



U.S. and Israeli Military Operations Against Iran: Issues for Congress

March 1, 2026

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched military [operations](#) against targets in [Iran](#). The United States and Iran had been engaged in talks over Iran's [nuclear program](#), amid broader U.S. concerns over Iran's [missile arsenal](#), terrorism, and support to armed groups. [President Donald Trump](#) and [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) addressed Iranian citizens directly in their public remarks, encouraging Iranians to use any opportunities created by the strikes to overthrow the Islamic Republic government, which has ruled Iran since 1979. International reactions have varied, with [Russia](#) and [China](#) condemning U.S. and Israeli actions, and some [European](#) and [Arab](#) governments denouncing Iran's counterattacks.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and [other](#) senior Iranian security leaders have been killed. Iranian officials have announced transitional leadership and continue retaliatory missile and drone attacks on Israel, bases in the region hosting U.S. forces, and targets in Arab Gulf countries and adjacent waters. As of March 1, civilians reportedly had been killed in [Iran](#), [Israel](#), [Kuwait](#), the [United Arab Emirates](#) (UAE), and [Syria](#), and some U.S. service members had been [killed](#) or wounded. The State Department has advised U.S. citizens [worldwide](#) to exercise caution and "follow the guidance in the latest [embassy] security alerts." Strikes by Iran have damaged airports and ports in the region, and regional airspace closures have caused global disruptions. Apparent Iranian strikes on [ships](#) near the [Strait of Hormuz](#) highlight threats to that critical chokepoint for transnational shipments of oil and natural gas.

Developments in the conflict and global responses present Congress with short- and long-term policy questions across several domains.

U.S. Objectives and Plans

President Trump has stated a range of U.S. objectives and options since the start of the operations. On February 28, the President [said](#) "our objective is to defend the American people by eliminating imminent threats from the Iranian regime." He reiterated longstanding U.S. insistence that Iran "can never have a nuclear weapon," and said that U.S. strikes on Iran seek "to destroy their missiles and raze their missile industry to the ground"; "to annihilate their navy"; and, "to ensure that the regime's terrorist proxies can no longer destabilize the region or the world." President Trump encouraged the Iranian people to "take

Congressional Research Service

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IN12662

over” their government in the wake of U.S. operations, telling members of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, armed forces, and police that they should disarm in order to be “treated fairly with total immunity.” In a March 1 [interview](#), the President said that he has agreed to engage remaining Iranian leaders in talks, and he declined to answer a question about possible U.S. support for a popular uprising in Iran.

The Future of Iran and the Middle East Region

The death of Iran’s Supreme Leader and U.S. and Israeli statements encouraging regime change imply fundamental questions about Iran’s future governance and stability. Following Khamenei’s death, Iranian officials named an interim governing council [consisting](#) of President Masoud Pezeshkian, judiciary head Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, and [Guardian Council](#) member Ayatollah Alireza Araf. In January 2026, Iranian authorities [killed](#) thousands of protestors, demonstrating a willingness to use violence to maintain power. Reports from Iran indicate that the regime has both supporters and opponents within the country’s diverse population of 90 million people. To date, an organized, effective Iran-based opposition movement does not appear to have coalesced, but disruption to the regime’s instruments of control could create opportunities for such a movement. Any post-Khamenei leaders in Iran will face considerable challenges in governing the country after decades of authoritarian rule, ongoing corruption, international sanctions, and conflict.

Congress, the President, War Powers, and Oversight

The 119th Congress [has debated](#) the President’s authority to use force in Iran. The Administration consulted with some congressional leaders [prior to](#) the strikes and reportedly [notified some](#) ahead of initiating U.S. operations. The [War Powers Resolution](#) (WPR), among other measures, [requires](#) the President to inform Congress of certain deployments abroad and the “introduction of United States Armed Forces into hostilities,” providing [expedited procedures](#) for congressional consideration of authorization or disapproval of such presidential action. Members may consider war powers resolutions in the House (H.Con.Res. 38) and Senate (S.J.Res. 104) to direct the President to remove U.S. forces from hostilities against Iran unless a declaration of war or authorization to use military force has been enacted. In June 2025, the Senate [rejected](#) a discharge motion for a similar resolution (S.J.Res. 59).

Outlook

Congress may examine U.S. objectives and assess the Administration’s priorities, including how the United States could respond to Iranian concessions or intransigence and the extent of U.S. alignment with Israel and other partners. Congress may seek information from the Administration and conduct its own fact-finding about plans to secure materials, equipment, and personnel from Iran’s nuclear, missile, and drone programs if state authority there is interrupted or changes. Congress also may assess what may come next in Iran, including possibilities of revolution or a weakened but reconstituted Islamic Republic.

Current operations mark the fifth U.S. military engagement with Iran since the Iran-backed militant group [Hamas attacked Israel in October 2023](#): U.S. forces defended Israel during Israel’s three conflicts with Iran in [April 2024](#), [November 2024](#), and [June 2025](#), and U.S. forces separately [struck](#) Iranian nuclear sites in June 2025. In preparation for the current “Operation Epic Fury,” additional U.S. air and naval assets deployed to the Middle East. The nature and pace of U.S. operations to date suggests that Congress could conduct its own examination of the amounts of munitions and air and missile defense assets that U.S. and partner forces may be expending. Congress may assess related implications for U.S. and partner

stockpiles and global readiness, including through combatant command posture assessments and Administration appropriations requests.

U.S. military deployments in the Middle East and support to partner governments have sought to deter Iran and assure regional and global actors that Iranian threats could be met with decisive force. Fundamental change to Iran's government could reduce, increase, or obviate the need for some such deployments and change considerations around some U.S. support to regional partners. Iran's attacks on Arab Gulf countries may also deepen its isolation. Prolonged U.S. and partner confrontation with Iran, lasting disruptions to Gulf energy flows, commerce, or travel, or Iran's descent into internal crisis could generate calls for continued, reduced, or expanded U.S. attention and resources.

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