Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 3/13/26 Update

Ari Cicurel
Associate Director of Foreign Policy

Yoni Tobin
Senior Policy Analyst

Jonah Brody
Policy Analyst

Rena Gabber
Research Associate

With the United States and Israel launching a joint campaign—Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion, respectively—against Iranian regime targets and Iran launching retaliatory missile and drone attacks against U.S. forces in the region, Israel, and Arab nations—dubbed Operation True Promise IV—JINSA will regularly release updates detailing the conflict. The update below includes information since JINSA's last update as of March 13 at 12:00 pm ET.

1. Overview

- During a Pentagon briefing on March 13, U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said that the United States and Israel have collectively struck over 15,000 Iranian targets; that Iran's missile launches have declined by 90 percent and its drone attacks by 95 percent since the start of the war; and that Iran has lost its air force, navy, air defenses, and capacity to build missiles.
  - » Hegseth also indicated that "our Gulf partners are stepping up even more now, going on the offense."
  - » Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine stated that the U.S. military has struck over 6,000 Iranian targets thus far, and announced, "Today will be our heaviest day of kinetic fires across the operating area."
    - – These strikes, according to General Caine, are targeting Iran's ballistic missile and drone capabilities; the Iranian Navy, and in particular, its sea mine laying capabilities; and Iran's capacity to attack commercial vessels.
    - – General Caine highlighted how U.S. operations are "targeting [the Iranian regime's] defense industrial base so they cannot rebuild the capabilities that can harm America's interests, or [those of] our partners, in the future."
- Iran continues to launch far fewer missiles than it did during the opening days of the war, but it has escalated its attacks against Saudi Arabia, particularly through drones, in an effort to pressure Washington and Gulf nations to end the war.
  - » Iranian missile fire continued its decline on March 12, with 32 missiles fired, a 30 percent decline from 46 missiles on March 11. So far, on March 13, Iran has fired just 19 missiles, a 42 percent decline from March 12.
  - » Iran has launched roughly 2,700 drones, 1,196 ballistic missiles, and 28 cruise missiles since the war began, with roughly 48 percent of total projectiles targeting the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.).

- Hegseth, on March 13, confirmed that Iran's new Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, is "wounded and likely disfigured." President Donald Trump echoed this assessment in a March 13 interview, stating Mojtaba Khamenei is physically "damaged."
  - » Hegseth noted that Mojtaba Khamenei "is scared, he's injured, he's on the run, and he lacks legitimacy." He also assessed that the Iranian regime "can barely communicate" internally, "let alone coordinate" operations.
- During a virtual meeting with G7 leaders on March 11, Trump reportedly said that Iran is "about to surrender" and added that he had eliminated "a cancer that was threatening us all."
- On March 12, a U.S. KC-135 aerial refueling tanker crashed in western Iraq, killing all six U.S. servicemembers on board.
  - » The crash was not caused by enemy or friendly fire, per the U.S. military, which noted that another aircraft was involved — suggesting a potential midair collision. According to *ABC News*, the second plane was also a U.S. KC-135.
  - » This incident brings the total number of U.S. servicemembers who have died thus far in the war to 13.
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on March 12, highlighted Israel's diplomatic achievements in the war, including forging "an alliance, unlikely any before, with the United States," and "weaving additional alliances with countries in the region – alliances that only a few weeks ago would have seemed unimaginable."
- The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) assessed that between 4,000 and 5,000 Iranian soldiers and commanders have been killed in Israeli strikes, among them a significant number of internal security forces and Basij paramilitary members, who have been a primary focus of Israeli targeting.
- Regular Iranian civilians are sending Israeli officials real-time targeting information over social media, a senior Israeli defense official told *The Wall Street Journal*.
  - » According to the official, Israel always investigates the targeting information and has often acted on it, including in the drone strikes on various positions held by the regime's Basij militia across Tehran on March 11.

