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## Five soldiers seriously wounded by Hezbollah rocket as Air Force pounds Beirut

*3 more, including minister's son, lightly hurt as projectile hits near border; dozens of IRGC officers said to flee Lebanese capital; campaign set to last after Iran war ends, officials say*

By [Emanuel Fabian](#)

and [Agencies](#) 6 March 2026, 4:58 pm Updated at 8:07 pm



*Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, Beirut's southern suburbs, March 6, 2026. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)*

**Eight Israeli soldiers were wounded, five of them seriously, in a Hezbollah rocket attack in northern Israel on Friday, the military said.**

**The rocket struck an army position near the Lebanon border. An alert sounded in the area, though the soldiers did not manage to seek shelter in time, according to a preliminary probe by the Israel Defense Forces.**

**The troops, who all serve with the Givati Brigade, were taken to a hospital for treatment. Five were listed in serious condition and three were lightly hurt, the army said.**

Among those lightly injured by the rocket strike was the son of Finance Minister Betzalel Smotrich, the minister's office said.

The Israeli Air Force launched airstrikes in Beirut overnight and throughout Friday, as officers from Iran's Revolutionary Guards reportedly fled the Lebanese capital amid Israel's attacks.

According to the IDF, overnight strikes hit 10 multi-story buildings that were being used by the terror group in Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold known as the Dahiyeh.

The buildings, including a drone warehouse and the headquarters of Hezbollah's executive council, "were intended to be used by Hezbollah to advance and carry out numerous attacks against IDF troops and the State of Israel," the military said in a statement.

A wave of strikes in the afternoon in the Dahiyeh struck a headquarters of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, as well as several Hezbollah sites.

According to the IDF, the headquarters served the IRGC air force. In addition, the military said it struck three Hezbollah headquarters — of the terror group's naval force, executive council, and financial division.

The IDF strikes in Beirut were preceded by a mass evacuation order for residents in all four major neighborhoods of the Dahiyeh. Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam warned Friday that the displacement risked a "humanitarian disaster." The UN said Israel's blanket evacuation orders raised "serious concern" under international law. Israel says the evacuations are meant to prevent harm to civilians as it targets terror infrastructure.

The IDF also issued evacuation orders in Hezbollah strongholds in southern Lebanon and in the country's

eastern [Beqaa Valley](#).

Hezbollah, for its part, issued its own [evacuation warning](#) for Israeli towns near the border with Lebanon on Friday, apparently in a sardonic rejoinder to Israel's Dahiyeh evacuation order. Israel has said it is not evacuating northern Israeli towns, and instead has launched a ground and air offensive aimed at pushing Hezbollah away from the border.

And unlike the hundreds of thousands who have answered Israel's call to leave in Lebanon, there is little evidence of mass departures from northern Israel, despite a rise in rocket attacks from Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Lebanese state media reported Friday that Israel struck a building on a main thoroughfare in the southern coastal city of Sidon with no prior warning. The IDF has not commented on the reports.

An AFP photographer said the strike targeted the 10th floor of an office building near two shelters for displaced people. According to Lebanon's Health Ministry, at least five people were killed and seven others wounded.

At least 123 people have been killed and 683 wounded in Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon after Hezbollah waded into the regional conflict earlier this week, according to the ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants.



***A man removes documents from the top floor of a damaged building struck by a reported Israeli airstrike in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon, March 6, 2026. (AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari)***

IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said Friday that the military has killed more than 70 Hezbollah operatives in strikes in Lebanon since Hezbollah joined the fray.

According to the IDF, since Hezbollah attacked Israel on Monday, the military has struck over 500 targets in Lebanon, including 170 rocket launchers. On Friday alone, over 100 targets were struck, the army said.

Israel has also sent troops deeper into Lebanon following the renewed Hezbollah attacks. At least five IDF

soldiers have been wounded fighting inside Lebanon, including an officer who was seriously wounded, according to the military.

In an assessment with senior IDF officers on Friday, Defense Minister Israel Katz said Israel would defeat Hezbollah "one way or another" and that no resident of northern Israel should have to evacuate.

"No resident of the north should have to leave or move from their land and communities, and our mission is to ensure and guarantee their safety and security," said Katz, according to his office. "The IDF has reinforced troops inside enemy territory and has now significantly expanded to additional positions."

"We will do this until Hezbollah is defeated, one way or another," he added.



***Defense Minister Israel Katz (center) meets with IDF generals at the military's underground command center at the IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv, March 6, 2026. (Ariel Hermoni/Defense Ministry)***

Among those killed in Israel's strikes in Lebanon since Monday are Iranian officials and senior officers in Iran-backed terror groups, according to the military, Arabic media reports, and the organizations themselves.

Citing senior Israeli defense officials and a third source with knowledge of the matter, [Axios](#) reported overnight that dozens of IRGC officers had fled Lebanon in the past two days over fears they could be targeted by Israel.

According to the news site, most of the fleeing officers are from the Quds Force, the IRGC's extraterritorial branch, who serve as military advisers for Hezbollah and hold significant sway over its operations.

"We expect the IRGC exodus from Lebanon to continue over the next several days," one of the Israeli defense officials was quoted as saying.

The report added that a small group of Iranian officers was expected to remain in Lebanon to maintain the

Quds Force's presence and liaise with Hezbollah.

### **Lebanon campaign expected to continue after Iran war**

Overnight Sunday-Monday, Hezbollah launched its first rocket barrage at Israel since the November 2024 Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire agreement, which had ended over a year of conflict initiated by the terror group.

Following Hezbollah's renewed attacks, the IDF has struck over 500 targets in Lebanon, according to the military. The targets have included top Hezbollah commanders, members of the group's elite Radwan Force, rocket launchers, command centers and weapon depots, as well as members of other terror groups and their infrastructure, the IDF said Friday.

Israel had regularly struck Lebanon following the 2024 agreement, accusing Hezbollah of ceasefire violations, and continued to hold on to five border posts inside Lebanon, citing security needs. It has now expanded beyond those points.

The Lebanese government, which seeks to disarm Hezbollah, has slammed its renewed attacks on Israel, accusing the terror group of dragging Lebanon into a regional war.



***A picture taken along the Israel-Lebanon border shows rockets being fired from southern Lebanon towards Israel on March 3, 2026. (Jalaa MAREY / AFP)***

Hezbollah has portrayed its renewed attacks as a response to "15 months of hostilities" by Israel, while also describing the attacks as a retaliation for the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei at the start of the US-Israeli bombing campaign, which seeks to destroy Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities and potentially lead to regime change.

Speaking with Reuters, a source briefed on Israel's military strategy described the Iranian and Lebanese fronts as separate, and said Israel's attacks on Hezbollah would

likely continue after the US-Israeli bombing campaign ends.

