

Iran Update, September 22, 2025



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Toplines

Some Iranian hardliners are renewing calls to revise Iran’s nuclear doctrine as part of a broader effort to restore deterrence after the Israel-Iran War and two years of Israeli military actions that have collectively weakened Iran’s missile program and the Axis of Resistance, both of which were long pillars of Iran’s deterrence.[1] Seventy-one Iranian parliamentarians sent a letter to the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) and the heads of the three branches of government on September 22 and urged a revision of Iran’s defense doctrine.[2] Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa in 2003 that banned the production and use of nuclear weapons.[3] The SNSC and the three branches of government cannot overturn Khamenei’s fatwa, but they can advise Khamenei to allow Iran to produce a nuclear weapon. The new letter follows a similar effort in October 2024, when thirty-nine parliamentarians wrote to the SNSC and called for the revision of Iran’s “defense doctrine” and to issue permission and provide facilities for the “production of nuclear weapons.”[4] Paydari (Stability) Front parliamentarian Hassan Ali Akhlaghi Amiri was the lead signatory of both the October 2024 and September 2025 letters. The near doubling of signatories over the past year indicates that calls to weaponize Iran’s nuclear program have become increasingly normalized in regime discourse. An Iranian expert close to the regime stated, without evidence, on September 21 that 90 percent of Iranians support acquiring a nuclear weapon.[5]

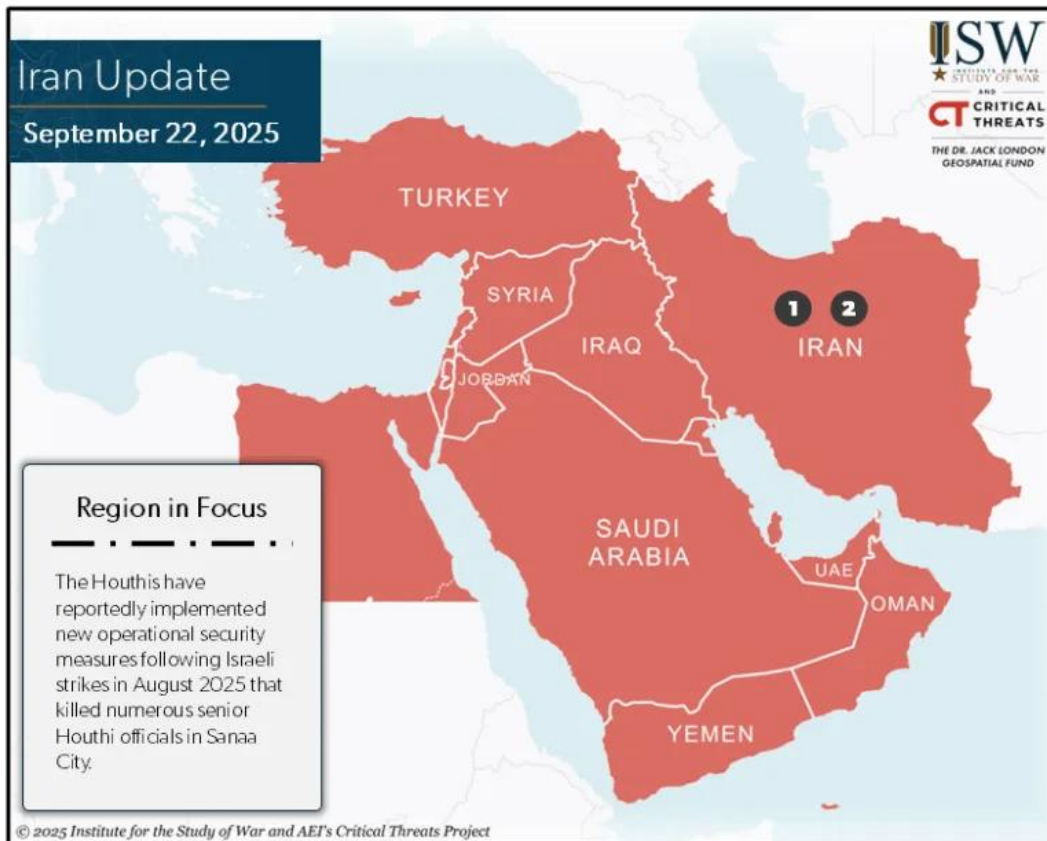
Calls to revise Iran’s defense doctrine come as Iran has lost key pillars that it has traditionally used to deter its adversaries, including its missile and drone stockpiles and the Axis of Resistance. Israel has significantly degraded the Axis of Resistance and limited their ability or willingness to support Iran since October 2023. Iran’s proxies did not provide Iran with any meaningful support during the Israel-Iran War.[6] Only the Houthis attacked Israel at all, and the Houthis’ actions did not change Israeli behavior. Israel intercepted 80 to 90 percent of Iran’s missiles during the 12-day war and destroyed 35 to 45 percent of Iran’s missile stockpile.[7]

Iranian parliamentarian Mohsen Zanganeh stated in an interview on September 20 that Iran conducted a missile test on September 18 and said that Iran is “conducting a security test of an intercontinental [ballistic] missile.”[8] Zanganeh’s phrasing is unclear and may suggest that Iran is taking some prerequisite steps to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile. CTP-ISW reported on September 19 that Iran tested an unidentified ballistic missile at the missile test range in the Semnan Space Center in Semnan Province on September 18, citing Iranian media.[9] Zanganeh stated on

September 20 that Iran had conducted a successful test of "one of the country's most advanced missiles" and added that "even under these circumstances, we are conducting a security test of an intercontinental missile."^[10] It is unclear if Zanganeh is stating that Iran conducted an ICBM missile test on September 18 or plans to conduct one in the future. Zanganeh is a member of the parliament's Economic Commission and previously worked as a representative at the Iranian Central Bank.^[11] It is unclear if Zanganeh would be privy to the details of the missile test.

Key Takeaways

1. **Iranian Nuclear Program:** Some Iranian hardliners are renewing calls to revise Iran's nuclear doctrine as part of a broader effort to restore deterrence after the Israel-Iran War and two years of Israeli military actions that have collectively weakened Iran's missile program and the Axis of Resistance, both of which were long pillars of Iran's deterrence.
2. **Iranian Missile Test:** Iranian parliamentarian Mohsen Zanganeh stated in an interview on September 20 that Iran conducted a missile test on September 18 and said that Iran is "conducting a security test of an intercontinental [ballistic] missile." It is unclear if Zanganeh is stating that Iran conducted an ICBM missile test on September 18 or plans to conduct one in the future.



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Iran

The US Department of State reinstated sanctions on Chabahar Port, which is on Iran's southeastern border along the Gulf of Oman.[12] The United States exempted Chabahar Port from sanctions in 2018 under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA) to ensure Chabahar Port could be used to support Afghanistan's reconstruction and economic development.[13] The port is an important node in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a multimodal transportation network that connects Russia to India via Iran's Chabahar Port.[14] The corridor facilitates trade between Iran and regional countries, including Central Asia and South Asia.

Iran is continuing to seek Russia's help to solve Iran's energy crisis. Atomic Energy Organization

of Iran head Mohammad Eslami led an Iranian delegation to Russia on September 22 to discuss nuclear cooperation with Russian officials.[15] Eslami announced that Iran and Russia will sign an agreement to build eight nuclear power plants in Iran, including four in Bushehr.[16] Russia finished the construction of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) in 2010. BNPP supplies approximately two percent of Iran's electrical consumption needs.[17] Russia agreed to build units two and three at BNPP in 2014.[18] Nuclear power plants, however, take a long time to construct and will not address Iran's energy crisis in the short term.[19] Eslami's visit to Russia comes after 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 to address energy shortages in Iran.[20]

Iraq

Shia Coordination Framework parties are reportedly concerned that voter turnout for the upcoming Iraqi parliamentary elections will fall below 20 percent due to Shia nationalist cleric Muqtada al Sadr's continued calls for Sadrist to boycott the elections.[21] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. Sadr announced in May 2025 that his Shia National Movement would not run in the November 2025 elections and has repeatedly urged his Sadrist movement, which is Iraqi Shia, not to vote.[22] Sadr's alter ego, Saleh Mohammad al Iraqi, implied on September 21 that Sadr would rescind his call to boycott the elections if unspecified Iraqi officials were removed from office and there were unspecified political reforms.[23] Sadr supports limiting the use of weapons to solely the Iraqi state, though he controls his own militia, and cracking down on corruption.[24] A 20 percent voter turnout rate would represent a massive drop from the 41 percent voter turnout rate in the 2021 parliamentary elections.[25]

French media reported on September 20 that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani met with National Security Adviser Qasim al Araji, National Intelligence Service head Hamid al Shatri, and several unspecified Shia Coordination Framework leaders to discuss the Iraqi government's response to the US State Department's recent designations of four Iranian-backed Iraqi militias as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).[26] 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 FTOs on September 17.[27] These four militias are part of the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, which is a coalition of Iranian-backed militias that consistently attacked US forces in Iraq and Syria between October 2023 and January 2024.[28] Sudani, Shatri, and Araji reportedly proposed closing the sanctioned militias' "official offices" during the meeting.[29] 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.[30]

Syria

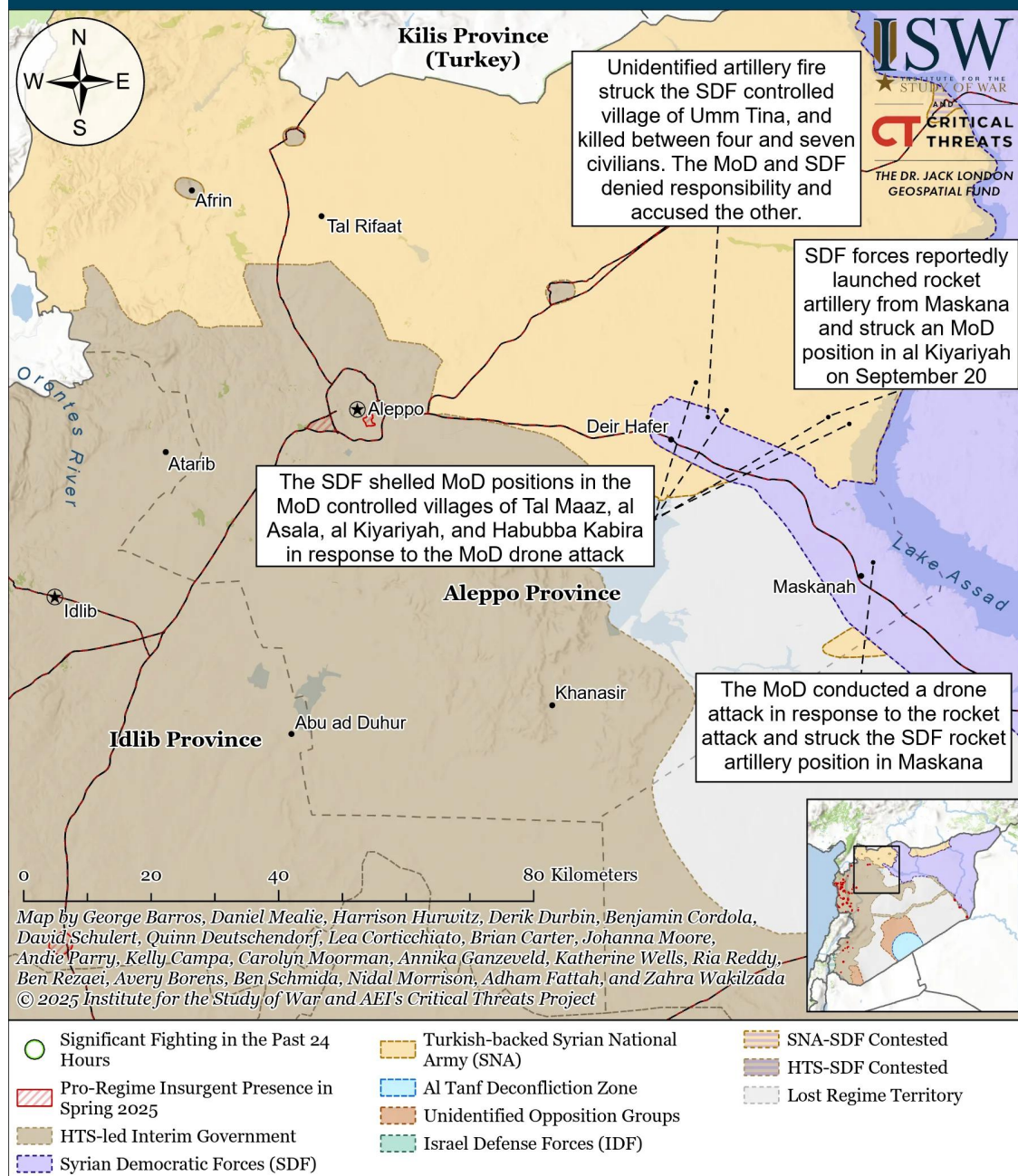
Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) engaged each other along the northern perimeter of the Deir Hafer salient in Aleppo Province on September 20. Both sides have since blamed each other for initiating the engagements and causing civilian casualties.[31] Northern Syria-based anti-SDF sources reported that the SDF initiated the engagement after the SDF launched rocket artillery on September 20, from the outskirts of Maskana and targeted MoD positions in al Kiyariyah.[32] The MoD then launched an unspecified drone that reportedly struck the SDF rocket position in Maskana.[33] A local anti-SDF source said the MoD drone struck the SDF rocket artillery position, causing a secondary explosion that killed nine SDF members,

while a separate source reported that the attack killed two SDF members.[34] The SDF confirmed the MoD drone attack occurred but denied that the attack caused “human or material losses.”[35] The MoD likely attacked the SDF with a Syrian “Shaheen” drone. Shaheen drones are locally produced one-way attack drones used by the Syrian government and, before that, Hayat Tahrir al Sham and its allies against the Assad regime.[36]

