

Operation „Epic Fury”

The US-Israel War with Iran: A Brief Horizon Scan

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Operation "Epic Fury" – The US-Israel War with Iran: A Brief Horizon Scan ¹ *

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Abstract

The purpose of this policy brief is to analyse the conflict between the US-Israel and Iran, which broke out at the end of February. This assessment looks at the causes and objectives pursued by combatants, its legitimacy, its impact on transatlantic relations, its effects on the international system, and the military lessons that can be drawn. The analysis is limited only to the American operation Epic Fury, not to its Israeli equivalent, Operation Roaring Lion. The period analysed is limited to the first month of conflict. The thesis of this paper is that the American operation against Iran pursues a series of unsustainable competing objectives, suffers from planning flaws, and lacks the scale necessary to force a major political change in Tehran (regime change).

Keywords: Epic Fury, United States, Iran, US-Israel conflict with Iran, Middle East.

¹ This publication draws exclusively on open-source materials. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the institution.

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INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, the US-Israeli attack against Iran represents a continuation of previous conflicts, the most recent one being the so-called 12-Day War of 2025, which began following Iranian strikes with ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones strikes against Israel. The US launched Operation *Midnight Hammer* in June 2025 to destroy the infrastructure associated with the Iranian nuclear program by bombing Iranian uranium enrichment facilities.

Israeli-Iranian tensions heightened in 2024 and culminated in direct attacks that same year. Tehran is suspected of having supported Hamas's actions to prevent reconciliation between Israel and Saudi Arabia through the Abraham Accords. Israel militarily struck Iran in 2025 to destroy its nuclear program and ballistic program. At the time, US forces also joined the Israeli attacks.

In parallel with this military conflict, Iran and Saudi Arabia were also facing a proxy conflict in Yemen. Iran-armed Houthi militants hit Israel in turn but also targeted civilian and military maritime traffic between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, entangling intervention from the US and European states.

Before the outbreak of this new military conflict between US-Israel and Iran, Washington and Tehran negotiated to resolve the nuclear issue ([Axios](#), February 17, 2026). These negotiations were conducted in parallel with the mobilization and deployment of US forces in the Persian Gulf region. The final round of negotiations reportedly ended on a positive note according to the official press releases ([Axios](#), February 26, 2026).

American objectives, as well as the motivation behind this new phase of the Iranian American conflict, remain unclear. Regime change in Tehran through air and/or naval strikes cannot be achieved. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the Trump administration's intention is to replace the Tehran regime with a new political regime (*regime change*) or simply to force a change in the "lineup" of political leaders in the Islamic Republic, in the hope that they will prove more susceptible to American interests than their predecessors (*regime compliance*). An explanation for launching this wave of strikes against Iran could be its refusal to completely abandon its nuclear program, significantly reduce its ballistic arsenal, and drop support for regional proxies (Hezbollah, Houthis).

According to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the US decided to resort to military force against Iran to eliminate the Iranian ballistic missile threat and its threat to freedom of navigation: *“The United States is conducting an operation to eliminate the threat of Iran’s short-range ballistic missiles and the threat posed by their navy, particularly to naval assets”* ([Department of State](#), March 2, 2026). Approximately three weeks after the start of military operations, President Donald Trump mentioned that US objectives are not regime change in Tehran, but preventing the development of a nuclear weapon (*„The major thing is that they cannot have a nuclear weapon”*), and secondarily installing a regime more susceptible to American interests ([MS Now](#), March 20, 2026). In this context, there is information that while negotiations were ongoing, Iran was allegedly conducting excavations to recover uranium located in centrifuges buried by the 2025 American air strikes ([Spaniel](#), March 9, 2026).

Secretary of State Marco Rubio reiterated in a recent press statement the objectives of the military operation against Iran from the US perspective: eliminating the Iranian navy, Iranian air forces, damaging or eliminating the Iranian military-industrial complex, and damaging or eliminating ballistic missile launching capabilities:

We were going to – we are destroying Iran’s navy. We are destroying their ability – their missile launchers by a significant percentage. We’re going to wipe out their defense industrial base, meaning their ability to make new missiles and new drones in the future, because it posed a great threat to the region. This Iran that you’re seeing now, this is Iran at its weakest point. Imagine them two years from now if they had thousands of more missiles to – thousands of more missile launchers and factories to make even more. ([Department of State](#), March 30, 2026)

