

# Iran Update



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**Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET**

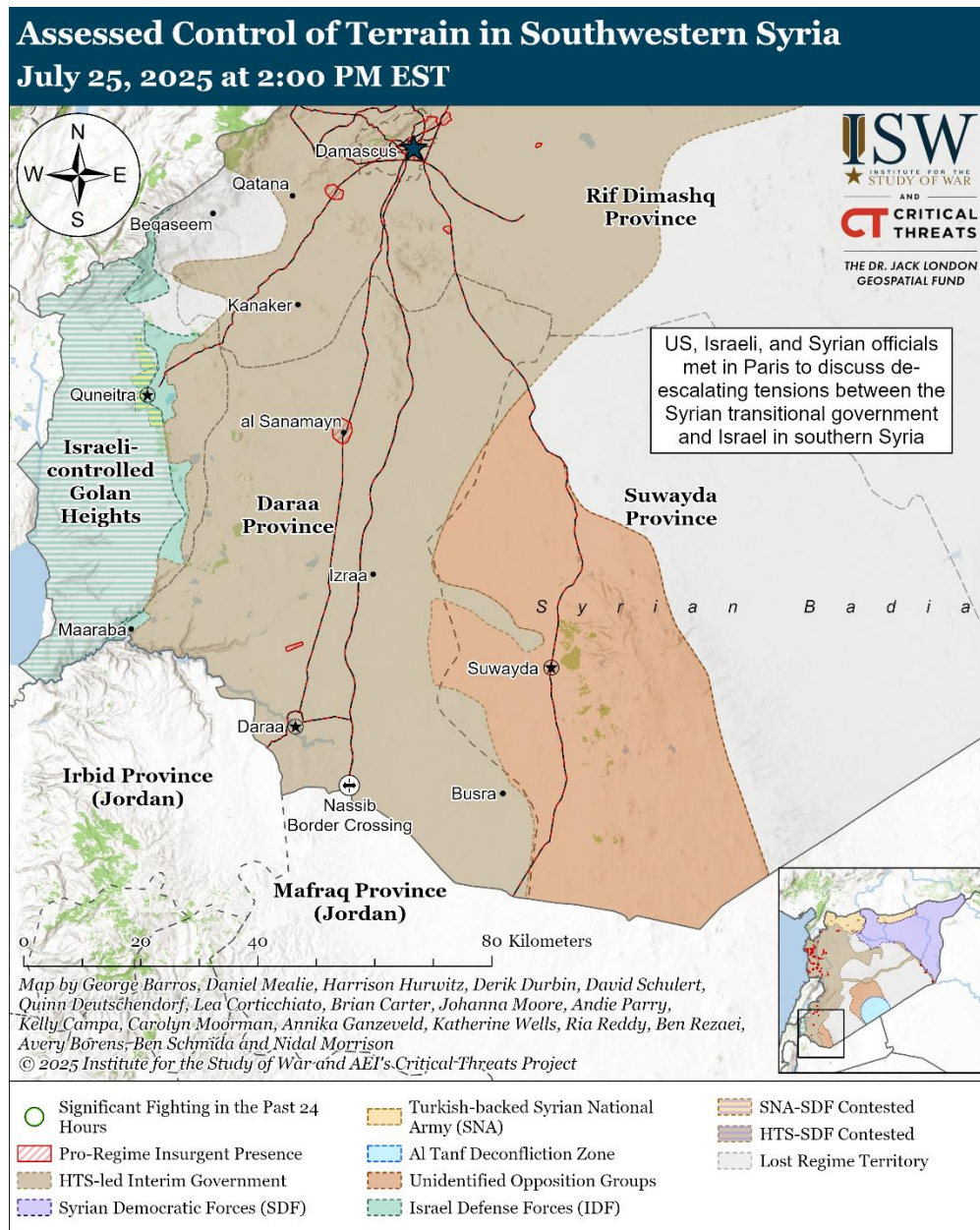
*The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. CTP-ISW publishes the Iran Update daily.*

*NOTE: CTP-ISW will publish the Iran Update Monday through Friday starting on July 25, 2025. CTP-ISW will resume seven-day coverage of the region should conditions warrant it and will notify our readers if we resume seven-day coverage.*

