

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Israel kills Hezbollah commander

Militia says airstrike targeted vehicle in southern Lebanon

By Bassem Mroue, Wafaa Shurafa and Jack Jeffery
Associated Press

BEIRUT — An Israeli airstrike killed an elite Hezbollah commander Monday in southern Lebanon, the latest in an escalating exchange of strikes across the

border that have raised fears of another Mideast war even as the fighting in Gaza exacts a mounting toll on civilians.

The strike on an SUV killed a commander in a secretive Hezbollah unit that operates along the border, according to a Lebanese security official who spoke on condition of anonymity in keep-

ing with regulations.

The commander, Wissam al-Tawil, was a veteran of the Iranian-backed Lebanese force who took part in the 2006 cross-border kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers that triggered the last war between Israel and Hezbollah, an official in the group said.

He is the most senior Hezbollah

milant killed since Hamas' attack into southern Israel triggered all-out war in Gaza and lower-intensity fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, which has escalated since an Israeli strike killed a senior Hamas leader last week in Beirut.

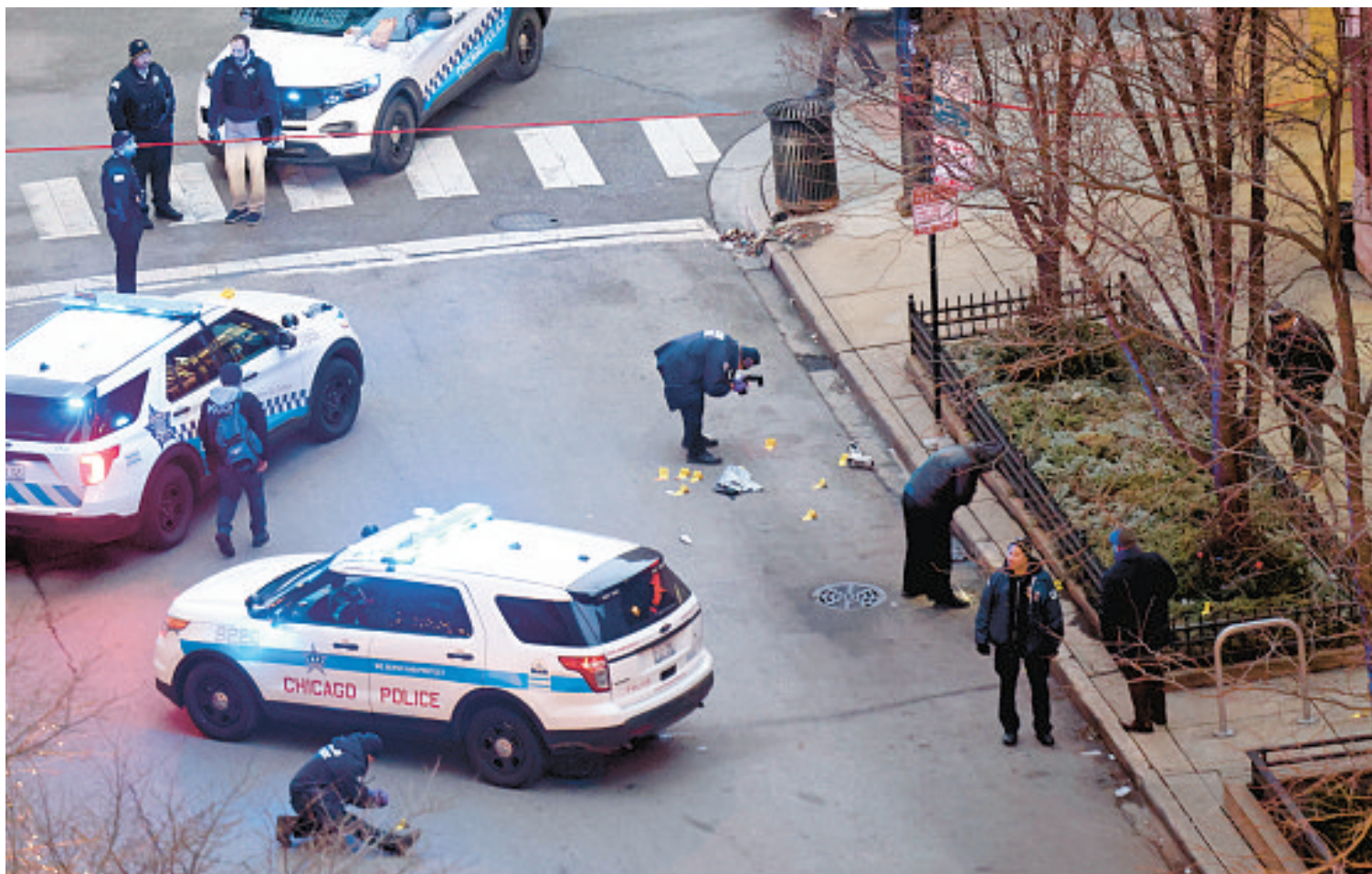
U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is back in the region this week, appears to be trying to head off a wider conflict.

