

DAILY BRIEFING

The Dispatch

DATE: 24 June 2026 ISSUED BY: Core Group — OSINT Unit
ANALYSIS LEVEL: Operational, Level 2 CLASSIFICATION: **Limited Distribution**

MAIN STORY: US-IRAN WAR DEAL ENTERS ITS TECHNICAL PHASE AFTER FIRST SWISS TALKS

- Iran and the United States concluded the first round of technical talks at the Swiss resort of Bürgenstock, mediated by Qatar and Pakistan, and agreed to stand up four joint working groups covering Sanctions Termination, Nuclear Affairs, Reconstruction and Economic Development, and Monitoring and Implementation. Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, who led Iran's technical team, said the round fixed the implementation mechanics of the June 17 Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding signed virtually by the two presidents, and that the next phase runs under a high-level committee pairing top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi with Vice President JD Vance. A 60-day clock now governs the push for a permanent accord meant to end more than three months of war.
- Ghalibaf confirmed an agreement to release \$12 billion in frozen Iranian assets in two \$6 billion tranches, the first slice of roughly \$100 billion locked under four decades of sanctions, and the Treasury waived sanctions on Iranian crude, petrochemicals, and petroleum products through August 21. Trump cast the money as a payday for American farmers, writing that the funds would move into escrow controlled by Washington and be spent exclusively on US food and medical supplies, naming corn, wheat, and soybeans. Central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati flatly denied any such obligation, saying the released \$12 billion is earmarked for essential goods and medicine but that no signed memorandum requires purchases from the United States, and that Iran would buy American only where price and quality compete.
- Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told the National Assembly the next 60 days will take up the nuclear file, frozen assets, and Iran's ballistic missile program, framing the round as historic progress toward a lasting agreement. Trump, at a Tuesday news conference, said he seeks a fair agreement, that relations with Tehran are good, and that Iran will never possess a nuclear weapon, claiming its economy had collapsed and its defenses were destroyed. The stated agenda exposes the gap the working groups must close, because Tehran already rejects two of the items Washington and Islamabad list as open.
- The sharpest dispute is over inspections of the nuclear sites US and Israeli strikes destroyed. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei ruled out granting International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors access to the bombed facilities, said Iran held no meeting with Director General Rafael Grossi in Switzerland and has none planned, and declared Iran's missile and defensive capabilities entirely off the negotiating table. That contradicts Vance, who had called Iran's agreement to readmit inspectors a major milestone and said IAEA discussions could begin within a day.

Trump went further, posting that Iran had “fully and completely agreed” to the “highest level” inspections “long into the future (Infinity!!!),” dismissing Tehran’s denials and warning there would be no further negotiations if it blocked access. He said Washington would keep warships in the Strait of Hormuz in case a blockade of Iranian ports has to be reimposed, calling that prospect highly unlikely.

- The US Senate approved a war powers resolution 50-48 to pause the military campaign against Iran, the first time the chamber has passed such a measure and a rare rebuke of a sitting president over an active war. Four Republicans, Lisa Murkowski, Susan Collins, Rand Paul, and Bill Cassidy, joined nearly all Democrats, while Democrat John Fetterman crossed the other way. It was the tenth attempt to halt the war and the first to succeed, following House passage earlier this month. The measure is largely symbolic and does not carry the full force of law, but for the first time it asserts that Trump must obtain congressional approval before further strikes, and it tracks broad public opposition to the war.
- The Pentagon told senators it needs roughly \$80 billion to cover the war, about \$20 billion of it tied directly to combat needs, part of a White House defense request of \$1.5 trillion that runs nearly 50 percent above current levels. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has worked Capitol Hill as lawmakers signal skepticism toward both the funding and the deal, and Majority Leader John Thune said he expects a formal supplemental request before counting votes. The war’s cost reached an estimated \$40 billion, munitions the largest line at about \$26 billion, including roughly 1,000 long-range missiles such as \$2.5 million Tomahawks, with the first 100 hours alone running \$3.7 billion. Two US carriers remain operational in the region, the USS George H.W. Bush sailing the Arabian Sea, preserving the option of renewed action even as the diplomacy proceeds.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

