



Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 5/16/26 – 5/18/26 Update

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The United States, Israel, and Iran reached a two-week ceasefire agreement on April 7, which President Donald Trump extended indefinitely on April 21. JINSA continues to release regular updates about the conflict. The update below includes information since [JINSA's last update](#) as of May 18 at 10:30 am ET.

Days left in U.S.-Israel-Iran ceasefire: **Extended indefinitely**

Days left in Israel-Lebanon ceasefire: **42**, following May 15 45-day extension

Iranian missiles and drones launched since ceasefire: **At least 283** (at least 10 on May 15–18)

Hezbollah attacks since ceasefire: **At least 121** (at least 19 on May 15–18)

Ships transiting Strait of Hormuz since ceasefire: **At least 360** (at least 25 on May 15–18)

- Note: Many of these ships are local fast boats, tugboats, or landing craft, not commercial vessels. Numerous ships in the area are also transmitting false locations.

Total blockade-eligible ships disabled or rerouted by U.S. forces: **At least 88** (at least 6 between May 15–18)

Total blockade-eligible ships that [evaded the blockade](#): **At least 12** (0 between May 15–18)

- Note: JINSA is significantly revising down its estimates of total ships that evaded the blockade, based on the Pentagon's May 13 [statement](#) that it allowed 15 ships to cross the blockade line for humanitarian purposes
- Note: The blockade line that the Pentagon announced crosses where the Gulf of Oman opens into the Arabian Sea, beyond the Strait of Hormuz itself. Some of the ships that evaded the blockade are small vessels with limited utility to the Iranian regime.

1. Overview

- President Donald Trump will [convene](#) his top national security staff on May 19 to discuss military options toward Iran, according to reporting in *Axios*.
- On May 17, President Trump [posted](#) on Truth Social, "For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won't be anything left of them. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!"
 - » President Trump also [told](#) *Axios*, "We want to make a deal. They are not where we want them to be. They will have to get there, or they will be hit badly, and they don't want that."
- In a May 17 phone call between President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the two leaders reportedly [spoke](#) about the possibility of resumed military action in Iran and President Trump's trip to China last week.

- After two days of negotiations with Israel and Lebanon in Washington, D.C., the United States announced a 45-day [extension](#) of the ceasefire between the two countries on May 15.
 - » Security track conversations will continue on May 29, and the State Department will mediate political track dialogues between the countries on June 2–3.
- On May 17, Saudi Arabia [intercepted](#) three drones that entered its airspace from Iraqi territory—the first attack against the kingdom since the first day of the ceasefire—and the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) [engaged](#) three drones from the west, with one hitting an electrical generator near a nuclear power plant.
- On May 15, the U.S. Department of Justice [revealed](#) that it arrested Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, an Iraqi national and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operative, for involvement in 18 terrorist attacks across Europe; two attempted attacks in Canada; and planned attacks on Jewish sites in Arizona, California, and New York.
- Commercial shipping flows through the Strait of Hormuz have increased in recent days.
 - » According to JINSA-reviewed Kpler shipping data, an average of nearly eight ships a day passed through the waterway between May 16-18, compared to an average of just three ships a day that did so between May 13-15.

2. Diplomatic Engagement

Iran

- On May 18, Pakistan shared a revised Iranian [proposal](#) with U.S. officials.
 - » That day, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei continued to [insist](#) on war reparations and that his country is “fully prepared for any eventuality,” including resumed combat operations.
- On May 17, Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani “affirmed the State of Qatar’s full support for the Pakistani mediation efforts” during a phone call with Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Shahbaz Sharif, according to a Qatari Foreign Ministry [statement](#).

