



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

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US-Iran War

Following the fragile ceasefire on 17 June 2026, clashes between the US and Iran intensified in July 2026 after the collapse of ceasefire, raising fears of a wider regional conflict. On 8–9 July, US President Donald Trump declared the ceasefire over, accusing Iran of attacking oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz and targeting US military facilities in Bahrain and Kuwait. In response, Washington launched more than 80 air strikes on Tehran and southern Iran, reportedly killing at least 14 people, including an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) member. The US also re-imposed stringent oil sanctions and strengthened its naval presence in the Gulf. Between 8 and 22 July, US forces carried out over 100 additional strikes across southern Iran and areas near the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian authorities reported at least 50 deaths and more than 500 injuries.

Saudi Arabia-Houthi conflict escalates

The conflict Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Houthis escalated sharply in July 2026, ending a prolonged but fragile stalemate. On 13 July, Yemen's internationally recognised government backed by Saudi Arabia conducted airstrikes on Sanaa International Airport to prevent an Iranian Mahan Air flight from landing. In retaliation, the Houthis launched ballistic missiles at Abha International Airport on 13–14 July and threatened a full-scale siege of Saudi Arabia. On 20 July, the Houthis declared a naval blockade and maritime embargo on Saudi shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Houthis conducted drone and missile attacks on Saudi oil tankers and targeted Aramco oil facilities in Jizan and Yanbu. Saudi-led coalition forces responded with airstrikes on 25 July against Houthi positions in Yemen, while joint US-Saudi strikes on Iran-backed militia bases in Iraq followed on 29 July.

US approves Military Sales to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait

On 15 July 2026, the US approved potential military sales worth US\$1.96 billion to Saudi Arabia and US\$484 million to Kuwait, reinforcing defence cooperation with two key Gulf partners. The package for Saudi Arabia included up to 20,000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System-II (APKWS-II) guidance sections for air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions, along with related equipment. The US State Department said the sale would strengthen Saudi Arabia's self-defence capabilities, enhance interoperability with US, regional and NATO forces, and support regional stability. Separately, Kuwait received approval to procure equipment, spare parts and support systems for its C-17 military transport aircraft fleet to improve operational readiness and strategic airlift capabilities. The announcement came amid heightened regional tensions following the conflict with Iran, which had resulted in attacks on US interests across the Gulf.

Saudi Arabia and the US sign nuclear cooperation agreement

The US and Saudi Arabia, on 22 July 2026, signed a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement establishing a 30-year partnership granting Riyadh access to advanced American nuclear reactors, components, technical expertise and low-enriched uranium fuel. The agreement seeks to diversify Saudi Arabia's energy mix and reduce domestic oil consumption. The agreement entails a proposed two-year study on the feasibility of uranium enrichment in Saudi Arabia, with any future enrichment requiring separate US approval. Saudi Arabia has committed not to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium on its own soil. Washington maintains that the agreement includes safeguards under the US Atomic

Energy Act and IAEA oversight. Following the signing, President Donald Trump added a new condition, i.e. Saudi Arabia's normalisation with Israel through the Abraham Accords. Riyadh has continued to condition Israel's recognition on the establishment of Palestinian statehood.

Kuwait and Pakistan sign Defence Cooperation Agreement

On 26 July 2026, Kuwait approved a decree-law ratifying a defence cooperation agreement with Pakistan, formalising a framework for expanding bilateral military and security cooperation. The agreement, originally signed in Kuwait on 11 June 2023, aimed to strengthen defence ties through collaboration in military training, education, logistics, intelligence sharing, scientific and technological cooperation, and the exchange of military personnel and technical experts. Both countries agreed to implement the partnership through annual executive protocols and regular official exchanges. A joint military committee, chaired by representatives appointed by the respective defence ministers, was established to oversee implementation and meet annually. The agreement also included provisions for protecting classified information, requiring written consent before any shared material could be disclosed to third parties.

