



# THE KING OF LIES

*The US president is lying about why he is at war with Iran, what he is achieving, what he has lost, and even what he feels*

## Trump misled the world: Iran's leadership unshakable and unyielding

TEHRAN – From the earliest days of the U.S.–Israeli military aggression that began on February 28, President Donald Trump has repeatedly asserted that Iran's political leadership has collapsed and that the country is seeking a ceasefire out of desperation. These statements have circulated widely in his public remarks, where he has described Iran as being on the verge of political disintegration and portrayed the initial wave of strikes as having eliminated the core of the Iranian state. According to his characterization, the killing of senior Iranian officials — including the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khomeini in the opening strike — amounted to the effective end of Iran's governing structure. He has also claimed that Iran's military capabilities have been destroyed and that the remaining authorities are appealing for a ceasefire because they have no ability to continue the conflict. ▶ **Page 3**

## The lies that built a war: Deconstructing Washington's shifting justifications for attacking Iran

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – One way to analyze the current U.S. aggression against Iran is through the political language that precedes and organizes it. In 2003, the invasion of Iraq was justified by a discursive apparatus centered on weapons of mass destruction that never appeared. The sequence is known: first, a set of propositions is presented as self-evident; then, reality is read through them. The decision for war does not emerge from the evidence. The evidence is adapted to the decision.

In the case of Iran, this dynamic is reproduced under new conditions. Claims are articulated, circulated in Western media and think tanks, and gradually sedimented into the collective imagination, where they become “facts” that do not require demonstration. By the time these propositions are challenged. ▶ **Page 3**

## Schrödinger's strait

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — Beyond the kinetic exchange of bombs and missiles, the 2026 war on Iran has revealed its true foundation: a meticulously constructed parallel reality. Twenty days in, it is clear that Washington is also waging a war of optics, built entirely upon a fragile architecture of institutionalized mendacity.

Launched on February 28, under the hubristic assumption that a “decapitation” strike on Iran would trigger an immediate collapse of the Islamic Republic, the campaign has instead devolved into a desperate propaganda effort to mask a strategic catastrophe.

At the epicenter of this deception is the Strait of Hormuz, where the Trump administration has attempted to override physical reality with a series of contradictory digital decrees.

Washington's rhetoric has birthed a strategic absurdity: Schrödinger's strait.

In this quantum paradox of Trump's own making, the waterway is simultaneously “totally safe” and “violently blockaded” for the international community. ▶ **Page 4**

## Out of control: Trump, the machine of lying

TEHRAN – The U.S. President Donald Trump's contradictory statements about the war with Iran, especially when it comes to attacking civilians, has turned him into a pathological liar who has no control over chronic lying.

Trump does not hesitate to make strange, big lies, repeatedly announcing his victory over Iran, claiming that he is ahead of the scheduled war against the country, while later he would change his words, saying that he has not achieved his goals and that he is looking for the ways to intensify military attacks on Iran.

In most recent development, Reuters reported that Israel's attack on an Iranian gas field on Wednesday was coordinated with the United States but is not likely to be repeated, three Israeli officials said, despite Trump saying he did not know about it in advance.

And talking about World Cup 2026, Trump said that the U.S. would not be safe for the Iranian team. After a while. ▶ **Page 4**

## Scrutinised discourse on engineered scarcity, co-opted protests, and contested casualty narratives in Iran

By Sondoss Al Asaad

South Lebanon—In an era where financial systems and media narratives function as colonial instruments of aggression and occupation, growing evidence has emerged suggesting that the United States and Israel have engaged in a coordinated strategy against Iran—one that blends economic pressure, narrative management, and political leverage.

These ample signs invite analysis through established political and economic theories.

From an economic perspective, the notion of a “manufactured dollar shortage” aligns with theories of financial coercion and sanctions-based pressure.

Scholars such as Susan Strange argue that control over global financial systems enables powerful states to exert structural influence over weaker economies. ▶ **Page 4**

Headline-grabber footballers back home - What happened in Australia?



By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - After more than a week of intense debate and widespread international media attention, Iranian female footballers have finally returned home from Australia, bringing an end to a wave of speculation and conflicting reports.

At the center of the controversy were six players and one member of the support staff who, participating in the AFC Women's Asian Cup in Australia reportedly left the team hotel in dramatic circumstances and initially were offered humanitarian asylum in Australia.

However, developments shifted rapidly in the days that followed. Five of the players, including team captain Zahra Ghanbari, reconsidered their decision and opted to return to Iran, joining the rest of the squad in the journey home.

On Wednesday, the team members ultimately crossed into Iran overland via Turkey, entering through the Bazargan border crossing, where they were welcomed by supporters and officials. Their return is deemed as a clear rejection of what related officials described as a coordinated foreign effort aimed at encouraging the athletes to defect and seek asylum abroad.

The event unfolded against the backdrop of heightened geopolitical tensions following the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, which began on Feb. 28 and has since influenced a range of political and social developments involving Iranian nationals overseas.

Upon arrival, several members of the team publicly reaffirmed their connection to their homeland.

"Iran is our home, and we are happy to return to where we belong," members of the squad said. "We would not exchange the soil of Iran for anywhere else in the world."

According to sources cited in Iranian media, the players were subjected to what was described as an organized campaign during their stay in Australia aimed at persuading them to remain abroad.

These accounts allege a combination of incentives, psychological pressure, and even threats designed to influence the athletes' decisions.

