



Today's date is 2024-09-25

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INTERNATIONAL

ISRAELI SOLDIERS HIDE FROM HEZBOLLAH ROCKETS

[1] Israeli soldiers hide from Hezbollah rockets

Video shows Israeli soldiers lying on the ground and sheltering from Hezbollah rockets believed to be targeting a military base in northern Israel on Wednesday.

Published On 25 Sep 2024 ■

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ISRAEL HAS BEEN BOMBING GAZA AND LEBANON AT THE SAME TIME

[2] Israel has been bombing Gaza and Lebanon at the same time

Hundreds of Israeli air strikes hit areas across Lebanon this week but Israel's attacks on Gaza haven't stopped either.

Published On 25 Sep 2024 ■

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NEWS

BBC FINDS LEBANESE SEASIDE CITY DESERTED AFTER ISRAELI ATTACKS

[3] The BBC has witnessed Israeli airstrikes around the city of Tyre, in southern Lebanon.

Correspondent Orla Guerin visited the usually crowded holiday destination, and said it is now "basically deserted", apart from people fleeing intense Israeli airstrikes in nearby towns.

Israel is carrying out "extensive" strikes in Lebanon after Hezbollah fires missile at Tel Aviv.

At least 23 people have been killed in the attacks, Lebanon's health ministry said. ■

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CHINA TEST-FIRES INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE FOR FIRST TIME IN DECADES

[4] China has said it successfully launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) carrying a dummy warhead into the Pacific Ocean.

The ICBM was launched at 08:44 local time (04:44 GMT) on Wednesday and "fell into expected sea areas", Beijing's defence ministry said, adding that the test launch was "routine" and part of its "annual training".

The type of missile and its flight path remained unclear, but Chinese state media said Beijing had "informed the countries concerned in advance".

Japan later said that it received "no notice" of the test launch.

China's nuclear weapon tests usually take place domestically, and it previously test-fired ICBMs west into the Taklamakan Desert in the Xinjiang region.

This is believed to be the first time since 1980 that it launched an ICBM into international waters.

"Unless I'm missing something, I think this is essentially the first time this has happened - and been announced as such - in a long time," Ankit Panda, a nuclear weapons specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote on X.

He added that Beijing's description of the test as "routine" and "annual" was odd, "given that they don't do this sort of thing either routinely or annually".

The Japanese government said on Wednesday that China had given it no prior notice of the ICBM launch.

"There was no notice from the Chinese side

in advance," government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

Japan's defence ministry had earlier said there was no damage to its vessels.

"We will continue to collect and analyse information on the movements of the Chinese military and will take all possible precautions in our vigilance and monitoring," the ministry said early Wednesday afternoon, according to Japanese broadcaster NHK.

When China last did such a test - in May 1980 - the ICBM flew 9,070km and landed in the Pacific. That test involved 18 Chinese naval ships and is still considered one of China's biggest naval missions.

"Timing is everything," Drew Thompson, a visiting research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore, wrote on X.

"[China's] statement claims the launch does not target any country, but there are high-levels of tension between China and Japan, Philippines, and of course perpetual tension with Taiwan."

"The launch is a powerful signal intended to intimidate everyone," he added.

John Ridge, a US-based defence analyst, said China could have conducted the test as a form of "posturing or signalling to the United States".

While the relationship between Beijing and Washington has improved in the past year, China's increasing assertiveness in the region remains a sticking point.

Tensions have ramped up between as their ships have repeatedly collided in disputed waters. Last month, after it accused a Chinese spy plane of breaching its air space, a move that it called "utterly unacceptable".

Beijing's claims over self-governed Taiwan have been another source of strain.

Taiwan's defence ministry said earlier on Wednesday that China had been carrying out "intensive" missile firing and other drills recently. In the same statement, the ministry said it had detected 23 Chinese military aircraft operating around Taiwan on "long-range missions".

Beijing routinely sends ships and aircraft into Taiwanese waters and airspace in what analysts say is a "greyzone warfare" tactic meant to normalise the incursions.

In July this year, China suspended its nuclear arms control talks with Washington, in retaliation for the.

Last year, China Rocket Force unit - the elite unit managing its nuclear arsenal - over corruption allegations.

