

DAILY BRIEFING

The Dispatch

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MAIN STORY: IRAN BREAKS THE SANA'A AIR BLOCKADE

- **The Flight.** Mahan Air flight IRM-1199, an Airbus A340-300, flew directly from Tehran to Sana'a on Friday, the first Iranian civilian aircraft to land in the Yemeni capital since 2015 and a unilateral break of the nearly 11-year air blockade on Sana'a International Airport. The inbound leg carried more than 200 Yemenis (stranded civilians, wounded, and patients), and the return leg lifted a senior Houthi delegation to Tehran for the funeral of Ali Khamenei. Armed forces spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree cast the operation as the start of a new phase and committed to continued Sana'a-Tehran flights regardless of consequences.
- **The Interception Clash.** A formation of Saudi warplanes entered Yemeni airspace at 05:20 Friday to prevent the landing, overflying Hajjah and Amran governorates, where explosions were heard, the jets most likely flying out of King Khalid Air Base. Houthi air defenses fired several surface-to-air missiles at the formation, the Saudi aircraft withdrew, and the Iranian plane landed safely, the first direct Houthi-Saudi fire exchange of the current crisis.
- **Houthi Escalation Ladder.** The armed forces warned that any repeat airspace violation or attack on Yemen will draw a comprehensive response against Saudi airports and vital interests on land and sea, and declared they will not accept the Saudi-American blockade indefinitely. All formations stand ready to execute whatever options Abdulmalik al-Houthi orders under the general mobilization, whose stated aims include ending the blockade, reopening Sana'a airport, restoring oil resources, and expelling foreign forces. Crowds filled Sabeen Square in Sana'a the same evening to celebrate the blockade break, with chants, echoed on Houthi television, calling for hypersonic-missile strikes on Saudi Arabia.
- **Riyadh's Counter-Threat.** Coalition spokesman Major General Turki al-Maliki answered early Saturday that the Houthi statements are an attempt to divert attention from the group's violations against Yemenis and to export the economic crisis it caused, and pledged a response "with unprecedented determination and force" to any attempt to target the Kingdom, its citizens, residents, or national assets, or to violate Yemen's sovereignty.
- **The PLC's Sovereignty Case.** Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council convened an emergency session under Rashad al-Alimi with all members present, branding the flight a blatant violation of Yemeni sovereignty and Security Council resolutions and proof of the Houthis' complete subordination to Tehran, down to the use of state institutions and border crossings in Iran's service. The Council accused the group of wrecking every peace track, foremost the Saudi-backed roadmap, assigned it full responsibility for Yemen's effective blockade and humanitarian collapse, and framed the flight as a threat to regional and international security demonstrating that no un-

derstandings with the Iranian government can be relied upon.

- **The Delegation.** The Tehran-bound party is headed by Grand Mufti Shams al-Din Sharaf al-Din and includes Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Lieutenant General Jalal al-Ruwaishan (wounded in an Israeli strike in August 2025), founding-generation commander Sheikh Abdullah Aydah al-Razami, whose son Yahya chairs the Hamdan Military Axis and the Military Coordination Committee, presidential-council diplomatic adviser Abdulilah Hajar, and media authority vice chairman Nasr al-Din Amer. Houthi media held the story for most of the day before the movement's official channel broke it in the evening, an operational-security pattern around senior leadership travel.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The airbridge is the sharpest direct Saudi-Houthi military exchange in years and an Iranian move as much as a Houthi one, executed in the funeral window to demonstrate that Tehran's regional reach survived the war. Both sides are now publicly committed to positions that collide on a schedule, Sana'a pledging more flights and strikes on Saudi airports if they are blocked, Riyadh pledging unprecedented force against any targeting of the Kingdom. Escalation control sits awkwardly with Riyadh, because the only reliable way to stop a second flight is to close the runway, the step the coalition took in 2015, and that act would trigger the threatened Houthi response almost automatically. The next observable is the second Iranian flight, which Sana'a says is coming. An unopposed landing would mean Riyadh has absorbed the precedent to protect its roadmap, while a runway strike or an interdiction attempt would reopen the Yemen front outright.

