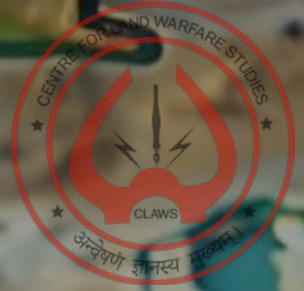


CLAWS Newsletter



West Asia Dispatch | Volume 1 | No.10

by Aishwarya Airy



About us

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) is an independent think tank based in New Delhi, India, dedicated to strategic studies and land warfare in the Indian context. Established in 2004 and registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, CLAWS operates as a membership-based organization governed by a Board of Governors and an Executive Council, under the Aegis of the Indian Army.

With a futuristic outlook and a policy-oriented approach, CLAWS focuses on national security issues, conventional military operations, and sub-conventional warfare. The Centre closely monitors regional conflicts and military developments within India's strategic frontiers, particularly in South Asia.

Committed to fostering strategic culture and informed policymaking, CLAWS disseminates its research to armed forces personnel, policymakers, members of the strategic community, and interested civilians. By facilitating in-depth studies and discussions, CLAWS contributes to shaping India's defense policies and military preparedness.

The CLAWS Newsletter is a newly fortnightly series under the leadership of Dr. Tara Kartha, Director Research & Academics. The newsletter features insightful content curated by CLAWS researchers, each specializing in their respective verticals. This initiative aims to provide in-depth analysis, strategic insights, and updates on key issues.

ISRAEL

1. Trump Believes Netanyahu Is Prolonging Gaza War for Political Gain: Report ([The Atlantic](#), July 31)

U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly believes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is deliberately extending the war in Gaza for political survival, according to a report by The Atlantic, citing two senior Trump administration officials. Trump believes that Israel's military goals in Gaza were achieved long ago and that Netanyahu is continuing Israel's assault for his own political motives. The administration also reportedly believes that Netanyahu is taking steps that interfere with the potential ceasefire deal. Yet, the report suggests that despite this private criticism, Trump is unlikely to publicly rebuke Netanyahu or allow it to influence U.S. policy toward Israel. While there is clear divergence in how Trump and Netanyahu view the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the personal and political bond between the two leaders appears intact and it is believed that this disagreement is unlikely to meaningfully alter the broader U.S.-Israel relationship.

2. IDF Orders 30% Reserve Drawdown Amid Widespread Burnout ([Israel Nation News](#), July 21)

The Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir ordered a phased drawdown of roughly 30% of active reserve combat forces, citing widespread burnout and heavy operational strain. The reduction spans Gaza, the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), and northern borders with Lebanon and Syria, where standing regular units will gradually replace reserve battalions to reduce pressure on fatigued reservists. Only one new reserve brigade is expected to be called up in Gaza in the coming weeks. The northern sector will undergo a slower transition due to ongoing tensions with Hezbollah. The decision comes after an unprecedented wave of mobilization—450,000 reserves were called up in late May, many serving multiple rotations within months. Turnout has since fallen sharply, with some units reporting less than 60% participation, reflecting growing disillusionment, personal hardship, and fatigue. Zamir stressed that the initiative is manpower-driven, not security-driven, and may be reversed if escalation occurs.

3. Romania to Acquire €2.3 B Israeli Air-Defense Systems Amid Rising Threats ([Arab News](#), July 21)

Romania, an eastern NATO ally and Ukraine neighbor, announced a €2.3 billion agreement with Israeli defence firm Rafael Advanced Defense Systems to purchase six anti-aircraft systems. As per the deal, Romania is set to buy six integrated Shorad-VShorad anti-aircraft systems, akin to Israel's Iron Dome, to protect its airspace from drones and cruise missiles. The framework runs for seven years and three further contracts will be signed in under the agreement.

4. Knesset Passes Symbolic Motion Backing West Bank Annexation ([The Times of Israel](#), July 23)

The Knesset passed a non-binding motion calling for the formal annexation of the West Bank, with a vote tally of 71 in favor, 13 opposed, and several abstentions. Sponsored by Likud and supported by far-right factions, the motion demands the Israeli government extend full sovereignty over the West Bank, with formal annexation endorsed by the legislature.

Though the motion carries no legal weight, its passage marks a significant symbolic push by right-wing lawmakers to formalize Israeli sovereignty over the disputed territory. Critics warn that annexation would constitute a breach of international law, provoke severe international backlash, and threaten existing peace treaties, especially with Jordan and Egypt

5. All Gaza will be Jewish: Israeli far right minister ([The Jerusalem Post](#), July 24)

Far-Right Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu stated in an interview with Israel's Kol Barama radio that the Israeli government is actively working to wipe out Gaza and transform it into a Jewish territory. "We are rushing to wipe out Gaza ... All of Gaza will be Jewish," he said. The minister framed the plan as a response to Gaza's association with Hamas, describing the territory as an "evil" that must be removed. He dismissed concerns about the genocide in Gaza and denied that starvation was caused by Israeli policy, labeling such claims a "campaign" against the state. His comments drew condemnation from Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Yechiel Leiter, who publicly denounced Eliyahu's remarks as "misguided, irresponsible, and unrepresentative" of the government's actual positions.

6. Mossad Chief: Covert Operations in Iran to Continue Post-Ceasefire ([JNS](#), July 27)

Mossad Director David Barnea has declared that Israel's intelligence agency will continue its covert operations inside Iran, calling them a "strategic imperative" for national security. In a rare public statement, Barnea emphasized that Mossad will remain active in Iran "like we have been there," despite the recent ceasefire between the two countries.

He lauded his field teams for their "unimaginable achievements," including establishing clandestine surveillance and strike capabilities targeting Iran's nuclear, military, and missile programs. Barnea also highlighted Mossad's close coordination with the CIA and IDF, specifically thanking CIA Director John Ratcliffe for critical support during Israel's recent precision strikes on Iranian targets. The remarks suggest Israel's intent to maintain pressure on Tehran through persistent intelligence operations, signaling that the end of open hostilities will not translate into a pause in Israel's broader counter-Iran strategy.

GAZA

Gaza Numbers (As of July 31)

Total Deaths Since October 7: 60,239 (*An average of 119 Palestinians killed every day in July*)

Total Displaced since Ceasefire Collapsed on March 18: 762,500

Starvation related deaths as of July 31: 175 (93 children)

1. Gaza Hospital Reports First Child Deaths from Hunger as Aid Crisis Deepens ([Euro News](#), July 25)

A Gaza pediatric emergency hospital in northern Gaza has recorded its first-ever child deaths due to malnutrition, marking a devastating escalation in the humanitarian crisis gripping the region. According to local doctors, children with no preexisting health issues are now arriving at the facility too weak to cry or move, a stark indicator of famine conditions. Medical staff at The Patient's Friends Hospital described scenes of unimaginable desperation, stressing that these deaths represent the culmination of months-long aid shortages and distribution failures. This comes amid mounting evidence of a widespread famine in Gaza. Reports suggest that 74 malnutrition-related fatalities have occurred in 2025, 63 of them in July alone,

with 24 being children under five, many with signs of severe wasting. Despite Israel's announcement of 10-hour humanitarian pauses and limited food aid deliveries, only a fraction of the needed 500–600 daily aid trucks are reaching Gaza, with many convoys hindered by violence, delays, and looting.

