

DAILY BRIEFING

The Dispatch

DATE: 07 July 2026

ISSUED BY: Core Group — OSINT Unit

ANALYSIS LEVEL: Operational, Level 2

CLASSIFICATION: **Limited Distribution**

MAIN STORY: LEBANESE CHRISTIAN BORDER VILLAGES REJECT NETANYAHU'S ANNEXATION CLAIM

- Municipalities, mukhtars, and local figures from 15 Christian-majority border villages issued a joint statement flatly denying Netanyahu's claim, aired Sunday, that some had asked to be annexed to Israel for protection against Hezbollah. The signatories branded reports that local officials contacted Israeli authorities to request annexation and Israeli nationality "totally fabricated," affirming the villages regard Lebanon as their definitive homeland. Debel mayor Joseph Attieh said the village had never asked anyone for protection and would stay Lebanese. Qlayaa mayor Hana Daher said the town had met every Israeli demand only to deny a pretext for entry, adding, "We don't want the Israelis or Hezbollah. Let them kill each other and leave us out of it." Rmeish mayor Hanna al-Amil called the idea "absolutely out of the question."
- Speaker Nabih Berri praised the border towns' statements Monday. He singled out Rmeish's municipality for refuting the claim and framed the assertion as an Israeli attempt to sow sectarian discord through "lies and falsehoods promoted by Israeli political circles." He tied the rhetoric to the demolition campaign across Bint Jbeil, Marjeyoun, Nabatieh, and Tyre, characterizing it as intent to render large areas of southern Lebanon uninhabitable, and urged the Lebanese state alongside Arab and international bodies to act to halt it.
- Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah turned the claim inward, accusing the Lebanese government of "suspicious silence" and of having granted Israel legitimacy for its continued presence "through their ill-fated agreement." He lauded Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Fahmy for condemning the demolition of a Bint Jbeil neighborhood, said the authorities "do not dare respond" to Netanyahu, and cast the annexation claim as exposing Israel's true intentions. Both Christian and Muslim border villages remain committed to Lebanon, he said, while "the occupation and its collaborators will have no role in the future of our country."

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Netanyahu's claim reads as an information operation to manufacture a sectarian pretext for the occupation rather than a description of any actual village request, and the uniform rejection across the Christian villages and the Shia political leadership alike has denied it local traction. The prior cycle flagged the claim on its face, and this cycle's coordinated denial by 15 municipalities confirms it gained no purchase on the ground. The framing most likely serves to justify barring displaced

residents, some of whom Israel ties to Hezbollah, from returning to the border belt, consistent with the army's standing March demand to clear those villages. The claim could acquire weight only if Israel names a specific village or produces a named official who made contact, neither of which has surfaced. The clearest near-term tell will be whether Israel substantiates the assertion or lets it lapse, and whether the demolitions Berri cites spread beyond Bint Jbeil and Marjeyoun, which would corroborate his uninhabitability read.

IRAN

- Mojtaba Khamenei, the successor unseen since March, confirmed Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei for another five-year term as chief justice by text message during his father's rites. The move signals continuity from a leader absent since he was wounded in the February 28 strike. Millions packed Tehran on the fourth mourning day, hurling stones at a Trump billboard reading 'The U.S. killed our father, we won't let you go' and raising 'KILL TRUMP' placards. The body was flown to Qom on Monday evening. Hezbollah's delegation under Mohammed Fneish and Hamas's under Mohammed Darwish met Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. IRGC commander Ahmad Vahidi appeared publicly for the first time in months.
- Trump said Washington will 'either make a deal or finish the job,' preferring a deal to avoid affecting 91 million people, and threatened to knock out Iran's bridges and energy supply within an hour. He ruled out an Iranian nuclear weapon and regime change, saying US strikes wiped out Iran's navy, air force, radar and leadership. National Security Council secretary Mohammad Bagher Zolqadr told him to address Iranians with respect 'or we will respond in another language.' Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf ruled out peace with Washington or recognizing Israel, naming the axis of resistance and Lebanon as red lines. Indirect talks resume after the funeral.

