

Iran Update



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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.

The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reiterated that it will trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism to reinstate UN Security Council sanctions on Iran if Iran fails to make progress towards a nuclear deal by the end of August 2025.^[1] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Iran is unlikely to make concessions on key issues such as domestic uranium enrichment and limits to its ballistic missile program by the August deadline.^[2] French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told Western media on July 26 that the E3 will trigger the JCPOA snapback mechanism if Iran does not reach an agreement by the end of summer.^[3] He stated that the E3 wants a "more comprehensive agreement" that includes limits to Iran's ballistic missile program and activities that destabilize the region, which refers to Iran's leading role in the Axis of Resistance. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated on July 28 that Iran will not negotiate over its defense capabilities.^[4] Iran sees its missile program and its proxies and partners as integral parts of its deterrence and therefore its defense. Senior Iranian officials repeatedly rejected demands during the US-Iran nuclear negotiations in April and May 2025 to limit Iran's missile program and support for the Axis of Resistance because the missile program is Iran's "most reliable means of defense."^[5]

The *Washington Post* quoted an Israeli source on July 25 who reported Iran is "no longer a threshold nuclear state" following US and Israeli strikes.^[6] The source stated that Iran will need at least one to two years to build a deliverable nuclear weapon, assuming it can do so undetected.^[7] The source stated that Israel would very likely detect any Iranian efforts to test a nuclear weapon and launch an attack. Senior Israeli officials have repeatedly warned since the strikes that Israel would "almost certainly" detect any Iranian attempts to recover nuclear material and conduct renewed strikes to prevent Iran from accessing the material.^[8] The source said that US and Israeli strikes destroyed the "logistical foundations" of Iran's nuclear program, which will hinder Iran's ability to weaponize.^[9] The strikes destroyed the Uranium Metal Conversion Plant at the Esfahan Nuclear Technology Center, which Iran could have used to transform uranium gas into dense metal in a process called metallization.^[10] This process is one of the last steps required to form the explosive core of an atomic bomb. The source also stated that the loss of nuclear scientists will significantly hinder Iran's ability to conduct ongoing nuclear weapons research, including research Iran was reportedly

conducting on electromagnetic pulse weapons that target electronics in a target area.[11] CTP-ISW previously assessed that the destruction of Iran's metallization process and the loss of several Iranian nuclear scientists would hinder Iran's ability to transform weapons-grade uranium, or 90 percent enriched uranium, into a usable nuclear weapon.[12]

Israeli strikes also reportedly buried a site where Iran stored 400 kilograms of highly-enriched uranium (HEU), or uranium enriched up to at least 20 percent.[13] Western media previously reported that Israeli strikes blocked tunnel entrances to an underground complex at the ENTC that stores part of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile.[14] The International Atomic Energy Agency reported in May 2025 that Iran had 683.1 kilograms of HEU as of mid-May 2025.[15] The Institute for Science and International Security previously assessed that the Israeli campaign also rendered most, if not all, of Iran's operational centrifuges inoperable and "effectively destroyed" Iran's enrichment capacity.[16]

The Iranian regime is facing a broad set of internal security challenges, including insurgency and anti-regime activities, which could constrain its ability to rebuild military capabilities following the Israel–Iran war. The Iranian Ministry of Intelligence released a comprehensive report on July 28 detailing its efforts during and after the 12-Day Israel-Iran War to secure Iran. The report emphasized the scale and complexity of the threats Iran faced.[17] The ministry described the war as a coordinated campaign by the “American-Zionist front” involving military strikes, sabotage, “cognitive warfare,” and efforts to trigger internal unrest through armed groups, separatists, and political dissidents.[18] Iranian officials use the term “cognitive warfare” to characterize what they claim are enemy-led psychological operations aimed at spreading distrust and hopelessness among the Iranian public to weaken the regime.[19] The ministry claimed that it arrested three Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) commanders and 50 “takfiri” fighters inside Iran as part of its counterintelligence efforts, seized suicide vests and advanced weapons, and disrupted the infiltration of 300 foreign fighters allegedly “mobilized by Israel” under an entity called the “United Baluchistan Front.”[20] The statement is likely referring to Jaish al Adl, a Baloch, Salafi-jihadi militant group that frequently attacks Iranian security forces in southeastern Iran. The Iranian regime has previously accused Israel of supporting Jaish al Adl.[21] The report also cited operations in Sistan and Baluchistan and Kerman provinces that led to the seizure of rocket-propelled grenades, grenades, and light arms intended for use in terror attacks.[22] These claims underscore the regime's growing concern that internal threats are increasing at a time when it cannot address them all simultaneously.

These internal security challenges will naturally limit Iran's ability to reinvest in its external security. Iran will very likely prioritize its internal security challenges over rebuilding the Axis of Resistance or its external capabilities beyond the level necessary to deter attacks. Iranian officials would prioritize these internal security challenges because they remain concerned about regime stability over the long term.

Jaish al Adl fighters attacked the Sistan and Baluchistan Provincial Courthouse in Zahedan on July 26.[23] Iranian security officials reported that three attackers disguised as civilians attempted to enter the building, threw a grenade inside, and opened fire.[24] The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Operational Base in Zahedan and the Law Enforcement Command (LEC) confirmed that six civilians died and 22 others suffered injuries, with several of the injured in critical condition.[25] The Iranian LEC stated that security forces killed all three attackers during the operation

and found suicide vests on them.[26] Jaish al Adl said that it conducted the attack in response to death sentences, arrests of "youth and clerics," and orders to "demolish mosques and homes." [27] Jaish al Adl conducted its most complex and coordinated attack in April 2024 when over 160 fighters attacked multiple IRGC and police sites across Sistan and Baluchistan Province in a 13-hour operation.[28] Unspecified attackers separately killed a Basij Organization commander in Zahedan on July 27.[29] Jaish al Adl has not commented on the killing of the Basij commander at the time of this writing.

This attack and others like it seek to disrupt Iranian regime activities to create opportunities for Jaish al Adl to gain the support of local Baloch civilians. Jaish al Adl justified the attack in defensive terms, which suggests the attacks are part of an effort to build the group's popularity as a defender of local Balochi civilians. The courthouse attack follows a broader pattern of insurgents targeting LEC and IRGC personnel and judicial institutions in southeastern Iran since 2012.[30] Iranian security forces have taken steps to target anti-regime militant groups following an uptick in anti-regime militancy in southeastern Iran since December 2023.[31]

Syria will hold its first parliamentary elections through provincial subcommittees between September 15 and 20, 2025.[32] The new parliament will probably not act as a check on executive power because the executive appoints one-third of its members and the executive influences the appointments of the other two-thirds of the parliament's members. The Supreme Committee for People's Assembly Elections also announced that it would request to increase the number of seats in Parliament from 150 to 210.[33] It is unclear at this time how the committee will distribute the additional seats among the provinces. Provincial subcommittees, which were created by Supreme Committee members, will select 140 representatives to the 210-seat People's Assembly in these elections.[34] Each provincial subcommittee will elect People's Assembly members from within the subcommittee.[35] Syrian President Ahmed al Shara will personally select the other 70 representatives, or one-third of the body.[36] Shara appointed the Supreme Committee's members, which thus enables him to influence the appointment of the provincial subcommittees and then the remaining 140 representatives.

The way that the parliament is selected suggests that it will probably follow the executive's lead on policy and exert very little legislative power. The People's Assembly is a legislative body that will propose, adopt, and amend Syrian laws according to the Syrian Constitutional Declaration.[37] The process for securing a majority to pass laws that run contrary to Shara's preferences will be extremely difficult because it will require votes from 106 of the 140 representatives that Shara did not appoint, assuming all the Shara-appointed members vote according to his wishes.

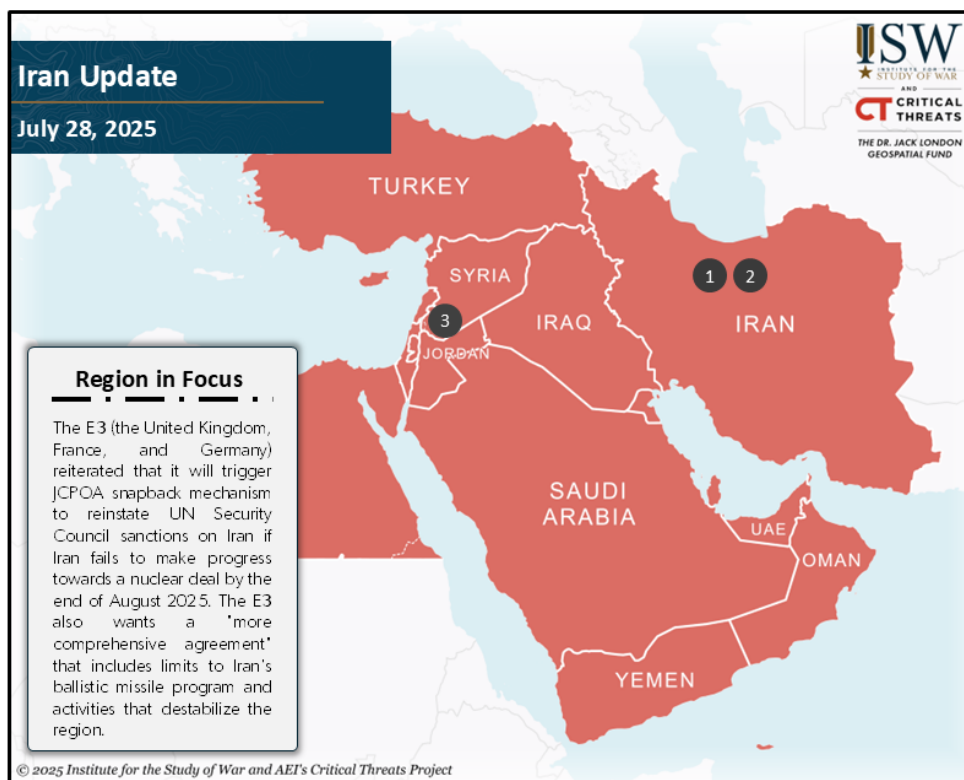
Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani recently met with several Shia Coordination Framework leaders in Baghdad to discuss the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections and unspecified "regional developments."[38] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. Ghaani reportedly held separate meetings with State of Law Coalition head Nouri al Maliki, Wisdom Movement head Ammar al Hakim, Badr Organization head Hadi al Ameri, and Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq head Humam Hamoudi.[39] Iran has previously urged unity among Shia Coordination Framework leaders ahead of the elections to improve the likelihood that Iranian-backed parties will maintain control of the Iraqi government.[40] The Shia Coordination

Framework currently plans to run across multiple lists in the elections, which will divide vote shares between Iranian-backed candidates.[41]

It is notable that Ghaani's visit occurred amid an ongoing debate in Iraq over the potential dissolution of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The PMF is an Iraqi state service that includes many Iranian-backed Iraqi militias. The Iraqi federal government has reportedly drafted a plan to dissolve the militias in the PMF, integrate militia members into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and offer key leadership positions in the next Iraqi cabinet to the militia political heads.[42] A Shia Coordination Framework member told a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)-affiliated journalist on July 20 that the Iraqi federal government shared this plan with unspecified Iranian governmental figures.[43]

Key Takeaways

- **Iran:** The E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) reiterated that it will trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism to reinstate UN Security Council sanctions on Iran if Iran fails to make progress towards a nuclear deal by the end of August 2025. The E3 also wants a "more comprehensive agreement" that includes limits to Iran's ballistic missile program and activities that destabilize the region.
- **Iran:** The Iranian regime is facing a broad set of internal security challenges, including insurgency and anti-regime activities that could constrain its ability to rebuild military capabilities following the Israel–Iran war. These internal security challenges will limit Iran's ability to reinvest in its external security.
- **Iraq:** Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani recently met with several Shia Coordination Framework leaders in Baghdad to discuss the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections and unspecified "regional developments." Iran has previously urged unity among Shia Coordination Framework leaders ahead of the elections to improve the likelihood that Iranian-backed parties will maintain control of the Iraqi government.
- **Iran:** An Israeli source told the Washington Post that Iran is "no longer a threshold nuclear state" following US and Israeli strikes. The source stated that Iran will need at least one to two years to build a deliverable nuclear weapon, assuming it can do so undetected.
- **Syria:** Syria will hold its first parliamentary elections through provincial subcommittees in September 2025. The new parliament is unlikely to act as a check on executive power because the executive appoints one-third of its members and the executive influences the appointments of the other two-thirds of the parliament's members.