2. UN Warns “Worst-Case” Famine Unfolding in Gaza ([NBC](#), July 29)

A UN-affiliated food security monitor confirmed that famine thresholds have been reached across most of the Gaza Strip, with acute malnutrition pervasive in Gaza City, marking a “worst-case scenario” unfolding in real time. Experts warn that over 500,000 people, nearly one in five, face starvation, and severe malnutrition among children and pregnant women is widespread. A recent Reuters and Guardian investigation underscores that Israeli policies, more than logistical failures, are directly causing widespread hunger by severely limiting aid access. UN agencies, NGOs, and humanitarian experts insist that only immediate, large-scale, and safe humanitarian access can prevent mass deaths. Aid airdrops and limited distribution centers remain insufficient and often expose civilians to deadly crowd violence.

3. Arab & Muslim Nations Join France–Saudi-Arabia Plan Calling on Hamas to Disarm ([The National News](#), July 28)

At a high-level UN conference co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia, a groundbreaking “New York Declaration” was signed by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, the Arab League, the EU, and 17 other nations, marking the first time Arab states publicly condemned Hamas' October 7 attack and called on the group to relinquish control over Gaza. The declaration demands that Hamas disarm and hand authority to the Palestinian Authority, with international and UN support, including a proposed temporary stabilization mission in Gaza. The declaration supports a two-state solution, urging Israel to endorse it, halt settlement expansion, and cease annexation efforts. It envisions a phased roadmap toward Palestinian statehood under PA governance, and emphasizes tangible, irreversible steps with international backing. Notably, neither the U.S. nor Israel participated, with both rejecting the conference as counterproductive. Nonetheless, France, the UK, Canada, and other Western states signaled recognition of Palestinian statehood by the UN General Assembly if conditions—including disarmament and PA reform—are met. Hamas has since rejected the declaration, reaffirming its resistance until the occupation ends and rejecting calls to cede control or arms.

4. No Proof of Hamas Stealing Aid: Report ([Reuters](#), [NYT](#), July 25, 26)

An internal U.S. government review by USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance, completed in late June 2025, examined 156 incidents of aid theft or loss reported by U.S. aid partners between October 2023 and May 2025. The analysis concluded no incidents were directly linked to Hamas, refuting Israeli and U.S. claims used to justify a controversial aid-distribution model. The review did find that 44 cases were directly or indirectly attributable to Israeli military actions, highlighting the risks associated with aid routes and convoy operations. However, the U.S. State Department publicly rejected the findings, alleging it possessed video evidence of Hamas looting aid, none of which has been released or independently verified.

After nearly two years of accusing Hamas of systematically stealing U.N. humanitarian aid, Israeli military officials have also now acknowledged they found no proof supporting those

claims, according to a New York Times investigation citing two senior Israeli military officials and two Israeli figures involved in aid oversight. The allegations had formed a central pillar of Israel's justification for restricting food and emergency supplies from entering Gaza, severely impacting the humanitarian situation. This admission comes as international scrutiny intensifies, with famine-like conditions gripping parts of Gaza. Doctors report rising deaths from starvation, underscoring the depth of the crisis.

6. Abbas Announces First PNC Elections Since 2006 to Revive PLO Legislature ([JNS](#), 20 July)

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree ordering elections for the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), scheduled to take place before the end of the year, marking the first such vote since 2006. The PNC, which sets PLO policy and elects its Executive Committee, had only convened twice since its last election—in 1996 and 2018. The new council will consist of 350 members, two-thirds representing Palestinians from Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and one-third drawn from the diaspora. A preparatory committee, including representatives of the PLO Executive Committee, political factions, popular organizations, civil society, and diaspora communities, must propose the electoral framework within two weeks

7. Gaza Faces Burial Crisis as Cemeteries Overflow ([The Times of Israel](#), July 22)

With shortages of all else, Gaza is also falling short of grave spaces to bury the dead. Morgues are being forced to bury victims in makeshift mass graves as burial plots vanish. The Times of Israel reported that shortages have intensified, especially after the UN said 86% of Gaza is under Israeli military control or designated evacuation zones, cutting civilians off from their homes and graveyards. Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, Gaza's southern medical hub, confirmed it has no remaining burial plots, compelling staff to use hospital grounds and nearby cemeteries without formal preparation

8. Israel Announces Tactical Pauses in Fighting to Allow Aid Drops (Sky News July 28)

Israel has reinstated humanitarian break periods and airdrops into northern Gaza to ease growing international pressure, though aid access remains severely constrained. The breaks-10-hour "tactical pauses" daily, were announced in zones including Gaza City and Mawasi, but aid agencies say the volume of assistance entering remains grossly inadequate.

IRAN

1. Iran's Nuclear Program (July 22, July 25, [Al Jazeera](#), [France 24](#), [Iran MFA](#), [Borna News](#))

Iran Meets Russia & China as Europe Threatens 'Snapback' of U.N. Sanctions: Iran convened with Russian and Chinese officials to address escalating threats from European powers who have threatened to invoke the “snapback” mechanism under U.N. Resolution 2231 if nuclear talks stall by the end of August. Iran's foreign ministry held the trilateral meeting between the diplomatic delegations of China, Russia and Iran where the three participants discussed the latest status of nuclear negotiations, sanctions and related issues. All parties stressed the importance of resisting what they described as “oppressive and illegitimate” sanctions, in reference to pressure from Western powers, particularly the European E3 bloc and the United States. On the sidelines, the heads of the Russian and Chinese delegations held separate bilateral meetings with Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs and the Director General for Peace and International Security.

Pezeshkian talks to Al Jazeera: In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that Iran never intended to pursue nuclear weapons, citing the existing fatwa against the nuclear weapon, and that it does not seek nuclear weapons. He went on to say that Iran will continue uranium enrichment activities within the framework of international laws and that they require nuclear technology for civilian purposes, citing the scientific benefit of the same. Talking further about

Iran Hold Nuclear Talks With the E3: Senior diplomats from Iran and the E3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) met in Istanbul for their first formal nuclear talks since the June Israel-Iran conflict. The meeting, led by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, focused on the future of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), potential reimposition of UN sanctions, and ongoing concerns over Iran's nuclear escalation and reduced transparency with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). European negotiators raised alarm over Iran's growing stockpile of highly enriched uranium, its refusal to allow full IAEA inspections, and the destabilizing implications of its recent missile and drone advances. They warned that if no diplomatic progress is made, they may trigger the snapback mechanism under UN Security Council Resolution 2231 before its expiry in October—effectively reimposing multilateral sanctions. Iran rejected the threat, calling it politically motivated and warned that such a move would be considered an act of aggression. Tehran reaffirmed its right to peaceful enrichment and hinted it may withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if snapback sanctions are enforced. Iran also reiterated that the breakdown began with the U.S. exit from the JCPOA in 2018, and that any durable solution must include trust-building with Washington. Although no concrete breakthrough was achieved, both sides agreed to continue dialogue in the coming weeks.

2. Iran Conducts First Operational Test of Russian S-400 Air Defense System (July 26, [Kyiv Post](#), [Army Recognition](#))

Iran reportedly carried out its first operational test of the Russian-made S-400 Triumf air defense system near Isfahan. While the Iranian government has not officially confirmed the deployment, satellite imagery and open-source intelligence strongly indicate a full S-400 battery was activated in the region. According to the Kyiv Post and military analysis platform Army Recognition, the test involved a full S-400 battery and included the 91N6E “Big Bird”

acquisition radar, 92N6E “Grave Stone” engagement radar, a command post, and several 5P85TE2 missile launchers. These components together form one of the most advanced surface-to-air defense configurations in the world. The S-400 system can engage multiple aerial targets simultaneously, including aircraft, cruise missiles, UAVs, and ballistic threats. The exercise reportedly involved the launch of long-range interceptor missiles, likely the 48N6E3 and possibly the 40N6. These missiles are equipped with advanced guidance systems capable of engaging high-speed, low-observable threats at various altitudes and distances. This test contradicts earlier public statements by Iranian officials who claimed the country had no plans to purchase the S-400, relying instead on domestic systems like the Bavar-373 and Khordad-15.