A careful reading of the US National Security Strategy adopted in 2025 shows that the US no longer considers the Middle East region a priority for US foreign and security policy due to the diversification of energy sources, the growth of US crude oil production, and alliances formed with Arab states in the region (NSS 2025, 27-28):

But the days in which the Middle East dominated American foreign policy in both long-term planning and day-to-day execution are thankfully over—not because the Middle East no longer matters, but because it is no longer the constant irritant, and potential source of imminent catastrophe, that it once was. It is rather emerging as a place of partnership, friendship, and investment—a trend that should be welcomed and encouraged. In fact, President Trump’s ability to unite the Arab world at Sharm el-Sheikh in pursuit of peace and normalization will allow the United States to finally prioritize American interests. (Ibid., 29)

The document adopted by the Trump Administration mentions Iran as the primary destabilizing factor in the region and considers it weakened following the 2025 attacks (Ibid., 28). Therefore, Operation *Epic Fury* represents an exception to the priorities identified and listed in the US National Security Strategy. Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election arguing that he would not engage the US in long wars, especially in the Middle East ([Axios](#), March 2, 2026; [NPR](#), March 10, 2026). We are already witnessing the seventh international American military intervention within a year of the American president taking office: Somalia (against the Islamic State - ISIS), Nigeria (against the Islamic State - ISIS), Iran (2025), Syria, Yemen (against Houthis), and Venezuela (2026).

INTERVENTION AGAINST IRAN AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EUROPEAN ALLIES

The legitimacy of the American intervention has been seriously called into question both internationally, as shown by some of the US's European allies (Spain, France), and domestically. Military operations against Iran launched by the US and Israel were not conducted under a UN Security Council mandate, and the US did not consult European allies prior to launching Operation *Epic Fury* ([Gov.uk](#), February 28, 2026; [Élysée](#), February 28, 2026; [Bundeskanzler.de](#), February 28, 2026). Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was the only European leader to harshly condemn the American intervention ([Euronews](#), March 2, 2026).

A series of uninspired comments by the US President regarding the capabilities of NATO European allies and their ability to assist Washington have exacerbated alliance tensions created by the launch of Operation *Epic Fury* ([The Telegraph](#), April 1, 2026). Internally tensions were further heightened by several countries' refusal to allow overflights (France) or the use of air bases (Italy, Spain) without prior consultation and agreement ([Reuters](#), March 31, 2026). Donald Trump escalated tensions with European partners by threatening to withdraw from NATO.

Although the US is requesting allied military assistance to secure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz ([Department of War](#), March 31, 2026), the Trump Administration did not consult prior to launching attacks against Iran with its European allies, despite the risk that they might be indirectly affected by the US-Israeli military operation being easy to anticipate. Furthermore, the Pentagon does not appear to have made contingency plans to secure freedom

of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz ([CNN](#), April 3, 2026). In addition to neglecting to consult European allies, the US has recently signalled that it wants NATO not to extend its role beyond the European continent and to limit itself strictly to the North Atlantic area, as defined by the Washington Treaty ([Politico](#), February 19, 2026). This regional restriction also includes NATO's training mission in Iraq, for example (*Ibid.*). Consequently, the American stance relative to European NATO allies is profoundly contradictory.

EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT

Despite the elimination of Ayatollah Ali Hosseini Khamenei and a substantial part of the Iranian military, paramilitary, and political elite ([Aljazeera](#), March 3, 2026), the institutional framework of the Iranian state remains functional. A new supreme leader was chosen in the person of Ayatollah Khamenei's son, Mojtaba, favoured by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ([The New York Times](#), March 9, 2026). His health condition and exact location remain unknown.

At the same time, no political movement has emerged inside Iran capable of successfully challenging the current regime in Tehran. Previous protests against the US-Israeli strikes – which were suppressed by regime forces – did not resume following the launch of Operation *Epic Fury*, as the Iranian government's retaliatory measures against the January 2026 demonstrations caused over 30,000 casualties ([Euronews](#), January 27, 2026). As long as American-Israeli attacks continue, a large-scale protest movement is unlikely to occur and successfully challenge the Tehran regime.

