

# Iran Update, September 15, 2025



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## Toplines

**A recent op-ed from Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-affiliated media offers insight into how some elements of the Iranian regime may be viewing the relationship between the United States, Israel, and the Gulf in the wake of Israel's September 9 strikes in Doha.[1]**

IRGC-affiliated outlet Tasnim released an op-ed on September 14 in which it claimed that Israel has played an increasingly divisive role in the relationship between the United States and the Gulf states.[2] Tasnim suggested that the Gulf states should make their continued economic cooperation with the United States contingent upon US efforts to "contain" Israel.[3] The report also added that the Gulf countries can diversify their partnerships with other countries with US adversaries, particularly Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC).[4] It is unclear if Iranian officials are directly attempting to convince Gulf states to undertake any of these efforts in the wake of Israel's September 9 strikes on Hamas leaders in Qatar.

Tasnim's op-ed is consistent with how Iranian officials have been framing Israel's September 9 strikes as an opportunity to unite regional powers in an anti-United States, anti-Israel regional coalition.[5] Tehran interim Friday prayer leader Ahmad Khatami recently addressed the governments of Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia—all countries that have security partnerships with the United States—and warned that Israel would strike their country next if it was allowed to grow in power.[6] Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Secretary Ali Larijani similarly urged regional Islamic countries on September 13 to establish a "joint operations room" against Israel to avoid their "own annihilation."[7] Proposals like Larijani's are unlikely to be taken seriously by the Gulf states because Iran has consistently conducted military attacks targeting the Gulf and could continue to do so in the future.

**Qatar hosted an emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha on September 15 to discuss the recent Israeli strikes in Doha.[8] No Gulf state, including Qatar, has made any tangible moves to punish Israel for the strikes.** Numerous Gulf and Arab leaders attended the summit, including Emirati Vice President Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sabah Khaled al Hamad al Sabah, and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.[9] The heads of state and other representatives condemned the Israeli strikes, reaffirmed solidarity with Qatar in its right to respond, and stressed the need for the international community to act urgently to "deter Israel."[10] The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) discussed the repercussions of the Israeli airstrikes and asserted that the strikes constitute a direct threat to the Gulf's joint security.[11] The GCC stated that Israel's ongoing "aggressive policies" undermine the future of "existing understandings and agreements" with Israel, likely referring to the Abraham Accords and other economic agreements between GCC countries and Israel.[12]

**Iran does not appear to have made serious commitments in its new agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Iranian effort to secure an agreement was likely an attempt to delay or prevent potential snapback sanctions.** Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi signed the Iran-IAEA agreement on September 9.[13] Grossi stated on September 10 that the agreement sets procedures for inspections and reporting on all Iranian facilities, including sites damaged during the 12-day War.[14] Araghchi stated on September 11 that Iran's cooperation with the IAEA will solely take place under a "new framework" that is defined by parliamentary law and the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).[15] The SNSC Secretariat confirmed in a statement on September 14 that all cooperation with the IAEA requires SNSC approval and that Iran will provide reports to the IAEA only after establishing its own internal security and safety conditions.[16] Iran has continued to refrain from cooperating with the IAEA in the days since the agreement and has not provided the IAEA with any timeline for resumed inspections or any clarification about the whereabouts of its remaining stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium.[17] Iran's newly defined limitations on its resumed cooperation with the IAEA follow a long pattern of Iran's partial and conditional cooperation with the IAEA. Iran also restricted IAEA oversight after 2021 by removing monitoring equipment and expelling inspectors.[18] Iran has also historically restricted IAEA oversight by refusing access to certain facilities associated with its pre-2003 weapons program and by withdrawing the certifications of several inspectors in September 2023 and barring other top inspectors in November 2024.[19] The European Union (EU) warned at the 69th IAEA General Conference on September 15 that the IAEA has not been able to access most safeguarded facilities since June 2025.[20]

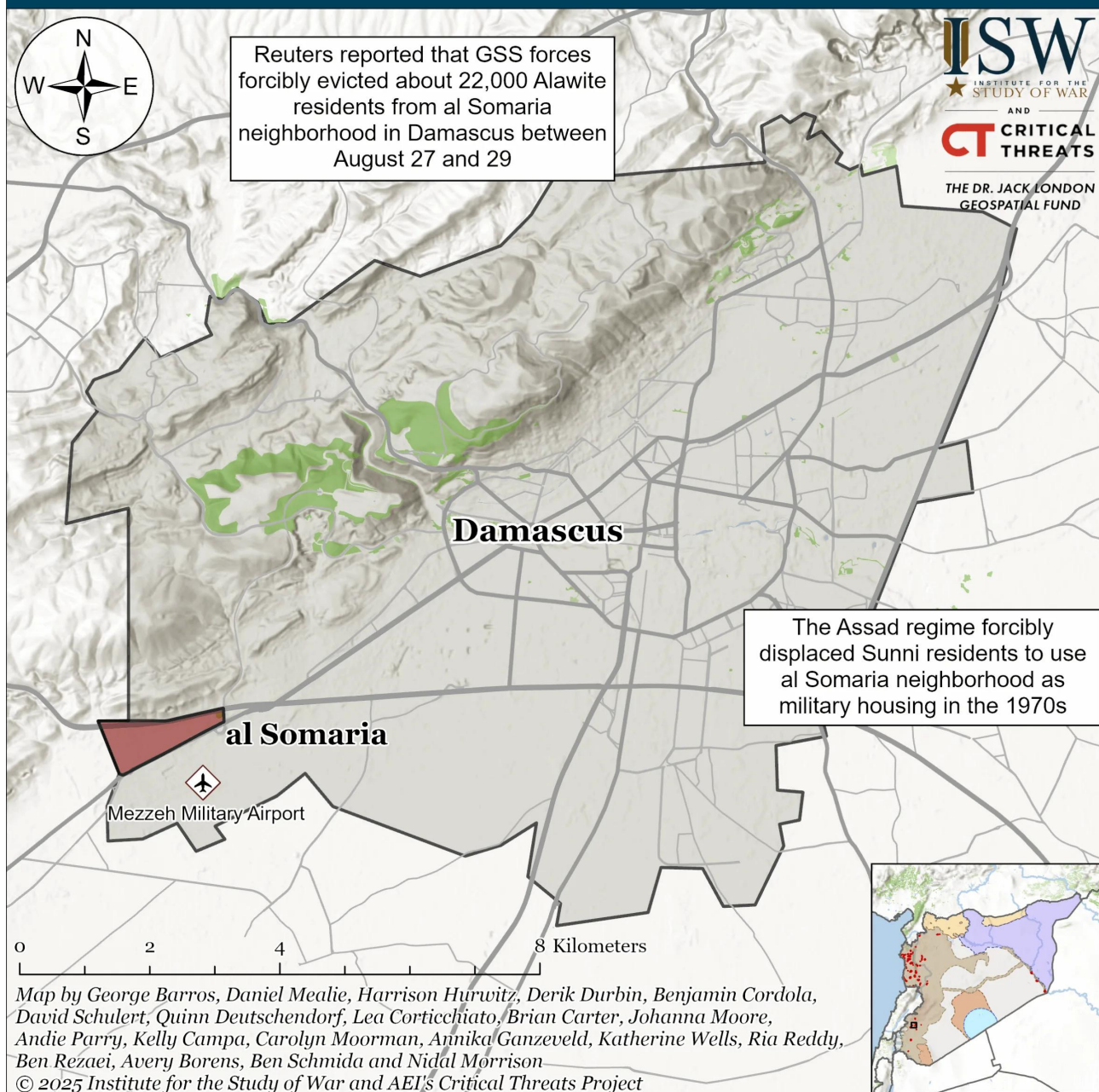
**Iran is simultaneously attempting to discourage the E3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) from imposing snapback sanctions by threatening to suspend Iran's agreed cooperation with the IAEA if sanctions are imposed.** Araghchi claimed on September 11 that Iran's cooperation with the IAEA is separate from its disputes with the Europeans over the snapback mechanism.[21] The SNSC specified on September 14 that any "hostile" actions—including the imposition of snapback sanctions—would suspend Iran's implementation of the Iran-IAEA agreement, which demonstrates that—contrary to Araghchi's claim—Iran does view cooperation with the IAEA as connected with the snapback mechanism.[22] The E3 triggered the 30-day JCPOA snapback process on August 28 but offered to extend the deadline by six months if Iran restored full IAEA cooperation, resumed negotiations with the United States, and accounted for its 60 percent enriched uranium stockpile.[23] Araghchi dismissed the E3 demands as "unrealistic, unreasonable, and contrary to Iran's national interest.[24] Iran has not complied with E3's demands, which, combined with Araghchi's comments, have left the E3 unconvinced that the Iran-IAEA agreement reflects any meaningful movement towards an Iranian effort to avoid snapback.[25]

**The Syrian transitional government's attempt to reconcile Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) violations in a Damascus suburb highlights the broader challenges that Damascus faces during Syria's recovery from Assad's rule and the civil war.** Local sources told Reuters that General Security Services (GSS) personnel forcibly evicted about 22,000 Alawite residents from Damascus's al Somaria neighborhood between August 27 and 29.[26] An Interior Ministry commander named Hadi Askar (Abu Hudhayfah) reportedly led the operation.[27] Al Somaria residents said GSS members demanded proof of home ownership and marked properties for eviction if residents failed to provide it.[28] The GSS's justification for the forced eviction was that the residents' homes were built on land illegally seized by the Assad regime in the 1970s, according to the Damascus governor.[29] The Assad regime forcibly displaced Sunni residents in Damascus's Muadamiyat al Sham neighborhood to build the al Somaria neighborhood over it as military housing in the 1970s.[30] Syrian sources told *Enab Baladi* that over 200,000 former landowners from the original Muadamiyat al Sham neighborhood and their heirs retain claims to return to their land in al Somaria.[31] Syrian human rights experts alleged to *Enab Baladi* that the GSS evictions in al Somaria constituted forced evictions on a selective basis and that

government forces failed to provide proper notice or housing alternatives.[32] The human rights experts explained that successful transitional justice for HLP violations must respect the rights of original landowners and violators and cannot be decided by the Syrian government alone.[33]

The evictions of the Alawite residents of al Somaria are emblematic of the country-wide challenges that Damascus faces as it attempts to rebuild Syria after decades under Assad rule and subsequent civil war. The Assad regime built multiple Damascus neighborhoods on top of others after displacing residents throughout its rule.[34] Turkey and its proxies have similarly displaced Kurds from their homes in northern Syria in acts of ethnic cleansing that seek to replace the Kurds with Sunni Arabs. The Syrian transitional government will need to contend with HLP reconciliation outside of Damascus, as well as internally displaced persons returning to their homes across the country. The transitional government will likely face continual challenges when addressing HLP violations, which can risk igniting long-held political or sectarian grievances.

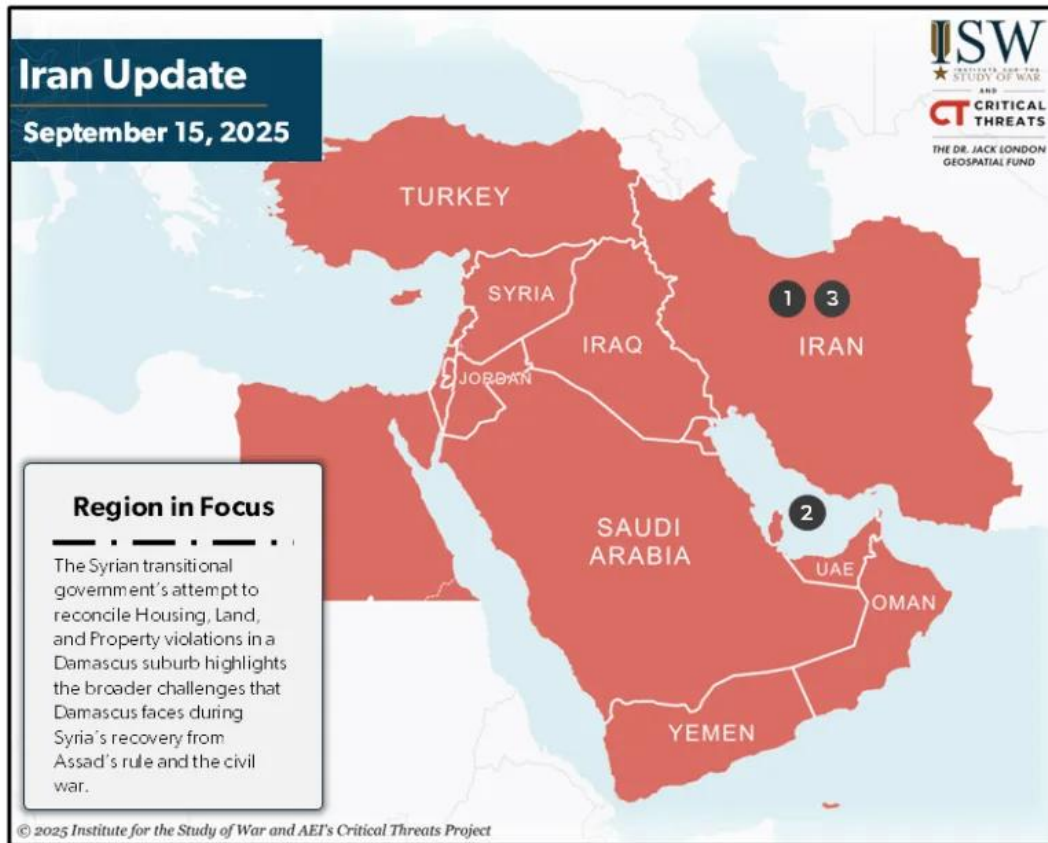
## Recent Forced Displacement in al Somaria Neighborhood, Damascus September 15, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



## Key Takeaways

1. **Iran and the Gulf:** A recent op-ed from IRGC-affiliated media offers insight into how some elements of the Iranian regime may be viewing the relationship between the United States, Israel, and the Gulf in the wake of Israel's September 9 strikes in Doha. Iranian officials have framed Israel's September 9 strikes as an opportunity to unite regional powers in an anti-US, anti-Israel regional coalition.
2. **Regional Response to Doha Strikes:** Qatar hosted an emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha on September 15 to discuss the recent Israeli strikes in Doha. No Gulf state, including Qatar, has made any tangible moves to punish Israel for the strikes.

3. **Iran's Cooperation with the IAEA:** Iran is attempting to discourage the E3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) from imposing snapback sanctions by threatening to suspend Iran's newly agreed-upon agreement with the IAEA if sanctions are imposed.
4. **Transitional Challenges in Syria:** The Syrian transitional government's attempt to reconcile Housing, Land, and Property violations in a Damascus suburb highlights the broader challenges that Damascus faces during Syria's recovery from Assad's rule and the civil war.



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- 2 **QATAR.** Qatar hosted an emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha on September 15 to discuss the recent Israeli strikes in Doha. No Gulf state, including Qatar, has made any tangible moves to punish Israel for the strikes.
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## Iran

**French diplomatic sources speaking to French media said that Israeli intelligence assesses that US and Israeli airstrikes during the Israel-Iran War severely degraded Iran's ability to produce a nuclear weapon in the short term.** An unspecified French diplomatic source told French



media outlet *Le Monde* on September 13 that Israeli intelligence assessed in early September that US and Israeli airstrikes destroyed Iran's centrifuge manufacturing sites and uranium enrichment facilities, particularly at Fordow and Natanz.[35] The French source added that Israel assessed that Iran lacks the necessary equipment to begin rebuilding its nuclear weapons program in the short term, though Iran could rebuild its nuclear program over an unspecified longer period.[36] Israeli intelligence also assessed that Iran has maintained "all" of its technical expertise despite Israel's assassinations of more than a dozen scientists associated with Iran's nuclear program.[37] The Israeli assessments are consistent with an Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) report from early September, which noted that US and Israeli strikes destroyed or rendered inoperable all of the 20,000 Iranian centrifuges that Iran had installed across its three declared enrichment facilities.[38] The Israeli assessments and ISIS report also agree that Iran retains approximately 450 kg of highly enriched uranium in gaseous form.[39]

## Iraq

**Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) head Brigadier General Ahmed Reza Radan discussed Iran-Iraq security cooperation with several Iraqi officials in Baghdad on September 13.** Radan discussed strengthening border security and law enforcement cooperation with Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh and several other Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) officials, including Chief of Staff Abdul Aziz al Muhammadawi (Abu Fadak).[40] LEC police forces helped Iranian-backed Iraqi militias in the PMF violently suppress protests in Iraq in 2019.[41] Radan separately discussed security cooperation with Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al Shammari.[42] Radan's discussions with Iraqi officials in part reflect Iranian concerns about Iranian internal security. Iran views Iraqi Kurdistan as a rear area from which anti-regime Kurdish groups can operate in Iran, which threatens the Iranian regime's stability.[43]

**Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah falsely claimed that it released Israeli-Russian dual citizen Elizabeth Tsurkov in return for various rewards, possibly in an attempt to portray Tsurkov's kidnapping as a success that conceals that the group released Israeli-Russian dual citizen Elizabeth Tsurkov under US and Iraqi federal government pressure.** Iranian-backed militias kidnapped Tsurkov, a Princeton University graduate student, in Baghdad in March 2023.[44] Kataib Hezbollah recently released Tsurkov on September 9.[45] A Kataib Hezbollah source claimed to Agence France Press (AFP) on September 10 that Tsurkov was released in exchange for a US withdrawal from Iraq.[46] This withdrawal is already underway, independent of Tsurkov's release.[47] Other Iranian-backed Iraqi sources have provided other conflicting accounts. One source claimed that the militias exchanged Tsurkov for a Lebanese Hezbollah member.[48] These accounts have since been disputed by multiple more reliable sources.[49] Multiple unspecified Iraqi government advisers and militia members told Saudi media on September 13 that US and Iraqi government pressure "forced" Kataib Hezbollah to release Tsurkov.[50] Unspecified sources close to the Iraqi government confirmed to AFP on September 13 that there was no deal to release Tsurkov and that Kataib Hezbollah released Tsurkov after bowing to "pressure." [51] It is unclear how or through which mechanism the United States or the Iraqi government applied pressure on Kataib Hezbollah to release Tsurkov. The United States has recently pressured the Iraqi government to disarm Iranian-backed Iraqi militias by threatening to impose sanctions on Iraq, however.[52]

The conflicting accounts from Iraqi militia sources indicate that Kataib Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed Iraqi groups lacked coordination in their messaging campaign. This is emblematic of other coordination and command failures, such as the inability of the Iraqi militias to stop the unapproved and uncoordinated rocket attacks during the Israel-Iran War, which indicates that Kataib Hezbollah or other Iranian-backed Iraqi groups lacked coordination in their attempt to paint Tsurkov's kidnapping as a

success for the Axis of Resistance.[53] A Kataib Hezbollah source told AFP on September 10 that Tsurkov was released in exchange for a peaceful US withdrawal from Iraq.[54] It is unlikely that this report is accurate because the US withdrawal was already underway by the time Kataib Hezbollah released Tsurkov.[55] Other Iranian-backed Iraqi sources have provided conflicting statements from Kataib Hezbollah. Iraqi sources told IRGC-affiliated media on September 10 that Tsurkov was exchanged for Lebanese national Imad Amhaz and an unidentified “Axis of Resistance” prisoner.[56]

## Syria

**Damascus has reportedly asked Turkey to delay any military action against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) amid increasing Turkish frustration over the pace of the SDF’s integration into the Syrian state.** An unspecified senior Syrian official told Reuters on September 15 that Turkey “support[s]” military action against the SDF but that Damascus has asked Turkey to delay such action to allow more time for negotiations.[57] The Syrian official noted that Turkey is “growing impatient” with the SDF’s limited progress toward implementing the SDF and government’s March 10 agreement.[58] Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan remarked during a conference in Italy on September 13 that SDF is “dragging its feet” in advancing the agreement, but Turkey is currently giving both Damascus and the SDF an opportunity to “resolve” their issues.[59] Fidan said that there may be no “alternative” if the situation “deteriorate[s],” however.[60] The unspecified Syrian official claimed that “the deadline” is “essentially until the end of the year,” which is likely in reference to a deadline that Turkey issued to the Syrian government.[61] Damascus has long demanded that the SDF complete its integration into the Syrian state by the end of 2025, and Turkey may be threatening Turkish intervention along this timeline to both directly threaten the SDF and encourage the Syrian government to increase political and military pressure on the SDF.[62]

Damascus likely remains committed to negotiations with the SDF despite the lack of progress toward implementing the agreement. Syrian Transitional President Ahmed al Shara told Syrian state media on September 13 that he has done “everything” to prevent a “battle or war” with the SDF, likely in reference to efforts from Damascus—both recently and in January 2025—to delay Turkish military action against the SDF to allow negotiations to continue.[63] Shara is unlikely to support any military action that would destabilize Syria, such as a large-scale Turkish and Turkish-backed offensive against the SDF in the northeast. Shara said that he will not “give up an inch” of Syrian territory, however.[64]

## Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis have launched one ballistic missile and four drones targeting Israel since September 12. The Houthis claimed that they launched a “Palestine 2” missile containing a cluster munition to target “sensitive targets” in Tel Aviv on September 13.[65] The Houthis previously claimed to fire a cluster munition targeting Israel on September 3.[66] The Houthis also claimed on September 15 that they launched three drones targeting Ramon Airport in Eilat and one drone targeting an unspecified military strike in the Negev.[67] The IDF stated that a hostile “aircraft” activated alerts over Eilat and in Be’er Ora, which is about 15km north of Eilat.[68] The IDF later stated that a false identification had activated the alerts.[69]

# Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*

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Endnotes



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# Iran Update, September 16, 2025



**Benjamin Schmida, Ben Rezaei, Ria Reddy, Kelly Campa, Nidal Morrison, Adham Fattah, Carolyn Moorman, Andie Parry, Brian Carter**

## Toplines

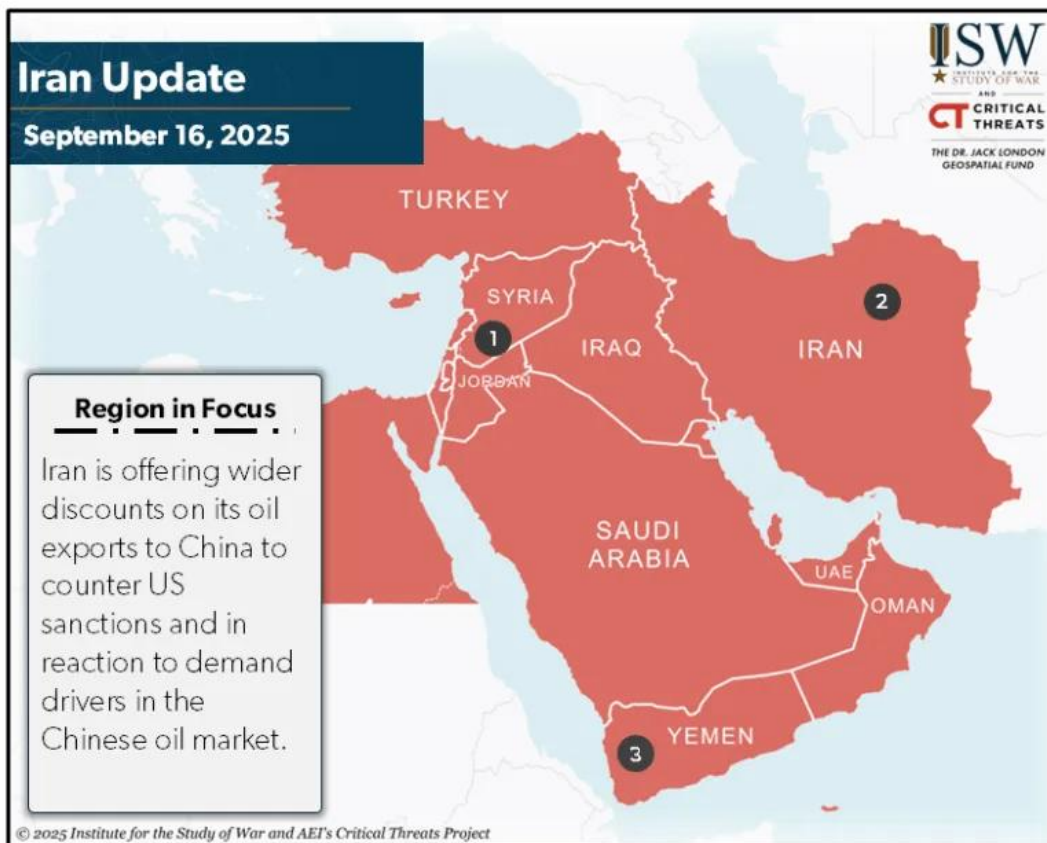
**Comments from sources involved in ongoing Syria-Israel security negotiations indicate that a security agreement between the two countries is currently very unlikely, despite US pressure.** Reuters reported on September 16 that the United States is pressuring the Syrian transitional government to accelerate negotiations with Israel for a limited security pact ahead of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 23.[1] This limited security pact would reportedly not include Israel-Syria normalization. US pressure has not resolved fundamental challenges to the current negotiations, however. The Syrian transitional government seeks to reinstate the 1974 demilitarized buffer zone between the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and Syria, curb Israeli incursions and airstrikes in Syria, and secure an Israeli withdrawal from recently seized territory in southern Syria, according to nine sources involved in the talks.[2] Syrian sources said the proposal for a security pact will not address the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, which will be handled “in the future.”[3] US sources said that “even a modest agreement would be a feat” due to Israel’s hardened stance in negotiations.[4] The US sources added that the Syrian transitional government is in a weakened position after intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province in July “inflamed calls for partition.”[5] Unspecified sources said to Reuters that Israel would be reluctant to give up recently occupied Syrian territory, and an Israeli security source confirmed that “Israel is not offering much.”[6] Israel’s negotiating position further narrows the prospect of a near-term security agreement due to the domestic political constraints that Shara faces. An Israeli source said Israel proposed to US Special Envoy Thomas Barrack that Israel would withdraw from southern Syria in exchange for Syria relinquishing its claim to the Golan Heights.[7] Syrian sources said that President Ahmad al Shara has rejected this proposal since “any compromise on the Golan would mean the end of his rule.”[8]

A Syrian military official separately told Agence France-Presse (AFP) on September 16 that Syrian government forces withdrew all “heavy weapons” from southern Syria, where Israel has repeatedly demanded a demilitarized zone.[9] A southern Syrian journalist confirmed this claim.[10] A Syrian diplomatic source added that the Syrian military has withdrawn heavy weapons northwards out of southwestern Syria to a line 10 kilometers south of Damascus.[11] A Syrian diplomatic source told AFP that Israeli and Syrian officials will meet in Baku, Azerbaijan, on September 19, but the source did not specify attendees.[12] Israel and Syria previously held bilateral negotiations in Paris on August 19, where the two sides discussed security arrangements in southern Syria and a previously rejected Israeli proposal for a humanitarian corridor that connects Israel to Suwayda Province.[13]



## Key Takeaways

1. **Syria-Israel Negotiations:** Comments from sources involved in ongoing Syria-Israel security negotiations indicate that a security agreement between the two countries is currently very unlikely, despite US pressure. Reuters reported on September 16 that the United States is pressuring the Syrian transitional government to accelerate negotiations with Israel for a limited security pact ahead of the United Nations General Assembly on September 23.
2. **Iran and the Gulf:** Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani met with senior Saudi officials in Riyadh on September 16, likely as part of a broader Iranian effort to dissuade Gulf states from cooperating with the United States or Israel following Israel's September 9 strike in Doha. Larijani met with Saudi officials, including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman, to discuss the "future of the region" and economic and defense cooperation.
3. **Chinese Imports of Iranian Oil:** Iran is offering wider discounts on its oil exports to China to counter US sanctions and in reaction to demand drivers in the Chinese oil market.
4. **Israeli Strikes in Yemen:** The Israel Defense Forces Air Force struck Houthi shipping infrastructure at Hudaydah Port on September 16, which the Houthis had repaired since the IDF's last strikes on the port in July 2025. A Yemen analyst reported that Israel struck three recently repaired piers at the port.