The MoD told Syrian state media that the SDF later mortared MoD positions in and around the MoD-controlled villages of Tal Maaz, al Asala, and al Kiyariyah, likely in response to the drone strike.[37] The SDF previously struck the villages on September 10, during which the SDF shelling killed two civilians in al Kiyariyah.[38] Unidentified artillery then struck the SDF-controlled village of Umm Tina after the mortar fire, which killed between four and seven civilians.[39] The SDF stated that the MoD artillery killed the civilians.[40] The MoD denied responsibility and claimed that its forces witnessed SDF rocket artillery strike Umm Tina amid mortar fire on nearby MoD-held villages, and a local anti-SDF source confirmed that the SDF hit its own position.[41] A local anti-SDF source reported that the SDF reinforced its frontline positions near Deir Hafer on September 22 in response to the fighting.[42]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Aleppo

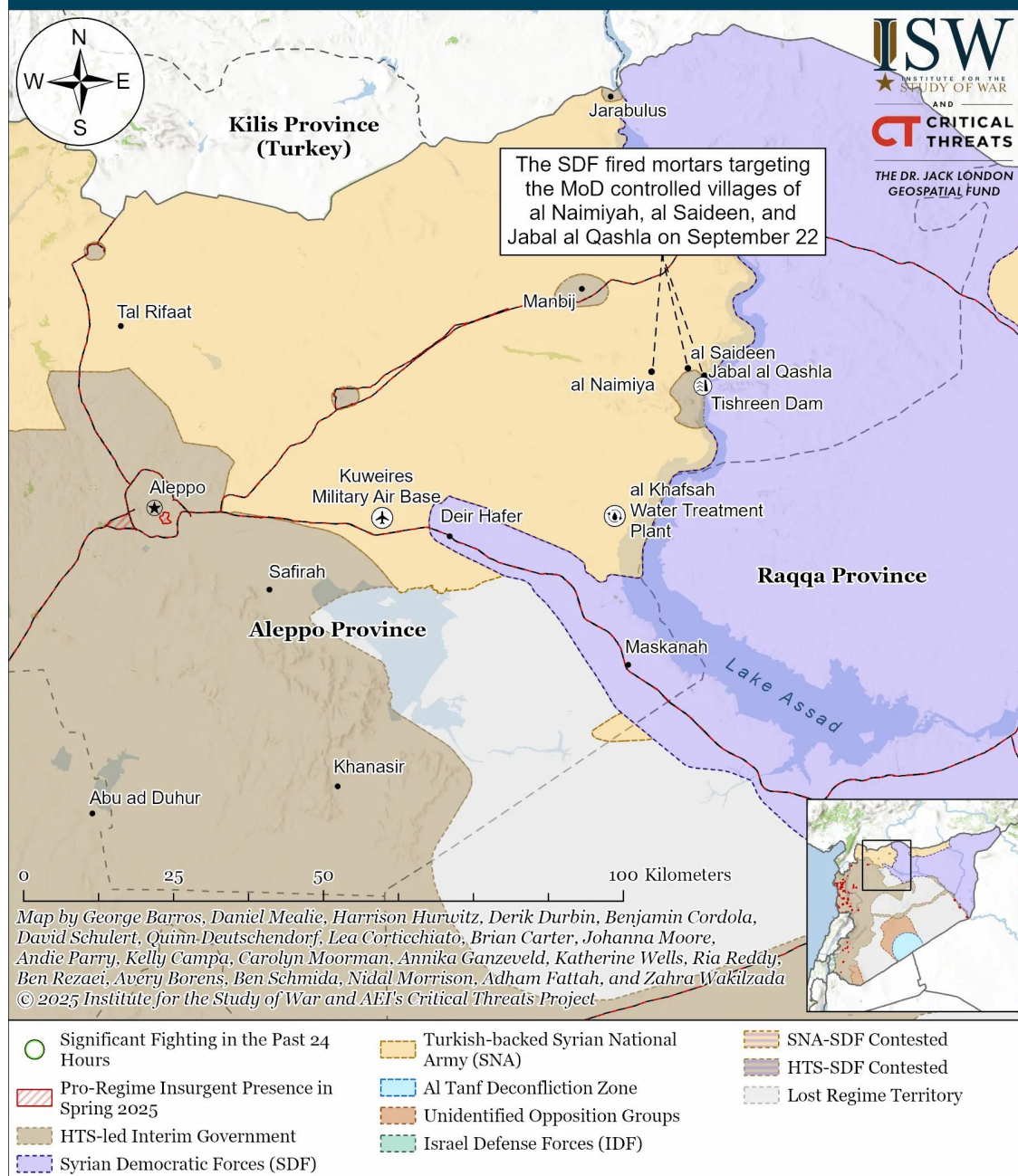
September 20 at 2:00 PM ET



Local media reported that the MoD and SDF also engaged each other on September 22 near the Tishreen Dam in Aleppo Province.[43] A source told Syrian media that the SDF fired mortars targeting the MoD-controlled villages of Al Saideen, Jabal al Qashla, and al Naimiyah on September 22.[44] Neither the SDF nor the MoD has commented on the engagement near the Tishreen Dam, and no casualties have been reported at the time of writing.

Assessed Control of Terrain around Aleppo

September 22, 2025 at 2:00 PM ET



Anti-SDF media reported on September 20 that the SDF offered to hand over several villages in SDF-controlled territory in Deir ez Zor Province to the Syrian transitional government. An anti-SDF, northern Syria-based media outlet reported that an SDF delegation met with Syrian government officials in Deir ez Zor on September 20 and discussed procedures to transfer SDF-controlled territory in Deir ez Zor to the Syrian government in the future.[45] The outlet reported that the SDF "promised" to hand over the "seven villages" in Deir ez Zor Province in the "coming days." [46] The "seven villages" refers to the villages of Hatla, al Husseinia, Marat, Mazloun, Khasham, Salhiya, and Tabiyya along the eastern bank of the Euphrates River in northern Deir ez Zor Province.[47] The Assad regime controlled these villages before the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. The villages represented the only regime foothold on the eastern side of the river. These villages also act as the entryway from government-controlled territory west of the Euphrates River into eastern Deir ez Zor Province and

Hasakah Province. Another anti-SDF, northern Syria-based source claimed that the SDF withdrew from its positions in al Salhiyah.[48] CTP-ISW cannot verify local reporting, but an SDF withdrawal from positions in the seven villages would be a requisite step to cede the territory to the transitional government. The SDF agreed to merge all civil and military institutions in northeastern Syria with the transitional government as part of the March 10 agreement.[49] The SDF has yet to transfer any of its territory in northeastern Syria to the government as of September 22, with the limited exception of two neighborhoods in Aleppo City that were surrounded by government-held areas.[50]

Syrian President Ahmed al Shara arrived in New York on September 21 to participate in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on September 23.[51] Shara's visit marks the first time that a Syrian president will address the UNGA since 1967.[52] Several other Syrian officials will also attend the UNGA.[53] Shara is expected to meet with President Donald Trump and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the UNGA.[54]

Arabian Peninsula

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck the only remaining fully operational berths at Hudaydah Port on September 16, likely to disrupt Houthi capabilities to import commercial goods or generate oil revenues through the port. The IDF conducted airstrikes targeting Houthi shipping infrastructure at Hudaydah Port on September 16.[55] Commercially available satellite imagery from September 20 showed that Israeli strikes damaged at least four berths: berths 4, 5, 6, and 8. Berths 4, 6, and 8 were the only operational berths at the port before the September 16 strikes, according to commercially available maritime data. At least 25 vessels, including cargo ships, entered Hudaydah Port and docked exclusively at berth 4, berth 6, and berth 8 between July 21 and September 16.[56] The IDF had previously struck several of the active berths in strikes between May and July 2025, and CTP-ISW observed that the Houthis repaired some of this earlier damage to port berths and facilities in August 2025 during a lull in Israeli strikes after the IDF struck the port on July 21.[57] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent, citing an unspecified Israeli security source, confirmed that the strikes targeted the port's docks to prevent Houthi attempts to rebuild the port.[58] The Houthis rely on Hudaydah Port to generate revenue and to import commercial goods.[59] Two UK representatives to the UN also previously warned that there has been a surge in Iranian ships bypassing international inspections and offloading uninspected cargo at Hudaydah Port since 2023.[60]

Two cargo vessels have arrived at the port after Israel's September 16 strikes and docked at berths five and six, according to commercially available maritime data between September 16 and September 22. CTP-ISW has also continually observed that the Houthis have quickly repaired damage to the port inflicted by Israeli strikes since June 2025, including by filling in craters.[61] The Houthis have still not fully repaired the more significant damage to the port that Israeli strikes inflicted on berths two, three, and seven, however.

The IDF may have also struck two cargo vessels docked at the port. Satellite imagery from September 20 showed that the Comoros-flagged cargo ship *Bella A*, which is anchored at the visibly damaged berth 8, is leaking oil or fuel into the port's waters. The ship's location and the presence of fuel or oil in the water suggest that *Bella A* sustained damage in the strikes as well. The *Bella A* arrived in Hudaydah from Djibouti on September 16, according to commercially available maritime data. The Antigua Barbuda-flagged cargo vessel *Ak Gary* was also docked at the port when the strikes occurred and has not moved

since, possibly due to damage sustained to the vessel or to its berth.



The Houthis have reportedly implemented new operational security measures following Israeli strikes in August 2025 that killed numerous senior Houthi officials in Sanaa City.^[62] The IDF killed Houthi Prime Minister Ahmed Ghalib al Rahwai and several other cabinet ministers and officials in a strike on a conference hall in Sanaa on August 28.^[63] Rahwai is the most senior Houthi official that Israel has targeted and killed since October 2023.^[64] Saudi-owned, UK-based outlet Asharq al Awsat reported on September 21 that the Houthis have “completely” changed security measures for Houthi leader Abdulmalik al Houthi in the wake of the Israeli strikes, according to unspecified local sources.^[65] Houthi officials have started to review the group’s operational security measures and recently advised leaders and officials to change residences and mobile numbers and limit time in Houthi offices. The sources also stated that “official” Houthi meetings have halted since the strikes.^[66] Israel has conducted several strikes targeting Houthi personnel since killing the Houthi prime minister on August 28, including striking a Houthi media office in Sanaa on September 10.^[67]

Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

Nothing Significant To Report.



Endnotes

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Iran Update, September 23, 2025



Avery Borens, Adham Fattah, Ben Rezaei, Nidal Morrison, Zahra Wakilzada, Parker Hempel, Carolyn Moorman, Andie Parry, Annika Ganzeveld

Toplines

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei categorically rejected negotiations with the United States in a speech on September 23.[1] Khamenei's speech marks the first time that Khamenei has rejected all negotiations with the United States since the end of the Israel-Iran War in June 2025. Khamenei previously rejected direct talks with the United States but did not explicitly rule out the possibility of indirect negotiations in a speech in August 2025.[2] Khamenei did not distinguish between direct or indirect negotiations in his September 23 speech, which indicates that he likely rejects any type of negotiation with the United States.[3] Khamenei stated on September 23 that negotiations with the United States "do not serve [Iran's] national interests" and cause serious and sometimes "irreparable damage." [4] Khamenei claimed that the United States approaches negotiations with a predetermined goal to end Iran's nuclear activities and enrichment and stated that engaging in such negotiations means accepting coercion. Khamenei warned that negotiating under threat signals submission and would embolden the United States to demand more concessions from Iran, such as reducing Iran's missile range. Khamenei also reiterated that Iran will not accept the United States' demand for Iran to halt domestic uranium enrichment, stating that enrichment is a national achievement that was developed through decades of effort.[5]

Khamenei separately claimed that national unity was decisive in undermining Iran's adversaries during the 12-day war. Khamenei stated that Iranians' cohesion prevented unrest despite "enemy effort[s]" to kill commanders, disrupt state functions, and "eradicate Islam in Iran." [6] Khamenei also highlighted the importance of swift leadership succession, the resilience of the Iranian armed forces, and effective state management during the war.[7] Khamenei's remarks about unity echo other regime officials' comments since the 12-day war about national cohesion and solidarity. Moderate and pragmatic figures, such as former President Hassan Rouhani, initiated calls for unity after the war.[8] Rouhani emphasized in July the need for unity and to rebuild trust between the regime and the Iranian people, for example. Other senior officials, including Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Expediency Discernment Council Chairman Sadegh Amoli Larijani, and Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani, have made similar statements about the importance of unity.[9]

Iran is highly unlikely to prevent the reimposition of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions by September 27 because Iran has failed to meet the E3's (the United Kingdom,

France, and Germany) demands for delaying the snapback mechanism. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi met with his E3 counterparts and European Union Foreign Policy Chief Kaja Kallas in New York on September 23 to try to prevent the reimposition of UNSC sanctions.[10] A European diplomat described the prospect of an agreement as “slim” because Iran has not fulfilled the E3’s conditions for delaying the snapback mechanism. These conditions include Iran granting inspectors full access to Iran’s nuclear sites, accounting for the location and amount of its highly enriched uranium stockpile, and resuming nuclear negotiations with the United States.[11] A US journalist reported on September 23 that Araghchi did not make progress toward preventing the reimposition of UNSC sanctions in his meeting with Kallas and the E3 officials.[12] Germany’s Foreign Office stated that the E3 and the European Union urged Iran to take “practical steps” in the coming hours and days to resume direct negotiations with the United States, among other steps.[13] Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei rejected negotiations with the United States on September 23, as noted above.

Iran is attempting to use the September 9 Iran-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agreement to pressure the E3 to stop the snapback process. The Iran-IAEA agreement reportedly sets procedures for future inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities but does not provide a timeline for inspections.[14] Araghchi met with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 22.[15] Grossi stated in an interview with PBS on September 22 that the IAEA has not received any “official communication” about Iran suspending the September 9 agreement.[16] Senior Iranian officials, including Araghchi, have maintained that the Iran-IAEA agreement will be voided if the E3 imposes snapback sanctions on Iran, however.[17] Iran may calculate that it can pressure the E3 to stop the snapback process by threatening to suspend cooperation with the IAEA, given that the E3 has repeatedly called for Iran to cooperate with the IAEA and allow IAEA inspectors to resume inspections at Iranian nuclear facilities.