Israel would not tolerate threats to northern Israeli towns and villages, said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Two senior Lebanese security officials and a foreign security official based in Lebanon said they also expected Israel to pursue military operations in Lebanon even once the broader conflict with Iran came to a close.

"This is about ending Hezbollah once and for all," one of the Lebanese security officials said.

All three officials said a long-term Israeli military occupation of the entire border strip of southern Lebanon was likely.

### **Lebanese, UN officials warn of humanitarian disaster**

The IDF said Friday that it estimates some 420,000 Lebanese civilians had evacuated their homes in southern Lebanon, and that tens of thousands more had evacuated Beirut's Dahiyeh, following Israel's evacuation warnings.

Salam, the Lebanese premier, warned on Friday that "a humanitarian disaster is looming" as a result of



Israel's evacuation orders and appealed to the international community to help stop Israel's attacks and spare Lebanon's infrastructure.

"The humanitarian and political consequences of this displacement could be unprecedented," Salam told foreign ambassadors.

He criticized both Israel and Hezbollah over the crisis, saying that the Lebanese state and people "did not choose this war."

***Displaced people fleeing Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon sit in traffic at a highway linking to Beirut, in the southern port city of Sidon, March 2, 2026, after Hezbollah fired rockets into Israel. (AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari)***

UN human rights chief Volker Turk accused Israel on Friday of issuing "blanket, massive displacement orders."

"We are talking here about hundreds of thousands of people," said Turk at a press conference in Geneva.

“This raises serious concern under international humanitarian law, and in particular when it comes to issues around forced transfer.”

Imran Riza, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Lebanon, told Reuters on Friday that about 100,000 displaced Lebanese were staying in shelters and the number of displaced is expected to rapidly increase following Israel’s “unprecedented” evacuation warnings.

The 100,000 people were gathered in “some 477 collective shelters,” said Riza, adding that “there are some 57 shelters that still have some space, but basically the capacity is being reached very, very quickly.”

“What we saw in the last couple of days is, I would say ... unprecedented in terms of the scale here in Lebanon of the warnings, the displacement orders, and the reaction, the panic also, that this has all created,” said Riza.

“We had people moving all over the place and not knowing where to go to. So yes, I think we’re going to have an increased number quite quickly,” he said.

He noted that more than a million people were uprooted in Lebanon during the previous Israel-Hezbollah war, 75-80% of whom were not in shelters. “This time again, the majority will not be in shelters probably,” he said. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/five-soldiers-seriously-wounded-by-hezbollah-rocket-as-air-force-pounds-beirut/>

## **IDF says it destroys Khamenei’s bunker, being used by top brass; Trump demands unconditional surrender Rubio said to tell Arab states war to last ‘several more weeks’; Israeli official says it’s going ‘much better than expected’**

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Jacob Magid](#), [Lazar Berman](#),

[Tel Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) 6 March 2026, 9:01 pm Updated: Today, 2:08 am



*Smoke rises from the site of airstrikes in a central area of the Iranian capital Tehran on March 6, 2026. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)*

**A massive Israeli strike Friday morning destroyed the underground Tehran bunker of Iran’s late supreme leader Ali Khamenei, which was being used by senior regime officials, the IDF announced, as the US-Israeli bombing campaign against the Islamic Republic continued into its seventh day.**

**Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said the assault would not let up until Iran announced its unconditional surrender. And IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir said Israel was “crushing the Iranian terror regime, and will seize every**

**opportunity to deepen our achievements.”**

**In the opening strike of the war, the IDF struck and killed Khamenei while he was at his compound, but not in the bunker buried deep underground.**

According to the military, Friday saw some 50 Israeli Air Force fighter jets drop around 100 bombs on the bunker, completely destroying it.

The bunker was located under the “leadership complex” in Tehran. Its rooms and tunnels were spread across multiple streets and included “many entry points and rooms for gatherings of senior members of the Iranian terror regime,” the army said. “The underground bunker was built beneath the [leadership] compound and was a secure emergency asset for managing the war by the leader, who was eliminated before he managed to use it.”

The military added that “the compound continued to be used by senior members of the Iranian regime” even after the killing of Khamenei days ago.

The results of the strike were not yet clear, and the military did not immediately name the officials targeted.

The Military Intelligence Directorate’s Unit 8200 and Unit 9900 — which are tasked with signal and visual intelligence, respectively — mapped out the site over a years-long effort, enabling Friday’s “precise” strike, according to the IDF.

The IDF has struck sites at Iran’s leadership complex in Tehran several times amid the conflict.

**Israeli Air Force fighter jets strike the underground bunker of Iran’s former supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, in Tehran, in footage published by the military on March 6, 2026. (Israel Defense Forces)**

The first attack of the war killed Khamenei at the complex. Another strike on a nearby building killed eight top Iranian officials, according to the military. On Tuesday, the IDF said it hit several sites at the complex, including Iran's presidential bureau and the headquarters of Iran's Supreme National Security.

Witnesses in Tehran described Friday's airstrikes as particularly intense, shaking homes in the area. Others reported explosions around the Iranian city of Kermanshah in an area that is home to multiple missile bases.



*Plumes of smoke rise as strikes hit the city during the US-Israeli military campaign in Tehran, Iran, March 5, 2026. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)*

Hours later, the IDF said it carried out another strike in Tehran, this time targeting "a senior Iranian terror regime commander."

According to Israeli security sources, the target of the strike was Asghar Hijazi, acting chief of staff of the supreme leader's office.

The IDF said that further details on the strike would be provided later. Hijazi's state was not yet known.

Hijazi was close to Khamenei and was a key figure in

the Islamic Republic's senior leadership structure.

"For years, he has been considered one of the most influential figures in the supreme leader's office," said Raz Zimmt, Director of the Iran and Shiite Axis Program at the Institute for National Security Studies think tank. He added that Hijazi was "far more than just the chief of staff," as he "served as Khamenei's representative in sensitive political and security consultations."

In all, the IDF said it hit over 400 Iranian military targets in western Iran on Friday, including ballistic missile launchers and warehouses containing drones.

The army said it estimated that Iran still has 100-200 remaining ballistic missile launchers, after destroying over 300 of them so far in the current war. It is continuing to "hunt down" launchers to "reduce as much as possible the scope of fire towards Israel," the military added.

According to the military, the Air Force has dropped over 6,500 bombs in Iran since the start of the war. In all, IAF fighter jets have carried out 2,500 sorties and 150 separate waves of strikes, the IDF said.

The military said it was now increasing strikes targeting Iranian regime sites in Tehran, as well as against Iran's weapon production facilities across the country — including those used to manufacture missiles and launchers — as it moves into a new phase of the war.

### **Trump: No deal without unconditional surrender**

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said Friday that "some countries" had begun seeking to mediate an end to the war. But shortly afterward, Trump declared that there would be no agreement with Tehran without a complete surrender.

