



# Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 3/16/26 Update

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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 16 at 11:00 am ET.

## 1. Overview

- The United States has [spent](#) approximately \$12 billion on Operation Epic Fury thus far, according to U.S. National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett.
- U.S. and Israeli airstrikes have [neutralized](#) over 70 percent of Iran's missile launchers and driven missile production to [zero](#), according to Israeli intelligence estimates. They have also, in recent days, [eliminated](#) most of Iran's defense industrial base and reportedly set back several key Iranian defense programs by a matter of years.
- U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) [reported](#) that Iranian attacks targeted Gulf states over 300 times in the past 14 days.
- 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 the Gulf nations to end the war.
  - » Iranian missile fire continued its decline on March 15, with 19 missiles fired, a 34 percent decline from 29 on March 14. So far on March 16, Iran has fired just 14 missiles, a 26 percent decline from March 15.
  - » However, Iran has already launched 64 drones against Saudi Arabia on March 16, up from fewer than 25 drones per day on March 13 and 14.
  - » Iran has launched roughly 2,930 drones, 1,265 ballistic missiles, and 28 cruise missiles since the war began.
  - » The Pakistan-flagged Karachi tanker, carrying crude from Das Island in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) to Pakistan, has [passed](#) through the Strait of Hormuz. It is the [first](#) non-Iranian tanker sharing its Automatic Identification System (AIS) signal to travel through the strait.
- The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) [announced](#) on March 15 that it had eliminated an estimated 90 percent of Hezbollah's pre-October 7 weapons supply.

## 2. U.S. and Israeli Operations

- President Donald Trump is weighing ordering troops to [seize](#) Iran's energy infrastructure on Kharg Island, responsible for the vast majority of Iranian oil exports, if commercial ships

remain unable to safely transit the Strait of Hormuz. Reportedly, U.S. officials believe such an operation would require U.S. boots on the ground.

- The United States is reportedly [planning](#) to announce in the coming days that multiple countries have agreed to form an international coalition to open the Strait of Hormuz.
  - » The United States is in [discussions](#) with seven countries to assist with efforts to secure the strait, President Trump told reporters on March 16. In addition, Israel and the United States have reportedly been [cooperating](#) on efforts to secure ships' safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz.
  - » Moreover, President Trump [told](#) the *Financial Times* on March 15, "It's only appropriate that people who are the beneficiaries of the strait will help to make sure that nothing bad happens there," adding, "If there's no response or if it's a negative response I think it will be very bad for the future of NATO."
  - » The summit between President Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, scheduled for the end of March, "may" be [delayed](#) if China does not assist with reopening the Strait of Hormuz.
- U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent [stated](#) that the United States is "fine" with the current tanker traffic Iran is permitting through the Strait of Hormuz, including Chinese tankers and ships transporting oil to India.
- Israel's *Walla News* reported on March 15, citing Israeli [intelligence estimates](#), that the U.S.-Israeli campaign has eliminated at least 120 Iranian radar systems and over 100 anti-aircraft batteries, enabling American and Israeli air superiority; neutralized at least 70 percent of Iran's missile launchers; and reduced Iranian missile production to zero.
- In recent days, U.S. and Israeli airstrikes have reportedly [targeted](#) key pillars of Iran's defense industrial base and inflicted severe damage to dozens of military research centers and production sites. The strikes will inhibit Iran's ability to produce many kinds of weapons systems for years, Israeli intelligence analysts told *Walla News*.
- The IDF has [embarked](#) on a "targeted ground operation" in southern Lebanon aimed at eliminating Hezbollah fighters, their infrastructure, and the threat the group poses to Israel's northern residents.
  - » The IDF [announced](#) that its operations since October 8, 2023, targeting Hezbollah have degraded the group's weapons supply by approximately 90 percent compared to its pre-war capabilities.
  - » At the same time, Lebanese and Israeli officials are reportedly [working](#) to start negotiations in the coming days over a long-term ceasefire and a genuine disarmament of Hezbollah.
    - However, according to multiple Lebanese officials who spoke to Reuters, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun is reportedly [seeking an end to hostilities](#) before entering negotiations.