Both the American attack and the Iranian response with ballistic missiles and drones put pressure on the production of ammunition for US-made air defense systems, particularly Patriot air defense systems. One of the consequences of this conflict for Romania is the delay in the delivery of the final three Patriot systems out of the seven ordered in 2017. Furthermore, Patriot interceptors (especially PAC-3) will be harder to procure for Ukraine. In the first two weeks of the current conflict approximately 1,000 Patriot interceptors of all types have been launched by Gulf states and the US against Iranian ballistic missiles and drones ([Bloomberg](#), March 10, 2026).

The US launched over 850 Tomahawk missiles against Iranian targets, representing a significant portion of the US Navy's cruise missile inventory ([CSIS](#), March 27, 2026). Thus,

the US consumed more Tomahawk missiles in a single month than during Operation *Iraqi Freedom* in 2003. As military operations are ongoing, cruise missile consumption will increase over time. In the fiscal year 2026, the US Navy is set to procure only 190 Tomahawk cruise missiles (Ibid.), an insufficient quantity to replenish stockpiles.

The US-Israel war with Iran diverts attention from the Russo-Ukrainian war and its peace process ([Axios](#), March 30, 2026). Washington's strategic focus will thus be stretched to its limit, especially since both the Middle East peace process and the Russo-Ukrainian peace negotiations are managed by the same team of negotiators: special envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner are also handling the Middle East.

The US-Israeli attack against Iran generated a disproportionate response that targeted and affected the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Cyprus, Iraq, Qatar, Turkey, Oman, and Azerbaijan – states that took no part in the hostilities. Tehran's strategy consists of horizontal escalation, expanding the conflict to a regional level to demonstrate to US partners that the alliance with Washington does not guarantee their security. While certain attacks might be justified from the perspective that they were launched against American facilities or US units deployed in the Gulf region, Tehran also targeted civilian assets without any military significance. This chaotic regional response reinforces the perception of Iran as an unpredictable actor operating outside international rules and accepted standards of behavior (*rogue state*). Operation *Epic Fury* strikes an ally of the Russian Federation – one that provided military assistance to the Kremlin without Vladimir Putin doing anything tangible to support it. The Russian Federation supports Iran by providing intelligence regarding US forces deployed in the Persian Gulf and US bases in the Middle East ([CBS News](#), March 28, 2026; [NBC News](#), March 28, 2026), as well as supplying improved Shahed drones. There is no direct Russian military support through troop deployment.

Ukraine aims to maintain attention on itself by offering support and assistance to counter Iranian drones for the US and Gulf states attacked by Iran. Several Ukrainian military experts have already been dispatched to the region to offer assistance to interested states concerning drone defense ([Atlantic Council](#), March 31, 2026; [Defence News](#), March 20, 2026).

Additionally, the attack on Iran removes a regional partner for Beijing. China was one of the main buyers of Iranian oil, but Beijing will be affected to a lesser extent by the oil shock due to investments made in green energy and electricity generation capacities.

The war severely affected freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, particularly tanker traffic. The outbreak of hostilities led to an explosion in insurance costs for shipowners. The US neglected to plan joint secure navigation corridors with regional or European allies backed by a robust naval presence. Although the Iranian navy was taken out of action through attacks on its bases, the combat capability of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy remains unclear ([Ship & Bunker](#), March 19, 2026).

Navigation in and out of the Persian Gulf is further complicated by the tense situation in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait connecting the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal³, where the Houthis attacked repeatedly vessels crossing these waters. Around 28 civilian ships have been attacked by various means (aerial drones, naval drones, anti-ship missiles, artillery) from the start of the conflict (February 28) to the present while transiting the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz ([USNI](#), April 3, 2026). The effects of the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz will be acutely felt in Asia-Pacific, as states in this region import large quantities of oil from the Gulf ([BBC](#), April 2, 2026).

Freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf has been called into question by the threat of naval mines. It is unclear whether Iran deployed mines before or after the outbreak of hostilities ([Reuters](#), March 11, 2026; [The New York Times](#), March 12, 2026). According to sources within the US Department of War (Department of Defense), 16 Iranian military vessels capable of laying naval mines were destroyed or taken out of action by US strikes ([Axios](#), March 10, 2026). Naval mines can easily be laid using military or even civilian vessels with the aid of improvised platforms. Fast attack craft (*Boghammer* type) can be used by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy to lay mines. During the Iran–Iraq War, Tehran mined Persian Gulf waters using military vessels, as well as civilian ships and craft. It is estimated that Iran possesses around 6,000 naval mines of all types ([The Wall Street Journal](#), March 11, 2026).