3. Jaish al-Adl Attack on Zahedan Judiciary Leaves Six Dead, Dozens Injured (July 26, [Mehr News Agency](#))

A group of armed assailants launched a coordinated gun and grenade attack on the judiciary building in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province in southeast Iran. The assault reportedly resulted in the deaths of six civilians, including a mother and child, and left 20 to 22 others injured, some in critical condition. The attackers, identified as members of the ethnic Baloch Sunni separatist group Jaish al-Adl, stormed the courthouse and engaged security forces in a clash lasting several hours. Iranian security forces killed all three militants, one reportedly wearing a suicide vest, and declared the entire terrorist team was dismantled in the ensuing clashes. The incident underscores longstanding ethnic and sectarian tensions in the underdeveloped Baloch-majority region, which borders Pakistan and Afghanistan and remains a frequent site of militant activity.

4. Armed Attack on IRGC Base in West Azerbaijan Leaves One Dead (July 26, [Nour News](#))

Militants launched an armed assault on an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) base near the village of Aghlan, in Sardasht, West Azerbaijan province. The attackers, described as members of a “terrorist group,” opened fire indiscriminately on IRGC personnel. The assault resulted in the death of one Basij force member, while another was seriously injured in the attack. Colonel Shaker, head of public relations for the IRGC’s West Azerbaijan Martyrs Base, confirmed that the incident targeted a military facility, though authorities have not yet disclosed the identity or motive of the perpetrators. Investigations are underway, and the identity of the attacking group has not been released.

5. Iran Unveils Cross-Border Rail Expansion to Central Asia (July 31, [BNE Intellinews](#))

Iran announced plans to extend its rail network to the Central Asian cities of Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and Mary (Turkmenistan), as part of a broader push to enhance regional connectivity and trade. Jabbar Ali Zakeri, CEO of Iran’s national railway company (RAJA), highlighted that these routes align with Iran’s strategic goal to deepen economic, passenger, and tourism ties across borders. Inspired by the revival of the Tehran–Van (Turkey) service and ongoing plans for Tehran–Herat (Afghanistan), the new Turkmenistan and Tajikistan lines are anticipated to significantly bolster freight and passenger transit, bringing Iran closer into logistical alignment with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. While official start dates remain pending, the enhanced infrastructure is expected to position Iran as a pivotal transit hub under broader transport corridor frameworks such as the Ashgabat Agreement and the International North–South

Transport Corridor.

6. Iran and Russia Conduct Joint CASAREX 2025 Naval Drills in Caspian Sea ([Caspian News](#), July 22)

Iran and Russia held their annual CASAREX 2025 maritime search-and-rescue exercise in the Caspian Sea, hosted by Iran's Northern Fleet and the Fourth Naval District. Participants included the Iranian Navy, IRGC Navy, Law Enforcement Command, and the Russian Federation Navy, with observers from other Caspian littoral states. The three-day drill comprised coastal and maritime phases and included simulated operations such as vessel assistance, vertical transfers, man-overboard rescues, aerial reconnaissance, formation sailing, and a closing naval parade. Rear Admiral Mohsen Razaqi, the exercise spokesperson, stated the event's aim was to reinforce multilateral operational capability, safeguard commercial shipping routes, and create a common framework for future Caspian naval cooperation. Exercises included man-overboard recovery, vessel rescue, vertical transfer operations, formation sailing, aerial reconnaissance, and a closing naval parade. According to Iranian Navy officials, the drill aimed to enhance bilateral naval coordination, improve operational interoperability, and safeguard maritime security in the Caspian region. The exercise underscores Tehran and Moscow's expanded military coordination in the Caspian region, signaling their capacity to maintain regional maritime security.

7. 14 Western Nations Accuse Tehran of Orchestrating Assassinations and Abductions ([The Whistler](#), July 31)

The United Kingdom, United States, France, and 11 other countries issued a joint statement condemning what they described as a growing surge in assassination, kidnapping, and harassment threats orchestrated by Iranian intelligence services in Europe and North America. Signatories, including Germany, Canada, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Czechia, Austria, and others, said in a joint statement that these operations, often targeting dissidents, journalists, Jewish citizens, and current or former officials, frequently involved collaboration between Iranian agents and international criminal networks. The coalition affirmed that such acts represent "violations of our sovereignty," pledging mutual cooperation to prevent further plots and calling on Iranian authorities to immediately halt these illicit activities. Since early 2022, the UK reports it has foiled over 20 Iran-linked plots, including attempted violence and espionage against UK-based Iranians and other individuals deemed threats by Tehran. Iranian officials denied the allegations, calling them "fabrications" and accusing the Western coalition of supporting terror groups under diplomatic cover.

8. Russia Launches Iranian Communications Satellite Into Orbit ([Mehr News](#), [Tehran Times](#), 25 July)

Iran successfully launched its telecommunications satellite Nahid-2 aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket from the Vostochny Cosmodrome, marking a major milestone in Tehran's space ambitions. The satellite was part of a broader multi-satellite launch program that included Russia's Ionosfera-M3 and M4, as well as 18 others from different countries, as per local media reports. The indigenously built satellite was successfully positioned into a 500 km low Earth orbit and is designed for a mission up to five-years in the LEO. The satellite will be the first to test homegrown Ku-band communications, along with X-band and UHF capabilities. By 28 July, the Iranian Space Agency confirmed the satellite's full functionality, with successful

telemetry, power systems, and data transmission. Development of Nahid-3 has already begun, ISA said.

On a more symbolic note, the launch saw the ISA emblem on the Russian Soyuz marking Iran's official participation in the international space mission.

Watch the video [here](#).

9. Back-to-Back Moscow Meetings Signal Growing Iran-Russia Diplomacy ([The Moscow Times](#), [Izvestia](#), July 20, 21)

On 20 July 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted a surprise meeting in the Kremlin with Ali Larijani, a senior advisor to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, focusing on Iran's nuclear program and regional tensions. The meeting—confirmed by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov and reported by Iranian state media—took place against a diplomatic backdrop suggesting renewed nuclear talks with the West. During the private session, Larijani relayed Iran's assessment of escalating Middle East volatility and developments surrounding its nuclear capacity. Putin reaffirmed Russia's position in support of resolving nuclear issues through diplomatic and political channels rather than coercive means. On 21 July 2025, Iran's Defense Minister Brig. Gen. Aziz Nasirzadeh met with his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov in Moscow, discussing bilateral cooperation in the defense and military sectors. Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, confirmed that strengthening strategic defense coordination was the meeting's central purpose. Nasirzadeh had also participated in a meeting on 20 July between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ali Larijani, a senior adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, conveying Iran's positions on regional security and its nuclear program. The defense minister's joint Moscow visit follows the Strategic Partnership Treaty signed in January 2025 and reflects Iran's sustained effort to bolster military-industrial cooperation despite Western sanctions.