The deal has moved from declaration to plumbing, but its two load-bearing claims, that Iran will admit inspectors and that its released money must buy American grain, are precisely the points Tehran publicly rejects, leaving Trump’s framing running ahead of any signed text. The four working groups give the 60-day window a structure, yet the nuclear and missile files sit in the gap between what Washington and Islamabad list as negotiable and what Iran declares closed. The Senate’s first successful war powers vote and the Pentagon’s \$80 billion ask signal that domestic constraints, not just Iranian intransigence, now bound the administration’s room to coerce. The next observable is whether IAEA inspectors actually reach Iranian soil inside the 60 days, since their arrival or continued exclusion will settle which side’s account of the inspection commitment holds. A collapse, which Trump has tied explicitly to inspection access, would surface first as the lapse of the August 21 sanctions waiver rather than as any new strike.

IRAN

C O R E G R O U P

- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian landed in Islamabad on Tuesday, his first trip abroad since the 28 February US-Israeli strikes on Iran, for talks with the government that mediated the Switzerland round. President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar received him at a military base under heavy security, with a Pakistani Air Force F-16 escort, and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi traveled with the delegation. The agenda spanned trade,

energy, border security, and regional connectivity. Sharif said at the talks that Iran's ballistic-missile program was neither discussed nor ever part of the negotiations, and Pezeshkian held that without its missiles Iran would be "just like Gaza."

- Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Ali Bahreini, said Iran alone will decide how the unfrozen funds are used and dismissed any US or Qatari role in overseeing them, contradicting JD Vance's claim that Washington and Doha would hold approval over the money. The Monday Treasury license authorizing Iranian crude and petroleum sales through 21 August is the first time Washington has permitted such trade since the measures imposed after the 1979 revolution, and the initial sums are a fraction of what a final accord could unlock through fuller sanctions relief and reconstruction financing. Unwinding more than four decades of layered US, UN, and EU sanctions will be neither quick nor clean, because some restrictions are written into US law and require Congress to amend them, and banks and firms are expected to stay wary of re-entering the Iranian market for fear of residual exposure.
- Iran and Oman moved to jointly administer the Strait of Hormuz. In a joint statement in Muscat after parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and Omani Foreign Minister Badr Al Busaidi, the two coastal states asserted sovereignty over their territorial waters and agreed to form a foreign-ministry working group to set the future management of navigation and the transit service costs to be charged, consulting other Gulf littoral states. Ghalibaf set Tehran's marker: "The Strait of Hormuz will never return to its pre-war conditions and will be administered by the Islamic Republic of Iran, in accordance with international law," and announced Iran would establish a communication line to guarantee safe passage. Washington rejected any fee regime, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, opening a Gulf tour in the UAE, calling Hormuz an international waterway on which no state may levy tolls and Trump demanding an unconditional reopening. The strait, largely shut since the war began on 28 February, had reopened after last week's accord before Tehran reclosed it on Saturday over Israeli strikes in Lebanon. Oman, coordinating with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), opened a temporary transit corridor that deems the existing traffic-separation scheme unsafe, grouping vessels, holding them at a designated waiting area, assigning individual routing, and requiring active AIS, with no tolls charged. The IMO began a phased evacuation of more than 11,000 sailors stranded since the closure, with roughly 600 vessels still trapped and 14 crew killed during the conflict.
- Iran's ambassador warned that Tehran would respond to any Israeli attack in Lebanon, a marker that Iran retains a deterrent interest in Hezbollah as the broader war winds down. In parallel, Iran and the United States are working to establish a coordination mechanism in Switzerland intended to prevent friction in Lebanon.
- Inside Iran, the war's economic and social toll is deepening, away from the clean-victory framing in Washington. In Sistan-Baluchestan, Baloch women and families report mounting forced disappearances, unfair trials, and resource dispossession, with mining projects draining scarce water in a strategically located but long-marginalized border province.

