

## MNI POLITICAL RISK ANALYSIS – Hot War Risks in Middle East Spike After Israel Strikes Iran

*by Adam Burrowes, Andrew Couper, Daniel Dawson, Edd Hardy, Tom Lake, and Lawrence Teye*

Following days and weeks of increasingly febrile speculation and indication that Israel could launch strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities in the very near future, the Israeli military did just that in the early hours of 13 June. The attacks, labelled 'Operation Rising Lion' by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), are the most widespread and targeted strikes by Israel on Iran to date. As well as hitting some of Iran's nuclear enrichment sites, the attacks consisted of a 'decapitation' strategy of eliminating key senior military and scientific personnel. Israel has indicated that the operation is not over, while Iran (and likely its proxies in the region) have already begun to launch retaliatory strikes.

In this article, we give a briefing on the events overnight and their immediate implications, a round-up of reactions from Israel, Iran, the Middle East and further afield, and some potential scenarios that could emerge in the days and weeks ahead. We also assess the impact of the strikes and the emerging risk of major escalation on oil markets, refineries and natural gas, and on the Israeli shekel currency.

### Contents

*Pages 1-3. What Has Happened?*

*Pages.3-6. What Could Happen?*

*Pages. 7-8. Commodities Summary*

*Page. 8. ILS Update*

*Pages. 9-16. Local, Regional and Global Reaction*

### What Has Happened?

In the early hours of Friday, 13 June, Israel launched a major military attack against Iran, utilising unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and around 200 fighter jets, hitting over 100 targets across the country.

#### Nuclear Sites Hit As Israel Looks To Halt Iranian Enrichment

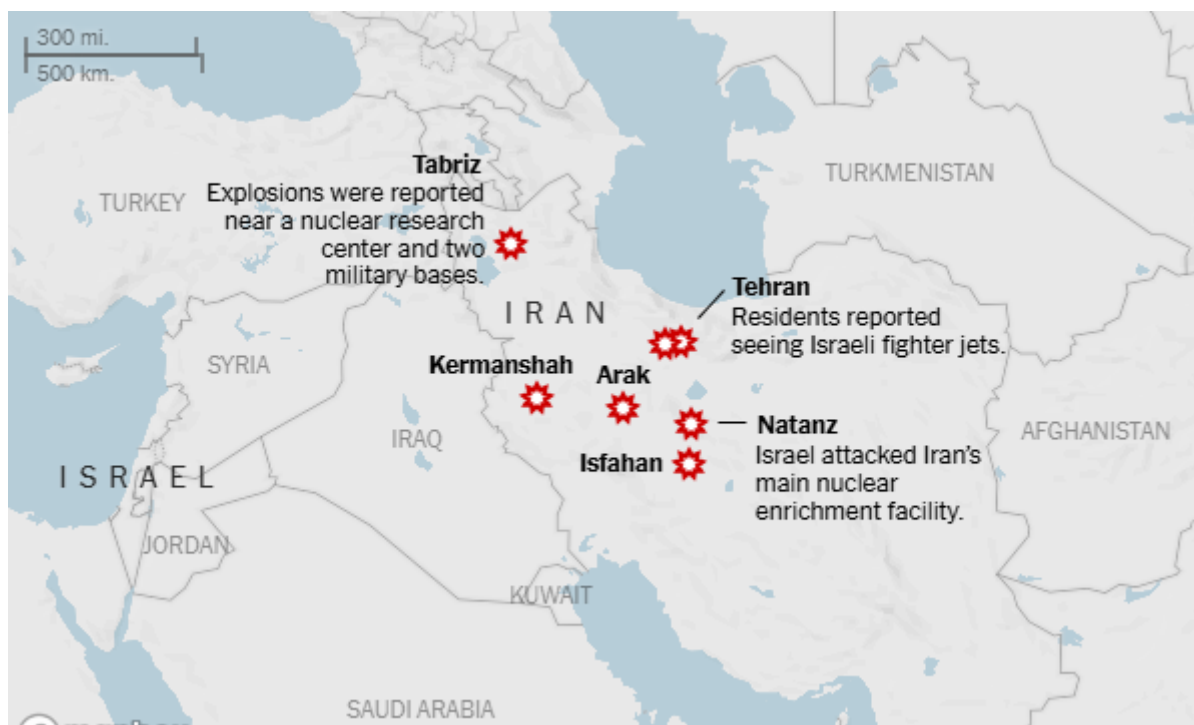
The aerial strikes included hitting Iran's main nuclear enrichment facility at Natanz, which Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation has confirmed sustained damage. The AEO says that there is 'no evidence' of any leakage of radioactive material or chemical contamination outside of the facility. It could take days or weeks to assess just how much damage has been done to the site. Natanz has in recent years been the site where Iran has produced most of its nuclear fuel, and indeed some of its near-weapons-grade enriched uranium, which has seen the country move closer than ever to developing an atomic bomb.

