

# BBC NEWS

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BBC News with Danielle Jalowiecka.

Israel says it's begun a fresh wave of airstrikes against Iran. The IDF said it was targeting launch sites and defense systems. The renewed bombardment follows Iranian strikes on Israel and U.S.-allied Gulf countries on Tuesday.

The United Arab Emirates says one Iranian drone hit the U.S. consulate in Dubai. Qatar says two missiles were launched towards it from Iran.

From Doha, here's Barbara Plett Usher. Arab governments are angry. The region's economy has been completely disrupted. A deliberate strategy by Iran to increase their pain so they pressure the U.S. to end its attacks. But that may backfire. Tehran risks pushing Gulf states closer to Washington, even having them join the war effort in some form. They're not there yet, for now, focused on defense. But much depends on how long the war goes on.

The Israeli military says its fighter jets have struck an underground nuclear site in Iran where it said scientists were covertly developing a key component for nuclear weapons. Displaying a map showing the facility in the eastern outskirts of Tehran, the Israelis said IDF intelligence had been following the scientists' activities.

President Trump has said the U.S. Navy would, if necessary, escort tankers through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has blocked the narrow passage between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean through which about a fifth of global oil and gas is transported. Danny Eberhardt reports.

In a post on social media, President Trump declared, "No matter what, the United States will ensure the FREE FLOW of ENERGY to the WORLD." He didn't say how exactly he'd determine whether providing U.S. Navy escorts for tankers was indeed necessary.

For the U.S., it would significantly ramp up risk, militarily but also politically. But there are risks, too, in a surge in energy prices. Private insurers are unwilling to offer cover for tankers and their cargos after several attacks. And if tankers can't operate, Gulf states will have to cut back on production.

Donald Trump has hit out at Britain and Spain over what he says is their lack of cooperation over the strikes on Iran, saying Spain had been terrible and that he'd asked for trade with Madrid to be cut off. The German chancellor says he later reminded the president that Spain was in the EU and that any trade deals with the bloc had to include the Spanish.

Mr. Trump added he was not happy with the U.K.'s refusal to permit the use of a base in Diego Garcia for the initial strikes. And he criticized Prime Minister Keir Starmer. "It's taken three, four days for us to work out where we can land. There would have been much more convenient landing there as opposed to flying many extra hours. So we are very surprised. This is not Winston Churchill that we're dealing with."

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There have been a series of loud explosions in the city of Erbil, the capital of Iraq's northern Kurdistan. Blasts were heard near Erbil Airport, which hosts U.S.-led coalition troops. The Iraqi military said it intercepted a drone aimed at the U.S. consulate in Erbil. The area is populated by Kurdish factions, some of whom are hostile to the Iranian government.

The U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has volunteered to testify before a congressional committee over his ties with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Mr. Lutnick's association with the disgraced financier has come under increasing scrutiny. Jacob Evans reports.

Howard Lutnick has not been accused of any wrongdoing in connection with Epstein's crimes. But he has faced calls to resign after files released by the U.S. Justice Department revealed the full extent of his relationship with Epstein.

Last month, Mr. Lutnick admitted to visiting Epstein's private island with family members in 2012, years after Epstein pleaded guilty to soliciting prostitution from a minor under the age of 18. Mr. Lutnick previously said he'd severed ties with Epstein years earlier.

If he appears before the congressional committee, Mr. Lutnick will become the first serving cabinet member to do so in connection with the Epstein investigation.

A Russian-flagged liquefied natural gas tanker has reportedly caught fire in the Mediterranean Sea. Maritime sources say the vessel, part of Russia's shadow fleet of sanctioned tankers, was ablaze between Malta and Libya. One report suggests it may have been hit by a Ukrainian naval drone, although there's no confirmation.

Britain has suspended all study visa applications for people from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan, accusing them of exploiting the U.K.'s asylum system. Afghans will also be banned from applying for work visas.

The British government says a growing number of people have been using legal migration routes as a gateway to claiming asylum.

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