



Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 3/17/26 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 17 at 11:00 am ET.

1. Overview

- President Donald Trump [stated](#) that Iran wants to reach a deal with the United States, but added that he is unsure they are prepared to do so.
 - » Newly appointed Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei reportedly [rejected](#) ceasefire and de-escalation proposals from two intermediary countries, indicating that it was not “the right time for peace.”
- The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) eliminated senior Iranian officials, with strikes [targeting](#) Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani—the regime’s effective leader since the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei—and Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) Basij Force Gholam Reza Soleimani.
- Iran increased its missile fire against Qatar and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia, even as the overall number of attacks remained well below the levels at the beginning of the war.
 - » On March 16, Iran fired 14 missiles against Qatar, the most against the country in a single day since March 3, and 98 drones at Saudi Arabia, the most it faced since the war began.
 - » Overall, Iranian missile launches increased 19 percent on March 16, with 31 missiles fired, up from 26 on March 15. So far on March 17, Iran has fired 18 missiles.
 - » Iran has launched roughly 3,100 drones, 1,315 ballistic missiles, and 28 cruise missiles since the war began.
- Iran continues to raise costs on oil markets in an effort to push the United States to end the war by [targeting ships](#) in the Gulf, effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz maritime choke-point.
 - » Reuters [reported](#) on March 16 that daily oil exports from the Middle East dropped by 61 percent in the preceding week.
 - » Select vessels have appeared to receive [Iranian approval](#) to transit, with a Pakistan-flagged crude tanker becoming the first non-Iranian vessel to broadcast its passage through the strait.

- The IDF is anticipating a [significant wave](#) of Hezbollah rocket barrages in the coming hours on March 17 and has troops actively working to preempt the attack.
 - » The warning comes after the IDF acknowledged it [failed](#) to alert the public ahead of an overnight Hezbollah salvo of over 200 rockets at northern Israel on March 12.
- While Trump stated that some countries are “very enthusiastic” about helping to secure the Strait of Hormuz, he criticized countries that have not heeded his call, [noting](#), “Some are countries that we’ve helped for many, many years. We’ve protected them from horrible outside sources, and they weren’t that enthusiastic.”
- Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Joe Kent [resigned](#) from his position on March 17, stating that he “cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran,” and that “Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby.”

2. U.S. and Israeli Operations

- President Trump [stated](#) that the United States has conducted over 7,000 strikes on Iran during Operation Epic Fury. He [highlighted](#) the success of U.S. strikes, noting, “We have achieved a 90% reduction in their [Iran’s] ballistic missile launches and a 95% reduction in drone attacks.” He added that due to Iran’s limited supply of missiles, “The missiles are trickling in now at very low levels.”
 - » Trump [stated](#) that the United States struck three Iranian missile and drone production facilities on March 16.
 - » He [added](#) that the U.S. strikes have eliminated over 100 vessels in Iran’s navy.
- Chief of Staff of the IDF Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir [highlighted](#) the interconnected nature of Israel’s strikes in Iran and efforts to counter Hezbollah in Lebanon, stating, “Weakening the [Iranian] regime and its capabilities will weaken the entire radical axis and, within that, the Hezbollah terror organization.” He added, “The shockwave of the strikes and the weakening of the radical regime in Iran are also felt in the campaign against Hezbollah.”
- While Trump [affirmed](#) that Operation Epic Fury could end this week, he clarified that he does not think it will, though he added that the operation will “be wrapped up soon.”
- Israel’s *Channel 12* outlet [reported](#) on March 16, citing a senior Israeli official, that Israel anticipates the war going on for another month and potentially longer.

Day 18 of Operations: March 17

Iran

- The Israeli military [killed](#) the secretary of Iran’s National Security Council, Ali Larijani, as well as the top Basij commander, Gholam Reza Soleimani, and his deputy, in overnight air-strikes.
 - » Overnight strikes also [killed](#) approximately 300 Basij commanders and officials.
- Strikes also targeted several other regime sites throughout Iran, according to [Iran International](#), including:
 - » An [IRGC intelligence headquarters](#) in southern Tehran;
 - » [Basij logistics and command centers](#); and
 - » The [Imam Hadi security unit command center](#) in Tehran.

Iraq

- An unattributed strike on a home in Baghdad’s Jadriya neighborhood—known as a hub for Iran-aligned Iraqi armed groups—[killed](#) four people, including two alleged Iranian advisers to Tehran’s Iraqi proxies.
- A separate unclaimed strike [targeted](#) a position belonging to the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in northern Baghdad.

