Hegseth Says Iran's Defense Industrial Base Nearing Complete Destruction

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Secretary of War Pete Hegseth told reporters today that, in addition to the extensive damage the U.S. and Israeli militaries have been inflicting upon the Iranian terrorist regime's active combat forces, the country's defense industrial base is now nearing complete destruction as well.

"Soon and very soon, all of Iran's defense companies will be destroyed," Hegseth said while providing an update on Operation Epic Fury from the Pentagon's press briefing room.

"For example, as of two days ago, Iran's entire ballistic missile production capacity – every company that builds every component of those missiles – [has] been functionally defeated [and] destroyed," Hegseth said, also noting that assessment includes buildings, complexes and factory lines all across the country.

"We're shooting down and destroying what missiles [the enemy] still have in stock; but more importantly, we're ensuring that they have no ability to make more. Their production lines, their military plants [and] their defense innovation centers [are] defeated," Hegseth said.

The secretary added that today marks the highest number of strikes the U.S. has conducted against targets in Iran and its capital city, Tehran, since U.S. Central Command and Israeli forces launched Operation Epic Fury on Feb. 28.

“As we continue to ramp up every tool [of warfare], we’re employing [them], blinding, confusing and deceiving our enemy; because we know who the good guys are here, and the American people do, too,” Hegseth said.

In the 10 days since the conflict started, Hegseth said the U.S. and Israeli air forces have struck over 15,000 enemy targets.

“Looking up, the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] and Iranian regime [see] only two things on the side of aircraft: the Stars and Stripes and the Star of David – the evil regime’s worst nightmare,” Hegseth said.

He also noted that both Iran’s missile launch volume is down 90% and one-way drone attacks are down 95% since Day 1 of the operation.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, who joined Hegseth at today’s briefing, concurred with Hegseth that this is the heaviest day of anti-regime kinetic strikes in the region.

Of note, Caine discussed the damage U.S. and Israeli forces have inflicted on Iran’s navy.

“In less than two weeks, we’ve rendered the Iranian navy combat ineffective; and [we] continue to attack all naval vessels, including all of their Soleimani-class warships, which were armed with anti-ship missiles and antiaircraft weapons,” Caine said.

He also noted that, while significant damage has been done to Iran’s navy, the regime still has the capability to harm friendly forces and commercial shipping – particularly in the Strait of Hormuz.

“The only thing preventing commercial traffic and flow through the strait right now … is Iran. They are the belligerents

here, holding the strait closed," Caine said.

To remedy that situation, Caine said U.S. Central Command has made it a priority to target Iran's mine-laying capabilities, as well as targeting nearby naval bases and depots.

Both Hegseth and Caine took time during the briefing to remember and pay tribute to the service members who were confirmed killed yesterday when a U.S. Air Force KC-135 refueling tanker crashed in western Iraq.

Four of the six crew members have been confirmed deceased, with rescue efforts continuing as of this morning.

"I ask that we remember our fallen and those participating in the recovery operations … Those are very, very, very tough days when that [casualty-notification] knock comes on the door — for people on both sides of the door," Caine said.

"American heroes, all of them," Hegseth said of the KC-135 crew, adding that he and other members of the current administration will be on hand to greet the fallen service members at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, once they are returned stateside.

"And their sacrifice will only recommit us to resolve this mission," Hegseth said.