10. Mysterious Explosions across Iran, Officials Suspect Israeli Hand ([YT News](#), July 23)

A string of mysterious explosions and fires across Iran over the past two weeks, impacting oil refineries, residential blocks, roadways, and even a shoe factory, has sparked internal concern among senior Iranian officials, including members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, who suspect covert sabotage likely conducted by Israel. They point to similarities with past clandestine operations attributed to Mossad, though no concrete proof has been disclosed.

One deadly incident at an oil refinery in Abadan killed one person, injured several, and halted production. Another fire hit a shoe factory; others impacted apartment buildings and infrastructure near Tehran's airport. The frequency and spread prompted speculation of coordinated attacks. State media and government spokespeople have publicly dismissed the incidents as coincidences or the result of aging infrastructure. The move is likely aimed at calming the public down post the recent 12 day war with Israel. Meanwhile, safety experts noted the possibility of gas-related causes but did not rule out sabotage. Despite these internal suspicions, Iran has so far refrained from officially accusing Israel.

11. Iran-U.S. Destroyer Confrontation in the Gulf of Oman ([This is Beirut](#), July 23)

Iran claimed its naval forces intercepted the U.S. Navy destroyer USS Fitzgerald in the Gulf of Oman after the vessel allegedly approached Iranian territorial waters. According to Iranian

state media, a naval helicopter issued radio warnings and conducted an overflight of the ship, prompting a brief standoff. Iran said the U.S. crew warned it would open fire, but the Iranian helicopter, backed by integrated air defenses, continued its mission before the destroyer “withdrew southward.” The U.S. military rejected Iran’s version of events, stating the interaction was “safe, professional, and routine,” denying any retreat or aggression. The Fitzgerald remained on its assigned mission, according to U.S. Central Command. The encounter is the first reported maritime flare-up between Iranian and U.S. forces since the June Israel–Iran war.

12. U.S. Sanctions Oil Network Linked to Khamenei Aide’s Son ([Reuters](#), [RFE](#), July 31)

The U.S. Treasury Department imposed its largest Iran-related sanctions package since 2018, targeting more than 115 individuals, companies, and petroleum vessels tied to a global oil trafficking enterprise. The U.S. Treasury imposed sweeping sanctions on a massive oil and shipping network linked to Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, the son of Ali Shamkhani, a top adviser to Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. The sanctions focus on a global fleet transporting Iranian and Russian oil, often through shell companies operating across 20-plus countries, including Panama, Hong Kong, and Italy. U.S. officials say the network generated tens of billions of dollars in oil revenues that helped fund Iran’s nuclear program, missile forces, and proxy militias. Separately, the US State Department said it was imposing sanctions on 20 entities, including companies in India, Indonesia, Turkey, and the UAE, for involvement in the trade of Iranian oil products.

13. Iran-China ‘Dark Fleet’ Oil Trade Continues Despite Sanctions ([CBS](#), July 31)

A CBS News investigation confirmed that China continues importing Iranian oil via a covert “dark fleet” of tankers that evade U.S. sanctions. These vessels conduct ship-to-ship transfers in international waters, often off Malaysia’s Riau archipelago, with transponders turned off and cargo documentation falsified, obscuring both origin and destination. Analysts estimate over 90% of Iran’s crude exports, totalling approximately 1.7-1.8 million barrels per day, now head to China via this clandestine network. The CBS crew that went into international waters to see how this functions reported that 12 such transfers were observed in one day, indicating a surge in activity. Vessels like the Tifani and Stellar Oracle (already sanctioned) were caught in the act, alongside others like Alps and Eon, the latter newly identified as a sanctions violator. Former U.S. Navy officer Charlie Brown called the area “dark fleet parking central,” noting these deceptive operations have become routine.

14. Iran Expels Over 70,000 Afghans in One Week Amid Mounting Humanitarian Crisis ([Shia Waves](#), July 27)

Between July 19–25, Iranian authorities forcibly deported 70,830 Afghan migrants, according to the Taliban-run Commission for Refugee Affairs. Most crossed via Islam Qala (Herat) and Silk Bridge (Nimroz), intensifying an already massive repatriation campaign. Since early 2025, over 1.5 million Afghans have been expelled from Iran, with the pace doubling after a 12-day conflict with Israel triggered nationwide crackdowns on undocumented individuals. Humanitarian agencies warn that the response capacity inside Afghanistan is reaching its breaking point. Aid funding has been sharply reduced even as returnee numbers surge, leaving many without shelter, food, or medical assistance. Iranian authorities have issued a deadline for all undocumented Afghans to leave the country by September, or face arrest and

deportation. The looming deadline, combined with large-scale expulsions, has raised alarm over a potential humanitarian catastrophe on Afghanistan's western border.

15. Iran Foreign Minister Visits Tajikistan; President Scheduled to Visit Pakistan (July 31, [Tehran Times](#))

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi visited Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and held talks with President Emomali Rahmon and Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin. Discussions focused on expanding cooperation in trade, energy, education, culture, and transportation. According to official readouts, both sides emphasized the importance of strengthening regional connectivity and reaffirmed support for implementing previously signed agreements, including a rail transit deal signed earlier this year allowing Iranian wagons to operate on Tajik rail networks.

In the past year, Iran–Tajikistan trade increased by 50%, reaching approximately \$380 million. Ongoing discussions also covered collaboration in water resource management and energy infrastructure, and integration into regional corridors such as the International North–South Transport Corridor. No new agreements were signed during the visit, but both countries reiterated intent to maintain regular political consultations and deepen cooperation across multiple sectors, particularly as Iran expands its outreach to Central Asian states. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is set to visit Pakistan on a two-day state visit from August 2-3. This will mark his first visit to Pakistan since assuming office. Pezeshkian is scheduled to meet the top Pakistani leadership including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari, and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir. He is set to land in Lahore and then travel to Islamabad. Iranian media reported that Pezeshkian's agenda includes high-level meetings and dialogues with cultural and business leaders.

TURKEY

(This newsletter excludes defence industry news from Turkey. Please read our Turkish Defence Updates Newsletter for more information)*

1. UK-Turkey Sign MoU to allow Turkish Purchase of Eurofighter Typhoon ([Wall Street Journal](#), July 23)

The UK and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding in Istanbul to pave the way for Ankara's potential purchase of up to 40 Eurofighter Typhoon jets, marking a significant step in strengthening NATO's collective defense and deepening bilateral industrial ties. The Eurofighter is jointly produced by BAE Systems (UK), Airbus (Germany/Spain), and Leonardo (Italy). The UK will manufacture 37% of each aircraft if the deal proceeds. Negotiations will continue in the coming weeks, following years of stalled discussions due to Germany's export license concerns over Turkey's foreign policy. However, a shift in Berlin's stance has revived the possibility of the multibillion-dollar deal moving forward.

