

# Hegseth Promotes Regional Border Security, Signs Joint Security Declaration



By Matthew Olay Pentagon News, March 5, 2026

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth underscored the importance of strong, regional border security today during the inaugural Americas Counter Cartel Conference at U.S. Southern Command headquarters in Doral, Florida.

The operational conference brought together regional defense and security leaders from the Caribbean, Central America and South America to achieve shared security objectives. Hegseth, along with representatives from 17 countries from throughout the Western Hemisphere, signed a joint security declaration, reaffirming their commitment to peace, sovereignty and stability in the region.

“This conference is about you; this conference is about us. This conference is not called the ‘America’s Counter Cartel Conference’; it’s the ‘Americas Counter Cartel Conference,’” Hegseth told the group at the beginning of his remarks.

The secretary drew comparisons between the current administration’s prioritization of homeland security and that of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, in which President James Monroe declared that the Western Hemisphere was off-limits to any new attempts at colonization by European nations, and that any interference by those powers would be viewed as a hostile act against the United States.

“Today, some 200 years later, we still marvel at the wisdom of President Monroe’s declaration. We, like you, want borders and sovereign territories that are secure; we want unfettered access to key terrain and trade so that our nations can industrialize; and we want to prevent external powers from threatening our peace and independence in our shared neighborhood,” Hegseth said, adding that the Western Hemisphere needs to be a region of strong, sovereign nations.

He described past U.S. foreign policy as a flawed form of “benign neglect,” in that it prioritized other overseas theaters and the borders of other countries before prioritizing its own.

As an example, Hegseth said that the human smuggling industry grew by as much as 2,000% over a five-year span, soaring from being a \$500 million enterprise in 2018 to one that brought in \$13 billion in 2022.

He also noted that the Western Hemisphere contains one-eighth of the world’s population but one-third of the violent crime.

In contrast, Hegseth said that under President Donald J. Trump and the recently released National Defense Strategy, all of those trends are reversing.

“The president’s historic National Defense Strategy ensures that the Department of War will prioritize resources around the threats and objectives that are core to homeland defense ... and prosperity of the American people,” he said.

To illustrate this, Hegseth pointed to the drastic reduction in illegal crossings at the U.S. southern border, as well as the successful deterrence of narco-terrorists in the Caribbean region, which has been ongoing since September 2025.

He also highlighted that the flow of fentanyl into the U.S. is down 56%.

Hegseth then appealed to the other represented countries in the room.

“America is prepared to take on these threats and go on the offense alone, if necessary. However, it is our preference – and it is the goal of this conference – that in the interests of this [hemisphere], we all do it together; with you, with our neighbors and with our allies who are eager and willing and capable to do this,” Hegseth told the group.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining shared Western values, stating that the nations of the Western Hemisphere have always been united by heritage, history and geography.

The secretary also called for the strengthening of partnerships through increased burden sharing among all partner countries south of the equator.

“This is what we did in World War II. We called it the ‘quarter sphere defense,’ and we will do this again if we’re serious about our national security [and] if we prioritize geography,” Hegseth explained.

“This means that for every country in this hemisphere, border security must be your top priority,” he added.

Hegseth wrapped his remarks up by circling back to the

Monroe Doctrine.

“With Donald Trump in the Oval Office, and with all of you here, we can still realize that long-ago dream of James Monroe, [and] in our time, we will make the Americas great again,” he said.

---

# **Ecuadorian and U.S. Military Forces Launch Operations Against Narco-terrorists**

From U.S. Southern Command, March 3, 2026

On March 3, Ecuadorian and U.S. military forces launched operations against Designated Terrorist Organizations in Ecuador. The operations are a powerful example of the commitment of partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to combat the scourge of narco-terrorism.

Together, we are taking decisive action to confront narco-terrorists who have long inflicted terror, violence, and corruption on citizens throughout the hemisphere.

“We commend the men and women of the Ecuadorian armed forces for their unwavering commitment to this fight, demonstrating courage and resolve through continued actions against narco-terrorists in their country,” said Marine Gen. Francis L. Donovan, commander of U.S. Southern Command.

---

# Hegseth Says There's No Shortage of American Will, Resources in Operation Epic Fury

March 5, 2026 | By Matthew Olay, DoW News

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth today said there is no shortage of American will, nor is there a shortage of materiel, when it comes to U.S. kinetic engagement against the Iranian terrorist regime during Operation Epic Fury.

