

Iran Update



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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.

Western media reported that the April 26 US-Iran nuclear talks in Oman ended in “major disagreements” despite repeated positive messaging from senior Iranian and US officials.[1] The *Wall Street Journal* reported on April 26 that one of the key disputes is whether a final agreement should address the Iranian missile program, which Iran is unlikely to make concessions on.[2] Iranian officials repeatedly stressed that negotiations must remain strictly limited to the nuclear issue and sanctions relief and reaffirmed that zero uranium enrichment and missile discussions are non-negotiable red lines.[3] Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi called the talks serious and technical and added that while some disagreements are serious and complex, progress so far has been good, but warned that Iran’s optimism should remain “extremely cautious.”[4] US President Donald Trump stated that the talks are going “very well” and that a “deal is going to be made” without “starting to drop bombs.”[5] While Iranian and US officials described the talks as positive and productive, Iran’s unwillingness to make concessions on its missile program may risk collapsing the

talks or pushing negotiations toward a deal less expansive than the deal US President Donald Trump reportedly desires.

It is not clear what restrictions the United States hopes to put on Iran's missile program. Iranian missile development could increase the threat from Iran's missile program. Iran has previously hinted at ambitions to develop missiles with ranges beyond 2,000 kilometers, which would significantly expand the missile ranges to include US bases in the region, such as Diego Garcia. Iranian officials have repeatedly threatened to attack US bases in the region in recent months in response to any military action.[6] An unspecified senior Iranian military official stated that Iran could target Diego Garcia, located about 3,700 kilometers from Iran's southern coast.[7] Iran's current missile range is around 2,000 kilometers, meaning Iran would need longer-range missiles or significant warhead modifications to reach such targets.[8] These threats underscore how expanded missile capabilities would directly increase Iran's threats beyond the Middle East. The Iranian missile program is one of the core pillars of Iran's military strength, due to the weakness of its conventional armed forces, which makes it further unlikely that Iran would agree to include missile restrictions in the ongoing nuclear talks.

The next round of indirect US-Iran talks is tentatively scheduled for May 3 in an undisclosed location in Europe, with Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) experts expected to join the technical talks.[9] International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Deputy Director General Massimo Aparo separately met with AEOI Deputy Chief Behrouz Kamalvandi in Tehran on April 28 to discuss outstanding safeguards issues.[10]

A large-scale explosion occurred at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, on April 26.[11] Western media reported that the blast was caused by the explosion of a chemical precursor for solid missile propellant.[12] The explosion occurred within the Sina Port and Marine Services Company (SPMCO) premises at the port.[13] SPMCO is subject to US Treasury secondary sanctions for its affiliation with the Mostazafan Foundation and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).[14] The Associated Press reported on April 27 that the explosion was caused by the improper handling of a shipment of solid fuel intended for ballistic missiles, citing a private security firm.[15] An unspecified individual with ties to the IRGC told the *New York Times* on April 26 that a container of sodium perchlorate exploded at the port and triggered a series of fires.[16] Sodium perchlorate can be converted to ammonium perchlorate, which is the main component for solid propellant for missiles. Two US-sanctioned Iranian cargo vessels delivered over 1,100 tons of sodium perchlorate from China to Bandar Abbas in early 2025.[17] The IRGC Procurement Department of the Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization (SSJO), partially responsible for Iran's ballistic missile research and development, reportedly received the first shipment.[18] The loss of a large amount of key chemical precursor for Iranian missiles may further delay Iran's ability to rebuild its intermediate-range, solid-fuel ballistic missile stocks after Israeli strikes damaged key production sites in October 2024.

The presence of Chinese chemicals, regardless of whether the chemicals caused the explosion, further illustrates how China-based entities have likely helped Iran replenish its missile stockpile and restore key aspects of its defense capabilities. Western officials estimated that recent Chinese shipments of sodium perchlorate, if converted to ammonium perchlorate, can fuel up to 260 mid-range Iranian ballistic missiles.[19] That amount of ammonium

perchlorate can also produce larger quantities of smaller munitions that require less solid fuel, including shorter-range ballistic missiles. China also remains the largest importer of Iranian oil, which undermines the US maximum pressure campaign aimed at driving Iranian oil exports to zero. Chinese assistance to Iran has likely exacerbated US military concerns with Iran and the Axis of Resistance.

The explosion at the port may further exacerbate Iran's deteriorating economic conditions. Iran will reportedly lose approximately \$25 million per day since it halted operations at the port on April 26.[20] Shahid Rajaee is Iran's largest port and accounts for 85 percent of Iran's shipping container traffic, including a significant portion of its oil exports.[21] The loss of the port—even temporarily—will likely worsen Iran's economic conditions and could cause internal unrest. Iranian media reported 70 deaths and over 1,200 confirmed injuries on April 28, which may also further stoke anti-regime sentiment and unrest.[22]

The Houthis used a complex strike package combining ballistic and cruise missiles and drones to force the USS *Harry S. Truman* to take evasive action. It is unclear if the attack overwhelmed air defenses or how close the projectiles came to hitting the *Truman*. The Houthis claimed the attack on April 28, without specifying the number of systems they used in the attack.[23] The US Navy confirmed on April 28 that a US Navy F/A-18 and tow tractor aboard the *USS Harry S. Truman* fell overboard into the Red Sea.[24] An unspecified US official told CNN that the *Truman* made a “hard turn” to evade Houthi fire, which contributed to the F/A-18 and tow tractor falling overboard.[25] The US Navy confirmed that the *Truman* remains fully operational, and all crew are accounted for. The Houthis will continue to optimize their strike packages and implement lessons learned as part of an effort to target and ultimately impact US Navy vessels in the Red Sea.

