



Written by [John and Nisha Whitehead](#) on March 4, 2026

Preemptive War, Permanent Emergency: The Real Cost of Trump's Iran Strike

"'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace." — Jeremiah 6:13-14

The military-industrial complex and the American police state have joined forces.

War abroad and war at home are no longer separate enterprises. They have fused.

This did not happen overnight.

Every modern president has [stretched the limits of war-making power](#). Some have shredded those limits altogether.

Each time that boundary is breached, the Constitution recedes a little further.

This is one of those moments.

In a complete [about-face](#) from his claims to being a peace president, Donald Trump has authorized yet another preemptive strike — this time against Iran — without a declaration of war from Congress, without meaningful public debate, and without constitutional clarity.

With its Orwellian proclamations of "[peace through strength](#)," [Operation Epic Fury](#) is less strategy than spectacle — an egotistical, muscle-flexing distraction by the Trump administration and an overarching attempt to normalize the use of unilateral force by the executive branch without congressional input or authorization.

This was never about peace. It was always about power.

And the Constitution is clear about how this is supposed to work, even if the White House is not.

Article I, Section 8 grants Congress — not the president — the power to declare war. The president under Article II, Section 2 is designated as commander-in-chief with the power to command the military. He is not commander-of-everything.

Yet here we are.

The Trump administration is advancing a global policing doctrine that mirrors the domestic police state: strike first, ask questions later.

Since January 2025, Trump has carried out [more than 600 military strikes](#) on foreign targets that include Iran, Yemen, Nigeria and Venezuela, while [threatening forceful military takeovers of Greenland](#), Colombia and Mexico.

Preemptive force has become policy.

And when the administration is asked to explain themselves, the answer is not constitutional deference but [open defiance](#). Clearly, they have lost sight of who they answer to — and who funds their war chests: we the taxpayers.



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The Constitution is the “*why*.”

The American people have a right to debate war before it begins. We have a right to know how our tax dollars are spent. We have a right to insist our representatives authorize the use of force. We have a right to know why our sons and daughters are sent into harm’s way. We have a right to refuse to have our tax dollars [used to kill other people’s daughters](#) and sons.

As Cato Institute’s Katherine Thompson [explains](#), “The Founders placed the power to initiate it in Congress precisely to ensure those costs are confronted and debated before the country walks into battle.”

That safeguard is being ignored.

And the damage does not stop at constitutional injury, because war is not only a constitutional problem. It is an [economic one](#).

Operation Epic Fury is pushing America towards a fiscal cliff.

Within days, the costs were staggering: \$300 million for three F-15E jets downed by “friendly” fire. \$630 million to transport troops, ships and aircraft to the region in advance of the attacks. [More than 50,000 troops deployed to the region](#). \$13 million a day just for two aircraft carriers stationed nearby. \$43.8 million for 1,250 Kamikaze drones. \$2 million *each* for Tomahawk missiles. \$12.8 million each for anti-ballistic missile interceptors.

Forbes estimates that Trump’s military strikes in Iran have [already cost American taxpayers over \\$1 billion](#), “with a price tag that could approach \$100 billion, depending on how long it can stretch on.” The total economic cost of the conflict “could [trigger an economic loss](#) for the U.S. of between \$50 billion and [\\$210 billion](#).”

And that is before accounting for the human cost.

Innocent civilians — over a hundred young girls between the ages of 7 and 12 — have died because the U.S. and Israel reportedly launched a deadly strike on a girls’ elementary school in Iran using outdated maps.

American servicepeople are dying because of one man’s unilateral decision to play at war.

So much for “America First.”

As usual, “we the people” will be forced to pay for another [unpopular forever war](#) — financially, constitutionally, and domestically — and for the presidential hubris and the greed of the military-industrial complex and Deep State undergirding it all.

If this were merely a constitutional dispute, it would be grave enough.

But it is not merely constitutional.

The consequences are immediate, political, and profoundly destabilizing.

Trump’s Iran escalation — a deadly, costly, immoral, [unpopular](#) distraction from [missteps of Trump’s own making](#) — comes amid dismal polling, a faltering economy, escalating immigration crackdowns, eroding constitutional protections, and renewed scrutiny tied to the Epstein files.

Moreover, what happens abroad does not stay abroad.

History teaches that war abroad produces blowback at home. Twenty-five years ago, 9/11 was itself



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blowback — the consequence of decades of military intervention and occupation in the Middle East.

Blowback justifies emergency powers. Emergency powers justify a police state. A police state justifies a permanent national security state.

The “war on terror” did not end terrorism. It institutionalized emergency. And permanent emergency makes constitutional government fragile.

James Madison warned that “the means of defense against foreign danger have been always the instruments of tyranny at home.”

We have seen it unfold over the past quarter century: the militarization of police, battlefield tactics in American neighborhoods, expansive surveillance justified by counterterrorism. The same tactics and rationale deployed abroad eventually get used against the American people here at home.

War abroad justifies control at home. That is the pattern.

As legal scholar Aziz Huq, professor of law at the University of Chicago, [warns](#), the same national-security powers used to justify bombing foreign nations can be turned inward — against domestic opponents and even against the electoral process itself.

That is the long game being played right now.

If we are to preserve any semblance of constitutional government, Congress must reclaim its war powers. The [War Powers Resolution must be enforced](#). Emergency powers must be narrowed, sunsetted and restrained. Surveillance must be reined in. Domestic military deployment must be limited to the most narrow, exceptional circumstances.

A government that governs by the rule of emergency eventually ceases to govern by the rule of law.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), the question is no longer whether America can police the globe. The question is whether our Republic can survive the weight of the Empire it has become.

We are at the point where we must choose: the spectacle of permanent war, or the survival of the American experiment in freedom.

We cannot have both.

About John & Nisha Whitehead:

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