Day 17 of Operations: March 16

Iran

- The Israeli Air Force [announced](#) that it had bombed an Intelligence Ministry headquarters in Tehran on March 15 and the [IRGC’s Navy headquarters](#) in Tehran on March 13.
- Strikes also targeted several other regime sites throughout Iran, according to *Iran International*, including:
 - » The [Tehran Prevention Police headquarters](#);
 - » A [Basij base, weapons storage sites, and air defense systems](#) in Tehran;
 - » A [ballistic missile site and security command center](#) in Shiraz; and
 - » [Air defense systems](#) in Tabriz.

Lebanon

- The Israeli Air Force [bombed](#) a subterranean Hezbollah weapons arsenal containing cruise missiles and rockets.

Iraq

- Three separate unattributed airstrikes [targeted](#) a PMF headquarters building, killing two fighters in the al-Qa’im district of al-Anbar Governorate.

U.S. and Israeli Rationale and Policy Objectives

United States

- President Trump [affirmed](#) the importance of Operation Epic Fury to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, stating, “If you believe that Iran should not have a nuclear weapon ... then you have to absolutely love what I’ve done.”
- Trump stated that Iranian officials have [conveyed interest](#) in a deal with the United States, but Iran is not yet ready for negotiations: “They want to make a deal. They’re talking to our people. I don’t know if they’re ready yet. They’re taking a pounding.”
- Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Joe Kent [resigned](#), stating that he “cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran,” and that “Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby.”

3. Iranian Operations

- Israel’s military intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Shlomi Binder, reportedly [said](#) in a briefing that Iran’s leadership “is in distress,” adding that the regime is just beginning to grasp how much damage it has sustained, and how vulnerable its command structure is.
 - » Maj. Gen. Binder also reportedly stated that Iran is only launching the amount of missiles it can fire, and that on a daily basis, Israel’s airstrikes are sealing off tunnels used to store missiles and launchers, rendering them inoperable.

- 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:
 - » A ballistic missile with cluster munitions hit multiple sites in [central Israel](#);
 - » Six people were [injured](#) after a Hezbollah rocket impacted a home in the northern Israeli city of Nahariya.
 - » Fragments from intercepted missiles and fired interceptors [fell](#) at several sites in Jerusalem, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the plaza of the Temple Mount and Al-Aqsa compound.
 - » The IDF is [expecting](#) Hezbollah to launch a significant wave of rockets within the coming hours on March 17, with Israeli troops actively working to prevent the attack.
- Arab countries continue to come under Iranian fire. Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) have each reported Iranian attacks on their country over the past day:
 - » Iraq: The American embassy in Baghdad was [targeted](#) by at least five drones and multiple rockets, with one drone striking the embassy compound, causing a fire.
 - » Qatar: Qatar [intercepted](#) 13 of 14 Iranian ballistic missiles and all accompanying drones, with one missile landing in an uninhabited area without causing casualties.
 - » Saudi Arabia: According to the Saudi Ministry of Defense, Saudi Arabia has [intercepted](#) 31 drones so far on March 17.
 - » U.A.E.: The U.A.E. [intercepted](#) 10 ballistic missiles and 45 Iranian drones, with missile debris [killing](#) one in Abu Dhabi. An earlier drone [strike](#) on the Shah natural gas field sparked a fire and forced the suspension of operations.
- A Kuwait-flagged liquefied petroleum tanker [sustained](#) minor structural damage after being struck by an unknown projectile—reportedly fragments from an airborne interception—in waters off the coast of the U.A.E., with no casualties reported.
- Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei [appointed](#) General Mohsen Rezaei, the former head of the IRGC, as a new military advisor within Iran’s government.
- Dutch authorities [announced](#) that they are investigating a potential Iranian-government link to an arson attack on a Rotterdam synagogue on March 13.

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 Kork, 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.
- At least 200 members of the U.S. military have been [injured](#) thus far in the war, 10 of whom have been “seriously wounded,” according to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) spokesperson CAPT Tim Hawkins.

- An Israeli soldier was [wounded](#) after being struck by gunfire during an “operational accident” on March 17, according to the IDF.
- 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 3,530 people have been [hospitalized](#);
 - » In the U.A.E., eight 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, over 70 Kuwaiti military personnel have [been injured](#), and two medical staff have been [wounded](#);
 - » 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 27 [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 886 people have been [killed](#), and more than 2,141 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](#). However, *Iran International* suggests at least 5,000 military personnel have been [killed](#), with over 15,000 wounded.

5. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian Officials

- Mazaher Hosseini, head of protocol in the office of the late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, [stated](#) that Mojtaba Khamenei narrowly survived the February 28 Israeli airstrike by stepping into the compound’s yard moments before missiles struck the building, sustaining only a minor leg injury, according to audio obtained by *The Telegraph*.
- Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei [rejected](#) ceasefire and de-escalation proposals from two intermediary countries, declaring it was not “the right time for peace” until the United States and Israel “accept defeat and pay compensation,” according to a senior Iranian official.

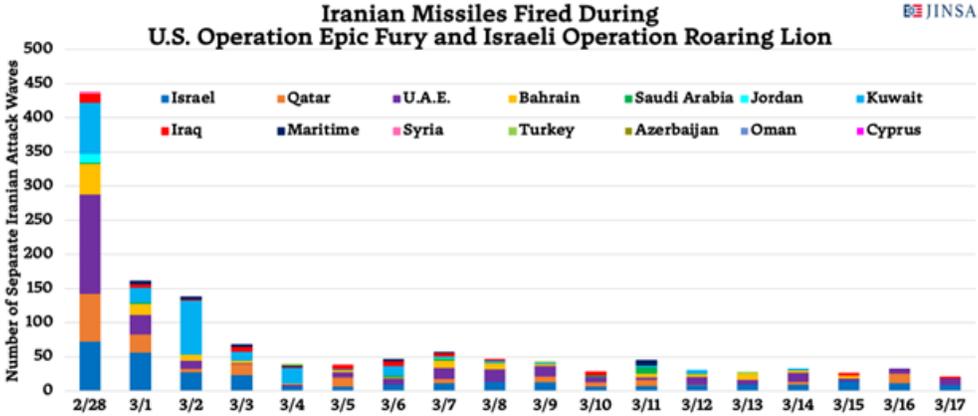
6. International Response

- Turkey and Germany both condemned Israel’s ground operation in Lebanon, with Turkey’s foreign ministry [warning](#) of “genocidal and collective punishment policies” risking another humanitarian catastrophe, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz [calling](#) the offensive an “error” that will “further exacerbate the already highly tense humanitarian situation,” urging Israel not to continue.

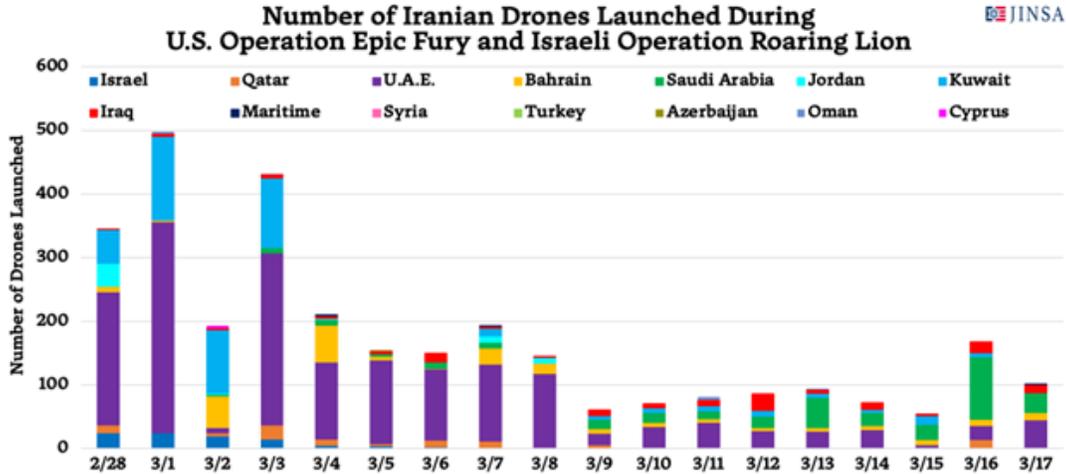
- High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas [said](#) that member states showed “no appetite” to expand the bloc’s Aspides naval mission to the Strait of Hormuz, rebuffing President Trump’s calls for allied nations to help police the waterway.
- The United Kingdom has reportedly [drafted](#) a plan for a Strait of Hormuz coalition and shared it with the United States and several other countries.
- Iraq’s oil ministry [said](#) it is in talks with Iran to secure safe passage for Iraqi oil tankers through the Strait of Hormuz.

