

Israeli Strikes in Iran

June 20, 2025 at 5:00 PM ET



Confirmed Airstrike

Reported Airstrike

Report of Explosion With Footage

Report of Explosion Without Footage

IRAN UPDATE SPECIAL REPORT



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Information Cutoff: 5:00 PM ET

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) are publishing multiple updates daily to provide analysis on the war with Iran. The morning update will focus on the exchange of fire between Iran and Israel. The evening update will be more comprehensive, covering events over the past 24-hour period and refining items discussed in the morning update.

Iran is attempting to impose a dilemma on the United States and the international community: either accept Iranian terms in nuclear negotiations or risk a long and challenging hunt for hidden Iranian nuclear material. This dilemma is likely designed to harden Iran's nuclear program against destruction either by securing an agreement on Iranian terms (which would presumably allow Iran to continue enrichment) or protecting Iranian nuclear material by hiding the material, thus making a US or Israeli effort to destroy the material more difficult.

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohsen Rezaei stated during an interview on June 20 that Iran has relocated its enriched material to a secure location to prevent it from being destroyed.[1] This statement is presumably intended to suggest to a Western audience that destroying all of Iran's nuclear material would require a long, challenging, and possibly futile hunt for hidden material and that, therefore, the West should negotiate with Iran. Iranian officials have expressed their interest in negotiating a nuclear deal with the United States, but have not moderated their negotiating position from before the conflict.[2]

Iran remains committed to preserving its stated "right" to enrich uranium.[3] These Iranian demands over enrichment have been a non-starter for the United States and Israel in the ongoing negotiations, suggesting Rezaei's statement is designed to increase the pressure on the United States and Israel to relax their positions. The United States and Israel have rejected Iranian demands and maintained that Iran will not be permitted to enrich uranium on Iranian soil.[4] Israel launched its air campaign on June 12 to "degrade, destroy, and remove [the] threat" of Iranian weaponization of its nuclear program, and a senior Israeli official said that enrichment remains a red line.[5] US President Donald Trump has threatened to support an air campaign targeting Iranian nuclear infrastructure if Iran fails to meet US demands for zero enrichment.[6]

European partners, alongside the United States, have demanded that Iran accept zero uranium enrichment levels, restrict its ballistic missile program, and end its support for its proxy forces.[7] French, German, British, and European Union representatives met with Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi in Switzerland on June 20 to urge Iran to return to nuclear

negotiations with the United States.[8] Araghchi rejected European calls to resume negotiations and reiterated that Iran will not negotiate until Israel ends its air campaign.[9] US White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stated on June 19 that Trump will decide whether or not to strike Iran “within the next two weeks.”[10] An anonymous European diplomat speaking to the *Washington Post* stated that the delegation hoped to reconvene before the end of Trump’s two-week deadline.[11]

An unspecified US official speaking to Fox News reported that the USS *Nimitz* carrier strike group is expected to arrive in the CENTCOM area of responsibility by June 22.[12]

A US official told Western media on June 16 that the USS *Nimitz* carrier strike group is en route to the Middle East from the South China Sea and that it is ahead of schedule.[13] The USS *Nimitz* carrier strike group, which includes the *Nimitz* and its air wing, multiple destroyers, and other assets, can support both offensive and defensive contingencies.[14] The United States has also deployed additional assets to support potential operations in the Middle East. There are five guided missile destroyers in the eastern Mediterranean as of June 20, according to US defense officials.[15] The destroyers can provide much-needed ballistic missile defense support for Israel. A large number of US aircraft have similarly traveled into the Middle East.[16] Six US Air Force air-to-air refuelers also moved westward from bases in California and Oklahoma to Honolulu, Hawaii, and Travis Air Force Base, California, respectively, since June 19.[17]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are attempting to deter US participation in the Israel-Iran War by threatening to expand the conflict.

These militias are very likely observing and reacting to ongoing discussions in Western media about the risks of a protracted war in the Middle East and seek to exploit these concerns by threatening to expand the conflict.[18] The militias have repeatedly threatened to target the United States and its regional interests if the US enters the war, but have not conducted any such attacks at the time of this writing.[19] Kataib Hezbollah Spokesperson Abu Ali al Askari threatened on June 19 that US participation in the war would trigger attacks on US bases in the region, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al Mandab, and the closure of ports in the Red Sea.[20] Askari added that US participation would cause the United States to lose trillions of dollars from the region, which could imply that Kataib Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed Iraqi militias could attack US-aligned Gulf states. This implication likely aims to pressure the Gulf states to discourage US involvement.[21] Attacks on major US bases outside of Iraq and Syria would by default target US-aligned Arab states, including the Gulf states.