While providing an update on the conflict for the second time in as many days, and joined by the commander of U.S. Central Command, Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, Hegseth said the Iranian regime would be foolish to think that the U.S. isn't completely committed to accomplishing the mission in Iran.

"Iran is hoping that we cannot sustain this, which is a really bad miscalculation for the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] in Iran," Hegseth said during a press briefing at Centcom headquarters in Tampa, Florida.

He added that there is no shortage of American will to execute the mission, and that there is no shortage of U.S. munitions to facilitate that execution.

"Our stockpiles of defensive and offensive weapons allow us to sustain this campaign as long as we need to. ... Again, our munition status only increases as our advantage increases. [And] our capabilities? We have only just begun to fight and fight decisively," Hegseth said.

Contrary to the notion that there is a shortage of U.S. material, the secretary said that even more offensive

firepower is headed to the region.

“The amount of combat power that’s still flowing – that’s still coming – that we’ll be able to project over Iran is in multiples of what it currently is right now, when you add up our capabilities and those of the Israeli defense forces,” Hegseth said.

“Our munitions are full up, and our will is ironclad, which means our timeline is ours and ours alone to control as long as it takes, to ensure the United States of America achieves these objectives,” he added.

Cooper thanked Hegseth for authorizing Centcom to use overwhelming kinetic force against the Iranian regime.

“If I could channel my inner Navy officer, we are at ‘full speed ahead’ in executing orders given by leadership in Washington,” Cooper told the media.

The admiral concurred with Hegseth’s assessment that U.S. combat power is growing in the region while Iran’s continually declines, citing the last 72 hours as an example.

During that time, America’s bomber force has struck close to 200 targets deep inside Iran, including around the capital city of Tehran.

Cooper also said that, in just the one hour prior to the start of today’s press conference, U.S. B-2 Spirit stealth bombers dropped dozens of 2,000-pound penetrator bombs that targeted deeply buried Iranian ballistic missile launchers.

“Notably, we have also struck Iran’s equivalent of [U.S.] Space Command, which degrades [Iran’s] ability to threaten Americans,” he said.

As to the decline in Iran’s combat capability, Cooper said that Iran’s ballistic missile attacks have decreased by 90% since the first day of the conflict, and that Iranian drone

attacks have decreased by 83% in the same timeframe.

At sea, Cooper said the count of sunken Iranian navy ships has surpassed 30.

“And in just the last few hours, we hit an Iranian drone carrier ship, roughly the size of a World War II aircraft carrier. And as we speak, it’s on fire,” he added.

Under orders from President Donald J. Trump, Centcom forces are working to destroy Iran’s missile industrial base.

“We’re not just hitting what they have, we’re destroying their ability to rebuild. And so, as we transition to the next phase of this operation, we will systemically dismantle Iran’s missile production capability for the future, and that’s absolutely in progress,” Cooper said.

He added that Centcom and Israel’s combined joint forces have “relentlessly destroyed” Iran’s air defenses during the conflict, and that those forces will continue hunting for more systems to attack.

“Our air defenders are at the top of their game, [and] I couldn’t be prouder, shoulder to shoulder with our partners in the region – in many cases – providing the most integrated air defense network in Middle East history,” Cooper said.

Following their formal remarks, Hegseth addressed reports that a U.S. F-15 Eagle fighter jet had been shot down, calling the reports false.

“As you can imagine, Iran is doing everything it can to peddle in lies, deception and inflation of numbers, in reality, mostly to propagandize to their own people,” he said, adding that Iran had floated another false report that 500 Americans have been killed in the conflict.

The secretary also addressed concerns about the operation expanding beyond Iran’s borders to other nations throughout

the Middle East, saying that nothing could be further from the truth, and that Iran's targeting of countries throughout the region is actually encouraging those countries to side with the U.S. and Israel in the conflict.

"It's actually firming up the unity of resistance in order to focus exactly where we need to," Hegseth said. "So, this idea that [the conflict] is expanding – no, it's actually simplifying, in a number of ways – exactly what we need to achieve and how we'll achieve it."

