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This month, the LeMay Center highlights Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER.

On 22 June 2025, the United States executed a strategic attack against Iran named Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. The attack was a joint force effort that synchronized unprecedented execution between strategic bomber forces and submarines to deliver rapid, decisive effects designed to punish Iran and compel its leaders to change course on their nuclear ambitions. Though the kinetic portion of the attack took less than an hour to execute, planning and preparation began years earlier.



In 2009, Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) personnel began studying Iran's underground nuclear enterprise infrastructure vulnerabilities. The DTRA analysts joined ongoing defense industry efforts to design a bomb that could penetrate underground structural entry points to hold Iran's nuclear weapons facilities at risk. In September 2011, the first 30,000 pound, GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator bunker-busting bomb was delivered to the Air Force.

On 21 June 2025, the largest B-2 strike package in history took off from Whiteman AFB, MO loaded with GBU-57s. Of the thirteen B-2s that departed Whiteman, six flew west as an elaborate decoy while seven flew east towards Iran. The seven B-2s inbound to Iran were supported by a joint force of 112 aircraft that performed air-to-air refueling, electromagnetic attack and jamming, and offensive counterair operations that included suppression of enemy air defenses. Over hostile territory, the stealth bombers executed complex rendezvous with escort aircraft in tightly coordinated multi-platform operations.

In the early morning of 22 June 2025, over two-dozen Tomahawk missiles struck the Isfahan nuclear site and multiple Iranian air defense locations. These strikes paved the way for seven B-2s to drop fourteen GBU-57s on Fordow and Natanz nuclear facilities. The post-attack damage assessments concluded the strikes "obliterated" Iran's nuclear enrichment capacity. However, it remains to be seen if Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER achieved its strategic objective of establishing long-term nuclear deterrence.

Why it matters today: Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER demonstrated airpower's unique speed, range, precision, and lethal capabilities to enable global reach and decisive strategic effects when integrated with joint force capabilities. The mission's comprehensive operations security and deception elements showcase the importance of shaping adversary perceptions through information environment operations alongside kinetic strikes. Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER's display of unmatched global reach sends a clear strategic message, the U.S. will respond decisively, at a time of our choosing, to threats around the globe. Through assurance, deterrence, and coercion, strategic attack enables POTUS and U.S. diplomats to negotiate from a position of strength.

For more information on strategic attack, see Air Force Doctrine's newest publication, Air Force Doctrine Publication ([AFDP](#)) 3-02, *Strategic Attack*, scheduled for a 4 August 2025

release. For additional doctrine on flexibility and the integration of operations, see [AFDP 3-0, Operations](#). Also check out our doctrine podcast library on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon Music, or at www.doctrine.af.mil.