2026 IRAN WAR · AUGUST 11, 2026

The 2026 Iran War: Full Timeline from Operation Epic Fury to the Hormuz Standoff (28 Feb – 10 Aug 2026)

A phase-by-phase chronology of the US–Israel–Iran war since 28 February 2026: the opening decapitation strikes, Gulf-wide retaliation and Hormuz closure, the April ceasefire and failed Islamabad talks, the June memorandum, and the renewed hostilities now grinding through a second Hormuz blockade.

11 min read · 5 sources

2026 Iran war | Israel-Iran conflict | Middle East | Strait of Hormuz | US-Iran conflict | ceasefire | naval blockade | timeline

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The 2026 Iran War began on **28 February 2026**, when the United States and Israel launched a joint air campaign — codenamed Operation Epic Fury (US) and Operation Roaring Lion (Israel) — against Iran, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the opening minutes. Iran retaliated within hours against Israel and every US-aligned Gulf state and shut the Strait of Hormuz, producing the largest oil-supply shock on record. As of **10 August 2026 the war is still running**: a June peace memorandum collapsed on 8 July, a US naval blockade is back in force, and the two sides are stuck in a standoff over who controls the strait, with talks limping through Omani, Qatari and Pakistani intermediaries.

5.5 mo	$37.5B	3,636	4,335	$100+
War duration	Official US war cost	Documented Iranian deaths	Lebanese deaths	Oil peak, $/bbl
since 28 Feb	Hegseth testimony, 21 Jul	HRANA, as of 7 Apr	MoH toll, 8 Aug	vs $67–71 pre-war

How it started

The war grew out of the unresolved **Twelve-Day War** of June 2025, which had failed to settle Iran's nuclear program, and of the **2025–26 crackdown on Iranian protests**. US–Iran nuclear negotiations were underway in February 2026 even as Washington built up its largest force in the region since 2003. On **27 February, en route to Texas on Air Force One, Trump authorized Operation Epic Fury** after Netanyahu lobbied for a joint strike targeting Iran's leadership [2]. US embassy staff in Israel had been told the previous day to leave "TODAY" if they wanted out [1].

Phase 1 — The opening blow and Gulf-wide retaliation (27 Feb – 6 Mar)

28 Feb 2026 **Operation Epic Fury begins**
US-Israeli strikes kill Supreme Leader Khamenei; Iran retaliates across the Gulf the same day.

2 Mar 2026 **Hezbollah enters the war**
Fighting resumes on the Israel–Lebanon front; Israel authorizes a ground invasion of southern Lebanon.

8 Mar 2026 **Hormuz closes, oil tops $100**
Mojtaba Khamenei elected supreme leader; crude breaks $100/bbl for the first time since 2022.

8 Apr 2026 **Two-week ceasefire**
Pakistan-brokered truce collapses within hours as Israel strikes Lebanon's command network.

12 Apr 2026 **Islamabad talks fail; US blockade**
21-hour talks end without a deal; Trump orders a US naval blockade of Iranian ports.

17 Jun 2026 **Islamabad Memorandum signed**
Trump and Pezeshkian sign the MOU at Versailles; blockade lifted 18 Jun, strait reopens.

8 Jul 2026 **Trump declares MOU 'over'**
Strikes resume; Iran hits US bases in Bahrain and Kuwait; blockade reinstated 13 Jul.

2 Aug 2026 **Planned 'largest op since WWII' called off**
Trump says Iran asked for time for a deal; Tehran denies it. Oman-brokered route talks stall.

At **06:35 UTC on 28 February**, CENTCOM began strikes using Tomahawks, HIMARS, B-2s, B-1s and B-52s, while Israel flew its largest combat sortie ever (~200 jets, over 1,200 bombs in 24 hours) [1] [2]. Three gatherings of senior Iranian officials were hit within half a minute of each other; **Khamenei was killed** along with Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh, Chief of Staff Abdolrahim Mousavi and dozens of IRGC commanders. His son and presumed heir **Mojtaba Khamenei survived, wounded** [2].

