

IRAN STRIKES Authorities step up security across US

CNN ONLINE

US federal authorities and leaders in several major US cities and states are increasing security measures and monitoring for potential threats after US strikes on key Iranian nuclear facilities.

"Our assets are fully engaged. We remain vigilant. God bless America, and all those who defend Her," FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino posted on X.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said, "We will work unceasingly to protect the American homeland."

Local leaders and law enforcement are also on heightened alert. "We're tracking the situation unfolding in Iran. Out of an abundance of caution, we're deploying additional resources to religious,

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New York Governor Kathy Hochul said.

cultural, and diplomatic sites across NYC and coordinating with our federal partners," New York Police Department said.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said there is no specific or credible threat to New Yorkers, but added, "Given New York's distinctive global profile, we are taking this situation extraordinarily seriously."

"All State agencies, utilities and other critical infrastructure facilities are on high alert to monitor for any possible disturbances," she said.

The Los Angeles Police Department is also increasing patrols near places of worship and other sensitive areas, according to Mayor Karen Bass.

"We will remain vigilant in protecting our communities," Bass said.

Police in Washington, DC, will maintain an "increased presence" at religious institutions, according to the Metropolitan Police Department. Mayor Muriel Bowser said, "Together, we are monitoring intelligence and, as always, ask everyone to stay vigilant."

Authorities and leaders in New Jersey, Texas, Illinois and others have announced that security will be heightened and threat monitoring increased following the US strikes.



Palestinians queue yesterday in front of a hot meal distribution kitchen in the al-Mawasi area of Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. Several Palestinian civilians were killed and others wounded that morning as Israeli forces launched a series of airstrikes targeting central and southern parts of the Gaza Strip.

PHOTO: AFP

World reacts to US attacks on Iran's nuclear sites

AGENCIES

The United States has bombed three nuclear sites in Iran, further escalating the war between Israel and Iran.

Iran acknowledged the attacks, saying its personnel working at the nuclear sites were evacuated before the attacks. Here are some key reactions from around the world following the US strikes on Iran's nuclear sites:

IRAN

In his first public remarks after the strikes, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Araghchi accused the US of breaching international law.

"The United States, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has committed a grave violation of the UN Charter, international law and the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] by attacking Iran's peaceful nuclear installations," Araghchi said in a social media post.

UNITED NATIONS

"I am gravely alarmed by the use of force by the United States against Iran today," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

"This is a dangerous escalation in a region already on the edge – and a direct threat to international peace and security," he said, adding that there is a "growing risk" that this conflict could "rapidly get out of control – with catastrophic consequences for civilians, the region, and the world".

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia expressed its "great concern" following the US attacks, according to a statement by the foreign ministry on X.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is following with great concern the developments in the sisterly Islamic Republic of Iran, represented by the targeting of Iranian nuclear facilities by the United States of America," the Saudi foreign ministry posted on X.

QATAR

Qatar says it fears serious repercussions after the US air strikes on nuclear facilities in Iran. The foreign ministry "warns that the current dangerous escalation in the region may lead to catastrophic consequences at both the regional and international levels," a statement said.

RUSSIA

Russia's foreign ministry said it strongly condemns the US attacks on Iran, reports Al Jazeera online. "The irresponsible decision to subject the territory of a sovereign state



to missile and bomb attacks, whatever the arguments it may be presented with, flagrantly violates international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council," the ministry said in its statement.

CHINA

The foreign ministry said it "strongly condemns" US strikes on Iran's nuclear sites, that "seriously violate the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law, and have exacerbated tensions in the Middle East".

"China calls on the parties to the conflict, Israel in particular, to reach a ceasefire as soon as possible, ensure the safety of civilians, and

start dialogue and negotiation," the ministry said on X.

UNITED KINGDOM

Prime Minister Keir Starmer urged Iran to return to the negotiating table and said that stability in the region remained a priority, according to a statement from Downing Street.

"Iran's nuclear programme is a grave threat to international security. Iran can never be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon and the US has taken action to alleviate that threat," Starmer said in a statement.

EUROPEAN UNION

The EU's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas has called for de-escalation and a return to negotiations.

"I urge all sides to step back, return to the negotiating table and prevent further escalation," Kallas wrote on X, adding Iran must not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon and that EU foreign ministers will discuss the situation today.

FRANCE

France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot has expressed concern and urged "the parties to exercise restraint to avoid any escalation likely to lead to an extension of the conflict". In a statement on X, he added that France was "convinced that a lasting solution to this issue requires a negotiated solution within the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty".

US DEMOCRATS

The top Democrat in the House of Representatives accused Trump of pushing the country towards war.

"President Trump misled the country about his intentions, failed to seek congressional authorization for the use of military force and risks American entanglement in a potentially disastrous war in the Middle East," Congressman Hakeem Jeffries said in a statement.

