

# [***Joe Biden Calls Houthis Terrorists Despite Delisting; Tehran Captures Oil Tanker Once Seized By U.S.; Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) Interviewed on U.S. Coalition Airstrikes against Houthis in Yemen and Upcoming Iowa Caucuses; Former President Trump Continue to have Commanding Polling Lead in Iowa in Republican Presidential Primary***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B3C-CJJ1-JCS1-60NS-00000-00&context=1516831)

Fox News FOX SPECIAL REPORT WITH BRET BAIER 6:00 PM EST

January 12, 2024 Friday

Copyright 2024 Fox News Network LLC All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Domestic

**Length:** 7182 words

**Byline:** Bret Baier, Aishah Hasnie, Chad Pergram, Peter Doocy, Mike Tobin, Matt Finn, Mark Meredith

**Guests:** Joni Ernst, Harold Ford Jr., Mollie Hemingway, Byron York

**Body**

HAROLD FORD JR., FOX NEWS CONTRIBUTOR: I love problem solvers. And that guy's a problem solver. God bless you.

JEANINE PIRRO, FOX NEWS LEGAL ANALYST: All right. That's it for us everybody, have a great night. We'll see you on Monday at 5:00.

BRET BAIER, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Hi, Judge, is everything OK with Jesse? Does he need quiet time?

PIRRO: Jesse, you know, when he started talking about the doctor, his hands, I said, there's no problem at this table.

BAIER: OK, all right -- all right. You guys have a good weekend. Thank you.

Good evening. I'm Bret Baier. We are just a weekend away from the first voting in the 2024 presidential election cycle. We will check in on Iowa, ahead of Monday's caucuses. And we'll speak with Iowa Senator Joni Ernst.

Plus, how Iran so called Ghost Armada is helping it skirt US sanctions as Americans endure attacks from Iranian proxies.

And plenty of complaining from Congress after an uneventful briefing on UFOs.

But first, breaking tonight, President Biden says Iran backed Houthi rebels are terrorists. This goes against current U.S. policy changed by the Biden administration.

The Houthis have already responded to yesterday's airstrikes against facilities in Yemen with new attacks today.

White House correspondent Peter Doocy starts us off tonight live from the North Lawn. Good evening, Peter.

PETER DOOCY, FOX NEWS WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: Good evening, Bret. Pentagon officials believe there will be some sort of retaliation for last night's strikes and we know the Houthi rebels have already launched at least one ballistic missile towards shipping lanes today. That undercuts an assessment the President Biden gave while he was on the campaign trail in Pennsylvania.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

JOE BIDEN, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: I've already delivered the message to Iran. They know not to do anything.

DOOCY (voice-over): The message, U.S. and U.K. strikes destroying 60 targets at 16 spots controlled by Houthis inside Yemen.

JOHN KIRBY, PRESS SECRETARY, PENTAGON: We're not interested in a war with Yemen.

DOOCY (voice-over): Turkey's President Erdogan claims that's exactly what the U.S. wants.

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN, TURKISH PRESIDENT (through translator): They are in an effort to turn the Red Sea into a sea of blood.

DOOCY (voice-over): The president's order earned rare praise from Republicans.

REP. MICHAEL MCCAUL (R-TX): I do commend the administration for finally hitting back.

DOOCY (voice-over): Democrats are the ones giving the president the hardest time. Progressives like Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal complained, this is an unacceptable violation of the Constitution. Article 1 requires that military action be authorized by Congress.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What do you say to members of your own party who are saying you needed congressional authorization for last night's strike?

BIDEN: They're wrong.

DOOCY (voice-over): The defense secretary monitored the strikes in real time from the hospital. Today, he was gently criticized for misleading his boss about his prostate cancer.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Was it a lapse in judgement for him not to tell you earlier?

BIDEN: Yes.

DOOCY (voice-over): Nearly three years ago, President Biden stopped supporting the Saudi fight against the Houthis.

BIDEN: We're ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen.

DOOCY (voice-over): And for humanitarian reasons, the State Department took the Houthis off the list of terror groups.

KIRBY: We are reviewing the FTO, Foreign Terrorist Organization finding on the Houthis.

DOOCY (voice-over): Officially, there has been no decision about relisting Houthis as a terror group, but the president has made up his mind.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Are you willing to call Houthis a terrorist group, sir?

BIDEN: I think they are.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

DOOCY (on camera): Well, that's that. Oil prices also rose today after last night's strikes. President Biden is saying tonight he is very concerned about oil prices rising further. He says that is why they've got to stop the Houthis, Bret.

BAIER: Peter Doocy live in the North Lawn. Peter, thanks.