The strikes were accompanied by cyberattacks that drove Iranian internet connectivity down to roughly 1–4% of normal for over 60 hours[1][2].

The worst civilian incidents of the war came in the first hours: a missile destroyed the Shajareh Tayyebeh girls' elementary school in **Minab** — Iranian media reported 180 killed, TIME reported 175 with at least 108 children; the figure was never independently confirmed — and a sports hall in **Lamerd** was hit during a girls' practice, killing at least 18[1][2][3]. A US investigation found the Minab strike resulted from outdated targeting data[2].

Iran's response, Operation True Promise IV, began at 09:05 UTC the same day: **ballistic missiles at Israel (an IDF estimate of ~170) and at US bases and cities across Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Jordan** — Al Udeid, Ali Al Salem, Al Dhafra and the Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain were all targeted[1]. Dubai's Palm, the Burj Khalifa area and the Fairmont The Palm hotel were hit; Kuwait International Airport, Riyadh and the Eastern Province also took fire; two tankers were struck off Oman and **150 freight ships stalled behind the strait** within days[1][2]. US deaths began on 1 March when a drone hit the Port Shuaiba logistics hub in Kuwait, killing six Army Reservists[2].

The naval war saw the first submarine sunk in combat since the Falklands (IRIS *Fateh*, 3 March) and the first sinking by an American submarine since World War II (IRIS *Dena* torpedoed by USS *Charlotte*, 4 March, 104 killed); CENTCOM said 17 Iranian ships were destroyed in the first days[1][2]. On 4 March an Israeli F-35I shot down an Iranian Yak-130 — the F-35's first air-to-air kill of a crewed aircraft — and Qatar became the first nation to down crewed Iranian aircraft when it shot down two Su-24s[1][2].

Phase 2 — Escalation to the edge (7 Mar – 7 Apr)

Mojtaba Khamenei was elected supreme leader on 8 March, completing a rapid dynastic transfer; he has not been seen publicly since[2][3]. Around the same time the strait closure hit global markets and **crude topped $100/bbl**[3]. Iran's missile cadence collapsed under the air campaign — one analyst measured ballistic launches down **92% (480→40) and drone launches 92% (720→60)** from day one to 10 March — but Iran shifted to heavier, penetrating strikes[1][2]. A leaked US intelligence report on 7 April concluded Iran still retained **70% of its missiles and launchers**, contradicting Trump's "neutralization" claims[2].

Key combat actions in this phase:

- **8–9 Mar:** Israeli strikes on fuel depots near Tehran caused a "river of fire"; Red Crescent tallied 65 schools and 32 medical facilities hit[2].
- **17 Mar:** Israel assassinated SNSC secretary **Ali Larijani** and Basij chief Gholamreza Soleimani; Iran's missile barrage killed two civilians in Ramat Gan; Israel launched its ground invasion of southern Lebanon the same day[2].

- **18 Mar:** Israel struck the **South Pars gas field**; Iran retaliated against Qatar's LNG industry; intelligence minister Esmaeil Khatib was killed [2].
- **21 Mar:** US bunker-buster strikes on **Natanz**; Iran hit **Dimona** (78 injured) and reportedly attempted a strike on Diego Garcia (Iran denies it) [2].
- **27 Mar:** Iran's missile/drone strike on **Prince Sultan Air Base** destroyed an E-3 Sentry, damaged multiple tankers and wounded at least 15 US soldiers — the day after Trump and Hegseth declared Iran's military "neutralized" [2].
- **28 Mar:** the **Houthis** joined with missile attacks on Israel; 2,500 US Marines arrived ahead of strait-clearing operations [2].
- **1–2 Apr:** Trump's "back to the Stone Ages" speech; US strikes collapsed the **Karaj B1 bridge** on Sizdah Be-dar, killing 8 and wounding 95 — experts called it a possible war crime [2].
- **3–5 Apr:** Iran shot down a US **F-15E** (first in 20+ years); the WSO was rescued by commandos backed by 155 aircraft, at the cost of an A-10, two MC-130s and several helicopters [2].

