



| Flash |

U.S. Military Strikes on Iran – SITREP #5: March 3, 2026

F-2026-03-03b

Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: High

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitics

March 3, 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 12:45 PM (EST) on March 3, 2026**; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.*

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| Key Findings

- A short-term escalation in the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran is likely. The United States and Israel continue to target key decision-makers in Iran. Iran is likely seeking to increase ceasefire pressure by expanding its list of targets and signaling further escalation.
- Iran's attacks on Gulf energy installations and civilian targets are likely intended to pressure the United States and Israel by disrupting the Gulf region's energy, tourism, and financial services hubs. However, there is a risk this will backfire and solidify Gulf opposition against Iran. Today Qatar became the first Gulf state to undertake offensive operations against Iran.
- With Iranian proxy groups formally joining the war, further spread of the conflict is likely in Iraq, Yemen, and particularly in Lebanon. Demonstrations and violent attacks on U.S. and Israeli diplomatic missions are likely, while individual attacks on servicemen, diplomats, and civilians are increasing in likelihood.
- Iranian-aligned cybergroups are adopting a similar asymmetric targeting regime, with cyber incidents reported across sectors that include critical infrastructure, energy, and financial services.

| Latest Details

Offensive Strikes Against Iran Leadership Continue

Initial reports indicate that Israeli airstrikes in Qom, Iran, targeted an alleged meeting place of Iran's Assembly of Experts, the government body responsible for electing the next Supreme Leader. Israeli authorities claimed the strike took place during a gathering of the 88-member council.¹ The strike came a day after Israeli warplanes destroyed another Assembly of Experts compound in the capital, Tehran.² Iran downplayed the Qom strike, stating the targeted building was not used for assembly gatherings.³

- Israel is all but certainly attempting to disrupt the process to replace former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the campaign's initial hours.
- If the strikes result in significant casualties among council members, Iranian authorities will face difficulty selecting a new Supreme Leader amid continued U.S.-Israeli targeting of political and military figures. In this case, the three-member leadership council established after Khamenei's death will likely continue ruling in an interim capacity until the Assembly of Experts can be rebuilt.
- Failure to select a new Supreme Leader would very likely impact morale and create more opportunities for disagreement among political and military factions.

Iranian Response

Iran has continued to target U.S. military logistics hubs in the region, including Kuwait's Camp Arifjan, where the main U.S. logistics hub is located, as well as the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Jebel Ali and Oman's Duqm,^{4,5} which are civilian ports assisting U.S. forces.

Missile and drone attacks continue to be reported across Israel, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Notably, Qatar claimed to have shot down two Iranian Su-24

¹[hXXps://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-03-03/israel-struck-iran-assembly-of-experts-while-they-met-kan-sa](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-03-03/israel-struck-iran-assembly-of-experts-while-they-met-kan-sa)

²[hXXps://www.nytimes.com/live/2026/03/03/world/iran-war-israel-lebanon-trump/0fc7cc15-3f54-5c15-a213-ea8677a01b05](https://www.nytimes.com/live/2026/03/03/world/iran-war-israel-lebanon-trump/0fc7cc15-3f54-5c15-a213-ea8677a01b05)

³[hXXps://www.nytimes.com/live/2026/03/03/world/iran-war-israel-lebanon-trump/393089a9-9a02-5827-9806-f48b1ef72c78](https://www.nytimes.com/live/2026/03/03/world/iran-war-israel-lebanon-trump/393089a9-9a02-5827-9806-f48b1ef72c78)

⁴[hXXps://www.aq.com.tr/en/middle-east/drones-hit-fuel-tank-at-oman-s-duqm-port-amid-us-iran-war/3847774](https://www.aq.com.tr/en/middle-east/drones-hit-fuel-tank-at-oman-s-duqm-port-amid-us-iran-war/3847774)

⁵ [hXXps://x.com/OmanNewsAgency/status/2028733560396652545?s=20](https://x.com/OmanNewsAgency/status/2028733560396652545?s=20)

bombers,⁶ one day after Qatar shut down production at the world's largest natural gas field as a precaution.

- Continued targeting of Qatar likely suggests Iran is signaling the possibility of escalation—particularly against energy infrastructure in the region. Qatar, which was one of Iran's closest regional allies before the war, shares an oil field with Iran and produces around 20 percent of the world's liquefied natural gas.⁷
- The UAE has likely experienced the bulk of attacks from hundreds of drone and ballistic missiles, as well as at least two cruise missiles.⁸ Nearly all civilian air traffic remains shut down across the Gulf, led by the region's biggest airport in Dubai, UAE, which was damaged; notable UAE landmarks that include the Palm Jumeirah, Burj Al Arab, and Burj Khalifa have also been targeted.⁹

Media reports continue to circulate that Qatar and the UAE are pressuring the United States and Israel to end their military campaign, which is threatening their wider economies.¹⁰ The UAE has built itself up as an alternative financial market, a key shipping and transportation hub, and an established home to the Middle East's AI industry.