**US, Israeli, and Syrian officials met in Paris on July 24 to discuss de-escalating tensions between the Syrian transitional government and Israel in southern Syria.[1] This meeting marks the first time that senior Israeli and Syrian officials have held direct talks since 2000.[2]** Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani, Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, and US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack sought to de-escalate tensions between Syria and Israel and reach an understanding regarding security in southern Syria.[3] Barrack posted on X on July 24 that the Israeli and Syrian officials achieved their goal of “dialogue and de-escalation” and expressed commitment to continuing talks.[4] Israeli officials told Axios on July 24 that the meeting aimed to maintain the ceasefire between Israel and Syria and prevent a renewed crisis in southern Syria.[5] Shaibani and Dermer’s meeting comes amid a series of deconfliction and normalization talks between Israel and Syria in recent months.[6] Western media reported on July 9 that Syrian President Ahmed al Shara has used diplomatic channels and engaged in indirect discussions with Israel to de-escalate tensions along the Syria-Israel border.[7]

Israel and the Syrian transitional government have not agreed on key issues regarding security in Suwayda Province despite signaling their willingness to de-escalate tensions in southern Syria.[8] The July 18 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Syria, as outlined by the Syrian Interior Ministry, includes three phases that culminate in the integration of Suwaydawi institutions into the Syrian state.[9] Israeli media reported on July 18 that Syrian government forces had 48 hours to enter Suwayda Province and restore stability under the ceasefire agreement.[10] Syrian government forces continue to operate in Suwayda Province to enforce the ceasefire and provide basic services as defined in phases one and two of the ceasefire agreement.[11] Israel has consistently expressed opposition to Syrian government forces operating in southern Syria.[12] Israel unilaterally declared a demilitarized zone in February 2025 that “prohibits the introduction of forces and weapons into southern Syria” and has struck Syrian government targets in southern Syria.[13] The Syrian government rejected Israel’s

declaration of a demilitarized zone and has consistently called for Israeli forces to withdraw from Syrian territory.[14]



**Iran and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reportedly discussed extending the snapback mechanism deadline during a meeting on July 25.[15] CTP-ISW previously assessed that postponing the snapback deadline would very likely not change Iran's position on the key issue of domestic uranium enrichment.[16]** Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi and Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi met with E3 officials in Istanbul on July 25 to discuss the Iranian nuclear program and potential snapback sanctions.[17] Ravanchi and Gharibabadi previously led Iran's technical team in the US-Iran nuclear negotiations in April and May 2025.[18] A *Wall Street Journal* correspondent reported on July 25 that Iran and the E3 discussed extending the

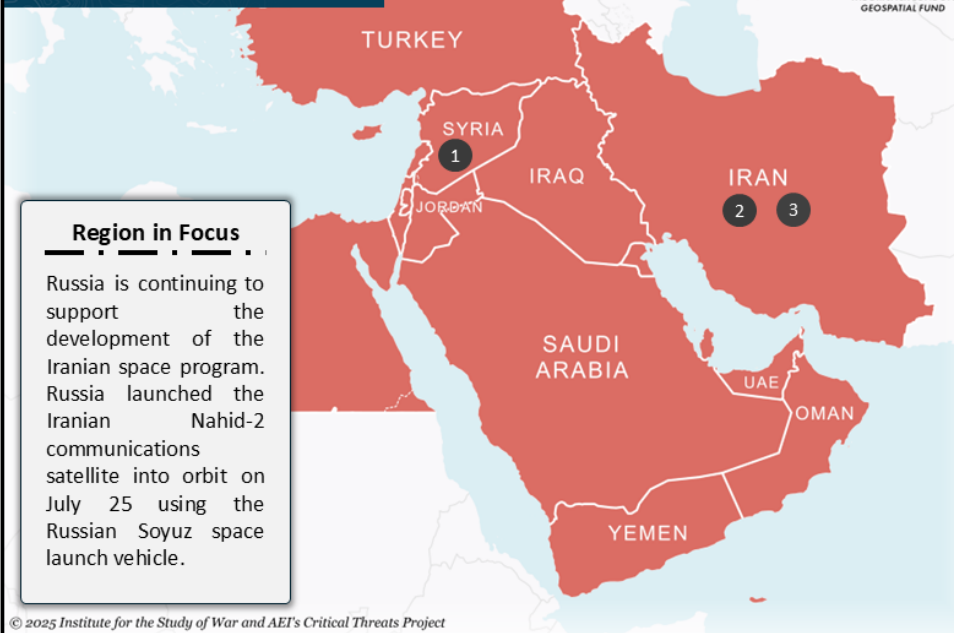
Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism to reimpose UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Iran.<sup>[19]</sup> The mechanism expires in October 2025. An extension would require a new UNSC resolution with at least nine votes in favor of the resolution and no vetoes from permanent UNSC members. Iran reportedly did not explicitly reject the idea of extending the deadline.<sup>[20]</sup> The *Financial Times* reported on July 24 that the E3 is prepared to extend the snapback deadline if Iran agrees to resume talks with the United States and cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).<sup>[21]</sup> Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei dismissed recent reports that the E3 may seek to extend the snapback deadline as "baseless and meaningless."<sup>[22]</sup> Iran is very unlikely to accept any deal that requires zero uranium enrichment, even if the E3 extends the snapback deadline to provide Iran more time to reach a deal with the United States. Senior Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, have repeatedly stated that domestic enrichment is non-negotiable.<sup>[23]</sup> Gharibabadi stated that Iran and the E3 agreed to continue talks.<sup>[24]</sup>

