



# U.S. and Iran Ceasefire Consistently Fragmented as Strikes Exchange

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**Abstract—** This brief examines the ongoing ceasefire negotiations between the United States and Iran following continued military exchanges throughout May and June 2026. It analyzes ceasefire violations, diplomatic efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, regional security concerns, and the economic and geopolitical implications of prolonged instability. This brief also evaluates current policy discussion surrounding Iran's nuclear program sanctions relief, and international mediation efforts aimed at preventing a return to full-scale conflict.

**Keywords –** Iran, United States, ceasefire, Strait of Hormuz, nuclear, negotiations, sanctions, Middle East, security, diplomacy

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ceasefire between the United States and Iran remains unstable as both sides continue to conduct military operations and exchange accusations of violations despite ongoing diplomatic negotiations. Recent discussion has revolved around extending the ceasefire, reopening the Strait of Hormuz, and establishing a framework for future discussions regarding Iran's nuclear program. This conflict has significantly disrupted energy markets, threatening international shipping routes and

increasing tensions among diplomacy and the well-being of neighboring states throughout the Middle East. Policymakers, along with international organizations and regional partners, continue to pursue diplomatic solutions while preparing for the possibility of a renewed escalation. Continued instability has also raised concerns regarding the humanitarian impacts, regional security and the economic consequences of prolonged conflict.

## I. OVERVIEW

The ceasefire between the United States and Iran remains increasingly fragile as both governments continue to accuse one another of violating the terms of the April 2026 agreement. Recent military exchanges in and around the Strait of Hormuz have included Iranian missile and drone attacks against regional targets and U.S. retaliatory strikes against the Iranian military infrastructure, raising concerns that the conflict could return to a broader, regional war.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Loft, Philip. "US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026." House of Commons Library, May 9, 2026.

Diplomatic negotiations mediated through regional partners have continued in an effort to expand the ceasefire, reopen critical shipping routes, and establish a framework for future discussions involving Iran's nuclear program. Despite periodic optimism from negotiations, disagreements of sanctions, frozen Iranian assets, uranium enrichment, and maritime security have repeatedly delayed a permanent settlement.<sup>2</sup> Policymakers and international organizations continue to view the conflict as one of the most significant threats to stability and geopolitical diplomacy in the Middle East and energy markets worldwide.

#### A. Pointed Summary

- The United States and Iran continue to exchange military strikes despite the April 2026 ceasefire agreement.
- Negotiators are discussing a proposal that would extend the ceasefire by 60 days and reopen shipping through the Strait of Hormuz
- Iran recently launched missiles and drones toward Kuwait and Bahrain, prompting U.S. interceptions and retaliatory strikes on Iranian radar sites
- Continued instability has disrupted global oil markets and increased concerns regarding wider regional escalation involving Lebanon, Hezbollah, and other Iranian-aligned groups.

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<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/>.

<sup>2</sup> Choukeir, Jana, Enas Alashray, and Phil Stewart. "Iran and US Trade Air Strikes after Trump Dismisses Report of Hormuz Deal." *Reuters*, May 28, 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-us-trade-air-strikes-after-trump-dismisses-report-hormuz-deal-2026-05-28/>.

#### B. Relevance

The continued instability of the U.S. - Iran ceasefire has significant implications for international security, global energy markets, and regional stability.<sup>3</sup> The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints for energy exports. Approximately one-fifth of globally traded petroleum passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making any disruptions to navigation harmful for global energy markets. Repeated ceasefire violations have increased uncertainty regarding the future of diplomatic negotiations.<sup>4</sup> Ongoing disagreements have complicated efforts to establish a long-term peace agreement. The outcome of these negotiations will likely shape U.S. policy toward Iran, regional security arrangements, and global energy markets for years to come.

## II. HISTORY

U.S.-Iran tensions have long been rooted in Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, its ballistic missile program, and its expansive military influence across the Middle East. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action offered a rare diplomatic framework to contain these ambitions, but unraveled after the United States unilaterally

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<sup>3</sup> Stewart, Phil, and Eman Abouhassira. "US Strikes Iranian Sites after Iran Launches Drones in Latest Gulf Flare-Up." *Reuters*, June 6, 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-attacks-iranian-coastal-sites-after-iran-launches-drones-latest-flare-up-2026-06-06/>.

