Iran War Update: November 21–23, 2026

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President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a now-expired Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on June 17, outlining terms to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz over a 60-day period of further negotiations. However, on July 8, President Trump declared the MOU to be "over," and both sides have resumed exchanging fire. JINSA continues to release regular updates about the conflict. The update below includes information since JINSA's last update as of November 23 at 10:30 am ET.

Brent Crude Oil Price: $90.91 a barrel as of 9:00 am ET (day range: $89.48–93.12)

1. Overview

- On November 22, President Donald Trump stated in a Truth Social post that "Iran has launched more drones and missiles in the last week than at any time for over a year," adding that "They've all been knocked down, and done no damage."
  - » He alleged that the Iranians have become more aggressive in response to the Democrats' election day win, claiming that "Iranian leaders consider the Democrats weak, ineffective, and Country destroying, but I won't let that happen!"
  - » He also stated, "Since the Election, the Oil price has dropped by a record level."
- In an interview with Fox News on November 22, President Trump shared that he is disposed to resume U.S. strikes on Iran after January 1 if the United States and Iran are unable to reach a deal.
  - » He stated that Iran is "more aggressive now than before the election."
  - » President Trump described Iranian officials as "professional tap dancers," stating that "They talk all the time, all they do is talk, but it's all b------."
- On November 22, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Admiral Brad Cooper concluded a weeklong Middle East trip, which included discussions in Israel, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia with senior military and civilian officials on "the current security environment and opportunities for continued collaboration," according to a statement from CENTCOM.
- At a press conference on November 20, President Trump stated that the Iranians "want to make a deal, but they don't want to make a deal that's acceptable to me."
  - » He added, "We want to make a real deal, not a fake deal that they've been doing for 51 years."
  - » Asked about Vice President JD Vance's post on X that the Republican election loss was triggered by the Iran war, President Trump stated that he was not upset with the post,

"except I would have had one other thing, that if we were asked… 'Would you do it again?' And absolutely, the answer is yes."

- At the press conference on November 20, when Vice President Vance was questioned whether the war in Iran merited the cost of losing Congress for the Republicans, he replied that "the goal of keeping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon is absolutely what we need to be doing."
  - » He added, "It's the biggest state sponsor of terrorism. If they had a nuclear weapon, they would use it as leverage, or they would attack."
  - » Vice President Vance also acknowledged that "My job is to support the president of the United States."
- Iran attacked an industrial facility in Bahrain on November 21 with an unknown projectile, causing two injuries and property damage.

2. Diplomatic Engagement

Iran

- On November 23, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani is slated to travel to Washington, D.C., to hold discussions with Secretary of State Marco Rubio about resuming U.S.-Iran diplomatic talks.
- On November 20, a delegation from Qatar traveled to Tehran and met with Iranian officials for two hours, according to Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi.
- In an interview with the state-run newspaper "Iran" reported by *Axios* on November 20, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that Iran's "first demand is that he [President Trump] explicitly declare that he wants an agreement," adding that "we need a series of confidence-building measures to ensure that this time ... the American side is genuinely entering negotiations seriously."
  - » Araghchi shared that Iran's two-day proposal that would implement a ceasefire, reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and restart talks on Iran's nuclear program remains on the table.
    - – He also shared that Tehran is willing to reduce the time frame of the proposal further.
    - – However, he noted that the United States must abide by all the conditions Tehran established for reopening Hormuz, including a ceasefire on every front, ending the U.S. naval blockade, providing Iran with oil sales waivers, and allowing Iran to access frozen assets.
  - » Araghchi noted that he believed a U.S.-Iran deal is possible, but emphasized that it would need to be a lasting agreement.
    - – He stated that the U.S. demand to eliminate Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium could be addressed, but Iran will not permit the material to be taken out of the country and would utilize the enriched uranium according to its needs.
    - – Araghchi remarked, "I believe a fair solution can be found regarding the nuclear material — one that is based on our national interests and meets the country's needs."
- On November 19, U.S. Special Envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met in Berlin with Qatari Prime Minister Al Thani and Qatar's Envoy Ali al-Thawadi to discuss U.S.-Iran mediation efforts.

Saudi Arabia

- On November 22, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar held a phone call to discuss diplomacy and Middle East tensions.

3. U.S., Israeli, and Arab Partner Operations

- On November 23, David Barnea, the former director of Mossad, said that Israel "must act quickly and decisively to bring about the downfall of this [Iranian] regime, and if this means going to another war, that is what we must do."
  - » Barnea called for military action against Iran "as soon as conditions allow" while warning of Iran's "tricks" which could cause a "long, chaotic period."
- On November 21, an Israeli defense official told Israel's Channel 12 outlet that Israel is preparing for multiple future operations against Iran, potentially over the course of years.
  - » The official conveyed that an Israeli operation against Iran "will not be a one-time operation. It may very well be necessary to repeat it over and over and over again to undermine the regime's capabilities, and shake up Iran's internal system, and set the threat back."
- On November 20, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated that he continues to reside at a U.S. military base due to security threats from Iran, but noted that "If the Iranians are after me, it means that they are being squeezed. We're going to continue squeezing them."

