

Iran Update



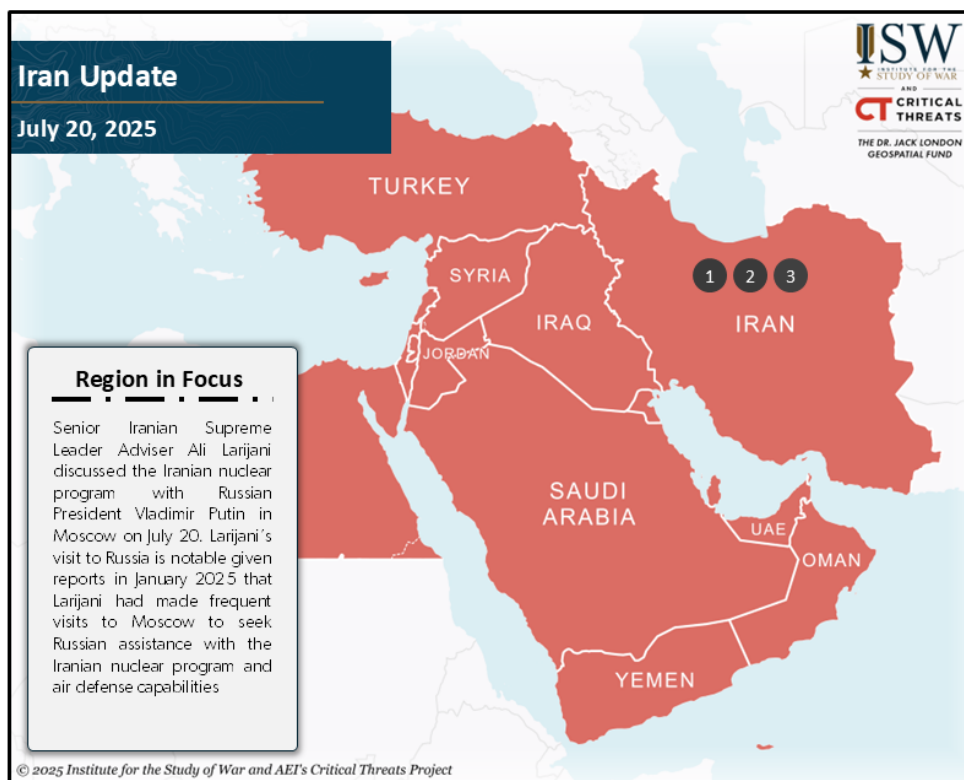
Katherine Wells, Ben Schmida, Andie Parry, and Annika Ganzeveld

Information Cutoff: July 20, 2025, 2:00 PM ET

CTP-ISW will publish an abbreviated Iran Update on July 19 and 20 and will resume full coverage on July 21.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran-E3 Talks:** Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-affiliated media confirmed that senior E3 (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France) and Iranian diplomats agreed to discuss Iran's nuclear program "next week." The E3 has warned that it may trigger snapback sanctions on Iran if Iran does not deliver unspecified "concrete results" by the end of August.
- **Iranian Air Defenses:** A senior Iranian military commander claimed on July 20 that Iran has replaced air defense systems that Israel destroyed during the Israel-Iran War. CTP-ISW previously assessed that it is very unlikely that Russia has supplied Iran with new S-300 systems, so Iran has likely replaced damaged air defense systems with domestically produced systems.
- **Russo-Iranian Cooperation:** Senior Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani discussed the Iranian nuclear program with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on July 20. Larijani's visit to Russia is notable given reports in January 2025 that Larijani had made frequent visits to Moscow to seek Russian assistance with the Iranian nuclear program and air defense capabilities



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- 3 **MOSCOW, RUSSIA.** Senior Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani discussed the Iranian nuclear program with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on July 20.

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-affiliated Tasnim News Agency confirmed that senior E3 (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France) and Iranian diplomats agreed to discuss Iran's nuclear program "next week."^[1] Tasnim reported that the parties have agreed on the "principle of talks" but that the timing and location of the talks are not finalized.^[2] A German diplomatic source confirmed to Agence France-Presse that the E3 are in contact with Iran to schedule talks for the coming week.^[3] Tasnim reported that the talks will take place at the deputy foreign minister level.^[4] The E3 has warned that it may trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism to reimpose UN Security Council sanctions on Iran if Iran does not deliver unspecified "concrete results" by the end of August.^[5] An Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee member said on July 20 that parliament would respond with

“severe countermeasures” if the E3 triggers the snapback mechanism.[6] The E3 would have to initiate the process to impose snapback sanctions by September 3 to complete the process before the mechanism expires in October 2025.[7]

A senior Iranian military commander claimed on July 20 that Iran has replaced air defense systems that Israel destroyed during the Israel-Iran War. Iranian Artesh Operations Deputy Rear Admiral Mahmoud Mousavi told Iranian Armed Forces General Staff-affiliated media on July 20 that Israel damaged “some” Iranian air defense systems during the war.[8] Israel destroyed Iranian air defense systems and radars throughout the war to establish air superiority over Iran. Previous Israeli airstrikes on Iran in April and October 2024 rendered Iran’s four Russian-made S-300 air defense systems inoperable.[9] Mousavi claimed that the Iranian armed forces replaced the destroyed systems with existing and new systems.[10] CTP-ISW previously assessed that it is very unlikely that Russia has supplied Iran with new S-300 systems, so Iran has likely replaced damaged air defense systems with domestically produced systems.[11] Iran tested its domestically produced Bavar-373 air defense system in March 2025.[12] Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Ali Reza Sabahi Fard announced in March that Iran would soon unveil a new version of the Bavar-373.[13] Iran has yet to publicly unveil the new version, however. CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran may prioritize developing indigenous air defense systems given that Russia is unlikely to supply Iran with S-300s in the near future.[14] Iran’s domestically produced air defense systems failed to prevent Israel from achieving air superiority during the Israel-Iran War and it is therefore unlikely that the same systems would effectively defend Iran against another conventional conflict with Israel or the United States.

Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani discussed the Iranian nuclear program with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on July 20.[15] Iranian media did not provide details about the meeting, but the Kremlin stated that Larijani presented Iran’s views on the “current escalation” in the Middle East and the Iranian nuclear program. Larijani’s visit to Russia is notable given reports in January 2025 that Larijani had made frequent visits to Moscow to seek Russian assistance with the Iranian nuclear program and air defense capabilities.[16] The visit is also notable given Iran’s reported dissatisfaction with Russian support for Iran during the Israel-Iran War. Iranian media reported on July 15 that Iran will likely maintain ties with Russia but must “rethink parts of the relationship and expand cooperation with other partners,” especially in “sensitive military and strategic areas.”[17] Moscow has offered to mediate between Iran and the United States and has reportedly encouraged Iran to accept a nuclear deal with the United States in which Iran would halt domestic uranium enrichment.[18] Russia reportedly offered to provide Iran with 3.67 enriched uranium to support a civil nuclear program, presumably in return for Iran agreeing to stop domestic uranium enrichment.[19] Russia previously accepted 11,000 kilograms of enriched uranium from Iran in exchange for natural uranium in December 2015 as part of the JCPOA.[20] Neither the United States nor Iran has accepted Russia’s offers regarding

Syrian transitional government and Suwaydawi forces continued to implement the US-brokered ceasefire in Suwayda Province on July 20 despite sporadic clashes and a Druze faction’s rejection of the deployment of government forces to Suwayda. US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack announced on July 20 that, as of 17:00 Damascus time (10:00 ET), all parties had ceased hostilities.[21] Barrack added that a prisoner exchange between Druze and Bedouin factions

was imminent. The United States brokered a ceasefire agreement between the Syrian transitional government and Israel on July 18.[22] The agreement reportedly returns control of Suwayda Province to the Syrian transitional government. Government forces continued to deploy to Suwayda Province on July 20 as part of the ceasefire agreement.[23] Prominent Druze Sheikh Hikmat al Hijri condemned government forces' deployment to Suwayda Province on July 20 and demanded their immediate withdrawal, despite government forces' deployment being part of the first phase of the agreement.[24] The Syrian Ministry of Interior (MoI) began implementing the second phase of the three-phase ceasefire on July 19. This phase includes the opening of a humanitarian corridor and a prisoner exchange between Druze and Bedouin factions.[25] Hijri confirmed that a prisoner swap would take place between Druze and Bedouin factions on July 20.[26] A pro-government Syrian journalist reported on July 20 that the prisoner exchange was not carried out, however, and that clashes between Druze and Bedouin fighters have resumed.[27] CTP-ISW cannot verify this claim.

CTP-ISW will provide further analysis about the ceasefire in Syria in its July 21 Iran Update.



[1] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1404/04/29/3358265>

[2] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1404/04/29/3358265>

[3] <https://www dot timesofisrael.com/iran-to-hold-nuclear-talks-with-european-powers-within-days-reports/>

[4] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1404/04/29/3358265>

[5] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/europeans-warn-iran-un-sanctions-if-no-concrete-progress-nuclear-issue-2025-07-17/> ; <https://www.axios.com/2025/07/15/iran-snapback-sanctions-nuclear-deal>

[6] <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1404/04/29/3358449>

[7] <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/245317.pdf>

[8] <https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/763554>

[9] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/consequences-idf-strikes-iran>

[10] <https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/763554>

[11] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-june-2-2025>

[12] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-march-3-2025> ; <https://www.tasnimnews dot com/fa/news/1403/11/17/3251865>

[13] <https://defapress dot ir/fa/news/729897>

- [14] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-march-3-2025> ;
<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-june-10-2025>
- [15] <http://en.kremlin dot ru/events/president/news/77474>
- [16] <https://www.thetimes.com/world/middle-east/article/iran-russia-nuclear-talks-deal-lfzbdh7z7>
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- [24] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02myRiyGp4sear2gRSe9jZQEkuv9xTDwnvXpA3dZVaHZJ4EfqtReCEzAsThHLpRFQcl&id=100089249525829 ;
<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iran-update-july-19-2025>
- [25] <https://x.com/QalaatAlMudiq/status/1946614190103286064> ;
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- [26] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02myRiyGp4sear2gRSe9jZQEkuv9xTDwnvXpA3dZVaHZJ4EfqtReCEzAsThHLpRFQcl&id=100089249525829 ;
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- [27] https://x.com/omar_alharir/status/1946971189403963775 ;
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Iran Update



Annika Ganzeveld, Ben Schmida, Avery Borens, Nidal Morrison, and Andie Parry

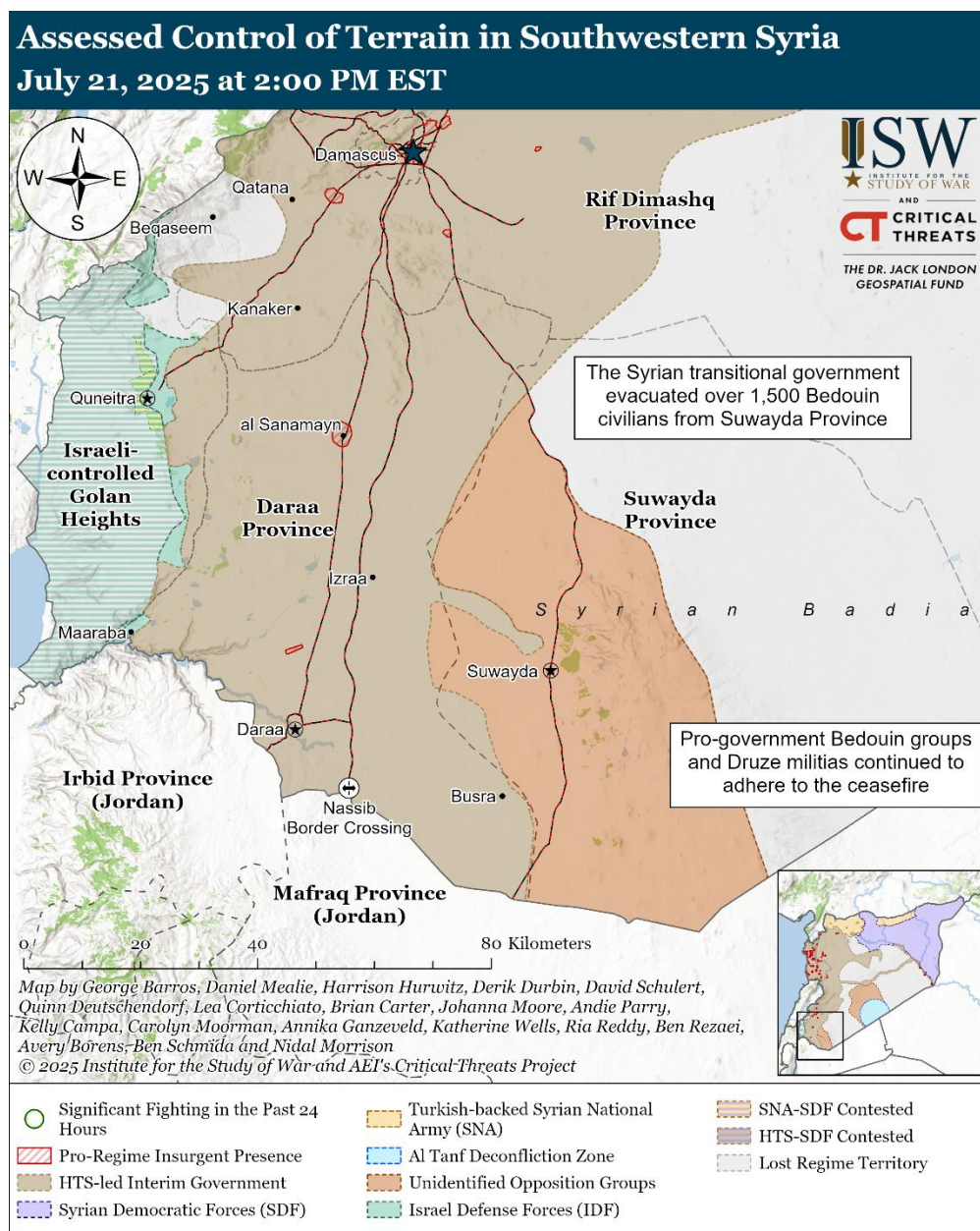
July 21, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

The Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry announced on July 21 that senior Iranian officials will meet with E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) officials in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 25 to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue.[1] Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi and Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi will attend the talks. The talks come as the E3 has threatened to trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism to reimpose UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Iran. The E3 has warned that it may trigger the snapback mechanism if Iran does not resume nuclear negotiations with the United States and make “concrete results” in the negotiations by the end of August.[2] The E3 would have to initiate the snapback mechanism by September 3 to complete the snapback process before the mechanism expires in October 2025.[3] Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei emphasized on July 21 that the Iran-E3 talks are separate from nuclear negotiations with the United States and stated that Iran has “no plans” to negotiate with the United States.[4]

Baghaei also announced that Iranian officials will meet with Chinese and Russian officials on July 22 to discuss the possibility of the E3 triggering the JCPOA snapback mechanism.[5] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Russia and China would likely not be able to prevent the reimposition of UNSC sanctions on Iran if the E3 triggers the snapback mechanism.[6] Any JCPOA signatory 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 UNSC permanent members (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia) can veto such a resolution.[7] China and Russia could therefore try to prevent the reimposition of UNSC sanctions on Iran by proposing a resolution to extend sanctions relief for Iran, but the United States, the United Kingdom, or France could veto such a resolution.