2. Turkey to Support Syrian Government in Counterterrorism and Stabilisation Efforts ([Daily Sabah](#), July 31)

Turkey has formally committed to providing training, consultancy and technical assistance to Syria's new administration in its fight against Daesh (ISIS) and other terrorist organizations, following a Syrian government request, according to Turkey's Defense Ministry sources. Ankara reaffirmed support for Syria's political unity and territorial integrity, conditioning its aid on Syria's commitment to integrate the YPG, the PKK's Syrian affiliate, into its armed forces by year's end (per a Damascus-YPG agreement). The move builds on Ankara's broader Counter-Daesh Coordination Cell, established jointly with Syria, Iraq, and Jordan, aimed at reducing reliance on the YPG in US-led anti-Daesh operations, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated

3. Turkey to Supply Natural Gas to Syria via Kilis–Aleppo Pipeline Starting August ([Middle East Online](#), July 30)

Starting August 2, 2025, Turkey will commence delivering natural gas from Azerbaijan to Syria through a restored pipeline from Kilis to Aleppo, marking a major development in regional energy collaboration. Initially, daily flows of about 3.4 million cubic metres are expected, scaling up to 6 million m³ per day, equivalent to 2 billion m³ annually. Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar indicated the gas will power Syrian plants to produce roughly 1,200 MW of electricity, raising daily power availability from around 3 to 4 hours to approximately 10 hours. In addition, Turkey plans to export up to 500 MW of electricity independently, with financial backing from Qatar and partnership through SOCAR of Azerbaijan.

4. Turkey Widens Crackdown on Main Opposition CHP Amid Corruption Allegations ([DW News](#), July 28)

Turkey's government has intensified its crackdown on the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), detaining several CHP mayors and municipal officials across multiple provinces, including Istanbul, Adana, Antalya, and İzmir. The arrests, which began in late 2024, have accelerated in recent weeks, with Turkish authorities citing charges related to corruption, bid-rigging, and alleged links to the outlawed PKK. Critics and rights groups argue the

investigations are politically motivated, aiming to undermine the CHP after its strong performance in the 2024 local elections. A key flashpoint remains the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, a leading opposition figure and potential presidential challenger. His arrest sparked widespread protests, drawing thousands into the streets in support.

5. Turkey Terminates Iraq Crude Oil Pipeline Agreement ([Iraq Business News](#), July 22)

Turkey has officially announced the termination of its long-standing Iraq–Turkey Crude Oil Pipeline Agreement, originally enacted in 1973, with the agreement set to expire on July 27, 2026. The move comes after the Kirkuk–Ceyhan pipeline remained inoperative since March 2023 following an arbitration ruling that ordered Ankara to pay \$1.5 billion in damages for unauthorized oil exports sourced from the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Officials say Turkey’s main motivations are twofold: to exert pressure on Baghdad to resolve the arbitration dispute and to repurpose the pipeline infrastructure for Turkish domestic crude, particularly the recently discovered Gabar field, which is already linked to the Turkish segment of the pipeline. Ankara has submitted a draft proposal to Iraq proposing a comprehensive new energy agreement, expanding cooperation beyond oil into gas, electricity, petrochemicals, and infrastructure projects tied to the Development Road corridor

6. Turkey Wildfires: At Least 17 Dead and Thousands Evacuated ([Sky News](#), July 28)

A wave of wildfires across northwest Turkey, notably around Bursa, has claimed at least 17 lives since late June, prompting mass evacuations and emergency response teams to battle extreme heat and wind-fueled fires. Over 3,500 residents were forced from their homes in the Bursa region alone as the fire swept through forests and residential areas. Among the fatalities were volunteer firefighters and forestry workers: ten died during a major Eskisehir fire, while four more lost their lives near Bursa. Fueling these unprecedented fires were record-breaking temperatures, reaching up to 50 °C, combined with strong winds that accelerated the calamity.

7. Turkey and Kazakhstan Sign 20 Strategic Cooperation Agreements Across Multiple Sectors ([Anadolu Ajansi](#), July 29)

During Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev’s official visit to Ankara and the fifth meeting of the Turkey–Kazakhstan High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Tokayev signed 20 bilateral agreements to deepen collaboration across a wide range of sectors. Key agreements include an energy and mining cooperation MoU between Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) and Kazakhstan’s Kaz-MunayGas to jointly explore and produce hydrocarbons, and a freight transport pact aimed at boosting capacity along the Middle Corridor railway route. Additional memoranda cover artificial intelligence, innovation, and space, media and communications, banking regulation, free special economic zones, road transport, education, healthcare, mining, urban planning, and justice.

8. Turkey on U.S. “White List” in Latest Tariff Regime ([Anadolu Ajansi](#), July 30)

Turkey’s Deputy Trade Minister, Murat Tuzcu, confirmed that Turkey has been placed on the U.S. tariff “white list”, designating it a low-risk trading partner with some of the lowest applied tariffs in the latest U.S. tariff framework. At an Istanbul seminar focused on the US-Turkey \$100 billion bilateral trade target, he emphasized that Turkey poses no commer-

cial threat to U.S. markets thanks to balanced trade volumes and substantial bilateral investments. Tuzcu noted that Turkey currently exports \$16–17 billion worth of goods to the U.S., a figure considered modest relative to overall potential, particularly when excluding petroleum and energy exports as per Turkish leadership. He outlined a strategic roadmap to diversify and increase Turkish exports by targeting sectors where American market share may shrink due to tariffs, highlighting areas like textiles, automotive and energy.

9. Turkey Deports Egyptian Linked to Muslim Brotherhood Amid Growing Ties with Cairo ([Middle East Eye](#), July 25)

Turkey has deported Mohamed Abdelhafiz, an Egyptian citizen accused of being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and its alleged armed wing, Hasm, signaling a notable policy shift amid Ankara's rapprochement with Cairo. Abdelhafiz, a long-term resident in Turkey, was detained at Istanbul Airport upon returning from Africa and deported to a third country under a no-entry order. While Turkey typically avoids deportations that risk rights violations, his removal coincided with Egypt's claim of thwarting a Hasm-planned attack. The move reflects Ankara's broader recalibration: closing Brotherhood-linked TV channels, restricting dissident activities, and intensifying cooperation with Egypt on counterterrorism. Despite not extraditing key Brotherhood figures, Turkey appears to be quietly limiting their freedom.

SYRIA

1. Israel-Syria Conflict ([X/@AvichayAdraee](#), [Aze Media](#), July 16 onwards)

On July 16, Israel launched a wave of airstrikes on Damascus, targeting locations near the presidential palace and the compound that houses the Syrian defence ministry. Simultaneously, strikes were reported in southern Syria, particularly in Suwayda province, where violent clashes between Druze fighters, Bedouin tribes, and Syrian security forces had been ongoing. Israel stated the strikes were in defense of the Druze community, accusing pro-government forces of attacking civilians. Defense Minister Israel Karz demanded the Syrian Army's withdrawal from Suwayda, warning of further action if hostilities continued. At the time of the Israeli strikes, at least 250 people had been killed in the Suwayda province.

Damascus denounced the airstrikes as a "flagrant assault" and accused Israel of supporting armed groups on Syrian soil. Several Arab states, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and Kuwait, condemned the Israeli actions calling them violations of international law. Turkey too condemned the attacks and labeled them attempts to "sabotage" a recent ceasefire and undermine Syria's multicultural identity and territorial integrity.

Turkish President Erdoğan reiterated that Israel's actions expose its intent to destabilize Syria. He told Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa that Turkey firmly supports Damascus in preserving unity, calling the airstrikes "unacceptable" and a regional security threat. Subsequently, the Turkish foreign minister reiterated that Turkey would intervene militarily if fragmented autonomy or division destabilizes Syria.

As the conflict escalated, the U.S. intervened and finally, on July 18, the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey publicly confirmed a ceasefire, brokered by Turkey, Jordan, and other regional actors. The ceasefire called for de-escalation and a halt to military operations by all sides, including the Syrian government and non-state armed groups.