<sup>4</sup> Reuters Staff. "Iran Is Stopping Message Exchanges with U.S., May Block Hormuz, Tasnim News Agency Says." *Reuters*, June 1, 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-is-stopping-g-message-exchanges-with-us-may-block-hormuz-tasnim-news-agency-2026-06-01/>.

withdrew in 2018.<sup>5</sup> Renewed negotiations in February 2026 collapsed over irreconcilable divisions – chiefly the U.S. demand for zero uranium enrichment, the fate of Iran’s ballistic missile program, and the sequencing of sanctions relief – and within 24 hours, the United States and Israel launched coordinated strikes against Iran on February 28, 2026.<sup>6</sup> After nearly six weeks of open conflict, Pakistan brokered a conditional ceasefire on April 8, opening a window for negotiations toward a lasting agreement – though repeated exchanges of strikes on both sides have left that window precarious.<sup>7</sup>

#### A. Current Stances

Negotiations with Iran and its nuclear program have historically put Iran in the crosshairs of the international community. Concerns of Iran crossing the nuclear threshold were already in talks since June 9th of 2025, and during this time, a documented stockpile of 400 kilograms of highly enriched uranium was reported by the IAEA.<sup>8</sup> Director General Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency explained

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<sup>5</sup> Britannica Editors. “2026 Iran War | Explained, United States, Israel, Strait of Hormuz, Map, & Conflict.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 6 Mar. 2026, [www.britannica.com/event/2026-Iran-War](http://www.britannica.com/event/2026-Iran-War).

<sup>6</sup> Loft, Philip. “US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026.” *House of Commons Library*, 24 Apr. 2026, [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/).

<sup>7</sup> Loft, Philip. “US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026.” *House of Commons Library*, 24 Apr. 2026, [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/).

<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Office at Geneva, “Lack of Cooperation from Iran Hampers Nuclear Checks, Says Atomic Energy Watchdog | the United Nations Office at Geneva,” The United Nations Office at Geneva (United Nations, June 9, 2025), <https://www.un Geneva.org/en/news-media/news/2025/06/107153/lack-cooperation-iran-hampers-nuclear-checks-says-atomic-energy>.

last year that “Unless and until Iran assists the agency in resolving the outstanding safeguards issues, the Agency will not be in a position to provide assurance that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful.” The IAEA has 35 board members who deliberate on financial statements and safeguards agreements. Board members include countries such as the U.S., Canada, China, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain.<sup>9</sup>

#### B. Tried Policy

Previous efforts to address tensions between the United States and Iran have primarily relied on economic sanctions, diplomatic negotiations, and international monitoring of Iran’s nuclear activities. The most significant attempt was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed in 2015 between Iran, the United States, The United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China and the EU. Under this agreement, Iran accepted restrictions on uranium enrichment and allowed inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in exchange for sanctions relief.<sup>10</sup> The agreement was widely credited with limiting Iran’s nuclear activities and expanding international monitoring access, but the United States withdrew from the deal in 2018 and reinstated extensive economic sanctions on Iran.

<sup>11</sup> Since then, successive administrations have pursued a combination of diplomatic negotiations

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<sup>9</sup> IAEA. “Board of Governors.” [www.iaea.org](http://www.iaea.org), 8 June 2016, [www.iaea.org/about/governance/board-of-governors](http://www.iaea.org/about/governance/board-of-governors).

<sup>10</sup> Loft, Philip. “US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026.” *House of Commons Library*, May 9, 2026, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/>.

<sup>11</sup> Britannica Editors. “2026 Iran War | Explained, United States, Israel, Strait of Hormuz, Map, & Conflict.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 6, 2026, [https://www.britannica.com/event/2026-Iran-War](http://www.britannica.com/event/2026-Iran-War).

and economic pressure to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities while avoiding a broader military conflict. More recently, ceasefire negotiations brokered by regional actors, including Pakistan, have attempted to reduce hostilities and establish a framework for renewed nuclear discussions, though repeated violations and disagreements have limited their effectiveness.<sup>12</sup>

### III. POLICY PROBLEM

#### A. Stakeholders

If ceasefire negotiations become persistently ignored or violated, the consequences would be severe and widespread for all parties and external organizations involved. Energy supply dilemmas would become exacerbated, with the war already removing up to 14 million barrels of oil per day from Gulf producers.<sup>13</sup> As a result, emergency petroleum reserves are being used to stabilize a wide array of oil markets; however, the IEA has warned that emergency energy reserves are only a temporary fix and not a solution to diminishing supply.<sup>7</sup> The closure of the Strait of Hormuz as a result of the U.S.-Iran war has also resulted in a substantial share of the world's oil supply being stripped from the market.<sup>14</sup> Europe and Asia, both major oil importers, have been most affected by the Straits closure, with oil prices in these regions rising even faster than in the U.S.<sup>8</sup> However, even

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<sup>12</sup> Loft, Philip. "US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026." House of Commons Library, April 24, 2026. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/>.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Gardner and Katharine Jackson, "Companies to Add 40 Mln Barrels of Oil to US SPR after Iran War Ends, Energy Secretary Says," *Reuters*, June 5, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/companies-add-40-mln-barrels-oil-us-spr-after-iran-war-ends-energy-secretary-2026-06-05/>.

