Trump administration covered up deaths of US troops in war against Iran

Andre Damon
18 September 2026

At least 22 US troops have died in the US war against Iran, the *Washington Post* reported Friday, four more than the official death toll of 18.

The *Post* cited six US officials it described as familiar with the Pentagon's internal casualty accounting data. Five of them put the number of military dead at 22 or more, the *Post* reported, and the sixth said 23 troops and three American contractors had died since the war began on February 28. The *Post* wrote that the names of the undisclosed dead, and the dates, places and causes of their deaths, "remain unclear."

The Pentagon refused to answer the *Post*'s questions about the uncounted deaths.

The administration is concealing the number of American dead in an illegal war of aggression that it began, together with Israel, in open defiance of international law. The US-Israeli war had killed at least 3,527 people in Iran by August 28, according to a count *Al Jazeera* compiled from health ministries and other official bodies.

The majority of the US population opposes the war. A Reuters/Ipsos poll taken September 11-14, seven weeks before the November 3 midterm elections, found that 59 percent of respondents disapprove of the US military strikes on Iran.

US President Donald Trump said in the Oval Office on September 4: "I call it a military conflict because it's small potatoes for us." He added that "we lost 18 people."

Facing a deepening debacle in Iran, the administration is actively discussing further escalation. Trump told Axios Thursday that he faced "a big decision" on Iran: "Do I want to go in and annihilate them or do I not?"

In the week of July 20, the Pentagon removed the names of four other soldiers from its public casualty database, the Defense Casualty Analysis System, days after their deaths, cutting its count of the dead from 18 to 14. It later relisted them under "Overseas Operations," a category it created for everyone killed or wounded from July 7 on.

Three of the four were Army air defense soldiers killed when Iranian forces attacked Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan on the night of July 17-18: Isabella Gonzales, 19, of Carrollton, Texas; Tyler Feehan, 25, of Ewa Beach, Hawaii; and Angel Rampersad, 28, of Ozone Park, New York.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported July 20, citing US officials, that Iranian forces struck the prefabricated housing units where soldiers were sleeping, in the last of three missile attacks on the base in 24 hours.

The fourth, Michael Swinton, 30, of Fayetteville, North Carolina, was killed on July 19 at the air base in Erbil, Iraq, during what the US military called a "controlled detonation" of a downed Iranian drone.

The Pentagon's database on Friday listed 832 US troops wounded in action, 414 of them under "Overseas Operations." The Associated Press reported August 6 that most of the wounded had suffered traumatic brain injuries.

A report by the Pentagon's inspector general found that Iranian strikes "damaged and destroyed hundreds of buildings and other structures at U.S. bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Oman and Jordan," the Associated Press reported September 14. "Dozens of American aircraft and drones also were destroyed or damaged," the AP wrote.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported June 25, citing US officials, that Iranian forces had struck at least 20 US military and diplomatic sites across the Middle East with missiles and drones. The damage, the *Journal*

© World Socialist Web Site

wrote, “has the U.S. re-evaluating its entire footprint in the region.”

The *Journal* examined satellite images of Naval Support Activity Bahrain, the headquarters of the Navy’s Fifth Fleet, which lies within 150 miles of the Iranian coast. The *Journal* found that Iranian forces, striking from late February to June, badly damaged the command headquarters, at least 12 other buildings and two satellite communications terminals. The Pentagon, the *Journal* wrote in June, had not publicly acknowledged the damage.

The Fifth Fleet headquarters building “is no longer usable,” the *Journal* reported, citing a US official. The *Journal* put the cost of constructing such a building today at $200 million and of constructing all the buildings damaged at the base at about $400 million. The United States evacuated most of its staff from the base and kept a small number there, the *Journal* reported.

Iranian forces also destroyed E-3 Sentry radar planes belonging to the Air Force at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia and did “significant structural damage” to Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates and Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait, the *Journal* reported.

The *Journal* reported, citing US officials, that the military was considering cutting its forces in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and shifting some bases westward, “farther from the reach of Iranian missiles and drones,” though no decisions had been made. “Structures that were attacked may not be rebuilt,” the *Journal* wrote.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington think tank, estimated on June 23 that the war had done between $4 billion and $9.4 billion in damage to US bases and cost between $1.8 billion and $3.5 billion in lost and damaged equipment. The *Post* reported Friday that a US military document it reviewed puts the war’s cost through early September at about $43.6 billion, a figure that does not include the damage to the bases.

Iranian forces destroyed a Navy logistics base in Bahrain on February 28, the day the war began, the *New York Times* reported September 2. The region’s other ports that can take a supply ship or an aircraft carrier lie within range of Iran’s missiles and drones, the *Times* wrote, “making them inaccessible.”

Navy supply ships must now sail to Diego Garcia, 2,200 miles away in the Indian Ocean, or to Singapore, 3,700 miles away, the *Times* reported. It wrote that the warships’ deployments are open-ended and that “this is not sustainable.”

The *Washington Post* reported August 30 that the heads of the Army, Navy and Air Force warned Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, in a classified August 14 document, that prolonging the war at its present scale is “unsustainable.” Admiral Daryl Caudle, the Navy’s top officer, told Hegseth that “barely one-fourth” of its destroyers are ready to deploy, the *Post* reported.

CNN reported August 4 that almost 80 percent of the military’s Terminal High Altitude Area Defense interceptors had been used up.

The war on Iran is one front of an escalating global war whose death toll will be far greater than the one the Pentagon is now concealing.

The United States and its NATO allies are escalating their war with Russia over Ukraine. On Thursday Trump announced progress toward a permanent US Army base in Poland, NPR reported Friday. “This will be a historic step for our Great U.S./Polish Alliance,” Trump wrote on social media.

The Trump administration is also preparing for war with nuclear-armed China. Air Force Secretary Troy Meink announced Monday that the United States now has weapons in orbit.

Chinese President Xi Jinping comes to the White House on September 24, 10 days after Meink spoke. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote in a September 15 editorial that the timing of the announcement “may be no accident.”

On Wednesday, 58 House Democrats joined Republicans in handing Trump new powers over war and trade, including the authority to tax goods from China and India, which buy Russian oil, at rates up to 100 percent. The bill, which also keeps the US sanctions on Iran’s energy and arms industries in force until 2031, passed the Senate 86 to 11 on August 7, with 36 of the 45 Democrats voting yes. Trump signed it into law Friday.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site