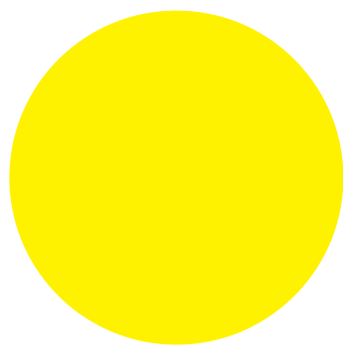


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The combo shows members of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps at a military drill around the capital in Tehran on May 9, 2026. DEAPRESS



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No scenario delivers victory for US

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

US President Donald Trump has claimed that he had been preparing for renewed military action against Iran but backed down at the request of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. This is not the first time he has spoken of calling off a planned strike. In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs expert Abed Akbari argued that a war with Iran would end in Washington's defeat, while the collapse of diplomacy would also tilt in Tehran's favor.



As a result, no scenario leads the United States to victory.

IRAN DAILY: What security and political considerations possibly drove these three countries to make such a request?

AKBARI: If Trump's claim is valid, such a request would point to a strategic failure for Washington in the region. Gulf states no longer trust the United States to protect them and understand that in the event of war, they—not America—would be the first victims. The vulnerability of energy infrastructure is the primary factor. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE know that Iran could bring their oil production close to zero within hours, and the United States would be unable to prevent it. These countries are no longer

willing to pay the price for Washington's adventurism. What they have come to understand is that the United States is not prepared to sustain a war, and its allies must come to terms with Iran themselves. The claim about diplomacy is also false. These states do not want to be destroyed in a war that the United States starts but does not finish. The experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq showed that Washington walks away from its allies. Saudi Arabia and the UAE no longer want to serve as expendable pieces.

What other concrete variables may have shaped US calculations in deciding to call off the strike?

First, fear of economic collapse. A \$200 oil price would paralyze the US economy. Trump, who promised economic growth, cannot be held responsible for a global recession. Washington knows that Iran could close the Strait of Hormuz and bring Europe and Asia to their knees. Second, military incapacity. The United States can strike, but it cannot win. The "Axis of Resistance" could destroy US bases in the region. Hezbollah could paralyze the Israeli regime. [Yemen's] Ansarallah has already shown that the US fleet in the Red Sea is vulnerable. Washington knows it would be drawn into a multi-front war with no winner. Third, the failure of air defense. The 40-day war showed that Iranian missiles can penetrate Iron Dome and Patriot systems. If the Israeli regime, despite full US support, could not defend itself,

how could US bases in the region remain secure? This was a catastrophic failure that forced Washington to accept that its military superiority is a myth. Fourth, domestic pressure. The American public is no longer willing to pay for futile wars. Iraq and Afghanistan cost thousands of lives and trillions of dollars with no gains. Congress also understands that war with Iran would be even more disastrous. Fifth, competition with China. The United States cannot become bogged down in the Middle East and leave China unchecked. War with Iran would mean losing the primary strategic competition. Russia and China would seize the opportunity and erode US global influence. Sixth, the lesson of the 40-day war: Iran demonstrated not only defensive strength but offensive capability. Washington saw that its deterrence had been broken and its allies were vulnerable. This marked one of the most significant strategic defeats for the United States in recent decades.

Given that the US has repeatedly refrained from military action at various junctures, does this pattern reflect operational constraints or a strategic preference for crisis management over escalation?

The pattern of US restraint reflects fear and incapacity rather than strategic calculation. Washington knows it cannot defeat Iran. Operational constraints are real. Iran is a vast, mountainous country with a population of 90 million and a

strong national identity. The Iraq experience is instructive. The United States toppled Saddam but destroyed the country and weakened itself. Iran is stronger than Iraq, and the United States is weaker than in 2003. War with Iran would mean the end of US hegemony. Washington has fallen back on sanctions and cyber operations because it has no other option. Yet these tools have failed. Sanctions did not push Iran back; its missile and nuclear programs advanced, and its regional influence expanded. Assassinations only made Iran more determined.

What conditions might push the United States toward accepting the costs of military action?

The scenarios that might push the United States toward military action would all end in Washington's defeat. First, if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, the United States would be unable to act. Striking underground facilities would be impossible, and Iran would have already relocated its assets. In that case, Iran would become a nuclear power, and Washington would have to accept it. The North Korea experience showed that the United States backs off in the face of nuclear capability. Second, if US forces are attacked, the response would be limited, as Washington knows escalation would lead to disaster. Third, closing the Strait of Hormuz is Iran's most powerful lever. If Iran keeps it closed, the global economy would be paralyzed, and pressure on the United States would increase for negotiations,

not war. Europe and Asia would urge Washington to step back rather than attack. The United States cannot reopen the strait, as Iran possesses thousands of anti-ship missiles capable of sinking the US fleet. Fourth, the failure of diplomacy works in Iran's favor. Over time, Iran grows stronger while the United States weakens. Sanctions are ineffective; Iran trades with China and Russia, and its nuclear program advances. Ultimately, Washington will have to come to terms with a nuclear Iran. Fifth, political change in the United States would not alter this trajectory. Even the most hardline president cannot launch a losing war. Public opinion, Congress, and the military are opposed. Pressure from the Israeli lobby is insufficient, as generals understand the likely outcome. Sixth, there is no tactical window. Iran has a multilayered defense system, and no internal collapse is on the horizon; after four decades of pressure, the Islamic Republic is stronger than ever. Even a limited US strike would trigger retaliation and set the region ablaze. Seventh, coalition pressure has lost its effectiveness. After the 40-day war, Arab states understand that aligning with the United States amounts to self-destruction.

As a result, no scenario leads the United States to victory. The longer Washington waits, the stronger Iran becomes. If it attacks, it loses and its hegemony comes to an end. The only option left is to accept the new reality: Iran is a regional power that Washington cannot stop.