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Between Iraq and a Hard Place

Outline

History

Geography

Weapons of War

Costs of War

US Strategy & Objectives

Iran Strategy & Objectives

Discussion



1950s–1970s: Seeds of Conflict

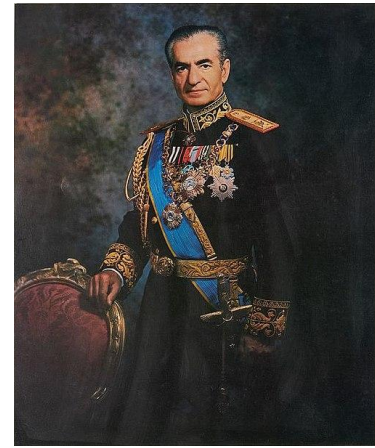
The Anglo Persian Oil Company (APOIC)

1953 – CIA/MI6-backed coup in Iran U.S. & U.K. orchestrate overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh after he nationalizes Iranian oil

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi returns to power

1954 – Consortium Agreement Shah signs a deal granting U.S., UK, & French companies 40% ownership of Iran's oil industry

1957–1970s – U.S. military and nuclear support to Iran
U.S. provides nuclear, military, & economic assistance to strengthen the Shah's regime



1979–1988: Revolution, Hostage Crisis

1979 – Iranian Revolution

Shah overthrown; Islamic Republic established.



1979–1981 – U.S. Embassy Hostage Crisis

52 American hostages, 444 days.



The destroyed US military transport aircraft from a ground angle at Desert One



1990–2015: Sanctions, Nuclear Tensions, Expanding Proxy Wars

1990s – Iran expands proxy influence
Hezbollah, Hamas, and Shia militias across the region

2000s – U.S.–Iran confrontation in Iraq - Shia militias attack U.S. troops

2011 – Iranian plot to assassinate Saudi ambassador in Washington

2015 – JCPOA nuclear agreement Iran and world powers reach a deal limiting Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief



2016–2020: Escalation and Direct Confrontation

2017–2019 – Proxy attacks intensify
Iran-backed militias strike U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria; Iran supports Houthi operations in Yemen

2019 – Attacks on oil tankers U.S. blames Iran for limpet mine attacks on Gulf shipping