- 1 **TEHRAN, IRAN.** The Iranian regime is facing a broad set of internal security challenges including insurgency and anti-regime activities that could constrain its ability to rebuild military capabilities following the Israel-Iran war. These internal security challenges will limit Iran's ability to re-invest in its external security.
- 2 **TEHRAN, IRAN.** An Israeli source told the Washington Post that Iran is "no longer a threshold nuclear state" following US and Israeli strikes. The source stated that Iran will need at least one to two years to build a deliverable nuclear weapon, assuming it can do so undetected.
- 3 **DAMASCUS, SYRIA.** Syria will hold its first parliamentary elections through provincial subcommittees in September 2025. The new parliament is unlikely to act as a check on executive power because the executive appoints one-third of its members and the executive influences the appointments of the other two-thirds of the parliament's members.

Iran

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei appointed Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Brigadier General Majid Ibn al Reza as deputy defense and armed logistics minister on July 26.[44] Defense and Armed Logistics Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasir Zadeh proposed that Reza replace former deputy Defense and Armed Logistics Minister Hojatollah Ghoreishi, who was appointed in January 2024 under former Defense and Armed Logistics Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani.[45] It is unclear what position Ghoreishi will hold, if any. Reza had served as the chief executive officer of the Armed Forces Social Security Organization (SATA) since 2022.[46]

The Defense and Armed Logistics Ministry established SATA in 2009 to provide social security for veterans.[47]

Iraq

Several Kataib Hezbollah members attempted to prevent the work of an Iraqi agriculture official, prompting engagements with Iraqi Federal Police officers in Dora, Baghdad, on July 27, killing one civilian and one Federal Police officer.[48] Several Kataib Hezbollah PMF fighters storming a Department of Agriculture building in Baghdad's Dora district on July 27 as the new director was being sworn in, which spurred the fighting.[49] Unspecified security sources and three unidentified department employees told Al Arabiya on July 27 that the fighters aimed to stop the replacement of the former director by attacking the building.[50] Baghdad Province Deputy Governor Ali Zaidan dismissed Kataib Hezbollah-affiliated Department of Agriculture Director Iyad Kazim Ali on July 23 and replaced him with Osama Hassan Saloumi.[51] Iraq's Joint Operations Command announced on July 27 the arrest of 14 members of the PMF's 45th and 46th Brigades for their suspected involvement in the attack.[52] The 45th and 46th PMF brigades are controlled by the Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah.[53] The Ministry of Interior announced on July 28 the arrest of the former Department of Agriculture Director for his "direct involvement" in the incident.[54]

Kataib Hezbollah denied on July 28 any involvement in the Iraqi Federal Police attack.[55] A member of Kataib Hezbollah's political party, Harakat Hoquq, described the clashes between Kataib Hezbollah militants and Iraqi Federal Police as "friendly fire" and a "mistake." [56] The Shia Coordination Framework also condemned the attack on July 27.[57] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Iran-backed Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. The PMF's Popular Mobilization Commission stated on July 27 that it will not "tolerate" any individual who violates orders or security procedures.[58] Kataib Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed Iraqi actors have tried to distance themselves from the incident, which occurred amid discussions on restricting arms to the state and dissolving the PMF.

Iraqi media reported on July 28 that at least four one-way attack drones crashed in Erbil, Duhok, and Kirkuk provinces.[59] Iraqi media reported on July 28 that at least two one-way attack drones crashed in Erbil Province.[60] One landed near Korgosk village, and the other hit a popular cafe in Rizgari Subdistrict.[61] Shafaq News reported on July 28 that a drone crashed in Bardarash District, Duhok Province.[62] Iraqi media also reported on July 28 that a drone fell near Hihawa village in Kirkuk Province.[63] It is unclear what these drones were targeting because the crashes appear to be the result of a technical malfunction rather than precise targeting. This reporting coincides with Iraqi National Security Advisor Qasim al Araj's visit to Erbil to discuss recent drone attacks targeting oil fields in Iraqi Kurdistan with the Kurdistan Regional Government.[64] Likely Iranian-backed Iraqi actors conducted at least nine one-way drone attacks targeting seven oil fields in Iraqi Kurdistan between July 14 and 17.[65]

The Iraqi state-run State Organization for Marketing Oil (SOMO) called on Iraqi authorities on July 28 to halt "widespread" oil smuggling operations in Iraqi territorial waters.[66] SOMO's statement came after the United States reportedly threatened in July 2025 to

sanction SOMO and therefore block \$350 million of Iraqi oil revenue if the Iraqi federal government failed to prevent Iranian crude oil smuggling.[67] Iran oversees an oil smuggling network in Iraq that generates around a billion dollars annually for Iran and its Axis of Resistance.[68] The United States sanctioned on July 3 six entities and four vessels involved in smuggling Iranian oil. The sanctioned entities included a network of companies run by an Iraqi businessman.[69]

Syria

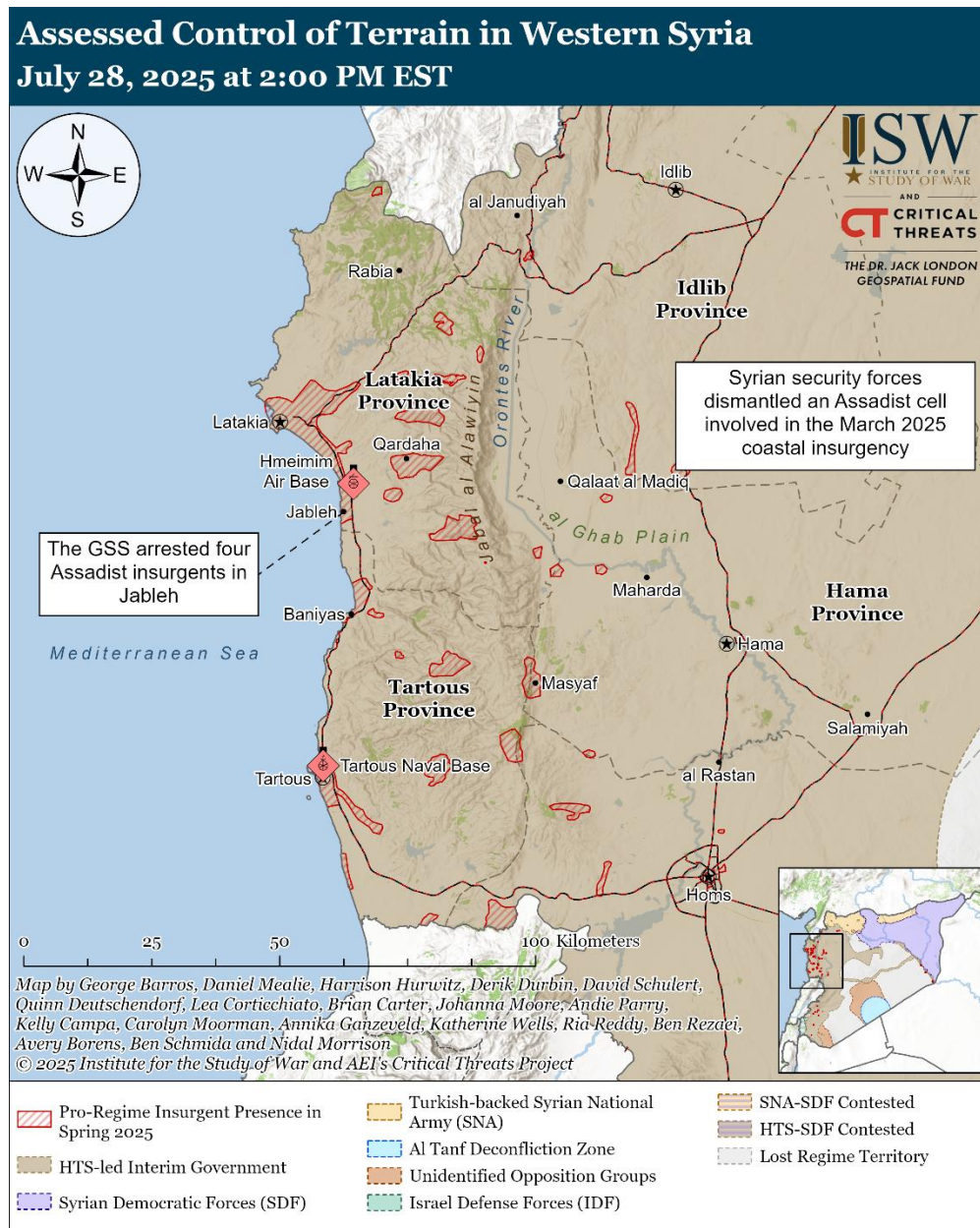
French, US, and UK officials are mediating stalled integration talks between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian transitional government. The SDF and Shara's government have not fully negotiated the integration of Kurdish-majority northeastern Syria into the transitional government despite a March agreement that outlined a framework and set of principles.[70] French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot met with SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi in Paris on July 25 to confirm future negotiations between the Syrian transitional government and the SDF and facilitated by US and French mediators to to implement the March 10 agreement, but did not provide a date for talks.[71] Barrot met with Abdi after a joint meeting between himself, US Special Envoy to Syria Thomas Barrack, and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Shaibani, which focused on stability concerns in Syria, including the situation in Suwayda and integration negotiations with the SDF.[72]

Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) Foreign Relations Department co-chair Ilham Ahmed attributed the failure to implement the March 10 agreement on July 27 to interpretive disputes from both sides regarding integration, participation, and unity in the new Syrian state.[73] Ahmed clarified the SDF's position on integration into the state when she emphasized that "airports, passports, and identity cards are sovereign issues that must be managed centrally," while "services, education, culture, and internal security must be managed decentralized to ensure genuine participation by local communities." [74]

Syrian Foreign Ministry Director for US Affairs Qutaiba Idlibi said on July 25 that the March 10 agreement "does not require months to be implemented but rather requires a genuine desire to implement it" and that there has been no progress in implementing the agreement so far.[75] The implementation of the March 10 agreement requires genuine desire for implementation from both sides, and it is notable that the Syrian government has so far failed to implement the first stipulation, which calls for the inclusion of all Syrian ethnic and religious groups in the political process. The transitional government has included minorities only in less-significant political positions, and the Shara-led government has centralized control over the legislative branch, as noted above. Idlibi claimed that "a lack of unified vision within the SDF's leadership" has hindered negotiations.[76]

SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi met with SDF generals, local council leaders, and tribal leaders from Deir ez Zor Province on July 27 in al Shaddadi, Hasakah Province, to discuss plans for an eventual SDF

withdrawal from Deir ez Zor. [77] A source that attended the meeting told Syrian media that the purpose of the meeting was to agree on the withdrawal of the SDF from all of Deir ez Zor Province to allow the Syrian transitional government to assume administration for the entire province.[78] The source claimed that the SDF decided to withdraw from Deir ez Zor after US pressure.[79] The SDF has controlled half of Deir ez Zor Province since it completed its campaign against ISIS in Deir ez Zor with US support.[80] Syrian media reported that the transitional government will assume control of Deir ez Zor Province within two to three months, though Kurdish media denied this claim.[81]



Syrian security forces dismantled an Assadist cell that participated in the March 2025 coastal violence. The General Security Services (GSS) arrested four Assadist insurgents in Jableh, Latakia Province, on July 26.[82] The Syrian Ministry of Interior (MoI) said in a statement on July 26

that it had dismantled a "terrorist cell" led by Maher Hussein Ali, who attacked GSS forces on March 6 during a coordinated wave of Alawite insurgency in coastal Syria. The cell had planned future attacks on the transitional government.[83] The MoI claimed that Ali's cell coordinated with Bashar al Assad's brother Maher, the commander of the "Mazkun Regiment", and with Lebanese Hezbollah as part of a plot to destabilize the coastal region.[84] The GSS also arrested Wadah Suhail Ismail, the commander of the "Mazkun Regiment," on July 26, after transitional government forces dismantled Ali's cell in Jableh and received additional intelligence on Assadist activity.[85] The Mazkun Regiment is an Assadist insurgent group on the Syrian coast that created a social media presence on May 21 after the height of the coastal insurgency in March.[86] The GSS also arrested an Assadist Republican Guard Colonel on July 26, who was the commander of the "Coastal Operation Room" that oversaw Assadist attacks on March 6.[87] The GSS arrested the colonel after it received intelligence from Ali's cell.[88]

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis said that they plan to expand their attack campaign on international shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, likely to put pressure on Israel to stop its war in the Gaza Strip.[89] The Houthis announced on July 27 that they entered the "fourth stage" of their attack campaign against Israel and will attack any vessel tied to Israel, regardless of the flag the vessel is sailing under.[90] The Houthis' announcement comes after Israel and the United States withdrew from ceasefire talks with Hamas on July 25.[91] The Houthis have tied their campaign against international shipping to Israel's war in the Gaza Strip since October 2023.[92]

The Houthis published a propaganda video on July 28 interviewing *Eternity C* crewmembers under duress in an attempt to portray the Houthis as a responsible actor.[93] The Houthis blamed the crew's captain and the shipping company for the sinking of the *Eternity C* and the death of four crewmembers. The Houthis initiated the attack on *Eternity C* and thus bear the responsibility for the deaths and damage.[94] The Houthis prompted one crewmember to warn shipping companies against trading with Israel to avoid being hijacked and their crew taken hostage.[95] The Houthis forced crewmembers to say that the Houthis rescued and provided shelter for the crew.[96] The Houthis also took the *Eternity C* crew hostage in international waters, which is an act of piracy under international law.[97]

