

Iran Update, April 19, 2024

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Information Cutoff: 2:00 pm ET

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. Click [here](#) to see CTP and ISW's interactive map of Israeli ground operations. This map is updated daily alongside the static maps present in this report. Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Iran Update.

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.

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.

Key Takeaways:

- **Gaza Strip:** The Nahal Brigade (162nd Division) continued to conduct “targeted raids” along the Netzarim corridor in the central Gaza Strip on April 20.
- **West Bank:** Israeli forces conducted operations in the Nour Shams Refugee Camp, Tulkarm for a second day and engaged fighters from several Palestinian militias, including PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades on April 20.
- **Lebanon:** Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least nine attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on April 19.
- **Iraq:** The Iraqi Defense Ministry reported that an explosion occurred at the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Kalsu Headquarters in Babil Province on April 19. No Iraqi government body characterized the explosion as a “strike.”

Israel-Hamas War as of April 20, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



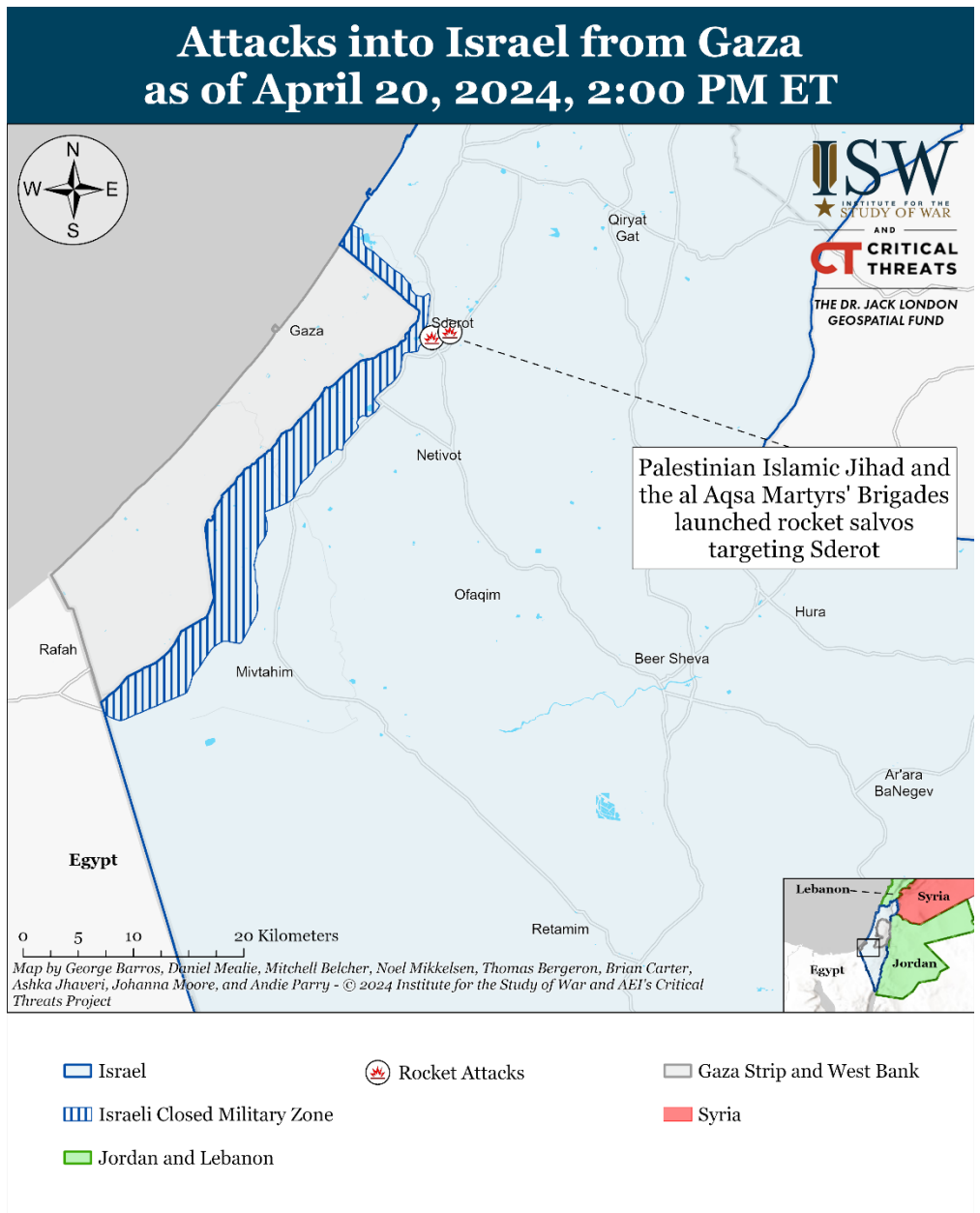
Gaza Strip

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Erode the will of the Israeli political establishment and the public to sustain clearing operations in the Gaza Strip
- Reestablish Hamas as the governing authority in the Gaza Strip

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued to target military infrastructure in the northern Gaza Strip on April 20. The 215th Artillery Brigade (162nd Division) and the IDF Air Force struck a rocket launch site in Beit Hanoun after Palestinian fighters launched rockets targeting Sderot on April 20.[1] The IDF Air Force separately targeted Palestinian fighters and infrastructure to support Israeli forces operating in the area.[2]

PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades have conducted two rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip targeting Sderot and Nir Am in southern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut off on April 19.[3]



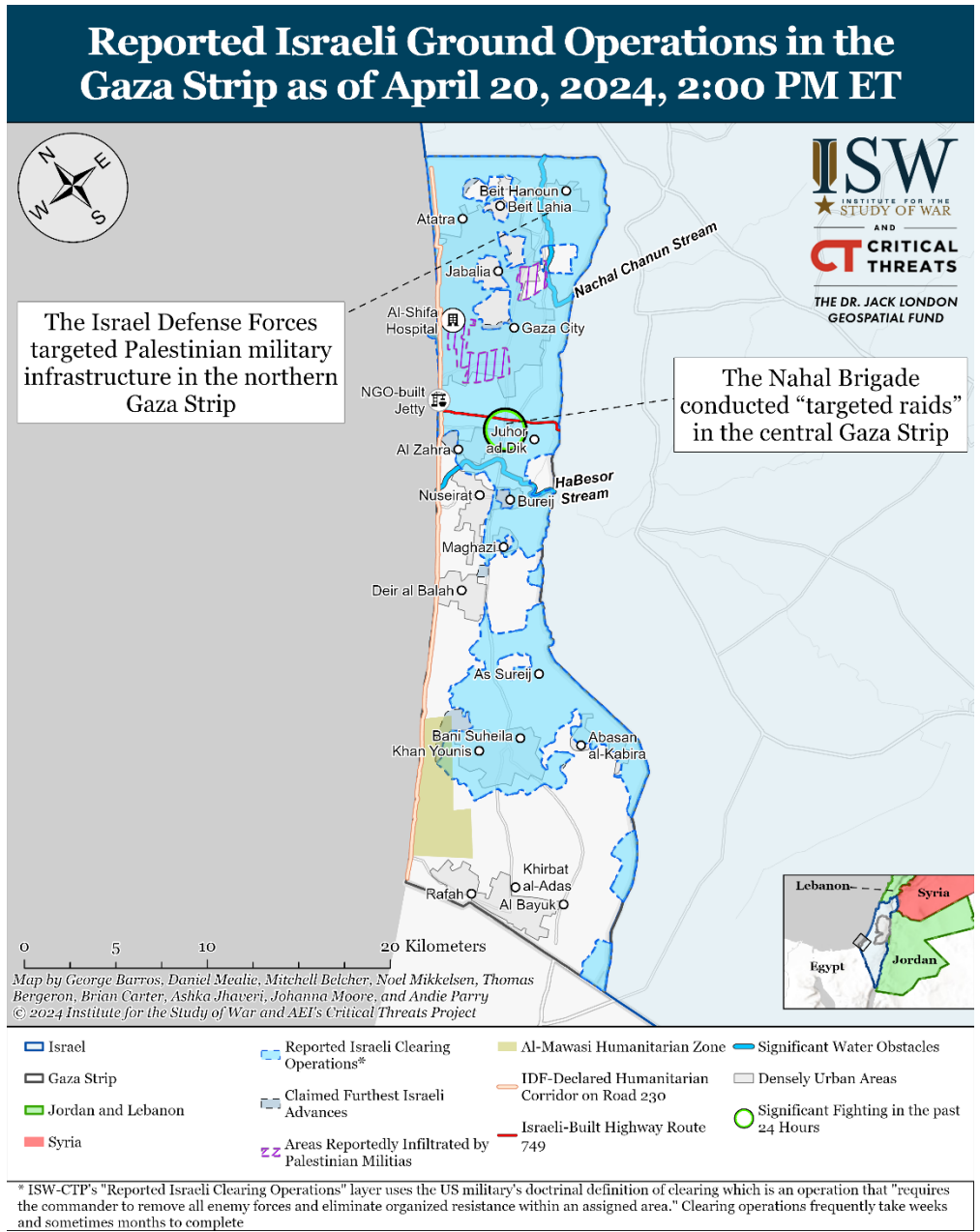
Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades—the self-proclaimed military wing of Fatah—mortared Israeli forces operating southeast of the Zaytoun neighborhood, Gaza City.[4]

