

Trump 'Golden Dome' plan expensive, tricky: experts

AFP, Le Bourget

President Donald Trump's proposed "Golden Dome" defence system is a plan that will face mammoth technical and financial hurdles, and could increase global insecurity, experts say.

Trump announced plans for the space-based system last month, saying it would eventually cost around \$175 billion and would be operational by the end of his term in 2029.

The planned defence shield's name is a nod to Israel's Iron Dome that has intercepted thousands of short-range rockets since 2011. But the US defence system would intercept much bigger intercontinental threats.

The plan comes after a study pointed to advances by China, Russia. Beijing is closing the gap with Washington when it comes to ballistic and hypersonic missile technology.

Pro-Gaza activists in UK damage planes at air base

REUTERS, London

Pro-Palestinian activists broke into a Royal Air Force base in central England yesterday, damaging and spraying red paint over two planes used for refuelling and transportation.

Palestine Action said two members had entered the Brize Norton base in Oxfordshire, putting paint into the engines of the Voyager aircraft and further damaging them with crowbars.

"Despite publicly condemning the Israeli government, Britain continues to send military cargo, fly spy planes over Gaza and refuel US/Israeli fighter jets," the group said in a statement, posting a video of the incident on X.

"Britain isn't just complicit, it's an active participant in the Gaza genocide and war crimes across the Middle East."

Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned the "vandalism" as "disgraceful" in a post on X. Britain's defence ministry and police were investigating.

"Our Armed Forces represent the very best of Britain. They put their lives on the line for us, and their display of duty, dedication and selfless personal sacrifice are an inspiration to us all," the ministry said.



A boy mourns over the body of a loved one at the morgue of Al-Awda Hospital in Nuseirat refugee camp, central Gaza, yesterday. Gaza is facing a man-made drought as its water systems collapse, the United Nations' children agency said yesterday, as 43 Palestinians killed by Israeli air strikes, gunfire across the Gaza Strip.

PHOTO: AFP

IRAN NUCLEAR CONTAMINATION RISK Anxiety grips Gulf Arab states



CNN ONLINE

Concern is rising in Gulf Arab states about the possibility of environmental contamination or reprisal attacks if Israel or the United States strikes Iran's nuclear facilities just across the Persian Gulf.

In Oman, users on messaging apps circulated advice on what to do in the event of a nuclear incident. Residents are instructed to "enter a closed and secure indoor space (preferably windowless), seal all windows and doors tightly, turn off air conditioning and ventilation systems" if the worst were to happen.

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In Bahrain, 33 shelters are being prepared for emergencies, and sirens were tested nationwide, the state news agency said Tuesday. Concern about nuclear fallout has also risen over the past week, with news outlets across the Middle East publishing guides on how to deal with radiation leaks.

Elham Fakhro, a fellow at the

Middle East Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School, said people are "definitely concerned" about the prospect of Israeli and US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran's only functional nuclear power plant, in Bushehr, is closer to several US allied Arab capitals than it is to Tehran. "Primarily there is fear of environmental contamination, especially in shared waters," Fakhro said.

She added that other concerns include "the possibility of an Iranian reprisal on US military facilities in the Gulf states, which could impact civilians, and extended airspace closures." Despite its improved relationship with Arab neighbours, Iran has implicitly warned that it would target nearby US interests if it were struck by the American military.

Bahrain, for example, hosts the US Naval Forces Central Command, which could be a target.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, an economic and political bloc that comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, on Monday activated its Kuwait-based Emergency Management Centre, to ensure that all "necessary preventive measures are taken at environmental and radiological levels."

The UAE's foreign minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, warned "against the risks of reckless and miscalculated actions that could extend beyond the borders" of Iran and Israel.

Almost 60 million people in Gulf Arab countries rely on desalinated sea water from Persian Gulf for drinking and usable water. Regional leaders warned that contamination from Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant, if attacked, could have severe environmental consequences for this critical water source.



A firefighter works at the site of an apartment building struck by a Russian drone in Odesa, Ukraine, yesterday. One person was killed and over a dozen others were injured in the aerial attack, according to officials.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NORTHERN KACHIN STATE Myanmar junta battles guerrillas for control of jade hub

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta and anti-coup guerrillas battled over the country's jade mining hub yesterday, a combatant and a local said, displacing desperate civilians as they fled for supplies of the precious stone.

Myanmar has been consumed by a many-sided civil war since a 2021 coup toppled the democratic government, with the myriad of fighting factions plundering the nation's vast natural resources to fill their coffers.

Jade is considered auspicious in Chinese culture and high-quality stones can fetch astronomical sums in the neighbouring country.

Fighting has raged during a Myanmar military offensive around villages and mining sites in Hpakan township of northern Kachin state, according to Naw Bu, spokesman of the Kachin Independence Army battling the junta in the area.

"They came to the jade mining areas of some companies and they burned down trucks and destroyed other things," he added. "They intended to stop our income from jade mining."

AFP was not able to verify the claim and a spokesman for Myanmar's junta could not be reached for comment.

Violence against kids hit 'unprecedented levels' in 2024: UN

AFP, United Nations



From Gaza to the Democratic Republic of Congo, violence against children in conflict zones reached "unprecedented levels" in 2024, a United Nations annual report said Thursday.

"In 2024, violence against children in armed conflict reached unprecedented levels, with a staggering 25 percent surge in the number of grave violations in comparison with 2023," according to the report from UN chief Antonio Guterres.

The report verified 41,370 grave violations against children in 2024 -- including 36,221 committed in 2024 and 5,149 committed previously but confirmed in 2024 -- the highest number since the monitoring tool was established 30 years ago. The new high beats 2023, another record year, which itself represented a 21 percent increase over the preceding year.

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