As the fragile truce held, a discreet diplomatic meeting was held on July 31 in Baku, Azerbaijan, between Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and Israeli Strategic Affairs Min-

ister Ron Dermer. The meeting, which followed earlier more public talks in Paris, reportedly focused on stabilising the situation in southern Syria, preventing further cross-border escalation, and exploring potential security arrangements. This meeting also followed al-Shaibani's meeting with Russia that was held earlier the same day.

2. IDEF 2025: Syrian Defence Ministry Delegation Visits ASFAT Pavilion & Holds Talks with Turkish Military Leaders ([Shafaqna](#), 25 July)

A senior delegation from Syria's Ministry of Defence toured the ASFAT pavilion at the International Defence Industry Exhibition IDEF 2025 in Ankara, Turkey, reviewing advanced Turkish defence technologies and equipment displayed by the state-owned company. The following day, the delegation visited the Turkish Naval College in Istanbul, an engagement highlighting Syria's interest in expanding military training and institutional cooperation with Turkey. During this period, they held bilateral discussions with high-ranking Turkish military figures, including Lieutenant General Selçuk Bayraktaroğlu, Commander of the Turkish Land Forces, and Lieutenant General Metin Tokal, Commander of the First Army. While no official agreements were signed publicly, the interactions reflect an ongoing policy of engaging Turkish military institutions, potentially signaling Syria's pursuit of capacity-building partnerships and security cooperation through informal channels. On July 24, Brigadier General Assem Hawari, Commander of the Syrian Air Force, held a bilateral meeting with Major General Ergin Dinç, Director of the Turkish Air College, on the sidelines of the IDEF 2025 defense industry exhibition. Earlier during the event, Brigadier General Hawari had also met with Turkish Air Force Commander, Lieutenant General Ziya Cemal Kadioğlu.

3. Syrian Foreign Minister Makes First Official Visit to Moscow ([The National News](#), July 31)

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani became the first member of Damascus's interim government to officially visit Moscow following the ouster of ex-president and Russian ally Bashar al-Assad in December 2024. Shibani, accompanied by Syrian Defense Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra, was received by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and then met with President Vladimir Putin. This marks a major shift in Syria-Russia diplomacy. During the meetings, Shibani underscored Syria's desire to have Russia by their side in its reconstruction and institutional transition, while requesting support for its "transitional justice" process and said that Syria has formed a committee to review past bilateral agreements. Lavrov responded with pledges of continued military, economic and infrastructure cooperation, reaffirming Russia's long-standing policy of supporting Syria's sovereignty and unity. Syria's Defense Minister also met his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov. Their discussions covered military cooperation and regional instability. Russia also formally invited interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa to participate in the first Russia-Arab League summit scheduled for October 15 in Moscow—a symbolic step toward Syria's reintegration into regional diplomacy.

4. Senior Israeli and Syrian Officials Hold U.S.-Brokered De-escalation Talks in Paris ([Axios](#), July 24)

Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani met in Paris, in a U.S.-brokered session alongside U.S. Envoy Tom Barrack. This marks the first publicly confirmed meeting between senior Israeli and Syrian officials in over 25 years.

The meeting aimed to stabilize escalating tensions in southern Syria, particularly in Sweida province, where deadly clashes between Druze militias, Bedouin tribes, and Syrian government forces intensified. Talks focused on confidence-building steps, security coordination, and crisis-prevention mechanisms. While no formal agreements were signed, Syrian state television (Ekhbariya) confirmed a mutual agreement to continue dialogue despite lingering disagreements, including Syria's rejection of imposed realities on the ground.

5. Jordan's Agriculture Co-operation with Syria ([Enab Baladi](#), [Jordan Pulse](#), July 23)

Jordan's Amman Chamber of Commerce hosted a delegation from Syria's Agricultural Engineers Syndicate to kick off a tripartite agricultural cooperation initiative with Syria and Lebanon. Chaired by Senator Khalil al-Hajj Tawfiq, the meeting focused on enhancing regional food security, economic integration, and sustainable agriculture. Al-Hajj Tawfiq proposed creating a joint agricultural calendar between Jordan and Syria to streamline customs, coordinate seasonal production, and facilitate smoother cross-border trade. The plan includes developing integrated supply chains to boost exports to Turkey and Europe—particularly through the reopened Bab al-Hawa crossing. Syrian delegate Mustafa al-Mustafa welcomed the initiative, highlighting Syria's fertile land and willingness to offer incentives for private investment and post-conflict reconstruction in the agricultural sector. The two sides agreed to expand Jordanian agricultural delegations to Syria, share sectoral databases (including exporters and fertilizer suppliers), and exchange technical expertise in farm management, marketing, and logistics. Jordanian stakeholders also pledged logistical and technical support to help rehabilitate Syria's agriculture infrastructure, with the private sector playing an active role in the reconstruction process.

6. Saudi Arabia to Invest over \$6B in Syria ([Al Arabiya](#), July 24)

In a landmark investment drive, Saudi Arabia has pledged \$6.4 billion to support Syria's reconstruction under the new government led by President Ahmed al-Shara. The announcement came during the Syrian-Saudi Investment Forum held in Damascus and was spearheaded by Saudi Investment Minister Khalid al-Falih alongside more than 100 Saudi companies and investors. Al-Falih stated that the initiative was ordered directly by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, signaling Riyadh's formal backing of Syria's new leadership. The investment package includes 47 agreements, with nearly \$3 billion directed toward infrastructure and \$1 billion toward the telecommunications sector. Key projects include three cement plants, a \$100 million retail tower, and initiatives across energy, infrastructure, telecoms, and hospitality. A new white cement factory in Adra and a planned joint Saudi-Syrian business council were introduced during the opening. Al-Mustafa said the deals will create roughly 50,000 direct jobs, and up to 150,000 indirect roles, reinforcing commitments to economic integration and development. This investment wave follows the lifting of most U.S. sanctions by President Trump in June.

7. Saudi-Syria Energy Cooperation Deepens with MoU ([Transformers](#), July 28)

Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and Syria's Energy Minister Mohammad al-Bashir signed a MoU in Riyadh that formalises bilateral energy cooperation across oil and gas, electricity generation, regional grid integration, renewables, petrochemicals, and clean energy investments. The agreement includes plans for technology transfers, collaborative seminars and workshops, and regulatory alignment to foster joint projects and inno-

vation in energy policy and infrastructure. It builds on a broader thaw in bilateral relations, following Saudi Arabia's \$6+ billion investment commitment and clearance of Syria's World Bank arrears .

This MoU may also enable Syria to connect to Saudi Arabia's grid and ramp up renewable deployment, marking a new era of strategic energy collaboration between Gulf monarchies and post-Assad Syria.

8. Senior ISIS Leader, Two Sons killed in U.S.-Syria Operation ([CENTCOM](#), [ED News](#), July 25)

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed the killing of senior ISIS figure Dhiya' Zawba Muslih al-Hardani and his two adult sons- Abdallah Dhiya al-Hardani and Abd al-Rahman Zawba al-Hardani- in a precision raid in al-Bab, Aleppo Governorate, Syria. The operation marked the coalition's first airdrop assault of 2025, conducted in coordination with the Syrian government's General Security forces and the U.S.-aligned Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Local observers reported extensive aerial deployment and a security cordon before the raid, which resulted in no civilian casualties and the three women and three children present at the site were unharmed.

