



Update from Israel

May 7, 2026

Prepared by and sent from Jewish Federations of North America's Israel Office

- **An Israeli soldier fell in Lebanon at the end of last week in an attack by Hezbollah**
- **US and Iran seem to be edging towards an agreement to end the war.**
- **IDF announces major new purchases**

Iran

- **Diplomatic contacts between Washington and Tehran intensified in recent days** as the US seeks to extend the ceasefire and potentially end the war. President Donald Trump said publicly that talks with Iran were making "very good progress". He suggested an agreement could be finalized within days, while warning, once again, that US strikes would resume if negotiations failed. Iranian officials confirmed they were reviewing a US proposal but accused Washington of maintaining military pressure alongside diplomacy.
- On the military front, the **United States paused its naval escort operation** in the Strait of Hormuz after less than two days, citing "diplomatic momentum." Iran's Revolutionary Guard issued fresh warnings to commercial shipping, insisting vessels adhere to Iranian-approved transit routes and threatening action against ships that deviated.
- As tensions mounted, in parallel to new diplomatic efforts, Israeli officials said the **IDF remained on heightened alert** and had prepared additional operational targets in Iran should fighting resume. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir said Israel was closely coordinating with US forces and monitoring Iranian efforts to rebuild missile capabilities damaged earlier in the war. The IDF's Homefront Command has not, as yet, issued new directives or instructions to Israeli civilians.
- Yesterday, the **United Arab Emirates reported further attempted missile and drone strikes** launched from Iran, marking a second consecutive day of attacks affecting the country. Emirati authorities emphasized their coordination with international maritime and security partners. They refrained from public threats of retaliation, while Western officials warned that continued attacks on Gulf states could harden international positions against Iran. Israeli media says that some of the Iranian missiles directed at the UAE were intercepted by the IDF, and that others were shot down by Emirati defenses supplied to the country by Israel.

- In Israel, senior officials voiced concern that an emerging US-Iran understanding could restore shipping and ease economic pressure on Tehran **without meaningfully addressing** missile production or Iranian support for regional proxies, potentially constraining Israel's freedom of action.
- Earlier today, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said he recently **met with Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei**, marking the first public acknowledgment of a meeting with Khamenei since he was seriously wounded at the outset of the US-Israeli war on Iran. Khamenei has not appeared publicly or issued video statements since assuming the role following the death of his father in February. Pezeshkian said the meeting took place in a "humble and deeply cordial" atmosphere.

Lebanon

- IDF Sgt. Liem Ben Hamo, 19, was **killed in southern Lebanon** earlier in the week when a Hezbollah explosive drone struck his unit. One additional soldier was moderately wounded in the attack. Ben Hamo, from Herzliya, was a combat soldier in the Golani Brigade and is survived by his parents and two siblings.
- Despite the ceasefire, **fighting between Israel and Hezbollah continued** along the northern front, with sustained exchanges of rocket fire, drone launches, and Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon. Over the past several days, Hezbollah launched repeated rocket and explosive-drone attacks toward northern Israeli communities, triggering air-raid sirens across the Galilee, Upper Galilee, and Golan Heights. Several rockets and drones were intercepted by Israeli air defenses, while others landed in open areas; there were reports of light injuries, property damage, and sporadic fires. The IDF said rocket and drone fire continued to target both Israeli civilian areas and IDF forces operating near and across the border.
- The IDF said it was monitoring **Hezbollah launch patterns and adjusting civil defense alerts** accordingly, while emphasizing that most projectiles were intercepted or fell in open areas. Emergency services responded to isolated impact sites, reporting light injuries and damage to homes, vehicles, and infrastructure.
- The IDF Home Front Command announced that **warning times for incoming rockets and drones will be extended** in 49 communities across northern Israel, effective Thursday at 4:00 p.m., following an operational and technological review. In 46 communities, the alert time will increase from 30 to 45 seconds, and in three communities to 60 seconds, a move the IDF said is intended to improve civilian preparedness and protection amid continued fire from Lebanon.
- The IDF is grappling with a growing drone-defense dilemma: adversaries are launching cheap, low-flying drones that are difficult to detect and sometimes immune to electronic jamming, while Israel often has to respond with far more expensive interceptors or aircraft, creating an unfavorable cost and sustainability balance. Some commentators have noted that Israel faces a choice between absorbing risk by selectively engaging drones or spending heavily to intercept every threat, while longer-term technological fixes remain incomplete.
- Israeli officials said Hezbollah's continued attacks constituted **violations of ceasefire understandings** and accused the terror group of attempting to maintain pressure on Israel while rebuilding military capabilities. In public statements, IDF Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said Hezbollah had continued to rearm, operate from civilian areas, and launch attacks despite diplomatic efforts elsewhere in the region.
- In a major success, Israel carried out a targeted airstrike in Beirut's southern suburbs last night, killing one of its most important targets, the **commander of Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force**. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz said the Israeli Air Force struck Malek Ballout, the Radwan Force's operations commander, claiming that he was responsible for directing rocket fire at northern Israeli communities and attacks on IDF soldiers. The strike marked the first Israeli attack on the Lebanese capital since the ceasefire went into effect last month.
- The Israeli Air Force and ground forces carried out **ongoing strikes against Hezbollah** military infrastructure in southern Lebanon and deeper areas, including weapons storage

sites, command centers, and rocket launchers. In one 24-hour period, the IDF said it struck roughly two dozen Hezbollah targets, including buildings used for military purposes and launch sites involved in attacks on Israel. The military released [aerial footage](#) and photographs showing strikes on launchers, compounds, and tunnel infrastructure.