Another challenge relates to the easing of the sanctions regime imposed on the Russian Federation in the oil sector to mitigate risks to the global economy. This sanctions relief applies to oil aboard tankers in transit. Moscow stands to gain in the short term from Operation *Epic*

³ Although crossing the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait is possible, merchant vessels generally avoid these waters due to attacks by Houthi rebels, preferring to bypass the African continent to reach the Mediterranean Sea from the Indian Ocean. Both the US and EU member states patrol the strait

Fury, but Ukrainian attacks on oil terminals in the Baltic Sea region narrow this window of opportunity ([Reuters](#), April 3, 2026).

The Russo-Ukrainian War and the US-Israel versus Iran war are interconnected through the actors involved and the systemic consequences of these military conflicts. Russia provides minimal support to Iran, and Moscow could benefit from the economic fallout of the Middle East war. Acute tensions in transatlantic relations serve the interests of revisionist powers, namely the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

Both sides have struck energy infrastructure ([Reuters](#), March 19, 2026) and even civilian targets. Water desalination plants in the Gulf region were hit ([The New York Times](#), April 3, 2026), as well as an Iranian school ([The New York Times](#), March 11, 2026), mistaken for an IRGC barracks. President Trump threatened to strike and target Iranian energy and transport infrastructure ([CNBC](#), April 3, 2026).

There is no support for Operation *Epic Fury* among American citizens, according to six recent polls conducted by or for: CNN, Reuters-Ipsos, Fox News, Washington Post, NBC News ([CNN](#), March 7, 2026). The American intervention against Iran generated no *rally around the flag* effect to re-legitimize the Trump Administration, as typically occurs in American politics when a military operation against an adversary is launched ([CBS News](#), March 22, 2026; [NBC News](#), April 1, 2026; [The New York Times](#), April 4, 2026). Operation *Epic Fury* does enjoy support among MAGA republicans ([CNN](#), March 20, 2026; [The New York Times](#), March 30, 2026), but within the rest of the Republican camp, opinions are more nuanced ([PBS](#), April 3, 2026). Among Democratic and independent voters, the military action enjoys no support ([Pew Research Center](#), March 25, 2026).

MILITARY LESSONS

The conflict reaffirms the superiority of Western weaponry and military model. Since the start of the conflict, the US has struck over 12,500 Iranian targets ([RFEL](#), March 31, 2026; [CNN](#), April 3, 2026). Iran, equipped with weapons of domestic, Chinese, and Russian manufacture, offers no serious resistance to the American-Israeli multi-domain assault. Russia and China will have to face more reluctant potential buyers of their sophisticated weapons systems, especially air defense systems. American military success, however, is not yet reflected in political-diplomatic terms.

The US failed to consider the lessons of the Iran–Iraq War (1980-1989) – especially the so-called "Tanker War", Operation *Praying Mantis* (1988), and Operation *Desert Storm* (1991) (Crist 2013, 277-380). In all these conflicts, Iran and Iraq respectively, sought to compromise navigation through the Persian Gulf, and the US and its allies intervened to eliminate threats to the freedom of navigation. Given the history of American operations in the Persian Gulf, the compromise of the freedom of navigation should have been anticipated by the planners of Operation *Epic Fury*. Strikes against coastal defense systems do not seem to have been a priority for the US and Israeli planners, even though air supremacy was achieved relatively easily.

Iran failed to close or significantly reduce its vulnerabilities in terms of intelligence highlighted by the 2025 American-Israeli attacks (Dolatabadi 2025, 21-28; [Rovner](#), June 20, 2025). Israel and the US managed to eliminate with relative ease part of Iran's civil and military leadership using intelligence gathered through various technical means, but also through human networks developed inside the country. Thus, there appear to be enough individuals, including within the Iranian political elite, willing to collaborate with Israeli and American intelligence services against the Islamic republic and the IRGC.

