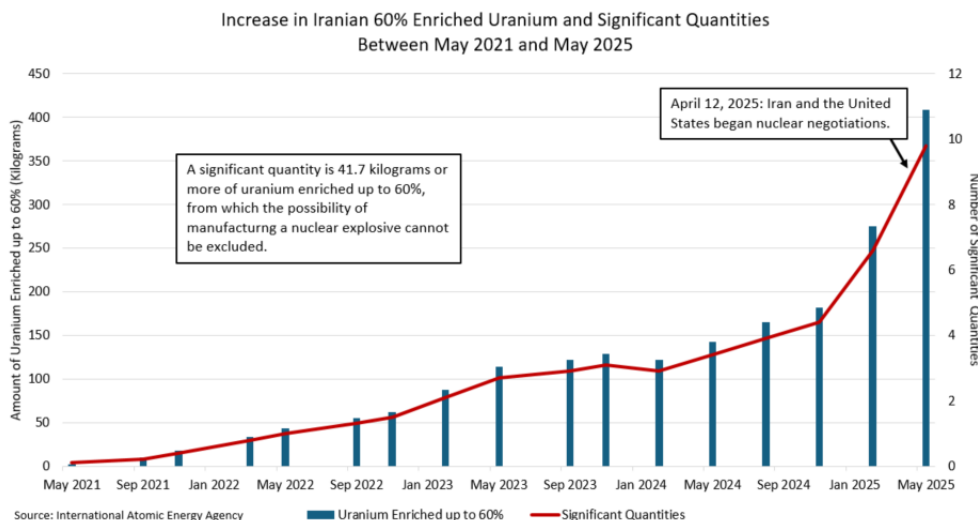


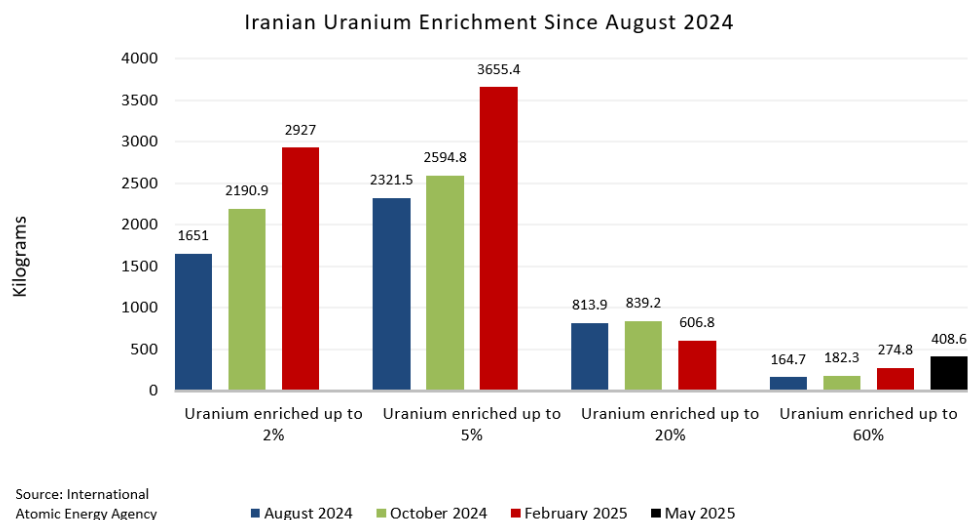
Iran Update

Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Katherine Wells, Kelly Campa, Avery Borens, Carolyn Moorman, Johanna Moore, Ben Schmida, Andie Parry, and Annika Ganzeveld

June 2, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

Iran increased its stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium by 133.8 kilograms, or 3.2 significant quantities, since February 2025, according to an unreleased International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report.[1] Iran has enough 60 percent enriched uranium, if enriched further, to produce nearly 10 nuclear weapons. The Associated Press reported on May 31 that Iran possesses 408.6 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, or 9.8 significant quantities, as of May 17.[2] A significant quantity is the “approximate amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded.”[3] Iran had 274.8 kilograms of uranium enriched up to 60 percent, or 6.6 significant quantities, in February 2025, by comparison. The IAEA report added that Iran’s total stockpile of enriched uranium is 9,247.6 kilograms, which marks a 953.2-kilogram increase since February 2025.[4] The IAEA report does not provide a month-to-month breakdown of Iran's uranium enrichment activity. It is therefore unclear whether Iranian uranium enrichment increased, decreased, or remained the same following the start of the US-Iran nuclear negotiations on April 12. Iran has previously increased its stockpile of enriched uranium to try to gain leverage in negotiations.[5] It is unclear, however, why Iran would pursue rapid enrichment amid the current US-Iran negotiations and potentially increase the risk of snapback sanctions or potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. The IAEA report comes as Iran has taken other measures to expand its nuclear program in recent months. Iran has installed new cascades of advanced centrifuges at Natanz and Fordow. Iran has also conducted metallurgical testing and computer simulations that could support the production of a nuclear weapon.[6]





The IAEA separately published a comprehensive report on May 31 that states that Iran’s cooperation with the IAEA has been “less than satisfactory” in “a number of respects.”[7] The report noted that Iran has failed to cooperate with the IAEA to resolve concerns about undeclared nuclear sites and material in Iran. The IAEA confirmed that Iran conducted undeclared nuclear activities at three locations—Lavisian-Shian, Varamin, and Turqzabad—until the early 2000s.[8] The IAEA published the comprehensive report on May 31 in response to an IAEA censure resolution in November 2024. The censure resolution was proposed by the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany).[9] The IAEA's quarterly and comprehensive reports both confirm Iranian non-compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards Agreement.

The United States and the E3 are planning to submit a resolution that formally declares Iran in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations in response to the recent IAEA reports, according to unspecified diplomats.[10] The United States and the E3 will reportedly submit the resolution at the next IAEA Board of Governors meeting on June 9 and 10. The resolution would lay the foundation for the E3 to trigger snapback sanctions. The JCPOA snapback mechanism allows JCPOA signatories to reimpose UN Security Council sanctions on Iran in the event of “significant non-performance by Iran of JCPOA commitments.”[11] The IAEA Board of Governors previously passed a similar resolution declaring Iran in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations in September 2005.[12] The Board of Governors referred Iran's non-compliance to the UN Security Council in February 2006, which led to the imposition of sanctions on Iran.[13] An unspecified senior Iranian official told Reuters on May 30 that Iran would respond to a resolution by "expand[ing] nuclear work." [14]

Iran is likely trying to prevent a possible non-compliance resolution and snapback sanctions ahead of the June 9 IAEA Board of Governors meeting. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi held a phone call with IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi on June 1, during which Araghchi asked Grossi to explain "Iran's cooperation with the [IAEA]" at the Board of Governors meeting and warned that Iran would respond to "any inappropriate move by the European parties," almost certainly referring to snapback sanctions.[15] Araghchi separately met with Grossi in Cairo,

Egypt, on June 2.[16] Araghchi and Grossi's meeting comes amid rising tensions between Iran and the E3. The E3 has threatened to trigger snapback sanctions on Iran if the United States and Iran do not reach a "substantial deal" by August 2025. An Iranian hardline outlet described a recent meeting between Iran and the E3 on May 16 as "tense." [17] The same outlet claimed that the E3 demanded that any future agreement include a JCPOA-style snapback clause—a demand that Iranian officials have condemned as "illegal." [18] Iranian officials have previously threatened a "serious response" if the E3 triggers snapback sanctions. [19] Iran could increase its near weapons-grade uranium stockpile or further expand its nuclear program in other ways in response to snapback sanctions.

The United States presented a written nuclear proposal to Iran via Oman on May 31. [20] Unspecified officials told the *New York Times* on May 31 that the proposal includes the establishment of a regional consortium comprised of Iran, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states. Axios similarly reported on May 31 that the proposal includes the establishment of a regional consortium to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. Axios reported that the United States and IAEA would oversee the consortium and that the United States wants the consortium's enrichment facilities to be located outside of Iran, citing an unspecified source. The Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson emphasized on June 2 that a regional consortium "cannot in any way replace enrichment inside Iran."

It is unclear if the United States would allow Iran to continue enriching uranium on Iranian soil if it agreed to join a regional consortium. The *New York Times* reported that the US nuclear proposal calls on Iran to completely cease uranium enrichment. Axios reported on June 2 that the proposal would allow "low-level uranium enrichment on Iranian soil" for an unspecified period of time. [21] Axios reported that Iran would reduce uranium enrichment to 3 percent, which is below the 3.67 percent limit in the JCPOA. The proposal also reportedly bars Iran from building new enrichment facilities conducting centrifuge research and development, and enriching uranium at underground facilities for an unspecified period of time. Under the proposal, Iran would limit enrichment activity at above-ground facilities and "dismantle critical infrastructure for conversion and processing of uranium."

Iran is reportedly planning to reject the US nuclear proposal, which would likely further stall the US-Iran negotiations. [22] An unspecified Iranian diplomat close to the Iranian negotiating team told Reuters on June 2 that Iran is drafting a negative response to the proposal and considers the proposal a "non-starter" due to its failure to address Iranian interests or soften the United States' stance on enrichment. [23] The source added that Iran's nuclear negotiations committee, which is under the supervision of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, assessed that the US proposal is "completely one-sided" and does not serve Iran's interests. [24] An Iranian expert close to the regime similarly stated on June 1 that the contents of the US nuclear proposal decrease the chances of Iran and the United States reaching a new deal. [25]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office called on the international community to "act now" against Iran following the release of the IAEA reports on May 31. Netanyahu's office described the reports as "a clear warning sign" that Iran is "totally determined to complete its nuclear weapons program." [26] These statements come amid reports that Israel is preparing to strike Iranian nuclear facilities if the US-Iran nuclear negotiations collapse. [27] US

President Donald Trump recently called on Netanyahu to avoid taking any action that could potentially jeopardize the US-Iran nuclear negotiations. [28]

The Iranian armed forces are continuing to prepare for potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. The *Financial Times* reported on June 1 that Western intelligence and satellite imagery indicate that Iran has repositioned surface-to-air missile launchers, including S-300 air defense systems, near nuclear sites such as Natanz and Fordow.[29] Israeli airstrikes into Iran in April and October 2024 rendered Iran's four Russian-made S-300 air defense systems inoperable, and it is very unlikely that Russia has supplied Iran with new S-300 systems. The IDF rendered an Iranian S-300 inoperable in April 2024 by striking the S-300's tomb stone engagement radar.[30] Iran displayed an S-300 with a "new, Iranian-designed" radar in February 2025.[31] The Artesh Air Defense Force conducted air defense exercises in northern and western Iran in January 2025, including near Fordow and the Arak heavy water reactor.[32]

Iranian commanders also continue to inspect air defense sites ahead of a potential Israeli or US strike on Iran. Artesh Air Force Commander Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi and his deputy, Brigadier General Ali Akbar Talebzadeh, inspected the 10th Tactical Air Base in Chabahar, Sistan and Baluchistan Province, on June 2.[33] Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard recently inspected Iran's Southeastern Air Defense Zone in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, on April 4 and May 30.[34] Artesh Commander Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi conducted an inspection at the same air defense zone on May 16.[35]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq (AAH) is waging a campaign against Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh, likely to damage Fayyadh's electoral prospects in the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections. An AAH parliamentarian claimed on June 2 that parliament will question Fayyadh over his alleged support for certain Sunni groups.[36] Asaib Ahl al Haq Secretary General Qais al Khazali claimed on April 1 that Turkey equips the Ninewa Guards and Kirkuk Shield Forces, the former of which integrated into the 59th Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) brigade in 2017.[37] AAH-controlled media similarly claimed in mid-April 2025 that Turkey and "Baathists" train and equip these forces.[38] AAH-controlled media also claimed that Fayyadh took several trips to Turkey to facilitate the integration of these groups into the PMF.[39] AAH has supported legislation that would require Fayyadh to retire and likely seeks to replace Fayyadh with someone more favorable to AAH.[40] Fayyadh will compete in the November 2025 parliamentary elections as part of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani's Reconstruction and Development Coalition, while Khazali will reportedly compete on a separate list.[41] AAH may calculate that it can damage Fayyadh's electoral prospects in the upcoming elections by highlighting his alleged ties to Turkey and support for the Ninewa Guards and Kirkuk Shield Forces.

Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah threatened to resume its attack campaign against US forces in Iraq in a statement commemorating the death of former Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini on June 2.[42] Kataib Hezbollah threatened that it would inflict "severe blows" on the United States if the United States "procrastinat[es]" its withdrawal from Iraq. The United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024 that hundreds of US-led international coalition forces would withdraw from Iraq by September 2025 and that remaining forces would withdraw by the end of 2026.[43]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have exploited loopholes within the Iraqi financial system to commit fraud and obtain funds to support operations since 2023.[44] The *Wall Street Journal* reported on May 31 that cross-border transactions increased from \$50 million to \$1.5 billion between January and April 2023 after the US Treasury and New York Federal Reserve took steps in 2022 to curb Iranian money laundering through Iraqi banks. Under this new method, Iranian-backed Iraqi militias would purchase large quantities of pre-paid Visas and Mastercards in Iraq and transport them into neighboring countries to withdraw the funds. The armed factions would withdraw cash from an ATM and transfer the money back to Iraq through electronic transfers or the hawala system. In Iraq, the militias would exchange the US dollars to Iraqi dinars for up to 21% above the official market rate. Mastercard blocked over 100,000 Iraqi-issued cards and removed 4,000 merchants in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) suspected of being involved in fraudulent Iraqi transactions. Visa similarly sent alerts warning of fraud for approximately 70,000 Iraqi cards and approximately 5,000 UAE vendors. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias and the Iranian regime have exploited lax oversight and loopholes within the Iraqi financial system to circumvent US sanctions on Iran.[45] The funds obtained through these loopholes are used to fund various Iranian and militia operations, including attacks on US forces in the region.

