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Today, sunshine with a few clouds, breezy, high 39. Tonight, partly cloudy, low 30. Tomorrow, mostly cloudy, snow and rain at night, high

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Prices in Canada may be higher

\$4.00









People gathered on Thursday to mourn, clockwise from top left, victims of bombings for which the Islamic State took responsibility; militants killed in a U.S. drone attack in Baghdad; Saleh al-Arouri, a Hamas leader killed in Beirut; and relatives hit by Israeli strikes.

Fears of Wider War Grow In Middle East, and U.S.

Attacks in Lebanon and Iran Raise Tensions — White House Warns the Houthis

This article is by Eric Schmitt, Julian E. Barnes. Helene Cooper and David E. Sanger.

WASHINGTON — American, Israeli and Lebanese officials insist that few parties want Israel's war in Gaza to become a wider conflict that engulfs the Middle

But the assassination of a top leader of Hamas in Lebanon on Tuesday, and the deaths of scores of people in explosions in Iran on Wednesday, threatened to bring the Middle East — and the United States — closer to the brink of a regional war, which the Biden administration has tried to stave off since Hamas's deadly attacks against Israel on Oct. 7.

Just hours after the bombs went off in Iran, the United States and 12 of its allies issued a written warning to another militia group in the region, the Houthis of Yemen, who have been mounting neardaily missile, drone and seaborne attacks on commercial vessels.

So far the United States has held back from retaliating against Houthi bases in Yemen, in large part because it does not want to undermine a fragile truce in Yemen's civil war

But now Biden officials are signaling that their patience is running out.

"Let our message now be clear: We call for the immediate end of these illegal attacks and release of unlawfully detained vessels and

By VIVIAN NEREIM

and TARIQ PANJA

When Senator Robert Menen-

dez arrived in Qatar in 2022 to at-

tend the country's lavish produc-

tion of the men's soccer World

Cup, he gave an unusual interview

to the authoritarian government's

news agency praising the

progress that Qatar had made on

The tiny Gulf state was facing

an onslaught of international criti-

Democrat, said he preferred to

iador rignts.

crews," White House officials said in a statement issued on Wednesday, a day after the shipping giant Maersk announced it would pause operations in the Red Sea.

"The Houthis," the statement continued, "will bear the responsibility of the consequences should they continue to threaten lives, the global economy, and free flow of commerce in the region's critical waterways."

The warning — also signed by Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Japan, Singapore and the Netherlands stopped short of threatening military strikes. Over the weekend, the U.S. Navy sank three Houthi boats, killing all the crew members, when they fired on American helicopters coming to aid a Maersk cargo ship.

On Monday, Iran's navy announced the deployment of a flotilla of warships to the waterway. On the same day, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian of Iran expressed "gratitude and appreciation" to a Houthi official visiting Tehran for the group's support for Hamas, the government-run IRNA news agency reported.

A senior Iranian official said dispatching the warships, which join an Iranian spy ship already in the region, was meant to signal that Iran is supporting the

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A Nation Is Cultivating

Ties to the Powerful

Across the World

highlight positive aspects of the

Traveling to Qatar gave Mr. Me-

nendez "the experience to say

wow!" he said, according to the

Qatari state news agency. "My

short visit to Doha was joyful and I

games, and the host nation.

Few Take Paxlovid, Even as Covid Surges Again | Eyes on 1991,

By CHRISTINA JEWETT

As Covid rises again, killing about 1,500 Americans each week, medical researchers are trying to understand why so few people are taking Paxlovid, a medicine that is stunningly effective in preventing severe illness and death from the

A study of a million high-risk people with Covid found that only about 15 percent who were eligible for the drug took it. If half of the eligible patients in the United

Researchers Struggle to Explain Unease Over Lifesaving Drug

States had gotten Paxlovid during the time period of the study, 48,000 deaths could have been prevented, authors of the study, conducted by the National Institutes of Health, concluded

It's not because people don't

know about the drug — most do but the reluctance seems to come from doctors worried about interactions with other drugs and people wary of a possible rebound case or the metallic aftertaste.

Regional differences offer a clue, with uptake highest in the Democratic strongholds of the Northeast and the Pacific Northwest regions of the United States and lowest in red areas, including Florida and Indiana. Yet no careful study has clarified why so few people used the medication, which

Continued on Page A17



tion. Back then, he warned his col-

leagues against an overly draconi-

an approach and urged them not

faced a constituent backlash and

multiple primary opponents in his

competitive district, has swung

into line with the zeal of a convert,

Now Mr. Gonzales, who has

to politicize the issue.

Protesters Are Swept Out of a Berkeley Park

The University of California has been trying for years to build student housing at the site. Page A11.

somewhat unlikely host.

Moscow Finds A New Enemy

By ANDREW HIGGINS

VILNIUS, Lithuania — When the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant last year for President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, a Moscow court launched a surprise counterattack: It ordered the arrest of a 70-year-old retired judge in Lithuania.

