US strikes Iran on eve of midterms

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The US military attacked Iran's Qeshm Island, at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz, on Monday night, the eve of the midterm elections.

Speaking on Fox News Tuesday morning, US President Donald Trump called the strike "just a minor attack. It wasn't war." In the same interview he said: "Look, I'm not looking to, you know, kill lots of people, but if we have to, we'll have to."

The administration had begun preparing a larger attack after the election. Admiral Brad Cooper, the commander of US forces in the Middle East, presented Trump with military options against Iran at the White House on October 29, the *Wall Street Journal* reported last week.

On Monday the *Journal* reported that the US had shipped additional missile defenses and munitions to the region, and that the administration had warned the Gulf states to "prepare for a short, intense operation shortly after the election."

The cable network MS NOW reported October 30 that three senior officials from the Gulf Arab states said the administration had briefed their governments to prepare for strikes "as soon as Nov. 4," the day after the election.

The elections expressed widespread opposition to the war against Iran and the affordability crisis it has triggered. Pew Research Center polling published on October 8 found 65 percent of Americans disapproving of Trump's handling of the war and 47 percent expecting it to last more than another year.

AAA put the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline at $4.15 on Tuesday, against $3.04 a year earlier. According to NBC News, gasoline prices are up more than 40 percent since the United States and Israel launched the war.

Thousands of US troops "remain in the waters off Iran" to enforce the naval blockade, the Associated Press reported Tuesday, and "Another aircraft carrier and thousands of additional troops are also on their way to the Middle East."

MS NOW reported on October 30 that the USS Theodore Roosevelt and its strike group were headed to the region, which would make three American carrier groups there. It also reported October 30 that the United States was moving more Patriot missile batteries into Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The military is considering using the GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb, one of the largest non-nuclear weapons in the US arsenal, against Iran's energy infrastructure and nuclear sites, among them Pickaxe Mountain, CNN reported October 15.

The Qeshm strike followed several weeks of smaller US attacks, none of which Washington had announced. The *Journal* wrote Monday that according to an official the administration had withheld the details so the attacks would not signal a resumption of major combat.

The AP reported that a US official described the strikes as "targeted Iranians using surface-to-air missiles against the U.S. in the strait." Trump told Fox News that the United States had struck a newly built Iranian anti-aircraft facility.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard said late Monday that its air defenses had shot down a US MQ-9 Reaper drone east of the strait and two smaller drones over the island, in reporting by Xinhua, China's state news agency.

The AP reported Monday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had joined senior members of the administration in urging Trump to order a "quick but extensive air campaign" after the election. The AP, citing a person briefed on the call, wrote Monday that Netanyahu had pressed Trump for strikes in a telephone call over the weekend.

Netanyahu and his far-right allies lost their parliamentary majority in Israel's October 27 election. A return to full-scale war could allow Netanyahu to set up an emergency government.

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According to Axios, Trump was “weighing three courses of action, backed by three different camps” and was “preparing to go back to war if he concludes a deal isn’t reachable.” Vice President JD Vance and Trump’s envoy Steve Witkoff, it said, were urging a deal.

Netanyahu “wants to resume combat, as does Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth,” Axios wrote. Of Netanyahu and Hegseth, it stated: “They argue that Iran can’t be trusted to make a deal, let alone abide by one, and that Trump should finish the job militarily.”

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, CIA Director John Ratcliffe and Secretary of State Marco Rubio were advising Trump “to maintain the ‘no war, no deal’ status quo and allow the economic pressure campaign to continue.”

Ratcliffe had told Trump “that prolonged economic pain would induce Iran to make more concessions—or create enough instability inside the country that citizens revolt,” Axios wrote, citing an unnamed source.

The third course would keep in force the naval blockade of Iran’s ports, an act of war. More commercial ships were attacked in the Strait of Hormuz in October than in any month since March, the AP reported Monday.

CBS News reported Tuesday that a cargo ship under the Indian flag had been struck off Oman, killing one of its crew. The United Kingdom’s maritime trade agency said Tuesday that two projectiles had struck the engine room of a tanker in the same waters.

Ali Abdollahi, the chief of staff of Iran’s armed forces, warned Tuesday that Iran would answer any threat from the United States and Israel immediately and “without geographical limitations,” Xinhua reported Tuesday.

Iran opened a third Basij militia training center in Tehran on Monday, the AP reported Tuesday. Ali Kowsari, the militia’s deputy head for training, said that “1,500 training bases will start working in all cities and towns” this week, with the aim of training one million volunteers.



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