The Houthis launched three drones targeting Eilat, Ashkelon, and Hadera and a missile targeting a "sensitive" site in Beer Sheva in southern Israel on July 24.[98] The IDF Air Force intercepted a Houthi drone before it crossed into Israeli territory on July 24.[99] 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.[100]

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

POWERED BY:



BABEL STREET

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Iran Update



Ria Reddy, Ben Schmida, Ben Rezaei, Carolyn Moorman, Katherine Wells,

Avery Borens, Johanna Moore, and Brian Carter

July 29, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

Media affiliated with Iranian Supreme Leader International Affairs Adviser Ali Akbar Velayati published an op-ed on July 29, framing moderates and pragmatic hardliners in Iran as necessary for national unity following the 12-day Israel-Iran War.[1] The article emphasized the importance of national unity and stated that a "reformist, moderate or transformational force must be strengthened" to establish and maintain such unity.[2] The article stated that this "force" does not seek to overthrow the existing system but is focused on gradual changes to improve societal conditions.[3] This statement is consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that ascendant moderates and pragmatic hardliners in the Iranian regime appear to be trying to reshape Iran's domestic and foreign policy in the post-war period.[4] The article stated that this approach has the "closest and most positive connection" with national solidarity.[5] The article stated that the moderates and pragmatic hardliners, which include moderate Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, pragmatic hardliner Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, and Velayati, were the most successful at bolstering national unity during the war.[6] The article criticized other "political forces," including reformists and ultra-hardliners.[7] Reformist outlet Ensaf News claimed on July 25 that ultra-hardliners have become marginalized and sidelined by all three branches of government as moderates and pragmatic hardliners seek to exert more political influence in the regime.[8]

The article emphasized the importance of "achieving social satisfaction." [9] This statement aligns with the views of moderates and pragmatic hardliners, who emphasize social reform. Velayati stated on July 21 that preserving national cohesion may require "revising social policies" and prioritizing public satisfaction.[10] He also warned that "outdated methods" no longer suit Iranian society.[11] Pezeshkian similarly stated on July 22 that solving problems requires dialogue, "not confrontation." [12]

Nour News published an op-ed on July 29 calling on the Iranian regime to alter its internal and external strategy following the 12-day Israel-Iran War.[13] Nour News has historically been affiliated with the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) broadly, but has recently aligned itself increasingly with the former SNSC Secretary Ali Shamkhani. The article emphasized that Iran's threat environment has changed following the war and urged Iran to "rearrange the country's decision-making system." [14] This appears to be a reaction to the convoluted Iranian decision-making process, which functioned poorly during the war. The article stated that Iran needs to adjust to counter hybrid threats that target Iran's soft and hard power. The article stated that Iran needs to integrate "public confidence and social capital" into the national security framework.[15] This statement echoes a statement from Shamkhani on June 28 calling on regime officials to resolve "disputes" with the Iranian population through "mutual understanding." [16]

The article stated that Iran must shift from a reactive posture to a preemptive posture that focuses on future threats.[17] The article proposed the creation of a "Strategic Command Center" with "cross-sectoral authority" to coordinate between the "security, economic, and diplomatic centers" and develop rapid responses to evolving threats.[18] The center would "eliminate parallel institutions, improve transparency, and reduce inter-organizational frictions." Iran's defense establishment is comprised of the following entities, but none of them fulfill all of the roles outlined in this proposal:[19]

- Supreme National Security Council: responsible for determining Iran's defense and national security policies per the supreme leader's guidance.[20] The supreme leader approves SNSC decisions, but during the war, the supreme leader was out of touch with his principal subordinates.[21]
- Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS): responsible for crafting strategic guidance and military policy, and is similar to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. It does not have operational responsibility.
- Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters: a parallel organization to the AFGS and is responsible for joint and wartime operations.
- Ministry of Defense: responsible for managing the Iranian military-industrial base and arms acquisitions and sales.

Iran has continued its efforts to assess damage at the Esfahan Nuclear Technology Center (ENTC) and Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant. The Institute for Science and International Security reported on July 28 that Iran has access to the northernmost tunnel entrance at the ENTC.[22] The Institute reported that there has been minimal to no activity at the other tunnel entrances.[23] Western media previously reported that US and Israeli strikes blocked tunnel entrances to an underground complex at the ENTC that stores part of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile.[24] The Institute assessed on June 24 that US strikes collapsed all four tunnel entrances at the ENTC.[25] It remains unclear whether Iranian personnel can enter the northernmost tunnel itself and if the buried nuclear material is accessible via this tunnel. Senior US and Israeli officials have stated they will resume strikes on Iran if they detect any Iranian efforts to resume activities at the nuclear facilities or extract the buried nuclear material.[26]

Satellite imagery captured on July 25 shows Iran has constructed new roads at Fordow. One of the roads extends along the impact points of the US GBU-57 bunker buster bombs, and the other appears approximately 700 meters to the east. Iran is likely building these roads in order to allow construction and excavation vehicles access to the strike location to assess damage and begin repairs.

Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission members urged President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration on July 28 to prioritize national defense, strengthen internal security, and realign foreign policy.[27] Parliamentarians called for allocating more budget to defensive capabilities in the next Persian calendar year (March 2025 to March 2026) and reinforcing border security in the northeast and southeast.[28] The emphasis on southeastern border security follows an uptick in anti-regime attacks in the region since December 2023, mainly by Jaish al Adl—a Baloch Salafi-jihadi group that frequently attacks Iranian security forces in southeastern Iran.[29] The committee members also demanded upgrades to the military communications infrastructure.[30] Parliamentarians also urged stronger ties with China.[31] This is

consistent with CTP-ISW's assessment that Iran is trying to strengthen military and defense cooperation with China following the Israel-Iran War.[32] The committee members also called for a reassessment of relations with certain countries, especially Azerbaijan.[33] Iranian officials and media have repeatedly accused Azerbaijan of cooperating with Israel, particularly during the 12-day war.[34] These demands come as Parliament has taken a more active role in recent weeks and is now pushing the Pezeshkian administration for a more assertive security and foreign policy agenda.

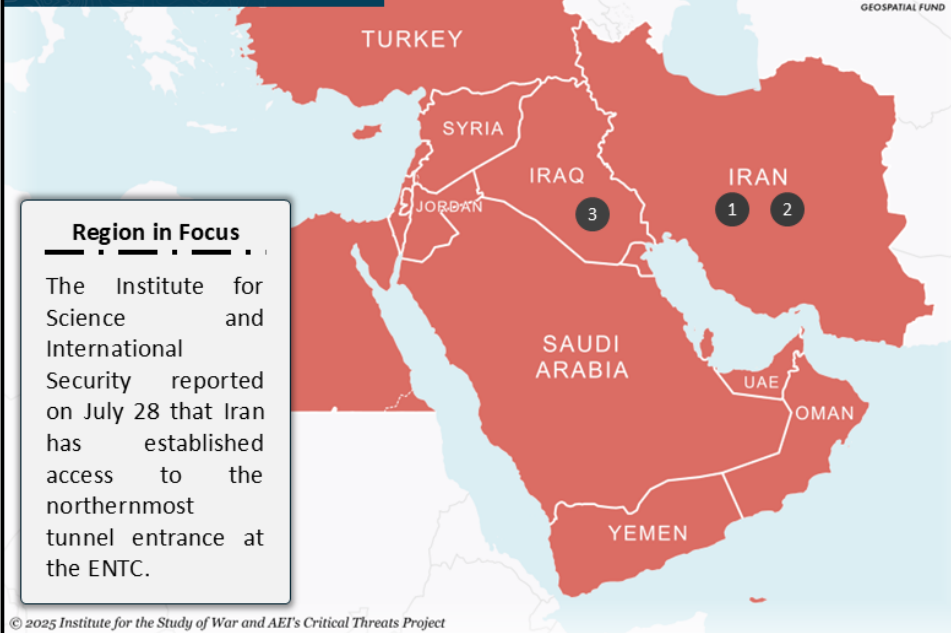
Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani held several meetings with Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia actors over the past several weeks to discuss efforts that would preserve and strengthen members of Iran's Axis of Resistance in Iraq. "High-ranking" Iraqi political sources told an Emirati outlet that Ghaani told four unspecified Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) leaders to instruct Popular Mobilization Force (PMF) commanders and members to use self-restraint during a meeting in Baghdad on July 27.[35] The PMF is an Iraqi state service that includes many Iranian-backed Iraqi militias that nominally report to the Iraqi prime minister but report to Iran.[36] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias conducted attacks on Israeli, US, Iraqi, and other foreign targets during and after the Israel-Iran Twelve Days War, though it is unclear if these attacks were sanctioned by Iran.[37] The militias did not claim any of the attacks. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias conducted approximately 40 drone attacks on Israel between June 12 and 24.[38]

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani claimed in a July 29 interview with the Associated Press that Iraqi federal government "security operations" thwarted 29 unspecified attacks by "armed groups" during the Israel-Iran War, which is likely a reference to attacks by Iraqi militias. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have conducted periodic attacks on foreign-owned oil fields in the weeks following the Israel-Iran ceasefire went into effect on June 24.[39] Al Araby al Jadeed reported on July 28 that Ghaani condemned unilateral Iraqi militia actions, which is a reference to likely militia drone attacks that targeted oil fields in Iraqi Kurdistan in mid-July.[40]

Iran is likely seeking to preserve the strength of its Iraqi partners in the Axis of Resistance in the wake of two years of conflict, which has severely weakened Iran and several other members of the Axis. Iran and members of the Axis of Resistance have been severely weakened by fighting with Israel over the past two and a half years. Iran's partners in Iraq have not suffered the same military defeat but have been rendered unwilling to wage an open campaign against the United States and Israel for now. Ghaani and other Iranian strategic leaders probably recognize that Israeli or US attacks against the Iraqi militias could provide openings for anti-Iranian Iraqis to undermine and contain Iran's penetration of the Iraqi state. Ghaani warned unidentified Iraqi politicians and Iranian-backed Iraqi militia leaders of "impending" Israeli attacks on militia facilities and headquarters during an earlier visit to Baghdad on July 15, according to informed sources speaking to al Araby al Jadeed.[41] Ghaani has historically met with Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia groups in Iraq at critical junction points to exert Iranian control over armed factions and prevent retaliation from the United States or Israel. Ghaani also reportedly urged Iraqi federal government officials to address unspecified "internal issues" and subvert Israeli infiltration of state agencies.[42] Israeli intelligence and covert operations have been instrumental in enabling Israeli military operations against Iranian and Iranian-backed military targets over the past two years. Iranian officials have expressed continued concern regarding Israeli infiltration.[43]

Iran Update

July 29, 2025



- 1 **IRAN.** Nour News published an op-ed on July 29 calling on the Iranian regime to alter its internal and external strategy following the 12-day Israel-Iran War. This appears to be a reaction to the convoluted Iranian decision-making process, which functioned poorly during the war.
- 2 **IRAN.** Media affiliated with Iranian Supreme Leader's International Affairs Adviser Ali Akbar Velayati published an op-ed on July 29 framing moderates and pragmatic hardliners in Iran as necessary for national unity following the 12-day Israel-Iran War.
- 3 **IRAQ.** Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani held several meetings with Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia actors over the past several weeks to discuss efforts which would preserve and strengthen members of Iran's Axis of Resistance in Iraq.

Key Takeaways

1. Nour News published an op-ed on July 29 calling on the Iranian regime to alter its internal and external strategy following the 12-day Israel-Iran War. The article emphasized that Iran's threat environment has changed following the war and urged Iran to "rearrange the country's decision-making system."
2. Media affiliated with Iranian Supreme Leader's International Affairs Adviser Ali Akbar Velayati published an op-ed on July 29, framing moderates and pragmatic hardliners in Iran as necessary for national unity following the 12-day Israel-Iran War.

3. Iran has continued its efforts to assess damage at the Esfahan Nuclear Technology Center (ENTC) and Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant. The Institute for Science and International Security reported on July 28 that Iran has established access to the northernmost tunnel entrance at the ENTC. Satellite imagery captured on July 25 shows Iran has constructed new roads at Fordow.
4. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force Commander Esmail Ghaani held several meetings with Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia actors over the past several weeks to discuss efforts that would preserve and strengthen members of Iran's Axis of Resistance in Iraq. Iran is likely seeking to preserve the strength of its Iraqi partners in the Axis of Resistance in the wake of two years of conflict, which has severely weakened Iran and several other members of the Axis.