Well, Iran is flushed with oil money since President Biden took office. The Islamic Republic is skirting U.S. sanctions and shipping large amounts of crude to China. Senior Correspondent Mike Tobin takes a look tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MIKE TOBIN, FOX NEWS SENIOR CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): When Iran's Navy on Thursday sees the oil tanker St. Nicholas in the Gulf of Oman. It was a retaliation for the U.S. seizing the very same ship months ago and offloading what was identified as smuggled Iranian oil under sanction.

VEDANT PATEL, STATE DEPARTMENT DEPUTY SPOKESMAN: Provocative actions like this are a menace to the global economy and it must cease.

TOBIN (voice-over): The ship is one of hundreds, ignoring U.S. sanctions, smuggling crude and funding Iran in what experts called the Dark Fleet or Ghost Armada. Anywhere from 300 to 560 tankers usually old and their ownership is hard to determine. They turn off transponders and hide on the lawless open sea. They shop around for poor countries that will permit them to fly their flag for a fee.

MICHELLE WESE BOCKMANN, LLOYD'S LIST INTELLIGENCE: Outside Western jurisdiction and primarily shipping sanctioned oil.

TOBIN (voice-over): Around half of them fly Panama's flag, which is why a bipartisan group of U.S. congressman is demanding Secretary of State Antony Blinken, pressure Panamanian leaders to de-flag all vessels actively evading U.S. sanctions by transporting Iranian oil.

REP. BILL HUIZENGA (R-MI): We're asking the administration to enforce the sanctions that are there and put the squeeze on those that are doing business with Iran.

TOBIN (voice-over): Iran's exports were held to around 400,000 to 600,000 barrels a day in 2019. With the help of the Ghost Armada, that number has jumped to an estimated 2.4 million barrels a day.

MARK WALLACE, UNITED AGAINST NUCLEAR IRAN: Right now, as we speak, there are over 300 vessels traversing the seas, smuggling Iranian oil, those vessels are operating with impunity.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

TOBIN (on camera): A State Department spokesperson told Fox News, Iran's leaders have to spend resources to evade U.S. sanctions and sell their oil on the black market. Therefore, profits end up considerably less than what would they would get on the legitimate market, Bret.

BAIER: Mike, thank you.

We are two days away from the Iowa caucuses and an impending blizzard could be a major factor. The Republican candidates are begging supporters not to let the weather keep them home Monday night. Congressional Correspondent Ayesha Hosni is in Urbandale, Iowa tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

AISHAH HASNIE, FOX NEWS CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT: In the middle of a blizzard, through snow and ice.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Do you plan on getting out and participating in the caucuses?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Of course, I do.

HASNIE (voice-over): Fox tagged along as these canvassers with a pro-Nikki Haley super PAC went door-to-door outside Des Moines to make a final push for caucus night.

DREW KLEIN, AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY: We could switch to phones, but the best conversations are had at people's doorsteps. And so, we only have a finite amount of time. We want to make the most of that.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Appreciate it.

HASNIE (voice-over): Vivek Ramaswamy's camp canvassing and working the phones today. As Governor Ron DeSantis stopped by his headquarters to pump up volunteers and plead for those last second votes.

GOV. RON DESANTIS (R-FL): It may be as few as 130,000, 140,000 people. Your vote matters a great deal on Monday night especially given the weather.

HASNIE (voice-over): He'll get some more help tomorrow as 47 Florida State officials and lawmakers fly in to stump for him.

Former President Trump is set to arrive in Iowa tomorrow to host two rallies. His son Don Jr. telling supporters Thursday night not to get too cocky.

DONALD TRUMP JR., SON OF DONALD TRUMP: The deep states preferred candidate in the billionaire donor class, Nikki Haley is surging rapidly because everyone's like, we're winning by so much, I'll sat at home. Like, why would you go out, it's -4, don't think that way.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HASNIE (on camera): And Bret, tonight, some late breaking developments. Fox is told by the DeSantis campaign that the governor will be traveling to South Carolina right after the Iowa caucuses instead of going to New Hampshire which is tradition.

Apparently, he wants to target Nikki Haley in her home state and send the message that he is serious about beating her there. He will have a campaign event in Greenville, South Carolina and then he will travel up to New Hampshire, Bret.

BAIER: That is interesting. As far as logistics. Aishah Hasnie, thanks.

Democrats are not caucusing this election cycle in Iowa but there is speculation, one Democrat may pose a challenge to President Biden, West Virginia Democratic Senator Joe Manchin. He may be exploring a third-party bid. Correspondent Mark Meredith has details tonight. Good evening, mark.

MARK MEREDITH, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Bret, good evening to you. Senator Joe Manchin certainly appears to be testing the waters for a third-party presidential bid.

