

Will US Strike Iran? Trump's Strategic Rubicon, Israel's Precision Gambit, and China's Calculated Game



Fire and smoke rise into the sky after an Israeli attack on the Shahran oil depot on in Tehran on June 15, 2025. Stringer/Getty Images



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Commentary

Just before dawn on June 13, Israel unleashed Operation Rising Lion, its largest air campaign ever, deploying over 200 fighter jets in coordinated waves that dropped more than 330 munitions on at least 100 strategic targets across Iran. The Natanz Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant—vital for housing roughly 1,700 IR4 and IR6 centrifuges, capable of enriching uranium to weapons-grade levels—was hit hard, its above-ground portion severely damaged. Israel also struck additional nuclear sites near Esfahan, Arak, Fordow, Parchin, and multiple IRGC bases—evidence of a meticulously calibrated campaign designed to hobble Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Yet not every fortress fell. The deeply buried Fordow facility—shielded under hundreds of feet of rock—[remains intact](#), beyond the reach of Israel's arsenal. It's precisely this gap that has stirred urgent talk in Washington: should the United States now bring out its GBU57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator, the 15-ton bunker-buster designed to penetrate hardened underground sites?

When Precision Strikes Collide With Political Calculus

Iran responded almost immediately, unleashing a barrage of over 150 ballistic missiles and 100 drones toward Israeli territory. The Iron Dome and allied air defenses neutralized the bulk of this threat, with only a fraction breaching the shield, causing limited but symbolic damage. U.S. intelligence officials reported that Iran expended nearly a quarter of its missile stockpile—estimated originally between 2,000 and 3,000—in just days, a testament to its waning capacity.

President Trump, who issued a [60-day deadline](#) in the spring demanding that Iran curtail its nuclear pursuits, faces a choice. According to The Wall Street Journal, he has privately approved military options, including U.S. strikes, yet holds his hand in the public arena—supporting Israel through missile defense deployments and regional force posturing while refraining from final orders. Trump's posture is not aggressive by impulse—it's measured with intent. His record suggests he is more anti-failure than anti-action, ready to act decisively, but only with the promise of lasting results.

Bunkers, Bombs, and the Burden of What Comes Next

It's one challenge to dispatch bunker-busters; it's another to envision the aftermath. Should a U.S. strike succeed in obliterating Fordow, the question becomes: What fills the vacuum it leaves?

One optimistic scenario, mentioned by some, centers on [Reza Pahlavi](#), the Shah's exiled son, potentially returning as a transitional figure. A domestic reformer with ties to expatriate moderates, Pahlavi could lay groundwork for a Western-aligned governance, economic reopening, and perhaps even a regional peace architecture reminiscent of the Abraham Accords. But optimism must be tempered. After Saddam Hussein was toppled in Iraq, the country unraveled into sectarian warfare and militant fragmentation, giving rise to ISIS, and later Iranian influence—a sobering aftermath of authoritarian collapse. Iran, for all its faults, retains stronger institutional and historical coherence. Unlike Iraq which was a new country, Iran has centuries of common history.

Still, signs of stress are evident: Tehran has seen mass evacuations; the economy teeters under the weight of sanctions and societal unrest; and the ruling elite, already rattled by losses in Natanz and elsewhere, appear divided. Left unmanaged, this fracture could spawn armed militias—some with control over nuclear-capable or radiological materials—raising the specter of “dirty bombs” that threaten global security.

From Shadows to Sky: Israel’s Intelligence Masterstroke

What elevates Operation Rising Lion from tactical strike to operational marvel is the intelligence architecture underpinning it. All the pieces were prepared over years. For months, Mossad planted explosive drones, sabotaged radar sites, and guided payloads into Iran—a strategy that Bloomberg describes as “hybrid warfare par excellence.” The agency’s creation of an on-ground drone base—believed to be within Iran’s central provinces—enabled precise neutralization of missile launchers and air defenses.

High-end platforms, including F-15I Ra’am “Thunder” fighters outfitted with 2,000-pound BLU109 bunker-busters, complemented stealth missions flown by F35I Adir jets, supported by mid-air refueling and advanced Israeli targeting pods. The synergy between covert human intelligence, cyber operations, drones, and manned aircraft has redefined the upper limits of modern precision warfare.

Hidden Costs: China’s Billion-Dollar Middle East Investment

Amid geopolitical tremors, [Beijing watches](#) not with idle detachment but with vested interest. The March 2021 25-year China–Iran strategic partnership, valued at an estimated \$300–400 billion, binds China to sustained investment in Iran’s energy, telecoms, transportation, and potentially military sectors.

For China, Iran serves multiple purposes: a sanctioned oil source (allowing the CCP to buy oil cheaper), a bridgehead into Middle Eastern geopolitics, and a lever to distract and divide the West. Should Iran’s regime collapse entirely, China loses that leverage—but if the country fractures, Beijing stands to exploit a fragmented state and erect a new foothold, much as it did post-U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

America’s Crossroads: Strategy Over Showmanship

The gravest miscalculation would be to treat forthcoming U.S. action as another stand-alone military strike. It's not about the thrill of bunker-busting—it's overshadowed by the imperative of foresight. U.S. planners must ask: Do we have a viable political roadmap? Can we guide post-strike governance? Do our allies and the international community align on reconstruction or transitional stability? Crucially, can we prevent Beijing from capitalizing on the aftermath?

These are not hypothetical queries—they are the strategic architecture of modern intervention, and I assume over the past week, or more, the U.S. administration has been busy behind the scenes working out these scenarios and reaching out to allies and others.

Conclusion: Legacy Wears the Blueprint, Not the Bomb

The [coming decision](#)—whether to drop bunker-busters on Fordow—will echo for generations. A purely kinetic victory that lacks follow-through risks turning tactical success into strategic liability. Worse yet, it could gift Beijing a new canvas of influence at a moment when the West seeks to check its expansion.

President Trump—or any American leader—faces a rare moment of strategic crossroads: drop the bombs, yes—but also draft the blueprint for Iran's next chapter. Victory without vision is hollow. Only with both can today's mission transcend into lasting legacy.

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