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh met with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov in Moscow on July 21, possibly to try to secure Russian military assistance following the Israel-Iran War. Iranian media reported that Nasir Zadeh and Belousov discussed “expanding military cooperation.”[8] Iranian media also reported that Nasir Zadeh attended Iranian Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on July 20.[9] Nasir Zadeh heads the Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry, which oversees the Iranian defense-industrial complex and manages Iranian arms sales and purchases.[10] Iran has long sought to acquire Russian Su-35 fighter jets and has pressured Russia to provide it with S-400 air defense systems after Israeli airstrikes in April and October 2024 rendered Iran’s four S-300 air defense systems inoperable.[11] Russia has not provided Iran with this equipment and is unlikely to do so in the

near future, which underscores the limits of the Russo-Iranian strategic relationship.[12] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran may expand strategic relations with other partners, such as China, due to Russia's limited support for Iran during and after the war.[13]



Pro-government Bedouin groups and Druze militias continued to adhere to the US-brokered ceasefire in Suwayda Province on July 21 as Syrian transitional government forces evacuated over 1,500 Bedouin civilians who were targeted in intercommunal violence since July 13.[14] Druze militias have obstructed the implementation of some ceasefire terms, but fighting has not resumed on a large scale.[15] Suwayda Internal Security Commander Brigadier General Ahmed al Dalati announced on July 21 that Druze militias agreed to allow Suwaydawi civilians to evacuate the province with assistance from the Syrian Ministry of Interior (MoI) until “their safe return to their homes is secured.”[16] Dalati also announced that the transitional

government established a security cordon around Suwayda Province to stop fighting between Druze and Bedouin militias and maintain the ceasefire agreement.[17] The evacuation of civilians from Suwayda is part of the second phase of the July 18 ceasefire agreement, which also mandates the delivery of humanitarian aid and the provision of basic services to civilians in Suwayda Province.[18] Druze militias prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid by the transitional government into Suwayda Province on July 20, however.[19] The Syrian Communications Ministry also said that Druze militias prevented it from entering Suwayda City to assess the city's fuel needs and address electricity and communications outages.[20] The Syrian Foreign Ministry condemned Druze militias on July 20 for preventing Syrian Red Crescent aid convoys led by three Syrian ministers from entering Suwayda.[21] The Syrian Foreign Ministry said that Druze militias only permitted a small number of Red Crescent vehicles to enter the province.[22] Druze militias reportedly did not participate in a prisoner exchange on July 20 in the town of Umm al Zaytoun, which was stipulated in the second phase of the ceasefire agreement.[23]

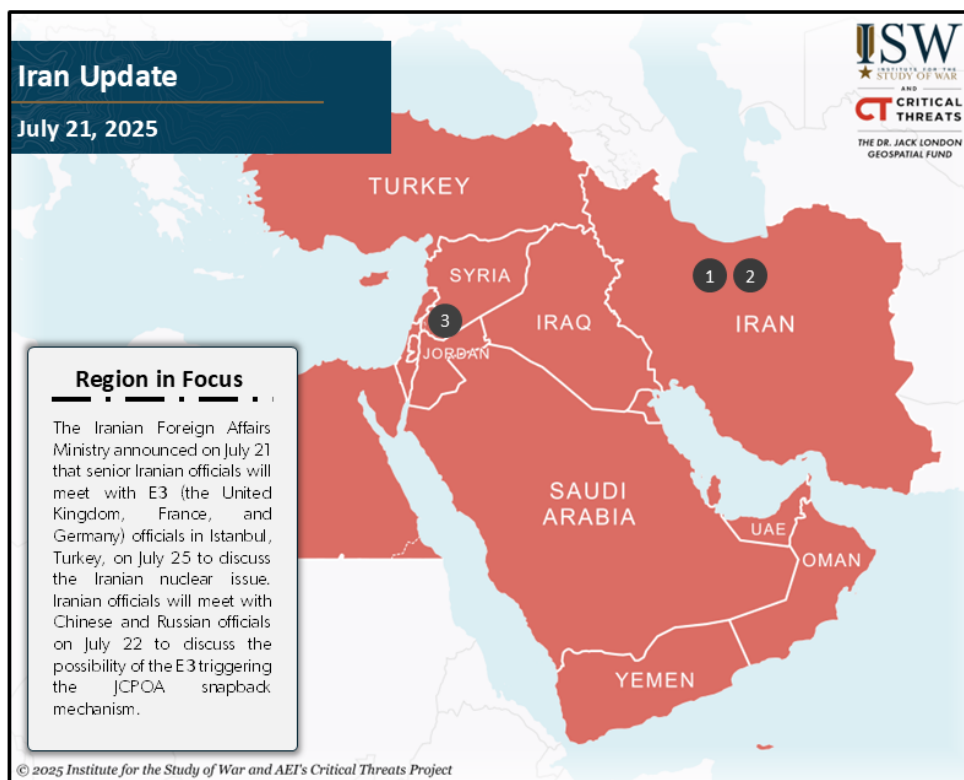
The transitional government faces major obstacles in restoring the rule of law, regaining trust, and healing inter- and intra-communal divisions in Suwayda Province even as the ceasefire holds. The third phase of the ceasefire mandates that internal security personnel will deploy to Suwayda Province and that state institutions in the province will reopen.[24] This phase will be difficult for the government to effectively implement due to the displacement of 93,000 people from Suwayda Province since fighting began, the ongoing documentation of atrocities by all actors, and Bedouin-Druze and intra-Druze conflict.[25] Distrust between the Bedouin and Druze communities remains high as more accounts of reciprocal atrocities surface.

This inter-communal mistrust is compounded by the Druze community's distrust of the transitional government after government forces committed abuses against Druze civilians upon deploying to Suwayda Province on July 16.[26] This distrust challenges the government's ability to maintain order and restore the rule of law in Suwayda. The Syrian government remains responsible for holding all perpetrators of atrocities accountable, including government forces. The Syrian National Inquiry Commission, which investigated the massacres of Alawites on the Syrian coast in March, presented its findings to President Ahmed al Shara on July 13.[27] While the details of the Inquiry Commission's conclusions have yet to be published, whether or how the transitional government holds its forces accountable for abuses committed during the March coastal violence will likely inform future peace processes in Suwayda Province. The Syrian government's response to the coastal atrocity report could further build or degrade minority trust in Suwayda, depending on how the government responds to the report's findings. Holding perpetrators of atrocities accountable requires the government to not only investigate the atrocities, but to act on its findings and charge, sentence, and punish perpetrators.

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran-E3 Talks:** The Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry announced on July 21 that senior Iranian officials will meet with E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) officials in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 25 to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue. Iranian officials will meet with Chinese and Russian officials on July 22 to discuss the possibility of the E3 triggering the JCPOA snapback mechanism.

- **Russo-Iranian Cooperation:** Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh met with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov in Moscow on July 21, possibly to try to secure Russian military assistance following the Israel-Iran War. Nasir Zadeh heads the Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry, which oversees the Iranian defense-industrial complex and manages Iranian arms sales and purchases.
- **Syria Ceasefire:** The Syrian transitional government faces major obstacles in restoring rule of law, regaining trust, and healing inter- and intra-communal divisions in Suwayda Province even as the ceasefire holds. Distrust between the Bedouin and Druze communities remains high as more accounts of reciprocal atrocities surface. This inter-communal mistrust is compounded by the Druze community's distrust of the transitional government after government forces committed abuses against Druze civilians upon deploying to Suwayda Province on July 16. This distrust challenges the government's ability to maintain order and restore the rule of law in Suwayda.



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- 2 **MOSCOW, RUSSIA.** Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh met with Russian Defense Minister Andrei Belousov in Moscow on July 21, possibly to try to secure Russian military assistance following the Israel-Iran War. Nasir Zadeh heads the Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry, which oversees the Iranian defense-industrial complex and manages Iranian arms sales and purchases.
- 3 **SUWAYDA, SYRIA.** The Syrian transitional government faces major obstacles in restoring rule of law, regaining trust, and healing inter- and intra-communal divisions in Suwayda Province even as the ceasefire holds. Distrust between the Bedouin and Druze communities remains high as more accounts of reciprocal atrocities surface. This distrust challenges the government's ability to maintain order and restore the rule of law in Suwayda.

Iran

Senior Iranian officials reiterated their opposition to the planned Zangezor Corridor to senior Armenian officials on July 19. The Zangezor Corridor is a Turkish-Azerbaijani proposed transit route that would connect Azerbaijan proper to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Iran opposes the proposed Zangezor Corridor because the route would cut off Iranian land access to Russia and Europe via Armenia. Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian emphasized that Iran opposes any “change in the region’s geopolitics” in a phone call with Armenian Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan.[28] Grigoryan assured Ahmadian that Armenia has not changed its position “regarding regional transit routes.” Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian

separately emphasized Iran's support for "preserving the territorial integrity of all countries" in a phone call with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.[29] The July 19 phone calls come after the United States offered on July 11 to manage the Zangezor Corridor.[30] Iranian media described the Zangezor Corridor on July 16 as a Turkish attempt to extend Turkish influence into Eurasia.[31] Iranian media also argued that the Zangezor Corridor would prevent Iran from being able to militarily support Armenia against Azerbaijan. Iran has become increasingly concerned about the growth of Turkish influence in the South Caucasus in recent years, particularly since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Iranian officials have expressed concern that Russia's focus on the war in Ukraine has left a power vacuum in the South Caucasus for other regional actors, such as Turkey and Israel, to exploit.[32]

The Iranian Artesh and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) navies started an annual naval exercise with the Russian Navy in the Caspian Sea on July 21.[33] The exercise is taking place in the 4th Artesh Naval District, which is based in Bandar Anzali, Gilan Province, and will continue until July 23.[34] A Russian naval commander told Iranian media on July 21 that the exercise demonstrates Iran and Russia's commitment to "strengthening military interactions" with each other.[35] Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan participated in the previous iteration of this exercise in July 2024.[36]

Iran is continuing to develop its space program, which could support Iran's development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). Iran conducted a suborbital test of the Qased space launch vehicle (SLV) on July 21 to evaluate unspecified "new technologies." [37] The Qased SLV previously launched the Nour-1 satellite in April 2020, the Nour-2 satellite in March 2022, and the Nour-3 satellite in September 2023.[38] All three launches took place at the Shahroud Space Center in Semnan Province, which is operated by the IRGC Aerospace Force.[39] Advancing Iran's space program could contribute to Iran's development of ICBMs, given that SLVs use similar technologies.[40] The Defense Intelligence Agency previously assessed in 2019 that Iran was developing SLVs with "increasing lift capacity" and "boosters that could be capable of ICBM ranges and potentially reach the continental United States, if configured for that purpose." [41]

Khatam ol Anbia Air Defense Headquarters Commander Brigadier General Ali Reza Sabahifard met with newly appointed IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Majid Mousavi on July 21.[42] Sabahifard claimed that Iranian air defense capabilities forced Israel to "retreat" during the Israel-Iran War. Israeli strikes on Iranian air defense systems during the war enabled Israel to establish air superiority over large parts of Iran, however. Sabahifard's meeting with Mousavi follows a series of similar meetings between senior Iranian military commanders in recent days. Many of these commanders were recently appointed to their posts by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei following the Israeli decapitation campaign targeting senior Iranian military commanders during the Israel-Iran War. The recent meetings include a meeting between newly appointed Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi and Majid Mousavi on July 14 and a meeting between newly appointed IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Pak Pour and newly appointed Artesh Commander Major General Amir Hatami on July 17.[43]

The Guardian Council reappointed Ahmad Jannati and Siamak Rahpeyk as its secretary and deputy secretary, respectively, on July 18.[44] The Guardian Council is a 12-member

regime body that is responsible for supervising elections, vetting candidates, and approving legislation. Jannati has served as the Guardian Council secretary since 1988.[45] Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reappointed senior clerics Ahmad Khatami, Alireza Araf, and Ahmad Hosseini Khorasani as Guardian Council clerical members on July 15.[46] The Iranian Parliament approved Hadi Tahan Nazif, Gholam Reza Mola Beygi, and Behzad Pour Seyyed as Guardian Council legal experts on July 16.[47]

Iraq

An Iranian Parliamentary National Security and Foreign Policy Committee delegation met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani and National Wisdom Movement leader Ammar al Hakim in Baghdad on July 20.[48] Iraqi media reported on July 20 that Hakim has been mediating efforts between the Shia Coordination Framework and Shia nationalist cleric Moqtada al Sadr to convince Sadr to re-enter Iraqi politics.[49] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. Sadr announced in March 2025 that his political party would not participate in the upcoming November 2025 parliamentary elections, although some Iraqi politicians speculate that Sadr could sway voters by endorsing certain policies or candidates.[50]

Syria

US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Commander Mazloun Abdi met on July 19 to discuss steps to restore Syrian stability and unify Syria.[51] Barrack stated after the meeting that there could be a breakthrough in negotiations between the SDF and the Syrian transitional government “in the coming weeks.”[52] A Turkish journalist that previously wrote for a pro-Erdogan newspaper claimed on July 21 that the United States and Turkey gave the SDF a 30-day deadline to finish integrating into the Syrian government.[53] The Turkish journalist claimed that Turkish and US officials told the SDF that some SDF units would not integrate into the Syrian army and would need to disarm.[54] The SDF denied this report.[55] CTP-ISW cannot verify this report.