CENTCOM claimed over **8,000 targets and 130 vessels struck by 21 March, and 11,000+ targets by 28 March** [2]. On 7 April Trump posted that "**a whole civilization will die tonight**," drawing international concern and 25th Amendment calls; the White House denied nuclear consideration [2].

Phase 3 — Ceasefire, dual blockade, Islamabad Memorandum (8 Apr – 19 Jun)

On 7 April a **Pakistan-brokered two-week ceasefire** was announced (10-point proposal via PM Shehbaz Sharif and Gen. Asim Munir), under which Iran would reopen the strait [2] [3]. Hours later Israel launched **"Operation Eternal Darkness"** against Hezbollah's command network — the war's largest strikes on Lebanon, killing at least 254 people (some counts exceed 350) in Beirut, the south and the Beqaa; Netanyahu said the ceasefire did not cover Lebanon [2] [3]. Iran paused Hormuz traffic in protest.

The **Islamabad Talks** (11–12 April) — the highest-level US–Iran contact since 1979 — ran 21 hours and failed; Vance said Iran refused "to accept our terms" [2] [3]. Trump then ordered a **US naval blockade of Iranian ports from 13 April**, creating what *The Guardian* called a "dual blockade": the US Navy could stop ships bound for Iran, but Iran still controlled the strait [2]. Iran seized or fired on container ships through late April (Epaminodes, MSC-Francesca, Euphoria), the US intercepted the *Touska*, and both sides harassed tankers [1]. Trump extended the truce on 21 April and, per a 1 May War Powers letter, declared hostilities "terminated" — while strikes and seizures continued [5]. **Operation Project Freedom** (3–6 May) to escort ships through the strait was paused after "great progress" claims [1]. Iran ended the internet blackout on 25 May [1].

June brought a final escalation toward a deal: Iran killed 1 and injured 63 in a 3 June drone strike on Kuwait International Airport; an Iran–Israel exchange followed 7–8 June; the US fired **49 Tomahawks** on 10 June and struck the tanker *Settebello*, killing three Indian crew [1]. On **14–17 June**

the Islamabad Memorandum was agreed, digitally signed, and signed by Trump (at Versailles) and Pezeshkian — ending the dual blockade, reopening the strait, and freezing Iran's nuclear program in place with HEU dilution at home [2] [3]. Talks at the Bürgenstock resort in Switzerland (21–22 June) produced a 60-day roadmap, IAEA inspector access, and a 60-day US oil-sanctions waiver — but by 20 June Iran had already re-closed the strait over renewed Lebanon fighting [3]. A 28 June US–Iran agreement to stop exchanging attacks held for barely ten days [2].

Phase 4 — Renewed hostilities and the second Hormuz war (8 Jul – 10 Aug)

After Iran struck the Qatari LNG tanker *Al Rekayyat* in the strait on 7 July, the US revoked Iran's oil-sale deal; on **8 July Trump declared the MOU "over"**, calling the regime "sick people" [1] [2]. The US hit 80–90 Iranian coastal targets; Iran answered with strikes on US bases in Bahrain and Kuwait. On **13 July Trump reinstated the naval blockade and announced a 20% toll on strait traffic** (scrapped the next day); the US hit Bushehr, Chabahar, Jask, Konarak, Abu Musa and Bandar Abbas, and used **suicide drone boats in combat for the first time** against Bandar Abbas naval facilities [1] [2].

The US then ran **13 consecutive nights of strikes** (11–24 July), including the first B-1 bomber raids since the resumption, while Iran struck US positions in Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and Saudi Arabia — CENTCOM confirmed **two US soldiers killed and one missing in a 17 July Jordan attack** [1]. Iran formally suspended its MOU commitments on 18 July [1]. The **Houthis declared a blockade of Saudi ports** in the Bab el-Mandeb on 20 July, opening a second chokepoint [2]. On **25 July the US paused the nightly strikes**, with CENTCOM chief Adm. Brad Cooper reportedly warning the campaign was unsustainable given Patriot depletion [1] [5].