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are also likely conditioning their entry into the war on US participation to avoid dragging Iraq into the war and the negative political repercussions of that decision ahead of the November 2025 Iraqi parliamentary elections. Iraqi Shia nationalist cleric Muqtada al Sadr stated that Iraq does not “need new wars” in his condemnation of Israel’s attacks on Iran.[22] Iranian-backed political parties, which include those of Iranian-backed Iraqi militias such as Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al Haq, and the Badr Organization, lost a significant number of seats in southern Iraq in the 2021 elections to the Sadrist Movement.[23] Sadr publicly announced in March 2025 that he is not running in the elections, but could change his mind.[24] Sadr’s warning against Iraqi involvement in the Israel-Iran War suggests he could position himself in opposition to the Iranian-backed Iraqi groups if he decided to run. Sadr could also use potential militia participation to deter Sadrist voters from Iranian-backed parties if he does not run. CTP-ISW assessed on June 3 that Iranian-backed parties may seek to

win votes from Iraqis who would have voted for Sadr in the elections, which underscores the potential risks associated with militia involvement in the conflict.[25]

International Atomic Energy Agency Director Rafael Grossi warned of a dangerous degradation of nuclear security at Iranian nuclear sites due to Israeli strikes.[26] Grossi addressed the United Nations Security Council on June 20 to present the IAEA's findings on nuclear security concerns amid the Israeli air campaign. He noted that further damage to Iranian nuclear facilities could result in radiological leaks that could endanger surrounding populations. Grossi noted that Israeli airstrikes targeting the Natanz enrichment site on June 13 destroyed electricity infrastructure and seriously damaged underground nuclear cascade facility. He noted that there was no observed radioactivity outside the facility following the strikes, but suggested that there could be contamination within the facility. Grossi stated that Israeli airstrikes on June 13 also damaged the central chemical laboratory, a uranium conversion plant, the Tehran reactor-fuel manufacturing plant, and the enriched uranium metal processing facility at the Esfahan nuclear site. Grossi confirmed that the Khondab Heavy Water Research Reactor in Arak, Markazi Province, was not operational at the time of Israel's June 19 airstrike. Grossi issued a strong warning that any damage to the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant could result in a "very high" release of radioactivity into the environment. Grossi stated that a strike that destabilized power to the facility could cause the reactor's core to melt and release radioactivity into the environment. He explained that damage to the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant would require relocating the nearby population several hundred kilometers away from the facility and providing iodine tablets to prevent radiation poisoning.