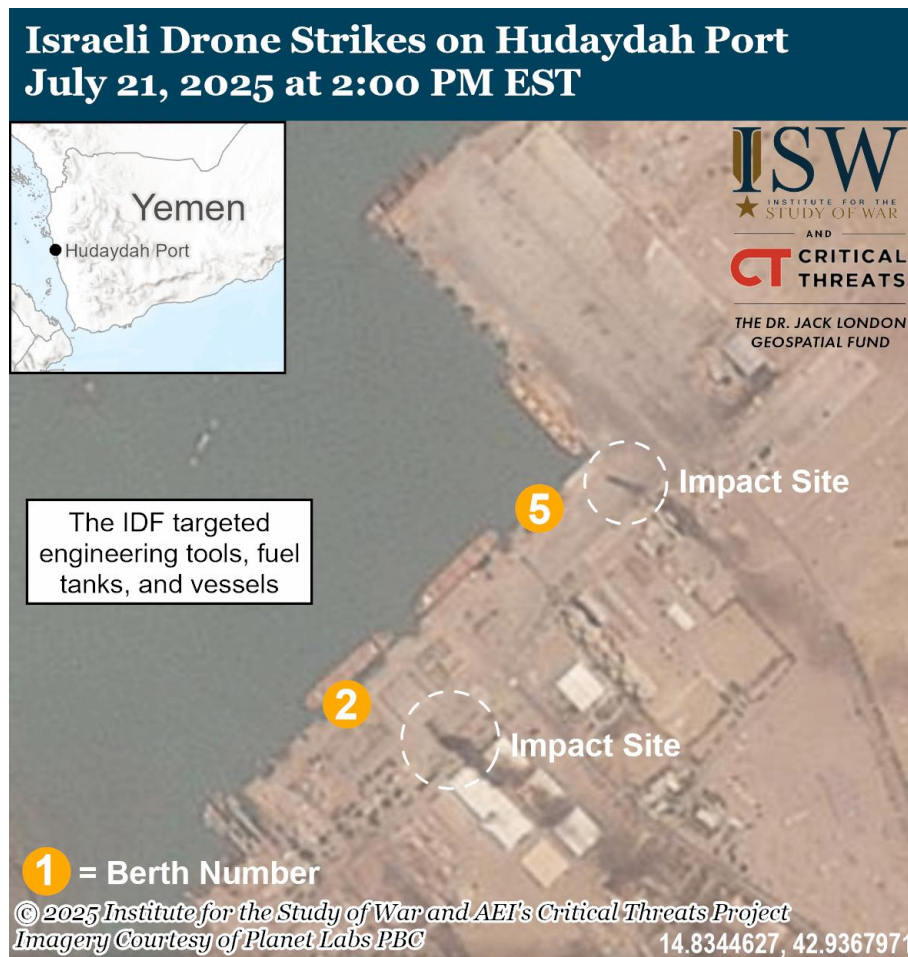
Barrack also stated that he believes that the violence in Suwayda Province will not derail integration negotiations between the SDF and the Syrian transitional government.[56] Syrian media have accused Syrian Defense Ministry forces of raiding homes, conducting summary executions, looting, and threatening civilians at gunpoint.[57] These actions risk eroding Syrian minority communities’ trust of the Syrian government, regardless of whether or how the government holds perpetrators accountable. Minority communities that fear the government will not protect them, such as the Kurds, may view the violence in Suwayda as confirmation of their fears and resist integration and disarmament. Kurdish political parties have consistently cited government protection of Kurdish citizens and their rights as one of their most important demands of the government.[58]

Arabian Peninsula

The Israeli Air Force (IAF) conducted drone strikes on Houthi-controlled Hudaydah Port on July 21.[59] The IAF said that it destroyed Houthi infrastructure, including fuel tanks, vessels, and engineering tools used to restore the port.[60] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on July 21, minutes after the strikes, shows smoke plumes near berths two and five. The IAF recently

struck and caused significant damage to berth two on July 6.[61] Satellite imagery indicates that the Houthis minimally repaired damage that the port's berths sustained during the most recent Israeli strikes on July 6. Israeli airstrikes targeting Hudaydah Port since May 2025 have rendered several berths at the port inoperable.[62] The recent Israeli strikes could further hinder the Houthis' ability to repair these facilities.

The IAF intercepted a Houthi drone before it crossed into Israeli territory on July 21 after Israel struck Hudaydah Port.[63]



The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

[1] <https://x.com/IranNuances/status/1947110751929237571>

[2] <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-hold-nuclear-talks-with-european-powers-friday-2025-07-20/>

[3] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-july-15-2025>

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- [6] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-june-3-2025>
- [7] <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/245317.pdf> ;
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- [13] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-july-15-2025>
- [14] <https://x.com/QalaatAlMudiq/status/1947200677068865898>
- [15] <https://t.me/syrianmofaex1/1159> ;<https://x.com/QalaatAlMudiq/status/1947011605784318184>
- [16] https://t.me/sana_gov/134075
- [17] <https://t.me/syriafree25/1512>
- [18] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iran-update-july-19-2025> ;
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- [19] <https://t.me/syrianmofaex1/1159> ;<https://x.com/QalaatAlMudiq/status/1947011605784318184>
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Iran Update



Ria Reddy, Andie Parry, Nidal Morrison, Avery Borens, Ben Schmida, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells, Johanna Moore, and Brian Carter

July 22, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi leveraged an interview with a US media outlet on July 21 to misrepresent Iran's nuclear program and Iran's policy towards the West to a Western audience. Araghchi interviewed with Fox News on July 22 and stated that Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful.[1] Araghchi stated that Iran has never produced 90 percent enriched uranium and only produced 60 percent uranium after its facilities were "sabotaged." [2] Civilian nuclear programs only need to enrich uranium up to 5 percent. Iran has taken several other steps that are consistent with the steps necessary for a state to develop a nuclear weapon, if it chooses to do so. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed in May 2025 that Iran conducted undeclared nuclear activities that could support the development of nuclear weapons at three locations in Iran until the early 2000s.[3] The IAEA stated that Iran conducted implosion tests at one of these sites in 2003 as part of its broader plan to conduct a cold test, which is typically the final test of a nuclear weapon implosion development program.[4] Axios reported in June 2024 that Iran had begun running computer simulations that could support the research and development of a nuclear weapon, citing US and Israeli intelligence agencies.[5] Iran has developed several large enrichment facilities, like those at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant and the Natanz Enrichment Complex. CTP-ISW has long assessed that Iran would likely build a nuclear arsenal—not just a single weapon—if it chose to weaponize, and large enrichment facilities would be necessary for an arsenal but unnecessary for a purely civilian program.

Araghchi downplayed Iranian threats to assassinate senior US officials. Araghchi stated that Iran's "Death to America" slogan does not include Americans, and it has "never been Iran's official position" to call for the death of senior US officials.[6] Senior Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened to kill senior US officials.[7] US intelligence has previously identified credible evidence that Iran is actively working on plots to kill US President Donald Trump.[8] Araghchi stated that it has also "never been Iran's policy" to "wipe Israel from the map." [9] Iran has also cultivated a transnational coalition of partners and proxies since 1979 to pursue its strategic interests that include expelling the United States from the Middle East and destroying the Israeli state. Senior Iranian officials, including Khamenei, who sets the regime's official policy, have repeatedly emphasized that Iran seeks to "erase Israel." [10] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian made a similar effort to platform Iran's demands and misrepresent Iran's destabilizing role in the Middle East during an interview with American media personality Tucker Carlson on July 7.[11]

Araghchi reiterated Iran’s stated right to enrich uranium on Iranian soil. He noted that uranium enrichment in Iran “has now stopped” because US and Israeli strikes caused “serious and severe” damage to Iranian nuclear facilities.[12] Araghchi’s comments are consistent with previous assessments of the damage to Iran’s nuclear facilities. Araghchi emphasized that Iran “cannot give up its enrichment” program long-term, however.[13] Araghchi stated that Iran will not import enriched uranium to support a civilian nuclear program because domestic uranium enrichment is a “question of national pride.” Araghchi’s statement is consistent with CTP-ISW’s assessment that Iran will almost certainly not accept a nuclear deal that includes a zero-uranium enrichment demand.[14] Araghchi suggested Iran will also not accept a deal that includes limits on its missile program because the missile program is Iran’s “most reliable means of defense.”[15] Araghchi stated that Iran’s missiles are “for defense, not for offense.”[16] Iran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles during its April and October 2024 attacks on Israel.[17]

There continues to be internal disagreements within Iran over how to engage with the West. Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-affiliated (IRGC) media published an article on July 22, accusing Araghchi of making “two strategic errors” in his Fox News interview. [18] The article criticized Araghchi for acknowledging damage to Iranian nuclear facilities and stating that enrichment in Iran has stopped. The article said such statements can be “interpreted as a sign of flexibility” and encourage further Western pressure.[19] The article also criticized Araghchi for attributing threats to assassinate Trump to “radical groups” and stated that this portrayal undermined national unity.[20] Several Iranian parliamentarians, including ultraconservative members, similarly criticized Pezeshkian for failing to endorse recent clerical fatwas against Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and undermining national unity during his interview with Western media in early July 2025.[21] Khamenei stated on July 16 that individuals who oppose Iranian officials on “diplomatic or military issues” must express their opposition in line with regime policy.[22] Khamenei may have been referring to efforts by the anti-negotiation camp in the regime to block efforts to resume nuclear talks with the United States. The backlash to Araghchi’s interview highlights ongoing disagreements between Iranian reformists and hardliners over nuclear negotiations and US-Iran relations following the 12-day Israel-Iran war.

The independent commission investigating abuses on the Syrian coast in March 2025 found that the massacres were not centrally organized or sectarian, but that a lack of government control over armed groups in the Ministry of Defense (MoD) contributed to the abuses.[23] Syrian National Inquiry Commission spokesperson Yasser al Farhan and chairperson Judge Jumaa al Anzi said on July 22 that their commission had referred 298 individuals to the Syrian judiciary for their attacks on Alawites in March. The commission also identified 265 individuals involved in anti-government insurgent activities in coastal Syria during this time. The commission reported that the government ordered large numbers of personnel to the coast but that other groups mobilized without orders.[24]

The report’s excuse that the killings were not “sectarian” but instead revenge-based ignores the complexity of sectarian violence, which is almost always in retaliation or revenge for a perceived attack by another sect. The spokesperson said that seemingly sectarian attacks were based on getting revenge for the actions of the Assad regime and not based on ideological opposition to the Alawite faith. Some Sunni Syrians equate all Alawites with the Assad regime and therefore see massacres targeting Alawites

as justifiable, however. Such killings are therefore technically in “revenge” or “retaliation,” but in practice, how victims are identified is almost always by sect. This contributes to a cycle of fear and violence that creates long-term instability.

The Syrian government will almost certainly need to take concrete steps to punish those responsible for the violence on the coast to restore trust, but the trust-building process will be slow and will suffer setbacks. Alawites, for example, have already rejected the findings. Alawite communities are unlikely to accept the excuse that all the attacks were “revenge based.” The Alawite community is especially unlikely to accept this excuse in instances where there is no evidence that a Sunni militiaman personally targeted Alawite individuals for violence that the targeted individual personally inflicted on the Sunni militiaman or his family during the war.[25] It is unclear how many killings were or were not motivated by personal instances of revenge or score-settling. Killings targeting an Alawite for perceived affiliation with the Assad regime are by definition sectarian because such killings are punishing an individual for the acts of other members of their sect. Other communities will carefully watch the government’s response to this report and the actions the government takes, especially in the wake of the intercommunal violence in southwestern Syria, which saw many trends similar to those on the Syrian coast.

The commission ultimately decided that the abuses were not centrally organized by any one group but acknowledged that the transitional government had “partial and sometimes non-existent” control over factions incorporated into the MoD, which contributed to the abuses. The commission issued recommendations for military reform based on the investigation.

Iraqi and Kurdish media reported on July 20 and 22 that the United States is placing increasing pressure on the Iraqi government to encourage the Iraqi government to subordinate Iraqi militias to the state.[26] US embassy officials reportedly told a delegation of Shia political officials that the United States may “act decisively” if the Iraqi government fails to take meaningful steps towards disarming the militias, according to an unspecified member of the Shia Coordination Framework who spoke to a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)-affiliated journalist.[27] The source claimed that the Iraqi government has drafted a plan to dissolve the militias, integrate the members into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and offer key leadership positions in the next Iraqi cabinet to the political heads of the Iraqi militias.[28] The heads of Iraqi militias could exert undue influence over the Iraqi Security Forces and replace competent Iraqi commanders with militia loyalists under this arrangement, however. The Iraqi government also shared this plan with unspecified Iranian government figures and Shia religious authorities for approval.[29] An unspecified US Department of State Spokesperson told Kurdish media outlet The New Region on July 21 that the Popular Mobilization Authority Law would be detrimental to US-Iraqi relations.[30]

The plan described by the Shia Coordination Framework member mirrors the existing Popular Mobilization Authority Law. The proposed Popular Mobilization Authority Law would integrate Iranian-backed Iraqi militias operating outside of the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) into the PMF before the PMF integrates into the ISF.[31] The amended version of the law allows PMF leaders who entered their posts before the law’s passage to maintain their position.[32] Senior Iranian-backed Iraqi commanders have sought senior positions within the Iraqi federal government in exchange for integrating into the ISF. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al Sudani withdrew this version

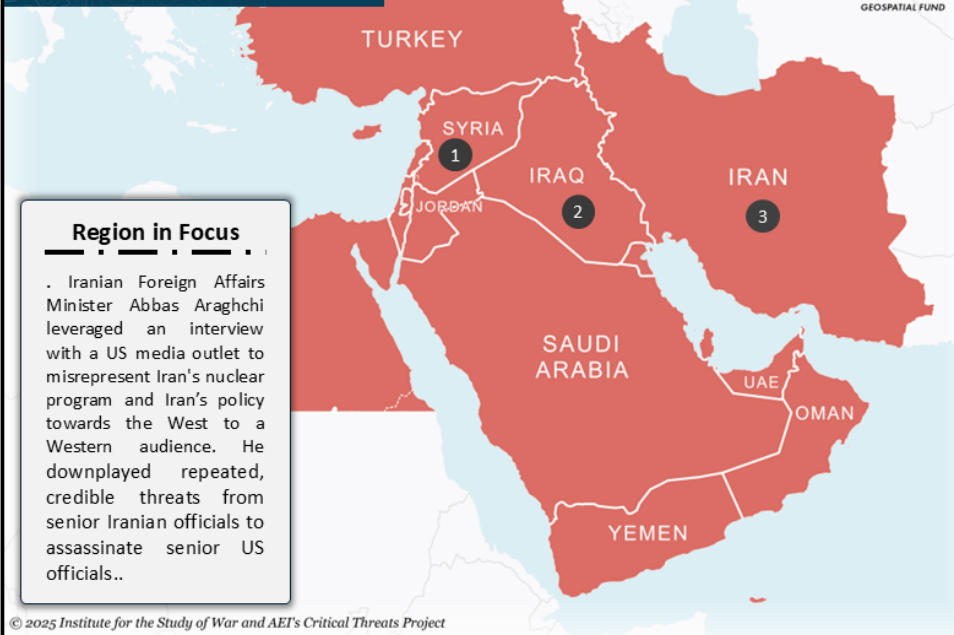
of the law from the parliamentary agenda on July 17 following US concerns about the legislation.[33] The integration of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias into the Iraqi armed forces does not, on its own, prevent the militias from taking orders from Tehran, nor does the law commit the Iraqi federal government to ensuring the militias will follow government orders.[34] The Iraqi federal government would have to disarm and disperse militia personnel across existing units to break existing informal chains of command outside of the Iraqi state.

