

# Iran will not 'automatically' fall after Khamenei's death, shah's widow tells

Paris, France

Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei's death is "historically significant" but will not "automatically" lead to the fall of the Iranian system, the widow of the country's last

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shah told AFP in an interview yesterday.

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ever central he may be to the architecture of power -- does not automatically mean the

end of a system," said Farah Pahlavi, who has lived in exile in Paris since being driv-

en out of Iran in the 1979 r evolution.

"What will be decisive,"

she said, was "the ability of the Iranian people to unite around a peaceful, orderly and sovereign transition to a state governed by the rule of law", which she added her son Reza Pahlavi "is in the process of preparing".

# Iran war an **endurance race** between missiles and interceptors

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● **Interceptor missiles are also very expensive and only produced in small numbers**

● **Only 96 Thaad missiles are produced each year**

● **During the 12-day war, some 150 Thaad were fired**

AFP | Paris, France

The war in the Middle East has so far been defined by two images: Iranian drones and missiles plunging to the ground and exploding, and interceptors streaking into the skies to stop them.

In the first two days of the conflict, Iran launched nearly 400 missiles and around 1,000 drones towards the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Jordan, said Mintel World, which specialises in open-source intelligence.

That figure does not include Iran's main target, Israel.

"It's really who has a deeper magazine," said Scott Benedict, a former marine and expert at the US-based Middle East Institute.

"It's like two archers launching arrows at each other and somebody is going to run out of arrows before the other person runs out of arrows."

Top US military officer General Dan Caine told a press briefing that its integrated air and missile defence network was working "exactly as it's intended", intercepting hundreds of ballistic missiles.

Dismissing reports that the United States could run out of interceptors, President Donald Trump claimed the military has

**PATRIOT AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM**

American surface-to-air missile system

Capable of intercepting ballistic and cruise missiles, aircrafts, and drones

Warheads: 90 kg, high-explosive fragmentation

Range: between 96 and 160 km (with PAC-2 missiles)

Altitude: up to 24 km

Flight duration: ranging from under 9 seconds up to 3 minutes (maximum)

**OPERATION**

- The radar detects and tracks the target
- Command and control center
- Missile launcher

Schematic diagram, illustrations and projections are to scale

Sources: CSIS, Critical Threats, Raytheon, US National Air and Space Museum

AFP

ing targeted by the United States and Israel.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the war was a case of "shooting the archer instead of the arrows".

Iran's latest missile barrages appear to be smaller than those launched in June and in October 2024, when Iran first attacked Israel.

"The low density of the Iranian salvos raises questions about Tehran's offensive capabilities," said Etienne Marcuz, a researcher at the France-based Foundation for Strategic Research.

"Are they preserving their stockpile to prolong the conflict and wear down their adversaries, or do they no longer have the capacity to launch coordinated strikes?"

Despite the smaller salvos, he said a "non-negligible number of missiles are still getting through, which might show that the defences are no longer as watertight and the Israelis know, they too will have to hold out over time" by economising their interceptors.

**'Low but constant pressure'**

Benedict said that the United States had enough "magazines to get to a point faster where we're in a better position than the Iranians".

Nevertheless, the attacker has a key advantage. For each ballistic missile, "at least two" interceptors need to be fired to guard against failure, said Marcuz.

Interceptor missiles are also very expensive and only produced in small numbers, despite planned production increases.

For example, only 96 Thaad missiles are produced each year and 600 of the PAC-3 MSE mu-

ditions used in the Patriot system.

During the 12-day war, some 150 Thaad were fired, The Wall Street Journal reported.

"The stock is not going to last very long," said Marcuz, making it crucial for the United States and Israel to destroy Iran's launchers as soon as possible.

However, completely destroying Tehran's ballistic missile threat was unrealistic, he said.

Like the Houthis in Yemen, Iran was likely to retain a "residual capability that will maintain a low but constant pressure for years if there is no political settlement".



**Many modern missile interceptors do not carry explosive warheads; instead, they rely on "hit-to-kill" technology, destroying incoming missiles through the sheer force of high-speed impact.**

**Some missile interceptor systems can engage multiple targets simultaneously, tracking dozens of incoming threats at once through integrated radar and command networks.**