"There will be no deal with Iran except UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER!" he said in a Truth Social post.

"After [Iran's unconditional surrender], and the selection of a GREAT & ACCEPTABLE Leader(s), we, and many of our wonderful and very brave allies and partners, will work tirelessly to bring Iran back from the brink of destruction, making it economically bigger, better and stronger than ever before," Trump wrote.



*US President Donald Trump speaks during an event to honor the 2025 Major League Soccer champions Inter Miami in the East Room of the White House, Thursday, March 5, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Julia Demaree Nihkinson)*

"IRAN WILL HAVE A GREAT FUTURE," he declared.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later told Fox News that what Trump meant by unconditional surrender "is when he — as commander-in-chief of the US military and the leader of the free world — determines that Iran can no longer pose a threat to the United States."

Speaking later with Axios, Trump said unconditional surrender could mean the total destruction of the Islamic

Republic's military capabilities and not necessarily a former capitulation by Iran.

“Unconditional surrender could be that [the Iranians] announce it. But it could also be when they can’t fight any longer because they don’t have anyone or anything to fight with,” [he said](#).

The remarks raised fresh questions over the Trump administration’s assertions that regime change is not one of the goals of the war. The US president said several times on Thursday that he wanted a role in the selection of the country’s next leader.

Pezeshkian, in his announcement that some countries have begun mediation efforts to end the war, stressed that any talks must first address those who started the war.

“Some countries have begun mediation efforts,” he said. “Let’s be clear: We are committed to lasting peace in the region, yet we have no hesitation in defending our nation’s dignity and sovereignty.

“Mediation should address those who underestimated the Iranian people and ignited this conflict,” the Iranian president said in a post on X.

### **Rubio said to tell Arabs war will last ‘several more weeks’**

According to a Friday report in Axios citing unnamed sources, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told Arab foreign ministers in a series of phone calls Thursday that the war with Iran is expected to last [several more weeks](#).

Rubio told the ministers that the US is focused on targeting Iran’s missile launchers, stockpiles and manufacturing sites, Axios said. The secretary tried to explain that the goal of the war is not regime change, even though he acknowledged that the US wants different people running Iran.

Rubio said there is currently no dialogue with the regime, as such contact at this stage would undermine military objectives, Axios added.

While Iran has targeted Israel and the US military with its retaliatory missile and drone strikes, it has also launched hundreds of ballistic missiles and thousands of drones at the Arab states in the Gulf, targeting energy infrastructure and civilian sites as well as US bases in the region, in an apparent bid to press Arab leaders to lobby for an end to the war.



*A large fire and plume of smoke are visible after, according to the authorities, debris of an Iranian-intercepted drone hit the Fujairah oil facility, in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday, March 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)*

On Friday, Saudi Arabia’s defense ministry said its military intercepted and destroyed a cruise missile near the central Al-Kharj area.

Iranian strikes also targeted Iraq on Friday, with an Iraqi security official saying that four drones struck Basra airport and two oil facilities in the south of the country.

“One drone crashed into the cargo terminal at Basra airport,” the official said, adding that two others hit a US company in the Burjesia oil complex, and a fourth struck

the Rumaila oil field, where energy giant BP operates.

Amid the strikes, Kuwait has begun cutting production at some oil fields after running out of room to store its bottled-up crude, The Wall Street Journal reported Friday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The country, which is a founding member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), is discussing limiting its production and refining capacity further, to just what it needs to cover domestic consumption, WSJ said.

Additionally, Qatari Energy Minister Saad al-Kaabi told the Financial Times that he expects all Gulf energy producers to shut down exports within weeks if the Iran conflict continues and drives oil to \$150 a barrel.

*This handout picture released by Qatar’s Amiri Diwan on March 5, 2026, shows Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (C) visiting the National Command Centre for the Ministry of Interior on March 5, 2026. (Qatar Amiri Diwan / AFP)*



Qatar halted its production of liquefied natural gas on Monday, as Iran continued to strike Gulf countries in retaliation for Israeli and US attacks. The country’s LNG production is responsible for about 20 percent of global supply and plays a major role in balancing both Asian and European markets’ demand for the fuel.

“If this war continues for a few weeks, GDP growth around the world will be impacted,” Kaabi said. “Everybody’s energy price is going to go higher. There will be shortages of some products and there will be a chain reaction of factories that cannot supply.”

Kaabi said that even if the war ended immediately, it would take Qatar “weeks to months” to return to a normal cycle of deliveries. Analysts and economists have highlighted the potential impact of the war on economies globally.

### **Senior Israeli official says war going ‘much better than expected’**

While Iran has not stopped launching missiles and drones across the region, the Israeli military said Friday that the frequency has decreased significantly, estimating that the number of ballistic missiles launched from Iran at Israel has slowed to around 20 per day in recent days.

On the first day of the war on Saturday, some 90 ballistic missiles were fired toward Israel. The following day, Sunday, the number dropped to around 60.

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, roughly 20 missiles were fired each day in multiple salvos, each consisting of a small number of projectiles.

Iran has launched dozens more ballistic missiles at other countries in the Middle East during the conflict. In total, Iranian media claims about 500 ballistic missiles have been fired.

CENTCOM chief Adm. Brad Cooper said Thursday that Iran’s ballistic missile attacks have decreased by 90% since the first day of the war.



*Anti-missile batteries fire interception missiles toward incoming ballistic missiles launched from Iran, as seen over Tel Aviv, during the war with Iran and ongoing missile fire toward Israel, March 5, 2026. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)*

As Iran seems to be slowing its missile and drone campaign, a senior Israeli official told The Times of Israel Friday that the Israeli-US campaign against Iran is “proceeding much better than expected.”

“Nobody could have expected such smooth execution,” said the official. “With such payloads being dropped, and such a complex level of coordination required — no one could have anticipated such success so soon.”

The official stressed that there is still much to be

done, “but the achievements are epic.” <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-destroys-key-tehran-bunker-used-by-top-brass-trump-vows-no-deal-until-iran-surrenders/>

## **Trump seeks a 'Venezuela model' in Iran, experts warn it won't work**

*Encouraged by the operation that captured Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro, President Donald Trump now wants a say in choosing Iran’s next leader, but experts warn the Shiite theocracy is built to survive pressure — not become a US-backed puppet*

ynet|17:54

**U.S. President Donald Trump’s statement that he should personally be involved in selecting Iran’s next leader, just as he said he did in Venezuela, has reinforced assessments over the past day that Trump is attempting to promote a similar model of change in Tehran to the one he pursued in Caracas.**



**Diplomats and analysts around the world are skeptical of that expectation, stressing that the Islamic Republic differs greatly from the South American oil power and warning that Trump is mistaken if he believes the same methods can be applied.**

*Donald Trump, Nicolás Maduro, Delcy Rodríguez (Photo: lev radin/shutterstock, AP Photo/Markus Schreiber)*

**On January 3, Trump ordered U.S. special forces to capture Venezuela’s socialist president, Nicolás Maduro, following months in which he**

**accused Maduro of running a drug cartel and smuggling illegal and harmful substances into the United States.** Trump warned that if Maduro did not comply with U.S. demands, his regime would be overthrown. After Maduro was captured and transferred to the United States, Washington said it was holding productive talks with his vice president, Delcy Rodríguez. Within days she was sworn in as his successor.

