

Iran Update



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Information Cutoff: April 25, 2025, 2:00 pm ET

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

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

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

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

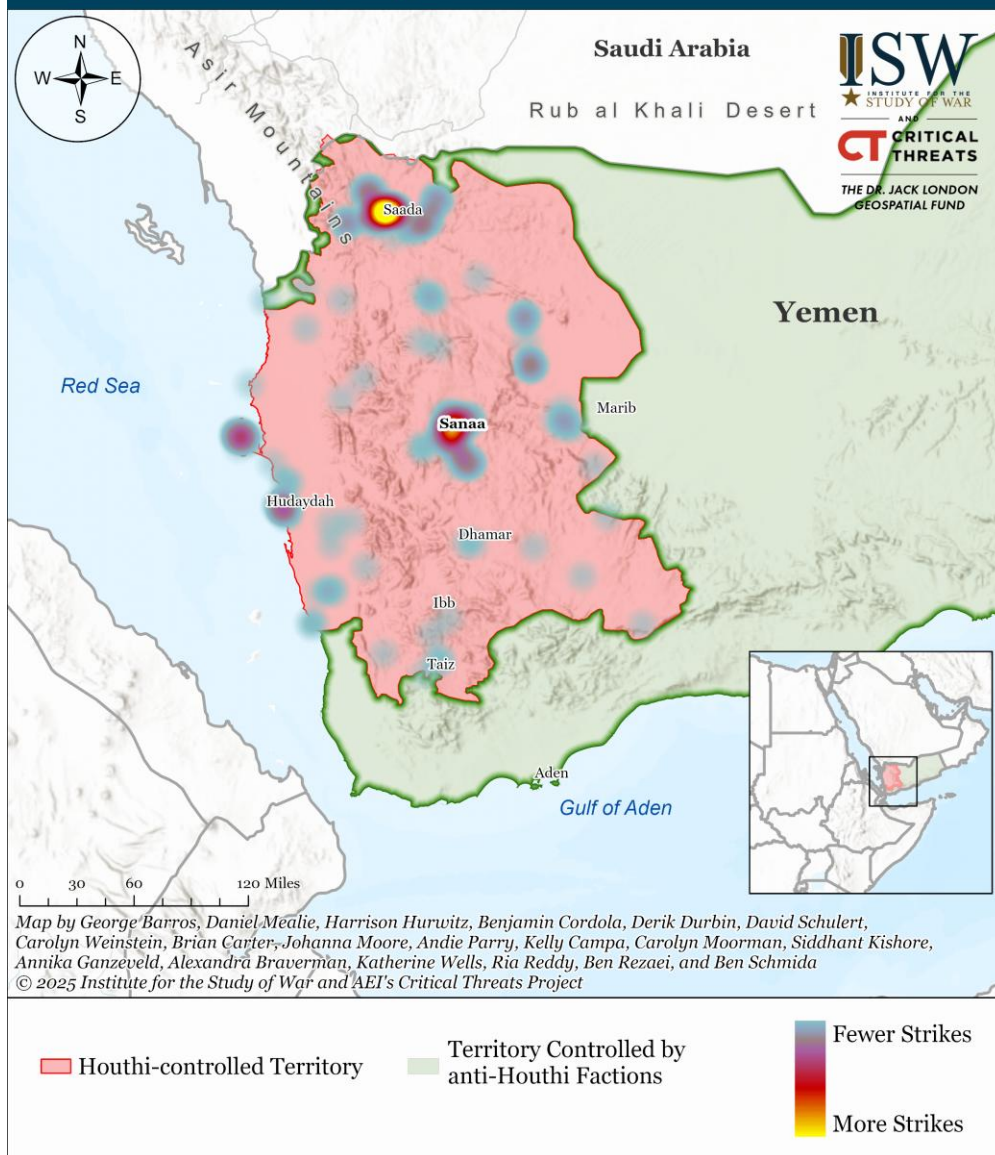
Iran and the United States will hold separate technical and high-level talks in Muscat, Oman, on April 26. Iranian media reported on April 25 that Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi and Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi will lead Iran's technical team.[1] Ravanchi was part of the Iranian nuclear negotiating team that helped conclude the 2015 nuclear deal.[2] US State Department Director of Policy Planning Michael Anton will lead the US technical team.[3] *The New York Times* previously reported that the technical-level talks will focus on Iranian uranium enrichment and mechanisms for monitoring and verifying Iranian compliance with a nuclear agreement.[4] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff will lead the high-level talks in Oman.[5]

