

the New Year's Eve period have resulted in cultivators being unable to completely empty their ponds and prepare them for restocking. For these reasons, production reduction in both the aquaculture sector and the marine capture sector appears unavoidable.

**Regarding marine capture in the southern sea, what is the condition of launches and fishing vessels? Have any damages been inflicted upon these vessels by the enemy during the war?**

In the realm of capture from the southern sea, as you are aware,

numerous restrictions currently exist due to wartime conditions. The fleet of fishing launches stationed in southern ports has likewise sustained damage during this war. Upon what basis and with what objective the enemy has targeted many of our fishing and cargo launches

along the southern coasts and within the ports of the Persian Gulf remains ambiguous. Naturally, such attacks disrupt the process of capture and production. Therefore, under current circumstances, no clear prospect exists for the improvement or increase of capture.

As previously indicated, we shall also confront diminished production in the aquaculture sector. Consequently, a lesser quantity of product shall be available for export, and exports this year shall likely decrease relative to the preceding year. The precise magnitude of

this reduction depends upon various prospective scenarios. Naturally, the sooner the existent wartime conditions are resolved, the lesser the damage sustained. However, should this trend persist, greater harm shall be inflicted upon both production and exports.

# Five shameless moments of Iran war opportunism and grifting

By Stavroula Pabst  
Reporter

## PERSPECTIVE

As the US blockade on the Strait of Hormuz threatens an already tenuous cease-fire between the US and Iran, many at home are looking to profit. Below are five examples of wartime grifters, profiteers, and opportunists absolutely outdoing themselves.

### Lockheed Martin CEO: wartime Trump Pentagon a 'golden opportunity'

Late last month, Lockheed Martin CEO Jim Taiclet lavished praise on the Trump administration for rolling out the red carpet to the defense industry.

"This is a golden opportunity right now based on who's in government," Taiclet told investors during an earnings call. He cited in particular officials' "willingness to change" and "the demand that they have for what we do and what our partners in our industry do".

That "demand," of course, is war, and the administration has pretty much been in it since Trump's 2025 inauguration, from supporting Israel in its Gaza and Lebanon operations, firefights with the Ansarullah (Houthis), and now Iran. Lockheed has signed billions in contracts with the Pentagon since the beginning of the year, mostly to replenish missiles. Lockheed Martin also has an agreement with the Pentagon to quadruple its production of THAAD interceptors by 2027.

And the US has used many of them both. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies found late last month, the US has burned up over 45% of its Precision Strike Missiles (PrSMs) and roughly half of its THAAD and Patriot missile defense interceptors.



Eric Trump (L) and Donald Trump Jr. pose outside the Nasdaq in Times Square in New York on August 13, 2025.

To refill these stocks, the US is mulling a possible Iran war supplemental package — slated to cost an estimated \$80 to \$100 billion — to replace lost munitions and other military equipment. According to Mike Fredenburg in his reporting for Responsible Statecraft (RS) in 2024, the US pays way too much for each missile, a lot more than it should for say, a SM-2 missile (\$1.2 million–\$2 million a piece) or SM-6 (upwards of \$5 million each), but since there are only a handful of prime contractors in the business, they can charge whatever they want.

As Stephen Semler, journalist and co-founder of the Security Policy Reform Institute, tells RS, "The interceptor shortage will be addressed in the military-industrial-congressional complex's favorite way: throw money at the problem."

### Trump's sons roll in the drone industry dough

Powerus, a drone firm funded by President Trump's sons, Eric Trump and Donald Trump, Jr., received an Air Force contract for an unspecified number of interceptor drones two weeks ago. Bloomberg reported last month

that Powerus is also in talks with the United Arab Emirates about a potential sale of drones that can counter Iranian attacks.