<sup>14</sup> Mariam Al-Shamma, "Why the Iran Conflict Is Affecting Diesel and Jet Fuel Prices More than Gasoline • Bipartisan Policy Center," Bipartisan Policy Center, June 2, 2026, <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/why-the-iran-conflict-is-affecting-diesel-and-jet-fuel-prices-more-than-gasoline/>.

if a faithful agreement is made to foreseeably end the conflict, oil and gasoline prices may go down, but high diesel and jet fuel prices are likely to persist for Americans post-conflict due to the pre-existing tight markets.<sup>8</sup> The Lebanese population is also another group being impacted by unsettled agreements. Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's leader, rejected the U.S.-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, labeling negotiations as "futile" and "humiliating" for Lebanon and its people.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that at least 3,526 people have been killed in Lebanon since the start of the war, with more than one million people registering themselves as displaced according to the UN. If negotiations and deals cannot be reached, Lebanon risks prolonged instability.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most obvious collection of people being afflicted by broken deals and the widespread conflict is Iranian civilians. Reports indicate that by mid-April of 2026, nearly 1,700 civilians, including 254 children out of a total of 3,400 in Iran, had been killed.<sup>16</sup> As of June 1, 2026, it has been reported that 25,000 people had been injured, with displacement numbers being in the millions. The country's subpar healthcare system, combined with the war, has pushed health facilities to the brink.<sup>10</sup>

#### B. Risks of Indifference

If a definitive deal cannot be made and the closure of the Strait is not addressed, oil prices could jump to 200 dollars, according to Roger Hammersland, researcher and economist at the Department of

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<sup>15</sup> Henry Moore, "Hezbollah Rejects US-Backed Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire," *BBC News*, June 4, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c052343r812o>.

<sup>16</sup> Yara M. Aremainssi, "The Humanitarian Impact of the War on Iran," Arab Center Washington DC, June 9, 2026, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-humanitarian-impact-of-the-war-on-iran/>.

Statistics Norway.<sup>17</sup> This would not only trigger dramatic inflationary pressures, higher energy prices, and interest rate hikes, but would also impact the most financially vulnerable groups the hardest, both domestically and globally.<sup>11</sup> Further, if there is no clear strategy to resolve the conflict with Iran, the U.S. risks a war that is capable of dragging on into the foreseeable future.<sup>18</sup> Operation Fury succeeded in weakening Iran's military capabilities, but without a clear deal to end operations, fragments of human, financial, and strategic costs could be seen again as with interventions conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq. Absent effort by the U.S. and Iran to make a deal, it would not only create a scenario of a prolonged war, but would also weaken U.S. capability of defending economic and ally interests, undermining U.S. credibility.<sup>12</sup>

### C. Nonpartisan Reasoning

UN Secretary General António Guterres condemned the joint military strikes by the U.S. and Israel, as well as the retaliation by Iran, saying that these actions “undermine international peace and security.”<sup>19</sup> Guterres, in his statement on February 28, 2026, also urged for “an immediate cessation of hostilities and de-escalation.”

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<sup>17</sup> Elise Kjorsstad, “Professor Warns: This Could Happen to the Economy If the Strait of Hormuz Remains Closed.” *ScienceNorway*, 15 May 2026, [www.sciencenorway.no/economy-foreign-policy-middle-east/professor-warns-this-could-happen-to-the-economy-if-the-strait-of-hormuz-remains-closed/2664618](http://www.sciencenorway.no/economy-foreign-policy-middle-east/professor-warns-this-could-happen-to-the-economy-if-the-strait-of-hormuz-remains-closed/2664618).

<sup>18</sup>Sophie Fang, “The War against Iran and Global Risks: ‘Tell Me How This Ends’ - Georgetown Journal of International Affairs,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, March 26, 2026, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/conflict-security/the-war-against-iran-and-global-risks-tell-me-how-this-ends/>.

<sup>19</sup> António Guterres, “Statement by the Secretary-General on Iran,” Secretary-General, February 28, 2026, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statements/2026-02-28/statement-the-secretary-general-iran>.

Guterres also strongly urged that all parties retreat to the negotiation table, signaling his support for ceasefire negotiations and agreements in the hopes of maintaining international peace.<sup>13</sup> Both sides continue to accuse one another of violating ceasefire deals, with both the U.S. and Iran blaming one another for why strikes and violations continue to fragment negotiations.<sup>20</sup> Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, in a press session at the U.S. Embassy in Singapore, expressed assurance that a “great deal” with Iran can be reached.<sup>21</sup> However, Hegseth stated that to finalize deals and negotiations with Iran, which would lift the blockade and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, Iran must accept the reality of never being able to possess nuclear weapons.<sup>15</sup>

## IV. POLICY OPTIONS

Policymakers are currently weighing several approaches to stabilizing the fragile and repeatedly violated ceasefire.

