

# **Operation Epic Fury -Preventing Strategic Catastrophe: Why President Donald J. Trump's Strike on the Iranian Mullah Regime Was the Only Responsible Strategic Choice**



# Dedication

This work is respectfully dedicated to **President Donald J. Trump**, whose strategic clarity and moral resolve guided the decision to confront a gathering threat before it matured into a far more dangerous and potentially catastrophic conflict. At moments of profound consequence, leadership requires the willingness to act when delay would only increase the cost in lives, stability, and security. In authorizing Operation Epic Fury, President Trump demonstrated the difficult but necessary resolve required of leaders entrusted with protecting the United States, its allies, and the broader international system. The decision reflected a recognition that the strategic trajectory created by the Iranian mullah regime—marked by persistent aggression, the pursuit of advanced weapons capabilities, and the expansion of destabilizing proxy networks—could no longer be allowed to continue unchecked. History often judges leaders not by the ease of their decisions but by their willingness to confront danger before it becomes unavoidable, and in that moment the President chose decisive action over complacent delay.

This report is also dedicated to **Secretary of War Pete Hegseth**, whose diligence, discipline, and steadfast leadership helped translate strategic direction into operational success. The planning, coordination, and execution required for an operation of this scale demand extraordinary professionalism and tireless commitment from those responsible for guiding it. Secretary Hegseth's leadership ensured that American military power was applied with precision, effectiveness, and strategic purpose. His work reflects the enduring principle that sound strategy must be matched by careful execution, and that the strength of the United States lies not only in its capabilities but in the competence and dedication of those entrusted to command them.

This dedication is further extended to **Secretary of State Marco Rubio**, whose eloquence and clarity in explaining the necessity of the operation helped articulate to the American people and the international community why confronting the threat posed by the mullah regime could no longer be delayed. In times of crisis, diplomacy serves not only to build coalitions but also to illuminate the strategic realities that compel difficult decisions. Secretary Rubio's voice helped frame the operation within its proper context: not as an act of aggression, but as a necessary response to a regime whose actions had repeatedly destabilized the region and endangered global security. His efforts helped ensure that the rationale for action was understood both at home and abroad.

Above all, this work is dedicated to the **men and women of the United States Armed Forces**, whose courage, professionalism, and gallantry remain the foundation of the nation's security. Every strategic decision ultimately rests upon the shoulders of those who must carry it out in the field, in the air, and at sea. Their willingness to place themselves in harm's way in defense of their fellow citizens represents the highest tradition of service and sacrifice. Throughout Operation Epic Fury, American servicemen and women demonstrated once again the discipline, skill, and bravery that have long defined the United States military. Their actions reflect not only technical excellence but a deep commitment to the ideals they are sworn to defend.

The dedication of this report also extends to the many intelligence professionals, analysts, engineers, logisticians, and planners whose quiet efforts behind the scenes make operations of this magnitude possible. National security is sustained not only by those who fight on the front lines, but also by those who labor tirelessly in laboratories, operations centers, command posts, and intelligence facilities to ensure that the nation's defenders possess the information, tools, and support necessary to succeed. Their

contributions often remain unseen, yet they are indispensable to the success of every mission undertaken in defense of the country.

Finally, this work is dedicated to the **people of Iran**, whose courage in pursuing freedom and dignity in the face of repression continues to inspire the world. For decades, countless Iranian citizens have demonstrated extraordinary bravery in demanding the fundamental rights that belong to all people: the right to speak freely, to live without fear, and to determine the future of their own nation. Their struggle serves as a powerful reminder that the desire for liberty cannot be permanently suppressed by coercion or force. The hope remains that one day the Iranian people will be able to live in a nation that reflects their aspirations rather than the constraints imposed by a regime that has long denied them those freedoms.

May the sacrifices, courage, and determination represented by all those named here serve as a reminder that the pursuit of security and freedom is never the work of a single individual or institution. It is a collective endeavor carried forward by leaders who accept responsibility, by soldiers who answer the call of duty, and by ordinary citizens who refuse to surrender their hopes for a better future. This report stands as a tribute to that shared commitment.

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## Executive Summary

President Donald J. Trump's decision to strike Iran's Islamic Republic was a **strategically necessary preemptive action** taken to prevent a far larger regional or global conflict. For decades the Iranian regime demonstrated a **consistent pattern of behavior** that included **sponsorship of terrorism, proxy warfare, assassination plotting, repression of its own population, and persistent pursuit of weapons of mass destruction**. These actions showed that the regime could not be moderated through **diplomacy, sanctions, or traditional deterrence alone**.

The ideological structure of the Iranian regime combines **political authority with pseudo-theological fanaticism**, producing **motives that are inelastic** and strategic behavior that is **less responsive to traditional cost-benefit calculations**. This ideological framework weakens **classical deterrence models** because the regime does not consistently operate within the **rational escalation management normally associated with state actors**.

At the same time, **global technological and economic trends increasingly favor proliferation rather than containment**. Advances in **transportation, telecommunications, and globally integrated supply chains** reduce barriers to acquiring **dual-use technology**, transferring sensitive materials, and preserving technical knowledge. As a result, the broader strategic environment steadily **lowers the cost of pursuing advanced weapons capability while raising the difficulty of preventing it**. Time therefore operates in **favor of proliferators rather than those attempting to contain them**.

Iran's expanding **missile and drone capabilities** further altered the strategic balance by creating a **negative cost-exchange ratio between offensive and defensive systems**. Iran can generate **large volumes of missile and drone attacks using comparatively inexpensive systems**, while the United States and its allies must rely on **significantly more expensive interceptors** to defeat them. This imbalance places **sustained pressure on defensive inventories** and creates a situation in which **cheap offensive mass can gradually exhaust high-end defensive resources**.

