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Travel Alerts Ahead of Likely Iranian Strikes on Israel

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Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: Medium

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitical

August 5, 2024

Scope Note: ZeroFox Intelligence is derived from a variety of sources, including—but not limited to—curated open-source accesses, vetted social media, proprietary data sources, and direct access to threat actors and groups through covert communication channels. Information relied upon to complete any report cannot always be independently verified. As such, ZeroFox applies rigorous analytic standards and tradecraft in accordance with best practices and includes caveat language and source citations to clearly identify the veracity of our Intelligence reporting and substantiate our assessments and recommendations. All sources used in this particular Intelligence product were **identified prior to 11:30 AM (EDT) on August 5, 2024**; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.

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› Key Findings

- Travel alerts have been issued across the Middle East ahead of a likely Iranian attack on Israel.¹ While Iran and Hezbollah are almost certain to retaliate for Israel's killing of two key Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, they will likely calibrate their retribution to avoid an all-out war, as they have done during previous escalation incidents in the nearly year-long war between Israel and Hamas.
- Like the April 2024 episode wherein both Iran and Israel launched direct attacks against each other, the negative economic, geopolitical, and supply chain effects will likely be muted as Iran has telegraphed its response.

| Details

On July 30, 2024, an Israeli airstrike killed Fuad Shukr in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Israeli officials claimed Shukr, a senior Hezbollah official, was responsible for an attack in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that killed 12 Israeli-Druze youths and wounded at least 40 others.² The following day, a bomb killed Hamas' political chief, Ismail Haniyeh, in Tehran. Haniyeh normally resides in Qatar but was in Tehran for the inauguration of new Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.³⁴ While no party has claimed responsibility for the

¹ [hXXps://www.naharnet\[.\]com/stories/en/307052-uk-govt-tells-british-nationals-in-lebanon-to-leave-now](https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/307052-uk-govt-tells-british-nationals-in-lebanon-to-leave-now)

² [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/cldy0zpyq77o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cldy0zpyq77o)

³ [hXXps://apnews\[.\]com/article/iran-hamas-israel-30968a7acb31cd8b259de9650014b779](https://apnews.com/article/iran-hamas-israel-30968a7acb31cd8b259de9650014b779)

⁴ *Ibid.*

attack, it is widely believed that Israel is behind it. In response, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei vowed there would be a “harsh” direct attack against Israel for killing a guest on his country’s soil. According to reports, this will be coordinated with Iran’s proxies in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq.⁵

On August 5, 2024, a spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry said, “The Islamic Republic does not want to escalate tensions but has the right, within the framework of international law, to punish Israel.”⁶ This underscores that Iran will likely retaliate, but they also want to avoid an all-out war between Iran and Israel.

- Haniyeh had evaded being killed for years while living in Qatar, which makes his death during a brief period in Iran deeply embarrassing for the Iranian government. Iran is very likely to retaliate directly against Israel; this will be the second time they have done so this year.⁷
- Normally, Iran uses proxies in Iran and Syria—as well as Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon—to target Israel. Such attacks give the Iranian government plausible deniability and, with some exceptions, generally do not reach a level that leads to an all-out war.

On April 13, 2024, Iran launched its first direct attack on Israel from Iranian territory (as opposed to those initiated by Iranian proxies in the region). The attack was almost certainly in response to an Israeli strike on an Iranian diplomatic facility that killed several senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials in Damascus on April 1, 2024.

- The strike included 170 Shahed-136/131 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles.⁸ Lebanese Hezbollah, the Houthi movement in Yemen, and Shi’a Iraqi

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[hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranians-mourn-hamas-leader-haniyehs-assassination-2024-08-01/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranians-mourn-hamas-leader-haniyehs-assassination-2024-08-01/)

⁶ [hXXps://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/307065-iran-says-has-legal-right-to-punish-israel-for-haniyeh-killing](https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/307065-iran-says-has-legal-right-to-punish-israel-for-haniyeh-killing)

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[hXXps://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/307068-report-blinken-tells-g7-iran-hezbollah-may-attack-israel-in-next-24-hours](https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/307068-report-blinken-tells-g7-iran-hezbollah-may-attack-israel-in-next-24-hours)

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[hXXps://www.usatoday.com/story/graphics/2024/04/15/us-israel-planes-missiles-iran-attack-maps/73316311007/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/graphics/2024/04/15/us-israel-planes-missiles-iran-attack-maps/73316311007/)

special groups participated in the attack as well. Iran also seized an Israeli-linked container ship in the Strait of Hormuz.⁹

- Ninety-nine percent of the missiles and drones launched were successfully intercepted by Israel and its allies before reaching their intended targets, and reporting indicates the incident caused no fatalities.