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei implied that Iran's recent cooperation with the United States to reach a nuclear deal is "temporary" during a speech to government officials on April 24.[6] Khamenei may have emphasized the temporary nature of US-Iranian

cooperation to assuage the concerns of hardline officials who oppose negotiations with the United States. Khamenei's main priority is preserving the Iranian regime. Khamenei may calculate that engaging in nuclear negotiations with the United States, at least temporarily, will help preserve regime stability by improving Iranian economic conditions and reducing the chance of a direct conflict with the United States.

CENTCOM Spokesperson Dave Eastburn stated on April 24 that CENTCOM has struck over 800 Houthi targets, including command-and-control sites, air defense systems, and advanced weapons production sites, since the start of the US air campaign on March 15. Eastburn said that the strikes have killed “hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders.”[7] Eastburn told CNN that “credible open sources” have reported “over 650 Houthi casualties” in CENTCOM airstrikes since March 15.[8] Eastburn stated that Houthi ballistic missile launches have decreased by 87 percent and Houthi drone attacks have decreased by 65 percent since the start of the CENTCOM airstrike campaign.[9]

US Strikes Against Houthi Targets March 15 to April 25, 2025



Key Takeaways:

- US-Iran Nuclear Talks:** Iran and the United States will hold separate technical and high-level talks in Muscat, Oman, on April 26. Iranian media reported on April 25 that Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi and Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi will lead Iran's technical team. The *New York Times* previously reported that the technical-level talks will focus on Iranian uranium enrichment and mechanisms for monitoring and verifying Iranian compliance with a nuclear agreement.
- US Air Campaign Against the Houthis:** CENTCOM Spokesperson Dave Eastburn stated on April 24 that CENTCOM has struck over 800 Houthi targets, including command-and-control

sites, air defense systems, and advanced weapons production sites, since the start of the US air campaign on March 15. Eastburn said that the strikes have killed “hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders.” Eastburn stated that Houthi ballistic missile launches have decreased by 87 percent and Houthi drone attacks have decreased by 65 percent since the start of the CENTCOM airstrike campaign.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

The Iranian rial appreciated from 807,000 rials to one US dollar on April 23 to 800,000 rials to one US dollar on April 25.[10]

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad announced on April 25 that Iran and Russia signed an agreement for Russia to export 55 billion cubic meters of gas to Iran annually via Azerbaijan.[11] Russian President Vladimir Putin previously stated in January 2025 that Russian gas deliveries to Iran would start at 2 billion cubic meters per year and could increase to 55 billion cubic meters annually.[12] Paknejad added that Russia will finance the construction of a new nuclear power plant in Iran.[13] Iran and Russia will continue nuclear energy cooperation, including by completing the second and third phases of the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant. Iran and Russia have also reportedly signed contracts worth four billion US dollars for the development of seven Iranian oil fields.[14] These agreements reflect Iranian efforts to deepen strategic cooperation with Russia under the framework of the January 2025 Russo-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Agreement.[15] The import of Russian gas to Iran may help Iran address chronic energy shortages, which have previously sparked protests in northeastern Iran.[16]