C O R E G R O U P

ISRAEL

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pressed Israel to end its reliance on Washington, telling reserve combat officers at Kibbutz Migdal Oz in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc on June 18 that the

country must "break free from dependency and build our own independent armaments network." He cast the fight against Iran and its proxies as unfinished and tied Israel's standing 30 years out to domestic weapons production. Israel has drawn more than \$300 billion in US aid since 1948 and currently receives about \$3.8 billion a year in weapons financing under a 2016 deal running to 2028, roughly 15 percent of its defense budget. Former prime minister Naftali Bennett, now heading the Together list against Netanyahu, warned at a Jerusalem policy summit that "Brand Israel" is for the first time since 1948 viewed negatively by many Americans and that a nation cannot anchor strategy to a single sympathetic president. The strain runs both ways: a written political-echelon order now bars Israeli forces from acting in Beirut and Tyre while permitting operations inside the yellow line, with Washington's message that "you had permission to operate without restrictions, and that period is over." Israel signaled through its Washington ambassador it would not yield to dictates on removing troops while Hezbollah remains a threat, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said Israel is "not a party" to the US-Iran talks, refused "talks with the devil," and vowed continued full operations in Lebanon. US ambassador Mike Huckabee cited an "unbreakable bond" while conceding an "enormous level of anxiety about the relationship."

- Naftali Bennett acknowledged that during his 2021 to 2022 premiership Israel began acquiring and smuggling tens of thousands of Starlink receivers into Iran to sustain internet and social-media access for anti-government protesters and help topple the leadership. He said Netanyahu's government abandoned the program, leaving the infrastructure absent when unrest later broke out. Starlink, the SpaceX satellite-internet service, is not licensed to operate in Iran.
- Lebanon and Israel opened a fifth round of direct, US-mediated negotiations at the State Department in Washington on Tuesday, the first since the US-Iran memorandum, with political and security tracks running through Thursday under Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz. A partial Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon was on the table under a pilot framework in which Israeli forces would vacate areas judged to pose no immediate threat and hand them to the Lebanese army. The Israeli side said the army "captured territory in recent days for the purpose of negotiations, to then withdraw from them," with positions that "do not allow for direct fire towards Israeli territory" the candidates for handover. Ambassador to Washington Yechiel Leiter publicly attacked the administration for folding the Lebanon ceasefire into the US-Iran deal, calling the linkage "a train wreck." A joint statement by Netanyahu, Katz and the military chief vowed the army would keep neutralizing threats, demolishing militant infrastructure and holding the security zone, and Smotrich ruled out any pullback from that zone, including Beaufort Castle, until Hezbollah is fully dismantled rather than merely disarmed. Israel also demanded resolution of the case of airman Ron Arad, missing since 1986, as a condition in any exchange of the Lebanese prisoners it holds.
- Netanyahu used the final re-examination phase of his corruption trial at the Tel Aviv District Court to again cast his ties to businessman Arnon Milchan in the Case 1000 gifts affair as friendship rather than favor-trading, branding the proceedings "one huge witch hunt." Ultra-Orthodox protesters in Beit Shemesh blocked roads, set dumpsters alight and damaged a police vehicle over the indictment of a resident accused of arson near a police station. Police arrested former Hadash chairman and ex-MK Mohammad Barakeh on suspicion of incitement to terrorism over a 2022 rally speech, and a court barred him from the West Bank for 30 days.
- A report on the June 2025 war with Iran found that many of the roughly 150,000 migrant workers then in Israel lacked reliable shelter access during the fighting, with protection uneven across agriculture, construction and live-in care. Among Thai agricultural workers surveyed, only 32 percent had full access to a protected space at both home and work within the required warning time.

- National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir drew a sharp European Union condemnation over a post declaring that “all of Lebanon must burn” and that “for every tear of an Israeli mother, a thousand Lebanese mothers must weep.” A European Commission spokesman called the rhetoric unacceptable “in the strongest possible terms,” and foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said several member states back sanctioning Ben-Gvir, though the bloc has reached no consensus.
- An Israeli assessment based on a tour of an underground Hezbollah drone facility in Lebanon concluded the site had placed all of Israel within range, sharpening the military’s frustration with what it describes as a porous ceasefire.