Shortly after Maduro's removal, Trump announced that Washington would now manage Venezuela's affairs remotely, with Rodríguez cooperating with the United States. He warned that if the new president failed to comply with U.S. demands — chief among them granting Washington access to Venezuela's oil resources — the United States would strike the country again. In the two months since the operation in Caracas, the message appears to have taken hold. The new government led by Rodríguez seems largely aligned with Washington, and Trump himself has praised her conduct.

Many analysts believe what appeared to be a successful operation in Venezuela emboldened Trump to launch a campaign against Iran and fueled hopes in Washington that it could also shape the future of the regime in Tehran. Against the backdrop of reports that Iran's clerical establishment has chosen Mojtaba Khamenei, son of the eliminated supreme leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#), as the next leader, Trump said the appointment was unacceptable to him and indicated he wanted to play a role in determining Iran's next leader. In remarks to Axios, Trump said the United States wanted Iran to be led by someone who would bring harmony and peace.



*Delcy Rodríguez with a portrait of former Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez in the background (Photo: JUAN BARRETO / AFP)*

Experts, however, warn that drawing parallels between Venezuela and Iran is a serious mistake. They note that the two countries differ greatly and require entirely different strategies. Secretary of State [Marco Rubio](#) made a similar point during a Senate hearing in January, acknowledging that there is no simple answer to who would replace Khamenei if he were removed. Rubio said he expected the situation to

be far more complicated than in Venezuela.

### **Kill the head, the deep state remains**

One fundamental difference between Iran and Venezuela — and the challenge they pose to U.S. ambitions — lies in the structure of power and the distribution of authority. Mona Yacoubian, director of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Iran's governing system is “far more complex than Venezuela's” and that power is more widely dispersed.

She told AFP that this complexity was one of the main concerns before the war began: the fear that removing the leadership could produce unpredictable consequences and lead to genuine chaos inside Iran.



*The eliminated supreme leader, Ali Khamenei*

(Photo: Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader/WANA (West Asia News Agency)/Handout via REUTERS)

CNN noted that although Khamenei served as Iran's supreme leader, authority within the regime is widely divided among clerics, military institutions and various political bodies. Vali Nasr, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, said the leadership further dispersed authority after [Operation Rising Lion](#) in June of last year so that assassinations would not disrupt the system as severely as

they otherwise might. “We can remove the head,” he said, “but the system was built to keep functioning.”

Nasr explained that Iran effectively operates through a “deep state” — a network of bureaucrats, politicians, clerics and commanders in the military and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps — who in practice have long managed the country even while taking direction from the supreme leader.

Another challenge for Trump is the absence of a ready-made successor in Iran — a deputy leader who could quickly step in and cooperate with Washington, as happened with Rodríguez in Venezuela.

Turning Iran into a compliant client state is far less practical than in Venezuela, Benjamin Gedan, a former National Security Council director for South America, told *The Guardian*. Even under Maduro, he said, Venezuela's government had already maintained working ties with the United States, historically its key energy partner and a central regional player. “The notion that after Venezuela the United States can simply move around the world,

intervene and install a Rodríguez-style figure wherever an aircraft carrier docks is rather foolish,” he said.

### **The Shiite ethos and the bitter adversary**

Another obstacle lies in the nature of Iran’s military power and the internal resistance facing the United States. The clerical regime, beyond being far stronger militarily than the government in Caracas, relies on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Basij volunteer militia. Just two months ago those forces carried out a mass crackdown against protesters who took to the streets calling for the regime’s overthrow.

So far there are no clear signs of serious fractures within those forces. On the contrary, their statements suggest they are closing ranks and intend to hold on to power even after the war ends.

Iran’s opposition, by contrast, lacks an armed force capable of confronting the Revolutionary Guard and the Basij. It also lacks a military leader like Ahmad al-Sharaa, whose organization Hayat Tahrir al-Sham led the 2024 uprising that toppled Bashar Assad’s regime in Syria.



*Basij members burn US and Israeli flags in Tehran (Photo: ATTA KENARE / AFP)*



*Smoke rises after an Iranian missile strike in Abu Dhabi (Photo: AFP)*

Equally significant is the regime’s unusually rigid ideology. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has operated as a Shiite theocracy. While the government in Caracas also adopted a radical ideological line from the early 2000s under socialist leaders who viewed the United States as a colonial power and bitter adversary, analysts say the hostility expressed in Venezuela never approached the intensity of Iran’s anti-American ideology. The belief in defeating the “Great Satan” is embedded in the ideology of the Iranian regime, and the chant “Death to America” is a recurring feature of official ceremonies. The Shiite ethos itself is rooted in narratives of enduring injustice and surviving against a ruthless enemy. Given that many Iranian officials, diplomats and security leaders are themselves motivated by this religious ideology, analysts say it is harder to imagine them capitulating and accepting Trump’s dictates.

Another major difference already visible is the scale of military involvement required in Iran and its regional consequences. To launch an attack on the Islamic Republic, the United States assembled the largest military force deployed to the Middle East since the start of the second Gulf War. Iran responded by launching heavy fire at military and civilian targets across several regional countries allied with Washington in an effort to pressure them to push Trump to halt the war.

This situation bears little resemblance to the events in Venezuela, where a limited and brief military operation was enough to assist U.S. special forces in capturing Maduro and enabling Rodríguez to take power. If the Iranian regime withstands the assault and refuses to surrender, pressure on Trump from regional partners is expected to increase as they seek to limit the heavy economic and security damage they are already facing.

### **'Decapitate and delegate'— the ideal scenario**

At least publicly, those differences have not discouraged Trump. In recent weeks he has repeatedly cited the events in Caracas as an example of how regime change can be carried out. He told The New York Times this week that what the United States did in Venezuela represented what he viewed as the ideal scenario.

Days later he said he had “three very good options” for who should lead Iran after Khamenei, though he declined to name them.



*An Iranian soldier steps on a Star of David symbol during a Revolutionary Guard parade (Photo: Reuters)*

A U.S. State Department official told The Wall Street Journal that Trump's "Venezuela strategy" — shaping the regime's behavior from afar without deploying American ground troops — could be described as "decapitate and delegate."

Iran specialists, however, told The Guardian that Trump's demand to be involved in selecting Iran's next leader is likely to be categorically rejected by surviving figures within the regime.

