



IT'S A TOUGH WORLD.

MENA Executive SITREP

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**MAX
INTELLIGENCE**



Executive Brief: US – Israeli Operations Against Iran and Regional Implications

Explainer: This daily report provides an executive summary of major developments related to the ongoing war in the Middle East. It complements MAX Security's more in-depth Situation Update reports. If you haven't yet received our situation updates and other reporting amid the current escalation, or would like to receive more details, join our [WhatsApp community](#). For operational support, please contact our Protection Division at operations@max-security.com.

Operational Overview

The Israeli-US aerial campaign against Iran continued on March 15-16. Multiple regime-linked targets were targeted, primarily in Tehran. No notable targets have been publicly announced by the IDF, except for a strike against an Iranian Space research center that was used to develop capabilities to attack satellites, which Israel designated as a threat to its satellites. The latter destroyed the formal aircraft of Iran's Supreme Leader at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport. An Iranian opposition outlet suggested that attacks against Basij checkpoints and personnel continued to take place in Tehran. As of March 16, the IDF is conducting strikes in Tehran, Shiraz, and Tabriz.

An Israeli report citing defense officials suggested that Israel's security establishment understands there are gaps in the current pace of the war in comparison to Israel's earlier expectations, and that it is difficult to trigger a resurgence of Iranian anti-government activity on the ground. The same report indicated that Israel and the US are still planning "big moves" in Iran that may impact the course of the war. The Israeli Mossad conveyed a message to the Iranian people on March 16 that "the final battle will begin soon."

Iranian actions

Iran continues to project governance resilience and demonstrate control on the streets. There were no significant expressions of civil unrest.

Iran continued to launch attacks against different states in the region over the course of March 15-16, targeting strategic civilian facilities, military bases, and residential areas as well. It fired missiles with cluster missiles toward Israel. It also targeted the UAE's Fujairah Port and Dubai International Airport again and led to a civilian casualty in Abu Dhabi's al-Bahya area. A UAV attack impacted Kuwait's Ali al-Salem Air Base.

Iran also called for evacuations of specific areas, such as the Dubai Marina and Lusail near Doha, projecting both its psychological warfare tactics and inclination to target soft civilian and economic



targets as part of its campaign to exert pressure on Gulf states.

Other notable developments

Energy/Maritime domain: On March 16, Iran claimed that the presence of the US aircraft carrier Gerald Ford in the Red Sea is considered a threat to Iran, and therefore, the US's "logistics and service centers in the Red Sea are considered a target for Iran. This highlights an Iranian attention to Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast, which is believed to be a logistical solution for US forces (through the King Fahd Industrial Port, which Iran has threatened in the past). It also follows reports on tankers congregating at Yanbu Port to load oil, as a substitute for Saudi's Persian Gulf exports, which will likely incentivize Iranian or Houthi attacks against this area, as the war progresses. It also comes amid an apparent uptick in Iranian attacks against Saudi Arabia in general over the past several days.

President Trump reportedly has limited success in recruiting international participation in security efforts in the Strait of Hormuz, prompting him to pressure NATO members to contribute. Iran continues to threaten travel through the Strait of Hormuz for the US and its allies, despite no reports of attacks over the past 24 hours. The Persian Gulf will remain a flashpoint of tension between the parties.

Israel-Lebanon: On March 16, following reinforcements to the region, the IDF launched a targeted ground operation into southern Lebanon's al-Khiam area. This highlights a further escalation between the parties, with Hezbollah projecting that it is viewing the current conflict as an existential threat, and Israel expanding its operation to degrade the Shiite movement as much as possible and secure Israel's north.

Travel & Security Aspects

- Regional travel conditions remain highly volatile, with most states in the region exposed to extreme risk. Travel to these areas should be avoided, and a shelter-in-place procedure should continue to be implemented.
- In this vein, airspace restrictions and sudden closures continue to disrupt travel across the region. Risks to travelers also remain high despite **Gulf** authorities' apparent eagerness to facilitate commercial flight operations. Continued UAV penetration into Gulf airspaces and attacks against airports continue to underscore the threat.
- Evacuations outside of the country and safe havens within countries should be considered as part of contingency planning.
- Extraction routes are still most viable through **Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt**. Despite not releasing formal statistics, Saudi Arabia appears to be increasingly impacted by Iranian attacks.
- **Egypt and Turkey broadly** remain outside direct hostilities and are assessed as medium-risk environments compared with other regional states. Turkey is exposed to risks in its southeastern border areas near Iran and around its NATO bases, as tensions increase.



- Oman remains comparatively less affected and continues to function as a key transit point for evacuations and regional travel adjustments. However, Iranian UAVs prompted casualties in the northern Sohar Province, near the Sohar International Airport and along the coastal highway connecting the UAE and Muscat. Vigilance and timely risk assessments should be implemented ahead of any evacuation through that area. Favor the Muscat al-Batinah Expressway rather than Highway 1.
- **Israel** is still allowing commercial flights with foreigners departing from the Ben Gurion International Airport. There are frequent flight cancellations and delays, extensive traffic, and congestion at the airport. Color Red sirens have also been sounded in the airport as part of the general attacks against the country, which now may also include short-notice Hezbollah fire, making it difficult to get to a protected space in time. Starting on March 16, El Al is now operating six direct flights to New York intended for American citizens who wish to return to the US. The flights are expected to operate at full capacity, subject to approval by Israeli authorities, upon request by the US Embassy.

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