Iran

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei delivered remarks on July 29 and honored those who died in the 12-Day War.[44] Khamenei claimed that the war demonstrated Iran's "power, determination, endurance, and strength" and that the "Islamic Republic" showed the world the "unparalleled strength" of its system.[45] Khamenei claimed that the regime has overcome repeated crises, including war, coups, and unrest, over the past 45 years.[46] Khamenei dismissed Western concerns over "nuclear and human rights issues" as pretexts for Western criticism of Iran's religion and scientific progress.[47]

Amwaj Media reported on July 29 that former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appears to be preparing to run in Iran's 2028 presidential election.[48] Media close to Ahmadinejad reported that local political groups supporting Ahmadinejad gathered in Tehran on July 10 as part of the "first nationwide meeting" of his supporters under an "organizational campaign." [49] Amwaj reported that Ahmadinejad reportedly told his supporters he would "win the presidency" if he chose to run, described the Pezeshkian administration as "weak," and claimed he has "no real rival." [50] Amwaj, citing a pro-reform journalist, assessed that Ahmadinejad's rally represents a political comeback and described the Tehran gathering as a meeting of his campaign staff.[51] The report claimed Ahmadinejad is "taking advantage of the post-war environment" following the 12-Day War to launch his effort.[52] CTP-ISW previously assessed that preexisting fissures within the regime have widened, as moderate and hardliner figures seek to capitalize on the postwar environment to expand their influence and challenge hardliner dominance.[53]

Iran's inflation rate rose to its highest level in two years, according to an Iranian government-run statistics center report published on July 29.[54] The report assessed that the price of bread and cereals increased by 16.6 percent, cooking oil increased by 7.3 percent, and meat increased by 5.9 percent in July. This comes amid drinking water and electricity shortages in Iran.[55] The Iranian regime is particularly concerned about stabilizing the price of basic goods, as increased prices demonstrate the regime's inability to effectively provide for the Iranian people. The cost of basic goods has been a frequent flashpoint that has led to protests against the regime in the past.[56] Economic-related protests have the potential to escalate into anti-regime protests, as demonstrations against increasing gas prices morphed into anti-regime protests in 2019.[57]

Iraq

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al Sudani claimed that the US presence in Iraq incentivizes Iranian-backed Iraqi militias to maintain their arms, which ignores the reality that some Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have repeatedly refused to surrender their arms until the return of the hidden Imam.[58] The United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024 that hundreds of US-led international coalition forces would withdraw from Iraq by September 2025 and that remaining forces would withdraw by the end of 2026.[59] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias would very likely remain armed whether or not US forces remain in Iraq, however. Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah Spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari stated on July 5 that the weapons of the “Iraqi resistance” will only be handed over to the “Imam Mahdi,” not following the withdrawal of US forces.[60] Imam Mahdi is the twelfth and final Imam in Shia Islam, who, according to Twelver Shia, is in hiding and will reveal himself in the future.

Sudani also signaled that he is open to further security and economic cooperation with the United States during the July 29 interview.[61] He stated that the United States and Iraq will meet to “arrange the bilateral security relationship” by the end of 2025.[62] Sudani’s stated aim to maintain a security relationship with the United States contradicts Iranian-backed Shia actors’ demands to end all security cooperation with the United States. Sudani added that he aims to secure US investment in the oil, gas, and artificial intelligence sectors.[63] This interview follows the Iraqi government signing contracts with two US energy companies on July 22 and 15.[64]

Syria

Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) fighters in northern Syria are reportedly experiencing salary delays and cuts, in part due to corruption.[65] **The salary shortfalls likely contribute to poor discipline among lower echelons in the new Syrian army.**[66] A Syrian news outlet reported that the Syrian government only paid half of the salaries for elements of four divisions, predominantly consisting of Turkish-backed Syrian National Army fighters (SNA).[67] The source said that the soldiers are only receiving between \$100 and \$150 once every two months instead of each month due to delays.[68] These salary shortfalls are a nationwide trend impacting Suwayda and Deir ez Zor provinces as well, but the salary shortfalls are exacerbated by corrupt commanders, who are forcing soldiers to hand over their salaries.[69] Some of the repurposed salaries are being sent to former SNA fighters, though dismissed SNA fighters have denied that they have received the informal payments.[70]

Corruption and salary shortfalls are likely contributing to discipline issues in the new Syrian army because the soldiers are unlikely to follow orders from commanders who do not adhere to discipline or military order. These soldiers are also more likely to loot or engage in criminal activity to supplement their truncated income. Commanders set the expectations and discipline in military units, and units frequently take their commander’s lead. Some corrupt commanders set the example for their subordinates that military discipline and order are not required. The government noted in its report on the March 2025 Coastal Violence that soldiers failed to listen to their commanders’ orders along the coast, and some of the units deployed on the coast in March 2025 were from the SNA.[71] This illustrates a lack of military discipline that could be exacerbated by corruption. These corrupt officers also skim their soldiers’ pay, which encourages soldiers to supplement their income by looting or engaging in criminal activity.[72] Syrian MoD forces

looted civilian homes in western Suwayda countryside, for example.[73] The failure to pay forces can create a self-reinforcing cycle in which forces exploit poor security for personal gain, thereby discouraging communities from cooperating with the transitional government and further degrading long-term stability in Syria.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) reaffirmed its commitment to integrate under Damascus's control, but remains distrustful due to the Syrian government's recent treatment of minorities and integration of armed groups that previously committed atrocities against Kurds. SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi **did not change the SDF's demands for integration into Syria ahead** of upcoming negotiations with the Syrian transitional government on July 29.[74] The SDF and the transitional government signed a document in March 2025 outlining four guiding principles for integrating the SDF into the Syrian MoD, but have not made further progress discussing the means by which to accomplish this.[75] Abdi said in the interview that the SDF will implement all provisions of the March 10 agreement by year's end, reaffirmed support for a unified Syria with "one army and one flag," and noted that integration mechanisms with the Ministry of Defense (MoD) will be finalized in an upcoming Paris meeting.[76] Abdi also confirmed that Kurdish political parties accepted the SDF's proposals to Damascus but remain concerned about integration into the MoD without constitutional guarantees for Kurdish identity and implied concerns for the Kurds after recent events on the Syrian coast and Suwayda.[77] Abdi also reiterated the SDF's demand to reflag its forces and integrate into the Syrian MoD without breaking apart its existing units.[78]

The Syrian transitional government has continuously applied a double standard to the SDF's integration into the MoD by imposing conditions on it that it has not required of other armed factions.[79] The transitional government has previously integrated elements of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), which were reflagged and integrated as blocs, while demanding that the SDF fully dissolve before being integrated.[80] These SNA units nominally exist as divisions under the Syrian MoD, but SNA forces effectively operate under their old command structures. Some SNA factions integrated into the MoD have committed documented atrocities against Kurdish civilians in northern Syria and continue to espouse ethno-nationalist rhetoric hostile to Kurdish identity.[81] The success of future SDF integration into the MoD will likely depend on the Syrian government's willingness to offer constitutional guarantees that address longstanding Kurdish concerns over identity and security.

Arabian Peninsula

Nothing significant to report

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has continued to degrade Hezbollah's capabilities and infrastructure since the November 2024 ceasefire agreement. The IDF announced on July 29 that the IDF has conducted airstrikes on 597 Hezbollah targets and has conducted "hundreds" of ground operations in Lebanon since November 2024.[82] The IDF said that it killed at least 234 Hezbollah fighters during these operations.[83] The IDF also destroyed a significant amount of Hezbollah weapons and command sites during these operations, including approximately 90 rocket launch platforms, 20 command headquarters, 40 infrastructure facilities, 5 weapons production sites,

and 3 Radwan training camps.[84] The Radwan Force is Hezbollah's special operations forces unit that is designed to conduct offensive ground operations into Israel.[85] A senior IDF Northern Command official said that the IDF has achieved a third of its "war achievements" against Hezbollah since the November 2024 ceasefire.[86] The IDF stated that IDF operations in Lebanon aimed to remove the threat of cross-border fire, target senior Hezbollah leaders, and set conditions to return displaced Israelis to their homes.[87] The senior official said that Israeli operations post the November 2024 ceasefire have focused on targeting Hezbollah weapons depots, obstructing and delaying its ability to rebuild its forces, and eliminating its fighters who have attempted to return to their positions near the Israel-Lebanon border.[88]

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تمهيداً-الإسرائيلية

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تمهيداً-الإسرائيلية

Iran Update



Katherine Wells, Avery Borens, Ben Rezaei, Ria Reddy, Ben Schmida, Kelly Campa, and Annika Ganzeveld

July 30, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

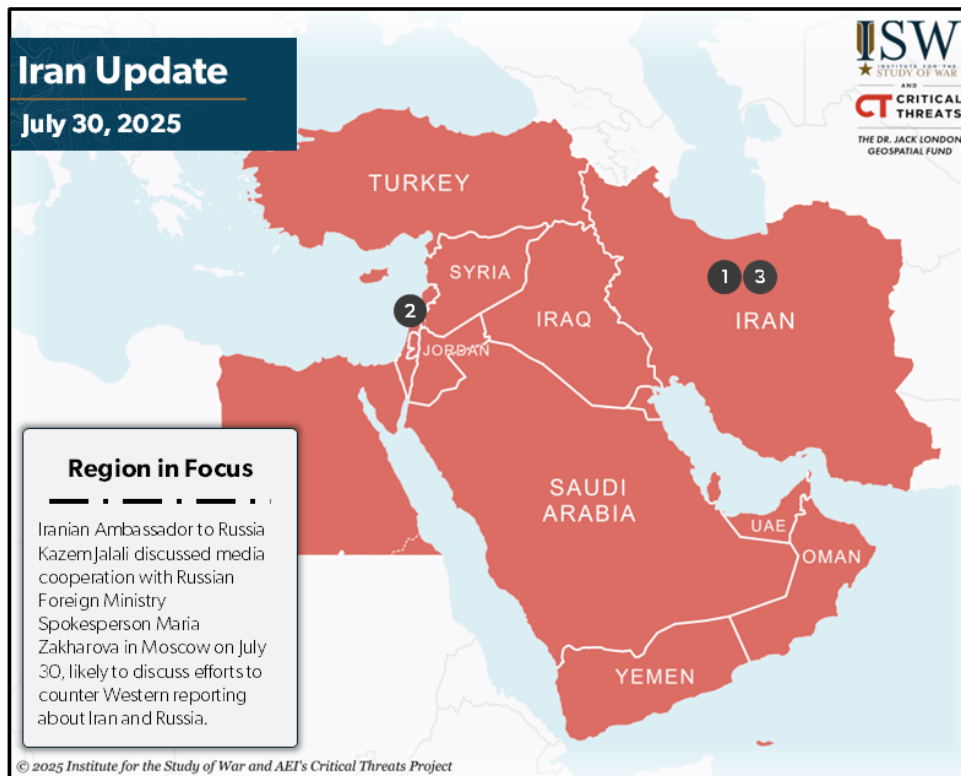
The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) publish the Iran Update, which provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. CTP-ISW publishes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

The Iranian Parliament appears to be trying to play an influential role in shaping Iranian security policy following the Israel-Iran War by supporting and approving security-related legislation at an anomalously high rate. Parliament recently approved a bill on July 27 that would further expand the regime's ability to suppress public dissent.[1] The bill targets unspecified "fake news" on social media and only applies to social media accounts with over 90,000 followers.[2] The regime could define anti-regime statements or unapproved narratives as "fake news" to suppress regime dissidents. The "fake news" bill is the latest of several security-related pieces of legislation that Parliament has approved since the conclusion of the war, which is consistent with the regime's efforts to securitize Iranian society following the war.[3] Parliament approved an espionage bill on June 29 that targets suspected spies or individuals aiding hostile states.[4] The regime could use the espionage bill to target any Iranian who opposes the regime, similar to the "fake news" bill. The Guardian Council still needs to approve the espionage bill in order for it to become law. Parliament separately passed a bill on July 2 to suspend Iranian cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which could undermine moderate pro-negotiations officials' ability to comply with foreign demands for Iran to cooperate with the IAEA.[5] The Iranian Parliament regularly passes legislation, including legislation related to security, but the rate at which it has done so following the war is anomalous and may reflect Parliament's efforts to play a more significant role in shaping Iranian security policy.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's cabinet withdrew the "fake news" bill from Parliament on July 30, which highlights the fissures between moderate and hardliner elements in the Iranian political sphere.[6] The decision to withdraw the bill may also reflect government concerns that the legislation could trigger popular unrest. Pezeskhian's cabinet withdrew the bill to maintain "national unity," according to the Iranian government spokesperson.[7] The Government Information Council head separately stated that Pezeshkian's cabinet withdrew the bill in order to avoid causing "concern and discomfort" to the Iranian

people.[8] The decision comes after the justice minister, legal experts, and civil society members reviewed the bill on July 30 upon Pezeshkian's request and amid criticism from reformist and moderate factions that the bill would further erode trust between the regime and the Iranian people.[9] Iranian hardliners, who comprise the majority of Parliament, will likely oppose Pezeshkian's decision to withdraw the bill.



- 1 **TEHRAN.** The Iranian Parliament appears to be trying to play an influential role in shaping Iranian security policy following the Israel-Iran War by supporting and approving security-related legislation at an anomalously high rate, including a bill that would further expand the regime's ability to suppress public dissent. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian cabinet's withdrawal of the bill from parliament on July 30 highlights the fissures between moderate and hardliner elements in the Iranian regime.
- 2 **BEIRUT.** The United States is reportedly pressuring the Lebanese Council of Ministers to vote on a resolution to disarm Hezbollah. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam is attempting to obtain support for a disarmament resolution from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement before convening the council for a vote, which will likely further stall US-Lebanon negotiations given that Hezbollah continues to refuse to disarm.
- 3 **TEHRAN.** Iran may be trying to replace its US-owned Global Positioning System (GPS) with the PRC's BeiDou satellite navigation system. Iran's interest in BeiDou is part of a broader increase in Iranian military and defense cooperation with the PRC following the war.

The United States is reportedly pressuring the Lebanese Council of Ministers to vote on a resolution to disarm Hezbollah. The United States and Lebanon have exchanged multiple proposals to disarm Hezbollah during ongoing negotiations over the past six weeks but have been unable to reach an agreement.[10] The Lebanese government gave US Special Envoy Thomas

Barrack an updated proposal during his visit to Beirut in early July, which Israel rejected.[11] Five unspecified sources told Reuters on July 29 that the United States will no longer engage in direct negotiations or “pressure Israel” to stop operations in Lebanon until the Lebanese Council of Ministers votes on a resolution that commits the Lebanese government to disarming Hezbollah.[12] The 24-member Council of Ministers is Lebanon’s executive body that sets and implements the Lebanese government’s policies.[13] A council decision would make Hezbollah’s disarmament Lebanese state policy and publicly affirm the government’s commitment to do so. Unspecified political sources told Lebanese media that French President Emmanuel Macron advised Salam to hold a council session to pass a resolution to monopolize the state’s arms during their July 24 meeting.[14]

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam is attempting to obtain support for a disarmament resolution from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement before convening the council for a vote, which will likely further stall US-Lebanon negotiations given that Hezbollah continues to refuse to disarm. Unspecified sources told Lebanese media that Salam is avoiding convening the council before obtaining an internal disarmament agreement with Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, which is a close ally of Hezbollah.[15] Salam agreed to hold a council session on August 5 to discuss Hezbollah disarmament, but Lebanese sources have indicated that no decision will be made at the session.[16] It is unlikely that Hezbollah would support a resolution that calls for its disarmament given its persistent rejection of calls to disarm. Hezbollah has long used ongoing Israeli operations in Lebanon and the 1989 Taif Agreement to justify its retention of weapons.[17] The Taif Agreement calls for the disarmament of all Lebanese militias except Hezbollah and states that Lebanon would take all necessary steps “to liberate all Lebanese territories from [Israel].”[18] Hezbollah Secretary General Naim Qassem has persistently rejected calls for the group to disarm and said on July 30 that supporters of disarmament “serve the Israeli project.”[19] Lebanese Parliament Speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri suggested on July 25 that recent Israeli operations in Lebanon and southern Syria have reinforced Hezbollah’s fears that Israel will remain in Lebanon and continue to pose a challenge to Hezbollah.[20]

Iran may be trying to replace its US-owned Global Positioning System (GPS) with the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) BeiDou satellite navigation system.[21] Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-affiliated media reported on July 30 that repeated GPS disruptions during the recent Israel-Iran War, especially in the Persian Gulf, have led Iran to seek China’s BeiDou navigation system.[22] The Iranian Information and Communications Technology Ministry confirmed on July 14 that the Iranian government deliberately jammed GPS signals inside Iran.[23] IRGC-affiliated media added on July 30 that Iran’s acquisition of BeiDou would represent a step toward strategic and “technological independence.”[24] The report claimed that US-Israeli strikes exposed Iran’s GPS as a vulnerability and framed Iran’s interest in BeiDou as part of a broader effort to challenge “Western digital hegemony.”[25]

Iran’s interest in BeiDou is part of a broader increase in Iranian military and defense cooperation with the PRC following the war.[26] Iranian Deputy Information and Communications Technology Minister Ehsan Chitsaz stated on July 14 that Iran is pursuing cooperation with the PRC within the framework of the 25-year Iran-PRC strategic agreement and noted that BeiDou was one of the main issues that Iranian and Chinese officials discussed during negotiations to reach that agreement.[27] Iran has also reportedly sought to acquire PRC military assets, including J-10 fighter jets and advanced AWACS

systems.[28] CTP-ISW cannot verify these reports. The BeiDou system provides navigation to aircraft, submarines, and missiles.[29] A US-based think tank previously reported that the PRC uses BeiDou-aided guidance for short-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and long-range guided rockets.[30] Iran may seek to use the BeiDou system in similar Iranian weapons systems, particularly to improve the accuracy of short-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones. PRC media previously reported that the BeiDou satellite navigation system is most effective with missiles with ranges under 500 kilometers.[31]

Key Takeaways

- **Iranian Securitization Efforts:** The Iranian Parliament appears to be trying to play an influential role in shaping Iranian security policy following the Israel-Iran War by supporting and approving security-related legislation at an anomalously high rate. This legislation includes a bill that Parliament approved on July 27 that would further expand the regime's ability to suppress public dissent. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's cabinet withdrew this bill from Parliament on July 30, which highlights the fissures between moderate and hardliner elements in the Iranian regime.
- **Hezbollah Disarmament:** The United States is reportedly pressuring the Lebanese Council of Ministers to vote on a resolution to disarm Hezbollah. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam is attempting to obtain support for a disarmament resolution from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement before convening the council for a vote, which will likely further stall US-Lebanon negotiations given that Hezbollah continues to refuse to disarm.
- **Iran-China Military Cooperation:** Iran may be trying to replace its US-owned Global Positioning System (GPS) with the PRC's BeiDou satellite navigation system. Iran's interest in BeiDou is part of a broader increase in Iranian military and defense cooperation with the PRC following the war.

Iran

Iranian armed forces-run Defa Press published an article on July 30 that praised Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's leadership during the 12-day Israel-Iran War.[32] The article described Khamenei as an "architect of national cohesion" and "leader of strategic rationality." [33] The article praised Khamenei for rapidly replacing senior military commanders whom Israel killed during the war and preventing a "decision-making vacuum." [34] The article also noted that Khamenei confronted the war's "psychological, media, cognitive, and diplomatic fronts" and effectively reassured the Iranian people.[35] This article notably follows reports of efforts to sideline Khamenei amid his prolonged absence from public view during the war.[36]

It is possible that the Defa Press article was a response to a July 29 Nour News op-ed that called on the Iranian regime to alter its internal and external strategy following the war.[37] Nour News has historically been affiliated with the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) broadly but has recently aligned itself increasingly with former SNSC Secretary Ali Shamkhani. The op-ed argued that Iran's threat environment has changed after the war and urged Iran to "rearrange the country's decision-making system." [38] The op-ed proposed the creation of a "Strategic Command Center" with "cross-sectoral authority" to coordinate between "security, economic, and diplomatic centers" and develop

rapid responses to evolving threats.[39]The Defa Press article may be a rejection of the proposal for a new decision-making institution by arguing that Khamenei effectively led Iran’s military efforts while also effectively overseeing Iran’s “soft war” efforts during the recent conflict. “Soft war” is a term that Iranian leaders use to refer to the West’s alleged use of nonmilitary means, such as economic and psychological pressure and information operations, to erode the regime’s legitimacy, cultivate domestic opposition, and propagate Western values in Iran.[40] The Nour News article also advocated for a transition from "reactive security" to "proactive security" to address future threats.[41] The Defa Press article, contrastingly, argued that Iran was not in a “position of reaction” but in a position of “setting the stage” during the recent war.[42]

Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali discussed media cooperation with Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova in Moscow on July 30, likely to discuss efforts to counter Western reporting about Iran and Russia.[43] Iranian media reported that Jalali and Zakharova discussed “strategies to combat fake news.” Jalali reportedly condemned Axios for spreading “lies” about Russo-Iranian relations, possibly referring to a July 12 report that Russian President Vladimir Putin had encouraged Iranian officials to accept the US demand for zero uranium enrichment.[44] Russia serves as a model for Iran in the cognitive warfare space.[45] Moscow’s engagement with Iran is consistent with Russia’s engagement with other allied states, such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC), to coordinate messaging on key issues, particularly Russia’s war in Ukraine.[46] Jalali and Zakharova’s meeting takes place as Iranian leaders are taking steps to further crack down on the Iranian information space. The Iranian Parliament recently introduced a bill that would penalize social media users who spread “fake news,” for example.[47]

Iran’s worsening water crisis has reportedly triggered protests in at least two cities across Iran since July 22. Anti-regime media published footage on July 29 of a large protest in Khomam, Gilan Province, that featured chants such as “water and electricity are cut off, this happens every day” and “we don’t want incompetent officials.”[48] Security forces reportedly violently suppressed the protest.[49] A similar protest against water shortages reportedly took place in Sabzevar, Khorasan Razavi Province, on July 22.[50]

Iran’s water crisis has continued to worsen and may lead to further protests. Iranian Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi stated on July 26 that 30 out of Iran’s 31 provinces are facing “water stress.”[51] Tehran Province Governor Mohammad Sadegh Motamedi said on July 25 that four of the dams that supply the province with water are 13 percent full. Certain areas of Tehran are reportedly experiencing water outages for up to 12 hours a day.[52] A resident of Bushehr in southwestern Iran told Western media that Bushehr residents only have access to running water for a few hours per day.[53] Water shortages have become increasingly common in Iran in recent years due to industrial expansion, climate change, and sanctions.[54] Tehran Province has entered its fifth straight year of drought, according to Iranian state media.[55] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian warned in a cabinet meeting on July 19 that the water crisis requires “urgent action.”[56] The Iranian regime is likely concerned that water shortages could cause further internal unrest. Water shortages in Khuzestan and Esfahan provinces in 2021 and Sistan and Baluchistan Province in 2023 previously triggered protests.[57]

Iraq

Nothing significant to report.

Syria

The Syrian and Iraqi interior ministries dismantled a Captagon smuggling network in Damascus on July 30.[58] The Syrian Interior Ministry seized 1.35 million Captagon pills and arrested several individuals.[59] A Syrian source assessed that the pills were likely bound for Iraq.[60] The Syrian and Iraqi interior ministries shared intelligence during the operation.[61] This operation marks the first time that the Syrian and Iraqi interior ministries have collaborated on anti-narcotics since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.[62] The Syrian Interior Ministry previously conducted joint anti-narcotics operations with Turkey along the Turkish-Syrian border in May 2025 and with Saudi Arabia in June 2025.[63] Captagon was one of the largest sources of income for the Assad regime and Iranian proxies such as Hezbollah.[64]

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis launched a ballistic missile targeting Ben Gurion Airport in Israel on July 29.[65] The Israeli Air Force (IAF) intercepted the Houthi missile before it crossed into Israeli territory.[66] 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.[67]

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

See topline section.



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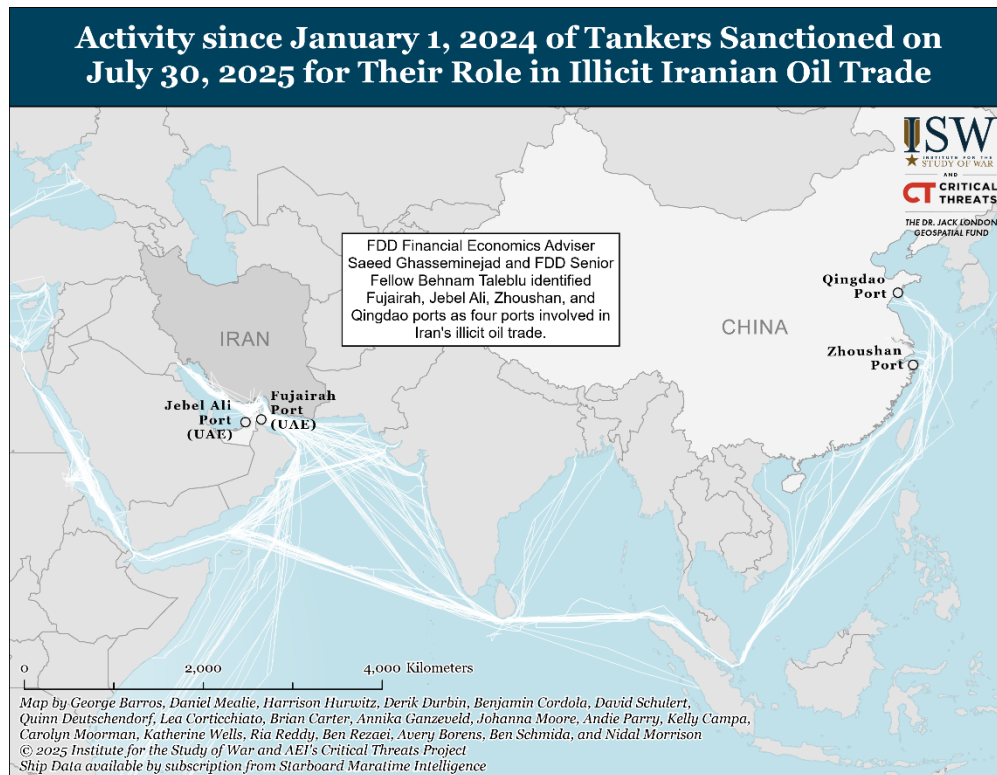
July 31, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

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.