Key Takeaways

1. **US-Iran Nuclear Negotiations:** Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei categorically rejected negotiations with the United States in a speech on September 23. Khamenei’s speech marks the first time that Khamenei has rejected all negotiations with the United States since the end of the Israel-Iran War in June 2025.
2. **Snapback Sanctions:** Iran is highly unlikely to prevent the reimposition of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions by September 27 because Iran has failed to meet the E3’s (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) demands for delaying the snapback mechanism. Iran is attempting to use the September 9 Iran-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agreement to pressure the E3 to stop the snapback process.

Iran

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) canceled military parades in Hamedan and Kurdistan provinces due to unspecified threats.[18] Iran holds annual military parades across the country during its Sacred Defense Week. The IRGC commander in Hamedan, Brigadier General Hossein Zare Kamali, announced on September 22 that the IRGC will refrain from holding large gatherings due to “emerging threats.” The IRGC’s decision to cancel military parades indicates that Iran remains concerned about potential security threats following the Israel-Iran War.

Iraq

Shia nationalist cleric Muqtada al Sadr indicated that he will not support a coalition bloc in the upcoming November 2025 parliamentary elections, according to Iraqi media on September 23. Sadr reportedly stated that he was unable to find a coalition bloc that aligns with his political objectives during a recent Sadrist movement meeting in al Hanana, Najaf Province.[19] A social media account that is likely controlled by Sadr posted in July 2025 that Sadr requested information about candidates and blocs that support his agenda, which includes limiting the use of weapons to the Iraqi state and cracking down on corruption.[20] Sadr announced in March 2025 that his Shia Nationalist Movement would not participate in the elections and has repeatedly urged his supporters, who are primarily Shia, not to vote.[21] Sadr's statement comes as Shia Coordination Framework parties are reportedly concerned that voter turnout in the upcoming elections will fall below 20 percent due to Sadr's continued calls for Sadrists to boycott the elections.[22] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. A 20 percent voter turnout rate would represent a massive drop from the 41 percent voter turnout rate in the 2021 parliamentary elections.[23]

Syria

Syrian officials emphasized the need for US sanctions relief and discussed security cooperation during meetings with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on September 22.[24] Syrian President Ahmed al Shara met with Rubio on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on September 22 and discussed methods to achieve Syrian "security and prosperity," particularly through US sanctions relief.[25] Shara and Rubio also discussed counterterrorism coordination, Syrian government efforts to locate missing US citizens in Syria, and relations between Israel and Syria.[26] Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani also discussed bilateral security and economic cooperation with Rubio on September 22.[27] Shaibani emphasized the importance of lifting US sanctions to support Syrian reconstruction efforts.[28] Shaibani met with US lawmakers in Washington, DC, on September 18 to discuss permanently lifting sanctions under the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019.[29] The Trump administration issued a 180-day suspension of Caesar Act sanctions on May 23, but Congress must pass a law to permanently remove the sanctions.[30] The Caesar Act targets anyone who provides support to the Syrian government, supports the Syrian oil and gas industry, exports aircraft or military equipment to Syria, or provides construction or engineering services directly or indirectly to the Syrian government.[31]

Arabian Peninsula

Nothing significant to report.

Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

Lebanese officials have continued to ask the United States to pressure Israel to cease its operations in Lebanon and withdraw from Lebanese territory. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Special Envoy Thomas

Barrack, and Deputy Special Envoy Morgan Ortagus in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on September 22.[32] Aoun asked the United States to pressure Israel to implement the US proposal to disarm Hezbollah by ceasing operations in Lebanon, withdrawing from Lebanese territory, returning Lebanese prisoners held in Israel, and abiding by UN Security Council Resolution 1701.[33] Aoun previously told Barrack during his visit to Beirut in August 2025 that Israel must commit to the US proposal and that the proposal would not become effective until Israel approves it.[34] The US proposal stipulates that Israel will withdraw from its five permanent positions in southern Lebanon within 90 days of the agreement's implementation and that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) will completely disarm Hezbollah by the end of 2025.[35] The LAF expects that it will require 15 months to disarm Hezbollah, however.[36] Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam similarly told Barrack in August that the United States must fulfill its responsibilities as a sponsor of the plan by pressuring Israel to cease hostilities and withdraw from Lebanese territory.[37] Israel has maintained that it will continue to operate in Lebanon until Hezbollah is disarmed, however. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Arabic-language spokesperson stated on September 23 that the IDF will not cease its operations in southern Lebanon "until the south of the Litani is completely cleaned" of Hezbollah.[38]

The Lebanese government has continued to try to acquire economic and military support for the Lebanese state and the LAF. Lebanese Defense Minister Michel Menassa met with the Austrian Ambassador to Lebanon, Francesca Husovitz Frensing, on September 23 to discuss strengthening military and security relations.[39] Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji separately met with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Jasem al Budaiwi on September 23 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA.[40] Budaiwi proposed organizing a Gulf-Lebanon trade and investment forum in 2026 to enhance economic cooperation and encourage investments in Lebanon.[41] Lebanese media reported on September 23 that Saudi Arabia and France will soon hold a conference in Riyadh to secure financial and logistical support for the LAF's deployment to southern Lebanon.[42] The Gulf states have continuously stated that Lebanon will not receive any economic investments until it completely disarms Hezbollah and implements economic reforms.[43] Hezbollah has historically used financial benefits to retain its Lebanese Shia support base but has recently struggled to pay for the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and maintain its financial commitments to fighters.[44] Economic incentives enabled by Gulf investment would help undermine Hezbollah's ability to build and maintain support among the Lebanese population by enabling the government to provide services that it has previously failed to provide.

Hezbollah and its allies used US Special Envoy Thomas Barrack's interview with Sky News Arabia on September 22 to try to undermine the Lebanese government's efforts to disarm the group. A Hezbollah-affiliated journalist claimed that Barrack "acknowledged" the logic behind Hezbollah's *raison d'être* by stating that continued Israeli operations in Lebanon strengthen Hezbollah's argument that it protects the Lebanese people from Israel.[45] Hezbollah often cites continued Israeli operations as justification for retaining its arms.[46] The Hezbollah-affiliated journalist also claimed that Barrack acknowledged that disarming Hezbollah would create a civil war in Lebanon.[47] Barrack stated that the Lebanese government is concerned about civil war but did not state that disarming Hezbollah would cause civil war.[48] Lebanese Parliament Speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri stated that Barrack's description of the Lebanese government, the LAF, and Hezbollah is "unacceptable." [49] Berri was referring to Barrack's statements that the Lebanese government is scared to disarm Hezbollah and that "all the Lebanese do is talk and there has never been one act." [50] Berri was also referring to Barrack's statements that the LAF is underequipped and "the only force available" and that Hezbollah is "[the United States'] enemy." [51]

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Iran Update, September 24, 2025



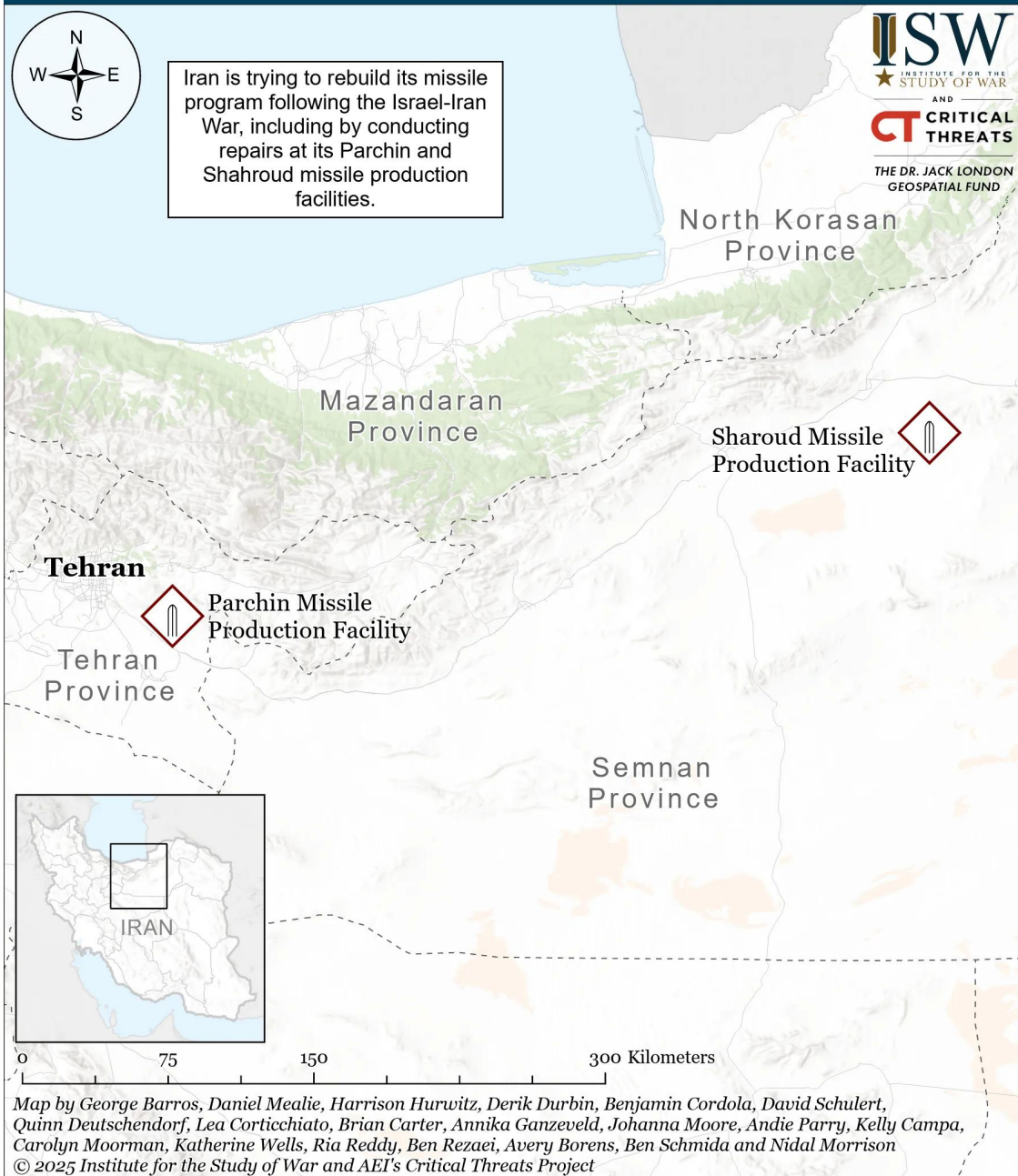
Avery Borens, Kelly Campa, Ben Rezaei, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells, Adham Fattah, Zahra Wakilzada, Benjamin Schmida, Johanna Moore, Annika Ganzeveld

Toplines

Iran has begun reconstructing several ballistic missile facilities as part of a broader effort to rebuild its degraded ballistic missile program after the Israel-Iran War. Iran has begun rebuilding the Parchin and Shahroud missile production facilities since August 28 and September 5, respectively, according to satellite imagery analyzed by the Associated Press.[1] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck the Parchin and Shahroud military sites in October 2024 and during the Israel-Iran War.[2] Satellite imagery of the Parchin missile site from August 28 and of the Shahroud missile site from September 5 showed that Iran has begun reconstructing buildings that housed solid fuel mixers, which are essential to producing solid fuel for ballistic missiles.[3] The Associated Press assessed that Iran still does not have mixers at Parchin or Shahroud to produce solid fuel, however.[4] The IDF previously destroyed Iranian solid fuel mixers during its October 2024 attack on Iran. Israeli sources stated in October 2024 that Iran could not domestically produce solid fuel mixers and would need to purchase them from China, which could take at least a year.[5] China previously assisted Iran in rebuilding its ballistic missile program after the October 2024 Israeli attack on Iran by supplying Iran with sodium perchlorate, which is a component of solid fuel.[6] The Associated Press report comes after Iran tested an unspecified ballistic missile in Semnan Province on September 18.[7] The report also comes after the Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Commission approved on September 7 a bill to increase the Iranian armed forces' "defense capabilities," which include Iranian missile capabilities.[8]