The United States will allow the Syrian transitional government to integrate foreign fighters into the new Syrian army in order to prevent foreign fighters from joining Salafi-jihadi groups in Syria.[46] US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack told Reuters on June 2 that the United States reached an “understanding” that the Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) will integrate foreign fighters into the ranks of the new Syrian army “with transparency.”[47] Barrack said that the United States prefers to keep foreign fighters under the command of the Syrian state rather than to exclude them.[48] Barrack’s comments constitute a significant departure from the United States’ demand in March 2025 that the Syrian government bar foreign fighters from senior government positions, including military positions.[49] Unspecified sources close to the Syrian MoD told Reuters that Syrian President Ahmed al Shara and his advisers argued to Western officials that excluding foreign fighters from the army could push them toward groups like al Qaeda or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).[50] Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) has historically integrated numerous foreign militias into its military structure and many of these groups, such as the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), are extremely loyal to HTS.[51] The Syrian government’s integration of these fighters into the new chain of command reduces the risk that these fighters join extremist armed groups, particularly given a recent uptick in activity by Salafi-jihadi groups in Syria in May 2025.[52]

Three unspecified Syrian defense officials said on June 2 that the MoD is planning to integrate 3,500 foreign fighters, including fighters from TIP, into the newly-formed 84th Division.[53] TIP is an al Qaeda-affiliated Uyghur jihadist group that has fought alongside HTS and its predecessor organizations since the mid-2010s.[54] The group is fully subordinate to HTS despite its al Qaeda affiliation and will therefore likely follow the chain of command of the new Syrian army. TIP political official Osama Bughra confirmed to Western media on June 2 that the group now operates “entirely under the MoD’s authority.”[55] Syrian defense officials said that Syrian fighters will also join the 84th Division, which suggests that the unit will not be completely composed of foreign fighters.[56]

It is unclear if the Syrian transitional government’s decision to integrate TIP into the 84th Division will complicate its nascent relationship with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The PRC has long opposed Uyghur militants’ activities in Syria and maintained a strategic partnership with the former

Assad regime in order to suppress TIP.[57] PRC Representative to the United Nations (UN) Fu Cong recently called on the Syrian government to fight against “foreign terrorist fighters,” including TIP and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), on March 25.[58] ISW assessed in late January 2025 that the containment of TIP, ETIM, and other Uyghur groups would likely shape the PRC’s Syria policy.[59] PRC officials may calculate that TIP’s inclusion in the Syrian government can sufficiently contain the group and prevent it from threatening the PRC. The PRC has pursued a diplomatic relationship with the new transitional government and PRC officials have conducted three official visits to Damascus since February 2025.[60] Syria has invited Chinese investment for its reconstruction and growth and recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a Chinese firm to invest in free trade zones in Rif Dimashq and Homs provinces.[61]

Key Takeaways:

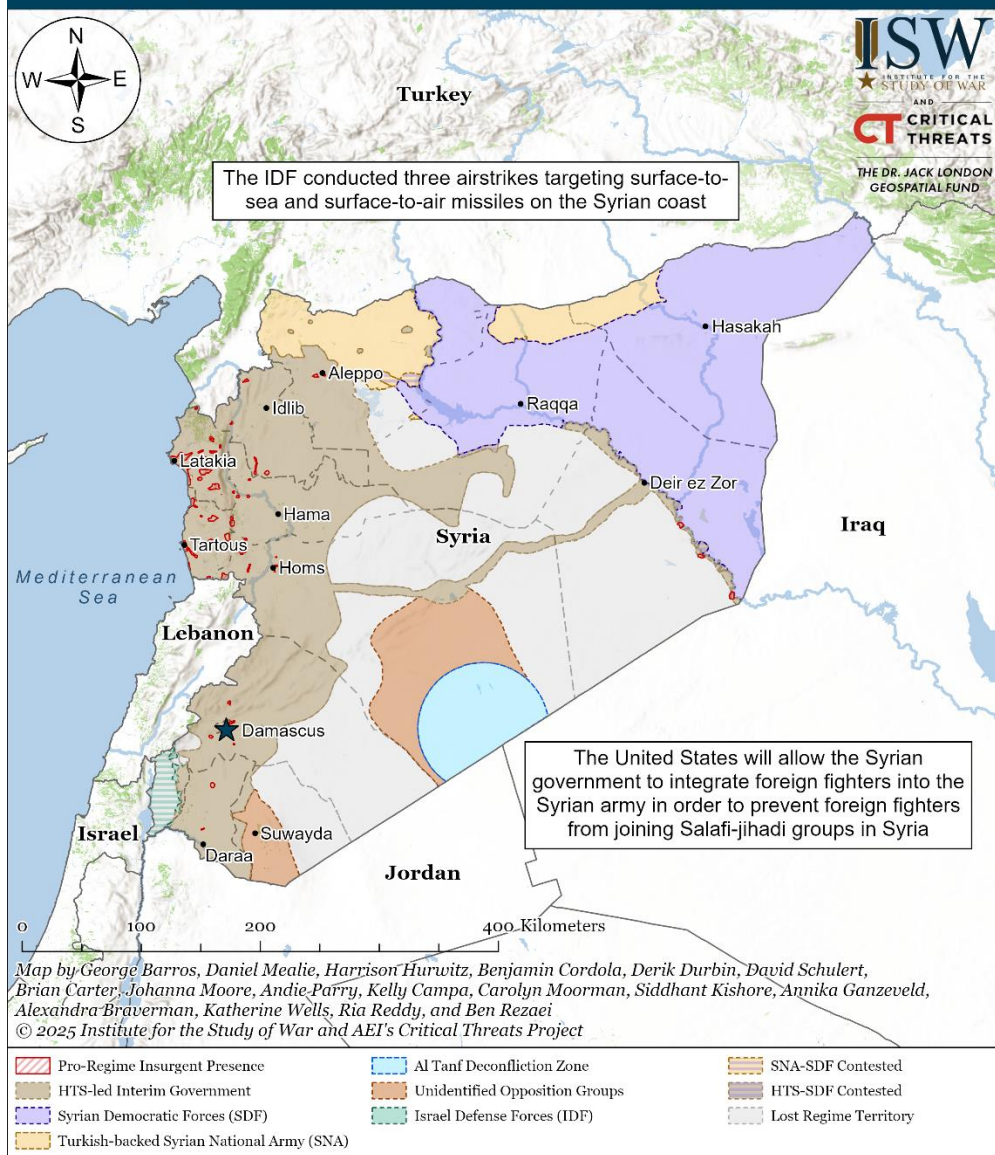
- **Iranian Nuclear Program:** Iran increased its stockpile of 60 percent enriched uranium by 133.8 kilograms, or 3.2 significant quantities, since February 2025, according to an unreleased International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report. Iran has enough 60 percent enriched uranium, if enriched further, to produce nearly 10 nuclear weapons. It is unclear whether Iranian uranium enrichment increased, decreased, or remained the same following the start of the US-Iran nuclear negotiations on April 12. The IAEA separately published a comprehensive report on May 31 that states that Iran’s cooperation with the IAEA has been “less than satisfactory” in “a number of respects.”
- **US-Iran Nuclear Negotiations:** The United States presented a written nuclear proposal to Iran via Oman on May 31. Unspecified officials told the *New York Times* on May 31 that the proposal includes the establishment of a regional consortium comprised of Iran, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states. Axios similarly reported on May 31 that the proposal includes the establishment of a regional consortium to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. It is unclear if the United States would allow Iran to continue enriching uranium on Iranian soil if it agreed to join a regional consortium. Iran is reportedly planning to reject the US nuclear proposal, which would likely further stall the US-Iran negotiations.
- **Iraqi Parliamentary Elections:** Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq (AAH) is waging a campaign against Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh, likely to damage Fayyadh’s electoral prospects in the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections. AAH may calculate that it can damage Fayyadh’s electoral prospects in the upcoming elections by highlighting his alleged ties to Turkey and support for the Ninewa Guards and Kirkuk Shield Forces.
- **Threat to US Forces:** Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah threatened to resume its attack campaign against US forces in Iraq in a statement commemorating the death of former Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini on June 2. Kataib Hezbollah threatened that it would inflict “severe blows” on the United States if the United States “procrastinat[es]” its withdrawal from Iraq.
- **Iraqi Militia Funding:** Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have exploited loopholes within the Iraqi financial system to commit fraud and obtain funds to support operations since 2023. The *Wall*

Street Journal reported on May 31 that cross-border transactions increased from \$50 million to \$1.5 billion between January and April 2023 after the US Treasury and New York Federal Reserve took steps in 2022 to curb Iranian money laundering through Iraqi banks.

- **Iranian Preparations for Potential US or Israeli Strikes:** *Financial Times* reported on June 1 that Western intelligence and satellite imagery indicate that Iran has repositioned surface-to-air missile launchers, including S-300 air defense systems, near nuclear sites such as Natanz and Fordow. Iranian commanders also continue to inspect air defense sites ahead of a potential Israeli or US strike on Iran.
- **Syrian Army Formation:** The United States will allow the Syrian transitional government to integrate foreign fighters into the new Syrian army in order to prevent foreign fighters from joining Salafi-jihadi groups in Syria. US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack told Reuters on June 2 that the United States reached an “understanding” that the Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) will integrate foreign fighters into the ranks of the new Syrian army “with transparency.” Unspecified sources close to the Syrian MoD told Reuters that Syrian President Ahmed al Shara and his advisers argued to Western officials that excluding foreign fighters from the army could push them toward groups like al Qaeda or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Three unspecified Syrian defense officials said on June 2 that the MoD is planning to integrate 3,500 foreign fighters, including fighters from TIP, into the newly-formed 84th Division.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

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Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Iran displayed Iranian-made military equipment during a Belarusian Defense Ministry media delegation's visit to Iran on May 31.[62] The Belarusian media delegation visited the Defense Industries Organization (DIO), which is a subsidiary of the Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry and is involved in the manufacturing of Iranian military equipment.[63] The DIO oversees several state-owned defense contractors and has been sanctioned by the United States for supporting the Iranian missile and nuclear programs.[64] Iranian and Belarusian officials discussed Iranian military capabilities, including Iran's drone technology. The media delegation's visit to the DIO follows a flurry of recent engagements between Iranian and Belarusian defense officials. Iran recently displayed Iranian-made drones, missiles, and other military equipment at a military exhibition in

Minsk, Belarus, on May 22.[65] Iran has also reportedly sought to establish a drone factory in Belarus since May 2023 to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[66]

Syria

US and Syrian military officials reportedly met in Damascus on May 30.[67] Syrian media reported on May 30 that Syrian Defense Minister Marhaf Abu Qasra met with Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve Commander Major General Kevin Leahy and Combined Special Operations Joint Task Force-Levant Commander Brigadier General Michael Brooks in Damascus.[68] US Central Command (CENTCOM) has not confirmed the meeting at the time of this writing. CENTCOM previously reported that Leahy and Brooks were present when US Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack raised the US flag over the US Ambassador's residence in Damascus on May 29.[69] Barrack conducted his first official visit to Syria on May 29 and met with senior Syrian officials, including Qasra.[70]

The Syrian transitional government is continuing to strengthen economic cooperation with Gulf countries. Syrian President Ahmed al Shara received a high-level Saudi delegation led by Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister Faisal bin Farhan al Saud in Damascus on May 31.[71] Shara, Syrian Foreign Affairs Minister Asaad al Shaibani, and Farhan discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation and economic coordination.[72] Shara and Shaibani separately conducted a visit to Kuwait on June 1.[73] Shara and Shaibani met with Kuwaiti Emir Mishal al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah, Kuwaiti Foreign Affairs Minister Abdullah Ali al Yahya and Kuwaiti Interior Minister Fahad Yousef Saud al Sabah.[74] Shara and Shaibani also met with unspecified Kuwaiti businessmen to discuss economic and investment cooperation.[75] This trip marked Shara's first visit to Kuwait since coming to power in December 2024.[76]

Qatar and Saudi Arabia will provide Syria with financial support for Syrian public sector salaries.[77] Qatar and Saudi Arabia announced on May 31 that they will deliver joint financial support to Syria over a three-month period.[78] The joint statement did not provide details about the size or start date of the financial support.[79] Qatar and Saudi Arabia have supported Syria economically in recent months. Qatar and Saudi Arabia settled Syria's remaining \$15 million arrears to the World Bank in May 2025, which will enable Syria to receive reconstruction grant approval and economic support.[80] Qatar will also support the payment of Syrian civil sector salaries after the US Treasury Department granted Qatar a sanctions exemption on May 7.[81] The Syrian government previously announced in January 2025 that it would raise public sector salaries by 400% the following month but has not been able to do so due to a lack of funding.[82] The Qatari and Saudi initiatives to pay Syrian salaries will provide immediate relief to some segments of the Syrian population, while the removal of sanctions will have a more gradual effect on the Syrian economy.

Syrian President Ahmed al Shara appointed a long-time Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) commander as deputy defense minister on June 1.[83] The Syrian MoD reported that Major General Mohammed Khair Hassan Shuaib (Abu al Khair Taftanaz) was one of the commanders who planned "Operation Deterrence of Aggression," which overthrew the Assad regime in December 2024.[84] Taftanaz previously served as the Idlib-based commander for the HTS-led Fateh Mubin Operations Room from 2019 until December 2024.[85] Taftanaz also reportedly founded the HTS-controlled Syrian Salvation Government's military college in Idlib Province.[86] Taftanaz commanded

special operations units and the “Abu Bakr” faction in Jaysh al Fatah from March 2015 until January 2017.[87] Jaysh al Fatah was a coalition of Syrian Islamist opposition groups that formed in March 2015 and later joined HTS in 2017.[88] Shara’s appointment of long-time loyalists like Taftanaz to key positions in the transitional government and military suggests that Shara seeks to continue to maintain his own and HTS’s influence within ministries that directly concern internal security and state stability.

The Syrian transitional government and a majority-Kurdish delegation continued integration negotiations on June 1.[89] The negotiations aim to implement the framework agreement that Syrian President Ahmed al Shara and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Commander Mazloum Abdi signed on March 10.[90] Transitional government and Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) representatives continue to negotiate how Damascus will administer SDF-controlled territory in northeastern Syria.[91] The transitional government and majority-Kurdish delegation agreed to resume paused prisoner exchanges in majority-Kurdish neighborhoods of Aleppo City on June 2.[92] The sides also agreed to form specialized committees to implement the March 10 agreement and discussed educational coordination between AANES and the transitional government.[93]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Western Syria

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The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted three separate airstrikes targeting surface-to-sea and surface-to-air missiles in Latakia and Tartous provinces on May 30.[94] The IDF airstrikes targeted the 107th Brigade barracks east of Jableh, a military base north of Latakia City, and a military base northeast of Tartous City.[95] The IDF said that the surface-to-sea missiles posed a threat to “international and Israeli freedom of navigation.”[96] The strikes likely targeted missile stockpiles left over from the Assad regime. The strike on the 107th Brigade barracks killed one and injured three Alawite civilians.[97] The IDF airstrikes on the coast are the first Israeli strikes in Syria since May 5 and follow reports of direct negotiations between the Syrian transitional government and Israel on May 27.[98]

Iraq

See topline section.

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

The Houthis conducted a ballistic missile attack targeting Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel on June 1 as part of the Houthi campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel.[99] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted the Houthi missile.[100] Some international airlines have suspended flights to Israel through July 2025 due to concerns about Houthi attacks on Ben Gurion Airport.[101] Houthi President Mahdi al Mashat called on companies that operate in Israel to “leave quickly.” Mashat implicitly warned that the Houthis may conduct additional attacks targeting Israel in the coming days that could pose “real and significant dangers” to these companies if they do not leave.[102]

The Houthis also claimed three separate drone attacks targeting “vital” sites in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area, Ashdod, and Eilat.[103]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually

expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

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Iran Update



Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, Ben Schmida, Ben Rezaei, Avery Borens, Nidal Morrison, Andie Parry, Johanna Moore, Kelly Campa, and Annika Ganzeveld

Information Cutoff: June 3, 2025 2:00 pm ET

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

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

A variety of Syrian armed groups, including those associated with the new transitional government, the Assad regime, and hardline Islamic groups, have committed a series of extrajudicial killings since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. CTP-ISW absolutely condemns these extrajudicial killings.

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi likely discussed the Lebanese government's efforts to prevent Hezbollah's reconstitution during a visit to Beirut on June 3.^[1] Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister Youssef Rajji stated during a meeting with Araghchi that all reconstruction aid for Lebanon must go through state institutions and rejected any efforts to bypass the Lebanese government to support Hezbollah's military reconstitution.^[2] Rajji's comments likely refer to recent Iranian efforts to financially support Hezbollah's reconstitution as the Lebanese state and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have simultaneously cracked down on Hezbollah activity across Lebanon. Iran recently attempted to smuggle funds to Hezbollah through Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport, for example.^[3] Iran will likely seek to establish other means through which to financially and materially support Hezbollah's reconstitution. Araghchi told Lebanese officials that Iran seeks to open a "new page" in its relationship with Beirut. Araghchi emphasized Iran's readiness to expand political and economic relations with Lebanon and reaffirmed Iran's support for Lebanon's independence and sovereignty during a meeting with Rajji.^[4]

US President Donald Trump confirmed on June 3 that the United States maintains its position that Iran cannot enrich uranium.^[5] Trump's statement follows an Axios report on June 2 that the recent US written nuclear proposal to Iran would allow Iran to enrich uranium at three percent on Iranian soil for a negotiated period of time.^[6] Axios reported that the proposal also calls for

the establishment of a regional nuclear consortium. Unspecified diplomatic sources told Reuters on June 2 that Iran plans to reject the proposal and considers the proposal a “non-starter” because it does not “soften the United States’ stance on enrichment.”[7] Iranian media and officials have similarly expressed disapproval of the US proposal, citing “excessive [US] demands” and have reiterated that domestic uranium enrichment is an Iranian “red line.”[8] Iranian plans to reject the US proposal suggest that the proposal calls on Iran to permanently suspend uranium enrichment after enriching uranium at three percent for a period of time.[9] The US proposal may allow Iran to enrich uranium at three percent until the regional nuclear consortium is established, after which Iran would not be allowed to enrich any uranium domestically. Iranian officials have previously stated that Iran would agree to reduce its uranium enrichment to 3.67 percent, which is the enrichment limit in the 2025 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)[10] Iran would therefore likely not reject the US proposal if it allowed Iran to permanently enrich uranium at near-JCPOA levels, which further suggests that the US proposal requires Iran to eventually halt all domestic uranium enrichment.