LEBANON

- Israeli machine-gun fire killed two young men and wounded a third on Tuesday in Nabatieh al-Fawqa, where they stood beside an excavator and an Islamic Health Committee crew clearing roads and recovering bodies in the Deir neighborhood, the first deaths from Israeli fire in three days and the first serious test of the ceasefire that had held since Sunday. The Israeli military said it targeted Hezbollah fighters posing an immediate threat to troops on the Ali al-Taher ridge, inside the roughly 10-kilometer-deep “security zone” it has declared in the south, while Hezbollah said the dead were civilians and called the killing a “blatant violation” of a truce it has so far observed, without saying whether it would respond. Hours later, soldiers fired warning shots then live rounds at four men who entered the zone on a bulldozer and a motorcycle, claiming hits and alleging the fighters had disguised themselves as civilians near a tunnel. Israeli forces also fired on mourners escorted by the Lebanese army at a burial near Hadatha, where Merkava tanks were positioned, struck Kfartebnit near the declared yellow line in the first strike there since Saturday, threw stun grenades across three southern towns, and flew drones over Tyre and Beirut’s southern suburbs, while tanks pushed toward Beit Yahoun in Bint Jbeil from the Kounine side amid heavy gunfire. The Lebanese army entered Ain Arab, removed Israeli-built earthen berms to reopen the Ain Arab-al-Mari road, and prepared to move into the Wazzani area. An Israeli divisional investigation concluded Hezbollah has rebuilt an observation and intelligence network across the yellow line and is using night-time detection of radio activity to locate and kill senior field commanders, tying the method to the deaths of the 52nd Battalion commander and three tank crew, the killing of the deputy commander of the 36th Division by a roadside bomb, the serious wounding of the former 401st Brigade commander in a drone strike, and a drone that struck Northern Command Major-General Rafi Milo’s car minutes after he stepped out.
- Lebanon’s cumulative toll from the Israeli offensive reached 4,192 killed and 12,171 wounded since the campaign began on 2 March. A joint UN Development Programme and National Council for Scientific Research assessment put direct building damage south of the Litani at more than \$1.38 billion, with roughly 3.1 million cubic meters of rubble and 11,095 buildings completely destroyed across the Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Nabatieh, Tyre and Sidon districts, derived from satellite imagery compared between October 2025 and April 2026. Displacement tracking recorded 844,243 internally displaced people as of 17 June, with 372,590 already returning to their communities. The humanitarian picture stayed fragile, with a 31 May airstrike destroying one of the few still-functioning primary healthcare centers and women’s safe spaces in the south and a revised \$25 million flash appeal seeking to cover 450,000 people through August. Municipalities in Burj Rahhal and Bazouriyeh warned that internationally banned cluster munitions shaped and colored like small children’s play balls are scattered across southern villages and orchards, urging families to

keep children away from any spherical object and to report finds to the army.

- President Joseph Aoun rejected both the Israeli occupation of the south and foreign interference in Lebanese affairs, a pointed allusion to Iran, telling the army command he would accept nothing less than a complete Israeli withdrawal and the fall of all foreign tutelage. Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem demanded the withdrawal follow a fixed timetable, insisting Israel leave every inch of Lebanese territory and that the Lebanese army then deploy alone south of the Litani. In a separate Ashura address Qassem assailed those who stood "alongside the Israeli entity" against Hezbollah during the war and called for a national accord, even as the government held to its 2 March designation of the group's weapons as illegal. Hezbollah, claiming victory in both the war and the US-Iran understanding, signaled it might press for a cabinet reshuffle in its favor, though the broadly backed Salam government leaves it little room. Speaker Nabih Berry and Hezbollah rejected the Israeli-proposed, US-backed "pilot zones," staged areas south of the Litani from which Israeli forces would withdraw to let the Lebanese army deploy and clear Hezbollah infrastructure, viewing the plan as handing Israel through negotiation what it failed to take by force. JD Vance, replying to a written appeal from Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea to separate the Lebanese track from the US-Iran talks, said Washington recognizes Aoun and his government as Lebanon's sole legitimate authority and that its contacts with Tehran aim only to pressure Iran into making Hezbollah honor its commitments, not to give Tehran any role in Lebanon's future.
- President Joseph Aoun and French President Emmanuel Macron discussed by phone the shape of an international force to succeed UNIFIL, whose mandate winds down at the end of 2026 with withdrawal beginning in early 2027. Several European states, with Lebanese backing, want to keep a troop presence in the operations area, and Macron said he would canvass governments on their readiness to take part. The French plan envisions a force of 2,000 to 5,500 personnel built with European partners alongside an alternative delegation mechanism. Separately, Army Commander Rodolphe Haykal and the Dutch Chief of Defence toured a frontline post of the Third Land Border Regiment.

