

TROOPS TO IRAN GOP lawmaker demands Congress vote

US Representative Nancy Mace, a Republican, has said Congress should have a say in any decisions to deploy troops to Iran, further underscoring division within President Trump's political party.

Mace's comments on Sunday came days after she emerged from a classified House of Representatives briefing on the war, saying it had raised concerns over the administration's plans.

"If we're going to do a conventional ground operation with Marines and 82nd Airborne that is a ground war that I believe Congress should have a say and we should be briefed," Mace said during an interview on CNN.

"We don't want troops on the ground," Mace added.



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike on Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday. A United Nations peacekeeper was killed in southern Lebanon overnight, prompting condemnations yesterday after a bloody weekend in which Lebanese journalists and medics were killed in Israeli strikes.

PHOTO: AFP

Spain closes airspace to US military planes

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain has closed its airspace to US planes involved in attacks on Iran, a step beyond its previous denial of use of jointly-operated military bases, Defence Minister Margarita Robles said yesterday.

"We don't authorize either the use of military bases or the use of airspace for actions related to the war in Iran," she told reporters in Madrid.

Spanish newspaper El Pais had first reported the news yesterday, citing military sources. The closure of the airspace forces military planes to bypass Nato member Spain en route to their targets in the Middle East, but it does not include emergency situations, El Pais added.

"This decision is part of the decision already made by the Spanish government not to participate in or contribute to a war which was initiated unilaterally and against international law," Economy Minister Carlos Cuerpo said.

'Nuclear fatwa is dead' Analysts wonder if Iran, cornered after Khamenei's death, will seek a nuclear bomb

CNN ONLINE

When Iran's covert nuclear programme came to international attention over two decades ago, Tehran insisted that its intentions were peaceful and that it had no plans to develop weapons.

The country's then-supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, even went as far as issuing a fatwa, or legal ruling under Islamic law, banning them. But his death at the hands of the US and Israel last month could clear a path for the regime's hardest-line factions to rethink the ruling. The public discourse in Iran is already heading that way.

"The nuclear fatwa is dead," Trita Parsi of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft told CNN. "Elite opinion as well as public opinion has shifted dramatically on this, which shouldn't be surprising since Iran has been bombed twice in the midst of negotiations by two nuclear-equipped states."

For years, the former supreme

leader resisted internal pressure to authorize the building of a nuclear weapon, particularly after President Trump withdrew from nuclear pact negotiated between Iran and Obama administration in 2018.



Faced with escalating American and Israeli hostility, Khamenei instead adhered to his doctrine of what experts call "strategic patience." He allowed Iran to steadily advance its uranium enrichment program, bringing the material ever closer to weapons-grade levels without crossing the threshold into

actual bomb development.

The calls to pursue a nuclear bomb grew louder after Trump's order to strike three of Iran's most important nuclear sites this month.

Even before those strikes, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) had warned that Tehran was prepared to shift its nuclear posture.

Presuming the Iranian regime has access to its highly enriched uranium stockpile, it could opt to build a crude nuclear device rather than a sophisticated, missile-deliverable weapon, said Sina Azodi, author of "Iran and the Bomb: The United States, Iran and the Nuclear Question."

He points out that Iran's deterrence policy over the decades has largely focused on Iraq, Israel and more recently Saudi Arabia. And, if Iran were to push forward with its own weapon, he says Riyadh would likely be the next regional candidate to go for a bomb.

American Univ in Armenia moves all classes online

AFP, Yerevan

The American University of Armenia said yesterday it was moving all classes online over Iranian threats to target US universities in West Asia.

Several US universities have campuses scattered throughout the Middle East, including Texas A&M University in Qatar and New York University in the United Arab Emirates.

Iran threatened to target US universities in the Middle East after saying US-Israeli strikes had destroyed two Iranian universities.

"Due to the threat made by Iran to target American universities in West Asia and the Middle East, all AUA classes on Monday, March 30, will be held fully online," the university said.

