

# “We negotiate with bombs”: US moves to deploy 82nd Airborne to Iran

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24 March 2026

On Tuesday, as US President Donald Trump declared that the United States had “won” its undeclared and illegal war against Iran and claimed negotiations are ongoing, US media reports made clear that the military buildup targeting the country is expanding.

CNN reported Tuesday that approximately 1,000 soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division, including the division commander Major General Brandon Tegtmeier and his staff, are “expecting to deploy” to the Middle East in the coming days. The *New York Times* reported Monday that the 82nd Airborne’s “Immediate Response Force”—a 3,000-strong rapid-deployment brigade—could be sent to capture Kharg Island, the terminal through which 90 percent of Iran’s oil exports pass. *Politico* reported Tuesday that a written deployment order was expected within hours.

The 82nd Airborne is the US Army’s rapid-deployment division, trained to parachute into hostile territory to seize airfields and key objectives. Its deployment is a qualitative escalation beyond the Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) already en route, which are smaller, amphibious forces designed for coastal operations. The combination of airborne and amphibious forces points to an operation involving both a seaborne assault and an inland insertion—far larger than a single island seizure.

The soldiers would join roughly 4,500 Marines aboard two amphibious assault groups heading for the Gulf. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the USS Tripoli, carrying 2,200 Marines from Okinawa, is due to arrive Friday. A second group, the USS Boxer with 2,500 Marines, departed San Diego last week.

The troop deployments came on the same day Trump claimed to be pursuing a negotiated settlement with Iran. Two days earlier, Trump had issued a 48-hour ultimatum threatening to obliterate Iran’s power grid

unless the Strait of Hormuz was reopened. On Monday, he reversed course, declaring on Truth Social that the United States and Iran had held “conversations regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East.” He announced a five-day postponement of strikes on Iranian power infrastructure.

Trump, speaking at the swearing-in ceremony for the new Homeland Security secretary Tuesday, declared: “We’ve won this. This war has been won.” He appeared semi-lucid and slurring his words as he described the state of the war: “They have no leaders left. The leaders are all gone. Nobody knows who to talk to. But we’re actually talking to the right people, and they want to make a deal so badly.”

He boasted of the systematic assassination of Iran’s political leadership: “I hate to say it, but we killed all their leadership, and then they met to choose new leaders, and we killed all of them.”

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, standing beside Trump, effectively admitted that Trump’s talk of negotiations was a cover for mass murder. “We negotiate with bombs,” he declared. “You have a choice as we loiter over the top of Tehran.” He praised the president for ordering the military to “close with and destroy the enemy as viciously as possible from moment one.”

The *Wall Street Journal*, as usual, stated the administration’s calculations bluntly in an editorial published under the headline, “The Fog of Diplomacy in Iran.” It wrote, “The new deadline to ward off escalation is Friday, when some 2,200 Marines are due to arrive in the region.” It asked: “Will this regime again challenge Mr. Trump to deliver on his threat? And was that the President’s plan all along?” The obvious answer is yes.

The *Journal* added: “They may be joined later by another Marine Expeditionary Unit as well as command elements and a combat brigade from the Army’s 82nd Airborne.”

Noting the arrival of US troops alongside Trump’s talk of negotiations, the *Journal* wrote: “Call it Trump-style diplomacy: One hand extends while the other visibly winds for a punch.”

The *Journal*, advocating for the deployment of ground troops, argued that a failure by the US to dominate the Strait of Hormuz would mark a major defeat, and that militarily subjugating Iran would send a message to Russia and China. “We trust he knows that giving in to the regime now would leave an Iranian gun to the world’s head, a proven veto on energy flows,” the *Journal* wrote. “The world—read: China and Russia—might conclude he couldn’t tolerate the political pressure at home from high oil prices.”

Nearly four weeks of bombing have killed thousands of Iranian civilians, destroyed residential buildings, struck schools and hospitals and reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble. Amnesty International has confirmed that a US strike on a school in Minab killed at least 170 people, most of them schoolgirls.

The supreme leader, the intelligence minister, the head of the Supreme National Security Council and dozens of other senior officials have been assassinated in strikes on densely populated residential areas of Tehran. Iran’s telecommunications have been destroyed, cutting off 90 million people from the outside world for more than three weeks.

The human rights organization HRANA has documented at least 1,443 civilian deaths, including 217 children—and the true toll is certainly far higher given the near-total communications blackout now in its 23rd day. Iran’s 90 million people have been cut off from the outside world since February 28; the blackout costs the economy \$35.7 million a day. On Monday, a strike on a residential building in northern Tehran killed a university professor and his two children. Gas facilities in Isfahan were struck and partially damaged. Strikes on the South Pars gas field have disrupted heating and cooking fuel across the country. Fourteen American service members have been killed.

In Lebanon, Israel has launched a full-scale ground invasion of the south under cover of the Iran war. At least 1,072 people have been killed and 2,966 wounded

since March 2, including 118 children and 40 medical workers. More than 1.2 million people—one in five Lebanese—have been driven from their homes.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz has ordered the “acceleration of the demolition of Lebanese houses in border villages” following what he called the “Beit Hanoun and Rafah models”—a direct reference to the methods of destruction Israel employed in Gaza. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called for making the Litani River “our new border with the state of Lebanon.” Among the dead was Taline Shehab, five years old, killed by an Israeli airstrike as she slept. Her father was also killed. Her mother is in a coma.

Israel has bombed five bridges over the Litani River, severing the south from the rest of the country. Katz declared that “hundreds of thousands of residents of southern Lebanon who evacuated northward will not return south of the Litani River.” On Monday, Israeli strikes killed at least three people in Beirut, including a three-year-old girl. Hussein Bazzi, a chemistry professor at the Lebanese University, was killed by an airstrike. Three Christian young men in the village of Ain Ebel were killed while repairing a satellite dish—the Israeli military claimed they were installing surveillance equipment; residents denied any connection to Hezbollah. The Lebanese government has ordered the expulsion of Iran’s ambassador.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll found Trump’s approval has fallen to 36 percent—its lowest since he returned to office—with 61 percent disapproving of the strikes and just 25 percent approving of his handling of the cost of living.



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