---

## Keel Laid for Future USS Philadelphia



Mrs. Maureen Paparo, sponsor for LPD 32, Philadelphia, and other platform guests watch as Cory Dillon, Ingalls Structural

Welder, welds the sponsor's initials onto the keel plate at Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, MS, March 3, 2026. (Photo/Luis Solis) In Photo From Left: Brian Blanchette, President of Ingalls Shipbuilding and Executive Vice President at HII Chris Kastner, President and CEO, HII, Captain Randy Slaff, Commanding Officer, Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair, Gulf Coast, Cory Dillon, Ingalls Structural Welder, Captain Matt Tardy, United States Navy, Amphibious Warfare Program Manager, Program Executive Office, Ships, Admiral Samuel Paparo, United States Navy, Commander, United States Indo Pacific Command, and husband to our ship sponsor, and Mrs. Maureen Paparo, Sponsor and Keel Authenticator of LPD 32. (Photo by Luis Solis)  
From Team Ships Public Affairs, March 4, 2026

PASCAGOULA, Miss. - The keel for the future USS Philadelphia (LPD 32), a San Antonio class-amphibious transport dock ship, was authenticated at HII's Ingalls Shipbuilding division, March 3.

The ship is named in honor of the historic city of Philadelphia and its maritime legacy. The city is the birthplace of the U.S Navy and Marine Corps and was home to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard from 1801-1995, which constructed numerous Navy vessels.

Keel laying authentication ceremonies are a centuries-old tradition marking a significant construction milestone where a ship transitions from design to reality. The keel was authenticated when the initials of the ship's sponsor, Ms. Maureen Paparo, were welded onto a steel plate. Paparo is a Philadelphia native and the spouse of Adm. Samuel Paparo, the 27th Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. This plate will be permanently affixed to the ship's hull, remaining with the vessel throughout its entire service life as a symbol of its beginning.

"The future USS Philadelphia honors one of America's foundational cities and its continuous support of the Navy and

the maritime domain,” said Capt. Matthew Tardy, program manager, Amphibious Warfare Program Office. “This keel laying marks the ceremonial beginning of construction and we look forward to delivering this ship to the fleet.”

San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ships (LPD) are warships that embark, transport, and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. They provide the Navy and Marine Corps with modern, sea-based platforms that are networked, survivable, and built to operate with 21st-century transformational platforms such as air-cushioned landing craft (LCAC), modern helicopters, and vertical take-off landing craft (MV-22).

Today’s ceremony underscores the Navy’s commitment to building America’s Golden Fleet. For 250 years, American naval power has projected strength globally. That mission continues – and intensifies. We operate forward 24/7, 365 days a year. This operational tempo demands continuous capability delivery, and the Golden Fleet is our answer.

As a Department of War acquisition organization, PEO Ships is responsible for executing the development and procurement of all destroyers, amphibious ships and craft, and auxiliary ships, including special mission ships, sealift ships and support ships.

---

**General Dynamics Mission  
Systems awarded contract to**

# continue support to Trident II Strategic Weapon System



*Delivering full life cycle support and next-generation fire control systems for strategic deterrence*

*From General Dynamics Mission Systems, March 4, 2026*

CHANTILLY, Va. – General Dynamics Mission Systems announced today that it was awarded a costplus- incentive-fee and cost-plus-fixed-fee follow-on contract with an initial order value

of \$255 million as the prime integrator for the Trident II Fire Control System (FCS). Under the fiscal year 2026 FCS omnibus contract, General Dynamics will continue to provide full life cycle and operational support for all deployed Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) FCSs, as well as continue the development, production and installation for all new Columbia-class SSBN FCSs through 2032. The contract, awarded in January, includes options which, if exercised, would bring the cumulative value to \$740 million.

General Dynamics Mission Systems supports the Navy's shipbuilding priority with FCS development, production, sparing and installation activities for three Columbia-class hulls along with additional labs and trainers kits. Continuous development for the Trident II D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) FCS will occur under this contract, as well.

"General Dynamics Mission Systems has been a trusted provider of highly reliable fire control systems to the U.S. submarine force for more than seven decades. We remain committed to delivering highly reliable state-of-the-art, innovative solutions to the U.S. Navy. Supporting the strategic deterrent mission is a responsibility we take seriously, and we are dedicated to continuing our track record of on-time, on-budget delivery," said Laura Hooks, vice president and general manager of Maritime and Strategic Systems at General Dynamics Mission Systems.

Work will be performed in Pittsfield, Massachusetts (87%); Bangor, Washington (1%); Kings Bay, Georgia (1%); Loanhead, Midlothian, United Kingdom (4%); Cape Canaveral, Florida (3%); Groton, Connecticut (3%); and Quonset Point, Rhode Island (2%). If all options are exercised, work will continue until December 2032.