Mohammad-Rahman Salari, a member of the Iranian Football Federation's board, said the team experienced unusual and persistent attempts at outside influence.

"From the very beginning of the war, communication between the players and their families was severely disrupted," Salari said. "At the same time, individuals contacted them through social media, applying pressure and even issuing threats. It appeared to be a pre-planned operation."

He also recounted an incident at the team hotel in which an individual approached him, mistakenly believing he was part of the coaching staff, and offered incentives for the team to remain in Australia.

"He said all members of the team could stay, offering residency, foreign passports, and \$30,000, along with guarantees of protection and relocation for their families," Salari said. "When I refused, they approached the head coach with similar offers, including employment opportunities in Australia."

Salari further claimed that multiple immigration lawyers were present at the team's hotel and that, at certain points, players were separated from the rest of the delegation at airports, limiting their access to team officials and increasing psychological pressure.

Trump's intervention

The situation attracted international attention after U.S. President Donald Trump made a series of public statements urging Australia to grant asylum to the Iranian players.

In social media posts dated March 9, Trump suggested that the athletes could face serious consequences if they returned to Iran, particularly in light of reports that some players remained silent during the na-

tional anthem at the tournament.

"Australia is making a terrible humanitarian mistake... give ASYLUM. The U.S. will take them if you won't," he wrote in one post, adding that he had discussed the issue with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

Trump also claimed that some players might feel compelled to return due to concerns about their families, an assertion Iranian officials rejected, describing it as part of a broader narrative intended to shape international public opinion.

Iranian authorities characterized the remarks as interference in domestic affairs and part of a wider political effort to exploit the situation.

Officials and fans praise players' 'awareness'

Following the team's return, Iranian officials and masses of football fans among other people from all walks of life, in different cities, welcomed players and praised them for what they described as awareness, resilience, and loyalty to the country.

Mehdi Taj, head of Iran's Football Federation, welcomed the team during a ceremony in the city of Zanjan, calling their decision "the best gift to the country's sports community."

"You rejected the enemy's proposals, and for that we thank you," Taj said. "Seeing you return is a source of pride."

He also pointed to the welcoming ceremonies held in other cities, including Tabriz and Qazvin, where crowds gathered along the team's overland route to Tehran.

"This sends a clear message," he added. "It demonstrates the deep bond between the Iranian people and their national teams, even in difficult circumstances."

Fariba Mohammadian, the deputy sports minister for women, described the situation as a "major conspiracy" that had ultimately failed.

"Our team was targeted with an extensive plan to encourage asylum," she said. "From the outset, they were presented with tempting offers. But our daughters, with full awareness, rejected these plots."

She added that reactions from the U.S. president indicated "who was behind the scenario," while emphasizing that the public attention across multiple cities reflected strong national solidarity.

"These young women proved that love for one's homeland cannot be traded," she said.

According to narratives circulating in Iranian media, the situation was further complicated by the alleged involvement of opposition groups abroad, including monarchist circles, which officials say attempted to pressure players into seeking asylum.

Officials also claimed that Western and U.S.-based media outlets initially amplified the story, publishing extensive coverage of the players' situation, but that attention diminished after most of the team chose to return.

"The project collapsed within less than a week," one official account stated, attributing its failure to the players' decision to reject asylum offers.

Government message of support

First Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref has issued a message, welcoming the players upon their return.

"My dear daughters," the message read, "I warmly welcome your return. You are the children of this land, and Iran will always be your safe home."

He added that the government would continue to support the country's athletes and expressed hope for a stronger future for Iranian women's sports.

First on record: Iran strikes US F-35 stealth jet in historic attack, releases footage

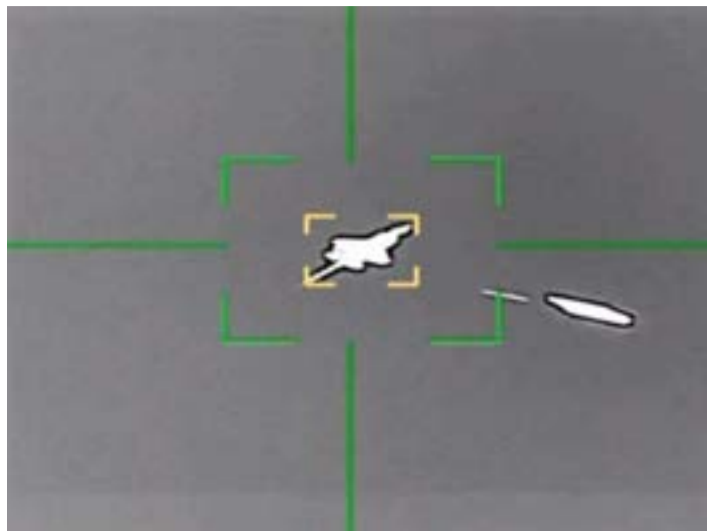
TEHRAN — Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) announced on Thursday that its air defense systems successfully struck and seriously damaged a U.S. Air Force F-35 stealth fighter jet in the skies over central Iran. The incident marks the first time a fifth-generation stealth aircraft has been hit by enemy fire in combat.

In a statement, the IRGC's Public Relations office detailed that the F-35 was engaged at approximately 2:50 a.m. local time. The aircraft was targeted by a "new advanced aerospace defense system" operated by the IRGC.

"The fate of this fighter jet is unknown and is under investigation," the statement read. "There is a high possibility it has crashed."

The statement added that the successful tracking and targeting of the stealth jet "shows the effective and targeted changes in the country's integrated air defense systems."