2020 – U.S. kills Qassem Soleimani
IRGC commander in Baghdad



2021–2024: Continuing Proxy Pressure

Iran-backed militias attack U.S. bases in Iraq/Syria

Rocket, drone, and IED attacks attributed to Iranian proxies

Iran supports Hamas
October 7 attacks

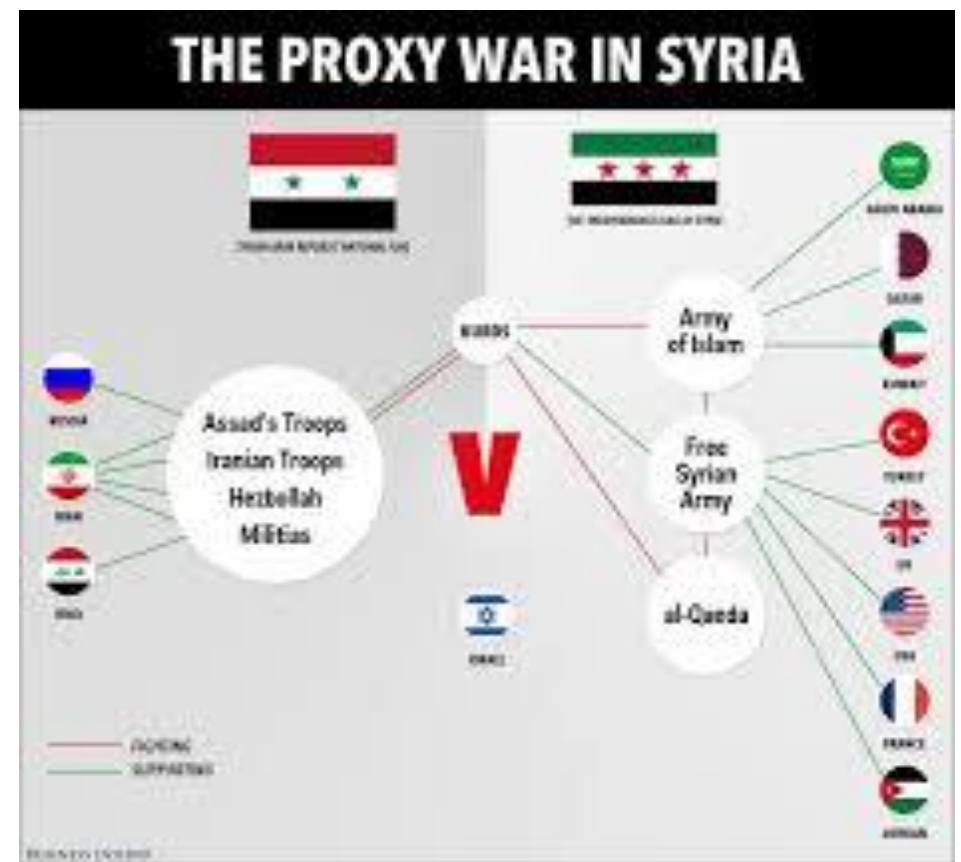


Present: Open Conflict & U.S. Strikes

2025 – U.S.–Russia–Iran proxy war in Syria Iran continues supporting Assad and proxy militias

2025–2026 – Escalating U.S.–Iran confrontations, including attacks on oil tankers and regional proxy clashes. June 22, 2025 Operation Midnight Hammer

2026 – U.S. attacks kill Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, President Trump orders strikes that kill Iran's Supreme Leader. Epic Fury





Bases: ME & SWA

Air Bases: Europe



Iran - Missiles and Drones

Missile Ranges: **300 km SRBMs to 2,000 km MRBMs,**

Drones - Cheap kamikaze to long-range Recon —“network-centric” doctrine.

Missile Arsenal

- 1. Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs) – threat to U.S. forces and bases in the Gulf.**
- 2. Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) - hold Israel and U.S. bases across the region at risk.**
- 3. Cruise Missiles**
 - Low-altitude, terrain-hugging profiles
 - Used in attacks on Gulf oil infrastructure
 - Complement ballistic salvos with harder-to-detect trajectories

Drone Arsenal

Mass-produced drones —cheap, numerous, intended for saturation attacks.

Shahed-136 drone

💰 Cost: US\$20,000 - US\$50,000

📍 Flight range: At least 2,000km

🌀 Speed: 180kmh



- Central to Iran's “**Network-Centric Warfare**” approach
- Used against Israel (2024–2025)
- Exported to proxies: Hezbollah, Houthis, Iraqi militias
- Some models exported to Russia for use in Ukraine

Drone Types

- **Shahed-136 / 131** – Long-range kamikaze drones
- **Mohajer-6** – Recon + strike
- **Ababil series** – Surveillance and loitering munitions
- **Arash-2** – Long-range, high-payload suicide drone designed for Israeli targets

TERMINAL • HIGH • ALTITUDE • AREA • DEFENSE

THAAD

INTERCEPTING A MISSILE.

The system has a track record of 100% mission success in flight testing.

LOCKHEED MARTIN





PATRIOT (MIM-104) – Air & Missile Defense System
Surface-to-air & terminal ballistic missile defense
Raytheon / Lockheed Martin, since 1981

- Range: ~160 km (99 miles)
- Max Speed: ~Mach 6.2 (6,170 km/h)
- Warhead: PAC 2 ~90 kg high-explosive
PAC-3 hit-to-kill kinetic interceptor
- Guidance: Phased-array radar (AN/MPQ-53/65)
with track-via-missile guidance
- Cost: ~\$4M per PAC-3 MSE interceptor
~\$1B per battery

Primary defense against Iranian ballistic and cruise missiles, in layered defense with THAAD.