Iran is likely continuing to try to prevent a possible non-compliance resolution and snapback sanctions ahead of the June 9 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors meeting. Unspecified diplomats told Reuters on June 2 that the United States and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) are planning to submit a resolution at the upcoming Board of Governors meeting that formally declares Iran in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations in response to recent IAEA reports.[11] Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi met with 17 ambassadors from IAEA Board of Governors member states and separately with the E3 ambassadors to the United Nations (UN) on June 3.[12] Gharibabadi warned them against implementing “any politically motivated action” against Iran. Gharibabadi likely sought to convince the IAEA Board of Governors member states to vote against a non-compliance resolution at the upcoming meeting. A non-compliance resolution would lay the foundation for the E3 to trigger the JCPOA snapback mechanism. The E3 has recently threatened to trigger snapback sanctions if the United States and Iran do not reach a “substantial deal” by August 2025.[13]

Gharibabadi held a separate meeting with the Chinese and Russian ambassadors to the UN on June 3, likely to encourage them to challenge efforts to impose snapback sanctions on Iran.[14] Any JCPOA signatory (the United States, the E3, China, and Russia) can initiate the snapback process by referring Iran's non-compliance to the UNSC. The JCPOA gives the UNSC 30 days to pass a resolution to extend sanctions relief for Iran, but the UNSC permanent members (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia) can veto such a resolution.[15] China and Russia, therefore, have limited ability to block the reimposition of UNSC sanctions on Iran. China and Russia are also members of the IAEA Board of Governors and could vote against a non-compliance resolution. There are, however, 35 members in the Board of Governors, and an IAEA resolution requires a two-thirds majority to be approved.[16]

Artesh Ideological and Political Organization head Abbas Mohammad Hassani threatened on June 3 that Iran would target US ships in the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, Atlantic Ocean, and Pacific Ocean in “the event of [US] mischief,” likely referring to potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran.[17] Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened to attack US bases and international shipping in response to a potential strike.[18] Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri approved the deployment of military assets to the Nazeat Islands in the Strait of Hormuz in early May 2025.[19] Senior Iranian military officials have also inspected defense and combat capabilities at military bases and air defense sites across southeastern Iran in recent weeks.[20] This activity is likely part of a broader Iranian effort to simultaneously deter and prepare for a potential strike on Iran. Hassani's threat to attack US ships in the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean is consistent with Iranian aspirations to develop a naval presence beyond the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz.[21]

Shia Coordination Framework members are reportedly encouraging Iraqis, including those in Sadrist strongholds, to register to vote in the upcoming November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections even though Sadr announced that he will not compete in the elections.[22] The Shia Coordination Framework may seek to win votes from Iraqis who would have voted for Sadr in the elections. The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. Iraqi media reported on June 3 that several current and former Shia parliamentarians have implied that Sadr will participate in the upcoming elections despite the fact that Sadr announced in late March 2025 that his party will not participate in the elections.[23] Iraqi media also reported on June 3 that Shia Coordination Framework parties are concerned about an Iraqi boycott of the elections, particularly in central and southern Iraq.[24] These parties are likely specifically concerned that Shias in central and southern Iraq will boycott the elections given that such a boycott would result in fewer votes for Shia Coordination Framework parties. Iraqi media reported on June 3 that over nine million eligible Iraqi voters are expected to boycott the elections.[25] Shia Coordination Framework members may be suggesting that Sadr will participate in the upcoming elections in order to encourage Iraqi Shias who were planning to boycott the elections to vote. The Shia Coordination Framework may calculate that, if Sadr ultimately does not participate in the elections, individuals who planned to vote for Sadr may instead vote for a Shia Coordination Framework party. Iraqi voters must update their voter registration by June 15 to be able to vote in the elections. Sadr denounced any attempt by political parties to use his name implicitly or explicitly on May 31, possibly referring to its use as a campaign tactic.[26]

Data from the Iraqi electoral commission, the Independent High Electoral Commission, shows that Iraqi voters have most frequently updated their voter registration in Ninewa Province and Baghdad's Rusafa District.[27] The Shia Coordination Framework recently announced that it will run in unified alliances in Ninewa, Salah al Din, and Diyala Provinces.[28] CTP-ISW assessed that the Shia Coordination Framework will compete in unified alliances in these provinces to ensure that it does not split the vote and enable more unified Kurdish or Sunni alliances to win more seats.[29] Rusafa District is a Sadrist support zone.[30] A parliamentarian from Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq's

Sadiqoun bloc told Iraqi media on June 3 that Sadiqoun is conducting a national campaign to encourage Iraqis in poor areas to participate in the upcoming elections.[31] Sadr's base has historically included poor Shia.[32]

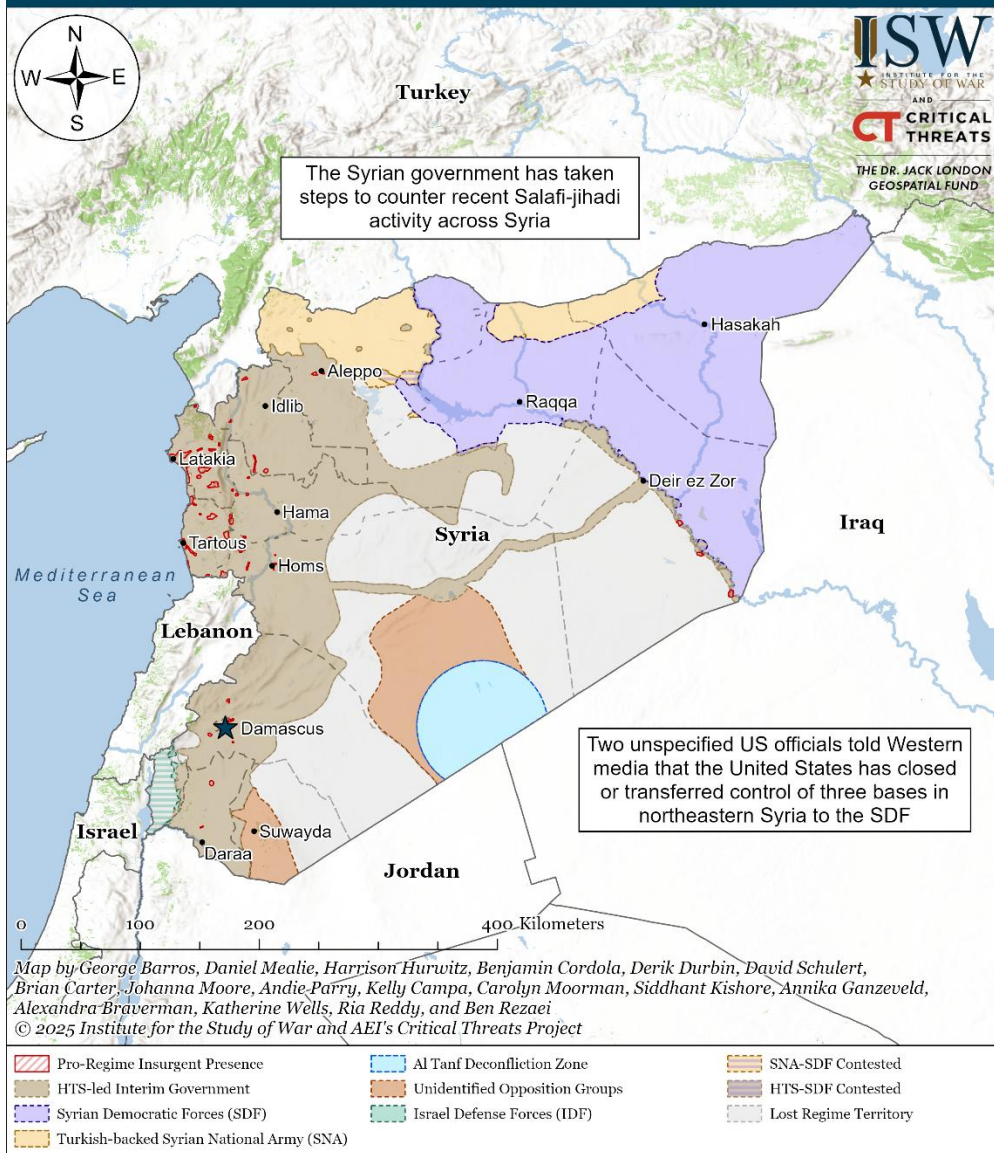
Two unspecified US officials told Fox News on June 2 that the United States has closed or transferred control of three bases in northeastern Syria to the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).[33] The two officials said that the United States has closed Mission Support Site Green Village and transferred control of Mission Support Site Euphrates to the SDF.[34] Both sites are located east of the Euphrates River in Deir ez Zor Province and supported SDF counter-ISIS operations. The United States also withdrew from a third unspecified position, according to the US officials.[35] US Special Envoy Thomas Barrack similarly said on June 2 in an interview with Turkish media that the United States will reduce its presence in Syria from "eight bases to five to three" and will "eventually" reduce its presence to one base.

The officials speaking to Fox News added that 500 US troops have withdrawn from Syria in recent weeks.[36] These withdrawals are consistent with the US Department of Defense's announcement on April 18 that the United States will reduce the number of US forces deployed in Syria to "less than a thousand" in the coming months.[37] The United States maintained roughly 900 US personnel in Syria between 2019 and 2024, when the United States increased the number of troops to 2,000 US personnel.[38]

Barrack said that the United States has encouraged the SDF to resolve its disputes with the transitional government and integrate into the Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD).[39] Middle East Eye also reported on June 3 that the United States has mediated talks between the SDF and Turkey about the US withdrawal from Syria, handover of ISIS prisons and camps, and SDF integration into the MoD.[40] The Syrian MoD is expected to soon deploy to northeastern Syria to backfill the SDF as part of a recent integration agreement, but Damascus and the SDF do not yet appear to have agreed to the terms of these deployments.[41] Outstanding disagreements between the SDF and Damascus could pull resources and attention away from the SDF to conduct counter-ISIS operations in northeastern Syria if the integration process is not smooth or worse, is unsuccessful.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

June 3, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Key Takeaways:

- Hezbollah Reconstitution:** Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi likely discussed the Lebanese government's efforts to prevent Hezbollah's reconstitution during a visit to Beirut on June 3. Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister Youssef Rajji stated during a meeting with Araghchi that all reconstruction aid for Lebanon must go through state institutions and rejected any efforts to bypass the Lebanese government to support Hezbollah's military reconstitution. Rajji's comments likely refer to recent Iranian efforts to financially support Hezbollah's reconstitution as the Lebanese state and Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have simultaneously cracked down on Hezbollah activity across Lebanon.

- **US-Iran Nuclear Negotiations:** US President Donald Trump confirmed on June 3 that the United States maintains its position that Iran cannot enrich uranium. Trump's statement follows an Axios report on June 2 that the recent US written nuclear proposal to Iran would allow Iran to enrich uranium at three percent on Iranian soil for a negotiated period of time. Axios reported that the proposal also calls for the establishment of a regional nuclear consortium. Unspecified diplomatic sources told Reuters on June 2 that Iran plans to reject the proposal and considers the proposal a “non-starter” because it does not “soften the United States’ stance on enrichment.” Iranian plans to reject the US proposal suggest that the proposal calls on Iran to permanently suspend uranium enrichment after enriching uranium at three percent for a period of time.
- **Iranian Threats to Maritime Shipping:** Artesh Ideological and Political Organization head Abbas Mohammad Hassani threatened on June 3 that Iran would target US ships in the Persian Gulf, Sea of Oman, Atlantic Ocean, and Pacific Ocean in “the event of [US] mischief,” likely referring to potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened to attack US bases and international shipping in response to a potential strike.
- **Iraqi Parliamentary Elections:** Shia Coordination Framework members are reportedly encouraging Iraqis, including those in Sadrist strongholds, to register to vote in the upcoming November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections even though Sadr announced that he will not compete in the elections. The Shia Coordination Framework may seek to win votes from Iraqis who would have voted for Sadr in the elections.
- **US Military Withdrawal from Syria:** Two unspecified US officials told Fox News on June 2 that the United States has closed or transferred control of three bases in northeastern Syria to the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The two officials said that the United States has closed Mission Support Site Green Village and transferred control of Mission Support Site Euphrates to the SDF. Both sites are located east of the Euphrates River in Deir ez Zor Province and supported SDF counter-ISIS operations. The officials speaking to Fox News added that 500 US troops have withdrawn from Syria in recent weeks.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

Iran is continuing to work with revisionist countries to undermine and mitigate the impact of international sanctions. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf traveled to Venezuela and Cuba on June 2 and 3, respectively.[42] Ghalibaf stated prior to departing for Venezuela that the BRICS Development Bank and alternatives to the SWIFT international banking and financial system can help Iran counter US sanctions.[43] Ghalibaf will visit Brazil, which is a member of BRICS, in the coming days.[44] Ghalibaf met with the Venezuelan transportation and foreign ministers as well as Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas.[45] Ghalibaf acknowledged that the distance between Iran and Venezuela presents an obstacle to increasing economic cooperation and called for resolving “problems in the field of transportation” to facilitate trade between the two countries.[46] Iran and Venezuela’s economic relationship is largely centered around energy. Iran has exported condensates and crude oil to Venezuela, repaired Venezuelan refineries, and delivered oil tankers to Venezuela.[47] Iranian and Venezuelan officials signed several energy-related agreements, including agreements to construct joint refineries, during former Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi’s visit to Venezuela in June 2023.[48]

Ghalibaf separately met with the Cuban parliament speaker and Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel in Havana on June 3.[49] Ghalibaf presented four “nuclear medicine kits” to Diaz-Canel, which Iranian media reported were meant to highlight the “capabilities of Iranian scientists.”[50] Ghalibaf called for developing air and shipping routes between Cuba and Iran during his meeting with the Cuban parliament speaker.[51]

Senior Iranian military commanders are continuing to prepare for potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. Iranian Artesh Ground Forces Commander Brigadier General Kiomars Heydari inspected the 840th Missile Group in Aran and Bidgol, Esfahan Province, on June 3, to evaluate the base’s combat and defense capabilities.[52] Iranian media published footage in October 2024 of missiles crossing over Aran and Bidgol during the October 2024 Iranian missile attack on Israel.[53] Heydari stated during his visit to the 840th Missile Group that the Artesh plans to build five new missile bases within its structure.[54]