The IRGC has released the



footage of the interception.

The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) has not confirmed that the jet was shot down. However, sources familiar with the matter confirmed to CNN that a U.S. F-35 fighter jet was forced to make an emergency landing after it was struck by suspected Iranian fire. CENTCOM spokesperson Capt. Tim Hawkins confirmed to The National Desk that the fifth-generation

jet was "flying a combat mission over Iran" when it was forced to land at a U.S. air base in West Asia. Hawkins confirmed the jet landed safely and the incident is under investigation. He did not provide details on the extent of the damage or the condition of the pilot, only stating that the pilot was stable.

The Trump administration has been accused of hiding the real U.S. casualties and damage of

the war against Iran.

On Wednesday, War Secretary Pete Hegseth projected confidence in the U.S. campaign, claiming that "Iran's air defenses flattened" and that the U.S. is "winning decisively and on our terms".

The F-35 Lightning II, manufactured by Lockheed Martin, is considered the world's most advanced stealth fighter, designed specifically to evade enemy radar. It has been a cornerstone of U.S. and Israeli air aggression for years without ever being successfully engaged by the other warring party. The F-35C variant, a carrier-based version, costs over \$100 million per unit.

In the early days of war, Iran downed three F-15 fighter jets in Kuwaiti territory. CENTCOM claim those jets were downed by "friendly fire" even though there were targeted in three different locations. Iran has also downed at least 118 advanced U.S. and Israeli drones over its airspace since the war began on February 28.

Trump feigns ignorance after Iran retaliates for strikes on its energy infrastructure

TEHRAN - U.S. President Donald Trump sought to distance himself from responsibility after Iran followed through on its warning that any attack on its energy infrastructure during the ongoing war would be met with strikes on regional energy assets in which the United States holds shares or interests.

In a post on social media, Trump claimed that Israel, acting out of anger, had attacked Iran's major South Pars Gas Field in the port city of Asaluyeh—and that Washington had no advance knowledge of the strike.

"Israel, out of anger for what has taken place in the Middle East, has violently lashed out at a major facility known as South Pars Gas Field in Iran. A relatively small section of the whole has been hit. The United States knew nothing about this particular attack," Trump posted on X on Wednesday.

His statement was quickly contradicted by multiple Western media outlets. An Israeli journalist believed to have close ties to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote for Axios that both U.S. and Israeli officials had told him the attack was carried out with prior American knowledge. Similar reports were published by Reuters and Hebrew-language media including Yedioth Ahronoth and Israel Hayom.

Trump's denials appeared aimed at limiting the fallout with Arab states in the Persian Gulf. According to a report by The Wall Street Journal, Arab leaders expressed "strong dissatisfaction" and "outrage" with the U.S. government over Israel's strike on the South Pars field, particularly since Washington either could not or would not intervene despite Arab calls for de-escalation. Since the war began on February 28, Iran had repeatedly warned that it would retaliate by targeting U.S.-linked energy infrastructure in the region if its own facilities were attacked.

This is not the first time Trump has claimed

ignorance of Israeli operations against Iran. During much of the 12-day war in June, his administration maintained a position of "no involvement" in Israeli strikes on Iranian territory. Months later, Trump admitted he had been "in charge" of the war from the start.

What energy sites did Iran attack?

Iran's retaliation began shortly after the Israeli strikes on Asaluyeh on Wednesday and continued into the early hours of the following day.

Iranian officials have not disclosed the specific sites targeted but have confirmed that retaliatory actions were carried out.

A spokesman for the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters—the body overseeing the war—warned neighboring Persian Gulf states that if Iran's energy sector is struck again, "further attacks on your energy infrastructure and that of your allies will not stop until it is completely destroyed, and our response will be much stronger than previous attacks."

The U.S. and Israel have been using the airspace and territory of Persian Gulf countries, as well as Iraq, to launch attacks against Iran.

In a post on X, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated that Iran had used only a "fraction" of its capabilities in deference to requests for de-escalation. He added that there would be "ZERO restraint" if Iranian infrastructure is targeted again.

Current information regarding Iran's targets comes from authorities in Arab Persian Gulf countries.

Qatar's Ras Laffan Industrial City was hit by Iranian missiles, causing "significant damage" and fires, according to an official statement from Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, confirmed by state-owned QatarEnergy. The facility is the world's largest LNG production hub, accounting for approximately 20 percent of global LNG supply.



QatarEnergy CEO says Iran's response has damaged 17% of Qatar LNG capacity, repairs may take up to five years

Kuwait's Mina Al-Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries were struck by drone attacks that sparked fires, according to statements from the Kuwait Petroleum Company. Mina Al-Ahmadi is one of West Asia's largest refineries, with a production capacity of around 730,000 barrels per day.

Saudi Arabia's SAMREF refinery in Yanbu was hit in an aerial strike, according to an industry source speaking to Reuters. A major joint venture between Saudi Aramco and ExxonMobil located on the Red Sea coast, the refinery is strategically important for exporting oil westward, bypassing the Strait of Hormuz—navigation through which has been restricted by Tehran since the war began.

The UAE's Habshan gas facility and Bab field were forced to shut down operations following Iranian attacks, according to the Abu Dhabi Media Office. Habshan is a key gas processing complex, while Bab is one of Abu Dhabi's major onshore oil fields.

The United States has direct ownership stakes or commercial interests in all of the targeted facilities.