UAE

1. UAE President Concludes Strategic State Visit to Turkey, Launches High-Level Council Amid Growing Bilateral Ties ([Khaleej Times](#), July 16)

UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan concluded a state visit to Turkey, marking a pivotal moment in regional diplomacy. Welcomed by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara, the two leaders inaugurated the first session of the UAE–Turkey High-Level Strategic Council and saw the signing of seven bilateral agreements. The Council aims to deepen cooperation across diverse sectors, including economy, technology, trade, renewable energy, and food security, supporting both nations' sustainable development agendas. Discussions also emphasised regional stability, mutual support for peace initiatives, and diplomatic conflict resolution strategies. The leaders also exchanged views on improving public and private sector cooperation between the two countries.

The visit was part of a diplomatic sprint by the UAE leader who visited Turkey, Albania, Serbia and Hungary between July 16- July 17.

2. UAE and Turkey Sign Secret Data Protection Pact to Enable Joint Defense Projects ([Nordic Monitor](#), July 16)

Turkey and the UAE signed a classified agreement titled "Agreement on Mutual Protection of Classified Information in the Field of Defence Industry", aimed at securing sensitive defense collaboration. Signed in Ankara by Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Güler and UAE Minister of State for Defense Affairs Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Mazrouei, during UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed's visit, the framework establishes shared protocols for classification, transmission, protection, and destruction of defense-related data and documentation. The pact covers personnel security clearances, standardizes four classification levels, mutual recognition of facility access, and protocols for urgent delivery of materials. Subcontractors must comply with national security standards, reinforcing accountability across joint projects. This agreement clears the way for co-production, technology transfer,

and secure R&D cooperation in areas like air defense, naval platforms, drones, and cybersecurity. It also reflects a notable reconciliation between Turkey and the UAE, enabling deeper defense industry integration after years of geopolitical rivalry.

3. UAE and U.S. Accelerate Innovation with Joint Patent Initiative ([Eye of Riyadh](#), July 16)

The UAE and U.S. announced a landmark Joint Statement of Intent to accelerate patent grant procedures, marking a major step in bilateral cooperation on intellectual property (IP). Delegates from the UAE Ministry of Economy and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) endorsed the agreement during a meeting hosted in Abu Dhabi. Under the framework, both sides will harmonize examination standards, share best practices, and streamline technology-transfer pathways in key supporting sectors like biotech, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing. Both offices aim to reduce processing time for patent issuance, enhance transparency, and improve predictability for innovators and investors.

4. UAE Begins Deporting Afghan Evacuees Despite U.S. Promises ([Khaama Press](#), July 21)

The United Arab Emirates has started deporting Afghan evacuees back to Afghanistan, even as U.S. President Donald Trump pledged to help them. According to both Khaama Press and a confidential U.S. State Department cable reported by Reuters, the UAE returned two Afghan families in early July and planned to deport the remaining 25 evacuees by July 20. These individuals were housed at Emirates Humanitarian City near Abu Dhabi, a temporary facility established in 2021 to host Afghan evacuees following the U.S. withdrawal. Despite hosting around 17,000 evacuees over the years, only a few remain, prompting concerns over rights violations. Reports suggest deportations were described as “voluntary,” but indicate pressure was applied under threat of arrest in order to secure their return. The UAE reportedly requested U.S. cooperation on messaging to avoid international criticism amid the resettlement stalemate.

OTHERS

1. Bahrain and Qatar Deepen Strategic Ties with U.S. During High-Level White House Engagements ([Daiji World](#), [WAM](#), July 17)

On July 16, U.S. President Donald Trump welcomed Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa to the White House and later hosted a private dinner with Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. In his meeting with the Bahraini leader, Trump discussed stronger diplomatic and economic collaboration. Bahrain's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa pledged over \$17 billion in investments in the United States. The centerpiece of the package includes a roughly \$7 billion deal for Gulf Air to purchase 12 Boeing 787 jets (with options for six more) and 40 GE engines, projected to support 30,000 U.S. jobs. Additional components involve Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund Mumtalakat investing \$2 billion in downstream aluminum projects and private-sector firms committing \$10.7 billion across sectors including aviation, technology, energy, and industry. Technology deals include partnerships with Cisco and Oracle, placing Cisco hardware centrally in Bahrain's efforts to replace Chinese servers in national infrastructure. Technology deals include partnerships with Cisco and Oracle, placing Cisco

hardware centrally in Bahrain's efforts to replace Chinese servers in national infrastructure. A civilian nuclear cooperation memorandum was also signed with the U.S., signaling broader strategic cooperation. The MOU commits both nations to develop a strategic civil nuclear partnership. It supports Bahrain's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, enhances energy security, and promotes deployment of safe, low-carbon nuclear technology. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also hosted Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa at the Pentagon to reaffirm and expand military cooperation between the two nations.

2. Pakistan and Kuwait Deepen Strategic Ties with Focus on Trade, Energy, and Defense Cooperation ([Arab News](#), July 29)

Pakistan and Kuwait have agreed to strengthen bilateral ties through enhanced high-level exchanges focused on cooperation in trade, investment, energy, food security, and defense, according to Pakistan's foreign office. The agreement was sealed during a meeting in New York between Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya held on the sidelines of the UN's International Conference on the Two-State Solution. The ministers also discussed expanding cooperation in areas like cybersecurity, defense training, and energy partnerships, signaling a strategic push within the Gulf region. Amid this diplomatic outreach, both nations also expressed concern over escalating Israeli aggression in Gaza, emphasizing the urgent need for a just and lasting resolution, aligned with support for Palestinian rights. Discussions included coordination at multilateral platforms such as the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Pakistan highlighted its ambition to expand skilled labor exports to the Gulf to sustain record remittances of \$38.3 billion in the last fiscal year, while Kuwait showed interest in deeper collaboration on defense and food security frameworks.

3. India and Kuwait Sign Landmark Air Services Pact, Boost Weekly Flight Capacity by 50% ([ITIJ](#), July 29)

India and Kuwait signed a revised Air Services Agreement, increasing bilateral seat capacity by 50%, from 12,000 to 18,000 seats per week. This is the first capacity expansion between the two countries in nearly 20 years. The agreement was signed between India's Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha and Kuwait's Director General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Hamoud Mubarak Al-Sabah. The new capacity will support rising travel demand, especially among the Indian expatriate community in Kuwait. Flights under the new agreement are expected to commence in August 2025, subject to slot coordination. The deal is expected to enhance connectivity, reduce costs, and improve airline service options on the India-Kuwait route.

4. Kuwait Unveils Bayraktar TB2 Drones, Marks Milestone in \$367 Million Defense Deal with Turkey ([Turkey Today](#), July 17)

Kuwait officially unveiled its first Bayraktar TB2 unmanned combat aerial vehicles at Salem al-Sabah Air Base, with Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali al-Sabah and top military leaders in attendance. The ceremony showcased three TB2 units—one outfitted with guided bombs—and included live technical presentations of their surveillance and strike capabilities. This follows Kuwait's \$367 million contract signed in June 2023 with Turkish firm Baykar, covering aircraft, training, munitions, ground stations, simulators, electronic warfare equipment, and three years of technical support. The deal reportedly comprises 18 drones,

1,800 smart munitions, multiple control stations, and support infrastructure. Kuwait plans to deploy TB2s in environmental surveillance and civilian missions, integrating them into broader national security applications.