Greece Approves Israeli Air Defence Procurement

Greece approved the procurement of a multi-layered air defence system worth up to €3.5 billion (US\$4 billion) from Israel as part of a broader military modernisation programme. The Government Council for Foreign Affairs and Defence (KYSEA) also authorised the purchase of military transport aircraft, drones and mini-submarines. Defence Minister Nikos Dendias said the 'Achilles Shield' system, built around Israeli radars and missile

technology supplied by Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), would provide protection against ballistic missiles, aircraft and drones and would become fully operational within 35 months. He added that Greek companies would manufacture at least 25 per cent of the system's components. The move further strengthened Greece's expanding defence partnership with Israel amid continuing regional security concerns.

UN Secretary-General visits Syria

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres visited Syria on 25 July 2026, and reaffirmed the UN's commitment to support the country's recovery and reconstruction. Guterres stressed that no country emerging from prolonged conflict could rebuild without international assistance. He reiterated the UN's position that the occupied Golan Heights remained Syrian territory and called for an end to violations of Syria's sovereignty. Syria described the visit as marking a new phase in Syria's relations with the UN, emphasising that reconstruction had become the country's top priority and required the removal of remaining restrictions.

India's External Affairs Minister visits Gulf

India's External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar visited Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from 5 to 10 July 2026 to strengthen India's strategic partnerships and review regional developments with Gulf leaders. During the visit, he held high-level meetings with the political leadership and foreign ministers of all four countries, focusing on cooperation in energy, trade, investment, defence and people-to-people ties. In Qatar, he discussed bilateral relations and regional issues, while appreciating Doha's role as a mediator in the US-Iran negotiations. In Bahrain, he reaffirmed

India's commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation and congratulated the Kingdom on its election to the UN Security Council for 2026–27. In Kuwait and Oman, discussions centred on advancing strategic partnerships and addressing regional and global developments. Jaishankar also interacted with members of the Indian diaspora in each country, commending their contributions to bilateral relations and thanking Gulf governments for ensuring the safety and welfare of Indian nationals, including assistance extended to Indian seafarers in Oman.

India's NSA holds strategic talks with Saudi leadership

India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval visited Saudi Arabia on 20 July 2026 and held high-level talks with Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and National Security Advisor Musa'ed bin Mohammed Al Aiban to review bilateral relations and regional developments. The discussions focused on strengthening the India–Saudi strategic partnership, enhancing energy security and safeguarding maritime corridors amid heightened tensions in West Asia. Both sides also exchanged views on the security of vital shipping routes as concerns grew over disruptions linked to the US-Iran conflict and Houthi threats in the Red Sea. Doval's visit, his third to the Kingdom this year, underscores India's growing diplomatic engagement with Gulf partners to ensure stable energy supplies and protect critical sea lanes. The talks also reflected India's interest in the welfare of its large expatriate community in Saudi Arabia and the security of Indian nationals and seafarers in the region.

Benjamin Netanyahu visits US

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Washington on 27-28 July 2026 for

talks with President Donald Trump amid growing strains in their relationship over Iran. The closed-door discussion was the eighth meeting between the two leaders since Trump took office in January 2025. Both leaders discussed the list of possible options concerning Iran as well as Lebanon, Gaza and Saudi Arabia's participation in the Abraham Accords. While Trump is pushing for diplomacy and de-escalation after the US-Iran ceasefire, Netanyahu seeks continued pressure on Tehran and stronger US backing ahead of Israel's October elections. Netanyahu stated, "It was a meeting with full cooperation, with mutual support, with understanding on the joint goal that Iran won't have nuclear weapons, and also other goals." Differences have also emerged over Israeli military operations in Lebanon, potential US arms sales to Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia's civilian nuclear programme.

New legislations in Knesset

Israel's 25th Knesset was officially dissolved on 17 July 2026 paving the way for national elections scheduled for 27 October 2026. Before dissolving, the coalition pushed through several controversial measures. On 14 July, Knesset passed a law temporarily banning the arrest and prosecution of ultra-Orthodox men evading military service, thereby legitimising continued mass Haredi non-enlistment. On 15 July, Knesset passed a law making the Attorney General's legal opinions non-binding reducing to recommendations that the government may disregard, removes the attorney general's exclusive authority to represent the state in court when positions differ, and sets the stage to alter future appointment and dismissal procedures. On 16 July, Knesset passed a law expanding gender segregation in higher education.