

# 'Iran attack is high risk, high reward'

Trump was told ahead of strikes

REUTERS, WASHINGTON

Ahead of the US attack on Iran, President Donald Trump received briefings that not only delivered blunt assessments about the risk of major US casualties but also touted the prospect of a generational shift in the Middle East in favour of US interests, a US official told Reuters.

The launch of what the Pentagon called "Operation Epic Fury" yesterday plunged the Middle East into a new and unpredictable conflict. The US and Israeli militaries struck sites across Iran, triggering retaliatory Iranian attacks against Israel and nearby Gulf Arab countries.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the briefers described the operation to the president as a high risk, high reward scenario.

Trump himself appeared to echo that sentiment when he acknowledged the stakes at the onset of the operation, saying "the lives of courageous American heroes may be lost."

"But we're doing this not for now, we're doing this for the future, and it is a noble mission," Trump said in a video address announcing the start of major combat operations.

"For 47 years, the Iranian regime has chanted death to America and waged an unending campaign of bloodshed and mass murder ... We're not gonna put up with it any longer."

The briefings from Trump's national security team help explain how the president decided to pursue arguably the riskiest US military operation since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Ahead of the strikes, Trump received multiple briefings from officials including CIA Director John Ratcliffe, US General Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

On Thursday, Admiral Brad Cooper, who leads US forces in the Middle East as the head of Central Command, flew to Washington to join discussions in the White House Situation Room.



## IRAN UNDER ATTACK

(Top) Satellite imagery from an alleged Israeli strike on the bunker where Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was reportedly being guarded. (Left) Smoke rises following an explosion in Tehran. Vehicles burn in Tehran in this screengrab obtained from a social media video. US and Israeli attacks have hit 24 of Iran's 31 provinces, killing 201 people and injuring 747.

PHOTOS: REUTERS/AFP/AGENCIES



Netanyahu says many signs that Khamenei 'is no longer'

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday that there were many signs suggesting Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei may have been killed in Israeli-U.S. strikes in Iran.

"This morning we destroyed the compound of the tyrant Khamenei," Netanyahu said in a video statement, adding that for more than 30 years Khamenei had "dispatched terrorism across the world, made his own people miserable, and worked constantly and tirelessly on a program to annihilate the state of Israel."

"There are many signs that this tyrant is no longer. This morning we eliminated senior officials in the ayatollahs' regime, Revolutionary Guards commanders, senior figures in the nuclear programme - and we will continue. In the next few days, we will hit thousands more targets of the terror regime," Netanyahu said.

# World warns against Mideast war as US-Iran conflict flares

AFP, Paris

Countries around the world voiced fear of a Middle East conflagration after the United States and Israel carried out strikes on Iran yesterday, triggering retaliation from Tehran, which targeted US bases in the region.

The United Nations' human rights chief condemned the US-Israeli strikes and Iran's response, warning further attacks "would only result in death, destruction and human misery".

"I call for restraint and implore all parties to see reason," Volker Turk said in a statement. Russia slammed the US and Israeli strikes on Iran and argued they were "bringing the region to the brink of a humanitarian, economic, and -- this cannot be ruled out -- radiological catastrophe".

China urged "an immediate halt to military actions", with Beijing's foreign ministry insisting that "Iran's national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity should be respected".

Qatar, which hosts a US military base, condemned an Iranian missile attack on its territory and warned it "reserves its full right to respond to this attack".

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen stressed it was "critical" to "ensure nuclear safety" after the US indicated Iran's atomic sites were in its crosshairs.

Norway's foreign minister argued that Israel's strikes on Iran broke international law, noting that "a pre-emptive attack would require the existence of an imminent threat".

India's foreign ministry insisted that "dialogue and diplomacy should be pursued"



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VOLKER TURK  
UN human rights chief

while the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be respected".

Britain, France and Germany jointly condemned Iran's retaliatory strikes, with the UK government also expressing fears the situation could escalate "into a wider regional conflict". The countries said that none of them had taken part in the US-Israeli operation.

Urging a halt to the "dangerous" escalation, French President Emmanuel Macron also called for an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam vowed his country would not be dragged into war after Israel announced it was carrying out strikes targeting Iran proxy Hezbollah in south Lebanon amid the Iran operation.

Reza Pahlavi, the son of Iran's last shah,

claimed "final victory" was near following the strikes. "Together we can take back and rebuild Iran," said Pahlavi -- who lives in exile in the United States.