In recent months, the Trump brothers have gone all out on defense tech, lining themselves up to profit from the war's their father is waging. Besides Powerus, Eric Trump has invested in Israeli attack drone firm and DoD contractor Xtend, whose drones have seen use in Iran, through a multi-million-dollar contract with an unnamed Middle Eastern government. Donald Trump Jr., for his part, backs drone parts startup Unusual Machines and is also a partner at defense- and tech-oriented venture capital (VC) firm 1789 Capital.

Keith Kellogg, Trump's former special envoy to Ukraine, also joined Powerus as an advisor last month, mere months after leaving his diplomatic post — likewise positioning himself to cash in on his time in government.

### Defense-contractor funded think tanker: Iran war is a bargain!

Two weeks ago, the Pentagon estimated that the Iran war has cost

about \$25 billion. Matthew Kroenig, a senior director at the defense contractor-funded Atlantic Council, called the low-ball price tag a "very good value."

"The entire US defense budget is roughly \$1 trillion and designed to deal with China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran," Kroenig wrote on X. "It only cost 2.5% of the annual defense budget to seriously degrade one of the four."

But others have to pay for Kroenig's bargain.

"I'm sure the farmers, trucking companies, and other small businesses that are going belly up because of soaring gas prices won't be surprised to hear that a war industry funded think tank believes the Iran war is a 'very good value,'" Ben Freeman, director of the Democratizing Foreign Policy program at the Quincy Institute, told RS.

The total cost of the Iran war has been a point of contention. Critics challenged the Pentagon's \$25



On March 23, anonymous traders bet about \$500 million that crude oil prices would go down. That was just 15 minutes before Trump announced the US would put off planned strikes on Iran's energy infrastructure — which sent oil prices falling. Another suspiciously timed trade occurred on April 21; betters wagered about \$430 million on falling crude oil prices, right before Trump said he would extend the US truce with Iran indefinitely.

billion estimate; US officials have since told CBS the conflict has cost around \$50 billion. Last month, Harvard economist Linda Bilmes predicted taxpayers will pay at least \$1 trillion for it in the long term. And none of these estimates include the broader impact of the war on the global economy.

According to the Quincy Institute's Think Tank Funding Tracker, the Atlantic Council has received nearly \$13 million from Pentagon contractors since 2019.

### Literally gambling on war

Prediction markets such as Polymarket and Kalshi have seemingly allowed those with insider knowledge of wartime events to gamble on — and profit handsomely from — their outcomes.

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Another suspiciously timed trade occurred on April 21; betters wagered about \$430 million on falling crude oil prices, right before Trump said he would extend the US truce with Iran indefinitely. That announcement likewise led to a drop in oil prices. The timing and amount of funds placed in the bets have led experts to contend they were not lucky, but were likely made based on advance knowledge of the announcements.

The White House has said it does not tolerate administration officials profiteering from insider knowledge. Donald Trump Jr. is on the advisory board of Polymarket.

### Political influence blitz

Chasing continued windfalls, weapons contractors are pushing for greater political influence in Washington.

As NOTUS reported two weeks ago, Political Action Committees (PACs) tied to 11 major weapons contractors sunk about \$4.7 million into federal congressional campaigns and political party committees from January 1 through March 31. As of late March, nearly three dozen firms had newly registered to lobby the US government on defense and energy-related issues since the conflict began, according to the Washington Times.

As contractors see it, money is on the table. In addition to a possible Iran war supplemental, Congress is also considering the White House's request for a record \$1.5 trillion defense budget for fiscal year 2027 — a jump up from fiscal year 2026's defense budget, which reached \$1 trillion for the first time.

"Every year Pentagon contractors get more and more taxpayer dollars and then use some of that money to convince Congress to give them even more money next year," Freeman argued. "It's a win-win-win for contractors, lobbyists, and Congress."

"The loser? American taxpayers who have to pay for this corrupt war profiteering," Freeman said.

The article first appeared on Responsible Statecraft.

## Crude oil futures trading volume

Contracts traded per minute; 6am to 8am March 23, 2026; ET

