

US-Israeli airstrikes target two steel plants in Iran: agencies

AFP | Washington

US-Israeli airstrikes yesterday damaged two major steel plants in Iran, Iranian media reports said.

"Minutes ago, the American-Zionist enemy targeted the Khuzestan Steel (in southwest Iran) and Mobarakeh Steel factories in Isfahan (central Iran) in two separate attacks," the Fars news agency said, with state broadcaster IRIB also reporting the strikes.

"Rescue forces have immediately arrived at the scene of the incident," Fars wrote.

The news agency added that initial information suggested an "electrical substation and an alloy steel production line" were targeted at Mobarakeh Steel complex, while a warehouse was hit at the Khuzestan Steel Factory.

Steel is a strategically important material essential for industrial and military production, including of missiles, drones and ships.

Iran turns back ships

AFP | Washington

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had turned back three ships trying to transit the Strait of Hormuz, adding the route was closed to vessels travelling to and from ports linked to its "enemies".

"The movement of any vessel 'to and from' ports of origin belonging to allies and supporters of the Zionist-American enemies, to any destination and through any corridor, is prohibited," they said.

The Guards also urged civilians across the Middle East to stay away from areas near US forces.



Rocket trails are seen in the sky amid a fresh barrage of Iranian missile attacks above the Israeli coastal city of Netanya, Israel

G7 allies **press** Rubio on Iran plans

European ministers warned that Middle East escalation must not divert vital support away from Ukraine

AFP | Cernay-la-Ville

G7 allies were yesterday pressing US Secretary of State Marco Rubio for clarity on American plans for Iran almost one month into the war in the Middle East, as concern intensifies over the damage to the global economy from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Having skipped the first day of the meeting at the historic monastery turned luxury hotel complex outside Paris, Rubio arrived at the Vaux-de-Cernay Abbey for a full day of talks with counterparts from leading industrialised democracies.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepful said the international community needed to collaborate even more closely now it was dealing with two wars -- including the conflict sparked by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine -- in which Russia and Iran were cooperating.

"We need to strengthen our unity. Given that Iran and Russia are working together in the closest way, we must stand even closer together," Wadepful told reporters.

He told German radio earlier ahead of the talks that allies



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio attends a G7 meeting with other leaders

needed to know "how the US will proceed" in Iran. Rubio, he said, would "perhaps explain this more precisely".

In contrast to usual protocol, and in a sign of the distance between the United States and its allies, there is to be no joint communique at the end of the meeting.

Instead, the G7 presidency, which France holds this year, will issue a statement, said a diplomatic source who asked not to be named.

'For the world'

The UK's foreign minister

launched the war with the air strikes on February 28 that killed supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

Before leaving for France, Rubio said Thursday that it was in the "interest" of all G7 nations to push for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Defending the war, he said: "The president is not just doing a favour to the United States and to our people. This is for the world."

'Play into Putin's hands'

With Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha in attendance, European ministers are keen to emphasise support for Kyiv must not be forgotten over four years after Russia's full-scale invasion.

"Putin is cynically hoping that the escalation in the Middle East will divert our attention from his crimes in Ukraine," Wadepful said.

"This calculation must not succeed," he said, warning that any compromising on Ukraine's defence capabilities would "play into Putin's hands".

Writing on X, in his first comment on the meeting, Rubio said he had reiterated at the G7 "that President Trump is committed to reaching a ceasefire and negotiated settlement to the

since the United States and Israel



In a significant break from diplomatic tradition, the meeting will conclude without a joint communique, signaling a growing divide between the United States and its closest allies over the handling of the conflict

Russia-Ukraine war as soon as possible".

France is eager to broaden the scope of the elite G7 club -- whose origins go back to the first G6 summit held in the nearby Chateau de Rambouillet in 1975 -- and which now comprises Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, UK and United States.

It has invited foreign ministers from key emerging markets Brazil and India, as well as Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

German foreign minister says expects direct US-Iran talks in Pakistan

AFP | Berlin

The United States and Iran are preparing for direct talks "very soon", German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepful said yesterday, as diplomatic efforts to end the Middle East war continue.

"According to my informa-

tion, there have been indirect contacts. And they have also prepared for a direct meeting," Wadepful told public broadcaster Deutschlandfunk.

He added that such a meeting was "expected to take place in Pakistan very soon", without revealing the source of the information.

On Thursday US envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed that Pakistan had passed a 15-point American peace plan to Iran.

Germany's top diplomat said he hoped Rubio would tell his counterparts more about "the approach and the interests of the US" in relation to the conflict.

Kuwait says main port damaged in drone attack

AFP | Kuwait City

Kuwait's main commercial port was damaged in a drone attack yesterday, authorities said, as Iran pressed its campaign in the Gulf in retaliation for US-Israeli strikes.

The Shuwaikh port was targeted at dawn "by enemy drones; preliminary reports revealed material damage but no human casualties", the Kuwait port authority said in a statement on X.

A second port still under con-

struction in the north of the country was also targeted yesterday, according to the ministry of public works.

The missile and drone attack on the Mubarak al-Kabeer port similarly caused damage but no casualties, the ministry said.