In a report published last year, the Pentagon estimated that China has in its arsenal, of which approximately 350 are ICBMs.

The report also projected that China will reach over 1,000 warheads by 2030. Still, that is a fraction of the more than 5,000 warheads that the US and Russia each say they possess. ■

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GOOGLE FILES EU ANTITRUST COMPLAINT ACCUSING MICROSOFT OF STIFLING CLOUD COMPETITION

[5] Jakub Porzycki | Nurphoto | Getty Images

filed an antitrust complaint with the European Commission Wednesday accusing of using unfair licensing contracts to stifle competition in the multibillion-dollar cloud computing industry.

At the heart of Google's complaint is the allegation

that Microsoft uses unfair licensing terms to "lock in" clients and exert control over the cloud market.

Google alleges that Microsoft, through its dominant Windows Server and Microsoft Office products, can make it difficult for its massive roster of clients to use anything but its Azure cloud infrastructure offering.

The internet giant said in its complaint that restrictions contained in Microsoft's cloud licensing terms makes it harder for customers to move their workloads from Microsoft's Azure cloud technology to competitors' clouds, despite there being no technical barriers to doing so.

European businesses and public sector organizations have been forced to pay the firm up to 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) a year in licensing penalties due to restrictions on customers' ability to switch from one cloud provider to another, Google said, citing a 2023 study by CISPE, a trade body for the cloud computing sector.

The antitrust complaint from Google arrives after CISPE and its members in July agreed a settlement with Microsoft which would see the firm make changes to address competition concerns.

Referring to the CISPE settlement, Microsoft said in a statement Wednesday that it expects the European Commission to dismiss Google's complaint.

"Microsoft settled amicably similar concerns raised by European cloud providers, even after Google hoped they would keep litigating," a Microsoft spokesperson told CNBC via email. "Having failed to persuade European companies, we expect Google similarly will fail to persuade the European Commission."

Microsoft's cloud 'tax' at issue

In a summary of the complaint, Google — which ranks third globally in the cloud computing market

behind market leaders Web Services and Microsoft Azure, respectively — said that Microsoft "harms cybersecurity and undermines innovation."

According to Google, if a company runs Microsoft's Office suite of productivity tools and other applications on Google Cloud Platform or other competing clouds, they are effectively required to pay a "tax" in the form of punchy licensing fees to Microsoft.

Google said that Microsoft undermined competition in cloud, and referred to findings of a U.K. Competition and Markets Authority study which determined Microsoft acquired over 60% to 70% of all new British businesses in 2021 and 2022.

Google also suggested that Microsoft's cloud practices have potentially made businesses more prone to security issues.

In an interview with CNBC's Arjun Kharpal Wednesday, Amit Zavery, Google Cloud's head of platform, said Google believes Microsoft is "100%" in violation of EU antitrust rules.

"We would like the cloud market to remain and become very vibrant and open for all the providers including European vendors, vendors like us, AWS and others," Zavery said.

"Today the restrictions does not allow choice for customers," Zavery said. "Today the restrictions does not allow choice for customers," he said, adding that Microsoft included restrictions once it realized the massive commercial potential of the technology.

"So, we would want those restrictions to be removed and allow customers to have and choose whatever cloud provider they think is best for them commercially and technically," he added.

Zavery told CNBC that if Microsoft makes changes to its cloud licensing terms as a result of its com-

plaint, Google and cloud customers more broadly would be "very happy."

Following the July settlement agreement with Microsoft, CISPE said the tech giant would work with its members to release an enhanced version of Azure Stack HCI, a cloud infrastructure product, to offer the same features that Microsoft customers using its Azure product currently benefit from.

Google, which is not a CISPE member, said it disagreed with the settlement and chose not to participate in the agreement. Amazon Web Services, which is a CISPE member, and its cloud unit AliCloud, also chose not to become part of the settlement.

For its part, Microsoft has denied that its cloud practices harm competition. In response to a cloud market study initiated by the U.K.'s Competition and Markets Authority, the firm said that it "firmly believes that the cloud services market is functioning well." ■

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BETTINA ORLOPP: THE WOMAN TASKED WITH LEADING COMMERZBANK AMID UNICREDIT TAKEOVER BATTLE

[6] Bettina Orlopp, chief financial officer of Commerzbank AG, speaks during a fourth quarter earnings news conference at the bank's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany, on Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020.