Lebanon

- On May 15, Israeli and Lebanese delegations [agreed](#) to a 45-day ceasefire extension during their third round of negotiations in Washington, D.C.
 - » The Lebanese delegation released a statement, claiming “Lebanon will continue to engage constructively in negotiations while safeguarding its sovereignty and protecting the safety of its people.”
 - » The delegation added that “Lebanon is negotiating for a future in which its borders are respected, its sovereignty is upheld solely by its Lebanese Armed Forces, and its people can live in lasting peace and security.”
 - Before the ceasefire’s extension was announced, Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Yechiel Leiter, [wrote](#) on X that the negotiations were “frank and constructive,” noting, “There will be ups and downs, but the potential for success is great. What will be paramount throughout negotiations is the security of our citizens and our soldiers.”
 - » On May 18, following the ceasefire’s extension, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun [stated](#), “The framework that Lebanon has set for the negotiations consists of the Israeli withdrawal, the ceasefire, the deployment of the army along the borders, the return of the displaced, and economic or financial assistance to Lebanon,” adding, “Anything else being discussed otherwise is incorrect.”

- He also stated that “It is my duty, and stemming from my position and responsibility, to do the impossible and whatever costs the least to stop the war against Lebanon and its people.”

3. U.S. and Israeli Operations

- According to reporting from *The New York Times* on May 15, “intense preparations” are [underway](#) between the United States and Israel for renewed attacks against Iran, beginning as soon as this week.
 - » American officials cited by *The New York Times* noted that the options for resumed attacks include intense strikes on Iran’s infrastructure and military assets and a ground operation with Special Operations forces to secure deeply buried enriched uranium at the Isfahan nuclear facility.
 - » In March, hundreds of Special Operations troops were deployed to the Middle East to allow for the option of a ground operation. In addition, the ground operation would require thousands of support troops; they would likely create a security perimeter and could be pulled into direct confrontation with Iranian forces. This operation would likely run the risk of casualties.
- Starting in 2024, Israel [established](#) a base in Iraq that it used during the 2025 12-Day War, *The New York Times* reported on May 17.
 - » The article followed the [revelation](#) from *The Wall Street Journal* that Israel had built another outpost in the country before Operation Roaring Lion.
 - » *The New York Times* indicated that the base used in 2025 is no longer operational, but the status of the base used in 2026 remains unclear.

Lebanon

- On the morning of May 18, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) [announced](#) that its forces had bombed 30 Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon throughout the past day, including weapon facilities and surveillance establishments, and also killed Hezbollah fighters posing threats to Israeli troops.
- Overnight between May 17 and 18, the Israeli military [carried out](#) an airstrike on the outer edge of the eastern Lebanese town of Baalbek, killing a commander of Islamic Jihad and his daughter in their apartment.
- On May 16, Lebanese state news [reported](#) that the Israeli military bombed a civil defense center located in southern Lebanon, killing six people, three of whom were paramedics.
- Between May 15 and 16, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) [bombed](#) approximately 100 Hezbollah sites, including weapon depots, surveillance sites, and other facilities throughout southern Lebanon.
 - » Additionally, the IAF [bombed](#) a Hezbollah building near a rocket launching site, killing two fighters in southern Lebanon.

4. Strait of Hormuz Shipping and Blockade Status

- On May 18, Iran’s Supreme National Security Council [unveiled](#) a new body—the Persian Gulf Strait Authority—to govern traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and provide real-time operational updates.
 - » Officials announced that a restricted shipping lane would be made available to select commercial vessels willing to coordinate with Iranian authorities, while explicitly barring vessels linked to the United States.

- U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) [announced](#) on May 18 that it has redirected 84 vessels in total—an increase of nine vessels from JINSA’s last update on May 15— since the U.S. naval blockade took effect, and that another four vessels have been disabled as part of CENTCOM enforcement operations.
- On May 16, Iraq’s oil minister, Basim Mohammed, [stated](#) that Iraq exported just 10 million barrels of oil through the Strait of Hormuz in April—down from approximately 93 million barrels monthly before the war, a cut of roughly 89 percent.
- On May 15, *Breaking Defense Europe* [reported](#) on the Multinational Military Mission—a 40-country operation, led by the United Kingdom and France—which is set to help ships safely transit the Strait of Hormuz once the United States and Iran officially commit to a ceasefire.
 - » The United Kingdom is set to contribute Eurofighter Typhoon fourth-generation fighter jets; HMS *Dragon*, a Type 45 air defense destroyer; and equipment for sweeping for mines and countering drones.
 - » France is set to send its *Charles de Gaulle* aircraft carrier, amphibious helicopter carriers, and frigates.
 - » Australia will send an E-7A Wedgetail aircraft.
 - » Belgium will contribute its Primula minehunter.
 - » Germany is sending its Fulda minehunter and Mosel replenishment ship.
 - » Italy will likely contribute two minehunters, a patrol vessel, and a logistic support vessel.
 - » The European Union is also looking to expand its Operation Aspides beyond the Red Sea into the Strait of Hormuz.