- Iranian attacks have notably targeted Emirati critical infrastructure, disrupted shipping routes, and hit a data center,¹¹ likely impacting the UAE's ability to lure and maintain financial services talent in the short term.¹²

⁶ [hXXps://www.cnn\[.\]com/2026/03/02/world/video/qatar-says-shot-down-two-iranian-bombers-rtc](https://www.cnn.com/2026/03/02/world/video/qatar-says-shot-down-two-iranian-bombers-rtc)

⁷ [hXXps://www.agbi\[.\]com/markets/2026/03/Ing-shutdown-sinks-qatar-stocks-but-tadawul-rebounds/](https://www.agbi.com/markets/2026/03/Ing-shutdown-sinks-qatar-stocks-but-tadawul-rebounds/)

⁸

[hXXps://www.nytimes\[.\]com/2026/03/01/world/middleeast/iran-attacks-dubai-persian-gulf-countries-retaliation.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/01/world/middleeast/iran-attacks-dubai-persian-gulf-countries-retaliation.html)

⁹ [hXXps://www.bbc\[.\]com/news/articles/c20lggwk134o](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c20lggwk134o)

¹⁰

[hXXps://www.bloomberg\[.\]com/news/articles/2026-03-02/uae-and-qatar-urge-allies-to-help-trump-find-off-ram-p-on-iran](https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-03-02/uae-and-qatar-urge-allies-to-help-trump-find-off-ram-p-on-iran)

¹¹ [hXXps://www.jpost\[.\]com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888442](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-888442)

¹²

[hXXps://www.bloomberg\[.\]com/opinion/articles/2026-03-03/iran-strikes-dubai-and-abu-dhabi-haven-status-is-starting-to-crack](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2026-03-03/iran-strikes-dubai-and-abu-dhabi-haven-status-is-starting-to-crack)

On March 3, 2026, Israeli reports indicated that Qatar “carried out strikes in Iran over the past day” in retaliation for the aforementioned Iranian strikes. The same reports claim that Saudi Arabia is also likely to carry out attacks against Iran “soon.”¹³

- On March 1, 2026, ZeroFox highlighted the risk that the targeting of civilian areas in neighboring countries will backfire on Iran, leading bordering countries to join the ongoing military operations against Iran and increasing the likelihood of the conflict spreading further.

Proxy Fighting Expands

On March 3, 2026, Lebanese Hezbollah claimed a “drone swarm attack” against Israel’s Ramat David Airbase.¹⁴ However, the rocket and drone fire from Lebanon appears limited and has so far had little substantive effect on the conflict.

- On March 3, 2026, Israeli officials declared that they had established a “buffer zone” in southern Lebanon to “create an additional layer of security for residents of northern Israel.”¹⁵

An Iranian-aligned Iraqi umbrella group called Islamic Resistance claimed responsibility for two dozen attacks on the U.S. Consulate and U.S. base in Erbil. The group said the attacks were connected to the air strike that killed Iran’s Supreme Leader.¹⁶

- While several Iran-aligned Iraqi militias have issued statements in support of Iran, few appear to have targeted U.S. assets in the country. U.S. warplanes reportedly struck several sites affiliated with Iran-aligned Iraqi militias on March 2.¹⁷

¹³

[hXXps://www.timesofisrael\[.\]com/liveblog_entry/qatar-carried-out-strikes-in-iran-saudi-arabia-to-soon-follow-israeli-reports/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/qatar-carried-out-strikes-in-iran-saudi-arabia-to-soon-follow-israeli-reports/)

¹⁴

[hXXps://www.middleeastmonitor\[.\]com/20260303-hezbollah-claims-drone-swarm-attack-on-military-base-in-northern-israel/](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20260303-hezbollah-claims-drone-swarm-attack-on-military-base-in-northern-israel/)

¹⁵

[hXXps://www.timesofisrael\[.\]com/idf-sends-troops-further-into-south-lebanon-and-strikes-beirut-amid-hezbollah-attacks/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-sends-troops-further-into-south-lebanon-and-strikes-beirut-amid-hezbollah-attacks/)