Technological developments further accelerate Iran's pathway to **dangerous capability**. Emerging enrichment technologies, including **laser-based uranium enrichment**, reduce the size and detectability of enrichment infrastructure. Advances in **biotechnology and computing** expand the range of potential weapons pathways. **Foreign assistance and global procurement networks** provide additional technical support that enables the regime to maintain and regenerate its programs even after **physical infrastructure is damaged**.

These realities create a **strategic environment in which military strikes against facilities cannot fully eliminate the underlying knowledge base or dispersed technical networks supporting the program**. **Scientific expertise, stockpiled materials, and distributed procurement pathways** ensure that weapons capability can be **regenerated over time**. **Physical destruction alone therefore cannot permanently solve the problem while the regime responsible for pursuing these capabilities remains in power**.

Meanwhile, Iran's missile forces have increasingly shifted toward **solid-fuel systems that shorten launch preparation times and reduce opportunities for pre-launch interdiction**. Intelligence reporting also indicates **continued research into chemical and biological weapons pathways** that could eventually be

paired with missile delivery systems. These developments **compress warning timelines** and increase the risk that **even a limited missile penetration could trigger catastrophic escalation**.

Under these conditions the **strategic window for preventive action narrowed rapidly**. Delaying action would have allowed Iran to continue strengthening a **hardened and dispersed infrastructure protected by a growing missile and drone shield capable of deterring intervention**. **Waiting longer would have increased the likelihood that a future confrontation would occur under far more dangerous conditions**.

A **limited or symbolic strike** would not have been operationally effective against a system designed for **dispersal, concealment, and survivability**. Iran invested decades in **burying critical infrastructure deep underground** and distributing missile capabilities across **hardened facilities and underground “missile city” networks**. Only a **large-scale strike designed to suppress as much retaliatory capability as possible** could prevent immediate escalation while degrading the regime’s strategic capacity.

The underlying strategic problem extends beyond **infrastructure**. The Iranian regime itself remains the **organizing force behind proliferation, proxy warfare, and regional destabilization**. As long as the regime survives, the **incentives and institutional structures driving the pursuit of advanced weapons capability remain intact**. The broader proliferation environment ensures that the **technical pathways to regenerate these programs will remain available**.

For these reasons, **lasting stability requires removing the regime that continues to generate the threat**. **Regime change represents the only durable solution capable of breaking the cycle of escalation, proliferation, and regional destabilization**.

President Trump’s decision to strike therefore represented a **necessary strategic intervention** taken at the point where **delay would have made the threat substantially more dangerous**. The action **disrupted a trajectory moving toward a larger war** and created the **conditions needed to prevent the emergence of a far more destructive conflict**.

## Key Findings

The evidence examined throughout this report demonstrates that the strategic environment surrounding the Islamic Republic of Iran had reached a point where delay posed greater risks than decisive action. The regime's ideological structure, operational behavior, and technological trajectory created a threat environment increasingly resistant to traditional tools of containment. At the same time, global technological diffusion and the evolving economics of missile warfare steadily shifted the strategic balance in Iran's favor. These conditions combined to produce a narrowing window in which the United States could act to suppress the threat before it matured into a far more dangerous and potentially uncontrollable conflict.

1. **The Iranian regime represents a structurally different type of adversary** - The regime's ideological foundation combines political authority with pseudo-theological fanaticism, producing motives that are resistant to moderation and strategic compromise. This ideological framework weakens traditional deterrence models because regime behavior is less responsive to normal cost-benefit calculations and escalation management. As a result, Iran cannot reliably be managed through conventional diplomacy, sanctions, or retaliation-based deterrence alone.
2. **The regime has demonstrated a continuous pattern of belligerent behavior** - Iran's conduct has included terrorism sponsorship, proxy warfare, assassination plots, anti-American violence, and large-scale repression of its own population. These activities were not isolated incidents but part of a sustained operational model embedded in the regime's governance and foreign policy strategy. Decades of diplomatic engagement and sanctions failed to produce meaningful moderation.
3. **The global technological environment increasingly favors proliferation** - Advances in transportation, telecommunications, and globalized supply chains have significantly lowered barriers to acquiring dual-use technology and transmitting technical knowledge. Dangerous expertise and specialized components can now be transferred and preserved through distributed networks that are far more difficult to isolate or suppress. These trends steadily increase the feasibility of weapons development for determined actors.
4. **Revolutionary technologies are reducing the detectability of weapons programs** - Technologies such as laser-based uranium enrichment, advanced biotechnology, and high-performance computing expand the range of possible weapons pathways while reducing the physical footprint of critical infrastructure. Smaller, dispersed, and modular facilities are increasingly capable of supporting advanced weapons programs. These developments complicate detection and shorten the timeline between technical knowledge and operational capability.
5. **Foreign assistance and proxy networks accelerate Iran's proliferation capability** - External state actors and international procurement networks provide technical expertise, industrial capacity, and material support that can significantly shorten the timeline for weapons development. These relationships also create opportunities for clandestine enrichment, proxy refinement of nuclear material, and obfuscation of forensic attribution. The result is a proliferation pathway that becomes increasingly difficult to detect and disrupt.
6. **The economics of missile warfare favor the Iranian offensive** - Iran's missile and drone arsenal operates within a negative cost-exchange ratio in which relatively inexpensive offensive systems can force the United States and its allies to expend significantly more expensive defensive interceptors. Cheap, mass-produced drones and missiles can therefore impose disproportionate economic and logistical pressure on defensive systems. Over time this imbalance risks exhausting defensive inventories and stressing the industrial base.

