

# Iran Update



## Iran Update, May 6, 2024

Andie Parry, Alexandra Braverman, Annika Ganzeveld, Kathryn Tyson, Kelly Campa, and Nicholas Carl

Information Cutoff: 4:00pm ET

**The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) began conducting targeted airstrikes against Palestinian militias in eastern Rafah on May 6.**[1] IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari stated on May 6 that the IDF Air Force struck 50 targets around Rafah in the past day as part of preparations for a clearing operation into Rafah.[2] Local journalists posted geolocated footage from May 5 and 6 showing extensive Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire into eastern Rafah.[3] An Israeli Army Radio journalist reported that the airstrikes killed at least 30 Palestinians in Rafah overnight.[4] The IDF Air Force has previously conducted airstrike waves as part of shaping efforts to enable ground maneuvers necessary to clearing operations.[5]

**Israeli officials suggested on May 6 that an Israeli clearing operation into eastern Rafah is imminent.** The Office of the Israeli Prime Minister announced on May 6 that Israel would “continue the operation in Rafah to exert military pressure on Hamas” to achieve Israeli war aims.[6] An official in the Israeli war cabinet told Israeli media that the Rafah operation will likely start “this week.”[7] Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, and the head of the IDF Operations Directorate, Maj. Gen. Oded Basiuk, discussed “the IDF’s expected operational plans in the Gaza Strip, with an emphasis on the Rafah area” on May 6.[8] Gallant previously told Israeli forces in the central Gaza Strip on May 5 that he anticipates “a powerful operation in Rafah in the near future” because Israel has “identified signs that Hamas does not intend” to reach a ceasefire agreement with Israel.[9] A Hamas senior official said on May 6 that an Israeli clearing operation into Rafah would “put negotiations in jeopardy” and threatened a strong military response.[10]

The IDF issued evacuation orders on May 6 for the parts of eastern Rafah targeted by the Israeli air campaign.[11] The IDF estimates that 100,000 Gazans are currently in this area.[12] The evacuation order directed the evacuees to an expanded “humanitarian services area” in Khan Younis.[13] The IDF first announced the expansion of the al Mawasi humanitarian zone on April 28 but announced additional details on May 6 about the services available in the expanded area.[14] The IDF says the zone north of Rafah “includes field hospitals, tents, and increased amounts of food, water, medicine, and other supplies.”[15] Israeli ground forces have cleared much of the area to which evacuees are instructed to move. The IDF also warned Gazans against approaching the Egyptian or Israeli borders and that north of Wadi Gaza is “still a dangerous combat zone.”[16] An Israeli Army Radio correspondent noted that the evacuation zone covers three Hamas battalions' areas of responsibility.[17]

# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of May 6, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



Hamas submitted a ceasefire proposal that the Israeli war cabinet called “far from Israel’s essential demands”

Palestinian militias conducted 12 indirect fire attacks targeting Israeli forces near the Netzarim corridor

The IDF began targeted operations against Hamas in eastern Rafah

The IDF expanded airstrikes against targets in Rafah

0 5 10 20 Kilometers

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	Significant Water Obstacles
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 Fighting in the past 24 Hours
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

**Hamas altered and then approved the Egyptian-proposed ceasefire agreement on May 6.[18] Hamas framed itself as approving the original agreement rather than the altered one.** Hamas officials told al Jazeera that they accepted “the proposal put forth by international mediators,” while Israeli media reported that Hamas had significantly changed the text of the agreement since Egypt and Israel iterated on April 26.[19] An anonymous Israeli official told Axios that the altered text is “practically a new proposal.”[20]

Hamas added stipulations to the agreement for a permanent ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip.[21] CTP-ISW has previously assessed, however, that Hamas would not likely adhere to the permanent ceasefire for which it is advocating given that Hamas has violated previous ceasefires and that Hamas remains committed to destroying Israel. Hamas has not changed its maximalist demands in negotiations since December 2023.

Hamas also changed in the agreement the pace at which Hamas would release Israeli hostages. Hamas said that it would release three hostages every week, while the original Egyptian-proposed agreement involved Hamas releasing three hostages every three days.[22]

**Israeli leaders rejected the new agreement that Hamas submitted.[23]** The Israeli war cabinet framed the altered text as “far from Israel’s essential demands.” The Office of the Israeli Prime Minister stated that it will send a delegation to continue negotiations.

