



Iran War Update: August 20–21, 2026

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President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a now-expired Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 17, outlining terms to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz over a 60-day period of further negotiations. However, on July 8, President Trump [declared](#) the MOU to be “over,” and both sides have resumed exchanging fire. JINSA continues to release regular updates about the conflict. The update below includes information since [JINSA's last update](#) as of August 21 at 11:00 am ET.

Iranian missiles and drones launched since July 7: **At least 424** (6 between August 12–14)

Brent Crude Oil Price: [\\$93.79 a barrel](#) as of 9:00 am ET ([day range](#): \$92.74–94.43)

1. Overview

- In a Truth Social post on August 19, President Trump [announced](#) the launch of “the MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY” against Iran. He described the measures as “an ECONOMIC D-DAY.”
 - » He added, “ANY country that allows its financial institutions, businesses, airports, or government entities to provide any type of lifeline to Iran will itself face TREMENDOUS Economic Consequences. Oil smuggling, swap lines, cash transfers, exchange houses, ship registries, front companies — It all needs to stop NOW.”
 - » President Trump stated, “we need all of our Allies to stand with the United States of America to isolate, and defeat, the Iran threat. These maniacs are on the ropes, and these HISTORIC MEASURES will cripple them and their ability to project terror worldwide.”
- On August 21, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian [stated](#), “It is better that we bring the war to an end now, as we are in a position of power and dignity.”
 - » His statement [follows](#) Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf’s declaration that “No matter how much military power we have, if people are hungry and we don’t have financial circulation, economic growth and domestic production, we will not endure.”
- In an interview with CNBC on August 20, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent [stated](#) that “If we are doing the maximum economic pressure, then that means that likely there will not be a large-scale kinetic restart.”
- On August 20, Israel [received](#) its second KC-46 refueling aircraft of the six it has ordered from the United States.
 - » Since 2018, JINSA has recommended the United States sell the KC-46 to Israel and expedite their transfer.

- On August 19, President Trump [told](#) reporters that “The blockade has been 100% successful.... We’re gonna see what happens. It’ll either be extremely good and oil prices are gonna drop like a rock or we’ll continue to do exactly what we’re doing.”
- On August 19, *Axios* [reported](#) that the U.S. military established a shipping corridor along the coast of Oman to transport oil out of the Strait of Hormuz, with U.S. officials stating that nearly 10 million barrels of oil are leaving the strait daily.

2. Diplomatic Engagement

Iran

- When asked whether the United States might resume talks with Iran, President Trump [stated](#) on August 19, “Maybe at some point, but right now the situation is so good.”

3. U.S., Israeli, and Arab Partner Operations

Iran

- In an interview with CNBC on August 20, Treasury Secretary Bessent [stated](#) that the U.S. plan for economic pressure on Iran “is a one-two punch. We have the blockade, and we are going to have the toughest sanctions in history.”
 - » He added that the United States will “collapse this regime.”
 - » Secretary Bessent said that the United States will be communicating to its allies that “You are either with us or against us.”
- On August 20, President Trump [said](#) in a radio interview with WABC Radio that Iran’s capacity to produce missiles and drones was “very low” compared to five months earlier, arguing that U.S. and Israeli operations had significantly degraded Tehran’s ability to replenish its arsenal.
 - » Trump also said Iran was “in bad shape,” citing high inflation, the collapse of its currency, and difficulties paying its military, and reiterated that Iran “cannot have a nuclear weapon.”
- On August 20, Iran’s state power company Tavanir [said](#) more than 2,000 points on the country’s electricity grid had been targeted since the Iran war began on February 28, damaging 4,500 megawatts of privately operated and 3,000 megawatts of state-run power generation capacity.
- In remarks to the press on August 19, President Trump [claimed](#) that the Strait of Hormuz will not be “as important as it was in the past,” noting the high number of alternative energy export pipelines being built to bypass the Strait.
- U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) [announced](#) that the George Washington Carrier Strike Group arrived in the Middle East on August 19.