7. **Iran's missile modernization compresses warning timelines and increases escalation risk -** The regime's shift toward solid-fuel ballistic missiles reduces launch preparation time and increases survivability of missile forces. Intelligence assessments also indicate continued research into chemical and biological payload pathways. These developments increase the probability that a large missile salvo could overwhelm defenses and potentially cross a weapons-of-mass-destruction escalation threshold.
8. **Hardened and dispersed infrastructure limits the effectiveness of limited strikes -**Iran has spent decades burying nuclear facilities deep underground and distributing missile capabilities across hardened networks of underground bases and "missile cities." This infrastructure was designed specifically to survive conventional attacks and preserve retaliatory capability. As a result, partial or symbolic strikes risk triggering retaliation without eliminating enough capability to prevent escalation.
9. **Military strikes cannot eliminate the underlying technical knowledge -** Scientific expertise, dispersed technical cadres, and preserved stockpiles ensure that weapons programs can eventually be regenerated even after physical infrastructure is destroyed. The regime itself acknowledges that nuclear knowledge cannot be bombed out of existence. Military action can degrade and delay capability but cannot permanently remove it while the governing system that pursues it remains intact.
10. **Regime survival guarantees long-term threat regeneration -** The Iranian regime remains the organizing force behind proliferation, proxy warfare, and regional destabilization. As long as the regime remains in power, the institutional incentives and ideological drivers supporting advanced weapons development will persist. In a proliferation-supportive global environment, this ensures that strategic capability will eventually be rebuilt.

The strategic trajectory outlined in this report demonstrates that the Iranian threat was intensifying across multiple dimensions simultaneously. Ideological rigidity, technological diffusion, and an unfavorable offense-defense cost exchange combined to create a rapidly deteriorating security environment. Under those conditions, delaying action would have allowed Iran to strengthen a hardened strategic posture protected by missile and drone mass capable of deterring intervention. The strike therefore represented a decisive effort to interrupt a strategic trajectory that was moving toward a far larger and more destructive conflict.





## **The Point Where Waiting Became More Dangerous Than Action**

For decades the Islamic Republic of Iran has represented one of the most persistent and destabilizing threats to international security, regional stability, and the safety of the United States and its allies. Unlike conventional adversaries motivated primarily by national interest and bounded by traditional deterrence logic, the mullah regime has operated through a hybrid model of ideological fanaticism, proxy warfare, terrorism, and strategic proliferation. Its conduct has not been episodic or reactive; it has been continuous, deliberate, and operationally embedded in the regime's method of rule and foreign policy.

Over time this pattern of behavior produced a clear and troubling trajectory. The regime repeatedly sponsored terrorism, enabled anti-American violence, pursued advanced weapons capability, and demonstrated a willingness to conduct assassination operations on foreign soil—including inside the United States itself. At the same time it brutally repressed its own population and refused meaningful moderation despite decades of diplomacy, sanctions, and deterrence. This was not the record of a state moving toward restraint. It was the record of a regime that persisted in escalation regardless of pressure or engagement.

Compounding this threat was a changing global environment that increasingly favored proliferation. Advances in transportation, telecommunications, and globally integrated supply chains reduced barriers to acquiring dual-use technology and preserving dangerous technical knowledge. In practical terms, the strategic clock was moving in the regime's favor. Waiting did not make the threat easier to manage; it made it harder to contain and more dangerous to confront later.

At the same time, Iran's expanding missile and drone arsenal created a negative strategic arithmetic in which cheap offensive mass could overwhelm expensive defensive systems. The regime's growing ability to generate large-scale missile and drone attacks—combined with the possibility of unconventional payloads—introduced the risk that even a small number of penetrations could trigger catastrophic escalation. Under those conditions, passive containment increasingly meant accepting a growing probability of regional war and strategic instability.

It was within this strategic context that President Donald J. Trump ordered the strike. The decision was not symbolic and it was not impulsive. It was the logical culmination of a long pattern of regime belligerency, a deteriorating strategic environment, and a narrowing operational window in which the threat could still be suppressed before reaching a far more dangerous threshold.

This report explains why the strike was not only justified but necessary. It examines the ideological drivers of the regime's behavior, the operational record of its belligerency, the technological and geopolitical trends that accelerated the proliferation threat, and the strategic arithmetic that made delay increasingly dangerous. Taken together, these factors demonstrate why decisive action became the only coherent policy option for preventing a far larger conflict in the future.

## **Inelastic by Belief, Dangerous by Design: The Pseudo-Theological Fanaticism THAT Made the Mullah Regime an Intolerable Threat**

The mullah regime was not driven by normal statecraft, normal incentives, or normal strategic restraint. Its pseudo-theological fanaticism made its motives inelastic, its behavior dangerous, and its threat increasingly

intolerable. This was not an adversary that could be reliably moderated through concessions, managed through routine diplomacy, or safely constrained through traditional retaliation-based logic alone. Its ideological structure distorted its decision-making in ways that made the threat it posed fundamentally different from that of a normal hostile state.

1. **Pseudo-theological fanaticism, not normal statecraft** — the regime's worldview was shaped less by conventional national interest than by a pseudo-theological ideological framework that elevated doctrinal commitment above prudence, restraint, and coexistence. That made its decision-making structurally more dangerous than that of a normal state actor.
2. **Inelastic motives made compromise unreliable** — because the regime's motivations were inelastic, moderation, de-escalation, and genuine strategic compromise could never be counted on as stable outcomes. Any apparent restraint had to be treated as temporary, tactical, or deceptive rather than evidence of durable behavioral change.
3. **Traditional deterrence was structurally weakened** — retaliation-based deterrence works best against actors who can be counted on to respond predictably to cost, risk, and punishment. A regime animated by pseudo-theological fanaticism is far less responsive to those pressures, making classical deterrence models weaker and less reliable.
4. **The regime did not operate by normal strategic rules** — this was not a conventional adversary operating within familiar boundaries of escalation management, mutual restraint, and rational cost-benefit calculation. Its ideological structure distorted its strategic logic and increased the likelihood of reckless, escalatory, and nonlinear behavior.
5. **This made the regime a qualitatively different threat** — taken together, ideological fanaticism, inelastic motives, and unresponsiveness to traditional deterrence made the mullah regime more dangerous than a normal hostile state. It was not merely another adversary to be managed, but a qualitatively different threat whose nature made passivity increasingly hazardous.

