

Drones hit oil sites, target armed groups in Iraq

AFP | Baghdad

Drones hit an airport and oil facilities in southern Iraq yesterday, while in the north strikes and explosions mainly targeted Iranian armed groups.

In Iraq's southern Basra province, "a drone crashed into the cargo terminal at Basra airport," a security official told AFP.

Two others hit a US company in the Burjesia oil complex, and a fourth struck the Rumaila oil field, where energy major BP operates, the official added, without being able to identify the perpetrators.

Iraq, long a proxy battleground between the US and Iran, has said it did not want to be dragged into the war engulfing the Middle East. But it has not been spared.

Iraq was drawn into the war from the outset, with strikes blamed on the United States and Israel targeting Iran-backed groups in Iraq which have vowed not to remain neutral and which have claimed attacks on US bases in the country and in the region.

The northern autonomous Kurdistan region, which hosts US troops, has been a main target of attacks. Explosions sounded yesterday near the airport in Kurdistan's capital Erbil, where drones have been repeatedly intercepted.



Smoke rises after an explosion near Erbil International Airport in Erbil

Kurdistan's natural resources ministry said yesterday that oil production at an oil field operated by US firm HKN Energy had been halted following an attack a day earlier in Dohuk province.

It said the strike was launched from areas in federal Iraq, and urged Baghdad to prevent such attacks on the northern region's civilians, economic infrastructure, and its oil and gas sector.

A security source said the at-

tack was carried out with two drones. In Erbil, construction worker Abdulmajid Ibrahim, 38, said he fears the "war will last for a long time".

Iraq's Kurdistan also hosts camps and rear-bases operated by several Iranian Kurdish rebel groups, which Iran has struck repeatedly since the start of the war.

Tehran threatened yesterday to target "all the facilities" of the region if Kurdish Iranian groups were allowed to enter Iran.

So far, no forces have entered Iran, several sources from the opposition said on Thursday.

Yesterday, fresh strikes hit the Kurdish groups, said an official from the exiled Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan.

"Our bases are under attack from the Iranian enemy," the PDKI official said.

Iranian Kurds pin their hopes on the war weakening the Islamic republic and may even go so far as to ally with the United States.

Iran warship docks at Indian port of Kochi: Indian govt source

AFP | New Delhi

An Iranian warship has docked in the southwest Indian port of Kochi, a government source in New Delhi said yesterday, after a US submarine sank another Iranian frigate and a third docked in Sri Lanka.

"IRIS Lavan... docked at Kochi on March 4. In this context, its crew of 183 are currently accommodated at naval facilities in Kochi," the source said.

Like the IRIS Dena, the Iranian warship sunk by a US submarine Wednesday off

the coast of Sri Lanka, IRIS Lavan had also been part of a naval fleet review off India's port city of Visakhapatnam.

"Days before the IRIS Dena incident south of Sri Lanka, India was approached by Iran to take in the Iranian Ship IRIS Lavan," the source said.

"This request was received on February 28, 2026, indicating that a docking at Kochi was urgent as the vessel had developed technical issues," the source added.

"Approval was accorded for the docking on March 1."

Merz warns against Iran state collapse, uncontrolled migration

AFP | Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said yesterday the Middle East war must not lead to the collapse of the Iranian state, warning of the impact this would have on migration to Europe.

"An endless war is not in our interest. The same applies to a collapse of Iranian statehood or proxy conflicts fought on Iranian soil," he said in a statement.

"Such scenarios could have far-reaching consequences for Europe, including for security, energy supply and

migration."

He added that "we share the goals of the United States and Israel regarding the Iranian nuclear and missile programme, Tehran's threats against Israel, its support for terrorism and proxies."

"The Iranian people have the right to freely decide their own destiny."

But Merz said a total collapse of the Iranian state would spread chaos, a point he also stressed speaking at a trade fair in Munich.

Germany and its European allies were "pushing hard for Iran's sovereignty to be preserved", he said there.

Israel says destroyed 'bunker' of slain Iran supreme leader



Satellite imagery from an alleged Israeli strike on the bunker where Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is being guarded

AFP | Jerusalem

The Israeli military yesterday said its fighter jets had "dismantled" an underground bunker that was meant to be used as a command hub by slain leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"The underground military bunker, which was located beneath the regime's leadership compound in the centre of Tehran, was intended to be used by the supreme leader of the Iranian regime as a secure emergency command centre," the army said.

"Khamenei was eliminated before he could use the bunker during operation 'Roaring Lion' but the compound continued to be used by senior Iranian regime officials."

The Israeli military said around 50 combat jets were involved in the strikes on the underground network that spanned "multiple streets in the heart of Tehran".

Khamenei was killed at his leadership compound on Saturday, on the first day of joint US-Israeli strikes that sparked the Middle East war.

The Pentagon has since said it was an Israeli strike that killed him, while Trump has said it was in part thanks to US intelligence.

On Thursday, Israel's military chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said: "In just 40 seconds, approximately 40 senior officials of the Iranian terror regime were eliminated, including the regime's leader, Ali Khamenei."

Sri Lanka denounces war deaths, houses Iran sailors

AFP | Colombo

Sri Lanka denounced the Stoll of Middle East fighting yesterday as it gave refuge to more than 250 Iranian sailors two days after a deadly torpedo strike on another of Iran's ships.

The crew from the second ship were brought ashore on Thursday and were being accommodated at a military camp near the capital Colombo. Their ship, IRIS Bushehr, was under Sri Lankan control.

The vessel reported engine trouble and sought port entry after another Iranian vessel, IRIS Dena, was hit by a US torpedo off Sri Lanka's southern coast on Wednesday.

Washington said it had carried out that attack, which killed at least 84 Iranian sailors and left 64 more missing. Sri Lanka rescued 32 injured survivors.

"Our approach is that every life is as precious as our own," Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake wrote on X yesterday, urging peace after the Israeli-US campaign led to Iranian retaliatory strikes.

Wednesday's attack was the first military strike far outside the Middle East since the United States and Israel launched their war on Iran on Saturday.

US authorities said Wednesday's strike was the first by a torpedo fired from an American



Iranian ship IRIS Bushehr after a US submarine attack, off the coast of Colombo

submarine since World War II.

Sri Lanka gave permission to IRIS Bushehr to enter its territorial waters and also evacuated its 219 crew to the naval facility, while the 32 survivors from the first vessel are in hospital.

"All our actions are aimed at saving lives and ensuring that humanity prevails," Dissanayake said.

He said in an earlier address to the nation that sheltering the sailors was the "most courageous and humanitarian course of action that a state can take".

"We jealously guard our non-aligned policy while ensuring

All our actions are aimed at saving lives and ensuring that humanity prevails

SRI LANKA'S PRESIDENT ANURA KUMARA DISSANAYAKE

that humanitarian values and the saving of lives remain our top priority," he said.

'Ceremonial' ship

Sri Lanka has remained neutral in the conflict. The United

States is Sri Lanka's largest export market, while Iran is a key buyer of tea, the island's main export commodity.

Iran's ambassador to Sri Lanka, Alireza Delkhosh, welcomed Dissanayake's gesture.

In neighbouring India, visiting Iranian deputy foreign minister Saeed Khatibzadeh slammed the United States for attacking a "ceremonial, unloaded" ship. Health authorities said autopsies on the 84 sailors killed in Wednesday's attack had been completed, but the cause of death will be announced "in a few days".