In brief:

- Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz vowed to 'thwart' any Iranian leader who again seeks Israel's destruction. Israel's security establishment monitors the revenge-seeking successor circle and prepares for a possible resumption of fighting with Iran.
- Iran's ambassador to China, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, said Tehran will charge Hormuz transit service fees, not a 'toll,' with 'special' treatment for friendly nations, defying Trump's warning that any such charge would end negotiations.
- Iranian envoy Ali Razaee opened the first Tehran-Sanaa flights in nearly a decade via Mahan Air, which Yemen's leadership council called a sovereignty violation, while Speaker Ghalibaf urged Lebanese factions to honor the US-Iran memorandum.
- British couple Craig and Lindsay Foreman, sentenced to 10 years each for espionage, continued a hunger strike in Iranian custody, having lost about 16 and 14 kilograms while denied medical care and family contact.

ISRAEL

- Israel's cabinet voted unanimously Sunday to reject a High Court ruling that the Second Authority media council keep operating. Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi and Justice Minister Yariv Levin vowed "all legal means" to nullify it. No government had ever announced it would defy the top court. Opposition leader Yair Lapid cast the move as a plan to "steal" the elections due by end-October. The Movement for Quality Government petitioned under the Contempt of Court Ordinance, pushing for fines or arrest of the ministers involved. Separately, the court proposed canceling Eliyahu's Israel Land Authority appointment over his political ties to Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.
- Netanyahu used two television interviews in under 48 hours to deny a rift with Trump, saying the two "see eye to eye on just about everything" and calling Israel a "model ally." He played down criticism of the US-Iran memorandum. Timed to Trump's departure for the NATO summit in Turkey, he lobbied Washington not to sell F-35 jets or engines to Ankara. He argued the sale would "upset the power balance" guaranteed by Israeli air superiority and branded Erdogan's government "a regime infected by the Muslim Brotherhood." The appearances followed Friday's call agreeing to meet "soon" in the US, after Trump said Netanyahu "knows who the boss is."
- Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared a "revolution in settlement," vowing to push outposts beyond the occupied West Bank into the Negev and Galilee, days after the cabinet approved 13 new settlements along the Route 60 corridor toward the Jordan Valley. Coordinated bans by 10 countries, including the UK, Canada and France, kept Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir out, decisions Israel's Foreign Ministry called "unjustified." Separately, 71 cross-party UK MPs and peers pressed Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper to sanction Netanyahu and Justice Minister Yariv Levin over the documented torture of Palestinian detainees.

In brief:

- The Israeli military will discharge about 10,000 reservists by the end of July, cutting active reserves from roughly 60,000 to 50,000, amid a budget shortfall of tens of billions of shekels.
- Arms supplier Elbit Systems said its Tzayad digital command system detected 850,000 potential targets in real time across Israel's war theaters between October 7 and the end of 2025, about 1,000 a day.
- Hamas warned neither Iran nor Hezbollah before the October 7 attack, secret documents indicate. The Knesset meanwhile passed a first reading of a coalition-controlled probe into the attack, which the opposition boycotted.
- Prosecutors indicted Bekhruz Dodobaev, 33, a Tajik citizen, for relaying footage of missile-impact sites, Haifa Port and an Elbit Systems facility to Iranian intelligence handlers in exchange for cryptocurrency.
- The Israeli and Greek air forces resumed joint air drills over the Aegean Sea, including Israeli aircraft refueling Greek F-16s, after a pause during Israel's wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.
- The cabinet moved to give the Shin Bet over NIS 500 million to fight organized crime in the Arab sector, as police wounded five in Ar'ara in the Negev halting a suspected Bedouin clan shooting.

