

Drone attack causes fire at Kuwait oil refinery

AFP | Washington

Drone attacks hit Kuwait's Mina Al-Ahmadi oil refinery yesterday, causing several fires but no casualties, state media said, citing the national oil company.

"The Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery... was subjected early today to several hostile drone attacks, causing fires in some of its units," the official Kuwait News Agency said, adding that "several refinery units were shut down".

The Kuwaiti army later said that the fire was brought under control without any casualties.

"Two drones targeted one of the units in a refinery of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, resulting in a fire that was brought under control by the specialised teams, without any injuries," it said on X.

Iran has stepped up attacks on Gulf energy infrastructure in recent days, hitting refineries and the world's biggest gas hub in Qatar, as Tehran retaliated over Israeli strikes on its South Pars gas field.

In Kuwait, an army statement said air defenses were "responding to hostile missile and drone threats", while the UAE state media reported "incoming missile and drone threats from Iran".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said in a statement carried by the Tasnim news agency that they had targeted US forces in the UAE's Al-Dhafra air base as well as sites in Israel with missiles and drones.

Saudi Arabia's defense ministry said that its forces had "intercepted and destroyed" more than a dozen drones in the country's east and another in the north.



Mourners bid farewell to the bodies of Iran's slain intelligence minister Esmail Khatib and his family during their funeral after yesterday noon prayers in Tehran

● **Iran's military threatened to hunt down US and Israeli officials and army commanders even while they were on holiday or visiting entertainment centres**

● **Israel's military said it was launching strikes in Iran's Noor region on the shores of the Caspian Sea, a day after carrying out its first strikes against Iranian targets in the body of water bordered by five nations**

● **The United States and Israel struck 16 Iranian cargo vessels in port towns on the Gulf in attacks that burnt the vessels, local media reported**

Israel say 2,000 targets struck in Lebanon in Mideast war
AFP | Jerusalem

Israel's military said yesterday that it had struck over 2,000 targets in Lebanon since Hezbollah joined the Middle East war on Iran's side.

Lebanon was drawn into the war on March 2 when Tehran-backed Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel to avenge the killing of the Islamic republic's supreme leader.

"So far, over 2,000 terror targets have been targeted, including approximately 120 Hezbollah command posts, over 100 weapons storage facilities, and over than 130 missile launchers," the Israeli military said.

Iran leader says enemy 'defeated'

Khamenei claims Iran is defeating US and Israel in Nowruz message

AFP | Tehran

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei yesterday said Iran was defeating the enemies of the Islamic republic and had struck a "dizzying blow" in the war against the US and Israel, in a defiant written message to the nation for the Persian New Year, Nowruz.

The long statement, published on his Telegram channel and official Iranian media, was the latest such message from Khamenei after he succeeded his father Ali Khamenei who was killed in an airstrike at the start of the war on February 28.

But almost two weeks into his tenure, the younger Khamenei has yet to issue a video or even audio message to Iranians, with state media and officials alluding to him being wounded in the strike that killed his father.

"At the moment, due to the particular unity that has been creat-

ed between you our compatriots -- despite all the differences in religious, intellectual, cultural and political origins -- the enemy has been defeated," said Khamenei.

He described the current war against Israel and the United States as the third war that the Islamic republic has experienced over the last 12 months, after the June 2025 12-day conflict with Israel but also nationwide protests at the start of this year which Tehran blamed on Israel and the US.

By showing unity and resolve, Iranians had "dealt him (the enemy) a dizzying blow so that he now starts uttering contradictory words and nonsense," Khamenei said in the message which was also read out on Iranian state television.

He said Israel and the United States had the "illusion" that if Ali Khamenei and other military leaders were killed, they would create "fear and despair" and

YOU KNOW WHAT

Despite leading Iran during a major conflict, Mojtaba Khamenei has yet to deliver a public audio or video address, fuelling speculation he was wounded in the strike that killed his father

Iran and its allied forces in the region were "in no way" behind attacks on Oman and Turkey during the war, instead blaming "deception by the Zionist enemy" in reference to Israel.

He accused Israel, which Iran does not recognise, of "using false-flag tactics to create division between the Islamic Republic and its neighbours" and warned "such actions may also occur in other countries".

Khamenei described the 12-day war as a "serious miscalculation" on the part of Israel, which he said had wanted to "overthrow the Islamic system" in Iran.

Mojtaba Khamenei predicted that Iranian's "unity will certainly become stronger and more solid, and your enemies will become humble and less powerful" in the coming year.

Attack on the holy sites

Meanwhile, Israel accused Tehran of an "attack on the holy

sites" of Jerusalem, after a blast blew a crater in the Old City a few hundred metres from the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

And in Iran, the Israeli army targeted a northern region around the Caspian Sea, a popular holiday destination that has so far been largely spared attacks.

In Jerusalem's Old City, a blast was caused "Iranian missile fragments", the Israeli military wrote on X, and drew an angry response from Israel's foreign ministry.

"The Iranian attack on the holy sites sacred to all three religions reveals the madness of the Iranian regime, which claims to be religious," the foreign ministry wrote on X, calling it an "Iranian gift" for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr.

On Thursday Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu indicated that an end to the fighting could be close.



Boys walk past damaged cars parked in a neighbourhood following a strike in Rehovot on the outskirts of Tel Aviv

Sri Lanka refused ground access to US warplanes

AFP | Colombo

Sri Lanka refused permission to the United States to station two of its warplanes at a civilian airport in the island's south in early March, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said yesterday.

The request was turned down to maintain Sri Lanka's neutrality and ensure its territory was not used for any military purpose that could help or hinder either side, he told parliament.

The Indian Ocean nation was drawn into the consequences of

the war when US forces torpedoed an Iranian frigate off its coast in March.

"They wanted to bring two warplanes armed with eight anti-ship missiles from a base in Djibouti to Mattala International Airport from March 4 to 8, and we said 'no'," Dissanayake said.

He said the United States made the request on February 26. Iran made a similar request on the same day for three of its warships, returning from India after a naval exercise, to make a port call.

"We were still considering the Iranian request to bring the three ships to Colombo from March 9 to 13. Had we said 'yes' to Iran, we would have had to say 'yes' to the US too," he said.

"But we didn't. We are steadfastly maintaining our position of neutrality," he added, drawing applause from the 225-member legislature.

The US torpedoed one of the Iranian ships, IRIS Dena, just off the island's southern coast on March 4, killing at least 84 sailors. Sri Lanka's navy rescued 32 survivors.