US, Iran exchange fire despite talks with mediators

By Nayera Abdallah, Jana Choukeir and Phil Stewart

November 17, 20267:45 AM GMT+2Updated November 18, 2026



Summary

Iranian officials holding talks with Qatar and Oman

War in Middle East is at stalemate after nearly nine months

Iran targets US radar system in Bahrain, says three tankers on fire

Trump says US taking dirty bomb report seriously

DUBAI, Nov 17 (Reuters) - The US and Iran exchanged fire on Tuesday, with the US striking an Iranian missile launch site after Iran said it targeted a US military radar system in Bahrain, despite talks between Iran and mediators Oman and Qatar.

The latest back-and-forth between the US and Iran was a reminder of difficulties ending nearly nine months of war that have destabilised the Middle East, pushed up global energy prices and fueled US voter anger in November elections that punished President Donald Trump's Republican Party.

> The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

A US military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said US fighter jets fired on a Revolutionary Guards missile launch site on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz in response to Iran's "aggression targeting US personnel and assets." Iranian media, citing an Iranian official, said the US attack did not damage infrastructure.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said earlier on Tuesday they targeted a US military radar system at Bahrain's Sheikh Isa base, and warned Bahrain over its alliance with the US and stance towards Shi'ite clergy.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Bahrain, which is home to the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet, said it intercepted the attack and there were no reports of casualties or damage.

Qatari and Iranian officials met on Tuesday for talks aimed at "bridging perspectives and narrowing the gap between proposals presented on the ground," Qatari spokesperson Majed Al Ansari said.

They coincide with a visit to Oman by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi. Oman's Foreign Ministry said he discussed safeguarding maritime corridors and ensuring the smooth flow of global shipping and trade, as well as preventing military escalation, with Oman's foreign minister.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Oman and Iran lie on opposite sides of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway that carried about one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies before the war but is now partly blocked by Iran.

Oman has previously held talks with Tehran about controlling traffic in the strait.

Araqchi said in a post on Telegram that he also met Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and informed him about Iran's diplomatic initiative to end the war that began with US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

RISE IN ATTACKS ON TANKERS

The war has ground to a stalemate, with Trump saying he might hold off from attacking Iran if the US does not face what he described as ⚠️ovocations from Tehran or the Iran-backed Houthi group in Yemen.



Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran, November 16, 2026. Razieh Poudat/ISNA/via WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS DIO FARDA. Purchase Licensing Rights

Trump said on Tuesday the US was taking seriously the possibility that Iran could be planning an attack involving a dirty bomb in Washington, after being asked about a CNN report citing US intelligence assessments.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the report was part of a US campaign "to lay the media groundwork for their sinister designs" using "baseless allegations."

Trump has also said he will maintain a US naval blockade on Iran because it has continued to disrupt shipping in the strait, which is a sticking point in negotiations.

Attacks on tankers have increased this month in the strait, and the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations agency said the crew of a tanker passing through the waterway was

unaccounted for after being attacked north of the Omani port city of Khasab.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards and navy said on Tuesday that a ship carrying LNG and two oil tankers had caught fire in the strait. Reuters could not independently verify the reports.

Benchmark Brent crude futures were up 0.4% at $92.76 a barrel, much higher than before the war but well below April's wartime peak of $126.41.

IRANIAN WARNING

The war continues to spill over into other parts of the Middle East as Iran puts pressure on Washington through its Houthi allies, who have carried out attacks on Saudi Arabia and seized areas along the Yemeni coast on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, hoping to squeeze Gulf oil producers.

Tuesday's attack on Bahrain, a Shi'ite-majority country ruled by a Sunni Muslim family, followed the sentencing there of 64 people, mostly Shi'ite clerics, to life in prison on charges of colluding with Iran to undermine the state.

Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned the court's ruling on Tuesday and said the accusations were baseless. Tehran has long denied interference in Bahrain's internal affairs.

Iran also fired on Bahrain on Sunday, saying it had targeted a US radar system at the Al-Rifaa helicopter base following what it said were hostile US actions.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards spokesperson Hossein Mohebbi said Bahrain had made "three key mistakes," which he listed as "cooperating in the invasion of the Islamic Republic of Iran, remaining within the US security bubble, and encroaching on the sanctity of Shi'ite religious authority."

These, "if continued, will jeopardize its survival in the region's new security order," Mohebbi said.

Additional reporting by Yomna Ehab and Elwely Elwelly, Writing by Nayera Abdallah, Aidan Lewis and Phil Stewart; Editing by Ros Russell, Peter Graff, Don Durfee and Rod Nickel