**Moderate and pragmatic elements of the Iranian regime appear to be trying to reshape Iran's domestic and foreign policy in the post-war period.** These elements have increasingly sought to influence Iranian decision-making since the start of the Israel-Iran War. Reformist outlet Ensaf News claimed on July 25 that ultraconservatives have become marginalized and sidelined by all three branches of government as moderates and pragmatic conservatives seek to exert more political influence in the regime.<sup>[25]</sup> Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stated on July 22 that the Iranian government is willing to engage in dialogue with the "opposition" and emphasized that solving problems requires dialogue, "not confrontation."<sup>[26]</sup> Pezeshkian may have been referring to domestic opposition figures, including former Iranian Prime Minister and key 2009 Green Movement leader Mir Hossein Mousavi.<sup>[27]</sup> Mousavi called on July 11 for a referendum to establish a constitutional assembly as a "means to reclaim national sovereignty," framing the current Iranian governance system as unrepresentative of the Iranian people.<sup>[28]</sup> Some traditional conservatives, including senior advisers to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei such as Ali Shamkhani and Ali Akbar Velayati, have publicly called on the regime to prioritize reconciliation in its domestic policy.<sup>[29]</sup> Shamkhani called on regime officials on June 28 to resolve "disputes" with the Iranian population through "mutual understanding."<sup>[30]</sup> Velayati stated on July 21 that preserving national cohesion may require "revising social policies" and prioritizing public satisfaction.<sup>[31]</sup> He also warned that "outdated methods" no longer suit Iranian society.<sup>[32]</sup>

Iranian officials, including Pezeshkian and Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi, have attempted in recent weeks to reframe the regime's image in Western media by downplaying the regime's hardline policies and ideology. Pezeshkian falsely presented Iran as a peaceful force in the Middle East in an interview with Tucker Carlson on July 7.<sup>[33]</sup> Araghchi separately claimed in a July 22 interview with US media that Iran has never sought to destroy Israel.<sup>[34]</sup> CTP-ISW previously assessed that Pezeshkian and Araghchi leveraged these interviews with US media to misrepresent Iran's policy toward the West to a Western audience.<sup>[35]</sup> This misrepresentation may also seek to distance the regime from rhetoric and confrontational policies pushed by ultraconservatives.<sup>[36]</sup> Ultraconservatives, including the Stability (Paydari) Front and some members of the Assembly of Experts, have supported hardline positions in recent weeks, including a senior cleric's call for the killing of US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.<sup>[37]</sup>

## Iran Update

July 25, 2025



- 1 **SYRIA.** US, Israeli, and Syrian officials met in Paris on July 24 to discuss de-escalating tensions between the Syrian transitional government and Israel in southern Syria. Israel and the Syrian transitional government have not agreed on key issues regarding security in Suwayda Province despite signaling their willingness to de-escalate tensions in southern Syria.
- 2 **NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS.** Iran and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reportedly discussed extending the snapback mechanism deadline during a meeting on July 25. Iran reportedly did not explicitly reject the idea of extending the deadline. The E3 is reportedly prepared to extend the snapback deadline if Iran agrees to resume talks with the United States and cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.
- 3 **IRAN.** Moderate and pragmatic elements of the Iranian regime appear to be trying to reshape Iran's domestic and foreign policy in the post-war period. These elements have increasingly sought to influence Iranian decision-making since the start of the Israel-Iran War.

## Key Takeaways

1. US, Israeli, and Syrian officials met in Paris on July 24 to discuss de-escalating tensions between the Syrian transitional government and Israel in southern Syria. Israel and the Syrian transitional government have not agreed on key issues regarding security in Suwayda Province despite signaling their willingness to de-escalate tensions in southern Syria.
2. Iran and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reportedly discussed extending the snapback mechanism deadline during a meeting on July 25. Iran reportedly did not explicitly reject the idea of extending the deadline. The E3 is reportedly prepared to extend the snapback

deadline if Iran agrees to resume talks with the United States and cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

3. Moderate and pragmatic elements of the Iranian regime appear to be trying to reshape Iran's domestic and foreign policy in the post-war period. These elements have increasingly sought to influence Iranian decision-making since the start of the Israel-Iran War.

