



| Flash |

Military Strikes on Iran – SITREP

#23: March 14, 2026

F-2026-03-14a

Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: High

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitics

March 14, 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 14, 2026**; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.*

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| Key Findings

- The U.S. has likely exhausted all means to alleviate oil shortages short of reopening the Strait of Hormuz (SoH). Therefore, the conditions for an energy price shock will likely be met if the conflict extends into April. A military escalation from the U.S. and Israel in the coming weeks is likely.
- Operation Epic Fury has likely severely degraded Iran’s ballistic missile capacities and its navy while further weakening its ability to support armed proxies abroad. Iran’s nuclear program likely remains intact, and Iran’s political-military establishment remains united and likely capable of maintaining a protracted conflict that causes energy price shocks and regional instability.
- A limited conflict will leave the maximalist aims of Operation Epic Fury unachieved, while a prolonged conflict in search of a more decisive outcome brings the almost certain risk of global economic consequences without the certainty of achieving its desired war aims.

- The last week has seen a series of terrorist attacks against Western targets likely inspired by the war in Iran rather than orchestrated by it.

| Latest Details

U.S. Marines Deploying to Region

On March 13, 2026 the United States began the deployment of a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), as well as an accompanying amphibious ready group from the U.S. Navy, to the Middle East in support of Operation Epic Fury.¹ A MEU is a rapid reaction force composed of aviation, logistics, and ground capabilities in a single unit.

The deployment of an amphibious capable MEU to the conflict zone is almost certainly designed to give President Trump options in the event of a larger escalation. While a U.S. ground invasion of Iran remains unlikely, having a combat ready MEU in the region is the first positioning of ground forces since the beginning of hostilities.

- The MEU also likely gives President Trump the ability to order small ground operations to seize key facilities—such as Karg Island or missile sites along the Strait of Hormuz.
- President Trump said on Friday that the U.S. destroyed military targets on Karg Island, the small Gulf island that stores around 90 percent of Iranian oil intended for export.² The island had been left alone by U.S. and Israeli strikes—targeting Karg Island suggests it will very likely become a key strategic front in the coming days.

¹

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/antoniopequenoiv/2026/03/13/thousands-of-marines-and-3-us-warships-deployed-to-the-middle-east-reports-say/>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/mar/13/trump-military-kharg-island-iran-oil-export>



Location of Karg Island in the Persian Gulf

Source:

https://en.as.com/latest_news/where-is-kharg-island-and-why-is-it-key-to-the-future-of-oil-f202603-n/

Economic Impact

The U.S. Treasury Department issued a second authorization to purchase sanctioned Russian oil that is already at sea for 30 days, after issuing a similar waiver just for India to purchase sanctioned Russian oil.³

- The U.S. is also considering suspending the Jones Act, a law requiring only U.S. ships to move goods between U.S. ports, in another bid to ease prices, as it will mainly impact ships moving oil, diesel, natural gas, and fertilizer between U.S. ports.⁴
- Earlier in the week, the U.S., along with the 31 other members of the International Energy Agency (IEA), agreed to release 400 million barrels of oil from strategic reserves.⁵ There have been other notable methods to limit the global oil price increase, like using alternative supply chains that avoid the conflict zone.

³

<https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/us-israel-iran-war-news-2026/card/u-s-says-countries-can-buy-sanctioned-russian-oil-tVLB6jYLDaeAwXb5wjZV>

⁴ <https://www.axios.com/2026/03/12/trump-jones-act-waiver-oil-prices>

⁵

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/3/13/iea-announces-release-of-400-million-barrels-of-oil-but-is-it-enough>

Going forward U.S. states could announce fuel tax exemptions, lower environmental standards for fuel, and ban exports to keep domestic U.S. oil prices low, and there is the unlikely possibility that the U.S. Treasury Department influences future trading markets. Together, these measures will likely avoid a rapid energy price increase in the short term only. The U.S., along with its allies, has very likely exhausted the most consequential moves to lower oil prices. Prices will likely continue to rise several percentage points a day.