Alex Vatanka, director of the Iran Program at the Middle East Institute in Washington, said Trump's attempt to intervene in choosing Iran's leader was "beyond absurd." "What he is effectively doing," Vatanka said, "is like asking radical Shiite Islamists to become part of the MAGA movement."

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/s1m14jyyzx>

## **Saudi Arabia said to intensify talks with Iran to defuse Mideast war**

*Reported outreach comes as Iran continues to attack its neighbors; officials from several Gulf states complain they weren't given earlier notice about initial US-Israeli strikes*

*By Agencies and Tol Staff Today, 1:23 am*



*This satellite image provided by Vantor shows firefighting crews working to contain a fire and damage after a drone attack at Ras Tanura oil refinery, in Saudi Arabia, Monday, March 2, 2026. (Satellite image ©2026 Vantor via AP)*

**Saudi Arabia has intensified direct engagement with Iran to help contain a war in the Middle East, Bloomberg News reported Friday, citing several European officials, as the Iranian campaign against the Gulf Arab states has continued to wreak severe economic consequences.**

**Saudi officials in recent days have used their diplomatic backchannel to Iran with increased urgency to ease tensions and keep the conflict from worsening, the**

**report said.**

**It added that several regional and European nations are backing the Saudi efforts, the officials quoted in the report said.**

According to the report, the Saudi-Iranian talks have so far involved both security and diplomatic officials, though the sources said that they were unsure if more senior officials were involved.

So far, Iran has not shown an inclination to negotiate an end to the conflict with the US and Israel, the report noted.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report, Bloomberg added.



*The Kingdom Centre is lit up with text that reads, 'Lord, make this country safe' in the Saudi capital Riyadh on March 3, 2026. (Photo by Fayez Nureldine / AFP)*

While Iran has targeted Israel and the US military with its retaliatory missile and drone strikes, it has also launched hundreds of ballistic missiles and thousands of drones at the Arab states in the Gulf, targeting energy infrastructure and civilian sites as well as US bases in the region, in an apparent bid to press Arab leaders to lobby for an end to the war.

Against the backdrop of Iran's campaign against the Gulf states, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a rare phone call this week with UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed, the

Kan public broadcaster reported Friday.

Iran's missile and drone fire on the Gulf continued Friday, with the Saudi defense ministry saying its forces intercepted several projectiles, both ballistic and cruise missiles, as well as three drones, east of its capital Riyadh.

Iranian strikes also targeted Iraq on Friday, with an Iraqi security official saying that four drones struck Basra

airport and two oil facilities in the south of the country.

“One drone crashed into the cargo terminal at Basra airport,” the official said, adding that two others hit a US company in the Burjesia oil complex, and a fourth struck the Rumaila oil field, where energy giant BP operates.

### **Only nine tankers said to pass Hormuz this week**

In addition to targeting Gulf energy and civilian infrastructure with missiles and drones, Iran has all but completely shut the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial chokepoint through which some 20 percent of the world’s oil and gas transits.

Only nine oil tankers, cargo and container ships, some of which at times concealed their position, have been recorded crossing the key maritime passage since Monday, according to MarineTraffic data analyzed by AFP.

Only vessels that emitted at least one signal on either side of the Strait of Hormuz were counted by AFP, excluding any others that may have travelled with their signals entirely concealed for a long period of time.



*A person points at a page on the Marinetransport website that shows commercial boats traffic on the edge of the Strait of Hormuz near the Iranian coast, in Paris on March 4, 2026. (JULIEN DE ROSA / AFP)*

Attacks since Sunday have multiplied against ships navigating Hormuz, raising concerns about a lasting impact on the global economy as the US-Israeli war on Iran and Tehran’s retaliatory attacks across the Gulf region have upended the world’s energy sector.

Iran armed forces spokesman Abolfazl Shekarchi told Iranian state broadcaster IRIB, “We emphasize the security of the Strait of Hormuz and control it, but we will not close it.”

Despite the conflict, “some tankers are still traveling east and west through the strait, with a number of voyages occurring under AIS (automatic identification system) blackouts,” said Matt Wright, an analyst at Kpler, which publishes MarineTraffic, on Wednesday.

Most carriers have suspended their operations and the passage remains perilous, as several ships have been targeted by Iranian drones and missiles since the conflict erupted last week.

### **Gulf officials ‘frustrated’ with US over lack of notice ahead of war**

As the Gulf has come under relentless attack, officials from several US-allied countries in the region have complained they were not given adequate time to prepare for the torrent of Iranian drones and missiles bombarding their countries in retaliation for strikes launched by the US and Israel.

Officials from two Gulf countries said their governments were disappointed in the way the US has handled the war, particularly the initial attack on Iran on February 28. They said their countries were not given advance notice of the attack and complained the US had ignored their warnings that the war would have devastating consequences for the entire region.

One of the officials said that Gulf countries were frustrated and even angry that the US military has not defended them enough. He said there is belief in the region that the operation has focused on defending Israel and American troops, while leaving Gulf countries to protect themselves, and said that his country’s stock of interceptors was “rapidly depleting.”

The governments of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates did not respond to requests for comment.

White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said in response: “Iran’s retaliatory ballistic missile attacks have decreased by 90% because Operation Epic Fury is crushing their ability to shoot these weapons or produce more. [US President Donald] Trump is in close contact with all of our regional partners, and the terrorist Iranian regime’s attacks on its neighbors prove how imperative it was that President Trump eliminate this threat to our country and our allies.”

The Pentagon did not respond.

Official reactions by the Gulf Arab countries have been muted, but public figures with close ties to their governments have been openly critical of the US, suggesting that Netanyahu dragged Trump into a needless war.

“This is Netanyahu’s war,” Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former Saudi intelligence chief, told CNN on Wednesday. “He somehow convinced the [US] president to support his views.”



*In this November 24, 2018, photo, Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal talks to The Associated Press in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. (AP/Kamran Jebreili, File)*

Pentagon officials conceded this week in closed-door briefings with lawmakers they are struggling to stop waves of drones launched by Iran, leaving some US targets in the Gulf region, including troops, vulnerable.

The Gulf countries have emerged as valuable targets for Iran, well within the range of Iran's short-range missiles and filled with targets, including American troops, high-profile business and tourist locations and energy facilities,

disrupting the world's flow of oil.

Since the start of the war, Iran has fired at least 380 missiles and over 1,480 drones targeting the five Arab Gulf countries, according to an AP tally based on official statements. At least 13 people have been killed in those countries, according to local officials.

In addition, six US soldiers were killed in Kuwait on Sunday when an Iranian drone strike hit an operations center in a civilian port, more than 10 miles from the main Army base. The husband of one of the slain soldiers, who was part of a supply and logistics unit based in Iowa, said the operations center was a shipping container-style building and had no defenses.

In briefings for members of Congress on Tuesday, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told lawmakers that the US will not be able to intercept many of the incoming UAVs, especially the Shaheds, according to three people familiar with the briefings.

