

Sen. Ted Cruz says he told Trump "don't miss this opportunity" to strike Iran
(07:48)

Face The Nation Transcripts

Transcript: Sen. Ted Cruz on "Face the Nation with Margaret Brennan," March 1, 2026

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The following is the transcript of the interview with Sen. Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, that aired on "Face the Nation with Margaret Brennan" on March 1, 2026.

MARGARET BRENNAN: We go now to Texas Republican Senator Ted Cruz, who joins us from Austin. Good morning to you, Senator. I'm glad we got your audio working. You are from Houston, I believe this morning.

SENATOR TED CRUZ (R-TX): I am. Good morning, Margaret.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Good morning, I want to ask you about Austin, though, because there are reports of three people dead, more than a dozen injured following a mass shooting in that city. The FBI is saying this morning that their Joint Terrorism Task Force has joined the investigation. Is there any nexus to terrorism or anything that is going on in regard to the, the worldwide caution at this moment?

SEN. CRUZ: We, we don't know for sure that there are some early reports that this shooting may be connected to terrorism, but we need to follow the evidence and see, see in particular, what motivated the shooting. We are certainly, Heidi and I, are

praying for those who were wounded and the families of those who were killed, but, but at this point, we don't know what the evidence will show in terms of whether this was an act of terrorism.

MARGARET BRENNAN: We'll continue to follow those, those early reports, but senator just looking at the global environment right now, CENTCOM announced three Americans were killed and five seriously wounded in this operation. President Trump and Presiden- Vice President Vance campaigned on not getting America involved in new wars. What do you say to Americans this morning who are asking why we are in this conflict now?

SEN. CRUZ: President Trump's decision to launch this decisive action against Iran is the single most important decision of his presidency. I think he laid out powerfully and effectively why he is taking this action. He is taking this action because the government of Iran is a profound and malign influence. They have been the leading state sponsor of terrorism for 47 years. They have, over that time, killed nearly 1,000 Americans. They provide more than 90% of the funding for Hamas. They provide more than 90% of the funding for Hezbollah, the Iranian ayatollah was, until yesterday, actively trying to murder the President of the United States Donald J. Trump. I spent the entire day with President Trump on Friday, right before he launched these attacks. He and I discussed this at length on Friday. My counsel to him was that the Iranian regime has never been weaker, that it was teetering and now was the time. My advice was do not miss this opportunity. I think the president has acted boldly. He's acted decisively, and Iran no longer being led by a theocratic, murderous dictator, that makes America much, much safer.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Senator, you are not going to find a lot of people in any way defending the supreme leader, that is for sure. However, putting Americans in harm way is what I'm pressing you on here. Did the president explain to you why he called off active diplomacy? Because at the very same time he was on that plane, the vice president of the United States was talking to the Omani mediator, who was trying to get a deal and told us that they were close to one. Why not choose diplomacy?

SEN. CRUZ: Because the diplomacy was an abject failure. The Iranians approached the diplomacy with arrogance, which with absolute hubris. They said they would not stop enriching. No matter what they were going to continue to enrich uranium. They would not discuss zero enrichment. They claimed a right to enrich uranium in underground bunkers with no supervision. As President Trump said on Friday when he was with me in Texas, his line was zero enrichment, and the Iranians refused to discuss it. They also refused to discuss their proxies. They refused to discuss Hamas and Hezbollah and the Houthis. And President Trump understood that the Iranian quote negotiation was just a stall tactic, and that the only response- my advice to him, I said, there's only one deal you should accept. And it's the deal that you offered Maduro, which is if you want to leave and flee the country, you can do so. Anything else is unacceptable. And, and Khamenei made his choice.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Well, there are disputes there in terms of your characterization of what was actually on the table and what the administration had indicated it was willing to accept in terms of allowing enrichment for medical purposes and the like, but, but that's now obviously done–

SEN. CRUZ: –So Margaret, what I just told you–

MARGARET BRENNAN: –Yeah–

SEN. CRUZ: –what I just told you is almost word for word, what Secretary of State Marco Rubio told me yesterday.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Can you tell us now if you believe that there was an ongoing nuclear weapons program? One of the top arms control- arms control experts out there, David Albright, has written there should be an immediate priority on rapid response operations to secure Iran's nuclear stockpiles right now. Can you assure the public that it will be secured, and if so, who is doing it if there are no Israeli or U.S. forces on the ground?

SEN. CRUZ: So there is no doubt that a year ago, Iran had an active and ongoing nuclear weapons program. We took out the vast majority of that at the end of the 12-Day War, where Israel had taken out–

MARGARET BRENNAN: –That U.S. intelligence assessment was not made public, if that is what was briefed to you.

SEN. CRUZ: We took out- we launched targeted bombs at the end of the 12-Day War, where we dropped the equivalent of about a third of a nuclear weapon on those underground facilities, facilities like Fordow, which was built into the base of a mountain. The bunker buster bombs we used, Israel doesn't have those bombs. No other country has those bombs. We took them out last year. The Iranians were still hell bent on rebuilding them, and one of the things we are doing right now is taking out their missiles, in particular the southern missile belt. Right now, Iran is building roughly 100 missiles a month. They're actively building missiles to threaten their neighbors, and I will point out–

MARGARET BRENNAN: –They're firing some of them right now at their neighbors.

SEN. CRUZ: Yeah.

MARGARET BRENNAN: At our allies.

SEN. CRUZ: They're illustrating powerfully. They're attacking virtually every Arab neighbor that surrounds them. They are firing missiles that- it's almost like they want to illustrate to the world just how malign they are.

MARGARET BRENNAN: But in terms of containing the risk, who's securing the nuclear material that you say still exists within Iran? Who's doing that?

SEN. CRUZ: Look, the quantity of nuclear material I didn't say one- anything, one way or another on that. What I said is they were building nuclear weapons a year ago, and our bombing took that out. They also had an ongoing desire to rebuild them. I don't have present day intelligence on what progress they had made towards rebuilding nuclear weapons since we bombed their facilities. I have no indication that that they were anywhere close to getting nuclear weapons because our bombing was devastating. And Margaret, that's one of the reasons I urged President Trump, now is the time. You know, dictatorships survive because they're perceived as invulnerable. And in this instance, Iran decisively lost the 12-Day War, that weakened the regime and set up what the president is doing now.

MARGARET BRENNAN: Senator Ted Cruz, we have to leave it there for today. Thank you for joining us.

SEN. CRUZ: Thank you.

MARGARET BRENNAN: We'll be right back with a lot more Face the Nation. Stay with us.

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