The IDF claims that it has damaged the centrifuge halls, located 50 yards underground and protected by reinforced concrete. An IDF statement claims, "*As part of the attacks, the underground space at the site, which contains a multi-story enrichment hall with centrifuges,*

*electrical rooms, and additional supporting infrastructure, was damaged. In addition, vital infrastructure at the site that enables its continuous functioning and the continued advancement of the Iranian regime's project to obtain nuclear weapons, was attacked,"* However, it remains to be seen whether the damage is superficial or enough to provide a significant setback to enrichment at Natanz.

It would appear that at present, the main other site for nuclear enrichment, at Fordow, has not been hit or damaged by Israeli strikes. It sits in a facility deep underground, intended to be out of the reach of airstrikes. However, it has been hit in the past as part of a cyberattack that installed malware onto the IT system that destroyed arrays of centrifuges. NYT [reports](#) US diplomat Brett McGurk, who has held positions under every president since George W. Bush, saying, *"If you don't get Fordow you haven't eliminated their ability to produce weapons-grade material."*

## Map 1. Where Israel Attacked Iran



Source: NYT

## 'Decapitation' Strategy

It was not only sites that were targets, but individuals. Israel has utilised again the 'decapitation' strategy, previously deployed against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, of targeting senior commanders for elimination. Israeli strikes are believed to have killed the chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Maj. Gen. Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Gen. Hossein Salami and deputy commander in chief of the armed forces Gen. Gholamreza Rashid. Bagheri sat as the second most senior military official in the country, behind Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, while Salami is the second IRGC commander in a row to have been assassinated following the targeted US strike on Qassem Soleimani in January 2020.

It is not only military officials that have been eliminated. Fereydoun Abbasi, former head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, and Mohammad Mehdi Tehrani, president of Islamic Azad University, were also killed. Both were senior nuclear scientists who were viewed as central to Iran's nuclear weapons programme. Four other nuclear physicists, names as Abdolhamid Minouchehr, Ahmadreza Zolfaghari, Seyed Amirhossein Feqhi and Motlabizadeh [his first name unknown] are also believed to have been killed as Israel looks to cripple Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons.

Ali Shamkhani, a former Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and member of the Expediency Discernment Council (making him a close advisor to Khamenei), has also been believed to have been killed after succumbing to his injuries from a targeted strike on his home. Shamkhani has been overseeing the Iran-US nuclear talks, heading up a committee tasked by the supreme leader to direct negotiations. Reports suggest that according to Iranian officials, Shamkhani's killing is a direct effort by Israel to halt nuclear diplomacy between the US and Iran.

### Iranian Retaliation Likely To Escalate

In the aftermath of the Israeli attacks, Iran launched around 100 drones targeting Israel. Earlier, the US State Department said the US Embassy (likely in Amman) has "indications there may be missiles, drones, or rockets flying over Jordanian airspace". AP reported that the Israeli military said it intercepted Iranian drones. Israeli public broadcaster KAN reported that Israel has intercepted drones over Saudi Arabia, as did Channel 12. Jordanian state news reported that the country's military has intercepted drones and missiles in its airspace this morning.

A response of this scale was always likely and given the scope of Israel's Iron Dome air defences, as well as those of Jordan and Israeli allies with military deployments in the region, such as the US and UK, this wave has not caused significant trouble for Israel. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said Israel will face a 'severe punishment' for the attacks. More waves of attack, and involving more sophisticated weaponry, should be expected. However, it remains to be seen how effective Iran's attacks can be, and what Iranian military hardware the Arrow and David's Sling air defence systems and the Iron Dome can combat.

### What Could Happen?

Reports suggest that attacks are continuing, with strikes on the northwestern city of Tabriz supposedly taking place many hours after the initial attacks. Indeed, Israeli officials and politicians have spoken of 'Rising Lion' as a lengthy operation. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a recorded message that "This operation will continue for as many days as it takes to remove this threat." Former PM and leading opposition figure Naftali Bennett echoed this statement on Bloomberg TV.