SYRIA

- Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa publicly ruled out sending troops into Lebanon to fight Hezbollah, answering Donald Trump's renewed push for Damascus to take on the group. In a Sunday interview, al-Sharaa said that if Syria wanted to deploy soldiers to Lebanon it would have the courage to say so openly, and that Damascus would not revive the old regime's 1990-2005 tutelage over the country. He acknowledged pressure from multiple parties for a renewed Syrian presence but insisted the solution to Lebanon's problems runs through Damascus rather than Tehran.
- Al-Sharaa met Chevron corporate development chief Frank Mount in Damascus to advance Syria's first deep-water gas project, with the US firm set to begin offshore exploration this summer across five blocks running from Tartus to Latakia. The Syrian Petroleum Company, which signed a memorandum with Chevron and Power International Holding in February before Chevron committed to offshore work in April, is moving to convert the Block 1 exploration memorandum into an executive contract and is courting Chevron as a strategic partner in the Kirkuk-Baniyas oil transit line. Any commercial gas find is three to four years out. The company separately signed a deal with US majors ConocoPhillips and Novaterra Energy to develop several gas fields and lift supply to

power plants and industry. The moves anchor Damascus's drive to draw foreign investment and rebuild an energy sector wrecked by the 2011-2024 war, after Saudi and Qatari crude and LNG shipments propped it up following Assad's fall.

- UN Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Claudio Cordone warned the Security Council that secessionist calls in the southern Sweida province threaten Syria's unity and territorial integrity, pressing all sides toward dialogue and cautioning that persistent hate speech endangers post-war social cohesion. He tied UN backing to Syria's transitional-justice track, citing the ongoing trial of Atef Najib. Arab foreign ministers meeting in Amman for the Arab League's resumed 165th ministerial session reaffirmed collective support for Syria's reconstruction and rejected Israeli strikes on its territory, with Jordan's Ayman Safadi casting the message as Arab states standing behind Damascus's stability and sovereignty. SDF commander Mazloum Abdi toured Europe without Damascus's coordination to shore up Kurdish standing in Hasakah after losing ground east of the Euphrates, a trip Syrian officials disavowed and that secured no French or European commitment of political or humanitarian support.
- Ankara's 9th High Criminal Court released its full reasoning for convicting three defendants over the May 2013 twin car bombings in Reyhanlı that killed 53 people, formally attributing the attack to intelligence elements tied to the Bashar Assad regime and executed by members of the THKP-C/Acilciler group that had coordinated with pro-Assad militias in Latakia.

PALESTINE

- The IDF has extended operational control to roughly 70 percent of Gaza, a share defense officials expect to grow, with Southern Command chief Maj.-Gen. Yaniv Asor running three parallel tracks: managing threats along the Yellow Line, expanding defensive infrastructure westward, and preparing a possible future campaign against Hamas while shaping Rafah under the US-backed "green city" plan. AMAN and the Shin Bet run daily target assessments and maintain a kill list of those tied to the October 7 attack, with officials casting the buildup as a hedge against a Hamas they accuse of stalling disarmament and rearming for renewed war. Strikes continued under the truce, killing four and wounding 20 in 24 hours plus one more in a drone strike on a tent in Khan Younis's Mawasi, bringing the toll since the October ceasefire to 1,028 dead and 3,280 wounded, atop a total of 73,039 killed since October 2023. Outside Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, families of the dead and rights groups rallied to demand the ceasefire be enforced and civilians protected, with Hamas charging Israel with systematic breaches through closed crossings and aid restrictions.
- A UN independent international commission of inquiry concluded that Israel is deliberately targeting Palestinian children in Gaza, amounting to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, with war crimes also in the West Bank. Roughly 30 percent of those killed in Gaza since October 2023 have been children, and the commission documented strikes on maternity and neonatal units, an aid blockade, destroyed orphanages and schools, and children arbitrarily detained, tortured, and sexually abused. The killings continued after the October 2025 ceasefire, with UNICEF counting more than 50,000 children killed or wounded and at least one child killed on average each day in the eight months since. The commission's September report had already found genocide and named Netanyahu, separately wanted by the ICC, as inciting it. Israel rejected the findings as a "libellous sham."