Trump gambles on force over diplomacy

AFP, Washington

For nearly a half-century the United States has squabbled with Iran's Islamic Republic but the conflict has largely been left in the shadows, with US policymakers believing, often reluctantly, that diplomacy was preferable.

With President Donald Trump's order of strikes on Iran's nuclear sites, the United States – like Israel, which encouraged him – has brought the conflict into the open, and the consequences may not be clear for some time to come.

"We will only know if it succeeded if we can get through the next three to five years without the Iranian regime acquiring nuclear weapons, which they now have compelling reasons to want," said Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA analyst and supporter of the 2003 Iraq war who is now vice president for policy at the Middle East Institute.

US intelligence had not concluded that Iran was building a nuclear bomb, with Tehran's sensitive atomic work largely seen as a means of leverage, and Iran can be presumed to have taken precautions in anticipation of strikes.

Trita Parsi, an outspoken critic of military action, said Trump "has now made it more likely that Iran will be a nuclear weapons state in the next five to 10 years."

"We should be careful not to confuse tactical success with strategic success," said Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for

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Responsible Statecraft.

"The Iraq war was also successful in the first few weeks but President Bush's declaration of 'Mission Accomplished' did not age well," he said.

WEAK POINT FOR IRAN

Yet Trump's attack – a week after Israel began a major military campaign – came as the cleric-run state is at one of its weakest points since the 1979 Islamic revolution toppled the pro-Western shah.

Since the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, which enjoys Iran's support, Israel – besides obliterating much of Gaza – has decimated Lebanon's Hezbollah, a militant group that would once reliably strike Israel as Tehran's proxy.

Iran's main ally among Arab leaders, Syria's Bashar al-Assad, was also toppled in December.

Supporters of Trump's strike argued that diplomacy was not working, with Iran standing firm on its right to enrich uranium.

ABRUPT HALT TO DIPLOMACY
Trump's attack comes almost exactly a decade after former president Barack Obama sealed a deal in which Iran drastically scaled back its nuclear work – which Trump pulled out of in 2018 after coming into office for his first term.

Most of Trump's Republican Party and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has long seen Iran as an existential threat, attacked Obama's deal because it allowed Tehran to enrich uranium at levels well beneath weapons grade and the key clauses had an end date.

But Trump, billing himself a peacemaker, just a month ago said on a visit to Gulf Arab monarchies that he was hopeful for a new deal with Iran, and his administration was preparing new talks when Netanyahu attacked Iran.

This prompted an abrupt U-turn from Trump. "Trump's decision to cut short his own efforts for diplomacy will also make it much harder to get a deal in the medium and long runs," said Jennifer Kavanagh, director of military analysis at Defense Priorities, which advocates restraint.

"Iran now has no incentive to trust Trump's word or to believe that striking a compromise will advance Iran's interests," said Kavanagh.

'We won't just sit in defence'

Ukraine army chief vows to
expand strikes on Russia

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's top military commander vowed to increase the "scale and depth" of strikes on Russia in remarks made public yesterday, saying Kyiv would not sit idly by while Moscow prolonged its three-year invasion.

Diplomatic efforts to end the war have stalled in recent weeks. The last direct meeting between the two sides was almost three weeks ago and no follow-up talks have been scheduled.

Russian attacks on Ukraine have killed dozens of people during the interim, including in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, according to officials.

"We will not just sit in defence. Because this brings nothing and eventually leads to the fact that we still retreat, lose people and territories," Ukrainian commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky told reporters including AFP.

Syrsky said Ukraine would continue its strikes on Russian military targets, which he said had proved "effective".

"Of course, we will continue. We will increase the scale and depth," he said.

Ukraine has launched retaliatory strikes on Russia throughout the war, targeting energy and military infrastructure sometimes hundreds of kilometres from the front line.

Kyiv says the strikes are a fair response to deadly Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure and civilians.

In wide-ranging remarks, Syrsky also conceded that Russia had some advantages in drone warfare, particularly in making fibre-optic drones that are tethered and difficult to jam.



Rescuers carry a body from a damaged building following a Russian strike in Kramatorsk yesterday, amid the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

India arrests 2 for harbouring J&K attackers

AFP, Srinagar

New Delhi's counter-terrorism agency said yesterday it has arrested two men in India-administered Kashmir for allegedly harbouring Pakistani gunmen behind a deadly attack on civilians that sparked a days-long conflict between the two countries.

India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) said the two suspects were from the Pahalgam area, where gunmen killed 26 people two months ago.

"The two men had provided food, shelter and logistical support to the terrorists, who had... selectively killed the tourists on the basis of their religious identity," a statement by NIA said.

The agency identified the two men as Parvaiz Ahmad Jothar and Bashir Ahmad Jothar, claiming the duo "have disclosed the identities of the three armed terrorists involved in the attack".