Key Takeaways

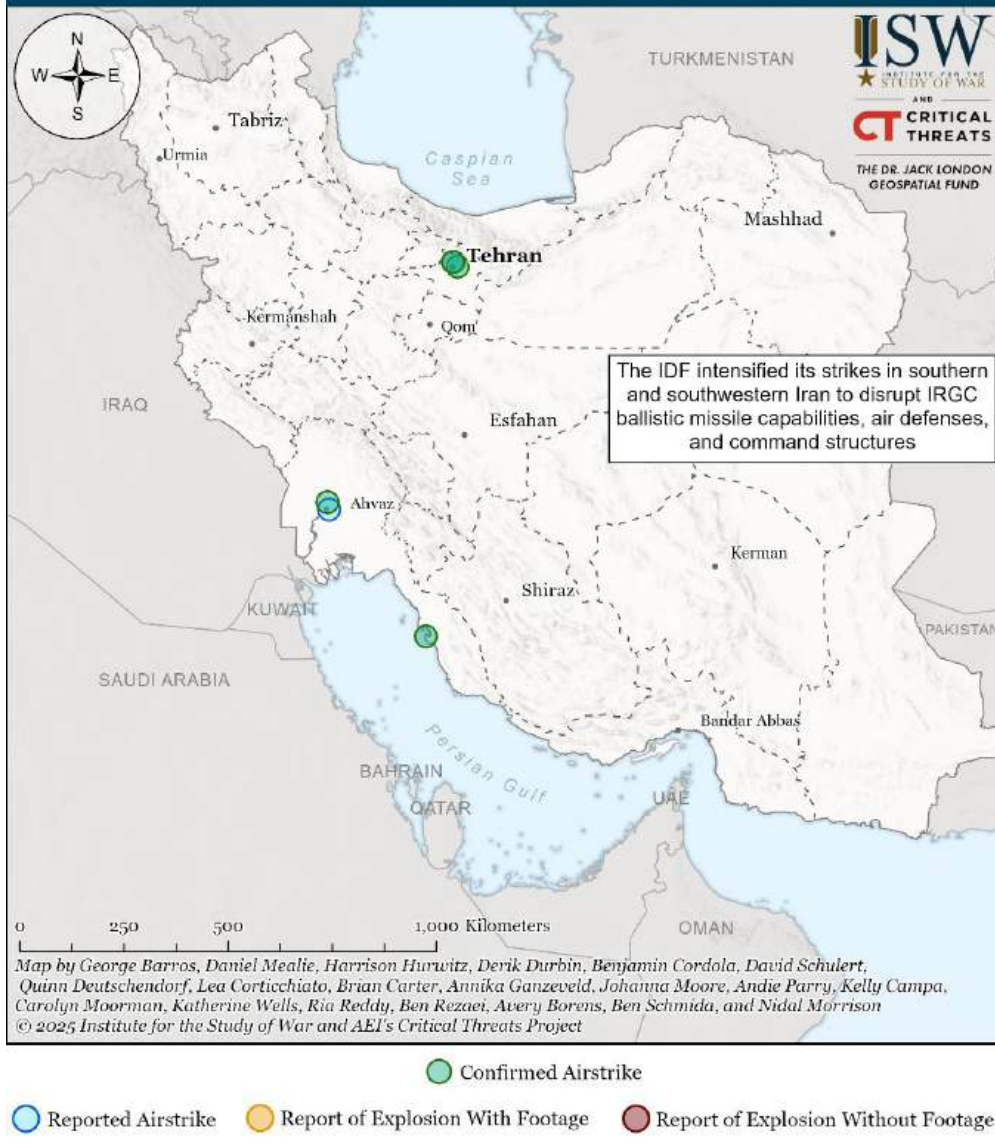
- Iran is using negotiations and its efforts to hide nuclear material to impose a dilemma on the United States and force Washington to decide between accepting Iranian terms in nuclear negotiations or risking a long and challenging hunt for hidden Iranian nuclear material. This dilemma is designed to protect the nuclear program by securing an agreement with allowances for enrichment or protecting enriched material by hiding it. Iranian officials have not relaxed their negotiating position, which US and Israeli officials are not willing to accept.
- The *Nimitz* Carrier Strike Group will arrive in the CENTCOM AOR by June 22.
- Iranian-backed Iraqi militias are attempting to deter US participation in the war by threatening to attack US forces if the US attacks Iran. These threats are probably informed by ongoing discussions in the West about a protracted war with Iran.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency director warned of a dangerous degradation of nuclear security at Iranian nuclear sites due to Israeli strikes.
- Israel continued to conduct strikes targeting the Iranian internal security and social control apparatus, which could destabilize the regime. CTP-ISW has not observed any indications that the regime is near collapse or that its control is significantly weakened at this time.

The IDF intensified its strikes in southern and southwestern Iran to disrupt IRGC ballistic missile capabilities, air defenses, and command structures. The IDF conducted several strikes on Ahvaz on June 20, including the IRGC Karbala Operational Base.[27] The IRGC

Karbala Operational Bases is one of the ten regional commands of the IRGC Ground Forces based in southwestern Iran.[28] The headquarters oversees three provincial corps, including Vali Asr in Khuzestan, Abolfazl in Lorestan, and Fath in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, and commands several major combat units, including the 7th Vali-ye Asr Operational Division and the 15th Imam Hassan Mojtaba Special Forces Brigade.[29]