The United States sanctioned Senior Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani's son, Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, and his multinational shipping network on July 30 for generating tens of billions of dollars in revenue for the Shamkhani family and the Iranian regime.[1] The US Treasury Department sanctioned 12 individuals, 52 vessels, and 53 entities, including 15 shipping firms, tied to Hossein Shamkhani's network to disrupt Iranian and Russian exports of petroleum products and other goods.[2] Hossein Shamkhani manages a fleet of oil tankers and containerships through several UAE-based companies.[3] One of the companies is involved in shipping missiles, drone components, and dual-use goods from Iran to Russia to support Russia's war in Ukraine in exchange for Russian oil.[4] The European Union recently sanctioned Hossein Shamkhani on July 21 for facilitating Russian oil trade.[5] Hossein Shamkhani's network has employed sophisticated tactics to evade previous international sanctions on his network.[6] These tactics include frequently changing vessel operators and managers to obscure ownership, falsifying cargo information, creating subsidiary companies in offshore jurisdictions, and turning off automatic identification systems (AIS) during loading. Iran's ghost fleet vessels frequently turn off their AIS and use falsified documents to transfer Iranian oil.[7] Hossein Shamkhani and his sanctioned associates also use aliases and international passports to bypass financial restrictions in the international banking system.[8] The network has laundered oil revenues through Emirati companies.[9] US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent noted that these sanctions are the largest action that the US Treasury Department has taken against Iran since US President Donald Trump reinstated his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran in February 2025.[10]

The United States sanctioned the Zhoushan Jinrun Petroleum Transfer Company, which is located at Zhoushan Port, Zhejiang Province, China, on July 30 for receiving at least six Iranian crude oil shipments.[11] At least three oil tankers and 18 cargo ships that the United States sanctioned on July

30 have visited Zhoushan Port since January 2024, according to commercially available maritime data. Zhoushan Port is one of several ports that Foundation for Defense of Democracies Financial Economics Adviser Saeed Ghasseminejad and Senior Fellow Behnam Ben Taleblu identified on July 30 as being involved in Iran's illicit oil trade.[12]

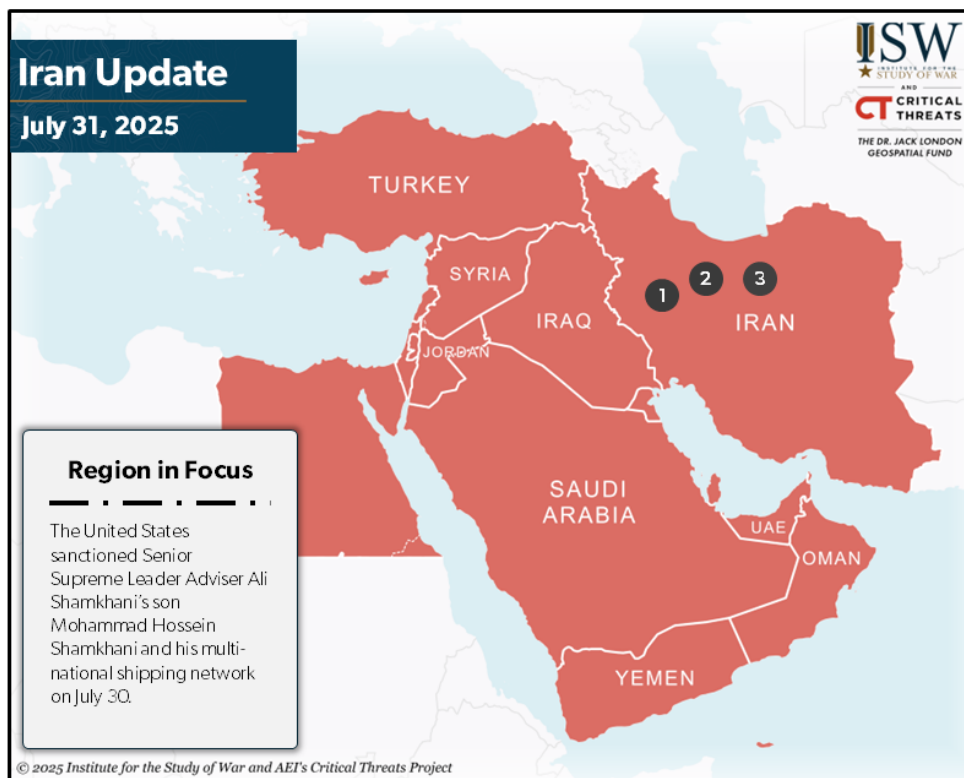


Iran increased crude oil exports from 1.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in June 2025 to 1.8 million bpd in the first half of July 2025, according to data reviewed by Ghasseminejad and Taleblu on July 30.[13] Ninety-two percent of Iranian crude oil exports in June went to China, including to Zhoushan and Qingdao ports, while 6 percent of Iranian crude oil exports in June went to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), including to Fujairah and Jebel Ali ports, according to the data. China imported more than 1.8 million bpd between June 1 and 10, according to Vortexa.[14] Another firm that tracks Iranian oil tankers reported that Iranian oil exports to China, including petroleum products and condensates, reached 1.46 million bpd on June 27.[15] Iranian oil exports to China likely decreased in the second half of June due to the 12-day Israel-Iran War. Iranian oil exports still increased in June from around 1 million bpd in May, however.[16]

Iranian outlet Nour News posted on X on July 30 that there will likely be "imminent changes" in high-ranking Iranian security institutions after "necessary...structural reforms have been implemented." [17] Nour News has historically been affiliated with the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) broadly, but has recently increasingly aligned itself with former SNSC Secretary Ali Shamkhani. Other Iranian media outlets widely recirculated this announcement but did not provide further details.[18] This post notably comes after Nour News published an op-ed on July 29 calling on the Iranian regime to alter its internal and external strategy following the 12-day Israel-Iran War.[19] The op-ed proposed the creation of a "Strategic Command

Center" to coordinate between "security, economic, and diplomatic centers" and develop rapid responses to evolving threats.[20] The center would reportedly "eliminate parallel institutions, improve transparency, and reduce inter-organization frictions."[21]

Some Iranian media outlets and social media users have speculated that the announcement from Nour News could be referring to Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani's possible appointment as SNSC secretary.[22] CTP-ISW cannot verify these claims. Some Iranian media outlets have speculated in recent weeks that Larijani may be appointed as the next SNSC secretary.[23] Larijani previously served as SNSC secretary from 2005 to 2007.[24] Ali Akbar Ahmadian has served as the SNSC secretary since May 2023.[25] A political activist reportedly close to Larijani told Iranian media on July 30 that he "does not rule out the possibility" that Larijani may be appointed SNSC secretary.[26] He stated that Larijani and President Masoud Pezeshkian have a close relationship.[27] The Iranian president appoints the secretary of the SNSC.[28] A reformist outlet also suggested on July 24 that Larijani may be appointed as SNSC secretary.[29] The outlet praised Larijani as an effective, trusted, and moderate leader. Another reformist outlet similarly highlighted that Larijani has historically aligned with the pragmatists within the Iranian hardline faction.[30] These characterizations of Larijani as a "moderate" official are consistent with reports that Larijani tried to contact Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei during the Israel-Iran War to advocate for a ceasefire.[31] Speculation about Larijani's potential appointment as SNSC secretary comes amid reports that Larijani's recent activities, including his visit to Russia on July 20 to discuss nuclear negotiations, signal a renewed effort by moderate and pragmatic factions in the regime to reassert influence over Iran's domestic and foreign policy after the war.[32] Iranian media has recently characterized Larijani's recent activities as his "return to the center of gravity of [Iran's] official politics."[33]



- 1 **Iran.** The United States sanctioned the Zhoushan Jinrun Petroleum Transfer Company, which is located at Zhoushan Port, Zhejiang Province, China, on July 30 for receiving at least six Iranian crude oil shipments. At least three oil tankers and 18 cargo ships that the United States sanctioned on July 30 have visited Zhoushan Port since January 2024.
- 2 **Iran.** Iran increased crude oil exports from 1.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in June 2025 to 1.8 million bpd in the first half of July 2025, according to data reviewed by Foundation for the Defense of Democracies Financial Economics Advisor Saeed Ghasseminejad and Senior Fellow Behnam Ben Taleblu.
- 3 **Iran.** Iranian outlet Nour News posted on X on July 30 that there will likely be “imminent changes” in high-ranking Iranian security institutions after “necessary. . . structural reforms have been implemented.” Some Iranian media outlets and social media users speculated that this announcement from Nour News could be referring to Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani’s possible appointment as SNSC secretary.

Key Takeaways

- **US Sanctions against Iran:** The United States sanctioned Senior Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Shamkhani’s son, Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, and his multinational shipping network on July 30 for generating tens of billions of dollars in revenue for the Shamkhani family and the Iranian regime. The US Treasury Department sanctioned 12 individuals, 52 vessels, and 53 entities tied to Hossein Shamkhani’s network to disrupt Iranian and Russian exports of petroleum products and other goods.
- **Iranian Crude Oil Exports:** Iran increased its crude oil exports from 1.7 million barrels per day (bpd) in June 2025 to 1.8 million bpd in the first half of July 2025, according to data reviewed

by Foundation for the Defense of Democracies Financial Economics Adviser Saeed Ghasseminejad and Senior Fellow Behnam Ben Taleblu.

- **Iranian Domestic Politics:** Iranian outlet Nour News posted on X on July 30 that there will likely be “imminent changes” in high-ranking Iranian security institutions after “necessary... structural reforms have been implemented.” Some Iranian media outlets and social media users speculated that this announcement could be referring to Supreme Leader Adviser Ali Larijani’s possible appointment as SNSC secretary.

Iran

Iran continues to maintain maximalist demands, including its right to domestic uranium enrichment, which makes it very unlikely that Iran will accept a nuclear deal with the United States that includes a zero-uranium enrichment demand. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi stated in an interview with the *Financial Times* on July 31 that the United States “must agree to compensate” Iran for damages it incurred during the Israel-Iran War.[34] Araghchi further demanded that the United States explain why it struck Iran during nuclear negotiations and assure Iran that it will not attack Iran again.[35] Araghchi exchanged messages with US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff during and after the war and has reportedly told Witkoff that the path to negotiations is possible but remains “narrow.”[36] Unspecified Western diplomats told Israeli media on July 30 that the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) officials left the July 25 Iran-E3 meeting frustrated and stated that “there is little room for progress” if Iran maintains its right to domestic uranium enrichment.[37] The E3 has repeatedly warned that it may trigger the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) snapback mechanism if Iran does not resume nuclear negotiations with the United States and produce “concrete results” in the negotiations by the end of August.[38]

Reformist outlet Ensaf News reported on July 31 that an unspecified member of President Masoud Pezeshkian’s administration recently met with former Iranian Prime Minister and key leader of the 2009 Green Movement Mir Hossein Mousavi “on behalf of Pezeshkian.”[39] The 2009 Green Movement was a mass protest movement in Iran that emerged after the disputed June 2009 presidential election, with demonstrators demanding political reform and protesting against electoral fraud.[40] Iranian Vice President for Executive Affairs Mohammad Jafar Ghaem Panah stated that the meeting between the unspecified government official and Mousavi indicates Pezeshkian’s willingness to lift Mousavi’s house arrest, which he stated is a “demand of part of the people.”[41] The meeting comes after Pezeshkian stated on July 22 that his administration is ready to engage “fairly and justly” with the “opposition.”[42] 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.[43]

Iraq

Nothing significant to report.