- Gaza ceasefire talks in Cairo hit their central obstacle over disarmament, with Board of Peace high representative Nickolay Mladenov demanding that “not a single bullet” remain in Gaza: full Hamas disarmament, surrender of tunnel maps, and even privately held family firearms. The fight centers on Clause 8 of the October 2025 plan, which sets disarmament terms, post-war control of military infrastructure, and transfer of security to a unified Palestinian body. Factions offered to warehouse heavy weapons but cast the total-disarmament demand as carrying Israel's maximalist terms. Separately, senior Hamas political bureau officials held a secret meeting with a French delegation of current and former diplomats and parliamentarians, the first such contact since October 7, in an undisclosed regional country. A four-officer Moroccan contingent arrived in southern Israel on June 18 to join the International Stabilization Force, making Morocco the first Arab state to publicly commit personnel.
- Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich declared the 1997 Hebron Agreement “cancelled,” stripping the Palestinian municipality of planning authority over the Old City and the Ibrahimi Mosque, the loudest step in what Israeli officials openly describe as annexation by decree in the West Bank and “creeping” annexation in Gaza after Washington blocked a new ground offensive. Smotrich also allocated 3 million shekels for a project by far-right Knesset member Zvi Sukkot to convert the Fasayel Pools archaeological site in the occupied Jordan Valley into a settler tourist resort, the same week settlers stormed the Sebastia archaeological site near Nablus. Extremist settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa compound through Bab Al-Maghariba under Israeli protection and performed Talmudic rituals, as forces arrested 26 Palestinians, restricted worshippers, and seized ID cards. Israeli forces entered a seventh day of land-levelling on a seven-dunam plot in Jenin's Al-Jabriyat neighbourhood, inside PA-controlled Area A, to build a military camp overlooking the Jenin refugee camp, where an operation running since January has displaced about 21,000 people and destroyed nearly half the camp's buildings. An Israeli strike on the Bureij refugee camp killed Al Jazeera cameraman Ahmed Wishah, the 12th network staffer killed since October 2023.

KEY REGIONAL EVENTS

Gulf states

- Rubio landed in Abu Dhabi late Tuesday to open a three-day Gulf tour (UAE, then Kuwait and Bahrain) aimed at selling the US-Iran memorandum to monarchies that judge its terms too generous to Tehran, chiefly the proposed \$300 billion reconstruction fund and the absence of any limit on Iran's ballistic missiles. He cast the Switzerland talks as groundwork requiring further consultation on allied security and will meet Gulf Cooperation Council officials in Bahrain. Arab foreign ministers in Amman endorsed the agreement, with Jordan's Ayman Safadi backing the Swiss negotiating track toward a comprehensive settlement, and Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan and Qatari counterpart Mohammed bin Abdulrahman pressed by phone for the talks to continue. Israel's ambassador to the UAE, Yossi Shelley, said Iran's roughly 3,000 missiles and drones fired at the Emirates during the war deepened Israeli-Gulf security cooperation under the Abraham Accords rather than splitting the two as Tehran had intended.

Qatar

- An explosion and fire tore through the Barzan gas facility at the Ras Laffan LNG complex on Sunday evening, killing 13 and injuring 66 at Qatar's principal liquefied natural gas processing site.