One option already underway is a phased diplomatic agreement anchored by a Memorandum of Understanding to extend the ceasefire by 60 days, reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and establish a framework for broader nuclear talks - though Vice President JD Vance described it as still “TBD,” noting the two sides are going back and forth on “a couple of language points” around Iran's nuclear program and enriched

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<sup>20</sup> Aoife Walsh, “Trump Holds Meeting to Make ‘Final Determination’ on Iran Deal,” *BBC News*, May 29, 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0r2d40r91qo>.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Embassy Singapore, “Secretary of War Pete Hegseth Holds a Press Availability at the U.S. Embassy in Singapore - U.S. Embassy in Singapore,” U.S. Embassy in Singapore, May 30, 2026, <https://sg.usembassy.gov/secretary-of-war-pete-hegseth-holds-a-press-availability-at-the-u-s-embassy-in-singapore/>.

uranium stockpile.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Iran has proposed resolving the Strait of Hormuz crisis first, with nuclear negotiations postponed to a later stage – a move critics warn would strip the U.S. of its primary leverage before the harder concessions are secured.<sup>23</sup> A final sticking point is IAEA inspections: the agency has been unable to verify the state of Iran's nuclear program since June 2025, with IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi warning that any agreement without resumed inspections would be an “illusion of an agreement.”<sup>24</sup>

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The fragility of the current ceasefire, unresolved Lebanon-Hezbollah hostilities, and growing congressional resistance to executive overreach demand an adjusted U.S. attitude. The United States should formally seek a congressional Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) clearly defining the scope and objectives of any further military engagement with Iran. Additionally, the Pentagon, State Department, and USAID inspectors general have already launched a review confirming that the conflict has legally exceeded the 60-day War Power Act threshold without proper authorization.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Tal Shalev et al., “US Says Iran Launched Missile toward Kuwait,” CNN, May 28, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/05/28/world/live-news/iran-war-us-news>.

<sup>23</sup> Barak Ravid, “Iran Offers U.S. Deal to Reopen Strait but Postpone Nuclear Talks,” Axios, April 27, 2026, <https://www.axios.com/2026/04/27/iran-us-hormuz-strait-nuclear-talks-proposal-pakistan>.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Loft, “US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026,” House of Commons Library, April 24, 2026, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/>.

<sup>25</sup> Camila DeChalus, Sarah Ferris, and Ellis Kim, “House Votes to Limit Trump’s Iran War Powers in Remarkable Rebuke,” CNN, June 3, 2026,

United States should also pursue a parallel diplomatic track, potentially through Pakistan and the EU, focused on limiting Iran’s ability to refine uranium. Also, IAEA Inspection access should be a focus since IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi has warned that any agreement lacking inspection provisions would constitute an “illusion of an agreement.”<sup>26</sup>

Continued exchanges between U.S. and Iranian forces along the Strait of Hormuz remain likely even under ceasefire conditions, with President Trump going as far as to describe the April 8 agreement as on “life support” during an active naval blockade and collapsed Islamabad Talks<sup>27</sup>. Iran’s warning that any Israeli attack on Beirut would trigger full-scale war also directly complicates U.S. efforts to address Lebanon separately.<sup>28</sup> Domestically, the House’s 215-208 passage of the War Powers Resolution signals that congressional patience is running thin, with both parties facing growing pressure to bring the conflict to a close with the 2026 midterms approaching.<sup>29</sup>

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<https://www.cnn.com/2026/06/03/politics/house-iran-war-powers-vote>.

<sup>26</sup> Philip Loft, “US-Iran Ceasefire and Nuclear Talks in 2026,” House of Commons Library, April 24, 2026, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10637/>.

<sup>27</sup> Congress, “U.S.-Iran Ceasefire: Assessment, Reactions, and Issues for Congress,” Congress.gov, May 13, 2026, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12678>.

<sup>28</sup> Al Jazeera Staff, “Israel, Lebanon Agree to Conditional Ceasefire,” Al Jazeera, June 4, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/6/4/israel-and-lebanon-agree-to-conditional-ceasefire>.

<sup>29</sup> Claudia Grisales, “House Passes War Powers Resolution Directing Trump to End Hostilities with Iran,” NPR (NPR, June 3, 2026), <https://www.npr.org/2026/06/03/nx-s1-5845102/house-iran-war-powers-vote>.

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