



| Flash |

Military Strikes on Iran – SITREP

#24: March 16, 2026

F-2026-03-16a

Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: High

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitics

March 16, 2026

Scope Note

*ZeroFox Intelligence is derived from a variety of sources, including—but not limited to—curated open-source accesses, vetted social media, proprietary data sources, and direct access to threat actors and groups through covert communication channels. Information relied upon to complete any report cannot always be independently verified. As such, ZeroFox applies rigorous analytic standards and tradecraft in accordance with best practices and includes caveat language and source citations to clearly identify the veracity of our Intelligence reporting and substantiate our assessments and recommendations. All sources used in this particular Intelligence product were **identified prior to 4:00 AM (EDT) on March 16, 2026**; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.*

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| Key Findings

- Newly appointed Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is reportedly injured and being managed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Any negotiations for a ceasefire will almost certainly have to meet the very likely hardline demands of the IRGC.
- Hamas admonished Iran publicly for attacking Gulf states, but in a secret letter, it reportedly expressed support for the new Supreme Leader and dismissed the concerns of Arab states that have normalized relations with Israel.
- Iran's Foreign Minister claims the drone attacks against regional neighbors are false-flag attacks by the United States. Iran is almost certainly attempting to obfuscate its responsibility for attacking its neighbors in an effort to prepare for a post-war regional environment.
- Russia is reportedly supplying Iran with Shahed drones for use in the current conflict with the United States and Israel. Iran will almost certainly seek continued assistance from its allies (especially Russia and China) to reconstitute its arsenal if the current conflict continues beyond the next few weeks.

Latest Details

U.S. and Israeli intelligence reportedly believe newly appointed Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei is injured and being managed by the IRGC.¹² Khamenei has not been seen in public since his appointment on March 8, 2026, and his only address to the Iranian people was a statement read out on state television by a news presenter.³

- Mojtaba Khamenei was likely the IRGC's choice for Supreme Leader, following the death of his father Ali Khamenei in the opening hours of the war. Mojtaba has been close to IRGC leadership and was very likely seen by IRGC as a more pliable version of his father, as he is almost certainly more willing to support its hardline policies both domestically and regionally.

Mojtaba was reportedly wounded in the airstrike that killed his father, and there is a roughly even chance that his injuries prevent him from appearing in public.⁴ However, there is an equally even chance his lack of appearances is out of fear of an assassination strike. In either case, it is very likely that the IRGC is in charge in Tehran and that Mojtaba will not have the same level of authority his father commanded.

- On March 7, 2026, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian apologized to regional neighbors for Iranian strikes on their territories but quickly reversed course and said strikes would continue for any country that supports the U.S.-led war. The rapid reversal was reportedly the result of IRGC commanders being outraged and demanding that the president backtrack.⁵

Regardless of the health of Mojtaba Khamenei, the IRGC is very likely making decisions and executing its strategy for the current war. Any negotiations for a ceasefire will almost certainly have to meet the very likely hardline demands of the IRGC, which the United States and Israel are unlikely to approve at this time.

¹ [hXXps://x.com/JasonMBrodsky/status/2033164316946346465?s=20](https://x.com/JasonMBrodsky/status/2033164316946346465?s=20)

²

[hXXps://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-intelligence-iran-supreme-leader-mojtaba-khamenei-father-sources-say/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-intelligence-iran-supreme-leader-mojtaba-khamenei-father-sources-say/)

³ [hXXps://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czjiz0enk70o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czjiz0enk70o)

⁴

[hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-new-leader-still-silent-was-elevated-by-revolutionary-guard-s-2026-03-10/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-new-leader-still-silent-was-elevated-by-revolutionary-guard-s-2026-03-10/)

⁵ *ibid.*

Hamas Supports New Supreme Leader

Iran-backed, Gaza-based militia Hamas released a public statement on Saturday urging Tehran not to attack its Arab neighbors. The armed Palestinian group urged Iran to cooperate with Gulf states “to preserve the bonds of brotherhood.”⁶ However, a reported secret letter to the new Supreme Leader suggests Hamas maintains a much more militant stance against the United States, Israel, and the regional Arab states.⁷

In the secret letter, Hamas reportedly expressed its support for the new Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, and urged Iran to “activate all fronts” in the war with the United States and Israel. It further dismissed the concerns of the Gulf states—especially those that have normalized relations with Israel—and called them part of the “losing camp.”⁸

- Hamas’ support for Iran is very likely to remain rhetorical. While it will likely attempt to conduct rocket or terrorist-style attacks, the group almost certainly lacks the military capability to join in the war effort or provide more traditional military support in the Persian Gulf theater of operations.

Iran Downplays Responsibility for Gulf Attacks

On March 15, 2026, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi suggested that the drone attacks against its Arab neighbors were false-flag operations conducted by the United States. He added that Iran is willing to participate in an international investigation to determine who is responsible for the attacks against the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and other Arab countries.⁹

Iran is almost certainly attempting to obfuscate its responsibility for attacking its neighbors in an effort to prepare for a post-war regional environment. Once hostilities end, the country will have to go back to living, cooperating, and trading with its Arab neighbors and is very likely seeking to downplay its involvement in devastating attacks across the region.

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg3xk6xgyzo>

⁷ <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-890059>

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ <https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-evening-special-report-march-15-2026/>

Russia Supplying Drones to Iran

Russia is reportedly supplying Iran with Shahed drones for use in the current conflict with the United States and Israel. Shahed drones have been used in attacks against targets across the Persian Gulf region, but the question of where the drones were built has never been raised. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed that Russian-made Shahed drones have been used to target Iran's Arab neighbors throughout the conflict.¹⁰

- Shahed drones were developed by Iran as a cheaper alternative to ballistic missiles. The drones have been used exclusively by Russia in its war with Ukraine, and Moscow has almost certainly made improvements to its own variant of the one-way drones.

Russia providing Iran with more Shahed drones is a strong indicator that U.S. and Israeli strikes, as well as Iranian heavy use, have very likely depleted Iran's available drones for continued attacks in the region. Iran will almost certainly seek continued assistance from its allies (especially Russia and China) to reconstitute its arsenal if the current conflict continues beyond the next few weeks.

¹⁰

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/russia-is-supplying-iran-with-shahed-drones-zelenskiy-says-2026-03-15/>

| Appendix A: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

	Red	Amber
WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?	Sources may use TLP:RED when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.	Sources may use TLP:AMBER when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.
HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?	Recipients may NOT share TLP:RED with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.	Recipients may ONLY share TLP:AMBER information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm. Note that TLP:AMBER+STRICT restricts sharing to the organization only.
	Green	Clear
WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?	Sources may use TLP:GREEN when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.	Sources may use TLP:CLEAR when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.
HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?	Recipients may share TLP:GREEN information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.	Recipients may share TLP:CLEAR information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

Appendix B: ZeroFox Intelligence Probability Scale

All ZeroFox intelligence products leverage probabilistic assessment language in analytic judgments. Qualitative statements used in these judgments refer to associated probability ranges, which state the likelihood of occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns with how readers should interpret such terms.

Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain
1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%