2. U.S. and Israeli Operations

- Speaking to reporters on March 13, Hegseth detailed the campaign's operational results.
  - » Hegseth said that over 15,000 Iranian targets have been struck, that Iran's missile launches have decreased by 90 percent; and that its drone attacks have declined by 95 percent, since the start of the war.
  - » He further stated, "Iran has no air defenses. Iran has no air force. Iran has no navy," adding that Iran's attacks on commercial shipping in nearby waters are an act of "sheer desperation."
  - » Additionally, Hegseth announced that Iran's once-formidable missile arsenal is "shrinking daily" and that the regime lacks "the ability to build more."
    - – He added, "every company that builds every component of [Iran's] ballistic missiles has been functionally defeated, destroyed," and that, "soon, all of Iran's defense companies will be destroyed."
    - – Hegseth highlighted U.S.-Arab cooperation in the war, saying that "our Gulf partners are stepping even more now, going on the offense, and have always been with us on the defense."

- During an interview on March 13, Trump indicated that the United States would escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz "if we needed to. But, you know, hopefully things are going to go very well. We're going to see what happens."
  - » Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent claimed on March 12 that the U.S. Navy will begin escorting ships through the Strait of Hormuz "as soon as it is militarily possible," and that the United States may do so as part of an international coalition.
- A U.S. KC-135 refueling aircraft crashed in western Iraq, resulting in the deaths of all six American servicemembers on board. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) stated that the crash was not the result of enemy fire or friendly fire.
- The Pentagon announced that its civilian harm reduction efforts are "currently undergoing a strategic reassessment," but did not address reports that outdated intelligence led to a U.S. strike on an Iranian elementary school that killed more than 165 people.
- Netanyahu, on March 12, publicly urged Lebanon's government to act against Hezbollah, declaring, "if they don't, it's clear to you that we will" and adding that the Lebanese government must act if it "wants to save itself."
  - » Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz subsequently threatened on March 13 that the Lebanese government would pay an increasingly steep price, including "damage to infrastructure and the loss of territory," until it fully disarms Hezbollah.
  - » Israeli aircraft conducted leaflet drops over Beirut with pamphlets urging the Lebanese people, which stated: "You must disarm Hezbollah, Iran's shield," and "Lebanon is your decision, not someone else's."
- Israel's "Or Eitan" laser intercept system has successfully intercepted dozens of drones launched by Hezbollah since the system became operational several months ago.
  - » IDF officials said the system is currently scaling up from an initial limited deployment to a larger configuration to be operated by the Air Force.

Day 14 of Operations: March 13

Iran

- Israel's military launched multiple waves of airstrikes targeting Iranian military assets across Tehran, Shiraz in southern Iran, and Ahvaz in the country's far southwest.
  - » Sites targeted included underground ballistic missile production facilities; missile storage sites; missile component manufacturing sites; air defense systems; Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) ground force headquarters; and Iranian internal security force headquarters.
- The IDF confirmed carrying out drone strikes against Basij paramilitary checkpoints in Tehran, with Iranian media reporting that several members of the force were killed.

Lebanon

- The IDF announced it carried out several waves of airstrikes against Hezbollah command centers in Beirut and southern Lebanon, targeting sites from which the group had been directing attacks against Israel.
  - » Ground troops in the western sector of southern Lebanon also killed a Hezbollah commander and several operatives.
  - » The IDF announced that the prior day, it eliminated three Hezbollah operatives in a strike on the Bint Jbeil area of southern Lebanon.
- Israeli airstrikes targeted what the military called a "key crossing" used by Hezbollah, the Zrarieh Bridge, in southern Lebanon.

» The bridge enabled Hezbollah operatives to move from northern to southern Lebanon, facilitate its attack planning and projectile assaults, and stage rocket launches towards northern Israel.

U.S. and Israeli Rationale and Policy Objectives

United States

- During a Pentagon briefing on March 13, Hegseth outlined the military objectives as "defeat the missiles, missile launchers, and defense industrial base … defeat the navy, and deny Iran the ability to have a nuclear weapon."
  - » During the same briefing, General Caine noted that the United States is "targeting their defense industrial base so they cannot rebuild the capabilities to harm America's interests or our partners in the future."

