

Hegseth Draws Distinction Between Epic Fury, Previous Conflicts

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During a Pentagon briefing today on Operation Epic Fury, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said the current conflict with Iran differs from the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“[Some people] want you [the American people] to think, just 19 days into this conflict, that we’re somehow spinning toward an endless abyss, or a ‘forever war,’ or a quagmire. Nothing could be further from the truth,” Hegseth said.

“Hear it from me, one of hundreds of thousands who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, who watched previous [administrations] squander American credibility – this is not those wars,” he continued.

The secretary went on to say the current campaign in Iran is laser-focused and decisive, and the U.S. objectives of destroying Iran’s missiles and missile launchers, eradicating the country’s navy and ensuring Iran never gets a nuclear weapon remain unchanged.

As evidence of the progress being made over close to three weeks, Hegseth said all Iranian ballistic missile and one-way drone attacks are down 90% since combat operations began Feb. 28.

Additionally, he said U.S. Central Command forces have damaged or sunk more than 120 Iranian naval vessels, including all 11 of the regime’s submarines.

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joined Hegseth at the briefing and provided an update

on battle damage.

“Centcom remains on plan to achieve our military objectives, and [we] remain unrelenting in our pursuit of Iranian missile capabilities, [drone] capabilities ... [Iran’s] navy and ... their industrial base,” Caine said.

In the air, Caine said the U.S. military yesterday dropped 5,000-pound penetrator bombs into underground Iranian storage facilities housing coastal defense cruise missiles and other additional support equipment.

He also said that Centcom forces are flying further to the east and penetrating deeper into Iranian airspace to hunt and kill one-way attack aircraft, limiting Iran’s ability to project power outside its borders.

Additionally, Caine said A-10 Thunderbolt II attack aircraft are hunting and killing fast attack watercraft in the Strait of Hormuz, and AH-64 Apache helicopters have joined the fight on the battlespace’s southern flank.

During the briefing, both Hegseth and Caine paid tribute to the U.S. airmen who lost their lives in a KC-135 Stratotanker crash in Iraq, March 12.

Both leaders were at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware yesterday for the return of the six fallen service members’ remains.

Hegseth said the overwhelming sentiment he and Caine heard from the family members of the fallen was that the campaign in Iran must be completed to honor the ultimate sacrifice those airmen made.

“My response, along with that of [President Donald J. Trump], was simple: Of course, we will finish this. We will honor their sacrifice. Their sacrifice only [hardens] our commitment,” Hegseth said.