- 1 **Syria.** Comments from sources involved in ongoing Syria-Israel security negotiations indicate that a security agreement between the two countries is currently very unlikely, despite US pressure. Reuters reported on September 16 that the United States is pressuring the Syrian transitional government to accelerate negotiations with Israel for a limited security pact ahead of the United Nations General Assembly on September 23.
- 2 **Iran.** Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani met with senior Saudi officials in Riyadh on September 16, likely as part of a broader Iranian effort to dissuade Gulf states from cooperating with the United States or Israel following Israel's September 9 strike in Doha. Larijani met with Saudi officials, including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman, to discuss the "future of the region" and economic and defense cooperation.
- 3 **Yemen.** The Israel Defense Forces Air Force struck Houthi shipping infrastructure at Hudaydah Port on September 16 that the Houthis had repaired since the IDF's last strikes on the port in July 2025. A Yemen analyst reported that Israel struck three recently repaired piers at the port.

## Iran

**Unspecified gunmen attacked an Iranian security force vehicle on September 16 in Khash, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, killing two police officers and wounding another officer.[14]** The gunmen stopped the police vehicle on the Khash-Zahedan highway.[15] The attackers' identities and motives remain unknown, and no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. The attack follows a series of recent Jaish al Adl attacks in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, however.[16] Jaish al Adl is a Baloch, Salafi-jihadi militant group that frequently attacks Iranian security forces in southeastern Iran.

**The United States sanctioned two Iranian financial facilitators and over a dozen Hong Kong- and United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based individuals and entities on September 16 for funding the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force and the Iranian Defense and**

**Armed Forces Logistics Ministry (MODAFL).**[17] The US Treasury Department stated on September 16 that two Iranian facilitators laundered more than \$100 million in oil revenue through cryptocurrency, front companies, and exchange houses to support Iran's weapons programs and the Axis of Resistance.

- **Alireza Derakhshan**

- Managed UAE- and Hong Kong-based front companies, including Alpa Trading – FZCO, Alpa Investment LLC, Alpa Hong Kong Limited, Paul AD Sons Trading FZE, Unique Station Trading, Minato Investment LLC, Minato Goods Wholesalers, Minato Commercial Brokers, Everest Investment LLC, and Alliance First Trading LLC.
- Facilitated illicit flows of funds on behalf of MODAFL and the IRGC, with transactions worth hundreds of millions of dollars.
- Remained in contact with a sanctioned currency exchanger who manages Powell Raw Materials Trading LLC and Powell International FZE.

- **Arash Eskati Alivand**

- Coordinated cryptocurrency transactions and oil brokerage activities for the Iranian government.
- Worked with the al Qaterji Company, a Syria-based IRGC Quds Force oil partner, to facilitate payments and sales.
- Arranged a payment from Minato Commercial Brokers in 2023 (a Derakhshan-linked company) to an al Qaterji account.
- Conducted transactions worth millions of dollars with Hezbollah-linked money changer Tawfiq Muhammad Said al Law, who provided Hezbollah with digital wallets to receive funds tied to IRGC Quds Force commodity sales.

**A combination of larger oil stock levels at independent Chinese refineries and US sanctions on Chinese refineries using Iranian oil is forcing Iran to offer wider discounts on its oil exports to China.**[18]

The United States imposed sanctions on Qingdao Port Haiye Dongjiakou Oil Products on August 21 for receiving Iranian oil on designated tankers.[19] The Haiye Dongjiakou terminal, one of China's largest handlers of Iranian crude, suspended operations shortly after the US sanctions.[20] Kpler reported that crude imports at Dongjiakou Port fell 65 percent in September after the terminal suspended operations. Reuters reported that demand for Iranian oil in China dropped because oil stockpiles in Shandong had reached record levels, which made refining at smaller refineries less profitable. Decreased Chinese government oil quotas further discouraged oil buyers.[21] Iranian suppliers responded to the slump in demand caused by high oil stockpiles, government quotes, and US sanctions by offering deeper discounts to buyers in the PRC, with Iranian light crude trading about \$6 below Brent in mid-September compared to \$3 below Brent in March. Kpler predicted that traders will divert Iranian oil imports to another hub in the Qingdao Port area in response to sanctions on the Dongjiakou terminal.[22]

**Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani met with senior Saudi officials in Riyadh on September 16, likely as part of a broader Iranian effort to dissuade Gulf states from cooperating with the United States or Israel following Israel's September 9 strike in Doha.**[23] Larijani met with Saudi officials, including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman, to discuss the "future of the region" and economic and defense cooperation.[24] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iranian officials are using the strikes in Doha to frame the United States as an unreliable security guarantor for Gulf states in an effort to break up the nascent anti-Iran coalition in the region.[25] Larijani urged regional Islamic countries on September 13 to establish a "joint operations room" against Israel to avoid their "own annihilation." [26] The recommendation for a joint operations room is unlikely to generate any support in Gulf capitals because

of Iran's adversarial relationship with the Gulf states, most of which have all been attacked by Iran or its proxies within the last five years. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian separately met with Qatari and Iraqi officials on the sidelines of the emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha on September 15.[27]

**Iranian Artesh Strategic Studies Center head Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan stated on September 16 that Iran will engage Israel and the United States in areas beyond missile operations in future conflicts.[28]** The Artesh Strategic Studies Center is responsible for conducting research to improve the Artesh's strategic plans.[29] Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh similarly stated in August 2025 that Iran has "tools" other than missiles that it has not used yet.[30] Iranian leaders likely learned lessons about the limitations of missile attacks on Israel from the Israel-Iran War and Iran's two large-scale missile attacks on Israel in April and October 2024.

## Iraq

**Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu discussed the development of Iraqi air defenses with senior Iraqi officials, but these discussions are unlikely to translate into Iraqi air defense purchases from Russia due to Russian constraints related to Ukraine.** Shoigu met with Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al Araj, Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al Mashhadani, Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee Chairperson Dilan Ghafoor Saleh, and several additional Parliamentary Security and Defense Committee members in Baghdad on September 16.[31] An unidentified Iraqi government source told Kurdish media on September 16 that Shoigu will hold several meetings with senior Iraqi political and military leaders during his two-day visit.[32] Shoigu will also reportedly sign contracts to "arm" the Iraqi army and discuss the development of air defense systems to protect Iraqi airspace after US forces fully withdraw in September 2026.[33] Shoigu's delegation reportedly includes the heads of Russian arms manufacturing companies.[34] Iranian-backed Iraqi politicians and militia figures have long called on the Iraqi government to procure advanced air defense systems to protect Iraqi airspace.[35] Russia faces constraints on transferring military equipment to its partners, including Iran, as it wages war against Ukraine.[36]

## Syria

**A likely Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighter executed a General Security Service (GSS) member in eastern Daraa on September 14.[37]** Syrian media circulated a video that depicted an unknown fighter executing a GSS member.[38] The fighter wore a patch commonly affiliated with ISIS and stated in the footage that the GSS member attacked "the soldiers of the caliphate." [39] Daraa-based media reported that the GSS member's body was found in Nahta, eastern Daraa, on September 14.[40] ISIS has not claimed any attacks in Daraa Province since the fall of the regime, but ISIS has long maintained a presence in southern Syria, particularly during the civil war.[41] ISIS conducted two attacks in late May 2025 targeting transitional government forces in eastern Suwayda Province, demonstrating that ISIS retains a presence along ground lines of communication between the central Syrian desert and southern Syria.[42]

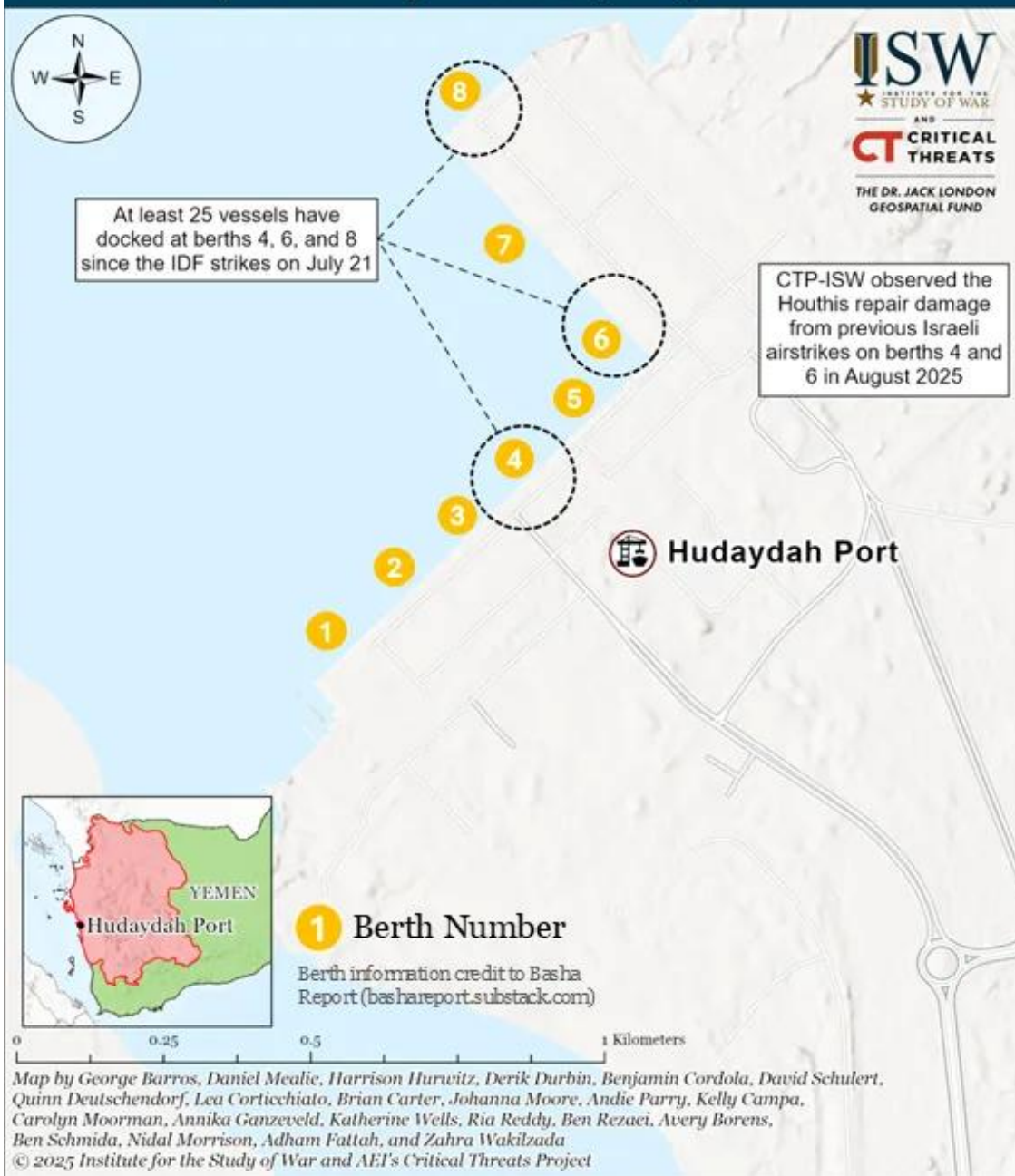
**The United States, Jordan, and Syria developed a plan on September 16 to resolve the intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province, but the roadmap will likely require buy-in from the newly formed Suwayda Autonomous Government for effective implementation.** US Special Envoy Thomas Barrack, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani developed a "road map" for Suwayda Province that "guarantees rights, supports justice,

promotes societal reconciliation, and paves the way for healing wounds.”[43] The Syrian government committed to an independent investigation of crimes committed in Suwayda Province and to holding all perpetrators accountable under Syrian law under the road map.[44] The Ministry of Interior will deploy personnel along the Suwayda-Damascus road and along the Suwayda Province border as part of the road map. The government also agreed to withdraw all tribal fighters from Suwayda Province who deployed to Suwayda from other parts of Syria during intercommunal violence there in July 2025.[45] Many of these tribal fighters declared their loyalty to the government and placed themselves under the government’s command in July 2025.[46] The road map seeks to set up short and medium-term security and administrative arrangements to facilitate the eventual integration of Suwayda Province into the Syrian state.[47] The road map is similar to a previous three-phase ceasefire agreement, which stalled in its third stage after the Suwayda leadership declared an autonomous government on August 6.[48] The Suwayda Autonomous Government established an alternative military structure on August 23, known as the “National Guard,” which has further complicated reintegration negotiations.[49] The Suwayda Autonomous Government has not commented on the road map at the time of this writing. The successful implementation of the road map for Suwayda Province requires adherence from Suwayda’s alternative governance structures and cannot proceed without it because these structures still control much of Suwayda Province.