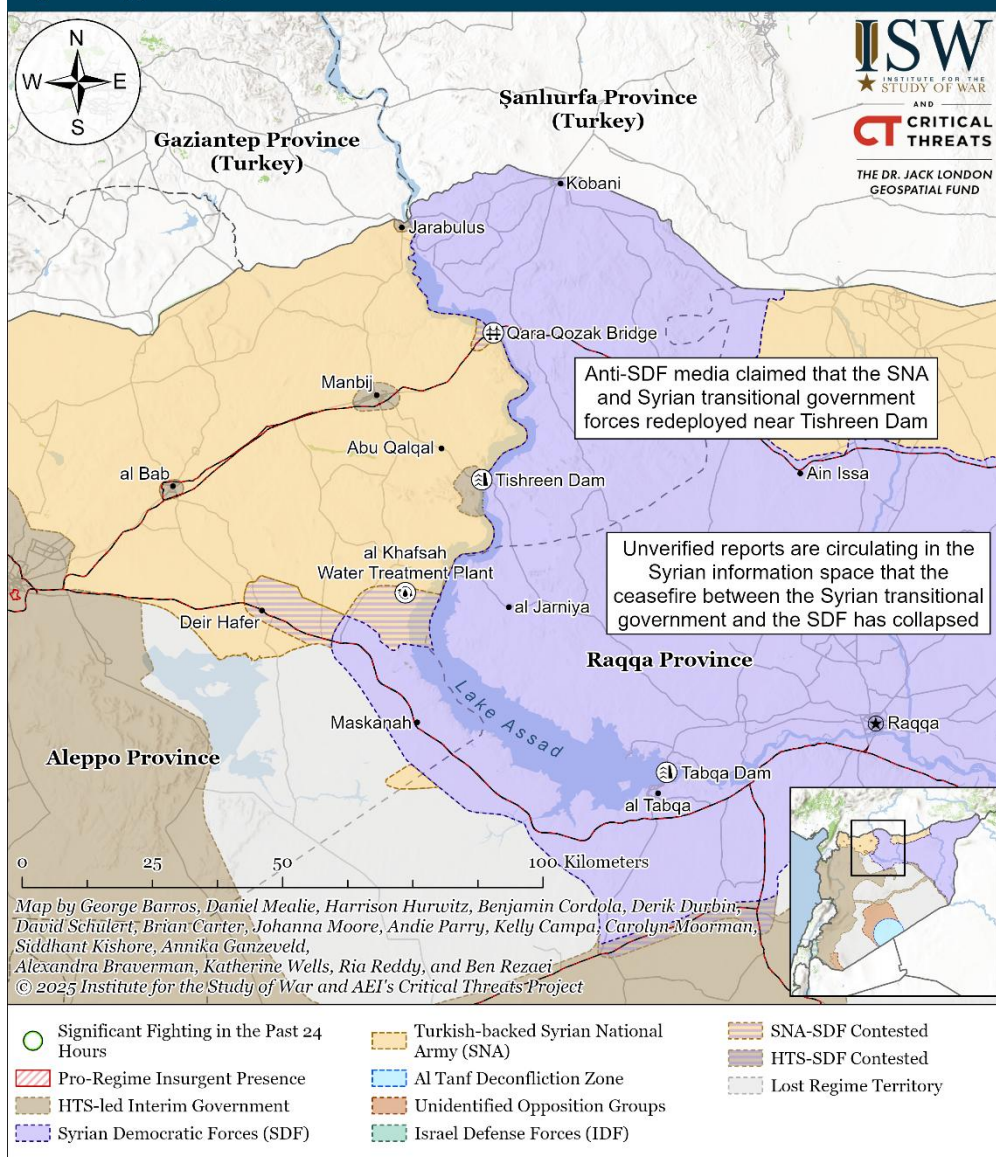
Syria

Unverified reports are circulating in the Syrian information space that the ceasefire between the Syrian transitional government and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) has collapsed. Anti-Kurdish social media users claimed that the agreements that the SDF and the transitional government recently reached regarding the status of the Tishreen Dam and two historically Kurdish neighborhoods in Aleppo City collapsed on April 25.[17] Users claimed that the ceasefire between the SDF and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) expired overnight on April 24.[18] Sources also reported that the SNA and the Syrian Defense Ministry deployed to lines of contact with the SDF, without providing evidence to support their claims.[19] A northern Syria-based, anti-SDF source reported on April 23 that the SDF redeployed to several of its positions in villages west of Tishreen Dam.[20] Pro-SDF sources denied the reports about an expired ceasefire and force redeployments.[21]

CTP-ISW cannot verify these claims, and the Syrian transitional government has not responded to these reports. Outstanding disagreements between the Syrian transitional government and the SDF prevented the government from asserting full control over the Tishreen Dam on April 19.[22] It is possible that the reports about an expired ceasefire and collapsed agreements between the SDF and the transitional government are a coordinated information effort ahead of a meeting between Kurdish parties on April 26 to unify their stance for future negotiations with Damascus.[23] It is unclear what effect such an informational campaign would seek to achieve, however.