A Shia Coordination Framework (SCF) member said in an interview with Iraqi media on July 22 that the SCF rejects US influence in Iraqi internal affairs, such as the Popular Mobilization Authority Law.[35] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. The United States has pressured the Iraqi government to dissolve and disarm the Popular Mobilization Forces and reportedly threatened to sanction PMF leaders in recent months.[36]

Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors are attempting to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the continued existence of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Iran-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq Secretary General Qais Khazali said on July 21 that “anyone who wants to hand over their weapons should prepare to have their mustache shaved off,” referring to the abuses Syrian security forces committed against Druze men in Suwayda Province.[37] Shia Coordination Framework member Amer al Fayez suggested in an interview with Iraqi media on July 21 that the situation in Syria justifies the PMF’s continued existence.[38] The PMF was established in 2014 by “institutionalizing” pre-existing and predominantly Shia militias that were engaged in the fight against ISIS. Among these were various Iranian-backed Iraqi militias like Asaib Ahl al Haq.[39] These Shia actors have remained immensely distrustful of the Syrian transitional government under Ahmed al-Shara due to his historic ties to al Qaeda and ISIS. Discussion surrounding US demands to disarm the PMF is probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.[40]

Iran Update

July 22, 2025



- 1 **SYRIA.** The independent commission investigating abuses on the Syrian coast in March 2025 found that the massacres were not centrally organized or sectarian but that a lack of government control over armed groups in the Ministry of Defense contributed to the abuses.
- 2 **IRAQ.** Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors are attempting to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the continued existence of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). These Shia actors have remained immensely distrustful of the Syrian transitional government under Ahmed al Shara due to his historic ties to al Qaeda and ISIS. Discussion surrounding US demands to disarm the PMF is probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.

Key Takeaways:

- **Araghchi interview:** Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi leveraged an interview with a US media outlet to misrepresent Iran's nuclear program and Iran's policy towards the West to a Western audience. Iran asserted that it maintained a peaceful nuclear program despite enriching uranium far beyond levels required for a civilian program and developing technology that would be required for weaponization. Araghchi also downplayed repeated, credible threats from senior Iranian officials to assassinate senior US officials.
- **Syrian MoD abuse commission:** The independent commission investigating abuses on the Syrian coast in March 2025 found that the massacres were not centrally organized or sectarian,

but that a lack of government control over armed groups in the Ministry of Defense contributed to the abuses. The report's excuse that the killings were not "sectarian" but instead revenge-based ignores the complexity of sectarian violence, which is almost always in retaliation or revenge for a perceived attack by another sect.

- **Iraqi actors and PMF:** Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors are attempting to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the continued existence of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). These Shia actors have remained immensely distrustful of the Syrian transitional government under Ahmed al Shara due to his historic ties to al Qaeda and ISIS. Discussion surrounding US demands to disarm the PMF is probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.

Iran

Clashes between border guards and Kurdish opposition forces in Kurdistan Province, northwestern Iran, on July 22 killed a border guard, according to an Iranian Border Guard commander.[41] Iran continues to perceive Kurdish opposition forces in northwestern Iran as a threat to regime stability. Iran has increased its military presence in the region to "fight against counter-revolutionaries and enemies" in the northwest region, likely referring to Kurdish opposition groups.[42] The IRGC Ground Force opened a new aviation base in Oroumیه, West Azerbaijan Province, close to the border with Turkey, in September 2024.[43] The base operates under the Hamzeh Seyyed ol Shohada Operational Base, responsible for West Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces.[44]

Iraq

Several unidentified Shia political parties have reportedly attempted to gain Iraqi Shia nationalist cleric Muqtada al Sadr's endorsement ahead of the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections.[45] An unspecified source close to Sadr told Iraqi media on July 22 that unidentified Shia political parties have used intermediaries to tell Sadr that their political priorities align with Sadr's priorities in an effort to gain support from Sadrist in the elections by securing support from Sadr himself.[46] A close associate of Sadr reported on July 13 that Sadr previously requested information on candidates and blocs in support of Sadr's agenda, which suggests Sadr is contemplating endorsing a candidate or bloc. Sadr's agenda includes promoting Iraqi independence, dismantling the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization Forces, and cracking down on corruption.[47] Sadr announced in March 2025 that his Shia Nationalist Movement would not participate in the elections. Sadr holds significant support among the Iraqi Shia.[48]

Syria[49]

Axios reported on July 22 that the United States will mediate a meeting between senior Israeli and Syrian officials on July 24 to reach a "security understanding" in southern Syria.[50] Intercommunal violence broke out between Druze factions and Sunni Bedouin tribes in Suwayda Province on July 13.[51] Undisciplined government personnel committed crimes during the government's response, which exacerbated the violence. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conducted over 160 airstrikes on July 15 and 16 on Syrian government targets after the government deployed forces to Suwayda to "save" the Druze in Syria, prompting government forces to withdraw from Suwayda

Province.[52] Israel and Syria agreed to a ceasefire on July 18.[53] The ceasefire permitted Syrian government forces to return to Suwayda Province to restore security.[54] US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack will mediate, and senior Israeli and Syrian officials will attend the meeting.[55] The meeting is expected to focus on security in southern Syria and increasing coordination between Israel and Syria to prevent any future crises.[56] A previous meeting between Syrian and Israeli officials occurred during a Syrian diplomatic visit to Baku, Azerbaijan, on July 12, before events in Suwayda began, possibly to discuss relations between Israel and Syria.[57]

The Syrian transitional government, Bedouin groups, and Druze militias continued to adhere to the US-brokered ceasefire in Suwayda Province on July 22. The ceasefire has remained in its second phase, which includes the delivery of aid, provision of services, and repair of infrastructure.[58] The US-brokered Syria-Israel ceasefire, agreed to on July 18, has three phases.[59] The third phase of the ceasefire will activate state institutions, redeploy government forces to Suwayda Province, and integrate Suwaydawi institutions into the Syrian state.[60] Bedouin militias from other areas of Syria have reportedly begun to gradually withdraw from Suwayda Province to Daraa Province on July 22 to allow the GSS to oversee disengagement between Druze and Bedouin fighters.[61] GSS forces continue to operate in towns in western Suwayda Province.[62] A joint Syrian Red Crescent, Civil Defense (White Helmets), and United Nations convoy entered the village of Walgha, Suwayda Province, on July 22 to evacuate more civilians, including UN staff and foreigners, from Suwayda.[63]

The GSS dismantled a rudimentary vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) in the village of Kafr Nouran, Aleppo Province, on July 22.[64] The Syrian Ministry of Interior (MoI) said it deployed security forces to investigate reports of a suspicious parked vehicle in Kafr Nouran.[65] The vehicle contained over 20 anti-tank mines connected with an electric wire.[66] The VBIED carried a large explosive payload, but the construction of the VBIED was rudimentary and did not resemble sophisticated VBIEDs such as those previously employed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.[67] The perpetrators merely placed mines in the vehicle rather than disguising the explosive payload like more capable military organizations have in the past. MoD engineers safely disabled the VBIED.[68] It is unclear what the VBIED's intended target was, or what group was responsible for its construction. The village of Kafr Nouran lies on the border between Aleppo and Idlib provinces.

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis launched a ballistic missile at Ben Gurion Airport on July 21.[69] The Israeli Air Force (IAF) intercepted the Houthi missile before it crossed into Israeli territory on July 21.[70] The Houthis have launched hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles targeting Israel since the Houthis began their campaign to enforce an economic blockade on Israel in October 2023.[71]

Israel's Eilat Port's Chief Executive, Gideon Golber, told the *Washington Post* on July 21 that activity at Eilat Port had dropped by 90 percent since October 2023 because shipping companies remain concerned about transiting through the Red Sea amid Houthi attacks.[72] Golber added that Eilat Port has lost \$1,193,301 per month since October 2023.[73] Golber warned that the port could be shut down completely without financial assistance. Golber told Reuters in December 2023 that shipping activity at Eilat Port had dropped by

85 percent in the first three months of the October 7 War.[74] Eilat is Israel's third-largest port and the only port on the Red Sea.[75] Eilat Port handles mostly car imports and Israeli fertilizer products exports.[76] Most of Israel's trade transits through Israel's Mediterranean ports, Haifa and Ashdod, however.[77]



A Yemeni journalist reported on July 21 that Israel's July 21 airstrikes at Hudaydah Port struck a vessel, a loading vehicle, storage tanks, and repair equipment, including a mobile crane.[78] Satellite imagery captured on July 19 indicated that the Houthis had conducted minor repairs to berth 3 at Hudaydah Port sustained from Israeli strikes on July 6.[79] Commercially available satellite imagery captured on July 21, minutes after the strikes, showed smoke plumes near berths two and five, leaving a crater near berth 5.[80] Israeli airstrikes targeting Hudaydah Port since May 2025 have rendered several berths at the port inoperable.[81] The recent Israeli strikes targeting Houthi repair equipment suggest that Israel aims to hinder the Houthis' ability to repair these facilities.

The United States sanctioned two individuals and five private entities on July 22 for money laundering and importing petroleum products into Houthi-controlled territory in Yemen:[82]

- **Muhammad al Sunaydar:** Manager of the petroleum companies' network between Yemen and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The US Treasury also sanctioned the following three UAE-based Sunaydar subsidiaries, which exported approximately \$12 million' worth of Iranian petroleum products from the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industry Commercial Company (PGPICC) to the Houthis through Houthi-controlled Ras Issa Port.
 - **Arkan Mars Petroleum Company for Oil Products Imports:** A UAE-based entity, which signed an agreement with the Houthis to import gas and oil, including Iranian petroleum products, through Houthi-controlled Hudaydah and Ras Issa ports. Iranian-affiliated companies have facilitated payments between the Iranian government and Arkan Mars since June 2025.
 - **Arkan Mars Petroleum DMCC:** UAE-based subsidiary of Akan Mars involved in exporting oil to Yemen.
 - **Arkan Marz Petroleum FZE:** UAE-based subsidiary of Akan Mars involved in exporting oil to Yemen.
 - **Yahya Mohammed al Wazir:** Responsible for laundering and raising money for the Houthis.
 - **Al Saida Stone for Trading and Agencies:** A Sanaa-based Houthi front company that purchased six million euros' worth of bulk coal across five payments to import to Yemen between November and December 2024.
 - **Amran Cement Factory:** A Houthi-controlled cement production company that funds Houthi operations and enables Houthi money laundering. The Houthis directed the production of cement from Amran Cement Factory to the Houthi stronghold of Saada Governorate in northern Yemen in March 2025 to fortify military, weapons storage, and ammunition cache sites.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Hezbollah's primary financial institution, al Qard al Hassan, announced on July 19 that it is increasing its number of branches and employees as well as its financial solvency ratio.[83] A financial solvency ratio is a financial metric that assesses a company's ability to meet its financial obligations.[84] Al Qard al Hassan said that the association is not subject to the authority of Lebanon's central bank, stressing that it will continue to perform its social and financial duties at "an increasing pace and [with] greater effectiveness." [85] The Lebanese Central Bank recently banned all licensed Lebanese banking institutions from working directly or indirectly with al Qard al Hassan.[86] Al Qard al Hassan is one of Hezbollah's main banking and financial arms that the group uses to transfer, manage, and receive funds.[87]

Al Qard al Hassan has opened four new branches in the past few days, but it is unlikely that four new branches will increase the effectiveness of the organization's operations.[88] This is the first time that Al Qard al Hassan has opened new branches since the November 2024 Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire.[89] Al Qard al Hassan has had to stop payments at most of its locations due to operational

difficulties and cash shortages.[90] It is unclear how four new branches will increase the organization's effectiveness under these conditions.

Al Qard al Hassan's announcement is likely an attempt to alleviate financial concerns among Hezbollah fighters, given that the institution has not resumed compensation payments and continues to face financial challenges. Hezbollah has struggled to maintain its financial commitments to fighters following the Israel-Lebanon conflict in late 2024. Al Qard al Hassan temporarily froze compensation payments in February 2025 and later indefinitely suspended payments to its fighters in June 2025.[91] Hezbollah supporters have stated that Hezbollah has not provided the funds it promised in the wake of the Israeli campaign in Lebanon and raised concerns over the group's ability to maintain its financial commitments.[92] Hezbollah has historically used financial benefits, including pensions for the families of deceased fighters and payments for those who lose their homes or property, to retain its support base among Lebanese Shia.[93] Disruptions to Hezbollah's ability to provide its support base with promised benefits could reduce support among its base.