## Arabian Peninsula

**An unspecified Israeli intelligence official told Axios that Israeli strikes killed “none” of the “top Hamas leaders” that Israel targeted on September 9 in Doha.**[50] Axios reported on September 16 that the Israeli strikes killed five Hamas leaders and a Qatari security guard but that none of the “key targets” at the meeting were killed.[51] Regional media immediately following the strikes reported that Israel targeted Hamas’ Gaza Strip leader Khalil al Hayya, West Bank leader Zaher Jabarin, and former Political Bureau Chairman Khaled Meshaal.[52]**The Israel Defense Force (IDF) Air Force struck Houthi shipping infrastructure at Hudaydah Port on September 16, which the Houthis had repaired since the IDF’s last strikes on the port in July 2025.** A Yemen analyst reported that Israel struck three recently repaired piers at the port.[53] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent, citing an unspecified Israeli security source, confirmed that the strikes targeted the port’s docks in order to prevent Houthi attempts to rebuild the port.[54] Israeli airstrikes targeting Hudaydah Port since May 2025 have rendered several port berths inoperable, but commercially available satellite imagery from early August showed the Houthis conducting repairs to at least three berths damaged by Israeli strikes.[55] Commercially available maritime data from between July 21 and September 16 confirmed that at least 25 vessels, including cargo ships, entered Hudaydah Port and docked exclusively at three berths, two of which CTP-ISW has observed the Houthis repair in August 2025. It is unclear at this time if the IDF struck these three operational berths, but such an action would be consistent with the Yemen analyst’s report that the IDF struck three recently repaired piers.[56] The Houthis heavily rely on Hudaydah Port to generate revenue through oil exports and to import commercial goods.[57] The Israeli security source also stated that the IDF aims to continue the “naval blockade” that Israel has imposed on the Houthis in recent months.[58]

## Active Berths at Hudaydah Port Between July 21 and September 16, 2025



**The Houthis claimed to target Israel with one ballistic missile and an unspecified number of drones on September 16 after Israel struck Hudaydah Port.[59]** The IDF said it intercepted one missile launched from Yemen.[60]

## Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*



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# Iran Update, September 17, 2025



**Kelly Campa, Ben Rezaei, Carolyn Moorman, Nidal Morrison, Adham Fattah, Johanna Moore, Andie Parry, Brian Carter**

## Toplines

**The E3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) stated on September 17 that Iran has not taken any concrete steps required to delay the snapback mechanism.**[1] The E3 triggered the 30-day Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback process on August 28.[2] The UN Security Council will reimpose sanctions on Iran when the 30-day process concludes on September 27 unless Iran meets the criteria laid out under the JCPOA. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi held a phone call with the foreign ministers of the E3 and EU Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas on September 17 to discuss snapback sanctions.[3] The E3 previously offered to extend the deadline by six months if Iran restored full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), resumed negotiations with the United States, and accounted for its 60 percent enriched uranium stockpile.[4] Iran signed an agreement with the IAEA on September 9 that set procedures for inspections on all Iranian nuclear facilities, but only within parameters set by Iran.[5] The agreement also did not provide a timeline for inspections or clarification about the whereabouts of its remaining stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium.[6] Araghchi stated on September 11 that the evaluation of enriched material buried under the rubble is still under review and will be submitted to the Supreme National Security Council, which will make the final decision based on Iran's security concerns. European states remain unconvinced that Iran's steps with the IAEA are serious.[7] Kallas separately warned on September 17 that the "window for finding a diplomatic solution" on Iran's nuclear issue is closing and added that Iran must take "credible steps" to meet E3 demands.[8] Germany's Foreign Ministry similarly stated that Iran has yet to take "reasonable and precise actions." [9] British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper also stated that Iran has not taken the necessary steps to avoid the reimposition of snapback sanctions and emphasized that the UK needs "concrete action." [10]

**The US State Department designated Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, Kataib Imam Ali, and Harakat Ansar Allah al Awfiya as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) on September 17.**[11] These four militias are part of the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, which is a coalition of Iranian-backed militias that consistently conducted attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria between October 2023 and January 2024.[12] US federal law makes it a crime for any person in the United States or subject to US jurisdiction to knowingly provide "material support or resources," including financial services, training, or weapons, to a designated FTO.[13] The United States Treasury Department previously designated these militias and their leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT).[14] The US Treasury Department has the authority to block the assets of SDGTs and any individual or entity that provides them with support or services.[15] US individuals or entities are also prohibited, with limited exemptions, from engaging in any transaction



with a designated SDGT.[16] These designations come as the United States continues to pressure the Iraqi government to limit Iranian influence in Iraq and disarm Iran-backed militias by threatening sanctions.[17]

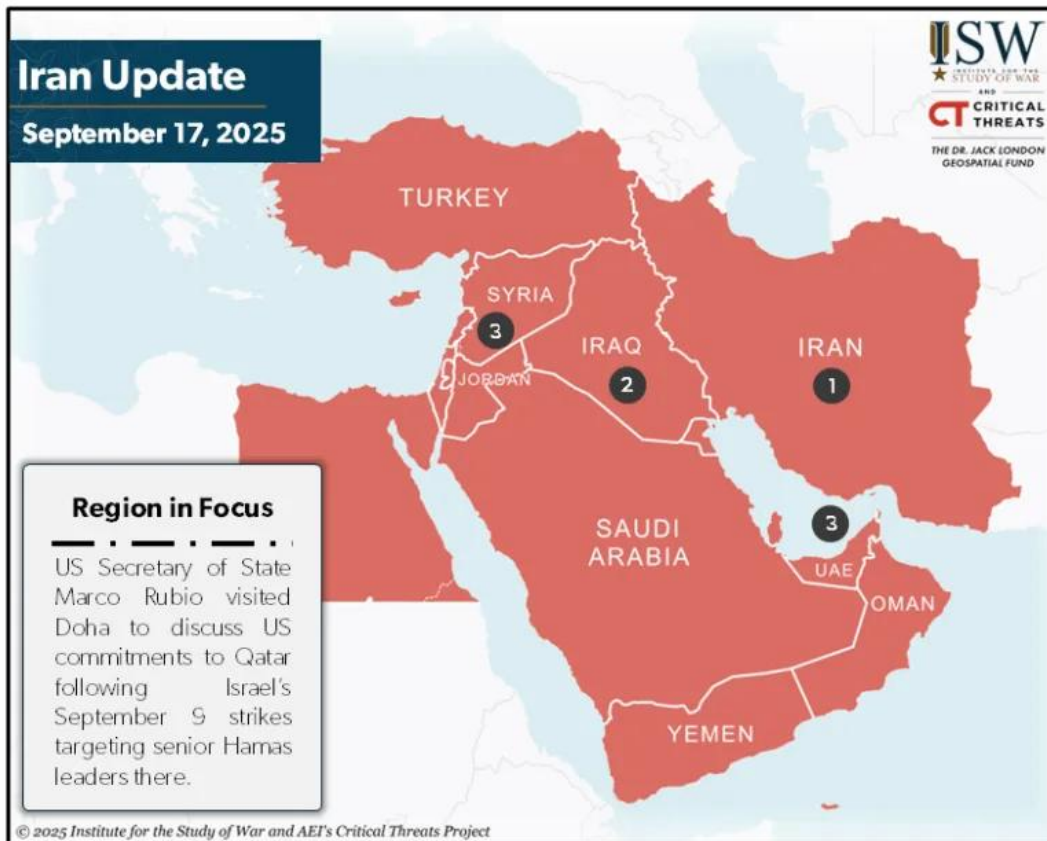
**The Suwayda Autonomous Government rejected a US-Syrian-Jordanian roadmap to resolve intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province.** The rejection will complicate the transitional government's effort to reconcile with the province and eventually integrate it into the state. The United States, Syria, and Jordan announced a plan to "guarantee rights" and "promote societal reconciliation" in Suwayda Province on September 16.[18] The anti-government Suwaydawis were not included in the creation of the roadmap, which decreased the likelihood that the roadmap would succeed. The roadmap seeks to set up short and medium-term security and administrative arrangements to facilitate the province's eventual integration into the Syrian state and commits the Syrian government to forming an independent commission for crimes committed in Suwayda.[19] The autonomous Suwayda government's judicial committee denounced the US-Syrian-Jordanian plan on September 16.[20] The body criticized the roadmap's reliance on a "corrupt" Syrian judicial system and on the Syrian government as a "neutral party." [21] The committee—in tandem with its military wing, which is comprised of about 40 Druze militias—provides administrative services and security to communities in central, southern, and eastern Suwayda, while pro-government forces maintain control in Suwayda's northern and western countrysides.[22] The committee argued in its denunciation of the roadmap that the violence committed in Suwayda in July 2025 justified the people of Suwayda's right to "self-determination." [23] The committee noted that self-determination may include either "self-administration" or "secession" from Syria.[24] The Suwayda Autonomous Government's denunciation of the roadmap contrasts with reactions from Syrian government allies and other regional powers. France, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain all released statements welcoming the plan on September 16 and 17.[25]

The Druze leaders that the Syrian transitional government has partnered with for this roadmap likely do not hold the required influence in Suwayda to eclipse the popularity of the Suwayda Autonomous Government. The Syrian Interior Ministry appointed Druze militia leader Suleiman Abdul Baqi as Suwayda's security director on September 15.[26] Abdul Baqi formerly led the Ahrar Jabal al Arab Gathering, which is a prominent Druze militia that has remained aligned with the government.[27] Abdul Baqi, alongside Mudhafat al Karama leader Laith al Balous, has been one of the main Druze leaders to engage with the Syrian government since the fall of the regime. Both Abdul Baqi and Balous have reportedly lost significant local influence since the Suwayda violence in July 2025, and many Druze reportedly "publicly revile" them as traitors for their sympathy for the government.[28] Pro-Hijri fighters burned down Abdul Baqi's house and abducted his father in late August 2025, which demonstrated the degree of hostility between the two sides.[29] The pro-Hijri factions' intimidation of Abdul Baqi suggests that he does not retain any favor with the factions that have joined the Suwayda parallel government's administrative and military structures.

Reported Israeli support for anti-government Druze factions will also complicate the government's efforts to reconcile with the Druze community. Two unspecified senior Druze commanders told Reuters on September 16 that Israel was helping to "unify" Druze factions in Suwayda and had delivered arms and ammunition to them since intercommunal violence erupted there in July 2025.[30] The two Druze sources and a Western intelligence source also said that Israel was paying salaries for "many of the roughly 3,000" anti-government Druze militia members.[31] Hijri prominently called upon Israel and the international community for support during the violence in July 2025.[32]

## Key Takeaways

1. **Snapback Sanctions:** The E3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) stated that Iran has not taken any concrete steps required to delay the snapback mechanism. EU Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas separately warned that the “window for finding a diplomatic solution” on Iran’s nuclear issue is closing and added that Iran must take “credible steps” to meet E3 demands.
2. **US Sanctions Designations:** The US State Department designated Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, Kataib Imam Ali, and Harakat Ansar Allah al Awfiya as Foreign Terrorist Organizations on September 17. These militias and their leaders were previously designated as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.
3. **Syrian State Formation:** The Suwayda Autonomous Government rejected a US-Syrian-Jordanian roadmap to resolve intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province. The rejection will complicate the transitional government’s effort to reconcile with the province and eventually integrate it into the state.



- 1 **IRAN:** The E3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) stated that Iran has not taken any concrete steps required to delay the snapback mechanism. EU Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas separately warned that the “window for finding a diplomatic solution” on Iran’s nuclear issue is closing and added that Iran must take “credible steps” to meet E3 demands.
- 2 **IRAQ:** The US State Department designated Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, Kataib Imam Ali, and Harakat Ansar Allah al Awfiya as Foreign Terrorist Organizations on September 17. These militias and their leaders were previously designated as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.
- 3 **SYRIA:** The Suwayda Autonomous Government rejected a US-Syrian-Jordanian roadmap to resolve intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province. The rejection will complicate the transitional government’s effort to reconcile with the province and eventually integrate it into the state.

## Iran

**Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi visited the tactical headquarters of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps’ (IRGC) Ground Forces on September 16 to evaluate battle readiness.[33]** Mousavi expressed satisfaction with the IRGC Ground Forces’ preparation.[34] Mousavi emphasized that Iran should maximize the mobilization of the Iranian population to enhance Iranian deterrence.[35] The IRGC Ground Forces primarily focus on internal security, but in recent years have projected more power abroad.[36]

**Iran executed a man whom it claimed was an Israeli spy on September 16.[37]** An Iranian media outlet reported that the man provided the coordinates of important infrastructure facilities in

telecommunications and security sectors to Mossad in exchange for cryptocurrency payments.[38] Iran has arrested hundreds of "Israeli spies" since the beginning of the Israel-Iran War to address the regime's fear of real and perceived Israeli penetration in Iran.[39] Iranian authorities executed an Iranian nuclear scientist on August 6 for reportedly providing Israel with information about another nuclear scientist whom Israel killed during the war, for example.[40]