Such a scenario is likely manageable for the global economy for the remainder of March 2026, as it would mean oil prices are not elevated for a substantial enough period to spread to other industries outside of the most fuel-dependent, like aviation, petrochemicals, and fertilizer. Oil above USD 100 a barrel into April will very likely constitute an energy crisis, contributing to inflation across sectors before likely leading to demand destruction in Western economies when oil reaches USD 150 a barrel.

- Asian airlines including Cathay Pacific, AirAsia, Thai Airways, Qantas, and Air New Zealand have all raised fares between 10-15% since the conflict began with jet fuel costs nearly doubling.⁶ Continued increases will almost certainly result in a severe drop in demand for air travel in what will likely be the first evidence of demand destruction.

Given the comments from U.S. President Trump and the remaining timetable before the economic costs become more entrenched, there is a likely window for the U.S. to escalate the conflict in the remainder of March 2026 without incurring long-term economic damage. During the window, the U.S. will likely seek further advances on its initial war aims by further degrading Iran's offensive weapons capabilities and continuing to target leaders in Iran's political and military establishment.

A short escalation is unlikely to dislodge the political and military establishment or prevent Iran from maintaining a protracted conflict that causes energy price shocks and

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<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2026/mar/12/flights-airlines-hike-prices-airfares-iran-war-middle-east-oil>

regional instability. A longer conflict is more likely to achieve those aims but it will almost certainly cause a severe energy shock leading to a global economic crisis.

Iran War Linked Acts of Terrorism

On March 12, 2026, a convicted Islamic State (IS) supporter opened fire in a classroom at Old Dominion University in Virginia, killing one person and injuring two others. In Dearborn Michigan, a driver crashed his truck into a synagogue and its preschool and was shot dead. The latter attack was reportedly done in response to an Israeli airstrike in Lebanon that killed members of the driver's family.

- Since the conflict began on February 28, there have been other incidents linked to the conflict in Iran including the arrest of two IS inspired men who set off homemade explosives at a anti-Islam protest in New York City, and a shooting in Austin, Texas that followed the killing of Ayatollah Khameni on February 28.

There is no evidence Iranian-aligned groups coordinated these attacks, particularly the IS inspired attackers, as IS considers Shia, the predominant Islamic sect in Iran, to be non-muslims. However, it is almost certain the conflict inspired the attacks. The conditions for a terrorist attack in response to the conflict are high. An uptick in extremist propaganda online will likely further inspire would-be attackers with calls for violence likely to take on added resonance from individuals angry over the war.

Cyber Developments

Advisory and Cybersecurity Developments

The digital landscape of the conflict continues to see a mixture of politically motivated reconnaissance activity, hacktivist operations, disruption campaigns, and information operations. In the past 24 hours, ZeroFox observed continued claims of data breaches targeting Israeli entities, and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) operations against government and public-sector websites across the Middle East. Additionally, disinformation campaigns leveraging AI-generated content continue to circulate across social media platforms.

- A Chinese AI firm, MizarVision, is reportedly aggregating satellite imagery from providers including VantorTech and Airbus Space to map U.S. military deployments across the Middle East, raising concerns over the use of commercial geospatial data to monitor troop positioning and operational infrastructure.⁷
- The UAE Cyber Security Council warned individuals and organizations about destructive wiper malware capable of erasing data and disabling systems. The council urged adherence to cybersecurity best practices, timely system updates, and continued vigilance against potential cyber threats targeting digital infrastructure.⁸ Notably, the Handala Hack Team, one of the most prolific threat collectives active in the course of the conflict, is known for using wiper malware and has recently claimed a politically motivated and confirmed disruptive cyberattack on a U.S. medical technology services provider.

Claimed Hacks

Handala Hack Team

On March 13, 2026, Handala Hack claimed a breach of the email account of Tamir Hayman, former Chief of the IDF Intelligence Directorate and the current director of Israel's Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), allegedly exfiltrating 50,000 emails containing correspondence, operational discussions, and strategic communications.

⁷ [hXXps://x.com/ChinaSelect/status/2032484597095645323?s=20](https://x.com/ChinaSelect/status/2032484597095645323?s=20)

⁸ [hXXps://x.com/cscgovae/status/2032579959785664522?s=20](https://x.com/cscgovae/status/2032579959785664522?s=20)

Tamir Hayman Hacked

2026-03-13

Hey Tamir,
Still feeling safe behind those fancy titles? Former chief of Aman, and now the proud executive director of Israel's national security institutes, yet you couldn't even secure your own mailbox! What a joke.