---

# Hegseth: Iranian Warship Sunk by U.S. Submarine Torpedo



By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – An Iranian warship has been sunk by a torpedo fired from a U.S. Navy submarine, the Secretary of War said. The action would be the first ship sunk by torpedo fired from a U.S. Navy ship since World War II.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said on March 4, 2026, that the Iranian ship was sunk in the Indian Ocean

According to the BBC, the sunken ship was the IRIS Dena, a guided-missile frigate that went down off the southern coast of Sri Lanka. The ship was one of six ships of the Moudge class.

According to Reuters, the Sri Lankan Navy rescued 32 people from the ship, of a crew estimated to number 180 members. At least 80 crew members died in the action.

The action represents the first sinking of an enemy warship by a U.S. submarine's torpedo since World War II.

During the Falklands War, on May 2, 1982, the Royal Navy nuclear-powered attack submarine HMS Conqueror sank the Argentine Navy cruiser ARA Belgrano with a torpedo. The Belgrano was formerly the light cruiser USS Phoenix.

U.S. Navy submarines are armed with 21-inch Mark 48 21-inch diameter torpedoes.

---

## **Glamox wins contract to light US Navy's latest Towing, Salvage, and Rescue Ship**



Artist's impression of a Navajo-class T-ATS vessel. Photo

Credit: Austal USA

*Latest contract brings the total to eight Navajo-class vessels Glamox has lit*

KATY, Texas, 4 February 2026: Glamox, one of the world's leading lighting companies, has secured a contract from [Austal USA](#) to supply exterior and interior LED marine lighting for the future *USNS James D Fairbanks (T-ATS 13)*, the latest Navajo-Class (T-ATS) Towing, Salvage, and Rescue ship being constructed for the US Navy (USN). This new contract brings the total to three [T-ATS ships](#) that Glamox is lighting for Austal USA. Previously, Glamox was awarded contracts to light five T-ATS vessels from Bollinger Houma Shipyards.

For the future *USNS James D Fairbanks*, Glamox will supply 914 lights. They include [navigation lights](#), [floodlights](#), [explosion-proof lighting](#), [deck lighting](#), and lights for the interior of the vessel – from [rooms](#), [corridors and stairwells](#) to [crew quarters](#). The lighting will be delivered in Spring 2026 and fitted by Austal USA at its shipyard in Mobile, Alabama.

“We are proud to be supplying lighting for this workhorse of the seas, which will enter service in 2028. This latest order, along with orders from navies worldwide, highlights Glamox's marine defence lighting capabilities, which range from lights for inshore rescue boats to large aircraft carriers,” said John O’Driscoll, General Manager of Glamox in North America.

T-ATS vessels will provide ocean-going towing, salvage and rescue capabilities to support fleet operations. They have a multi-mission common-hull platform capable of towing USN ships and will combine the capabilities of the retiring Rescue and Salvage Ship (T-ARS 50) and the Fleet Ocean Tug (T-ATF 166) vessels. The T-ATS series will be able to support current missions, including towing, salvage, rescue, oil spill response, humanitarian assistance, and wide-area search and

surveillance.

The T-ATS vessels may also enable future rapid capability initiatives, such as supporting modular payloads with hotel services and appropriate interfaces. Their large, unobstructed 6,000 square feet (557 square metres) of deck space allows for the embarkation of a variety of stand-alone and interchangeable systems.

In addition to the T-ATS series, Glamox worked with Austal USA to supply lights for the auxiliary floating dry dock medium (AFDM) and navigation lights for the USN's Landing Craft Utility (LCU) 1700-class vessels.

---

## **Four Days In, Hegseth, Caine Say U.S. Making Decisive Progress in Iran**



March 4, 2026 | By Matthew Olay, DoW News

During the War Department's second press conference since the U.S. and Israel's launch of Operation Epic Fury against the Iranian regime Feb. 28, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, today said America is making decisive offensive progress in the conflict.

"I stand before you today with one unmistakable message about Operation Epic Fury: America is winning decisively, devastatingly and without mercy," Hegseth told the media from the Pentagon's press briefing room.

"We are only four days into this, and the results have been incredible – historic, really. ... Only the United States could lead this [mission]. ... But, when you add the Israeli Defense Forces – a devastatingly capable force – the combination is sheer destruction for our radical Islamist Iranian adversaries," Hegseth said.

During his remarks, Caine reiterated that the U.S. and Israel's joint, three-pronged mission in the region is to target and eliminate Iran's ballistic missile systems, destroy the Iranian navy and ensure Iran cannot rebuild or reconstitute its combat capability or power – including ensuring the country never obtains nuclear weapons.