Hezbollah may use its front companies and exploit charitable organizations to acquire funds and mitigate disruptions. Hezbollah has previously used front companies to generate millions of dollars in revenue and support the group's operations.[94] The IRGC similarly uses bonyads, which are quasi-governmental institutions that perform charitable activities on behalf of the Iranian government, to generate revenue and evade sanctions.[95]

US and Lebanese officials recently met to continue discussing proposals on Hezbollah disarmament.[96] **The United States, Lebanon, and Hezbollah continue to disagree over key outstanding issues.**[97] US Special Envoy Thomas Barrack, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met between June 20 and 22 to discuss the state's monopoly on violence, Hezbollah disarmament, and the US proposal for Hezbollah disarmament in June.[98] The Lebanese government responded to the US proposal on July 7 with a seven-page document that included its recommendations.[99] It is unclear what the document entailed or what these recommendations were. Aoun gave Barrack a draft comprehensive memorandum on July 21 to gradually implement the return of the state's monopoly on weapons "in stages," which would progress as Israel withdraws from southern Lebanon.[100] Lebanese media reported on July 22 that Berri is also expected to present a proposal to Barrack that will call for Israel to suspend its attacks on Lebanon for 15 days, after which Lebanon would begin a disarmament process.[101] Hezbollah has insisted that Israel must first meet a series of its demands before it will hand over its heavy weapons, however.[102] Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem previously called on July 8 for the implementation of the Taif Agreement, which Lebanese parliamentarians signed in 1989.[103] The Taif Agreement states that Lebanon would be "taking all the steps necessary to liberate all Lebanese territories from [Israel], to spread state sovereignty over all the territories." [104] This includes the Israeli-controlled Shebaa Farms, in Hezbollah's view.[105] Hezbollah is also exempt from the Taif Agreement's requirement for militia disarmament because Hezbollah argues that it is a unique exception and must retain its weapons to resist Israel.[106]

United States, the Lebanese Government, and Hezbollah's Negotiation Demands

July 22, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST

Actor	Demands
The United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hezbollah gradually hands over weapons in return for Israeli forces withdrawing from southern Lebanon and ceasing airstrikes• The Lebanese government conducts financial reforms of the economy• The Lebanese government cracks down on Hezbollah-linked institutions• Improved relations between Lebanon and Syria• Disarmament of Palestinian factions in Lebanon• Finalization of border demarcation• Establishment of UN mechanism to secure the release of Hezbollah-linked prisoners by Israel
The Lebanese Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Israel stops attacks on Lebanon• The Lebanese state restores its monopoly on weapons• The state retains the sole ability to make peace or declare war• The state regains control over all Lebanese territory• The state disarms of all armed groups in Lebanon
Hezbollah	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Israeli withdrawal from the five contested points in southern Lebanon• Israel releases Lebanese detainees held in Israel• An end to Israeli "violations"• The start of reconstruction efforts in war-torn areas• All parties abide by the November 2024 Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire agreement• The monopoly over weapons is a matter for internal dialogue and should have no timetable or engagement from outside parties



Note: This information is based on open-source reports.

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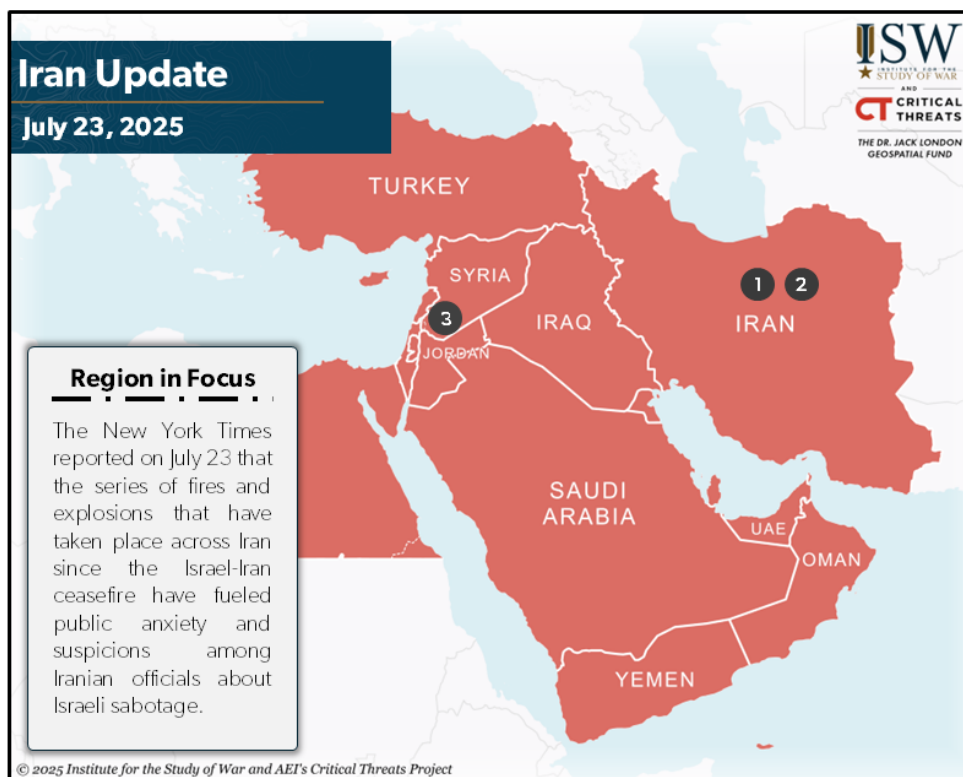
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Iran Update

**Ben Rezaei, Avery Borens, Katherine Wells, Ria Reddy, Kelly Campa,
Karolina Hird, Henry Jenks, William Doran, and Brian Carter**
Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET



- 1 TEHRAN.** The Israel-Iran War has exacerbated longstanding divides within the Iranian regime as “pragmatic conservatives” seek to reassert influence over foreign policy and counterbalance hardliners’ opposition to diplomacy with the West.
- 2 TEHRAN.** Iran held trilateral talks with the PRC and Russia in Tehran on June 22 ahead of expected United States-Iran nuclear talks, likely to rally diplomatic support for Iran in the event that the E3 triggers the JCPOA snapback mechanism. It is unlikely that the PRC and Russia could prevent the reimposition of sanctions if the E3 triggers the snapback mechanism, so Iran is likely trying to get the PRC and Russia to prevent the E3 from activating snapback mechanism in the first place.
- 3 SUWAYDA.** The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) supporters attempted to foment intercommunal violence and encourage attacks by ISIS supporters against the Druze during the recent violence in Suwayda Province. Several ISIS-linked social media accounts claimed that ISIS supporters are currently active in Suwayda Province and are participating in the conflict “discreetly and independently” alongside Sunni Bedouin tribes.

The *New York Times* reported on July 23 that the series of fires and explosions that have taken place across Iran since the Israel-Iran ceasefire have fueled public anxiety and suspicions among Iranian officials about Israeli sabotage.[1] Three unspecified Iranian officials, including an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officer, told the *New York Times* that they believed that “many” of these incidents have been acts of sabotage, though they provided no evidence to support this claim.[2] The officials added that Iran has avoided blaming Israel publicly in order to avoid pressure to retaliate from Israel.[3] An unspecified European official also assessed that the incidents were acts of Israeli sabotage, citing Israel’s recent history of covert operations in Iran.[4] A similar pattern of explosions in 2020 took place at Iranian nuclear and military facilities, and Western and Iranian officials attributed them to Israeli cyberattacks and covert strikes.[5] Iranian authorities have publicly attributed the recent incidents to gas leaks, garbage fires, and aging infrastructure.[6] The *New York Times* report highlighted several notable incidents, including a fire at the Abadan oil refinery, an explosion in Qom Province that damaged an apartment building, and a blast in Tehran Province that struck housing for Iranian judiciary staff.[7] Images of the aftermath of the judiciary housing explosion show “walls and windows [that] were blown out.” This pattern of damage is similar to damage to apartment buildings in Tehran on June 12 and 13 during the Israel-Iran War.[8] Such fires and explosions are not uncommon in Iran during the summer months, however. Some incidents may result from accidental causes, such as infrastructure failures or extreme heat. CTP-ISW has tracked dozens of explosions and fires across Iran since the Israel-Iran ceasefire on June 24, including the following incidents:

- **June 25 – Janat Abad, Tehran Province:** An explosion occurred in an unfinished building. Iranian media attributed it to a gas leak.[9]
- **June 26 – Farmaniyeh, Tehran Province:** Unconfirmed reports and social media footage suggested that a drone struck an apartment building.[10]
- **June 29 – Southern Tehran Province:** Explosion and fire reported in two areas, reportedly near military and industrial sites.[11]
- **July 1 – Shahr-e Ray, Southern Tehran Province:** An X account reported multiple explosions at an unknown site.[12]
- **July 1 – Southern Vali-e Asr, Tehran Province:** A large plume of smoke was seen rising from an unknown warehouse following a large explosion.[13]
- **July 3 – Azadegan Highway, Southeastern Tehran Province:** Footage posted by anti-regime media showed a thick plume of smoke following a reported explosion along Azadegan Highway in southern Tehran.[14]
- **July 4 – Gheshm Island, Hormozgan Province:** A major fire broke out at a commercial complex.[15] Iranian media stated that the cause is under investigation.[16]
- **July 5 – Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province:** A large fire and multiple explosions occurred in a truck parking lot.[17] Iranian media reported that flammable materials present at the scene intensified the fire.[18]

- **July 6 – Ashrafi Esfahani, Tehran Province:** Iranian media reported that two liquefied gas cylinders ignited after a gas valve in a three-story residential building was left open, which caused a large explosion.[19]
- **July 10 – Chitgar, Tehran Province:** Iranian media reported that a gas explosion occurred on the 15th floor of Pamchal Tower and injured four people.[20]
- **July 14 – Khorasan Razavi Province:** Iranian media reported that a massive fire broke out at a commercial complex.[21]

The Israel-Iran War has exacerbated longstanding divides within the Iranian regime as “pragmatic conservatives” seek to reassert influence over foreign policy and counterbalance hardliners’ opposition to diplomacy with the West. Reformist newspaper Ham Mihan published an article on July 23 in which it argued that the recent activities of two senior advisers to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Ali Larijani and Ali Akbar Velayati, signal a renewed effort by “pragmatic conservatives” to reassert influence over Iran’s domestic and foreign policy after the 12-Day Israel-Iran War.[22] The outlet highlighted Larijani’s unannounced trip to Russia on July 20 to discuss the Iranian nuclear program with Russian President Vladimir Putin. It also argued that Velayati’s public calls for a “new approach” on July 21 to preserve national unity reflect Velayati’s efforts to counterbalance entrenched hardliners, which likely includes the ultraconservative Stability (Paydari) Front faction.[23] Velayati stated on X on July 21 that preserving “national cohesion” may require the government to change certain social policies and prioritize “public satisfaction in a tangible way.”[24] Velayati added that “outdated methods” will no longer meet the needs of Iranian society after the war.[25] Velayati made other more pragmatic statements prior to July 20 and 21, such as on July 14, when he said that Iran is open to negotiations without “preconditions.” This July 14 statement is in direct opposition to the hardliners’ established position that the United States must classify Israel as the aggressor during the Iran-Israel War, that unspecified actors must investigate US involvement, and Iran must secure war reparations and security guarantees to prevent future attacks.[26] Ham Mihan highlighted that Larijani and Velayati have historically aligned with “moderate conservatives” within Iran’s traditional right wing and often supported “cautious reforms” and engagement with the West.[27] Paydari leader Saeed Jalili and other hardline officials have openly challenged this pragmatic faction and opposed the ceasefire with Israel.[28] Jalili also criticized Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi for agreeing to the ceasefire with Israel and signaling their openness to renewed nuclear negotiations with the United States.[29]

This internal divide between hardliners and pragmatic conservatives is not a new phenomenon within Iranian politics, however. Parliament Speaker Mohamad Bagher Ghalibaf, long seen as a hardliner, moved closer to pragmatic conservatives such as Pezeshkian during the 2024 presidential election.[30] Ghalibaf’s split from figures like Jalili highlighted the regime’s ongoing internal rifts over domestic and foreign policy and fissures between hardliners and pragmatic conservatives.[31]

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) supporters attempted to foment intercommunal violence and encourage attacks by ISIS supporters against the Druze during the recent violence in Suwayda Province.[32] A BCC Salafi-jihadi analyst reported on June 22 that hardline Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State (IS), have frequently shared literature in recent days that denounces the Druze as “infidels” and calls upon ISIS supporters to fight

them.[33] The analyst said that IS supporters have invoked ISIS's 2018 violence against the Druze in Suwayda to appeal to Sunni Bedouin tribes and as proof of ISIS's ability to "crush the Druze." [34] IS supporters are reportedly engaging in theological debates via online forums regarding the religious permissibility for ISIS fighters or sympathizers to join the Sunni Bedouin tribes fighting against the Druze in Suwayda.[35] Some IS supporters have argued that the intercommunal violence is motivated by "un-Islamic" tribal loyalties rather than religious motivations and used this as evidence for why it is impermissible to fight alongside Sunni Bedouin tribes.[36] Other IS supporters have argued that the current situation in Suwayda is an opportunity to launch attacks against the Druze.[37] These discussions reflect the discourse within IS constituencies, not strategic deliberations between senior ISIS commanders.

Several ISIS-linked social media accounts claimed that ISIS supporters are currently active in Suwayda Province and are participating in the conflict "discreetly and independently" alongside Sunni Bedouin tribes.[38] Syrian social media circulated several videos that show unknown fighters wearing clothing and holding rifles with flags showing the shahada in white text on a black field, which IS has long used as its flag.[39] These emblems do not necessarily verify that these are ISIS fighters or directly related to IS, however. Other Salafi-jihadi fighters in Syria have used the flag.

IS supporters have also called on Sunni Bedouin tribes to "form an alliance" with ISIS and reach out to ISIS fighters in the Syrian desert in the past two days.[40] ISIS previously used eastern Suwayda to shelter some senior leadership and launch attacks during the civil war.[41] ISIS maintained likely support zones in eastern Suwayda Province in 2022, and the Assad regime ambushed ISIS "supply" vehicles in Tulul al Safa in June 2022, demonstrating that ISIS previously operated in this rural area and used it to resupply fighters.[42] CTP-ISW defines a support zone as any area where an insurgent force can conduct offensive operations.[43] ISIS's recent attacks in Suwayda Province in May 2025 suggest that ISIS retains a presence along ground lines of communication between the central Syrian desert and southern Syria.[44] ISIS uses central Syria's sparsely populated desert as a sanctuary where it can rest, refit, and train new fighters.[45]

Unknown men in military uniforms reportedly executed Druze civilians in Suwayda Province during the recent bout of intercommunal violence, which will likely erode trust in government forces and increase the risk of future spasms of violence regardless of whether government forces are culpable for the executions. Druze civilians have alleged that gunmen in military fatigues executed Druze civilians during the violence in Suwayda from July 13 to July 18.[46] Syrian media circulated a video on July 22 that showed men in military uniforms executing a supposedly Druze man.[47] Syrian Defense Minister Major General Marhaf Abu Qasra acknowledged the reports that men in military uniforms committed such violence and announced that the Defense Ministry formed a committee to investigate the individuals involved.[48] Abu Qasra blamed "regional groups" who carried out "retaliatory operations" in Suwayda but noted that the individuals involved in the abuses will be punished "even if they are affiliated with the Defense Ministry." [49] It is often difficult to discern between Syrian army personnel and other unknown fighters in military fatigues because the new Syrian army has no standardized uniform. The abuses against civilians by men in military uniforms risk significantly eroding minority communities' trust in government forces, regardless of whether the men involved were Syrian army personnel or from so-called "regional groups." Community members subjected to this violence may associate military uniforms with the

abuses described above and react aggressively to Syrian army deployments, as happened when Druze fighters mobilized against Syrian forces that deployed to Suwayda Province on July 14.[50] The Syrian army's ability to secure Syrian territory is directly contingent on local communities' trust in Syrian forces. The lack of a trusted, state-operated security force will create opportunities for other actors to exploit the ensuing security vacuum and drive instability in Syria in the long term.