**A senior Iranian military officer described how Iran and its so-called “Axis of Resistance” could destroy Israel with a multi-front ground attack.** Maj. Gen. Gholam Ali Rashid, who is the commander of the Iranian Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters, discussed the Iranian theory on how to destroy Israel in an interview with English-language, Tehran-based *Iran Daily* on May 5.[24] Rashid asserted that the Hamas attack into Israel in October 2023 highlighted Israeli vulnerability and the weakness of the IDF. Rashid argued that Hamas’ attack affirmed that the Axis of Resistance could destroy Israel by launching surprise attacks from Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank simultaneously. He added that such an attack would involve 10,000 fighters from Lebanon, 10,000 fighters from the Gaza Strip, and 2,000–3,000 from the West Bank. Rashid likened such an attack to the Beit ol Moghaddas operation that Iran conducted to liberate Khorramshahr during the Iran-Iraq War. This interview with Rashid is especially noteworthy given his role in commanding the Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters, which is the highest Iranian operational headquarters and is responsible for joint and wartime operations.[25]

Rashid’s comments echo a similar strategic concept that IRGC Commander Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami articulated in August 2022.[26] Salami described his idea of how to destroy Israel during an interview with the official website of the Office of the Supreme Leader. Salami stated that the Axis of Resistance should conduct ground attacks into Israel from multiple fronts and with increasing frequency. Salami argued that such attacks would generate internal displacement and instability and ultimately collapse the Israeli state. Rashid’s interview suggests that Iranian military leadership is continuing to develop this idea and refining it based on lessons from the Israel-Hamas war.

Rashid’s comments also signaled confidence that the Axis of Resistance has the advantage against Israel and will ultimately defeat it in the current war.[27] This message was likely part of an information operation meant for Western consumption given that Rashid gave these comments to an English-language outlet.

Rashid separately repeated the Iranian regime argument that it could have inflicted greater damage on Israel during its drone and missile attack on April 13, 2024.[28] Rashid argued that Israel would collapse without Western support and that 80 percent of the Iranian projectiles would have struck Israel if the United States and its partners did not intercept any. Rashid also repeated the regime assertion that the IRGC Aerospace Force used only “20 percent of its offensive capabilities” in the attack.[29] Other senior IRGC officials have made similar arguments in recent days, emphasizing that Iran could have launched a larger drone and missile attack than it did against Israel.[30]