Syria

Senior Syrian political and defense officials met with Russian officials in Moscow for the first time on July 31 to discuss bilateral economic cooperation and are likely to continue negotiations over Russian basing rights in Syria.[44] Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Lavrov stated that Russia is willing to support Syrian reconstruction and review Assad-era “agreements and contracts.”[45] Syrian Defense Minister Marhaf Abu Qasra and General Intelligence Service Director Hussein Salameh separately met with Russian Defense Minister Andrey Belousov to discuss “cooperation between defense ministries and the situation in the Middle East,” which likely refers to Russian bases in Syria.[46] Lavrov thanked Syrian authorities for ensuring the security of Russia’s two military bases in Syria.[47] The Russian government invited Syrian President Ahmed al Shara to Moscow in October 2025 to attend the Arab-Russian Summit.[48] Russia and the Syrian transitional government have engaged in negotiations about the status of Russian bases in Syria since January 2025.[49] Russian forces remain present at Hmeimim Airbase in Latakia Province and a naval base in Tartous.[50] Russian forces have reportedly returned to a helicopter base in Qamishli, Hasakah Province, after evacuating the base following the collapse of the Assad regime.[51] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin previously suggested in May 2025 that Russia was continuing to negotiate with the Syrian government about the status of Russian military bases in Syria.[52]

The Syrian Ministry of Finance announced on July 31 that “outlaw groups” robbed money intended for public servant salaries in Suwayda Province, which demonstrates the lack of rule of law in this province following the announcement of the July 18 ceasefire agreement.[53] “Outlaw groups” robbed the state-owned Syrian Commercial Bank in the town of Shahba, Suwayda Province, on July 31.[54] The Syrian government and Druze militias agreed to a three-phase ceasefire on July 18, which is currently in the second phase. This phase includes the evacuation of civilians, the delivery of aid, and the restoration of basic services in Suwayda Province.[55] Druze militias have become responsible for security and the distribution of government services throughout the province since the ceasefire’s announcement.[56] The third phase of the July 18 ceasefire mandates that internal security personnel will deploy to Suwayda Province and that state institutions in the province will reopen, although it is unclear when this phase will be implemented.[57]

The Syrian Ministry of Justice (MoJ) announced on July 30 that it has received cases from the Ministry of Interior to prosecute former Assad regime officials accused of war crimes.[58] MoJ officials reviewed several cases and submitted public lawsuits against multiple prominent Assad regime officials.[59] MoJ judges will first review the lawsuit against General Atef Najib, Bashar al Assad’s cousin.[60] General Najib previously served as the Daraa Province political security commander and was accused of torturing children, which sparked the first anti-Assad protests in Daraa City in 2011.[61] This announcement comes amid significant reform to the Syrian judicial system, including the removal of Assad-era judges.[62]

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis launched five drones targeting an unspecified “military site in Ashkelon and two “sensitive” sites in Tel Aviv and the Negev Desert in southern Israel on July 30.[63] The Israeli Air Force intercepted a Houthi drone before it crossed into Israeli territory on July 30.[64]

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.[65]

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun publicly called on Hezbollah to disarm during a speech on July 31.[66] Aoun called on Hezbollah to “rely solely on the Lebanese state” and said that Hezbollah’s refusal to disarm enables Israel to justify attacks on Lebanon.[67] Aoun has previously emphasized the need for the Lebanese state to have a monopoly on arms but has never explicitly urged Hezbollah to disarm.[68] Hezbollah has persistently rejected calls to disarm, which makes it unlikely that Hezbollah will accept Aoun’s call for the group to give up its weapons.[69]

Aoun also revealed details about the Lebanese government’s recent counterproposal to the United States regarding Hezbollah’s disarmament during his July 31 speech. The United States and Lebanon have exchanged multiple proposals about disarming Hezbollah during negotiations over the past six weeks, but have not yet reached an agreement.[70] The United States submitted a proposal to the Lebanese government on June 19.[71] Aoun announced that the Lebanese government will discuss amendments to the US proposal during a cabinet session on August 5.[72] Aoun said that Lebanon’s counterproposal includes demands for Israel to halt operations in Lebanon and for Hezbollah to disarm.[73] The proposal also stipulates that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) would recruit, equip, and deploy an additional 4,500 soldiers to southern Lebanon to seize weapons.[74] Aoun did not explain how the Lebanese government will address Hezbollah infrastructure north of the Litani River.[75] Western media reported on July 29 that Israel rejected a Lebanese government proposal in recent days.[76] It is unclear whether the amendments that Aoun outlined were made before or after Israel’s rejection.

The Lebanese government’s proposal commits the government to strengthening Lebanese border security, which could further hamper Hezbollah’s ability to smuggle weapons into Lebanon.[77] The proposal includes mechanisms to improve counter-smuggling cooperation between Lebanon and Syria.[78] Recent disruptions to Hezbollah’s land, air, and maritime smuggling routes have complicated Hezbollah’s ability to procure Iranian weapons.[79] The Syrian government and the LAF have increased counter-smuggling efforts in recent months and dismantled smuggling networks between Lebanon and Syria that Iran previously used to transfer weapons to Hezbollah.[80] The LAF has also increased its presence along the Lebanon-Syria border and maintained control over areas known for Hezbollah smuggling.[81]

**The Lebanese Government's Proposal
as of July 31, 2025, at 2:00 PM ET**

Demands	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Israel will immediately stop all attacks on Lebanon and withdraw from southern Lebanon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lebanese government will establish control over all Lebanese territory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lebanese government will disarm all armed groups, including Hezbollah
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unspecified countries will provide Lebanon with \$1 billion annually for ten years to support the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebanon will organize an international conference in fall 2025 to acquire funds for reconstruction efforts in Lebanon
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebanon will finalize land and sea border demarcations with US, Saudi, and French mediation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lebanese government will repatriate Syrians from Lebanon to Syria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lebanese government will increase counter-smuggling efforts with Syria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LAF will recruit and equip an additional 4,500 soldiers to deploy to southern Lebanon to help seize weaponry



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

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Iran Update



Ben Rezaei, Ben Schmida, Katherine Wells, Avery Borens, Carolyn Moorman, Ria Reddy, Andie Parry, Parker Hempel, Ali Fishman, and Annika Ganzeveld

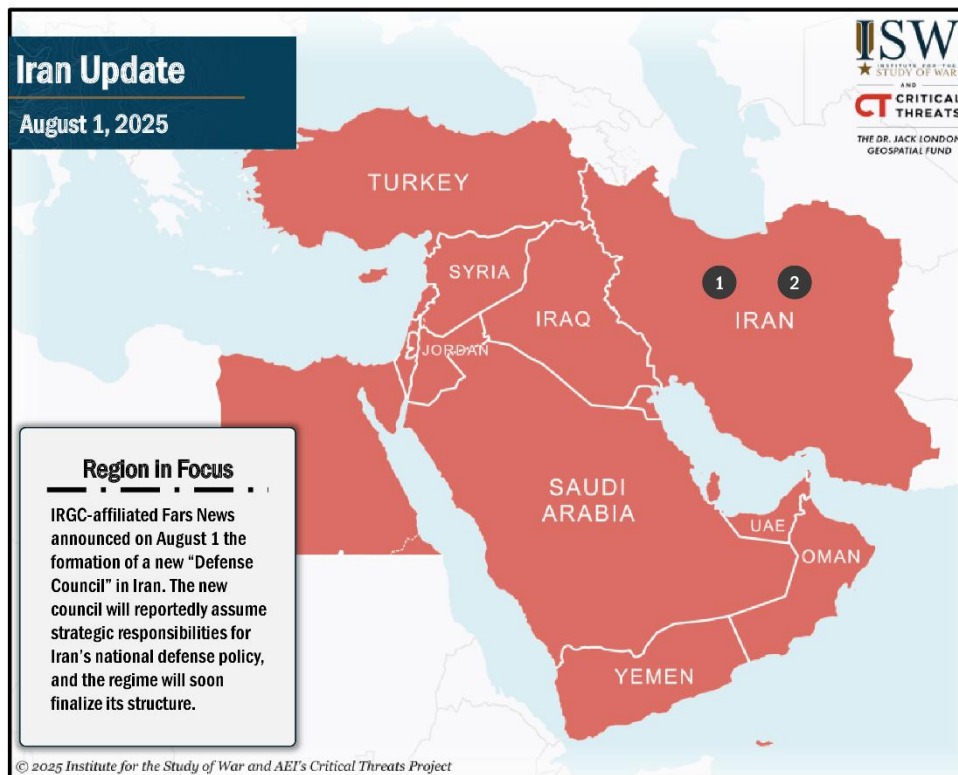
August 1, 2025 Information Cutoff: 2:00 PM ET

Former Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif proposed the creation of a regional nuclear body called the Middle East Network for Atomic Research and Advancement (Menara) in an op-ed in the Guardian on July 31.[1] Iran would almost certainly demand to maintain domestic enrichment capabilities under such a proposal.[2] Zarif stated that Menara would promote “peaceful nuclear cooperation” among member states.[3] Zarif added that countries would have to reject nuclear weapons and agree to verification mechanisms to be admitted to the regional body.[4] Zarif stated that Menara member states would “benefit from peaceful nuclear technology” and conduct “joint ventures,” including uranium enrichment, waste management, nuclear fusion, and medicine.[5] Zarif stated that a board of representatives from member states would monitor compliance and suggested that the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN Security Council could support the regional body.[6]

Zarif suggested that Menara member states would share enrichment facilities.[7] The United States previously sought, before the Israel-Iran War, to establish a regional nuclear consortium outside of Iran that would provide Iran with uranium for civilian nuclear purposes but would not allow enrichment on Iranian soil.[8] Iranian officials stated that Iran was open to the consortium model, but only if the consortium's enrichment facilities were located in Iran.[9] Iran would similarly likely only support Menara if it allowed Iran to continue enriching uranium on Iranian soil. An Iranian expert close to the regime stated that Menara cannot succeed without support from global powers such as the United States.[10] The United States has repeatedly insisted that Iran must halt domestic uranium enrichment.[11] The expert also stated that Israel would likely refuse to join this new nuclear body, which he stated would turn the Menara plan into “unilateral disarmament for Iran and Arab states.”[12]

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-affiliated Fars News announced on August 1 the formation of a new “Defense Council” in Iran. The new council will reportedly assume strategic responsibilities for Iran’s national defense policy, and the regime will soon finalize its structure.[13] Fars News stated that the Defense Council will be part of Iran’s “new” defense and security structure.[14] Fars News also announced that the regime will likely appoint Ali Larijani as the new Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) secretary in the coming days.[15] Some Iranian media outlets and social media users have speculated in recent weeks that Larijani may soon be appointed as SNSC secretary.[16] Fars News reported that current SNSC Secretary Ali Akbar Ahmadian would take responsibility for “several special and strategic files.”

This announcement follows a Nour News report from July 30 that there will likely be "imminent changes" in high-ranking Iranian security institutions after "necessary...structural reforms have been implemented." [17] Nour News has historically been affiliated with the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) broadly, but has recently increasingly aligned itself with former SNSC Secretary Ali Shamkhani. Iran previously established the "Supreme Defense Council" following the 1979 Islamic Revolution to oversee the Iranian armed forces and manage defense-related matters, including coordinating the armed forces and overseeing national security during the Iran-Iraq War. [18] This announcement also follows a July 29 Nour News op-ed that called on the regime to restructure its decision-making system and establish a "Strategic Command Center" with "cross-sectoral authority" to coordinate security, economic, and diplomatic responses to threats. [19]



- 1 **IRAN.** Former Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif proposed the creation of a regional nuclear body called the Middle East Network for Atomic Research and Advancement (Menara) in an op-ed in the Guardian on July 31. Iran would almost certainly demand to maintain domestic enrichment capabilities under such a proposal. The United States has repeatedly insisted that Iran must halt domestic uranium enrichment.
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Key Takeaways

- **Iranian Nuclear Program:** Former Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif proposed the creation of a regional nuclear body called the Middle East Network for Atomic Research and Advancement (Menara) in an op-ed in the Guardian on July 31. Iran would almost certainly demand to maintain domestic enrichment capabilities under such a proposal. The United States has repeatedly insisted that Iran must halt domestic uranium enrichment.
- **Iranian Defense Establishment:** Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)-affiliated Fars News announced on August 1 the formation of a new “Defense Council” in Iran. The new council will reportedly assume strategic responsibilities for Iran’s national defense policy, and the regime will soon finalize its structure. Fars News also announced that the regime will likely appoint Ali Larijani as the new Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) secretary in the coming days.