Because the regime's beliefs distorted its behavior, the threat it posed could not be judged through ordinary deterrence models alone. Its pseudo-theological fanaticism made it less governable by fear, less responsive to pressure, and less predictable under stress. That combination made the danger more severe, more persistent, and more difficult to contain over time.

**This was not a normal adversary and it could not be treated like one**

## **Relentless by Pattern, Escalatory by Nature: The Mullah Regime's Continuity of Belligerency Proved It Would Not Moderate**

The mullah regime's belligerency was not episodic, rhetorical, or misunderstood. It was continuous, operational and repeatedly expressed through terrorism, proxy warfare, assassination plotting, anti-American violence and internal mass repression. U.S. authorities have publicly tied Iranian regime

elements to assassination plots against the Saudi ambassador in Washington D.C. and numerous attempts against President Trump. The same pattern extended inward through lethal crackdowns on the Iranian people.

1. **Terrorism — Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis, etc.** — Terrorism was not incidental to the regime's conduct; it was a standing instrument of power. The U.S. Treasury and State Department have repeatedly identified IRGC-QF support to Iran-aligned proxy and terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah and the Houthis as part of the regime's operating model for violence, coercion, and instability across the region.
2. **Killing of United States servicemen and women in Iraq via al Quds Forces** — The regime's belligerency included the killing of American personnel in Iraq through the IRGC-QF and its militia partners including Kata'ib Hizballah & Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq.
3. **The mullah regime attempts at assassination in D.C. — Saudi ambassador** — The DOJ announced charges in a plot "directed by elements of the Iranian government" to murder the Saudi Ambassador to the United States while he was in the United States and later announced a prison sentence for a conspirator who admitted participating in the plot with Iranian military officials.
4. **Numerous attempts at assassination of the president** — U.S. authorities have publicly described Iranian regime-linked assassination plots targeting President Trump. In November 2024, DOJ announced charges against mullah regime asset who was tasked by the regime to direct criminal associates to further Iran's assassination plots, "including President-elect Donald J. Trump," and FBI testimony in late 2025 repeated that Iran had directed assassination plots against targets including President Trump.
5. **Wholesale slaughter of Iranian civilians in the most recent protests** — In the most recent protests, the mullah regime responded with mass killing, leaving an estimated 40,000 to 90,000 Iranian civilians dead. It did so despite directives and mounting international pressure to halt the crackdown, underscoring that large-scale violence against its own population remained central to its method of rule.

Taken together, this was not the record of a regime that moderated under pressure. It kept using terrorism, kept enabling anti-American violence, kept plotting killings on foreign soil and in the United States, and kept crushing its own population with lethal force. The pattern was not accidental and it was not temporary.

**This mullah regime sustained its hostility regardless of diplomatic approach or punitive action / consequence**

**An Environment Increasingly Supportive of Proliferation:  
Transportation, Telecommunications and Globalized Dual-Use  
Access**

The mullah regime's path to dangerous capability was shaped not only by its own intent, but by an external environment that increasingly favored proliferation. Global socioeconomic change and technological diffusion lowered the barriers to moving material support, preserving technical knowledge, and acquiring dual-use inputs across borders. Advances in transportation and telecommunications reduced both the physical and informational friction that had once constrained weapons-relevant programs. In that sense, the surrounding operating environment was becoming more permissive, not less.

## **Global Socioeconomic and Technological Trends**

The broader global environment increasingly supported proliferation rather than restraining it. The combination of technological modernization, dense international trade networks, and the residual structure of an integrated postindustrial knowledge economy made it easier for hostile actors to obtain material support, access specialized components, and preserve the industrial and technical base needed for dangerous programs.

1. **Advancement in transportation technology minimized the practical barriers to moving material support** — Improvements in transportation technology reduced the practical difficulty of shipping, concealing, rerouting, and obtaining sensitive material support. In operational terms, distance and water imposed less stopping power than in earlier eras, because globally integrated logistics, shipping, and procurement systems made it easier to move critical inputs through indirect channels and intermediary networks.
2. **Advancement in telecommunication technology reduced the transaction cost of dangerous knowledge** — Advances in telecommunication technology sharply lowered the cost of acquiring, transmitting, refining, and preserving technical knowledge relevant to advanced weapons development. This meant that dangerous expertise became harder to isolate, harder to suppress, and easier for determined actors to access through distributed digital networks and globally connected technical ecosystems.
3. **Globalization transferred goods, services, dual-use technology, and the means of mass delivery across borders** — Globalization was not limited to legitimate commercial exchange. It also created pathways through which dual-use technology, specialized industrial services, sensitive components, and the means needed to produce and mass-deliver advanced weapons capabilities could move across borders, often embedded inside otherwise lawful or hard-to-police systems of trade and finance.

Taken together, these trends made proliferation more feasible over time. Material support was easier to move, dangerous knowledge was easier to preserve and transmit, and dual-use technology was easier to acquire through globalized systems. That meant the environment itself was increasingly permissive for determined proliferators. Time was not neutral under those conditions.

**Time was not neutral. The environment increasingly favored proliferation.**

# “You Cannot Destroy the Technology”: Why the Mullah Regime’s Path to WMD Became Easier Over Time and why President Trump Had to Order the Strike

The mullah regime’s path to WMD did not become easier by accident. It was accelerated by revolutionary disruptive technologies, outside assistance from hostile or co-aligned actors, and U.S. policy decisions that gave the regime time, space, and technical breathing room. As enrichment and other fuel-cycle capabilities diffuse, the core proliferation problem becomes harder to eliminate completely, because the same knowledge and infrastructure that support civilian programs can also support weapons-relevant pathways. Iranian officials themselves have openly leaned into that reality, insisting that the underlying technology cannot simply be bombed out of existence.