The Houthis claimed on April 26 that they launched an unspecified number of drones at the USS *Harry S. Truman* aircraft carrier in the northern Red Sea.[26]

Syrian President Ahmed al Shara and Kurdish political parties remain at odds over Syria's form of government. Neither side has made any major adjustments to their positions on Syrian centralization or military integration despite the March 10 Agreement between the two parties. Damascus and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) signed an eight-point framework agreement on March 10 that did not attempt to resolve the main issues between the two parties and appeared to lay out starting positions for future negotiations.[27] The agreement called for the representation of all Syrian communities and their participation in the political process, as well as the integration of all civil and military institutions in northeastern Syria into the Syrian state.[28] The Kurds expressed frustration after the government unveiled the Constitutional Declaration on March 13, which concentrated power in Shara's hands and did not make allowances for popular participation in the political process.[29]

Kurdish political parties, including the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the Kurdish National Council (KNC), have since unified and called on April 26 for a federal Syrian structure that would create a unified entity to administer all Kurdish-majority regions in northeastern Syria.[30] Shara rejected these demands on April 27, calling the push for federalism “divisive” and urging the PYD-controlled Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to preserve “national unity.”[31] Shara emphasized that national unity remains a “red line” and reaffirmed that Damascus would protect Kurdish rights within a single governing entity.[32]

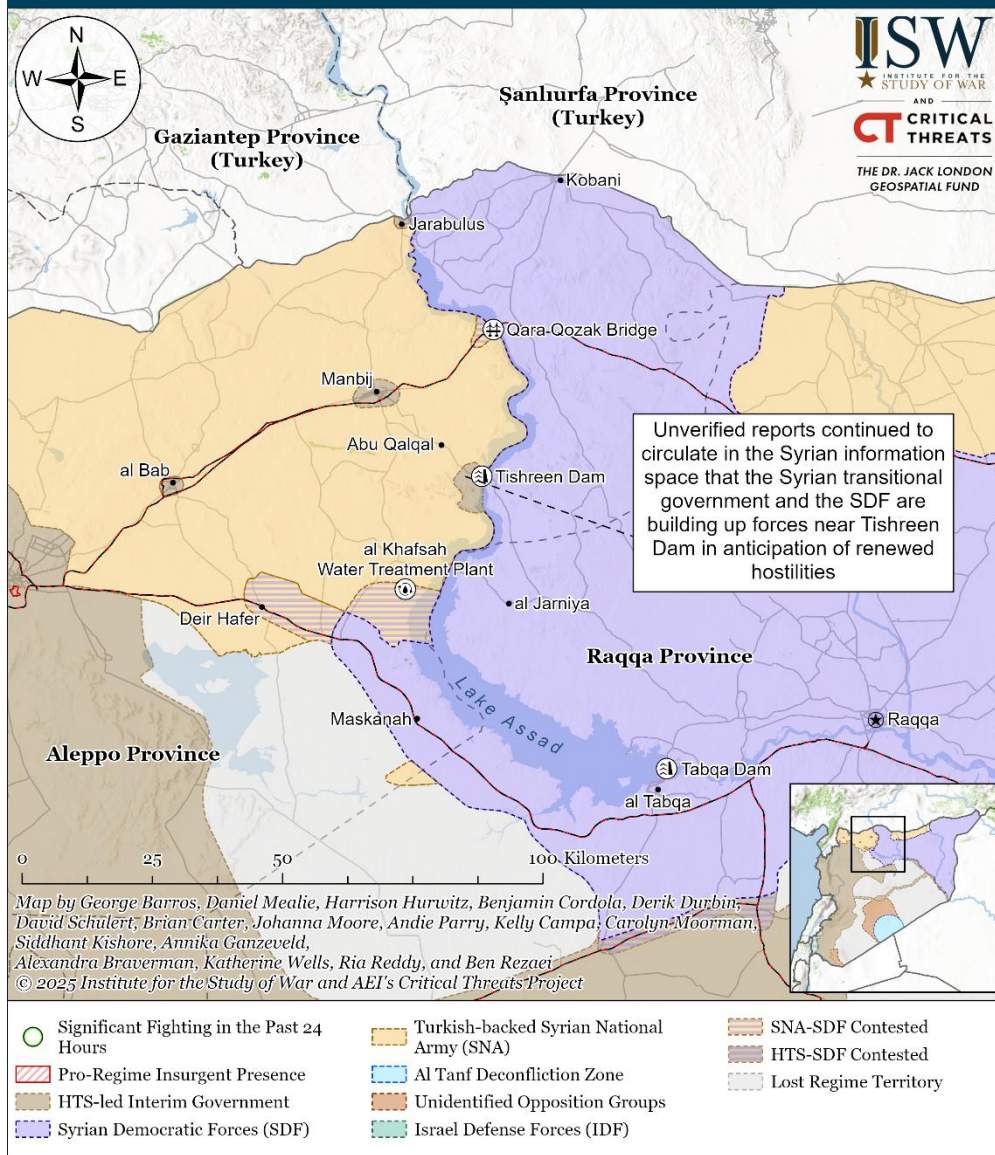
Shara is attempting to frame the Syrian Kurds as secessionists by incorrectly treating federalism and “unity” as mutually exclusive concepts.[33] Shara desires a centralized state and dislikes sharing power, as would be required in a federal system. The Kurdish parties have not called for an independent Kurdish state and have repeatedly emphasized that they seek to remain a part of Syria.[34] The Kurdish parties are simultaneously calling for greater Kurdish representation in the political process in Syria, thus demonstrating that the Kurds seek to be a part of the Syrian state.[35] The calls for representation reflect that Shara has not upheld his responsibilities under the agreement regarding participation in the political process. There are currently no members from a major Kurdish political party in Shara’s cabinet.