Assessed Control of Terrain around Manbij

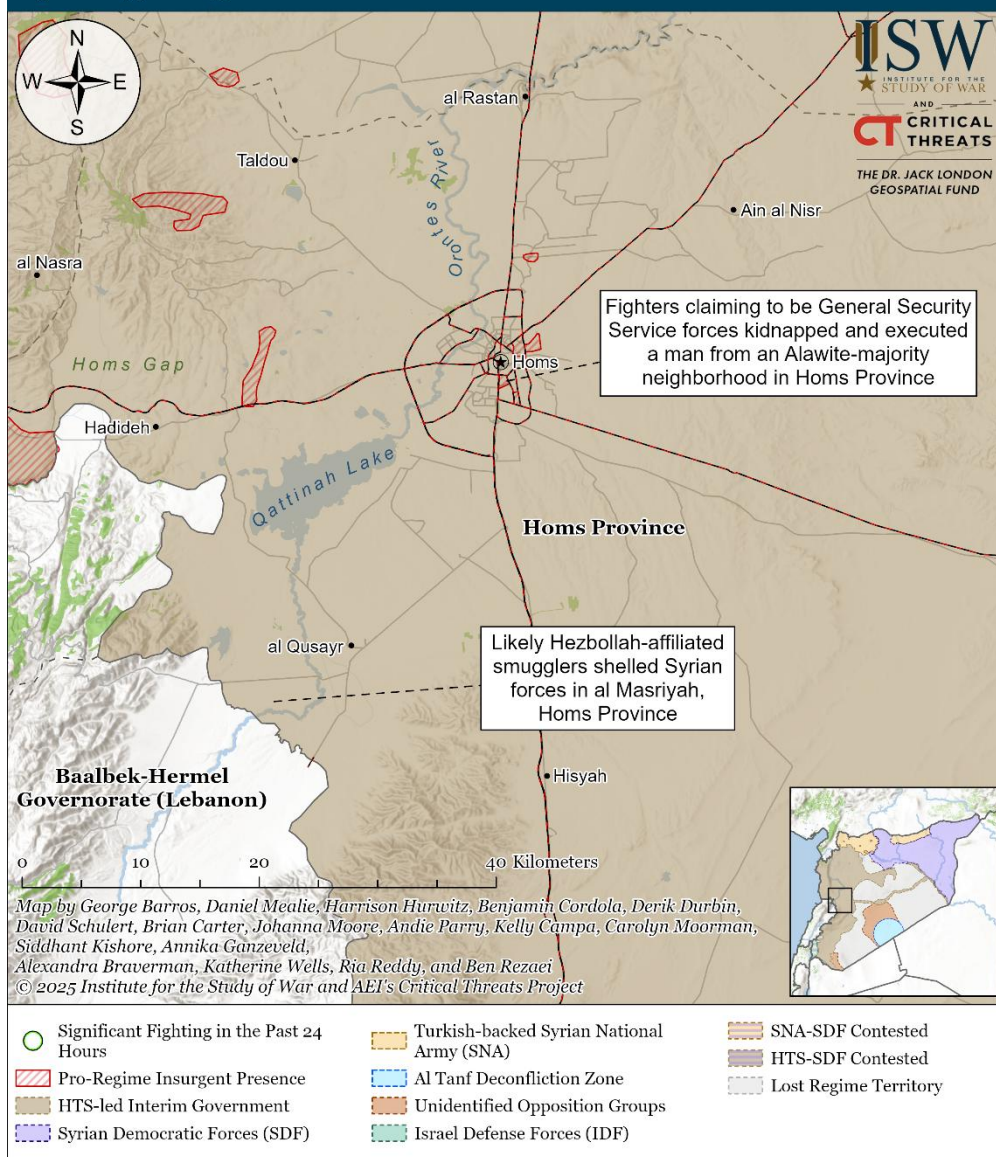
April 25, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Likely Lebanese Hezbollah-affiliated smugglers retain some ability to operate along the Lebanon-Syria border despite joint Syrian and Lebanese efforts to dismantle cross-border smuggling networks. Likely Hezbollah-affiliated smugglers shelled Syrian General Security Services (GSS) forces in al Masriyah, Homs Province, on April 24.[24] The attack reportedly injured four GSS personnel.[25] Syrian forces fired at the smugglers before the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) intervened.[26] The LAF deployed along the border and arrested one member of the armed smuggling network.[27] The attack on GSS forces follows joint Syrian and Lebanese efforts to thwart cross-border smuggling attempts in recent months. The LAF expanded its deployment in areas that were previously operational hubs for Hezbollah's smuggling networks in response to smuggler attacks on Syrian forces in February and March 2025.[28] The LAF and Syrian forces increased patrols and closed several illegal border crossings in the Qusayr area between Syria and Lebanon in late March 2025. [29]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Homs