## Proliferation of Revolutionary and or Disruptive Technologies

Revolutionary disruptive technologies widened the regime’s options over time and continue to do so even after the U.S. strikes on Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. Proliferation-sensitive technologies tied to enrichment remain inherently dangerous because the same underlying capability can support both civilian and weapons pathways; laser-based enrichment has long been flagged as especially concerning because it could enable smaller, harder-to-detect enrichment footprints; in parallel, advances in computing and biotechnology reduce barriers to sophisticated state-level research and shorten the time between access to knowledge and practical capability.

- **SILEX laser enrichment (Separation of Isotopes by Laser Excitation)** now enables compact, virtually undetectable uranium processing. A working SILEX facility—capable of producing weapons-grade uranium—can fit inside a shipping container or a medium-sized industrial building. It consumes far less electricity than centrifuge or gaseous-diffusion plants, generates almost no detectable waste heat or chemical emissions, produces minimal acoustic or vibration signatures, and avoids large-scale UF<sub>6</sub> leaks or massive cooling requirements—rendering it almost invisible to satellite imagery, energy monitoring, or traditional remote surveillance.

SILEX systems are modular, scalable, and relocatable; they can be deployed by a skilled scientific team in a matter of months (not years), operated in parallel at multiple dispersed sites, and quickly moved to evade detection or targeting. Core enabling technologies (high-powered lasers, precision optics, control systems) are widely available on the commercial market with extensive legitimate civilian applications, dramatically lowering both startup cost and technical barriers.

- **Advanced bioweapons and radiological threats** expand the WMD spectrum far beyond nuclear. These now include genetically targeted or synthetic pathogens and radiological dispersion devices (RDDs) using isotopes such as cobalt-60—offering asymmetric pathways to mass effect, deterrence, and societal disruption that exploit gaps in technical detection and policy response.

**Result:** Traditional detection, satellite imagery, export controls, and legacy counter-proliferation tools are obsolete. A determined regime can now reconstitute full nuclear or alternative WMD capability in months, not years; warning timelines have collapsed, attribution is increasingly difficult, and the margin for strategic

surprise has all but disappeared. Every tactical or technical victory against physical infrastructure is therefore temporary. The mullah regime's adaptive intent and global proliferation networks guarantee that the WMD threat will reemerge—stronger, faster, and harder to detect—unless the underlying driver (the regime itself) is changed

## Proxy-Enabled Acceleration

The regime's operating environment was further improved by outside help and remains turbo-charged by it even after the U.S. strikes. Iran's civil nuclear projects have long depended in part on foreign cooperation, including Russian involvement in reactor work at Bushehr and technical support for other sites, while international reporting and sanctions records have repeatedly documented Iran's broader reliance on external networks for procurement, finance, and proliferation-relevant support.

State patrons and proxies (putin's criminalized counter intelligence state, Chinese communist party, North Korea Regime, elements of Pakistan) now provide the decisive accelerant: **they can refine, launder, and rapidly supply enriched uranium or turnkey nuclear devices**. The mullah regime's existing stockpile of uranium enriched to 60% U-235 already places it a short technical step from weapons-grade material ( $\geq 90\%$  U-235).

- **Rapid clandestine transfer and proxy refinement:** Iran can covertly move its 60% stockpile to a co-aligned state possessing industrial-scale, high-efficiency enrichment infrastructure unburdened by international oversight or the threat of outside intervention. In secure foreign facilities, the final enrichment step to  $\geq 90\%$  can be completed in days or weeks instead of the months (or longer) required for domestic processing—collapsing the nuclear “breakout” timeline dramatically.
- **Operational advantages for the proxy state:** The patron's advanced technology, expertise, and physical security allow rapid, continuous operation that is invisible and untouchable to Western or Israeli intelligence and military action. The finished weapons-grade uranium can then be returned to Iran, retained abroad for leverage or delivered as weapon components or assembled warheads—further complicating strategic warning and response timelines.
- **Deliberate obfuscation of attribution:** Modern nuclear forensic methods rely on detailed isotopic and chemical “fingerprinting” to identify origin and enrichment pathway. When material is further refined abroad, the resultant forensic profile becomes a composite of both the original Iranian signature and secondary signatures imparted by the proxy state's technology and processes. Deliberate chemical masking, blending, purification, or stockpile laundering creates ambiguous or misleading signatures that can delay, complicate, or even preclude definitive attribution to either Iran or its co-aligned partners.
- **Strategic payoff:** This proxy pathway gives both Iran and its patrons powerful tools for plausible deniability and diplomatic leverage while overwhelming existing international security architecture. Attribution becomes far more difficult, international consensus for retaliation or sanctions harder to achieve, and the margin for strategic surprise essentially eliminated.

**Result:** Every tactical or technical victory against physical infrastructure is temporary. Foreign assistance—now evolved into full proxy-enabled acceleration—guarantees that the WMD threat will reemerge stronger, faster, and far harder to detect or attribute unless the underlying driver (the regime itself) is changed.

## Previous Obama and Biden Administration Policies

U.S. policy choices repeatedly widened the regime’s operating space. Previous Obama and Biden administration policies handed the mullah regime time, space, technical breathing room, and billions in resources precisely when it was racing toward 60% enrichment and hardened-site protection—directly enabling the disruptive technologies and proxy pathways that survived the U.S. strikes on Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan.

- **a. JCPOA sanctions-relief windfall (January 2016):** Secretary of State John Kerry publicly acknowledged that sanctions-relief cash under the Iran deal would likely reach the IRGC and designated terrorist entities: “I think that some of it will end up in the hands of the IRGC or other entities, some of which are labeled terrorists.” Estimates at the time put the windfall at \$55–150 billion; much of it flowed straight into the regime’s military and proxy architecture, funding the very centrifuge cascades, underground fortifications, and foreign procurement networks that later proved resilient to conventional strikes.
- **b. Rosatom sanctions waivers restored (February 2022):** The Biden administration restored sanctions waivers specifically so Putin’s Rosatom could resume work on two light-water reactors and non-proliferation projects at Arak (reactor redesign), Fordow (conversion to stable isotopes), and Bushehr. State Department officials publicly defended the move as “necessary to facilitate compliance-related work” and to keep JCPOA revival talks alive—even as Russia was simultaneously supplying Iran with drones and other lethal aid for use against U.S. partners. These waivers gave the mullahs critical technical breathing room, political cover, and continued foreign expertise at the exact moment they were sprinting to 60% enrichment and burying their most sensitive assets deeper underground.