Iranian ultraconservative outlet Raja News attacked Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS) Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri on May 30 for criticizing current Iranian policing tactics.[55] Bagheri stated on May 26 that Iran’s evolving society requires a “thoughtful and scientific” approach.[56] Bagheri warned that the Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) “will get nowhere” with a harsh method based on “batons and daggers.” Bagheri added that the LEC must understand the younger generation and how to engage them effectively.[57] Raja News, which is affiliated with the Paydari (Stability) Front led by Saeed Jalili, accused Bagheri of straying from Khamenei’s directives.[58] Raja News also questioned Bagheri’s shift from a revolutionary figure to a more “ambiguous” public figure.”[59] Hardline Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-linked Javan News defended Bagheri in response to the Raja News report and accused Raja News of echoing “Israeli talking points.”[60] Javan News labeled the outlet as belonging to “super-revolutionary” circles.[61] Raja News’s public attack on Bagheri was unusually harsh and the public disagreement between two hardline Iranian outlets highlights the existing fractures within hardline circles.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian nominated Ali Madani Zadeh as Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance on June 1.[62] Madani Zadeh is an associate professor of economics and Dean of the Graduate School of Management and Economy at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran.[63] He has received postgraduate degrees from Sharif University of Technology, Stanford University, and the University of Chicago. This nomination comes after Iranian parliamentarians impeached former Economic Affairs and Finance Minister Abdol Nasser Hemmati in March 2025 in response to worsening economic conditions.[64] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Hemmati’s removal was unlikely to alleviate Iran’s economic issues.[65] The Iranian Parliament will begin Madani Zadeh’s confirmation process next week.[66]

Syria

The Syrian transitional government continues to strengthen ties and pursue economic cooperation with Gulf countries. A Syrian delegation headed by Syrian Foreign Affairs Minister Asaad al Shaibani visited Qatar on June 3.[67] Syrian and Qatari ministers discussed expanding energy and economic cooperation.[68] Shaibani stated that Qatar agreed to continue supplying gas to Syria via

Jordan and to reactivate the Qatari-Syrian Holding Company to facilitate investment in Syria.[69] Qatar and Syria established the Qatari-Syrian Holding Company in 2008 to enhance investment opportunities in Syria.[70] Qatar previously agreed to supply three months of natural gas to Syria in March 2025.[71] Western media reported on June 2 that two-thirds of Syria's energy transmission grid is either completely destroyed or in need of major repair, which would cost roughly \$5.5 billion.[72] The Syrian transitional government has consistently sought assistance from Gulf countries to rebuild and mitigate the effects of its severely damaged energy sector since coming to power in December 2024.[73]

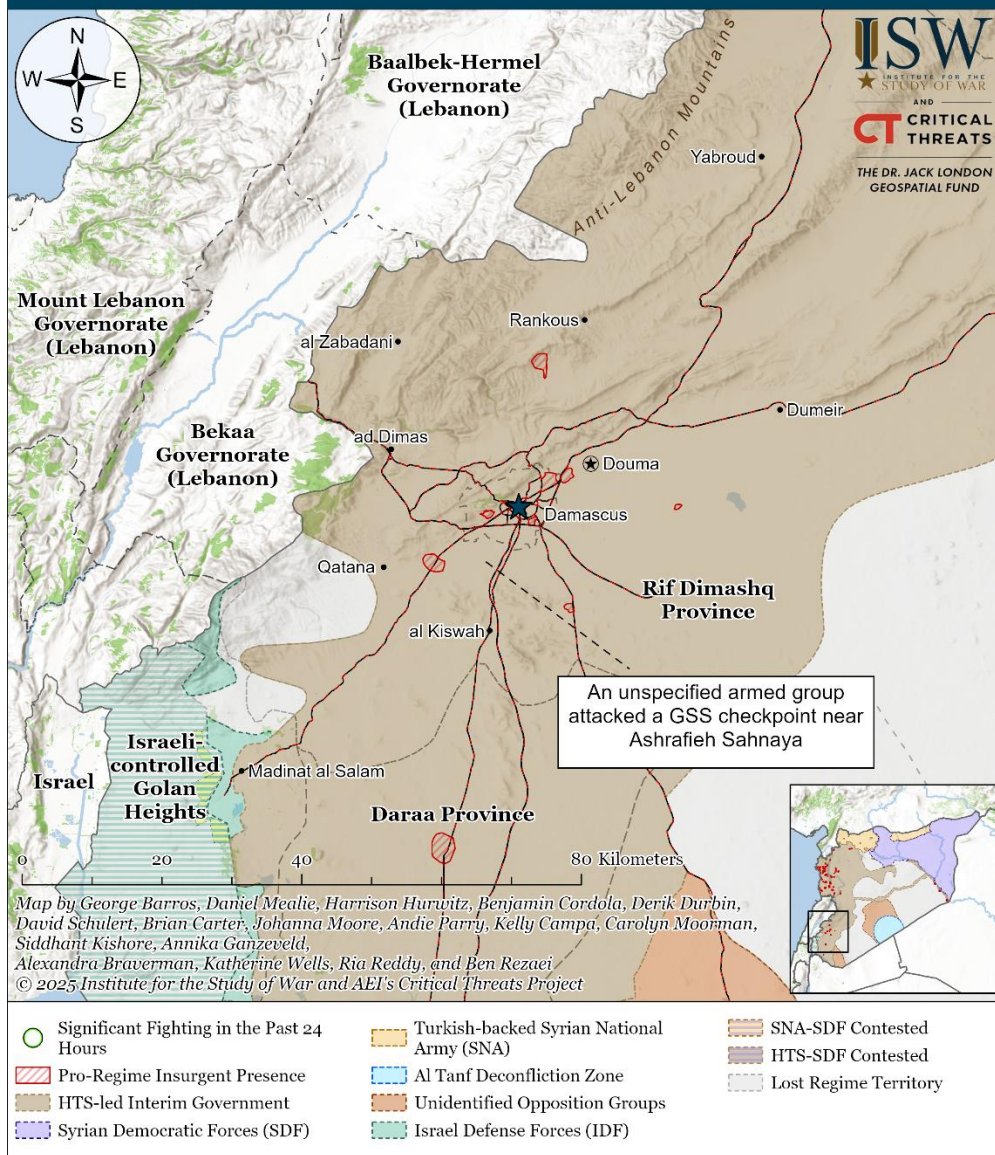
Syrian Interior Minister Anas Khattab met with Saudi Interior Minister Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz in Jeddah on June 2.[74] Khattab and Abdulaziz discussed enhancing security cooperation to combat terrorism, organized crime, and drugs.[75] Khattab and Abdulaziz also discussed strengthening border security and information sharing.[76] Abdulaziz affirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to helping Syria restore stability and security.[77]

The Syrian transitional government has taken steps to counter recent Salafi-jihadi activity across Syria. The General Security Service (GSS) and 70th Division conducted counter-ISIS operations in Tulul al Safa, Suwayda Province, on June 3.[78] ISIS fighters recently detonated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) targeting Syrian MoD vehicles in two separate attacks in Tulul al Safa on May 22 and May 28.[79] GSS forces also arrested three ISIS fighters responsible for a May 18 vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on a GSS station in al Mayadin, Deir ez Zor Province.[80] These attacks are part of an uptick in activity by Salafi-jihadi groups in Syria in May 2025.

Insurgent attacks targeting Syrian government forces continue to take place sporadically. An unspecified armed group targeted a GSS security checkpoint near Ashrafiyah Sahnaya, Rif Dimashq Province, on June 2.[81] The armed militants killed three GSS members.[82] Unspecified militants previously targeted Druze civilians and transitional government forces manning checkpoints in Ashrafiyah Sahnaya in late April 2025.[83] Insurgent activity in Syria has declined since its height in March 2025.[84] The lack of recent insurgent attacks contrasts sharply with insurgent activity in March 2025, when insurgents targeted government forces multiple times a week.

Assessed Control of Terrain around Rif Dimashq

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Syrian businessman and the maternal cousin of Bashar al Assad, Rami Makhoul, has continued to threaten a revolt against the Syrian transitional government despite a sharp decrease in pro-Alawite insurgent activity. Makhoul has repeatedly claimed to have assembled forces in coastal Syria and framed himself as a defender of Alawites, including most recently in a May 28 statement.[85] Makhoul continued to spread misinformation on May 28 about the March 2025 coastal violence that resulted in the extrajudicial killing of over 800 people.[86] Makhoul claimed that June 2025 will mark the “beginning” of anti-government activity and that this activity will accelerate in July 2025.[87] Makhoul’s claim that June and July 2025 will lead to the restoration of Alawite power under “the return of the previous system” is not supported by the trend of decreased insurgent activity on Syria’s coast. Multiple factors, including a lack of Alawite support, government pressure, and poorly executed insurgent operations, have probably contributed to the decrease in insurgent activity.

Government forces have continued to arrest Assad-linked insurgents and seize weapons stockpiles in insurgent support zones, which further reduces the possibility of a resurgence of insurgent activity in the near future.[88]

A pro-Alawite insurgent group is using a Salafi-jihadi group's activities targeting Alawites to amplify sectarian narratives and support pro-Alawite insurgent objectives.

Pro-Alawite insurgent group Coastal Shield Brigade warned Alawites to “stay home and remain calm” after Salafi-jihadi group Saraya Ansar al Sunnah announced on May 29 that it obtained the personal information of over 5,000 Alawites, former regime members, and human rights workers.[89] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah threatened to create and publish a “target bank” with the information.[90] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah is a Salafi-jihadi group ideologically close to ISIS that has conducted numerous attacks in western Syria targeting accused regime remnants, most of whom are Alawite.[91] It is unclear if Saraya Ansar al Sunnah actually obtained Alawites’ personal information .[92] The Coastal Shield Brigade’s amplification of Saraya Ansar al Sunnah’s threat demonstrates how Alawite insurgent groups can use the recent uptick in Salafi-jihadi activity in Syria to advance sectarian narratives that support insurgent objectives. The Coastal Shield Brigade has previously accused Saraya Ansar al Sunnah of “elicit[ing] terror” on the Syrian coast due to the group’s violence against minorities, particularly Alawites.[93] Claims like this are consistent with the sectarian content that pro-Alawite social media accounts and insurgents often proliferate, which attempt to reinforce a pre-existing sense of disenfranchisement and fear among Syrian Alawites.[94] Alawite insurgents use these claims to present themselves as the protectors of their communities, likely to cultivate further support among Alawites for the insurgency.[95]

Iraq

Iraq transferred 832 individuals from al Hol camp in northeastern Syria to al Jada camp in Ninewa Province on June 1.[96] This transfer marks the eleventh group of individuals that the Iraqi government has repatriated from Syria in 2025. The Iraqi Migration Ministry spokesperson said that over 12,600 Iraqis remain at al Hol as of June 2025.[97] Deradicalization and repatriation of former ISIS families is a time and resource intensive process. The Iraqi government began to repatriate thousands of ISIS-affiliated families and internally displaced persons (IDP) in 2021 and has faced immense challenges in doing so.[98] The Iraqi government has struggled to integrate ISIS families and IDPs into their new communities, and returnees often face extreme isolation and suspicion from these communities.[99]

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

The Houthis conducted a ballistic missile attack targeting Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel on June 2 as part of the Houthi campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel.^[100] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted the Houthi missile.^[101] Some international airlines have suspended flights to Israel through September 2025 due to concerns about Houthi attacks on Ben Gurion Airport.^[102]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.



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Iran Update



Avery Borens, Carolyn Moorman, Ben Rezaei, Ben Schmida, Ria Reddy, Andie Parry, Nidal Morrison, Johanna Moore, and Annika Ganzeveld

June 4, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei categorically rejected the recent US nuclear proposal because the proposal would require Iran to eventually halt all uranium enrichment on Iranian soil.[1] Iran's continued rejection of the US demand for zero uranium enrichment could cause the US-Iran nuclear negotiations to collapse. Axios reported on June 2 that the US proposal would allow Iran to enrich uranium at three percent on Iranian soil during the establishment of a regional nuclear consortium.[2] The United States reportedly seeks to establish the consortium outside of Iran. Iran would be required to halt all enrichment after the establishment of the consortium. Khamenei delivered a speech on June 4 in which he stated that enrichment in Iran "is a red line." [3] Khamenei claimed that a nuclear industry without enrichment is "practically worthless" and emphasized that Iran would not become "dependent" on foreign countries for uranium.[4] Under the US proposal, Iran would receive uranium for civilian nuclear purposes as part of the regional consortium but would not be allowed to independently enrich uranium on Iranian soil after the consortium is formed.

Iran may accept the establishment of a regional nuclear consortium if it operates on Iranian soil. An unspecified senior Iranian official told Axios on June 3 that Iran is open to the consortium model, but only if the consortium's enrichment facility is located in Iran.[5] Two unspecified Iranian officials separately told the *New York Times* on June 4 that Iran is planning to "bargain" for the regional consortium to be based on Kish or Ghesm islands in the Persian Gulf to maintain its right to enrichment on Iranian soil.[6] An unspecified Arab diplomatic source told Israeli media on June 3 that the United States may propose placing the consortium on one of the disputed islands—Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, or Lesser Tunb.[7] Iran seeks for the regional consortium to be based on Kish or Ghesm islands, rather than the disputed islands, given that the former are internationally recognized as Iranian territory while the latter are claimed by both Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The Iranian officials speaking to the *New York Times* added that Iran is open to the consortium idea because Iran "does not want talks to fail." [8] It is in Iran's interest to prolong the nuclear talks, given that it likely calculates that prolonging the talks will delay or prevent snapback sanctions and a potential US or Israeli strike on its nuclear facilities. US President Donald Trump accused Iran of "slow-walking [its] decision" after Khamenei rejected the US proposal on June 4. Iran has not yet submitted a formal response to the US proposal, which could reflect internal debates in Iran about how to reject the US zero enrichment demand in the proposal while also ensuring that the negotiations do not collapse.