Bader Mousa Al-Saif, a Kuwait-based analyst with Chatham House, said the US appeared to have underestimated the risk to its Gulf Arab allies, believing American troops and Israel would be the primary targets of Iranian retaliation.

"I don't think they saw that there would be as much exposure to the Gulf," he said, saying the lack of a plan to protect the Gulf countries "speaks to US short-sightedness."



*The body of one of two Kuwaiti navy soldiers killed on duty during Iranian missile and drone attacks on Kuwait is lowered into the grave during their funeral at the Sulaibikhat cemetery in Kuwait City, Kuwait, March 3, 2026. (AP Photo/Jaber Abdulkhaleg)*

The frustration in some of the Gulf nations is driven in part by the relative success that Israel has had knocking down drones and missiles compared to some of their neighbors, according to a person familiar with the sensitive diplomatic matter who was not authorized to comment publicly.

Their air defense systems are hardly as robust as Israel's, but according to the person, US officials have been somewhat perplexed that the Gulf countries are still not

showing an appetite for delivering a counteroffensive by launching missiles at Iranian targets.

Elliott Abrams, who served as a special representative for Iran and Venezuela at the end of Trump's first term, said that US national security officials and their Gulf allies were aware that Iran had the capability to carry out significant strikes.

"And the neighbors knew it and were afraid of it. But it was never clear that Iran would actually do it, because they have a lot to lose," Abrams said. "These attacks will leave long-term enmity, and if they keep up, the Gulf Arabs may start attacking Iran."

Michael Ratney, a former US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said that while the Gulf countries have an interest in seeing Iran weakened, they also have key concerns about the ongoing war — including the economic damage and instability it is causing and its open-ended nature.

Ratney, who is now a senior adviser in the Middle East program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said: "What comes next? The countries of the Gulf will have to bear the brunt of whatever that is."

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/saudi-arabia-said-to-intensify-talks-with-iran-to-defuse-mideast-war/>

**Azerbaijan says it foiled Iranian terror attacks on synagogue, Israeli embassy**  
**Authorities say at least 7 Azerbaijani nationals detained; plot also said to include targeting Jewish community leaders, attack on pipeline servicing Israeli oil imports**

By [AFP](#) and [ToI Staff](#) 6 March 2026, 10:59 pm



*A general view of the Azerbaijani capital of Baku on September 19, 2023 (TOFIK BABAYEV / AFP)*

**BAKU — Azerbaijan said on Friday it had foiled a series of Iranian terror attacks on its territory, including against the Israeli embassy in Baku, a synagogue and Jewish community leaders.**

**Israel has warned of “concrete threats” of Iranian attacks on Israeli civilians and missions around the world, and security for Jewish sites has been upped in many countries amid the war, due to the potential of Iranian-led terror. Azerbaijan has a Jewish population generally estimated at some 7,000-**

**10,000.**

**The Azeri accusation came a day after Baku accused Iran of firing drones at an Azerbaijani border region, an incident that has sparked fears of the Middle East war spilling over into the Caucasus.**

In a video statement, Azerbaijan’s state security service said it had “prevented terrorist acts and intelligence operations in Azerbaijan organized by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).”

Also among the planned targets was the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which runs through neighboring Georgia and Turkey and carries around a third of Israel’s oil imports, it said.

At least seven Azerbaijani nationals have been detained in connection with the probe, it said.

Iran made no immediate public comment on Azerbaijan’s accusations.



The United States and Israel began strikes against Iran on Saturday, killing its supreme leader and sparking retaliatory attacks across the Gulf.

The war, now in its seventh day, has embroiled nations beyond the region and upended the world’s energy and transport sectors.

Azerbaijan said on Friday it was withdrawing diplomatic staff from Iran.

*File: Police stand guard in front of the Azerbaijan embassy in Tehran, January 27, 2023 (AFP)*

“The process applies to both the embassy in Tehran and the consulate in Tabriz,” Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov

said.

Thursday’s attacks involved at least four drones that crossed from Iran into Azerbaijan’s exclave of Nakhchivan bordering Iran.

One hit the airport and another exploded near a school, Baku said. Four people were wounded.

Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev accused Iran of “terrorism” and threatened retaliation.

The general staff of Iran’s armed forces said it had not carried out the attack and pointed the finger at Israel.

Iran has long expressed concern that Israel — a close ally of Azerbaijan and a key arms supplier — could use Azerbaijani territory to stage attacks on it. In June 2025, Azerbaijan reassured Tehran that it would not allow such use of its territory after Israel launched a large-scale strike on Iranian targets. Tehran has historically been wary of separatist sentiment among its ethnic Azerbaijani minority, which makes up around 10 million of Iran’s 83 million citizens. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/azerbaijan-says-it-foiled-iranian-terror-attacks-on-synagogue-israeli-embassy/>

**Israel said backing potential Kurdish offensive in Iran, with sides in talks for a year**  
**Sources tell Reuters of ‘long-term’ contacts, with Kurdish militants poised to assault border territories and fight IRGC; senior PDKI official says group ready to join fight**

By [Reuters](#), [ToI Staff](#) and [AFP](#) 6 March 2026, 11:41 pm



*Members of the Kurdistan Freedom Party PAK stand guard in Irbil, Iraq, Thursday, March 5, 2026. (AP Photo/Rashid Yahya)*

**Israel has been bombing parts of western Iran to support Iranian Kurdish militias who hope to exploit the US-Israeli war against the Islamic Republic to seize towns near the frontier, three sources familiar with Israel's talks with the factions told Reuters Friday.**

**The notion of an offensive by Iranian Kurdish forces based in Iraq gained attention in recent days amid reports that Washington was encouraging such action.**

**US President Donald Trump told Reuters on Friday it would be “wonderful” if they crossed the border. Trump’s comments came after some reports had suggested that Iraqi Kurdish groups had already crossed the border into Iran, though the Iraqi government and the autonomous Kurdistan region denied the claims and said that “Iraqi territory must not be used as a launching point for attacks against neighboring countries.”**

A Kurdish insurgency could have serious consequences for Iran as it defends itself against the Israeli-American air campaign. The militias have consulted with the US about how and whether to attack Iran’s security forces, Reuters has reported.

Israel has been holding its own talks with Iranian Kurdish insurgent groups based in the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan for around a year, two Iranian Kurdish sources said, while an Israeli source said talks had been “long-term.”

The two Iranian Kurdish sources have direct knowledge of the armed dissident groups and the source from Israel has direct knowledge of its engagement with them. All spoke on condition of anonymity.

Israel’s government and military did not immediately respond to requests for comment, and Israel has not commented publicly on such engagement during the current war.



