

## Pak militants use drones to target security forces: officials

REUTERS, Peshawar

Militants in Pakistan have started using commercially acquired quadcopter drones to drop bombs on security forces in the country's northwest, police said, a potentially dangerous development in the volatile region.

Two quadcopters sent by the militants targeted a police station earlier this month, killing a woman and injuring three children in a nearby house in Bannu district, said police officer Muhammad Anwar. A drone spotted over another police station on Saturday was shot down with assault rifles, he said. It was armed with a mortar shell, he said.

Eight such drone attacks have targeted police and security forces in Bannu and adjacent areas in the last two and a half months, he said. The main militant group is the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) denied using the drones.

## YEMEN PORT Israeli military attacks Houthi targets

REUTERS

The Israeli military attacked Houthi targets in Yemen's Hodeidah port yesterday in its latest assault on the Iran-backed militants, who have been striking ships bound for Israel and launching missiles against it.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the army was "forcefully countering any attempt to restore the terror infrastructure previously attacked".

The Al Masirah TV said yesterday that a series of attacks on the port was under way, without providing any details.

In a statement, the Israeli military said the port it attacked had been used "among other things, to transfer weapons from the Iranian regime, which are then used by the Houthi to execute terrorist attacks against the State of Israel and its allies."

Since Israel's war in Gaza against the Palestinian group Hamas began in October 2023, the Iran-aligned Houthi have been attacking vessels in the Red Sea.

Israel has responded by launching attacks on Houthis, who control the most populous parts of Yemen, including the vital Hodeidah port.



Smoke and flames rise from a residential building hit by an Israeli strike in Gaza City yesterday. Pope Leo spoke by phone with Palestinian Authority President Mahmud Abbas about the conflict in Gaza and violence in the West Bank, the Vatican said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Israel begins ground assault in Deir al-Balah

17 Palestinians killed; UK, 24 Western allies, in a joint plea, say the war in Gaza 'must end now'

REUTERS, Cairo

Israeli tanks pushed into southern and eastern areas of the Gazan city of Deir Al-Balah for the first time yesterday, an area where Israeli sources said the military believes some of the remaining hostages may be being held.

Gaza medics said at least three Palestinians were killed and several were wounded in tank shelling that hit eight houses and three mosques in the area, and which came a day after the military ordered residents to leave, saying it planned to fight Hamas fighters.

The raid and bombardment pushed dozens of families who had remained to flee and head west towards the coastal area of Deir Al-Balah and nearby Khan Younis.

In Khan Younis, earlier yesterday, an Israeli airstrike killed at least five people, including a man, his wife, and their two children, in a tent, medics said.

Israel's military said it had not entered the districts of Deir Al-Balah subject to the evacuation order during the current conflict and that it was continuing "to operate with great force to destroy the enemy's capabilities and terrorist infrastructure in the area."

Israeli sources have said the reason the army has so far stayed out is that they suspect Hamas

might be holding hostages there.

Families of the hostages expressed their concern for their relatives and demanded an explanation from the army of how it would protect them.

The military escalation comes as Gaza health officials warned of potential "mass deaths" in the coming days due to mounting hunger, which has killed at least 19 people since Saturday, according to the territory's health ministry.

Israel and Hamas are engaged in indirect talks in Doha aimed at reaching a 60-day truce and hostage deal, although there has

**Tanks pushed into southern, eastern areas of Gaza**

**IDF believes hostages may be held in Deir Al-Balah**

**Rising deaths, hunger will affect ceasefire talks: Hamas**

between Hamas and Israel that are being mediated by Qatar and Egypt, with US backing.

A Hamas official told Reuters on Sunday that the group was angered over the mounting deaths and the hunger crisis in the enclave, and that this could badly affect ceasefire talks underway in Qatar.

Israel and Hamas are engaged in indirect talks in Doha aimed at reaching a 60-day truce and hostage deal, although there has

been no sign of breakthrough.

UNRWA, the UN refugee agency dedicated to Palestinians, said in a post on X yesterday, it was receiving desperate messages from Gaza warning of starvation, including from its own staff as food prices have increased 40-fold.

"Meanwhile, just outside Gaza, stockpiled in warehouses UNRWA has enough food for the entire population for over three months. Lift the siege and let aid in safely and at scale," it said.

The European parties have been at fault and negligent in implementing the nuclear agreement, said Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei.

## Iran blames Europeans for nuclear deal collapse

AFP, Tehran

Tehran yesterday blamed European powers for the failure of 2015 nuclear deal, accusing them of breaking their commitments ahead of renewed talks in Istanbul with UK, France and Germany.

The 2015 deal, reached between Iran and the UN Security Council's permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — plus Germany, imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

But it unravelled in 2018 when the United States, during Donald Trump's first term as president, unilaterally withdrew from the accord and reimposed sweeping sanctions.

The Europeans had pledged continued support for the deal, but the mechanism intended to offset US sanctions never materialised effectively and many Western firms were forced to exit Iran, which has since faced a deepening economic crisis.

"The European parties have been at fault and negligent in implementing the nuclear agreement, said Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei.

## FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

### X calls French probe 'politically motivated'

AFP, Paris

A French probe into alleged foreign interference and bias via the algorithm at Elon Musk-owned social network X is "politically motivated", the company said in a post yesterday, adding that it was refusing to cooperate.

"X believes that this investigation is distorting French law in order to serve a political agenda and, ultimately, restrict free speech," the social network said.

It added that it "has not acceded to the French authorities' demands" to access its recommendation algorithm and real-time data, "as we have a legal right to do".

Cybercrime prosecutors announced the opening of the probe on July 11 into suspected crimes including manipulating and extracting data from automated systems "as part of a criminal gang".

The move followed two complaints received in January about "foreign interference" in French politics via X — one of them from Eric Bothorel, an MP from President Emmanuel Macron's centrist party.

Bothorel had complained of "reduced diversity of voices and options" and Musk's "personal interventions" on the network since his 2022 takeover of the former Twitter.



## Russia strikes Ukraine with 450 drones

2 killed; apartment hit

AFP, Kyiv

Russia fired a volley of drones and missiles at Ukraine early yesterday, hitting apartment blocks and a nursery in Kyiv, days after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proposed holding a fresh round of peace talks.

Moscow has not responded to Zelensky's call for new negotiations this week or an ultimatum by US President Donald Trump to make progress on a peace deal or face massive sanctions.

Two people were killed across the country, Zelensky said. Russia launched 450 drones and missiles in total, according to Ukraine's air force.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot arrived in the capital, Kyiv, while rescuers were still sifting through the rubble.

Zelensky condemned the strikes as an "assault on humanity" and said at least 15 other people had been wounded in the attacks, including a 12-year-old boy.

Efforts to reach a diplomatic solution to the three-year war have stalled in recent weeks.

The two sides last met for direct negotiations more than a month ago in Istanbul.

They did not make any progress towards a ceasefire, instead agreeing to a series of prisoner exchanges.



An aerial view shows a truck carrying evacuating members of the Bedouin community stopping at a checkpoint set up by Syrian government forces along a road in Taarah, in Syria's southern Sweida province, en route to Daraa, yesterday. Inset, Druze fighters patrol a street in the predominantly Druze city of Sweida after the ceasefire halted a week of sectarian bloodshed.



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