



USA Today

Escalation in the Gulf: Fall of a Drone, Rise of Tensions

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Iran's Revolutionary Guard brought down a United States Military spy drone on Thursday the 20th of June 2019. The incident occurred in an unfavorable context that witnesses increasing tensions between the adversaries. Unsurprisingly, both states rushed to share their own narratives of the attack. Tehran contended that the spy drone violated Iran's airspace and was therefore a target for its air defense. On the other hand, Washington repudiated these claims by stressing that the drone was operating in international airspace. The Pentagon defined the incident as an "unprovoked attack" and US President Donald Trump warned that "Iran made a very big mistake". The situation fluctuated at a fast pace and eyes turned to Washington to observe the nature of response the US would adopt. On Friday the 21st, Trump tweeted that he called-off a retaliatory strike that was 10 minutes away from three different targets. He explained that 150 people would have died as a result of the strike if he didn't stop it, thus making it a disproportionate response to the downing of an unmanned drone. Nonetheless, Iran denied receiving a warning from the US via Oman of an imminent strike.

The United States imposed a new round of sanctions in an attempt to increase the financial strangle over Tehran. This round targeted the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and other senior officials in the government. The US also removed all oil waivers and threatened to sanction any country that would purchase Iranian oil. On the other side, Tehran enunciated that it will not hesitate to take any measure to protect the country's sovereignty. Iran doesn't appear regretful on bringing down the US drone, particularly that its naval chief warned that Iran is capable of shooting down other spy drones in case of violating Iran's airspace. On a different front, Tehran stated that it has successfully dealt with a cyberattack launched by the US that targeted Iran's infrastructure on Thursday the 20th of June.

US response appears to flounder amidst the increasing tensions. Despite the demanding urge of several senior officials in Washington to respond with force, Trump asserted that a war with Iran is not what he wants. Despite this, he warned of an "obliteration like you've never seen before" in case a war erupts with Iran. Trump pledged to be "Iran's best friend" and promised financial prosperity for the latter upon solving the nuclear question. Notably, the US-Iran tensions triggered unrest in a variety of contexts. From one side, oil prices witnessed a notable increase after the US drone was brought down. Oil prices remain prone to soaring in case the situation further deteriorates, particularly that Tehran might take action in the Strait of Hormuz which serves as the world's most pivotal oil route. On the other side, major airlines started rerouting flights in an attempt to avoid potential escalation between the adversaries. Nonetheless, the reader should note that this is not the first drone incident between the United States and Iran. In December 2011, Iran captured a US spy drone that flew 140 miles inside Iranian territory. The US drone was allegedly hijacked by an Iranian engineer before landing it in Iran.

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