

# Behind the US Operation to Strike Iran

U.S. and Israeli military planners have for years been watching Iran's nuclear progress, and preparing to strike.

## The 12-Day War

With no deal after 60 days of U.S.–Iran nuclear talks, Israel launches a surprise attack targeting Iran's military and nuclear program.



**JUNE 13**

In the early hours, Israeli warplanes conduct a surprise attack across Iran, targeting Iranian military and nuclear facilities, multiple top Iranian military officials, and leading nuclear scientists.

**JUNE 14**

Iran returns fire on Israel and Iranian representatives back out of a set of planned June 15 talks with U.S. representatives in Oman.

**JUNE 16**

At a G7 summit in Canada, leaders of the United States, the UK, Japan, France, Italy, Germany, and Canada issue a joint statement affirming support for Israel, calling Iran "the principal source of regional instability and terror," and declaring that Iran cannot obtain a nuclear weapon.

**JUNE 15**

Trump states that there will soon be peace between Israel and Iran and says there are "many calls and meetings now taking place"

**JUNE 17**

As strikes continue, Israeli forces begin issuing evacuation orders for parts of the Iranian capital city of Tehran.

**JUNE 18**

The U.S. Embassy in Israel announces it will close from June 18 to 20.

**JUNE 20**

The British, French, and German foreign ministers, along with the European Union's foreign policy chief, hold talks with Iran's foreign minister to find ways to resolve the conflict.

**JUNE 19**

Trump announces two-week timeline to decide whether the United States joins the Israel–Iran conflict.

**JUNE 21**

More than 125 U.S. warplanes, assisted by U.S. warships, carry out strikes on three Iranian nuclear facilities.

**JUNE 22**

Iran's Supreme National Security Council debates closing the Strait of Hormuz.

## Fordow

**FIRST VENTILATION SHAFT**

Ventilation Shaft Construction June 29, 2008

Main Shaft

Covered Shaft September 27, 2009

Aim Point

Post-Strike Shaft June 25, 2025

Main Shaft

**Diagram of First Ventilation Shaft**

VENTILATION SHAFTS

PORTAL 3

1

2

PORTAL 2

PORTAL 1

PORTAL 4

**Diagram of Second Ventilation Shaft**

VENTILATION SHAFTS

PORTAL 3

1

2

PORTAL 2

PORTAL 1

PORTAL 4

**SECOND VENTILATION SHAFT**

Ventilation Shaft Construction June 29, 2008

Main Shaft

Covered Shaft February 6, 2024

Aim Point

Post-Strike Shaft June 25, 2025

Main Shaft

**JUNE 24**

Trump criticizes both Iran and Israel for carrying out additional attacks following his cease-fire announcement. Both sides ultimately implement the cease-fire.

**JUNE 23**

Iran launches a largely symbolic retaliatory missile strike at the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. After dismissing the Iranian barrage as "weak," Trump announces Israel and Iran have accepted a cease-fire.

**Al Udeid Air Base**

The largest U.S. military base in the Middle East.

**Qatar**

**GBU-57 Testing**  
U.S. Air Force tests the GBU-57, a precision-guided, bunker-busting weapon designed to destroy deeply buried and hardened targets.

## Natanz

## Isfahan

## GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP)

The GBU-57 weighs approximately **30,000 pounds**, including a more than 5,000-pound explosive warhead.

Each GBU-57 used in Operation Midnight Hammer is specially configured for its specific role in the mission.

The Massive Ordnance Penetrator bomb falls at more than **1,000 feet per second** by the time it hits its specified target.

The GBU-57 can drive up to **200 feet** into the ground before exploding.

## Operation Midnight Hammer

More than 125 U.S. warplanes, assisted by U.S. warships, strike three Iranian nuclear facilities, fulfilling more than 15 years of planning and preparation.

**12:01 a.m. ET**

Seven B-2 bombers depart Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. Other B-2s depart the base heading west as a diversion.

**5 p.m. ET**

U.S. warships begin launching more than two dozen Tomahawk cruise missiles at Iran's Isfahan nuclear facility.

**6 p.m. ET**

U.S. 4th and 5th generation fighter jets flying ahead of the B-2 bombers enter Iranian airspace and preemptively suppress Iranian air defense systems.

**6:40 p.m. ET**

Lead B-2 bomber crew reaches Fordow nuclear facility and drops two GBU-57 bombs. The rest of the bomber crews drop payloads over Fordow and Natanz.

**7:05 p.m. ET**

Final sea-launched Tomahawk missiles fall on the Isfahan facility.

**7:30 p.m. ET**

U.S. air strike package exits Iranian airspace.

**7**

B-2 bombers depart (plus decoys)

**More than 24**

TLAM Cruise Missiles fire at Isfahan

**12**

GBU-57 MOPs drop on Fordow

**2**

GBU-57 MOPs drop on Natanz

IRAN AND US

## Iran's Nuclear Program, and US Plan to Destroy It

Iran claims its nuclear program is peaceful, but international observers have been concerned by Iran's continued enrichment of uranium to levels far higher than needed for civilian purposes.

**February 2004**

Department of Defense begins developing the massive ordnance penetrator (MOP).

**2006**

Iran begins construction of Fordow nuclear facility.

**2009**

Department of Defense tasks two members of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency to study Fordow and determine a way to destroy it. They help steer development of the MOP.

**July 14, 2015**

China, France, Russia, the UK, the United States, Germany, and the European Union sign onto a deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in which Iran agrees to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief.

**May 8, 2018**

President Donald Trump withdraws Iran from the JCPOA and renews sanctions against Iran.

**2019**

Iran begins ramping up its uranium enrichment in response to rising U.S. sanctions.

**April 13, 2021**

Following an explosion at Natanz nuclear facility, and ahead of talks with the Biden administration to repair the JCPOA, Iran announces it will start enriching uranium up to 60 percent purity.

**August and September 2023**

In a deal the State Department said was separate from other Iran-related matters, the Biden administration authorized a prisoner exchange and the unfreezing of \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets.

**April 12, 2025**

The Trump administration restarts negotiations to restrain Iran's nuclear program.

**June 13, 2025**

Israeli forces launch a surprise attack targeting Iran's military and nuclear program, setting in motion a 12-day conflict.

THE EPOCH TIMES  
ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES, THE PENTAGON, AIR FORCE TELEVISION PENTAGON/DEFENSE VISUAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SERVICE, REUTERS, GETTY IMAGES, PUBLIC DOMAIN, PNGTREE