Ministry of Defense

- In a major development, Israel's Ministry of Defense also announced that it will **acquire two additional fighter squadrons**: a fourth squadron of F-35I stealth aircraft from Lockheed Martin and a second squadron of F-15IA aircraft from Boeing. The agreements, valued at around \$150 billion, included integration into the Israeli Air Force as well as long-term sustainment, spare parts, and logistics support. These purchases are intended to maintain Israel's air superiority for the long-term.
- Israel's Ministry of Defense announced that the first of six Boeing KC-46 **aerial refueling aircraft** ordered for the Israeli Air Force had completed its maiden flight in the United States. The aircraft, designated "Gideon," is expected to be delivered to Israel within about a month and will be fitted with Israeli systems tailored to IAF operational requirements. The new tanker was purchased as part of a broader, long-term force buildup program and will extend the operational range and endurance of Israeli combat aircraft.
- The Ministry also reported a **major expansion of Israel's "air and sea bridge,"** with two cargo ships and multiple aircraft delivering approximately 6,500 tons of US munitions and military equipment to Israel within 24 hours. The shipments arrived at the ports of Ashdod and Haifa and included air and ground munitions, military vehicles, and additional equipment that were rapidly transported to IDF bases nationwide. Since the launch of Operation Roaring Lion, Israel has received more than 115,600 tons of military equipment through 403 airlifts and 10 sealifts, with the air and sea bridge described as a central tool for maintaining readiness amid ongoing security challenges.

Other Developments

- Prime Minister Netanyahu met this week in Jerusalem with Board of Peace Director-General Nikolay Mladenov to discuss the **stalled Gaza talks**, with a focus on Hamas disarmament, humanitarian access, and next steps under the US-backed 20-Point plan. Israel is insisting on Hamas demilitarization; mediators are pushing for additional humanitarian easing as a bridge toward a post-Hamas governance framework led by an international mechanism rather than Hamas itself. The talks show few signs of progress.
- Israel's **high-tech sector showed signs of recovery** after more than two years of war-related disruption, with defense and cybersecurity firms driving investment and exports despite sustained manpower shortages from reserve duty call-ups. Industry data indicated that while many companies continued to operate with a significant share of employees serving as reservists, demand for technologies developed and tested during wartime offset earlier declines. Foreign investment activity picked up in early 2026; Israeli firms raised more private funding than the previous year, reinforcing the tech sector's central role as a growth engine for the broader economy.
- The Israeli **shekel continued to trade near multi-year highs** against the US dollar and other currencies, extending a strengthening trend seen since the start of 2026. Bank of Israel data showed the shekel appreciated further against the dollar, supported by foreign capital inflows, institutional investor activity, and improved market sentiment. Last week, the Israeli currency fell below NIS 3.00 per dollar, its strongest level since 1995, after gaining more than 20% against the US dollar since the start of 2024. Economists noted that while the strong currency helped curb inflation by lowering import costs, it also posed significant challenges for exporters.
- Prime Minister **Netanyahu returned to court** this week as proceedings in his long-running corruption trial resumed following the lifting of emergency restrictions imposed during the

war with Iran. The trial, which began in 2020, centers on charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in three separate cases – allegations that Netanyahu has consistently denied. Hearings had been repeatedly postponed in recent months due to security developments, and Netanyahu's legal team again sought scheduling adjustments, citing ongoing diplomatic and security demands. President Isaac Herzog said he would consider Netanyahu's request for a pardon only after efforts to reach a plea deal were exhausted. The President has invited both sides to join him in discussions.

- Israel's entrant Noam Bettan, who will perform the song "Michelle" at the **Eurovision Song Contest**, arrived in Vienna this week ahead of the competition. Last November, the European Broadcasting Union upheld Israel's participation despite boycotts by some countries, with multiple European broadcasters withdrawing from the competition in protest over Israel's presence. Israel's delegation is being marked by an almost unprecedented security operation.
- President Isaac **Herzog arrived in Panama** yesterday, as part of a four-day official visit to Central America, becoming the first Israeli president to visit the country. Herzog toured the Panama Canal and met with Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino in Panama City, where the two leaders discussed strengthening bilateral ties and cooperation in areas including trade, technology and security.

Jewish Federations and Partners

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

- Emergency Response and Recovery Since February 28, 2026:
 - Jewish Federation-supported JDC directly assisted more than 81,500 vulnerable Israelis through emergency response and recovery programs.
 - JDC provided focused assistance in five heavily impacted cities.
 - Approximately 14,000 pounds of humanitarian aid were distributed to 4,070 individuals.
 - JDC supplied 844 pieces of emergency rescue equipment to first responders.
 - Community caseworkers were deployed to support older adults and people with disabilities.
- Housing and Displacement Support
 - Housing transition support was provided in four vulnerable municipalities.
 - Sixty households received assistance navigating government systems, securing rental housing, arranging repairs and replacing essential household items.
 - An additional 120 households were slated to receive sustained, personalized housing support until stable accommodation is secured.
- Municipal and Infrastructure Support
 - Some 507 public shelters were connected to Wi-Fi.
 - Crisis support was provided to 37 municipalities and regional councils.
- Children, Seniors and Disability Support
 - More than 15,500 children and youth participated in resilience, educational, and support activities.
 - More than 10,000 support kits were distributed to seniors nationwide.
 - Five-hundred deaf and deafblind Israelis received alert bracelets to enable access to emergency warnings.

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