While Operation Rising Lion appears to be continuing, focus will already be turning towards what the attacks mean for geopolitical security in the region, and indeed the prospect of an all-out war in the Middle East. It is often seen as the case that in global geopolitics cooler heads prevail, and the risk of major conflict is minimal. However, given the shift towards a multipolar world and the US' increasing isolationism on the world stage, this escalation takes



place in something of a global power vacuum, with no single actor able to step in and mediate. History has shown numerous examples where large-scale conflict was viewed as impossible or at least very unlikely, only for situations to rapidly spiral out of control. It is all-but-impossible to say whether the Middle East faces such a scenario now, but it would not be alarmist to note that the risks of a broader regional conflict today are as high as they have been for many years.

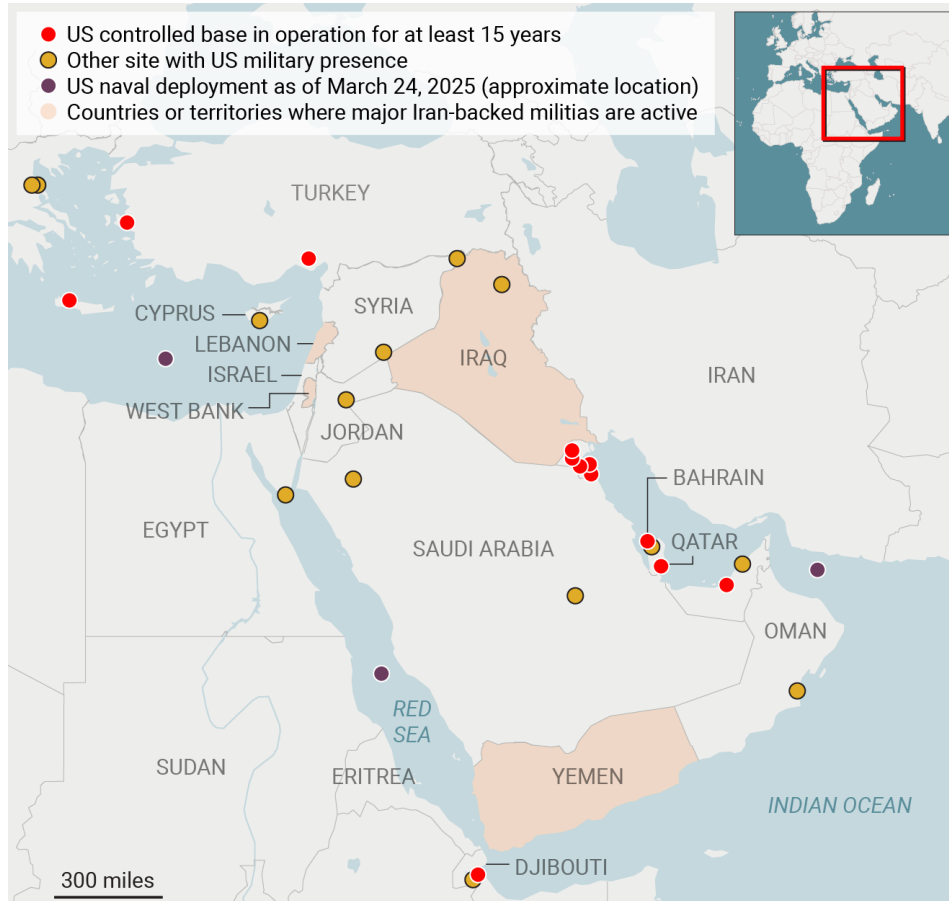
## Iranian Retaliation Could Target Outside Israel

A repeat of the series of attacks that ran from April 2024, when Israel hit an annexe to the Iranian consulate in Damascus, through to October 2024, when Israel launched attacks on Iranian air defence sites and Iran fired hundreds of missiles and drones at Israel, would appear to be out of the question. The scale of the Israeli strikes is too large for Iran to respond with only the ineffective aerial barrage seen this morning. This raises the prospect of Iran utilising its most advanced missiles, and indeed firing enough to overwhelm Israeli defences (Tehran is believed to have a substantial stockpile of ballistic and cruise missiles).

It is not only sites within Israel that could find themselves under Iranian fire. Oil refineries and other infrastructure in the region could be targeted. While Iran has improved ties with Saudi Arabia and other GCC nations, a 2019 [attack](#) that Riyadh claims Iran was involved in, for a short time, reduced Saudi oil production by 50% and took offline 5% of global supply

Only days ago, Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh [threatened](#) US bases in the region with attack should Israel strike Iran's nuclear facilities, saying "Some officials on the other side threaten conflict if negotiations don't come to fruition. If a conflict is imposed on us ... all US bases are within our reach and we will boldly target them in host countries." By not giving warnings (as has previously been the case) and launching simultaneous attacks with its proxies in Yemen and Iraq, Iran could deal a more significant blow to US sites in the region.