Missile Facilities That Iran is Trying to Repair

September 24, 2025

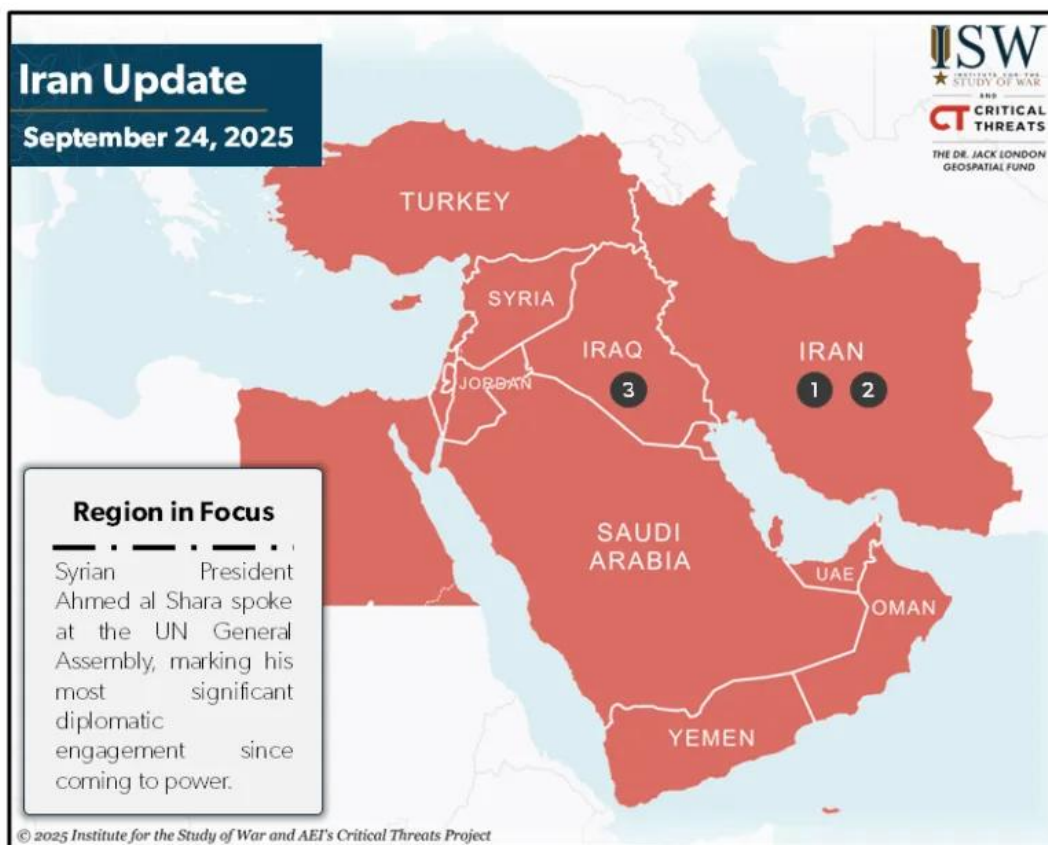


An Iranian parliamentarian who is affiliated with the ultraconservative Paydari (Stability) Front and a member of the Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Commission claimed on September 23 that Russia delivered MiG-29 fighter jets to Iran.[9] CTP-ISW cannot verify this claim, but if the claim is true, Iran's acquisition of MiG-29 aircraft would almost certainly not help Iran defend against Israeli or US aircraft in a future conventional conflict. Abolfazl Zohrevand claimed that Russian MiG-29 fighter jets have arrived in Shiraz, Iran, as part of Iran's efforts to strengthen its air force.[10] Russia has not confirmed this report. CTP-ISW cannot independently confirm whether Russia has delivered MiG-29 fighter jets to Iran at the time of this writing. The MiG-29 is an antiquated system and would not be able to confront more advanced Israeli and US aircraft, such as F-35 fighter jets. Zohrevand also claimed that Russian Su-35 fighter jets are "gradually entering" Iran and that Russia will supply Iran with S-400 air defense systems.[11] Iranian officials have repeatedly claimed in recent years that Russia will provide Iran with Su-35 fighter jets and S-400 air defense systems, but Russia has not yet

delivered any such systems to Iran.[12] CTP-ISW continues to assess that Russia is unable to divert critical systems like the Su-35 and S-400 away from its war effort in Ukraine. Zohrevand further claimed that China would supply Iran with HQ-9 long-range surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).[13] Chinese HQ-9 SAMs bear similarities to Russian S-300s. Senior Iranian officials have expressed openness to expanding military cooperation with China, but it is unclear whether China is willing to provide Iran with the advanced systems that it seeks.[14]

Shia Coordination Framework parties, which will compete against Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani in the November 2025 parliamentary elections, continue to try to detract voter support for Sudani's coalition. The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. The spokesperson for former Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki's State of Law Coalition accused the Sudani administration of withholding government services, such as electricity, to pressure State of Law members to join Sudani's coalition in an interview with Iraqi media on September 21.[15] The spokesperson added that the State of Law Coalition opposes Sudani serving another term as prime minister. Unidentified Shia Coordination Framework members previously accused Sudani and his coalition of corruption, which is likely to damage Sudani's prospects in the upcoming elections.[16]

Iraqi media separately reported on September 24 that unidentified Shia Coordination Framework parties have circulated rumors that Sudani is a Baathist.[17] An unidentified Shia Coordination Framework party previously accused Sudani of having ties to the Baath Party during discussions about Sudani becoming prime minister in 2022, according to an unidentified former Iraqi minister. It is unclear which Shia Coordination Framework parties are behind these accusations at the time of this writing. Maliki has frequently warned that Baathists could infiltrate the elections, however.[18] CTP-ISW assessed on August 20 that Maliki may be using the Accountability and Justice Commission, which bars candidates with Baathist ties from running in the elections, to sideline political opponents.[19]



- 1 **IRAN:** Iran has begun reconstructing several ballistic missile facilities as part of a broader effort to rebuild its degraded ballistic missile program after the Israel-Iran War.
- 2 **IRAN:** An Iranian parliamentarian claimed on September 23 that Russia delivered MiG-29 fighter jets to Iran. CTP-ISW cannot verify this claim, but if the claim is true, Iran's acquisition of MiG-29 aircraft would almost certainly not help Iran defend against Israeli or US aircraft in a future conventional conflict.
- 3 **IRAQ:** Shia Coordination Framework parties that will compete against Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani in the November 2025 parliamentary elections are continuing to try to detract voter support for Sudani's coalition.

Key Takeaways

1. **Iranian Ballistic Missile Program:** Iran has begun reconstructing several ballistic missile facilities as part of a broader effort to rebuild its degraded ballistic missile program after the Israel-Iran War.
2. **Russo-Iranian Defense Cooperation:** An Iranian parliamentarian claimed on September 23 that Russia delivered MiG-29 fighter jets to Iran. CTP-ISW cannot verify this claim, but if the claim is true, Iran's acquisition of MiG-29 aircraft would almost certainly not help Iran defend against Israeli or US aircraft in a future conventional conflict.
3. **Iraqi Parliamentary Elections:** Shia Coordination Framework parties, which will compete against Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani in the November 2025 parliamentary elections, continue to try to detract voter support for Sudani's coalition.

Iran

Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) signed a three-year roadmap for trade and economic cooperation in Moscow on September 24.[20] The Iranian Industry, Mines, and Trade Minister, Mohammad Atabek, stated that the 2025-2028 Iran-EAEU roadmap will expand cooperation between Iran and EAEU countries in various fields, including infrastructure, logistics, road and maritime transport, customs, and digital trade. The Russian minister for EAEU trade, Andrey Slepnev, stated that the previously signed Iran-EAEU free trade agreement, which went into effect in May 2025, eliminated tariffs on 87 percent of goods and has increased Iran-EAEU trade by 16 percent. Iran's efforts to expand its trade partnerships with regional countries are part of its "neighborhood policy," which seeks to undermine and mitigate the impact of international sanctions.

Iraq

See topline section.

Syria

Syrian President Ahmed al Shara celebrated Syria's transformation since the fall of the Assad regime and discussed several of the challenges facing Syria's transition during his speech at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York on September 24.[21] Shara's speech marks his most significant diplomatic engagement on the world stage since coming to power in December 2024. Shara discussed Syria's emergence from decades of regime rule and proclaimed that Syria has transformed from an "exporter of crises" to a state with the opportunity to bring peace and stability to the region. He warned that some parties have attempted to "incite sectarian strife and internal conflict" with the objective of "dividing and tearing" Syria apart. Shara discussed the government's establishment of independent commissions to investigate abuses committed on the Syrian coast in March 2025 and in southern Syria in July 2025.[22] He noted that he will "bring to justice" those who have harmed or killed innocent civilians and that he aims to build a country with laws that guarantee the rights of all individuals "without exception." Shara called on all countries to lift sanctions on Syria.

Shara additionally highlighted Syria's commitment to "dialogue and diplomacy" with Israel, likely in reference to the ongoing Syrian-Israeli negotiations over a new security agreement to determine the Israel-Syria disengagement line and address Israel's presence in southern Syria and activity in Syrian airspace.[23] Shara condemned "Israeli threats" against Syria since the fall of the regime and accused it of "exploiting" the transitional period and risking the "spiral of new conflicts." [24] Shara called on the international community to stand with Syria in confronting Israeli "threats." [25]

Arabian Peninsula

A Houthi Samad drone crashed in Eilat, southern Israel, on September 24, marking the second time that a Houthi drone has penetrated Israeli air defense systems in the past week.[26] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) confirmed on September 24 that the Iron Dome failed to intercept the drone and that the drone crashed in Eilat.[27] An initial investigation conducted by the Israeli Air Force found that the Iron Dome air defense system detected the drone late in its flight

path.[28] Israeli media suggested that the Iron Dome may have failed to intercept the Houthi drone due to the drone's low altitude.[29] Israeli media reported that the Houthi drone attack wounded at least 22 civilians.[30] The Houthis confirmed the attack on September 24.[31] This attack comes after a Houthi drone penetrated Israeli air defense systems and struck a hotel in Eilat on September 18.[32] Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz warned the Houthis on September 24 that "those who harm Israel will be harmed sevenfold."[33]

Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun reiterated on September 23 that continued Israeli operations in Lebanon hinder the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) from being able to implement its plan to disarm Hezbollah.[34] Aoun met with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on September 23.[35] Aoun told Guterres that the LAF is carrying out its duties in southern Lebanon but is waiting for Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon to fully deploy its forces there.[36] The LAF has previously stated that continued Israeli airstrikes will prevent the LAF from fully deploying to southern Lebanon and hinder its ability to disarm Hezbollah.[37] The LAF plan stipulates that the LAF will disarm Hezbollah south of the Litani River by the end of November 2025.[38] Aoun noted that the Lebanese government's disarmament plan was expected to be implemented shortly after the plan was approved on September 5 but that continued Israeli attacks in Lebanon are preventing the plan's implementation.[39] Aoun stressed to other foreign officials on the sidelines of the UNGA that continued delays in Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon hinder "all efforts" to strengthen the state's sovereignty over all Lebanese territory.[40] Israel has maintained that it will continue to operate in Lebanon until Hezbollah is disarmed.[41]

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf claimed on September 24 that Hezbollah is "more alive than ever" and noted that Iran is continuing to provide support to Hezbollah and other members of the Axis of Resistance.[42] Ghalibaf's statements support Hezbollah's campaign to pressure the Lebanese government to reverse its decision to disarm Hezbollah by portraying Hezbollah as strong and capable of confronting the government. Ghalibaf told Hezbollah-aligned media on September 24 that Hezbollah is "stronger, more steadfast, and more cohesive" than it was previously.[43] Ghalibaf added that US diplomats' visits to Lebanon and the Lebanese government's efforts to disarm Hezbollah demonstrate Hezbollah's "strength and influence." [44] Ghalibaf's statements mirror those from senior Hezbollah officials who have sought to demonstrate Hezbollah's strength and willingness to confront the Lebanese government to prevent disarmament.[45] Iranian officials regularly emphasize the strength of the Axis of Resistance, so it is unclear whether Iran intentionally coordinated its language with Hezbollah in this instance.

Hezbollah's decision not to call on its supporters to protest suggests that Hezbollah is engaged in a pressure campaign against the Lebanese government and does not currently seek to incite confrontation with the government. Hezbollah reportedly called on its supporters on September 23 to take part in an upcoming rally at Raouche Rock in Beirut to commemorate the death of former Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, according to Lebanese media.[46] Hezbollah often uses commemorative events to rally its supporters and signal its strength.[47] Several Lebanese officials condemned Hezbollah's call for a rally.[48] Lebanese parliamentarian Waddah al Sadek said on September 23 that Hezbollah often warns the Lebanese government against being "dragged into civil war" but "wastes no chance to provoke Beirut's residents." [49] Hezbollah later denied that it had organized a rally at Raouche.[50] Hezbollah has threatened in recent months to call on its supporters to

confront the Lebanese government if the government follows through on its plan to disarm Hezbollah, but has largely refrained from inciting protests against the Lebanese government.[51] Hezbollah and the Amal Movement have only issued one call to protest since August 25 but later postponed the protests to allow for dialogue.[52] Hezbollah's decision not to hold protests against the Lebanese government's plan to disarm the organization highlights Hezbollah's relative weakness within the Lebanese political space, given that Hezbollah has previously incited mass protests in response to much less significant issues in the past.[53]



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Avery Borens, Adham Fattah, Nidal Morrison, Ben Rezaei, Zahra Wakilzada, Benjamin Schmida, Katherine Wells, Kelly Campa, Henry Jenks, Andie Parry, Annika Ganzeveld

Toplines

Hezbollah is reportedly facing internal divisions among its members over its response to the Lebanese state's plan to disarm Hezbollah. Senior Hezbollah officials are divided over how to address the Lebanese government's August 2025 decision to disarm the group, according to a Lebanese journalist speaking to Saudi media.[1] Some Hezbollah officials, such as Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem and Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc Head Mohammad Raad, have rejected the Lebanese government's decision. Raad previously proclaimed "death over handing over" Hezbollah's weapons, for example.[2] Qassem has similarly directly threatened confrontation with the Lebanese government.[3] Other Hezbollah officials have called for more flexibility and sought to avoid confrontation with the Lebanese Armed Forces.[4] Hezbollah Political Council Deputy Head Mahmoud Qamati stated in August 2025 that Hezbollah will use all "peaceful means possible to oppose" the Lebanese government's disarmament plan and affirmed that Hezbollah "will not use [its] weapons inside Lebanon" or "be dragged into internal strife with the [Lebanese Armed Forces]."[5] It is unclear if the differences between Hezbollah officials will impair Hezbollah's ability to form and execute a cohesive strategy to prevent the Lebanese state's disarmament campaign.