QatarEnergy attributed the blast to an operational incident during start-up and said export capacity was unaffected with no environmental risk. Emir Tamim bin Hamad received condolences from UAE president Sheikh Mohamed and from Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Turkey

- Security forces detained 209 people in raids across Ankara on Tuesday, executing 241 detention orders ahead of the July 7-8 NATO summit that Trump is expected to attend. Those held included alleged Islamic State militants and members of the far-left DHKP-C. Authorities banned all demonstrations from June 28 through the summit and are sealing roads to airports and the venue, a month after a nationwide sweep took in 324 Islamic State suspects.

Yemen

- The Houthi-controlled Government of Change and Construction and the Sana'a parliament both endorsed Abdulmalik al-Houthi's newly announced roadmap "to regain sovereignty and break the blockade," granting him "full and unrestricted authority" to pursue all options against what they cast as a Saudi-led coalition operating "under American supervision and Saudi execution," and reaffirming the aims of ending the war, lifting the blockade, and expelling foreign forces. The mobilization drive comes against reported food shortages and mounting hunger in Houthi-held areas.

KEY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

- US President Donald Trump branded the New York Times's Iran-war coverage "treasonous" and threatened to fold the paper's reporting into his multi-billion-dollar lawsuit against it, reacting to a piece arguing the war changed little after nearly four months. Trump countered that it degraded Iran's military and leadership, reopened the Strait of Hormuz, and lifted US markets. The revolt inside his own coalition is widening: Tucker Carlson said he will not back the Republican Party in November's midterms, calling the war "immoral" and "treasonous" and waged at Israel's and donors' behest rather than for American voters. A poll that closed Monday found only one in four Americans think the war was worth its cost, 52 percent saw no need for it against 24 percent who judged it necessary, just 23 percent consider the US stronger versus Iran now against 35 percent who see it weaker, and 63 percent expect the truce to collapse. Trump's approval slid to 34 percent, tying the low of his second term. Conservative radio host Sid Rosenberg defended Trump's handling at an Israeli policy forum while rebuking JD Vance.
- Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told foreign envoys that Washington has dropped any pretense of being an "objective mediator" on Ukraine and is escalating sanctions pressure instead, with US-led talks frozen as Trump's attention stays on the Middle East. Overnight Russian strikes killed and wounded civilians across Sumy, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia, days after a Ukrainian strike on a missile-components plant in Voronezh killed five. Russia's worsening fuel crisis has reached Siberia as Ukrainian attacks degrade its energy infrastructure, and Putin warned that any strike launched from NATO territory would draw an inevitable Russian response.
- Taiwan launched five days of "Immediate Combat Readiness" drills, sending tanks of the Army's

269th Infantry Brigade onto streets and highways in Taoyuan to test rapid deployment against a sudden Chinese escalation, after a Chinese sortie of 23 aircraft and seven navy vessels toward the island over Sunday and Monday.

- North Korea's Kim Jong Un vowed to accelerate the country's military buildup at the close of a three-day Workers' Party meeting, citing US and South Korean modernization he said is pushing the peninsula "to the brink of a nuclear war." He said the program to arm the navy with nuclear weapons is on schedule, commissioned the 5,000-ton destroyer Choe Hyon, and laid out plans for 10,000-ton warships and two new surface combatants each year.
- EU defence commissioner Andrius Kubilius warned that Europe must be ready "soon" to replace key US weaponry, after Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth opened a six-month review of US force posture in Europe driven by anger over allies' response to the Iran war. Kubilius said failing to plug gaps in strategic enablers such as space-based intelligence would be an "open invitation" for Putin to test the continent, and put the cost of closing them at roughly 500 billion euros.
- Abelardo de la Espriella, a Trump-endorsed, pro-Israel political outsider, is poised to win Colombia's presidency, leading the runoff by about one point, near 251,000 votes, over Iván Cepeda with nearly all ballots counted. The lawyer and businessman campaigned on a hardline crime crackdown and on ending outgoing President Gustavo Petro's dialogue with armed groups, and Cepeda is contesting the result, which is unlikely to change.
- A Yale human rights investigator, Nathaniel Raymond, will tell a Commons committee that Britain withheld 2024 intelligence indicating Ethiopia was backing the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan's civil war, declining to go public under "significant private pressure" from the United Arab Emirates. Raymond alleges the UK valued Emirati relations over averting mass atrocities, including the RSF's massacre of tens of thousands at El Fasher. Ethiopia, whose role surfaced only this year, denies involvement.
- Another 11 migrant bodies washed ashore near Tobruk in eastern Libya, raising the recovered toll to 26 with dozens still missing from a boat carrying about 61 people that capsized last week. Libya's eastern, Haftar-aligned government in Benghazi barred entry to nationals of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia across all ports, exempting only diplomats and accredited education and medical workers. Amnesty International accused the EU of complicity in an intensified, month-long crackdown of mass arrests and expulsions across both halves of Libya, charging that Brussels' funding of the Libyan Coast Guard and new engagement with eastern factions underwrites the abuses.
- A sectarian attack killed 20 people in the Bokkos area of Plateau State in central Nigeria, where police fought off the assailants early Sunday before they fled. The state police commissioner ordered additional tactical units into the Middle Belt region, which has seen recurrent communal killings despite repeated security deployments.