The continued Damascus-Kurdish tension over the formation of the Syrian state and its structure could be further enflamed by the formation of the People’s Assembly in the coming weeks. Shara will appoint one-third of the representatives to the assembly, and a committee that Shara appoints will tap the remaining two-thirds of the assembly.[36] The formation of this assembly will be a key indicator of the direction of the Syrian state and the seriousness with which Shara intends to stick to his commitments under the March 10 Agreement.

Unverified reports continued to circulate in the Syrian information space that the Syrian transitional government and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are building up forces near Tishreen Dam in anticipation of renewed hostilities.[37] Syrian sources claimed that unspecified Syrian MoD factions deployed to Tishreen Dam on April 28.[38] Some sources indicated that the MoD sought to assert control over the dam by deploying forces, while other sources asserted the deployment was a show of force after rumors circulated that the ceasefire at the dam collapsed.[39] International Coalition and NGO groups also reportedly deployed to the dam on April 28.[40] The SDF was separately deployed to several villages on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River.[41] Turkey, the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, and Syrian transitional government forces have not engaged the SDF near Tishreen Dam, eastern Aleppo Province, since early April.[42]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Manbij

April 28, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Former Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi may be cooperating with Iranian-backed Iraqi political parties to unseat his rival and current Parliament Speaker, Mahmoud al Mashhadani. Iranian-backed political parties likely conspired to remove Halbousi as parliamentary speaker in late 2023 by using an unconstitutional Federal Supreme Court decision.[43] The Federal Supreme Court is heavily influenced by Iranian-backed factions.[44] Halbousi reportedly formed an “alliance” with Iranian-backed Asaib Ahl al Haq leader Qais al Khazali in January 2025 after Halbousi’s Sunni rivals formed a bloc that excluded Halbousi.[45] This new bloc, the United Sunni Leadership Coalition, includes Mashhadani and top Iraqi Sunni rivals of Halbousi.[46] The formation of this new coalition and its explicit support for long-held Sunni political demands opposed by Iranian-backed political parties creates a confluence of interests between Halbousi and his Iranian-backed former enemies like Khazali.[47] Iranian-backed groups tried and failed to remove Mashhadani from

his post as parliament speaker in January 2025 after he passed a law that favored Sunnis, for example.[48]

The Baghdad Court of Appeals dismissed the charges that caused Halbousi's removal as speaker in November 2023 on April 27.[49] The degree of control and coercion that Iranian-backed groups in Iraq exercise makes it improbable that such a decision would be taken without their acquiescence. The lack of response by Iranian-backed groups and their allies similarly suggests that they do not disapprove of the acquittal. Halbousi's acquittal could pave the way for him to unseat Mashhadani before or after the upcoming November 2025 elections, which would support Halbousi's ambition of returning to the speakership and the Iranian-backed groups' desire to remove Mashhadani.

The Syrian transitional government requested that the United States clarify several conditions that would enable Syria to attain partial sanctions relief, including the removal of foreign fighters' influence on the Syrian government.[50] The Syrian government responded on April 14 to a letter that US diplomats sent in mid-March 2025 that laid out eight "confidence-building" measures.[51] The Syrian government letter said that the transitional government plans to fully address five of the eight demands, including the destruction of any remaining chemical weapons stockpiles and the appointment of a liaison to assist efforts to find missing US citizen Austin Tice.[52] A source familiar with the Syrian transitional government's approach to retaining foreign fighters said that Damascus seeks to delay a decision that would prevent the government from appointing foreign fighters to senior Syrian government roles for as long as possible.[53] CTP-ISW assessed on March 26 that Syrian President Ahmed al Shara would likely oppose the condition to bar foreign fighters from senior government positions, given that this condition would require him to sideline individuals who are deeply loyal to him.[54] Damascus asked for further talks to establish "mutual understandings" around the place of foreign fighters in Syria and about permissions for US airstrikes in Syria.[55] The letter pledged that Syria would not tolerate any threats to Western, Israeli, or US interests.[56]