**Map 2. US and US-Allied Military Bases/Sites with Military Presence**



Source: *The Times/Sunday Times, Council on Foreign Relations*

Another key focus for global markets will be the status of the Strait of Hormuz. Even during previous escalations, the Strait, at the mouth of the Gulf, has remained open. Iran has targeted merchant shipping in the past, but has not shut the passage that carries a 39% share of global seaborne crude oil and 19% of natural gas. For more info on the potential impact of a closure on global gas markets, please see Commodities section below.

### Nature Of Attack Leaves Iranian Regime Weakened

As noted above, the Israeli strikes have eliminated several key figures within the Iranian regime. While senior politicians, such as President Masoud Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi have been left unharmed, Israel targeted high-ranking military figures and those seen as close to Supreme Leader Khamenei. This highlights a key facet of the Iranian government, in that it is the Supreme Leader and the cadre of military, religious, and judicial figures around him that actively steers much of Iran's policy, rather than politicians in cabinet or parliament.

While Israel might have considered striking directly against Khamenei, this would have risked making him a martyr to the cause. Iran experienced major civil unrest in 2022 following the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody, while the 2009 presidential election led to the 'Green movement' protests against the re-election of hardliner Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad. As has been noted by some commentators, leaving Khamenei increasingly isolated with targeted strikes against his allies could be viewed as Israel looking to pave the way to a domestic popular revolt against the government, rather than a regime change imposed from outside (which would carry a much higher risk of a popular backlash).

## US-Iranian Diplomatic Efforts Under Threat

There is now very little likelihood that the planned sixth round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States, scheduled for Sunday, 15 June in Oman, will go ahead as Tehran continues to calibrate its immediate response to the attacks.

However, this is not to say that diplomacy between the two sides is at an end in the long term. Indeed, President Trump posted on his Truth Social “*Two months ago I gave Iran a 60 day ultimatum to “make a deal.” They should have done it! Today is day 61. I told them what to do, but they just couldn’t get there. **Now they have, perhaps, a second chance!***”.

For Tehran there are a number of options, with two prominent (and diametrically opposed ones) being either fully committing to nuclear talks with the US in an effort to reach a deal, which in turn would see the US strongly ward off any further Israeli attacks, and potentially see sanctions lifted. However, by fully divesting its enriched uranium stockpile and halting any nuclear weapons development, the Iranian regime will be very aware of the fate of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, whose government publicly renounced its WMD programmes in 2003, only to be killed in a popular uprising eight years later.

Alternatively, Iran could see a rush for a nuclear weapon as the only way to stop future Israeli strikes. This would then become a race between Iran and Israel/US, with the prospect of much larger strikes from the US and its allies being launched if Iran is seen as being close to having nuclear weapons that can strike outside its territory. Should Iran develop such weapons before Israel/US can halt it, then Tehran could look to become a Middle Eastern North Korea, with its adversaries too wary to strike it directly but becoming a pariah state under crushing sanctions.

## Commodities Summary

### Oil

Oil prices saw a sharp move higher at market open on Friday after the overnight Israeli attacks on Iran. Markets quickly made assessments surrounding the severity of the attacks and potential developments for wider conflict.

- Oil prices surged as much as 13% on Friday - the highest intraday jump since the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Prices quickly retreated as new details surfaced. Key factors tempering the initial surge included no reported strikes on oil facilities, Iran's limited drone response being intercepted, and emerging indications that strikes on nuclear facilities had minimal impact.
- The strikes do however leave oil markets on alert as the possibility for further escalations in the region move sharply higher on Friday.
- Prior reporting on the potential for strikes saw some significant price moves for oil over the last month.
- The first major leak came via CNN on May 20. They ran the headline: "New intelligence suggests Israel is preparing possible strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, US officials say" This resulted in a sharp oil move higher at the time.
- Axios also ran a similar story on May 21 – "Israel preparing to strike Iran fast if Trump's nuclear talks break down"
- On May 28, the New York Times reported: "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has been threatening to upend the talks [U.S./Iran nuclear talks] by striking Iran's main nuclear enrichment facilities, according to officials briefed on the situation."
- 2024 saw two direct confrontations between Israel and Iran in April and October resulting in sharp oil prices spikes, both of which faded out once it became apparent the attacks were orchestrated and a more symbolic show of force.

### Refineries

Iran's 700k b/d Abadan refinery and 110k b/d Tabriz refinery have not been attacked and are operating as normal, according to Argus reporter Nader Itayim.