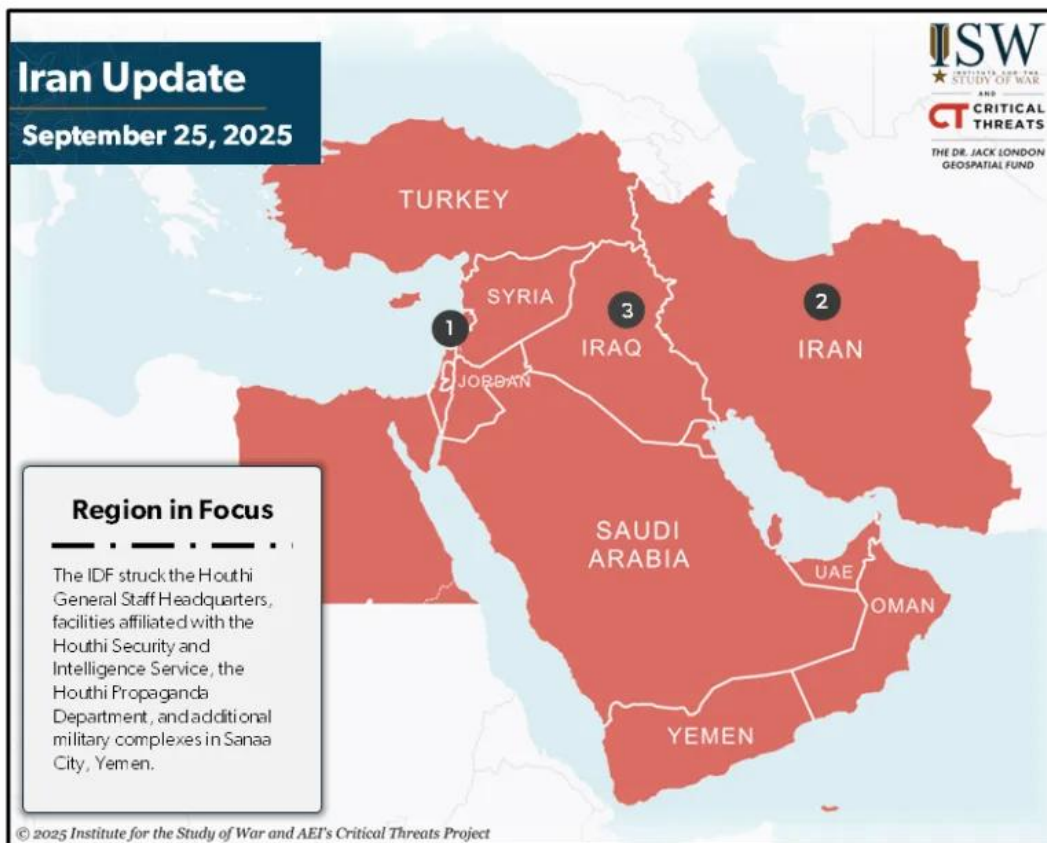
Hezbollah is also reportedly facing challenges in appointing new leaders following the Israeli decapitation campaign against Hezbollah in late 2024. Unspecified sources familiar with Hezbollah's internal affairs told Saudi media on September 25 that Hezbollah has been unable to appoint a deputy for Qassem.[6] Hezbollah has similarly been unable to fill positions in its Coordination and Liaison Unit, which is Hezbollah's main security apparatus.[7] The unit is responsible for communicating with Lebanese security agencies and reports directly to Qassem.[8] Hezbollah's need to appoint senior leaders is a lingering effect of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) air campaign in late 2024, in which the IDF killed a significant number of top Hezbollah commanders and inflicted a 45 percent casualty rate on Hezbollah.[9] Unspecified informed sources told Saudi media on September 25 that Hezbollah's Shura Council is taking steps to replace Coordination and Liaison Unit Head Wafiq Safa due to "his failures and poor relations" with Lebanese state agencies.[10] Safa has led the unit for over a decade and survived a targeted Israeli airstrike in Beirut in October 2024.[11] Safa is one of the few officials who was on former Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah's Shura Council to survive the war.[12] Hezbollah reportedly seeks to replace Safa with a new unspecified figure close to Qassem.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf emphasized on September 24 the

strategic importance of maintaining an Iranian presence near Israel's borders to defend against Israel.[13] Ghalibaf claimed that Israel's recent campaign against Iran would "definitely not have occurred" and that Iran would have "confronted" Israel on its border with Syria if Iran still retained a presence in Syria.[14] Ghalibaf may have been arguing that Iran could have opened another front against Israel in Syria and thereby detracted Israel's attention and diverted its resources away from Iran during the Israel-Iran War if Iran maintained its foothold in Syria. Iranian-backed groups in southern Syria, including Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian militias, often launched munitions targeting Israel and the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights in the months following October 7, 2023. Iran's network in Syria remains extremely limited after the fall of Assad in December 2024, and Iranian-aligned militias in Syria did not participate in the Israel-Iran war.[15] Ghalibaf also claimed that Israel would advance to Iran's border if Iran does not "stand against [Israel] in the Golan [Heights]."[16] Ghalibaf's comments reflect Iran's long-held objective to encircle Israel and to prevent conflicts with Israel from reaching Iran.

Ghalibaf also emphasized the need for Iran to strengthen its air power. Ghalibaf claimed that Iran's Bavar-373, Khordad, Sayyad, and Majid air defense systems operated effectively during the Israel-Iran War, but called on the regime to prioritize purchasing fighter jets.[17] Israel achieved air superiority in Iran within a few days of the start of the Israel-Iran War.[18] Ghalibaf's statements come amid reports that Iran may have acquired Russian MiG-29 fighter jets from Russia.[19] Ghalibaf's statements also come after Iranian armed forces-affiliated Defa Press expressed support for the purchase of Chinese fighter jets in June.[20]

The United States is continuing to pressure the Iraqi federal government to limit Iranian influence in the Iraqi federal government. Three unnamed Iraqi officials told UK-based, Qatari-owned media on September 24 that the United States asked the Iraqi federal government to reform the Iraqi judiciary and improve financial oversight as part of an effort to reduce Iranian influence over Iraqi state institutions.[21] Iranian-backed Iraqi actors have co-opted the Iraqi judicial system to issue rulings favorable to militia interests.[22] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have also exploited loopholes within the Iraqi financial system to commit fraud and obtain funds to support Iranian and militia operations, including attacks on US forces and allies.[23] The US demand for improved financial oversight comes after Iraq's Rafidain Bank signed a "professional partnership agreement" with a US-based financial consulting firm on August 15 to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.[24] The Iraqi government previously used Rafidain Bank to process and distribute salaries to members of the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces.[25]



- 1 LEBANON.** Hezbollah is reportedly facing internal divisions among its members over its response to the Lebanese state's plan to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah is also reportedly facing challenges in appointing new leaders following the Israeli decapitation campaign against Hezbollah in late 2024.
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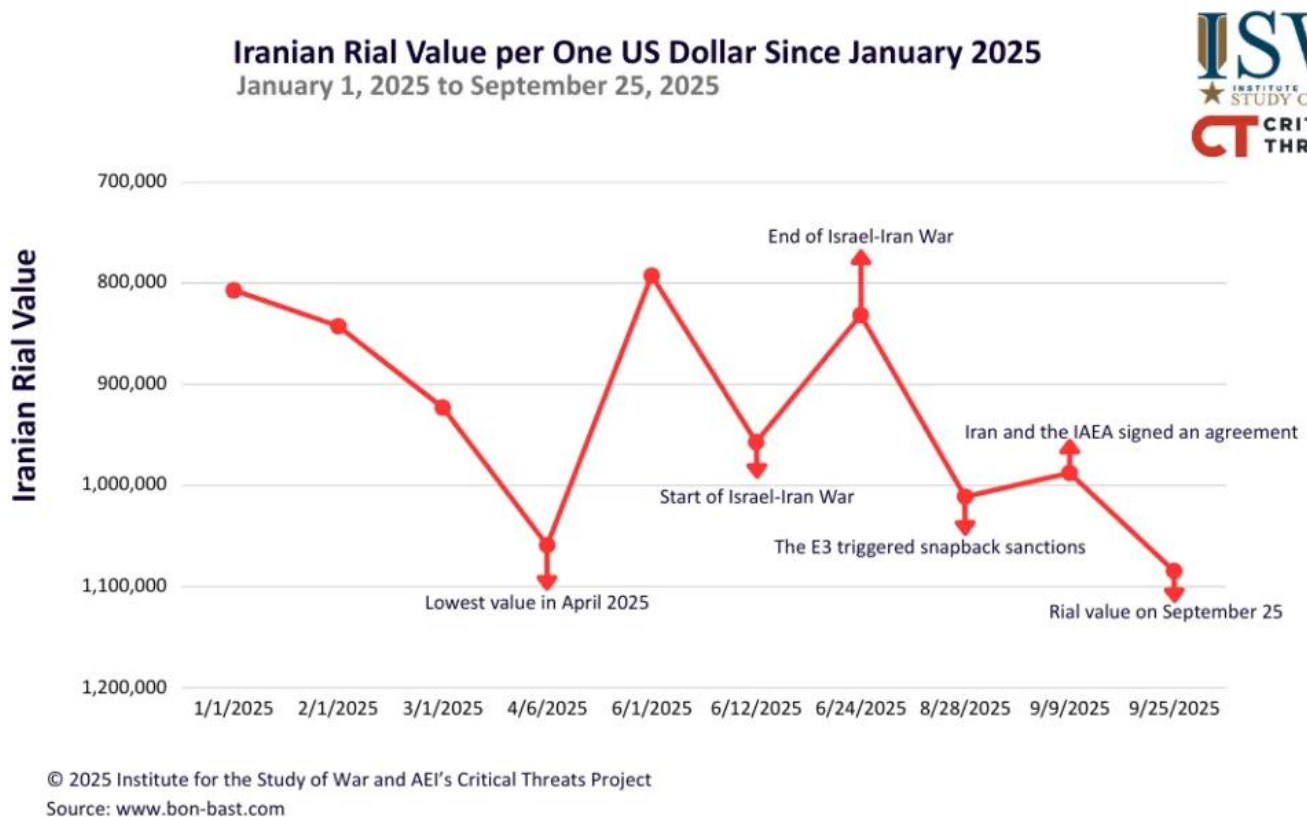
Key Takeaways

- 1. Internal Hezbollah Disagreements:** Hezbollah is reportedly facing internal divisions among its members over its response to the Lebanese state's plan to disarm Hezbollah. Hezbollah is also reportedly facing challenges in appointing new leaders following the Israeli decapitation campaign against Hezbollah in late 2024.
- 2. Iranian Perspective on Syria:** Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf emphasized on September 24 the strategic importance of maintaining an Iranian presence near Israel's borders to defend against Israel. Ghalibaf claimed that Israel's recent campaign against Iran would "definitely not have occurred" and that Iran would have "confronted" Israel on its border with Syria if Iran still retained a presence in Syria.
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limit Iranian influence in the Iraqi federal government. Three unnamed Iraqi officials told UK-based, Qatari-owned media on September 24 that the United States asked the Iraqi federal government to reform the Iraqi judiciary and improve financial oversight as part of an effort to reduce Iranian influence over Iraqi state institutions.

Iran

Iran is preparing economic measures to try to withstand the likely reimposition of UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on September 27. UNSC Resolution 2231 endorsed the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and terminated six earlier UNSC resolutions.[26] The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) triggered the 30-day JCPOA snapback process on August 28.[27] The UNSC will reimpose the six suspended resolutions, which include sanctions on Iranian military and nuclear entities, on September 27 unless Iran meets its obligations laid out under the JCPOA. Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad claimed on September 24 that the Iranian government has developed contingency plans to counter snapback sanctions and claimed that oil sales will continue at their current rate despite sanctions.[28] Paknejad added that snapback sanctions will not directly target Iranian oil sales but could affect trade, finance, and shipping.[29] Central Bank Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin similarly stated on September 24 that the bank will stabilize the Iranian currency if UNSC sanctions are reimposed.[30] Farzin also claimed that the Central Bank will sell more gold coins and bullion to keep the gold market stable and control inflation.[31] The Iranian rial reached 1,085,000 rials per one US dollar on September 25, reflecting Iranian anticipation about imminent snapback sanctions.[32]



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi stated on September 23 that Iran still retains the capacity to advance its nuclear program after US and Israeli strikes targeted Iranian nuclear facilities in June 2025.[33] Grossi stated that the strikes

may not have damaged all Iranian centrifuges and that Iran retains facilities to manufacture centrifuge components.[34] Grossi also stated that it would take Iran only “weeks” to enrich its uranium stockpile to 90 percent.[35] Israel struck the Iran Centrifuge Technology Company (TESA) workshop in Karaj, west of Tehran, and the Tehran Nuclear Research Center (TNRC) in Tehran Province during the Israel-Iran War.[36] Iran manufactured centrifuge components at TESA and manufactured and tested advanced centrifuge rotors at the TNRC.[37]

Iran showcased its nuclear technology at the 2025 Atom Expo in Moscow on September 25.[38]

Atomic Energy Organization of Iran head Mohammad Eslami presented advancements in Iran’s nuclear technology on September 25.[39] China, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan also participated in the exhibition.[40] Eslami met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi on the sidelines of the event.[41] Eslami announced that Iran plans to develop large nuclear power plants and small modular reactors (SMRs) with the help of Russian state-owned atomic energy corporation Rosatom.[42] Eslami and the Rosatom director general signed a memorandum of understanding on September 24 for Russia to build eight SMRs in Iran, including four at the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant.[43]

Indian officials recently discussed the possibility of purchasing oil from Iran and Venezuela in exchange for reducing Russian oil imports with the Trump administration.[44] An anonymous source with knowledge of the discussion told Bloomberg on September 25 that an Indian delegation visiting the United States emphasized to the Trump administration that India must receive oil from Iran and Venezuela in order to be able to suspend oil imports from Russia without causing a spike in global oil prices. India has not purchased oil from Iran since 2019.