**Result:** Every tactical or technical victory against physical infrastructure is temporary. These policy decisions—by creating periods of reduced pressure and active foreign technical assistance—guaranteed that the regime’s WMD knowledge base, stockpiles, and external lifelines would survive kinetic strikes and enable rapid reconstitution through disruptive technology and proxy acceleration unless the underlying driver (the regime itself) is changed.

## “You cannot destroy the technology”

The regime itself recognized the new strategic reality. Iranian officials and state media have repeatedly emphasized that knowledge, dispersed expertise, and protected stockpiles cannot simply be bombed out of existence. After the 2025 strikes that flattened the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz (1,700+ centrifuges destroyed) and cratered Fordow, Tehran’s line was consistent: the technology lives in the minds of its scientists and in hidden stockpiles. The March 2026 follow-on strikes have only reinforced the point.

- **After-Action Review & Bomb Damage Assessment (Open-Source, March 2026)** The current campaign provides the clearest real-world validation of the regime’s claim—and the clearest proof of why President Trump had to act.

- **Fordow (June 2025 strikes):** B-2-delivered GBU-57 MOP bunker-busters and Tomahawks rendered the deeply buried enrichment halls inoperable. Post-strike assessments confirmed the site was “decimated”; Iran made no significant rehabilitation efforts by early 2026.
- **Natanz (June 2025 + March 2, 2026 strikes):** The 2025 hits destroyed the above-ground Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant and support infrastructure. The March 2, 2026 follow-on strike (first nuclear target of the Epic Fury campaign) damaged at least three buildings and the surface entrances to the underground Fuel Enrichment Plant (FEP), per commercial satellite imagery analyzed by Israeli sources and the Institute for Science and International Security. IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi confirmed March 3: “some recent damage” to entrance buildings, but “no additional impact detected at FEP itself” and “no radiological consequence expected.” The site had already been “severely damaged” in 2025. Iranian IAEA envoy Reza Najafi told the Board of Governors the attacks on “peaceful safeguarded nuclear facilities” were unjustified.

Key takeaway from the combined AAR/BDA: physical infrastructure is slag, yet the regime still holds an estimated 400 kg of 60% enriched uranium (enough for roughly a dozen weapons if further processed) whose exact location remains unknown. Cadres of nuclear and missile scientists have been scattered but not eliminated. CSIS analysis notes explicitly that “kinetic strikes may introduce new proliferation risks” because those scientists could migrate to non-state actors or foreign buyers if the Atomic Energy Organization collapses. In other words, the bombs did exactly what they were supposed to—set the program back years—but they cannot erase the knowledge base the regime spent two decades and billions of dollars (much of it enabled by the policies above) embedding into its system.

Taken together, these accelerants—disruptive tech, foreign lifelines, and self-defeating U.S. policies—lowered the cost of persistence for the mullahs while raising the cost of inaction for the United States. Revolutionary technology widened what was technically possible. Foreign assistance expanded what was practically achievable. Policy choices created the time and space in which dangerous capability could be preserved or rebuilt. The regime was not imagining its strategic advantage; it recognized it clearly. That trend line is why President Trump had to order the strikes—and why even successful BDA on Fordow and Natanz leaves the deeper problem intact: **you cannot destroy the technology**

**The mullah regime understood the trend line: the technology base, the external assistance, and the policy environment increasingly favored regeneration**

## **Negative Cost / Production Exchange Ratio: Cheap Offensive Mass, Thin High-End Defensive Replenishment, and Why Waiting Increased the Danger**

The strategic problem was not just intent but arithmetic and it was precisely this arithmetic that compelled President Trump to order the decisive strike against the mullah regime. The regime’s missile and drone threat operated inside a negative cost-exchange environment in which cheap offensive systems could force the United States and allied partners to expend far more expensive defensive inventory. This threat

environment left no choice but preemptive action to break the cycle before it exhausted allied defenses and emboldened further aggression.

1. **Negative cost exchange ratio (mullah regime missiles / drones vs United States / Israeli interceptor costs)** - the cost exchange ratio was negative because the mullah regime could generate offensive pressure with systems that were often dramatically cheaper than the interceptors used to defeat them. A Shahed cost \$35,000 while the PAC-3 MSE is about \$3.64 million and SM-3 Block IIA sits in an even more expensive tier.
2. **Negative production ratio (Iranian missile mass vs low-volume production of key interceptors)** — the production problem compounded the cost problem. Iran's ballistic missile arsenal has been publicly estimated at over 3,000 missiles, while some critical U.S. ballistic missile defense lines remained extremely low-volume in FY2025, including 12 SM-3 Block IIA missiles and 12 THAAD interceptors for the year. That did not apply equally to every interceptor line, but at the high end of missile defense it meant the replenishment base was thin relative to a large and diverse missile threat.
3. **Cheap offensive mass imposed expensive defensive scarcity** — the key strategic effect was that offense could be generated in bulk while important parts of the defensive architecture remained expensive, industrially constrained, or slow to replace. Left unchecked large missile-and-drone threat could consume scarce inventory, impose fiscal strain, and stress the industrial base.
4. **This is why directed energy defense at scale matters** — directed energy is strategically important because it offers a path to reversing the exchange ratio by lowering the cost per engagement and reducing dependence on limited interceptor inventories. In a threat environment defined by cheap mass fires, directed energy is especially relevant to handle large volumes of drones, rockets and lower-cost airborne threats without exhausting high-end missile-defense magazines.

