

Those who rose through the ranks during the war played a crucial role in covering these gaps and implementing our military and operational strategies during the conflict. One key figure was the late Brigadier General Pilot Abbas Babaei, who was promoted from captain to colonel and appointed deputy operations commander of the Air Force. He was truly a military genius. His first move was to shift the F-14 fleet from the airbases in Isfahan and Shiraz to Bushehr, significantly cutting down aircraft flight hours. As you know, the more hours a plane logs, the more it requires servicing and parts replacement. According to our initial contract with the Americans, we weren't allowed to move the F-14s from Shiraz and Isfahan, and the infrastructure to support such a transfer wasn't in place. But he went ahead and violated that contract, transferring the F-14s despite the difficulty of supporting them at the new base. On the other hand, Brigadier General Babaei, aware of our missile shortages, urged caution with missile use and advised us not to fire them off freely, even though his orders didn't sit well with the pilots. His rationale was that if we blew through our missiles now and the war dragged on, we'd run out of supply. Meanwhile, Iraq was rapidly stocking up its military equipment from various countries. He said, "Let's assume this war stretches for 20 years and we have to stretch out what we have until the end." Therefore, we kept flying the F-14s mostly as a deterrent. Enemy pilots would beat a retreat as soon as they spotted an F-14 approaching. Later, we came up with the idea to build missiles for the F-14. Our technical



team innovatively mounted ground-to-air Hawk missiles on the fighter jets, effectively turning them into air-to-air missiles. This was a major breakthrough. The initial test was carried out by Fereidoun Ali-Mazandarani, and I conducted the operational test over the Persian Gulf against Iraqi Mirage jets. The planning for this innovation was done by the late Brigadier General Babaei. Even though the Americans hadn't yet handed us the F-14 air-to-ground bombing manual, he and the late Mostafa Ardestani and Shahram Rostami came up with the plan.

In fact, the Americans equipped the F-14 with bombs only after us, during the First Persian Gulf War. The difference was that they used supersonic bombs, while we relied on conventional bombs.

As someone who participated in the entire eight-year war and witnessed its ups and downs firsthand, what is your take on the war's outcome? Despite all the hardships and shortages, and despite the full backing that dozens of countries gave to Saddam Hussein's regime, we managed to hold off the enemy's aggression and didn't give up



Iranian Air Force pilot Vali Ovisi (R) gets awarded by then-president of Iran Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (L) for safely landing a burning F-14 aircraft during the Iraqi-imposed war (1980-1988).
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Of course, the army always has contingency plans for war and crises, but this must be managed at a higher level as well. We have to know in advance how much budget, weapons, and equipment we need for a long, grinding war and how to keep the country afloat over 10 or 20 years of conflict. Now, this plan exists — not because we welcome war, but as a necessity for when it's needed.

even an inch of our soil. However, we must face the war's realities and draw lessons from the eight-year Sacred Defense for the future. You may recall that after liberating Khorramshahr and pushing Iraq out, we used to chant "War, war until victory," and another slogan was "Even if the war lasts 20 years, we stand firm." Yet, victory in a war expected to drag on for 20 years requires precise, calculated planning from the start. We should have laid out our strategy for a prolonged war beforehand so we wouldn't reach a point after eight years where our officials would advise the late founder of Iran's Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini in a way that made him see accepting Resolution 598 as "drinking from the poisoned chalice". They told him our defense and logistical capacity were such that accepting the cease-fire then was in the country's best interest, but had we been prepared for a 20-year conflict and had a solid plan, we wouldn't have let things get to that point. Of course, the army always has contingency plans for war and crises, but this must be managed at a higher level as well. We have to know in advance how much budget, weapons, and equipment we need for a long, grinding war and how to keep the country afloat over 10 or 20 years of conflict. Now, this plan exists — not because we welcome war, but as a necessity for when it's needed. Had we gone in with a 20-year strategy, we would have stayed in the fight until final victory because if the outcome had met Imam Khomeini's expectations, he wouldn't have used the phrase "drinking from the poisoned chalice" to describe accepting the cease-fire and ending the war.

New details emerge about Iran-Israel dogfight in June

PERSPECTIVE

The commander-in-chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army has stated that some of the country's pilots have flown missions and gone head-to-head with the enemy during the imposed 12-day war in June 2025. "These experiences must be carefully logged and utilized," Major General Amir Hatami said. According to Defa Press, the Iranian Air Force, boasting experienced, committed, and skilled pilots, despite harsh sanctions and technical constraints, has kept up and optimized its older fleet, such as Phantom and MiG fighters, while also deploying domestic aircraft like Kowsar and Azaraksh to hold the line in protecting the country's airspace. During the imposed 12-day war, given limited resources, the Iranian Air Force faced off against the air forces of at least four countries directly supporting the Israeli regime's fighters, namely Germany, the UK, France, and the USA. Based on field observations, they were

in charge of logistics and refueling. Despite this, Iran's Air Force put on a strong showing. Throughout the recent conflict, by maintaining round-the-clock flights, the force managed to prevent damage that the Israeli Air Force might have inflicted on critical infrastructure such as electricity, water, gas, and even civilian homes. Without this presence, casualties and damages in our country would have run wild. Major General Hatami remarked, "Although this war lasted only 12 days, it carries precious lessons. We essentially went toe-to-toe with the technologically concentrated essence of the West and NATO. They had handed our Israeli enemy everything it needed, and whenever shortages arose, its allies stepped in to back it up and support it." This is precisely what is said about the logistical backing of Israel's Air Force during the imposed 12-day war; Tanker planes from Germany, France, and the US, along with the British airbase in southern Cyprus, stood behind the Zi-



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An Iranian pilot waves to the audience at the 12th Iran International Aerospace Exhibition, which was held in Kish Island, southern Iran, on December 10-13, 2024.
● [FARHAD KHIABANI/MASHREGH](#)



Iranian Air Force Commander Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi (L) closely inspects the Chinese-made J-10C fighter jet at Airshow China 2024 in Zhuhai.
● [SNN](#)

onist enemy. However, the proud pilots of the Iranian Air Force, despite scarce resources, compromised many enemy flights over our skies and disrupted their operations. Brigadier General Pilot Hamid Vahedi, commander of the Iranian Air Force, revealed that only minutes after the official start of the Israeli regime's attack on our beloved country, pilots at Shahid Babaei Air Base in Isfahan and other bases flew into action over Tehran and other critical areas, successfully shooting down several advanced and unmanned enemy aircraft. He added: "Brave pilots from various Air Force bases repeatedly launched attacks on enemy flight groups, thwarting their operations. Moreover, during the recent imposed war, the Air Force gave its all to defend Iran's skies and people, conducting dozens of operations that, due to security considerations, cannot be brought out into the open at this time." In this comprehensive hybrid war, which the Zionist regime and its allies

kicked off and ultimately begged for a cease-fire in disgrace, all branches of the armed forces stepped up with full might to defend the country. This was echoed in the words of the commander-in-chief, who maintained, "All of Iran, from the Ground Forces, Air Defense, and Air Force to Basij, the IRGC, and the people, were in the thick of it during the recent imposed war and truly fought and resisted to ensure that Islamic Iran remains proud in history forever." It is worth noting that Iranian Air Defense, in countering enemy aircraft, also achieved significant success by taking down drones, micro-UAVs, and cruise missiles. Even today, more than two months after the war with the Zionist regime, Iranian Air Force pilots keep up their essential duties regularly, especially night patrols over Iran's skies, to prevent any surprise in possible future battles.

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