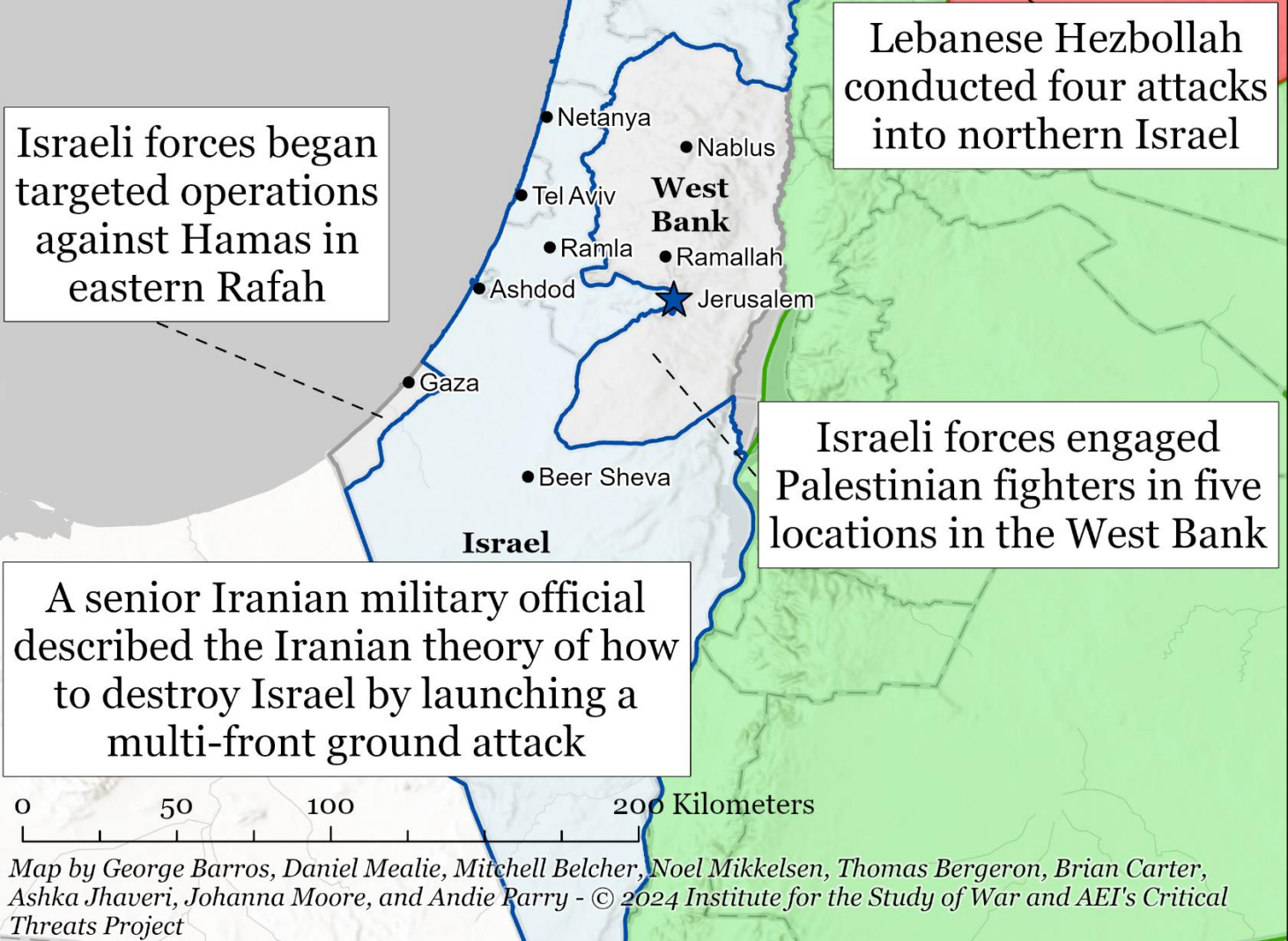
### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Gaza Strip:** Israeli forces began conducting targeted airstrikes against Hamas in eastern Rafah. Israeli officials have suggested that a clearing operation into the area is imminent.
- **Ceasefire negotiations:** Hamas altered and approved the text of the Egyptian-proposed ceasefire deal. Israeli officials said the altered text is “far from Israel’s essential demands.”
- **Iran:** A senior Iranian military officer described how Iran and the Axis of Resistance could destroy Israel with a multi-front ground attack. The comments suggest Iran is continuing to develop and refine its theory on how to destroy Israel.
- **Iraq:** A member of an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia suggested that Iranian-backed forces may soon resume their attacks on US forces.

# Israel-Hamas War as of May 6, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



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- Israel
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Jordan and Lebanon
- Syria
- Golan Heights

## **Gaza Strip**

### **Axis of Resistance objectives:**

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

**Israeli forces struck Palestinian fighters and militia infrastructure across the Gaza Strip.** The IDF 143rd Division struck a Hamas command-and-control site inside an UNRWA compound in the central Gaza Strip on May 5.[31] The IDF said that it used precision weapons in the strike to minimize harm to civilians.[32] The IDF Air Force targeted several Palestinian militia sites across the Gaza Strip, including launch sites and booby-trapped buildings, on May 6.[33] The IDF 679th Armored Brigade directed an airstrike targeting a Palestinian squad near Israeli forces in the central Gaza Strip.[34] Local Palestinian sources separately reported Israeli artillery fire in Beit Lahia, Juhor ad Dik, and Zaytoun.[35]

**Seven Palestinian militias conducted at least 12 indirect fire attacks targeting Israeli forces near the Netzarim corridor on May 6.[36]** Israeli forces have established forward operating bases along the Netzarim Corridor to facilitate raids into the northern and central Gaza Strip.[37] Palestinian militias have claimed almost daily indirect fire attacks targeting Israeli forces near the Netzarim corridor since April 18.[38] A PIJ sniper also targeted Israeli forces east of Shujaiya, north of the Netzarim corridor, on May 6.[39]

**The rocket attack that Hamas conducted targeting Kerem Shalom on May 5 killed four Israeli soldiers.[40]** Hamas fired 14 rockets targeting Israeli forces at Camp Amitai near Kerem Shalom, according to an Israeli Army Radio correspondent.[41] The IDF was preparing equipment there for a clearing operation into Rafah. Israeli media suggested that the Hamas attack influenced the decision of the Israeli war cabinet to issue evacuation orders for eastern Rafah on May 6.[42] The IDF Air Force struck a Palestinian sniper position and militia infrastructure near Rafah at the location from which Hamas launched the attack.[43]