Iraq

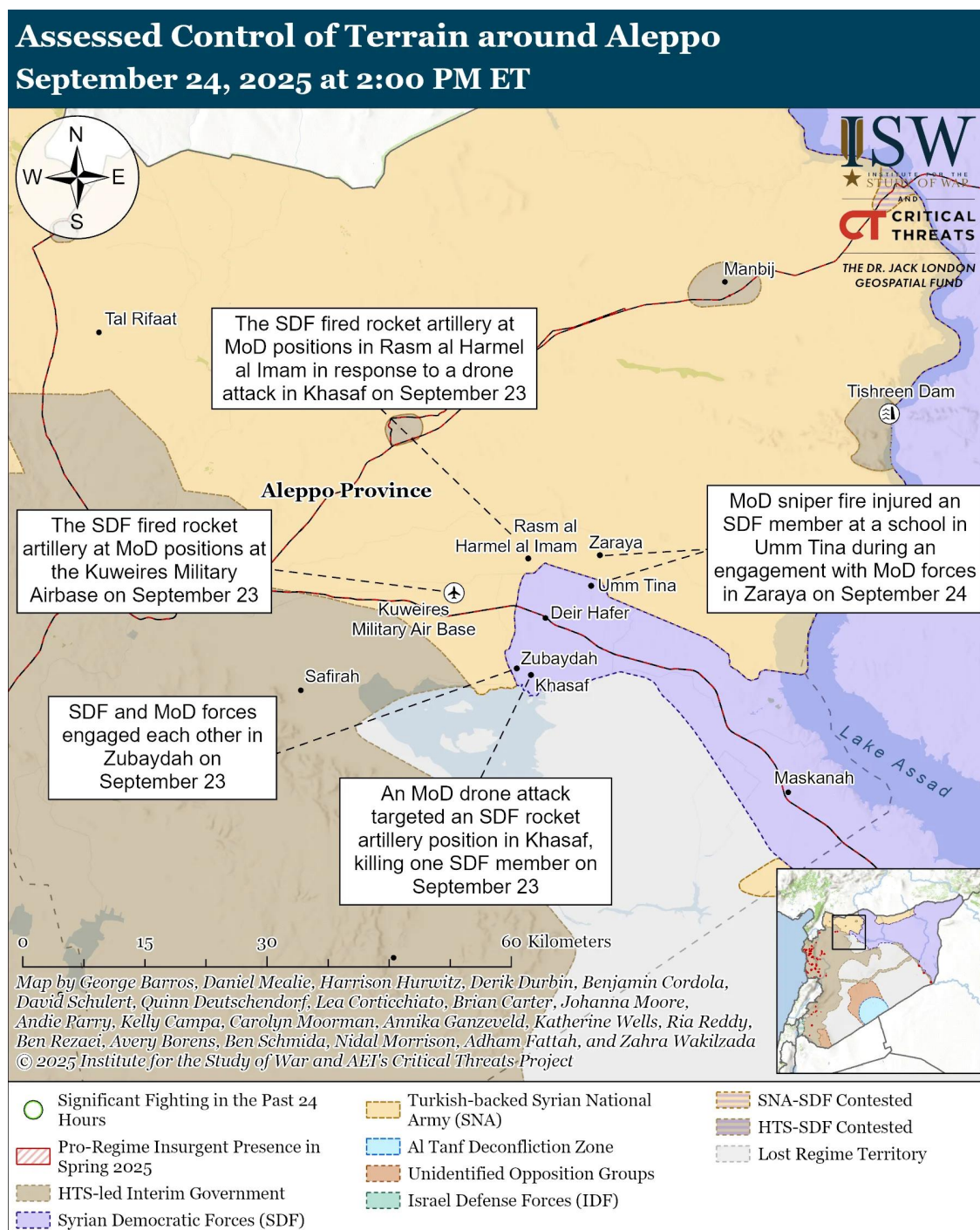
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Syria

The Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) conducted several drone strikes to disable US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) artillery positions south of Deir Hafer, Aleppo Province, on September 23. Deir Hafer is the westernmost city that the SDF still holds in Aleppo Province and the salient where MoD and SDF engagements occur most frequently. The SDF and local media reported that the MoD launched two drones that struck an SDF rocket artillery position near Khasaf, a village south of Deir Hafer, on September 23.[45] The drone strike killed one SDF member and injured two others.[46] A similar incident occurred on September 20, when the MoD conducted a drone strike on an SDF rocket artillery position in Maskana, 40 kilometers south of Deir Hafer.[47] Anti-SDF media reported that the SDF has conducted several rocket artillery attacks on MoD positions near the Deir Hafer salient since September 20.[48] It is unclear what is prompting the SDF’s reported attacks.

The SDF responded to the MoD drone strike by targeting MoD positions near the Deir Hafer salient on September 23 and 24.[49] The SDF fired rocket artillery targeting several MoD positions in the area, including Kuweires Military Airbase, on September 23.[50] The SDF and MoD also exchanged fire in several towns within a seven-kilometer radius of Deir Hafer on September 24.[51] A local anti-SDF

source claimed that MoD snipers injured an SDF member at a school in Umm Tina during an engagement with MoD forces positioned in Zaraya.[52] Syrian media reported on September 24 that an SDF sniper killed an MoD 80th Division fighter near Deir Hafer.[53] Continued SDF-MoD engagements are violations of the March 2025 ceasefire.[54] Renewed larger-scale conflict along the Deir Hafer salient could hinder the SDF's integration into the Syrian state before the end of the year. Turkey reportedly gave the Syrian transitional government until the end of 2025 to integrate the SDF into the Syrian state before it takes military action against the SDF.



Turkish officials continue to reiterate to the Syrian government that the SDF is not complying with its agreement to integrate into the Syrian state, likely to encourage the Syrian government to increase political and military pressure on the SDF. Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan met with Syrian President Ahmed al Shara in New York on September 24.[55] Erdogan stressed to Shara that the SDF must comply with the March 10 integration agreement, according to an official Turkish readout of the meeting.[56] Erdogan's comments to Shara come as Turkey is "growing impatient" with the SDF's limited progress toward integrating into the Syrian state.[57] Turkey has long sought to dismantle the SDF, which it sees as a threat to Turkish regional ambitions and domestic stability.[58] CTP-ISW recently assessed that Turkey is likely encouraging the Syrian government to increase military and political pressure on the SDF to integrate into Syria.[59] The spokesperson for the Turkish Defense Ministry cited recent SDF-MoD clashes in Aleppo as evidence that the SDF is not abiding by its commitments.[60] Damascus has reportedly asked Turkey to delay any military action against the SDF to allow for negotiations to continue. The Syrian MoD has continued to cooperate with Turkey against the SDF on and near the frontlines in Aleppo Province in recent days, including through possible Turkish drone reconnaissance, however.[61]

Syrian Navy Commander Brigadier General Mohammed al Saud discussed Syrian-Turkish naval cooperation with Turkish Fleet Commander Admiral Kadir Yildiz in Turkey on September 25.[62] The Syrian MoD delegation toured a Turkish frigate in Kocaeli Province, Turkey.[63] The Turkish Defense Ministry stated that Turkey has pledged to provide "land, sea, or air" support to develop the "defense and security capacity" of the new Syrian government.[64] The Turkish Defense Ministry said that Saud's visit to Turkey comes within the context of the Syrian-Turkish military training and "consultation" agreement signed in Ankara on August 13.[65] The Turkish Defense Ministry pledged to provide training programs and technical support to strengthen the Syrian MoD and "reform the security apparatus comprehensively" under the provisions of the agreement.[66]

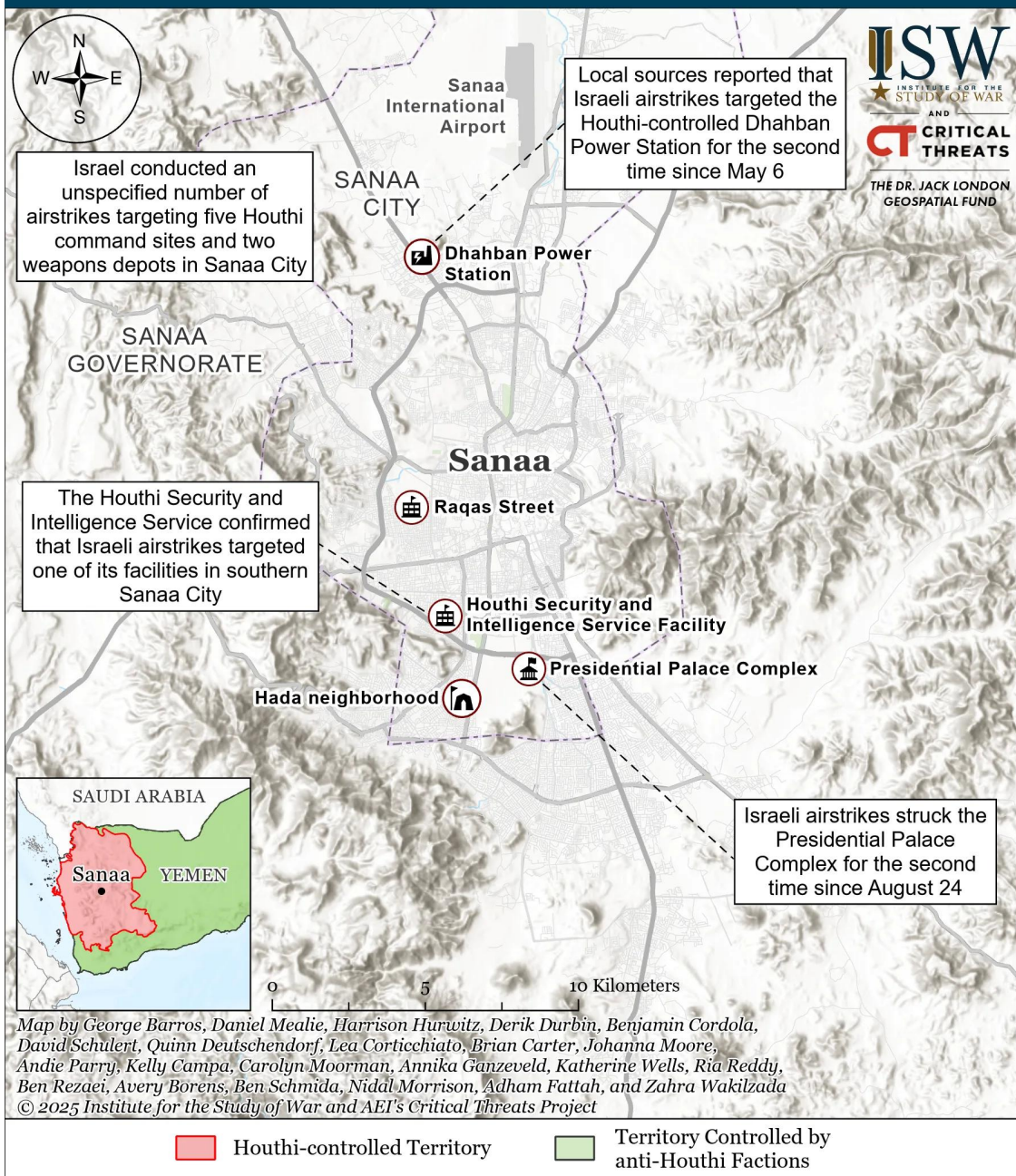
Syria and Ukraine restored diplomatic relations on September 24 after a meeting between Syrian President Ahmed al Shara and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA).[67] Ukraine severed ties with Syria in 2022 after the Assad regime recognized the independence of Luhansk and Donetsk following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[68] Shara and Zelensky discussed common security threats and areas where Syria and Ukraine can enhance cooperation, which likely includes trade.[69] Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha met with Shara in Damascus in December 2024 shortly after Assad's fall and agreed to provide Syria with 500 tons of flour to offset Russia's suspension of exports to Syria at the time.[70] Syrian and Ukrainian port and trade officials met in Damascus on September 23 to discuss strengthening bilateral economic and trade relations.[71] The restoration of diplomatic relations between Syria and Ukraine follows an increase in diplomatic contact between Russia and Syria in recent months. Syrian officials, including Chief of Staff Ali al Nassan, Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani, and Shara, met with senior Russian officials in Damascus on September 9, likely to continue negotiating the status of Russian bases in Syria.[72] Shara is expected to travel to Moscow on October 15 for the Arab-Russian summit.[73]

US President Donald Trump met with Syrian President Ahmed al Shara on September 24 on the sidelines of the UNGA.[74] Trump and Shara first met in Saudi Arabia in May 2025, when Trump announced that he would lift all US sanctions on Syria.[75] Syrian Foreign Ministry Director of US Affairs Qutaiba Idlibi said that Trump and Shara's September 24 meeting focused on sanctions relief, likely in reference to the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2019.[76] The Trump administration suspended Caesar Act sanctions for 180 days on May 23, but Congress must pass a law to permanently remove the sanctions.[77] Idlibi indicated that Shara and Trump will soon meet again in Washington, DC, but not during Shara's visit to the United States to attend the UNGA.[78]

Arabian Peninsula

The Israeli Air Force (IAF) struck five Houthi command sites and two weapons depots in Sanaa City, Yemen, on September 25.[79] The IAF conducted the airstrikes in response to a Houthi drone attack that injured 22 civilians in Eilat, southern Israel, on September 25.[80] The IAF struck the Houthi General Staff Headquarters, facilities affiliated with the Houthi Security and Intelligence Service (SIS), the Houthi Propaganda Department, and additional military complexes.[81] Local sources reported that IAF airstrikes targeted the Presidential Palace Complex in southern Sanaa City, which reportedly houses Houthi command sites.[82] Houthi SIS sources confirmed that Israeli airstrikes targeted one of the SIS's facilities in southern Sanaa City.[83] The SIS sources and a Yemen analyst claimed that the facility housed political prisoners detained by the Houthis, which CTP-ISW is unable to verify.[84] Local sources also reported that IAF airstrikes targeted an unspecified site in the Hada neighborhood of southern Sanaa City and a residential building on Raqas Street in eastern Sanaa City.[85] Houthi media reported that the IAF also struck the Houthi-controlled Dhahban Power Station in northern Sanaa City.[86] The IAF last conducted airstrikes targeting the Dhahban Power Station in May.[87]

Israeli Airstrikes Against Houthi Targets in Sanaa On September 25, 2025



Houthi Supreme Leader Abdulmalik al Houthi confirmed on September 25 that the Houthis attacked a vessel on September 23.[88] This attack is part of the Houthis' offensive campaign against international shipping transiting the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to economically "blockade" Israel. An unspecified vessel's crew reported an explosion in the vicinity of their vessel 120 nautical miles east of the Port of Aden on September 23.[89] The crew did not report any casualties or damage to the vessel.[90]

Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

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Iran Update, September 26, 2025



Kelly Campa, Adham Fattah, Ben Rezaei, Katherine Wells, Zahra Wakilzada, Avery Borens, Brian Carter, Parker Hempel