Giant tanker forced to back down as Iran successfully maintains control of Hormuz Strait

TEHRAN - A 160,000-ton oil tanker sailing under a Barbados flag was forced to retreat from the Strait of Hormuz this week after attempting to challenge Iran's transit restrictions, in what the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) called a clear demonstration that Tehran's control over the strategic waterway remains absolute and uncontested.

According to the IRGC's Public Relations Department, the giant tanker ignored declared restrictions and entered a sensitive operational zone, prompting naval units to go on high alert. Maritime tracking data and imagery released by Iranian forces show the vessel suddenly changing course and making a "swift and decisive retreat" from

the area. The IRGC described the incident as "a practical acknowledgment of Iran's superiority in managing this vital waterway" and emphasized that "any transit now takes place according to the rules set by Iran".

This week's incident is just the latest in a series of operations Iran has carried out to assert its firm grip on the Strait since the war began on February 28. Throughout March, the IRGC has effectively choked traffic through the waterway, with commercial shipping plummeting by an estimated 90 percent as major global shippers including Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd, and CMA CGM suspended Persian Gulf transits. On March 11, Iranian projectiles struck the Thai-flagged

civilian tanker Mayuree Naree as it attempted to transit the strait, with photographs showing damage just above the waterline—a signature of explosive-laden surface drones. Days earlier, on March 3, Iranian forces seized the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Talara, forcing it into Iranian territorial waters as it travelled from the UAE to Singapore. And on March 12, IRGC naval units attacked the American-owned oil tanker Safe-sea Vishnu off the coast of Iraq, using a naval drone to blow open its hull in an operation that sent Brent crude prices surging past \$100 per barrel.

The United States has failed to force the waterway open despite urgent calls for help. President

Donald Trump publicly criticized NATO after key allies declined to support U.S. efforts, calling the alliance's reluctance a "very foolish mistake". French President Emmanuel Macron stated that France would "never" participate under current conditions, while the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, and Italy all signalled they would not join a naval mission. German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius questioned the logic of the request, stating, "What does Donald Trump expect a handful of European frigates to do in the Strait of Hormuz that the powerful U.S. Navy cannot?". Other allies, including Australia, Japan, and South Korea, also opted not to join.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# The lies that built a war: Deconstructing Washington's shifting justifications for attacking Iran



By Xavier Villar

MADRID – One way to analyze the current U.S. aggression against Iran is through the political language that precedes and organizes it. In 2003, the invasion of Iraq was justified by a discursive apparatus centered on weapons of mass destruction that never appeared. The sequence is known: first, a set of propositions is presented as self-evident; then, reality is read through them. The decision for war does not emerge from the evidence. The evidence is adapted to the decision.

In the case of Iran, this dynamic is reproduced under new conditions. Claims are articulated, circulated in Western media and think tanks, and gradually sedimented into the collective imagination, where they become “facts” that do not require demonstration. By the time these propositions are challenged, the machinery of escalation is already in motion. What has changed in relation to 2003 is not the structure of the discourse, but its speed and lack of restraint.

Unlike the invasion of Iraq, there has been no serious attempt to construct a multilateral framework or achieve a stable political consensus around the attack on Iran. The operation advances with a narrow procedural base, relying on Washington's unilateral power and the complicity of a few regional actors. In this context, what appears is not a single coherent justification but a constellation of overlapping narratives. Each one compensates for the limits of the others; none is sufficient on its own.

Surveys in the United States and Europe reveal little enthusiasm for an open conflict with Iran. This lack of popular support has not altered the strategic orientation; it has simply forced elites to diversify the rhetoric used to justify it. Different audiences receive different explanations. The result is not a unified argument, but a flexible discursive field that can be rearranged as needed. Evidentiary coherence is not a requirement for this system to function. Its objective is to keep the war structure operative while containing oversight.

## The nuclear premise

The central axis remains the assertion that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons. This claim persists despite the most consis-

tent and long-standing assessments of the U.S. intelligence community, which for over two decades has maintained that Iran has not taken the political decision to build a nuclear bomb. This distinction between nuclear capability and weaponization is crucial yet is systematically erased in mainstream discourse.

Policy does not confront this distinction; it displaces it. Enrichment—an activity explicitly allowed under the Non-Proliferation Treaty—is recoded as the sign of an invisible intention. Technical capacity is interpreted as proof of an underlying will to arm. The burden of proof is inverted: it is no longer necessary to demonstrate that Iran is constructing a weapon; it is sufficient to affirm that Iran could do so. Possibility is elevated to the rank of guilt.

At this point, the question is not what has been empirically verified, but how observation is organized through specific categories. “Threat” is not a neutral description emerging from reality; it is a political lens that shapes what can be seen and what must remain invisible. The absence of proof is not read as a limit, but as a space to be filled by suspicion. Uncertainty becomes a resource to legitimize further coercion.

This logic is not applied uniformly. Nuclear-armed states outside the NPT, or those enjoying Western protection, are never subjected to the same constant suspicion and punitive measures. The asymmetry is not argued; it is presupposed. It belongs to a broader colonial hierarchy that decides which sovereignties are acceptable and which must be permanently problematized.

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) introduced strict limits on Iran's nuclear program and the most intrusive monitoring regime ever applied to a member of the NPT. The International Atomic Energy Agency repeatedly confirmed Iran's compliance. The agreement demonstrated that the problem was not verification; verification was possible and effective. Washington's decision in 2018 to abandon the JCPOA did not resolve a proliferation crisis. It dismantled an arrangement that was working.