The Iranian strategy relies on a major exercise of will power. Tehran seems willing to absorb an entire series of apparently catastrophic losses, banking on the lack of resilience of the US and its regional and European allies. In this sense, it launched attacks against regional states with the aim of demonstrating that their partnerships with the US does not protect them. The *de facto* blockade of the Strait of Hormuz fits into this strategy of raising costs upon the aggressor and its allies. Iran seems to have implemented certain measures to decentralize military and political command in order to better survive American and Israeli strikes ([The New York Times](#), February 22, 2026). The effectiveness of these measures is debatable ([Parpanchi](#), March 17, 2026).

Integrated air defence systems only partially solve the problem of the threat posed by ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and especially "kamikaze" drones (which in practice act as rudimentary cruise missiles). There must also exist an aerial and/or ballistic retaliatory capability targeting primarily the production and storage facilities of these types of weaponry.

Iran's only effective response against American-Israeli coalition attacks are ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and kamikaze drones. Shahed-136 drones remain a persistent threat due to their relatively minimal cost compared to the damage they can cause. The Iranian

response has so far generated minor casualties among American troops in the Gulf and some materiel losses without significantly diminishing the operational capabilities of US forces ([CNN](#), March 30, 2026).

The *Aegis* system was successfully used against ballistic attacks launched against Turkey ([Türkiye Today](#), March 14, 2026). Two Iranian ballistic missiles launched against Turkey were destroyed by Standard SM-3 interceptors ([Anadolu Ajansi](#), March 10, 2026; [Military](#), March 10, 2026), of the same type as those deployed in Romania as part of the *Aegis Ashore* program.

Iran reportedly launched two intermediate-range ballistic missiles at the British base in Diego Garcia, without hitting any target. At this moment, it is unclear what happened to these missiles: either they failed after launch, or they were intercepted by anti-ballistic systems aboard *Aegis*-equipped warships ([BBC](#), March 22, 2026).

CONCLUSIONS

- American objectives within Operation *Epic Fury* remain unclear: *regime change*, *regime compliance*, military attrition of Iran, or dismantling the Iranian nuclear program. These cannot be pursued simultaneously with the military assets the US has deployed in the region and put into action against Tehran.
- The US neglected the role of European allies in Operation *Epic Fury*. Consequently, freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf has suffered.
- The US did not anticipate that Iran, using a relatively small number of asymmetric means as well as threats and bellicose statements, could compromise freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Compromising freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz is the result of poor planning of the American military intervention.
- US foreign policy during the second Trump Administration is exceptionally interventionist compared to previous electoral campaign promises, as well as existing programmatic documents.

- Alliance management is not a strong suit of the Trump Administration. The intervention against Iran was not prepared from a diplomatic and political point of view – hence the development and escalation of transatlantic tensions.
- The intervention against Iran has consumed ammunition that could have been donated or sold to Ukraine, but which the US refused to make available, claiming it is needed for deterrence against Chinese revisionism in the Indo-Pacific. This aspect strains relations with European allies who pay on Ukraine's behalf for American weaponry through the PURL initiative and raises serious questions regarding American strategic priorities (China, Russia, or the Middle East).
- The Trump Administration did not anticipate the economic effect of the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz because the US became the world's largest oil producer in the last decade ([EIA](#), March 11, 2024) and is thus independent of Middle Eastern oil. Decisionmakers in Washington likely underestimated the impact of the blockade on international markets.
- The oil shock generated by the US-Israeli intervention is already being felt in the Asia-Pacific region, and this aspect could affect US relations with allies in this region.
- Eliminating a significant portion of Iran's political, theological and military elite could make negotiating a ceasefire difficult due to the risk of the rise to power of a much more radical faction of Iranian decisionmakers.
- Through the election of Mojtaba Khamenei, son of the late ayatollah, to the position of supreme leader, the Iranian regime turns into a *dynastic theocracy*, and M. Khamenei is known for his radical stances ([The Times of Israel](#), March 13, 2026; [CNN](#), March 29, 2026).
- The objective of replacing the Tehran regime solely through air strikes is not achievable.
- For the survival of the Tehran regime, the period after the end of hostilities is crucial. That is when the regime is likely to face a new wave of domestic dissent.
- Iran's strategy is to extend the conflict to a regional level using asymmetric means, in order to force US-allied Gulf states to pressure Washington to abandon the intervention.
- The only way Iran can retaliate is by affecting the global economy and, implicitly, the American economy. The *de facto* disruption of the flow of hydrocarbons from the

Middle East could result in a global recession. The Tehran regime is banking on the fact that the West cannot absorb the effects of another global economic crisis ([Politico](#), March 27, 2026).

