

## How much is the war in Iran costing taxpayers?

March 3, 2026

On February 28, 2026, the United States launched military operations in Iran after weeks of preparation. U.S. actions in Iran risk catastrophic consequences for Iran, the region, and the United States. Civilian deaths are mounting, and the U.S. has already lost troops and aircraft. The risk of wider war is grave.

Meanwhile, Congress has not authorized the current military operations. And the costs of these operations are rising quickly during a time when Americans are struggling to afford basic needs.

This fact sheet offers an initial point-in-time estimate of the operation and support costs of major military equipment – aircraft and naval assets – deployed to the region in recent weeks.

Deployed systems include two aircraft carrier strike groups and related naval support, as well as more than 200 military aircraft. We also include a ten percent increase over the normal operating costs for these systems to account for the heightened pace of combat operations.<sup>1</sup>

**Daily operations in and around Iran for these major military systems are costing taxpayers an estimated \$59.39 million per day.**

**That \$59.39 million a day could instead cover the daily costs of Medicaid for more than four million Americans, or SNAP (food stamps) for more than 9.5 million Americans.<sup>2</sup>** Both programs were subject to significant cuts under last year's H.R. 1, with [millions of Americans](#) at risk of going hungry and without healthcare as a result.

Partial Daily Operation and Support Costs of U.S. War in Iran as of March 3, 2026	
Components	Daily Costs
Naval Deployment	\$30.679 million
Aircraft Deployment	\$23.314 million
10% increase over normal operation costs for combat operations	\$5.399 million
<b>Daily operations of major equipment</b>	<b>\$59.39 million</b>

<sup>1</sup> Cancian and Park. Center for Strategic and International Studies. [The Costs and Global Trade-Offs of U.S. Military Action Against Venezuela](#). January 15, 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Based on federal Medicaid costs per person from Kaiser Family Foundation, and SNAP costs from USDA. For more information, see [National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies](#).

### ***About the numbers***<sup>3</sup>

This estimate does not include operating costs for all military assets previously in the region; troop deployments except those required to staff the included assets; munitions; or the original procurement or development costs of the ships or aircraft deployed in the region. Including these figures would raise the total considerably.

The situation in Iran is changing quickly. This estimate represents the best available information, largely from media reports, at a particular point in time. The daily costs cited here could change as a result of escalation, deescalation, or other factors. As more information becomes available, we expect to update these figures.

The death toll and the costs continue to rise. And the Pentagon is spending massively for an unauthorized war of choice while Americans struggle to afford basic necessities.

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<sup>3</sup> Cost estimates are from the Congressional Budget Office. Assets were identified from a variety of media sources. Bilmes, Linda J. [Costs of United States Military Activities in the Wider Middle East Since October 7, 2023](#). Oct. 7, 2025.

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