Iran

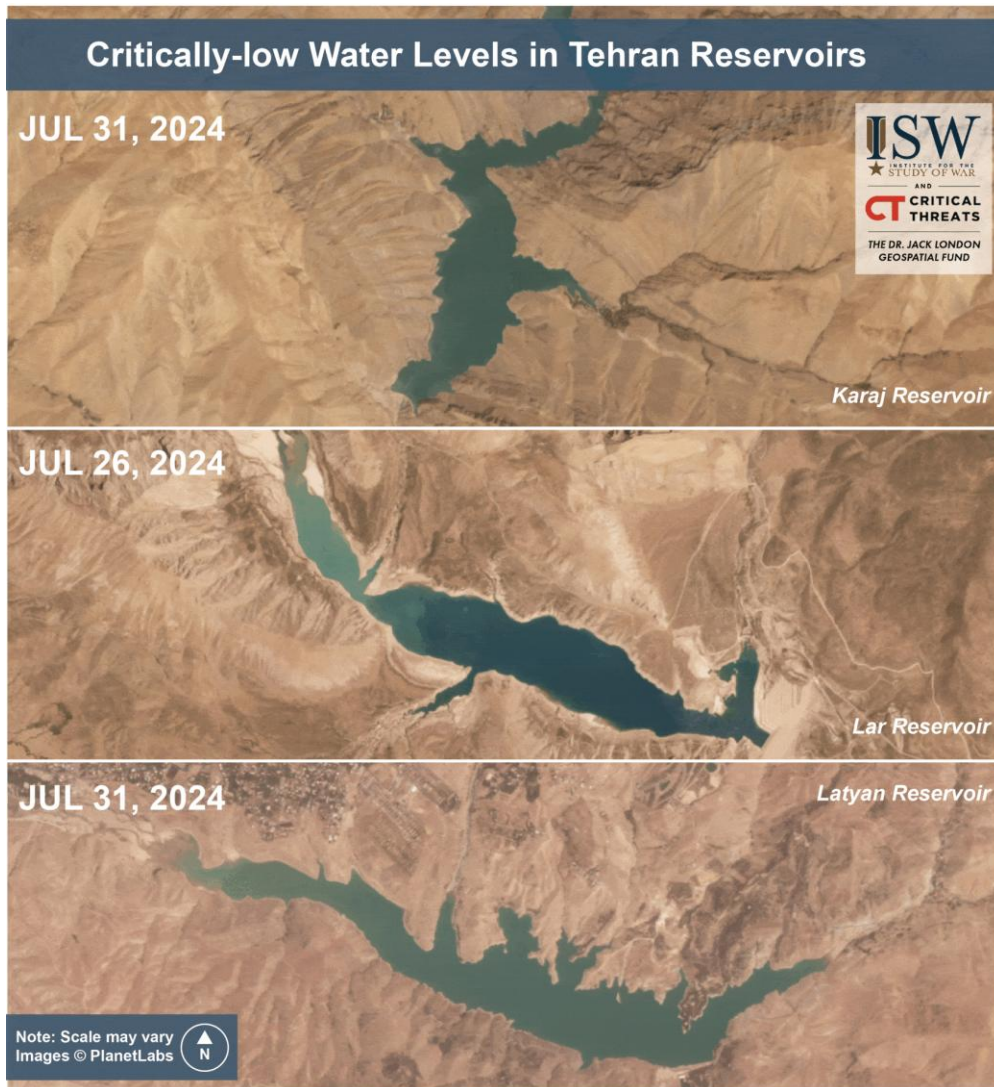
A CBS News investigation published on July 31 found that 12 ship-to-ship oil transfers took place in the Riau Archipelago off the coast of Malaysia in a single day as part of Iran’s illicit oil trade with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).[20] Iran and the PRC use ship-to-ship transfers to obfuscate the origin of Iranian oil. The investigation found that the vessels involved in ship-to-ship transfers used tarps and nets to cover their names and identification numbers. All the vessels also turned off their transponders. The publication of this investigation comes after the United States sanctioned dozens of vessels on July 30 for facilitating Iranian and Russian oil trade.[21] Over 92 percent of Iranian crude oil exports in June 2025 went to China.[22]

The United States sanctioned five entities and one individual based in Iran, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China on July 31 for procuring technology for the Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA).[23] HESA is a subsidiary of the Iranian Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Ministry and manufactures Ababil and Shahed-series drones.[24] Several of the sanctioned entities procured computer numerical control (CNC) machines for HESA. This equipment is used “to create precise and durable components for commercial and military aircraft,” according to the US Treasury Department.[25]

An unspecified attacker stabbed Ali Reza Mohammadi, the prosecutor of Rafsanjan, Kerman Province, on July 31.[26] Kerman Province Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Hamidi said that the attacker stabbed Mohammadi at his home and fled.[27] The Law Enforcement Command (LEC) is investigating the case and trying to identify the attacker’s motive.[28] This incident follows similar attacks targeting Iranian judiciary officials, including the killing of the head of the Shiraz Criminal Court in Fars Province in May 2025 and the killing of two Supreme Court judges in Tehran in January 2025.[29]

Iran is continuing to face severe water shortages. Director of the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment, and Health Kaveh Madani told CNN on July 31 that Tehran Province could run out of water within weeks.[30] Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian warned on July 31 that dams in Tehran will become empty by September or October if Iranians do not reduce water consumption.[31] The CEO of the Tehran Provincial Water and Wastewater Company said on July 17

that citizens in Tehran must reduce water consumption by 20 percent to “overcome” the water crisis, and that there was a seven percent decrease in consumption so far.[32]



The Iranian regime will likely not be able to meaningfully improve this water crisis if it does not address underlying issues, such as mismanagement and unsustainable development. President Pezeshkian met with regime officials, including Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi and Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, on July 31 to discuss potential solutions for the water shortages.[33] The Iranian government shut down municipal offices in Tehran on July 23 and is considering further shutdowns to conserve water resources.[34] Pezeshkian stated on July 30 that closures are not enough to solve Iran’s water crisis and emphasized the importance of implementing sustainable development practices.[35] The head of the Iranian Environmental Protection Organization told state media on July 31 that the lack of sustainable water management practices caused the water crisis.”[36]

Iraq

Iranian-backed Badr Organization head Hadi al Ameri confirmed on July 31 that the Badr Organization will run independently in the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections.[37] The Badr Organization ran with other Iranian-backed Iraqi militias in the Fatah alliance in the 2018 and 2021 elections.[38] Ameri's announcement follows IRGC Quds Force Commander Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani's recent meetings with several Shia Coordination Framework leaders, including Ameri, to discuss coalition building ahead of the elections.[39] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs. Iran has encouraged Shia Coordination Framework leaders to unite ahead of the upcoming elections to improve the likelihood that Iranian-backed parties maintain control of the Iraqi parliament.[40] Iran has reportedly encouraged Iranian-backed Iraqi militias to run as a single party.[41] Iranian-backed Iraqi parties lost a significant number of seats in the 2021 elections due to inter-party competition that advantaged the more unified opposition.[42]

Syria

The Syrian transitional government's ability to hold its forces accountable for abuses committed during the recent intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province will likely impact its ability to rebuild trust with the Druze community. The Syrian Ministry of Justice (MoJ) formed an inquiry committee on July 31 to investigate the recent intercommunal violence in Suwayda Province.[43] The committee will investigate the violence and refer individuals involved in abuses and atrocities to the judiciary.[44] The committee is comprised of judges, lawyers, and officers from the MoJ and will submit periodic reports and present the committee's findings to President Ahmed al Shara within three months.[45] The committee includes:

- Hatem al Naasan: Naasan is a judge and legal adviser at the Court of Cassation in al Rai, a Turkmen-majority city in northern Aleppo Province.[46] Naasan served as a judge in the Assad regime and was appointed as the Civil Affairs Directorate Assistant Director in September 2016.[47]
- Hassan al Hamwi: Judge Hamwi was appointed as the public prosecutor for Rif Dimashq Province in August 2023.[48] Hamwi was a vocal critic of Assad early in the civil war.[49]
- Maysoun al Tawil: Judge Tawil is a Suwaydawi Druze judge counselor from Shahba and the first female judge from Suwayda.[50] Tawil presided over the Assad regime courts in Suwayda, Damascus, and Rif Dimashq provinces during the civil war.[51]
- Jamal al Ashqar: Judge Ashqar was the president of the Syrian National Coalition Military Court during the civil war and a member of the opposition Free Syrian Lawyers Association.[52]
- Mohieddin Harmoush: Harmoush served as the Political Security Commander for Deir ez Zor and Hama provinces under Assad before he defected to the Syrian opposition in 2012.[53] Harmoush later became the interior minister for the Syrian interim government in exile in 2019.[54]
- Tariq al Kurdi: Kurdi is a lawyer and the former head of the opposition Syrian Negotiation Commission's Legal Office.[55]

- Ammar Ezz al Din: Al Din is a lawyer and member of the Homs Bar Association's Transitional Justice Committee.[56] Al Din served as the opposition Free Syrian Lawyers Association's Operations Director.[57]

Retaliatory kidnappings between local Druze and Bedouin factions began in Suwayda Province on July 13 after Bedouin militias beat and robbed a Suwaydawi Druze man.[58] The Syrian transitional government deployed Ministry of Defense and Interior (MoD and MoI) forces to Suwayda Province on July 14 to end the intercommunal violence, but they were ambushed by Druze militias.[59] MoD and MoI forces committed atrocities against Druze fighters and civilians after they regained control of parts of Suwayda Province on July 15.[60] Druze militias and Bedouin fighters committed atrocities against one another.[61] The United States mediated a three-phase ceasefire agreement between Syria and Israel on July 18.[62] The violence has forced thousands of Bedouin civilians to leave Suwayda Province out of fear of retaliation from Druze militias.[63] The Syrian transitional government vowed to hold MoD and MoI members involved in atrocities accountable on July 22.[64] It is unclear how the transitional government's committee will conduct its investigation, as Druze militias maintain control over most of Suwayda Province.

The committee investigating atrocities in Suwayda may seek to absolve the transitional government of responsibility for the recent violence, similarly to how a separate government committee distanced the government from the March 2025 coastal violence. The Syrian National Inquiry Commission investigated the March Alawite massacres and presented its findings to President Ahmed al Shara on July 13.[65] The commission determined that the massacres were not centrally organized and emphasized the role of Alawite insurgents in the atrocities.[66] The committee investigating atrocities in Suwayda may similarly downplay MoD and MoI atrocities in Suwayda by accusing Druze militias of initiating the violence. Civilians in Suwayda Province protested the transitional government's plan to establish a committee to investigate the violence on August 1 and demanded an international investigation instead.[67] The Syrian transitional government will have to investigate, prosecute, and punish perpetrators to achieve meaningful accountability.

The Syrian Interior Ministry announced on July 31 that it will assign every General Security Service (GSS) officer a body camera and identification number to increase accountability for violations.[68] The ministry is investigating GSS violations, such as the recent torture and death of a young Syrian man in Damascus.[69] These incidents have likely pushed the GSS to equip its officers with body cameras to mitigate these violations. The use of body cameras could help prevent GSS extortion and restore trust between security forces and civilians. Body cameras could also improve discipline among GSS forces. Some GSS forces ignored commanders' orders during the March 2025 coastal violence, which led to sectarian and revenge killings.[70] It is unclear how the Syrian Interior Ministry plans to fund this initiative at this time. The Syrian Interior and Defense ministries have struggled to pay soldiers' salaries across multiple provinces.[71]

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on July 31 to strengthen bilateral cooperation and likely to continue negotiations over Russian basing rights in Syria.[72] Shaibani stated that Putin aims to improve bilateral relations and "transform the historical [Russo-Syrian] relationship." [73] Putin expressed interest in supporting Syrian reconstruction efforts and enhancing Syria's

stability.[74] Russia has negotiated with the Syrian transitional government on Russian basing rights since January 2025.[75] CTP-ISW previously assessed that Russia may leverage economic cooperation and Russian reconstruction aid as part of its negotiations on Russian basing rights in Syria.

Arabian Peninsula

The Houthis are reportedly fortifying their coastal territory and conducting training exercises simulating attacks on international shipping in Houthi-controlled Hudaydah Governorate, according to local sources speaking to a regional news outlet on August 1.[76] “Hundreds” of armed Houthi fighters have reportedly recently deployed to various areas in Hudaydah Governorate to reinforce unspecified military infrastructure and tighten security measures.[77] These areas include Houthi-controlled districts around Hudaydah City and the Houthis’ southwestern coastal frontlines. The United States and Israel heavily targeted these areas in their airstrike campaigns against Houthi leadership and military and port infrastructure from March to July 2025. [78]

Local sources reported that the Houthis have also recently conducted training exercises, including hijacking ships, on five islands west of Luhayyah City, northern Hudaydah Governorate.[79] The Houthis sank two oil tankers, the *Magic Seas* and *Eternity C*, and kidnapped the *Eternity C*’s crew in the Red Sea on July 6 and 7, respectively.[80] The Houthis have consistently threatened to attack vessels tied to Israel in the Red Sea as part of their campaign to pressure Israel to stop its war in the Gaza Strip.[81]

The Houthis have reportedly continued to import oil and other commodities through Houthi-controlled ports that were damaged in recent Israeli airstrikes.[82] The Houthis have reportedly attempted to fill in craters from US and Israeli strikes with containers and scrap metal to enable vessels to access these ports.[83] Commercially available maritime data confirmed that several cargo ships and oil tankers arrived at Houthi-controlled ports between July 17 and 31, including six cargo ships at Hudaydah Port, three cargo ships at Salif Port, and four oil tankers at Ras Issa Port.[84] The Houthis have also reportedly offloaded cargo from vessels onto small boats at night when vessels have been unable to dock at the ports.[85]

Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

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