 surface-to-air missiles and a 358 loitering surface-to-air missile.[82] A Yemen analyst published a photo in January 2024 of Houthi President Mahdi al Mashat inspecting a Saqr 1 Eagle missile, which is the Houthi name for the Iranian 358 missile.[83] The 358 missile has a range of 650 to 1,050 kilometers per hour, a payload of 10 kilograms, and a flight ceiling of 8,500 meters. The 358 missile is equipped with an optoelectronic guidance system, which allows the operator of the missile to modify the missile's trajectory in flight to improve the accuracy of the missile's targeting system.[84] The Yemen analyst assessed that the Houthis likely used Saqr 1 Eagle missiles to shoot down US MQ-9 Reaper drones, which US Central Command used for reconnaissance over Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen before the May 2025 US-Houthi ceasefire.[85] A US official stated in late April 2025 that the

Houthis had shot down at least six US MQ-9 Reaper drones since the start of the US airstrike campaign against the Houthis on March 15.[86]

The Houthis' attacks on the *Magic Seas* and *Eternity C* commercial vessels in the Red Sea on July 6 and 7 significantly increased regional shipping insurance prices. Sources familiar with shipping insurance costs told Reuters on July 10 that war risk premiums rose from around 0.3 percent of the value of a vessel before the attacks to around 0.7 percent of the value of a vessel after the attacks.[87] Some insurance companies have reportedly stopped covering some voyages that pass through the Red Sea.[88] Some insurance companies reportedly set rates on July 7 up to one percent of the value of a vessel, which match the rates set by insurance companies when the Houthis were conducting almost daily attacks on commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea in 2024.[89] Reuters reported that these insurance rates add hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional costs to every shipment.[90] The head of insurance company Marsh and McLennan's marine and cargo department told the *Financial Times* on July 8 that insurance costs for a \$100 million-valued vessel increased by approximately 230 percent after the most recent Houthi attacks.[91] Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi stated on July 17 that the attacks on the *Magic Seas* and *Eternity C* sent a "strong message to all companies" that transit through Israeli ports.[92] Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea stated on July 16 that the Houthis will continue to target commercial vessels that transit through Israeli ports as part of the Houthis' economic blockade against Israel.[93]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

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