

# Israel’s war zone awash in U.S. arms

Lethal weaponry floods in out of the public eye as alarm builds over tactics

BY JOHN HUDSON

The United States has quietly approved and delivered more than 100 separate foreign military sales to Israel since the Gaza war began Oct. 7, amounting to thousands of precision-guided munitions, small-diameter bombs, bunker busters, small arms and other lethal aid, U.S. officials told members of Congress in a recent classified briefing.

The triple-digit figure, which has not been previously reported, is the latest indication of Washington’s extensive involvement in the polarizing five-month conflict even as top U.S. officials and lawmakers increasingly express deep reservations about Israel’s military tactics in a campaign that has killed more than 30,000 people, according to Gaza’s health authorities.

Only two approved foreign military sales to Israel have been made public since the start of conflict: \$106 million worth of tank ammunition and \$147.5 million of components needed to make 155 mm shells. Those sales invited public scrutiny because the Biden administration bypassed Congress to approve the packages by invoking an

SEE ISRAEL ON A20

**Feeling betrayed:** Policies prompt an activist’s shift from Biden. C1

# In Gaza, young lives cut short — by hunger

16 children have died of malnutrition, all but one in the aid-needy north

BY STEVE HENDRIX AND HAJAR HARB

JERUSALEM — Sahar al-Zebdda was born in a hospital with no electricity. She died 47 days later from complications of malnutrition, her doctor said — her short life a chronicle of the deprivation overwhelming Gaza.

On Feb. 27, with her underfed mother unable to breastfeed and her father unable to obtain formula, Sahar became one of the youngest victims of a food shortage that has reached critical levels in the northern part of the enclave. Her parents had been displaced five times over nearly five months of conflict.

“We expected that one of us would die by bombing or be killed by bullets,” her father, Tawfiq al-Zebdda, 27, told The Washington Post in a phone interview. “We did not know that the baby girl who was born and died during the war would die of hunger.”

Post reporters found the families in this story through doctors at hospitals in northern Gaza, which aid experts say is nearing a

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MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

Nikki Haley leaves the podium Wednesday after announcing her withdrawal from the Republican primary race in Charleston, S.C.

# Haley’s exit clears path for Trump

BY DYLAN WELLS, MAEGAN VAZQUEZ AND AMY B WANG

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Nikki Haley, a former U.N. ambassador and governor of South Carolina, has announced she is suspending her presidential campaign, leaving Donald Trump with no major opponents left on his path to becoming the 2024 Republican nominee.

“I said I wanted Americans to have their voices heard. I have

But she doesn’t endorse, urging him to ‘earn’ support from her voters

done that. I have no regrets,” Haley said Wednesday morning. “And although I will no longer be a candidate, I will not stop using my voice for the things I believe in.”

Haley congratulated Trump

on probably becoming the Republican nominee and said she wished him well but stopped short of endorsing him, instead urging him to earn the support of Republicans and independent voters who backed her.

“I have always been a conservative Republican and always supported the Republican nominee,” Haley said. “But on this question, as she did on so many others, Margaret Thatcher provided some good advice

SEE HALEY ON A7



**Haley’s backers:** Will they turn to Trump, or consider Biden? Here’s what some had to say. A6



**Next phase:** Trump, facing own woes, looks to unify his party. A4



ODELYN JOSEPH/AP

## ‘A question of time’ as chaos spreads

Soldiers inspect commuters at the entrance of the airport in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Wednesday. The U.S. State Department has asked Prime Minister Ariel Henry to resign. Story, A12

# Race-based program is ordered to open to all

BY JULIAN MARK AND TAYLOR TELFORD

A federal judge in Texas has ordered a 55-year-old federal agency created to help minority-owned businesses to open its doors to all races, a ruling that potentially imperils dozens of government programs that also presume racial minorities are inherently disadvantaged.

In a 93-page opinion rendered Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Mark T. Pittman ruled that the Minority

Federal agency serving minority-owned firms violates rights, judge says

Business Development Agency’s presumption that businesses owned by Blacks, Latinos and other minorities are disadvantaged violated the Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection. He permanently enjoined the agency’s

business centers, which have assisted minority-owned businesses in accessing capital and government contracts, from extending services based on an applicant’s race.

“If courts mean what they say when they ascribe supreme importance to constitutional rights, the federal government may not flagrantly violate such rights with impunity. The MBDA has done so for years. Time’s up,” wrote Pittman, who was appointed to the

SEE RULING ON A15

# Biden continues to walk student loan tightrope

Debt relief advocates say the \$138 billion forgiven isn’t enough for voters

BY DANIELLE DOUGLAS-GABRIEL AND TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA

Before President Biden took office, Catherine McDermott-Coffin, 76, was resigned to spending the rest of her life repaying \$148,966 in federal student loans.

The clinical psychologist had worked with incarcerated women at a state prison for more than a decade while paying down her graduate school loans — work that should have qualified her for a popular loan forgiveness program for public servants. But like so many other borrowers, McDermott-Coffin later learned she was in the wrong repayment plan for the debt program, derailing her chance of relief.

But everything changed in 2021. The Biden administration temporarily waived requirements for the notoriously complicated Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, giving hundreds of thousands of people like McDermott-Coffin a new path to cancellation. Within months of applying, McDermott-Coffin received a letter informing her that her \$80,000 loan balance had been eliminated.

“It was just a great emotional weight lifted off my shoulders,” said McDermott-Coffin, of Bed-



BRYAN ANSELM FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Catherine McDermott-Coffin had \$80,000 in loans forgiven by the Biden administration.**

ford Hills, N.Y. “There was so much stress and anxiety around wanting to retire but having this \$621 bill every month. Not having to worry about it is such a tremendous relief.”

There are about 3.9 million Americans like McDermott-Coffin who have benefited from Biden’s cancellation of \$138 billion in federal student loans during the past three years. Yet the administration’s efforts are not energizing potential voters the way the White House had hoped and, as Biden gears up his reelection campaign, he is seeking to raise the profile of one of his most sweeping actions.

Biden, who continues to grapple with how best to frame his relief push, faces backlash from Republican opponents who have

SEE BIDEN ON A2

**State of the Union:** Live coverage begins at 8 p.m. at washingtonpost.com.

## IN THE NEWS

**Climate change mandate** The Securities and Exchange Commission will require companies to report their emissions and the threat that warming poses to their operations. A10

**Long-awaited cleanup** Crews removed truckloads of debris from D.C.’s Kingman Island as part of a restoration project. B1

**THE NATION** **Lawmakers** demanded answers from Medicare on an alleged \$2 billion billing fraud. A3  
**Colorado River** states are at odds over conflicting proposals on how to cut water use. A10

**THE WORLD** **A site in Ukraine** may be the oldest spot in Europe to hold evidence of early humans. A13  
**A Russian missile** strike appeared to target Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. A13

**THE ECONOMY** **Privacy advocates** are raising alarms over the FBI’s use of push alerts, the agency’s latest technique that uses data to track suspects. A14  
**A ransomware group** said it had shut down, but its damage lingers — and the gang could reappear. A15

**THE REGION** **The founder** of Casa Ruby, a D.C. nonprofit for homeless LGBTQ youths, was charged with money laundering and fraud. B1  
**The family** of a man killed in his apartment by a Prince George’s police officer intends to sue the county. B1

**STYLE** **At Paris** Fashion Week, Chanel proves that it may not be hip, but it’s certainly still cool. C1  
**LOCAL LIVING** **Some renters** are renovating the homes they don’t own, seeing their happiness as more valuable than their security deposit.

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