Iran held trilateral talks with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia in Tehran on June 22 ahead of expected United States-Iran nuclear talks, likely to rally diplomatic support for Iran in the event that the E3 triggers the JCPOA snapback mechanism. NOTE: A version of this text also appears in CTP-ISW's July 23 Adversary Entente Task Force Update. Iranian media reported on June 22 that representatives of Iran, the PRC, and Russia discussed the nuclear negotiations and sanctions against Iran and agreed to continue "close consultations" in coming weeks.[51] Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said that Iran has "aligned positions" with the PRC and Russia and noted that Iran is in "continuous" consultations with both countries to prevent the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) from reinstating snapback sanctions or to mitigate the potential consequences of reinstated sanctions.[52] The E3 threatened on July 17 to trigger the JCPOA snapback mechanism if Iran fails to achieve progress on a nuclear deal by August 2025.[53] Iran has previously engaged with the PRC and Russia over the possibility that the E3 triggers the snapback mechanism.[54] It is unlikely, however, that the PRC and Russia could prevent the reimposition of UN Security Council sanctions if the E3 triggers the snapback mechanism, so Iran is likely trying to get the PRC and Russia to prevent the E3 from activating the snapback mechanism in the first place.[55]

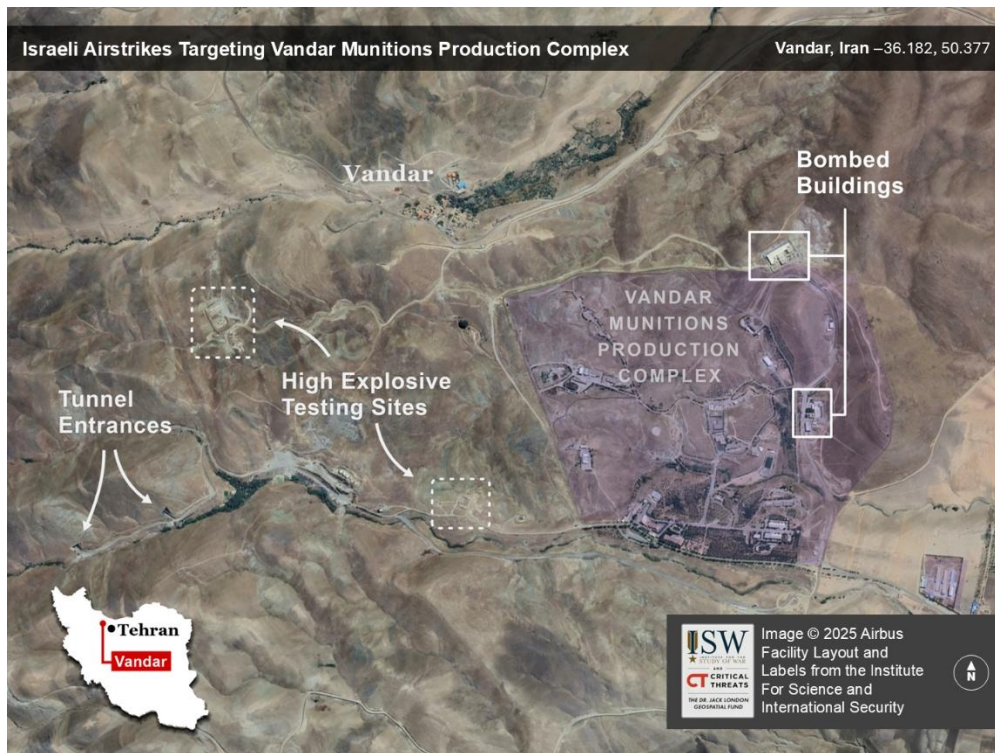
Key Takeaways:

- **Explosions in Iran:** The *New York Times* reported on July 23 that the series of fires and explosions that have taken place across Iran since the Israel-Iran ceasefire have fueled public anxiety and suspicions among Iranian officials about Israeli sabotage.
- **Iranian Approach to the West:** The Israel-Iran War has exacerbated longstanding divides within the Iranian regime as "pragmatic conservatives" seek to reassert influence over foreign policy and counterbalance hardliners' opposition to diplomacy with the West.
- **Iran-China-Russia Coordination:** Iran held trilateral talks with the PRC and Russia in Tehran on June 22 ahead of expected United States-Iran nuclear talks, likely to rally diplomatic support for Iran if the E3 triggers the JCPOA snapback mechanism. It is unlikely that the PRC and Russia could prevent the reimposition of sanctions if the E3 triggers the snapback mechanism, so Iran is likely trying to get the PRC and Russia to prevent the E3 from activating the snapback mechanism in the first place.
- **ISIS in Southern Syria:** The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) supporters attempted to foment intercommunal violence and encourage attacks by ISIS supporters against the Druze during the recent violence in Suwayda Province. Several ISIS-linked social media accounts claimed that ISIS supporters are currently active in Suwayda Province and are participating in the conflict "discreetly and independently" alongside Sunni Bedouin tribes.

- **Security in Suwayda:** Unknown men in military uniforms reportedly executed Druze civilians in Suwayda Province during the recent bout of intercommunal violence, which will likely erode trust in government forces and increase the risk of future spasms of violence regardless of whether government forces are culpable for the executions.

Iran

Israel struck a munitions production facility and explosives handling facility in Qazvin Province during the 12-day Israel-Iran War, according to the Institute for Science and International Security (the Institute).[56] The Institute reported that the complex housed high-explosive munitions production, handling, storage, and testing facilities in Vandar, eastern Qazvin Province.[57] The Institute reported that a probable munitions production facility and an explosives handling facility sustained severe damage from Israeli strikes. Iran expanded the site before 2024 to include sections that reportedly appear to have been designed to produce newer munitions.[58] The IDF Air Force reported that strikes on June 17 and 18 targeted a complex near Vandar that produced anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) for Lebanese Hezbollah and other Axis of Resistance members.[59] This strike is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that the Israeli air campaign will have a secondary effect of weakening Iranian-backed Axis of Resistance groups by degrading Iran's ability to support the reconstitution of its partners and proxies.[60]



Iran and Russia completed an annual combined naval exercise in the Caspian Sea on July 23.[61] The navies of the Artesh—the conventional Iranian military—and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), as well as the Russian Navy, began the three-day, search-and-rescue exercise on June 21 in the 4th Artesh Naval District, which is based in Bandar-e Anzali, Gilan Province.[62] The Russian *SB738* tug participated in the exercise.[63] IRGC-affiliated media reported that the exercise

aims to strengthen “maritime interactions” between Caspian Sea states.[64] Iran and Russia have used combined military exercises in recent years to improve interoperability, disseminate technical and tactical lessons, and pressure the US and its allies.[65] Iran previously hosted Russia and other Caspian Sea states for a previous iteration of this naval exercise in July 2024.[66]

Iranian media circulated a video of an Iranian Navy helicopter reportedly harassing the US destroyer USS *Fitzgerald* in the Gulf of Oman on July 23. Iranian media claimed that the USS *Fitzgerald* approached Iranian territorial waters in an unspecified location in the Gulf of Oman.[67] The United States did not acknowledge the incident as of this writing.

Iranian border guards clashed with Kurdish opposition forces on the Iran-Iraq border in northwestern Iran on July 22.[68] The clash on July 22 killed two more border guards in Baneh, Kurdistan Province. This is the second incident between Iranian border guards and Kurdish opposition forces since July 21. A local Kurdish outlet in Iraq assessed that the Kurdish fighters were from the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), an anti-Iranian, Kurdish nationalist militant group.[69] PJAK claimed that an Iranian drone struck a PJAK vehicle and killed one PJAK fighter on July 19.[70] Iran threatened to launch attacks on Kurdish opposition forces in Iraq on February 21 if the Iraqi federal government and Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) do not properly uphold the March 2023 trilateral border security agreement with Iran.[71] The agreement requires the Iraqi federal government and the KRG to prevent Kurdish fighters from attacking Iran near the Iran-Iraq border.[72] Iran continues to perceive Kurdish opposition forces in northwestern Iran as a threat to regime stability. Iran has increased its military presence in the region to “fight against counter-revolutionaries and enemies” in the northwest region within the last year, likely referring to Kurdish opposition groups.[73]

Iraq

Nothing significant to report.

Syria

The US Consulate in Istanbul announced on July 23 that a US Treasury Department delegation met with Turkish, Syrian, and Iraqi officials in Turkey to discuss lifting sanctions on Damascus.[74] Acting US Treasury Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing Anna Morris led the US delegation.[75] The US Embassy in Turkey said that Morris was expected to highlight the Trump Administration’s recent lifting of sanctions on Syria and “seek compliance” with the administration’s maximum pressure campaign on Iran.[76] The US Embassy in Turkey did not release any further details regarding the meeting. The US Treasury said that it is ready to assist the new Syrian government in improving the financial sector’s ability to counter money laundering and terrorist financing.[77]

Unspecified Turkish Ministry of Defense (MoD) sources told Turkish state media on July 23 that the Syrian transitional government officially requested the Turkish government’s support to strengthen its defense capabilities and combat terrorist groups such as ISIS.[78] The unspecified Turkish MoD sources said that the Turkish MoD will continue to provide Syrian forces with training, consultation, and technical support in line with the request.[79] Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler previously told Western media on June 4 that Turkey had started

providing military training and consultancy services while taking unspecified steps to increase Syria's defense capacity.[80] Turkey and Syria have engaged in defense talks since December 2024.[81] Turkey has long argued to the United States that Turkish forces could handle the counter-ISIS mission to demonstrate to the United States that US forces do not need to support the Kurdish-dominated SDF against ISIS.[82]

Arabian Peninsula

A shipping news outlet reported on July 21 that the Houthis increased their oil and gas imports ahead of the US military operation and sanctions against the Houthis in early March.[83] The Houthis likely sought to stabilize the local price of oil and gas as well as other commodities in Houthi-controlled territory to reduce the risk of unrest in these areas ahead of the US designation. The Houthis control official basic good prices in their controlled areas, which have remained consistent since July 2024.[84] Most Yemeni civilians in these areas rely on black market prices in these areas, which are more volatile and harder to assess.[85] Both the US and Israeli campaigns against the Houthis in 2025 targeted Houthi financial assets and port facilities in addition to traditional military targets. The Houthis have continued to import petroleum products even after the United States sanctioned oil exports to Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. The United States sanctioned at least five out of eight tankers berthed and anchored at the Houthi-controlled Ras Issa Port on July 23 for facilitating oil and gas trade to the Houthis.[86] These tankers also turned off their Automatic Identification System (AIS) so that they could not be tracked. Tankers that transport Iranian crude oil to other places, such as China, have also turned off their AIS in the past to evade detection.[87] All eight tankers sailed to Ras Issa from Djibouti Port, where the United Nations (UN) actively inspects vessels that are sailing to Yemeni ports for arms under the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM).[88] UNVIM is not mandated to enforce US sanctions on exporting petroleum products to Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, however.[89]

A Yemeni journalist reported on July 22 that the Houthis lost at least \$1.8 million in local currency from US airstrikes that targeted Houthi money storage facilities in Saada Governorate in late March 2025.[90] The Houthi-controlled Sanaa exchange rate was 540 Yemeni rials to one US dollar on July 23.[91] One billion Yemeni Rials under the Sanaa exchange rate is \$1.8 million. The Yemeni journalist reported the Houthis lost “billions” of rials in the strikes.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

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Iran Update



Ben Rezaei, Ben Schmida, Katherine Wells, Nidal Morrison, Ali Fishman, and Brian Carter

July 24, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

Some Iranian officials continued to signal openness to resuming nuclear talks with the United States, but Iranian officials have not altered their previous set of conditions.^[1] Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi stated on July 24 that Iran is ready to resume talks with the United States and added, "The sooner, the better."^[2] Gharibabadi said that Iran will open talks only if the United States comes to the table with "sincerity" for a "win-win solution," and not use the talks as a "cover for another military attack."^[3] Gharibabadi is the Iranian chief nuclear negotiator and has coordinated high-level engagement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) envoys.^[4] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi previously stated on July 1 that Iran will not resume nuclear talks unless it first receives assurance that the United States will not launch military attacks during negotiations.^[5] Gharibabadi also described the E3-imposed end-of-August deadline for reaching an agreement as "flexible."^[6] A *Wall Street Journal* reporter previously noted that the E3 proposed extending the snapback deadline during a July 17 call with Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi.^[7]

A delay in the snapback deadline is unlikely to shift Iran's position on domestic uranium enrichment, though additional leverage applied after a delay could cause Iran to shift its position.^[8] Iran and the E3 will meet on July 25 in Istanbul to discuss Iran's nuclear program and snapback-related sanctions.^[9] Iran may calculate that reaching a deal with the E3 and the United States would delay or prevent snapback sanctions by demonstrating Iran's willingness to resolve the nuclear issue. The E3 reportedly aims to engage Iran and secure verifiable steps—such as restoring Iranian cooperation with the IAEA and the removal of Iran's 60 percent enriched uranium stockpile—before the snapback deadline takes effect.^[10]

Araghchi emphasized Iran's commitment to domestic uranium enrichment ahead of the upcoming July 25 E3 meeting.^[11] Araghchi added that the upcoming Iran and E3 meeting is important for European officials to understand that Iran's position remains "unchanged," and that enrichment will continue as a "non-negotiable right."^[12] Gharibabadi warned on July 23 that continued E3 pressure to reimpose snapback sanctions could push Iran to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).^[13] Iranian officials repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the NPT if the E3 triggers the snapback sanction mechanism.^[14]

Gharibabadi announced on July 23 that an IAEA technical team will visit Iran in the coming weeks to discuss a “future engagement framework.”[15] Gharibabadi stated that the technical team will not be allowed access to damaged nuclear sites.[16] Iranian personnel have been unable to access the nuclear sites due to damage caused by the strikes, which makes the question of a technical visit to the sites mostly irrelevant at this time because the IAEA cannot access centrifuge halls or other enrichment facilities that are underground.[17] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian claimed during his interview with Tucker Carlson on July 7 that the US strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities destroyed much of the equipment and infrastructure, and Iranian personnel cannot easily access the sites.[18] Pezeshkian added that Iran must wait to determine whether it can regain access.[19] IAEA announced on July 4 that it withdrew all inspectors from Iran.[20] Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei previously stated on June 30 that Iran would allow inspectors to remain in the country, but could not guarantee their safety following recent strikes on nuclear infrastructure.[21] The Iranian Parliament passed a bill on June 25 to suspend all cooperation with the IAEA, mandating the suspension of inspections until the IAEA recognizes Iran’s right to enrich uranium.[22]

The Syrian transitional government’s continued demand that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) disarm is a double standard that the government has not applied equally to all factions. SDF spokesman Farhad Shahdi told Syrian media on July 23 that the SDF refuses to disarm because it fears attacks from forces affiliated with the government.[23] Shahdi emphasized that the SDF must be integrated as a military bloc, rather than as individuals, which has been a recurring point of contention between both sides.[24] This would allow the SDF to maintain a Kurdish force to defend Kurds in northeastern Syria, which have come under threat from forces that are now affiliated with the government throughout the civil war.

