

# Weekly Update

## 1. Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq and Syria Standing Down, for Now

Ahmadian, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, welcomed Syrian Defense Minister Abbas, who was in Tehran. The situation around the Gaza Strip was discussed. Ahmadian regretted that "some areas of Syria are still occupied by foreigners, especially the United States and the Zionist regime, as well as terrorist groups".

Source: The Soufan Center

<https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-march-18/>

## 2. Finland ranked world's happiest country for seventh year

In the World Happiness Report ranking the world's happiest countries, sociologists calculate happiness based on the following variables:

- GDP
- Life expectancy
- Social support
- Freedom to live as you wish
- Donation
- Corruption
- The answer to the question "Did you laugh yesterday?"
- The answer to the question "Were you sad yesterday?"
- Trust in government, courts, election integrity, police and business.

Source: DW

<https://www.dw.com/en/finland-ranked-worlds-happiest-country-for-seventh-year/a-68619436>

## 3. French Navy Air Defense FREMM Intercepts 3 Ballistic Missiles

The French Ministry of Defense published footage of the interception of a kamikaze UAV, which Ansar Allah militants used to attack a commercial ship in the Red Sea. Judging by the video, the Houthis used a drone of the Samad family. The helicopter crew from the frigate Languedoc D653 shot down the drone.

Source: Naval News

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/03/french-navy-air-defense-fremm-intercepts-3-ballistic-missiles/>

## 4. Beijing's motivation in China-Taliban relations

The Wakhan corridor connects Afghanistan with China and is guarded by the 219 Omar III Operational Division under the personal command of Taliban Chief of Staff Qari Fasihuddin Fitrati, where a separate brigade of border troops is allocated.

Source: GIS reports

<https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/china-taliban-relations/>

## 5. Saudi foreign minister meets Syrian counterpart in Riyadh

Saudi and Syrian foreign ministers meeting in Riyadh. Syrian Foreign Minister "Faisal Miqdad" met

and held talks with his Saudi counterpart "Faisal bin Farhan" at the Saudi Foreign Ministry in Riyadh.

*Source:* **Anadolu Ajansi**

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/saudi-foreign-minister-meets-syrian-counterpart-in-riyadh/3164542>

## **6. Progress in Riyadh-Washington Talks Over Israeli Normalization**

*Blinken's visit to Arabia and Egypt: The US State Department announced the visit of Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to discuss the establishment of a ceasefire in Gaza.*

*Source:* **Iran International**

<https://www.iranintl.com/en/202403215595>

## **7. Modi visits Bhutan to shore up India's position amid Chinese outreach**

*Warm welcome for PM Modi in Bhutan: Indian PM arrived in Bhutan on a two-day state visit, this will be his last foreign visit before the elections begin in India.*

*Source:* **Nikkei Asia**

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Modi-visits-Bhutan-to-shore-up-India-s-position-amid-Chinese-outreach>

## **8. "Ukraine does not stand alone", says Chair of the NATO Military Committee at the Kyiv Security Forum**

*Russia issues serious warnings to Ukraine and NATO. The Kremlin added Russia cannot allow the existence of a state near its border that has a documented intention to use any means to annex Crimea. This comes after Ukraine faced its largest-ever attacks on energy facilities in recent months.*

*Source:* **NATO**

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_223986.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_223986.htm?selectedLocale=en)

## **9. 'India stands in solidarity with Russia': PM Modi reacts to Moscow attack**

*Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Moscow.*

*Source:* **Hindustan Times**

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/russia-moscow-concert-hall-attack-narendra-modi-reacts-101711165170868.html>

## **10. CIA director makes unannounced brief visit to Guyana**

*What is the CIA chief doing in Guyana? CIA chief William Burns visited the country at the official invitation of Guyana's President Irfaan Ali and was welcomed at the presidential palace.*

*Source: **loop news***

<https://caribbean.loopnews.com/content/cia-director-makes-unannounced-brief-visit-guyana>