# Reported Israeli Ground Operations in the Gaza Strip as of May 6, 2024, 2:00 PM ET

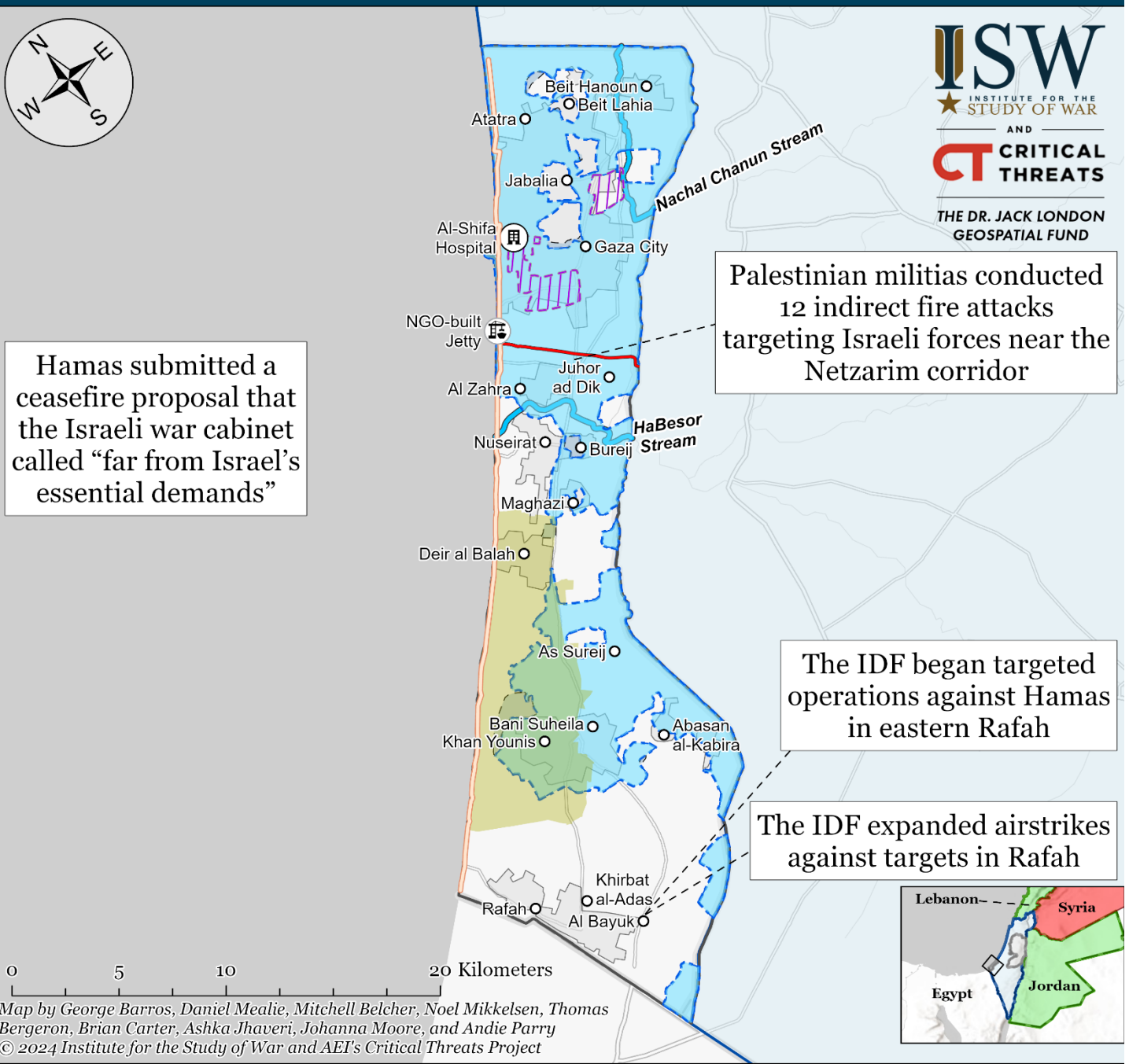


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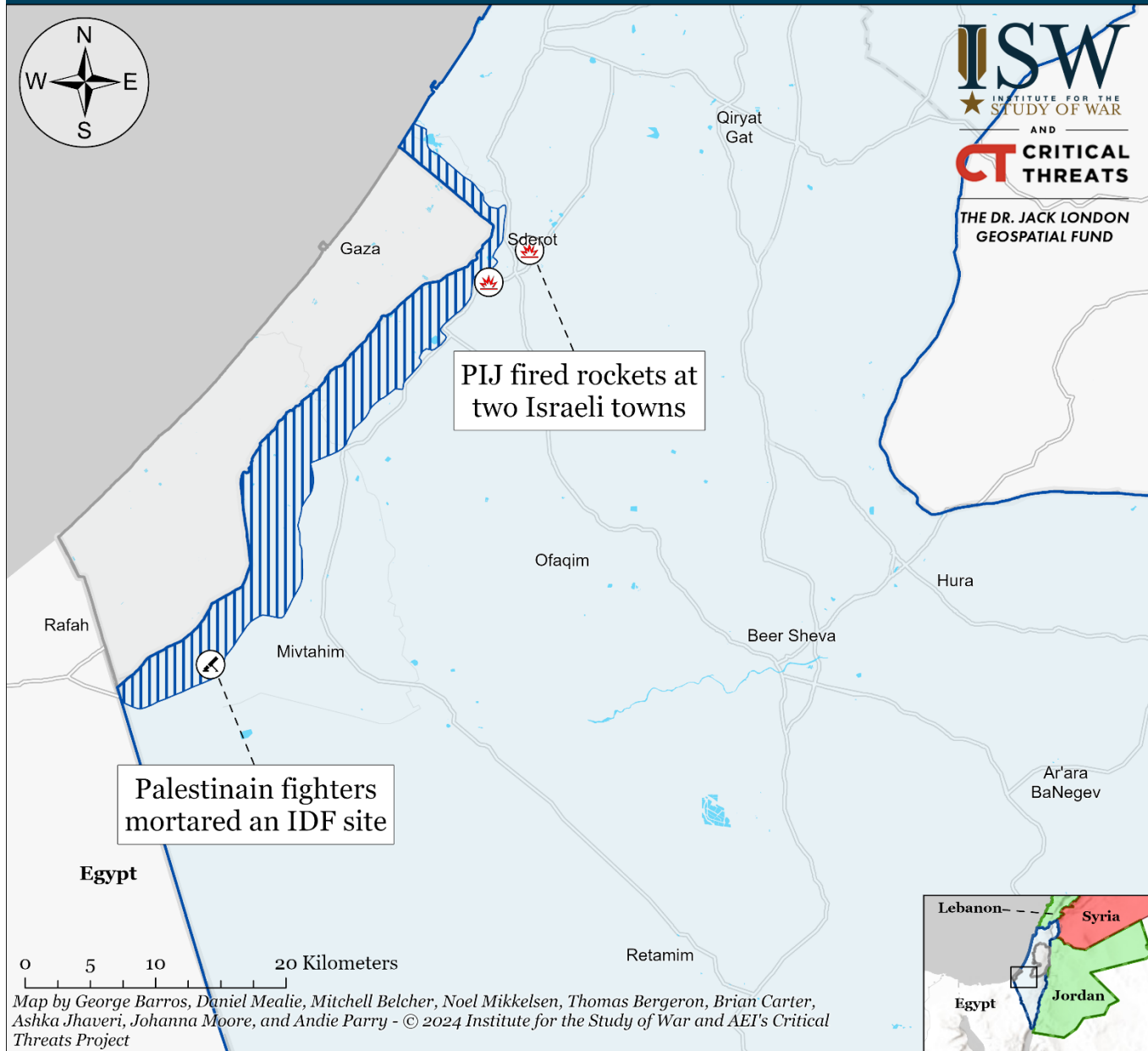
Map by George Barros, Daniel Mealie, Mitchell Belcher, Noel Mikkelsen, Thomas Bergeron, Brian Carter, Ashka Jhaveri, Johanna Moore, and Andie Parry  
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**Palestinian militias conducted three indirect fire attacks into southern Israel on May 6.** Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters fired rockets at two Israeli towns near the Israel-Gaza Strip border.[44] The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine separately mortared Israeli forces near the Sufa military site on the Israel-Gaza Strip border.[45]

# Attacks into Israel from Gaza as of May 6, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



- Israel
- Israeli Closed Military Zone
- Jordan and Lebanon
- 🔥 Rocket Attacks
- ☞ Mortar Attacks
- Gaza Strip and West Bank
- Syria