Toplines

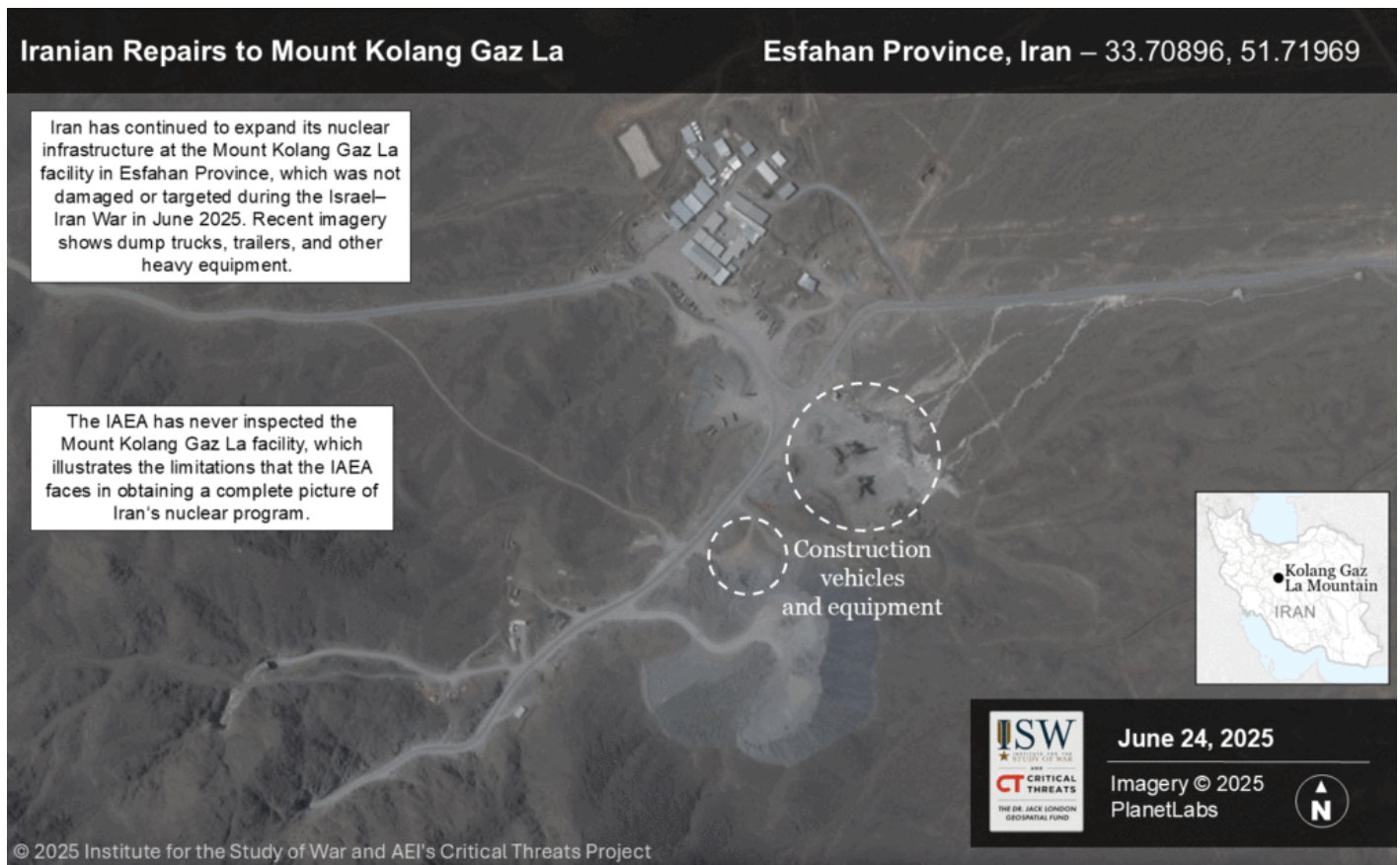
The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) will reimpose UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Iran on September 27 despite a last-ditch Iranian effort to delay the snapback mechanism. A UK-based media outlet reported on September 26 that Iran offered to immediately grant International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors full access to the Natanz Nuclear Facility. Iran, in return, called for the UNSC to adopt a Russian-Chinese resolution to extend the snapback mechanism's deadline by six months.[1] The UNSC rejected the Russian-Chinese resolution in a vote on September 26, which means the UNSC sanctions will automatically be reimposed on September 27.[2] The E3 offered in July 2025 to extend the snapback mechanism's deadline if Iran fully cooperated with the IAEA, resumed nuclear talks with the United States, and accounted for its 60 percent enriched uranium stockpile.[3] Iran failed to meet the E3's conditions.

Iran has continued to expand its nuclear infrastructure at the Mount Kolang Gaz La facility in Esfahan Province, which was not damaged or targeted during the Israel-Iran War in June 2025.[4] The *Washington Post*, citing satellite imagery, reported on September 26 that Iran has made key changes at the site since the war.[5]

- **Security perimeter:** Iran completed construction on roughly 4,000 feet of wall on the western edge and graded a parallel road, which brings the enclosure close to completion.
- **Tunnel entrance:** Iran reinforced one eastern entrance with dirt and rock to prevent damage or potential collapse in future airstrikes.
- **Excavation spoil:** The pile of rock and soil outside the eastern tunnels has modestly increased, indicating continued tunneling inside the mountain.

Unspecified analysts told the *Washington Post* that the facility's underground halls may be 260 to 330 feet deep, which is deeper than the underground halls at Iran's Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.[6] The depth of the facility's underground halls has fueled suspicions that the site could serve not only as a centrifuge assembly plant, as Iran announced in 2020, but also as a covert enrichment facility or secure storage for near-weapons-grade uranium.[7] The Institute for Science and International Security reported in April 2025 that Iran had already begun building a security wall with new roads and space for fences, lights, and cameras at the facility.[8] The institute's report noted that the facility could house an advanced centrifuge assembly plant or potentially a small undeclared enrichment plant.[9] The IAEA has never inspected the Mount Kolang Gaz La facility, which illustrates the limitations that the IAEA faces in

obtaining a complete picture of Iran's nuclear program. Iran also barred IAEA inspectors from accessing the site's tunnels in April 2025 and told the agency that "it is none of [their] business." [10]

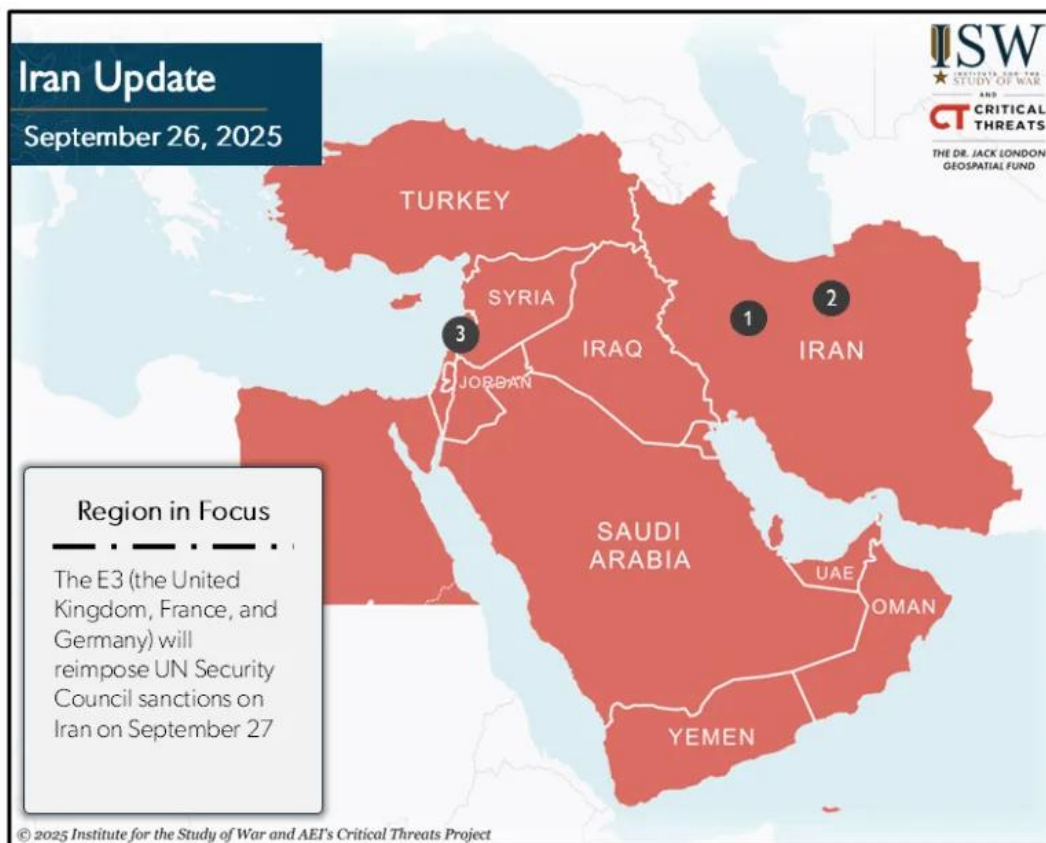


Iran is attempting to exploit anti-Israel sentiments in Saudi Arabia in order to protect Hezbollah from its looming disarmament. Iran's attempts to exploit anti-Israel sentiment in the Saudi government will most likely fail due to Iran's long history of attacking Saudi Arabia with proxies and partners trained by Hezbollah. Iranian officials appear to have grown increasingly concerned about Hezbollah's ability to retain its weapons amid the Lebanese state's current efforts to disarm the group following Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani's trip to Riyadh on September 16.[11] Two unspecified Iranian sources told Reuters on September 26 that Hezbollah's disarmament was one of the "main topics" of Larijani's visit and that Larijani attempted to convince Riyadh that Hezbollah's disarmament would benefit neither Lebanon nor the region.[12] Saudi Arabia has positioned itself in recent months as one of the principal regional powers supporting the Lebanese state's efforts to disarm Hezbollah.[13] Larijani urged Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem to reach out and show "goodwill" to Saudi Arabia after his trip, according to the two Iranian sources and an unspecified source with "knowledge of Hezbollah's thinking." [14] Qassem—in acquiescence to Larijani's request—called on Saudi Arabia to "open a new page" with Hezbollah during a speech on September 19.[15] Qassem argued that both parties have a common enemy in Israel.[16]

Qassem's reasoning is consistent with Iranian diplomatic efforts and rhetoric that have attempted to exploit regional anti-Israel sentiments in the wake of Israel's strikes on Doha, Qatar, on September 9.[17] Iran has aimed these efforts at Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, and has called for Arab, Islamic, and international responses since Israel's strikes in Doha.[18] Iranian officials have framed Israel's strikes as an opportunity to unite regional powers—particularly the Gulf states—in an anti-Israel, anti-United States

regional coalition.[19]

Such an Iranian effort to exploit anti-Israel sentiments in Saudi Arabia is highly unlikely to weaken Saudi support for Hezbollah's disarmament. Hezbollah has trained several Iranian proxy and partner groups—including Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq and other Iraqi militias and the Houthis—that have targeted Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, in addition to other Gulf states, has promised significant economic aid to Lebanon that is contingent on Hezbollah's disarmament, likely as an economic incentive to pressure the Lebanese government to implement its disarmament plan.[20] Saudi Arabia is unlikely to ease pressure on the partner of its regional rival, Iran, based on shared anti-Israel sentiment alone.



- 1 IRAN.** The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) will reimpose UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Iran on September 27 despite a last-ditch Iranian effort to delay the snapback mechanism. The E3 rejected Iran's offer to immediately grant International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors full access to the Natanz Nuclear Facility in return for the UNSC adopting a Russian-Chinese resolution to extend the snapback mechanism's deadline by six months.
- 2 IRAN.** Iran has continued to expand its nuclear infrastructure at the Mount Kolang Gaz La facility in Esfahan Province, which was not damaged or targeted during the Israel-Iran War in June 2025. Iran has made significant changes to the site's security perimeter and tunnel entrance since the war, and increased excavation spoil outside the tunnel entrances suggest increased tunneling at the site.
- 3 LEBANON.** Iran is attempting to exploit anti-Israel sentiments in Saudi Arabia to protect Hezbollah from its looming disarmament. Iran's attempts to exploit anti-Israel sentiment in the Saudi government will most likely fail due in part to Iran's long history of attacking Saudi Arabia with proxies and partners trained by Hezbollah.

Key Takeaways

1. **Snapback Sanctions:** The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) will reimpose UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Iran on September 27 despite a last-ditch Iranian effort to delay the snapback mechanism. The E3 rejected Iran's offer to immediately grant International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors full access to the Natanz Nuclear Facility in return for the UNSC adopting a Russian-Chinese resolution to extend the snapback mechanism's deadline by six months.
2. **Iranian Nuclear Program:** Iran has continued to expand its nuclear infrastructure at the Mount Kolang Gaz La facility in Esfahan Province, which was not damaged or targeted during the Israel-Iran War in June 2025. Iran has made significant changes to the site's security perimeter and tunnel entrance since the war, and increased excavation spoil outside the tunnel entrances suggests increased tunneling at the site.
3. **Hezbollah-Saudi Arabia Relations:** Iran is attempting to exploit anti-Israel sentiments in Saudi Arabia in order to protect Hezbollah from its looming disarmament. Iran's attempts to exploit anti-Israel sentiment in the Saudi government will most likely fail due in part to Iran's long history of attacking Saudi Arabia with proxies and partners trained by Hezbollah.