TOMAHAWK LAND ATTACK MISSILE (TLAMs)

>> Designed for long distance, precision strikes of land targets
 >> Can be redirected to new target while in flight



LAUNCHED FROM

- ⊕ surface US Navy ships
- ⊕ submarines



Wingspan:
8 feet, 9 inches



Warhead:
453.5kg

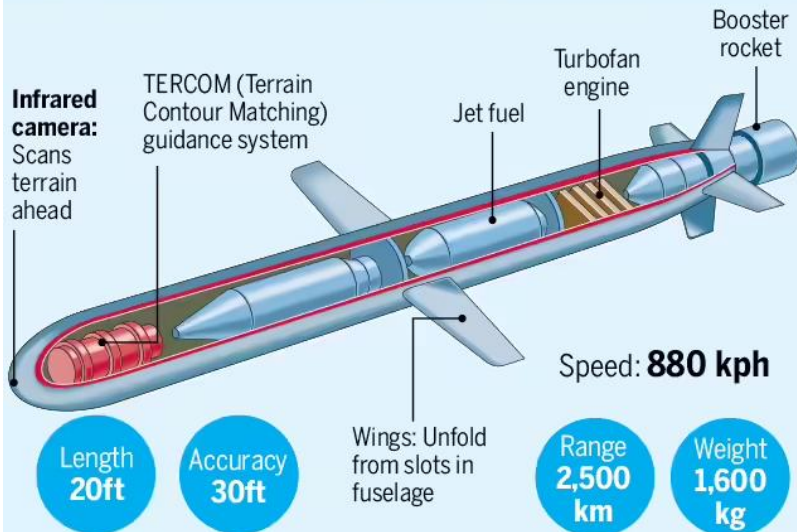


Cost:
\$ 1.59mn each



First deployed:
1984

**MADE BY:
RAYTHEON**



Source: AFP Graphics, news reports

Long-Range Cruise Missile

Raytheon

Range: ~850 miles

Speed: ~Mach 0.74

Warhead: ~680lbs

Guidance: GPS (retarget)

Launched from destroyers, cruisers, submarines

Deep-strike missions

AD, C2, missile storage sites, IRGC infrastructure.

~3,600 in inventory

850 fired in 4 weeks

Production Rate: 100–200 / year

Replenish: 2yr lead time

Burn Rate

Reapportionment from Pacific

Increase bomber sorties

Replenishment will take years, not months

Congress/DoD “emergency procurement authorities”

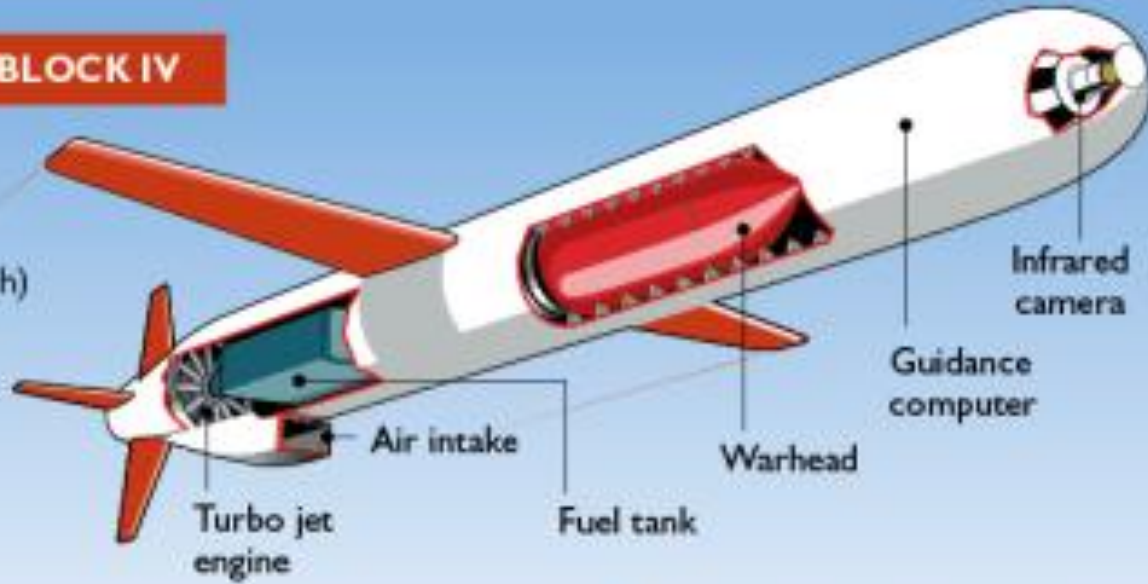
TOMAHAWK BLOCK IV

Wingspan
8ft 9in (2.67m)