Israel

- Speaking at a March 12 press conference, Netanyahu described the rationale for the campaign. He stated that Iran had accelerated its "industries of death," namely its missile and nuclear programs, after the June 2025 12-Day War and had been working to bury its nuclear program more deeply.
  - » Netanyahu further stated, "if we had not acted immediately, within a few months Iran's industries of death would have become immune to any strike."
  - » He emphasized that this reason is why "we went out together to battle — the United States and Israel — to continue what we began and to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. To prevent Iran from developing ballistic missiles that threaten Israel, the United States, and the entire world."
- Netanyahu laid out an additional objective of the campaign aside from dismantling the regime's missile and nuclear capabilities: setting "the conditions that will allow the Iranian people to remove the cruel, tyrannical regime."
  - » Netanyahu added, "I say to the Iranian people: the moment when you will be able to embark on a new path to freedom is approaching … We stand with you. We are helping you. But in the end, it depends on you."

3. Iranian Operations

- Iran has increasingly equipped its ballistic missiles with cluster munitions in an effort to bypass Israel's air defenses, with Israeli officials estimating roughly half of all ballistic missiles fired at Israel during the war have carried such payloads.
  - » The munitions release dozens of bomblets at high altitude, dispersing them across wide areas before they can be intercepted — posing a challenge when the host missile is successfully destroyed.
  - » The use of cluster munitions against populated areas is prohibited under international humanitarian law.
- Iran and its proxy Hezbollah continue to target Israel with an array of drone, missile, and rocket attacks. Over the past 24 hours, these attacks have included:
  - » A missile attack that led to fragments striking at least three sites and causing fires.
  - » A strike on the northern Israeli village of Zarzir near Nazareth, wounding approximately 58 people and causing heavy damage to several buildings.
- Regional Arab countries and international shipping in the Strait of Hormuz continue to come under Iranian fire. Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. each reported Iranian attacks on their country over the past day:

» Iraq:

  – A base housing U.S. and U.K. troops was attacked by a drone, resulting in injuries to U.S. servicemembers, and a base hosting troops from the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS was targeted in a drone strike, resulting in the death of one French servicemember and at least six French soldiers being wounded.

» Kuwait:

  – On Thursday, March 12, Kuwait was targeted with five ballistic missiles and seven drones, of which four ballistic missiles and five drones were intercepted, with the remainder falling outside the designated threat zone.

» Oman:

  – Oman downed a drone over Sohar province, with falling debris killing two people and wounding an unspecified number of others.

» Saudi Arabia:

  – Saudi Arabia intercepted at least 60 drones over multiple waves since March 12, including attacks that targeted the embassy district in Riyadh, Al-Kharj province, and Shaybah field.

  – Saudi Arabia also intercepted at least one missile that targeted the Prince Sultan Air Base.

» U.A.E.:

  – The U.A.E. downed 10 missiles and 26 drones launched by Iran.

    ➢ Debris from an intercepted drone damaged a building in Dubai.

- Turkey's defense ministry reported that NATO defense systems intercepted an Iranian ballistic missile in Turkish airspace, the third such incident since the war began.
- The IRGC's intelligence organization issued a call for information on U.S. troops residing in hotels and private accommodations across the region, declaring them legitimate targets.
- General Caine stated that Iran has not deployed unmanned surface vessels, clarifying that attacks on shipping in the region have been carried out with surface-to-surface missiles.

4. Estimated Casualties of Iranian Operations

- Thirteen U.S. service members have died during Operation Epic Fury.

  » An Iranian drone attack killed six U.S. servicemembers at Port Shuaiba in Kuwait on March 1: Maj. Jeffrey O'Brien, 45; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan, 54; Capt. Cody Khork, 35; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Amor, 39; Sgt. 1st Class Noah Tietjens, 42; and Sgt. Declan Coady (posthumously promoted from specialist), 20.

  » Another U.S. servicemember, Sgt. Benjamin Pennington, 26, was killed during a March 8 Iranian attack targeting U.S. troops at the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia.

  » Six U.S. servicemembers were killed when a KC-135 aerial refueling aircraft crashed over western Iraq on March 12.