5. Iranian and Proxy Operations

- American officials cited by CNN on May 15 [suspect](#) that Iran is behind hacks in several U.S. states of automatic tank gauge (ATG) systems, which track the quantity of fuel in gas station fuel tanks.
 - » If Iranian hackers are responsible for the attack, this would be the latest of several Iran-linked cyber attacks on U.S. infrastructure during the war.

Lebanon

- Between May 15-18, Hezbollah launched several drone, rocket, mortar, and bombing attacks targeting Israeli forces operating in southern Lebanon, as well as communities in northern Israel.
 - » On the evening of May 18, the IDF [intercepted](#) three Hezbollah drones flying near troops in southern Lebanon that prompted sirens in northern Israeli towns.
 - » On May 18, several Hezbollah rockets targeting Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon [entered](#) Israeli territory, with some striking open areas and the IDF intercepting the others.
 - The attack prompted sirens in northern Israel, including Kiryat Shmona.
 - » On May 18, an explosive-laden Hezbollah drone [impacted](#) Israeli territory, with the IDF announcing that it found fragments in the northern town of Shomera.
 - » On the night of May 17, the Israeli military [shot down](#) a Hezbollah drone flying near troops in southern Lebanon.
 - » By mid-evening on May 17, the IDF [announced](#) that Hezbollah had fired explosive drones, mortars, and rockets throughout the day at Israeli troops, with many projectiles crashing near the soldiers but failing to cause injuries.

- » On May 17, in the late afternoon, a suspected Hezbollah drone [prompted](#) sirens across the Western Galilee without causing injuries.
- » On the afternoon of May 17, Israeli air defenses [intercepted](#) a barrage of Hezbollah rockets targeting Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon.
- » On May 17, Israeli forces [shot down](#) a suspected Hezbollah drone in southern Lebanon that was operating near Israeli troops.
- » Overnight on May 17, a Hezbollah bomb [planted](#) on a roadside in southern Lebanon exploded, injuring four Israeli soldiers, including one seriously.
- » On the evening of May 16, Israeli forces [intercepted](#) two Hezbollah drones flying near Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon.
 - Earlier, Hezbollah fighters fired rockets and mortars that impacted near the troops, but failed to cause casualties.
- » In the afternoon of May 16, Israeli air defenses [intercepted](#) a suspected Hezbollah drone that prompted sirens in the northern Israeli town of Metula.
- » Separately, on May 16, a suspected Hezbollah drone [prompted](#) sirens in the area of Mount Meron, but resulted in no injuries.
- » On May 15, Hezbollah [launched](#) an explosive drone at Israeli troops operating in southern Lebanon, killing Capt. Maoz Israel Recanati.
- » On the evening of May 15, Hezbollah drones [impacted](#) sites in the northern Israeli communities of Metula and Kiryat Shmona, without causing injuries.
 - Israeli air defenses also shot down two drones, while other drones crashed into open areas.
 - Earlier that day, Hezbollah [launched](#) drones, mortars, and rockets at Israeli soldiers working in southern Lebanon, with the IDF intercepting numerous drones.

U.A.E.

- On May 17, the U.A.E. [engaged](#) three drones that entered the country's airspace from the west without any reported casualties. According to the Ministry of Defense, two drones were intercepted while a third hit an electrical generator near the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant.

Saudi Arabia

- On May 17, Saudi Arabia [intercepted](#) three drones that entered the country's airspace from Iraq without any reported casualties.
 - » On May 18, Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that it would investigate the Saudi claims but [stated](#), "No information has been recorded through Iraq's air defense and radar systems indicating the passage or launch of those drones from Iraqi territory."