Likely Iranian-aligned militants launched a small-scale rocket attack from southwestern Syria into the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights on June 3.[9] This attack marks the first

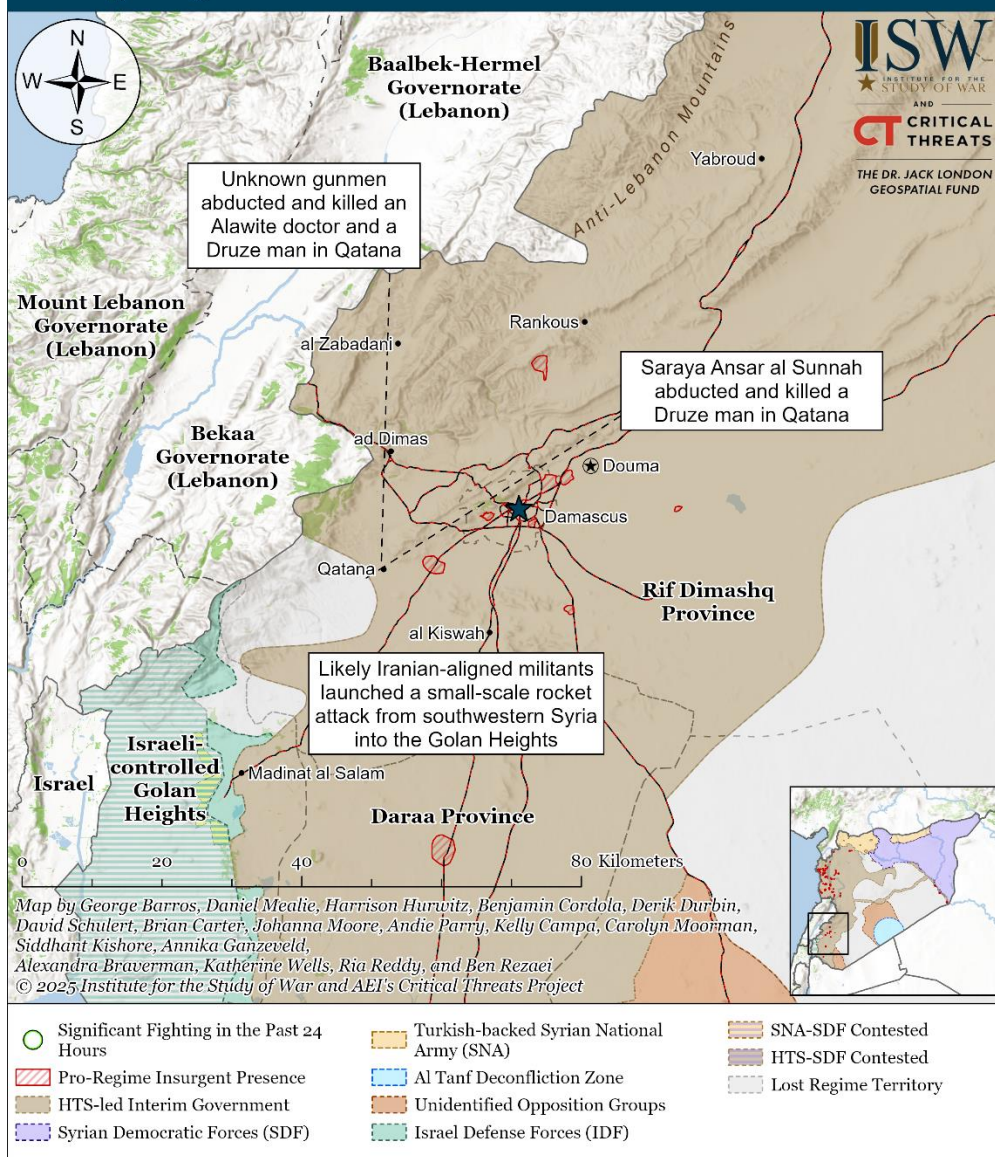
time that militants have attacked Israel from Syrian territory since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.[10] Militants launched two rockets from Tasil, Daraa Province, into the southern Golan Heights.[11] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) briefly operated in Tasil in April 2025.[12] Israeli media reported on June 3 that the rockets landed in open areas and did not cause any casualties.[13] The IDF launched several retaliatory air and artillery strikes targeting Syrian military sites and towns in southwestern Syria on June 3.[14] The targeted military sites included the new Syrian army's 121st Brigade base near Kanaker, Rif Dimashq Province, and the 175th Brigade base near Izraa, Daraa Province.[15]

Two likely Iranian-aligned groups separately claimed responsibility for the June 3 rocket attack.[16] Neither group has previously conducted any attacks targeting Israel. The Martyr Muhammad al Deif Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack and released a video that reportedly showed the rockets landing in the Golan Heights.[17] The Martyr Muhammad al Deif Brigades is a Hamas-aligned Palestinian resistance group that announced its formation on June 3.[18] The Islamic Resistance Front of Syria-the First of the Brave also claimed responsibility for the attack and published a video of the alleged rockets in their launching positions on June 3.[19] The Islamic Resistance Front of Syria-the First of the Brave is an anti-Israel militia formed in January 2025 that uses iconography widely associated with or inspired by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.[20] The Islamic Resistance Front of Syria-the First of the Brave Spokesperson Abu al Qasim gave a speech on June 4 in which he stated that the Syrian government has become a “defeatist project demanding normalization” with Israel to gain “some personal and moral privileges.”[21] Qasim stated that this attack was a “clear warning” and that the group will conduct additional attacks targeting Israel in the future.[22] Qasim also noted that the group will attack “whoever tries to strip Syria of its resistance identity.”[23]

This attack may have been an attempt to fuel tension between Israel and Syria in order to undermine recent deconfliction and diplomatic efforts between the two countries. Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz posted on X on June 3 that Israel holds Syrian President Ahmed al Shara “directly responsible for every threat” and attack on Israel from Syrian territory.[24] The IDF also stated on June 3 that the Syrian transitional government will continue to bear consequences “as long as hostile activity continues from its territory.”[25] The Syrian Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a statement that reaffirmed that Syria “has not and will not” pose a threat to any country in the region.[26] The ministry added that some external actors are seeking to destabilize the region to advance their own interests.[27] Israel has repeatedly expressed concern regarding threats to Israel from Syria since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.[28] The IDF has conducted ground and air operations in southern Syria since December 2024 with the aim of eliminating these threats, including Iranian-backed networks in Syria.[29] The Syrian transitional government has repeatedly called on Israel to withdraw from Syrian territory to the 1974 deconfliction line.[30] Israel and Syria have taken steps in recent weeks to ease tensions. Several unspecified sources told Western media on May 27 that Israeli and Syrian officials are holding direct talks on joint security and “broader political understandings” to calm tensions and prevent further conflict.[31] Syrian President Ahmed al Shara also reportedly expressed willingness to normalize relations with Israel during meetings with US officials in April 2025.[32] Renewed tension between Israel and Syria could undermine the countries’ recent efforts to prevent military escalation and reach a political and diplomatic understanding.

Assessed Control of Terrain around Rif Dimashq

June 4, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) spokesperson announced on June 4 that the LEC arrested an “ISIS-affiliated network” in Tehran.[33] LEC forces arrested 13 individuals who were part of the network, including the leader, members of support and coordination teams, and suicide operatives. LEC forces seized suicide vests and backpacks, among other equipment. The network reportedly planned to execute attacks at public ceremonies across Iran, likely during the current flurry of commemoration ceremonies for former Iranian Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini. Police departments across Tehran, Esfahan, Qom, and Alborz provinces coordinated to arrest the individuals. Iranian officials have recently articulated a clear commitment to border security amid an uptick in militant activity since December 2023.[34] Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which is the Afghan branch of the Islamic State, has conducted several attacks in Iran in recent years. ISKP members detonated suicide vests during a ceremony in Kerman Province in January 2024,

commemorating the anniversary of the United States killing former Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani.[35] ISKP separately conducted two attacks targeting the Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz, Fars Province, in October 2022 and August 2023.[36]

Shia Coordination Framework members opposed to Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and his coalition accused Sudani and his coalition of corruption, likely to damage Sudani's electoral prospects in the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections. The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. An unspecified Shia Coordination Framework member opposed to Sudani claimed on June 4 that Sudani is paying voters to vote for him.[37] The source also claimed that Sudani is using prominent members of his Reconstruction and Development Coalition to increase support for his coalition. The Shia Coordination Framework member accused Karbala Governor Nassif al Khattabi and Popular Mobilization Committee Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh, who are members of Sudani's coalition, of using public funds in their electoral campaigns. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq (AAH) head Qais al Khazali and State of Law Coalition head Nouri al Maliki are running against Sudani in the upcoming November 2025 elections and have recently accused Sudani and members of his coalition of corruption.[38] It is unclear who made the recent allegations against Sudani, Khattabi, and Fayadh. Sudani has derived a large amount of popular support among the Iraqi population for his anti-corruption policies.[39] Corruption charges against Sudani, real or fabricated, could diminish support for his coalition.

The Shia Coordination Framework reportedly rejected a proposal by Sudani for a "political consensus" to prevent conflicts during the formation of the next government after the parliamentary elections.[40] A Shia Coordination Framework member told Iraqi media on June 4 that Sudani sought to negotiate an agreement with the Coordination Framework to allocate control of the presidency, speakership, and premiership. Sudani reportedly sought to negotiate this agreement to prevent deadlock in parliament following the elections. The Iraqi Parliament failed to elect a president and prime minister for a year following the 2021 elections for multiple reasons, including disputes between Iranian-backed parties and Shia nationalist cleric Muqtada al Sadr.[41]

Sudani is likely attempting to secure a second premiership. Iraqi public polling throughout the Sudani administration has shown that Sudani is popular among voters and will likely win a significant portion of seats in parliament in the November 2025 elections.[42] Unspecified Shia sources told Saudi media in September 2024 that Sudani had formed alliances with 50 unspecified Shia Coordination Framework members, around 60 parliamentarians, and multiple provincial governors.[43] A member of the Iranian-backed Badr Organization told Iraqi media on May 25 that the Shia Coordination Framework would not prevent Sudani from serving a second term, indicating that the Shia Coordination Framework has discussed the possibility of Sudani continuing to serve as prime minister.[44]

Key Takeaways:

- **US-Iran Nuclear Negotiations:** Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei categorically rejected the recent US nuclear proposal because the proposal would require Iran to eventually halt all uranium enrichment on Iranian soil. Iran's continued rejection of the US demand for zero uranium enrichment could cause the US-Iran nuclear negotiations to collapse. Khamenei claimed that a nuclear industry without enrichment is "practically worthless" and emphasized

that Iran would not become “dependent” on foreign countries for uranium. Under the US proposal, Iran would receive uranium for civilian nuclear purposes as part of the regional consortium but would not be allowed to independently enrich uranium on Iranian soil after the consortium is formed.

- **Israel-Syria Tensions:** Likely Iranian-aligned militants launched a small-scale rocket attack from southwestern Syria into the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights on June 3. This attack marks the first time that militants have attacked Israel from Syrian territory since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. Two likely Iranian-aligned groups separately claimed responsibility for the June 3 rocket attack. Neither group has previously conducted any attacks targeting Israel. This attack may have been an attempt to fuel tension between Israel and Syria in order to undermine recent deconfliction and diplomatic efforts between the two countries.
- **Iranian Internal Security:** The Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) spokesperson announced on June 4 that the LEC arrested an “ISIS-affiliated network” in Tehran. LEC forces arrested 13 individuals who were part of the network, including the leader, members of support and coordination teams, and suicide operatives. LEC forces seized suicide vests and backpacks, among other equipment. Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), which is the Afghan branch of the Islamic State, has conducted several attacks in Iran in recent years.
- **Iraqi Parliamentary Elections:** Shia Coordination Framework members opposed to Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and his coalition accused Sudani and his coalition of corruption, likely to damage Sudani’s electoral prospects in the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections. The Shia Coordination Framework separately rejected a proposal by Sudani for a “political consensus” to prevent conflicts during the formation of the next government after the parliamentary elections.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

The US maximum pressure campaign against Iran has hampered Iran’s ability to export oil to China. Bloomberg reported on June 3 that Iran exported 1.1 million barrels of condensate and crude oil per day to China in May 2025, which marks an approximately 26 percent decrease in Iranian crude exports to China since April.[45] Chinese independent refiners are reportedly processing near record-low amounts of Iranian oil. Reuters reported in early May that recent US sanctions on two small Chinese independent refineries—Shandong Shouguang Luqing Petrochemical and Shandong Shengxing Chemical—have begun to disrupt China’s refining of Iranian crude oil.[46] Ship-tracking data shows that Chinese refiners stockpiled crude oil earlier in the year, which may also explain the recent decrease in Iranian oil exports to China.[47]

The Parliamentary Civil Committee met on June 4 to address issues facing Iranian truck drivers.[48] Truck drivers across Iran have gone on strike since May 22 to protest a planned fuel price increase as well as rising insurance costs and low wages.[49] Anti-regime media recently reported that over 400,000 truck drivers remained on strike as of June 1.[50] The strike has reportedly expanded to include other transportation workers, including taxi drivers.[51] The strike has caused disruptions to supply chains at a time when the Iranian economy is already reeling from the impacts of international

sanctions, mismanagement, and corruption.[52] CTP-ISW previously noted that economic-related protests and strikes have the potential to evolve into anti-regime protests.[53]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem in Beirut on June 4.[54] Araghchi and Qassem may have discussed challenges stemming from the Lebanese government's efforts to block Hezbollah's reconstitution. Araghchi emphasized Iran's readiness to support Lebanon. The meeting between Araghchi and Qassem followed Araghchi's June 3 announcement that Iranian companies are ready to participate in Lebanon's reconstruction.[55] Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister Youssef Rajji stated during a meeting with Araghchi on June 3 that all reconstruction aid must go through state institutions and rejected any effort to bypass the Lebanese government to support Hezbollah's military reconstitution.[56] The Lebanese Armed Forces are working to dismantle Hezbollah's military infrastructure in southern Lebanon as part of the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire agreement. The Lebanese government's insistence on any Iranian reconstruction aid going through the Lebanese state could impede Iranian efforts to support Hezbollah.

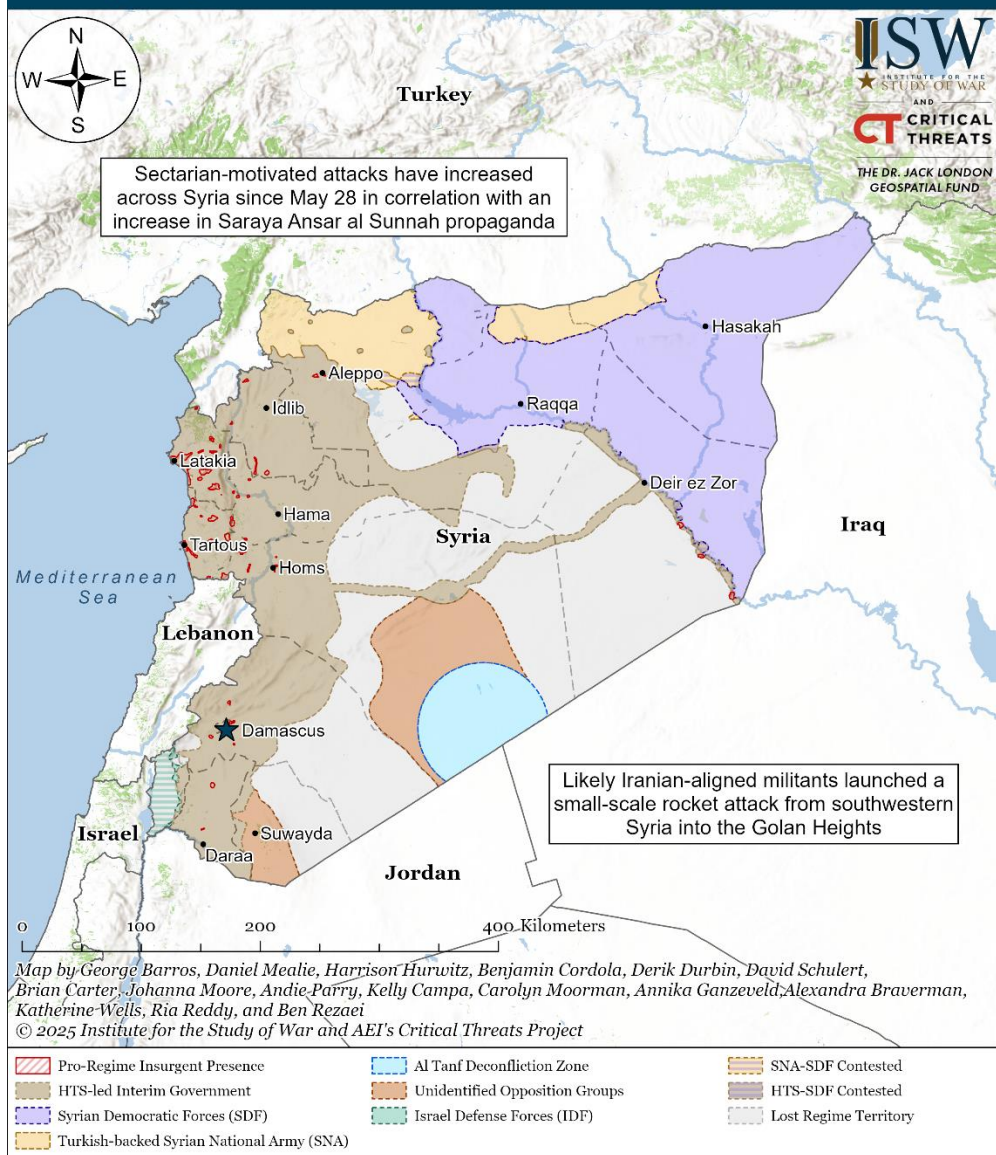
The Iranian rial depreciated from 824,000 rials to one US dollar on June 3 to 837,500 rials to one US dollar on June 4.[57]