Key Takeaways:

- **US-Iran Nuclear Talks:** Western media reported that the April 26 US-Iran nuclear talks in Oman ended in "major disagreements" despite repeated positive messaging from senior Iranian and US officials. One of the key disputes is reportedly over whether a final agreement should address the Iranian missile program. Iran's unwillingness to make concessions on its missile program may risk collapsing the talks or pushing negotiations toward a deal less expansive than the deal US President Donald Trump reportedly desires.
- **Chemical Explosion in Iran:** A large-scale explosion occurred at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas, Hormozgan Province, on April 26. Western media reported that the blast was caused by the explosion of a chemical precursor for solid missile propellant. The loss of a large amount of key chemical precursor for Iranian missiles may further delay Iran's ability to rebuild its intermediate-range, solid-fuel ballistic missile stocks after Israeli strikes damaged key production sites in October 2024. China delivered the same precursor to Bandar Abbas earlier this year. These chemicals further illustrate how China-based entities have likely helped Iran replenish its missile stockpile and restore key aspects of its defense capabilities.

- **Houthi Attack Campaign Against US Navy:** The Houthis used a complex strike package combining ballistic and cruise missiles and drones to force the USS *Harry S. Truman* to take evasive action.
- **Syrian Kurd-Syrian Government Negotiations:** Syrian President Ahmed al Shara and Kurdish political parties remain at odds over Syria's form of government. Neither side has made any major adjustments to their positions on Syrian centralization or military integration despite the March 10 Agreement between the two parties. Shara is attempting to frame the Syrian Kurds as secessionists by incorrectly treating federalism and "unity" as mutually exclusive concepts. Shara desires a centralized state and dislikes sharing power, as would be required in a federal system. The Kurdish parties have not called for an independent Kurdish state and have repeatedly emphasized that they seek to remain a part of Syria.
- **Iraqi Politics:** Former Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad al Halbousi may be cooperating with Iranian-backed Iraqi political parties to unseat his rival and current Parliament Speaker, Mahmoud al Mashhadani. The formation of a new coalition that includes Mashhadani and its explicit support for long-held Sunni political demands opposed by Iranian-backed political parties creates a confluence of interests between Halbousi and his Iranian-backed former enemies like Khazali.
- **Syrian Sanctions Relief:** The Syrian transitional government requested that the United States clarify several conditions that would enable Syria to attain partial sanctions relief, including the removal of foreign fighters' influence in the Syrian government.

Iranian Decision-Making, Internal Dynamics, and Foreign Policy

The Iranian rial depreciated from 800,000 rials to one US dollar on April 25 to 814,000 rials to one US dollar on April 28.[57]

Iranian Information and Communications Technology Deputy Minister Behzad Akbari stated on April 28 that Iran repelled "one of the most widespread and complex" cyberattacks targeting Iranian infrastructure.[58] Iranian media did not provide specifics as to the nature of the attack.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian oversaw the signing of seven Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) on April 28 between Iran and Azerbaijan during a meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Baku, Azerbaijan.[59] The MOUs cover topics including transport, health, media, and investment. Iran seeks to develop transportation routes, including the International North-South Transport Corridor, which would run through Azerbaijan, to increase regional trade.[60]