Iran

Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Ali Reza Sabahi Fard inspected an unspecified air defense site in northwestern Iran on September 26.[21]

Sabahi Fard commended the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and Artesh on their performance during the Israel-Iran War in June 2025. Sabahi Fard noted that Iran's air defense is at its "highest level" of combat capability and defense readiness. Israel destroyed a significant number of Iranian air defense systems and radars throughout the war to establish air superiority over Iran.[22]

Iraq

Nothing significant to report

Syria

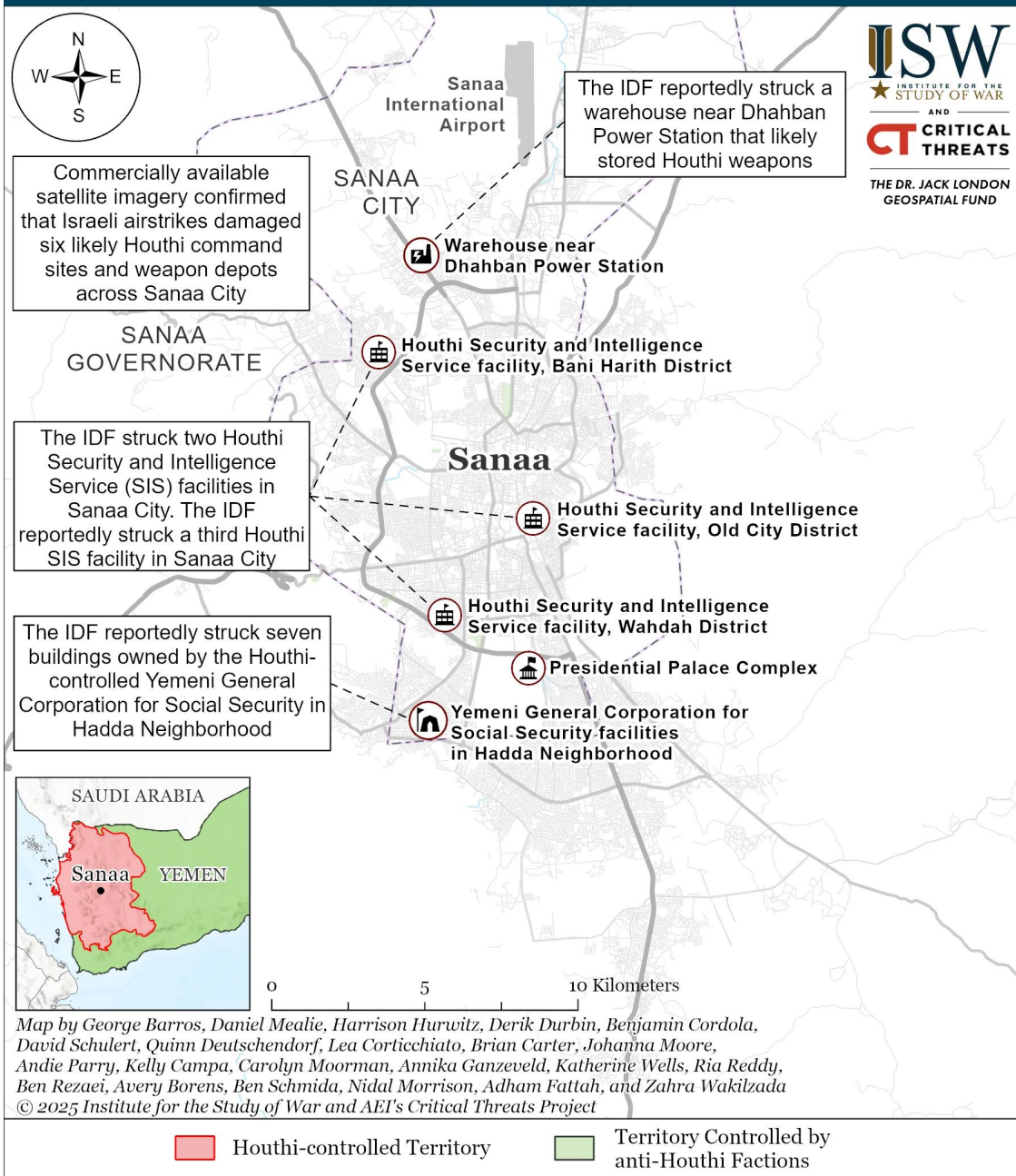
Syria and Israel's security negotiations have reportedly stalled due to Israel's demand for a humanitarian corridor between Israel and Suwayda City in Syria, according to unspecified sources speaking to Reuters.[23] Syria and Israel have engaged in negotiations since mid-August 2025 over the demilitarization of southwestern Syria, Israeli withdrawal from Syrian territory captured after the Assad regime's fall, and protection of Suwayda Province's Druze population.[24] Syria and Israel were reportedly close to reaching a "de-escalation" agreement until Israel reintroduced its demands for a humanitarian corridor between Israel and Suwayda City, which has stalled the negotiations.[25] Israel previously proposed to establish a humanitarian aid corridor spanning over 40 miles from the Israeli border to Suwayda City in August 2025, which Syrian officials rejected.[26] Syrian officials have continuously argued that such a corridor would violate Syrian sovereignty.[27]

Arabian Peninsula

Commercially available satellite imagery captured on September 26 confirmed that the Israeli airstrikes on September 25 damaged six Houthi sites across Sanaa City, including five command and control sites and one weapons depot.[28] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Air Force confirmed on September 25 that it struck five Houthi command sites and two weapons depots in Sanaa City in response to the recent Houthi drone and missile attacks targeting Israel.[29] The IDF stated that the strikes targeted the Houthi General Staff Headquarters, facilities affiliated with the Houthi Security and Intelligence Service (SIS), the Houthi Propaganda Department, and additional military complexes in Sanaa City.[30] An IDF strike heavily damaged a Houthi SIS facility in Wahdah District, according to commercially available satellite imagery. Houthi SIS sources and Mohammad al Basha, a Yemen-focused analyst, claimed that this strike targeted an SIS facility that housed political prisoners detained by the Houthis.[31] The IAF airstrikes also damaged two other Houthi SIS facilities in Bani Harith District and in Old City District, as well as seven buildings owned by the Houthi-controlled Yemeni General Corporation for Social Security, according to Basha and commercially available satellite imagery.[32] Commercially available satellite imagery also confirmed that the IAF airstrikes damaged buildings in the east wing of the Presidential Palace complex, which reportedly houses Houthi command sites and likely weapons depots. The IAF strikes also damaged a warehouse near Dhabhan Power Station, which likely served as a weapons depot.[33]

Israeli Airstrikes Against Houthi Targets in Sanaa

On September 25, 2025



Houthi Security and Intelligence Service Facility in Wahdah District

Sanaa, Yemen – 15.32850, 44.19322



Houthi Security and Intelligence Service Compound in Bani Harith District

Sanaa, Yemen – 15.402819, 44.1739412



**Houthi Security and Intelligence Service Facility
in Old City District**

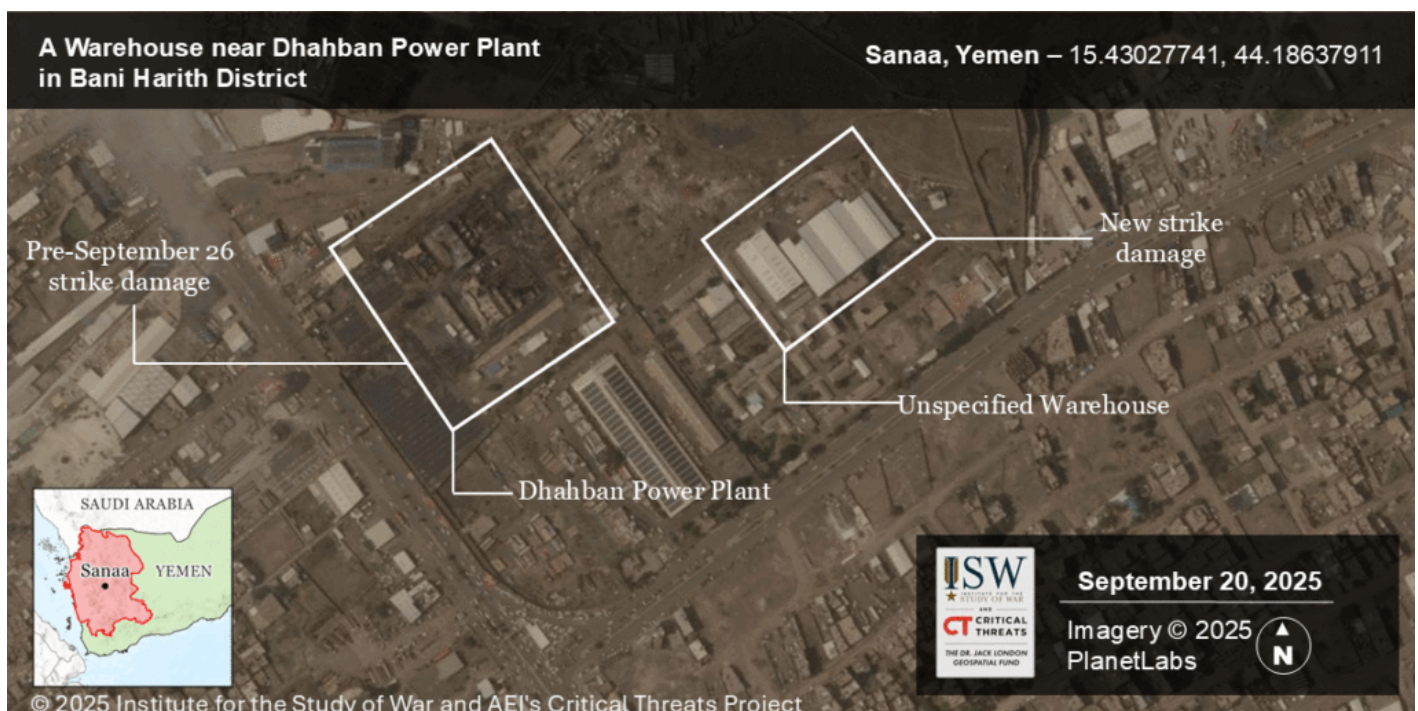
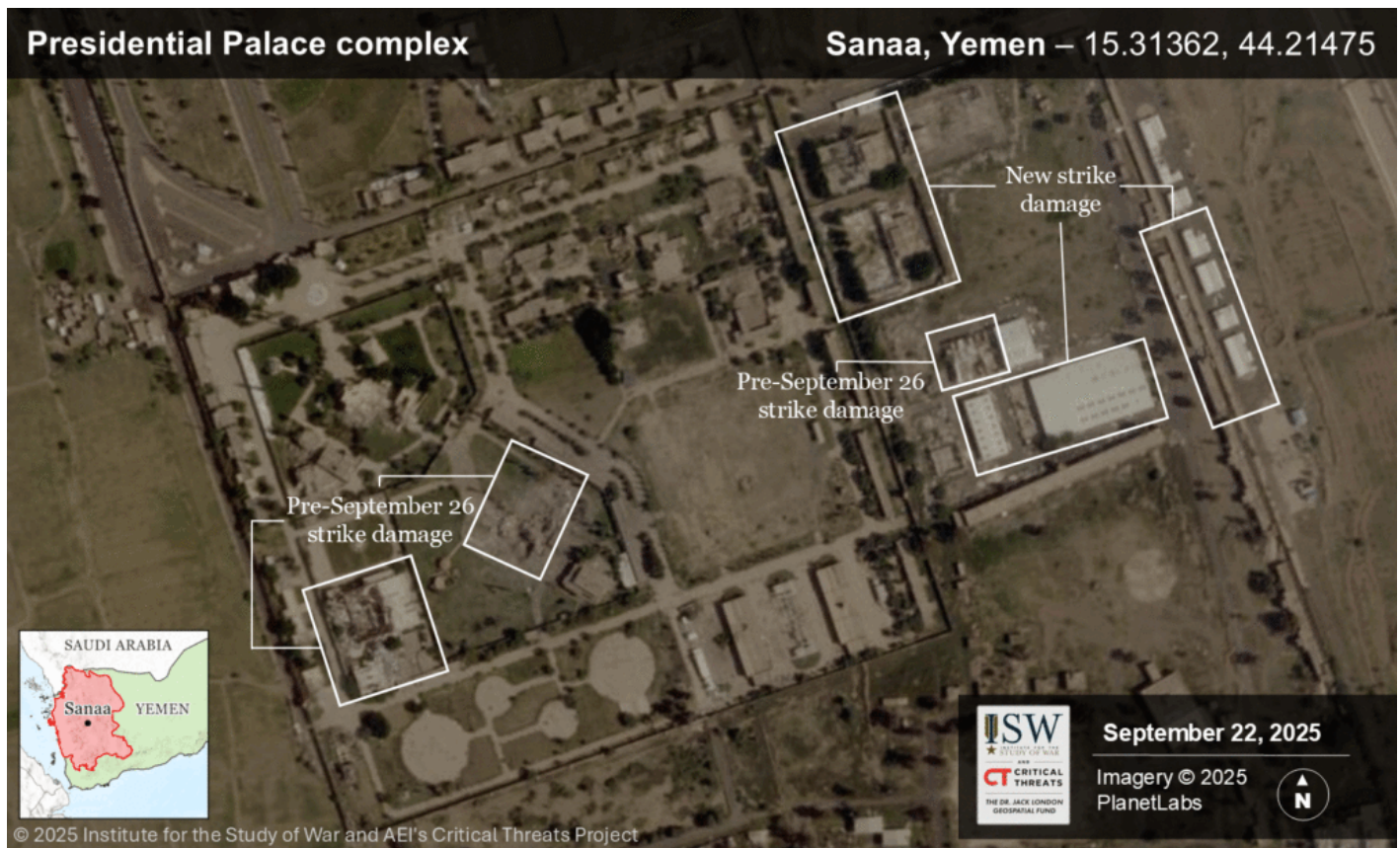
Sanaa, Yemen – 15.3557965, 44.2191821



**Yemeni General Corporation for Social Security
facilities in Hadda Neighborhood**

Sanaa, Yemen – 15.29865, 44.18841





The Houthis launched a ballistic missile on September 25 targeting “several sensitive” sites in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area, central Israel, following Israeli airstrikes on Houthi sites in Sanaa City on September 25.[34] The IDF Air Force intercepted the missile.[35] The Houthis have launched hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles targeting Israel since the Houthis began their campaign to enforce an economic “blockade” on Israel in October 2023.[36]

Palestinian Territories & Lebanon

See topline section.

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