LEBANON

- An Israeli drone struck a car in Nabatieh al-Fawqa on Monday around 12:30, killing four: school principal Esperanza Ghandour, her mother, and a foreign female domestic worker and a male Syrian worker, as the four returned from inspecting the family home. The military said it hit four suspects approaching the "security zone" in the Al-Aqida area who posed a threat to its forces. Overnight and through the day, Israeli forces demolished homes in six towns including Aitaroun, Kounine and Houla, sent two Merkava tanks and a D9 bulldozer into central Haddatha, and struck Kfartebnit and Baraashit. At Haddatha, the army claimed operational control after destroying over 90 infrastructure sites, killing more than 20 fighters and seizing more than 150 weapons (RPGs, anti-tank missiles, machine guns, Kalashnikovs) over the past month. Chief of staff Eyal Zamir, touring near Beaufort Castle, vowed to keep operating "decisively" to remove threats and warned Israel is ready to resume the offensive if the ceasefire is violated.
- The Israeli army sent recorded warnings to residents of Marjayoun-district towns including Abl al-Saqi, Qlayaa, Jdeidet Marjeyoun, Bourj el-Moulouk and Deir Mimas. The messages told them to bar the return of "strangers," a reference to Hezbollah members, and refused to guarantee residents' safety if they do not comply. Municipal heads in the Christian villages, Hanna Daher in Qlayaa and Elie Sleiman in Bourj el-Moulouk, confirmed receiving the messages and said no displaced persons are present in their localities. They tied the warning to returns of displaced people from Debbine and Blat to nearby Jdeidet Marjeyoun.
- More than 646,000 displaced Lebanese returned since June 22. About 500,000 remain displaced out of over one million uprooted. Some 400,000 returned to the south. In Tyre, restaurants reopened and families gather on the beachfront, though residents still hear nightly strikes and describe destruction "beyond imagination." Authorities removed tent encampments around Beirut and reduced official shelters. Returnees face rebuilding towns like Srifa, near where Israeli troops still hold a border strip, and the risk of renewed fighting. Israel says the underground network it is clearing beneath the south (tunnels, arms depots, drone-assembly sites, launch positions built over decades) was designed to survive airstrikes.
- President Joseph Aoun defended the Washington framework, telling journalists "I am not fond of Israel, but give me another solution, whatever it may be, and I will proceed with it." He separately warned that Israel's continued occupation prevents the Lebanese army's deployment and "undermines the legitimacy of the state." Critics laid out alternatives he bypassed, from refusing direct talks that handed Israel a free political image to withholding concessions on Hezbollah's arms before a full withdrawal. Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea told Walid Jumblat "history does not move backward" in their dispute over the 1949 Armistice, calling to rectify the present rather than lament the past.

In brief:

- Information Minister Paul Morcos put preliminary direct war damage at \$3-4 billion, excluding economic and indirect losses. UNICEF logged 211 children killed and 308,000 still displaced, its appeal only 36 percent funded. The health sector recorded 4,298 deaths and 12,196 injuries since March 2.

SYRIA

- French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Damascus on Monday evening for talks with President Ahmad al-Sharaa, the first visit by a Western head of state since Assad's ouster in 2024. Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani met him at the airport. Macron brought a delegation of investors and French company representatives, with reconstruction, infrastructure, the financial sector, and security cooperation on the agenda. Al-Sharaa said the visit would produce signed agreements across those areas, casting Paris as the partner that helped reopen Syria to the outside and lift its sanctions. "I have come to express France's commitment to the Syrian people," Macron posted. Both presidents travel to Ankara on Tuesday for the NATO summit.

In brief:

- US President Donald Trump will meet al-Sharaa and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky in separate bilaterals Wednesday afternoon at the NATO summit in Ankara.
- Mourners in Damascus buried three victims of the cafe bombing near the main judicial complex, an attack that killed nine people and wounded 20, as officials promised arrests with no group claiming responsibility.
- A Viennese court sentenced former Syrian intelligence general Khaled Al-Halabi and ex-police officer Musab Abu Rukbah to eight years each for torturing Assad opponents in Raqqa between 2011 and 2013, under universal jurisdiction.
- Iraqi and Syrian border commanders held their first joint border meeting at Al-Qaim, agreeing to deepen coordination, intelligence-sharing, and control along the shared frontier against security threats.