In that instance, Iran appeared not to have aimed at large civilian centers and also avoided attacking U.S. forces; it reportedly warned the United States of the strike through Turkey.¹⁰

| Supply Chains and Economic Impacts

It is likely energy prices will remain volatile for the coming weeks amid speculation over possible further retaliation by Israel. As of August 5, 2024, oil prices are at USD 73 a barrel—one of the lowest levels of 2024.¹¹ This is likely a reflection of the broad consensus that the war will not escalate. A broader conflict could see Iran close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil supply passes.¹²

- If Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz, there would be even more difficulty transporting oil by tanker ship in the Middle East, and its oil production would be further sanctioned, pushing prices up even further.¹³

The most significant impacts to supply chains will be for trade that passes through the Middle East. The region's trade is already constrained due to Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, which will be worsened with the United States and European Union nations urging citizens to evacuate and not to travel to Israel and Lebanon.¹⁴

⁹ [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/world-middle-east-68806508](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68806508)

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[hXXps://www.reuters\[.\]com/world/middle-east/iranian-notice-attack-may-have-dampened-escalation-risks-2024-04-14/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iranian-notice-attack-may-have-dampened-escalation-risks-2024-04-14/)

¹¹ [hXXps://www.cnbc\[.\]com/2024/08/05/crude-oil-prices-today.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2024/08/05/crude-oil-prices-today.html)

¹² [hXXps://www.eia\[.\]gov/todayinenergy/detail.php](https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php)

¹³ [hXXps://www.ft\[.\]com/content/b3faaef5-b68f-4a35-a54f-1305afda1483](https://www.ft.com/content/b3faaef5-b68f-4a35-a54f-1305afda1483)

¹⁴ [hXXps://www.naharnet\[.\]com/stories/en/307055-foreign-nationals-told-to-leave-lebanon-as-war-fears-surge](https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/307055-foreign-nationals-told-to-leave-lebanon-as-war-fears-surge)

- The airspace over a large portion of the Levant is closed to traffic, with numerous airlines adjusting and canceling routes in the region. Services at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport (TLV), Jordan's Queen Alia International Airport (AMM), and Lebanon's Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY) have been particularly affected.¹⁵ The possibility of a wider war threatens air freight, another already-costly alternative to sea shipping via the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

| Conclusion

The response from the Iranian government will likely remain limited and designed to avoid further escalation. However, as in April, Iran's expected retaliation will increase pressure on Israel to respond with "tit-for-tat" attacks that lead to a wider war. Back in April, the conflict between Israel and Iran reached its most dangerous point in decades, and the latest conflagration reiterates that the danger remains. Iran will likely continue to use proxies in Iran and Syria—as well as Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon—to target Israel. Attacks by them give the Iranian government plausible deniability and, with some exceptions, generally do not reach the level that would lead to an all-out war. ZeroFox recommends avoiding the wider Levant region for the foreseeable future.

¹⁵ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-and-uk-urge-citizens-to-leave-lebanon-on-any-ticket-available/>

| Appendix A: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Red

Sources may use

TLP:RED when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.

Amber

Sources may use

TLP:AMBER when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.

HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?

Recipients may NOT share

TLP:RED with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.

Recipients may ONLY share

TLP:AMBER information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm.

Note that

TLP:AMBER+STRICT restricts sharing to the organization only.

Green

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Sources may use

TLP:GREEN when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.

Clear

Sources may use

TLP:CLEAR when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.

HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?

Recipients may share

TLP:GREEN information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.

Recipients may share

TLP:CLEAR information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

Appendix B: ZeroFox Intelligence Probability Scale

All ZeroFox intelligence products leverage probabilistic assessment language in analytic judgments. Qualitative statements used in these judgments refer to associated probability ranges, which state the likelihood of occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns with how readers should interpret such terms.

Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain
1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%