



Middle East and North Africa

Eastern Mediterranean

⚠️ ⚡ **Israel/Palestine** **Deadly Golan Heights rocket strike blamed on Hizbollah and assassination of Hamas political leader in Tehran risked further escalation; Israel continued assault on Gaza Strip and approved largest land seizure in West Bank since Oslo accords.**

Deadly strike on Beirut and assassination of Hamas leader in Tehran risk igniting wider conflict. Rocket strike 27 July killed 12, including children, and injured over 40 in Israeli-occupied Golan Heights village of Majdal Shams. Israel and U.S. blamed attack on Hizbollah, which denied responsibility. In response, Israeli air raid 30 July killed top Hizbollah commander Fuad Shukr and five civilians in Lebanese capital Beirut, while injuring at least 74 others; Hizbollah vowed retaliation. Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh killed 31 July in Iranian capital Tehran. Hamas and Iran blamed operation on Israel as Hamas said killing would “take the battle to new dimensions” and Iran vowed “harsh punishment”. Qatar same day questioned potential for ceasefire negotiations – which had stalled earlier in month – following assassination. Earlier in month, Yemeni Houthi drone 19 July killed one and injured at least ten in Tel Aviv; in response, Israel next day struck Yemeni port of Hodeida, killing nine and injuring 87 (see Iran, Lebanon, Yemen).

Israel conducted major operations in Gaza. Israel continued aerial bombardment and conducted major assaults on Khan Younis, Rafah and Gaza City. Notably, Israeli attack on humanitarian safe zone al-Masawi 13 July reportedly killed up to 100; week-long incursion into Khan Younis 22-30 July reportedly killed at least 255 and injured over 300. Operations in July killed over 1,500 Palestinians, bringing death toll since 7 Oct to over 39,400; medical journal *The Lancet* 5 July found total Gaza death toll (including deaths due to lack of food, healthcare and sanitation systems) could exceed 186,000. UNRWA head 28 July said only 14% of Gaza’s territory was not under Israeli evacuation orders.

Israel approved largest land seizure in West Bank in decades. Israeli NGO Peace Now 3 July reported Israel late June approved seizure of 12.7 square km in Jordan Valley, marking largest land annexation since 1993 Oslo accords. Meanwhile, settler violence, raids and airstrikes continued in West Bank, killing at least 37 Palestinians and bringing death toll since 7 Oct to at least 576.

➡ ⚡ **Lebanon Risk of all-out war with Israel rose sharply after rocket strike killed a dozen youths in Golan Heights and Israel's military killed top Hizbollah commander in retaliation; double executive vacuum and economic crisis persisted.**

Hizbollah and Israel expanded range of cross-border strikes. Rocket strike 27 July killed 12, including children, in Israeli-occupied Golan Heights village of Majdal Shams. Israel and U.S. immediately blamed Hizbollah for attack, while Hizbollah denied responsibility. Israeli PM Netanyahu same day warned that Hizbollah would “pay a heavy price”, while U.S. diplomats reportedly urged Tel Aviv to exercise restraint to avoid full-blown conflict. Israeli air raid 30 July killed top Hizbollah commander Fuad Shukr and five civilians in Lebanese capital Beirut, while injuring at least 74 others; Hizbollah could retaliate severely, especially in light of Hamas political head Ismail Haniyeh's assassination in Iran hours later (see Israel/Palestine). Earlier in July, Israel continued lethal aerial bombing campaigns across southern Lebanon, striking near cities of Saida and Tyre in south and Baalbek in east, while Hizbollah upheld trend of retaliating severely. Notably, Israeli drone strike 3 July killed Hizbollah commander Mohammed Naame Nasser near Tyre; Hizbollah 3-4 July responded by launching around 300 rockets into northern Israel. Hizbollah Sec Gen Hassan Nasrallah 17 July said cross-border attacks would hit new places in Israel after Israeli strikes 15-16 July killed eight civilians in Lebanon, including three children. Hizbollah 20 July for first time launched rockets at Israeli kibbutz Dafna in retaliation of same-day Israeli drone strike that injured civilians in Burj al-Muluk village.

