

7 March 2025

An Analytic Intelligence  
Wire Prepared by The  
Students of Embry-Riddle  
Aeronautical University

# Issue 468

## Of Eagle Eye Intelligence

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Conflict

## ISRAEL: Clashes With New Syrian Security Force Could Lead to Unintended Conflict

**Summary:** A Damascus suburb, Jaramana, saw a shootout at a security checkpoint between new government forces and residents, which could lead to unintended conflict between Damascus and Jerusalem.

**Development:** On 28 February, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights announced that Ahmed Al-Khatib, a Druze gunman, killed a security officer at a checkpoint in a skirmish located in Jaramana, a suburb of Damascus, according to the Associated Press. The skirmish also left nine other individuals injured, according to *The New York Times*. Jaramana's population consists mostly of Christians and Druzes, a monotheist minority group, according to *The New York Times*. Over 140,000 Druze living in Israeli territory have accepted Israeli citizenship, according to Al Jazeera. Approximately 6,000 Druze in the Golan Heights, a former Syrian territory Jerusalem occupies, have Israeli citizenship, according to *The Times of Israel*. Israel Defense Minister Israel Katz stated in an interview that Jerusalem remains "committed to...preventing harm to their Druze brothers in Syria," according to Al Jazeera. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar stated in November 2024 that Jerusalem must leverage regional minorities to advance influence in the region, according to Al Jazeera. Damascus deployed security forces into Jaramana after local militias refused to hand over the shooting suspects, according to Al Jazeera. Jerusalem sent forces into Southern Syria to create a demilitarized zone after the fall of the Assad government in December 2024, according to the Associated Press.

**Analysis:** The skirmishes causing ethnic tensions could lead to unintended conflict between Damascus and Jerusalem. Jerusalem's current and historical support of the Druzes probably places political pressure on the new government in Damascus to display strength. Jerusalem's establishing a zone within Syria further likely displays Jerusalem's ability to act if needed. The combination of motivation and an opportunity to act likely pushed Damascus into a corner and helped Jerusalem establish power over the new government. This attack almost certainly allowed Jerusalem to get involved with Damascus through a regional minority to maintain the hierarchy Israel has in the Middle East.

[Riley Grant]

## IRAN: Impending Economic Collapse Likely to Result in Social Upheaval

**Summary:** Iran's economy experienced a major downturn after the recent re-establishment of United States' "maximum pressure" tariffs. The subsequent decreasing quality of life for the average Iranian citizen will likely result in social upheaval and a push for major government reform.

**Development:** On 23 February, Iranian Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi conducted an interview stating that the Iranian society lay on the brink of collapse due to poor living conditions and extreme poverty, according to The Telegraph. Since 2018, tariffs and other economic restrictions have resulted in the deprecation of Iran's Economy. As sanctions increased throughout 2018-2020, Tehran quickly spent its \$150,000 National Development Fund, according to Iran International. Iran's national currency, the rial, lost stability and inflated, according to Responsible Statecraft. Iran's standard of living for civilians remained extremely poor and has not recovered since. Iran's allies do not currently possess the means or ability to support the economic deficit. Beijing responded to Washington, DC's economic restrictions by blocking sanctioned oil tankers from a major port of Iranian oil exports, causing significant harm to the country's GDP, according to Iran International. Moscow-Tehran relations remain historically friendly, although current conflicts make appreciable contributions to the economic crisis difficult, according to the United Kingdom Parliament. Although Damascus and Tehran shared a past alliance, the predominant military force maintains hostile relations with Tehran after the fall of the Assad Regime. A security alliance of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (E3) has established a deadline of July 2025 for Tehran's commitment to an agreement limiting nuclear ordinance research under threat of further economic restriction.

**Analysis:** Iran's social unrest will likely escalate unless the government can find a way to delay inflation and restore positive living conditions for citizens. The recent blockage of Tehran's oil to Beijing, their only major export target, will likely impose severe limitations on economic recovery. Decreasing regional support from past allies will likely restrict alternative paths for economic improvement. The embargoes that would follow nuclear weapons research mean that military leverage will unlikely show effectiveness in future negotiations.

[Katie Lindsey]

## MEXICO: Cartel Co-Founder's Repatriation Plea Likely to Cause Vast Political Conflict

**Summary:** Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum faces major legal and civilian pressure after senior Sinaloa cartel co-founder Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada demanded his return to Mexico awaiting trial. This development will likely stir up conflict in many groups awaiting a decision.

**Development:** On 21 February, Zambada and his lawyer, Frank Perez, sent a letter to Mexico City, stating that Mexico City should seek extradition due to issues regarding his prosecution. Zambada threatened that Mexico must get involved to preserve its bilateral relationship with the United States, according to *El País*. Zambada’s team claims that his abduction and transfer to the United States violated Mexico’s sovereignty, thereby implying that the United States held him unlawfully since his arrest in July 2024, according to *Latin Times*. Perez told interviewers that Zambada wants to avoid legal proceedings in court and will accept pleading guilty if not faced with the death penalty, according to *Latin Times*. Sheinbaum stated that Zambada’s claims hold some validity, according to *El País*. Sheinbaum claimed Mexico would not bow to Zambada’s threats, but she admits this case regards a Mexican citizen’s rights within the legal process, according to *El País*.

**Analysis:** Zambada’s repatriation plea will likely spark significant political conflict within Mexico, as this event covers critical issues such as international relations and legal sovereignty. Sheinbaum will likely continue to face immense domestic pressure over her handling of this situation as well as related future events. Zambada and his team claiming unlawful detention will likely fuel tension and may incite an uprising among various political groups, especially in the areas where cartels carry heavy influence. Even though Sheinbaum acknowledges that Zambada’s argument holds some validity, she will likely struggle to balance legal obligations with the political priorities of Mexico’s current agenda.

[Morgan Evenson]

## About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

## About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Currently, Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and do not represent the position Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University or the College of Business, Security, and Intelligence.

Lauren Estrada, a Senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at [editorsee@gmail.com](mailto:editorsee@gmail.com) or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 468, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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