The judge, Kornelija Maceviciene, was not connected in any way to the case against Mr. Putin in The Hague or to investigations into Russian war crimes in Ukraine. Her "crime," as the Moscow

court sees it, was handing down "unjust" guilty verdicts against former Soviet officers, nearly all Russians, for their role in a brutal crackdown against pro-independence protesters who had gathered at a television tower in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, on Jan. 13, In a bloody episode that helped

seal the demise of Soviet power, 14 protesters - one of them a young woman crushed by a tank — were killed and hundreds of others were injured when Soviet forces stormed the tower in an abortive last-ditch attempt to prevent Lithuania from escaping Moscow's

After examining copious evidence showing who in 1991 gave the orders to use deadly force and who carried them out, Ms. Maceviciene and two fellow judges

Continued on Page A6

becoming a chief champion of the

Republicans' strict border en-

forcement bill and a proponent of

efforts to use it as political lever-

He has endorsed calls to make

border security improvements a

precondition of securing military

Continued on Page A12

age against President Biden.

cism over its preparations for the saw that the global community world's biggest sporting event, incame to Qatar and were well recluding over the exploitation of ceived and well respected." migrant workers who built the Less than a year later, Mr. Metournament's infrastructure. But Mr. Menendez, a New Jersey

Menendez Case Offers Glimpse

Of Qatar's Efforts to Build Clout

nendez, 70, was charged in a fed-Continued on Page A10

Weighing the Fate of a Robber Who Got Caught Pink-Handed

By DAN BARRY

The man left the bank like a satisfied customer who hadn't just robbed it. With an envelope of cash smoldering in his right pocket, he began walking down a Newark street with studied nonchalance.

A few steps into his casual getaway, a dye pack inside the envelope exploded like an ill-timed gender reveal, into a misty puff of pink. Only then did he hurry away, leaving in his wake a cartoonish contrail and some surveillancevideo distraction for the Covid-infected summer of 2021.

When the man, Esau Grant, was arrested two days later, a Newark police official could not resist joking that he had been caught "redhanded." And public attention moved on to the next viral moment of human folly.

Perhaps there is no profound takeaway in the case of Mr. Grant. Perhaps it offers nothing more than a chance to imagine yourself in the pink-stained sneakers of a



Video of a dye pack exploding was used at Esau Grant's trial.

desperate, hapless bank robber -

as I did when I served on the jury that recently heard the state's case against him. On the cool, wet Saturday morn-

ing of July 3, 2021, Mr. Grant joined a long line in the small Capital One bank on Springfield Avenue. It was the beginning of the month and the day before the Fourth: busy banking time. Tall and lanky, the 27-year-old

man wore a light blue durag, a Continued on Page A16



By KAROUN DEMIRJIAN

Speaker Mike Johnson and scores

of House Republicans converged

in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Wednes-

day to call for a crackdown on mi-

grants at the border, they had a

WASHINGTON

INTERNATIONAL A4-10

Soon-to-Be Queen of Denmark

Princess Mary, a common-born former Australian, never dreamed of royalty. "I wanted to be a veterinarian." PAGE A7

Balloons Float Over Taiwan

Some analysts say the objects are a calculatedly ambiguous reminder to voters that China is watching. PAGE A10 **NATIONAL A11-17, 20**

It was only months ago that

Representative Tony Gonzales,

the Texas Republican who repre-

sents the busy border crossing

and the majority-Hispanic district

that surrounds it, broke with his

party in opposition to parts of its

hard-line approach on immigra-

Oligarch Sues Sotheby's

At a trial next week, a Russian billionaire is accusing the auction house of helping an art dealer trick him into wildly overspending. PAGE A15

From Skeptic to Champion of G.O.P.'s Hard Line on Immigration

A Busy January for Trump

The former president faces Iowa's caucuses and New Hampshire's primary as he pursues the G.O.P. nomination, but he also has two trials.

Subway Collision in Manhattan

A subway train struck a work train near West 96th Street, causing it to derail. Two dozen people were injured, none of them seriously, officials said. PAGE A20 **BUSINESS B1-4**

Oil Flows Despite Attacks

Militia raids on tankers in the Red Sea leave operators with a choice: Accept the risks or lose business.

French Retailer Drops PepsiCo

The supermarket chain Carrefour says the maker of Pepsi, Lay's and 7-Up is "unacceptably" expensive.

OBITUARIES B9-10

Her Forecast Delayed D-Day

Maureen Sweeney detected stormy weather and helped save General Eisenhower's Normandy invasion from potential disaster. She was 100. PAGE B9



WEEKEND ARTS C1-12 An Expensive Fantasy

A blockbuster restaging of Luna Luna, an "art amusement park," aims to recover the lost element of fun.

Somehow, Life Goes On

In the film "Good Grief," Daniel Levy applies a light but wise hand to a man navigating life after loss.



Rich College Sports Deal

The N.C.A.A. and ESPN reached a \$920 million deal for broadcast rights to 40 college championships.

The All-Free-Agent Team Shohei Ohtani and Yoshinobu Yamamo-

to are spoken for, but plenty of fine players remain on the market. PAGE B7

OPINION A18-19

Charles M. Blow



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