


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# ‘Safe and sound’: How a U.S. Airman Shot Down in Iran Was Rescued From a Mountain Crevice

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by [Richard Hall](#) and [Rebecca Schneid](#)

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**A** United States Air Force member who was missing behind enemy lines for more than 24 hours after his F-15E fighter jet was shot down in Iran on Friday has been rescued, President Donald Trump announced early Sunday morning.

"WE GOT HIM!" Trump wrote on Truth Social shortly after midnight. "The U.S. Military sent dozens of aircraft, armed with the most lethal weapons in the World, to retrieve him. He sustained injuries, but he will be just fine," Trump wrote.

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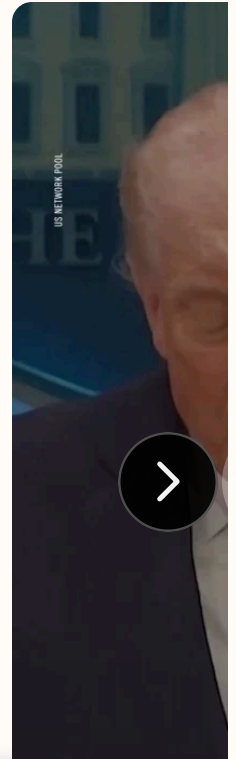
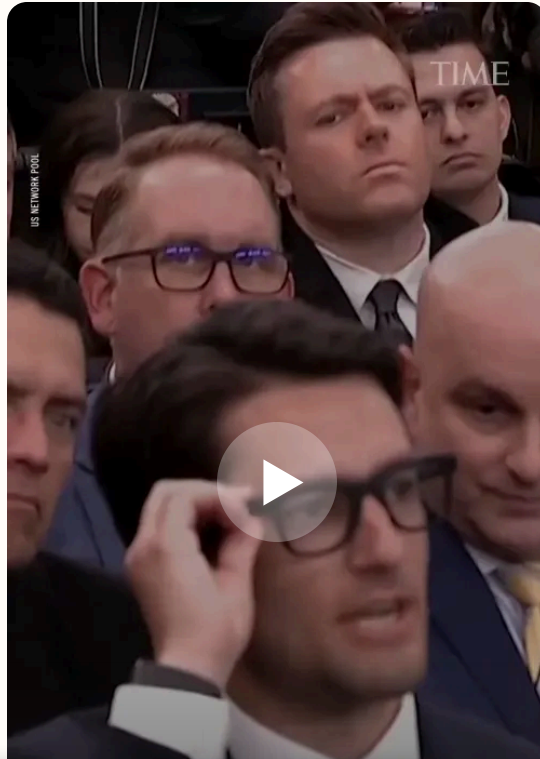
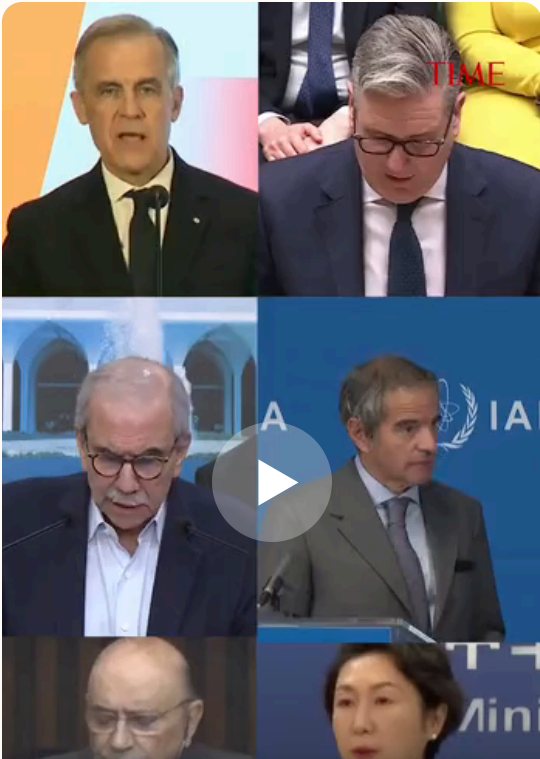
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The F-15E was the first U.S. military aircraft to be shot down inside Iran since the start of the Iran war on Feb. 28, when the U.S. and Israel launched a surprise attack that killed the country's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, and more than 100 school children in a single day. U.S.-based rights group Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) says 3,531 people have been killed by U.S.-Israeli bombing in Iran so far in the war, and that 1,607 of that number were civilians, including at least 244 children. Thirteen U.S. service members have also been killed.

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Another U.S. warplane, an A-10 Warthog, also crashed near the Strait of Hormuz on Friday. According to Fox News, the Warthog was providing covering fire for rescue teams searching for the pilot. The Iranian military said its air defenses brought down the A-10 and released a video that it claimed showed the aircraft being shot down, but U.S. officials have not said what caused the A-10 to crash. Two rescue helicopters were also hit on Friday during the operation to locate the missing airman.

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The rescue operation involved hundreds of special forces troops and military personnel, as well as dozens of U.S. warplanes and helicopters. The operation was done at night after the U.S. had established a temporary base in Iran, the defense official told Axios. Israel shared intelligence about the situation on the ground, the official said. Israeli officials told Axios that the Israeli Air Force carried out one strike to block Iranian forces from reaching the area.

“They have been good partners. They have been great and brave people. We are like a big brother and little brother,” Trump told Axios.

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After the crash landing, the colonel hiked up a 7,000-foot mountain ridgeline and hid in a crevice. While evading capture, he activated an emergency beacon, which allowed U.S. forces to locate him, two U.S. officials told Fox News. A military official told the New York Times that the airman’s signaling was intermittent.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) said it had a deception operation in Iran that spread a false report that Iranian officials had already been killed.

Trump told Axios that he would “send a message” and “send a message” and “send a message” said “God bless our troops” “Power be with us” would say

The CIA used the operation, an official told Axios.

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The CIA also reportedly facilitated an “unconventional assisted recovery,” a process in which the agency contacts civilians willing to aid or shelter U.S. military forces, Axios reported.

While the airman was hiding in the mountains, IRGC said it was searching the area near where the pilot's plane came down, and Iranian officials issued a public plea for locals to find the crew member, offering a reward of \$60,000.

Videos posted online showed locals from the area where the jet went down forming search parties to find the airman. According to the Times, U.S. aircraft dropped bombs on convoys that approached the area where the airman was hiding.

When the airman was found, he was taken to two MC-130J aircraft that were waiting nearby to exfiltrate him out of the country. But the aircraft malfunctioned, which led to U.S. forces destroying the two disabled planes and four helicopters, the *Times* reported. The commandos and injured airman were eventually reloaded onto three replacement aircraft, according to the *Times*.

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