And tonight, the group No Labels which is kind of teasing a unity ticket is actively working to get itself registered in dozens of states.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MEREDITH (voice-over): Today, Manchin held multiple events up in New Hampshire telling crowds, he knows many voters are turned off by the idea of a rematch between presidents Biden and Trump. And while he did not announce any campaign plans, he strongly suggests he'll make his intentions known soon.

SEN. JOE MANCHIN (D-WV): Let me just say that I'm not a candidate. So let's get that very, very clear right now. I'm here truly as a concerned citizen because I've seen up close and personal.

MEREDITH (voice-over): Larry Hogan, the former Republican governor of Maryland recently stepped down from his co-chair position at No Labels, a potential sign he too may be thinking of a presidential run. No Labels leaders also said they're interested in potentially getting former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, who just dropped out of the Republican race into their operation.

There's a new Gallup poll coming out today which shows more people identify as independent now at 43 percent compared to either being a Democrat or a Republican.

No Labels has already established itself in 13 states and the group's top strategies told us today while he doesn't know who they would pick as a nominee, the group will be ready when the time comes.

RYAN CLANCY, CHIEF STRATEGIST, NO LABELS: One of the analogy that we've used sometimes is we are effectively building the launching pad. If we offer another line to the unity ticket, they got to build the rocket ship to take themselves to the White House.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MEREDITH (on camera): But not everyone is thrilled with the idea of No Labels jumping in. Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi blasted the group back in November, suggesting they could jeopardize President Biden's reelection chances. No Labels, Bret, says they're going to announce their plans publicly by about mid-March, Bret.

BAIER: OK, Mark, thank you.

Stocks are mixed today as earnings season begins the Dow lost 118. The S&P 500 gained four, the NASDAQ was up three.

For the week, the Dow gained a third of a percentage point, the S&P 500 finished ahead almost two, the NASDAQ jumped three.

Up next, the state of Texas takes over federal property in an effort to deal with the border crisis. We'll have a live report from the border.

First, here's what some of our Fox affiliates around the country are covering tonight. Fox 29 in Buffalo as federal prosecutors say they will seek the death penalty against a white supremacist who killed 10 Black people at a Buffalo supermarket. 20-year-old Pasyton Gendron is already serving a sentence of life in prison with no chance of parole after he pleaded guilty to state charges of murder and hate motivated domestic terrorism in the 2022 attack.

Fox 11 in Los Angeles as a Navy officer formerly jailed in Japan over a car crash that killed two Japanese citizens has been released from American custody.

Lieutenant Ridge Alkonis had been serving for a three-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to the negligent driving deaths of a woman and her son-in-law in May of 2021.

And this is a live look at Honolulu. One of the big stories there from our affiliate KHON, it's sunny there. Hawaii partners with local entities to bring sea gliders to the islands in a global first. Sea gliders are zero emission all electric vehicles that operate over water at 180 miles per hour. Promoters say they will provide Hawaiians and visitors with affordable travel lower cargo costs and no carbon emissions. There you go.

That's tonight's live look outside the Beltway from SPECIAL REPORT, we'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

BAIER: Texas is taking the unprecedented move of seizing federal land along the Rio Grande River that has served as a landing spot for illegal immigrants from Mexico. It's another action pitting the state's Republican governor against President Biden and his administration. Correspondent Matt Finn is an Eagle Pass, Texas tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MATT FINN, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Tension between Governor Greg Abbott and the Biden administration escalating to a new high as seen in this video from Eagle Pass, Texas.

On the left is city owned Shelby Park, where a countless number of migrants have illegally crossed the Rio Grande River into the U.S.

On the right, U.S. Border Patrol agents processing migrants on the street outside Shelby Park. After Texas put up the razor wire you see and kicked out of federal government.

Governor Greg Abbott argues President Biden's reckless border policy has allowed unfettered access for cartels to smuggle migrants into the park. So Texas has seized the property.

The Texas National Guard has maintained a presence in the parks since 2021 and will remain there. Writing, the current posture is to prepare for future illegal immigrant surges and to restrict access to organizations that perpetuate illegal immigrant crossings in the park and greater Eagle Pass area.

Overnight, the Department of Homeland Security filed an emergency lawsuit seeking access to the park, writing in part, Texas's new actions demonstrated an escalation of the state's measures to block a Border Patrol's ability to patrol or even surveil the border and be in a position to respond to emergencies.

An average of four to 500 migrants per day are crossing into Eagle Pass including this group that arrived this morning. The Eagle Pass mayor says he was caught off guard by Abbott seizing the property and does not approve of the move.