- "While there was an incident in the vicinity of the 110k b/d Tabriz refinery, I'm told the refinery was not struck, and is operating as normal," Itayim said on X.
- Meanwhile, an official statement from Abadan refinery cited by Itayim says "regarding the publication of information online about this company... Abadan Oil Refining Co is producing and providing stable services at full capacity. There is no disruption."
- These statements corroborate earlier comments by Iran's national oil company that there was no damage to its oil refineries or storage tanks in overnight attacks by Israel.



## Natural Gas

A 'worst case scenario' for the gas market would see further escalation in the between Iran and Israel cutting off shipping via the Straits of Hormuz.

- LNG flows from Qatar, the UAE, and Oman would be disrupted, with Qatar alone comprising around 19% of global supply, Platts said.
- Qatar is now China's largest LNG supplier, accounting for 33.4% of its total imports across Jan-April.
- China currently receives around 15.9m mtpa of LNG from Qatar and 800k mtpa from the UAE on long-term contracts, with volumes set to rise as signed contracts reach their start dates.
- The closure of the Straits of Hormuz would shift demand to unaffected regions to cover the loss, a boon for Australia.
- Russian LNG may also see increased demand, although sanctions will likely cap the upside.
- With the risk premium driving up JKM prices, there may be some demand destruction among price sensitive buyers, particularly in South Asia.
- Chinese buyers had been sitting out of the LNG spot market amid healthy domestic and pipeline supply, coupled with lower demand.

## ILS Update

Price action across ILS this week shows the direct strike on Iranian facilities was partially priced in, with USD/ILS marked higher by near 3% even before confirmation of the military action overnight. As such, ILS has rallied off lows, closing the gap higher in USD/ILS and suggests markets see the broader fallout for asset markets as limited at this stage.

- In contrast, the front-end of the ILS vol curve has surged: 1m implied now clears 13 points for the first time since 2023, blowing out the break-even on a USD/ILS straddle to levels in excess of the international pushback to Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip this year.
- As such, markets are concluding that while the implications for the Israeli economy are limited at this stage, there remains considerable risk of further fallout through protracted escalation - evident in the shift in the premium for USD/ILS call vol to clear 2 points over puts for the first time since the onset of COVID in 2020.



## Local, Regional and Global Reactions

### Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a [statement](#) declaring that 'Operation Rising Lion' will continue "for as many days as it takes to remove this threat."

- Netanyahu said: "We struck at the heart of Iran's nuclear enrichment program. We struck at the heart of Iran's nuclear weaponization program. We targeted Iran's leading nuclear scientists working on the Iranian bomb. We also struck at the heart of Iran's ballistic missile program."

Former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said in a statement: "Israel's strike against Iran's nuclear program and military was vital, and done at the very last moment possible. All Israelis—left and right—support this action of self defense. Iran was about to get ten nuclear warheads."

- Bennett continued: "...I've been pushing for striking its head for a long time. Now it's finally happening. The action will save millions of lives and make the world a safer place. We need to brace ourselves for tough days ahead and stay united."

Maj.-Gen. Shlomi Binder, head of the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate (Aman), [said](#) Israel is entering an "existential campaign" against Iran and Aman is operating at the highest level of readiness to disrupt Tehran's nuclear and missile programs.

- Binder said: "We want to degrade, disrupt and remove this threat. We are embarking on a campaign that is nothing short of existential... Military Intelligence is fully prepared for this mission, is on very high alert, and is entering this campaign from a very strong position,"

The Jerusalem Post reports that earlier Friday morning, Israel said Iran has "started a program to try to build tens of thousands of ballistic missiles to clearly be able to overwhelm Israel's anti-missile shield."

- JP adds: "Israel published on Friday that Iran has made progress between December 2024 and now relating to nuclear core explosion, implosion, neutrons, and physical nuclear core issues, something which military intelligence would have had a leading or major hand in learning along with the Mossad."

### Iran

The government of Iran said in a [statement](#): "The cowardly nighttime operation while the diplomatic process on the Iranian nuclear issue is underway is a sign of this regime's fear of Iran's power to convince and defend the world."

- The statement continued: "The world now better understands Iran's insistence on the right to enrichment, nuclear technology, and missile power, and the enemy has made it possible to prove our injustice and righteousness..."
- The statement concluded: "Revenge is near; closer than the jugular vein to the terrorist Zionists. This is the voice of a nation and a government that calls upon the

world to bear witness that we did not initiate the war. But the end of this story will be written by Iran...”

Reuters reports that the Iranian parliament will hold an “emergency meeting” today, with Iranian President Mahmoud Pezeshkian expected to deliver a speech “soon”.