The Nahal Brigade (162nd Division) continued to conduct “targeted raids” along the Netzarim corridor in the central Gaza Strip on April 20.[5] Israeli forces raided Palestinian militia positions and killed fighters operating in the area.[6] Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed separate mortar attacks targeting Israeli forces in unspecified areas of

the “Netzarim Axis,” which refers to the Israeli-built highway Route 749. Route 749 bisects the Gaza Strip.[7]

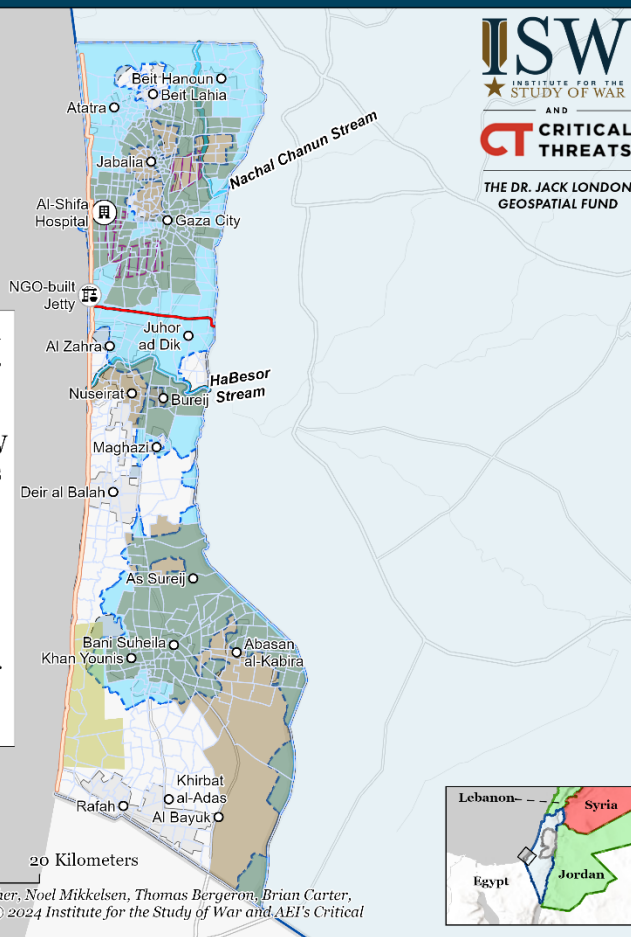
IDF Southern Command commander Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkleman and the 162nd Division commander met to discuss the division’s operations in the Gaza Strip.[8]



Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones in the Gaza Strip as of April 20, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



CTP-ISW's "Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones" layer shows Israeli evacuation zones announced by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). CTP-ISW used IDF maps and statements to create this layer. Where IDF maps cover part of a zone this layer covers the whole zone to avoid understating the evacuation order. The IDF began announcing these evacuation zones on December 2, 2023, at 0222 ET on X (Twitter)



Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry - © 2024 Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project

Israel	Reported Israeli Clearing Operations*	Al-Mawasi Humanitarian Zone	Israeli Announced Evacuation Zones
Gaza Strip	Claimed Furthest Israeli Advances	IDF-Declared Humanitarian Corridor on Road 230	Densely Urban Areas
Jordan and Lebanon	Areas Reportedly Infiltrated by Palestinian Militias	Israeli-Built Highway Route 749	Significant Water Obstacles
Syria			

* ISW-CTP's "Reported Israeli Clearing Operations" layer uses the US military's doctrinal definition of clearing which is an operation that "requires the commander to remove all enemy forces and eliminate organized resistance within an assigned area." Clearing operations frequently take weeks and sometimes months to complete

West Bank

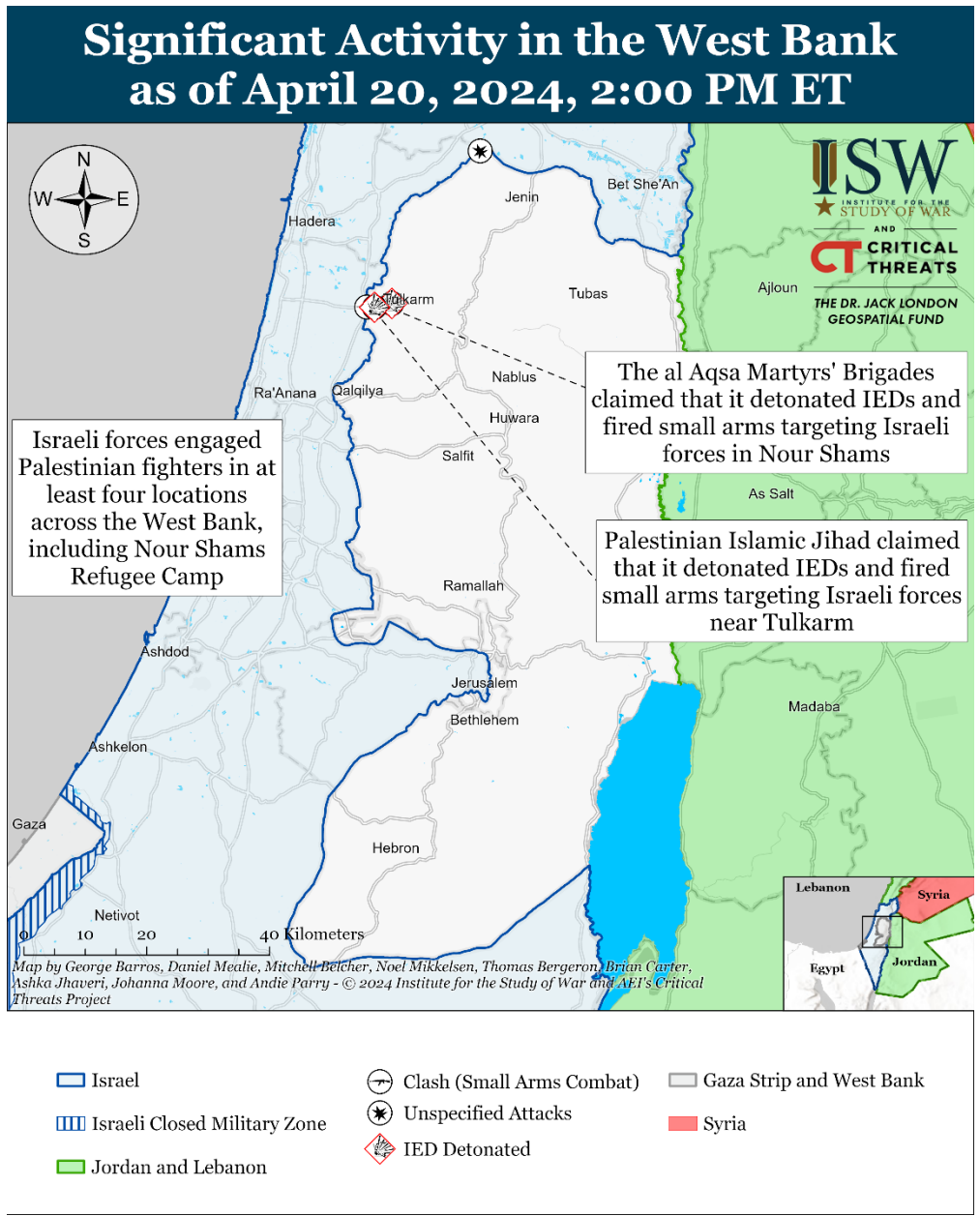
Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