ROLANDO SALINAS, MAYOR OF EAGLE PASS, TEXAS: This is not something that the city wanted, requested, asked for. Of course, our legal team is looking into the actions taken by the states.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

FINN (on camera): And Bret, Texas has now barricaded this park so extensively. We noticed today that migrants are now arriving either up or down river, Bret.

BAIER: Matt Finn along the border. Matt, thank you. Hunter Biden's lead attorney has told the House Oversight and House Judiciary Committees that his client will comply with any new subpoena issued under what he calls the duly authorized impeachment inquiry.

House Republicans are moving forward to hold the younger Biden in contempt of Congress for refusing to testify in front of lawmakers about his business dealings.

Attorney Abbe Lowell wrote to the committee's today saying the initial subpoenas were legally invalid because they were issued before the full House voted to formalize the impeachment inquiry against President Biden.

House Speaker Mike Johnson is standing by a $1.6 trillion spending deal with Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. Some House Republicans are pressuring him to abandon it in favor of lower spending and new border restrictions.

Speaker Johnson says lawmakers will move forward to implement the deal with what he calls a robust appropriations process. Congress is seeking to avert a partial government shutdown after funding for some federal agencies expires next Friday.

Well, if the truth is out there, many Congressional lawmakers feel they are not getting it from the Biden administration when it comes to UFOs. Senior Congressional Correspondent Chad Pergram reports tonight on the latest briefing for lawmakers today. stonewalled

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Stonewalled once again.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I just wasted time.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There's a concerted effort to conceal as much information as possible.

CHAD PERGRAM, FOX NEWS SENIOR CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Bipartisan frustration over what lawmakers say could be a government cover up about UAP, unidentified aerial phenomenon.

House Oversight Committee members hoped intelligence community Inspector General Thomas Monheim could explain the unexplainable at a classified briefing. But lawmakers say they aren't hearing from the people who really know what's out there.

REP. GLENN GROTHMAN (R-WI): They send us bureaucrats who don't know one purpose.

PERGRAM (voice-over): Others disagreed about the briefing.

REP. JARED MOSKOWITZ (D-FL): This one actually moved the needle.

PERGRAM (voice-over): Moskowitz says lawmakers learn more this time about claims made at a hearing last year by UAP whistleblower and former Air Force Intelligence Officer David Grusch. Grusch contends the government's hiding spacecraft from someplace else and non human remains. Lawmakers are trying to dissect Grusch's allegations.

REP. ANNA PAULINA LUNA (R-FL): Grusch never said extraterrestrial or alien, he said interdimensional.

PERGRAM (voice-over): You said interdimensional, I mean, now, what does that term, is this something that bends time and space.

LUNA: He said interdimensional, he refused to use certain terms.

PERGRAM (voice-over): The inquiry comes as bipartisan lawmakers write legislation enabling commercial and civilian pilots to report strange things they see up above without being shocked.

REP. ROBERT GARCIA (D-CA): They had nowhere to report or feel safe and being able to report these occurrences.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

PERGRAM (on camera): Fox is told what pilots see could be technology from top secret government programs. Lawmakers can't tell what's from this world or perhaps from out of this world, Bret.

BAIER: All right, Chad. Thank you.

Up next, we'll talk about the Iowa caucuses and major U.S. foreign policy decisions with Iowa Senator, member of the Senate Armed Services Committee Joni Ernst.

First, Beyond our Borders tonight, hundreds of thousands of people attend final pre-election rallies in Taiwan, ahead of critical presidential and parliamentary votes there, China continuing its efforts to influence the outcome in Taiwan. Today, the Defense Ministry warned it will smash any Taiwan independence plots.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak unveils new military funding for Ukraine. He's in -- he's in Kyiv today on a visit aimed at reassuring the country the West is still providing support nearly 23 months after Russia's invasion.

And Notre Dame celebrates another significant milestone and its advanced toward restoration and reopening later this year. Today, a large bouquet of flowers was craned to the summit of its timber frame roofing that has been entirely reconstructed after the fire in 2019 that nearly destroyed that cathedral.

Just some of the other stories Beyond our Borders tonight. We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Everyone thinks we're a flyover state but we want to get our voice heard and we'll get out.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Trump supporters are pretty loyal and they'll go through any type of weather and to get out there and vote for him.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: There are a lot of older people that are very much probably not going to participate.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It would take a lot for us not to go.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's our job as Iowans to make sure the rest of the country knows we're going to be there. And you're going to hear our voice.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: The Iowa caucuses just three days away, the entire nation watching the Middle East meantime after U.S. strikes against Houthi rebels. We're going to talk about all of that and more tonight with Iowa Republican Senator Joni Ernst who's in Iowa at her home office with a couple feet of snow outside. Right, Senator? Good to see you.