- Pezeshkian’s X account [said](#): “As soon as the criminal attack by the Zionist regime occurred, the President and the government team have taken charge of managing the situation, and a special cabinet meeting has been held in this regard; Dr. Pezeshkian will soon speak with the people. God willing, the Zionist regime will regret its action today.”

Iran’s Atomic Energy Agency said in a statement that “investigations have not shown any radioactive or chemical contamination outside Natanz.”

- The agency added that Israel’s attack is a ‘failure’ for the IAEA as a result of its director’s ‘shortcomings’, per Reuters.

## United States

US President Donald Trump told [Fox News’ Brett Baier](#) Thursday evening: “Iran cannot have a nuclear bomb and we are hoping to get back to the negotiating table. We will see. There are several people in leadership that will not be coming back,” an apparent reference to senior members of the Iranian military and nuclear programme reported killed in the strike.

- Baier noted that Trump told him that he was “aware of Israel’s action before it happened” and said the US had “reached out to a key Middle Eastern ally beforehand to acknowledge the strike was going to happen but that the US was not involved...” The ally is likely to be either Saudi Arabia, with whom Trump has a close relationship, or Jordan whose airspace is most at threat of an Iranian counterattack.
- Trump posted on his Truth Social platform at 05:56ET, *“I gave Iran chance after chance to make a deal. I told them, in the strongest of words, to “just do it,” but no matter how hard they tried, no matter how close they got, they just couldn’t get it done. I told them it would be much worse than anything they know, anticipated, or were told, that the United States makes the best and most lethal military equipment anywhere in the World, BY FAR, and that Israel has a lot of it, with much more to come - And they know how to use it. Certain Iranian hardliner’s spoke bravely, but they didn’t know what was about to happen. They are all DEAD now, and it will only get worse! There has already been great death and destruction, but there is still time to make this slaughter, with the next already planned attacks being even more brutal, come to an end. Iran must make a deal, before there is nothing left, and save what was once known as the Iranian Empire. No more death, no more destruction, JUST DO IT, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. God Bless You All!”*

Trump has scheduled a meeting of his National Security Council at 11:00 ET 16:00 BST, which some commentators have noted is surprisingly late in the morning.

- In remarks at the White House yesterday, Trump suggested that he still leaned towards a deal with Iran but acknowledged that Israel could strike Tehran unilaterally.

- Trump said: “I want to have an agreement with Iran. We're fairly close to an agreement... I'd much prefer an agreement as long. As I think there is an agreement, I don't want [Israel] going in because I think I would blow it, might help it actually, but it also could blow it.”
- On his decision to withdraw US troops from the Middle East, which was taken as a sign Washington expected an Israeli strike, Trump said: “They didn't tell me anything [but] there's a chance of massive conflict. We have a lot of American people in this area and ... I don't want to be the one that didn't give any warning...”

As recently as yesterday, US officials had [confirmed](#) Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff's attendance at the 6<sup>th</sup> round of nuclear talks with Iran in Oman on Sunday.

- Iran announced on state television that it will not participate in the nuclear negotiations with the United States that were scheduled for Sunday, or any negotiations until further notice.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio issued a [statement](#) distancing Washington from the strikes: “Tonight, Israel took unilateral action against Iran. We are not involved in strikes against Iran and our top priority is protecting American forces in the region.”

- Rubio continued: “Israel advised us that they believe this action was necessary for its self-defense. President Trump and the Administration have taken all necessary steps to protect our forces and remain in close contact with our regional partners. Let me be clear: Iran should not target U.S. interests or personnel.”

National Iranian American Council President Jamal Abdi said in a statement: “Forces for war have been trying to sabotage Trump's efforts to secure a verifiable nuclear peace agreement with Iran since he first promised to do so on the campaign trail.”

- Abdi continued: “Whether it is the whisper campaign they've orchestrated against Witkoff or demands that the U.S. adopt a deliberately impossible 'zero-enrichment' negotiating position, they've helped bring us to the brink of no return and the President must stand up to them before we get dragged into a new forever war that will make the Iraq invasion look like a cakewalk.”

## US Congress

Haaretz notes: “The strikes occurred while Trump was hosting the White House congressional picnic, so lots of allies attempting to influence Trump both ways in his presence - in full sight of the media too.”

- Republican lawmakers generally characterised the strike as a defensive action, with GOP hawks warning Iran against retaliation on US assets in the region.
- House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA), who was scheduled to deliver a [rare address](#) to the Israeli Knesset on June 22, [said](#): “Israel is right—and has a right—to defend itself!”

