

Hezbollah Sees Risks at Home In Israel Attack

Retaliation May Bring Backlash in Lebanon

By MARIA ABI-HABIB and HWAIDA SAAD

A day after the assassination of a senior commander of the Lebanese militant faction Hezbollah, the group vowed to retaliate against Israel. More than two weeks later, however, the response has not come as Hezbollah strikes a delicate balance between the vengeance it seeks and the risks of a backlash at home.

Lebanon is already deep in turmoil from a yearslong political and economic crisis, and its citizens are tired of strife. The country has careened from one crisis to the next since a 15-year civil war broke out in 1975. And if Hezbollah ends up in another punishing war with Israel now, the nation could well turn against it.

The Lebanese state is made up of a multitude of factions and sects, and it has been controlled for years by an ineffectual caretaker government. Hezbollah, an Iran-backed Shiite Muslim group, is both part of that coalition government and considered the real power underpinning Lebanon.

As the dominant political and military force in the entire country, Hezbollah has everything to lose and knows it must tread carefully.

The group has cemented its position over the last three decades after outmaneuvering its domestic foes in a political system that divides power by sect. The group has amassed a large and potent arsenal and is more powerful than the national military. It controls or has oversight of the country's most important infrastructure. And it has lifted up its constituents in the process, empowering, enriching and providing services to Shiites in Lebanon, a historically marginalized sect.

Many of Lebanon's Shiites now benefit from a plethora of services run by Hezbollah, including quality health care, free education and even a boy scouts program. Meanwhile, a broken and broke Lebanese state struggles to provide even the most basic services, such as electricity, for all its citizens. And no other political party has the funds or organization to provide for their own sect as well as Hezbollah.

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ERIN SCHAFF/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Vice President Kamala Harris sought to personalize the impact of her economic policies, as she spoke in Raleigh, N.C., on Friday.

Russia Is Advancing in Donetsk Despite an Offensive by Ukraine

By CONSTANT MÉHEUT

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian troops are closing in on the strategic eastern Ukrainian town of Pokrovsk, according to open-source battlefield maps, casting doubts on Ukraine's hopes that its new offensive into western Russia will prompt Moscow to scale back its attacks elsewhere on the battlefield.

After capturing several villages in the area and pushing along a railway line, Russian forces are now about eight miles from Pokrovsk, one of Ukraine's main defensive strongholds in the Donetsk region, according to the maps, which are based on combat footage and satellite images.

The capture of the city would bring Russia a step closer to its long-held goal of seizing the entire Donetsk region, much of which it

Kyiv's Goal of Diverting Invaders Is in Doubt

already controls. Pokrovsk, a city with a prewar population of about 60,000, sits on a key road linking several cities that form a defensive arc protecting the part of Donetsk that is still held by Ukraine. The situation is so dire that the city's military administration has urged residents to leave, although it has not issued a formal order. "The enemy is rapidly approaching the outskirts of Pokrovsk," Serhii Dobriak, the head of the military administration, said on Thursday. "Evacuation is underway in the community. Don't delay!"

Russia's advance toward
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Defying Trump Over Election Costs a Republican, Literally

By NICK CORASANITI

Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's Republican secretary of state, has been forced to spend half a million dollars defending himself in court for having stood up to former President Donald J. Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election. The only way to spare himself from the defamation lawsuit he has been fighting, he and his lawyer say, would be to lie.

The lawsuit centers on a 2020 video that purported to show election fraud in Georgia. The video, which was presented to state lawmakers, showed security footage of election workers tabulating ballots in Atlanta. Multiple news media outlets and the secretary of state's office have debunked the claims of election fraud made in the video presentation to legislators.

\$500,000 Tab to Pay for His Legal Defense

The plaintiff in the case, Jacki Pick, a Texas-based Republican podcast host who guided the lawmakers through the 30-minute presentation, sued Mr. Raffensperger for defamation over how he described the video in his book, "Integrity Counts." He wrote that the video "had been deceptively sliced and edited." Ms. Pick, who is married to the Texas multimillionaire and megadonor Doug Deason, claims she was defamed, even though Mr. Raffensperger's book never mentioned her by name.

Ms. Pick's lawyers let it be known that if Mr. Raffensperger
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A Scramble to Get More Drugs In the Last Days of Perry's Life

By JULIA JACOBS and MATT STEVENS

On the day Matthew Perry died, his live-in personal assistant gave him his first ketamine shot of the morning at around 8:30 a.m. About four hours later, while Mr. Perry watched a movie at his home in Los Angeles, the assistant gave him another injection.