This was the kind of threat environment in which containment became progressively more expensive and less reliable. That meant time did not favor the side trying to intercept everything with traditional missiles alone which is exactly why President Trump acted with the strike to neutralize the mullah regime's capacity to exploit this asymmetry before it became irreversible.

**When offense is cheap, mass-producible, and easy to regenerate, defense must become deeper, cheaper per shot, and scalable. Trump's strike was the necessary correction to an arithmetic that had already tilted dangerously against the free world**

## **Why Strike Now: Time Compression and the Rising Risk of Uncontrolled Escalation**

The problem was not simply that the mullah regime remained dangerous, but that the danger was becoming more time-sensitive. As Iran's missile force shifted toward systems with faster launch readiness,

shorter preparation windows, and greater survivability, the opportunity to preempt mass fires before launch narrowed. At the same time, ODNI's 2025 threat assessment said Iran likely aims to continue offensive chemical and biological agent research, while reporting in late 2025 said IRGC programs were optimizing ballistic missiles to carry chemical and biological agents. That meant the strike window was not opening — it was closing.

1. **PRC-linked support to mullah regimes missile program increased the danger** — Public U.S. sanctions actions showed that PRC-based networks were helping sustain Iran's ballistic missile program. Treasury sanctioned an Iran- and PRC-based network for procuring ballistic missile propellant ingredients for the IRGC, and AP reporting later said Iran's solid-fuel missile reconstitution depended on regaining large mixers crucial to missile-fuel production. That meant outside support was helping compress the time required for Iran to rebuild the missile force that had already been used in the conflict.
2. **Solid-fuel ballistic missiles compressed warning and launch timelines** — the difference between liquid- and solid-fueled systems mattered operationally. Solid-fuel missiles can be stored ready for launch and fired with far less preparation time than liquid-fueled systems, reducing the window in which launchers can be detected and destroyed before firing. In practice, that meant a larger solid-fuel missile force increased readiness, survivability, reload potential and sustained-fire capability under combat conditions.
3. **Israeli and intelligence reporting raised the danger of unconventional payloads on the missile force** — the escalation risk rose sharply because the concern was no longer limited to conventional warheads. ODNI's 2025 threat assessment stated that Iran very likely aims to continue research and development of chemical and biological agents for offensive purposes, **and late-2025 Israeli intelligence reported IRGC was optimizing ballistic missiles to carry chemical and biological agents**, with military sources describing this as part of a "complementary deterrent factor." In other words, the fear was that a faster, more survivable ballistic missile force could eventually be paired with far more escalatory payloads.
4. **Mass launch created the risk of leakers, WMD-threshold escalation, and a wider war** — once a regime has a large ballistic missile arsenal, shorter launch cycles, and a growing drone shield, the danger is that a mass salvo will produce leakers. If even a limited number of ballistic missiles carrying chemical or biological payloads penetrated Israeli defenses, the conflict would no longer remain a conventional exchange; it would become a threshold-crossing event with a high probability of strategic retaliation, regional energy disruption through the Strait of Hormuz, and escalation drawing in additional great-power actors already competing across the broader world system. Rubio's argument was that Iran could not be allowed to hide behind this growing missile-and-drone shield while moving toward more dangerous capability.

This is why the strike had a time component, not just a capability component. As Iran's missile posture became faster, harder to suppress, and potentially more dangerous in payload terms, the cost of waiting rose and the margin for preventing a wider war narrowed. A regime with a growing missile-and-drone shield was moving toward a position in which it could threaten the region at higher levels while deterring action against its broader strategic ambitions. The strike window was closing, not opening.

**The longer the wait, the faster the launch cycle, thinner the warning window and the greater the risk that a mass missile salvo would trigger uncontrolled escalation**

## **Why a Mass Strike Was the Only Operationally Coherent Option**

The logic was not symbolic punishment but maximum suppression. Iran had spent decades dispersing, burying, and hardening core elements of its nuclear and missile infrastructure, including facilities such as Fordow deep inside a mountain and a wider network of underground “missile cities” designed to preserve launch capability under attack. At the same time, recent protest waves exposed a real legitimacy crisis inside Iran, but not one that made the regime safe to leave half-broken; a regime under internal pressure and facing what it viewed as an existential attack was more likely to lash out with everything it had left. Under those conditions, a limited strike risked triggering maximum retaliation without eliminating enough capability to stop escalation.

1. **The regime had spent decades dispersing and hardening its centers of gravity** — Iran did not leave its most important capabilities exposed in soft, concentrated targets. Its enrichment program included deeply buried facilities such as Fordow, which the IAEA described as built deep inside a mountain, and its missile force was increasingly tied to underground bases and dispersed “missile city” networks intended to preserve storage, survivability, and launch capacity even under sustained attack. That meant a light strike risked damaging edges of the system while leaving enough of the hardened core intact to absorb the blow and retaliate.
2. **The regime was under internal strain but that did not make it less dangerous** — The recent protest wave pointed to a serious legitimacy crisis and broad unrest inside Iran, but it did not mean the regime could be counted on to collapse cleanly or moderate under pressure. Recent analysis of the 2025–2026 uprisings describes a decisive challenge to the regime’s legitimacy, while also noting that the state reasserted control through force, censorship, and targeted repression. A regime under that kind of internal strain can become more reckless, not less, if it believes survival is on the line.
3. **Any strike was likely to be treated as existential, increasing the chance of all-in retaliation** — Iranian leadership and affiliated reporting explicitly framed the threat environment in existential terms. Iran International reported that informed military sources said IRGC programs were optimizing ballistic missiles to carry chemical and biological agents, and one source said the leadership viewed potential Israeli and American attacks as a threat to its very existence and believed unconventional weapons use could be justified in that context; ODNI’s 2025 threat assessment likewise said Iran very likely aims to continue research and development of chemical and biological agents for offensive purposes. That meant any strike risked being interpreted not as a limited signal, but as a survival-level confrontation.
4. **A limited strike risked leakers, escalation and a much wider war** — If the regime responded to a partial strike with mass missile and drone fires, even a strong defense risked some leakers. In the worst case, if unconventional warheads were paired with that surviving missile force and some penetrated Israeli defenses, the conflict could cross a WMD threshold and drive strategic retaliation, wider regional war, and severe disruption across energy and trade routes. That is why

the operational requirement was not a pinprick strike, but the maximum feasible suppression of Iran's retaliatory capacity at the outset.