Syria

The Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) is establishing a formal chain of command for a volunteer force that the MoD envisions will include 200,000 individuals.[58] A Syrian military official told Emirati media that the MoD has recruited 100,000 of a planned 200,000 soldiers to join the Syrian Army.[59] The MoD plans to divide these forces into 20 divisions with five brigades each: two infantry brigades, an armored brigade, a special forces brigade, and a multi-task brigade.[60] A Syrian MoD official said that most brigades are currently "at skeleton stage." [61] This formal chain of command may assist Damascus in asserting better command and control over the disparate militias that comprise the Syrian army. The MoD has not consistently dissolved pre-existing command structures and has allowed some former militias to reflag as brigades in the Syrian army, however.[62] This type of integration often results in members of former militias answering to their former militia commander instead of observing the formal chain of command. The Syrian transitional government reportedly pays soldiers between \$150 and \$500, partly from assets seized from the Assad regime.[63] The transitional government will very likely struggle to pay the entire Syrian army from these assets, particularly once the force doubles in size. Local media in Deir ez Zor Province reported that some divisions are struggling to pay their forces due to a lack of cash flow from the transitional government and some recruits are switching divisions to be paid.[64] Salaries are reportedly dependent on the leadership of each faction.[65] Turkey paid the salaries of Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) factions as of late May 2025, but it remains unclear if direct Turkish support to the SNA has persisted.[66] Qatar and Saudi Arabia have committed to fund public sector salaries in Syria to help with the transitional government's budget shortfall, but it is unclear whether this assistance will include military salaries.[67]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

June 4, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST

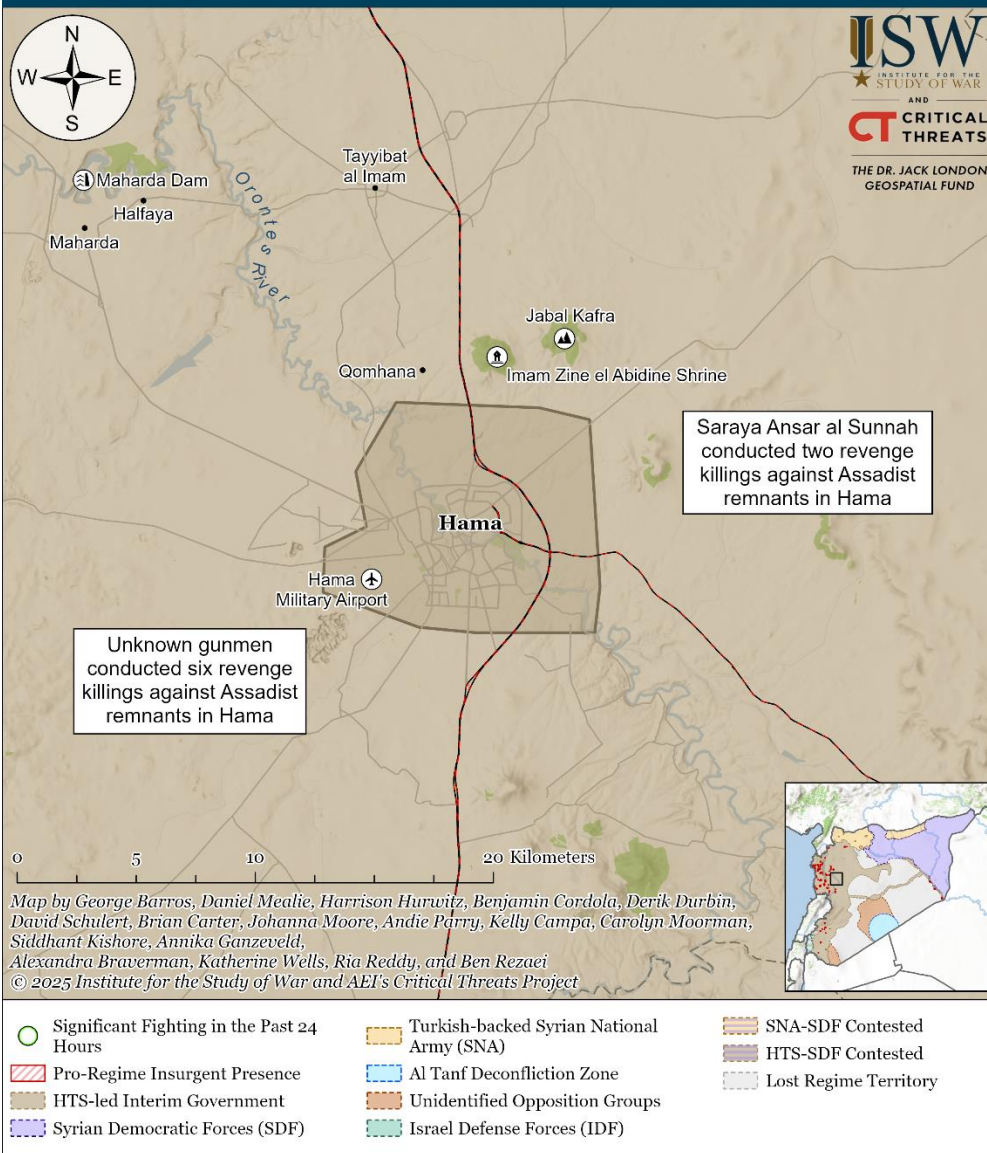


Sectarian-motivated attacks have increased across Syria since May 28 in correlation with an increase in Saraya Ansar al Sunnah propaganda. CTP-ISW has recorded six instances of sectarian-motivated attacks since May 28, compared to a single attack between May 21 and 28.[68] Three of these attacks followed a clash between drug smugglers and General Security Service (GSS) forces in Qatana, Rif Dimashq Province, on May 30.[69] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah abducted and executed a Druze man in Qatana on May 31.[70] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah propaganda posts more than doubled in the past week. Salafi-jihadi groups such as Saraya Ansar al Sunnah utilize social media to spread their ideology to a wider audience and encourage their followers to conduct “lone wolf” attacks that target religious minorities and Assad regime remnants in Syria.[71] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah frequently provides its audience religious justification to kill religious minorities whom they view as apostates.[72]

Revenge killings targeting former Assadists have slightly increased across Syria since May 28. CTP-ISW has recorded nine instances of revenge killings targeting former Assad regime members since May 28, compared to six attacks between May 21 and 28.[73] Seven revenge killings took place in Hama City.[74] Saraya Ansar al Sunnah claimed two of the seven killings.[75] Hama was the site of the 1982 Hama massacre, which was orchestrated by Bashar al Assad's father, Hafez, and Assad's uncle, Rifaat.[76] The massacre, which killed an estimated 30,000 people, traumatized the populace who carried deep-seated resentment against the Assad regime.[77] This resentment, combined with a nascent transitional justice system, creates conditions in which the population may pursue vigilante justice for crimes committed under the Assad regime. The recent formation of a transitional justice and missing persons committee by the transitional government on May 18 has not decreased the rate of revenge killings in Syria.[78] This is likely due to Syrians' skepticism of the transitional government's ability to administer justice in an effective and meaningful way. The transitional government must try, prosecute, and sentence individuals who committed crimes and atrocities under Assad in order to demonstrate its commitment to transitional justice and increase trust among Syrians that the government will punish those who harmed the Syrian people.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Hama

June 4, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Iraq

The US Department of Defense denied any changes or delays to the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq in a statement to Iraqi media on June 4.[79] The United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024 that hundreds of US-led international coalition forces would withdraw from Iraq by September 2025 and that remaining forces would withdraw by the end of 2026.[80] The US Department of Defense announced in April 2025 that the United States will reduce the number of US forces deployed in Syria to “less than a thousand” in the coming months.[81] The US drawdown in Syria leaves a vacuum which Iraqi officials have warned ISIS could exploit to reconstitute and threaten Iraq.[82] The Iraqi federal government has reportedly considered postponing the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq in recent months due to concerns that ISIS could exploit the fall of the Assad regime in Syria to threaten Iraq.

Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) 26th Brigade Commander Maitham al Zaidi accused unspecified actors of imprisoning and interrogating PMF members for political purposes on June 4. The PMF is an Iraqi state security service that includes many Iranian-backed Iraqi militias.[83] The PMF 26th Brigade, also known as the “Abbas Combat Division,” is loyal to Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani.[84] Zaidi claimed that unspecified actors imprisoned a PMF member for failing to provide his regiment commander with ten voting cards.[85] Zaidi also claimed that unspecified actors detained a different PMF member for 40 days because the member’s relatives support a rival candidate in the upcoming parliamentary elections.[86] Zaidi added that unspecified actors harshly interrogated a group of PMF recruits at a camp in southern Iraq after a candidate lost an election.[87] The 2016 PMF Commission Law, which formalized the PMF as an independent entity reporting directly to the Iraqi prime minister, prohibits PMF members from associating with any political parties.[88] Zaidi called for comprehensive PMF reforms to ensure compliance with the law.[89]

Arabian Peninsula

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Harden the Houthi regime against internal dissent in Houthi-controlled areas
- Destroy the anti-Houthi opposition in order to control all of Yemen
- Erode Israeli will to continue the war in the Gaza Strip

The Houthis conducted a ballistic missile attack targeting Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel on June 3 as part of the Houthi campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel.[90] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted the Houthi missile.[91] Some international airlines have suspended flights to Israel through September 2025 due to concerns about Houthi attacks on Ben Gurion Airport.[92]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is

comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

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BABEL STREET

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Iran Update, June 5, 2025

Jun 5, 2025 - [ISW Press](#)



Iran Update, June 5, 2025

Ria Reddy, Ben Rezaei, Carolyn Moorman, Ben Schmida, Avery Borens, Johanna Moore, and Annika Ganzeveld

Information Cutoff: 2:00pm ET

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

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

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

A variety of Syrian armed groups, including those associated with the new transitional government, the Assad regime, and hardline Islamic groups, have committed a series of extrajudicial killings since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. CTP-ISW absolutely condemns these extrajudicial killings.

Russia continues to position itself as a mediator in the US–Iran nuclear negotiations. Russia's mediation of the US–Iran talks would be very unlikely to secure US interests given Russia's alignment with Iran. US President Donald Trump stated on June 4 that Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to "participate" in the US–Iran nuclear negotiations.[1] Russia's offer to mediate the negotiations comes after Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei explicitly rejected a recent US nuclear proposal to Iran because the proposal would require Iran to eventually halt all uranium enrichment on Iranian soil.[2] CTP-ISW previously assessed that

Iran's continued rejection of the US demand for zero uranium enrichment could cause the US–Iran nuclear negotiations to collapse.[3] Iran and Russia have held several meetings since March 2025 to discuss the dispute between Iran and the United States over Iran's nuclear program.[4] Russia has opposed stated US objectives in the nuclear negotiations and the recent US proposal by supporting Iran's right to enrich uranium.[5] Russian Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov claimed in early March 2025 that Iran's production of 60 percent enriched uranium has “no weapons risk.”[6] Iran currently has enough 60 percent enriched uranium, if enriched further, to produce nearly 10 nuclear weapons.[7] Russia's support for Iran's domestic uranium enrichment is inconsistent with the stated US position against uranium enrichment on Iranian soil. US President Donald Trump confirmed on June 3 that the United States maintains its position that Iran cannot enrich uranium.[8]

Iran and Russia have deepened political and military cooperation in recent years, particularly since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Iran has supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine by providing Russia with Fateh-360 ballistic missiles and launchers and Shahed drones.[9] Iran reportedly purchased Russian Su-35 fighter jets in January 2025, though Russia has not yet delivered the Su-35s to Iran.[10] Russia has also supported and cooperated with Iran's Axis of Resistance in recent years. This cooperation has included working with Iran and Iranian-backed militias to attack US forces in the Middle East.[11] Russia also supported the Axis of Resistance against Israel during the October 7 War, including by providing targeting intelligence to the Houthis to support attacks on international shipping and US vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.[12] Iran and Russia signed a strategic cooperation agreement in January 2025, which further illustrates their close collaboration and alignment in working to erode US global influence.[13]

Iran is leveraging its membership in multilateral organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to try to mitigate the effects of international sanctions. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf attended the 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in Brazil on June 4 and 5.[14] Ghalibaf called for a joint legislative charter among BRICS members to counter sanctions.[15] Ghalibaf urged BRICS members to use alternative financial tools, such as BRICS Pay, and conduct commercial transactions using national currencies instead of the US dollar. Ghalibaf met with Brazilian officials on the sidelines of the forum to promote the expansion of bilateral ties through the Iran-Brazil Joint Economic Commission.[16]

Iranian Central Bank Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin separately attended a meeting for central bank governors of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states in Beijing on June 2.[17] Farzin proposed the creation of a joint bank for SCO member states in order to facilitate financial transactions among members and reduce reliance on institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Iran's emphasis on cooperation with BRICS and SCO members is part of a broader Iranian effort to build a parallel international order that challenges “Western dominance” and US “unilateralism.”[18]

Senior Iranian military commanders continue to prepare for potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard inspected Iran's Northern Air Defense Zone at Mehrabad Airport in Tehran Province

on June 5 to evaluate military units and defense capabilities at the site.[19] Sabahi Fard also inspected air defense positions near former Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini's mausoleum in southern Tehran. Sabahi Fard may have inspected the Hazrat-e Amir Brigade Air Defense Site. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) struck the Hazrat-e Amir Brigade Air Defense Site in October 2024.[20] The brigade is located roughly 8 miles from Khomeini's mausoleum and about 7 miles from the Northern Air Defense Zone at Mehrabad Airport. Sabahi Fard has inspected at least 12 Iranian air defense sites across Iran since April 2025.[21]

Key Takeaways:

- **Russo-Iranian Cooperation:** Russia continues to position itself as a mediator in the US–Iran nuclear negotiations. Russia's mediation of the US–Iran talks is unlikely to secure US interests given Russia's alignment with Iran. Russia has opposed stated US objectives in the nuclear negotiations and the recent US proposal by supporting Iran's right to enrich uranium. Russian Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov claimed in early March 2025 that Iran's production of 60 percent enriched uranium has "no weapons risk." Iran currently has enough 60 percent enriched uranium, if enriched further, to produce nearly 10 nuclear weapons.
- **Iranian Efforts to Undermine Sanctions:** Iran is leveraging its membership in multilateral organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to try to mitigate the effects of international sanctions. Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf attended the 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in Brazil on June 4 and 5. Ghalibaf called for a joint legislative charter among BRICS members to counter sanctions. Iranian Central Bank Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin separately attended a meeting for central bank governors of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states in Beijing on June 2. Farzin proposed the creation of a joint bank for SCO member states in order to facilitate financial transactions among members and reduce reliance on institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.
- **Iranian Preparations for a Potential Strike:** Senior Iranian military commanders continue to prepare for potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard inspected Iran's Northern Air Defense Zone at Mehrabad Airport in Tehran Province on June 5 to evaluate military units and defense capabilities at the site. Sabahi Fard also inspected air defense positions near former Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini's mausoleum in southern Tehran. Sabahi Fard may have inspected the Hazrat-e Amir Brigade Air Defense Site.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

