

An F/A-18E Super Hornet aircraft, attached to Strike Fighter Squadron 37, landing on the flight deck of the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), while operating in support of Operation Epic Fury



US Sailors observing as an E-2D Hawkeye aircraft, attached to Airborne Command and Control Squadron 124



An F/A-18F Super Hornet, attached to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 41, making an arrested landing on the flight deck of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72)



# Skies aflame

The conflict is spreading rapidly, with no indication of containment

Gulf monarchies threatened to retaliate as a Saudi oil refinery burned, Qatar halted LNG production, tankers were attacked off Oman and energy prices soared.

Ali Larijani, the powerful head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, voiced defiance, vowing that Iran would defend itself "regardless of the costs and will make the enemies sorry for their miscalculation".



People look at the damage at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the offices of Al-Qard al-Hassan, a Hezbollah-linked financial institution, in the southern coastal Lebanese city of Tyre

## Three US jets shot down in friendly fire in Kuwait



A pilot descending from the sky with a parachute near al-Jahra in Kuwait after three US F-15e Strike Eagle jets were mistakenly shot down by Kuwaiti air defence according to the US Central Command. "During active combat -- that included attacks from Iranian aircraft, ballistic missiles, and drones -- the US Air Force fighter jets were mistakenly shot down by Kuwaiti air defences," CENTCOM said. The pilots and weapons officers survived.

## 'Boots on ground' in Iran?

Pentagon chief refuses to rule out

AFP | Washington, United States

The US defense secretary yesterday declined to rule out putting troops on the ground in Iran and indicated the war launched over the weekend could go on for as long as six weeks.

When asked if the United States already had boots on the ground, Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth told a news conference: "No, but we're not going to go into the exercise of what we will or will not do."

"We'll go as far as we need to go," he said.

"I think it's one of those fallacies for a long time that this department or presidents or others should tell the American people and our enemies by the way, 'Here's exactly what we'll do, here's exactly how long we'll go,'" he said.

As for how long the war will last, Hegseth said: "Four weeks, two weeks, six weeks, it could move up. It could move back."

He sought to differentiate the Iran operation from past long-running US wars in Iraq

Trump says would consider boots on ground in Iran if necessary: NY Post

Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump yesterday told the New York Post he would not rule out sending ground troops into Iran if necessary.

"I don't have the yips with respect to boots on the ground -- like every presi-

dent says, 'There will be no boots on the ground.' I don't say it," Trump told the Post in one of several brief interviews he has given since launching the Iran operation on Saturday.

"I say 'probably don't need them,' [or] 'if they were necessary,'" he said.

and Afghanistan, saying the war is not an effort to build democracy in Iran. "No stupid rules of engagement, no nation building quagmire, no democracy-building exercise. No politically correct wars. We fight to win and we don't waste time or lives," the Pentagon chief said.

"This is not Iraq. This is not endless," Hegseth said. "Our generation knows better and so does this president. He called the last 20 years of nation building wars 'dumb' and he's right."

"With every passing day, our capabilities get stronger and Iran's get weaker. We set the

terms of this war from start to finish. Our ambitions are not utopian, they are realistic scoped to our interests and the defense of our people and our allies," he added.

General Dan Caine, the top US military officer, spoke alongside Hegseth, saying that air superiority had been achieved over Iran.

Strikes by American forces "resulted in the establishment of local air superiority. This air superiority will not only enhance the protection of our forces, but also allow them to continue the work over Iran," Caine said.

An Iranian drone hit the runway of a UK air force base in Akrotiri in Cyprus, whose government announced that the major airport in its town of Paphos and the area around the British facility would be evacuated.

In Lebanon, the strikes have triggered a new round of violence between Israel and Hezbollah, with the Iran-backed group firing rockets and its enemy responding with bombing.

The Israeli military said it had struck a senior Hezbollah operative in Beirut, while Lebanese authorities said Israeli strikes killed at least 31 people.

Iran Revolutionary Guards say targeted 500 US, Israeli sites

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's retaliatory strikes have so far targeted 500 sites linked to the United States and Israel in the Middle East, the Revolutionary Guards said on the third day of fighting yesterday.

"Since the start of the conflict, the brave soldiers of the Iranian armed forces have attacked 60 strategic targets and 500 American military targets and targets of the Zionist regime (Israel)," the Guards said in a statement. It added they had launched more than 700 drones and hundreds of missiles.

## Lebanese state bans Hezbollah military activities: PM

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanon's government has decided on an "immediate ban" of Iran-backed Hezbollah's military and security activity, Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said yesterday, in an unprecedented move as Israel

retaliated to rocket fire.

Hezbollah is represented in both the government and parliament and the move came hours after the party announced it had launched rockets and drones towards Israel early Monday, to avenge the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei

in US-Israeli attacks Saturday.

After an emergency cabinet meeting, Salam said: "The Lebanese state declares its absolute and unequivocal rejection of any military or security actions launched from Lebanese territory outside the framework of its legitimate institutions.