*An Iranian Kurdish Peshmerga member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) inspects damage sustained at the Azadi Camp of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) following an Iranian cross-border attack in the town of Koye (Koysinjaq), in the east of Erbil district in the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq on March 3, 2026. (Safin HAMID / AFP)*

**An initial goal of the Kurdish factions would be seizing Iranian territory along the border, the three sources said. One of the Kurdish sources said their aim was to seize the towns of Oshnavieh and Piranshahr, among others.**

**These sources said thousands of fighters were gathering on the Iraqi side of the border and preparing to launch an offensive within a week, something Reuters was not able to**

**confirm.**

**Independent estimates put the militias’ combined strength at 5,000-8,000.**

**They possess only light arms, according to the Kurdish sources. But while they might not have the firepower to mount a significant bid for self-rule, with US and Israeli help, they could cause trouble on the border.**



**The Israeli source said Israel did not expect them to be able to overthrow the Iranian government, but that backing them could erode Iran’s control over its hinterlands and distract its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.**

*An Iranian Kurdish Peshmerga member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) inspects damage sustained at the Azadi Camp of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) following an Iranian cross-border attack in the town of Koye (Koysinjaq), in the east of Erbil district in the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq on March 3, 2026. (Safin HAMID / AFP)*

Five long-standing Iranian dissident groups announced an alliance just at the end of last month.

It includes the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), which have all participated in insurgencies and maintain fighters in Iraq.

It is not clear that they will get any support from their ethnic brethren in Iraq, however. Iraqi Kurdistan's political leadership has publicly denied any plan to send fighters or get involved in Iran, despite reports of outside pressure to do so.

The Israeli source cautioned that there was pushback from the Iraqi Kurds, and without their practical support, it would be hard for the Iranian Kurds to mobilize. Trump's lack of clarity on how long the war could last had also led to hesitancy.

Iran has been [attacking](#) Kurdish armed groups inside Iraq, along with US bases in the area, and on Friday warned Iraqi Kurdistan that it would retaliate against any deployment of hostile forces on the frontier.

### **Kurdish militant says group ready to join fight**

In an interview with Channel 12 published Friday, senior PDKI official Mohammad Saleh Qadri said that his group was ready and waiting to enter Iran from Iraq and begin seizing territory from the Iranian government.

In the first interview of its kind with Israeli media, the Iranian Kurdish official, who is currently based in Iraq, said: "This is a historic moment for the destruction of the regime. History has given us the responsibility to act immediately in defense of our people, for the redemption of Iranian Kurdistan — we will begin to act as soon as possible."

"Our request to Israel, Europe and the United States is to give us guarantees for the national and ethnic rights of our people. We do not want to replace this regime with another dictatorial regime," he said.

"We must remember that for the past 47 years, the Kurds have been victims of the ideology that has taken over Iran. Fifty thousand Kurds have been killed in the years of our struggle," Qadri told the Israeli outlet. "Our struggle is for the self-determination of the Kurdish people in Iranian Kurdistan."

"Our struggle is to destroy the ideology of the Iranian regime, and to create an Iran that will not have conflict with any country in the region or any of its neighbors," he said.

When asked if his organization is ready to join the fight against Iran, he said: "Yes. The Kurdish forces in Iran are currently preparing, and are waiting for the coalition's decision to immediately begin operations against Iran."

"Our largest force is already in Iran," he claimed.

### **Kurds providing target intel to US and Israel**

The three sources speaking to Reuters said Kurds within Iran had been providing targeting intelligence on the border areas to the US and Israel.

Israeli analyst Jonathan Spyer said Israel was seeking to "destroy the regime by any means available," but Danny Citrinowicz, an Iran expert and former Israeli intelligence officer, said an insurgency in Iran did not have broad support among Iraqi and Iranian Kurds.

"I think they're all waiting to see if the regime will hold on or not," he said.

Turkish and Iraqi officials, neither keen to support separatism among an ethnic group spread across parts of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran, have also expressed reservations about any insurgency in Iran.

Citrinowicz said supporting an uprising might backfire on the US and Israel by fanning nationalism.

Israel has maintained discreet military, intelligence and business ties with various Kurdish groups since the 1960s, viewing them as a buffer against shared adversaries.

***A member of the Kurdistan Freedom Party PAK, stand guard in Irbil, Iraq, March 5, 2026. (AP Photo/Rashid Yahya)***



The two Kurdish sources said the factions were in closer coordination with the US than with Israel, but that any cross-border offensive would require air support from both.

One of those sources said they had not yet received weapons, but would request air defense systems, drones, small arms, and artillery support.

Kurdish groups have a long history of working with the US, but recent incidents have strained ties.

One of the Iranian Kurdish sources said Kurdish leaders had concerns about being "betrayed" like the Kurdish groups in northern Syria, who had been forced to cede territory after long serving as the primary US partner in the area.

The source said Iranian Kurdish leaders had requested guarantees from the US, without saying what they were.

Both Iranian Kurdish sources said the factions' goal would be to establish a semi-autonomous region in a federal Iran, similar to the model in Iraq. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-backing-kurdish-offensive-in-iran-with-sides-in-talks-for-a-year/>

## Iranian officers abandon posts, conscripted troops amid US and Israeli strikes - report

The soldiers who spoke with the outlet reported that since the killing of former supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday, confusion has erupted within the Iranian military. By **SAM HALPERN** MARCH 6, 2026 19:21 Updated: MARCH 6, 2026 21:12



Flags of Israel and Iran painted on a cracked concrete wall with soldier shadow. (photo credit: SHUTTERSTOCK)

**A mid the ongoing Israeli and US strikes against the Iranian regime, some officers in the Islamic regime's armed forces have abandoned their barracks, leaving behind the soldiers under their command to remain on guard duty, a number of conscripts told Iranian opposition outlet Iran International.**

**The soldiers who spoke with the outlet**

**reported that since the killing of former supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday, confusion has erupted within the Iranian military.**

**Several soldiers stationed at a military base in** Lorestan province told Iran International that they were uncertain about the command structure and were uneasy about the deteriorating security situation.

One soldier told the outlet that many commanders had, fearing strikes, abandoned their posts, leaving conscripted soldiers behind without support.

Some soldiers, also fearing American and Israeli strikes, have been spending nights in open areas outside of the base for fear of being hit in an airstrike, the soldier said, adding that leadership was not paying adequate attention to the needs of the regular troops.

An Iranian soldier holds an RPG on Quds Day, in Tehran, Iran, April 5, 2024 (credit: SHUTTERSTOCK)

### **Israel, US vow to finish the job**

The Iran International report comes as the US and Israel have vowed an escalation in the campaign against Iran's regime.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that Israel would intensify its attacks against Iran in the coming days. On Friday, the Israel Air Force launched its 15th wave of strikes on Iranian targets in Tehran and Isfahan.

During its strikes in the country, the IDF said it had hit over 400 targets, including a "senior Iranian terror regime commander in Tehran."

