

Cost to US for war on Iran is \$3.7bn in first 100 hours

AGENCIES

The US-Israeli war on Iran is estimated to have cost Washington \$3.7bn so far in its first 100 hours alone, or nearly \$900m a day, driven largely by the huge expenditure of munitions, according to new research.

An analysis by Washington-based think tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) underlined the colossal cost of the war, which entered its seventh day yesterday, as the US attacks Iran with stealth bombers and advanced weapons systems.

Researchers Mark Cancian and Chris Park said only a small amount of the estimated \$3.7bn cost of the war in the first 100 hours was already budgeted for, while most of the costs - \$3.5bn - were not.

That meant the Pentagon would likely need to request more funding soon to cover the unbudgeted costs, they said.

SCHOOL STRIKE US probe points to likely US responsibility

REUTERS

US military investigators believe it is likely that US forces were responsible for an apparent strike on an Iranian girls' school that killed scores of children on Saturday but have not yet reached a final conclusion or completed their investigation, two US officials told Reuters.

Reuters was unable to determine more details about the investigation, including what evidence contributed to the tentative assessment, what type of munition was used, who was responsible or why the US might have struck the school.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday acknowledged the US military was investigating the incident.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military matters, did not rule out the possibility that new evidence could emerge that absolves the US of responsibility and points to another responsible party in the incident.

Reuters could not determine how much longer the investigation would last or what evidence US investigators are seeking before the assessment can be completed.



Houthi supporters hold placards of late Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a demonstration in solidarity with Iran and Lebanon, amid the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Sanaa, Yemen, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran now stands largely alone

Russia, China stay on sidelines, prioritise own strategic gains

REUTERS, Dubai

With its supreme leader killed and its war machine under relentless US pressure, Iran now stands largely alone - its longtime partners Russia and China offering nothing more than diplomatic condemnations and expressions of concern.

'COLD CALCULATION'

With the Strait of Hormuz already shut, the attacks have sent energy prices soaring, destabilising global markets and forcing major economies to scramble, underscoring the world's exposure to the fallout from Tehran's response to the war.

Russia and China's restraint reflects a cold calculation, analysts say: intervening as Iran faces Israel and the US would bring high costs, limited gains and unpredictable risks - burdens neither power appears willing to shoulder.

"Putin has other priorities, and chief among them is Ukraine," said Anna Borshchevskaya, a Russia expert at the Washington Institute. "It would be foolish for Russia to go into a direct military confrontation with the United States."

STARK PARADOX

China has spent years embedding itself in Middle Eastern diplomacy, while Russia has cast Iran as a pillar of its anti-Western alignment.

Yet as the conflict flared, both powers were constrained - China

by its dependence on Gulf energy and trade and by security priorities in Asia, and Russia by a grinding war in Ukraine that has sapped its capacity to shield partners and sharpened its need to preserve ties with oil-rich Gulf states. The result is a stark paradox: Iran remains strategically useful to both, but

on Venezuela alone.

China's key vulnerability remains energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, which carries some 45 percent of its oil imports. But Beijing has built strategic reserves and substantial volumes of Iranian oil already sitting in tankers or storage, experts say.



not useful enough to fight for. **CHINA ALLIANCES FOCUS ON TRADE**

Unlike the US, whose alliances rest on mutual defence obligations, China prefers partnerships built on trade, investment and arms sales, ties that stop short of dragging it into costly conflicts beyond East Asia, said Evan A Feigenbaum from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Beijing maintains ties with Iran and Gulf Sunni rivals, and in Latin America, never placed all its bets

HIGHER OIL PRICES HELP RUSSIA

Russia also sees concrete benefits: rising oil prices strengthen its war economy.

Russia does not benefit from the collapse of the Iranian regime, but it is also not tying its fate to Tehran's survival, said Borshchevskaya. Moscow is hedging, preserving flexibility, regardless of the conflict's outcome, and would build ties with any new government, even one aligned with Washington.

Iran's proxies in Iraq reluctant to join war

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iran has spent decades and billions of dollars preparing foreign proxy fighters like A J, a commander in a pro-Iranian paramilitary group in Iraq, for a moment just like this. Since the US and Israel went to war on the Islamic Republic a week ago, A J has been awaiting marching orders from Tehran.

But they have yet to come. And so as the leadership in Tehran faces a potentially existential threat, many of the fighters and militia groups the Iranians cultivated in Iraq have so far not entered the fight for them.

There has been no mass mobilization of Iran's proxies inside Iraq, one of the last redoubts of the Islamic Republic's once-formidable system of alliances stretching from Gaza, Lebanon and Syria to Yemen and Iraq.

Some pro-Iranian groups in Iraq have claimed attacks in recent days, to be sure. One group said it had fired drones at "enemy bases in Iraq and the region," and several explosions rocked the northern city of Erbil, a Kurdish stronghold that hosts a US base.