The American University of Armenia said it had received no direct threats and stressed there was no cause for alarm, calling the move "a precautionary measure".

RUSSIAN OIL SECTOR Allies sent Ukraine 'signals' on reducing strikes Zelensky says amid a spike in global energy prices

REUTERS, Kyiv

Some of Ukraine's allies have sent Kyiv "signals" about the possibility of scaling back its long-range strikes on Russia's oil sector amid a spike in global energy prices, President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters in a WhatsApp chat, he added that Ukraine was ready to reciprocate if Russia stops attacking the Ukrainian energy system, and that Kyiv is open to an Easter ceasefire.

"Recently, following such a severe global energy crisis, we have indeed received signals from some of our partners about how to reduce our responses in the oil sector and the energy sector of the Russian Federation," Zelensky said in a WhatsApp briefing with journalists.

The US-Israeli war on Iran has squeezed international supplies of oil, gas and refined products, sending prices soaring. Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure have already left it scrambling for supplies.

Israeli fire kills 4 in Gaza, West Bank

REUTERS, Cairo

An Israeli air strike killed at least three people in the Gaza Strip yesterday, local health officials said, in the latest round of violence since a US-brokered ceasefire took effect more than five months ago.

Medics said three people were killed and two others wounded when an Israeli plane fired a missile at a group of Palestinians near the Zeitoun neighbourhood in Gaza City. There was no immediate Israeli comment.

More than 72,000 people have been killed since the war started in October 2023.

Israel is now also waging a war, alongside the US, against Iran, and is carrying out a new campaign against Hezbollah in which Israeli forces have invaded southern Lebanon.

Violence in Gaza has persisted despite the ceasefire and amid Israel's war with Iran.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, health officials said Israeli forces shot and killed a 22-year-old man near the city of Hebron. They added that soldiers took the body away.

Palestinian security sources identified the dead man as Ramzi Awawada and accused Israeli soldiers of leaving him to bleed to death and preventing rescuers from reaching him.



Supporters of Nepal's former prime minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli march during a protest against his arrest in Kathmandu, Nepal yesterday.

Myanmar junta chief steps down Eyes presidency in parliamentary vote

REUTERS

Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar's military chief who led a coup in 2021, stepped down yesterday to stand as president in a parliamentary vote following the first polls in the Southeast Asian nation since the takeover that triggered a civil war.

The 69-year-old general, who had commanded Myanmar's armed forces since 2011, was one of two people named as vice-presidential candidates by lawmakers from the country's newly convened lower house of parliament.

The country's upper house will also nominate a vice-presidential candidate, with both houses to select a president from the three in a later vote. A date for that vote has not been announced.

"Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is proposed as a vice-presidential candidate," Kyaw Kyaw Htay, a lawmaker from a military-aligned party, said on the floor of the lower house of parliament, according to a live broadcast of proceedings on state media.

The move follows a controversial election held in December and January, won by military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party but widely derided as a sham by the UN and many Western countries.

Myanmar has been gripped by violence since the 2021 coup in which the military, also known as the Tatmadaw, unseated the democratically elected government of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. At a separate ceremony in the capital Naypyitaw, Min Aung Hlaing handed over the position of commander in chief of the armed forces to Ye Win Oo, a veteran officer.

"I will continue to serve the interests of the people, the military, and the national interests of the country," he said in a speech broadcast by military-owned media. Ye Win Oo was appointed Myanmar's intelligence chief in 2020, and was promoted to commander-in-chief of the army earlier this month. "The fact that he received two major promotions within two months clearly demonstrates that he is one of Min Aung Hlaing's most trusted loyalists," said Aung Kyaw Soe, an independent analyst.



Official document from the Election Commission of Bangladesh regarding the 2024-25 election process, including details on the ballot paper and the election date.

Official document from the Bangladesh Supreme Court regarding the 2024-25 election process, including details on the ballot paper and the election date.