August opened with brinkmanship: Trump ordered a strike wave (31 July) that he **called off on 2 August**, claiming Iran asked for time and that a plan existed for "the largest US operation since World War II" — Tehran called the claim a "lie" [1] [2]. On 3 August Trump gave Iran a "last chance" with a 24-hour deadline and threatened "decapitation"; Iran denied any direct talks [1]. A proposed **Iran–Oman split-lane shipping route** (enter via an Iran-controlled channel, exit via Oman's) advanced through early August but awaits Supreme Leader Khamenei's sign-off — whom Pezeshkian said is "very difficult" to reach [5]. The IRGC has said reopening Hormuz depends on US acceptance of Iran's conditions: ending threats, lifting the blockade and sanctions, withdrawing troops, compensating war losses and releasing frozen assets [2].

Current standing (10 Aug 2026)

- **Military:** The war is active but asymmetric. The US navy has redirected **55 vessels** under the reinstated blockade (since 14 July) and is striking Iranian coastal infrastructure almost nightly; Iran continues hit-and-run missile/drone attacks on Gulf bases, energy and desalination sites, and

seizures in the strait. Iran's leadership structure is damaged but intact — Khamenei, unseen since March and reportedly hospitalized, finally appeared in an undated video on 8 August [5].

- **Diplomatic:** No direct US–Iran negotiations; messages move through Oman, Qatar, Pakistan and Iraq. A trilateral Pakistan–Saudi–Turkey "Mecca mutual-defence pact" (7 Aug) reshaped the regional alignment. US officials say Trump is preparing to declare victory if the strait reopens, even without a nuclear deal [1] [5].
- **Human and economic toll:** see table. The US has consumed roughly half its Patriot inventory and about 80% of its THAADs, "virtually all" PrSM/ATACMS and "a little less than half" of its global Tomahawk stockpile, per August reporting — a key constraint on escalation [2] [5].

COUNTRY	KILLED	WOUNDED	NOTES
Iran	**3,636 documented** (HRANA, 7 Apr); Iran state claims ~3,528; OCHA 3,400+ civilians	27,170 (state claim); 33,000+ civilians (OCHA)	US/Israel claim 6,000+ Iranian military killed; figures conflict [2] [3]
US	**19 soldiers + 1 contractor** (Wikipedia tally; 13 as of late June per TIME)	624 (Wikipedia); ~100 in July alone per Pentagon acknowledgment	42 aircraft lost; bases in the Gulf heavily damaged [2] [3] [5]
Israel	40 soldiers + 1 contractor, 31 civilians	7,841 total	Plus IDF losses in Lebanon [2]
Lebanon	**4,335** (MoH, 8 Aug)	12,273	1M+ displaced; Israel holds a ~600 km² "security zone" [3] [5]
Gulf states + crews	Dozens (Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Saudi; Indian and other sailors)	Hundreds	ADNOC alone reports 15 vessels attacked since Feb [2] [5]

CAUTION

Casualty figures are contested and date-stamped: HRANA's Iranian count is from 7 April (military deaths are believed "significantly higher"), TIME's US figures from 22 June, and the Wikipedia totals reflect later reporting. The Minab school toll and the alleged Diego Garcia strike were never independently confirmed [2] [3].

Bottom line

The 2026 Iran War is a five-and-a-half-month regional conflict that has gone through four distinct phases — decapitation strikes, full-spectrum retaliation and strait closure, a broken ceasefire and failed peace talks, and now a second, attritional Hormuz war fought around a US naval blockade. The June Islamabad Memorandum was the high-water mark of diplomacy and collapsed within three weeks. As of 10 August the defining question is unchanged: **who controls the Strait of Hormuz** — Iran's answer is "nobody, until our conditions are met"; Washington's is "the US Navy." Both sides are exhausted (US missile stocks, Iranian leadership and economy), which is why the coming days hinge

on whether the Oman-brokered shipping-route deal — and the unseen Supreme Leader's signature — can break the deadlock before the next planned escalation[1][5].

SOURCES

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