5. U.S. Finalizes \$400M Jet Gift from Qatar, Sparks Backlash ([Aero Time](#), July 29)

The U.S. Department of Defense has formally agreed to accept a Boeing 747-8 jet, valued at \$400 million, as a no-strings-attached gift from Qatar to be used as a temporary Air Force One. The agreement was sealed on July 7, 2025, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. However, the full contents of the MoU remain undisclosed. The deal has sparked significant backlash from lawmakers and ethics watchdogs, with critics warning it could breach the Foreign Emoluments Clause of the U.S. Constitution and compromise national security and transparency. While the Pentagon maintains the arrangement is legally sound, some reports suggest that Washington may have initiated the offer, complicating claims of Qatari goodwill. The aircraft will require extensive retrofitting to meet presidential standards—an effort projected to cost up to \$1 billion. To fund the upgrade, the U.S. Air Force reportedly plans to reallocate surplus funds from the over-budget LGM-35A Sentinel nuclear missile project.

6. U.S. Ramps Up Pressure on Lebanon for Cabinet Decision to Disarm Hezbollah (July 30, [Harici](#))

The United States intensified its demands on Beirut to issue a formal cabinet decision requiring Hezbollah's disarmament—without which U.S. envoy Thomas Barrack will suspend visits and halt pressure on Israel to end airstrikes or withdraw troops from southern Lebanon. Negotiations over the previous six weeks centered around a U.S.-brokered roadmap: Hezbollah would lay down arms within four months in exchange for Israeli troop withdrawal from five southern border positions and cessation of drone strikes. Lebanese officials face warnings that continued foot-dragging could jeopardize both U.S. diplomatic engagement and international mediation efforts. While Hezbollah has publicly rejected disarmament—often calling it “capitulation”—it is reportedly considering scaled-down reductions in private discussions, provided Israel meets its withdrawal conditions first. Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri has echoed the demand that ceasefire terms must be officially implemented before arms negotiations proceed.

7. Iraq Reopens Mosul Airport After 11 Years of ISIL Destruction ([Al-Monitor](#), July 18)

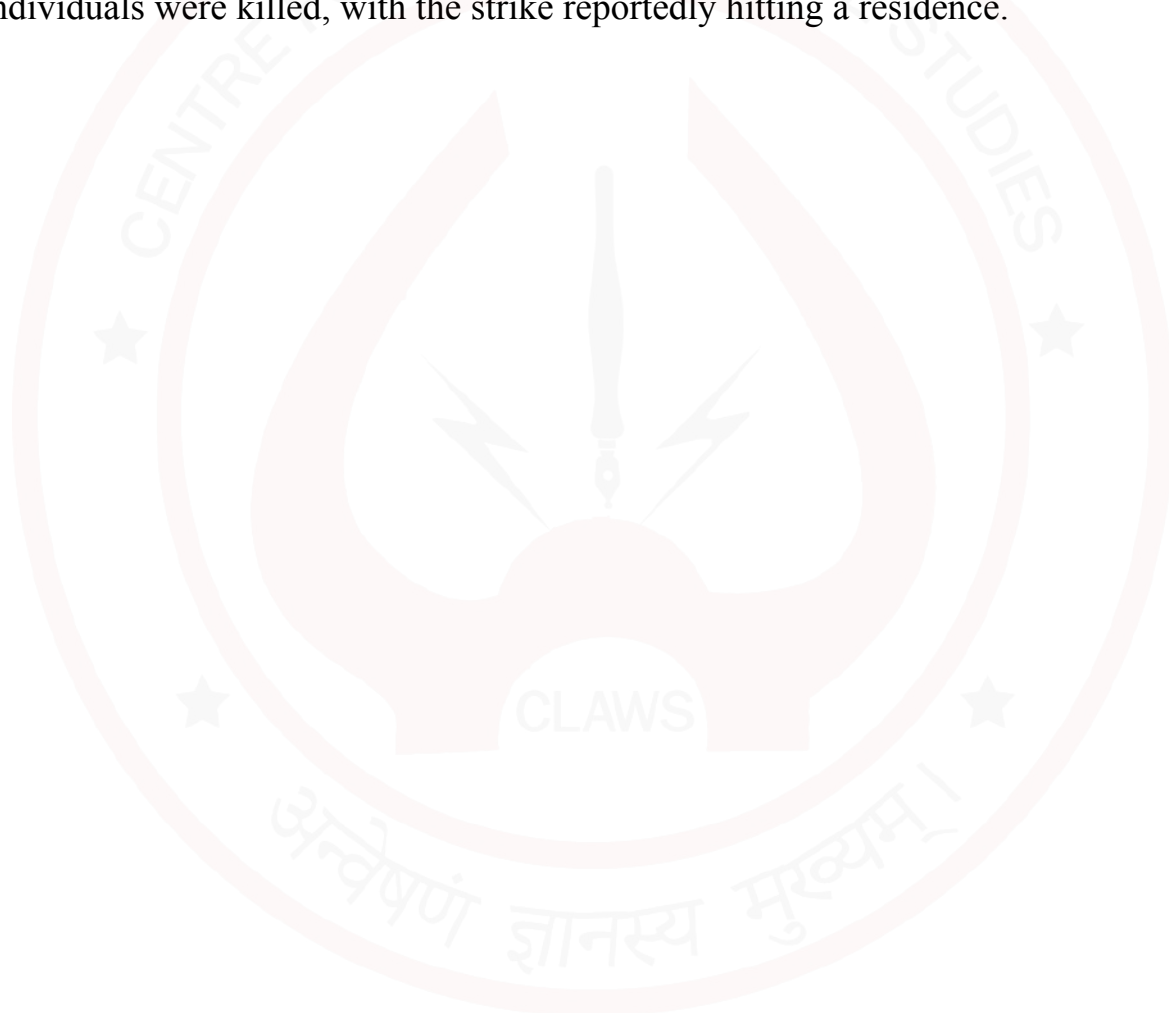
Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani formally reopened Mosul International Airport, more than a decade after it was destroyed during ISIS occupation in 2014. Sudani landed on one of the first aircraft to arrive at the restored facility and toured key areas including the control tower, main terminal, arrival and departure halls, and a new VIP lounge. The upgraded airport features an extended runway, advanced radar systems, and is designed to handle up to 630,000 passengers and 30,000 tonnes of cargo annually.

8. Unidentified Drone Strike in Northern Iraq Kills PKK Member, Injures Another ([Arab News](#), July 19)

An unidentified drone attack struck a motorcycle near Sulaymaniyah in northern Iraq, killing one member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and injuring another, according to Iraqi security sources and local officials . This marked the first drone strike of its kind in several months. Neither the origin of the drone nor the party responsible for the strike identified or claimed the operation. The incident occurred amid ongoing discussions regarding PKK demilitarisation and evolving security dynamics in the Kurdish region of Iraq.

9. Israel Strikes in South Lebanon Kill Three Amid Ceasefire Violation Claims ([Al Arabiya](#), July 27)

Israeli forces conducted drone strikes in southern Lebanon's Tyre district, killing three people despite an existing ceasefire with Hezbollah, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. One strike targeted a vehicle, killing a Hezbollah commander reportedly responsible for rebuilding militant capabilities in Bint Jbeil. In a separate strike in the town of Debaal, two more individuals were killed, with the strike reportedly hitting a residence.



About the Author

Aishwarya Airy is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, focusing on West Asia. She can be reached at aishwarya.claws@gmail.com.

All Rights Reserved 2023 Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, archived, retained or transmitted through print, speech or electronic media without prior written approval from C L A W S. The views expressed and suggestions made in the article are solely of the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement. Attributability of the contents lies purely with author.