



By: TA | AP Brief

# Rubio to testify before Congress for the first time since the start of the Iran war



Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to face a litany of questions Tuesday about the Trump administration's fragile or stalling diplomatic efforts around the world when he appears for back-to-back hearings on Capitol Hill for the first time since the Iran war began.

The former Republican senator will sit before House and Senate committees to make the State Department's annual budget request.

But the focus is likely to shift quickly to the already **unsteady ceasefire** between Washington and Tehran, which has been further tested in recent days by back-and-forth attacks.

Cabinet members, including Rubio, have defended President Donald Trump's decision to launch the conflict despite promises over the years not to engage in "forever wars" in the Middle East. That work has been made more difficult by Trump's **shifting goals** for the conflict.

While Rubio is testifying before Congress for the first time since the Iran war started on Feb. 28, he took part in a classified briefing for lawmakers days after the first U.S. and Israeli strikes.

He faced Democrats' anger over the lack of congressional approval but strong support from most Republicans for taking action against one of America's oldest adversaries.

## Economic consequences

In the two months since the war began, however, a small but growing faction of Republicans have joined Democrats in questioning the **astronomical price tag** and overall economic consequences of the conflict as they head into midterm elections in the fall.

Last month, the Senate managed to advance legislation for the first time that would have **forced Trump** to withdraw from the conflict after GOP Sen. **Bill Cassidy** — fresh off a primary election loss in which Trump endorsed his opponent — joined Democrats in

pushing it forward.

The House also had scheduled a vote on a war powers resolution, but **GOP leadership** kept it from coming to the floor after it became clear that the majority party would not have the numbers to defeat it.

## The GOP is struggling to maintain political backing for Trump's handling of the war

The actions show the GOP is struggling to maintain political backing for Trump's handling of the war as rank-and-file Republicans are increasingly willing to defy the president over the conflict.

Following his appearances Tuesday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Appropriations subcommittee responsible for the State Department, Rubio will return to the Hill on Wednesday to testify before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and equivalent Senate Appropriations subcommittee.

Rubio — the son of Cuban immigrants — also is likely to be questioned about the administration's escalatory behavior toward Cuba, as Trump has hinted that the small island country could be the next **U.S. target** after operations in Iran are wrapped up.

Despite a series of meetings between U.S. and Cuban officials, Trump and Rubio have renewed threats against the island's government, which take on greater weight after the administration announced criminal charges against former President Raúl Castro.

Over his congressional career and now as America's top diplomat, Rubio has maintained that Cuba is a national security threat because of its ties to U.S. adversaries and that Trump is intent on addressing it.