IRAN

- Iran opened the public phase of Ali Khamenei's state funeral Saturday, his coffin lying in state at Tehran's Grand Mosalla alongside the remains of family members killed with him in the February 28 opening strike, among them the wife of his successor Mojtaba. Crowds filled the complex before dawn chanting "revenge" and "death to America," authorities expect 15 to 20 million mourners across the six-day cycle, and Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, weeping at the bier beside President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, framed the turnout as making the nation's call for vengeance heard worldwide, while IRGC commander-in-chief Ahmad Vahidi made his first public appearance since February 8. Friday's official rites drew delegations from more than 100 countries but almost no heads of state and no Western governments: Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived with army chief Asim Munir, Dmitry Medvedev represented Putin, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi attended, Lebanon sent Defense Minister Michel Menassa, and Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Waleed Elkhoreiji conveyed condolences from King Salman and the crown prince, with Egypt and Qatar represented at parliament-speaker level. Tehran charges that Washington engineered the thin top-level turnout, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio directing US embassies to press host governments to downgrade or stay away, phoning counterparts in at least five Arab states, and warning African capitals that attendance could affect US aid. The Axis network was on open display: Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatemiyoun-linked and Houthi delegations (the Houthi contingent including masked security-service figures) joined members of Nasrallah's family and IRGC officials from Lebanon at the bier, Hezbollah called a commemoration in Beirut's southern sub-

urbs for Wednesday, and Lebanese supporters bought travel packages of \$450 to over \$2,000 to attend in person. Mojtaba Khamenei stayed away and will not attend, leaving open whether he surfaces at the July 9 Mashhad burial after the coffin's route through a mass Tehran procession Monday, Qom Tuesday, and Najaf and Karbala Wednesday, where Iraq's Dhi Qar province has suspended official work for the cortege.

- Trump said Iran has agreed to "just about everything we need" toward a final settlement, casting the campaign as "the denuking of Iran" rather than a war, describing Tehran as a weakened "bully of the Middle East" now adjusting to pressure, and saying the US gave Iran a week's pause in talks for the funeral. The claim follows the latest Doha round, where Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner and Iranian negotiator Kazem Gharibabadi met separately with Qatari and Pakistani mediators, registered positive progress, and agreed to reconvene at the earliest possible time after the funeral, with the Strait of Hormuz and Lebanon the two unresolved files. Tehran intends to press the Lebanon file when talks resume, working toward a settlement that produces an Israeli withdrawal, while Rubio insists Washington deals on Lebanon directly with the Lebanese government, apart from the Iran track.
- The Trump administration concluded that Israel planned to assassinate senior Iranian negotiators, including Araghchi and Ghalibaf, during the ceasefire talks that began in April, and intervened to stop it. Washington learned Ghalibaf was at minimum on an Israeli target list, asked Israel not to strike him, and, fearing an assassination would collapse the negotiations, had regional governments warn Tehran of the threat. Israel's Prime Minister's Office denied the account Friday.
- Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya joint military command warned that any tanker deviating from Iranian-approved routes or ignoring Iranian navigation protocols in the Strait of Hormuz faces an "immediate and forceful response," a threat that followed a CENTCOM-hosted meeting in Bahrain where regional leaders affirmed commitment to the free flow of commerce through the strait. The command also called continued US fighter patrols over the waterway a threat to regional security and said any US interference in strait security would draw a "rapid and decisive reaction." At the UN Security Council, Iran's envoy Amir Saeed Iravani cast Tehran as compliant, committing to safe passage without transit fees for the 60-day negotiating window provided Washington meets its own obligations, and putting demining of the waterway at 30 days to completion. A foreign container ship ran aground in the strait on a route Iran had not approved, lending weight to Tehran's claim to control transit. China called for a "proper settlement" to end the disruptions, saying early resumption of safe and free passage through what it stressed is an international waterway serves all parties.
- State television cut short its broadcast of a Ghalibaf interview midway through Tuesday, dropping the segments on IAEA inspections, Iran's frozen assets, and a \$300 billion reconstruction credit despite receiving the recording more than two hours before airtime. Parliament's media center protested publicly and the broadcaster said the remainder would air Wednesday. The episode feeds hardline hostility to the deal, coming a month after a state TV presenter called for closing Mehrabad Airport to keep the negotiating team from flying out.
- Ghalibaf called on all Lebanese components to implement the memorandum's Lebanon clause, saying its implementation is what prevents civil strife inside Lebanon.
- Months of war, repression and economic collapse are driving a mounting mental-health toll inside Iran. The January crackdown that killed at least 7,000 protesters, a war that killed thousands and displaced many more, inflation near 70 percent and widespread loss of work have left Iranians reporting broad psychological distress, while the harder-line leadership that emerged from the war signals readiness to continue military confrontation even as talks proceed.