Outside the Middle East

- The U.S. Department of Justice [announced](#) on May 15 the arrest of Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi, a 32-year-old Iraqi national and alleged Kata'ib Hezbollah member and IRGC member.
 - » Al-Saadi allegedly plotted at least 18 terror attacks across Europe and North America in retaliation for the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran, including the stabbings of Jewish men in London and an attack on a synagogue in North Macedonia.
 - » He also was allegedly planning additional attacks inside the United States, including terror plots targeting a New York City synagogue and other Jewish sites in Arizona and California.

Internal Dynamics and Repression

- On May 18, the IRGC [claimed](#) to have targeted groups it described as linked to the United States and Israel in Iran's Kurdistan province.
 - » The groups were attempting to smuggle a large shipment of weapons and ammunition into Iran from northern Iraq, according to the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA).

6. 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.
 - » A U.S. servicemember, Sgt. Benjamin Pennington, 26, was [killed](#) in 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 Ashley B. Pruitt, 34; Captain Seth R. Koval, 38; Captain Curtis J. Angst, 30; and Technical Sergeant Tyler H. Simmons, 28.
- At least 400 members of the U.S. military have been [injured](#) thus far in the war.
 - » Ten have been seriously [wounded](#), and at least 354 of the injured have reportedly returned to duty.
 - » At least 15 Americans were [hurt](#) in an Iranian drone strike on Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait on April 6, most of whom were lightly injured.
 - » In the March 27 Iranian attack on a U.S. base in Saudi Arabia, at least 15 U.S. servicemembers were [injured](#), including two who were seriously wounded.
- Since the war began, [at least 50 people have been killed in Israel](#), while over 7,795 have been [injured](#). At least 20 of these [casualties](#) include Israeli soldiers who have been killed while fighting Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.
 - » On May 15, Capt. Maoz Israel Recanati of the IDF was [killed](#) after a Hezbollah drone attacked Israeli troops in southern Lebanon.
- Since the war's outbreak, numerous other casualties have been reported:
 - » Iran: At least 3,636 people, including at least 1,221 military personnel, have been [killed](#), with at least 26,500 [wounded](#). *Iran International* reports that over 4,700 security personnel have been [killed](#), including members of the Basij, IRGC, and police forces.
 - » Azerbaijan: Four civilians have been [injured](#).
 - » Bahrain: Three people have [been killed](#), including a [Moroccan contractor](#), and at least 46 people [have been injured](#), including five [Emirati soldiers](#).
 - » Iraq: At least 119 people have been [killed](#), including 20 [people](#) in Iraqi Kurdistan.
 - » Jordan: At least 31 people have [been injured](#).
 - » Kuwait: Two [Kuwaiti navy sailors](#), two [Kuwaiti interior ministry officers](#), two [Kuwaiti civilians](#), and an [Indian national](#) have been killed; over 90 Kuwaiti military [personnel have been injured](#), and eight [civilians](#), including two [medical staff](#), have been wounded.
 - » Lebanon: At least 2,988 people have been [killed](#), and nearly 9,210 have been wounded—figures that do not distinguish between Hezbollah operatives and civilians.

- » Oman: At least [three people](#) have been killed, and at least 17 have [been wounded](#).
- » Qatar: Around 20 people have been [wounded](#), and seven were [killed](#) on March 22 in a helicopter crash in Qatari territorial waters due to a technical issue.
- » Saudi Arabia: Three people have been killed, including a Saudi [national](#) and two [foreign nationals](#), and at least 23 others [have been injured](#).
- » Syria: At least four people have been [killed](#) in Syria, and several others have been [injured](#).
- » U.A.E.: 13 people have been [killed](#), and at least 230 have been injured.

