

U.S. MISSILES HIT HOUTHI TARGETS IN YEMEN



Supporters of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia on Thursday in Sana, Yemen. It had defied warnings from the Biden administration.

5 Allies Join Response to Attacks in Red Sea as War in Mideast Grows

By ERIC SCHMITT and HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON — The United States and five of its allies on Thursday carried out military strikes against more than a dozen targets in Yemen controlled by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia, in an expansion of the war in the Middle East that the Biden administration had sought to avoid for the past three months.

The American-led air and naval strikes came in response to more than two dozen Houthi drone and missile attacks against commercial shipping in the Red Sea since November, and after warnings to the Houthis in the past week from the Biden administration and several international allies of serious consequences if the salvos did not stop.

On Thursday night, President Biden called the strikes a “clear message that the United States and our partners will not tolerate attacks on our personnel or allow hostile actors to imperil freedom of navigation in one of the world’s most critical commercial routes.”

In a statement, he warned: “I will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary.”

But the Houthis have defied earlier American ultimatums, vowing to continue their attacks in what they say is a protest against Israel’s military campaign in Gaza.

More than 2,000 ships have been forced to divert thousands of miles to avoid the Red Sea, causing weeks of delays, Mr. Biden said. On Tuesday, American and

British warships intercepted one of the largest barrages of Houthi drone and missile strikes yet, an assault that U.S. and other Western military officials said was the last straw.

Biden officials said they had telegraphed what was coming for weeks. But the strikes, they said, were meant more to damage Houthi capability and to hinder the group’s ability to strike Red Sea targets, rather than to kill leaders and Iranian trainers, which could be viewed as more escalatory.

The strikes hit radars, missile and drone launch sites, and weapons storage areas, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III said in a statement. Pentagon officials said late Thursday they were still assessing whether the strikes were successful, and emphasized that they had sought to avoid any civilian casualties.

Thursday’s attack drew the United States more deeply into a conflict that ignited after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7 and killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli officials. The Israeli response has so far killed more than 23,000 people in Gaza, according to health authorities there.

Some American allies in the Middle East, including the Gulf nations of Qatar and Oman, had raised concerns that strikes against the Houthis could spiral out of control and drag the region into a wider war with other Iranian proxies, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Tehran-backed mili-

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Colleges Fled SAT in Spite Of Its Utility

By DAVID LEONHARDT

After the Covid pandemic made it difficult for high school students to take the SAT and ACT, dozens of selective colleges dropped their requirement that applicants do so. Colleges described the move as temporary, but nearly all have since stuck to a test-optional policy. It reflects a backlash against standardized tests that began long before the pandemic, and many people have hailed the change as a victory for equity in higher education.

Now, though, a growing number of experts and university administrators wonder whether the switch has been a mistake. Research has increasingly shown that standardized test scores contain real information, helping to predict college grades, chances of graduation and post-college success. Test scores are more reliable than high school grades, partly because of grade inflation in recent years.

Without test scores, admissions officers sometimes have a hard time distinguishing between applicants who are likely to do well at elite colleges and those who are likely to struggle. Researchers who have studied the issue say that test scores can be particularly helpful in identifying lower-income students and underrepresented minorities who will thrive. These students do not score as high on average as students from affluent communities or white and Asian students. But a solid score for a student from a less privileged background is often a sign of enormous potential.

“Standardized test scores are a much better predictor of academic success than high school grades,” Christina Paxson, the president of Brown University, recently wrote. Stuart Schmill — the dean of admissions at M.I.T., one of the few schools to have reinstated its test requirement — told me, “Just getting straight A’s is not enough information for us to know whether the students are going to succeed or not.”

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Democracy Takes the Stage Loudly and Proudly

By CHRIS BUCKLEY and AMY CHANG CHIEN

CHIAYI, Taiwan — Huang Chen-yu strode onto an outdoor stage in a southern Taiwanese county, whooping and hollering as she roused the crowd of 20,000 into a joyous frenzy — to welcome a succession of politicians in matching jackets.

Taiwan is in the final days of its presidential election contest, and the big campaign rallies, with M.C.s like Ms. Huang, are boisterous, flashy spectacles — as if a variety show and a disco

At Campaign Events, M.C.s Work to ‘Light a Fire’ in Voters

crashed into a candidate’s town hall meeting.

At the high point of the rally, the Democratic Progressive Party’s presidential candidate, Lai Ching-te, was introduced to the crowd in Chiayi, a county in southern Taiwan. Ms. Huang roared in Taiwanese, “Frozen

garlic!”

The phrase “dongsuan” sounds like “get elected” and, yes, also like “frozen garlic.” Ms. Huang and another M.C. led the crowd of supporters, now on their feet, in a rapid-fire, call-and-response chant: “Lai Ching-te! Frozen garlic! Lai Ching-te! Frozen garlic!” Then they sped up: “Lai Ching-te! Lai Ching-te! Lai Ching-te! Frozen garlic! Frozen garlic! Frozen garlic!”