PALESTINE

- Hamas dissolved its government emergency committee, which has run Gaza for nearly two decades, and offered to hand authority to the US-backed National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG). Committee head Mohammed al-Farra resigned to clear the transfer, but the statement carried no pledge to disarm unilaterally, and Hamas kept its ministry staff and retained security in areas it controls. NCAG chairman Ali Shaath called the body ready once conditions allow, demanding "one authority, one law, one weapon." Israel has blocked NCAG from entering Gaza since January. Mladenov called the move "the bridge between declarations and implementation" and urged completing the roadmap to unlock disarmament, Israeli withdrawal, and reconstruction.
- Israeli strikes across Gaza killed five Palestinians and wounded 25 since dawn Monday, despite the October ceasefire. A drone strike on a vehicle in al-Mawasi, west of Khan Younis, killed one and wounded 16, and a strike on a displacement tent nearby killed two more. In Gaza City, a dawn strike on the Doghmush family home in Tel al-Hawa killed a man and his wife and wounded six, and drone fire wounded three fishermen off al-Shati. Rescue teams recovered eight bodies of the Safadi family from rubble in Sabra. The ceasefire-period toll rose to 1,072 killed and 3,463 injured, within a war death toll now put at 73,098.

- Israeli forces held a family for over an hour Sunday at a checkpoint outside Deir Ammar, west of Ramallah, and four-month-old Ahmad Marouf Zeid, being rushed for urgent care, was declared dead on arrival. Soldiers fired tear gas at civilians. In a separate raid on Qalandiya refugee camp north of Jerusalem, Israeli forces shot dead 16-year-old Walid Abu Sneineh and wounded two other children in the legs. CCTV from Qalandiya showed a Border Police officer hurling a stun grenade into a car of young Palestinians, all of whom survived, then firing his rifle as they fled. Police opened an investigation, saying the officer had not acted "in accordance with procedure."

In brief:

- The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention branded Israel's 18-month detention of Kamal Adwan hospital director Hussam Abu Safiya arbitrary and demanded his release, as his lawyer found him near-unrecognizable from injuries in Rakefet prison.
- Netanyahu insisted there will be "no reconstruction in Gaza without the disarmament of Hamas," as Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar dismissed Hamas's governance handover as a "Hezbollah model" designed to preserve its arms.
- A UN humanitarian delegation visited the UAE field hospital in Gaza to coordinate aid, as extreme summer heat deepened the ordeal of displaced families in Khan Younis tents without electricity or reliable water.

KEY REGIONAL EVENTS

Yemen

- Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree threatened a comprehensive response against Saudi airports and vital interests on land and sea if Riyadh again violates Yemeni airspace, after Sanaa claimed it repelled a Saudi bid to block an Iranian civilian flight. The delegation sent to Tehran for Khamenei's funeral declared that flight the first breach of the Saudi-led blockade and threatened renewed war, its passengers drawn largely from the movement's media and information-operations network, not the wounded civilians it advertised. Houthi-linked accounts amplified threats against Aramco by recirculating Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman's account of the 2019 Abqaiq strike that erased half of Saudi oil output in 20 minutes.
- Yemen's Chief of the General Staff Aziz Sagheir ordered every military branch to its highest readiness after government forces repelled a Houthi assault on Jabal Dabbas south of Hodeidah. The ridge commands the N2 highway linking Hodeidah port to the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and the Houthis' failed push to seize it aimed at fire control over Hays. The Houthis pressed a whole-of-society mobilization into its 79th day. Marib's Murad and Bani Abd tribes declared general mobilization and thanked Iran for the Sanaa flight they cast as breaking the Saudi blockade. Sanaa rallies awaited orders under an 'airport for airport, port for port' formula.

In brief:

- Southern Transitional Council supporters called a mass demonstration in Aden for July 7, the 1994 civil-war anniversary, as Saudi Arabia took over the western-coast task force from departed UAE forces under Brigadier General Sa'd al-Qahtani.