Speed
550mph (880km/h)

Warhead
450kg high
explosives

Range
1,500 miles



HOW THE TOMAHAWK FINDS ITS TARGET





Strait of Hormuz Mines

Ships

Drones

Robots

AI



Costs of War

13 Killed in Action

415 Wounded in Action

Aircraft Losses

39 Destroyed. 10 Damaged.

24 MQ-9 Reapers Lost.

2 AWACs destroyed

1 KC135 Refueler Losses

Priority Targets

Airbase Infrastructure; Shelters, Fuel & Ammo Depots

Ground Based Air Defense THAAD Radars

C4ISR And Communication Nodes.

SATCOM, Tactical Data Links

Logistics & Maintenance Depots



Iran war: US military aircraft damage and losses

Multiple US aircraft have been damaged or destroyed in the ongoing war with Iran, including fighter jets, drones, refueling tankers and helicopters

— Fighter / Attack Aircraft — Airborne Warning and Control System — Special Mission Aircraft — Refueling Tankers — Helicopters — Drones

Total cost:
Over **\$2.8 billion**

F-15E Strike Eagle
\$260 million
in total, *\$65 million per unit
(4)

MC-130J Commando II
\$228.4 million
in total
(2)
*\$114.2 million per unit

UH-60 Black Hawk
\$108 million
in total - *\$36 million per unit
(3/ 1 damaged)

CH-47 Chinook
\$48 million
*per unit
(1)

F-35 Lightning II
\$82.5 million
*per unit
(1/ damaged)

E-3 Sentry
\$1.4 billion
*in total
(2/ 1 damaged)
*Replacement cost:
\$700 million per unit

KC-135 Stratotanker
\$277.2 million
*in total
(7/ 6 damaged)
*\$39.6 million per unit

MH-6 Little Bird
\$18 million
in total - *\$4.5 million per unit
(4)

MQ-9 Reaper
\$384 million
in total -
*\$32 million per unit
(12)
*Open-source investigations suggest actual MQ-9 Reaper losses may be higher

A-10 Thunderbolt II
\$18.8 million
*per unit
(1)

Iranian Casualties

KIA: Between **3,636** and over **6,000 military personnel** killed, including IRGC commanders and nuclear scientists.

Wounded: **26,500+** injured during the campaign.

Iranian Navy: Over **155 Iranian vessels** destroyed or damaged, including the sinking *IRIS Dena*

Civilian Impact: over **1,600 civilian deaths**



US Strategy and Objectives

Conducted in close coordination with Israel

1. Prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons
2. Dismantle Iran's military (ballistic missile/drone programs, naval forces, defense industry)
3. Dismantle ability to wage proxy war
4. Regime Change
5. Blockade Iranian maritime transit in and out of the [Strait of Hormuz](#) in order to force Iran to capitulate and negotiate a deal favorable to the US and Israel



Donald Trump states that the US and Israel are nearing their war objectives in Iran and indicates the conflict might end very soon.

Iran's Strategy

1. Saturation Attacks

Overwhelm Patriot, THAAD
Dozens of SRBMs & Cruise Missiles
Swarms of kamikaze drones

2. Deterrence & Retaliation

Raise **cost** of U.S. or Israeli intervention.

3. Underground "Missile Cities"

Hardened, underground launch complexes allow:
Rapid salvo launches
Protection from pre-emptive / retaliatory strikes

4. Proxy Integration

Hezbollah (Lebanon)
Houthis (Yemen)
Iraqi militias
Syrian IRGC units

Create a **multi-front threat**

5. Delay. Defend. Survive. Make it Cost



DISCUSSION