Iran

- On November 22, Israeli outlet *Ynet* reported, citing U.S. officials, that President Trump had postponed potential military strikes against Iran by at least a week, despite Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's push for a short, intensive joint offensive aimed at weakening the Iranian government.
- On November 22, Israeli military intelligence cautioned Prime Minister Netanyahu that an Israeli strike on Iran could cause the conflict to spread to "multiple fronts," including Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza, according to Israel's Channel 12.
- On November 20, the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions against four "oil trustees" that have facilitated Iranian oil sales to other countries.
- On November 20, Iran's semi-official Tasnim News Agency shared that an explosion on Qeshm Island was triggered by unexploded munitions disposal, following earlier reporting that a missile had struck Qeshm Island.

Lebanon

- On November 21, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) intercepted 203 kilograms and 61 kilograms of smuggled C4 and TNT, respectively, coming into Lebanon from Syria.
  - » The LAF also arrested three Lebanese citizens involved in the incident.

Yemen

- On November 23, Houthi media announced that Saudi Arabia launched a strike on the Yemeni Public Telecommunications Corporation's building in Houthi-controlled Hodeidah, resulting in the deaths of four people and injuring 18 others.
- On November 22, the Houthi-run health ministry in Yemen announced that an airstrike on the state-run oil company's fuel station in Sanaa injured six workers and caused damage to the building.
- On November 22, a Yemeni military spokesperson announced that Yemen's Armed Forces neutralized 86 Houthi commanders and fighters, as well as damaged 64 Houthi vehicles and military equipment pieces during recent fighting.
- Between November 19–21, anti-Houthi forces carried out heavy airstrikes on Houthi positions at Aqabat Thara, which connects the Al-Bayda and Abyan governorates in Yemen, as well as the Al-Kawr Mountains and Al-Irsal Hill.

- On November 20, *The New York Times* reported that the United Arab Emirates has established two airbases in Somalia's semi-autonomous Puntland region, which have potential application in future counter-Houthi operations.

4. Iranian and Proxy Operations

- On November 22, Iranian media released a video depicting Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders touring a new underground missile facility containing a launcher that can supposedly fire two liquid-fueled missiles at the same time.
  - » The video also included footage of a handwritten message insulting the White House.
- On November 20, President Trump stated in a press conference that "There is a rumor that they're [the Iranians are] building a dirty bomb," adding that "If they are, we'll find out about it. We will not allow that."

Bahrain

- On November 21, Iran carried out a strike on a civilian industrial facility in Bahrain, which sparked a fire and caused injuries to a Bahraini citizen and a Pakistani resident who is in critical condition. The IRGC said that its forces targeted two American military bases.
  - » In a separate November 21 attack, Bahraini air defenses shot down several Iranian strikes, with the country stating that falling shrapnel from the intercepted projectiles resulted in material damage.
    - – The IRGC claimed that the combined missile-and-drone attack against Bahrain targeted American positions at the Al-Riffa and Awali bases, alleging that it destroyed two radars for the U.S. Patriot air defense system.

Iraq

- On November 20, Iraqi security forces deployed to Jurf al-Sakhar, where Iran-allied Kataib Hezbollah ran an oil smuggling operation, after a compromise deal was reached one day prior for Kataib Hezbollah's withdrawal.

Israel

- On November 23, *The Times of Israel* reported that last Monday, Israeli police detained a Holon resident suspected of handing out fliers for an Iranian agent, with a court removing the case's gag order and releasing the suspect "under restrictive conditions" on November 22.

Maritime

- On November 22, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Center reported that an incident occurred in the Gulf of Oman near Chabahar, Iran, involving military forces and a tanker.
- Seven different oil tankers have been struck and damaged in the Strait of Hormuz and nearby waters since November 16, according to the Joint Maritime Information Center.
  - » The latest attack in the above-mentioned series occurred on November 21, near the coast of Oman, with Iran claiming that "a violating oil tanker that had entered a restricted zone east of the Strait of Hormuz caught fire after striking a naval mine."
  - » That same day, UKMTO reported that an unknown projectile struck a tanker's engine room 17 nautical miles east of Khasab, Oman, and also reported another incident in which a projectile struck a tanker's stern 11 nautical miles north of Khasab.
- On November 20, a tanker eight nautical miles off the coast of Khasab, Oman, was hit by an unknown projectile, causing a fire and property damage.