- Around 140 members of the U.S. military have been wounded thus far in the war, of whom eight sustained severe injuries. As of March 11, according to *CBS News*, more than 30 U.S. servicemembers remained hospitalized.
- Since the war's outbreak, numerous other casualties have been reported:

  » 17 Israelis have been killed, two of them soldiers killed in southern Lebanon, and over 2,500 have been hospitalized;

- In the U.A.E., six people have been killed, and 126 have been injured;
- Two Kuwaiti navy sailors, two interior ministry officers, and a Kuwaiti civilian have been killed, and over 67 Kuwaiti military personnel have been injured;
- Four people have been killed in Syria, and several have been injured;
- Two foreign nationals have been killed in Saudi Arabia, and 12 others have been injured;
- In Qatar, around 20 people have been wounded;
- In Oman, at least three people have been killed;
- In Bahrain, two people have been killed, and 35 people have been injured;
- At least 16 people have been killed in Iraq, including an Iraqi security officer and several fighters in Iran-backed militias. A woman was killed after being hit by rocket shrapnel, and an airport employee was wounded in Iraqi Kurdistan. An Indian national was killed following a strike on an oil tanker in Iraqi waters. A French soldier was killed in a drone strike on a military base in Iraqi Kurdistan.
- In Azerbaijan, four civilians have been injured;
- In Lebanon, at least 634 individuals have been killed, and more than 1,580 have been wounded; and
- In Iran, at least 1,444 people have been killed, according to Iran's health ministry.

5. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian Officials

- Commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force Seyed Majid Moosavi stated that Israel's Leviathan and Karish gas fields are potential targets.
- Attending the annual Quds Day rally, Ali Larijani, Secretary of the National Security Council, dismissed the threat of a possible Israeli strike at the demonstration, saying, "One who is strong wouldn't bomb demonstrations at all. It's clear that it has failed." He added, Trump "doesn't understand that the Iranian people are a brave nation, a strong nation, a determined nation. The more he presses, the stronger the nation's determination will become."
- The IRGC threatened that new anti-regime protests would be met with a harsher response than the crackdown in January.
- The spokesman for Iran's Central Operational Command warned, "We will set the region's oil and gas on fire with the slightest attack on Iran's energy infrastructure and ports."
- Strait of Hormuz:
  - Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmaeil Baghaei, said that ships must coordinate their movement through the Strait of Hormuz with the Iranian Navy.
- Iranian ambassador to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani stated that Iran will not close the Strait of Hormuz, but added that "it is our inherent right to preserve the peace and security in this waterway."

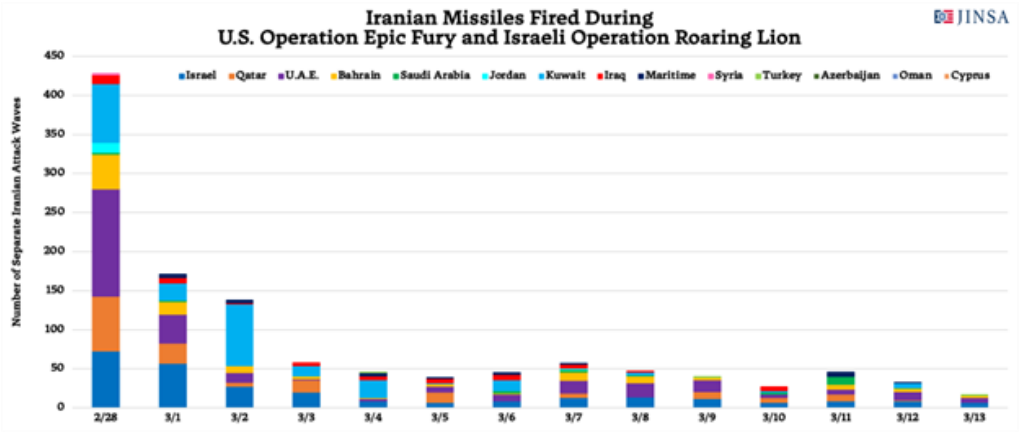
6. International Response

- Brent crude held near $100 per barrel on the morning of March 13, a day after closing above that threshold.
  - In an effort to stabilize global energy markets, the United States issued a 30-day waiver allowing countries to purchase sanctioned Russian oil and petroleum products stranded at sea.