ISRAEL

- Netanyahu spoke with Trump on Friday and the two agreed to meet soon in the United States, their first meeting since February 11, the session that preceded the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran later that month. Netanyahu congratulated Trump on American independence's 250th anniversary and called the United States a guarantor of global freedom. Trump told Netanyahu that negotiating with Tehran remains his priority while keeping renewed military force on the table if Iran refuses a deal, noting that Iran's earlier decision not to sign "did not end well for them," and another joint strike has not been ruled out.
- Gadi Eisenkot, who on Tuesday opened his campaign to unseat Netanyahu four months before the October election, pledged at his first campaign meeting to ensure "the 'October 7' government ends its role in history," and the week's polling now frames the race as a dead heat, with his Yashar party at 20-22 seats against Likud's 21-24 across surveys. A Friday poll testing a Netanyahu breakaway found he would win 16 seats at the head of his own list against a rump Likud's 7, a combined 23 that would still shrink the coalition bloc to 49 seats against 60 for the opposition and 11 for the Arab parties, leaving Netanyahu's list third behind Yashar and the Bennett-Lapid Together alliance at 20 seats each. 62 percent of Israelis rate a cross-bloc unity government after the vote as having slim or no chance of forming.
- The Defense Ministry marked the war's 1,000th day by reporting that some 26,200 soldiers and security personnel have entered treatment since October 7, 65 percent of them with psychological conditions including post-traumatic stress (roughly 17,000 cases, against 7,700 physical injuries including 97 amputations). Reservists account for 62 percent of the wounded and nearly half of all those treated are under 30. The ministry forecasts the total will pass 90,000 during 2026 and warned that without immediate implementation of the Mor Yosef committee recommendations and additional resources the national rehabilitation system risks collapse. Senior officers described a transformed post-October 7 doctrine in which no emerging threat goes unanswered, one citing the same-day elimination of a militant on the outskirts of Nabatiye as a strike the pre-war army would have withheld under a ceasefire.
- The United States signed an agreement Wednesday to build its permanent embassy at the Allenby compound in southern Jerusalem, consolidating services dispersed across the city since Trump's 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Ambassador Mike Huckabee cast the project as planting the American flag permanently in Jerusalem, and Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said the agreement deepens the "unbreakable alliance" coming out of the joint campaign against Iran.
- The Israel State Archives unsealed thousands of pages on the 1976 Entebbe raid ahead of the operation's fiftieth anniversary on July 4, including complete Cabinet and Security Cabinet transcripts and the records of the special security team Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin established, while about two dozen rescued hostages and relatives gathered in Jaffa to honor Sorin Hershcu, the paratrooper gravely wounded in the raid.
- Sa'ar accused Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan of "textbook incitement to genocide" after Fidan called Israel "a burden that humanity can no longer bear" and urged the international community to act against it. Sa'ar said dehumanizing the Jewish people as an unbearable burden echoes history's eliminationist regimes and demanded unequivocal condemnation from Turkey's NATO allies.