## Iraq

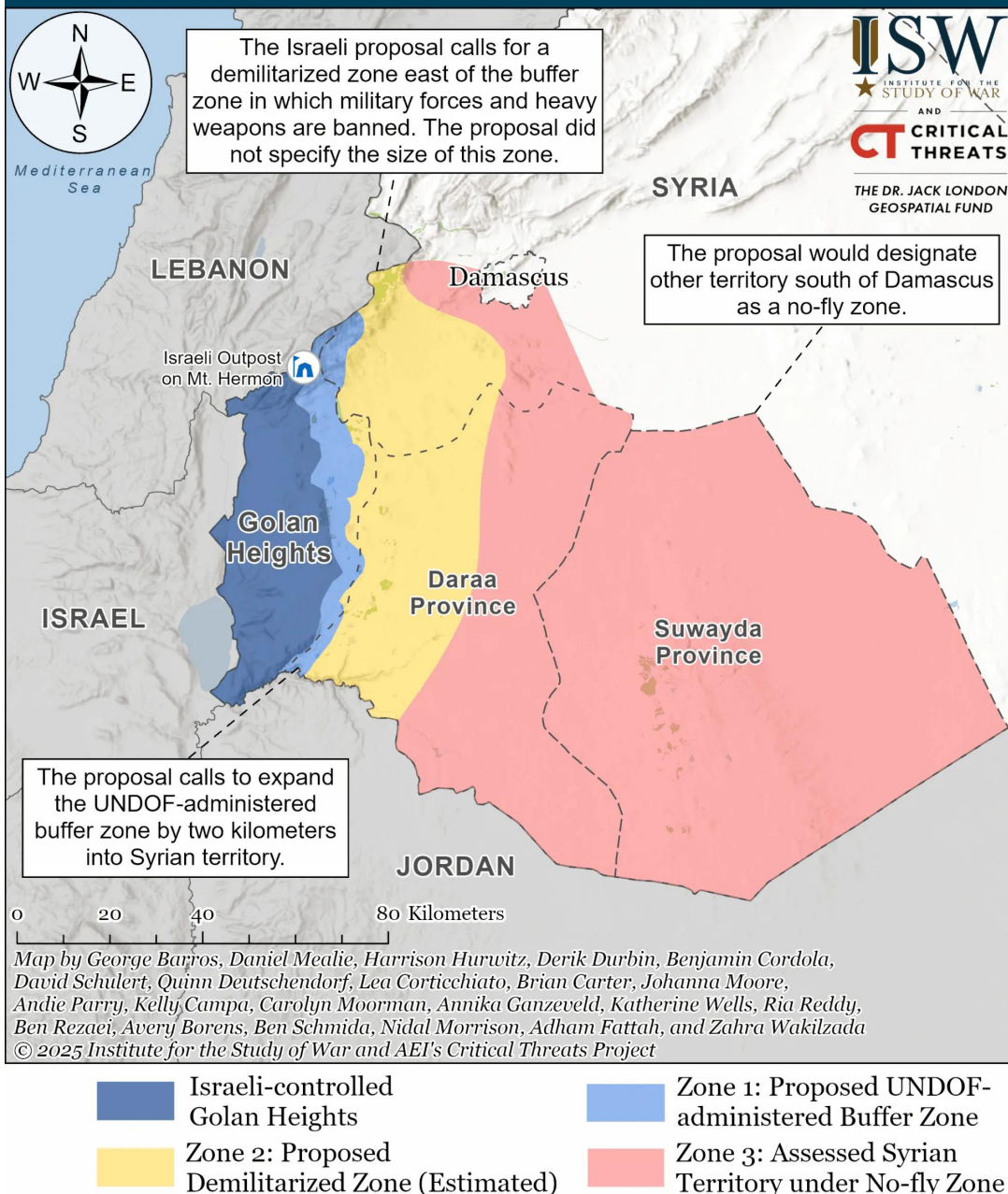
**Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are continuing to block Saudi investment in Iraq out of concern for the negative influence that increased Saudi influence could have on Iranian-backed power in Iraq.**[41] Political sources told Iraqi media that Iraqi militias disrupted a parliament session on September 16 to remove a bill that would approve over \$75,000,000 of planned Saudi investment in Iraq.[42] The law would support Saudi energy and infrastructure investment in the Iraqi desert along the Iraq-Saudi border. A parliamentarian from Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah's Haqq Movement said that the law harms the Iraqi national interest and added that over 100 unspecified parliamentarians have signed a petition to block the inclusion of the law on the parliamentary agenda. The Kataib Hezbollah-affiliated parliamentarian previously introduced petitions to pressure the Parliament Speaker to remove this law from consideration in previous parliament sessions.[43] The Iraqi federal government has sought to pass this law through the Iraqi Parliament since former Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi's premiership from 2020 to 2022.[44] Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki's State of Law Coalition and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq head Qais al Khazali have both previously rejected Saudi attempts to invest in Iraq as a threat to Iraqi sovereignty.[45] It is notable that the Iraqi federal government has provided Iranian-backed Iraqi militias with state contracts to develop land along the Iraq-Saudi border via the militia-controlled Muhandis General Engineering Company.[46] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have also used areas along the Iraq-Saudi border to conduct attacks targeting the Gulf states.[47] Iran remains interested in maintaining its own influence and that of its Axis of Resistance partners in Iraq.

## Syria

**Israel reportedly presented Syria with a proposal for a security agreement that would establish three demilitarized zones in southern Syria with increasingly restrictive rules depending on their distance from Israel.**[48] Two unspecified sources told Axios on September 16 that Israeli officials presented the proposal to Syrian officials several weeks ago. The agreement is intended to replace the 1974 disengagement agreement between the countries, according to the sources. The agreement would additionally designate a no-fly zone for Syrian aircraft from Damascus to the Israeli border. One source noted that Israel's "central principle" of the plan is to maintain an air corridor to Iran through Syria in order to allow for possible Israeli strikes in Iran in the future.

- **Zone 1:** The current buffer zone between Israel and Quneitra Province will be extended by two kilometers into Syrian territory.
- **Zone 2:** An unspecified area adjacent to the buffer zone and "closest" to the Israeli border that Syrian military forces and heavy weapons will be unable to access. The Syrian General Security Service (GSS) and police will be able to access Zone 2. It is unclear how much territory is included in the second zone.
- **Zone 3:** The area between the currently undefined border of the second zone and Damascus will be designated as a no-fly zone. It is unclear if military forces and heavy forces will be permitted.

## Reported Israeli Proposal for Demilitarized Southern Syria September 17, 2025



This Israeli proposal echoes Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's call to fully demilitarize southern Syria in February 2025.[49] The Israeli government has maintained such calls in the months since then and has conducted airstrikes targeting Syrian government forces who "violated" the sought-after demilitarized zone.[50] The Israeli proposal is based on Israel's 1979 peace agreement with Egypt that divided the Sinai Peninsula into three zones with differing levels of demilitarization, according to the two sources.[51]

Syrian officials are unlikely to agree to the Israeli proposal in its current form, as it contains no major Israeli concessions to Syrian demands. The Syrian transitional government seeks to reinstate the 1974 demilitarized buffer zone between the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights and Syria, curb Israeli incursions and airstrikes in Syria, and secure an Israeli withdrawal from recently seized territory in southern Syria, according to nine sources involved in the talks.[52] The Israeli proposal only partly addresses one of these concerns in that it proposes that Israeli forces would "gradually withdraw" from Syrian territory,

except the IDF's recently seized outpost on Syrian Mt. Hermon.[53] Damascus is formulating a counteroffer to the proposal, according to the sources.[54] Israeli and Syrian officials will meet in London on September 17 and in Baku on September 19 to continue to discuss the issue, but it is unlikely that the parties will agree to a proposal that resembles this outline in the near future.[55]

## Arabian Peninsula

**US Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited Doha to discuss US commitments to Qatar following Israel's September 9 strikes targeting senior Hamas leaders there.[56]** Rubio met with Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani on September 16 to discuss US-Qatari defense cooperation, ceasefire negotiations on Gaza, and the repercussions of Israel's strikes in Doha.[57] Rubio announced after the meeting that Qatar and the United States are finalizing an "enhanced defense cooperation agreement," but did not provide further details.[58] A Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesperson noted that the recent Israeli strikes "expedited" the need for a renewed defense agreement between Qatar and the United States.[59] The Qatari spokesperson added that the defense agreement would not be considered a new agreement.[60] The United States and Qatar previously expressed their discontent with the Israeli strikes in Qatar. Qatar is a major non-NATO US ally and houses the largest US military base in the Middle East.[61]

## Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

*Nothing significant to report.*

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# Iran Update, September 18, 2025



**Johanna Moore, Ben Rezaei, Avery Borens, Benjamin Schmida, Nidal Morrison, Kelly Campa, Ria Reddy, Brian Carter**

## Toplines

**Senior Iranian officials, including Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, met with Russian Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilyov in Tehran on September 18 to discuss energy cooperation, likely in an effort to address energy shortages in Iran.[1]**

Paknejad and Tsivilyov reviewed the Iran-Russia April 2025 agreement for Russia to export 55 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Iran annually via Azerbaijan.[2] Russian President Vladimir Putin previously stated in January 2025 that Russian gas deliveries to Iran would start at 2 billion cubic meters per year and could increase to 55 billion cubic meters annually.[3] Iran, and especially northern Iran, faces recurring gas shortages during the winter because Iran has limited gas storage capacity, and energy production is concentrated in the South Pars gas field in southern Iran.[4] Iranian media reported that Iran faces a potential steep decline in overall gas production over the next five to seven years.[5] Iranian officials may be concerned about potential unrest as a result of ongoing chronic energy shortages. Energy shortages have previously caused protests in northeastern Iran.[6] Recent energy shortages have forced the Iranian government to temporarily shut down offices, banks, schools, and government buildings.[7]

Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi also met with Tsivilyov and emphasized the importance of deepening bilateral defense cooperation amid Western sanctions.[8] These meetings reflect Iranian efforts to deepen strategic cooperation with Russia under the framework of the January 2025 Russo-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Agreement.

**French President Emmanuel Macron stated on September 18 that UN snapback sanctions on Iran are a “done deal” and will be reimposed at the end of September.[9]** Macron told Israeli media that Iran has failed to make serious commitments.[10] Iran reportedly presented the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) with a proposal earlier this week to extend the snapback deadline by several months in exchange for positive steps to curtail its nuclear program and an Iranian move to resume talks with the United States.[11] The E3 reportedly viewed the proposal as “insufficient,” according to a source familiar with the proposal.[12] The E3 triggered the 30-day Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback process on August 28.[13] The UN Security Council will reimpose snapback sanctions on Iran when the 30-day process concludes on September 27 unless Iran meets the criteria laid out under the JCPOA.

**Iran views Russia and China as critical to its efforts to rebuild its military and prepare for**

**future conflict.** Iranian Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS)-controlled outlet Defa Press published an article on September 15 discussing how Iran will benefit from an upcoming BRICS naval exercise.[14] BRICS, which is an international economic coalition comprised of the PRC, Russia, and others, was scheduled to conduct a combined naval exercise with Iran and others in November 2025, though BRICS has delayed the exercise indefinitely. This would mark the first combined exercise with Iranian participation since the Israel-Iran war. The Iranian article asserted that the exercise would help Iran develop “modern tactics” across multiple domains, test domestically produced weapons, and share weapons technology and intelligence with other exercise participants.[15] Indeed, combined exercises provide a controlled environment for militaries to test new tactics and equipment, enhance their interoperability, and learn from one another—all of which Tehran likely values heavily given its need to rebuild its military.

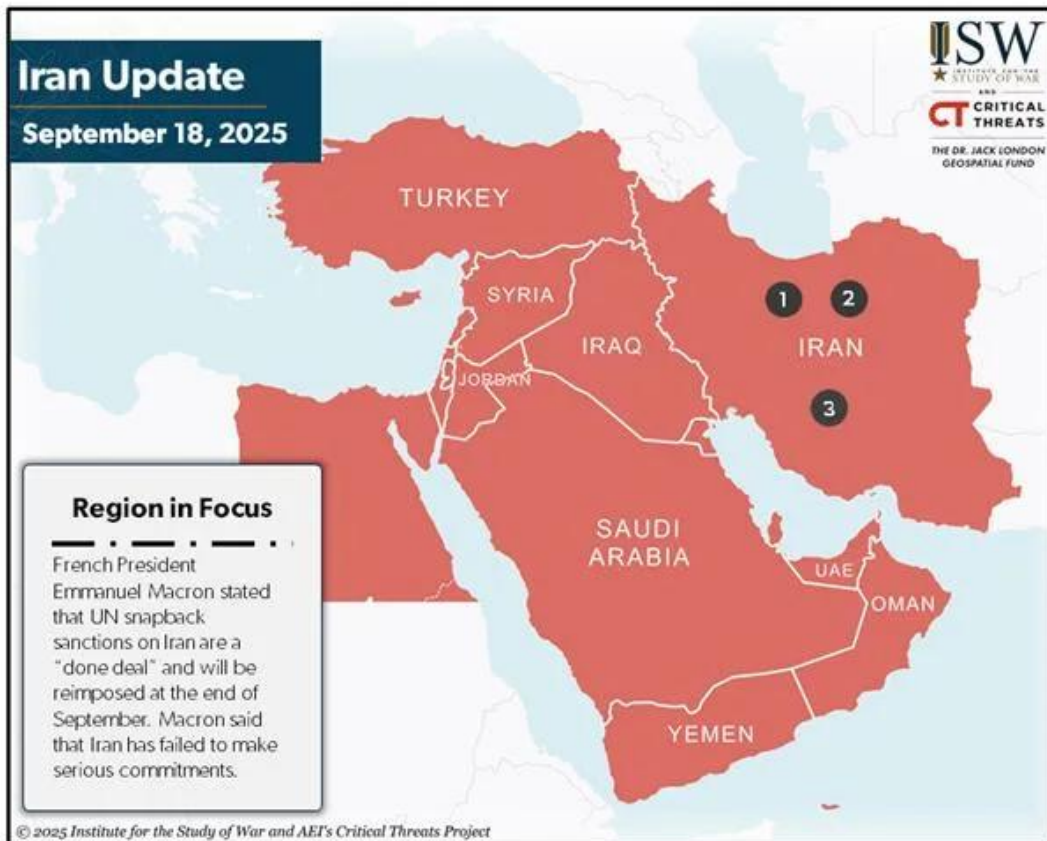
The Iranian discussion about the BRICS naval exercise came as Tehran has looked to the Adversary Entente for critical military and economic assistance. Iran has reportedly sought to buy advanced air defenses and fighter jets from the PRC and Russia in recent weeks.[16] Iran will need foreign help for the foreseeable future to reconstitute the damage that Israel inflicted upon Iranian air and air defense capabilities. Iranian officials and state media have separately emphasized in recent weeks the need to deepen economic cooperation with the PRC to withstand international sanctions.