Even after that unilateral withdrawal, intelligence assessments continued to indicate that Iran had not resumed

a nuclear weapons program. Nonetheless, the public rhetoric kept returning to the same nuclear specter. When officials now claim that military strikes have “neutralized” Iran's nuclear infrastructure, they generate a new contradiction: if there was a weapons program to be destroyed, the previous assessments were false; if there was none, the language of neutralization is purely theatrical. Both statements cannot be sustained simultaneously without eroding the credibility of the entire discourse.

At the same time, diplomatic channels were not exhausted. Mediated talks, including Omani facilitation, had advanced to a point where a new framework combining inspections with clear limits on enrichment was realistic. Iran had shown, once again, its willingness to operate within defined parameters. The interruption of this process did not arise because diplomacy failed; it occurred precisely when diplomacy began to work. An effective agreement narrows the space for the nuclear threat narrative. What is threatened by such an agreement is not Western security, but Western capacity to maintain discretionary pressure over Iran's strategic autonomy.

## The construction of threat

The second element of the justification revolves around the category of “imminent threat.” Conceptually, imminence designates an event that has not yet occurred and cannot, by definition, be fully verified beforehand. It must be asserted as fact before it can be empirically tested.

In Washington's discourse, imminence does not derive from clear evidence of Iranian preparations for attack. Instead, it is constructed from a hypothetical sequence: if Iran is subjected to certain pressures, it might respond; therefore, action is needed before that response takes place. Cause and effect are thus folded into a circular relation. What appears as an original threat is, in reality, the projection of a possible reaction to previous acts of coercion.

Threat, in this sense, is not discovered; it is produced. Intelligence becomes a reservoir of elements that can be selectively assembled to support a pre-established conclusion. The conclusion comes first, and the interpretation of data is adjust-

ed to it. The same information could sustain a call for de-escalation or for war, depending on how it is inserted into the discursive framework.

Within this anticipatory logic, what Iran actually does at any given moment is less central than how its capabilities can be narrated. The threshold for the use of force is detached from verifiable conduct and relocated in the capacity to represent a set of possibilities as existential risk. The separation between evidence and inference collapses, producing a field in which the notion of “security” is permanently expandable.

The role played by allied actors is largely erased in this narrative. The United States operates in close coordination with regional partners whose actions—from sanctions to targeted killings—shape the environment in which Iranian decisions unfold. To depict Tehran as the sole source of instability is to conceal how Western and allied practices contribute to the very conditions later described as threatening.

In the absence of public proof of an imminent large-scale Iranian attack, the discourse of imminence persists as a structural necessity, not as a conclusion derived from facts. Internal assessments that continue to differentiate between nuclear capability and actual weaponization accentuate the distance between analytical knowledge and political justification. Imminence thus becomes a doctrine that releases decision-makers from the obligation to demonstrate the reality of the threat they invoke.

## What this war reveals

Taken together, these narratives do not produce a coherent chain of reasoning. Their articulation gives the impression of completeness, but they do not converge into a unified logic.

Their role is not to explain reality, but to organize perception in such a way that the continuation of aggression appears both necessary and inevitable. The target is not a concrete act committed by Iran at a specific moment; it is the very fact that Iran insists on preserving an independent foreign policy and a degree of strategic autonomy that does not fit within the Western security architecture.

The framework used to evaluate Iran does not merely register threats; it manufactures them. Identical or greater capabilities—whether nuclear, military, or regional—are tolerated in some actors and criminalized in others. These distinctions are not neutral. They reflect a colonial order that hierarchizes sovereignties and decides who may exercise power freely and who must do so under permanent suspicion.

What remains, once the rhetoric is stripped away, is not only the content of the accusations, but the method by which they are constructed, insulated from contradiction, and detached from the very evidence they invoke. It is within this gap between discourse and reality that war becomes possible—and repeatable.

## Trump misled the world: Iran's leadership unshaken and unyielding



TEHRAN – From the earliest days of the U.S.–Israeli military aggression that began on February 28, President Donald Trump has repeatedly asserted that Iran's political leadership has collapsed and that the country is seeking a ceasefire out of desperation. These statements have circulated widely in his public remarks, where he has described Iran as being on the verge of political disintegration and portrayed the initial wave of strikes as having eliminated the core of the Iranian state. According to his characterization, the killing of senior Iranian officials—including the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei in the opening strike—amounted to the effective end of Iran's governing structure. He has also claimed that Iran's military capabilities have been destroyed and that the remaining authorities are appealing for a ceasefire because they have no ability to continue the conflict.

These claims, however, do not align with the facts that have emerged in the weeks since the conflict began. While the initial strikes inflicted losses on Iran's senior leadership, the political system did not collapse. Iran's governing institutions continued to operate, and new or existing officials stepped into roles of authority. The Iranian cabinet convened, the National Security Council issued directives, and the state maintained its ability to coordinate military and political responses. The martyrdom of senior figures such as Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, and Major General Mohammad Pakpour, commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), were significant, but they did not result in the disintegration of the state apparatus. Iran's political system—built around multiple layers of institutions, councils, and constitutional mechanisms—demonstrated an ability to absorb the shock and continue functioning.

The clearest contradiction to the claim of political collapse comes from the public statements of Iranian officials themselves. Ali Larjani, the secretary of Supreme National Security Council, who was assassinated this week in an Israeli strike in Tehran, had explicitly rejected the idea that Iran had sought a ceasefire. The assassinations of Larjani and Intelligence Minister Esmaeil Khatib were meant to project the image of a collapsing state, yet their loss only highlighted how resilient and cohesive Iran's political leadership remains. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also dismissed the notion that Iran was appealing for an end to the war. Both officials stated that Iran was willing to consider an end to hostilities only under specific conditions, including the preservation of Iran's rights and the cessation of aggression. Their statements were not framed as pleas but as policy positions—reflecting a government that still has the capacity to negotiate, set terms, and articulate national objectives.

President Masoud Pezeshkian reinforced this position by stating that any ceasefire must include compensation for the damage inflicted on Iran and international guarantees that the United States and Israel would not resume attacks. These conditions indicate that Iran's leadership continues to operate with a coherent strategy rather than acting from a position of collapse. A government that has lost its political structure does not issue detailed conditions for a ceasefire or insist on long-term guaran-

tees; it simply accepts whatever terms are offered. The fact that Iran has not done so is itself evidence that the leadership remains intact.

International reporting has also contradicted the idea that Iran's political system has fallen apart. Major news outlets, including those in the United States, have acknowledged the severity of the initial strikes but have consistently reported that Iran continues to function as a state actor. Coverage has documented ongoing Iranian military operations, continued decision-making by Iranian authorities, and the presence of organized political leadership. These reports do not support the claim that Iran's leadership has collapsed. Instead, they describe a government that has suffered losses but remains capable of directing military operations, issuing political statements, and managing internal affairs.

Iran's continued military activity further undermines the claim that its leadership has disintegrated. In the weeks following the February 28 strikes, Iran has continued to launch multiple retaliatory attacks against U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf and against strategic sites in Israel. These operations required coordination, planning, and command structures that would not exist if the political leadership had collapsed. The ability to carry out sustained, long-range strikes demonstrates that Iran's military and political institutions remain functional. A state without leadership cannot organize complex military operations across multiple fronts.

Domestic developments inside Iran also contradict the narrative of collapse. Large public gatherings—including mourning ceremonies and pro-government rallies—have taken place across the country. These events have shown significant public mobilization and expressions of national solidarity. While public sentiment in any country is complex, the scale of these gatherings indicates that the state retains the ability to organize and maintain public order. A government that has collapsed does not coordinate nationwide events or maintain control over major cities during wartime.

It is also important to note that Trump's claims about Iran “appealing” for a ceasefire have not been supported by independent reporting. While multiple countries and international organizations have expressed interest in de-escalation, there has been no verified evidence that Iran has sought a ceasefire unconditionally. Instead, the statements from Iranian officials have emphasized that Iran is open to ending the conflict only if its sovereignty is respected and if there are guarantees against future aggression. This is a conditional diplomatic position, not an appeal born of collapse.

In the end, the most reliable measure of whether a political system has collapsed is whether it can still perform the basic functions of governance: issuing orders, coordinating institutions, managing public communication, and directing military operations. By these measures, Iran's leadership remains intact. The government continues to articulate policy, its military continues to operate, and its institutions continue to function. These facts stand in direct contradiction to the claims that Iran's leadership has fallen apart or that it is pleading for a ceasefire.



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## Out of control: Trump, the machine of lying

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Trump does not hesitate to make strange, big lies, repeatedly announcing his victory over Iran, claiming that he is ahead of the scheduled war against the country, while later he would change his words, saying that he has not achieved his goals and that he is looking for the ways to intensify military attacks on Iran.

In most recent development, Reuters reported that Israel's attack on an Iranian gas field on Wednesday was coordinated with the United States but is not likely to be repeated, three Israeli officials said, despite Trump saying he did not know about it in advance.

And talking about World Cup 2026, Trump said that the U.S. would not be safe for the Iranian team. After a while, he changed his stance posting that "The United States of America looks very much to hosting FIFA World Cup. Ticket sales are 'through the roof'! It will be the greatest and safest Sporting Event in American History.

On the very beginning day of the war, February 28, Trump claimed that he started the Operation Epic Fury to protect Americans against imminent threat from Iran. However, there was no single evidence of such a thing.

Steve Witkoff, the senior negotiator of the U.S., in a tweet said that during final days of negotiations with Iran, Abbas Araqchi, Iranian Foreign Minister, threatened that Iran will make 11 nuclear weapons. His claim was strongly rejected by Araqchi, in an interview with MS NOW.

He said that, "I don't know what they have conveyed to their boss. What I know is that on February 26, when we met in Geneva, we were able to make good progress."

Trump, together with his Israeli criminal partner, Benjamin Netanyahu, began the second war against Iran. They assassinated the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, along with several members of his family in the initial hours of the war by striking his Tehran office and residence.

Trump has even claimed that the illegal war aims to change the regime in Iran for the freedom of Iranians. Then in a post on his Truth Social, he wrote there "will be no deal with Iran except UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER."

Back in January, Trump stated that the "help is underway". He asserted that the attacks will only target military forces, but in practice Trump and his vicious partner have bombarded non-military targets including schools, hospitals, medical



centers, ambulances, residential areas, emergency bases, and many other places.

On February 28, Trump's help arrived in the form of an airstrike on an elementary school in the southern city of Minab, murdering almost 170 students, school staff, and some parents, a total tragedy.

Trump claimed that the attack on the school in Minab had been done by Iran itself. However, preliminary findings from a Pentagon investigation indicated the missile was launched by U.S. forces.

Since the beginning of the war till March 17, the United States and Israel have attacked 67,414 non-military units, including 9,218 business units, and 58,196 residential units, according to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

Some 18,180 of the damaged houses were located in Tehran. During the same time, the violent attacks severely damaged 236 medical, pharmaceutical, and emergency bases.

Some 498 schools have been destroyed by the strikes directly or indirectly. The aggression has also resulted in the martyrdom and injury of 206 and 156 students and school staff, respectively.

So far, 17 medical centers, 37 rescue vehicles, including 35 ambulances, affiliated with the IRCS have been destroyed.

Ten IRCS relief workers were wounded while on their duty, and one was martyred. Moreover, 16 medical workers have lost their lives, and 78 were wounded in airstrikes.

According to Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani 18 days into war, 227 women have been martyred, and 3,210 have been wounded, IRNA reported. A total of 204 people under the age of 18, and 13 kids aged below five were martyred, she added.

## Scrutinised discourse on engineered scarcity, co-opted protests, and contested casualty narratives in Iran

By **Sondoss Al Asaad**

South Lebanon—In an era where financial systems and media narratives function as colonial instruments of aggression and occupation, growing evidence has emerged suggesting that the United States and Israel have engaged in a coordinated strategy against Iran—one that blends economic pressure, narrative management, and political leverage.

These ample signs invite analysis through established political and economic theories.

From an economic perspective, the notion of a "manufactured dollar shortage" aligns with theories of financial coercion and sanctions-based pressure.

Scholars such as Susan Strange argue that control over global financial systems enables powerful states to exert structural influence over weaker economies.

The dominance of the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency creates vulnerabilities for states like Iran, particularly under sanctions regimes.

In this context, fluctuations in currency availability may be interpreted as outcomes not merely of domestic mismanagement, but of deliberate external constraint.

The second claim, concerning the alleged hijacking of peaceful protests, can be situated within the broader concept of "hybrid warfare" and "soft power intervention."

Joseph Nye introduced the idea of soft power as the ability to shape preferences through attraction and influence rather than coercion.

Various critics of Western foreign policy have extended this concept, arguing that external actors may attempt to influence internal dissent movements through media amplification or selective framing.

Opinion pieces in outlets such as The Guardian and Foreign Affairs have debated the extent to which foreign powers engage in narrative-shaping during periods of unrest, though conclusions vary widely.

The third claim—regarding the inflation of casualty figures—relates to theories of information warfare and agenda-setting. According to the agenda-setting theory developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, media coverage does not tell audiences what to think, but rather what to think about.

In conflict situations, the framing and quantification of casualties can significantly influence international perception and policy justifi-

fication.

Observers argue that selective reporting or unverifiable figures may contribute to building a narrative conducive to intervention, although such claims are highly disputed and depend on the credibility of sources.

It is important to note that a growing body of analysis underscores the decisive impact of external economic coercion—especially sanctions and financial isolation—on Iran's conditions, while raising serious questions about potential external manipulation of protest movements and the politicisation of casualty narratives.

Hence, the convergence of economic disruption, protest dynamics, and contested casualty narratives appears less coincidental and more structurally interconnected.

Taken together, these elements form a coherent interpretive argument: that economic coercion, protest dynamics, and contested information flows may operate in tandem within a broader strategy of pressure.

When the U.S.–Israeli aggression against Iran began on the morning of Saturday, February 28, the gamble resembled the 12-day war in principle, but not in scale.

# Schrödinger's strait

How Trump constructed a parallel reality to mask the failure of his war on Iran

By **Garsha Vazirian**

TEHRAN — Beyond the kinetic exchange of bombs and missiles, the 2026 war on Iran has revealed its true foundation: a meticulously constructed parallel reality. Twenty days in, it is clear that Washington is also waging a war of optics, built entirely upon a fragile architecture of institutionalized mendacity.

Launched on February 28, under the hubristic assumption that a "decapitation" strike on Iran would trigger an immediate collapse of the Islamic Republic, the campaign has instead devolved into a desperate propaganda effort to mask a strategic catastrophe.

At the epicenter of this deception is the Strait of Hormuz, where the Trump administration has attempted to override physical reality with a series of contradictory digital decrees.

Washington's rhetoric has birthed a strategic absurdity: Schrödinger's strait.

In this quantum paradox of Trump's own making, the waterway is simultaneously "totally safe" and "violently blockaded" for the international community.

This oscillates entirely based on the political exigency of the hour and Trump's own volatile psychological state—a reality where the truth is whatever his fractured ego requires to survive the news cycle.

**The absurd paradox**

On March 14 and 15, Trump took to Truth Social to insist that the U.S. had "destroyed 100% of Iran's military capability" and that the passage was "OPEN, SAFE, and FREE."

Yet, within that same 48-hour window, the White House was caught issuing frantic, high-level pleas to Beijing, Tokyo, and London to "send warships" to "secure" the very waterway he claimed was already pacified.

This is the hollow core of Trump's war: a bifurcated reality where the American voter is fed a "Mission Accomplished" fantasy, while the international community is quietly told that the U.S. cannot guarantee the passage of a single tanker without a global life-raft.

This collapse of the observer's reality is no accident; it is a state-sponsored mass-psychosis event.

In this theater of the absurd, truth has been reduced to whatever Trump dictates on his Truth Social five minutes after a security briefing he categorically refuses to heed.

In the real world, Lloyd's of London has blacklisted the Persian Gulf, and insurance premiums

have surged by 4,000%.

The "freedom of navigation" Trump claims to have secured is a phantom, existing only in the echo chambers of Washington.

Iran has maintained a transparent and consistent doctrine of selective enforcement.

As Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated, the Strait remains open to the world, but it is closed to those who facilitate aggression against Iran.

While vessels linked to the U.S., Israel, and their backers are paralyzed by fear, non-hostile shipping from China and India continues to navigate under Iranian oversight.

This reality shatters the American narrative of a "blanket blockade," revealing instead a sophisticated exercise of Iranian sovereignty that the U.S. Navy is powerless to stop.

**Information laundering and the Unit 8200 pipeline**

A central pillar of this war of lies is the stenographer strategy, an information-laundering operation conducted through media proxies who masquerade as independent journalists.

The vanguard of this strategy is Barak Ravid of Axios and Israeli Channel 12. A veteran of Unit 8200—the Israeli military's elite signals intelligence and cyber-warfare branch—Ravid does not function as a reporter in any traditional sense.

Instead, he serves as a high-level conduit for the U.S.–Israeli political and intelligence apparatus, specializing in the "controlled leak."

The March 18 strike on Iran's South Pars gas field—the world's largest energy reserve and the lifeline for 90% of Iran's electricity—exposed the inner workings of this pipeline.

As fires raged across the facility, President Trump took to Truth Social to claim the U.S. "knew nothing about" the attack, framing it as a "rogue, independent Israeli move."

Yet, almost simultaneously, Ravid was fed a "leak" from senior officials confirming the strike was "fully coordinated and approved" by the White House.

This is not journalism; it is a calculated signaling mechanism.

By saying one thing to the American public on social media while saying the opposite through Ravid, Washington and Tel Aviv maintain a facade of plausible deniability for domestic consumption while ensuring Tehran understands that the U.S. is intentionally targeting civilian life-support systems.

Ravid has built a career out of packaging anonymously sourced



White House press releases as "scoops," providing the information interests of his masters with a thin veneer of third-party credibility.

While he is the most visible example, he is far from alone in this industry of promulgated propaganda, where "anonymous sources say X" is used to create a fog of manufactured confusion.

**The death of plausible deniability**

The technical impossibility of Trump's denial was further dismantled by Dan Shapiro, the former U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

Shapiro directly disputed Trump's assertion of ignorance, noting that an operation of this magnitude would require total synchronization with U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM).

"Trump can say whatever he wants," Shapiro wrote. "But there is zero, meaning zero, chance the IDF [Israeli military] carries out a strike in that location without giving CENTCOM the full picture. Trump knew (and approved)."

This transforms the South Pars attack from a military strike into a war crime of mutual consent.

They engage in a cowardly form of hybrid warfare: they hit the switch that plunges millions of Iranian civilians into darkness, then use their media stenographers to whisper that it was all according to plan.

Equally fraudulent is the administration's claim that Iran's response to U.S.–Israeli aggression was "unforeseen."

On March 17, Trump told the press at Joint Base Andrews, "Nobody expected them to hit the bases or the gas lines... We thought they'd just give up."

On March 18, Senate testimony from DNI Tulsi Gabbard confirmed that U.S. intelligence had explicitly warned that strikes on Iranian soil would result in the closure of the Strait and retaliatory strikes on U.S. assets in Qatar and Bahrain.

Iran had publicly and repeatedly vowed this exact response for years.

The administration did not fail

to see the bill; they simply lied about the cost until the American public was already forced to pay it.

**The rejected suitor and the NATO schism**

Another pathetic display of this deceptive strategy is the NATO schism.

On March 14, Trump slammed NATO allies as "foolish" for refusing to join the "Epic Fury" naval coalition.

Less than an hour after the rejection was made public, he pivoted, posting that the U.S. "no longer needs or desires" NATO help because the U.S. military is "too successful."

This is the rhetoric of a rejected suitor. The loyalty test he attempted to impose on traditional allies—including Japan and Australia—failed because even they recognized that the U.S. has no exit strategy.

As Brent Crude surges past \$110 per barrel and the IRGC's decentralized missile boats continue to demonstrate that the "100% destruction" of the Iranian Navy was yet another Trumpian fiction, the myth of the "quick end" crumbles.

Iran is defending its existence. Washington, conversely, is fighting a war of mirrors, hoping that if they lie enough about the Strait being open, the ships will eventually believe them.

But ships do not sail on Truth Social posts; they sail on safe waters and the Persian Gulf remains indifferent to the digital decrees of the White House.

Supertankers and global markets do not navigate based on the capricious whims of Trump's Truth Social; they sail only upon the guarantee of safe, sovereign waters—a guarantee Washington has forfeited through its own lawlessness.

As long as the U.S.–Israeli axis persists in this illegal aggression, the Schrödinger's strait paradox will remain unresolved for the aggressor, and the only thing "open" in the Strait of Hormuz will be the eyes of the world to the reality of American decline.



The American assumption was that a second round of leadership targeting, extending to the Leader, could create greater disruption than June 2025, especially if synchronized with coordinated internal chaos.

Nonetheless, Iran's rapid response demonstrated a preplanned strategy, with leadership replacements executed simultaneously with strikes on Israeli and U.S. military targets.

Drawing on lessons from 2025, popular mo-

bilization prevented internal synchronization with external attacks, while Iran simultaneously pressured enemy forces, safeguarded strategic stocks, targeted U.S. bases and naval assets, and maintained regional leverage.

The outcome whatsoever hinges on Iran's ability to resist synchronized external attacks, potentially reshaping regional power dynamics and challenging assumptions of U.S. and Israeli dominance.