LEBANON

- A Hezbollah fighter opened fire at close range on a 679th (Yiftah) Brigade force inside a building in Bint Jbeil on Thursday evening, seriously wounding one Israeli reservist and lightly wounding two others before escaping. Warplanes bombed the building and the search for the fighter continues, days after a Hezbollah fighter killed Captain David Hazutt in the same sector. Overnight drone strikes on a vehicle in Siddiqin (Tyre district) wounded two people, and drones dropped stun grenades on Safad al-Battikh and Mansouri, hours after strikes on roughly ten Hezbollah infrastructure sites around Bint Jbeil and on a weapons truck near the security zone. Demolition operations kept leveling border villages from Haddatha to Kfar Tebnit, and in the Ali al-Taher heights, where an airstrike killed a Hezbollah operative emerging from a tunnel Thursday, forces continue clearing an underground network of galleries, weapons depots, drone workshops, and launch positions built to survive air attack. The Givati Brigade ended its eight-month Lebanon deployment at a Camp Filon ceremony attended by Northern Command chief Maj. Gen. Rafi Milo, credited with destroying hundreds of Hezbollah sites and seizing over 1,000 weapons, part of the drawdown from five divisions to two that followed the framework signing. Rescue teams and the Lebanese Army accounted for the four men who vanished on June 15 while returning south, recovering three bodies in the Wadi Slouki area and one survivor, Mohammad Hassan, hospitalized after an amputation. The cumulative toll since March 2 now stands at 4,301 killed and 12,199 wounded.
- The battle over the framework agreement deepened on every front. Berri, who has vowed the deal "will not pass," branded it "an agreement of sedition" and warned that Israel's true objective is dragging the Lebanese Army into confrontation with Hezbollah, a scenario he insists will not materialize. He revealed he had agreed with Aoun to demand any Israeli withdrawal proceed by administrative districts and was surprised the final text adopted pilot zones instead, said Hezbollah stands ready to withdraw from south of the Litani concurrent with a complete Israeli withdrawal and to integrate its weapons across Lebanon within the state, and called for an international umbrella of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Iran to guarantee any settlement. Aoun drew his own red lines, warning that inciting sedition or toppling the government through street action will not be tolerated, defending negotiation as "a diplomatic war without unnecessary bloodshed," pledging not to yield a single inch of territory, and accusing those "accustomed to tutelage" of obstructing Lebanon's sovereign decision to separate its track from the Iran-US negotiations. Jumblat declined to join any coalition to bring the agreement down but called it a misstep, noting the word "withdrawal" appears nowhere in the text and that Article 13 bars Lebanon from prosecuting war criminals during negotiations. Six rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Legal Agenda, warned that clauses 3 and 13 block both countries' recourse to the ICC and ICJ and threaten to betray victims of war crimes. Western diplomats privately dismiss the deal as a "non-starter," citing its uncertain legal standing, the absence of any withdrawal timetable, no real movement from Israel, and the risk that Washington and Tehran negotiate different Lebanon terms, and the proposed US-Iran-Lebanon de-confliction cell, which Qatar and Pakistan are to broker, has yet to convene or acquire a defined structure. Israeli ambassador to Washington Yechiel Leiter reinforced the doubters, stating the agreement's focus "is the dismantling of Hezbollah, not Israel's withdrawal," confirming Israel insisted on no timetable, claiming the Lebanese Army is sidelining Shiite troops unwilling to confront Hezbollah, and describing a "shelf agreement" for full peace to be consummated only after disarmament. Geagea countered that the agreement shatters Hezbollah's narrative and opens a credible path to ending illegal weapons

and securing full Israeli withdrawal, and UK Deputy National Security Adviser Barbara Woodward closed a two-day Beirut visit calling the framework central to withdrawal, disarmament, and full Lebanese Army deployment.

- Shaibani closed his Beirut visit with a hero's welcome in Tripoli, where hundreds waved Syrian flags at Dar al-Fatwa as he met Tripoli Mufti Mohammad Imam, Akkar Mufti Zaid Bakkar Zakaria, and Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Mitri, calling the stop a gesture of loyalty to a city that stood by the Syrian revolution. He assured Aoun that Damascus has no intention of intervening militarily in Lebanon despite US pressure to act against Hezbollah, relayed an invitation from President Ahmad al-Sharaa for a first presidential visit to Damascus, and held a first-ever meeting with Berri, who said afterward that Lebanon has no choice but engagement with Syria and that he sensed no hostility toward Hezbollah, while Shaibani did not rule out meeting the group in the future. Salam and Shaibani signed the cabinet-approved agreement establishing the Joint Lebanese-Syrian High Committee, covering political, economic, security, energy, transport, and border cooperation on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and non-interference.
- France is preparing with Italy to field a new international coalition force in southern Lebanon once UNIFIL's mandate ends at the close of the year, with US backing and the participation of several European countries. The force would deploy at Beirut's request to support the Lebanese Army, and consultations on the deployment mechanism continue within the framework agreement's security arrangements.
- 646,107 displaced Lebanese have returned to their areas of origin since the June 21 ceasefire, out of more than one million displaced during the war, and nearly 500,000 remain displaced, including 47,143 in 430 collective shelters, over half of them women and girls. Authorities dismantled informal camps in Beirut as official shelters wound down, but returns to dozens of border villages remain suspended amid large-scale destruction, continuing strikes and demolitions, and the Israeli troop presence in the security zone. The 2026 Lebanon Flash Appeal is 37 percent funded.
- A UN Human Rights Office team began work inside Lebanon on a first-of-its-kind assessment mission, collecting evidence on violations of international law by all parties since March 2 after Beirut granted the necessary guarantees. Investigators are interviewing victims, witnesses, and civil society and will seek access to areas hit by hostilities on both sides of the Lebanese-Israeli border, with public findings to follow.
- Lebanon is moving to convert the UAE travel thaw into capital. Ambassador to the UAE Tarek Mneimneh said Emirati investors are more than welcome and that talks already under way will expand, identifying ports, airports, and digital governance as entry sectors for Emirati expertise and courting figures such as Mohamed Alabbar and Khalaf Al Habtoor toward a market he called almost a greenfield in many sectors, with Beirut pairing the outreach with reform and regulatory guarantees. The pitch follows Monday's entry into force of the UAE decision lifting its April 30 travel ban on Lebanon.