Egypt's foreign ministry said it "strongly condemns Iran's targeting of the unity and territorial integrity of brotherly Arab states", warning of "the grave risks this poses to the security and stability of Arab states".

Turkey's foreign ministry urged "all parties to cease hostilities immediately" as the conflict "risks the future of our region and global stability".

Jordan's government urged de-escalation while warning it will defend the kingdom's interests "with all its might". A government spokesman said the country was not part of the conflict.

Palestinian militant group and Iran ally Hamas condemned the United States and Israel's "aggression" towards Tehran, calling it "a direct assault on the entire region".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky argued the strikes on Iran created an opportunity for the Iranian people to oust the "terrorist regime" in Tehran.

International Committee of the Red Cross President Mirjana Spoljaric warned that the "military escalation in the Middle East is igniting a dangerous chain reaction across the region, with potentially devastating consequences for civilians".

The African Union called "for restraint, urgent de-escalation and sustained dialogue" after the strikes, warning that conflict could risk harming people on the continent.

# Travel chaos grips ME after US strikes Iran

REUTERS, Dubai/London

Airlines suspended flights across the Middle East yesterday, including to and from the world's busiest travel hub, Dubai, after the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, plunging the region into a renewed military confrontation.

Flight maps showed airspace over Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Israel and Bahrain virtually empty as Israel said it struck Iran and the U.S. military initiated a series of strikes against targets in the country. Iran retaliated with a salvo of missiles.

Witnesses told Reuters about explosions across the Gulf, including in Qatar's Doha, which hosts the biggest U.S. military base in the Middle East, as well as Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates -- key regional transport hubs.

Dubai Airports said all flights at Dubai International, which handled nearly 100 million passengers last year, as well as the smaller Al Maktoum International airport, were suspended

- Airspace closures affect routes between Europe and Asia
- Lufthansa, Wizz Air, others halt flights to affected regions
- EU aviation regulator advises against flying over Middle East amid military operations

until further notice, urging passengers not to travel.

"Due to multiple regional airspace closures, Emirates has temporarily suspended operations to and from Dubai," the Dubai-based carrier said, while its sister airline flydubai said it had temporarily suspended operations.

Eithad Airways said all flights scheduled to depart Abu Dhabi were suspended until 1000 GMT on Sunday, and flights expected to arrive at the Gulf hub before that time would be cancelled. "Flights already en route to Abu Dhabi are returning to their origin airports where required," it added.

**STRIKES DEEPEN REGIONAL TURMOIL**  
The escalation dimmed hopes for a diplomatic solution to Tehran's nuclear dispute with the West and reignited conflict after weeks of U.S. military buildup in the region.

It marks the latest upheaval for air travel in the usually busy region amid escalating tensions. Airports in the Middle East are some of the busiest in the world, covering an area stretching from Iran and Iraq to the Mediterranean and serving as a connecting hub for flights between Europe and Asia.

"Passengers and airlines can expect airspace to be shut for quite some time in the region," said Eric Schouten, head of aviation security advisory Dyami. "The impact on regional aviation is immediate and highly fluid."

**FLIGHTS REROUTED, PASSENGERS STRANDED**  
Airlines have cancelled almost 40% of flights to Israel and 6.7% of flights to the broader region yesterday, according to preliminary Cirium data. That number seems likely to rise.

At Doha's Hamad International Airport, gates appeared almost empty, while stranded passengers queued to make hotel arrangements. There was uncertainty about when flight schedules would resume, a Reuters witness reported.

# Democrats slam Trump's 'illegal' war

AFP, Washington

Republicans largely welcomed strikes launched Saturday by US forces and ally Israel against Iran but prominent Democrats condemned what they called an illegal aggression.

"Today, Iran is facing the severe consequences of its evil actions," including "terrorism," the murder of Americans and the regime's sustained nuclear ambitions, Speaker of the House of Representatives Mike Johnson said in a statement.

However, the top Democrat in the Senate, Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, demanded a briefing to Congress by the Trump administration.

"The American people do not want another endless and costly war in the Middle East when there are so many problems at home," he said.

Republican Congressman Thomas Massie broke ranks to say: "I am opposed to this war."

"This is not 'America First,'" Massie posted, referring to Trump's widely used campaign slogan. The Republican stressed that when the House and Senate reconvene, he will work with Democrats to "force a congressional vote on war with Iran."



The site where a Bolivian Air Force Hercules aircraft carrying banknotes crashed on Friday evening onto a busy avenue amid inclement weather in the city of El Alto, Bolivia. At least 20 people were killed in the crash.

PHOTO: REUTERS