



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 16-17. Multiple regime-linked targets were hit, primarily in Tehran, on March 16 and 17. Notably, the IDF claimed to have assassinated Ali Larijani, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, whom the IDF viewed as Iran's "effective leader," in addition to the Basij's commander. This highlights Israel's continued pursuit of high-ranking Iranian officials, whose killing would purportedly contribute to further destabilization of Iran's political elite and encourage anti-government Iranian groups to reignite protest activity. Israeli PM Netanyahu further pledged additional surprises and projected resolve to continue fighting, dismissing "pessimistic media" and highlighting substantial strategic gains that are being achieved.

The IDF also indicated that it attacked multiple military targets, including UAV, ballistic missile, and aerial defense storage facilities, mainly in Tehran, Shiraz, and Tabriz, in recent airstrike waves. The IRGC's Naval Headquarters were also struck in Tehran.

Iranian actions

Iran continues to project governance resilience and demonstrate control on the streets. There were still no significant expressions of civil unrest. It remains to be seen if the killing of Larijani would spark more substantial expressions of dissent during the night hours.

Iran continued to launch attacks against different states in the region, despite decreasing operational capacities, over the course of March 16-17. Direct impact or debris caused a fire at the UAE's Fujairah Oil Terminal; fallen shrapnel from intercepted missiles killed an individual in Abu Dhabi's Bani Yas Neighborhood; UAVs impacted residential areas in Kuwait; and additional attacks targeted several areas of Saudi Arabia, including in al-Kharj, Riyadh, and Eastern Province. Iran also targeted Abu Dhabi's Shah Gas Field and the Majnoon Oil Field in southern Iraq, pointing to an expansion from targeting energy refineries, terminals, and storage facilities, to production sites. It highlights the continued Iranian interest in exerting pressure by targeting strategic economic infrastructure.



Iran has also threatened to target specific US firms and their compounds in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, highlighting repeated and explicit Iranian threats against US companies, which are viewed as legitimate targets by Tehran.

Iran also continued to launch ballistic missiles against Israel, prioritizing the utilization of cluster munition warheads that spread across an extended radius to prompt civilian casualties.

Other notable developments

Iraq: On March 16, Kataib Hezbollah (KH) announced the death of the group's security chief and spokesperson, Abu Ali al-Askari. Unconfirmed reports cited an unnamed security official stating that he was killed in an American strike on Baghdad on March 14. This has led to an uptick in militia attacks in Iraq, which impacted a hotel in Baghdad, as well as the US Embassy Compound, and other targets, highlighting the escalatory trend that is taking place on Iraqi soil, especially given that KH constitutes the most prominent Iran-backed militia in Iraq.

Kuwait: On March 16, Kuwaiti authorities announced that they had dismantled a Kuwait-based cell affiliated with Hezbollah, which sought to recruit individuals to join the group. During the security operation, the authorities arrested 14 Kuwaiti citizens and two Lebanese nationals and seized an unspecified number of weapons, drones, ammunition, narcotics, and encrypted communication devices. This follows additional instances where Gulf authorities thwarted Iranian or Iran-linked cells plotting attacks on their territories, including the UAE and Qatar. It points to Iran's overall ability to establish a footprint in these neighboring countries as part of its clandestine operations.

Maritime domain: On March 17, a vessel off the coast of the UAE's Fujairah was struck by falling shrapnel from interceptions, after an initial assessment indicated it was targeted in a direct attack. This points to the risk of indirect damage and casualties to vessels operating close to the Fujairah Port, especially as the site constitutes a primary target for Iran, as it allows the onloading of oil outside the Strait of Hormuz.

Israel-Lebanon: Following Israel's launch of its targeted ground operation in Lebanon in recent days, the IDF has indicated that Hezbollah intends to launch significant barrages of rockets into Israel in the evening and night hours of March 17. This is more likely to entail more significant barrages into northern Israel, with sporadic launches toward central Israel. It cannot be ruled out that Hezbollah operatives will try to conduct targeted raids against IDF forces within Lebanese territory, especially as Hezbollah's Chief Naim Qassem is also intending to give a speech during the evening hours of March 17. IDF ground and air forces are likely to be on very elevated alert and work to thwart Hezbollah capabilities and attempts over the coming hours. IDF strikes throughout southern Lebanon and in more northern areas will recur.



Travel & Security Aspects

- Regional travel conditions remain highly volatile, with most states in the region exposed to extreme risk due to repeated and unpredictable missile and UAV attacks.
- Airspace restrictions and sudden closures continue to disrupt travel across the region. Risks to travelers also remain high despite **Gulf** authorities' eagerness to facilitate commercial flight operations. Continued UAV penetration into Gulf airspaces and attacks against airports continue to underscore the threat, especially in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.
- 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.
- **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. 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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