Senate Budget Committee Chair Lindsay Graham (R-SC), a prominent Iran hawk, said in a [statement](#) on X “game on”, later [adding](#) that if Iran attacks American military personnel or



interests in the region: "America should have an overwhelming response, destroying all of Iran's oil refineries and oil infrastructure putting the ayatollah and his henchmen out of the oil business."

- Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) [said on X](#): "Iran said they would not dismantle their advanced centrifuges. That was a giant middle finger to President Trump. Tonight, we saw the consequences of Iran's defiance."
- Similarly to Graham, Cruz [said](#): "Here's my message to the Ayatollah: If you strike at America, I have every confidence that President Trump will respond with overwhelming force."

Democrats in Congress warned that the attack undermined US leadership on Iran and threatened to plunge the region into conflict.

- Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in a [statement](#): "Israel's alarming decision to launch airstrikes on Iran is a reckless escalation that risks igniting regional violence. [And threaten] the stability of the entire Middle East and the safety of American citizens and forces."

Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) said in a [statement on X](#) that the attack was "clearly intended to scuttle the Trump Administration's negotiations with Tehran", providing "further evidence of how little respect world powers - including our own allies - have for President Trump."

- Murphy added: "This is a disaster of Trump and Netanyahu's own making... A war between Israel and Iran may be good for Netanyahu's domestic politics, but it will likely be disastrous for both the security of Israel, the United States, and the rest of the region. As Secretary Rubio stated, the United States was not involved in today's strikes, and we have no obligation to follow Israel into a war we did not ask for and will make us less safe."

Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) said: "I commend the Trump Administration for prioritizing diplomacy and working to curb Iran's nuclear program, and for refraining from participating in tonight's actions."

- Senator John Fetterman (D-PA), a prominent backer of Israel in Congress, said he fully supports the strikes, adding that the US "must provide whatever is necessary—military, intelligence, weaponry—to fully back Israel in striking Iran."
- Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) told MSNBC: "This is deeply disturbing. Look, I don't agree often with the Trump administration, but I think here it's important to say we need more negotiation, we need de-escalation. We need to get to a deal,"

## NATO

NATO Secretary General told reporters during a press conference with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson in Stockholm that it is crucial for NATO to work to deescalate the situation in the Middle East.



- Rutte said: "This was a unilateral action by Israel. So I think it is crucial for many allies, including the United States, to work as we speak to deescalate. I know they're doing that. And I think that is now the first order of the day."

## United Nations and Nuclear Experts

Raphael Grossi, the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog the IAEA, told the Board of Governors today: "The Natanz enrichment site has been impacted and that there are no elevated radiation levels."

- Grossi added: "They have also reported that at present the Esfahan and Fordow sites have not been impacted."
- Grossi said: "I have indicated to the respective authorities my readiness to travel at the earliest to assess the situation and ensure safety, security and non-proliferation in Iran."

Nuclear experts [warned](#) of the long-term risk to nuclear facilities, noting that the strikes could exacerbate a normalisation of military strikes on civilian nuclear sites since the Russia-Ukraine war.

- Ali Vaez, a leading commentator on Iran, said: "Bibi just blew up Trump's diplomacy with Iran. What Trump does next could determine whether his presidency will be consumed by another war in the Middle East or not."

Dr. Jeffrey Lewis, a nuclear proliferation expert, said on X: "If Israel is striking Iran alone, I don't see how it makes any long-term impact unless there something really special and/or surprising in the mix."

- Lewis added: "Netanyahu states that Israel struck the Natanz Uranium Enrichment Plant, but doesn't mention the Fordow Uranium Enrichment Plant. If they don't destroy Fordow, this entire effort is basically for nothing."
- Nicole Grajewski, Iran nuclear expert at the Carnegie Endowment, [said on X](#): "If the U.S. acquiesced, the Trump administration is weaker than Biden vis-à-vis Israel and derailed the only peaceful path to avoid an Iranian nuclear bomb."

Kesley Davenport, Director for Nonproliferation Policy at Arms Control Now, [said](#): "Call this attack what it is. It is not a preemptive strike. It is not a preventive attack. This is blatant attempt to disrupt US negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. In the long run, it is more likely to push Iran toward nuclear weapons."

- Davenport [added](#) on the likelihood the strikes significantly damaged Iran's long-term nuclear programme: "There are reports circulating that Israel 'destroyed' Natanz. It is premature to speculate on the amount of damage. Also unclear if Iran diverted anything from the site before or after the strikes. A resumption of IAEA inspections is critical—but unlikely if attacks continue."
- Davenport continued: "Also should not overlook that there is a facility under construction at Natanz that is more deeply buried than Fordow. It may be the new

enrichment facility Iran announced this week. Unlikely Israel's strike destroyed that part of the Natanz site."