**The Iranian military establishment has discussed acquiring Russian-made Krasukha-4 electronic warfare (EW) systems as part of the Iranian military reconstitution effort.** An Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS)-controlled outlet published an article on September 13 discussing efforts to strengthen Iranian air defense following the Israel-Iran war and focusing particularly on using Krasukha EW systems.[17] The Iranian military establishment has been very interested in improving its EW capabilities, particularly against the backdrop of the Russian war in Ukraine.[18] The Iranian leadership has more broadly emphasized the need to improve domestic defensive capabilities since the June 2025 Israel-Iran war.[19] Russia developed the 1L269 Krasukha in 2010 as a ground-based EW system built to neutralize low earth orbit (LEO) spy satellites, ground-based radars, airborne surveillance radars, and radar-guided ordinance at ranges between 150-300 kilometers.[20] Russia deployed the Krasukha-4 to Syria in 2015.[21] Commander of US Special Operations Command General Raymond Thomas reported in 2018 that Russian EW attacks in Syria had disrupted communications, EC-130s, and other equipment.[22] Satellite imagery captured in January 2024 showed that Iran had deployed a Krasukha-4 system to Bandar Abbas.[23] Israel struck military targets at Bandar Abbas during the June 2025 Israel-Iran war, though it is unclear whether the Krasukha systems were impacted.[24] Israel used F-35s during its strikes into Iran, which are equipped with advanced counter-electronic warfare capabilities and can likely evade the Krasukha-4.[25] The Iranian military establishment may therefore be interested in new Krasukha-4 systems to defend against Israeli drone operations. Israel launched a wave of drones at the onset of its strike campaign in Iran to suppress air defenses and electronic countermeasures and damage missile launchers.[26] Russia has used the Krasukha-4 EW system to defend against Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian military assets in the Russian rear and also explicitly credited the Krasukha-4 for the Russian ability to defend against Ukrainian ground-based counteroffensive operations in June 2023.[27] Iran is likely hoping to acquire the Krasukha-4 and integrate these operational lessons in future defensive operations against Israel.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Snapback Sanctions on Iran:** French President Emmanuel Macron stated on September 18 that UN snapback sanctions on Iran are a “done deal” and will be reimposed at the end of September. Macron told Israeli media that Iran has failed to make serious commitments. The UN Security Council will reimpose snapback sanctions on Iran when the 30-day process concludes on September 27 unless Iran meets the criteria laid out under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.
2. **Iran-Russia Energy Cooperation:** Senior Iranian officials, including Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad, met with Russian Energy Minister Sergey Tsivilyov in Tehran on September 18 to discuss energy cooperation, likely in an effort to address energy shortages in Iran. Iranian officials may be concerned about potential unrest as a result of ongoing chronic energy shortages.
3. **Iranian Military Cooperation with US Adversaries:** Iran views Russia and China as critical to its efforts to rebuild its military and prepare for future conflict. Iranian Armed Forces General Staff-controlled outlet Defa Press published an article on September 15 discussing how Iran will benefit from an upcoming BRICS naval exercise. The Iranian article asserted that the exercise would help Iran develop “modern tactics” across multiple domains, test domestically produced weapons, and share weapons technology and intelligence with other exercise participants.
4. **Iran-Russia Defense Cooperation:** The Iranian military establishment has discussed acquiring Russian-made Krasukha-4 electronic warfare (EW) systems as part of the Iranian military reconstitution effort. Iran is likely hoping to acquire the Krasukha-4 and integrate these operational lessons in future defensive operations against Israel.



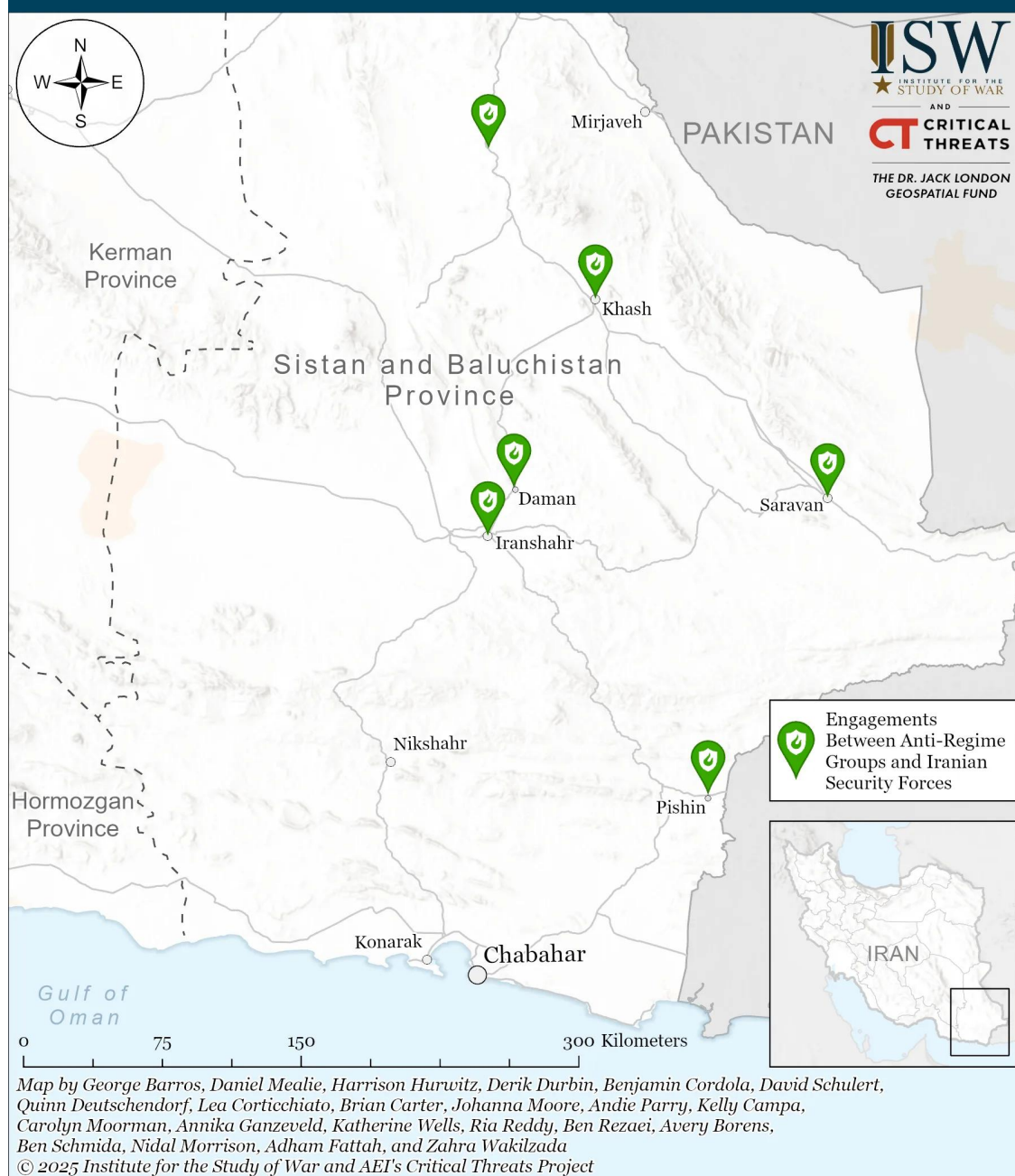


- 1 **IRAN.** French President Emmanuel Macron stated on September 18 that UN snapback sanctions on Iran are a "done deal" and will be reimposed at the end of September. Macron told Israeli media that Iran has failed to make serious commitments.
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## Iran

**The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces Quds Operational Base announced on September 18 that unspecified fighters fired small arms at and killed a Basij member in Iranshahr, Sistan and Baluchistan Province.[28]** The attack follows a series of recent Jaish al Adl attacks in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.[29] Jaish al Adl is a Baloch, Salafi-jihadi militant group that frequently attacks Iranian security forces in southeastern Iran.

## Anti-Regime Militant Activity in Sistan and Baluchistan Province Between August 15 and September 18, 2025



## Iraq

**Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada and Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba said it was an “honor” that the US State Department designated them as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).**[30] Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada Secretary General Abu Alaa al Walai said on September 17 that the FTO designation increases the group’s “honor and elevation.”[31] Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada spokesperson Kadhim al Fartusi claimed that the designation will not affect militia activity because the militia does not participate in “activities outside of Iraq.”[32] Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba military aide Abdul Qader al Karbalai similarly suggested on September 17 that the designation will not impact the group’s activities.[33] The US State Department designated both militias as FTOs on September 17.[34] Both groups are part of the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, which is a coalition of Iranian-backed militias that consistently conducted attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria between

October 2023 and January 2024.[35] US federal law makes it a crime for any person in the United States or subject to US jurisdiction to knowingly provide “material support or resources,” including financial services, training, or weapons, to a designated FTO.[36] The designation comes as the United States has pressured the Iraqi federal government in recent months to limit Iranian influence in Iraq and disarm Iran-backed militias by threatening sanctions.[37]

## Syria

**Syrian President Ahmed al Shara told Reuters on September 17 that a security agreement with Israel is a “necessity,” but that the agreement must respect Syria’s airspace, territorial unity, and require UN supervision.**[38] Shara said on September 17 that Syria could reach a security agreement with Israel “in the coming days.”[39] Shara’s own stated positions, Israel’s proposals for a continued presence in southern Syria and a demilitarized zone, and reports about the contents of the Syrian counterproposal to Israel indicate that any agreement in the short term is very unlikely.[40] The contradictions between the stated Israeli and Syrian positions are significant and suggest that an agreement will not occur in the coming days. Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani reportedly met with Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer in London on September 17 to discuss the recently proposed Israeli-Syrian security agreement.[41] A Syrian Foreign Ministry source told French media on September 19 that “there is progress in the talks with Israel” and there will be agreements before the end of this year.[42] An Israeli-Syrian security agreement is unlikely in the near future, due to differences between Israel’s proposal, which calls for three demilitarized zones in southern Syria, and Syria’s most recent counterproposal.[43] A Syrian government source told Qatari media that Shaibani presented a counterproposal during the meeting that called for Israel’s withdrawal from territory that Israel occupied following Assad’s fall in December 2024.[44] The Syrian counterproposal also calls for the redeployment of a UN disengagement observer force (UNDOF) to the designated buffer zone between the countries.[45] Shaibani emphasized that “regional security can only be achieved by respecting Syria’s sovereignty and independence,” which directly contradicts Israel’s hopes for a demilitarized and no-fly zone in southern Syria.[46] An unspecified diplomatic source also told French Media that Israeli and Syrian technical delegations will meet on September 19 to continue negotiations on a security agreement in Baku, Azerbaijan.[47] Shaibani and Dermer will not attend the Baku meeting, however.[48]

**Turkey has continued to apply pressure on the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian transitional government to coerce the SDF to integrate into the Ministry of Defense (MoD) under terms that are favorable to Turkey.** Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) Director Ibrahim Kalin met with Syrian President Ahmed al Shara on September 17 to discuss bilateral and regional security issues.[49] Kalin emphasized Turkey’s “readiness to give all the support needed to the Damascus administration” against internal threats, which is likely a reference to the SDF.[50] Turkish Defense Ministry Spokesperson Rear Admiral Zeki Akturk said that the Turkish military will remain in Syria to “fight terrorism and prevent the terrorist corridor,” in reference to the SDF, on September 18.[51] The Syrian transitional government reportedly asked Turkey on September 15 to delay military action against the SDF amid Turkey’s frustration over the SDF’s slow integration into the state.[52] Kalin and Shara also discussed Syria’s fight against ISIS, the development of Syrian MoD capacity, border security, and efforts to improve economic conditions.[53] Turkey reportedly began training Syrian MoD personnel on September 19 following a bilateral defense agreement signed on August 13.[54]

**Syrian state media reported that Syrian Defense Minister Major General Marhaf Abu Qasra met with the Russian Embassy’s defense attaché, Colonel Andrey Badrodinov, on September**

**18, to discuss “issues of mutual interest.”[55]** The details of the meeting have not been released at the time of this writing. Syrian Chief of the General Staff Major General Ali al Nassan previously met with Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-bek Yevkurov in Damascus on September 9, likely to continue negotiations on Russian basing in Syria.[56] Syrian President Ahmed al Shara said that Syria has maintained “a calm relationship with Russia” after the fall of Assad in an interview with Syrian media on September 12.[57]

## Arabian Peninsula

**US White House Envoy Steve Witkoff met with Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer in London on September 17 to discuss resuming ceasefire negotiations following Israel’s September 9 strikes targeting senior Hamas leaders in Doha.[58]** An unspecified source told an Israeli journalist that the United States is acting as a mediator between Qatar and Israel to reach a solution to ease tensions and return Qatar to its role as a mediator between Israel and Hamas.[59] The source added that the United States urged Israel to take steps to reduce tension with Qatar.[60] Qatar has served as a key mediator in ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas since October 2023, but immediately suspended its mediation efforts following the Israeli strikes.[61] Qatar later stated that the strikes would not deter it from its role as a mediator but added that it is currently focused on protecting its sovereignty and responding to the Israeli strikes.[62] Qatari officials have continued to express their discontent with Israel’s strikes, calling them “cowardly and treacherous.”[63]

**Qatar hosted a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Joint Defense Council meeting in Doha on September 17 to discuss the recent Israeli strikes in Doha and Gulf security.[64]** Qatari, Emirati, Saudi, Omani, Kuwaiti, and Bahrani defense officials attended the meeting.[65] Gulf leaders agreed to strengthen defense and intelligence coordination.[66] CTP-ISW has not yet observed any discussion of tangible or specific changes to GCC defense coordination at this time.

**The Houthis likely launched a drone that struck a hotel in Eilat, Israel, on September 18. Eilat residents posted footage on social media of a drone that struck a hotel entrance in Eilat.[67]** The IDF stated that unspecified actors launched the drone “from the east.”[68] The Houthis have not claimed this attack at the time of this writing, but the Houthis have regularly launched drones targeting Eilat since the start of the Houthi missile and drone campaign targeting Israel in October 2023.

