

Armed Conflict



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MENA SITUATION UPDATE: Israel confirms launch of Operation Rising Lion targeting Iran's nuclear sites on June 13; avoid all travel to Israel, Iran amid anticipation of extended hostilities

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Current Situation:

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Operation Am KaLavi (Operation Rising Lion) was launched to strike Iran's nuclear program. The operation is targeting Iran's nuclear project, including the enrichment facility in Natanz, Iran's ballistic missile program, and other military targets.
- Netanyahu stated that the operation "will continue for as many days as it takes to remove this threat."
- Israel's Army Radio stated that the opening wave of the Israeli strikes targeted Iranian air defense targets, surface-to-surface missiles, and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officials and nuclear scientists.
- Iranian state-affiliated media confirmed that the IRGC commander in chief Major General Hossein Salami was killed in the strikes.
- According to a report citing an Israeli official, strikes were conducted in tandem with a series of

covert operations led by the Israeli Mossad on the ground in Iran.

- Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport (TLV) has been evacuated, and Israel's airspace remains closed. El Al airlines has announced the suspension of its flights on routes to and from Israel following the latest developments.
- In Iran, reports indicate that the Natanz nuclear facility and the Khandab project in Arak, Markazi Province have been hit, and explosions were heard in several other provinces, including Tehran, Kermanshah, Lorestan, Hamadan, Khorramabad, Isfahan, and Ahvaz.
- According to reports, Iranian authorities have closed the country's airspace to all air traffic. IRGC-affiliated media outlets have reported that all domestic and international flights across Iran have been cancelled.
- Preliminary reports indicate that subsequent waves of Israeli strikes are ongoing as of the time of writing.
- In Iraq, unconfirmed reports indicate that explosions were heard in the vicinity of the Baghdad International Airport (BGW) and that operations have been suspended at the airport.
- A news report citing US officials stated that Israel had initiated the strikes without any American assistance or involvement, while another official stated that the US military is preparing for a range of contingencies in the Middle East, including the potential evacuation of American civilians.
- US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reportedly stated that Israel had taken "unilateral action against Iran" and that the US was "not involved".

Assessments & Forecast:

1. As of the time of writing, no launches from Iran have been identified as Israel's second wave of strikes within Iran is ongoing. This may be related to an element of surprise and what appears to be an extensive operation by Israel, that according to an estimation from Israel's army radio, has eliminated the entire General Staff of the Iranian army.
2. Nevertheless, Israeli authorities are actively preparing for retaliation and have notified the Israeli public of the need to prepare for an extended period of armed hostilities with Iran that is anticipated to be much more extensive than previous exchanges between the parties. This is the basis for the HFC's current guidelines which require everyone residing in Israel to remain close to shelters, which will likely remain in place for at least several days.
3. Launchings of ballistic missiles from Iran would take several minutes to reach Israeli airspace. There is an increased risk that extensive barrages of missiles would overwhelm Israel's aerial defense umbrella, underscoring the critical importance of adhering to HFC guidelines and reaching shelters promptly after the sounding of Color Red sirens.
4. At the current juncture, the US has indicated that it is not actively involved in the Israeli strikes. This is likely an early effort to distance itself from the hostilities and keep American bases and assets in the MENA beyond Iran's bank of targets. This will put Iran in a dilemma on whether to seek to target such assets, which at the current juncture remains less probable as it would embroil the US in the hostilities. Nevertheless, it still cannot be ruled out that Iran's regional allies would seek to target US assets in the region, based on a desire to stand by Iran. In this context, countries hosting US bases in the region are likely to also be on heightened alert in anticipation of possible aerial attacks from Iran-backed forces, such as the Houthis in Yemen and/or Shiite militias in Iraq. The situation in these countries will thus remain volatile in the coming hours and days.

Recommendations:

Israel:

1. Avoid all travel to Israel until further notice due to the escalation between Israel and Iran and the increased prospect of extensive Iranian retaliation following Israel's attack on Iran's nuclear project.

2. Those operating or residing in Israel are advised to remain close to a shelter until further notice and be ready to enter shelters upon Home Front Command (HFC) notifications promptly.
3. Refresh security protocols and ensure shelters' preparedness for long durations.
4. During Color Red sirens, prefer reaching a shelter if possible. In "Mamads" (residential secure spaces), make sure to lock the outer steel window of the room (and not only the glass window), as well as the steel door of the safe area, to ensure safety.
5. Do not attempt to travel to the Ben Gurion International Airport at the current time as Israel's airspace remains closed.
6. **MAX Security has strong on-ground capabilities in Israel and the West Bank, including contingency consultation and planning. Contact us at operations@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434.**

Iran:

1. Avoid all travel to Iran at the current juncture due to the current escalation.
2. Remain cognizant of the elevated risk of arbitrary detentions in Iran, especially during heightened tensions between Iran and the West.

MENA Region:

1. Avoid nonessential travel to other countries in the region, conduct specific and timely risk assessment prior to any travel, and closely monitor regional developments.