- The UAE launched Al Selmiyyah, a defense free zone to build sovereign arms production after this year's drone and missile campaigns, and gave \$30 million in emergency aid for Sudan's El Obeid.
- Iraq moved to reopen a Syrian land route for oil exports, trucking Basra crude to Banyas to bypass Strait of Hormuz risks, as a corruption probe seized a further \$20 million stuffed in water bottles.
- Iraqi President Nizar Amidi said Baghdad seeks its strongest possible strategic ties with Saudi Arabia, calling Gulf security inseparable from Iraq's, while Saudi and Jordanian foreign ministers discussed regional developments by phone.

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- Trump arrived in Ankara for the two-day NATO summit, telling reporters "We don't need their money, we don't need anything, I just want loyalty" after singling out Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain for refusing to let US forces use their bases against Iran. Secretary-General Mark Rutte staged a defense-industry forum unveiling tens of billions in contracts, including a replacement for NATO's aging surveillance fleet. He pitched European spending near 4 percent of GDP to a president who branded the alliance a "paper tiger." Erdogan hosts the 32 leaders at his Bestepe compound, theme "NATO 3.0." Trump's attacks on Giorgia Meloni backfired. European leaders closed ranks around her.
- Russia struck Kyiv apartment buildings for the second time in a week, killing at least 24 on the summit's eve. It fired 68 missiles and 351 drones into residential districts including Podilsky, where a block was cratered and split in two, days after a strike that killed more than 30. Zelensky pleaded for the alliance to supply air defenses against ballistic missiles Ukraine cannot intercept, and expects "decisions" at Ankara. Ukrainian FP-1 drones hit the Gazprom Neft refinery at Omsk in Siberia, roughly 2,700 kilometers away and one of Kyiv's deepest strikes. The plant processed some 460,000 barrels a day. Putin dismissed the mounting refinery losses as "not critical" and refused any ceasefire. Trump, after an 85-minute Fourth of July call with Putin and a "good call" with Zelensky, said a resolution is "getting closer than people realize." The Kremlin's Dmitry Peskov insisted the US position was unchanged.

In brief:

- The Rapid Support Forces' siege has plunged El Obeid, the army-held North Kordofan capital where 500,000 civilians are trapped, into total blackout. RSF assaults near the Chad border razed North Darfur villages and displaced over 3,500 from Wadi Fungo alone, raising fears of an El Fasher-style atrocity.
- China test-fired a submarine-launched strategic missile carrying a dummy warhead into the Pacific, drawing US State Department alarm over Beijing's "rapid and opaque" nuclear buildup and demands it commit to launch pre-notification.
- Morocco's Central Bureau of Judicial Investigations arrested 10 suspects, including a minor, tied to Islamic State in the Sahel, seizing chemicals and a fuel-tank-modified vehicle in Inezgane prepared for a suicide bombing or car-ramming attack.
- Britain sanctioned seven Russian scientists and two research labs behind the Novichok used in the 2018 Salisbury attack and the agent that fatally poisoned opposition figure Alexei Navalny in 2024.

MARKETS

- The IRGC fired at least two missiles at commercial ships crossing the Strait of Hormuz Monday night, damaging two vessels tied to two different Gulf Arab states, without casualties. Early Tuesday a tanker caught fire after a projectile hit its port side 8 nautical miles (15 km) east of Limah, Oman, prompting a UKMTO attack warning. Stranded crude kept flowing out regardless. A fleet of 10 Japan-linked vessels exited Monday, and two more Japan-owned supertankers carrying four million barrels of Saudi crude followed Tuesday. That lifted the week's Japan-linked outflow to 16 million barrels as US refueling tankers operated overhead.

In brief:

- Brent rose 0.5% to \$72.37 and WTI 0.4% to \$68.85 as focus shifted to supply gains (UAE output near record, OPEC+ August hike), while Gulf bourses closed higher and Asian markets stayed mixed.
- A Britain- and France-led multinational naval mission, working with Oman, is expected to reach the Strait of Hormuz within days to clear mines and reopen shipping, with Germany insisting Iran foot the clearance bill.

ISSUED BY: Core Group — OSINT Unit

LIMITED DISTRIBUTION

C O R E G R O U P