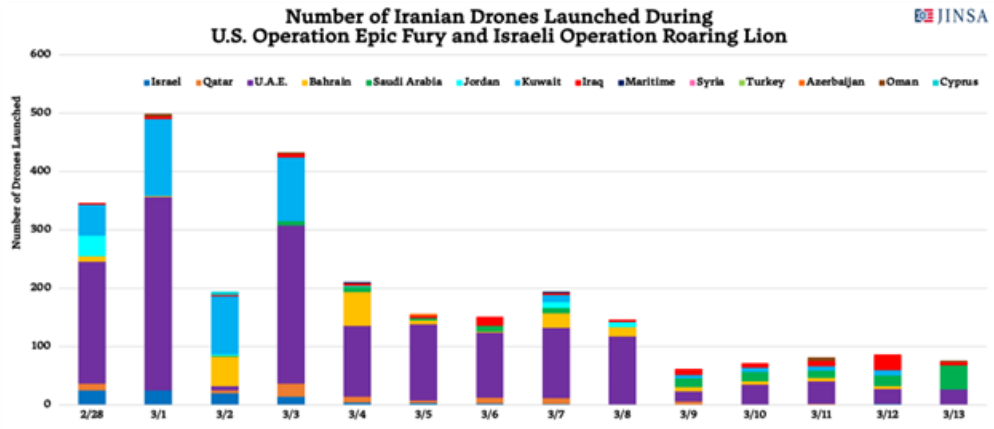
- France and Italy have opened talks with Iran seeking to negotiate safe passage for their vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.
- In a call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Indian President Narendra Modi shared his "deep concern over the escalation of tensions and the loss of civilian lives as well as damage to civilian infrastructure." He added that India's priorities are the safety of its citizens and "the need for unhindered transit of goods and energy."

7. Charts and Trends

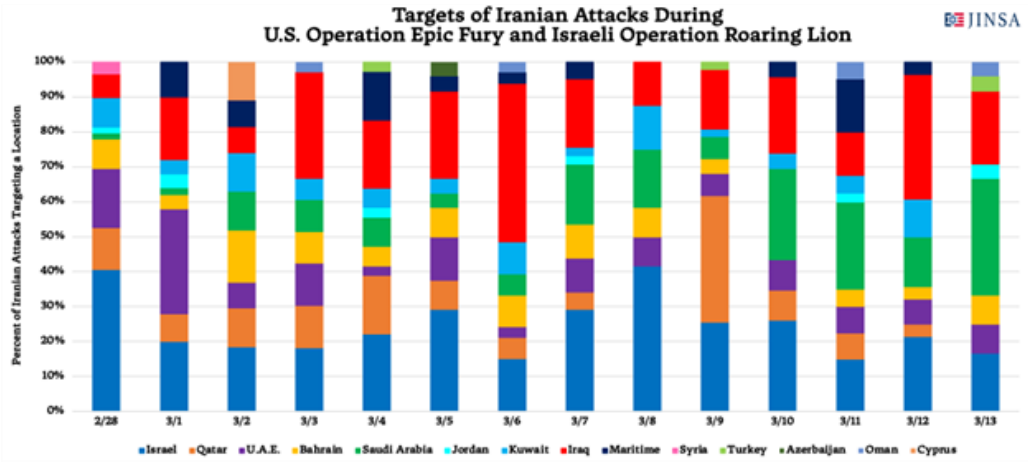
- Overall, Iranian missile fire continued its decline on March 12, with 32 missiles fired, a 30 percent decline from 46 on March 11. So far, on March 13, Iran has fired just 19 missiles, a 42 percent decline from March 12.
  - » For the third time during the war, an Iranian missile that threatened Turkish territory was intercepted.