SEN. JONI ERNST (R-IA): Yes, exactly. Exactly.

BAIER: We'll talk about the caucuses in just a second. But I do want to get you -- you're on the Senate Armed Services Committee, I want to get you your thoughts about the strikes overnight on the Houthi rebels and the fallout from that and your take on that.

ERNST: Yes, it is a long overdue striking the Houthi so who are backed by Iran. The Houthis have been targeting American service members in the Middle East region for several months now without any retribution coming from the United States, as well as the Houthis are targeting American carriers, other international shipping carriers, and it has become a very dangerous situation in the Red Sea.

So again, these strikes are long overdue, but I will remind everyone, this is retaliation for strikes against our own people and innocent civilians that are operating shipping carriers. And it was an international effort as well. So I'm glad the Biden administration finally moved on this. So, we'll see what happens next. But we need to show leadership, and we haven't seen that in the past from this administration.

BAIER: And you are saying it's long overdue, and there are, obviously, a lot of people in Congress that feel that way and have been talking that way. There are others, Democrats and some Republicans, Rashida Tlaib, "POTUS violating Article 1 of the Constitution by carrying out airstrikes in Yemen without congressional approval. The American people are tireless of endless war." And Senator, if you go back to January, 2020, then candidate Biden tweeting this out about President Trump, "Let's be clear, Donald Trump does not have the authority to take us into war with Iran without congressional approval. A president should never take this nation to war without the informed consent of the American people." What do you say about that and looking back to that moment with going after Soleimani?

ERNST: Yes, and this is retaliation. We are not in a war with Iran as much as Iran continues to back their proxies, their terrorist proxies throughout the region. We are not in a war. However, I do believe that it is very important that the president keep Congress informed should we take any further action. It would be good to have a heads up, absolutely.

However, we have seen 27 strikes already by the Houthis. So this is just in response. It would be self-defense. But, again, long overdue. When those first strikes happened months ago, we should have struck back then.

BAIER: Meanwhile, there's a lot happening in the world. Taiwan votes tomorrow. We did a little story on it, but it really is a big moment if you think about all of the pressure they are getting from China. "The Wall Street Journal" writes it this way, "Taiwan hurdles toward uncertain presidential vote with global stakes. The volatile three-way race is the subject of intense focus in both Beijing and Washington, and it's result has the potential to alter the trajectory of relations between the two powers." Obviously, if China moves on Taiwan, how this election goes, it's really significant that something the American people maybe aren't following day to day.

ERNST: Yes, it is extremely significant. And we are always concerned about China. They are a pacing threat. And certainly, in upcoming years, they could be moving on the island of Taiwan. We certainly want to make sure Taiwan stays as free as possible and not under the strong clutches of the Communist Chinese Party. We do need to be aware of any movement there.

We had Admiral Aquilino, who is regent's, the Indo-Pacific regent's commander, military commander, and doing a briefing at the United States Senate the other day. And it was very informative. And it just tells us we need to remain strong and continue building strength in that region with our own military and working with our partners in the region as well to push back against the influence of the Chinese Communist Party.

BAIER: All right, Senator, let's talk about your home state and the caucuses coming up Monday. If you look at the latest RCP average of polls, obviously the former president enjoys a big lead over Nikki Haley now in second. These are just polls, but they are a snapshot in time of the recent polls that we have seen. You know how caucuses work. It is who shows up, and with that weather, a lot people are talking about the weather being a factor. Iowans are pretty sturdy, though, aren't they?

ERNST: They are. Bret, we will throw on our Carhartts and coveralls and we'll get out in the bad weather, no doubt about it. So I would encourage all Iowans, go out and show support for your favorite candidate. Of course, the former president, he is quite popular across Iowa. Though we have seen Governor DeSantis and Ambassador Haley really have a good showing and a lot of support here across Iowa as well. So, I would just remind everybody, if you have an elderly neighbor that might be discouraged by the cold, go ahead and give them a lift down to your caucus site. I will be picking up my mom and heading out to the caucuses. So it's an exciting time. And you are right, the polls are just a snapshot in time. I'm anxious to see what Monday evening brings.

BAIER: You remain neutral in this race. You said you were going to be from the beginning. You're going to wait until you get to a nominee. I just want to tap into your political savviness about the message we heard from Governor DeSantis tonight. After Monday he is going to South Carolina, not going to New Hampshire. What do you think that tells us?

ERNST: Well, I think it tells us he maybe hasn't focused on New Hampshire like he should have, and he'll just skip right over that and head down to South Carolina. But he has spent a lot of time in Iowa, and we're grateful for that. But Ambassador Haley has really been putting in a lot of hard work in the number of states. So it will be interesting as each of the states fall by the wayside with their primaries and elections. I think it will be a really interesting year.