Political deadlock and economic crisis persisted. Double executive vacuum with no president and only caretaker govt persisted as leaders made no serious efforts to end political deadlock. Economic crisis continued without progress on International Monetary Fund's conditions to unlock financial rescue package. Central Bank governor Wassim Mansouri early July travelled to U.S. capital Washington, D.C. to lobby U.S. officials not to place Lebanon on Financial Action Task Force's “grey list” of countries insufficiently committed to combating money laundering and terrorism financing; final decision expected in Oct.

➡ **Syria Anti-Türkiye protests turned deadly in north west, where demonstrations against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) continued; Iran-backed groups resumed attacks on U.S. bases.**

In north west, anti-Türkiye protests turned deadly and protests against HTS continued. Following late-June attacks on Syrians in Türkiye, large-scale anti-Türkiye protests 1 July erupted in north west, with protesters removing Turkish flags and attacking Turkish military vehicles, bases, and checkpoints; Turkish forces killed seven protesters in Afrin city and one in Jarabulus city, both in Aleppo province. Amid widespread internet and communications' service disruptions, Türkiye closed border for several days as military police of Türkiye-aligned Syrian Interim Govt 3 July launched arrest campaign (see Türkiye). Meanwhile, protests demanding resignation of HTS leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani and prison reform continued in Idlib and Aleppo provinces; notably, clashes 5 July erupted in Binnish town as HTS cracked down on protesters after they allegedly injured police officer. Protest movement, local community leaders and HTS-dominated Salvation Govt 17 July

reached agreement to release some detainees and suspend protests in Binnish for three months; protests continued elsewhere.

Iran-backed groups and U.S. carried out tit-for-tat strikes. Iranian-backed groups 25-26 July fired missiles toward U.S. base at Conoco gas field, prompting U.S. to strike locations of Iranian-backed groups east of Deir ez-Zor city with heavy artillery shells. Meanwhile, Israel continued strikes, notably killing govt-affiliated business tycoon and militia leader Baraa al-Qaterji and his driver on Damascus-Beirut highway 15 July.

ISIS attacks persisted. U.S. Central Command 17 July noted uptick in Islamic State (ISIS) attacks in Syria and Iraq as part of group's attempt to "reconstitute" capabilities. Notably, ISIS 3 July killed two shepherds and six govt forces searching for them in Raqqa province.

In other important developments. Clashes between local group Thuwar Kanaker and govt forces 2 July erupted in Kanaker town, Rif Dimashq province after latter arrested former commander of al-Furqan Brigades; govt forces same day shelled town, killing five civilians; parties next day reached ceasefire. Kurdish authorities in north east 17 July granted general amnesty to people "whose hands are not stained with blood of Syrians", leading to release of hundreds of prisoners. Türkiye continued attacks on Kurdish militants (see Türkiye).

Gulf and Arabian Peninsula

➔ ⚡ **Iran Supreme Leader threatened retaliation against Israel after Hamas political leader killed in Tehran, as confrontations between Iran-aligned groups and Israel/U.S. rose; reformist Masoud Pezeshkian took office as new president.**

Tehran vowed revenge against Israel after killing of Hamas leader. Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh killed 31 July in capital Tehran, reportedly prompting rare emergency meeting of influential Supreme National Security Council. Iran immediately blamed operation on Israel. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei same day vowed "severe punishment", said it was Tehran's "duty" to avenge Haniyeh's death as it had occurred on Iranian soil, fuelling fears of Iranian-led Axis of Resistance coalition-wide retaliation – loosely or closely coordinated – against Israel/U.S. in coming days and weeks.

Axis of Resistance launched strikes at Israeli, U.S. targets. Yemeni Houthis throughout month conducted regular drone and missile strikes against vessels in Red Sea, and 19 July struck Israel's city Tel Aviv with drone, killing one; Israel next day retaliated with strike against Hodeida port. Amid daily cross-border exchanges between Israel and Hizbollah, including 27 July rocket strike on Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and 30 July Israeli air raid killing top Hizbollah commander, Iran repeatedly pledged support for Hizbollah in case of full-blown conflict. Series of drone and rocket attacks against bases hosting U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria in second half of July broke months-long lull in targeting of U.S. facilities there; Israel in July also intercepted multiple drones seemingly launched from Iraq (see Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen).