Tonight, reality hit you harder than any intelligence briefing ever could. Consider all your "top secret" correspondence exposed: 50,000 emails, every classified conversation, every so-called "strategic" plan, every desperate attempt to look smart, now available for the world to download.
So much for "national security," right?

You spent years boasting about defending Israel's secrets, investigating Iran, and exposing others. How ironic, now you're the headline, and your "methods" are a laughingstock.

All those years in Aman, all those speeches about security... and you couldn't protect your own digital front door. Maybe you should spend less time tweeting about Iran and more time learning cyber hygiene.

Sleep tight tonight, Tamir, if you can. We're sure you'll enjoy reading what the world is saying about your "leadership."
Tonight, you're not the hunter. You're the prey.

Also Amos Yadlin, you'd better watch yourself.

Maybe you should ask Sima Shine, or get help from Amos Yadlin or even General Petraeus from the CIA. After all, your "consultations" have only brought misery to your regime's people.

But honestly, that's great news for us. These so-called analyses are exactly what will bring about the downfall of the Kahanists and the Zionists.

Handala Hack Team's Post

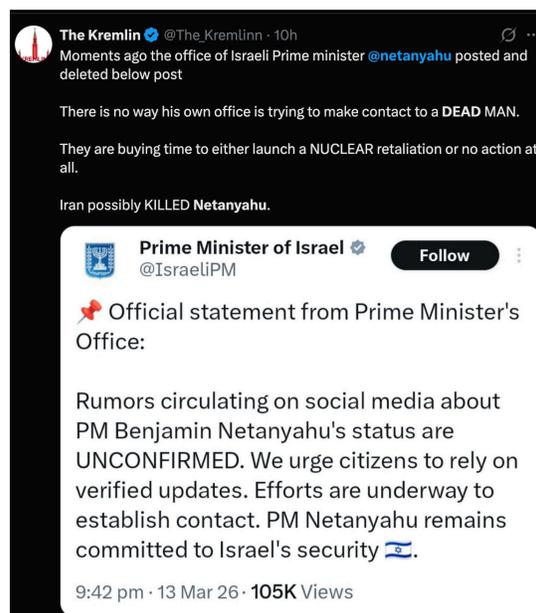
Source: ZeroFox Intelligence

The collective has been one of the most prolific groups in the course of the conflict and has previously claimed to have breached into the systems of the INSS. It likely used the claimed access to INSS's networks to exfiltrate data from Hayman's email account. If the claims are true, the exposed files are likely to reveal a host of sensitive, and potentially confidential, intelligence pertaining to the ongoing conflict.

Disinformation Operations

Information operations linked to the conflict continue to spread across social media platforms, particularly on X. Several accounts and media outlets circulated AI-generated images and unverified claims alleging that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been killed in a strike.

- On March 13, 2026, the PM’s official X account posted a video of him addressing the ongoing conflict and Israel’s objectives in it. X accounts have been observed posting clips from this video, claiming that the video was manipulated with the help of AI.
- Some of the X accounts propagating this carry the X “blue tick,” which, even if bought, is likely to make viewers perceive their claims as legitimate.



X accounts with blue ticks propagating disinformation

Source: ZeroFox Intelligence

Such narratives are very likely intended to influence public opinion, cause fear among the public, discredit official statements, and give Iran a strategic advantage to conduct influence operations in nations opposed to it or its actions. In the coming days, more disinformation campaigns are likely, which will very likely increasingly rely on AI to create realistic deepfakes of key officials from both sides of the conflict.

Additional Findings

Several hacktivist collectives have claimed responsibility for DDoS operations targeting government websites and public-sector digital infrastructure across the Middle East.

- The collective 313 Team claimed DDoS attacks against multiple targets including the United Arab Emirates Cyber Security Council, the Qatari National Cyber Security Agency, an official UAE government website, and the official website of the U.S. President Donald Trump.

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%