On Monday in Saudi Arabia,

Blinken said four key Arab nations and Turkey have agreed to begin planning for the reconstruction and governance of Gaza once Israel's war against Hamas ends.

Those countries had previously resisted U.S. calls for post-war planning to begin, insisting that there must first be a cease-fire and a sharp reduction in the civilian suffering caused by Israel's mili-

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ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Police officer and suspect shot in Gold Coast break-in attempt

Police work the scene at Walton and State streets on Monday after a Chicago police officer and a suspect were shot and wounded following an attempted smash-and-grab involving several vehicles at Prada, a block away on Oak Street. Police were searching for other suspects involved in the smash-and-grab attempt, and detectives and the Civilian Office of Police Accountability were investigating the shooting, Chicago Police Department Superintendent Larry Snelling said Monday. **Story, Page 2**

Found skull remains a mystery 45 years later

DNA, genetics tech, funding may help solve Batavia puzzle

By Rebecca Johnson
Chicago Tribune

A couple remodeling their rented home in Batavia 45 years ago found some interesting items behind the walls — old bottles, shoes and corn-cobs. But one discovery was the stuff of nightmares.

While ripping out a plaster wall, the wife spotted human bones in the debris, including a piece of a skull and a lower jawbone, according to a 1978 article from the Batavia Chronicle.

"When I first found it, I was hysterical," Martha Skinner told the newspaper. "I could tell it was human because of its size and I just freaked out."

The couple called the Batavia police, who eventually sent the remains to an anthropology professor from Northern Illinois University. He determined they were likely from a woman in her mid-20s, and could have been in the home for decades.

But the investigation didn't turn up any answers, and the

Turn to Skull, Page 4



Bears coach Matt Eberflus talks to quarterback Justin Fields before the game against the Packers on Sunday at Lambeau Field in Green Bay. EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Bears must be brutally honest in evaluations as they choose a path



Brad Biggs

Players stuffed large cardboard boxes with workout gear Monday morning at Halas Hall, a rite of passage into an uncertain offseason for the Bears.

Many took a few minutes to talk about the 7-10 season that ended Sunday with a 17-9 loss to the Packers at Lambeau Field. They talked about how the Bears, after a rough opening month and a tumultuous series of staff departures, rebounded to become competitive over the final two months.

"We had two or three games where, if the outcome was different, we wouldn't even be at this day right now," wide

receiver DJ Moore said. "We'd still be going strong into the playoff picture."

Added edge rusher Montez Sweat: "You've seen how the defense performed when we're on all cylinders. You've seen how the offense could perform when they're on all cylinders too. There's definitely a foundation here that we're building upon."

Turn to Biggs, Page 2

Guilty plea made in 2019 slaying

Woman helped mom kill pregnant teen, cut baby out of womb

By Madeline Buckley
Chicago Tribune

A woman accused of helping her mother kill a pregnant teen and cut the baby out of her womb on Monday pleaded guilty to murder in the case that drew international attention for its brutal and bizarre details.

Desiree Figueroa, 29, was charged along with her mother, Clarisa, of murder and other felonies in connection with the strangling of 19-year-old Marlen Ochoa-Lopez. Clarisa Figueroa is still facing charges.

The mother and daughter lured Ochoa-Lopez to their Southwest Side home in April 2019 with the promise of free baby clothes, prosecutors have alleged. Clarisa Figueroa strangled the teen with a cable, according to prosecutors, and sliced open her abdomen from side to side, removed the baby from the womb and placed him inside a bucket, they said.

The baby, Yovanny Jadiel Lopez, died months later on June 14.

The plea agreement stipulates that Desiree Figueroa testify against her mother in an upcoming trial. She entered her plea of first-degree murder in front of Judge Peggy Chiampas at the Leighton Criminal Court Building.

Prosecutors agreed to a sentence of 30 years in prison following her testimony. Clarisa Figueroa is scheduled for trial later this month.

A third co-defendant, Piotr

Turn to Pleads, Page 4

High court declines Ill. gun law review

The U.S. Supreme Court denied a Republican state lawmaker's request for a review of a ruling from Illinois' high court that upheld the state's sweeping gun ban. **Chicagoland, Page 3**

Radio giant files for Chapter 11

Audacy, the nation's second largest radio chain and a major player in the Chicago airwaves, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, seeking to reduce nearly \$2 billion in debt. **Business**

Sheky Greene remembered

The Tribune's Rick Kogan has some final words and a Sinatra story about the Chicago-born comic, who died Dec. 31. **Arts & Living**