But most missile and drone attacks have come directly from Iran, Kurdish officials say.

US can't provide enough missiles for Gulf nations

Says EU commissioner

AFP, Warsaw

The United States is not in a position to provide enough missiles to the Gulf states and Ukraine to defend themselves, EU defence and space commissioner Andrius Kubilius said yesterday.

"It's very clear that after the Iranian crisis ... it became more urgent for us in Europe to ramp up production of air defence and anti-ballistic missiles," Kubilius said in Warsaw.

"Americans really will not be able to provide enough of those missiles, both for the Gulf countries, for American army itself, and also for Ukrainian needs."

Kubilius said Europe was facing a "huge challenge" in developing anti-missile defence, stressing that Ukraine's needs were "immense".

He said "for the winter season alone" Ukraine needed around 700 Patriot, PAC-2 and PAC-3 missiles, which is "more or less equal to the number of missiles that American manufacturers are capable of producing in a year".

At a joint press conference with Polish defence minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz, Kubilius emphasised that "the situation (in Europe) is really critical".

"It is clear that we are going to have to develop our missile production very quickly and very urgently," he added.

Missile fire hinders Middle East rescue flights

REUTERS, Dubai

Emirati airlines resumed some flights to global cities from the war-hit Gulf yesterday, but a Lufthansa jet that was headed to the region diverted over safety fears and an Air France repatriation flight was forced to turn back due to missile fire.

The outbreak of the US-Israel war against Iran has led to flight cancellations across the Middle East, leaving airlines and governments scrambling to support thousands of stranded passengers. Shares in carriers from New Zealand to Japan have slid meanwhile, as the conflict drives up fuel prices.

Passengers have paid huge sums to get out of the Middle East, with last-minute dashes to the airport, overland trips to less impacted hubs and fighter jets at times escorting passenger planes out. Some described it as "absolute chaos".

With most airspace in the region still closed over missile and drone concerns, some people with deep pockets have turned to private jets while charter flights and limited commercial services struggle to evacuate tens of thousands of travellers.

A Lufthansa flight to Saudi capital Riyadh diverted to Cairo yesterday over safety concerns after a similar move by an Air France late on Thursday.

"(It) reflects the instability in the region and the complexity of repatriation operations," French Transport Minister Philippe Tabarot said.

Britain's first repatriation flight from Oman landed at London's Stansted Airport early yesterday after delays. Similar repatriation flights arrived or were due to arrive back in countries from Poland to Portugal.



Medical stocks 'critically low' in Gaza: WHO

REUTERS, Geneva

The World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday that medical supplies in Gaza were running critically low despite Israel's reopening of a key crossing this week.

Supplies of some items such as gauze and needles have already run out, said WHO's regional director Hanan Balkhy, citing information from the Health Ministry in Gaza, devastated by the two-year Israel-Hamas war.

"Stocks of essential medicines, trauma supplies and surgical consumables are critically low, and fuel shortages continue to limit hospital operations," she said.

"The situation is difficult, and we will be running out of whatever is remaining."

On Tuesday, the Israeli military agency that controls access to Gaza said it had reopened the Kerem Shalom border crossing "for the gradual entry of humanitarian aid". It had closed entry points earlier citing missile threats from Iran amid an escalating air war after Israeli and US forces attacked Iran on Saturday.

The Rafah crossing into Egypt, the main exit point for most people in Gaza, has remained shut and medical evacuations suspended, WHO said.

Some 18,000 people, including injured children and people with chronic diseases, are awaiting evacuation, according to the UN agency.

Balkhy said that it was able to import some medical supplies and fuel on Tuesday and Wednesday, but that some trucks remain on standby in al-Arish, Egypt.

"We're talking about ... maximum 200 out of 600 daily trucks that need to go in are going in so that is really not enough to support the needs in Gaza," she said.



Relatives of political prisoners rally outside the national parliament in Caracas, Venezuela on Thursday. Venezuela enacted a historic amnesty law expected to free hundreds of detainees, but experts say it is exclusionary and leaves many at the mercy of those in power.

PHOTO: AFP

Zelensky 'has to get a deal done': Trump

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Thursday described Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky as the obstacle to a deal with Russia, whose leader Vladimir Putin he insisted was cooperative.

"Zelensky, he has to get on the ball, and he has to get a deal done," Trump said in an interview with Politico. Trump, returning to language he used during a tense White House meeting a year ago where he and Vice President JD Vance publicly berated Zelensky, suggested that the Ukrainian leader was in a weak position and needed to make compromises.

"It's unthinkable that he's the obstacle," Trump was quoted as saying. "You don't have the cards. Now he's got even less cards."

"I think Putin is ready to make a deal," Trump said.

Trump has long said that US support for Ukraine is wasteful to the United States.