Pentagon launches new strikes on Iran

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Renewed American airstrikes on Iran, followed by Iranian attacks on US-linked military targets in the Gulf, have exposed the chasm between President Donald Trump's declarations that the conflict is effectively finished and the continuing expansion of the war.

Tuesday's US strike on Qeshm Island and Wednesday's exchanges involving Kuwait and Bahrain were followed by reports that Trump was considering another extensive bombing campaign. The escalation comes just two weeks after the 2026 midterm elections in which opposition to the war was expressed—among many other issues—in a major political defeat for Trump and the Republican Party.

A US military official told Reuters on Tuesday that American fighter aircraft had attacked an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) missile launch site on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. The official, speaking anonymously, described the operation as retaliation for Iran's targeting of American personnel and assets. No evidence substantiated the alleged threat.

CNN reported that American aircraft used precision munitions in the attack and an official characterized it as a "self-defense" strike that was "in response to IRGC aggression targeting American personnel and assets." The same official reported that US Central Command (CENTCOM) remained "highly vigilant and fully postured to protect Americans across the region."

Iranian authorities acknowledged the US attack while disputing the extent of its impact. Ahmad Nafisi, Hormozgan province's deputy governor for political and security affairs, said it caused no damage to vital infrastructure, commercial premises or residential areas. Available media reports have not established a verified casualty toll or independently confirmed the extent of military damage.

The renewed strikes contradicted Trump's reassurance given in statements made last week. After the midterm election, he declared that Iran's "militarily is effectively over" and suggested another major attack was unlikely. Nevertheless, he maintained that the threat of a dirty bomb is taken seriously.

On Monday, November 9, Trump told reporters, according to *The Atlantic*, "At this point, taking military action doesn't seem to be a very necessary thing—but we're locked and loaded, ready to go for any reason." Reporting by *The Independent* likewise described Trump as playing down concerns that he would escalate after the elections. His qualification, however, left no meaningful deadline for when military operations might resume.

At the same time, Vice President JD Vance offered empty assurances in a Monday interview with Fox News, saying Trump "is not going to let this become a forever war." Vance added, "We told the American people we would do no more forever wars." However, Vance rejected "a 10- or 15-year commitment, or frankly, even a two-year commitment," without announcing a withdrawal date or binding deadline.

By late Wednesday, however, the *New York Times* was reporting a substantially different view. "President Trump is weighing plans for another round of extensive military strikes on Iran." The *Times* account described pressure from Israel, intelligence claims concerning Iranian weapons capabilities and significant disagreements within the administration about both the intelligence and the wisdom of renewed attacks.

The *Times* reported that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was pressing for a joint air campaign lasting four to seven days. These developments point to the existence of an active review of a major escalation that was being discussed prior to the elections and days after assurances that the military phase was effectively finished.

Iran said it targeted American drone and missile installations at Kuwait's Ali Al Salem base overnight

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after the Qeshm strike. Kuwait reported that its air defenses were responding to hostile drones. Reuters said the operation is Iran's first attack on the US-allied Gulf state since September.

Bahrain said it intercepted Iranian aerial attacks Wednesday for the third time in a week. The kingdom hosts the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet. Kuwait provides facilities for primary staging, supply, maintenance, and a force-projection hub for CENTCOM across the Middle East. The two countries collaborate with the regional military presence of US imperialism and have exposed their populations to the consequences of this collaboration.

The Democrats' response to the intensification of the Iran war has revealed the role of the "progressives" and "lefts" within the party as providing critical political support for the party establishment. Talk of ending the Iran war or confronting the Trump administration over Pentagon appropriations is being used to bargain for a more aggressive military stance, particularly as it relates to the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

For example, MS NOW reported on Tuesday, that the Democrats were in a "debate" about "playing hardball" on the Iran war, including the threat of a government shutdown if the December 11 funding deadline is missed.

After Democrats won control of the Senate on November 3, New York Senator Chuck Schumer said the war "must end" and invoked Congress's power of the purse. However, he did not demand that the next funding bill prohibit continued hostilities. Patty Murray, Democratic Senator from Washington, who is positioned to chair the Appropriations Committee, similarly promised to examine available tools without committing to any specific condition.

Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen, who is challenging Schumer for the Democratic leadership, accused existing leaders of refusing to use their strongest weapon to defund the war. Alongside Michael Bennet, Bernie Sanders and Tammy Duckworth, he demanded restrictions on using appropriated money to continue the conflict. Tim Kaine likewise argued that funding restrictions were necessary because Trump had ignored congressional war powers action.

These developments show that the leadership of the Democratic Party is blocking immediate action to cut off funding for the Iran war. Schumer's refusal to endorse concrete actions leaves the administration with room to continue its criminal operations, while the Democrats cite the danger of a shutdown before their new congressional majorities take office.

Alongside the military escalation, the justifications for it came from reports that Iran was considering attacks on senior administration officials using a "dirty bomb" or chemical weapon. CNN cited seven US officials who described intelligence concerning possible locations and targets.

Crucially, officials disputed whether Tehran intended or possessed the capability to execute such plans. While a dirty bomb is not a nuclear weapon, it disperses radioactive material using conventional explosives.

White House spokesperson Lauren Bis supplied the central qualification in a statement that the United States is "monitoring any and all potential threats, but at this time there are no credible threats to the homeland." Secretary of State Marco Rubio likewise said Wednesday that he did not believe there was an imminent threat to Washington. Iran rejected the allegations as baseless.

Media reports confirm that the warnings themselves contain uncertainty about intent and the operational capacity of the alleged threats. The unnamed source quotation about whether Iran possessed the personnel to execute such an attack originated in a CNN report.



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