Iran elected first reformist president in two decades. After second round of presidential election held 5 July, reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian secured presidency with 53.6% of vote and was inaugurated 30 July. Pezeshkian's campaign emphasised political cohesion, less restrictive social and cultural policies, enhanced economic management and improved relations with West; hardline conservatives will likely push back on his ambitions to change status quo, however.

U.S. imposed more sanctions on Iran-linked entities and individuals. U.S. 12 July designated one Iranian entity for involvement in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; 18 July sanctioned two individuals and five entities for being associated with Houthi financing networks; and 30 July sanctioned five individuals and seven entities for facilitating Iran's missile and drones program.

➔ **Iraq Iran-backed groups targeted U.S. troops with drones and rockets after months-long hiatus, and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leader raised hopes of improved Erbil-Baghdad relationship.**

Iran-backed groups, U.S. resumed tit-for-tat strikes. In first attack since March, armed drones by suspected Iran-backed groups 16 July targeted Ain al-Asad airbase housing U.S. troops in Anbar governorate; rockets 25 July again targeted base, with no U.S. casualties reported. In first known airstrike since Feb, U.S. 30 July targeted Hashd al-Shaabi base used by Iran-aligned militias in Babil governorate, killing four; Iraqi military next day denounced strike as "heinous crime" and violation of U.S.-led coalition's mandate. Meanwhile, Tehran-aligned Islamic Resistance in Iraq 15 July reportedly carried out joint operation with Yemeni Houthis against ship in Mediterranean, and 19, 21 July claimed unconfirmed strikes on Israeli cities Haifa and Eilat.

Islamic State (ISIS) continued attacks, U.S. and Iraq discussed troop drawdown. Clashes between govt forces and ISIS 13 July killed four police officers in Khan Bani Saad town, Diyala governorate; U.S. Central Command 17 July noted uptick in ISIS attack in Iraq and Syria as part of group's efforts to "reconstitute" capabilities. Iraqi and U.S. officials 22-23 July held second round of Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue to discuss transition from U.S.-led Global Coalition against Islamic State (ISIS) to bilateral security relationship.

KDP submitted candidates for local elections and KDP leader visited Baghdad. Following latest of several extensions of registration deadline for candidates, KDP 18 July said it had submitted candidate list, removing last hurdles for Kurdistan legislative elections in Oct. Meanwhile, KDP leader Masoud Barzani 3 July visited capital Baghdad for first time in six years, said talks with PM al-Sudani represented "real breakthrough" in relations.

Türkiye operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) continued in north. Turkish President Erdoğan 13 July claimed ground operation Claw-Lock against PKK in north would end "very soon", hailing it as success. Meanwhile, clashes between PKK and Turkish forces early July reportedly caused evacuation of seven villages in Duhok governorate. Türkiye also continued anti-PKK strikes. Notably, Turkish Defence Ministry 30 July announced "neutralising" 13 PKK members in Gara and Haftanin regions.

➔ **Oman Islamic State claimed killing several Shia worshippers in unprecedented attack in sultanate.**

Gunmen 15 July carried out shooting in Shia mosque in capital Muscat's Wadi al-Kabir neighbourhood, killing at least six people including police officer, injuring nearly 30 and briefly holding others hostage. Police shot all three assailants dead. Islamic State (ISIS) claimed responsibility, marking group's first-ever attack in normally calm Gulf Arab state where significant Sunni, Shia, and Ebadi Muslim communities reside.

➔ **Saudi Arabia Riyadh facilitated de-escalation of banking dispute between Yemeni govt and Houthis after latter threatened to renew cross-border attacks; Crown Prince congratulated Iran's new president.**

Houthis threatened to resume cross-border attacks over banking restrictions. Houthis around 7 July accused Saudi Arabia of being behind Yemeni govt's newly-imposed ban on commercial banks in Houthi-controlled areas, threatening to resume cross-border attacks if they were not overturned (see Yemen); Riyadh reportedly facilitated 22 July agreement between Yemeni govt and Houthis to lift tit-for-tat banking restrictions.