SYRIA

- **Cafe bombing aftermath:** Mourners filed through Damascus's Midan district Friday to bury victims of Thursday's bombing at the Al-Mushairiya cafe, where the toll stands at ten dead and more than 20 wounded. Six of the dead were lawyers, among them Muhannad Khalaf, Hossam al-Safadi, Fathi al-Qabbani and Mahmoud Shehab, mourned by the Syrian Bar Association, a ca-

sualty profile consistent with the cafe's position 70 meters from the Palace of Justice, which has been hearing high-profile cases against former Assad officials. The Interior Ministry's preliminary findings describe a roughly one-kilogram improvised device packed with metal shrapnel, planted inside the cafe and detonated at 15:00. No group has claimed the attack and the investigation has produced no announced arrests, though Damascus Governor Maher Marwan called the device primitive and committed to bringing the perpetrators before the courts. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan, the Arab Parliament, the Kurdistan Region's Nechirvan Barzani and the UN Secretary-General's office condemned the bombing and declared solidarity with Damascus. The security pressure carried into Friday, when a motorcyclist threw grenades at a checkpoint at the entrance to Jaramana, wounding three security personnel before a third grenade exploded in his hand and killed him, with authorities identifying him as a wanted murder and drug-trafficking suspect.

- **Counter-narcotics arrest:** Syria's Drug Enforcement Administration arrested one of the country's most prominent traffickers in Nasib, Daraa province, after a surveillance operation, seizing 15,960 Captagon pills, 5,560 narcotic pharmaceutical tablets and a cache of medium-caliber weapons. The raid extends the interim government's drive to dismantle the Assad-era narcotics industry, which President Ahmad al-Sharaa cast last week as a national program and shared responsibility.
- **First Green Climate Fund project:** The Green Climate Fund board approved \$27.7 million for Syria's first national project, targeting water-scarcity risks in the areas hardest hit by climate change. The approval came at the fund's 45th board meeting in Dushanbe (June 29 to July 3), where Deputy Environment Minister Youssef Sharaf led the Syrian delegation. The award ends Syria's exclusion from GCF financing and is built to strengthen water security, protect agriculture and livelihoods, and open the way for further national climate initiatives.
- **T4 landmine deaths:** A landmine killed five civilians near the T4 military airport in Homs countryside, where field-survey teams found the bodies days after the group entered the restricted perimeter. Security forces separately defused an improvised explosive device planted on a passenger bus in the al-Wurud area of rural Damascus without detonation.
- **Assad-era accountability stalled in London:** A judge at London's Old Bailey ruled Salem Michel al-Salem, a 58-year-old former Syrian Air Force intelligence colonel charged with three counts of murder as a crime against humanity, three counts of torture and conduct ancillary to murder over the shooting of protesters in Damascus in 2011 and 2012, unfit to plead and unfit to stand trial. Four medical experts agreed his advanced motor neurone disease has left him paralyzed in all four limbs and effectively unable to communicate, and the prosecution accepted the finding, halting one of the few crimes-against-humanity prosecutions of an Assad-era officer outside Syria.

PALESTINE

- The war in Gaza crossed its 1,000th day with Israeli fire still killing Palestinians almost daily under the October ceasefire. A quadcopter drone dropped a bomb Friday morning on two children filling water containers behind the Al-Omari Mosque in Gaza City's Old City, killing one and wounding the other, a second drone strike killed a man east of Deir al-Balah, tank fire reached displacement tents in Rafah, and engineering units demolished more than a kilometer of underground routes in Khan Yunis. Gaza's Health Ministry has recorded 1,053 Palestinians killed since the ceasefire took effect on October 10, over 350 of them women and children. Israeli forces hold more than half

the Strip and the government intends to expand that to 70 percent, while the next ceasefire steps, Hamas disarmament and reconstruction, remain stalled and the ICRC assesses even a semblance of normality remains distant.

