# Humza Yousaf warns Prestwick Airport use by US jets risks Scotland’s complicity in Israel-Iran conflict



Humza Yousaf, the former First Minister of Scotland, has raised profound concerns about the use of Prestwick Airport by US Air Force jets amid escalating hostilities between Israel and Iran. He warned that Scotland risks becoming complicit in war crimes by permitting these military operations to use its publicly owned facility in Ayrshire. This cautionary stance comes as American military aircraft have made 39 stops at Prestwick since the beginning of June, shortly after Israel launched its initial strikes against Iran. These movements include a range of military aircraft such as KC-135 Stratotankers for air-to-air refuelling, C-17A Globemaster III cargo planes, and C-130 Hercules transport aircraft, which military analysts view as a potential indicator of growing US involvement in the conflict.

Yousaf emphatically called on the Scottish Government, under John Swinney, to take legal and moral responsibility by distancing Scotland from what he labels as Israel’s “genocide” in Gaza and its “illegal” strikes on Tehran. He emphasized that the Scottish Government must assess its legal obligations regarding the refuelling of US planes at Prestwick, stating, “Scotland, including through the use of our publicly owned assets such as Prestwick, cannot be complicit.” Yousaf urges Scotland to sever ties with Israel in a manner akin to the international response to apartheid South Africa or Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, advocating for Scotland to treat Israel as a rogue nation under current leadership.

The conflict has intensified over the past week. Iran continues to reject diplomatic talks with the US over its nuclear programme as Israeli bombardments persist. Iranian media report the deaths of at least ten nuclear scientists and approximately 400 casualties in total, while Israeli officials confirm around 25 fatalities from Iranian strikes and thousands injured. Strikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities, including a plant in Isfahan, have been confirmed, though authorities report no release of nuclear material. These developments come amid threats from Houthi forces in Yemen to target American vessels should the US formally enter the conflict.

Yousaf critiques Israel’s military actions as a deliberate distraction from the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and a cynical attempt to sabotage imminent nuclear programme talks between Iran and the US. He remarked, “The strike was three days before the US and Iran were due to have talks about the nuclear programme. It’s not just illegal, it’s deeply cynical, shameful and I can’t understand why anyone would seek to defend it.” While critical of Israel, he clarifies his stance does not equate to support for the Iranian regime, insisting Iran must adhere to nuclear inspections and curb uranium enrichment levels. Nonetheless, he underscores that Israel’s right to bomb nuclear sites and cause civilian casualties is indefensible.

The Scottish Government has faced controversy over Prestwick Airport’s military associations for years. Back in 2018, the airport was earmarked as a staging base for US Air Force operations, including frontline missions with air-to-air refuelling and cargo flights. These operations attracted criticism due to potential conflicts of interest, especially given the proximity of the airport to former President Donald Trump’s Turnberry golf resort. Reports revealed that the US military spent millions on fuel at Prestwick and received perks like discounted hotel stays and free golf rounds, prompting investigations into possible constitutional breaches in the US. Opposition parties have repeatedly questioned the government's role, with some highlighting that ministers had no direct control over Prestwick’s commercial deals.

In response to public and political pressure, Prestwick Airport ceased business dealings with the Israeli Air Force following a military plane’s visit in November 2023. This independent decision, backed by the Scottish Government which owns the airport, was aimed at addressing concerns over the airport's role in international military conflicts and its potential impact on Scotland’s reputation.

Humza Yousaf also singled out the UK Government for criticism, condemning its ongoing supply of arms to Israel amid the Gaza conflict and calling for a halt to any financial support or investment linked to companies selling weapons to Israel, including those based in Scotland. He insists that Scotland must do all it can to ensure no taxpayer money facilitates any aspect of what he describes as a genocide. His views are echoed by figures such as former Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill, who labelled Israel’s strikes on Iran “illegal and insane” and rejected any collusion in military action.

The Scottish Government’s Constitution Secretary Angus Robertson recently reaffirmed the stance that Israel’s actions stand beyond justification and stressed the need for accountability. However, questions remain about the extent of Scotland's influence over Prestwick’s military operations and how far the government can genuinely distance itself from the geopolitical tensions entwined with the airport.

These developments come at a sensitive and volatile moment, as the international community watches closely the potential widening of the Middle East conflict and the implications of foreign military use of Scottish infrastructure. The situation underscores the growing tensions between regional security, international diplomacy, and local governance responsibilities over assets like Prestwick Airport.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/07/scottish-government-criticised-over-us-military-use-of-airport), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/08/nicola-sturgeon-us-military-prestwick-airport), [[6]](https://www.politico.com/story/2019/09/06/air-force-trump-scottish-retreat-1484337)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://www.thenational.scot/news/24193832.prestwick-airport-cuts-off-israeli-air-force-access-backlash/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/air-force-jets-using-prestwick-35431254> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/07/scottish-government-criticised-over-us-military-use-of-airport> - In 2018, the Scottish government faced criticism over the use of Prestwick Airport by the US military. Documents revealed that the airport was earmarked as an 'abort landing site' for Dream Chaser, a remotely operated space shuttle. Additionally, the USAF confirmed that Prestwick supported frontline operations, including air-to-air refueling and cargo flights. Opposition parties questioned the government's involvement and potential conflicts of interest, especially given the airport's association with the Trump Organization. The Scottish government maintained that ministers had no role in the airport's commercial decisions.
3. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24193832.prestwick-airport-cuts-off-israeli-air-force-access-backlash/> - Following backlash, Prestwick Airport ceased business with the Israeli Air Force after hosting a military plane in November 2023. The Scottish Government, which owns the airport, stated that the Israeli Air Force had not visited since that time and that the airport had taken the independent decision not to conduct further business with them. This decision came amid concerns over the airport's involvement with military operations and potential conflicts of interest.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/08/nicola-sturgeon-us-military-prestwick-airport> - In 2018, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon rejected calls for full disclosure regarding Prestwick Airport's use by the US military. Despite documents revealing that the airport supported frontline military missions, Sturgeon dismissed the concerns, stating that such operations were neither new nor a revelation. Opposition parties criticized the government's lack of transparency and questioned the potential conflicts of interest, especially given the airport's association with the Trump Organization.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/uk-news/scottish-government-minister-warned-about-prestwick-us-military-allegations-last-year-1405972> - In 2019, it was revealed that a senior Scottish Government minister, Humza Yousaf, was warned about allegations that Glasgow Prestwick Airport was using taxpayers’ funds to subsidize US military aircraft. Sources claimed that the airport was waiving service fees for inbound US Armed Forces flights to bolster traffic and maintain its relationship with the US Defence Department. Opposition politicians accused the Scottish Government of hypocrisy and mismanagement of the airport.
6. <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/09/06/air-force-trump-scottish-retreat-1484337> - In 2019, reports emerged that the US military had spent $11 million on fuel at Prestwick Airport since October 2017, raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest involving President Donald Trump. The airport, located near Trump's Turnberry resort, provided cut-rate rooms and free rounds of golf at Turnberry for select airline crews. These practices led to investigations into whether the military's use of the airport and the resort violated the US Constitution.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17893101.us-military-flights-prestwick-should-be-suspended-amid-trump-investigation/> - In 2019, amid investigations into President Trump's potential conflicts of interest, calls were made to suspend US military flights at Prestwick Airport. The House Oversight and Reform Committee raised concerns over increased US military spending at the airport and allegations of discounted accommodations at Trump's Turnberry resort. Scottish Greens co-leader Patrick Harvie expressed fears that Scotland's reputation could be tarnished by association with the Trump brand and called for the suspension of such flights until the investigation concluded.