US President Donald Trump [has also said](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-889107) on Friday that he would only accept unconditional surrender from the Islamic Republic after saying on Thursday that "We want to fight now more than they do."

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-889107>

## **"America Can't Do a Damn Thing Against Us"**

Tue, 3 Mar 2026 7:21 PM PST by Daniel Greenfield



(Marine Barracks bombing - Beirut)



In June 2025, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei told his regime at the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini that Iran's nuclear program would go on regardless of President Trump. "Our response to the US nonsense is clear: they cannot do a damn thing in this matter."

A few weeks later, Iran's underground nuclear program was rubble and a year later, Khamenei, who mocked any American efforts to negotiate, has joined his beloved nukes under the ground.

In early February, a top adviser to the commander of the regime's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps dismissed the buildup of U.S. forces. "Even if America brings 12 aircraft carriers to the region, it can't do anything," [he bragged](#). "America is defeated and incapable of any aggression."

His commander is now dead along with Khamenei and elements of the regime's leadership.

The Islamic Revolution that took over Iran had two slogans, "Death to America" and "America can't do a damn thing against us". Or "Marg bar Amrika" and "Amrika hich ghalati namitavanad bokonad." The Ayatollah Khomeini had coined the latter slogan after raiding the American embassy and taking its people hostage while Jimmy Carter did nothing.

And America indeed did not do a damn thing.

Khomeini had outfoxed everyone, his former Marxist allies, the French and the Carter administration which was full of radicals eager to swap the Shah for Islamist rule. The Islamic theocrat had assured the Kennedy administration and then the Carter administration that he would be friendly to America and that Muslims and Christians made natural allies.

"You will see we are not in any particular animosity with the Americans," Khomeini, who would later make 'Death to America' into the regime's slogan, assured Carter's people.

"We would do a disservice to Khomeini to consider him simply as a symbol of segregated education and an opponent to women's rights," Philip Stoddard, the head of the State Department's Intelligence Bureau, who had come out of the Saudi-funded Middle East Institute, argued.

For the next forty something years, Khomeini and his successor, Khamenei, went on killing Americans, murdering at least [869 U.S. military personnel](#) across the Middle East, from the truck bombings in Lebanon to airline hijackings and IEDs across the Muslim world.

And "America can't do a damn thing against us" remained an unchallenged slogan. Iran's Islamic regime appeared to have Allah at their backs because they were able to [brutally torture and murder Americans](#), make videos and recordings of it, and distribute them to the world.

While we did nothing.

The Obama administration's negotiations with Iran to legitimize its nuclear program were greeted with the triumphal slogan, "America can't do a damn thing against us" appearing on billboards and banners across Tehran and at speeches by Khamenei. By the time, Iran abducted and paraded around U.S. Navy sailors, the slogans appeared indisputable.

Then in 2020, Qasem Soleimani, the evil genius behind Iran's worldwide terrorist networks, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was taken out near Baghdad by an American drone. In the regime's eulogy, it declared that Soleimani had "deeply believed that America can't do a damn thing against us." Soleimani's end was proof that his deeply held belief was worthless.

America's inaction wasn't a product of Allah's intervention, but of moral weakness.

The Iran Lobby had invested deeply in Biden, going back to 2006, and saw in him another Carter. Iranian hackers [intervened to help him win](#) in 2020. Once Biden was in power, Iran launched a series of major escalations, targeting Israel with the Oct 7 attacks and international shipping with Houthi piracy out of Yemen. The Biden administration initially resisted, but then crumbled, pressuring Israel to make a deal with Hamas, and then refusing to go on the offensive against the Houthis in any consistent way, leading to the humiliation of the U.S. Navy.

In 2025, Trump was back, but last June the ayatollah was still assuring the faithful that America "cannot do a damn thing." Other clerics echoed him, in Bushehr, a major site of Iran's nuclear program, a cleric claimed that "the US cannot do a damn thing to stop Iran's nuclear progress."

The airstrikes that soon followed proved them wrong.

America can do quite a bit. We didn't. And that's how we got an 'endless war'. The more that Carter, Obama and Biden backed off and tried to make a deal, the more the Islamic regime became convinced that we were impotent and that it was invulnerable. Iran was never all that tough. Our leaders were simply weak and corrupt. The more aggressive Iran became, the more they backed down and looked for an exit ramp. Is it any wonder that Iran's terror grew worse?

President Trump has taken the opposite approach, punishing Iran's intransigence, instead of rewarding it, and making a mockery of its beloved slogan, "America can't do a damn thing against us". Iran never had Allah on its side. It had Carter, Obama and Biden.

Without appeasers in the White House, America can do a whole lot and the Islamic terrorists can do very little. The ayatollahs and their regime had gambled on the fecklessness and cowardice of their non-Muslim enemies. Over the last 6 years, their bets have started to fail. They're popular at Columbia, UCLA and Harvard, but hated in their own cities, and President Trump has shown how weak they are underneath their cruelty and theological boasting.

The monsters who once hijacked, kidnapped, tortured and murdered Americans are afraid. They're hiding out in their own capital because America is doing some damn things to them.

***[Daniel Greenfield](#) is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center. This article previously appeared at the Center's [Front Page Magazine](#).***

<https://bkdvk-zgpvh.campaign-view.com/ua/viewinbrowser>



BS"D

#### STEP BY STEP

STEP BY STEP: Good news is that many friends and supporters of Lev U'Neshama (Heart and Soul) donated towards the Education Fund project to provide basic school supplies for actually 350 children within our Lev U'Neshama families.

We are grateful that the school supply part of our effort has been successful.

According to the Israel Population and Statistics office, Tzfat's population is about 40,000, and one third live at the poverty level. We do what we can so at least the children within our struggling LUN families can get the things they need.

Every week we are providing new sport shoes and eye exams/eyeglasses to the children on our request list. However, previous donations are rapidly dwindling. I am reaching out now before the fund has been emptied and we will have to say "no" to additional requests.

We work with two local shoe merchants who give Lev U'Neshama a discount but they advised us the cost of the shoes has increased. Also, we work with an accredited optician in town who also gives us a discount but his cost is stable.

Lev U'Neshama is an Israeli registered non-profit charity organization, volunteer run, no business expenses whatsoever and every \$ goes into our programs.

Shoes: \$45 per pair regular and \$60 for First Steps, baby shoes.

Eye Exam/Eyeglasses: \$60 per child.

Your support is urgently requested.

Or use the Zelle US to US bank transfer system (contact me at [mortsmo@aol.com](mailto:mortsmo@aol.com) for bank information.

US Donors may also send checks made payable to

Simcha Smolensky, my son, who is also a volunteer. Send to:

Rabbi Simcha Smolensky, 6739 N Mozart St Chicago IL 60645

**Your support will be appreciated.**

Yaffa Smolensky