### **Day 17 of Operations: March 16**

#### *Iran*

- The IDF "[launched](#) a wave of extensive strikes" targeting regime infrastructure; the strikes are occurring concurrently in Tehran, Shiraz, and Tabriz.
- The IDF [obliterated](#) a government space facility in Tehran used to help the regime attack satellites.
- Overnight, the IDF [destroyed](#) former Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's plane at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport.

## *Lebanon*

- Israeli forces have [expanded](#) into southern Lebanon as part of a “targeted ground operation” to dismantle key Hezbollah assets in the region.
  - » According to the IDF, the limited offensive is “part of the effort to establish forward defense” to [protect](#) Israel’s national security and defend the country’s northern residents from Hezbollah attacks.
  - » In response to the ground operation, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz also [announced](#) that Lebanese residents “who have evacuated and are evacuating from their homes will not return to the area south of the Litani [River] until the safety of the residents of the north is guaranteed.”

## *Iraq*

- An airstrike [targeted](#) fuel tanks belonging to a unit of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a collection of Iran-backed militias in Iraq, north of Mosul, wounding three fighters.

## **Day 16 of Operations: March 15**

### *Iran*

- Israel’s air force [struck](#) over 200 regime targets throughout Iran, including weapons storage facilities, command centers, and air defense systems.
  - » However, IDF spokesman and former JINSA Visiting IDF Fellow Brigadier General Effie Defrin, [announced](#) that Israel’s military still has “thousands of targets” to address in Iran as its forces identify “new targets every day.”
- Strikes [targeted](#) at least five Iranian internal security forces’ checkpoints across Tehran.
  - » Iranian security personnel are increasingly moving their checkpoints into tunnels or underneath bridges to avoid exposure to airstrikes.
  - » A drone attack on a checkpoint in northeast Tehran [eliminated](#) Basij Commander Mohammad Sarlak.
- Strikes also targeted other regime sites, including an [air base](#) in Bandar Abbas; an [army aviation base](#) in Isfahan; and a [maritime base](#) in Bandar Siraf.

## *U.S. and Israeli Rationale and Policy Objectives*

### *United States*

- CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper [reiterated](#) the U.S. military objectives of the war: “eliminating Iran’s ballistic missiles, drones, and naval threats,” including missile and drone manufacturing facilities. He added that the United States is also focused on eliminating the threat Iran poses to ship movement through the Strait of Hormuz.
- White House trade adviser Peter Navarro [argued](#) that neutralizing Iran could significantly reduce global oil pricing, contending that Tehran’s threats have long imposed a “terror premium” of \$5 to \$15 per barrel on crude by keeping markets on edge over potential disruptions to the Strait of Hormuz.

### *Israel*

- Top spokesperson for the IDF and former JINSA Visiting IDF Fellow Brigadier General Effie Defrin [said](#) regime change is not a military objective, but added that Israeli operations aim to create conditions that will allow the Iranian people to “take their fate into their own hands” over time.
- IDF spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani [stated](#) that Israel has detailed war plans for the next three weeks. He added, “We want to make sure that they [Iran] are as

weak as possible, this regime, and that we degrade all their capabilities, all parts and all wings of their security establishment.”