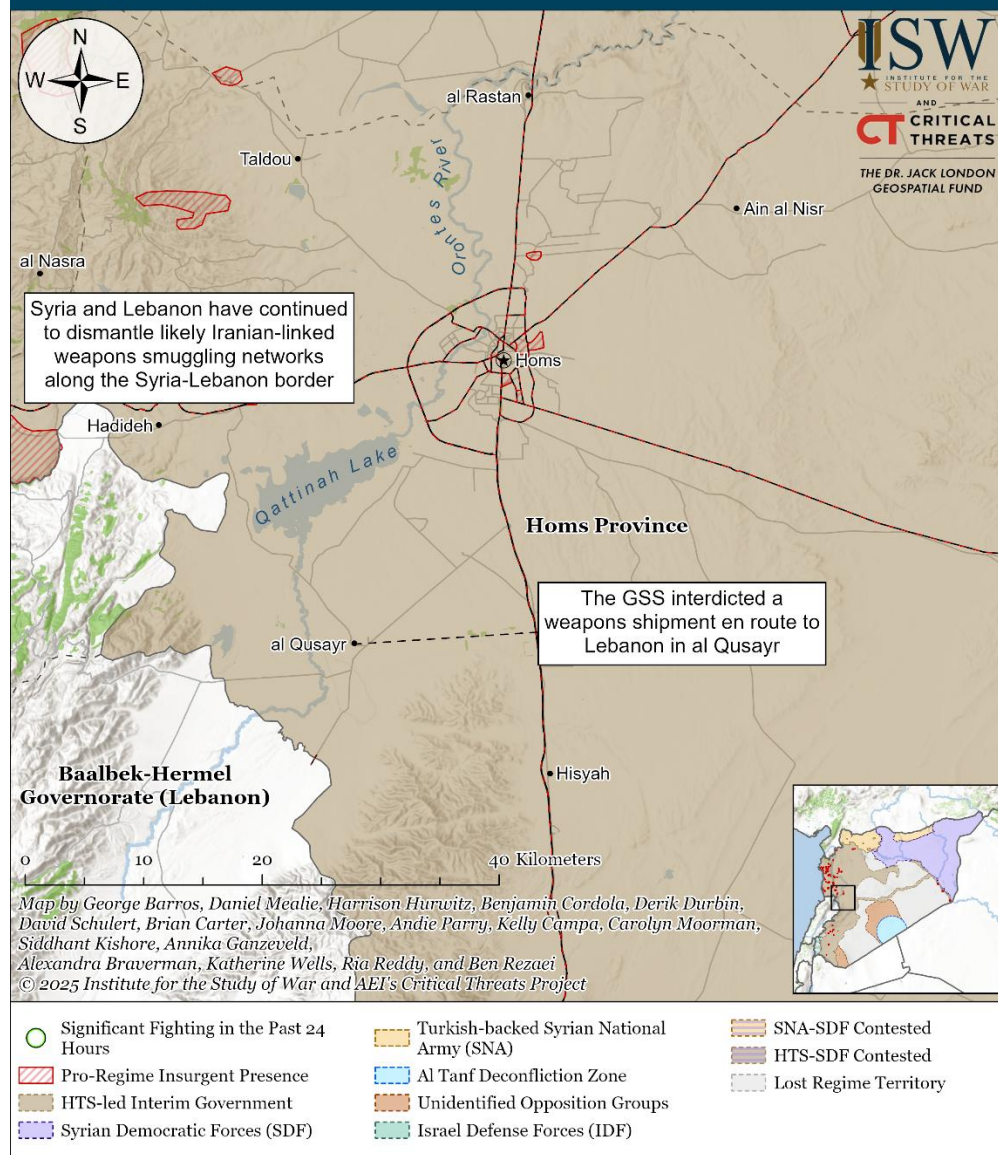
The Iranian appreciated from 837, 500 rials to one US dollar on June 4 to 836,500 rials to one US dollar on June 5.[22]

Syria

Syria and Lebanon have continued to dismantle likely Iranian-linked weapons smuggling networks along the Syria-Lebanon border. Syrian forces have interdicted at least two weapons shipments in Homs Province en route to Lebanon since May 29.[23] The seized shipments included Kornet anti-tank guided missiles, ammunition, small arms, machine guns, and other unspecified military equipment.[24] These shipments were likely headed to Hezbollah-affiliated fighters in the Bekaa Valley, given that the weapons were interdicted in Homs Province, which borders the Bekaa Valley. Hezbollah has historically used Kornet anti-tank missiles to attack Israeli tanks.[25] The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) closed six known smuggling routes between Syria and Lebanon near Yahfoufa on May 30.[26] Yahfoufa is located northwest of the Syrian town of Serghaya, which lies on a road that travels northward into Hezbollah's stronghold in the Bekaa Valley.[27] The LAF has reportedly shut down 107 illegal border crossings with Syria since January 2025.[28] An unspecified Lebanese military source told Saudi media on May 29 that the LAF is enhancing its presence along the Lebanon-Syria border and maintaining strict control over areas that are known for smuggling.[29] The Syrian transitional government and the LAF have held meetings in recent months to enhance military coordination between the two countries.[30] Syrian Chief of Staff Major General Ali al Naasan and Syrian Deputy Interior Minister for Police Affairs Major General Ahmed Latouf recently met with LAF Liaison Officer Brigadier General Michel Boutros on May 27 and 28 to discuss border security and counter-smuggling efforts.[31]

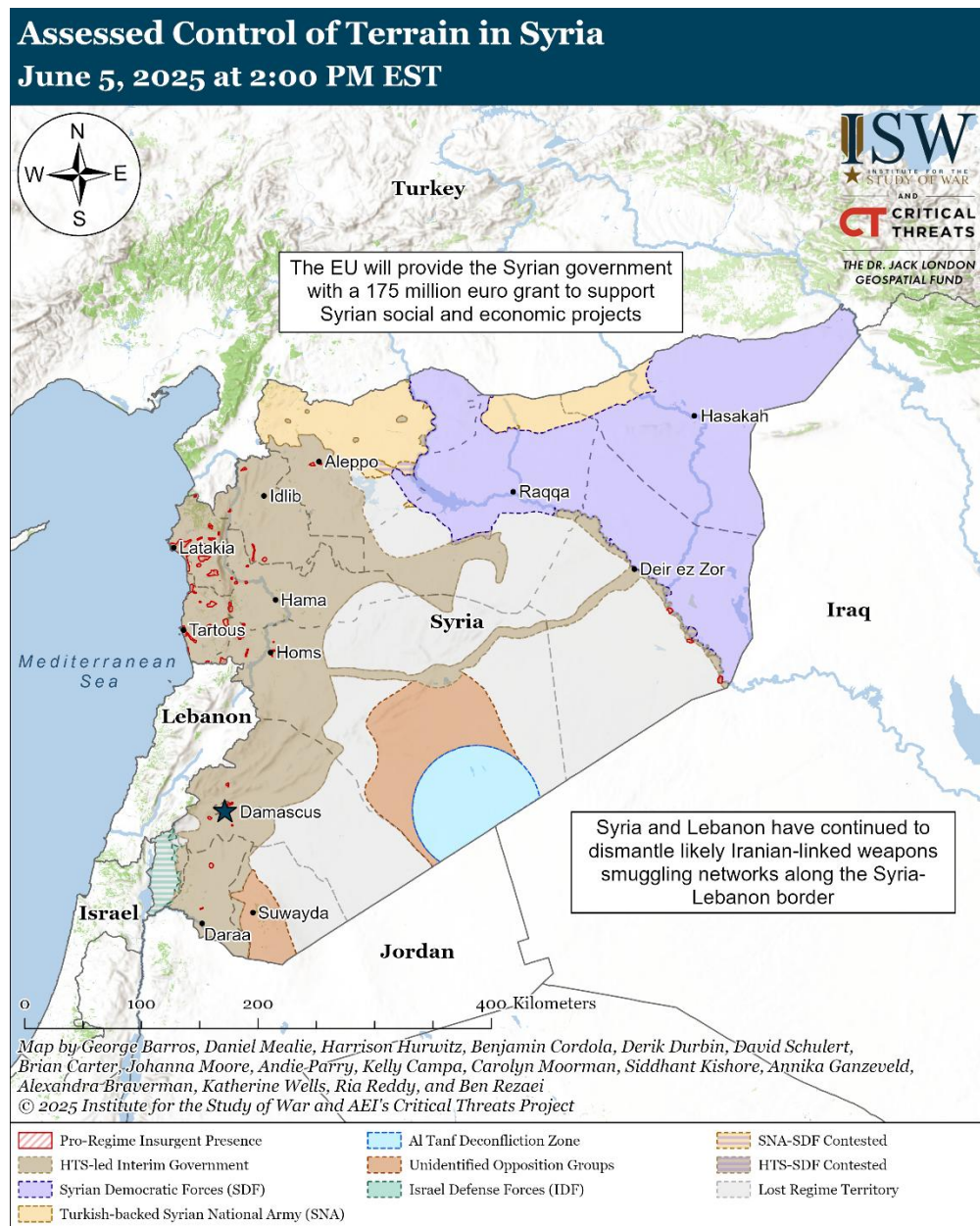
Assessed Control of Terrain around Homs

June 5, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The European Union (EU) Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Dubravka Suica, announced on June 5 that the EU will provide the Syrian transitional government with a 175 million euro grant to support Syrian social and economic projects.[32] The grant will support Syrian public institutions, grassroots energy projects, education, health, agriculture, transitional justice mechanisms, and human rights institutions.[33] The grant follows the EU's decision to lift sanctions on Syria on May 28.[34] Suica visited Damascus and met with President Ahmed al Shara and Foreign Affairs Minister Asaad al Shaibani on June 5 to discuss the grant and the return of Syrian refugees residing in Europe.[35] Suica confirmed that Shaibani will attend an EU ministerial conference in Brussels later in June.[36] She also noted that the EU Commission is working to integrate Syria into several initiatives with its Mediterranean partners, including the Erasmus+ program and the New Pact for the Mediterranean.[37] Suica was the first

EU commissioner to visit Damascus since the Syrian transitional government was established in March 2025.[38]



Iraq

A “political source” told Iraqi media on June 5 that the Shia Coordination Framework has agreed to amend the Iraqi electoral law ahead of the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections.[39] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. The proposed electoral law amendment reportedly adjusts the way that votes are allocated to candidates by automatically distributing 20 percent of the votes cast for the candidate with the most votes in a district to other candidates on the same list.[40] Iraq

currently distributes only surplus votes, or votes exceeding the minimum number of votes required to win a seat, from the top-performing candidate to other candidates on the same list.[41] Iraq previously used this system in elections between 2010 and 2018. Iraq removed the ability to transfer votes between candidates on the same list ahead of the 2021 elections.[42] The Shia Coordination Framework passed an amendment in 2023 to return Iraq to the 2010-2018 system, likely to favor Shia Coordination Framework parties ahead of the 2025 elections.[43] The Shia Coordination Framework's reported consensus on this newly proposed amendment suggests that the Shia Coordination Framework views this amendment as a tool to increase the likelihood that it will remain an influential bloc in the formation of the next Iraqi government. Shia Coordination Framework parliamentarians will reportedly discuss the amendment at the next parliament session.[44] The Iraqi Parliament is on recess until early August 2025.[45]

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis conducted a drone attack targeting Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel on June 4 as part of the Houthi campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel.[46] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted the Houthi drone.[47] Some international airlines have suspended flights through September 2025 due to concerns of Houthi attacks on Ben Gurion Airport.[48]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the "Axis of Resistance" as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence

from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

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Tags

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<https://www.understandingwar.org/background/iran-update-june-5-2025>

Iran Update



**Ben Rezaei, Ria Reddy, Ben Schmida, Andie Parry, Carolyn Moorman,
Avery Borens, Nidal Morrison, and Annika Ganzeveld**

June 6, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

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

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

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

A variety of Syrian armed groups, including those associated with the new transitional government, the Assad regime, and hardline Islamic groups, have committed a series of extrajudicial killings since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. CTP-ISW absolutely condemns these extrajudicial killings.

Iran is continuing to cooperate with China to replenish its solid-fuel ballistic missile stockpile after Israel destroyed Iranian solid-fuel production sites in October 2024.[1]

Israeli strikes in October 2024 damaged three major long-range missile production sites in Iran, including the Shahroud Military Site in Semnan Province and the Khojir and Parchin complexes in Tehran Province.[2] Unspecified sources told the *Wall Street Journal* on June 5 that Iran has ordered thousands of tons of ammonium perchlorate from China in recent months.[3] Ammonium perchlorate comprises around 70 percent of the propellant of solid-fuel missiles.[4] The sources stated that an Iranian firm, Pishgaman Tejarat Rafi Novin Company, ordered the material from a Hong Kong-based company. This report follows several sodium perchlorate transfers from China to Iran in recent months.[5] Sodium perchlorate can be converted into ammonium perchlorate. Two US-sanctioned Iranian cargo vessels, *Golbon* and *Jairan*, delivered over 1,100 tons of sodium perchlorate from China to Bandar Abbas, Iran, in early 2025.[6] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization (SSJO), which oversees part of Iran's missile research and development,

took delivery of the cargo.[7] Iran also previously engaged in secret negotiations with China and Russia in April 2023 to acquire ammonium perchlorate from China.[8]

The sources speaking to the *Wall Street Journal* stated that the new ammonium perchlorate shipments could support the production of up to 800 ballistic missiles. Western sources previously estimated that 1,000 tons of ammonium perchlorate can fuel up to 260 medium-range ballistic missiles.[9] If the 800 ballistic missiles that the *Wall Street Journal* referred to are medium-range missiles, this would suggest that Iran purchased around 3,000 tons of ammonium perchlorate from China.[10] Iran may have purchased this amount of ammonium perchlorate to compensate for the loss of some sodium perchlorate that China recently shipped to Iran. An unspecified source told the *Wall Street Journal* that the explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas on April 26 destroyed some of the sodium perchlorate that China shipped to Iran in early 2025.[11]

Iran could provide its proxies and partners, including the Houthis and Russia, with new ballistic missiles that it produces or materials that are needed to build ballistic missiles. An unspecified source told the *Wall Street Journal* that Iran plans to send part of the ammonium perchlorate to Iranian-backed militias, including the Houthis in Yemen.[12] Iran has previously exported ammonium perchlorate to members of the Axis of Resistance. The US Navy intercepted a vessel in the Gulf of Oman that was carrying around 70 tons of ammonium perchlorate from Iran to Yemen in November 2024, for example.[13] The recent shipments may also improve Iran's ability to provide ballistic missiles to Russia for its war with Ukraine. Iran began sending Fateh-360 ballistic missiles, which are solid-fuel missiles, to Russia in September 2023.[14]

The United States and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) are planning to submit a non-compliance resolution against Iran at the upcoming International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors meeting on June 9. The resolution will reportedly give Iran time to address its “less than satisfactory” cooperation with the IAEA’s probe into three undeclared nuclear sites.[15] The IAEA's recent quarterly and comprehensive reports both confirmed Iran's non-compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Safeguards Agreement.[16] An unspecified senior Western diplomat told the Associated Press on June 5 that the goal of the planned non-compliance resolution is to “resolve the [Iranian nuclear] issue.”[17] The diplomat stated that the Board of Governors will not immediately refer the non-compliance resolution to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and that Iran will have an unspecified amount of time to fulfill its safeguards obligations. The Board of Governors will reportedly hold an extraordinary meeting in the summer to pass a resolution to refer Iran's non-compliance to the UNSC if Iran fails to cooperate with the IAEA by that time. The IAEA Board of Governors previously passed a similar resolution that declared Iran in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations in September 2005.[18] The Board of Governors later referred Iran's non-compliance to the UNSC in February 2006, which led to the imposition of UN sanctions on Iran.[19]

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on X on June 6 that Iran would respond “forcefully” to any IAEA Board of Governors resolution.[20] Iran announced that it would install over 6,000 centrifuges at its enrichment facilities in retaliation for the IAEA Board of Governors' November 2024 censure resolution that condemned Iran for its failure to cooperate fully with the IAEA.[21] It is

unclear if Iran would decide to take a similar course of action in response to a non-compliance resolution. Iran could calculate that taking steps to further expand its nuclear program would increase the risk of snapback sanctions or potential US or Israeli strikes on Iran. The non-compliance resolution would lay the foundation for the E3 to trigger snapback sanctions.