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

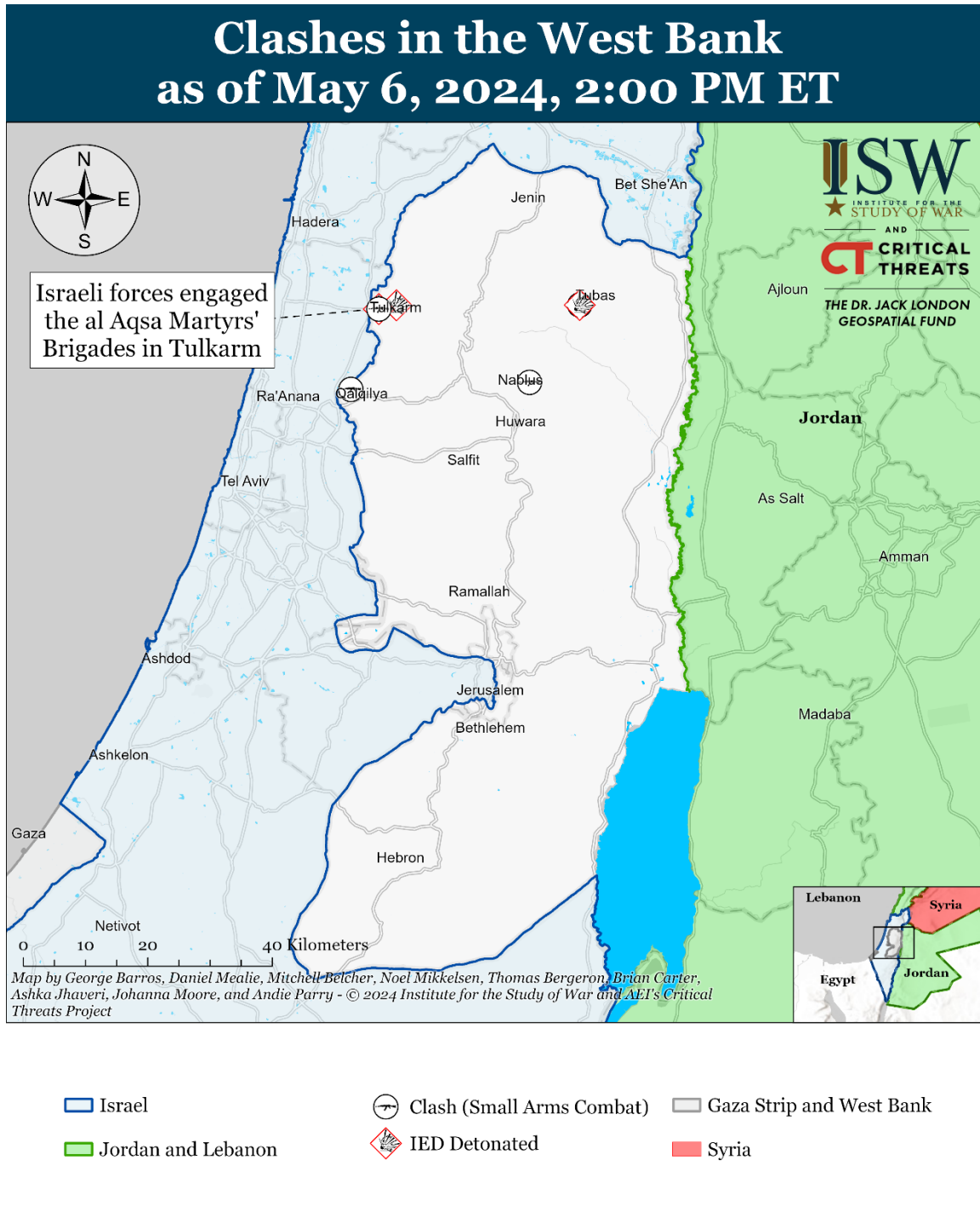
## West Bank

### Axis of Resistance objectives:

- Establish the West Bank as a viable front against Israel

**Israeli forces engaged Palestinian fighters in at least five locations across the West Bank since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on May 5.[46]** The al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades fired small arms and detonated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) targeting Israeli forces in Tulkarm on May 5 and 6.[47] Israeli forces killed one Palestinian fighter, destroyed an IED production site, and confiscated small arms in Tulkarm.[48] IDF engineers also uncovered several IEDs planted in the area.[49]