### 3. Iranian Operations

- Iran and Hezbollah continue to target Israel with an array of drone, missile, and rocket attacks. Over the past 24 hours, these attacks have included:
  - » Iran launched six ballistic missile attack waves, with at least two cluster munitions [impacting](#) sites across central Israel and several other locations being hit with shrapnel from intercepted missiles.
  - » Hezbollah [launched](#) rockets at northern Israeli towns.
- Arab countries continue to come under Iranian fire. Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E. have each reported Iranian attacks on their country over the past day:
  - » Iraq: The U.S. Victory Base Complex near the Baghdad International Airport was reportedly targeted in three separate incidents. Early on Monday, the Victory Base Complex was [targeted](#) in two separate attacks involving nine drone and rocket attacks, with at least three drones reportedly intercepted. Hours later, four rockets again [targeted](#) the Victory Base Complex. Additionally, an IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) missile attack [hit](#) a camp belonging to the Iranian Kurdish opposition Komala Party in Iraqi Kurdistan.
  - » Qatar: Qatar [intercepted](#) several Iranian drones on March 15.
  - » Saudi Arabia: So far, on March 16, Saudi Arabia has successfully [intercepted](#) 64 drones.
  - » U.A.E.: The U.A.E. [intercepted](#) six Iranian missiles and 21 drones. Earlier drone strikes targeted the [Dubai International Airport](#), prompting a temporary suspension of flights; the [Fujairah port](#), causing a fire and the suspension of oil-loading operations; and a [building](#) in the city of Umm Al Quwain. In addition, a missile strike in Abu Dhabi [resulted](#) in the death of a Palestinian civilian.
- Iran reportedly [permitted](#) two Indian tankers to pass through the Strait of Hormuz in recent days, among the only vessels it has permitted to do so.
  - » More broadly, India is reportedly in talks with Iran to secure the safe passage of all 22 of its vessels stranded in the Arabian Gulf. Iran is demanding the release of three of its vessels that India seized in February in exchange.

### 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: Major John A. Klinner, 33; Captain Ariana G. Savino, 31; Technical Sergeant Ashle B. Pruitt, 34; Captain Seth R. Koval, 38; Captain Curtis J. Angst, 30; and Technical Sergeant Tyler H. Simmons, 28.
- 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 3,369 people have been [hospitalized](#);
  - » In the U.A.E., seven people have been [killed](#), and at least 145 have been [injured](#);
  - » Two [Kuwaiti navy sailors](#), two [interior ministry officers](#), and a [Kuwaiti civilian](#) have been killed, and over 70 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, and at least 10 people have been [wounded](#);
  - » In Bahrain, two people have [been killed](#), and 35 people have [been injured](#);
  - » At least 21 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 850 people have been [killed](#), and more than 2,105 have been [wounded](#)—figures that do not distinguish between Hezbollah operatives and civilians; and
  - » In Iran, at least 3,000 people, including at least 1,120 military personnel, have been [killed](#).

## 5. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian Officials

- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [stated](#) that Iran is not seeking a ceasefire with the United States and Israel, but that “this war must end, in a way that our enemies never again think about repeating such attacks.”
- The IRGC [vowed](#) to continue efforts to locate and kill Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stating it would pursue him “with force.”
- Iranian Armed Forces spokesperson Ebrahim Zolfaqari [declared](#) that the “logistics and service centers” for the USS *Ford* Carrier Strike Group in the Red Sea would now be “considered” targets.
- Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters [warned](#) regional countries against cooperating with the London-based opposition outlet *Iran International* and threatened to designate any media infrastructure supporting the channel as a legitimate target.
- Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei [claimed](#) that Iran had not closed the Strait of Hormuz, but that its armed forces tightly control the waterway and would permit ships from non-hostile countries to safely transit the Strait.
- Baghaei also [stated](#) on March 16 that “if Romania makes its bases available to the United States, it would amount to participation in military aggression against Iran.”
- Iranian judiciary chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejei, referring to accused U.S. and Israeli sympathizers, [stated](#) that Iran “must not delay or show leniency in executing final verdicts