Israeli officials informed the United States that Israel will not strike Iran unless US President Donald Trump signals that the US-Iran nuclear negotiations have failed, according to two unspecified Israeli sources.^[22] An unspecified Israeli source told *Axios* on June 5 that Israeli officials said that Israel will not "surprise" the United States with a military strike on Iran. A separate Israeli source added that Israeli officials said that there is "no logic" in attacking Iran if a "good diplomatic solution" is reached. Trump warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against taking any action that could potentially jeopardize the US-Iran nuclear talks in a phone call on May 22.^[23] US officials told *Axios* that the next round of the US-Iran nuclear negotiations is not expected to take place this weekend.^[24]

Key Takeaways:

- **Chinese Support for the Iranian Ballistic Missile Program:** Iran is continuing to cooperate with China to replenish its solid-fuel ballistic missile stockpile after Israel destroyed Iranian solid-fuel production sites in October 2024. Unspecified sources told the *Wall Street Journal* on June 5 that Iran has ordered thousands of tons of ammonium perchlorate from China in recent months. Ammonium perchlorate comprises around 70 percent of the propellant of solid-fuel missiles. This report follows several sodium perchlorate transfers from China to Iran in recent months. Sodium perchlorate can be converted into ammonium perchlorate. The sources speaking to the *Wall Street Journal* stated that the new ammonium perchlorate shipments could support the production of up to 800 ballistic missiles. Iran could provide its proxies and partners, including the Houthis and Russia, with new ballistic missiles that it produces or materials that are needed to build ballistic missiles.
- **US-Iran Nuclear Negotiations:** The United States and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) are planning to submit a non-compliance resolution against Iran at the upcoming International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors meeting on June 9. The resolution will reportedly give Iran time to address its "less than satisfactory" cooperation with the IAEA's probe into three undeclared nuclear sites. An unspecified senior Western diplomat stated that the Board of Governors will not immediately refer the non-compliance resolution to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and that Iran will have an unspecified amount of time to fulfill its safeguards obligations. The Board of Governors will reportedly hold an extraordinary meeting in the summer to pass a resolution to refer Iran's non-compliance to the UNSC if Iran fails to cooperate with the IAEA by that time. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on X on June 6 that Iran would respond "forcefully" to any IAEA Board of Governors resolution.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

The United States sanctioned over 30 individuals and entities on June 6 for their involvement in Iran's "shadow banking" network.[25] These sanctions mark the first time that the United States has targeted Iranian shadow banking infrastructure since the start of the US “maximum pressure” campaign in February 2025.[26] The Iranian regime uses shadow banking to move revenue from its oil and petrochemical exports, which helps Iran fund its nuclear and missile programs and proxy network.[27] The sanctioned entities include Hong Kong and UAE-based companies

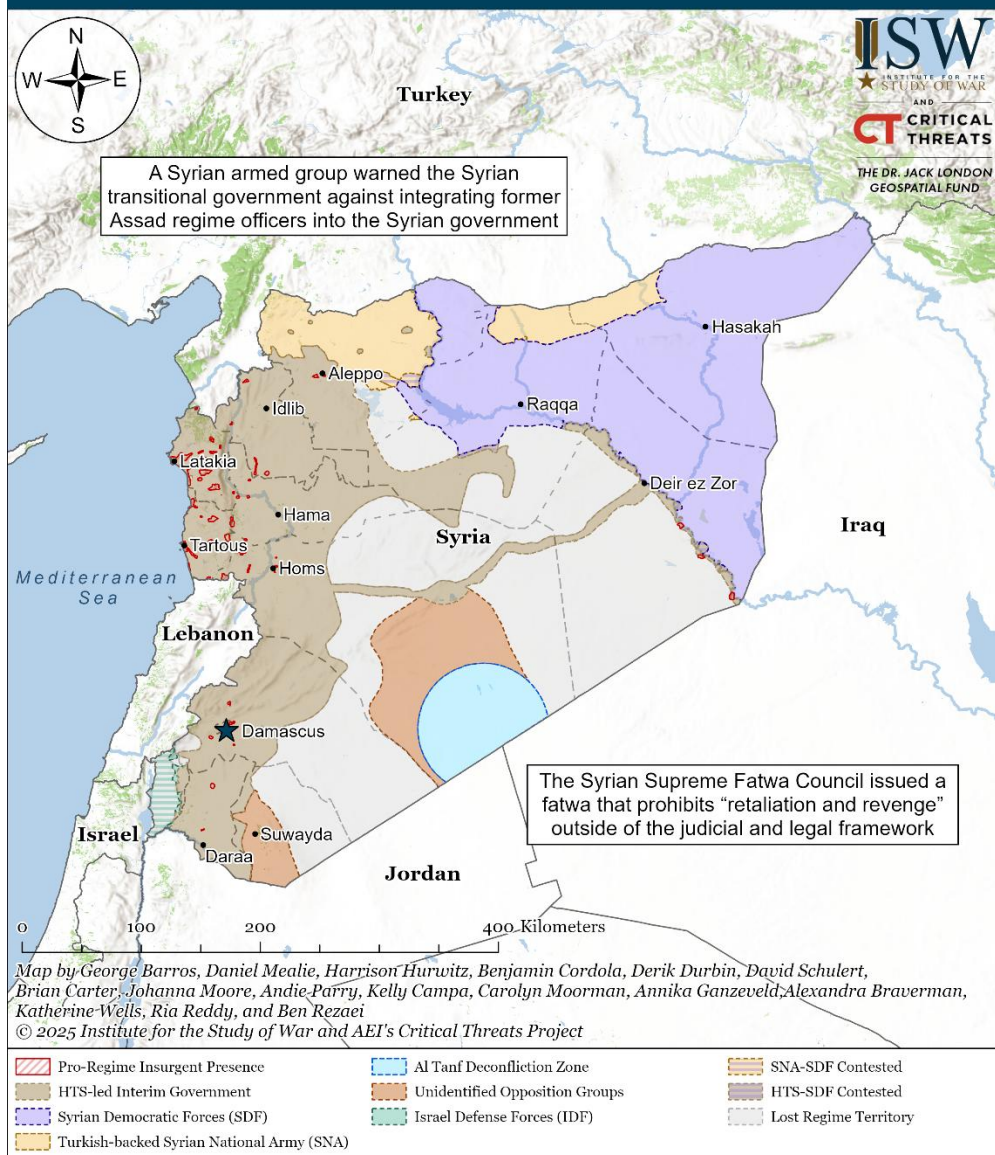
The Iranian rial appreciated from 836,500 rials to one US dollar on June 5 to 835,500 rials to one US dollar on June 6.[28]

Syria

A Syrian armed group warned the Syrian transitional government on June 6 against integrating former Assad regime officers into the Syrian government.[29] The group, “Burkan al Furat,” appears to be comprised of former Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Syrian National Army (SNA) fighters from northeastern Syria, according to Syrian and Lebanese media.[30] Burkan al Furat claimed an attack on Russian forces at Hmeimem Airbase in May 2025, but does not appear to have been active since that attack.[31] Burkan al Furat Commander Abu Ibrahim al Suri warned Syrian Interior Minister Anas Khattab that the government must reverse its appointments of former regime officers or else “the free people will start a war against you.”[32] Suri claimed that the integration of former regime officers would cause SNA and FSA fighters to defect from the Syrian army and join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).[33] Burkan al Furat may be responding to the Syrian government's recent efforts to incorporate former regime officers into new state structures. The Interior Ministry recently met with defected officers to discuss ministry reform.[34] Syrian Defense Minister Major General Marhaf Abu Qasra separately announced on May 26 that the Defense Ministry will integrate former defected officers into the new Syrian army.[35] These officers include both individuals who served in Assad regime military units during the civil war and individuals who have not been involved in military affairs in recent years.[36] These officers could have fought against the FSA and SNA for several years during the Syrian Civil War. The integration of former officers who may have fought on the side of the Assad regime in the civil war will probably continue to create tension between former opposition groups and the new government.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

June 6, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The Syrian Supreme Fatwa Council issued a fatwa on June 6 that prohibits “retaliation and revenge” outside of the judicial and legal framework.[37] It is unlikely that this decree will significantly reduce the rate of extrajudicial revenge killings across Syria. The Syrian Supreme Fatwa Council includes 15 Sunni scholars whom President Ahmed al Shara appointed to oversee and implement religious rulings.[38] Various armed groups have conducted extrajudicial revenge killings against Assadist remnants across Syria since the fall of Assad in December 2024.[39] The council issued the fatwa in response to questions from the public about the legitimacy of revenge killings.[40] The Fatwa Council emphasized that the implementation of punishments and retaliation is the responsibility of the judiciary and competent authorities and that individuals cannot implement punishments and retaliation on their own.[41] US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack said that the fatwa represents “great first steps for a new Syrian government moving towards a new Syria.”[42]

Revenge killings stem in part from a lack of effective transitional justice mechanisms in Syria. The transitional government must try, prosecute, and sentence individuals who committed crimes and atrocities under Assad in order to demonstrate its commitment to transitional justice. Only by taking meaningful steps to punish Assadist remnants will the transitional government be able to prevent further revenge killings. Some Salafi-jihadi groups that conduct revenge killings, such as Saraya Ansar al Sunnah, view the Supreme Fatwa Council as heretical and are unlikely to respect its rulings, moreover.[43]

Iraq

State of Law Coalition head Nouri al Maliki urged the Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC) and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) on June 6 to investigate candidates and parties for suspected Baath Party links.[44] Maliki's call for the AJC to review candidate backgrounds could be an attempt to sideline political opposition ahead of the November 2025 parliamentary elections. Iraqi law bans Baath Party members from running in local or national elections.[45] The AJC replaced the De-Baathification Committee in 2008 to prevent “the return of the Baath’s ideology, power, or practices,” but has been weaponized by Iranian-backed actors, including Maliki, to sideline political opposition.[46] Maliki argued on February 1 that the Iraqi government must prevent attempts by “sectarians” and “Baathists” to overthrow the Iraqi government after Sunni politicians made a concerted effort to advance long-held Sunni political demands.[47]

An IHEC spokesperson told Iraqi media on June 6 that IHEC will bar any candidates convicted of bribing Iraqis for votes from participating in the upcoming elections.[48] This statement comes after Shia Coordination Framework members accused Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and his coalition of corruption, likely in an attempt to damage Sudani’s electoral prospects in the elections.[49]

A parliamentarian aligned with Sudani told al Araby al Jadeed on June 5 that Sudani is facing opposing pressures from multiple actors, including Iranian-backed political parties and the United States, on how to address the Iraqi federal government’s current dispute with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).[50] The Iraqi Finance Ministry announced on May 29 that the Iraqi federal government will stop transferring funds to the KRG due to the KRG’s failure to transfer oil and non-oil revenue to the Iraqi federal government.[51] The Iraqi federal government’s transfer of funds to the KRG is a frequent point of contention between the federal government and the KRG. The federal government’s decision to stop transferring funds on May 29 came after the KRG signed a multi-billion-dollar oil and gas deal with two US-based companies on May 20.[52] Unidentified political parties, Parliament, Iraqi President Abdul Latif al Rashid, and the United States have reportedly urged Sudani to reverse the federal government’s decision to stop transferring funds to the KRG.[53] The Sudani-aligned parliamentarian added that unidentified Shia Coordination Framework leaders have pressured Sudani to maintain the federal government’s decision.[54] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. The parliamentarian implied that Sudani’s decision regarding the dispute could influence political alliances in the upcoming elections.[55] The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which governs the KRG, previously allied with former Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi and Shia nationalist cleric

Muqtada al Sadr in the 2021 parliamentary elections in an attempt to exclude Iranian-backed parties from the government.[56] Shia Coordination Framework leaders may be pressuring Sudani to abide by the federal government's decision in an attempt to create fissures between the KDP and political parties that the KDP could ally with in the upcoming elections, such as Sudani's coalition.

The commander of the 3rd Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) brigade, which is controlled by the Iranian-backed Badr Organization, denied claims on June 4 that unspecified actors recently “exploit{ed}” PMF members for political purposes.[57] The PMF is an Iraqi state security service that includes many Iranian-backed Iraqi militias. The militias answer, on paper, to the Iraqi prime minister, but in reality, many of the militias answer to Iran.[58] The 2016 PMF Commission Law, which formalized the PMF as an independent security force, prohibits PMF members from being affiliated with or participating in political activities.[59] The PMF has participated in voter intimidation and election interference in past election cycles, however.[60] The 26th PMF Brigade commander recently accused unspecified actors on June 4 of imprisoning and interrogating PMF members for political purposes.[61] The 26th PMF brigade is affiliated with Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani.[62]

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis conducted a ballistic missile attack targeting Ben Gurion Airport in central Israel on June 5 as part of the Houthi campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel.[63] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted the Houthi missile.[64] Some international airlines have suspended flights to Israel through September 2025 due to concerns about Houthi attacks on Ben Gurion Airport.[65]

European Union (EU) Aspides Naval Mission Commander Rear Admiral Vasileios Gryparis told Western media on June 5 that Red Sea maritime traffic has increased by 60 percent since August 2024.[66] Maritime traffic in the Red Sea has not returned to pre-October 2023 levels, however.[67] The Houthis began attacking international shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden in November 2023, which led to a significant decline in maritime traffic.[68] Gryparis stated that maritime traffic has increased from around 20-23 ships per day in August 2024 to around 36-37 ships per day in June 2025.[69] Approximately 72-75 ships transited the Red Sea per day before the start of the Houthi attack campaign in November 2023.[70] Gryparis also noted that the number of merchant ships transiting the Bab el Mandeb Strait has increased since May 6, when the Houthis agreed to end attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea and the Bab el Mandeb Strait as part of a ceasefire with the United States.[71]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

The IDF Air Force struck Hezbollah drone production and storage facilities in Beirut's southern suburbs on June 5.[72] The IDF said that Hezbollah's drone unit, Unit 127, used the facilities to produce “thousands” of drones with Iranian guidance and funding.[73] Western media reported that the IDF conducted at least 10 airstrikes targeting facilities in Beirut's southern suburbs.[74] The IDF issued evacuation warnings before conducting the strikes.[75] The IDF also struck a Unit 127 facility that Hezbollah used to manufacture attack and reconnaissance drones in Ain Qana, southern Lebanon.[76]

An unspecified Israeli security source told Saudi media that Israel contacted the Lebanese army through the United States about the drone facilities in Beirut before conducting the strikes.[77] A Lebanese security source confirmed to Reuters that the Lebanese army received a message from Israel about a site, but determined hours before the Israeli strikes that the site did not contain drone equipment.[78] The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have historically lacked the capability and political will to challenge Hezbollah in its strongholds, which include Beirut's southern suburbs.[79] The LAF has so far been successful in disarming Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, but this success may reflect Hezbollah's willingness to cooperate with the LAF in the south.[80] The LAF condemned the Israeli airstrikes on Beirut as a ceasefire violation and warned that the LAF may suspend its cooperation with the ceasefire monitoring committee.[81]

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the "Axis of Resistance" as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

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