- If the US launches ground operations in Iran, these could target the Iranian coast of the Strait of Hormuz, the islands of Abu Musa Island, Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb, or Kharg Island, where the main Iranian oil terminal is located. Occupying Kharg Island could further amplify the global oil shock. An American ground intervention could also target capturing Iran's enriched uranium stockpile and destroying facilities buried since the air strikes of Operation *Midnight Hammer* in 2025.
- The launch of intermediate-range ballistic missiles against the American base on Diego Garcia demonstrates Iran's determination to fight off the intervention and capability to escalate the conflict beyond regional limits.
- Furthermore, drones of any type (aerial, naval, terrestrial) remain a persistent threat and a cutting-edge technology available to both state and non-state actors. The proliferation of these weapons systems cannot be stopped due to technological maturity, low development costs compared to other weapons systems, and their battlefield effectiveness. Unmanned systems will decisively influence the character of war in the next decade. At present, mastering the technology behind unmanned systems represents a major stake in inter-state competition.

Implications and Consequences for Romania

- Romania's economy has been affected by the oil shock generated by the war. Increasing fuel prices will have cascading effects across the economy, and inflation will rise.
- In addition to the oil shock affecting the Romanian economy, agricultural production risks suffering due to the conflict's impact on natural gas production and transport, leading to a decrease in chemical fertilizer production. Thus, agricultural operational costs and production costs will increase ([RFERL](#), March 27, 2026).
- The Iranian ballistic arsenal presents some risks for Romania in the context of Bucharest's decision to allow the US to use the Mihail Kogălniceanu base to host American tanker aircraft. However, the launch of intermediate-range ballistic missiles

against Romania is improbable. The *Aegis Ashore* system deployed at Deveselu provides effective protection against such ballistic attacks.

- Placing bases on Romanian territory at the disposal of US military forces, under the strategic partnership and agreement regarding the hosting of US troops on national territory, does not mean that the Romanian government becomes a belligerent in the Middle East conflict. The agreement concluded with the American side and approved by CSAT and Parliament provides for using Romanian bases for aerial refuelling aircraft, not for strike aircraft.
- The conflict in the Middle East, tensions in Asia-Pacific, and competition for the Arctic will make promoting the Black Sea agenda difficult. This conflict, combined with the Greenland crisis that brought Arctic competition into discussion, has greatly used up the bandwidth of the West's strategic attention. The Black Sea agenda will need to be presented by Romania in a much more imaginative way than before.
- Should CSAT decide that Romania participates in a demining mission in the Strait of Hormuz, Romania's naval mine countermeasures capabilities will be tested ([MAS](#), April 2, 2026). This participation will likely take place after the cessation of hostilities. Romanian mine warfare assets are already strained under the MCM Black Sea mission in the Black Sea, but Romanian capabilities in this area are limited due to the age of vessels assigned to these missions. The newest mine warfare ships that Romania possesses are two *Sandown*-class minehunters procured from Royal Navy surplus between 2022 and 2025, built in the early 2000s. Romanian-designed and produced *Musca*-class minesweepers are not adapted to Persian Gulf conditions, have limited capabilities ([Despre marina română](#), December 10, 2025), and are known for poor sea-keeping qualities ([RNHS](#), January 28, 2023). However, the Romanian Naval Forces possess drones and submersible vehicles that can be used for mine countermeasures.
- Romania joined a diplomatic declaration agreed upon by Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Japan regarding securing freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz ([Administrația Prezidențială](#), March 20, 2026). Romania's position regarding the American-Israeli-Iranian war is non-involvement in the conflict and de-escalation (Ibid.). Romania could participate in such a mission with staff officers and/or personnel specialized in mine warfare operations ([Antena 3](#), March 23, 2026).

- Strengthening coordination with European allies in defence and foreign policy is necessary.
- Developing drone production as well as counter-drone technology must be accelerated and prioritized.
- Operation *Epic Fury* reinforces the need to protect freedom of navigation, maritime security, and maritime lines of communication both from a strategic and economic perspective. Romania's National Defence Strategy explicitly notes the lack of investment in equipping and arming the Romanian Naval Forces as a vulnerability ([SNA 2025](#), 15). The Strait of Hormuz crisis represents an additional argument for investing in new ships and modern naval assets.

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