It was only about 40 minutes later that Mr. Perry wanted another shot, the assistant, Kenneth Iwamasa, recalled in a plea agreement that he signed.

"Shoot me up with a big one," Mr. Perry told Mr. Iwamasa, according to the agreement, and asked him to prepare his hot tub.

So Mr. Iwamasa filled a syringe with ketamine, gave his boss a third shot and left the house to run some errands, according to court papers. When he returned, he found Mr. Perry face down in the water, dead.

Mr. Iwamasa was one of five people who the authorities in California said this week had been charged with a conspiracy to distribute ketamine, a powerful anesthetic, to Mr. Perry. The defendants also included two doctors, a



WILLY SANJUAN/INVISION/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The actor Matthew Perry died last year after taking ketamine.

woman accused of being a dealer and an acquaintance who pleaded guilty to acting as a middleman.

Mr. Perry, a beloved figure who rose to fame playing Chandler Bing on the sitcom "Friends," had long struggled with addiction. Court papers filed in the case shed light on the desperate weeks leading up to Mr. Perry's death on Oct. 28 at the age of 54.

In his last days, law enforcement
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Football Dream Over? NASCAR Has a Job It'd Like to Discuss.

By KEN BELSON

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — D.J. Twitty was taking it all in: the jackmen lifting the racecars, the whizzing of air guns screwing in lug nuts, the slinging of 50-pound wheels. For a South Carolina native like the 24-year-old Twitty, the cacophonous scene was just this side of paradise.

"I'm ready to make this my home," Twitty said. He was one of 55 recruits who attended the annual pit crew combine for Hendrick Motorsports. The auto racing team's coaches and trainers use the all-day event in June — and a smaller, three-day minicamp held last week — to find a half dozen or so athletes capable of jumping onto a track, gassing a car and changing tires in less than 10 seconds.

Twitty, a former running back at the University of South Carolina, was in attendance because Hendrick and other teams have learned that former football players often make the best prospects for five-man crews, thanks to their strength, agility and speed. So teams scour college campuses looking for players like Twitty who didn't catch on with an N.F.L. team and want to trade their football helmets for fireproof suits. A few,



TRAVIS DOVE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Max Marsh, a former Kansas State football player, joined 54 recruits at a pit crew combine in June.

like Twitty, know about NASCAR — he grew up rooting for the driver Denny Hamlin — but most are new to the sport and can barely change the oil on their own cars.

"You don't grow up playing pit

crew in your backyard," said Keith Flynn, Hendrick's developmental pit crew director, who has recruited athletes for 14 years. "Most of these football guys had no idea that this is even an opportunity. But once they come on

campus and see the place, they get pretty excited."

NASCAR races can cover up to 600 miles, with cars zipping around the track approaching 200 miles per hour. Yet races are often

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Proudly Waving Kenya's Flag

Some protesters are using it as a symbol of resistance, defying the country's strict rules about displaying it. PAGE A4

Familiar Rulers in Thailand

The rise of the scion of a political family is widely seen as the continued undermining of Thai democracy. PAGE A7

NATIONAL A8-15

New York's Mayor Subpoenaed

A new round of federal subpoenas in the investigation of Mayor Eric Adams and his 2021 fund-raising seeks a wide range of information. PAGE A8

Menendez Ends Senate Bid

The New Jersey senator, recently convicted of taking bribes, told officials to strike his name from the ballot. PAGE A13

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A Rookie's Standout Summer

Jackson Chourio, the Brewers' outfield phenom, even won a battle against the pitcher Clayton Kershaw. PAGE B7



BUSINESS B1-5

It's No Joke for The Onion

The satirical site is hoping a new print edition with fake stories and fake ads will lead to real money. PAGE B1

An Economic Divide Narrows

Research shows that the Black-white opportunity gap closed by about 30 percent for people born poor. PAGE B1

ARTS C1-6

Now Open in the Adirondacks

A visual artist and a jazz trumpeter created the Mill, an 11,000-square-foot arts and music center in far upstate New York, hoping to create "a cultural oasis" in a town of 1,300. PAGE C1

Cinematic Dynamite

In New York, Film Forum's Blaxploitation, Baby! series includes genre mainstays like "Shaft" and "Blacula" along with surprises such as "Thomazine & Bushrod," a Western. PAGE C3

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Doug Sosnik

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