Riyadh indicated willingness to strengthen relations with new Iranian govt. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman 6 July congratulated reformist Masoud Pezeshkian on election as Iran's president and affirmed "keenness on developing and deepening the relations" between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

➔ **Yemen Regional tensions remained elevated as Israel launched retaliatory airstrikes on Hodeida port after Houthi drone killed Israeli in Tel Aviv; govt and Houthis agreed on de-escalatory measures.**

Israel struck oil and energy infrastructure in Hodeida after Houthi drone targeted Tel Aviv. Houthi drone 19 July struck Israeli city Tel Aviv, killing one Israeli and injuring at least ten. In response, Israeli airstrikes next day struck oil and energy infrastructure in Hodeida port, killing nine and injuring 87. UN Sec Gen Guterres 21 July warned of further regional escalation, calling for "utmost restraint" while Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi same day threatened "more attacks targeting Israel" (see Israel-Palestine, Iran). Meanwhile, Houthis in July stepped up attacks on shipping in Red, Arabian and Mediterranean seas, and Indian Ocean; notably, Houthis 1 July claimed four operations against U.S., UK, and Israeli ships; 15 July claimed attacks targeting three ships in Red Sea and Mediterranean.

Govt and Houthis agreed to de-escalate tit-for-tat banking restrictions. Govt-controlled Central Bank 7 July revoked licenses of six commercial banks for failing to relocate offices from Houthi-controlled capital Sana'a to Aden. Houthis around same day accused Saudi Arabia of being behind govt-imposed banking restrictions, threatening to resume cross-border attacks if they were not overturned (see Saudi Arabia). Govt and Houthis 22 July informed UN envoy Hans Grundberg that they had agreed to lift tit-for-tat banking restrictions and expand national airline Yemenia flights.

Parties made progress on prisoners' swap and UN renewed monitoring mission. Govt and Houthi representatives 6 July attended meeting of Supervisory Committee

on the Implementation of the Detainees' Agreement in Omani capital Muscat and reached "breakthrough" preliminary agreement on release of govt-aligned political leader Mohamed Qahtan, who has been detained by Houthis since 2015. UN Security Council 8 July extended mandate of UN Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNHMA) until 14 July 2025; mission plays vital role in monitoring Hodeida port and implementation of Houthi-govt ceasefire and could potentially facilitate de-escalation in Red Sea.

Humanitarian situation continued deteriorating. World Food Programme 1 July said "severe food deprivation" had reached unprecedented levels in both northern and southern Yemen since May.

North Africa

➔ **Algeria** **President Tebboune officially announced candidacy for 7 Sept election, as opposition decried unfair voting environment amid wider crackdown; govt recalled ambassador from Paris.**

President announced candidacy while opposition criticised conditions for poll. Incumbent Tebboune 11 July confirmed he will run for another term as president after months of speculation. Opposition continued to voice concerns over election process. Algerian Workers' Party leader Louisa Hanoune, whose participation may have legitimised elections as democratic contest, 13 July withdrew from race citing unfair conditions and called on her party to boycott elections; 11 prominent opposition figures 21 July wrote open letter denouncing "authoritarian climate" surrounding upcoming elections and calling for democratic change. Although 16 candidates filed applications, election body 25 July announced only three had met requirements and would compete in poll – Tebboune, Front des Forces Socialistes national secretary Youcef Aouchiche and Abdelaali Hassani Charif of Mouvement de la société pour la paix.

Authorities arrested pro-democracy Hirak movement activists and journalists. In lead-up to vote, authorities cracked down on journalists and Hirak movement members. Police 8-15 July arrested 14 Hirak activists in Bejaia city and authorities placed eight of them in pre-trial detention, while releasing other six under judicial supervision. Associated Press 1 July reported arrest of journalists Sofiane Ghirous and Ferhat Omar in late June for broadcasting material that authorities claimed "constituted incitement and hate speech".

Algiers recalled ambassador from France over Western Sahara policy shift. Govt 30 July announced withdrawal of ambassador to Paris following France's announcement same day it considered Moroccan plan for autonomy over Western Sahara "only basis" to solve conflict (see Western Sahara); move soured diplomatic relations with Algiers, supporter of Sahrawi independence.