Syria

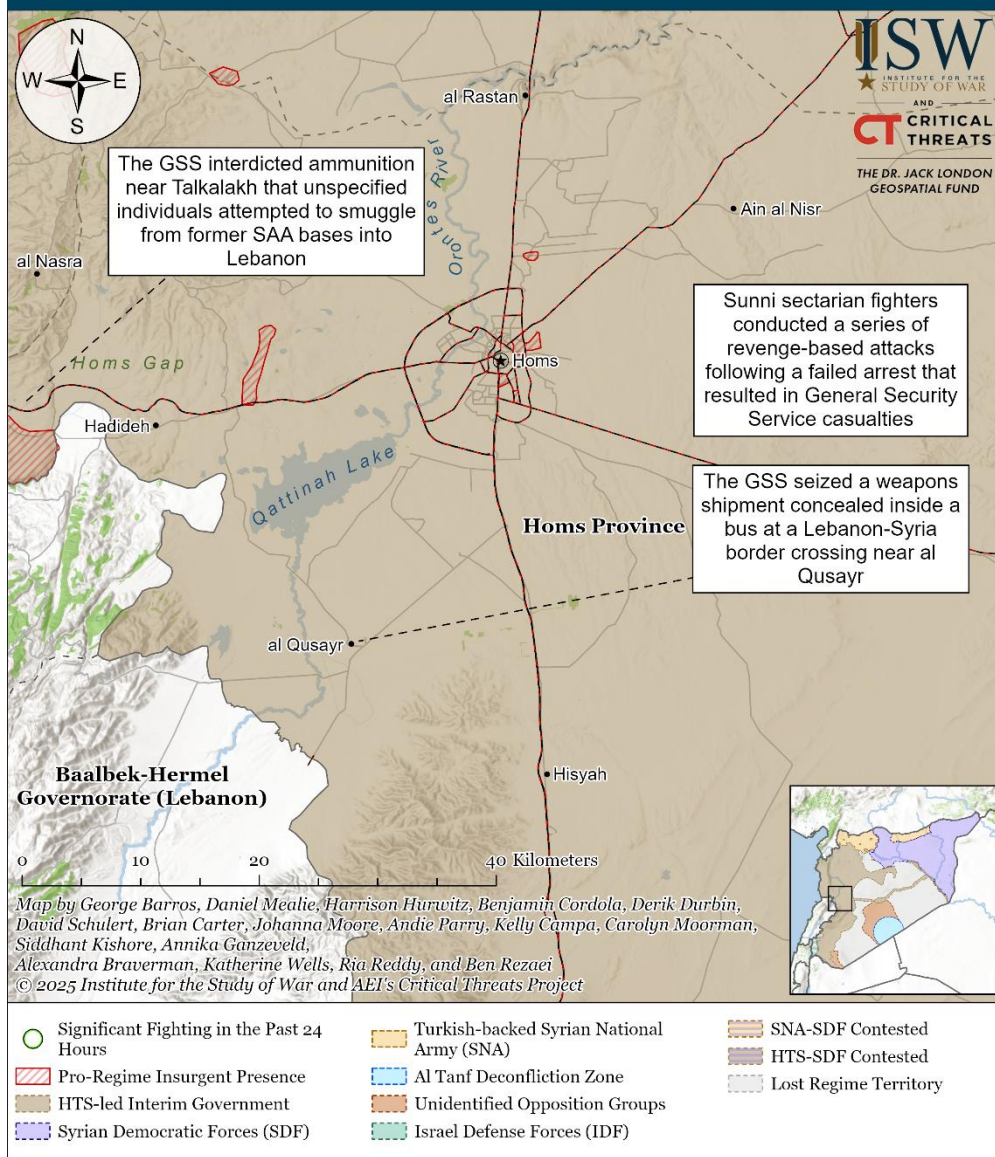
The Syrian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on April 27 that it will begin to recruit Assad regime defectors to apply to work in the MoD.[61] MoD Head of Officer Affairs Brigadier General Mohammad Mansour confirmed that this applies to former SAA soldiers who defected and joined the Syrian opposition.[62] The MoD will receive applications from two categories of defectors: individuals and non-commissioned officers.[63] A MoD official previously confirmed in mid-March

that the ministry was working to return all defected officers to the new Syrian army and the MoD.[64] Several defected SAA members who later joined armed opposition factions currently command divisions in the MoD. [65] Mansour told Syrian media on April 27 that the MoD will establish mechanisms to properly incorporate returning officers into new army formations in line with their expertise and specializations.[66]

General Security Services (GSS) forces interdicted two shipments of smuggled weapons and ammunition between Lebanon and Syria on April 26 and 28.[67] The GSS seized a weapons shipment concealed inside a bus at a Lebanon-Syria border crossing near al Qusayr on April 26.[68] The shipment included assault rifles, rockets, grenades, sniper and night vision equipment, and munitions.[69] GSS forces arrested several individuals.[70] GSS forces discovered the shipment after receiving information from an unspecified source.[71] GSS forces also arrested a group that attempted to smuggle ammunition into Syria, near Talkalakh, Homs Province, on April 28.[72] These interdictions come amid joint Syrian and Lebanese efforts to thwart cross-border smuggling attempts in recent months. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Syrian forces increased patrols and closed several illegal border crossings between Syria and Lebanon in late March 2025.[73]

Assessed Control of Terrain around Homs

April 28, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



Prominent Syrian businessman Rami Makhoul may be supporting efforts to build pro-Assad insurgent networks, though it is unlikely that he has assembled thousands of fighters to “defend” the Alawite community against the transitional government.[74]

Makhoul, who is Bashar al Assad’s maternal cousin, claimed on Facebook on April 27 that he and former Special Forces commander Suhail al Hassan have assembled 150,000 special forces fighters.[75] Makhoul also claimed that he has the support of “one million” popular committee members.[76] It is highly unlikely that Makhoul or Hassan has been able to acquire any force or support base of this size. It is possible Makhoul is involved in recruiting support for the Alawite insurgency abroad, however. Several former Assad officials have been linked to the insurgency.[77] Makhoul has likely remained in the UAE since 2020 and likely has connections there that could help him recruit forces or support for the insurgency.[78] Mohammad Jaber, a UAE-based Syrian businessman and former Assad regime