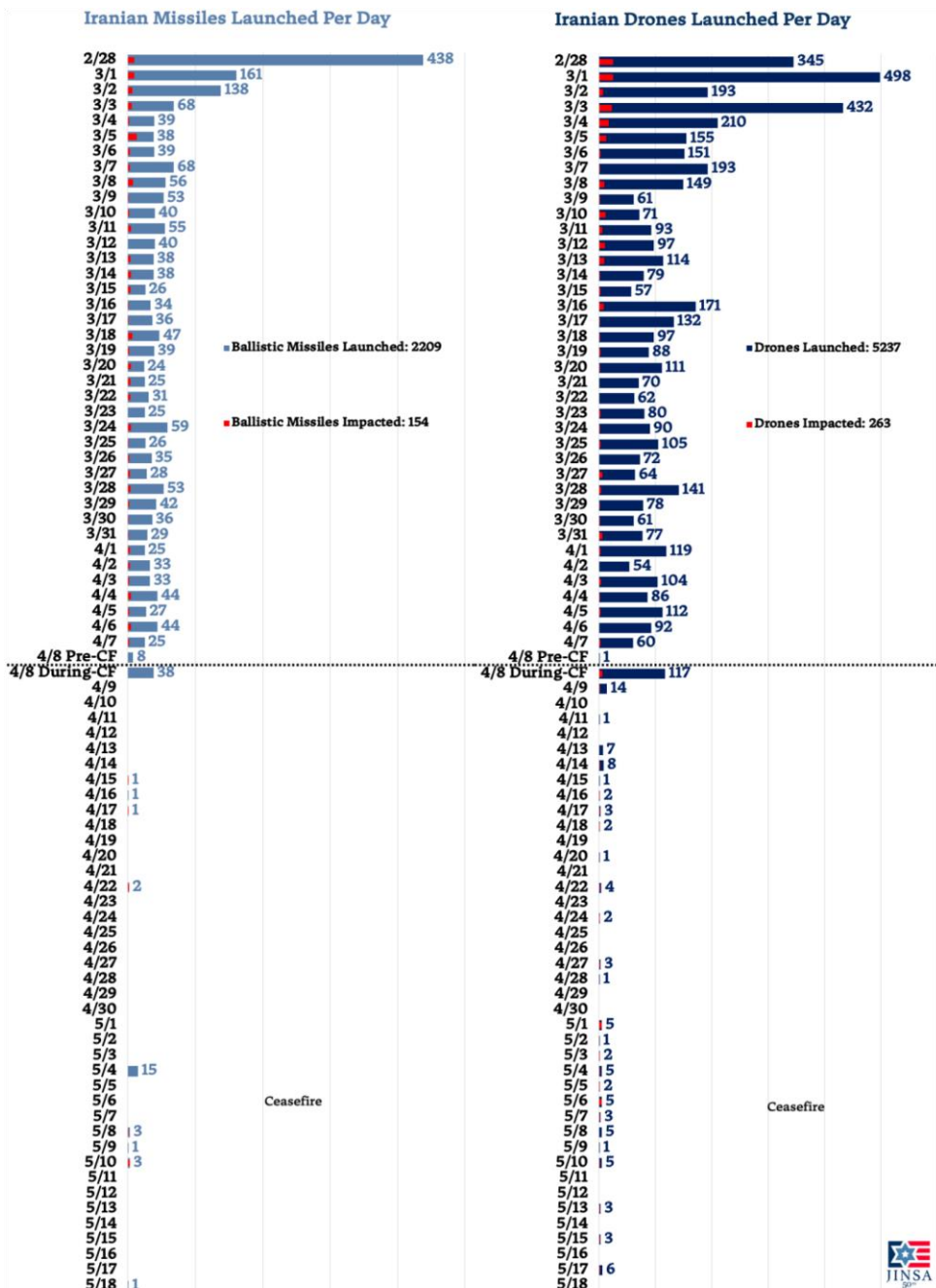
7. Threats and Condemnation from Iranian Officials

- On May 18, in response to reports that Prime Minister Netanyahu visited the U.A.E. during the Iran war, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei [warned](#) that “The countries of the region, including the UAE, should learn from what happened in the last two or three months.”
 - » Baghaei claimed that these states “saw that the military presence of the US and the Zionist regime in the region does not bring security, it brings insecurity for all countries in the region.”
 - » He maintained that Iran has “no enmity with any of the countries in the region.”
- In a post on X on May 17, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmail Baghaei [stated](#) that “it was the reckless warmongering of the U.S. and Israeli regimes that shattered promising diplomatic processes and, through an unprovoked military aggression against Iran, deliberately injected insecurity into vital energy routes—only then to accuse Iran of destabilization.”
 - » He added, “This is their familiar, cynical playbook: manufacture crisis and war, then escalate further under the noble banner of ‘restoring stability’ and ‘defending peace.’”
- On May 16, the Iranian state-run IRNA news agency [reported](#) that Iran’s stock market is set to reopen on Tuesday, May 19.