- Israel's Security Cabinet approved plans Thursday for 13 new settlements in the Binyamin bloc of the central West Bank, straddling Route 60, the north-south artery linking Nablus, Ramallah, and Bethlehem. The first phase, expected within months and backed by investments worth millions of shekels, builds four to six settlements and legalizes existing outposts for state funding and infrastructure. The Jerusalem Governorate warns the project will sever East Jerusalem from its Palestinian surroundings and create new geographic realities stretching from northwest of Jerusalem to the eastern slopes toward the Jordan Valley. The approval lands as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich says his ministry has prepared plans for three settlements in northern Gaza, with Netanyahu declining to rule them out.
- Settler violence spiked across the West Bank and the Jerusalem periphery on Friday, increasingly aimed at infrastructure and livelihoods. Settlers cut the main electricity line to al-Maniya southeast of Bethlehem for the second time this week and vandalized greenhouses southeast of Tulkarem, extending a recent pattern of attacks on water springs, power lines, and farms. Dozens of settlers stoned and pepper-sprayed Palestinians and foreign volunteers trying to reach farmland between Abu Falah and Turmus Ayya north of Ramallah, injuring several. Seven residents of Yarza east of Tubas were hurt when settlers stormed the village as families inspected homes they had been forced from months earlier, an army-protected settler assault on Idhna west of Hebron left a young man shot in the neck with a coated metal round and two elderly men beaten, and a raid on the al-Tabneh Bedouin community near Khan al-Ahmar east of Jerusalem injured two and ended with four arrests.
- The Israeli army fired live rounds and stun grenades Friday to disperse a protest in Abu Njeim southeast of Bethlehem against a new outpost tent pitched on residents' land, wounding several Palestinians and arresting one, amid rising outpost attempts across eastern Bethlehem. The Duvdevan unit separately arrested eight Palestinians in Mukhmas accused of stoning a group of Israeli Breslov hassidim whose car fled into the village during a Thursday police chase, an incident that drew commandos and a combat helicopter before the army ruled out a kidnapping attempt. A pre-dawn arrest sweep Saturday hit Ramallah, Nablus, Tubas, Jenin, and Qalqilya, detaining released prisoner Awni Shakhshir among others.
- An Israeli strike in northern Gaza on Wednesday killed Muhammad Na'im Jandiya, head of military security for Hamas's Shajaiyah Battalion, who took part in the October 7 kidnapping of Captain Daniel Perez and held hostages Yotam Haim, Samar Talalka, and Alon Shamriz in tunnels beneath Shujaiyya (all three were later killed accidentally by Israeli fire). The army says Jandiya had recently been advancing attack plots against its forces in Gaza.
- The Israeli army confirmed the authenticity of a widely circulated image showing a Palestinian detainee in Gaza lying face down on a camp bed, blindfolded, hands bound with zip ties, and an iron rod strapped to his back, the photo captioned "good morning" in Hebrew. A command-level investigation is underway, with those involved to face measures under its findings, though the army withheld the soldiers' identities and the incident's date. The detainee was seized by the Kfir Brigade's Netzah Yehuda battalion during operations in northern Gaza. The confirmation renewed calls from rights advocates for an independent investigation into detainee treatment.
- The Palestinian Foreign Ministry categorically denied claims by former official Nasser al-Qudwa that it asked South Africa to withdraw its genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), calling the allegations false and warning they undermine Palestinian diplomatic

and legal efforts.

- Australian federal police are reviewing a 61-page submission from the Australian Centre for International Justice alleging an Australian citizen serving in an Israeli battalion committed war crimes in Gaza in 2023 and 2024, built on witness testimony, forensic evidence from Gaza, verified satellite imagery, and footage the citizen allegedly posted. Special investigations commander Matthew Gale confirmed the material has been referred to investigators.

KEY REGIONAL EVENTS

Yemen

- The anti-Houthi tribal gathering at Matrah al-Karamah (the Dignity Sit-in) in Al Rayyan, Al Jawf, held through its 82nd day, with reinforcements still arriving despite a slower tempo than the past week's surge. Tribes from Harib, Dhamar, Haraz, Bani Al Harith, Bani Jabr, and other areas across multiple governorates joined in response to Sheikh Hamad bin Fadgham's call, and additional convoys were moving toward the site even as a Houthi disinformation campaign claimed the tribes were abandoning it. Tribal mediators announced their effort to defuse the standoff had failed after Houthi authorities in Sanaa refused, over several days of negotiation, to release Sumaya Al-Zubairi (also known as Mira Saddam Hussein) and transfer her to Al Rayyan, removing the last negotiated exit and leaving the confrontation to widen as the Houthis run their own counter-mobilization.

UAE

- The Cybersecurity Council thwarted a wave of sophisticated cyberattacks on the financial sector, detecting and containing them early with no disruption to financial services. The attackers combined advanced phishing, vulnerability exploitation, and malware against digital systems and critical technology infrastructure and used artificial intelligence to sharpen their techniques, prompting the council to call on all organizations to harden systems and report suspicious activity.