**The Houthis likely launched at least one missile targeting Israel on September 18.[69]** The IDF stated on September 18 that it intercepted one missile launched from Yemen.[70]

## Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

**The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) issued multiple evacuation warnings for residents in southern Lebanon on September 18 for the first time since May 2025.[71]** The IDF Arabic-language spokesperson called on residents of six specific buildings in southern Lebanon to evacuate and stated that the IDF will soon target Hezbollah military sites.[72] The IDF struck the six sites shortly after it issued the evacuation warnings and reported that the targeted sites were Hezbollah Radwan Force weapons depots.[73] These evacuation warnings identified specific target buildings, unlike the IDF’s previous warnings, which called for village-wide evacuations.[74] Israel has maintained that it will continue to



operate in Lebanon until Hezbollah is disarmed.[75] The IDF shifted to a “forward defense” posture in August 2025 to maintain Israel’s “strategic superiority” in southern Lebanon and prevent Hezbollah from reconstituting capabilities that could pose a threat to northern Israeli towns.[76] This is a continuation of the Israeli objective during the major combat operations phase of its campaign against Hezbollah in late 2024, which was to stop Hezbollah attacks and allow displaced civilians to return safely to their homes.[77] Israel accomplished this objective in late 2024 by executing military tasks that prevented a potential Hezbollah ground operation into northern Israel and stopped direct and indirect fire attacks targeting northern Israeli towns.[78] The November 2024 Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire agreement included an addendum that secures Israel’s right to self-defense against any future threat that Hezbollah may pose to Israel.[79] The IDF has acted on this addendum and continued to operate against Hezbollah since November 2024, including via airstrikes and raids targeting Hezbollah infrastructure.[80]



**Hezbollah officials have continued to warn the Lebanese government about potential internal conflict between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Hezbollah, which is likely part of an effort to deter the government from taking serious action to disarm Hezbollah.** Hezbollah's fiery rhetoric but general inaction suggests that the group fears escalation because its weaker position and the inherent unpredictability of protests or military escalation could rapidly spiral out of Hezbollah's control. Hezbollah Executive Council Head Ali Damoush called on the Lebanese government on September 18 to not "drag" the LAF into confrontation with Hezbollah or Lebanese civilians.[81] Hezbollah parliamentarian Ihab Hamadeh stated on September 18 that the Lebanese people are ready to push Lebanon towards internal conflict, but Hezbollah has "spared" Lebanon from "slipping into that situation." [82] Hezbollah officials, including Secretary General Naim Qassem, have continuously threatened potential confrontation and anti-government protests if the Lebanese government attempts to disarm Hezbollah.[83] Hezbollah has largely refrained from officially inciting protests in response to the Lebanese government's decision to disarm the group, however. Hezbollah and the Amal Movement only called on supporters to protest once in August 2025, but later postponed the protests to allow for dialogue.[84]

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# Iran Update, September 19, 2025



**Ben Rezaei, Ria Reddy, Carolyn Moorman, Benjamin Schmida, Adham Fattah, Kelly Campa, Avery Borens, Brian Carter, Parker Hempel**

## Toplines

**Iran is attempting to prevent snapback sanctions by offering an interim deal that secures concessions upfront from the United States and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany), but avoids any meaningful commitments regarding its nuclear program and cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).** Iranian and US officials have reportedly been in direct contact in recent days to discuss a new nuclear proposal.[1] Iran's new proposal stipulates that Iran would resume talks with the United States over an interim deal while the E3 simultaneously halts the snapback process and extends UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231 for several months to allow time for negotiations. UNSC Resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, prohibited Iran from engaging in "any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons...until the date eight years after the JCPOA Adoption Day." [2] Iran's proposal said that the United States must also provide a guarantee that there will be no more strikes on Iran once an interim deal is reached. Iran would then begin retrieving its 60 percent highly enriched uranium stockpile. The proposal calls for the following three steps to be conducted after Iran's retrieval and the United States provides a security guarantee:

1. The UNSC will permanently terminate Resolution 2231.
2. Iran will dilute its 60 percent enriched uranium stockpile to 20 percent for use in fuel plates at the Tehran Research Reactor.
3. The United States will lift sanctions it agreed to in the interim deal, and both sides will begin talks for a "final agreement."

An unspecified political source told Amwaj Media that Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi submitted the Iranian proposal to US Special Envoy to the Middle East and lead nuclear negotiator Steve Witkoff on September 16.[3] Araghchi separately gave the same proposal to E3 foreign ministers and EU Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas on September 17.[4] The E3 responded to the proposal, calling it "insufficient in substance." [5] An unspecified source familiar with the proposal stated that the Iranian proposal demands "far-reaching actions," but includes "no concrete action" from Iran.[6] The United States has not responded to the proposal at the time of writing.[7] These Iranian steps are inconsistent with the stated US position on any nuclear agreement with Iran.

**The UNSC rejected a draft resolution on September 19 to permanently lift sanctions on Iran.[8]** South Korea, which is the UNSC's current president, finalized a UNSC resolution on September 8

to extend sanctions relief for Iran.[9] South Korea was required to hold the resolution for 10 days after the E3 triggered the snapback mechanism if no other UNSC member held the resolution. The E3 triggered the 30-day Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback process on August 28.[10] The UN Security Council will reimpose snapback sanctions on Iran when the 30-day process concludes on September 27 unless Iran meets the criteria laid out under the JCPOA. Snapback sanctions target Iran's arms transfers and nuclear program more broadly, including its domestic enrichment activities.

**Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a mutual defense pact on September 17, likely in response to multiple security concerns, including Iran.**[11] The agreement is a mutual defense guarantee under which an attack on one party would trigger a response by both countries.[12] Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif stated on September 18 that Pakistan's nuclear program "will be made available" to Saudi Arabia if necessary.[13] Asif added that Pakistan or Saudi Arabia has not specified a "country whose attack would automatically trigger a retaliatory response," which demonstrates that the agreement aims to address multiple security concerns rather than a single security threat.[14] Iranian media have portrayed the agreement as a response to Israel's September 9 strikes in Doha, Qatar, that drew condemnation from Gulf states.[15] Iranian outlets have also framed the agreement as a challenge to US influence in the region. An Iranian media outlet stated on September 19 that the agreement signals that "the era of unilateral dependence on America is over." [16] The outlet claimed that the agreement shows that Saudi Arabia is shifting away from the United States toward other "independent options." [17] Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have been losing faith in US security guarantees for several years, at least since Iran targeted Saudi oil facilities with multiple missiles and drones in 2019, and a separate Iranian-backed attack struck Abu Dhabi, UAE, in 2022.[18] The timing of this agreement suggests that the recent Israeli strike in Doha factored in the Saudi decision to pursue and sign the agreement. But Iran has repeatedly targeted regional states, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, in the past, with much less precision and to a much greater effect than the Israeli strikes in Doha. The Iranian drone and missile attack in 2019 forced Saudi Arabia to dip into its oil reserves to support exports.[19] Iran has backed hundreds of Houthis and Iraqi militia attacks targeting the Gulf states since 2015 as well.[20] Iran similarly conducted missile and drone strikes in Pakistan in January 2024, claiming to target members of the Baloch, Salafi-jihadi militant group Jaish al Adl.[21] Iran has also repeatedly accused Saudi Arabia of fomenting internal unrest in Iran and backing anti-regime groups in southeastern Iran.[22] Saudi Arabia has historically supported US efforts to curb Iranian influence in the region, including by fighting Iran's regional proxies such as the Houthis in Yemen.[23] CTP is considering the hypothesis that Iran may be more concerned about this development than Iranian media coverage would suggest, given Iran's repeated attacks or support for attacks in both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

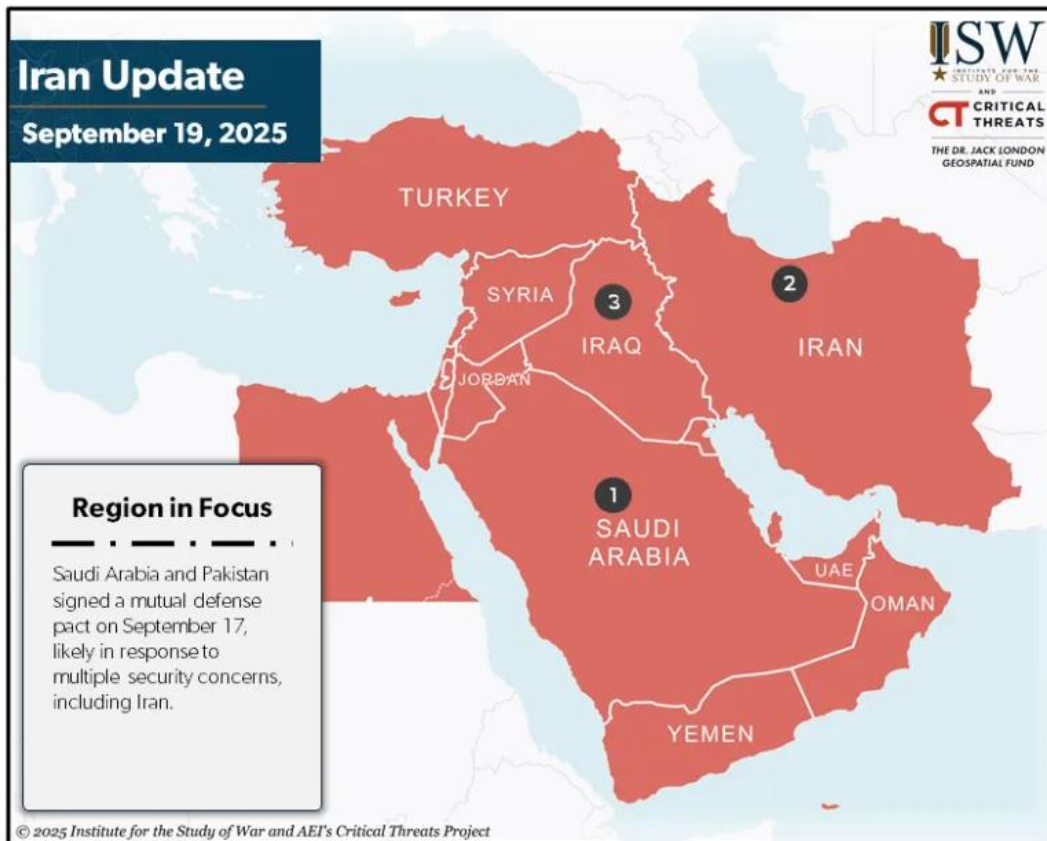
**The Iraqi federal government has reportedly suspended an agreement to import Turkmen gas due to US pressure. The deal would have enabled Iran to manage the gas flow and receive 23 percent of the gas daily.**[24] **Such an arrangement would have given Tehran additional revenue and leverage over Baghdad, depending on the specific terms of the deal.** Iraq would have imported over five billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas through Iran under the deal, which Iraq and Turkmenistan first proposed in 2023, according to four unidentified Iraqi officials and documents viewed by Reuters.[25] The Iranian state-owned National Iranian Gas Company would have reportedly managed the gas flow, and Iran would have received up to 23 percent of that gas daily. This arrangement would have benefited Iran and presumably enabled Iran to gain some revenue. It would also give Tehran leverage over Baghdad, assuming Iran could adjust the specific amount of flow from Turkmenistan if Iran desired. The United States rejected the Iraqi federal government's previous attempts to justify the agreement, including an offer to employ a third-party international monitor to ensure that the agreement complied with US sanctions and anti-money laundering rules. An adviser to Iraqi Prime Minister

Mohammad Shia al Sudani on electricity issues implied that the United States would sanction Iraqi banks and financial institutions if the agreement moved forward. A source familiar with the matter told Reuters on September 19 that the United States refused to approve “arrangements that would benefit Iran.”[26] The US opposition to this agreement comes as the United States continues to pressure the Iraqi government to limit Iranian influence in Iraq.[27] This deal would have nominally decreased Iraq’s reliance on Iranian gas imports, but Iran’s ability to “manage” gas flows and receive 23 percent of the gas flow would have benefited Iran.

Iraq continues to rely on Iran to meet its energy demands. An unidentified Iraqi power official told Reuters on September 19 that Iranian gas fulfills nearly a third of Iraq’s total power generation.[28] The United States revoked a waiver for Iraq to import Iranian electricity in March 2025, but Iraq has continued to import Iranian gas.[29] Iran’s ongoing, chronic energy shortages have complicated its ability to supply gas to Iraq, however. The office of Iraqi Electricity Minister Ziad Ali Fadel stated on August 1, ahead of Fadel’s meetings with Iranian officials in Tehran, that Fadel would discuss ways to ensure Iran’s commitment to its contracts regarding oil exports to Iraq.[30] Iraqi energy shortages run the continued risk of threatening Iraqi political stability by triggering power outages, though the destabilizing effects of power outages in Iraq are less pronounced after the summer. Summer power cuts have previously caused major anti-government demonstrations in Iraq, which would be especially concerning ahead of the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections.[31] Iraq has continued to pursue alternative pathways to fulfill its energy demands beyond relying on Iran, including via potential imports of Qatari and Omani gas and improvements to its existing energy infrastructure.[32]

## Key Takeaways

1. **Snapback Sanctions on Iran:** Iran is trying to prevent snapback sanctions by offering an interim deal that secures concessions upfront from the United States and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) but avoids any meaningful commitments on its nuclear program and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) cooperation. These Iranian steps are inconsistent with the stated US position on any nuclear agreement with Iran.
2. **Saudi-Pakistan Defense Cooperation:** Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a mutual defense pact on September 17, likely in response to multiple security concerns, including Iran. Iranian media have portrayed the agreement as a response to Israel’s September 9 strikes in Doha, Qatar. Iran has repeatedly targeted regional states, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, in the past and backed numerous militia attacks targeting the Gulf states.
3. **Iraq Energy Imports:** The Iraqi federal government has reportedly suspended an agreement to import Turkmen gas due to US pressure. The deal would have enabled Iran to manage the gas flow and receive 23 percent of the gas daily. Such an arrangement would have given Tehran additional revenue and leverage over Baghdad, depending on the specific terms of the deal.



- 1 **SAUDI ARABIA.** Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a mutual defense pact on September 17, likely in response to multiple security concerns, including Iran. Iranian media has portrayed the agreement as a response to Israel's September 9 strikes in Doha, Qatar. Iran has repeatedly targeted regional states, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, in the past.
- 2 **IRAN.** Iran is trying to prevent snapback sanctions by offering an interim deal that secures concessions upfront from the United States and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) but avoids any meaningful commitments on its nuclear program. These Iranian steps are inconsistent with the stated US position on any nuclear agreement with Iran.
- 3 **IRAQ.** The Iraqi federal government has reportedly suspended an agreement to import Turkmen gas via Iran due to US pressure. The deal would have enabled Iran to manage the gas flow and receive 23 percent of the gas daily. Such an arrangement would have given Tehran additional revenue and leverage over Baghdad, depending on the specific terms of the deal.