**Israeli forces detained 13 wanted individuals during raids across the West Bank on May 6.[50]**



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



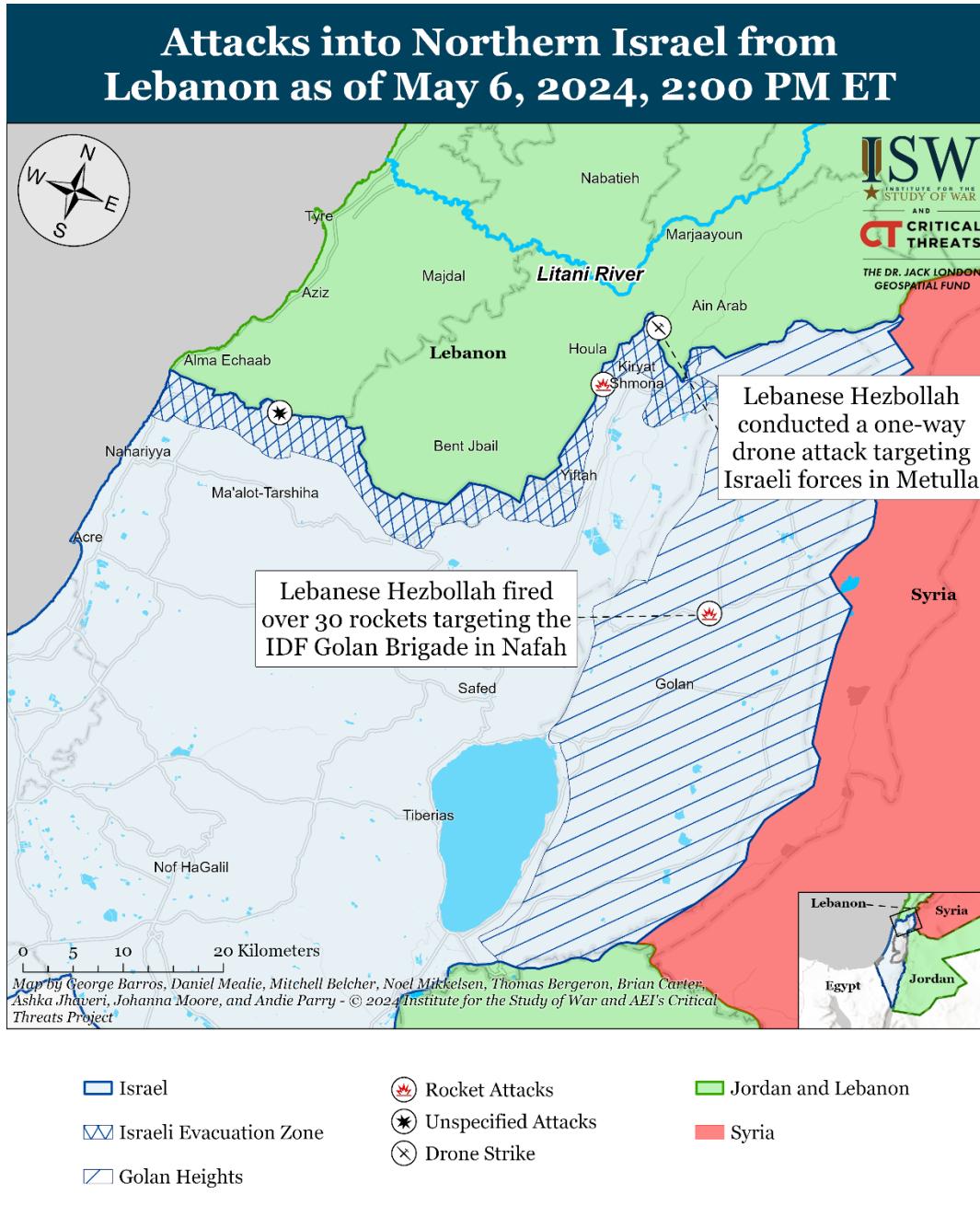
## Southern Lebanon and Golan Heights

### 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 conducted at least four attacks into northern Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on May 5.[51]** Lebanese Hezbollah launched a one-way attack drone targeting Israeli forces in Metula on May 6.[52] Israeli media reported that the drone wounded two Israelis but did not specify whether they are civilians.[53]