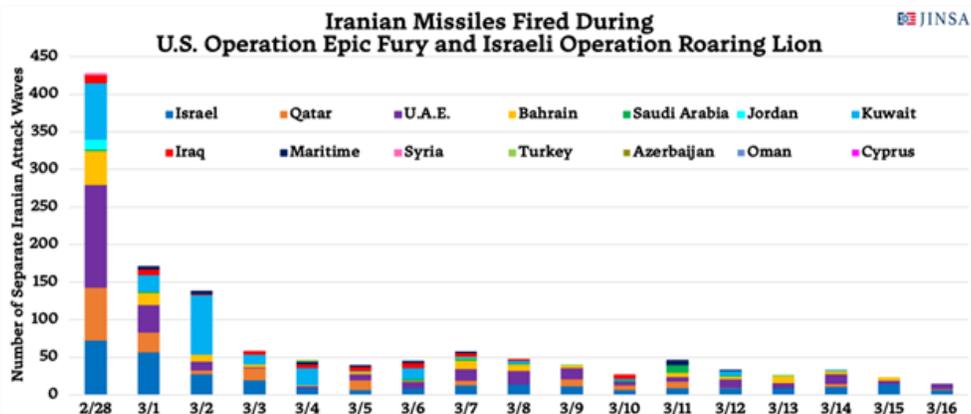
against those who, during wartime and unrest, committed crimes and were affiliated with the aggressor enemy.”

## 6. International Response

- Multiple U.S. allies [declined](#) President Trump’s call to send warships to secure the Strait of Hormuz, with Australia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom all ruling out naval deployments to the area.
  - » German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius [questioned](#) what a handful of European frigates could accomplish that the U.S. Navy cannot, and declared, “this is not our war, we have not started it.”
  - » British Prime Minister Keir Starmer [stated](#) that the United Kingdom will not be drawn into a “wider war” over Iran, but added the government is “working with allies” on a plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.
  - » Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen [declared](#) that Denmark would keep an open mind to President Trump’s plan, stating “it’s wise to keep an open mind on whether Europe ... can contribute.”
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been [speaking](#) regularly with President Trump during the war and reportedly has urged him to press the campaign against Iran aggressively and “cut off the head of the snake.”
- Qatar’s foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari [said](#) diplomatic talks with Iran are only possible if Tehran first halts attacks on Gulf states.
- French President Emmanuel Macron [said](#) he spoke with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and urged Tehran to halt what he called “unacceptable” regional attacks, adding that freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz must be restored “as soon as possible.”
- High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas [stated](#) that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz is helping Russia to fund the war in Ukraine.
- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and United Kingdom (U.K.) issued a [joint statement](#) following an extraordinary meeting.

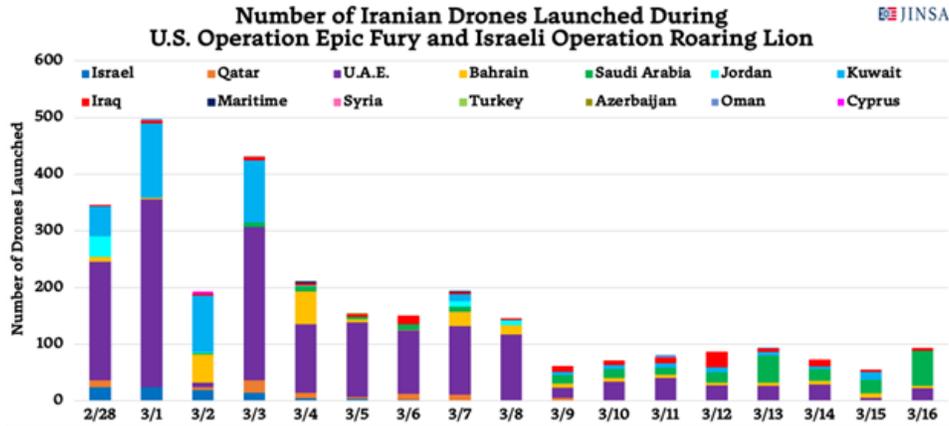
## 7. Charts and Trends

- Overall, Iranian missile fire continued its decline on March 15, with 19 missiles fired, a 34 percent decline from 29 on March 14. So far on March 16, Iran has fired just 14 missiles.