For Ms. Huang, the event, days before Taiwan’s election on Saturday, was one of at least 15

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Before his departure on Thursday, Patriots Coach Bill Belichick was celebrated as savior and sage.

The Glowering Man Behind New England’s Joy

By BILL PENNINGTON

It is hard to make an impression, and even harder to make history in a place as old and momentous as New England. The measuring stick is so high.

But Bill Belichick, who departed Thursday as the head coach of the New England Patriots after 24 years of unmatched dominance in America’s most popular sport, will be remem-

24 Years and 6 Trophies Later, Belichick Exits

bered alongside New England legends like Ted Williams, Bill Russell and Paul Revere.

OK, Paul Revere is a stretch. Only Tom Brady will exist in perpetuity alongside Paul Revere.

Nevertheless, Belichick, whose

teams won six Super Bowls with Brady as quarterback, is big enough in the Boston area that he could qualify as an honorary Kennedy.

Belichick’s exit as the Patriots coach, after consecutive losing years that included this season’s 4-13 record, is an end of an era in a place where sports heroes can outshine almost any senator, civic leader or artist. Belichick, known

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Faking Names, ESPN Handed Its Stars Emmys

By KATIE STRANG
The Athletic

Last March, Shelley Smith, who worked for 26 years as an on-air reporter for ESPN, received a call from Stephanie Druley, then the network’s head of studio and event production. Druley said she wanted to talk about something “serious” that needed to stay between the two of them, Smith recalled. She then told Smith that Smith needed to return two sports Emmy statuettes that she had been given more than a decade earlier.

That request was one of many ESPN made of some of its biggest stars last year after the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the organization that presents the Sports Emmy Awards, uncovered a scheme that the network used to acquire more than 30 of the coveted statuettes for on-air talent ineligible to receive them. Since at least 2010, ESPN inserted fake names in Emmy entries, then took the awards won by some of those imaginary individuals, had them re-engraved and gave them to on-air personalities.

Kirk Herbstreit, Lee Corso, Chris Fowler, Desmond Howard and Samantha Ponder, among others, were given the ill-gotten Emmys, according to a person briefed on the matter who was granted anonymity because the individual was not authorized to discuss it publicly. There is no evidence that the on-air individuals were aware the Emmys given to them were improperly obtained.

“I think it was really crummy what they did to me and others,” said Smith, who worked at ESPN from 1997 until her contract expired last July.

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Limited amounts of food and other aid are entering Gaza.

U.N. Says Gaza Is Approaching Famine’s Brink

By STEPHANIE NOLEN

The number of people facing possible starvation in the Gaza Strip in the coming weeks is the largest share of a population at risk of famine identified anywhere since a United Nations-affiliated panel created the current global food-insecurity assessment 20 years ago.

After Hamas’s surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, Israel responded with air and ground assaults and a sealing of the territory, which have left the 2.2 million people who live there deprived of sufficient food, water and supplies. The United Nations has concluded that without significant intervention, Gaza could reach the level of famine as soon as early February.

Limited amounts of food and other aid are entering Gaza from Israel and Egypt at border points with rigorous inspections; the ongoing bombardment and ground fighting make distribution of that aid extremely difficult.

Scholars of famine say it has been generations since the world has seen this degree of food deprivation in warfare.

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In Camellia Country

Verbania in Italy’s Piedmont seeks to attract flower lovers with its mild climate and spectacular gardens. PAGE A8

Iran Says It Seized Oil Tanker

The vessel was involved last year in the U.S. seizure of oil being transported in violation of U.S. sanctions. PAGE A7

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Food Aid Faces a Shortfall

The Agriculture Department says millions of women and children could miss out on nutrition assistance if Congress does not increase funding. PAGE A13

Newark Lowers Voting Age

New Jersey’s largest city will allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections. Supporters hope that it’s the start of a national movement. PAGE A11

Race for Deal on River’s Water

The Western states that rely on the Colorado River worry that a change in administrations after the election could set back negotiations. PAGE A14



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College Football’s King Retires

Nick Saban won more national championships than any college football coach, when it was harder than ever. PAGE B7

Unbreakable Spirit in Tennis

Elina Svitolina, the comeback player of 2023, is resolved to aid Ukraine while continuing her rise. PAGE B10

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F.A.A. to Review Max 9 Design

Federal regulators notified Boeing that they would investigate whether the aerospace giant followed safety rules on a plane that lost a fuselage panel while in flight last week. PAGE B1

Next Front in Chips Battle

A U.S.-born chip technology called RISC-V has become critical to China’s ambitions. Washington is debating the question of whether it’s advisable, or even possible, to limit it. PAGE B1

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David Wallace-Wells PAGE A22



WEEKEND ARTS C1-16

Even More ‘Mean Girls’

A film version of a stage musical based on a film comedy has its charms. Above, Renee Rapp and Avantika. PAGE C1