**The IDF and local Syrian sources reported that unspecified fighters launched rockets from Syria targeting Ramat Magshimim in the southern Golan Heights on May 5.[54]** An IDF spokesperson stated that the rockets landed in open areas and did not cause casualties or material damage.[55] Israeli forces targeted the launch site in Daraa Province, Syria, with artillery fire.[56]



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

## Iran and Axis of Resistance

A political member of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia **Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba (HHN)** suggested on **May 6** that Iranian-backed militias would resume attacks targeting US forces if the Iraqi federal government does not end the US-led international coalition's mission in Iraq.[57] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias suspended attacks targeting US forces in January 2024 after a one-way drone attack killed three US personnel in Jordan.[58] The HHN politician claimed that Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia al Sudani vowed to the Shia Coordination Framework, Parliament, and Iraqi people to remove US forces from Iraq.[59] The politician also reiterated the need for Sudani to establish a timeline for the removal of US forces from Iraq. CTP-ISW previously observed that Iranian-backed Iraqi militias have appeared divided on whether to resume attacks on US forces in recent weeks.[60]

**The Islamic Resistance in Iraq—a coalition of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias—has claimed six attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's last data cut-off on May 5.** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed that it conducted an attack targeting the Ashkelon oil port using Arqab cruise missiles on May 6.[61] This attack marks the fourth time that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed an Arqab cruise missile attack since May 2.[62] The Islamic Resistance in Iraq also claimed five drone attacks targeting an IDF airbase in Eilat, the Leviathan Natural Gas Field in the Mediterranean Sea, the “Johannesburg” base, the “Yarden” base in the Golan Heights, and an unspecified IDF facility on May 5 and 6.[63] The IDF reported on May 5 that its fighter jets intercepted an unmanned aircraft that entered Israeli airspace from the east.[64]

## Iranian-sponsored Attacks in the Middle East as of May 6, 2024, 2:00 PM ET



**Iraqi Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC) Chairman Faleh al Fayyadh discussed counterterrorism cooperation with Syrian President Bashar al Assad in Damascus on May 6.**[65] Fayyadh and Assad emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation to ensure border security and eliminate terrorist elements that threaten Iraqi and Syrian security.[66]

**Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government President Nechirvan Barzani discussed economic and security cooperation with senior Iranian officials in Tehran on May 6.** Barzani met with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Supreme National Security Council Secretary Rear Adm. Ali Akbar Ahmadian, President Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Affairs Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.[67] Barzani emphasized that his government will not allow “third parties” to use Iraqi Kurdistan to threaten Iranian security during his meeting with Ahmadian, presumably referring to long-standing Iranian accusation that Israeli intelligence services and Kurdish militias use Iraqi Kurdistan to facilitate operations into Iran.[68] Barzani and Ahmadian also discussed “fully implementing” the March 2023 security agreement between Iran and Iraq that requires Iraqi authorities to disarm and relocate members of Iranian Kurdish opposition groups away from the Iran-Iraq border.[69] Raisi separately stated that security is the foundation for expanding economic cooperation with Iraqi Kurdistan during his meeting with Barzani on May 6.[70]

Barzani’s visit comes amid an uptick in discussions about border security between Iranian and Iraqi officials. Ahmadian recently discussed the March 2023 security agreement with Iraqi National Security Adviser Qasem al Araji on the sidelines of the 12th Russian International Security Summit in Moscow on April 23.[71] Iranian Deputy Interior Minister Majid Mir Ahmadi separately discussed border security and the March 2023 security agreement with Iraqi Interior Minister Abdul Amir al Shammari and Araji in Baghdad on May 1 and 2, respectively.[72]

**Iran is hosting its first Nuclear Science and Technology Conference in Esfahan City, Esfahan Province, between May 6-8.**[73] Iranian media reported that the conference is meant to showcase Iranian nuclear achievements.[74] Various countries, including Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe, are participating in the conference.[75] The Russian delegation includes the deputy industry and trade minister and the vice president of the Russian Kurchatov Institute.[76] The United States designated the Kurchatov Institute as a Specially Designated National in 2022 for aiding Russia’s “harmful foreign activities.”[77] Iran and Russia previously agreed in the late 1990s for Iranian nuclear specialists to train at the Kurchatov Institute.[78] International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi traveled to Iran on May 6 to meet with Iranian officials and attend the nuclear conference in Esfahan.[79]

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