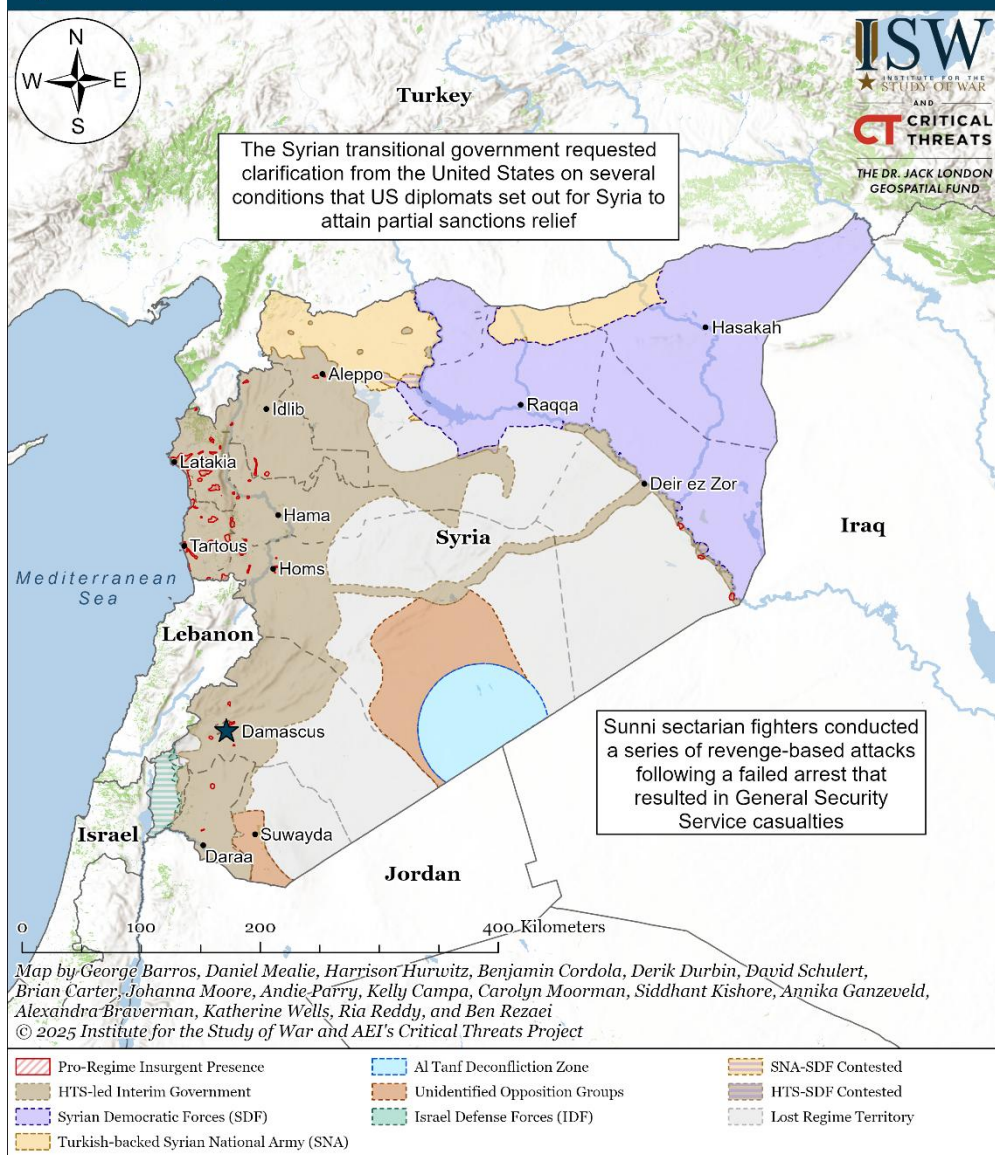
militia commander, admitted to cooperation with the insurgency in early April.[79] Makhoul was an influential Syrian billionaire with close ties to Assad for many years until the two had a public falling out in 2020. [80] Makhoul positioned himself as a defender of the Alawite community in his letter on Facebook and echoed many of the sectarian justifications that have fueled support for Alawite insurgency, including that insurgents are acting in self-defense against sectarian-based attacks by the transitional government.[81] Makhoul said that he would like to "cooperate" with Damascus to stabilize the coast and called upon the international community, and Russia in particular, to defend the Alawite community.[82] It is probably a non-starter for the Damascus government to cooperate with Makhoul, who is responsible for some of Assad's crimes in Syria.

The association of Assad-era businessmen and officers like Makhoul, Hassan, and others will likely undermine support for the insurgency within the Alawite community. Not all Alawites supported the Assad regime, and many are presumably unwilling to fight for the return of Assad. Makhoul and Hassan are both notorious regime figures despite Makhoul's claims that he and Hassan kept Syria from collapsing under the rule of Assad.[83] Many Alawites have been drawn to the coastal insurgency by a range of economic grievances and fears of revenge-based attacks and harassment rather than support for the former Assad regime. This could motivate them to form their insurgent groups in time.

