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WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

IRAN SAYS IT HIT US TARGETS



MOHAMMED SALEM, REUTERS

Mourners gather Thursday by Imam Reza shrine on the day of the burial of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed Feb. 28 in Israeli and United States airstrikes, in Mashhad, Iran.

American military bases in Gulf region in crosshairs amid burial of supreme leader

ELWELY ELWELLY, NAYERA ABDALLAH AND TALA RAMADAN
Reuters

DUBAI — Iranian armed forces launched attacks on United States military infrastructure in Persian Gulf nations Thursday after U.S. strikes on Iran's southern coastal and eastern provinces.

Iranian media later reported explosions across southern Iran, including Bushehr, where one of Iran's nuclear plants is located, along with Konarak, Choghadak and Bandar Abbas. The U.S. military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the reports.

The developments came on the day Iran buried its slain Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at a shrine in Mashhad, the culmination of a week of mass funeral

processions and rallies.

A U.S. airstrike killed Khamenei on the first day of the war Feb. 28 as part of a U.S.-Israeli barrage against the nation that set off a monthlong conflict that killed thousands and throttled worldwide energy supplies.

Attacks on Qatari and Saudi shipping vessels this week upended the fragile ceasefire, with U.S. President Donald Trump declaring the truce "over."

Khamenei's funeral procession reached the country's holiest shrine for his burial with a huge crowd packing the courtyard, some bearing banners denouncing the U.S. president and reading, "We Will Kill Trump."

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Navy said the U.S. attacks and intervention in

redirecting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz disrupted the waterway's gradual reopening.

The Guards said the number of vessels transiting the strait under Iranian supervision recovered to about 50% of prewar levels over the past two weeks, adding that permission was being granted only to ships using routes designated by Tehran.

Any further U.S. intervention will draw a "crushing response," the Guards said.

The U.S. said Wednesday that its latest strikes were aimed at keeping the Strait open after it said Iranian forces struck three tankers in the area. The assault came hours after Trump said he believed the interim ceasefire with Iran to be over.

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NATO weathers latest Trump storm, but braces for more

ANDREW GRAY AND LILI BAYER
Reuters

ANKARA, Turkey — NATO has weathered another storm from Donald Trump, but European members of the military alliance are bracing for more turbulence ahead in relations with the U.S. president.

It says much about the state of U.S.-European ties when a NATO summit that began with a U.S. leader ordering a cut-off in trade with one member, Spain, and rebuking others was widely hailed as a success after he recommitted to the alliance hours later.

European leaders were upbeat after the Ankara summit, pleased by Trump's talk of "love in the room," his endorsement of a declaration that reiterated support

for NATO's Article 5 mutual defense pact and his decision to give Ukraine a license to make Patriot missile interceptors.

That was a relief after months of severe strains triggered by Trump's efforts to take Greenland from fellow NATO member Denmark and divisions over the Iran war, which prompted him to revive his long-standing criticism of the alliance and cast doubt on future U.S. membership.

Though they expect more volatility in the relationship, European officials see value in keeping their superpower ally inside the alliance. Without U.S. military clout, many fear they would be more vulnerable to an attack from Russia.

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YVES HERMAN, REUTERS

From left, U.S. President Donald Trump, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte attend a meeting of the North Atlantic Council on Wednesday during the NATO leaders' summit in Ankara, Turkey.