Saudi Arabia

- On November 22, the Houthis claimed to have struck Saudi Arabia's Rabigh oil refinery on the Red Sea coast, although the extent of the damage remained unclear.
- On November 22, the Saudi-led coalition shot down a Houthi drone targeting the capital city of Riyadh.
  - » The day before, the Saudi-led coalition also shot down a Houthi ballistic missile targeting western Saudi Arabia, as well as three Houthi ballistic missiles targeting Riyadh.

5. Internal Iranian Dynamics

- On November 22, Iran began rationing electricity, with planned outages of up to two hours daily, as President Masoud Pezeshkian warned that U.S. and Israeli strikes against gas infrastructure had exacerbated the country's energy shortages ahead of winter.
  - » Iranian authorities also introduced restrictions on subsidized bread purchases in at least three provinces, requiring households exceeding monthly quotas to pay more than five times the subsidized price.
- On November 22, Iranian President Pezeshkian described the U.S. economic pressure campaign as a "silent war that is far more difficult than the one in which missiles are launched," as CENTCOM announced that its naval blockade against Iran had reached 130 consecutive days.

6. Threats, Condemnations, and Statements from Iranian and Proxy Officials

- On November 23, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei stated that Iran would deploy "all available means" to address the American naval blockade on Iranian ports.
- On November 23, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei shared that Tehran had summoned Qatar's chargé d'affaires to object to a joint statement by Germany and Qatar denouncing Iran's attacks in the region.
- On November 23, Iranian judiciary official Hassan Abdolianpour claimed that domestic courts had awarded $290 billion in damages against the United States for actions spanning several decades, while Tehran had also filed lawsuits against Gulf Arab states for allegedly allowing U.S. forces to use their territory to launch attacks against Iran.
- On November 23, *Iran International* reported, citing an Iranian official, that approximately 500 Hezbollah operatives wounded during a 2024 Israeli covert operation to blow up their beepers were sent to Iran for medical treatment.
- On November 22, the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei released an image of a menorah composed of explosives, along with the warning from the previous Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei that Israel would no longer exist by 2040.
- On November 21, CENTCOM stated that "Iran did not attack a US F-16 fighter aircraft yesterday — at all," following Iranian claims that it launched a missile at an American F-16 aircraft, causing damage and forcing the plane to make an emergency landing.
- On November 21, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated during an interview that "There are those who believe the country's nuclear doctrine should be maintained in its current form, and others who speak of the need to change it. Both sides have their own arguments and rationale," adding that "Russia and China are also opposed" to changing the Iranian doctrine.

7. International Response

- On November 23, South Korean Defense Minister Kang Shin-chul defended the government's decision to extend the Cheonghae anti-piracy unit in the Gulf of Aden, stating it did

not equate to involvement in the Iran war and the mission's aim was to ensure the freedom of navigation.

- On November 22, Bahrain demanded that the United Nations Security Council enforce Resolution 2817—which calls on Iran to halt attacks and ensure the freedom of shipping navigation—following a recent Iranian attack on the kingdom's civilian infrastructure.
- On November 22, Saudi Arabia and Qatar condemned Iran's attack on Bahrain, with Saudi Arabia labeling it as "heinous Iranian aggression" and Qatar calling it an "egregious breach of international law."
- On November 22, the Jordanian Foreign Ministry posted on X that it was continuing to coordinate with the U.A.E. and Oman to find a missing Jordanian sailor who remains missing after an oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz was attacked last week.
- On November 21, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun criticized Iranian meddling in Lebanese internal affairs, a reference to Iran's support for Hezbollah. However, Aoun also stated that Lebanon "wants relations of friendship and mutual respect with Iran."

8. JINSA Resources

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- Jonah Brody, *To Stop Iran's Rearmament, Trump Must Confront Russia and China*, November 16, 2026
- Jonathan Ruhe, "How the Iran War Exposes Cracks in America's Foundation," *The Dispatch*, November 13, 2026
- Michael Makovsky, PhD, and Blaise Misztal, "President Trump: Forget the Midterms and Finish the Job in Iran," *The Hill*, November 7, 2026
- Hussein Aboubakr Mansour, *The Yemen–Horn of Africa Corridor: Houthi Expansion and the Gap in American Red Sea Strategy*, October 22, 2026
- Ari Cicurel, *Iran Escalates Before U.S. Midterm Elections*, October 19, 2026
- LtGen Michael Groen, USMC (ret.) and Sarah Havdala, "Iranian Cyber Operations," *RealClearDefense*, October 17, 2026
- John Hannah and Rena Gabber, "Iran 'Blew the Hell Out of Bahrain' — And Trump's Gulf Strategy With It," *The Washington Examiner*, October 12, 2026
- Lt Gen Thomas Bergeson, USAF (ret.), LTG Karen Gibson, USA (ret.), LtGen Sam Mundy, USMC (ret.), and MajGen Robert Sofge, USMC (ret.), "How to Keep the Houthis Out of the Red Sea," *The National Interest*, October 5, 2026