MARKETS

C O R E G R O U P

- Crude swung two ways as traders tracked rising Strait of Hormuz transit. Prices fell more than 3 percent on Monday after Washington granted Iran a 60-day sanctions waiver running to August 21, then traded choppily on Tuesday, with Brent near \$76.81 to \$78.15 a barrel and US West Texas Intermediate around \$72.99 to \$74.19, a recovery attempt capped by persistent distrust between the two capitals. The flow signal drove the move: at least 36 commodity carriers crossed Hormuz

on Monday, the heaviest traffic since the war began but still only about a third of the peacetime rate of roughly 120 a day, including two crude tankers carrying just under 2 million barrels. Three stranded supertankers exited the strait on Tuesday, and seven empty Qatar-linked LNG tankers have entered the Gulf in recent weeks, an early sign Gulf gas shipping could resume if the corridor holds, though no broad return of empty LNG vessels has yet materialized. Saudi Arabia and the UAE kept routing 6 to 7 million barrels a day through pipelines that bypass the strait, more than before the war.

- Equities mostly slipped and gold held flat on caution over the Iran war after eight days of gains. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 dropped 3.6 percent and South Korea's Kospi tumbled 10 percent off record highs on a technology sell-off and tighter semiconductor scrutiny, while European indices fell roughly 1 to 1.6 percent and US futures pointed lower, with S&P 500 futures off 1.5 percent and Nasdaq futures down 2.6 percent. Chip makers led the rout, Micron and Intel each off more than 7 percent. Gold steadied at about \$4,191 an ounce, pressured by growing expectations the Federal Reserve raises rates in December.
- The war exposed Asia's energy dependence as an economic emergency. The Asian Development Bank projects 2026 regional GDP growth falling 0.7 percentage points and inflation rising to 5.2 percent if oil holds near \$96 a barrel for the year, and the World Bank cut its Southeast Asia growth outlook, after Hormuz was largely shut from late February. The Philippines declared a national energy emergency in March when fuel prices more than doubled, shifting government workers to a four-day week. Indian National Security Adviser Ajit Doval called a reopening of the strait a "highly welcome development" that would ease fertilizer, chemical, and commodity bottlenecks for import-reliant India, as UN experts warned of a compound shock from the war and looming El Niño conditions threatening regional food supplies.
- Saudi Arabia's economy staged a V-shaped recovery from the conflict shock even as the Riyadh bourse eased. Rima Bhatia of Gulf International Bank described a brief but sharp downturn during the US-Israel conflict with Iran followed by a fast purchasing managers' index snapback, underpinned by non-oil growth, rising private investment, and Vision 2030 reforms. The Tadawul All Share Index slipped 0.35 percent to close at 11,033.99 on turnover of SR4.03 billion (\$1.07 billion), with 215 listed stocks retreating against 42 advancers, and the parallel Nomu market fell 0.98 percent.
- Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Mexico seeks to restart oil shipments to Cuba soon, routing them through private firms rather than state-owned companies. The supply line collapsed after the US strike on Venezuela in January and a Trump tariff threat against any country selling oil to the island, leaving Cuba, which produces only 40 percent of its own petroleum, in deepening blackouts after a single 730,000-barrel Russian tanker delivery.