8. International Response

- On May 18, Reuters [reported](#) that during the Iran war, Pakistan provided Saudi Arabia with roughly 8,000 troops, a Chinese HQ-9 air defense system, and a squadron of fighter aircraft, under the Saudi-Pakistan mutual defense pact.
 - » According to two of the sources cited by Reuters, Pakistan also deployed two drone squadrons to Saudi Arabia.
- In a [statement](#) on May 17, following the drone attack on an Emirati nuclear power plant earlier that day, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi “expresses grave concern about the incident” and “reiterates call for maximum military restraint near any NPP [nuclear power plant] to avoid the danger of a nuclear accident.”
 - » In the statement, the IAEA noted that the U.A.E. confirmed that the levels of radiation at the U.A.E.’s Barakah nuclear power plant were “normal” following the attack.
- Following the drone attack on a nuclear power plant in the U.A.E. on May 17, a Saudi Foreign Ministry [statement](#) on May 18 “expresses the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s strongest condemnation of the attack targeting the brotherly United Arab Emirates with drones,” noting that the attacks “threaten the security and stability of the region.”
 - » The statement noted that Saudi Arabia supports “all measures it [the U.A.E.] takes to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity.”

- German Chancellor Frederick Merz [posted](#) on X on May 18, “We strongly condemn the renewed Iranian airstrikes against the United Arab Emirates and other partners,” adding that “Attacks on nuclear facilities pose a threat to the safety of people throughout the entire region.”
 - » Merz noted that Tehran “must enter into serious negotiations with the USA, stop threatening its neighbors, and open the Strait of Hormuz without restrictions.”
- Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry also [released](#) a statement on May 18 condemning Iran’s attack on the U.A.E., claiming “Nuclear installations must never be targeted under any circumstances.”
- On May 16, Iranian state media [reported](#) that unspecified European states have started talks with the IRGC Navy to secure authorization for ships to travel through the Strait of Hormuz.



9. JINSA Resources

- Rena Gabber and Jonah Brody, [Holding China Accountable for Iran](#), May 13, 2026
- Gen Charles Wald, USAF (ret.), VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), VADM Robert Harward, USN (ret.), LTG Karen Gibson, USA (ret.), VADM John Miller, USN (ret.), VADM John Bird, USN (ret.), Blaise Misztal, Jonathan Ruhe, and Ari Cicurel, [Epic Fury II: Securing U.S. Objectives in Iran](#), May 8, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, and Blaise Misztal, "[The U.S. Blockade of Iran Is a Means, Not an End](#)," *The National Interest*, May 8, 2026
- Giran Ozcan, [Iranian Attacks on Iraqi Kurdistan Threaten a Vital U.S. Partnership](#), May 7, 2026
- Yoni Tobin, [Turning Tides: U.S. Blockade Enforcement Exceeds Iranian Evasion](#), May 1, 2026
- Hussein Aboubakr Mansour, [The UAE's OPEC Exit: Strategic Implications for the Gulf Order](#), April 29, 2026
- Ari Cicurel, [Iron Dome Deployment to U.A.E. Showed Abraham Accords Defense Potential](#), April 28, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, and Blaise Misztal, [The Iranian People: America's Most Powerful Weapon](#), April 26, 2026
- Hussein Mansour, [The Emirati Moment: The U.A.E.'s Strategic Cycle and the Iran War](#), April 24, 2026
- Blaise Misztal and Yoni Tobin, [Lebanon Ceasefire Cannot Become Iranian Leverage](#), April 17, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, and Blaise Misztal, [In Defense of the War. And How to Finish It](#), April 17, 2026