But I just want to emphasize, again, that here in the state of Iowa, we have seen these great candidates out there. There is no shortage of talent in the Republican Party. I am so proud of that, and I'm glad they are all coming to Iowa and sharing their personal life stories and their ambitions with all of these incredible Republican voters.

BAIER: Well, Senator Ernst, we really appreciate the time, and we will be out in the about in the snow and cold with you in just a bit. Thanks.

ERNST: Thanks, Bret.

BAIER: Up next, the panel on the U.S. strikes against the Houthi rebels and the final days before the Iowa caucuses. Plus, Candidate Casino.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BRIG. GEN. PATRICK RYDER, PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY: Last night, what you saw was a multinational effort to send a very loud and clear message to the Houthis that these kinds of illegal, reckless, and dangerous attacks will not be tolerated.

REP. MICHAEL MCCAUL, (R-TX) HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: It's about time that we struck back. In that part of the region, that part of the world, all they understand is power.

REP. JASON CROW, (D-CO) HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: The simple fact of the matter is these are challenging things, making sure that we are smart, that we have a proportionate response, that we are defending ourselves.

REP. MIKE GALLAGHER, (R-WI) HOUSE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE: As the Biden administration looks to spike the football on these strikes, we should remember that this is a problem of their own creation.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Well, the strikes on the Houthi rebels in Yemen directly in retaliation for attacks in the Red Sea on U.S. ships, U.S. forces. There have been more than 130 attacks, as we have mentioned, all throughout the Middle East region U.S. troops. And "The New York Times" writes this, "Strikes are extremely unlikely to deter Houthis, experts say. U.S.-led airstrikes in Yemen could play into the agenda of the Houthis who have built their legitimacy on hostility toward the United States and Israel, scholars say."

With that, let's bring in our panel, Harold Ford Jr., former Tennessee Congressman, co-host of THE FIVE, Mollie Hemingway, editor in chief of "The Federalist," and Byron York, chief political correspondent of "The Washington Examiner." Byron, what about this and what the administration is saying that it is doing and will do in the big picture?

BYRON YORK, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT, "THE WASHINGTON EXAMINER": Well, it certainly is about time, Rs representative McCaul said. But Joe Biden has been trying to sort of exquisitely balance the idea of sending the Houthis the message that they have been bad, but not really widening any sort of conflict, as opposed to simply taking out their ability to do this. The real deterrence is not to change their mind or change their philosophy. It's to destroy their ability to attack shipping in the Red Sea and protecting freedom of navigation and of commerce. It's something the United States has done throughout its history. And Biden has just let these guys attack, attack, attack.

BAIER: And speaking of the message of deterrence, Harold, the Biden administration has been making that message, the president has been making that message about the Middle East for a long time. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE BIDEN, (D) PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Any country, any organization, anyone thinking of taking advantage of the situation, I have one word -- don't.

ANTONY BLINKEN, U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE: To any actor state or non-state trying to take advantage of this crisis to attack Israel, don't.

LLOYD AUSTIN, DEFENSE SECRETARY: Anyone thinking about trying to take advantage of this atrocity to try to widen the conflict or to spill more blood, we have just one word -- don't.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: But, Harold, they did.

HAROLD FORD JR., FORMER TENNESSEE REPRESENTATIVE: First off, thanks for having me on and happy Friday. I think Byron touches on, and remarks by the president and some of his deputies demonstrate two things. One, we want to ensure that we do everything we can to deter these attacks by Houthis. And to Byron's point, interfering with and impairing navigation, commercial navigation in that region of the world is really, I think, was the final catalyst here.

Separate but apart from that is how do you ensure that we don't widen this conflict and worsen this conflict. I thought the attacks, our response, rather, today was long overdue. I agree with Byron, the sense and the implication in his remarks that we should have probably done this earlier. I don't have access to all of the intelligence. Obviously, none of us do. But I hope that the president can be taken at his word going forward that we won't allow this, these kinds of attacks to impede commercial navigation.

Now, those who want us to attack for the other attacks on our interests and our soldiers, I'm not -- I'm not sure if I'm fully there yet, because I understand the administration's desire to calibrate and ensure that we don't widen and invite more conflict on top of an already very difficult war in the Middle East already.

BAIER: Mollie, your thoughts on this?

MOLLIE HEMINGWAY, EDITOR IN CHIEF, "THE FEDERALIST": It's not just about what needs to be done right now, but really what led us to this point. And it kind of reminds me of what happened with the border situation where at the end of the Trump administration you had a pretty secure border. And on day one, the Biden administration came in, issued a bunch of executive orders, and really worked to make the border porous.