➔ **Egypt** **New govt sworn in amid economic crisis as Cairo continued to advocate for resolution to crises in Gaza and Sudan.**

Newly announced cabinet included personnel changes, kept previous priorities. New govt of PM Madbouly sworn in 3 July with new Defence Minister Abdel Megeed Sakr and FM Badr Abdelatty, alongside new heads of key economic ministries;

President Sisi same day appointed Lt. Gen. Fathy Khalifa as new army chief of staff with former army head Osama Askar made presidential adviser. Madbouly 8 July presented govt program which pursues former priorities including preserving national security, promoting economic growth and implementing political reforms suggested by Aug 2023 national dialogue initiative. Amid electricity shortages due to economic crisis, Madbouly 17 July announced rolling blackouts would pause from 21 July until Sept. Meanwhile, rights group Amnesty International 18 July reported security forces detained over 100 people since month began for calling for protests against rising prices and power cuts.

Cairo continued to advocate for steps to address crises in Gaza and Sudan. Abdelatty 18 July met his Jordanian counterpart Safadi in Jordan's capital Amman; both leaders reiterated rejection of Israeli offensive in Gaza Strip and mass displacement of Palestinians, and stressed harmful regional repercussions of war; Abdelatty 30 July reiterated need for immediate ceasefire during call with U.S. Sec State Blinken. Cairo 6 July hosted conference of Sudanese civil society and political groups, during which Abdelatty repeated call for immediate, sustainable cessation of hostilities; although FM said any solution should involve all Sudanese actors, Sudan's two main warring parties did not attend.

In other important developments. Egyptian geologist 17 July claimed on social media that Ethiopia had begun new round of filling of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as govt remained opposed to project. In further sign of deepening relationship, Cairo 17 July hosted Egypt-EU dialogue on migration and investment.

➔ **Libya Rival assemblies agreed on roadmap for unity govt, although tensions remained amid lack of budget compromise; UN human rights chief criticised rise in detentions and disappearances.**

Rival authorities agreed on forming unity govt and organising elections. Around 130 members from east-based House of Representatives (HoR) and Tripoli-based High State Council (HSC) 18 July met in Egyptian capital Cairo and announced they agreed on forming unity govt and organising legislative and presidential elections. Doubts persisted, however, over whether political deadlock had actually been broken as it remained unclear whether HSC as a whole had sincerely agreed to roadmap or whether HoR would take process forward in absence of UN endorsement. Meanwhile, selection procedures for potential new govt and election laws remained in limbo.

Budget deadlock continued despite attempts at compromise. HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh 7 July met Central Bank Governor Sadiq al-Kabir to discuss steps to unify budget. HoR 10 July approved additional budget of \$18.3bn to finance country's east-based institutions; HSC next day rejected budget, criticising unilateral approach and large size of additional funds.

International actors criticised arbitrary arrests and disappearances. UN human rights chief Volker Türk 9 July lamented stalled political process and deteriorating human rights situation, highlighting "escalation in arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances", especially of civil society activists and political opposition. Unidentified armed men 8 July abducted political activist Moatassim al-Areebi in Misrata city, releasing him 11 July after UN and U.S. called for his release. Authorities 11 July detained journalist Ahmed al-Sanussi, who reported on

allegations of govt corruption, in capital Tripoli; police 14 July released Sanussi after UN, EU and others criticised arrest.

In other important developments. Amid Italian seizures in June of Russian shipment of Chinese-made drones headed to eastern port of Benghazi in violation of arms embargo, U.S. military delegation 16-18 July visited PM Dabaiba in Tripoli and representatives of eastern commander Khalifa Haftar to discuss unification of military institutions. Court 28 July sentenced 12 officials to prison terms between nine and 27 years for culpability in Sept 2023 dam collapses amid floods in Derna city that killed over 5,000.