In terms of battle damage, Caine said there has been an 86% overall drop in Iran's ballistic missile launches since the first day of fighting, and a 23% decrease in just the last 24 hours. Additionally, he added there has been 73% decrease in Iranian one-way attack drone shots fired from early on in the conflict.

In terms of air power, Hegseth said that the U.S. and Israeli forces are poised to have complete control of Iranian air space within the next few days.

“I hope all the folks watching understand what ‘uncontested airspace’ and ‘complete control’ means: It means we will fly all day [and] all night ... finding, fixing and finishing the missiles and defense industrial base of the Iranian military; finding and fixing their leaders and their military leaders; flying over Tehran ... [with] Iranian leaders looking up and seeing only U.S. and Israeli air power every minute of every day, until we decide it's over – and Iran will be able to do nothing about it,” Hegseth said.

At sea, U.S. Central Command announced yesterday that more than 20 Iranian navy vessels have been destroyed, including the sinking of an Iranian combatant ship in the Indian Ocean by a U.S. Navy fast attack submarine.

It was the first time a U.S. submarine has used a Mark 48 torpedo to sink an enemy vessel since 1945, Caine noted.

“I want to remind everybody that this is an incredible demonstration of America's global reach. To hunt, find and

kill an out-of-area deployer is something that only the United States can do at this type of scale,” he said.

In discussing the Iranian regime’s predicament, Hegseth said he likens the situation to a football game, wherein Iran’s offense has already exhausted all of its scripted plays.

“But now that the game has started and the [U.S. and Israeli] defensive blitz is on, [Iran doesn’t] know what plays to call, let alone how to get in the huddle and call those plays,” Hegseth said.

He added, because so many of Iran’s senior leaders being killed on Operation Epic Fury’s first day, the military is unable to effectively communicate, let alone mount a coordinated and sustained offensive.

“This was never meant to be a fair fight, and it is not a fair fight. We are punching [the enemy] while they’re down, which is exactly how it should be,” Hegseth said, adding that Epic Fury has already unleashed twice the air power as the initial “shock and awe” phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

Looking ahead, Caine said that Centcom will continue to strike the regime’s infrastructure – including hunting and killing ballistic missile launchers and one-way attack capabilities – as well as continuing to attack Iran’s naval capabilities.

“We are just getting started,” Hegseth said.

---

## **Hegseth Says ‘Epic Fury’**

# Goals in Iran Are 'Laser-Focused'



March 2, 2026 | By C. Todd Lopez, DoW News

Since early morning Feb. 28, American forces in the U.S. Central Command area of operations have been involved in an intense bombing campaign against Iran that has already resulted in the death of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

As part of Operation Epic Fury, which started at 1:15 a.m. EST, American forces have already targeted the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps command and control facilities, Iranian air defense capabilities, missile and drone launch sites and military airfields.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said that while there is no timeline for the military operation, there are clearly defined

goals for what the United States hopes to achieve.

“The mission of Operation Epic Fury is laser-focused,” Hegseth said today during a briefing at the Pentagon. “Destroy Iranian offensive missiles, destroy Iranian missile production, destroy their navy and other security infrastructure, and they will never have nuclear weapons.”

For decades, Iran has been in pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability, through both enrichment of weapons-grade nuclear material and development of missiles that can carry a nuclear warhead.

In June 2025, during Operation Midnight Hammer, the United States struck Iran’s Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant using 30,000-pound GBU-57 “massive ordnance penetrator” bombs. That operation, Hegseth said, obliterated Iran’s nuclear program.

Nevertheless, Hegseth said, the Iranians have persisted in pursuing a nuclear capability and in building conventional capabilities to protect their nuclear ambitions.

“Iran was building powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions,” he said. “Our bases, our people, our allies, all in their crosshairs – Iran had a conventional gun to our head as they tried to lie their way to a nuclear bomb.”

The secretary said the clear goals for Epic Fury mean it will be unlike past American conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Our ambitions are not utopian; they are realistic, scoped to our interests and the defense of our people and our allies,” he said. “This is not Iraq. This is not endless. ... This is the opposite. This operation [has] a clear, devastating, decisive mission: destroy the missile threat, destroy the navy, no news.”

Hegseth said Epic Fury doesn’t include nation-building or

democracy building goals.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said planning for an operation such as Epic Fury has been underway for a significant amount of time.