Israeli forces conducted operations in the Nour Shams Refugee Camp, Tulkarm for a second day and engaged fighters from several Palestinian militias, including PIJ and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades on April 20.[9]

Israeli forces have engaged Palestinian fighters in at least four locations across the West Bank, including Nour Shams Refugee Camp, since CTP-ISW's data cut off on April

19.[10] Hamas and the al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades shot at Israeli forces stationed checkpoints in Jenin and Tulkarm.[11]



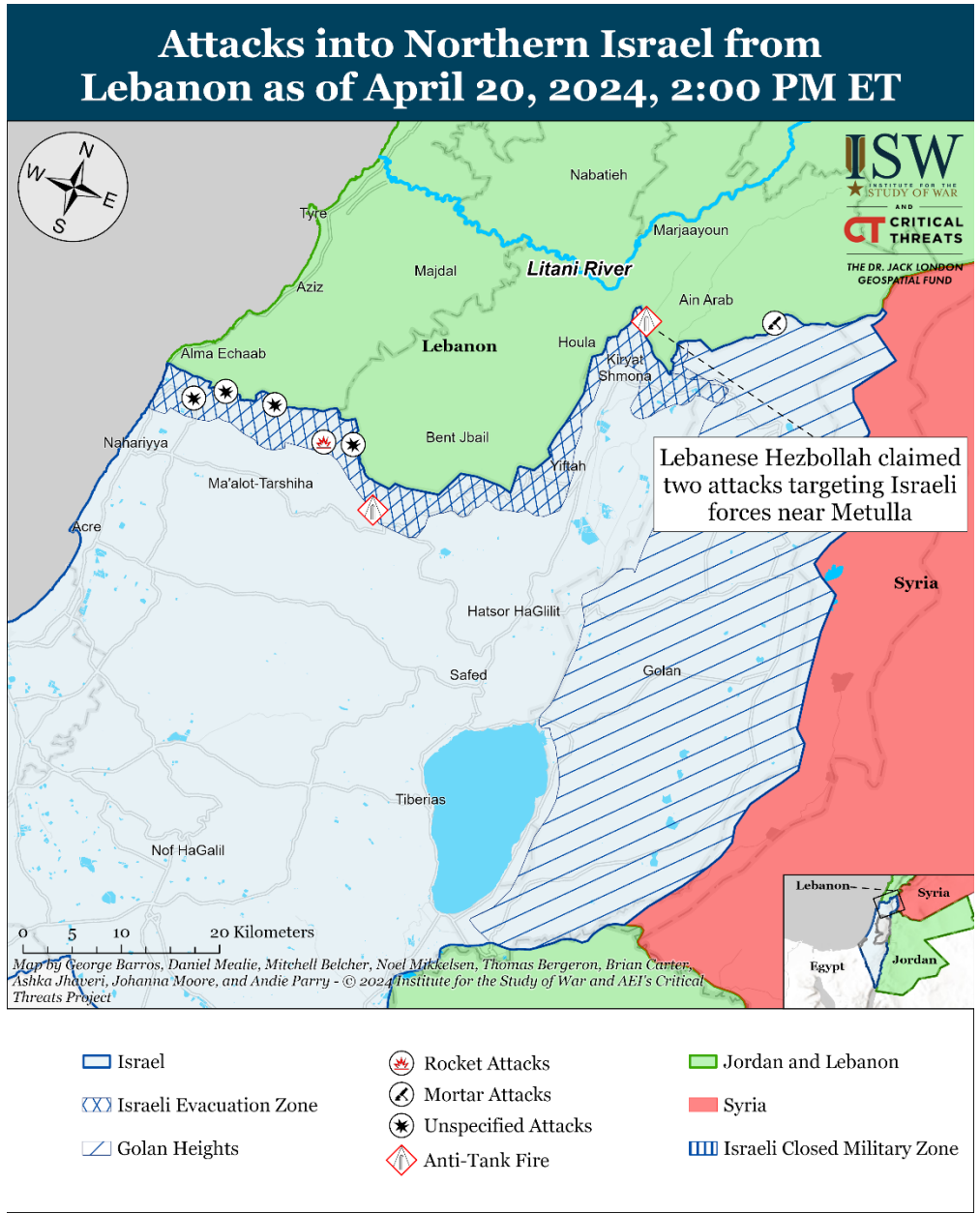
This map is not an exhaustive depiction of clashes and demonstrations in the West Bank.

Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Deter Israel from conducting a ground operation into Lebanon
- Prepare for an expanded and protracted conflict with Israel in the near term
- Expel the United States from Syria

Lebanese Hezbollah has conducted at least nine attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cutoff on April 19.[12]



Recorded reports of attacks; CTP-ISW cannot independently verify impact.

Iran and the Axis of Resistance

The Iraqi Defense Ministry reported that an explosion occurred at the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Kalsu Headquarters in Babil Province on April 19.[13] The explosion killed one PMF member and injured eight Iraqi Army soldiers according to the Defense Ministry. Local footage showed secondary explosions at Kalsu Headquarters, which suggests that the explosion occurred at a weapons storage facility.[14] The United States and Israel denied rumors that they had conducted a strike targeting the base.[15] Iraq's Air Defense Command reported that it did

not detect any drones or aircraft in the air at the time of the explosion.[16] Improper weapons storage has previously caused accidental detonations at PMF weapons storage facilities.[17] The Defense Ministry reported that it initiated an official investigation into the cause of the explosion.[18] No Iraqi government body characterized the explosion as a "strike."

The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed one drone attack targeting Eilat, southern Israel, on April 19.[19] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that its attack on Eilat was in response to Israel's "targeting of the Popular Mobilization Forces camps."



- [1] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781572015213641878>
- [2] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781572017734533124>
- [3] <https://t.me/sarayaps/17689> ; <https://t.me/nedalps/4077>
- [4] https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6297 ; <https://t.me/AymanGouda/6118>
- [5] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781627650659774932>
- [6] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781627650659774932> ; <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781627765889941803>
- [7] <https://t.me/jeninqassamm/6537> ; <https://t.me/sarayaps/17692> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6295
- [8] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781627885222023175>
- [9] <https://twitter.com/idfonline/status/1781647306749542684> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6294 ; <https://t.me/sarayatulqarm/450>
- [10] <https://t.me/sarayajneen/1247> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6292 ; <https://t.me/sarayatulqarm/449> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6294 ; <https://t.me/jeninqassamm/6538>
- [11] <https://t.me/sarayajneen/1247> ; https://t.me/elaqsa_1965/6292 ;
- [12] <https://t.me/mmirleb/3386> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3390> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3391> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3394> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3396> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3398> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3400> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3403> ; <https://t.me/mmirleb/3405>
- [13] <https://twitter.com/SecMedCell/status/1781586978246386107> ; <https://ninanews.com/Website/News/Details?key=1122059>
- [14] <https://twitter.com/GatorNanaJag/status/1781446374111748414>
- [15] <https://twitter.com/CENTCOM/status/1781474064478966238> ; <https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/19/middleeast/iraq-explosion-military-base-intl/index.html> ; https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-04-20-24/h_ec8ae3c62b4f33ac70e9954eod1fb03f
- [16] <https://twitter.com/SecMedCell/status/1781586978246386107>
- [17] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/20/explosion-rocks-arms-depot-north-of-iraqs-baghdad> ; <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/08/weapons-warehouse-blasts-frighten-iraqis>
- [18] <https://ninanews.com/Website/News/Details?key=1122059>
- [19] <https://t.me/ElamAlmoqawama/1054>