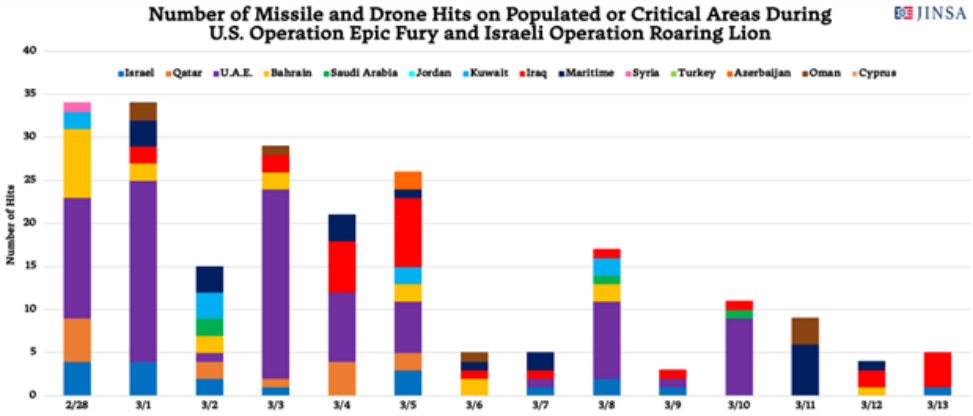
- The number of drones Iran has launched has continued to rise since March 9, even as it remains much lower than earlier in the war. As part of its effort to impose costs on oil markets, Iran sharply escalated drone attacks against Saudi Arabia, launching 41 drones already on March 13, up from 12-18 drones per day from March 9-12.



- Since the afternoon of March 12, Iran has focused its attacks against Saudi Arabia, with 33 percent of attacks so far on March 13 targeting Saudi Arabia, up from 14 percent on March 12. At the same time, Iran's continued focus on targeting Iraq on March 12 and March 13, with 10 and 5 attacks respectively, suggests an ongoing effort to strike at U.S. forces and Kurdish groups.



- Since the afternoon of March 12, the number of Iranian projectiles successfully hitting targets increased from 4 hits on March 12 to 6 hits on March 13. Four of the six hits on March 13 struck Iraq, reflecting Iran's continued focus on Kurdish regions, while two cluster munitions struck Israel, including one attack that injured nearly 60 people in the Galilee region.
  - » Most successful strikes continue to appear to have been from drone attacks and missiles targeting Iraq, where air defenses are weakest.



8. JINSA Resources

- Meriem Mokhtari, *How the Muslim Brotherhood Funds Iran's Proxies*, March 11, 2026
- Blaise Misztal, *Principles for U.S.-Kurdish Partnership*, March 6, 2026
- Hussein Mansour, *Gulf Situation Assessment: Iran's Attacks on Arab States Will Backfire*, March 5, 2026
- Ari Cicurel, *Iran's Missile Fire Has Almost Run Out*, March 5, 2026
- Blaise Misztal, *Iran is Not Iraq*, March 4, 2026
- Giran Ozcan and Jonah Brody, *The Kurdish Moment in Iran*, March 4, 2026
- Gen. Frank McKenzie, USMC (ret.), IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, IDF MG (ret.) Oded Bassiuk, and John Hannah, "Webinar: Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion," March 1, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, *U.S.-Israel Joint Operations Against Iran's Regime*, February 28, 2026
- Blaise Misztal, Giran Ozcan, and Jonah Brody, *The Rise of Iran's Kurdish Coalition*, February 27, 2026

- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, *Israel: America's Third Aircraft Carrier in the Middle East*, February 25, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Ari Cicurel, *Iran's Evolving Missile and Drone Threat*, February 20, 2026
- Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.), LTG Karen Gibson, USA (ret.), and Lt Gen Sam Mundy, USMC (ret.), "Any Action Against Iran Needs to Account for the Proxies," *Breaking Defense*, February 19, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe and Yoni Tobin, "Iran Has Teeth. Can America Extract Them?", *JNS*, February 12, 2026
- IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, VADM Robert Harward, USN (ret.), Lt Gen Charles Moore, USAF (ret.), and Blaise Misztal, "Webinar: How Should the United States Respond to Iranian Protests?, January 15, 2026
- Gen Charles Wald, USAF (ret.), VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), and LTG Robert Ashley, USA (ret.), *Operation Rising Lion: Insights from Israel's 12-Day War Against Iran*, November 20, 2025
- Ari Cicurel, *Shielded by Fire: Middle East Air Defense During the June 2025 Israel-Iran War*, August 21, 2025