Probable sectarian Sunni fighters conducted a series of revenge-based attacks following a failed arrest of a former Assad regime officer that resulted in GSS casualties.[84] The GSS attempted to arrest former Assad-era pilot Ali Shalhoub in Homs Province on April 25.[85] Shalhoub resisted arrest and fired on security forces, killing one and wounding several others.[86] Syrian media reported a sharp uptick in killings of civilians in Sabil, Karam al Zeitoun, and Nuzha neighborhoods of Homs City. A Syria-focused journalist reported that fighters claiming to be members of the GSS detained an Alawite man and searched his home in Nuzha.[87] The man was found dead the following day.[88] GSS denied sending forces to the man's home.[89] The GSS is primarily composed of Hayat Tahrir al Sham fighters.[90] There have been anecdotal reports of positive interactions between security forces and the Alawite community. Revenge-based violence after forces suffer casualties is often indicative of poor discipline within a force.[91]

Assessed Control of Terrain in Syria

April 28, 2025 at 2:00 PM EST



The Yemeni Foreign Ministry announced that the Yemeni embassy in Damascus reopened on April 27.[92] The Houthis took control of the Yemeni embassy in Damascus in 2016 following their capture of Yemen's capital, Sanaa.[93] Syrian officials ordered Houthi embassy employees to vacate the premises, according to a Houthi Finance Ministry director.[94] The Syrian transitional government has taken steps since the fall of the Assad regime to weaken Iranian and Iranian-backed actors in Syria.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani held multiple diplomatic meetings in New York with various United Nations and foreign officials. Shaibani met with UN Special Envoy to Syria Geir Pedersen in New York on April 26.[95] The pair discussed recent developments in Syria and explored ways to strengthen international support for the Syrian people.[96] Pedersen emphasized that inclusivity and transparency are essential for the next steps in the political transition of Syria.[97]

He expressed his support for the March 10 agreement between Ahmed Shara and Mazloun Abdi that outlines principles for future negotiations and stressed the importance of further dialogue amongst Syrians to integrate northeastern Syria into the new Syrian government.[98] Shaibani also met with Under-Secretary for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs at the UN Rosemary DiCarlo, UN Under-Secretary for Peacekeeping Operations Jean Pierre Lacroix, and UN Development Program Administrator Achim Steiner.[99] Foreign Minister Shaibani also met with Libyan Permanent Representative to the UN Taher al Sunni during a joint meeting attended by ambassadors and representatives of the Arab Group.[100] Shaibani gave a briefing on the latest developments in Syria that focused on the efforts of the new transitional government to confront the current political, security, and economic challenges.[101] Sunni affirmed Libya's full support for the Syrian government and its people to recover from the crisis it has endured and emphasized the preservation of Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and stability.[102]

The Syrian government announced on April 27 that Saudi Arabia and Qatar will pay Syria's arrears to the World Bank.[103] The Syrian Foreign Affairs Ministry thanked both countries for paying Syria's debts, which amount to \$15 million.[104] Western media reported that the World Bank will be able to re-establish its activities in Syria after a 14-year pause.[105] It is unclear if either country will expect Syria to repay them eventually or if an alternative arrangement has been reached. The Syrian government said that the payment will allow Syria to cultivate a relationship with international institutions that will assist in its recovery and reconstruction.[106]

Iraq

Iraqi National Intelligence Service head Hamid al Shatri discussed Iraq-Syria cooperation with Syrian Interim President Ahmed al Shara in Damascus on April 25.[107] Shatri is reportedly affiliated with the Iranian-backed Badr Organization.[108] Shatri and Shara discussed potential trade deals concerning the oil and grain sectors and agreed to develop a working mechanism to operate the al Waleed border crossing in Homs Province.[109] Syrian media separately reported on April 26 that the Iraqi government sent 39 trucks of grain and wheat through the Albu Kamal border crossing in Deir ez Zor Province. The Iraqi government hopes to provide 222,000 total tons in the future, according to Syrian media.[110]