Lebanon

- On August 21, the Israeli Air Force [carried out](#) a strike on a building in the Baraashit area of southern Lebanon, which lies in Israel’s buffer zone, after individuals crossed the ceasefire line and entered the suspicious facility.
- In a statement on August 20, the U.S. Treasury Department [announced](#) that Hezbollah was redesignated as a terrorist group.
 - » A State Department official [shared](#) that the new designation “specifies that Hezbollah is an Iranian proxy, not a stand-alone operation as implied by the previous designation.”
 - » The Treasury Department also announced sanctions against 10 individuals participating in a network that channeled cash to Hezbollah.

Strait of Hormuz

- On August 19, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that the U.S. Navy has helped protect more than 1,000 vessels traveling through the Strait of Hormuz, facilitating their transit via routes close to the Omani coast.
 - » A CNN article also [noted](#) that Iran is losing control of the Strait, noting that “More than 80% of liquids transits through the Strait of Hormuz over the past two weeks have taken the Omani route.”
 - » President of Lipow Oil Associates Andy Lipow also [highlighted](#) that several Gulf countries are chartering their Very Large Crude Oil Carriers (VLCC) to transfer oil to other tankers when they reach the Gulf of Oman, avoiding transfers in the Persian Gulf that risk Iranian interference.

Syria

- On August 19, new details emerged regarding Israel's August 18 strike on Syria's Abu al-Dubur Military Airport.
 - » Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) the strike followed unsuccessful Israeli warnings to Turkey against a military buildup in Syria, stating, “The message was conveyed but apparently they didn't hear it, so we made sure they understood it better.”
 - » Israel's *Channel 12* [reported](#) that the Trump administration increasingly viewed Israeli intelligence indicating a Turkish military buildup in Syria as credible.
 - » Reuters [reported](#) that Mossad Director Roman Gofman and Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani discussed Turkey's military presence in Syria during an August 14 phone call, four days before the Israeli strike.

Yemen

- On August 21, Yemen's internationally [recognized](#) government forces struck a Houthi command position amid intensifying fighting between the Iran-backed group and government-aligned forces across multiple fronts in the country.
- On August 20, *Al Arabiya* [reported](#), citing Yemeni military sources, that two Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) members and an Iraqi militia fighter linked to the IRGC were killed in clashes with Yemeni government forces. The location and timing of the clashes were not immediately clear.
 - » *Al Arabiya* also reported that a commander of the Houthis' Third Brigade of the “Fatah Brigades” was wounded in a drone strike.

4. Iranian and Proxy Operations

- On August 19, several U.S. government agencies [issued](#) a Cybersecurity Advisory to industrial control systems owners and operators, warning them of an active cyberthreat targeting Siemens S7 Series programmable logic controllers (PLC) connected to U.S. critical infrastructure, including water facilities.
 - » While the Advisory did not explicitly link the threat to Iranian cybercriminals, the warning follows several alleged [Iranian cyberattacks](#) targeting U.S. water facilities in late July.

Saudi Arabia

- On August 20, the Houthis [claimed](#) to have fired drones at an airport and an Aramco facility in the Saudi city of Najran.

Yemen

- On August 19, Agence-France Presse, citing several sources knowledgeable on the matter, [reported](#) that the Houthis plan to take control of Yemeni territory near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

5. Internal Iranian Dynamics

- On August 21, Iranian parliament member Qasem Ravanbakhsh [announced](#) that lawmakers have submitted a proposal that would eventually lead to Iran withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), adding that Iran's National Security Council Secretary "has also taken a position on" the issue.
- On August 21, oil-tracking firm TankerTrackers [posted](#) to X, writing, "The reason why we are not seeing many loadings anymore at Kharg is because Iran's crude oil production has (in recent months) dropped to a level just slightly north of its domestic refining/consumption."

6. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian and Proxy Officials

- On August 21, Hezbollah [responded](#) to new U.S. sanctions against the organization for its IRGC connections, releasing a statement that reads "All these unjust sanctions and classifications will not deter us from adhering to the path of resistance and the right of Lebanon and the Lebanese to defend their land, sovereignty and resources."
 - » Hezbollah added that "Our close and fraternal relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran is a relationship we cherish and are proud of."
- On August 20, Iran's Foreign Ministry [addressed](#) President Trump's "Economic D-day" threat, saying that Iranian civilians would bear the brunt of the sanctions and that the actions would amount to "economic terrorism."
- On August 20, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [stated](#) in a post on X that "The so-called 'Economic D-Day' is a diversion from America's own crisis: unprecedented debt & surging interest costs."
 - » He warned, "Doubling down on failed policies will only bring further defeat—and enmity of Iranians. U.S. economic terrorism threatens [the] global economy and sovereignty worldwide."
- On August 20, Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Ali Bahraini, [warned](#) of a potential space race, saying, "The development of US military and offensive space capabilities could push other countries to develop counter-capabilities and intensify the arms race in space."

7. International Response

- On August 20, Turkish Head of Communication Burhanettin Duran [said](#) Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is seeking to "undermine peace and stability in the region" and that Turkey "will not fall into the trap" set by Israel following the August 18 strike on Syria.
- On August 19, Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty [informed](#) *Al Arabiya* that Egyptian officials are in contact with Iran in hopes of decreasing regional tensions and encouraging diplomatic paths forward.
- On August 19, *Al-Monitor* [reported](#), citing regional officials, that Saudi Arabia was pressing Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi to arrest and punish leaders of Iran-backed militias responsible for attacks against the kingdom.

8. JINSA Resources

- Gen Charles Wald, USAF (ret.), VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), and VADM John W. Miller, USN (ret.), [“U.S. Must Reopen the Strait of Hormuz,”](#) *The Washington Times*, August 3, 2026
- Yoni Tobin, [Not Bottlenecks, But Strategic Opportunities: Making Room for More U.S. Refueling Tankers in Israel,](#) August 3, 2026
- Giran Ozcan, [While Washington Pauses, Tehran Targets the Kurds,](#) July 31, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe, [“Taking Out Iran’s Pickaxe Nuclear Site is Key — Here’s How Trump Can Do It,”](#) *The New York Post*, Friday, July 24
- Giran Ozcan, [The Iran War Through the Kurdish Lens,](#) July 24, 2026
- John Hannah, [“Trump’s Hands Are Tied in Hormuz. Here’s ‘Plan B.’”](#) *The Washington Examiner*, July 23, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, [Arsenal of Procrastination: The United States Must Expand Munitions Production, Not Merely Replenish,](#) July 21, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe, [“The Long, Dark Shadow of the Iran Nuclear Deal,”](#) *The Dispatch*, July 17, 2026

Estimated Casualties of Iran War Operations			JINSA
Country	Killed	Injured	Notes
United States	18	500+	1 missing; 10 seriously wounded; 100 wounded in July; 358+ returned to duty
Israel	67+	7,798+	Killed include 26 civilians and 41 troops killed fighting Hezbollah (40 soldiers, 1 contractor)
Iran	3,720+	26,580+	Includes 1,221+ military; Iran International reports 4,700+ security personnel killed
Azerbaijan	—	4	All civilians
Bahrain	3	46	Killed include a Moroccan contractor; injured include 5 Emirati soldiers
Iraq	127	Several	Includes 28 in Iraqi Kurdistan
Jordan	—	31+	
Kuwait	8	161+	Injured includes 90 soldiers
Lebanon	4,346	12,301	Figures do not distinguish Hezbollah operatives from civilians
Oman	3+	17+	
Qatar	7	23	Killed occurred in March 22 helicopter crash
Saudi Arabia	3	34	Killed include 1 Saudi national and 2 foreign nationals
Syria	4+	Several	
United Arab Emirates	12	230	
International Waters	16	Several	

Data compiled by JINSA from various sources.