➔ **Mauritania Post-election unrest left several dead as opposition contested re-election of President Ghazouani.**

After announcement of provisional results showed incumbent President Ghazouani re-elected for second term in 29 June poll, demonstrators 1 July protested in opposition strongholds of Bogué, Kaédi and Nouadhibou cities as well as some neighbourhoods in capital Nouakchott; in Kaédi, security forces clashed with demonstrators as protests turned violent amid acts of looting and vandalism, arresting unconfirmed number. Interior ministry next day said three protesters had died, two while in detention and third later in hospital, without providing further details about their deaths. Constitutional Court 3 July confirmed Ghazouani's win with 56.12% of vote. Opposition candidate and activist Biram Dah Abeid – who body said won 22.1% of vote – refused to recognise results, citing alleged irregularities including ballot stuffing and accusing electoral commission of giving Ghazouani thousands of extra votes. Although unrest died down in following days, authorities 1-24 July restricted access to mobile internet.

➔ **Tunisia President Saïed set October election date amid deteriorating political climate for polls as authorities arrested several opposition candidates.**

President set presidential vote and announced his candidacy. Incumbent Saïed 1 July scheduled presidential election for 6 Oct and 19 July confirmed his own candidacy; Saïed said he was answering country's "sacred call" to keep up fight toward "national liberation", raising concern he may intend to forcibly secure election (see below). Earlier, Saïed 5 July called for vigilance against destabilisation attempts in pre-election period. In likely attempt to win public support, president 9 July made new social welfare announcement with 33% increase in allowance for poorest families, affecting 310,000 beneficiaries. Hundreds of pro-Saïed demonstrators 25 July marched in capital Tunis, as families of political prisoners same day gathered in capital to demand their release.

Govt continued to disqualify and imprison opposition candidates. Prosecutor 12 July banned presidential hopeful Abdellatif Makki, former leader of Islamist-inspired An-Nahda party, from travel and media appearances due to alleged involvement in 2014 death of businessman when Makki was health minister. Authorities next day arrested Sec Gen of An-Nahda Ajmi Ouirimi and two party members, fuelling concerns authorities may attempt to dissolve still-popular movement ahead of election. Authorities 13 July also arrested Yadh Elloumi for allegedly buying sponsorship for runner-up in 2019 presidential election, Nabil Karoui, as campaign official. Court 19 July sentenced Lotfi Mraihi, candidate for left-wing opposition Republican People's Union, to eight months' imprisonment and ruled him ineligible to run for office for life on charges of corruption and vote buying

during previous candidacy in 2019. Rejected candidate Abir Moussi 29 July began hunger strike to protest her exclusion, while candidate Nizar Chaâri next day announced his campaign manager and member of campaign team had been arrested on accusations of forgery. Rights group Amnesty International 16 July and main opposition coalition National Salvation Front next day denounced crackdown, with latter claiming measures create impossible conditions for holding democratic elections. Meanwhile, court 6 July sentenced Saïed critic and prominent lawyer Sonia Dahmani, arrested early May, to one year in prison for spreading “false news”.

➔ **Western Sahara Figures of pro-independence Polisario Front openly challenged leadership; France adopted Moroccan autonomy plan.**

Internal divisions within Polisario laid bare. Bachir Moustafa, brother of Polisario Front founder and candidate in latest leadership election in Jan 2023, 7 July publicly called for general congress to “take emergency measures” to save Front from downfall, heavily criticising Polisario leader Brahim Ghali and demanding more intransigence towards Morocco. Main Polisario body did not reply to attack or congress calls. Meanwhile, Oubi Bouchraya, Polisario representative in Geneva, 6 July took to social media to highlight growing tensions and protests in Tindouf refugee camps and denounced Polisario’s security-minded approach to protests, marking first time Polisario official admitted public security issues in camps. Over 100 Polisario fighters 16 July laid down weapons in front of Polisario general secretariat in Rabouni refugee camp in protest at corruption and leadership decisions regarding military appointments, further signalling rising discontent within independence movement.

France adopted Moroccan autonomy plan, shifting Western Sahara stance. In letter to Moroccan King Mohammed VI made public 30 July, French president Macron called Moroccan autonomy plan, which would give Rabat control over Western Sahara’s national security and foreign affairs, “only basis” to solve conflict; Polisario same day condemned move, saying it deprived Sahrawi people of “right to freedom and independence”; move marked notable policy shift and drew anger from Algeria which supports Western Saharan independence (see Algeria). Earlier, outgoing U.S. ambassador to Algeria Elizabeth Moore Aubin 18 July also reaffirmed U.S. support for autonomy plan.