

US bombards Iran for 13th straight night as White House plans “major” escalation

Andre Damon
24 July 2026

American warplanes and missiles struck Iran for a 13th consecutive night late Thursday and into Friday morning, hitting sites from the Strait of Hormuz to the Caspian Sea coast.

An American attack on the city of Ahvaz killed four people and wounded five, the state broadcaster IRIB reported.

The bombardment came as US President Donald Trump met Friday with senior advisers and cabinet members to decide whether to order a vast expansion of the war, the *New York Times* reported the same day, citing four people briefed on the discussion.

“Look, we’re locked and loaded,” Trump told reporters at the White House Friday afternoon.

The meeting capped a week of public threats. Trump told Axios in an interview published Thursday that he was considering “a massive attack. Bigger than ever before,” and said Iran had not “received enough pain yet.”

On Wednesday he threatened to “bomb and destroy ONE BRIDGE OR POWER PLANT” in Iran each time an Iranian weapon hit a ship in the Strait of Hormuz.

The forces for the escalation are already in place. The *Wall Street Journal* reported Wednesday on the surge of special operations forces, fighter squadrons and medics to the region.

The *Times* reported Friday:

Additional Air Force F-16 fighters from Germany and stealthy F-35 jets from Britain have arrived in the Middle East in recent days, joining scores of warplanes and attack drones already positioned at land bases or on two aircraft carriers, according to several U.S. military officials who spoke on the condition of

anonymity to discuss operational matters.

B-2 and B-52 crews in the United States have been placed on alert, according to the same report, and a fleet of nearly 20 warships is operating in and around the Arabian Sea. Some 50,000 American troops are assigned to the war in the region and Europe.

The *Journal* also reported Wednesday that more than 150 additional medics had been dispatched to the US military hospital at Landstuhl, Germany—preparation for American casualties on a scale the war has not yet produced.

The administration is actively preparing a ground invasion. On July 15, the *Journal* revealed that Trump’s advisers meeting in the White House Situation Room had weighed putting US troops ashore at the Kharg Island oil hub.

Reuters wrote Friday that Trump’s threats in recent days include taking the island with ground forces and bombing the underground nuclear-linked site at Pickaxe Mountain.

As it prepares a wider war, the administration is concealing the cost of the war to date. On Friday, the Pentagon’s official count of American dead in the war stood at 14, cut from 18—the deleted four being the soldiers killed in Iran’s mid-July attacks in Jordan and Iraq, whose remains Trump received at Dover Air Force Base on Wednesday.

Three military officials told the *New York Times* Friday that the four were removed on the grounds that they died after Trump declared a ceasefire in April. Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell blamed “a temporary data disruption.”

Retired Major General Paul Eaton called the revision a statistical sleight of hand, designed to make the war

look less costly and to hide its real course from the public. Republican Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky dismissed the Pentagon's explanation as a ruse and said that by waging war for more than 90 days without congressional authorization, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is breaking the law.

The official count of wounded was cut the same week, from 482 to 420, without explanation. Officials have told Reuters that the true number of wounded exceeds 500. The Pentagon last briefed the press in detail in May.

Inside Iran, the death toll is mounting. The Iranian health ministry on Friday put the toll since Trump renewed the bombing campaign in late June at 59 dead and 666 wounded, in a war that has killed thousands of Iranians.

The US military has destroyed a growing number of railway bridges used by civilians and, military officials told the *Times*, has hit more than 1,000 sites in the two-week escalation—radar stations, missile launchers, boats and bridges—on top of some 13,000 sites struck in the opening campaign between February 28 and the ceasefire of April 8.

Iran answered Friday with missiles and drones across the region. Its army said it struck American depots at Camp Buehring and positions at Camp Arifjan and Camp Doha in Kuwait. The Revolutionary Guards said they damaged a US Fifth Fleet surveillance tower in Bahrain and hit a barracks, fighter jets and air defense batteries in Jordan and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Jordan said it shot down seven missiles and six drones. The Guards warned civilians in the Gulf states to keep 500 meters away from buildings used by American forces.

US forces enforcing the naval blockade fired into the engine room of the tanker *Lavine* on Friday, disabling it after its crew tried to run the blockade, US military spokesman Captain Tim Hawkins said Friday, the *Times* reported.

The war is strangling the world economy. After the Houthis struck Saudi tankers in the Red Sea this week, Brent crude topped \$100 a barrel for the first time since May, before easing to about \$96 on Friday.

A single tanker passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday, the fewest since May 7. War-risk insurance for the southern Red Sea doubled for some shippers, and rerouting around Africa adds at least four

weeks to a tanker's voyage.

The costs land on the working class. Gasoline in the United States averaged just over \$4.10 a gallon Friday, according to AAA, and Indermit Gill, the World Bank's chief economist, told Reuters this week that the war could cut global growth this year to as low as 1.3 percent, from 2.9 percent last year.

The conflict is widening into a regional war. The *Journal* reported Friday that Bahrain and Kuwait, with Emirati intelligence and air cover, secretly bombed military sites inside Iran early this month—their first direct attacks on the country. The strikes hit drone and missile storage depots, the *Journal* wrote, after weeks in which Iran had concentrated its fire on the two states, both of which host American bases.

Israel, which launched the war alongside Washington in February, is continuing its onslaught in Gaza. Israeli strikes killed 12 people there on Tuesday, medics said, among them a father, his wife and their four children, whose home in Gaza City was set ablaze.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact