



Israel's Major Unprovoked and Reckless Attacks on Iran Spark Fears of an All-Out War

The scenario that many had long feared was growing in likelihood unfolded late last night into today as Israel launched a massive wave of bellicose attacks across Iran. The unprovoked and reckless strikes have thrown the Middle East into dangerous uncertainty, and sparked grave concern regarding an all-out regional war and further destabilization that could drag in the United States. Israel's attacks have included the bombing of nuclear and missile sites, residential areas, sabotage operations, and the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists and military leaders. They also come just days before Iran and the United States were slated to hold a sixth round of nuclear talks in Oman, with these now being indefinitely suspended in light of what has transpired. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has repeatedly sought to derail these efforts, and observers point to this as one of the clear motivations behind the attacks on Iran.

Iran has vowed to avenge the Israeli attacks, and stated that it will respond forcefully to the offensive and belligerent military actions, as it has begun to fire missiles towards Israel in retaliation to the attacks. The Iranian government has insisted that the attack demonstrates Israel does not adhere to any international rules or laws and instead brazenly seeks to perpetuate conflict and hostilities. It also contends that Israel's behavior illustrates its unhinged aggression and the fact that it is the entity which is dangerously threatening the security of the region. While U.S. officials insist that Israel took unilateral action against Iran, for many analysts, the Trump administration bears culpability for what has materialized regardless of whether or not it was explicitly involved or covertly approved of the Israeli attacks. The evacuation of U.S. embassy personnel from the Middle East prior to the recent attacks on Iran suggests that American officials had some awareness regarding the serious potential of an Israeli military operation. President Trump himself has even expressed to media outlets that the U.S. had been aware of the impending Israeli attack. Thus, Israel's carrying out of the attack indicates that either Trump is unable to restrain the actions of Netanyahu or that public U.S. statements of opposition to the Israeli attack are coupled with behind-the-scenes tacit consent – both equally troubling realizations whichever is the case. Now, the region risks spiraling towards heightened conflict and violence.

Israel's attacks on Iran have taken place after yesterday's news that the global nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors approved a resolution declaring that Iran is not complying with its commitment to international safeguarding measures. This had prompted concerns over the potential for escalation, which did indeed manifest with the Israeli bombardment of Iran. The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) finding was the first time in 20 years that the organization has formally ruled Iran is not meeting its obligations, with 19 of the 35 countries on the IAEA board voting in favor of the motion. Last week, the IAEA had released an additional report which stated that Iran had enough uranium enriched to possibly make nuclear bombs, but the Iranian government insists that its nuclear activities are for peaceful civilian purposes and a matter of national sovereignty. The IAEA's resolution had also raised fear of an uptick in tensions due to the fact that the move could spur an effort to restore United Nations sanctions on Iran later this year. The noncompliance declaration might now be referred to the United Nations Security Council, which has the power to "snap back" the sanctions that were lifted under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal if Iran is deemed to be failing to fulfill its obligations. The ability to reimpose sanctions expires later this year in October, and European nations have repeatedly threatened to trigger the mechanism if Iran does not cooperate with the IAEA.

However, for the time being and as a result of Israel's reckless attacks on Iran, the IAEA developments have taken a back seat to the more pressing concern over what will ensue in the coming days as the region faces the prospect of further calamitous escalations. The threat has perhaps never been greater in recent years that the United States could be dragged into a widened conflict in the Middle East, and it remains to be seen what unravels next. One thing that is evident at this point is that while Trump came back into office vowing to end wars in the Middle East and elsewhere, his administration's policies have not only failed to do this, but they have also risked increased U.S. entanglement to the detriment of America's interests.