Likewise, we had incredibly stable situation in the Middle East at the end of the Trump administration, and pretty quickly, within two or three weeks, President Biden said he didn't want to keep doing the Trump administration policy of pivoting toward Saudi Arabia instead of Iran and supporting the war against these rebels, these Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen. He took them off the terrorist designation list. And now we can see that policies and leadership matter. And this is the direct result of having had some really bad foreign policy decisions and a really bad foreign policy administration.

BAIER: All right, let's turn to the Iowa caucuses. It is the final days. GOP rivals of former President Trump kind of swinging for the fences towards him as he is in the big lead. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RON DESANTIS, (R) FLORIDA: Donald Trump was president for four years. He did not make a dent in the administrative state. He did not make a dent in draining the swamp. That's just the reality.

NIKKI HALEY, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: The only way we get out of this if we elect a new conservative leader to carry us forward. We can't do that with either Biden or Trump.

VIVEK RAMASWAMY, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: If you think they will let Donald J. Trump get anywhere near that White House again, I'm just going to ask you --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: Well, it is something in the closing days. The latest poll is the Suffolk poll. I put up the RCP earlier. But there is movement here, but it is still, Byron, it is the former president's, it doesn't -- it depends on who shows up. It depends on who gets out to the caucuses. But there is a big lead here.

YORK: This lead just appears to be prohibitive now. And in the past few days Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley have spent most of their time, not all, but most of their time attacking each other, fighting each other for second place. So there is an expectations game here. But the worst-case scenario really for the DeSantis and Haley crowd and all the people who want to move on from former President Trump, the worst-case scenario is he gets over 50 percent. And that's a devastating blow to them, because they want to be able to say, well, look, a majority of Republicans still didn't vote for Donald Trump. If a majority do, they are in pretty bad shape.

BAIER: We'll follow it all. Countdown is on.

Up next, the Friday Lightning Round, UFOs, third party ***politics***, plus Winners and Losers, and later, "Notable Quotables."

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GLENN GROTHMAN, (R-WI) HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: We want to track down exactly what the military thinks of individual instances of these objects flying around.

REP. TIM BURCHETT, (R-TN) HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: I'm not talking about little green men or flying saucers. I'd just like to know what they are spending the money on.

REP. ROBERT GARCIA, (D-CA) HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: I take this topic very seriously. It's not a joke. Our pilots, our commercial aviators, our military members deserve to have skies where they feel that they are safe and free.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: The number of incidents, we have talked about it, UFOs, UAPs, it's gone up significantly. Now Congress is looking into it. But they are frustrated today. We're back with the panel. Harold, it seems like there's just a lot of congressmen, both sides of the aisle, they just want to get to the bottom of all this, and they feel like they are stymied.

FORD: In general, I'm always for transparency. And the only way you build trust and confidence in the American people on any issue is to do just that. So I hope they are able to share and are willing to share everything they know about these objects, these unidentified flying objects, and let the American people be the judge.

BAIER: Yes, this July hearing, Mollie, Ryan Graves, a witness, points out the stigma of coming forward with some of this stuff. And a lot of them are pilots. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LT. RYAN GRAVES (RET), FORMER U.S. NAVY PILOT: UAP are in our airspace, but they are grossly under reported. These sightings are not rare or isolated. They are routine. Military aircrew and commercial pilots, trained observers whose lives depend on accurate identification, are frequently witnessing these phenomena. The stigma attached to UAP is real and powerful and challenges national security.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: So it's just frustrating to try to get to the bottom of it.

HEMINGWAY: Right. And a lot of what these lawmakers are upset about is they're being asked to fund programs without getting a lot of transparency about what the money is being used for. That is a very realistic thing, especially with the intelligence community which seems to thrive on not being transparent. At the same time, Congress should probably spend a lot more time on the southern illegal alien issue than the interdimensional alien issue.

(LAUGHTER)

BAIER: Right. OK, "Politico," Byron, about a third party saying it will be a nailbiter. A third party scholar in 2024 election, "They almost certainly won't win the White House, but in a close race between presumptive nominees Donald Trump and Joe Biden, a third party candidate could easily siphon off enough votes in one state or another to tip the election. They could absolutely play the spoiler. If you look at the RCP average with spoiler, so-called spoiler candidates in the mix, the former president holds a five point lead over President Biden. But there you see RFK Jr., Jill Stein, Cornel Wand, not we're not even talking yet about the No Labels possibility with Senator Manchin in New Hampshire today, Byron.

