



June 13, 2025

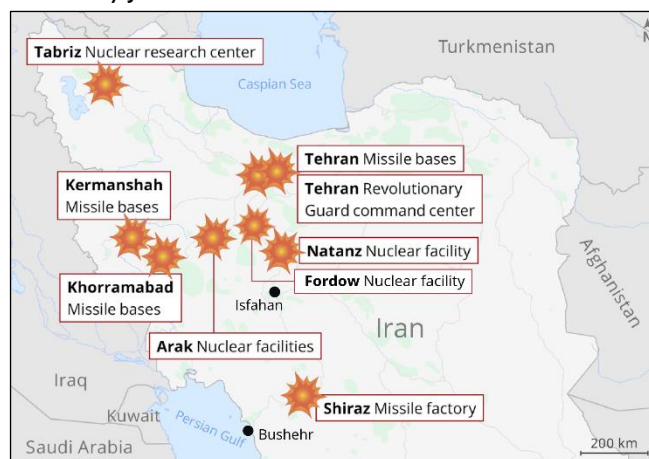
Israeli Attack on Iran: Considerations for Congress

On June 13, 2025, Israel began a major military operation against Iran, including air strikes and **reported covert action**. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu **vowed** to continue attacks for “as many days as it takes,” targeting what he termed existential threats posed by Iran’s nuclear program and ballistic missiles. Iran’s foreign minister **described** Israel’s attack as a “declaration of war” in a letter to the United Nations, and called on the UN Security Council to immediately address the issue. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei **pledged** that Israel would receive a “bitter, painful fate.”

Initial Israeli attacks reportedly were successful in **degrading** Iranian air defenses and some missile bases, **targeting** nuclear sites across the country, and **killing** a number of high-level Iranian military and government officials and nuclear scientists (see **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). A government-aligned Iranian news outlet **reported** the strikes had killed dozens and wounded hundreds of civilians. Israel has procured most of its fighter aircraft and large munitions from U.S. suppliers, **financed to date by more than \$3 billion of U.S. aid annually**.

Figure 1. Reported Key Israeli Strikes on Iran

As of early June 13, 2025



Source: Haaretz, citing non-Israeli open sources, modified by CRS using Google Maps. All areas and notations are approximate and subject to revision and updates.

Iran launched **150** missiles at Israel in response to the June 13 attack, with some reportedly injuring civilians in Tel Aviv. U.S. forces reportedly helped intercept some missiles, as they did during **Iran’s April and October 2024 drone and missile attacks**.

Trump Administration and Congressional Response

President Donald Trump said he **was aware** of the Israeli plans beforehand, **supports Israel**, and **alluded to “more to**

come.” Secretary of State Marco Rubio **stated** at the outset of the Israeli attack that the United States was “not involved” in the strikes. Prior to the strikes, President Trump expressed a preference for a negotiated rather than military solution. President Trump **posted on Truth Social** that Israel’s attacks came at the end of the 60-day deadline he set for U.S.-Iran negotiations to reach a deal when they began in mid-April, and told a reporter the attack might **compel** Iran to reach an agreement with the United States. Iranian state television **appears to have reported** that Iran has suspended U.S.-Iran negotiations indefinitely in the wake of the attack; a sixth round of talks was previously **scheduled** for June 15. Secretary Rubio **warned** Iran not to target U.S. interests or personnel, some of whom **may have started departing the region** before the Israeli attacks.

Figure 2. Map with Inset Photo of Natanz Enrichment Facility



Source: USA Today (stating that the satellite image of nuclear facilities before the Israeli attack was copyrighted by Maxar Technologies).

Some Members of Congress **expressed support** for Israel’s actions and called the operation “**understandable and justified**.” Others called the strike “**alarming**” and “**reckless**” and expressed **concern** about possible escalation.

Historical Background

During Prime Minister Netanyahu’s tenure after 2009, Israel has threatened multiple times to act militarily to destroy or set back Iran’s nuclear program. Israel, which for decades **has presumably maintained a nuclear arsenal** but has not officially acknowledged it, has taken preemptive action against nuclear programs in the region—destroying an **Iraqi facility in 1981** and a **Syrian one in 2007**. In the 2010s, Israel apparently executed a number of covert actions against Iranian facilities and personnel to disrupt and delay the program. Alongside U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil exports, the Obama Administration led international efforts to reach a 2015 agreement (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA), which placed new physical constraints, as well as inspection and monitoring provisions, on Iran’s nuclear program. In 2018, President Trump (with strong support from Netanyahu) ended U.S. participation in the JCPOA, citing what he described as the

accord's defects, and increased sanctions on Iran. Approximately a year later, Iran began nuclear activities that exceeded limits set forth in the JCPOA.