“This marked the culmination of months, and in some cases, years, of deliberate planning and refinement against this particular target set,” Caine said. “From precision strikes against key military infrastructure to persistent intelligence and targeting integration to the close coordination of the components across vast distances, this operation again demonstrated America’s reach, readiness and professionalism, and that of our joint united force.”

### Setting the Force

Over the last 30 days, at the direction of the secretary, Caine said, the joint force repositioned forces around the region in order to provide President Donald J. Trump with options, if he intended to act.

“These movements ensured that U.S. forces remained postured, protected and ready to respond decisively [to] any emerging threat,” he said.

That effort included thousands of service members, hundreds of advanced fighter aircraft, refueling tankers, a sustained flow of munitions, fuel and supplies, and the USS Abraham Lincoln and USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike groups, along with their air wings. More capabilities continue to flow into the region, Caine said.

“This rapid buildup of forces demonstrated the joint force’s ability to adapt and project power at the time and place of our nation’s choosing,” Caine said.

The final word that Epic Fury was going to happen, he added, came Friday afternoon from the president.

“Operation Epic Fury approved. No aborts. Good luck,” Caine said, relaying the message from the president.

“In the region, every element of the joint force made their final preparations,” he said. “Air defense batteries readied themselves, checking their systems to respond to Iranian attacks. Pilots and crews rehearsed their strike packages for the final time. Air crews began loading their final weapons, and two carrier strike groups began to move towards their launching points across the globe.”

## Epic Fury

U.S. Cyber Command and U.S. Space Command, he said, initiated action with non-kinetic effects to disable Iran’s communications ability. And then, at 1:15 a.m. EST, 9:45 a.m. Tehran time, Epic Fury kicked off.

“More than 100 aircraft launched from land and sea: fighters, tankers, airborne early warning, electronic attack, bombers from the states and unmanned platforms forming a single synchronized wave,” he said. “This was a daylight strike based on a trigger event conducted by the Israeli Defense Forces, enabled by the U.S. intelligence community.”

On the sea, the U.S. Navy launched Tomahawk missiles at Iran and attacked Iranian naval forces. While on the ground, he said, coordinated salvos of precision standoff weapons from across the region have neutralized hundreds of preplanned targets.

“This was a massive, overwhelming attack across all domains of warfare, striking more than 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours,” Caine said. “We are now roughly 57 hours into the operation. In the initial phase, Centcom’s focus was systematic, targeting of Iranian command and control, infrastructure, naval forces, ballistic missile sites and intelligence infrastructure – designed to daze and confuse them.”

As a result of strikes in Iran, Caine said the U.S. has established local air superiority, which enhances the ability to protect U.S. forces and allows them to continue operations there.

“Operation Epic Fury stands as a reminder of what the United States military uniquely delivers: the ability to project power on a global scale with speed, surprise, precision and overwhelming force, when and where our nation requires it,” Caine said. “What we’ve demonstrated over the past several days reflects years of investment in readiness, joint integration and professionalism of the joint force.”

During the briefing, Hegseth also directly addressed U.S. troops who are participating in Epic Fury, telling them that both he and the president have their backs.

“We will finish this on ‘America First’ conditions of President Trump’s choosing – nobody else’s – as it should be,” Hegseth said. “And know this above all, President Trump and I have your back, always. Through fire, through criticism, through fake news, through everything, we unleash you because you are the best, most powerful, most lethal fighting force the world has ever seen.”

---

## **U.S. Forces Launch Operation Epic Fury**



From U.S. Central Command, Feb. 28, 2026

TAMPA, Fla. – U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commenced Operation Epic Fury, Feb. 28, at the direction of the President of the United States.

U.S. and partner forces began striking targets at 1:15 am ET to dismantle the Iranian regime's security apparatus, prioritizing locations that posed an imminent threat. Targets included Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps command and control facilities, Iranian air defense capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and military airfields.

"The President ordered bold action, and our brave Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, and Coast Guardsmen are answering the call," said Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of CENTCOM.

Following the initial wave of U.S. and partner strikes, CENTCOM forces successfully defended against hundreds of Iranian missile and drone attacks. There have been no reports

of U.S. casualties or combat-related injuries. Damage to U.S. installations was minimal and has not impacted operations.

The first hours of the operation included precision munitions launched from air, land, and sea. Additionally, CENTCOM's Task Force Scorpion Strike employed low-cost one-way attack drones for the first time in combat.

Operation Epic Fury involves the largest regional concentration of American military firepower in a generation.