YORK: Yes. The thing that is driving this is a widespread public disgust with the idea of another Joe Biden, Donald Trump matchup. A lot of the voters just don't want to see it, so they are open to third parties. The No Labels nomination, I think they are on the ballot in more than a dozen states already. That is a very valuable thing. Some people have dismissed it, but it is a very valuable thing. And if some big name politician takes it, that could make those numbers you just put up even more troubling for Biden and Trump.

BAIER: Joe Lieberman, former senator, former Democratic vice presidential nominee, was on today talking about the No Labels deal. Take a listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOE LIEBERMAN, NO LABELS CHAIRMAN: We have said we will only do this if we feel it's constructive or we can make a real difference in our government and in our ***politics***, and secondly, if we can get top tier candidates to be willing to run on a bipartisan unity ticket. Right now I think we can do both.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: So you've got Manchin talking about it, Harold. You have got Larry Hogan dropping off the board, former Maryland governor, Republican. You have got the organization talking, apparently, with, or about Chris Christie. Is it possible that there is a legitimate No Labels ticket that emerges here?

FORD: Could be. I take them at their word, they won't get in the race if they can't win. They don't want to be a spoiler. Joe Manchin is, I think, one of the guys we should be want more of in ***politics***, people who want to solve problems, and he's one of those people. I take him at his word he won't do anything to spoil the race. But I do hope he keeps pushing to try to get both parties and even those who are running as third party candidate to talk more about solutions than what divides us.

BAIER: All right, let's do some Winners and Losers. Winner first, Mollie?

HEMINGWAY: My winner for the week is Jim Harbaugh who had that big victory for Michigan with the national championship. My loser is Fani Willis. This week she got embroiled in all sorts of controversy for allegedly paying her boyfriend to get involved in her sort of anti-Republican RICO campaign. And it turns out that she was paying, allegedly paying him and that he was meeting with the White House. So big problems down in Atlanta for that part of the effort.

BAIER: All right, lightning winner and loser, Byron?

YORK: Winner is Nick Saban, who retired as Alabama coach as the greatest in history this week. The loser is Chris Christie, and I don't think I need to say anything more. Least popular Republican pulls out of race.

BAIER: All right, quick winner and loser, Harold?

FORD: Mollie and I agree, bipartisan. I like Jim Harbaugh in Michigan, my law school alma mater. Congratulations. My loser, unfortunately, will be the country if House Republicans end up trying to get another speaker because they don't like this speaker's willingness to work with Democrats to keep the government open.

BAIER: We'll watch it. All right, thanks, guys.

That sounds means it's Friday. Time for "Notable Quotables."

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We are going to approach it with 100 percent and complete transparency.

PETER DOOCY, FOX NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Why should we believe anything that this administration tells us about anything?

JOHN KIRBY, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL COORDINATOR FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: We're not going to plant a microchip in their neck like they're a poodle.

NIKKI HALEY, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I think Biden should be fired.

GOV. RON DESANTIS, (R-FL) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: This guy is few fries short of a happy meal.

DONALD TRUMP, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT: I'm not going to have time for retribution. Our ultimate retribution is success.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: President Trump incited an erection -- an --

(LAUGHTER)

BAIER: If he called and said Vivek, I really like you.

(LAUGHTER)

VIVEK RAMASWAMY, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: He got this fight started, but now it is our job to finish it.

TRUMP: The biggest fan of Dr. Fauci was Ron De-sanctimonious.

HALEY: If I'm a good mom and a good wife, I will be a good president.

CHRIS CHRISTIE, (R) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: And she is going to get smoked. She is not up to this.

TRUMP: It's one of the few things he has been right about.

CROWD: Ceasefire now! Ceasefire now!

JOE BIDEN, (D) PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We're quietly working with Israeli government.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We have a Hunter sighting today, oh boy.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hold on, hold on, hold on. Order. Order.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You are the epitome of white privilege. What are you afraid of? You have no balls.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Here doesn't seem to be too afraid.

HUNTER BIDEN, PRESIDENT BIDEN'S SON: Do you have a dad? Does he call you?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Two-thousand migrants moved into the school.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: If you didn't see it coming, then you are either blind, dumb, or just stupid.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: -- to chase imperfection, and it's hard to be perfect.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

BAIER: One week.

We'll have a special edition of the program Sunday, 6:00 p.m. eastern, SPECIAL REPORT previewing the Iowa caucuses.

Remember, if you can't catch us live, set your DVR, 6:00 p.m. in the east, 3:00 p.m. on the west coast.

Thanks for inviting us into your home tonight, fair, balanced, and unafraid. THE INGRAHAM ANGLE is now.

**Load-Date:** January 13, 2024

**End of Document**