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More US troops died in Iran war than Pentagon disclosed – WaPo

Sources put the toll at up to 23, while Secretary of War Pete Hegseth was quick to brand the report a “lie”

Published 19 Sep, 2026 10:26

The number of US service members who have died while deployed in the Middle East since the start of the Iran war is higher than the Pentagon's public tally, the Washington Post reported on Friday, citing military sources. The Pentagon's public casualty database may be missing as many as five military fatalities, according to the report.

As of Friday, the Pentagon's Defense Casualty Analysis System (DCAS) listed 18 US military fatalities, including deaths from hostile and non-hostile action since the Iran war began on February 28.

Five sources, however, told the outlet there have been at least 22 military fatalities, while a sixth put the toll even higher, saying 23 service members have died since the war began. Not all of the additional



A US Army carry team moves flag-draped coffins containing the remains of US soldiers killed in an Iranian retaliatory strike on Kuwait's Port of Shuaiba, Dover, Delaware, March 7, 2026. © Getty Images / Kyle Mazza/Anadolu

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deaths were directly tied to the conflict, the official said, but involved US personnel stationed in the Middle East amid the ongoing hostilities. Three US contractors based in the region have also died since combat operations began, the official added.

It is unclear whether the discrepancy was intended to downplay the war's toll or stemmed from administrative procedures for classifying military deaths.

The US administration's casualty accounting already faced scrutiny in July, when the Pentagon briefly removed four Iran war deaths from its public tally during a since-failed ceasefire – three troops killed in an Iranian missile strike on a US base in Jordan and another killed the next day during a controlled detonation of an Iranian drone in Iraq. The Pentagon blamed a data-processing error after the removals drew congressional scrutiny. The deaths later reappeared alongside some 207 wounded personnel, but under *"Overseas Contingency Operations"* rather than Operation Epic Fury, the administration's name for the Iran war.



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Commenting on the report on X, US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth vehemently denied its authenticity, calling it *"a complete LIE."*

"This is DISGUSTING and FAKE... Shame on the Washington Post – they're worse than Iranian state media," he wrote.



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Separately, the Pentagon said two US service members have died in the Middle East since February on missions unrelated to the war. Sgt. Devin Seibel was killed in a training accident in Irbil, Iraq, on May 31, while Maj. Sorffly Davius died after an unspecified medical emergency in Kuwait on March 6. Neither is named in DCAS, despite dying at bases attacked by Iranian forces.

The Washington Post said the Pentagon declined to address its questions about the discrepancies.

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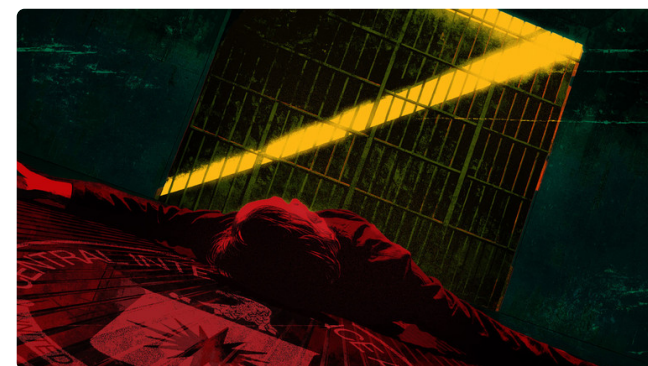
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Shame on the Washington Post — they're worse than Iranian state media.

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Exclusive: More American service members have died in the Middle East during the ongoing Iran war than the Pentagon has disclosed publicly, according to six U.S. officials familiar with the data. wapo.st/4xtFlaf

Last edited 11:03 PM · Sep 18, 2026

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An increasingly unpopular war

Despite US President Donald Trump insisting the war has been a success – even claiming at times that *“Americans aren’t against the war”* – polling indicates growing public opposition. A September Reuters/Ipsos poll found 28% support Trump’s approach to Iran, while 62% disapprove.

The war has also deepened divisions in Congress ahead of the November midterms. Congressional Democrats have overwhelmingly opposed the conflict, making its multibillion-dollar cost and economic fallout – including gasoline prices approaching \$5 a gallon – campaign issues. They have also pledged to investigate the Pentagon’s handling of casualty notifications if they retake the majority.