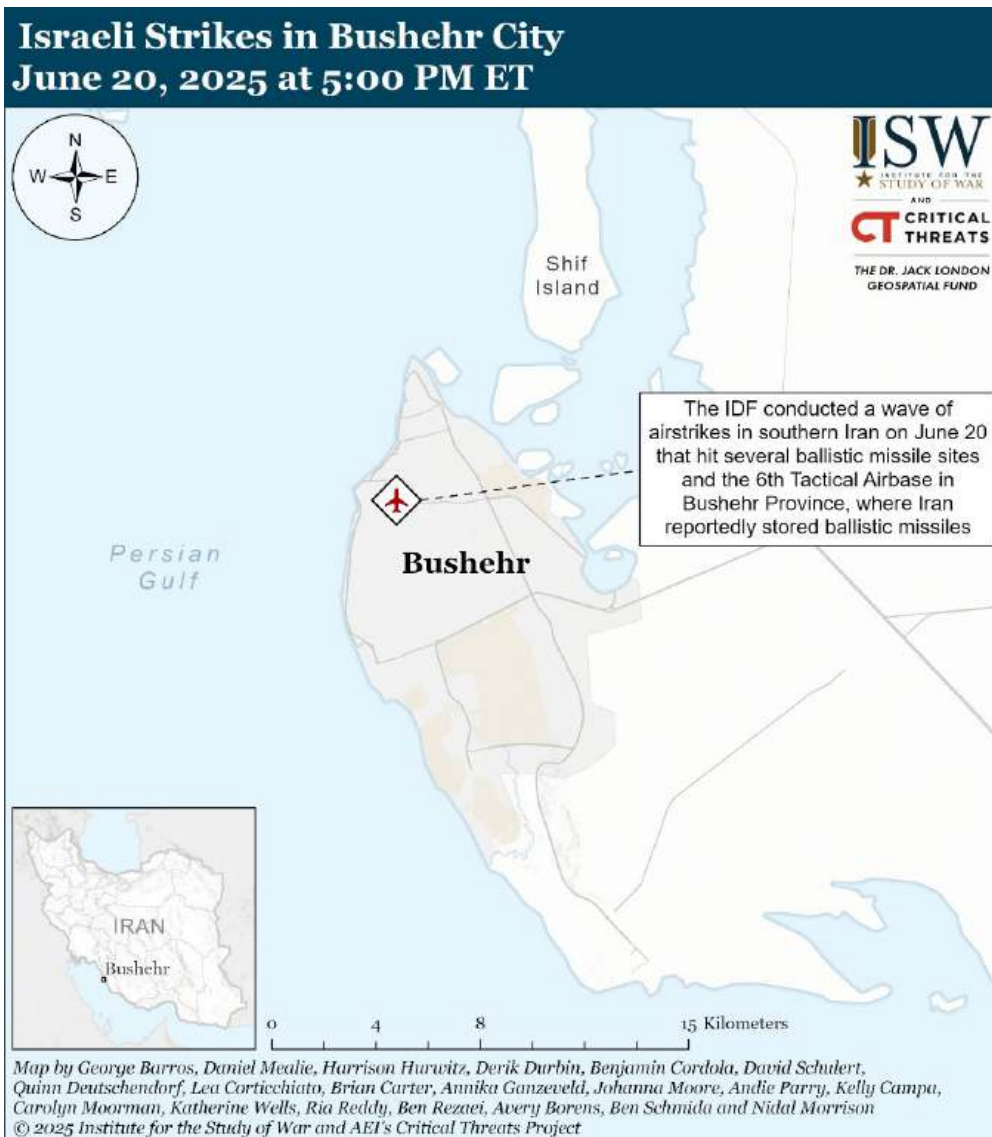
The IDF also conducted a wave of airstrikes in southern Iran on June 20 that hit several ballistic missile sites and the 6th Tactical Airbase in Bushehr Province, where Iran reportedly stored ballistic missiles.[30] The types of missiles Israel targeted are unclear, and they could be either short-range ballistic missiles, which could range US bases in the Gulf, or medium-range missiles, which could target Israel. Israeli security officials stated that the strikes did not target the Bushehr nuclear reactor.[31] The IDF separately targeted an air defense base in southwestern Iran on June 19.[32] The air defense base was in northern Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province.[33]

Israeli Strikes in Iran June 20, 2025 at 5:00 PM ET



Israeli Strikes in Khuzestan Province June 20, 2025 at 5:00 PM ET





The IDF continued to degrade Iranian missile capabilities through sustained airstrikes on launch sites and storage facilities.[34] The IDF announced on June 20 that it completed another wave of strikes in western Iran using 15 fighter jets and over 30 munitions to target missile launch sites.[35]