Alex Kraus | Bloomberg | Getty Images

announced Tuesday it has picked 10-year veteran, and current Chief Financial Officer Bettina Orlopp to helm the bank as chief executive as it seeks to fend off a potential hostile takeover from Italian bank UniCredit.

The bank has been on the defensive as looks to become its largest shareholder, signaling the po-

tential for a full takeover.

Earlier this month, the Milan-based bank started building its shareholding with a 9% stake in Commerzbank, then announced this week it had acquired additional Commerzbank shares, taking its stake in the German lender to around 21%, and submitted a request to increase its holdings to 29.9%.

Senior officials at Commerzbank and the German government, which was the company's largest shareholder until UniCredit stepped in, have both said they oppose a hostile takeover. Orlopp will now be put in charge of leading the fight.

Commerzbank in a late Tuesday statement that its supervisory board is aiming for current Chief Executive Manfred Knof to hand over his duties to Orlopp, "in the near future." The firm added that the board had agreed unanimously on Orlopp succeeding Knof after an internal and external search for candidates.

Later on Wednesday the bank announced Knof will leave the company at the end of the month on September 30.

Orlopp's contract is set out for five years, Commerzbank said, noting that the search for her replacement as CFO is still underway. The CFO said she was "looking forward to this new challenge," while also noting that "significant tasks lie ahead."

"Together with all our key partners, we will navigate through the challenges ahead of us successfully," she said.

Need for a 'credible CEO'

, Orlopp has been Commerzbank's CFO, covering finance, investor relations, tax and treasury departments, according to her. Most recently she was also the deputy chairwoman of the board of direc-

tors at the German bank, a position she has held.

The 54-year-old banker initially joined Commerzbank in 2014 as a divisional board member for group development and strategy. Since then, Orlopp has worked as an executive board member and then member of the board of managing directors overseeing areas including compliance, legal and human resources divisions.

Prior to her time at Commerzbank, Orlopp worked at McKinsey for 19 years. She holds a business administration diploma from the University of Regensburg, where she also completed a doctorate in finance.

Orlopp told journalists last week that current developments with UniCredit were unexpected, but urged calm.

"We have all been very surprised by the process," she said according to. "That's why the most important thing now is simply to sort it out calmly, to think about what's on the table now and how to deal with it," she added.

Other officials at Commerzbank have been more direct in sharing their concerns about a tie-up with the Italian bank. Stefan Wittman, supervisory board member at Commerzbank, on Tuesday "we certainly hope we can avoid" a hostile takeover and warned that major job losses could occur if UniCredit took over.

This is not Orlopp's first tumultuous time at Commerzbank. She was at the bank when it began the process of restructuring in 2016 and throughout periods of merger considerations, in 2018 and 2019.

When Orlopp became CFO in 2020, the bank was facing pressure from U.S. private equity group Cerberus, which at the time held an around 5% stake in Commerzbank, according to Reuters. The activist investor demanded personnel and strategy — including cost cutting — changes at the German

lender.

Thesaw both the CEO and chairman of the supervisory board at the time, resign from their positions. Knof was then in 2020 and officially took on the role in 2021.

Thomas Schweppe, founder of 7Square, on Wednesday told CNBC that he believed it was important that the decision to make Orlopp CEO was taken quickly. "The situation is untenable. You cannot defend a company without a credible CEO," he said.

Orlopp's extensive experience at Commerzbank will allow her to hit the ground running, which is "very very important," Schweppe said.

"At the same time obviously she has been part of some decisions that potentially led to the, you know, difficult situation Commerzbank finds itself now in," he added. ■

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IRAN'S DILEMMA: HOW TO PRESERVE ITS PROXIES AND AVOID FULL-SCALE WAR

[7] Advertisement

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News Analysis

Iran says Israel wants to trap it into a direct conflict by bombing Hezbollah, even as a new Iranian president tries outreach to the West.

President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran told the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday that Israel was seeking to trap his country into a wider war. Credit... Dave Sanders for The New York Times

Steven Erlanger, who covered the Iranian revolu-

tion of 1978-79, has been writing about the Middle East and its diplomacy for decades.

