MEMO

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Iran's Dangerous Military Presence in Syria

Pro-Assad troops and Iranian-backed forces have retaken the Syrian Golan Heights on Israel's and Jordan's borders. Israel has vowed to prevent Iran from establishing a permanent military presence in Syria and opening a new front on Israel's northern border. The United States should support Israel's efforts as a key part of Washington's broader regional strategy.

Iranian forces in Syria are now close to Israel's border.

- Iran is using Syria as a base for launching direct attacks against Israel. Earlier this year, Iran launched an armed drone into Israel — marking the first time Iran has ever directly attacked the Jewish state. This spring, Iran also fired 32 rockets toward the Golan Heights.

- Hezbollah and Iranian-led Shia militias aided the Assad regime's push south to recapture rebel strongholds along the Israel-Syria border.

- Iranian-backed fighters have used the offensive to strengthen their longstanding efforts to directly integrate into the Syrian Army in order to conceal their presence on Israel's border and throughout the country. Other Iranian militiamen have returned to southern Syrian provinces disguised with Syrian flags and uniforms.

Hezbollah, a Lebanon-based Iranian proxy, has thousands of fighters deployed inside Syria. (Syrian Central Military Media via AP)

Iran is working to establish a permanent military presence in Syria.

- Iran has taken advantage of the civil war to build military infrastructure in Syria, including almost 40 long-term positions throughout the country. Tehran already has military bases, hardened positions, advanced air-defense systems, and production and storage facilities across Syria.

- Iran commands at least 20,000 to 30,000 troops in Syria, including at least 2,000 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) advisors and 8,000 Hezbollah fighters.

- Iran continues to create a secure "land bridge" to facilitate its weapons and troop transfers from Tehran via Iraq to Syria (potentially including the Golan Heights) and Lebanon.

- Since 2012, Israel has carried out more than 100 airstrikes to prevent Iran's transfer of precision-guided missiles and other strategic weapons to Hezbollah and other terrorist groups.