While most House Republicans have voted to block anti-war resolutions, some GOP lawmakers have broken ranks, backing bipartisan efforts to invoke war-powers restrictions or halt funding for the conflict. Representative Thomas Massie (KY) also moved this week to force a House vote on impeaching Hegseth, alleging he violated the War Powers Resolution of 1973 by pursuing



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hostilities without congressional authorization.



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The war has cost the US \$43.6 billion through September 3, including \$28.1 billion in munitions expended, according to CENTCOM figures shared with lawmakers and the media on Friday. The total excludes extensive damage to US bases across eight Middle Eastern countries. Senior military officials reportedly warned Hegseth last month that prolonged large-scale operations against Iran were unsustainable.

Trump, however, insists the war will end soon, telling reporters last week it would likely stop immediately after the midterms. He told Axios on Thursday that he faces *“a big decision”* over whether to restart major combat operations to end the conflict.

Iran, meanwhile, has refused to cave to Trump's threats, with Parliament Speaker and top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf warning earlier this month of *“faster, heavier and more painful”* retaliation against further US aggression. On Friday, Tehran showcased a new volunteer force that will receive limited military and emergency training to support the IRGC. IRGC chief Hassan Hassanzadeh told state broadcaster IRIB that over 600,000 people had registered, with more than one million expected to undergo training.

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Trump signs new Russia sanctions bill

Moscow has warned that the measure could complicate Ukraine peace efforts and drive US fuel prices higher

Published 19 Sep, 2026 09:03 | Updated 19 Sep, 2026 10:05

US President Donald Trump has signed sweeping legislation expanding the sanctions on Russia and authorizing tariffs of up to 100% on major buyers of Russian energy. Moscow warned that additional sanctions would complicate efforts to settle the Ukraine conflict and could further destabilize the energy markets.

In a statement on Friday, the White House announced that Trump approved the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, after the Senate passed it 86-11 in August and the House passed it 262-159 on Wednesday.

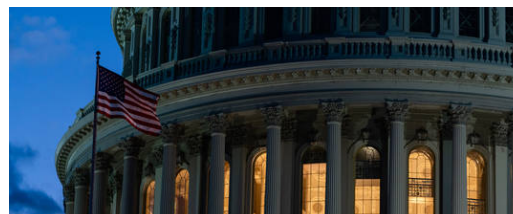


US President Donald Trump speaks during a ceremony commemorating the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in Arlington, Virginia. © Getty Images

The legislation targets senior Russian officials, banks, defense and energy entities, as well as what Western countries refer to as Russia's 'shadow fleet' of ships. It also empowers Trump to impose tariffs of up to 100% on goods from the five largest buyers of Russian crude oil and natural gas.

The text, however, does not explicitly name major Russian energy buyers such as China or India, and the tariff rate can be set below the 100% ceiling.

The measure was initially proposed by late Republican Senator and Russia hawk Lindsey Graham and Democrat



Richard Blumenthal in April 2025. The original proposal threatened 500% tariffs on countries that buy Russian energy, but after more than a year of negotiations with the White House, the figure was cut to 100%.



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The bill also grants Trump broad waiver powers, allowing him to suspend sanctions according to national interests and giving his administration wide leeway in setting tariff rates – one of the key points of negotiations between the White House and lawmakers, as some feared that the legislation would give Trump too much power.

The Trump administration recently eased sanctions on Russian oil. During the Iran war, the administration issued temporary exemptions allowing the sale and delivery of Russian oil already at sea to alleviate pressure on the energy markets.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned on Thursday that the “unfriendly” move “*would definitely complicate efforts to find a peaceful settlement in Ukraine.*”

The Russian Embassy in Washington argued that blocking Russian energy trade while Middle Eastern supplies are disrupted could prove costly for the US, calling it an “*invitation to ever-higher prices at the pump.*” It also warned that simultaneously escalating tensions with Moscow and Beijing would be a geopolitical lose-lose situation and would “*only play into the hands of Euro-Atlantic warmongers.*”

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