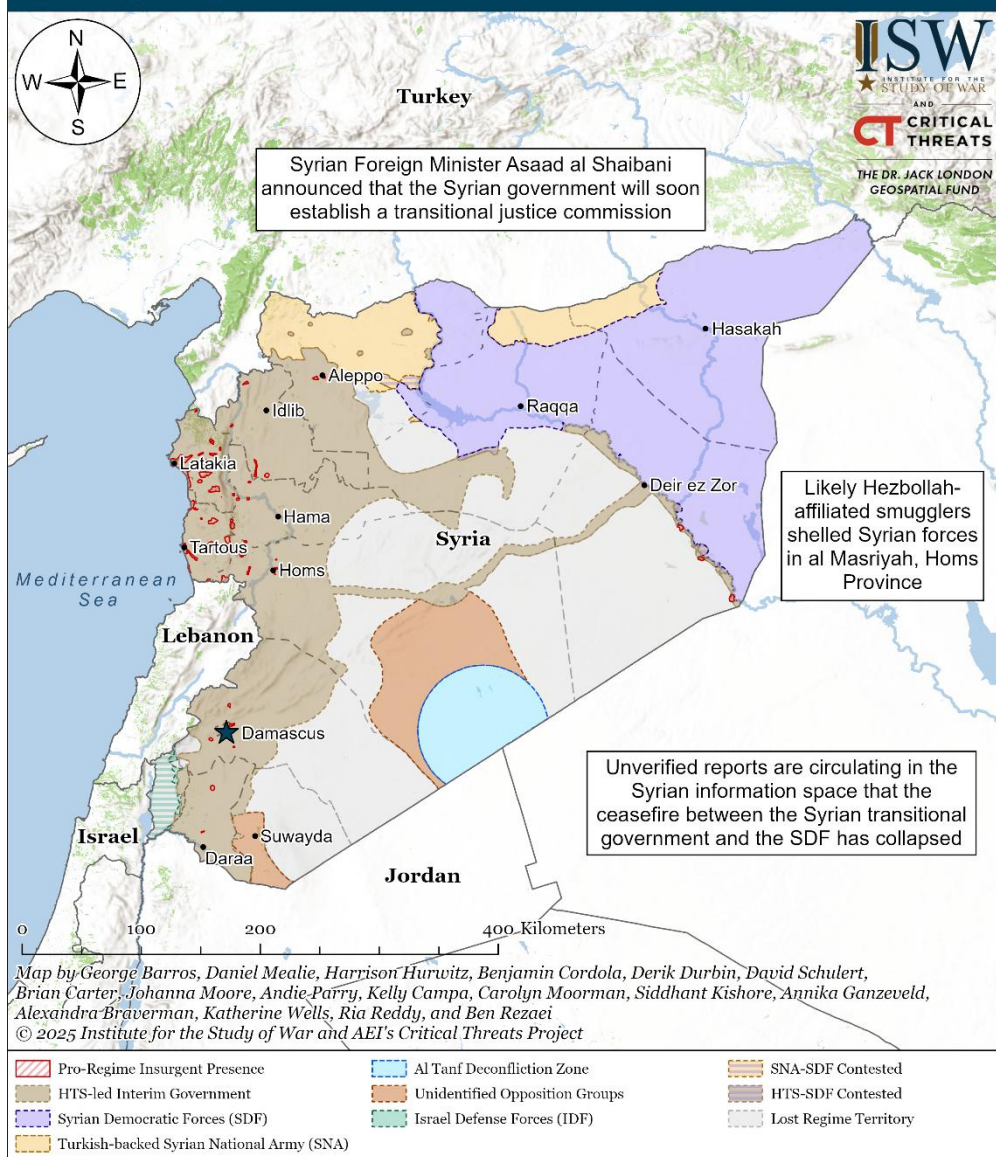
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Fighters claiming to be GSS forces kidnapped and executed a man from an Alawite-majority neighborhood in Homs Province on April 24. The fighters raided the man's home in Karam al Luz and detained him for questioning.[30] The man's body was found on April 25.[31] CTP-ISW cannot independently verify whether the fighters were members of the GSS or members of a Sunni sectarian militia. There is likely an overlap between hardline factions within the Sunni-majority transitional government and Sunni sectarian militias.