Saudi Arabia

- Saudia publicly distanced itself from Boeing 777-200s now linked to a sanctioned carrier, stating it sold the aircraft on June 7, 2023 to a company registered outside Saudi Arabia and has had no operational or commercial relationship with them since. The airline did not identify the buyer.

Oman

- Oman is advancing the Muscat Metro, a 55km, 42-station line linking Sultan Haitham City with Ruwi and serving Muscat International Airport, developed in partnership with France as a pillar of Oman Vision 2040 diversification. No launch date has been set for the project, in the pipeline since 2023, which would put Muscat alongside Dubai, Riyadh, and Doha in the Gulf's accelerating build-out of urban rail.

Turkey

- Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Ankara and Washington are taking concrete steps to lift the CAATSA sanctions imposed over Turkey's S-400 purchase, with President Erdogan and President Trump sharing "a strong will" to remove them after instructing both governments to work toward that goal at their Washington meeting last September. Fidan, who with the defense minister is working intensively on the file, called CAATSA the last major institutional obstacle in bilateral ties, noting most other US restrictions on Ankara have already been lifted. The sanctions cost Turkey its place in the F-35 program in 2019 and hit its defense procurement agency.

Jordan

- The army's Northern Military Region command on Friday foiled an infiltration attempt by three individuals crossing the border illegally, the second thwarted crossing in a week. Border Guard units detected the three, applied the rules of engagement, arrested them, and referred them for legal action.

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- Russia declared the complete capture of Kostyantynivka, the fortified Donetsk stronghold of roughly 78,000 pre-war residents whose fall opens the axis toward Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, the last major cities in Donbas under Kyiv's control. Putin, appearing in uniform at a command post, called it a strategic achievement, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov said the southern grouping is now driving to take all of Donetsk region with forces closing on Lyman 70 kilometers north, and the Kremlin claimed full control of Luhansk. The announcement caps a June in which the front barely moved: Russia netted 30 square kilometers, most of it reclassified earlier incursions in Kharkiv region, Ukrainian counterattacks recovered 29 square kilometers across Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk, and Moscow is averaging 15 square kilometers a month this year after giving up some 403 square kilometers in April and May. Ukrainian long-range strikes on refineries continue to strain Russian fuel supplies, and Putin cast expanded "security zones" along the Kharkiv and Sumy border areas as his answer to them. Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Ukraine is seeking to lower tension after President Karol Nawrocki stripped Zelensky of Poland's top honor over an army unit named for UPA insurgents tied to the Volhynia massacres, tied reconciliation over that history to Ukraine's EU path, and said Warsaw's NATO-summit delegation would be cautious about pledging further financial aid to Kyiv.
- NATO leaders including Trump will affirm an "ironclad commitment" to collective defense under Article 5 at the July 7-8 Ankara summit, under a declaration approved Friday by the ambassadors of all 32 members that also pledges €70 billion (\$80 billion) in military assistance to Ukraine for 2026 and at least equivalent levels in 2027. The affirmation follows Trump's public doubts about the mutual-defense pact, including talk of quitting the alliance, after his clash with European capitals over the Iran war. European leaders arrive intent on parking the Iran and Greenland disputes and showing they are shouldering the continent's defense, with tens of billions of dollars in new arms deals due for signature, Zelensky attending a dinner hosted by Erdogan, and Erdogan holding a private bilateral with Trump. Trump's attacks on Italy's Giorgia Meloni, whose reliability as a wartime ally he questioned, have instead rallied European leaders around her and accelerated bloc-level coordination on defense, tariffs, and foreign policy, narrowing his room to

negotiate with capitals one by one. Outgoing British Prime Minister Keir Starmer added a record defense plan of nearly £300 billion (\$397 billion) over four years, an extra £15 billion through 2030 weighted toward drones and autonomous systems, a plan that cost him two defense ministers and lands weeks before he leaves office.