## Iran

**Iran tested an unidentified ballistic missile at the missile test range in the Semnan Space Center in Semnan Province on September 18.[33]** Iranian provincial officials confirmed on September 18 that Iran had conducted a missile test.[34] Iranian security officials have not specified which missile they tested or the missile's specifications. A Western news outlet claimed that the tested missile may be part of the Sejil-class system due to the missile's silhouette and launch characteristics. The Sejil-class system is Iran's most advanced domestically produced medium-range ballistic missile.[35] Iran launched a Sejil ballistic missile against Israel for the first time on June 18 during the Israel-Iran War.[36]

## Iraq

*See topline section.*

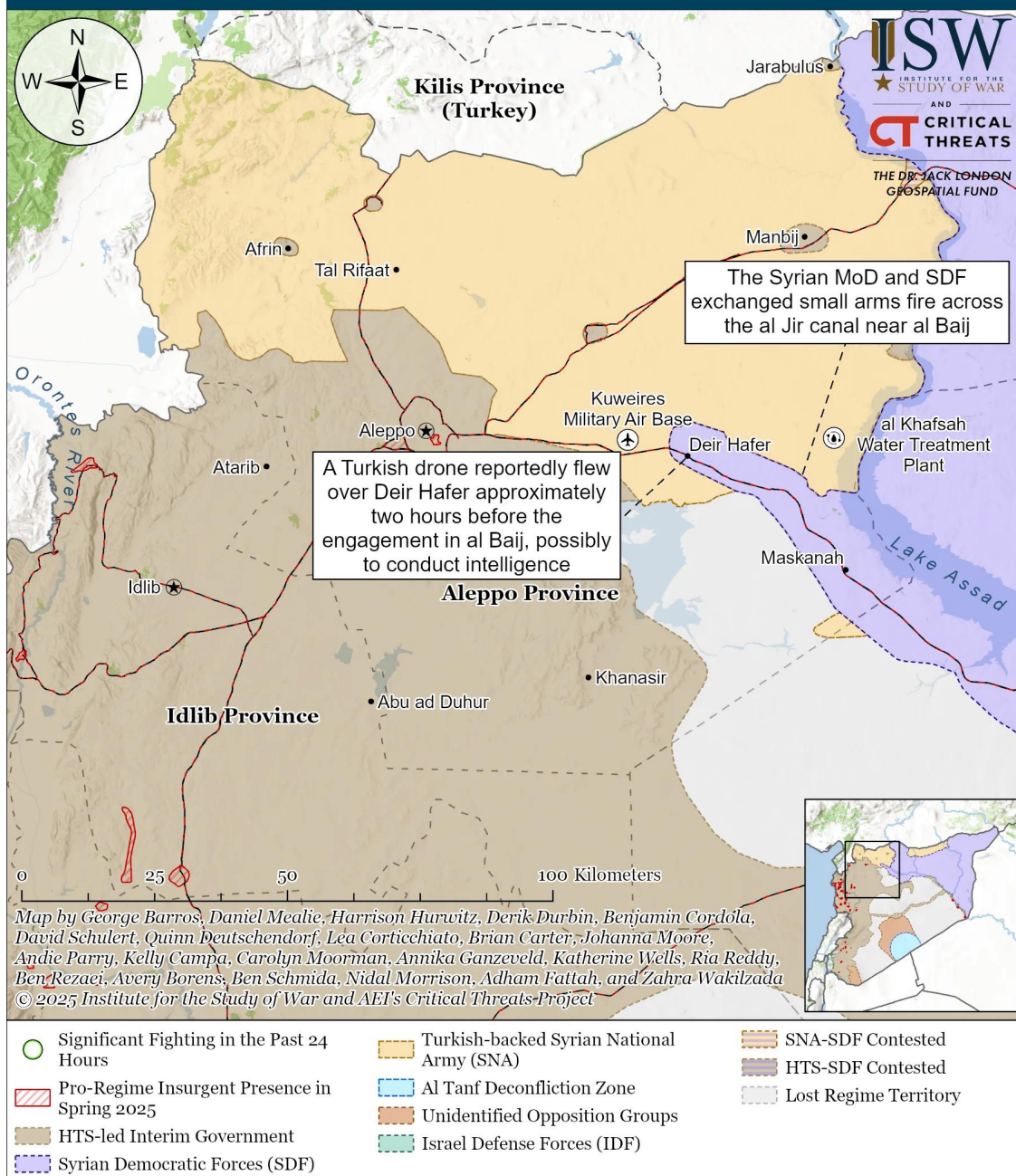
## Syria

**Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) forces and Turkey have continued to cooperate against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on and near the frontlines in Aleppo Province.** Local Syrian sources reported that the MoD and SDF exchanged small arms fire on September 18 near al Baij, Aleppo Province.[37] The frontlines between the MoD and SDF near al Baij are separated by a 20-meter-wide canal, which acts as a barrier that forces must cross to access the other side. No military casualties have been reported at the time of writing. A local source reported that a Turkish drone flew over Deir Hafer approximately two hours before the engagement in nearby al Baij, possibly conducting reconnaissance.[38] A drone over this area of Syria can observe the entire SDF-held salient around Deir Hafer if the drone is operating at or over 1,000ft of altitude, and most of the salient if it is operating at or around 500ft of altitude. The MoD and SDF previously exchanged artillery fire between the MoD-controlled towns of al Kayariya, Rasm al Ahmar, and Habubba Kabir, and the SDF-controlled Jirah Military Airport within the Deir Hafer salient on September 10.[39]



# Assessed Control of Terrain around Aleppo

## September 19, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



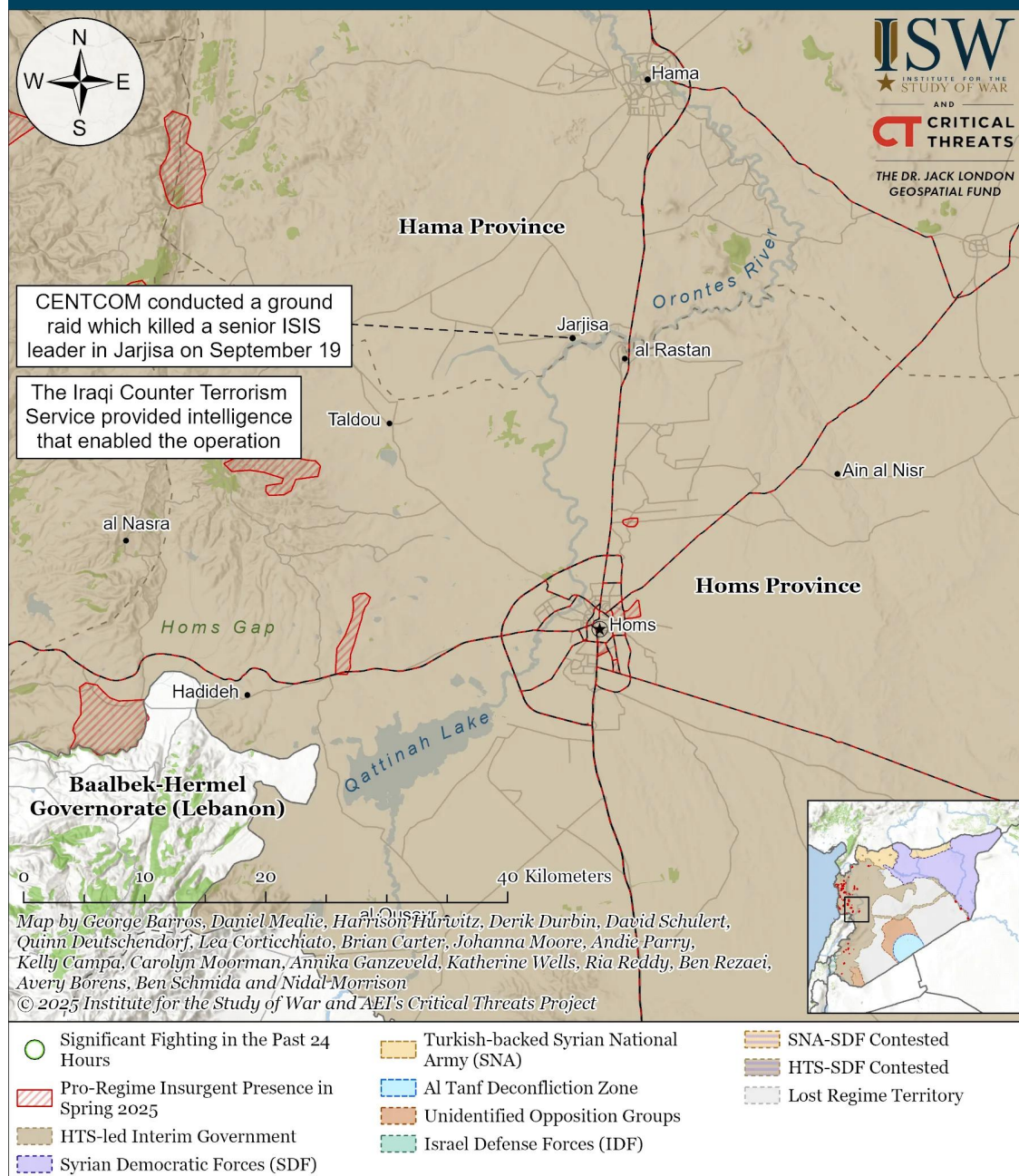
The recent SDF-MoD engagement, which possibly involved Turkish drone reconnaissance, follows a recent increase in Syrian-Turkish military cooperation. Turkish Defense Ministry spokesperson Rear Admiral Zeki Akturk said that the Turkish military will remain in Syria to “fight terrorism,” a reference to the SDF, on September 18.[40] Turkey will reportedly give the Syrian government a “deadline” until the end of 2025, after which it will take military action against the SDF.[41] Turkey previously signed a defense agreement with Syria on August 13 and reportedly began training Syrian MoD personnel in Turkey on September 9.[42] The defense agreement stipulates that Turkey will help procure military equipment for Syria and train Syrian forces.[43]

**US Central Command (CENTCOM) conducted a ground raid using Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) intelligence in Jarjisa, Hama Province, on September 19, which killed a senior**

**Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leader.[44] This is the first time that the Iraqi CTS has provided US CENTCOM with intelligence to support a counter-ISIS operation in Syria since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.[45]** US CENTCOM reported on September 19 that its forces conducted a raid that killed Omar Abdul Qader Bassam (Abdul Rahman al Halabi), who was planning external attacks against the United States.[46] Local media claimed Bassam directly planned the 2013 suicide attack on the Iranian embassy in Beirut that killed 23 people.[47] A Syrian source said Lebanese authorities previously detained Bassam in Roumieh prison in Lebanon for being an ISIS member.[48] Lebanese authorities later transferred him to the Assad regime, which first imprisoned Bassam in the Palestine Branch Prison and then in the notorious Sednaya Prison.[49] Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) forces captured Sednaya in December 2024 and reportedly released Bassam along with all surviving prisoners.[50] Bassam was reportedly the ISIS “chief of operations and external security” and was responsible for planning and supervising “remote provinces,” according to Iraqi intelligence.[51] The Iraqi CTS stated on September 19 that Iraq’s intelligence monitoring and judicial support over the past several months led to the CENTCOM operation.[52] CTS did not claim or suggest that Iraqi forces entered Syria. Local media said that the General Security Service (GSS) cordoned off Jarjisa, indicating that CENTCOM coordinated the operation with Damascus and demonstrating the Syrian government’s support for the counter-ISIS mission.[53] CENTCOM and Syrian security forces previously coordinated on a joint counter-ISIS raid in Atmeh, Idlib Province, on August 20, which killed a senior Iraqi ISIS leader.[54]

## Assessed Control of Terrain North of Homs

September 19, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



## Arabian Peninsula

**The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted a ballistic missile and two drones that the Houthis launched targeting Israel on September 18.[55]** The Houthis claimed to have launched at least three drones targeting Eilat and Beersheba, Israel.[56] Shrapnel from one of the intercepted drones struck a hotel in Eilat, as CTP-ISW reported on September 18.[57] The Houthis also fired a Palestine-2 ballistic missile targeting Tel Aviv, which the IDF intercepted on September 18.[58]

## Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

**Lebanese and Cypriot officials reportedly discussed the issue of Lebanese prisoners held in**

**Israel on September 16.[59]** Lebanese media reported that unspecified Lebanese security officials met with Cypriot intelligence chief Tasos Tzionis in Beirut on September 16 to discuss the status of Lebanese prisoners held in Israel and potential strategies to secure their release.[60] At least 19 Lebanese citizens remain imprisoned in Israel, most of whom are linked to Hezbollah, according to Israel.[61] Tzionis reportedly reiterated Cyprus's desire to help mediate the release of Lebanese prisoners during the meeting.[62] Tzionis separately met with unspecified Hezbollah officials during his visit to Beirut.[63] Hezbollah has consistently identified the release of Lebanese prisoners as one of its key priorities.[64]

**Cypriot mediation could potentially help implement the US proposal to disarm Hezbollah.** The US proposal states that Israel will release Lebanese prisoners within 60 days of the proposal coming into effect.[65] An Israeli journalist reported on August 25 that the Israeli government will not discuss the US proposal and has no intention of responding to it, however.[66] Tzionis is reportedly in contact with unspecified foreign countries "capable of pressing Israel" to release Lebanese prisoners.[67] Lebanese officials have previously called on the United States to pressure Israel to release Lebanese prisoners.[68] Cyprus has previously had some success in mediating prisoner releases, such as the release of the Israeli-Russian dual citizen Elizabeth Tsurkov on September 9.[69] Israeli Mossad chief David Barnea thanked Tzionis for Cyprus' assistance in the release of Tsurkov and stated that Cypriot-Israeli cooperation "has proved itself once again." [70]

**The Lebanese government condemned Israel's recent airstrikes in southern Lebanon and claimed that continued Israeli airstrikes are hindering the Lebanese Armed Forces' (LAF) ability to implement its disarmament plan.**[71] The IDF struck six Hezbollah Radwan Force sites in southern Lebanon on September 18.[72] The LAF stated on September 18 that continued Israeli airstrikes will prevent the LAF from fully deploying its forces to southern Lebanon as part of its disarmament plan and hinder its ability to disarm Hezbollah.[73] The LAF disarmament plan stipulates that the LAF will disarm Hezbollah south of the Litani River in three months.[74] Israel has maintained that it will continue to operate in Lebanon until Hezbollah is disarmed, however.[75]

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