The SDF’s statement about disarmament and the linkage of disarmament with the recent violence in Suwayda reflects a deeply held fear developed throughout the civil war among Syrian Kurds about the threat they face from forces now affiliated with the government, rather than a recent fear spurred by the recent violence. An unspecified Syrian government official stated in a response to Syrian media on July 24 that the transitional government will not respond to SDF preconditions that contradict state unity, rejected the SDF’s refusal to disarm, and condemned the SDF’s use of violence in Suwayda Province as a justification for refusing to integrate into the Syrian state.[25] The implication that the SDF is using the violence in Suwayda as a political tool to retain their weapons, combined with the rejection of SDF concerns, ignores legitimate SDF and Kurdish fears that the government will be unable to control elements in the Syrian security forces that seek to suppress the Kurds.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to continued negotiations, but the Syrian government has continued to emphasize disarmament of the SDF. The emphasis on disarmament is a double standard that the government has not applied to every Syrian faction equally.[26] The SDF and Syrian transitional government signed a framework agreement on March 10 outlining broad principles for the integration of the SDF’s military and civil organizations into the Syrian government and the handover of SDF-controlled sites in northeastern Syria to the government.[27] The Syrian transitional government has repeatedly demanded that the SDF disarm and dissolve its forces prior to integrating into the Syrian Defense Ministry (MoD).[28] These demands differ from the transitional government’s willingness to allow certain Syrian armed groups, like elements of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and Druze forces led by Laith al Balous, which were re-flagged and integrated as

blocs.[29] Some Turkish-backed militias in the SNA are made up of Turkish ethno-nationalists who have committed atrocities against Kurds in northern Syria.[30] The government, by its own admission, cannot control all the bad actors within its security forces, some of whom would pose a potentially existential threat to Kurdish forces who disarm.[31]

Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors continue to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the existence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) leader Hammam Hamoudi said in an interview with the Australian Ambassador to Iraq on July 24 that the events in Suwayda Province have convinced Iraqis that they must “hold on” to the PMF, referring to the abuses Syrian security forces committed against Druze in southwestern Syria.[32] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari said on July 23 that Iraqis from the Sunni-majority “western regions” who left to fight in support of the Syrian government must be monitored, presumably by the PMF.[33] These statements follow the leader of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq and an Iranian-affiliated Iraqi politician separately suggesting on July 21 that the violence in Suwayda Province justifies the PMF’s continued existence.[34] The PMF was established in 2014 by “institutionalizing” pre-existing and predominantly Shia militias that were engaged in the fight against ISIS, including various Iranian-backed Iraqi militias like Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al Haq.[35] These Shia sectarian actors have remained intensely distrustful of the Syrian transitional government under Ahmed al Shara due to his historic ties to al Qaeda in Iraq, which was the predecessor to ISIS.[36] Ongoing discussions surrounding the dissolution of the PMF are probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.[37]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran-US Nuclear Talks:** Some Iranian officials are continuing to signal openness to resume nuclear talks with the United States, but Iranian officials have not altered their previous set of conditions.
- **SDF-Syrian Government Negotiations:** The Syrian transitional government’s continued demand that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) disarm is a double standard that the government has not applied to every Syrian faction equally. The SDF’s recent statement about disarmament and the linkage of disarmament with the recent violence in Suwayda reflects a deeply held fear that Kurds developed during the civil war about the threat they face from forces now affiliated with the government, rather than a recent fear spurred by the recent violence.
- **Iraqi Discussions on the PMF:** Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors continue to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the existence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Ongoing discussions surrounding the dissolution of the PMF are probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.

Iran

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian held separate meetings with conservative senior Iranian clerics Ayatollah Ali Reza Araf and Naser Makarem Shirazi during an unofficial visit to Qom on July 23 and July 24.[38] Pezeshkian and the clerics discussed strengthening clergy-Iranian government ties and socio-economic issues, including inflation, housing, and youth unemployment.[39] Shirazi met with former Reformist President Hassan Rouhani in Qom in mid-

June, according to opposition media reports.[40] Rouhani reportedly attempted to encourage Shirazi to persuade Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to drop Iran's demand for uranium enrichment on Iranian soil and accept a ceasefire with Israel.[41] Shirazi declared on June 29 that individuals who threaten Khamenei or religious authority are "mohareb" (enemies of God) and therefore subject to the death penalty.[42] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Shirazi's fatwa may be a public rejection of Rouhani's reported discussions with Shirazi and others that sought to sideline Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.[43] Ayatollah Ali Reza Arafai also issued fatwas on June 30 that echoed Shirazi's June 29 fatwa that declared individuals "mohareb." [44] Arafai has been a member of the Guardian Council since 2019, which is the body responsible for supervising Presidential elections and screening parliamentary legislation.[45]

Pezeshkian also met with Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani's representative in Iran, Javad Shahrestani, in Qom on July 23.[46] Sistani is the highest Shia religious authority in Iraq.[47] Both officials discussed the importance of government institutions working with religious authorities to address Iran's socio-economic problems. Iranian media readouts of the meeting do not mention any discussion on Iran-Iraq relations. Pezeshkian previously met with Shahrestani in Qom to discuss similar topics in October 2024.[48]

Iran is facing a severe water shortage crisis, which may stoke further anti-regime sentiment and internal unrest if sustained over time. IRGC-affiliated media reported on July 23 that half of the Iranian urban population is facing water shortages.[49] Rainfall levels across the country have reportedly decreased by 40 percent in 2025.[50] The East Azerbaijan Regional Water Company CEO warned on July 23 that the most populated city in northwestern Iran, Tabriz, has less than 3 months' worth of drinking water reserves.[51] Tehran Provincial Water Company reported that the reservoirs used to supply water to Tehran Province are at their lowest levels in a century.[52] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian acknowledged that his government needs to take urgent action to remedy the water crisis during a cabinet meeting on July 19.[53] Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi announced on July 15 that Iran is looking to import water from neighboring countries and that negotiations have already taken place with Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.[54] Iran closed government offices in at least 14 provinces on July 23 in an effort to relieve some stress on water and energy infrastructure.[55] Local authorities in some regions have even cut water supplies to consumers for hours at a time amid a severe heatwave.[56]

The water crisis may stoke internal unrest. Anti-regime media posted footage of a protest outside of the governor's office in Sabzevar, Razavi Khorasan Province, which featured chants such as "Water, power, life: our absolute rights." [57] Severe water shortages in Khuzestan Province in 2021 sparked protests that spread across Iran.[58] Iranian security forces suppressed these protests using live ammunition, and dozens were killed.[59]

US Central Command (CENTCOM) denied that the USS *Fitzgerald* entered Iranian waters in the Persian Gulf on July 23. CENTCOM also called the interaction between an Iranian Navy helicopter and US destroyer USS *Fitzgerald* near the Gulf of Oman on July 23 "safe." [60] "Safe" in this context means that the interaction did not endanger US personnel or assets. Iranian media previously claimed on July 23 that the Iranian Navy helicopter harassed the USS *Fitzgerald* in the Gulf of Oman after the USS *Fitzgerald* approached Iranian territorial waters.[61]

Iranian Artesh Air Force Commander Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi inspected the Artesh Air Force 9th Tactical Airbase in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, on July 24.[62] Senior Iranian military commanders routinely inspect military bases to assess operational readiness.[63] Iran will likely continue to conduct inspections of military bases after the Israel-Iran War.[64] Bandar Abbas is a key Iranian port that is vital to its maritime trade. It also hosts many military facilities.



Iran-Belarus parliamentary friendship group members met Belarusian Council of the Republic Speaker Natalia Kochanova in Minsk, Belarus, on July 24.[65] The Iran-Belarus parliamentary friendship group is an official interparliamentary body that facilitates legislative diplomacy and bilateral ties between Iran and Belarus.[66] The Iranian delegation head proposed the establishment of a direct Tehran–Minsk flight route.[67] The delegation also discussed joint economic,

scientific, and medical projects, including over 45 current bilateral agreements.[68] Iran and Belarus signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in April 2025 to expand bilateral trade along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).[69] The INSTC is a trade route that connects India, Iran, Russia, and Central Asia via road, rail, and sea to reduce transit time and costs between South Asia and Europe.[70] The visit follows broader Iranian efforts to strengthen ties with Russia-aligned states, including through defense coordination. Iran has attempted to establish a drone factory in Belarus since May 2023 to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine and showcase Iranian military equipment.[71]

Iraq

See the topline section.

Syria

See the topline section.

Arabian Peninsula

An unspecified local source told a Yemeni journalist on July 23 that Israeli airstrikes targeting Hudaydah Port on July 21 killed seven Houthi special naval force members involved in Houthi attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea.[72] The Yemeni journalist also reported that Israel struck a Houthi vessel attempting to leave Hudaydah Port on July 21. The strike on the vessel would not be visible on satellite imagery if the strike sank the vessel.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

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Some Iranian officials continued to signal openness to resuming nuclear talks with the United States, but Iranian officials have not altered their previous set of conditions.[1]

Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi stated on July 24 that Iran is ready to resume talks with the United States and added, "The sooner, the better." [2] Gharibabadi said that Iran will open talks only if the United States comes to the table with "sincerity" for a "win-win solution," and not use the talks as a "cover for another military attack." [3] Gharibabadi is the Iranian chief nuclear negotiator and has coordinated high-level engagement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) envoys. [4] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi previously stated on July 1 that Iran will not resume nuclear talks unless it first receives assurance that the United States will not launch military attacks during negotiations. [5] Gharibabadi also described the E3-imposed end-of-August deadline for reaching an agreement as "flexible." [6] A *Wall Street Journal* reporter previously noted that the E3 proposed extending the snapback deadline during a July 17 call with Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi. [7]

A delay in the snapback deadline is unlikely to shift Iran's position on domestic uranium enrichment, though additional leverage applied after a delay could cause Iran to shift its position. [8] Iran and the E3 will meet on July 25 in Istanbul to discuss Iran's nuclear program and snapback-related sanctions. [9] Iran may calculate that reaching a deal with the E3 and the United States would delay or prevent snapback sanctions by demonstrating Iran's willingness to resolve the nuclear issue. The E3 reportedly aims to engage Iran and secure verifiable steps—such as restoring Iranian cooperation with the IAEA and the removal of Iran's 60 percent enriched uranium stockpile—before the snapback deadline takes effect. [10]

Araghchi emphasized Iran's commitment to domestic uranium enrichment ahead of the upcoming July 25 E3 meeting. [11] Araghchi added that the upcoming Iran and E3 meeting is important for European officials to understand that Iran's position remains "unchanged," and that enrichment will continue as a "non-negotiable right." [12] Gharibabadi warned on July 23 that continued E3 pressure to reimpose snapback sanctions could push Iran to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). [13] Iranian

officials repeatedly threatened to withdraw from the NPT if the E3 triggers the snapback sanction mechanism.[14]

Gharibabadi announced on July 23 that an IAEA technical team will visit Iran in the coming weeks to discuss a “future engagement framework.”[15] Gharibabadi stated that the technical team will not be allowed access to damaged nuclear sites.[16] Iranian personnel have been unable to access the nuclear sites due to damage caused by the strikes, which makes the question of a technical visit to the sites mostly irrelevant at this time because the IAEA cannot access centrifuge halls or other enrichment facilities that are underground.[17] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian claimed during his interview with Tucker Carlson on July 7 that the US strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities destroyed much of the equipment and infrastructure, and Iranian personnel cannot easily access the sites.[18] Pezeshkian added that Iran must wait to determine whether it can regain access.[19] IAEA announced on July 4 that it withdrew all inspectors from Iran.[20] Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei previously stated on June 30 that Iran would allow inspectors to remain in the country, but could not guarantee their safety following recent strikes on nuclear infrastructure.[21] The Iranian Parliament passed a bill on June 25 to suspend all cooperation with the IAEA, mandating the suspension of inspections until the IAEA recognizes Iran’s right to enrich uranium.[22]

The Syrian transitional government’s continued demand that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) disarm is a double standard that the government has not applied equally to all factions. SDF spokesman Farhad Shahdi told Syrian media on July 23 that the SDF refuses to disarm because it fears attacks from forces affiliated with the government.[23] Shahdi emphasized that the SDF must be integrated as a military bloc, rather than as individuals, which has been a recurring point of contention between both sides.[24] This would allow the SDF to maintain a Kurdish force to defend Kurds in northeastern Syria, which have come under threat from forces that are now affiliated with the government throughout the civil war.