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

April 25, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani announced on April 25 that the Syrian government will soon establish a transitional justice commission.[32] Shaibani's announcement comes as various groups have conducted extrajudicial killings against alleged former Assad regime members.[33] One of these groups is Saraya Ansar al Sunnah, which is a Salafi-jihadi group ideologically close to the Islamic State (IS). CTP-ISW previously assessed that the group, Saraya Ansar al Sunnah, is exploiting real grievances in Syria caused by a lack of transitional justice in order to justify its attacks on alleged Assad loyalists. The group's killing of alleged Assad loyalists reflects that some Syrians believe that there has been no justice for the atrocities that the Assad regime committed. A transitional justice committee could help alleviate some of these grievances, but the transitional government must also prosecute and hold accountable individuals involved in extrajudicial killings to demonstrate its commitment to transitional justice and build trust among targeted communities.

Shaibani added in his speech at the United Nations that Syria will coordinate with the United States to investigate missing Americans in Syria.[34] US Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Levant and Syria Natasha Franceschi delivered a list of eight “confidence-building” conditions to Shaibani in Brussels in March 2025. These conditions included the appointment of a liaison to assist efforts to find missing US citizen Austin Tice in exchange for sanctions relief.[35] Shaibani’s announcement demonstrates that Damascus is attempting to meet at least some of the conditions set out by the United States.

Iraq

Iraqi National Intelligence Service head Hamid al Shatri and an accompanying Iraqi delegation traveled to Damascus on April 25 to discuss Iraq-Syria relations with Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara and other senior Syrian officials.[36] Shatri is reportedly affiliated with the Iranian-backed Badr Organization.[37] The Iraqi delegation included officials from the Border Ports Authority, the Interior Ministry, and the Oil and Trade Ministry.[38] The Iraqi delegation will discuss counterterrorism, border security, and the potential reopening of the Kirkuk-Baniyas pipeline with Syrian officials.[39] Syria and Iraq agreed to reopen the Kirkuk-Baniyas pipeline in 2007, but closed the pipeline in 2010 after it sustained damage from counterterrorism operations against ISIS.[40] Iran halted oil exports to Baniyas after the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, so the Syrian transitional government may seek to open the Kirkuk-Baniyas pipeline to compensate for the reduction in oil exports to Syria.[41]