Hamas-led attacks on Israel in 2023 were followed by broader regional conflict between Israel and Iran's "axis of resistance." Direct clashes between Israel and Iran in April and October 2024 and Israel's large-scale degradation of Hezbollah (a key Iranian ally) in Lebanon prompted serious discussion in Israel about whether and when to act against Iran's nuclear program. Having seemingly mostly neutralized Hezbollah's missile threat and ostensibly weakened Iran's air defenses and ballistic missile production capacity, Israeli leaders reportedly explored plans, including with U.S. counterparts, to strike Iran's nuclear program amid increasing discussion of the once-taboo subject of weaponization in Iran. Some of President Trump's public comments discouraged attacks while U.S. officials engaged in diplomacy with Iran after April 2025.

Iran: Impact and Possible Responses

Leadership. Israel appears to have targeted the upper echelons of the Iranian military establishment. According to Israeli claims and other reports, major Iranian figures killed or injured in the Israeli attack may include its military chief of staff; the commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), IRGC Air Force, and IRGC-Quds Force; an advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei with responsibility for nuclear negotiations; and at least 10 senior nuclear scientists.

Iran's regime. Israel's assault could inspire Iranians to rally around a government that has faced popular protests in recent years, or could contribute to political instability. Late on June 13, Netanyahu told the Iranian people that Israel was "clearing the path for you to achieve your objective, which is freedom."

Nuclear program. The impact on Iran's nuclear program may depend on what remains of Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles, accumulated technical knowledge, or other elements of its nuclear program—parts of which are underground and may be less vulnerable to aerial attacks. The International Atomic Energy Agency's Director General reported late on June 13 that strikes had "destroyed" an above ground uranium enrichment facility at Natanz, and relayed Iranian reports of attacks on sites at Fordow, where Iran has a deep underground enrichment facility, and Isfahan. Iran could pull out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (which Iranian officials had recently threatened to do) and/or accelerate efforts to develop a nuclear weapon to deter or threaten Israel and other adversaries. In March 2025, U.S. officials restated their assessment that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program, but that added "Iran's enriched uranium stockpile is at its highest levels and is unprecedented for a state without nuclear weapons."

Military responses. It is unclear what additional capabilities Iran might seek to use against Israel. Reportedly, U.S. Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff warned some Senators earlier in June that Iranian ballistic missile retaliation could overwhelm Israeli air defenses. In June 10 House Armed Services Committee testimony, U.S. Central Command Commander General Michael Kurilla said that a

U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system was defending Israel from ballistic missile threats. Iran could also attack U.S. regional installations, having on June 11 reiterated longstanding threats to do so in the event of conflict; Iran's foreign minister said that the June 13 attack "could not have been carried out without the coordination and authorization of the United States." Such attacks, or Iranian moves to close the Strait of Hormuz or otherwise disrupt global energy markets, could trigger direct U.S. responses. Iran's apparent loss of senior military leaders and the damage to weapons and infrastructure could affect its ability to coordinate military attacks.

Regional and International Reactions

Within the region, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman (which had mediated U.S.-Iran talks), Qatar, and Iraq have condemned Israel's attack. The Gulf Cooperation Council said that Israel's actions violate international law, and called for concerted international efforts to stop Israel's "aggression" and avoid escalation. Russia and the People's Republic of China also strongly criticized the attack.

Considerations for Congress

In engaging executive branch officials, shaping legislative responses to recent developments, and conducting oversight of the Administration's approach to those developments, Congress could consider the following questions:

- What immediate effect could the conflict have on U.S. citizens and personnel in the region and beyond? How may the conflict affect regional and global security and commerce?
- What military responses might Iran consider taking against U.S. personnel and installations? Against Israel or other U.S. partners? What authorities and resources, if any, should Congress make available immediately or in the event the United States is drawn into direct conflict with Iran? What, if any, limitations should it consider?
- How likely are Israel's actions to permanently destroy or set back Iran's nuclear program? How likely are Iranian leaders to move closer to acquiring nuclear weapons in response? What are the prospects for U.S.-Iran nuclear talks?
- In the context of major conflict involving Israel and Iran that has gripped the region since October 2023, how might this fighting affect the regional balance of power, great power competition, and U.S. capacity to pursue its strategic priorities in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and elsewhere?

To support, reject, or modify the Administration's approach to developments, Congress may consider action concerning military assistance, arms sales, sanctions, defense appropriations, authorization of use of military force, negotiated agreements, and oversight of the Administration's past and ongoing policies and programs.

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