Sept. 25, 2024Updated7:17 a.m. ET

Israel's another embarrassment for Iran and its new president, raising the pressure on him to strike back at Israel to defend an important ally.

Iran has so far refused to be goaded by Israel into a larger regional war that its supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, clearly does not want, analysts say. Instead, President is at the United Nations hoping to present a more moderate face to the world and meeting European diplomats in the hopes of restarting that could lead to vital sanctions relief for.

In New York this week, Mr. Pezeshkian was blunt. Israel was seeking to trap his country into a wider war, he said. "It is Israel that seeks to create this all-out conflict,". "They are dragging us to a point where we do not wish to go."

After a series of humiliations, heightened by Israel's intensified attacks on Hezbollah, Iran faces clear dilemmas.

It wants to restore deterrence against Israel while avoiding a full-scale war between the two countries that could draw in the United States and, in combination, destroy the Islamic Republic at home.

It wants to preserve the proxies that provide what it calls forward defense against Israel — Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis in Yemen — without going into battle on their behalf.

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ISRAEL'S ATTACKS ON HEZBOLLAH ACHIEVED SHORT-TERM AIMS, OFFICIALS SAY

[8] Advertisement

Israel's Attacks on Hezbollah Achieved Short-Term Aims, Officials Say, but End Goal Is Unclear

Some hawkish generals think that Hezbollah can be forced to back down, current and former Israeli officials said, while others in the government think Israel must reach a deal with Hamas before expanding the war.

An area hit by an Israeli strike in Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday.Credit...Anwar Amro/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

* Published Sept. 24, 2024Updated Sept. 25, 2024,1:20 a.m. ET

Israel achieved many short-term goals in a series of strikes on Hezbollah during the last week, according to five current and former senior Israeli officials. But they also expressed concern that there was on bringing calm and returning tens of thousands of displaced people back to Israel's north.

The escalations against Hezbollah began almost by chance after last-minute Israeli intelligence suggested that an operation to blow up pagers owned by members of the Iranian-backed Lebanese mili-

tia was in danger of being exposed, according to the officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter. If the plan was not activated by the beginning of last week, the officials said, Hezbollah might discover it, possibly along with a second operation targeting walkie-talkies.

That set up a dizzying week of attacks in Lebanon. Israel distributed by Hezbollah, killing dozens of people and injuring thousands more. It then assassinated a group of its near Beirut. On Monday, a wave of Israeli airstrikes targeting parts of the country where Hezbollah holds sway.

The intensified attacks against Hezbollah reflect the opinion of some hawkish generals and others who think that the group can be forced to back down, the officials said, while others in the government believe Israel and hostage deal with Hamas before turning to another battleground. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has opposed a truce that would allow Hamas to survive the war.

The decision to escalate was met with strong opposition from some senior officials, according to three current and former officials who spoke to The Times. They worried that such actions, the officials said, could lead to all-out war with face-to-face fighting and questioned how they would pave the way for the return of Israelis to the north.

Hezbollah has been targeting northern Israel with rockets and drones since last year in solidarity with Hamas and its war against Israel in Gaza. Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, has said the group will not agree to stop firing at Israel until Israel and Hamas reach an agreement that ends the war in Gaza.

Ronen Bergman is a staff writer for The New York Times Magazine, based in Tel Aviv. His latest book is "Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations," published by Random House.

Advertisement ■

WHAT LEBANON LOOKS LIKE AFTER ISRAEL'S
HISTORIC AIRSTRIKES

[9] Advertisement

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Sept. 24, 2024

After nearly a year of back-and-forth attacks between Israel and Hezbollah, the fighting along the border in the last two days has been remarkably one-sided.

Israel has waged one of its modern warfare, leaving large parts of southern Lebanon in ruins and forcing tens of thousands of people to flee. Many videos circulating on social media and verified by The New York Times show multiple strikes in quick succession.

About 10 miles north of the border, this city was hit hard.

Video

CreditCredit...

Monday was the country's deadliest day since its 15-year civil war, which ended in 1990. The number of people reported dead in Lebanon on Monday almost surpassed the number believed to have lost their lives there since the current conflict began in October.

The figures do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, although Lebanon's health minister, Firass Abiad, said on Tuesday that scores of women and children were among those killed.

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