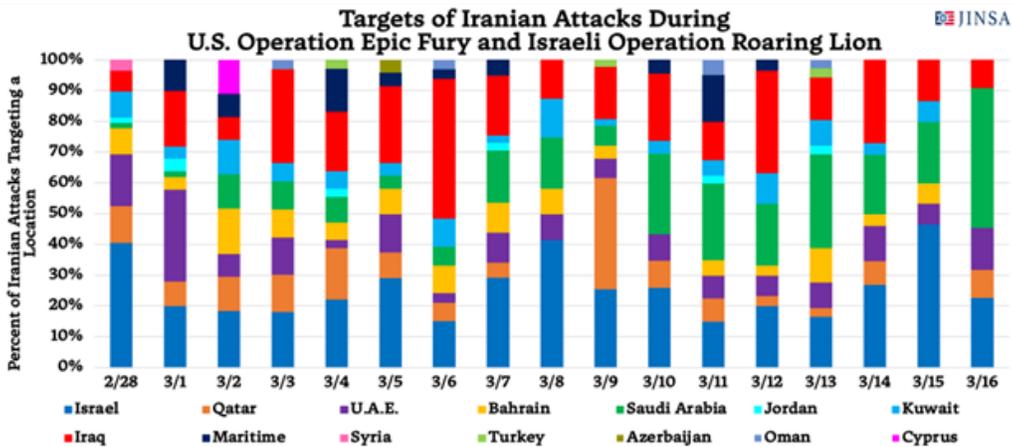


- Iran sharply escalated drone attacks on March 16—in particular against Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E.— by launching 93 drones so far, a 72 percent increase from 54 drones on March 15. Iran increased drone attacks against Saudi Arabia by 158 percent on March 16, up to 62

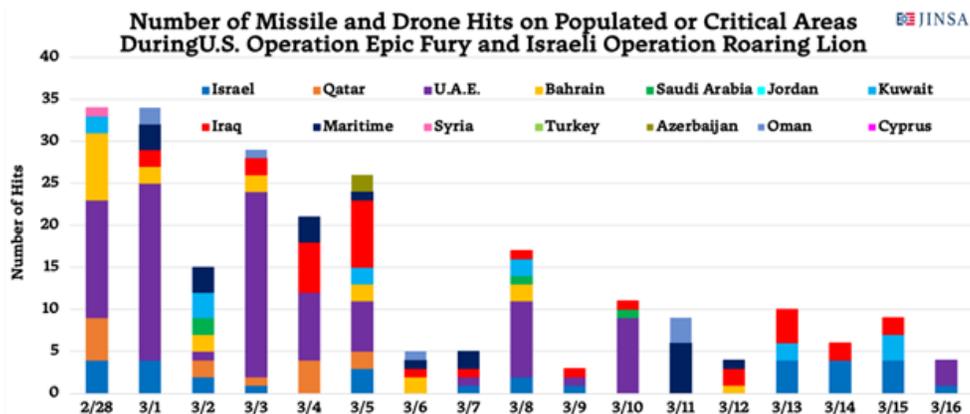
already on March 16 from 24 on March 15 to 62, marking the most drones it has fired at the country in a single day since the war began.



- As part of its effort to raise the cost of oil, Iran has substantially escalated its attacks against Saudi Arabia over the past week, with 45 percent of attacks so far on March 16 targeting Saudi Arabia, up from 20 percent on March 15.
  - So far on March 16, 23 percent of Iranian attacks targeted Israel, down from 47 percent on March 15.



- Since the afternoon of March 15, the number of Iranian projectiles successfully hitting targets decreased from 9 hits on March 15 to 4 hits so far on March 16, with three of the four hits on March 16 striking the U.A.E., reflecting Iran's focus on Gulf infrastructure.



## 8. JINSA Resources

- Hussein Mansour, [\*If Tehran Falls: How Iran's Collapse Reshuffles Arab Gulf Relations\*](#), March 16
- Meriem Mokhtari, [\*How the Muslim Brotherhood Funds Iran's Proxies\*](#), March 11, 2026
- Robert McNally and Michael Makovsky, PhD, "[\*Webinar: Iran War Energy Disruption: Short-Term or Here To Stay?\*](#)" March 10, 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