- Monaco and Interpol identified the chief suspect in Monday's bombing of Ukrainian-born businessman Vadym Yermolaiev as Anastasiia Berezovska, a 39-year-old Ukrainian who had been living in Germany, and issued a Red Notice for attempted murder, criminal conspiracy, and placing an explosive device in a public place. Disguised as a man after repeatedly scouting the site, she detonated a parcel bomb by remote control as Yermolaiev, his partner, and his 13-year-old son returned from dinner, wounding all three, then fled on foot into France and drove a German-rented car back to Germany via Italy. Prosecutors assess she did not act alone, and German authorities searched her rented apartment.
- Venezuela's earthquake toll climbed to 2,645 dead and more than 12,000 injured, with some 15,000 displaced and thousands still missing, as rescue teams mounted a final push for survivors of the June 24 twin quakes (magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, the strongest in more than a century) that damaged or destroyed an estimated 58,870 buildings, with coastal La Guaira hardest hit. The second flight of the Jordanian-Qatari humanitarian air bridge departed Friday for Caracas with 26 tonnes of medical, relief, and food supplies, following a first flight already delivered.
- Trump defended earning roughly \$1.2 billion from his family's cryptocurrency ventures last year, saying everybody profits from the rising market and that blind trusts manage his money, after financial disclosures placed the crypto income at the center of criticism that he is using office for personal enrichment.
- A London court jailed two Romanians for the March 2024 stabbing of Pouria Zeraati, a journalist with the Persian-language channel Iran International, outside his home, with the judge ruling the evidence overwhelmingly points to an attack carried out on behalf of the Iranian state. George Stana, 25, received 12 years and Nandito Badea, 21, eight years for wounding with intent in a planned attack preceded by reconnaissance and ordered by a third party acting for Tehran. Zeraati, previously threatened along with his family, was stabbed three times in the thigh, and a third man, David Andrei, remains in Romania.
- Pegasus spyware from Israel's NSO Group infected the phone of Stelios Kouloglou, a Greek journalist and former member of the European Parliament, at least three times in 2022 and 2023 while he served on the Parliament's PEGA committee investigating spyware abuse in EU states. The infections coincided with key committee activity, one landing 10 days before fact-finding visits to Greece and Cyprus, and likely exposed confidential committee documents and internal deliberations.
- Google, working with the FBI and Lumen Technologies, disrupted NetNut, a residential proxy network operated by an Israeli company and used to conceal and route malicious cyber activity. The action disabled accounts and services running command-and-control for malware tied to the network and cut the operator's pool of exploitable consumer devices by millions.
- The United States withdrew most of the forces deployed to Nigeria for the May operation against Islamic State's West Africa affiliate, in which US and Nigerian forces killed nearly 200 fighters in the Lake Chad region, including Abu Bilal al-Minuki, the group's global second-in-command. Africa Command's General Dagvin Anderson said intelligence-sharing continues at Abuja's request, separate from the roughly 200 non-combat trainers sent earlier this year, with US troop numbers in the country fluctuating by requirement.

- Macron announced the carrier Charles de Gaulle is returning to its home port of Toulon, ending the Middle East deployment begun in mid-May when the US-Iran war put it on standby to help secure navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Citing the positive turn the US-Iran memorandum represents and his talks with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, he said France's mine-clearing assets (two minehunters), two frigates, and a maritime patrol aircraft remain deployed and ready to contribute with partners to the security of Hormuz shipping.

MARKETS

- **Gulf crude exports** in June reached 10.07 million barrels per day of combined crude and condensate from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Iraq and Iran, a jump of more than 3.5 million bpd over May that puts hard numbers on the export recovery flagged earlier this week, though flows remain roughly 40 percent below pre-war levels. The UAE led with a record 3.7 to 3.8 million bpd, more than 1 million bpd above May, as a surge in tanker traffic cleared the backlog of barrels stranded in the Gulf, while Saudi crude exports rose 768,000 bpd to 4.52 million bpd. With the US escort presence keeping oil moving through Hormuz, the restored supply has pushed prices back to pre-conflict levels: Brent traded at \$71.76 a barrel Friday and WTI at \$68.49, both on track for a slight weekly decline as traders price in progress toward a definitive end to the US-Iran war.
- **Strait of Hormuz traffic** is stabilizing at 38 confirmed crossings on 2 July, down 10 percent day on day but inside the 30 to 60 crossings per day band that has emerged since transits resumed. Commercial vessels still dominate the flow, but Iranian-flagged activity rose sharply and operators are shifting toward Iranian and dark or unknown routing, a pattern indicating shipper confidence remains incomplete while the transit-fee and route-governance dispute stays unresolved.
- **Air India Express** will restore its full Gulf network by the end of this week, resuming service to all 13 of its destinations across Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with Kozhikode and Bengaluru flights to Kuwait restarting Friday and Saturday. The move returns Indian carriers to one of their top international markets after months of cancellations, reroutings, elevated fuel costs and weakened demand that followed the February 28 attacks and the strait closure.
- **Lebanese fuel prices** fell this week as crude retreated to pre-conflict levels. Taxi fares have yet to follow the drop, keeping transport costs elevated for commuters.