

Four Days In, Hegseth, Caine Say U.S. Making Decisive Progress in Iran



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During the War Department's second press conference since the U.S. and Israel's launch of Operation Epic Fury against the Iranian regime Feb. 28, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth and Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, today said America is making decisive offensive progress in the conflict.

"I stand before you today with one unmistakable message about Operation Epic Fury: America is winning decisively, devastatingly and without mercy," Hegseth told the media from the Pentagon's press briefing room.

"We are only four days into this, and the results have been

incredible – historic, really. ... Only the United States could lead this [mission]. ... But, when you add the Israeli Defense Forces – a devastatingly capable force – the combination is sheer destruction for our radical Islamist Iranian adversaries,” Hegseth said.

During his remarks, Caine reiterated that the U.S. and Israel’s joint, three-pronged mission in the region is to target and eliminate Iran’s ballistic missile systems, destroy the Iranian navy and ensure Iran cannot rebuild or reconstitute its combat capability or power – including ensuring the country never obtains nuclear weapons.

In terms of battle damage, Caine said there has been an 86% overall drop in Iran’s ballistic missile launches since the first day of fighting, and a 23% decrease in just the last 24 hours. Additionally, he added there has been 73% decrease in Iranian one-way attack drone shots fired from early on in the conflict.

In terms of air power, Hegseth said that the U.S. and Israeli forces are poised to have complete control of Iranian air space within the next few days.

“I hope all the folks watching understand what ‘uncontested airspace’ and ‘complete control’ means: It means we will fly all day [and] all night ... finding, fixing and finishing the missiles and defense industrial base of the Iranian military; finding and fixing their leaders and their military leaders; flying over Tehran ... [with] Iranian leaders looking up and seeing only U.S. and Israeli air power every minute of every day, until we decide it’s over – and Iran will be able to do nothing about it,” Hegseth said.

At sea, U.S. Central Command announced yesterday that more than 20 Iranian navy vessels have been destroyed, including the sinking of an Iranian combatant ship in the Indian Ocean

by a U.S. Navy fast attack submarine.

It was the first time a U.S. submarine has used a Mark 48 torpedo to sink an enemy vessel since 1945, Caine noted.

“I want to remind everybody that this is an incredible demonstration of America’s global reach. To hunt, find and kill an out-of-area deployer is something that only the United States can do at this type of scale,” he said.

In discussing the Iranian regime’s predicament, Hegseth said he likens the situation to a football game, wherein Iran’s offense has already exhausted all of its scripted plays.

“But now that the game has started and the [U.S. and Israeli] defensive blitz is on, [Iran doesn’t] know what plays to call, let alone how to get in the huddle and call those plays,” Hegseth said.

He added, because so many of Iran’s senior leaders being killed on Operation Epic Fury’s first day, the military is unable to effectively communicate, let alone mount a coordinated and sustained offensive.

“This was never meant to be a fair fight, and it is not a fair fight. We are punching [the enemy] while they’re down, which is exactly how it should be,” Hegseth said, adding that Epic Fury has already unleashed twice the air power as the initial “shock and awe” phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

Looking ahead, Caine said that Centcom will continue to strike the regime’s infrastructure – including hunting and killing ballistic missile launchers and one-way attack capabilities – as well as continuing to attack Iran’s naval capabilities.

“We are just getting started,” Hegseth said.