7. Charts and Trends

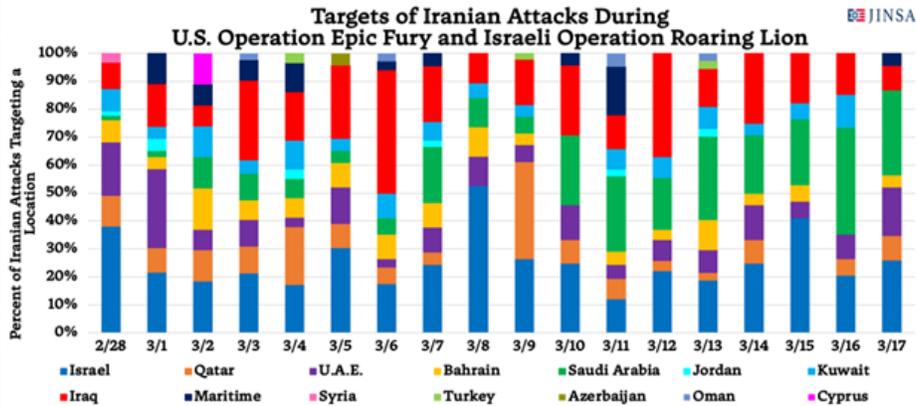
- Iranian missile fire increased on March 16, with 31 missiles launched, a 19 percent increase from 26 on March 15. So far on March 17, Iran has already launched 20 missiles.
 - » Iran fired 14 missiles at Qatar on March 16, the highest single-day total against Qatar since March 3.



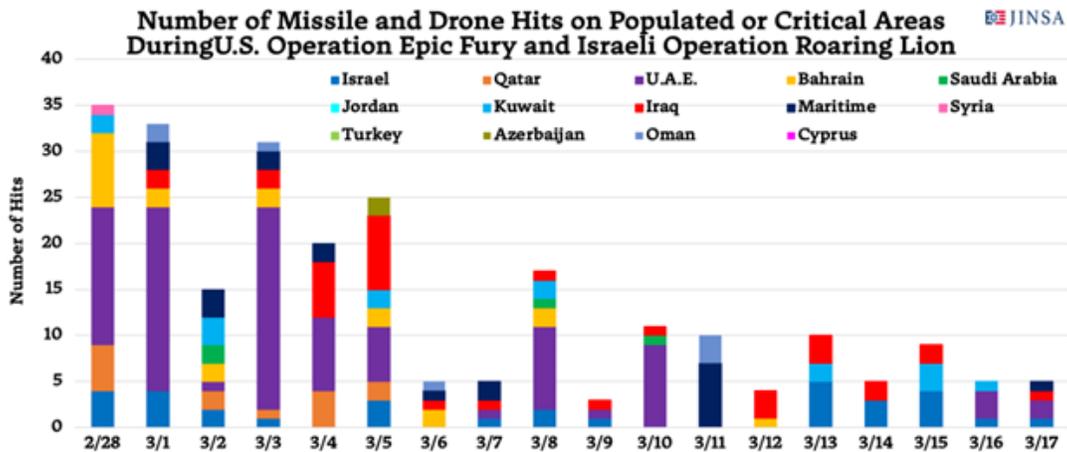
- Iran continued heavy drone attacks against Saudi Arabia, launching 98 drones on March 16, the most against Saudi Arabia since the war began, up from 24 on March 15 and 21 on March 14.
 - » So far on March 17, the number of Iranian drones targeting Saudi Arabia has decreased by roughly seventy percent, with Iran launching 31 drones.
 - » On March 17, Iran slightly shifted its focus toward the U.A.E., launching 45 drones already, up from 22 drones on March 16.



- Since the afternoon of March 16, Iran continued shifting its targeting patterns, with 38 percent of attacks on March 16 targeting Saudi Arabia, up from 24 percent on March 15.



- The number of Iranian hits declined 44 percent to five hits on March 16, from nine hits on March 15, but has already reached five hits on March 17.
 - » Three of the five hits on March 16 struck the U.A.E., while two of the five hits on March 17 struck the U.A.E.
 - » Over the last two days, the number of Iranian projectiles hitting Israel decreased from four hits on March 15 to just one hit on both March 16 and March 17, following Iran’s expanded use of cluster munitions over the weekend that led to an increase in hits.
 - » On March 17, an Iranian projectile hit and damaged a ship for the first time in a week.



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