¹⁶ [hXXps://www.aljazeera\[.\]com/news/liveblog/2026/3/2/us-israel-attack-iran-live?update=4356034](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2026/3/2/us-israel-attack-iran-live?update=4356034)

¹⁷ [hXXps://understandingwar\[.\]org/research/middle-east/iran-update-evening-special-report-march-2-2026/](https://understandingwar.org/research/middle-east/iran-update-evening-special-report-march-2-2026/)

- In Yemen, the Houthi militia issued a statement early in the conflict stating that the group would resume targeting commercial shipping in the Red Sea, but it has yet to launch strikes in solidarity with Iran.¹⁸

With Iranian proxy groups formally joining the conflict over the last day, an escalation in fighting is likely in Iraq, Yemen, and particularly in Lebanon.

Civilian and Diplomatic Risks

On March 2, 2026, the U.S. State Department urged U.S. citizens to leave countries across the Middle East due to the war with Iran.¹⁹ This comes as Iran and its proxy groups have expanded their targeting to include diplomatic facilities.

- The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh came under an attack from two drones, according to Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Defense.²⁰
- Pro-Iran demonstrators protested against the Bahraini government, reportedly calling for alignment with Iran.²¹ Bahrain is a Shia-majority country hosting U.S. forces, where protests are rare.
- Other protests against the war have taken place in neighboring Iraq and Pakistan, which both have notable Shia populations. In Pakistan, at least 10 people were killed when a crowd attempted to storm the U.S. consulate in Karachi on March 1.²²

Further demonstrations outside of diplomatic locations are likely, while there is a roughly even chance that this could expand to include Iran-aligned actors carrying out acts of violence against diplomatic personnel, service members, or civilians globally.

Emerging Cyber Threats

ZeroFox has observed a significant surge in cyberattacks almost certainly linked to politically and ideologically motivated threat groups, most of which are aligning their

¹⁸<https://www.stimson.org/2026/the-houthis-must-decide-join-irans-war-against-the-us-and-israel-or-abandon-iran/>

¹⁹ <https://x.com/AsstSecStateCA/status/2028588420403241021>

²⁰ <https://thehill.com/policy/international/5764422-saudi-arabia-condemns-drone-strike-against-us-embassy/>

²¹ https://x.com/Herqles_eng/status/2028740327431913528

²²<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/3/1/at-least-9-killed-in-pro-iran-protest-at-us-consulate-in-pakistans-karachi>

cyber efforts with pro-Iran causes. Cyber activity is presently being driven by a diverse range of hacktivist collectives operating predominately across the deep and dark web (DDW) and Telegram. These groups are largely targeting critical infrastructure, government, and finance entities across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and other countries perceived as Western allies.

Similar to its military proxy efforts, Iran also employs proxy groups and asymmetric tactics in the cyber world. ZeroFox has observed anti-U.S., anti-Israel, and pro-Iran aligned collectives targeting the United States, Israel, and Western allies through distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) operations and website defacements. In addition, pro-Russian hacktivist collectives have adopted an anti-Israel and anti-U.S. stance, aligning their operations with broader geopolitical narratives. We have also observed anti-Iran hacktivist collectives targeting Iran, seemingly in support of Israel and likely in response to cyberattacks against Israel.

- On March 3, 2026, the pro-Palestinian (and pro-Iran aligned) group known as “Handala Hack Team” alleged it had conducted several cyberattacks against Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco)^{23,24}, Israel Opportunity – Energy Resources, and Sharjah National Oil Corporation on both its newly established X account (at the time of writing some posts appear to be suspended) and its deep web leak site.
- On March 3, 2026, a collective known as “The Moroccan Black Cyber Army” claimed to have disrupted the Israel Natural Gas Company’s (INGSC) internal networks and communications infrastructure on the group’s Telegram channel.²⁵

Politically and ideologically motivated hacktivists and threat collectives will almost certainly continue to target entities in opposition to their stances on this conflict—especially those in the critical infrastructure, finance, and energy sectors. Continued cyber activity will most likely be aimed at supporting either Western or Iranian-based political interests and disrupting oppositional forces’ efforts.

²³ [hXXps://x.com/HANDALA_X/status/2028769622778954093](https://x.com/HANDALA_X/status/2028769622778954093)

²⁴ [hXXps://x.com/HANDALA_X/status/2028846613276282901](https://x.com/HANDALA_X/status/2028846613276282901)

²⁵ [hXXps://x.com/FalconFeedsio/status/2028783675752710609](https://x.com/FalconFeedsio/status/2028783675752710609)

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%