

Russian strikes kill at least 16 across Ukraine

AFP | Kyiv

A massive Russian drone and missile barrage killed at least 16 people in cities across Ukraine, more than four years into the war with peace talks stalled, Ukrainian officials said yesterday.

AFP journalists heard loud bangs echoing over the capital during the night and saw huge plumes of black smoke rising over central Kyiv at dawn.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched 659 drones in the attack and 44 missiles, over the last 24 hours, adding that its air defence units downed 636 drones and 31 missiles.

Officials across the country said 16 people were killed and more than 100 were wounded in the attacks in several regions.

"Another night has proven that Russia does not deserve any easing of global policy or lifting of sanctions," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on social media after the attack.

"Russia is betting on war," added the president, who has been touring European countries to drum up support.

US Democrats file impeachment articles against Pentagon chief

AFP | Washington

US House Democrats introduced six articles of impeachment against Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth on Wednesday, accusing him of "high crimes and misdemeanors" including waging war on Iran without congressional approval.

The impeachment resolution is led by Yassamin Ansari, a Democratic Congresswoman from Arizona, and has slim chances of passing due to the Republican majority in the House.

Impeachment is the process by which the US House of Representatives brings charges against a government official for alleged wrongdoing, with removal from office only possible if the Senate convicts after a trial.

"I've introduced Articles of Impeachment against Pete Hegseth for violating his oath, endangering U.S. servicemembers, and committing war crimes, including attacks on civilians and a girls' school in Minab, Iran," Ansari wrote on X.



Lebanese army soldiers secure the site of an Israeli drone attack that targeted a vehicle on the highway of Saadiyat, south of Beirut

US threatens to resume strikes if Iran spurns peace offer

Vance offers "grand bargain" but Iran's enrichment stance remains key obstacle

● Previous talks ended without agreement

● US considers another round in Islamabad

● Strait of Hormuz remains blocked

AFP | Tehran

The United States warned yesterday it could resume air strikes on Iran and continue a naval blockade of its ports if Tehran refuses to accept a deal to end the war that has engulfed the Middle East.

The warning came as Pakistan's army chief travelled to Tehran to meet senior Iranian officials as part of efforts to arrange another round of talks between the two sides.

Iranian state television showed

Field Marshal Asim Munir meeting parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who led Tehran's delegation at last week's US-Iran talks in Pakistan, which ended without agreement.

"If Iran chooses poorly, then they will have a blockade and bombs dropping on infrastructure, power and energy," Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at the Pentagon.

Earlier, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said further talks would "very likely" take place in Islamabad, adding that discussions were ongoing.

Despite expectations of renewed talks, the United States said it would maintain its blockade of Iranian ports and use the two-week ceasefire period to strengthen its military position.

Diplomatic Uncertainty

Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Tahir Andrabi said no date had been set for the next

YOU KNOW WHAT

Multiple vessels attempting to leave Iranian ports were turned back during the initial phase of the US blockade, with CENTCOM stating "zero ships have broken through"

round of talks, though mediation efforts continue.

US Vice President JD Vance said Iran is being offered a "grand bargain" to end the six-week war and address the dispute over its nuclear programme.

Israel's defense minister Israel Katz said Iran faced a clear choice between abandoning its current course or facing further consequences.

Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz — a key global oil route — has been disrupted since the conflict began and remains a central source of tension.

Washington said its blockade had effectively halted maritime trade involving Iran, with US Central Command reporting that vessels attempting to leave Iranian ports had been turned back.

The United States has also imposed fresh sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector, aimed at senior figures within the regime.

Threats and Escalation

Iranian military officials warned that failure to lift the blockade could jeopardise the ceasefire.

They also warned that contin-

ued pressure could disrupt shipping routes across key regional waters.

Senior figures linked to Iran's leadership threatened action against US vessels in the strait if Washington attempts to enforce control over the shipping channel.

Nuclear Dispute

US President Donald Trump has said any deal must permanently prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

He launched the war on February 28, citing concerns that Tehran was advancing toward developing an atomic bomb.

Washington has proposed a long-term suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment programme, while Iran has offered a shorter-term alternative that has been rejected by US officials.

Iran continues to maintain its position on enrichment, leaving a key issue unresolved.

US to blockade Iran ports 'as long as it takes': Pentagon chief

AFP | Washington

The United States will blockade Iranian ports for "as long as it takes," US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said yesterday, threatening renewed strikes if Tehran does not make a deal.

"If Iran chooses poorly, then they will have a blockade and bombs dropping on infrastructure, power and energy," Hegseth told a news conference at the Pentagon.

US forces began blockading

"If you do not comply with this blockade, we will use force. So far, 13 ships have made the wise choice of turning around"

GENERAL DAN CAINE

Iranian ports at 1400 GMT on Monday after peace talks in Pakistan ended without an agreement the previous day.

General Dan Caine, the top US

military officer, said the blockade "applies to all ships, regardless of nationality, heading into or from Iranian ports."

"If you do not comply with this blockade, we will use force," Caine said alongside Hegseth.

"So far, 13 ships have made the wise choice of turning around," Caine added.

Hegseth meanwhile said Iranian forces are attempting to dig out equipment buried during the more than five weeks of US-Israeli strikes against the Islamic

republic.

Addressing Iranian leaders directly, he said: "We know what military assets you are moving and where you are moving them to. While you are digging out -- which is exactly what you're doing, digging out of bombed out and devastated facilities -- we are only getting stronger."

"You are digging out your remaining launchers and missiles with no ability to replace them -- you have no defense industry, no ability to replenish your

offensive or defensive capabilities," Hegseth said.

Admiral Brad Cooper, the head of US Central Command, which is responsible for American forces in the Middle East, said Washington is using the ceasefire to rearm and adjust.

"We're rearming, we're retooling, and we're adjusting our tactics, techniques and procedures. There's no military in the world that adjusts like we do, and that's exactly what we're doing during the ceasefire," Cooper said.