## **Iran**

**Russia is continuing to support the development of the Iranian space program.** Russia launched the Iranian Nahid-2 communications satellite into orbit on July 25 using the Russian Soyuz space launch vehicle (SLV).[38] The Iranian Space Research Center and Iranian Space Agency designed and developed the Nahid-2.[39] Russia has launched four Iranian-made satellites into orbit since 2022, including the Khayyam satellite in August 2022, the Pars-1 satellite in February 2024, and the Kowsar and Hodhod satellites in November 2024.[40] Russia's launch of the Nahid-2 comes after Iran conducted a suborbital test of its Qased SLV on July 21.[41] Russia reportedly provides Iran with technical assistance for its SLV and missile programs.[42] Russian assistance with the SLV program is particularly significant given that this program could support the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM).[43]

**Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reiterated his call for national unity in a statement on July 25 commemorating the deaths of senior Iranian military commanders and nuclear scientists during the Israel-Iran War.**[44] Khamenei acknowledged that the deaths of military commanders and nuclear scientists were a "heavy" loss for the regime but praised the "perseverance and stability" of regime institutions. Khamenei also praised the Iranian people's "firm determination to stand united" during the war. Khamenei previously called for national unity in a speech on July 16.[45] Khamenei's calls for unity come amid fissures between hardliners and pragmatic elements of the regime over the regime's domestic and foreign policies.[46] Khamenei outlined seven recommendations for different parts of Iranian society and the regime in the post-war period. These recommendations include:

1. All elements of Iranian society should maintain national unity.
2. The "scientific elite" should accelerate scientific and technological advancements.
3. Iranian media and intellectuals should maintain Iran's "honor and reputation."
4. Military commanders should improve Iran's ability to preserve national security and independence.
5. Government officials should pursue national goals with "seriousness."
6. The clerical establishment should provide spiritual guidance and help Iranians remain "patient, calm, and steadfast."
7. Iranian youth should maintain a revolutionary spirit.

## **Iraq**

*Nothing significant to report.*



## Syria

**US, Syrian, and French officials met in Paris on July 24 and released a joint statement about Syrian stability.**<sup>[47]</sup> Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani, French Foreign Minister Jean Noel Barrot, and US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack met on the sidelines of the meeting between US, Israeli, and Syrian officials to discuss guiding principles for the future of Syrian stability, including counterterrorism support, Syrian state centralization, and reconciliation with Syrian minorities.<sup>[48]</sup> US, French, and Syrian officials agreed to strengthen Syria’s counterterrorism capabilities and enhance counterterrorism cooperation.<sup>[49]</sup> US, French, and Syrian officials called for Syrian reconciliation and national unity, particularly with Suwayda and northeastern Syrian provinces.<sup>[50]</sup> The officials agreed to hold talks between the Syrian transitional government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Paris in the coming days to implement the March 10 SDF integration agreement.<sup>[51]</sup> US and French officials agreed to support the Syrian transitional government’s efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for violence against minorities in Suwayda Province and coastal Syria.<sup>[52]</sup>

## Arabian Peninsula

**Anti-Houthi media reported on July 25 that a hacking group named “S4uD1Pwnz” attacked over 75 Houthi-controlled websites.**<sup>[53]</sup> The websites included Houthi-controlled news outlets, ministry websites, and university websites. The Houthis have not commented on the attack at the time of this writing.

## Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

**Lebanese President Joseph Aoun is conducting direct talks with Hezbollah regarding this group’s disarmament, according to Lebanese state media.**<sup>[54]</sup> Aoun stated that negotiations are progressing slowly but that Hezbollah has responded “positively” to the idea of disarming.<sup>[55]</sup> Hezbollah has been undergoing a strategic rethink since November 2024 in which it is considering turning over heavy weaponry to the Lebanese state in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, including the Israeli-controlled Sheeba Farms.<sup>[56]</sup> Hezbollah would retain smaller weaponry like anti-tank munitions, however, which it used to launch attacks into Israel between October 2023 and November 2024.<sup>[57]</sup> Lebanese Parliament Speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri suggested that Israeli operations in Lebanon and southern Syria have reinforced fears of Israeli operations in Lebanon and will pose a challenge to Hezbollah’s disarmament.<sup>[58]</sup>

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