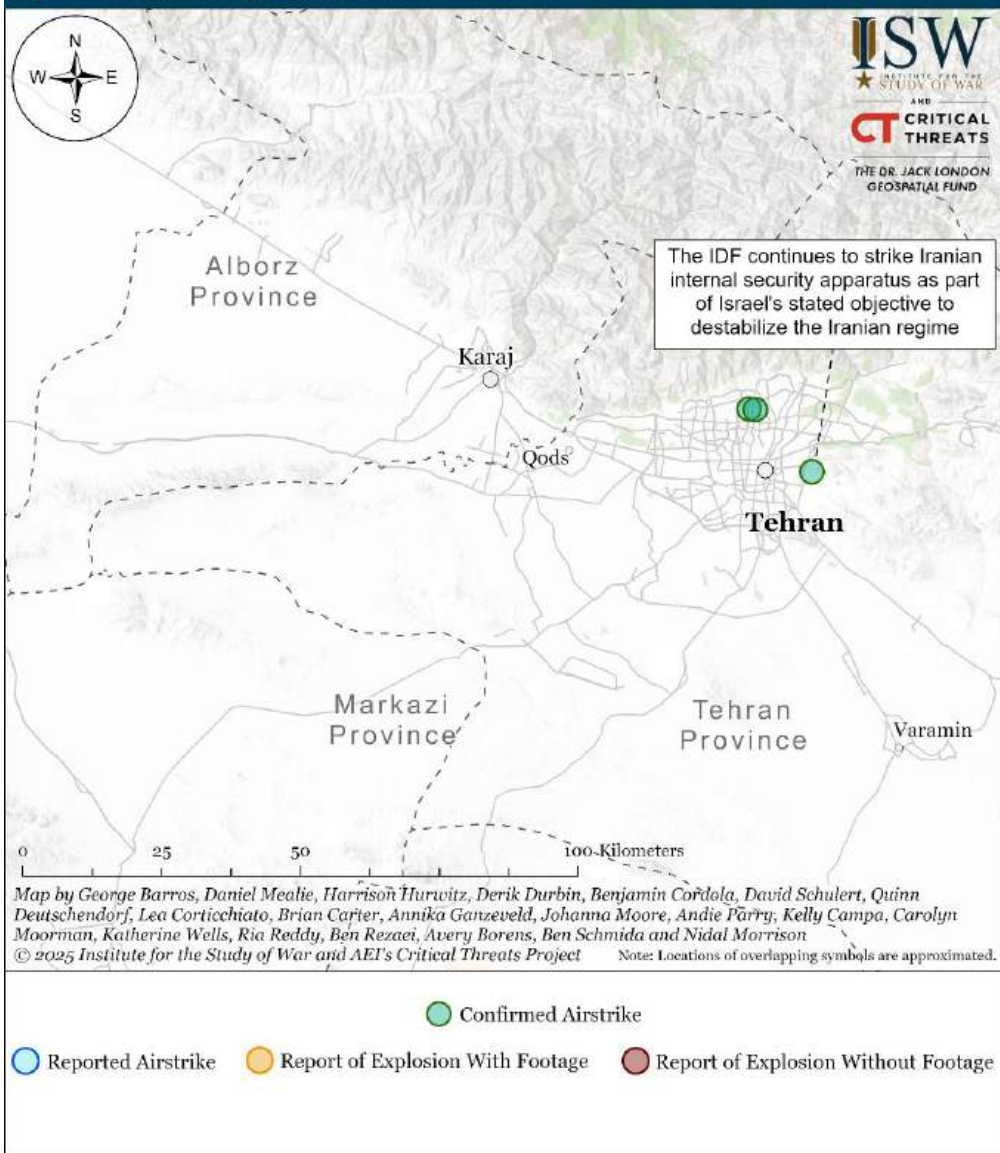
Israel continued to target IRGC positions in Tehran Province on June 20. The IDF targeted an IRGC position in Chitgar, northwestern Tehran, on June 20.[36] The IDF previously targeted the same location on June 16.[37]

The IDF continues to strike the Iranian internal security apparatus as part of Israel's stated objective to destabilize the Iranian regime. Israel has struck internal security institutions across Iran, including the Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC), Basij, and IRGC provincial units, since June 15.[38] Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz stated on June 20 that he instructed the IDF to “intensify” strikes on Iranian regime symbols and sites connected to domestic repression in Tehran to “destabilize” the regime.[39] Katz previously stated on June 19 that he and Prime Minister Netanyahu

directed the IDF to increase the intensity of strikes on Iranian government targets to "undermine" the regime.[40]

