

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.

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 Cuelpo 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".

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.



Min Aung Hlaing

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.

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.

Tk 31,000cr in fuel subsidies needed till June

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and act responsibly. "If people buy more than they need or store fuel, supply will inevitably be disrupted. As a flammable substance, this also poses serious fire risks," he warned.

The minister said a tendency among consumers to stockpile fuel has become a bigger concern than any actual supply shortage.

"Let me state clearly—there is no fuel shortage in Bangladesh at this moment. In fact, we have increased supply compared to last year," Tuku said.

Replying to a query, he said despite the surge in demand, diesel stocks have risen to 2,18,000 tonnes from 2,06,000 tonnes as of March 30, he added.

However, in a separate briefing at the secretariat, diesel stock was cited at

1.33 lakh tonnes. The minister told parliament that fuel supply in March was maintained at 10-25 percent higher than that of the same period last year.

He said changes in consumer purchasing behaviour, such as panic buying, created artificial pressure in the market. He cited examples of motorcycles collecting 15-20 litres daily instead of the usual five litres.

According to the minister, daily diesel demand last year was around 12,000 tonnes, while octane and petrol demand stood at 1,200 tonnes and 1,400 tonnes, respectively.

Between March 1 and 23 this year, octane sales reached 28,239 tonnes, averaging about 1,258 tonnes per day, indicating

a steady supply in the market. Long queues at filling stations for octane and petrol do not reflect the overall supply situation, he added.

To ensure a steady supply, the government is importing 50,000 tonnes of octane in April, he said, adding that around 30,000 tonnes will come from domestic sources.

These will be enough to meet nearly two months' demand, he assured.

He said authorities have conducted 3,168 drives nationwide, filed 1,053 cases, fined offenders Tk 75 lakh, and jailed 16 people.

"Around 2.08 lakh litres of fuel were recovered during these drives, including 1.4 lakh litres of diesel, 22,000 litres of octane, and 23,000 litres of petrol," he said.

ILO lauds changes

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government in 2021 formulated a five-year roadmap on labour sector reforms and submitted it to the ILO Governing Body. Over the past five years, progress under this roadmap has been discussed in eight ILO Governing Body sessions.

Yesterday, the current government presented its ninth progress report.

Of the ILO's 56-member Governing Body, 19 countries, along with 28 countries from two regional groups and representatives of employers, praised the new government's strong commitment to legal and administrative reforms in the labour sector.

They also called for a swift resolution of the 2019 case.

Among the supporting entities, 14 countries, the 22-member Arab Group, the six-member Gulf Group, and the employers' representatives strongly demanded the withdrawal of the case.

It was unanimously decided that the next discussion on the case will be held in March next year.

Forty-seven countries at the 356th ILO Governing Body session also congratulated Bangladesh and expressed full support for its democratically elected government.

Minister for Labour and Employment and Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ariful Haque Chowdhury, MP, and the Prime Minister's Adviser on Labour, Employment, and Education Mahdi Amin represented Bangladesh in

the discussion.

Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to Geneva, Ambassador Nahida Sobhan, and Labour Secretary Abdur Rahman Tarafdar were also present.

Amin highlighted the importance of the ILO and noted the prime minister's personal commitment to ensuring labour rights, worker protection, and social justice.

"At the core of this mandate is the election manifesto, which places special emphasis on civil rights -- including human rights, the rule of law, and freedom of expression -- as well as on creating extensive and diversified employment opportunities, ensuring quality education, and enhancing skills and competencies."

He reiterated the government's strong commitment to transparency and accountability, adding that these priorities are aligned with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

He also informed the session that a parliamentary special committee has provided recommendations to transform the Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 into law.

The government will make strong efforts to expedite the process, he assured.

He further noted that the government holds a positive stance on the amendments formulated through tripartite consultations and expressed optimism that these measures would enable inclusive, sustainable, and employment-driven development.

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