The SDF’s statement about disarmament and the linkage of disarmament with the recent violence in Suwayda reflects a deeply held fear developed throughout the civil war among Syrian Kurds about the threat they face from forces now affiliated with the government, rather than a recent fear spurred by the recent violence. An unspecified Syrian government official stated in a response to Syrian media on July 24 that the transitional government will not respond to SDF preconditions that contradict state unity, rejected the SDF’s refusal to disarm, and condemned the SDF’s use of violence in Suwayda Province as a justification for refusing to integrate into the Syrian state.[25] The implication that the SDF is using the violence in Suwayda as a political tool to retain their weapons, combined with the rejection of SDF concerns, ignores legitimate SDF and Kurdish fears that the government will be unable to control elements in the Syrian security forces that seek to suppress the Kurds.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to continued negotiations, but the Syrian government has continued to emphasize disarmament of the SDF. The emphasis on disarmament is a double standard that the government has not applied to every Syrian faction equally.[26] The SDF and Syrian transitional government signed a framework agreement on March 10 outlining broad principles for the integration of the SDF’s military and civil organizations into the Syrian government and the handover of SDF-controlled sites in northeastern Syria to the government.[27] The Syrian transitional

government has repeatedly demanded that the SDF disarm and dissolve its forces prior to integrating into the Syrian Defense Ministry (MoD).[28] These demands differ from the transitional government's willingness to allow certain Syrian armed groups, like elements of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and Druze forces led by Laith al Balous, which were re-flagged and integrated as blocs.[29] Some Turkish-backed militias in the SNA are made up of Turkish ethno-nationalists who have committed atrocities against Kurds in northern Syria.[30] The government, by its own admission, cannot control all the bad actors within its security forces, some of whom would pose a potentially existential threat to Kurdish forces who disarm.[31]

Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors continue to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the existence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) leader Hammam Hamoudi said in an interview with the Australian Ambassador to Iraq on July 24 that the events in Suwayda Province have convinced Iraqis that they must “hold on” to the PMF, referring to the abuses Syrian security forces committed against Druze in southwestern Syria.[32] Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari said on July 23 that Iraqis from the Sunni-majority “western regions” who left to fight in support of the Syrian government must be monitored, presumably by the PMF.[33] These statements follow the leader of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq and an Iranian-affiliated Iraqi politician separately suggesting on July 21 that the violence in Suwayda Province justifies the PMF's continued existence.[34] The PMF was established in 2014 by “institutionalizing” pre-existing and predominantly Shia militias that were engaged in the fight against ISIS, including various Iranian-backed Iraqi militias like Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al Haq.[35] These Shia sectarian actors have remained intensely distrustful of the Syrian transitional government under Ahmed al Shara due to his historic ties to al Qaeda in Iraq, which was the predecessor to ISIS.[36] Ongoing discussions surrounding the dissolution of the PMF are probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.[37]

Key Takeaways:

- **Iran-US Nuclear Talks:** Some Iranian officials are continuing to signal openness to resume nuclear talks with the United States, but Iranian officials have not altered their previous set of conditions.
- **SDF-Syrian Government Negotiations:** The Syrian transitional government's continued demand that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) disarm is a double standard that the government has not applied to every Syrian faction equally. The SDF's recent statement about disarmament and the linkage of disarmament with the recent violence in Suwayda reflects a deeply held fear that Kurds developed during the civil war about the threat they face from forces now affiliated with the government, rather than a recent fear spurred by the recent violence.
- **Iraqi Discussions on the PMF:** Some Iranian-backed Iraqi actors continue to use sectarian events in Syria to justify the existence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Ongoing discussions surrounding the dissolution of the PMF are probably driving some of these Iraqi militia efforts to justify their existence.

Iran

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian held separate meetings with conservative senior Iranian clerics Ayatollah Ali Reza Araf and Naser Makarem Shirazi during an unofficial visit to Qom on July 23 and July 24.[38] Pezeshkian and the clerics discussed strengthening clergy-Iranian government ties and socioeconomic issues, including inflation, housing, and youth unemployment.[39] Shirazi met with former Reformist President Hassan Rouhani in Qom in mid-June, according to opposition media reports.[40] Rouhani reportedly attempted to encourage Shirazi to persuade Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to drop Iran's demand for uranium enrichment on Iranian soil and accept a ceasefire with Israel.[41] Shirazi declared on June 29 that individuals who threaten Khamenei or religious authority are "mohareb" (enemies of God) and therefore subject to the death penalty.[42] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Shirazi's fatwa may be a public rejection of Rouhani's reported discussions with Shirazi and others that sought to sideline Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.[43] Ayatollah Ali Reza Araf also issued fatwas on June 30 that echoed Shirazi's June 29 fatwa that declared individuals "mohareb." [44] Araf has been a member of the Guardian Council since 2019, which is the body responsible for supervising Presidential elections and screening parliamentary legislation.[45]

Pezeshkian also met with Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani's representative in Iran, Javad Shahrestani, in Qom on July 23.[46] Sistani is the highest Shia religious authority in Iraq.[47] Both officials discussed the importance of government institutions working with religious authorities to address Iran's socioeconomic problems. Iranian media readouts of the meeting do not mention any discussion on Iran-Iraq relations. Pezeshkian previously met with Shahrestani in Qom to discuss similar topics in October 2024.[48]

Iran is facing a severe water shortage crisis, which may stoke further anti-regime sentiment and internal unrest if sustained over time. IRGC-affiliated media reported on July 23 that half of the Iranian urban population is facing water shortages.[49] Rainfall levels across the country have reportedly decreased by 40 percent in 2025.[50] The East Azerbaijan Regional Water Company CEO warned on July 23 that the most populated city in northwestern Iran, Tabriz, has less than 3 months' worth of drinking water reserves.[51] Tehran Provincial Water Company reported that the reservoirs used to supply water to Tehran Province are at their lowest levels in a century.[52] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian acknowledged that his government needs to take urgent action to remedy the water crisis during a cabinet meeting on July 19.[53] Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi announced on July 15 that Iran is looking to import water from neighboring countries and that negotiations have already taken place with Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.[54] Iran closed government offices in at least 14 provinces on July 23 in an effort to relieve some stress on water and energy infrastructure.[55] Local authorities in some regions have even cut water supplies to consumers for hours at a time amid a severe heatwave.[56]

The water crisis may stoke internal unrest. Anti-regime media posted footage of a protest outside of the governor's office in Sabzevar, Razavi Khorasan Province, which featured chants such as "Water, power, life: our absolute rights." [57] Severe water shortages in Khuzestan Province in 2021 sparked protests that spread across Iran.[58] Iranian security forces suppressed these protests using live ammunition, and dozens were killed.[59]

US Central Command (CENTCOM) denied that the USS *Fitzgerald* entered Iranian waters in the Persian Gulf on July 23. CENTCOM also called the interaction between an Iranian Navy helicopter and US destroyer USS *Fitzgerald* near the Gulf of Oman on July 23 “safe.” [60] “Safe” in this context means that the interaction did not endanger US personnel or assets. Iranian media previously claimed on July 23 that the Iranian Navy helicopter harassed the USS *Fitzgerald* in the Gulf of Oman after the USS *Fitzgerald* approached Iranian territorial waters.[61]

Iranian Artesh Air Force Commander Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi inspected the Artesh Air Force 9th Tactical Airbase in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, on July 24.[62] Senior Iranian military commanders routinely inspect military bases to assess operational readiness.[63] Iran will likely continue to conduct inspections of military bases after the Israel-Iran War.[64] Bandar Abbas is a key Iranian port that is vital to its maritime trade. It also hosts many military facilities.

Bandar Abbas map

Iran-Belarus parliamentary friendship group members met Belarusian Council of the Republic Speaker Natalia Kochanova in Minsk, Belarus, on July 24.[65] The Iran-Belarus parliamentary friendship group is an official interparliamentary body that facilitates legislative diplomacy and bilateral ties between Iran and Belarus.[66] The Iranian delegation head proposed the establishment of a direct Tehran–Minsk flight route.[67] The delegation also discussed joint economic, scientific, and medical projects, including over 45 current bilateral agreements.[68] Iran and Belarus signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in April 2025 to expand bilateral trade along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).[69] The INSTC is a trade route that connects India, Iran, Russia, and Central Asia via road, rail, and sea to reduce transit time and costs between South Asia and Europe.[70] The visit follows broader Iranian efforts to strengthen ties with Russia-aligned states, including through defense coordination. Iran has attempted to establish a drone factory in Belarus since May 2023 to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine and showcase Iranian military equipment.[71]

Iraq

See the topline section.

Syria

See the topline section.

Arabian Peninsula

An unspecified local source told a Yemeni journalist on July 23 that Israeli airstrikes targeting Hudaydah Port on July 21 killed seven Houthi special naval force members involved in Houthi attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea.[72] The Yemeni journalist also reported that Israel struck a Houthi vessel attempting to leave Hudaydah Port on July 21. The strike on the vessel would not be visible on satellite imagery if the strike sank the vessel.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

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Iran Update



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

July 25, 2025

Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

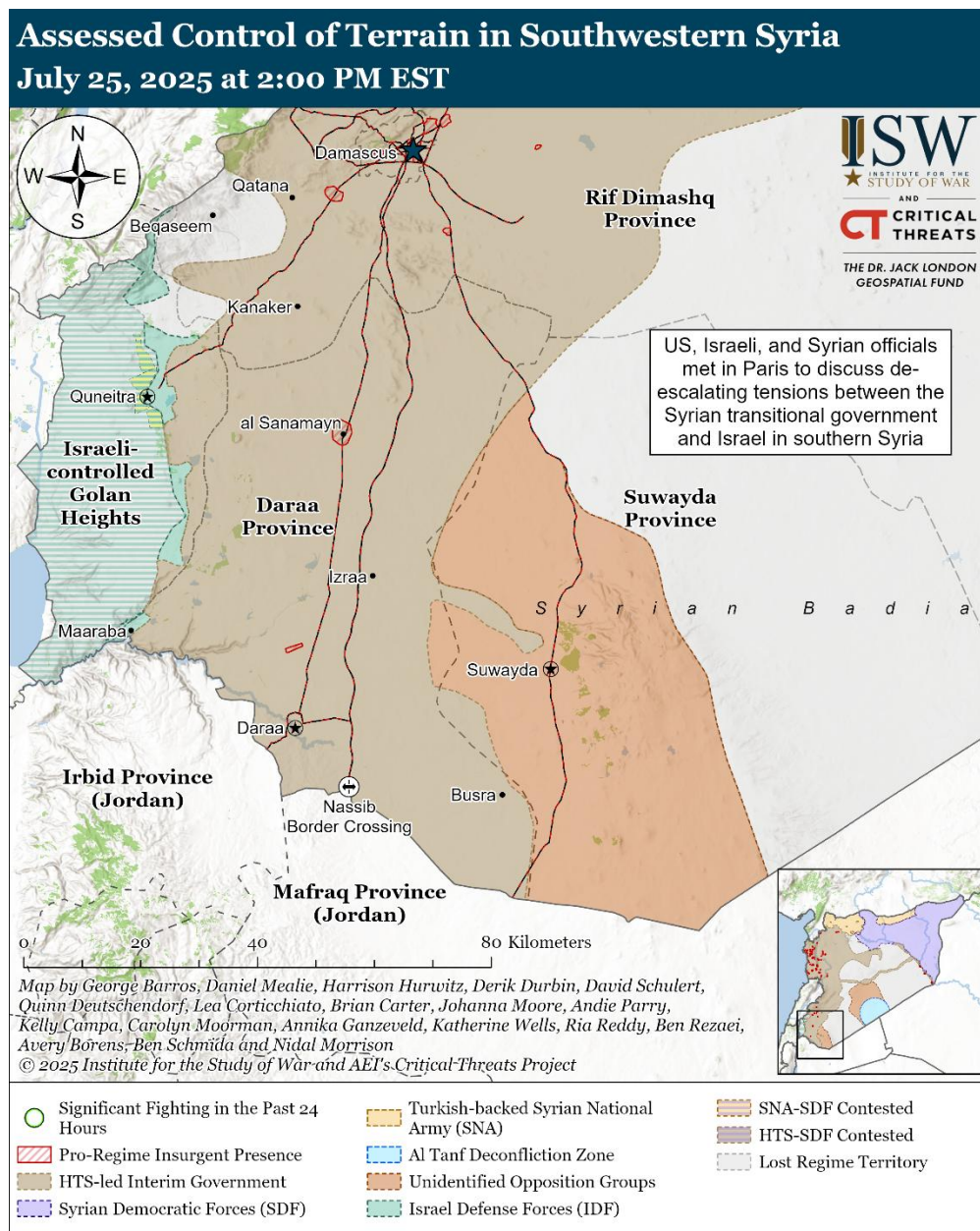
The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. CTP-ISW publishes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

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

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

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

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

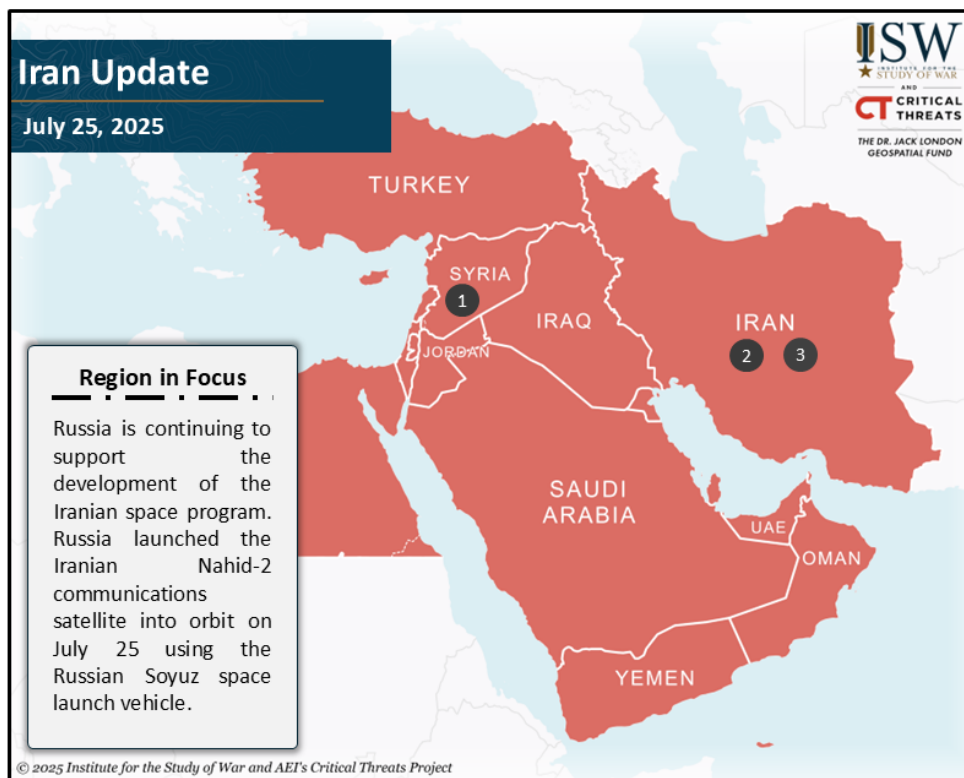


Iran and the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reportedly discussed extending the snapback mechanism deadline during a meeting on July 25.[15] CTP-ISW previously assessed that postponing the snapback deadline would very likely not change Iran's position on the key issue of domestic uranium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

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

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

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



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

Key Takeaways

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

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

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

Iran

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

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

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

Iraq

Nothing significant to report.

Syria

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

Arabian Peninsula

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

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

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

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