A sustained campaign that targets Iran's internal security and social control institutions, combined with severe economic downturn and mass population displacement that triggers protests, could destabilize the regime over time because the Iranian regime has relied on the LEC and Basij as the first line of defense against mass anti-regime protests. The IDF struck the Iranian Law Enforcement Command (LEC) Headquarters in central Tehran and the LEC Special Units headquarters in southeastern Tehran on June 20.[41] The IDF previously targeted the LEC headquarters on June 18.[42] The Iranian regime has maintained social control by violently cracking down on protests and other expressions of popular anti-regime sentiment through internal security organizations like the Basij, LEC, and the IRGC.[43] The LEC Special Units are highly trained anti-riot forces deployed when regular police are unable to manage civil unrest.[44] Basij units have been deployed to support LEC forces during major protest movements like the Mahsa Amini protests and the Iranian Green Movement.[45]

Israeli Strikes in Tehran and Alborz Provinces June 20, 2025 at 5:00 PM ET



Iran has continued to use ballistic missiles with cluster munition warheads, possibly to compensate for its inability to launch large missile salvos and reliably penetrate Israeli defenses.[46] Iran has conducted one ballistic missile attack containing approximately 20 missiles targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's 5:00 AM ET data cutoff on June 20.[47] The IDF confirmed that Iran launched at least one ballistic missile that contained a cluster munition warhead in its barrage.[48] The cluster submunitions within these warheads can cause more damage over a wider area, though these warheads have significantly less explosive power at the point of impact. Iran may calculate that using cluster munitions is more likely to cause Israeli casualties and impose costs on Israel for its air campaign against Iran.

The Iranian missiles struck several buildings in Haifa, northern Israel, and Beer Sheva, southern Israel. The impacted sites include the Weizmann Institute of Science, Gav Yem Negev Advanced Technologies

Park, the Colel Chabad Daycare Center, al Jarina Mosque, and an unspecified residential apartment.[49] The daycare center said that it was hit by cluster munitions.[50] The Gav Yem Negev Advanced Technologies Park reportedly houses active military and cyber facilities.[51] Iranian missiles also reportedly struck near the Israeli Interior Ministry and the Beit ha Mifras Tower in Haifa.[52] The Beit ha Mifras Tower reportedly houses several Israeli government agencies.[53] The IDF Chief of Staff, Eyal Zamir, reported on June 20 that the IDF destroyed about half of Iran's missile launchers.[54] Zamir also stated that Iran had about 2,500 missiles on June 12 and has launched at least 500 so far, suggesting that Iran has a maximum of 2,000 missiles remaining.[55] The IRGC said that Iran's strikes in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Beer Sheva "indicate that the offensive capability of ballistic missiles is on the rise until the complete punishment" of Israel.[56]

Iran has also continued to fire drones at Israel, but these attacks are relatively ineffective due to the distances involved and the amount of time Israel has to react to Iranian drones. The drones employed by Iran to target Israel take roughly nine hours to reach Israel, which enables Israel to scramble aircraft or direct aircraft on combat air patrol to intercept incoming projectiles. The IDF intercepted at least 16 Iranian drones targeting Israel since this morning.[57] It is unclear if any of these drones were calibrated to enter Israeli airspace at the same time as the ballistic missile attacks mentioned above, which were reported at 8:34 AM ET.[58]

Observed Impacts in Israel June 20, 2025 at 5:00 PM ET



The United States sanctioned eight entities and one individual on June 20 for procuring and transshipping dual-use components to Iran for its ballistic missile, drone, and asymmetric weapons programs.[59] The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned eight entities based in China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Turkey.[60] OFAC sanctioned one Chinese national who was aware of the Iranian shipments.[61] OFAC also identified the Panama-flagged bulk carrier Shun Kai Xing as blocked property because it has carried sensitive goods bound for Iran.[62] Blocked property means freezing assets of financial property, tangible or intangible assets, and any other interests.[63] These sanctions are part of the United States' effort to degrade Iran's ability to produce and proliferate ballistic missiles, drones, and other weapons.[64]



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