This is why a mass strike was the only operationally coherent option once the decision to strike had been made. Iran's hardened and dispersed infrastructure, its internal instability, its existential threat perception, and the risk of missile-and-drone retaliation with possible unconventional payloads all pointed in the same direction: anything limited risked being too small to prevent the escalation spiral. The objective had to be to suppress as much retaliatory capability as possible before it could be used. A partial strike risked the worst of both worlds — retaliation without decisive suppression.

## **Why the Goal Must Be Regime Change: Inelastic Motives, a Mortally Wounded Adversary, and a Proliferation Environment That Guarantees Regeneration**

The problem did not end with striking the regime's infrastructure, because the regime itself remained the source of the threat. Its motives were inelastic, its behavior was shaped by pseudo-theological fanaticism rather than normal strategic restraint, and the broader proliferation environment still favored regeneration of dangerous capability over time. At the same time, recent reporting showed that even after devastating strikes and leadership losses, the regime retained enough structure to keep retaliating rather than moderating. That is why rollback without regime change risked leaving the underlying threat alive.

1. **The mullah regime's motives were inelastic** — the core problem was not just capability, but motive. ODNI's 2025 Annual Threat Assessment states that Iran very likely aims to continue research and development of chemical and biological agents for offensive purposes, and Iranian officials publicly insisted after earlier strikes that nuclear know-how "cannot be destroyed." Those two facts point in the same direction: the regime's strategic intent was not being moderated by pressure, but preserved through ideology, technical continuity, and long-term commitment.
2. **The mullah regime had been mortally wounded, which made it more dangerous, not less** — recent reporting showed the regime suffered devastating military and leadership losses, yet still maintained enough command structure to continue retaliatory action. That is the danger zone: a badly damaged regime that still has coercive instruments left is more likely to use whatever remains to impose maximum pain, preserve deterrence, and try to survive politically through escalation. A wounded regime with inelastic motives is not a stable end state.
3. **A proliferation-supportive environment meant the residual regime would keep pursuing WMD capability in any capacity available** — the external environment still favored regeneration. Dangerous knowledge remained intact, dual-use technology and outside support networks remained part of the operating environment, and Iran itself argued that the underlying technical base could survive military action. That meant a surviving regime would retain both the motive and the pathway to rebuild strategic capability unless it was removed as the organizing center of that effort.
4. **A surviving regime would retain the incentive to leverage WMD against the United States, Israel, NATO allies and its own people** — the same regime that used proxy warfare abroad and

brutal repression at home was not suddenly going to become restrained after being struck. Analyses of the 2025–2026 uprisings describe a decisive legitimacy crisis, but also show the state reasserting control through force, censorship, and targeted repression. A residual regime facing internal weakness and external pressure would have every incentive to use whatever escalatory tools remained available — including unconventional pathways and terror against its own population — to survive.

This is why the end state could not be limited to punishment or temporary degradation. A surviving regime with inelastic motives, proven willingness to pursue offensive chemical and biological capability, and access to a proliferation-supportive environment would remain a generator of danger even after major strikes. Recent events also showed that severe damage alone did not guarantee collapse or moderation. Regime change was therefore not a slogan, but the only durable way to end the threat cycle at its source.

**If the regime survives, the threat survives, and the pathway to regeneration survives with it.**

## **The Decision That Prevented the War**

History rarely announces the moment when **delay becomes more dangerous than action**. Yet the evidence laid out throughout this report makes clear that **such a moment had arrived**. The mullah regime's motives were **inelastic**, its pattern of belligerency was **continuous**, and the strategic environment increasingly favored the **regeneration of dangerous capability rather than its containment**. Waiting longer would not have reduced the danger. It would have allowed it to mature into **something far more catastrophic**.

When a regime combines **ideological fanaticism, persistent proxy violence, expanding missile capability, and access to a proliferation-supportive global environment**, the strategic problem stops being theoretical. **It becomes urgent**. Containment depends on an adversary that can be **moderated, deterred, or exhausted over time**. The mullah regime demonstrated repeatedly that **it was none of those things**. It escalated regardless of diplomacy, sanctions, or pressure, while continuing to pursue the means to impose **even greater destruction in the future**.

Under those conditions, the strategic choice facing the United States was **stark**. Either **act while the threat could still be suppressed**, or wait until a **hardened, dispersed, and technologically supported adversary** crossed a threshold that would make confrontation **vastly more destructive**. The strike ordered by **President Donald J. Trump** was therefore **not reckless escalation**. It was **the necessary correction to a strategic trajectory** that was moving toward **a far larger war**.

When the threat is **inelastic** and the operational environment **no longer supports containment**, **delay becomes surrender to catastrophe**.

President Trump's **preemptive strike against the mullah regime** was **morally courageous, strategically clear, and the only responsible option available** to prevent a wider conflict. The decision demonstrated that **American leadership still understands the difference between avoiding war and merely postponing it until it becomes uncontrollable**. For that reason, **gratitude is not misplaced**.

**Thank you, President Trump.**  
**Thank you, Secretary Hegseth.**

Your decision did more than **destroy targets**. It **saved lives**. It **prevented a wider regional catastrophe**.  
And it **created the conditions necessary to stop an even larger war before it began**.

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