Arabian Peninsula

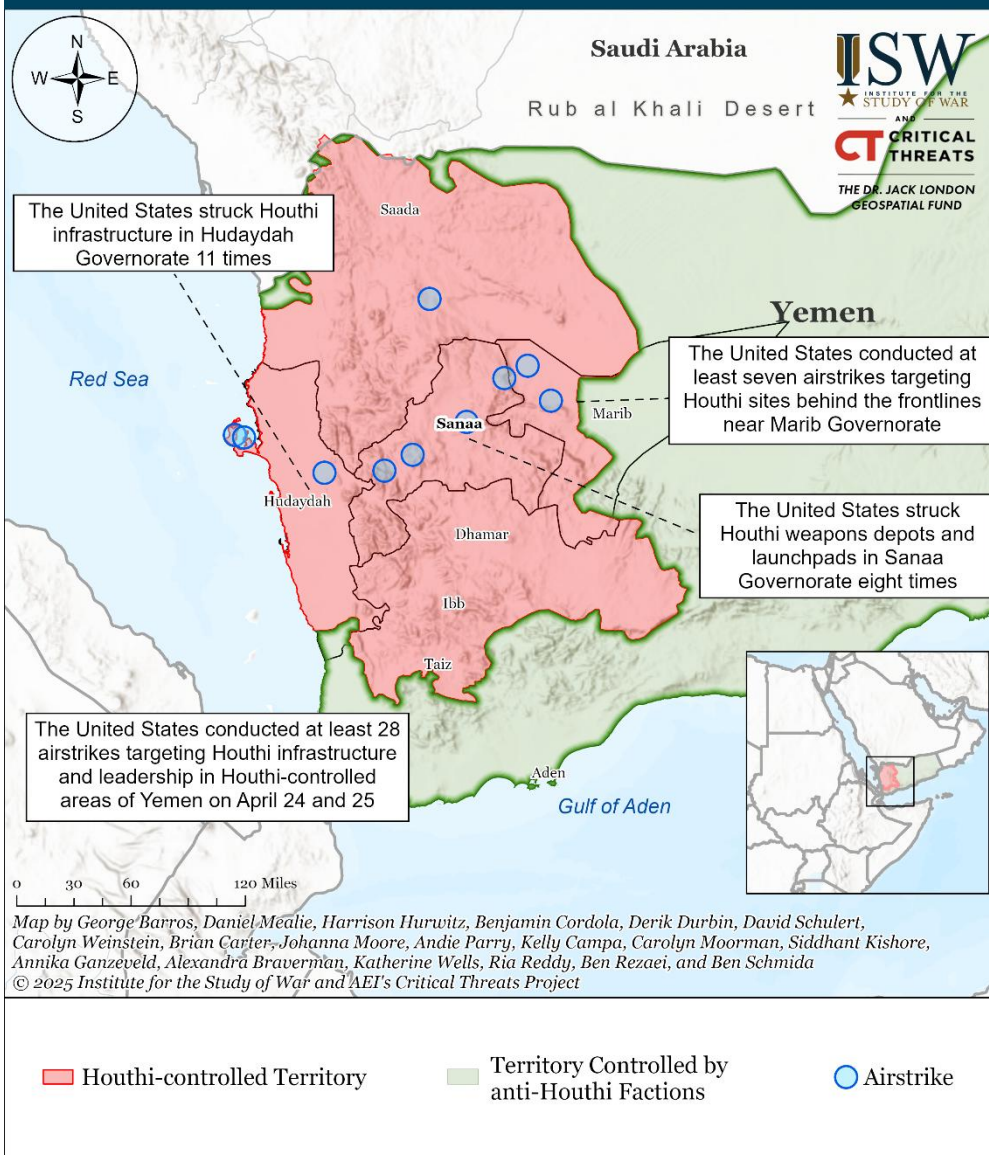
Axis of Resistance objectives:

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

US Central Command (CENTCOM) has conducted at least 28 airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure and leadership in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen since 2:00 pm ET on April 24.[42] CENTCOM conducted at least seven airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure, including launch sites and weapons depots, in Majzar and Madghal districts, Marib Governorate, which are less than 50 kilometers behind the frontlines in Marib Governorate.[43] CENTCOM also conducted at least 11 airstrikes targeting Houthi sites in Bajil District, al Salif Port, and Kamaran Island in Hudaydah Governorate.[44] CENTCOM reportedly struck Houthi weapons depots and launch sites in al Haymah, Manakhah, Bani Hashish, and Harib Nihm districts in Sanaa Governorate.[45]

US Strikes Against Houthi Targets

April 25, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



CENTCOM confirmed on April 25 that the explosion on Furwa Market in Old Sanaa City on April 20 was caused by a Houthi missile and not a CENTCOM airstrike.[46] The Houthi Health Ministry reported that the explosion killed at least 12 individuals.[47] A Yemeni journalist previously confirmed on April 22 that a Houthi missile launched from an airbase on Adhran Mountain near Sanaa City malfunctioned and crashed into Furwa Market.[48] Houthi media falsely reported the incident as a CENTCOM airstrike.[49]

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel

and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

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

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

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