Tom Nichols, a staff writer at the Atlantic with expertise on the subject, wrote a [thread on X](#) arguing that these are not "preemptive" strikes." They are rather "preventive" strikes, "which are usually NOT permissible in law or tradition."

- Nichols added: "This matters not only as a matter of law, but in the battle for global public opinion. Everyone wants to be "preemptive," no one wants to be the source of a preventive war - and for good reason, because prevention is morally and legally a lot shakier of a rationale."
- Afshon Ostovar, a writer on Iranian security, [said](#): "Israel is forcing a generational turnover in IRGC leadership. The ruling generation has been ideologically inflexible but also bore the scars of the Iran-Iraq war. That made them wary of direct, open conflict. The incoming generation might not be as cautious".

## Europe

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz told reporters he has been in contact with Netanyahu to discuss Israel's objectives. He said he has convened a meeting of the federal government's security cabinet and noted that Germany, Britain, France, and the US are "coordinating closely".

- Merz reiterated Germany's support for Israel, saying "Israel has right to defend its existence and security of citizens," and stressing that the "goal must remain that Iran cannot develop nuclear weapons", per Reuters.

## Russia

Interfax reports that the Kremlin condemns the "sharp escalation in tensions between Israel and Iran" and noted that "Russia is concerned by the situation after Israeli strikes on Iran."

- Interfax added that the Kremlin said Russian President Vladimir Putin, "is getting real time reports on situation between Israel and Iran from the Russian defence ministry, Russia's SVR foreign intelligence service and the Russian Foreign Ministry."

Hannah Notte, a Russia/Middle East nuclear expert at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, said: "Russian senator Konstantin Kosachev has condemned the Israel strikes and you can expect Russian MFA to follow suit. Russia might call for, or support, a UNSC session on the matter. But I expect little else from Moscow."

- Notte added: Israel's campaign against Iran & the axis of resistance which proved too intense & unpredictable for Moscow to reliably steer in a favourable direction. It ended w/Assad's fall... Through last year, as its partner Iran was weakened by proxy & direct confrontation with Israel, Russia offered no meaningful assistance..."
- Notte concludes that although there has been some ongoing collaboration with Tehran, "The bottom line is that Russia has not meaningfully enabled an increasingly vulnerable Iran, has not helped it restore deterrence."

## Oman

Haaretz reports that Oman “strongly condemned Israel's operation”, warning it would derail diplomatic efforts. In a statement on X, the Oman News Agency said the government views the attack as “a dangerous and reckless escalation,” deeming it a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and international law.

- It added Oman holds Israel fully responsible for the escalation and its consequences, and calls on the international community to take a clear and firm stance to stop this “dangerous approach.”

## Saudi Arabia

The Foreign Ministry of Saudi Arabia issued an uncharacteristically strong [statement](#) condemning the attack as “heinous”, and say the international community bears a “great responsibility to immediately halt this aggression”.

- Statement: “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expresses its strong condemnation and denunciation of the blatant Israeli aggressions against the brotherly Islamic Republic of Iran, which undermine its sovereignty and security and constitute a clear violation of international laws and norms.”

## Jordan

Middle East Eye reports, “The Jordanian military announced that it intercepted missiles and drones that entered its airspace, as sirens sounded in the kingdom following a major Israeli attack on Iran early on Friday.”

- Jordanian Government Spokesperson Mohammad Momani stressed that, “Jordan has not and will not allow any violation of its airspace, reaffirming that the Kingdom will not be a battleground for any conflict.”
- Momani said in a [statement](#) that, “Jordan’s national security is a red line, and that the Kingdom will not allow any attempt to threaten its security and the safety of its citizens.”

## Qatar

Doha, “described Israel's offensive as one instance of a recurring pattern of aggressive policies that undermine efforts to de-escalate tensions and reach diplomatic solutions.

- “Qatar called on the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibility to urgently halt these violations,” per Haaretz.

## United Arab Emirates

Similarly, the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “condemned the Israeli military action, emphasizing the importance of exercising “maximum restraint and prudence” to avoid widening the conflict.

- "It reaffirmed its belief that promoting dialogue, respecting international law and upholding state sovereignty are the best foundations for resolving current crises," per Haaretz.

## Turkey

Turkey's Foreign Ministry condemned Israel's strikes "in the strongest terms," saying the attack showed Israel "does not want issues to be resolved through diplomatic means" and urged it to halt "aggressive actions that could lead to greater conflicts."

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