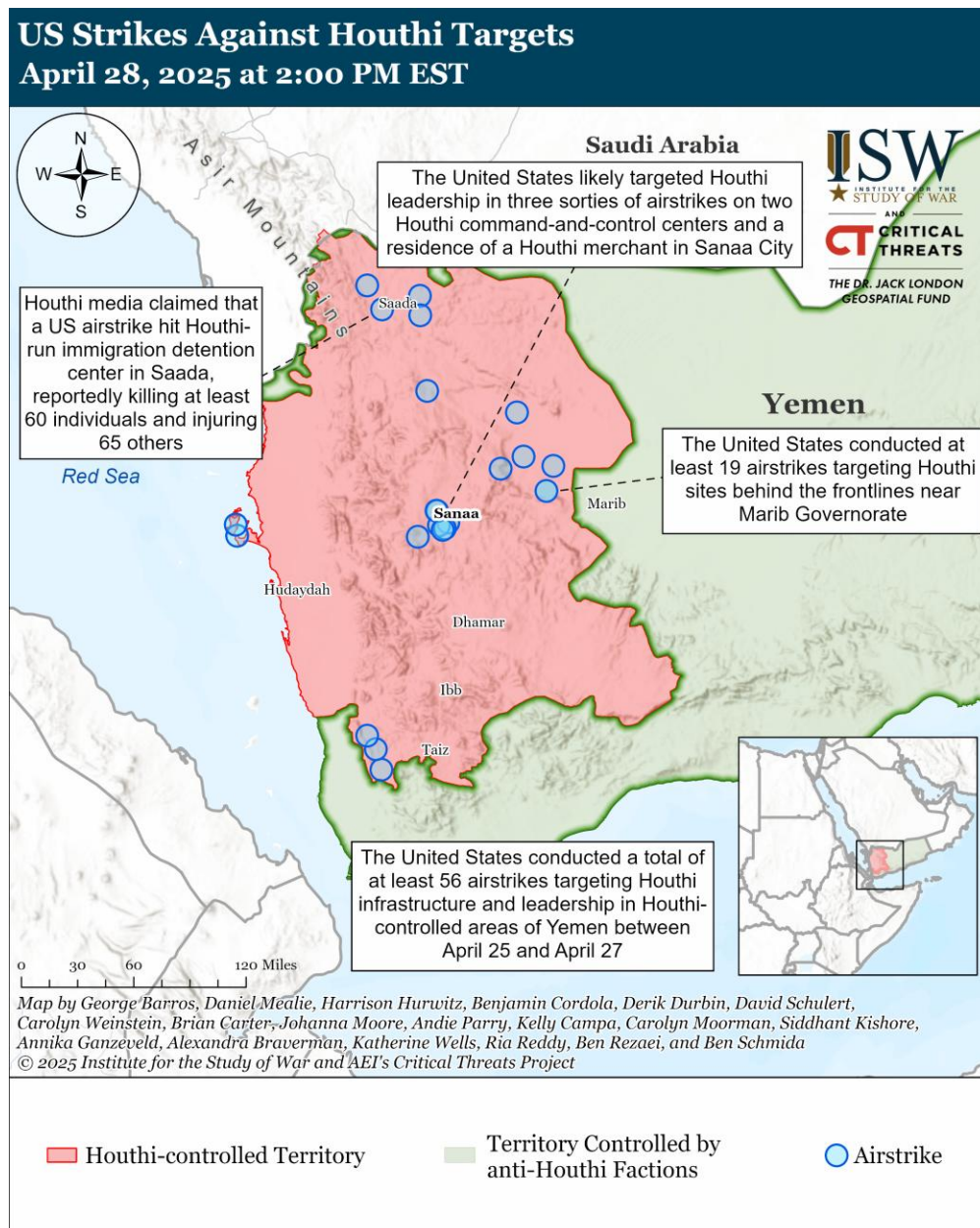
Arabian Peninsula

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 56 airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure and leadership in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen since 2:00 pm ET on April 25.[111] CENTCOM conducted at least 19 airstrikes targeting Houthi infrastructure between April 25 and 27, including launch sites and weapons depots, in Majzar and Madghal districts, Marib Governorate; Rabt al Anan, al Jawf Governorate; and Nihm District, Sanaa Governorate. All three locations are less than 50 kilometers behind the frontlines in Marib Governorate.[112] CENTCOM also

conducted at least five airstrikes on April 26 targeting Houthi infrastructure at Ras Issa Port and Kamaran Island in Hudaydah Governorate.[113] Houthi media reported that CENTCOM struck an immigrant detention center in southwestern Saada City, reportedly killing at least 60 individuals and injuring 65 others.[114] CENTCOM reportedly struck Houthi command-and-control centers on April 26 near the Presidential Complex in Sanaa City and near Mount Yajoura, Bani al Harith District, on the outskirts of Sanaa City.[115] CENTCOM also struck a house on April 26 in the October 14 neighborhood, al Sabeen District, Sanaa City, reportedly owned by Houthi merchant Nabil al Khameri.[116]



A Yemeni journalist and Saudi media outlets reported on April 25 and 26 that US airstrikes targeting Majzar District, Marib Governorate, on April 24 killed Houthi security commander for Majzar District Abu Mohsen al Rasas.[117]

The Houthis claimed that they have launched three drones and two ballistic missiles at various unspecified military sites across Israel since April 25. The Houthis claimed on April 26 that they launched one drone targeting an unspecified target in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa area and an unspecified “vital” target in Ashkelon, southern Israel.[118] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted one drone on April 26 outside of Israeli territory.[119] The Houthis separately claimed on April 26 that they launched a ballistic missile targeting the Nevatim Air Base, southern Israel.[120] The IDF intercepted one missile outside of Israeli territory on April 26.[121] The Houthis claimed on April 28 that they launched a ballistic missile targeting the Nevatim Air Base and one drone targeting Ashkelon.[122] [123] The IDF intercepted one drone on April 27 outside of Israeli territory.[124]

The US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned three vessels and their owners on April 28 for delivering oil derivatives to the Houthis via the Ras Issa Port.[125] The three vessels include the San Marino-flagged *Tulip BZ*, the Panama-flagged *Maisan*, and the Panama-flagged *White Whale*. The sanctioned companies that facilitated the movement of oil derivatives via these vessels are registered in the Marshall Islands and Mauritius.

The Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

Nothing significant to report.

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

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

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

these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

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