Saudi forces intercept Houthi ballistic missile

Blasts heard in Riyadh; UK to deploy fighter jets to help protect KSA

AGENCIES

Saudi forces yesterday said they had intercepted a Houthi ballistic missile aimed at the kingdom's capital, after authorities issued a danger warning and AFP journalists reported hearing blasts.

The kingdom "intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched by the terrorist Houthi militia towards Riyadh", said Turki Al-Malki, a spokesman for the Saudi-led military coalition backing Yemen's government in its war against the Houthis.

Riyadh was shaken by two blasts, according to AFP journalists in the capital.

"A warning has been issued by the National Early Warning Platform in Riyadh City to alert for a potential danger," the Saudi civil defence said in a statement on X.

But the alert was lifted a few minutes later, with the civil defence saying "the danger has passed".

Meanwhile, the UK government announced yesterday that British fighter planes will be deployed to help Saudi Arabia defend itself against increasing attacks from Houthi rebels.

The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen warned the Houthi group against using traditional boats to smuggle weapons, missiles and military equipment into the country, citing risks to civilians and regional security, Anadolu reports.

The coalition's Joint Forces Command stressed in a statement that the practice threatened security in Yemen and beyond.



Demonstrators hold placards during a protest against the government's handling of wildfires and calling for an end to corruption, collusion and nepotism, marking the second anniversary of President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka's administration, in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran downs US drone over Hormuz

IRGC claims mines stop two tankers crossing the strait; Qatar reports ongoing US-Iran talks, backs Riyadh amid Houthi strikes

AGENCIES

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said yesterday that it intercepted and destroyed a US MQ-9 drone over the Strait of Hormuz, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

The Revolutionary Guard said the drone was downed while flying over the strategic waterway. It claimed that the aircraft was the 54th US MQ-9 drone it had destroyed, according to the agency.

Meanwhile, Iranian naval mines halted two tankers attempting to travel the strait via routes considered illegal by Tehran.

"Two violating oil tankers were set ablaze and halted due to the explosion of mines planted by the brave sailors of the IRGC Navy at an illegal crossing point in the southern part of the Strait of Hormuz," the Guards said in a statement published on their official Sepah News website.

Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari said that negotiations between Iran and the US are continuing, with both sides engaging in diplomatic efforts despite growing tensions and fears of renewed fighting.

"On the negotiations of the JCPOA, they are ongoing, we are seeing engagement from both parties," Majed al-Ansari said at the Global Security Forum in Doha.

"The fact that we're not hearing about it is a good sign that we're doing our job properly," he said, stressing the importance of confidential negotiations. He added that Doha stands firmly behind Riyadh amid the widening conflict, reports Al Jazeera.

"Qatar is supporting our brothers in Saudi Arabia in defending their sovereignty against this attack," he said.

Pakistan's powerful army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, whose country has attempted to mediate a peace deal in the Middle East war, arrived in Tehran yesterday.

In a separate development, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has discussed Iran with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during an unannounced visit to Israel on Monday, three Israeli officials said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi yesterday said that Russia and Iran have "never" worked so closely, as Moscow seeks to play a mediating role in the Middle East war.

Iranian FM Araghchi says Russia and Iran have never worked so closely as Moscow seeks to mediate in Middle East war

Araghchi hosted his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Iran, in his first visit since the outbreak of the conflict.

"We covered everything from Europe to West Asia, including Lebanon, Palestine, Ukraine and Yemen. Also focused on expansion of economic and nuclear cooperation," Araghchi wrote on X.

IN BRIEF



Trump approval falls to record low of 31pc: poll

REUTERS, *Washington*

President Donald Trump's approval rating fell to a record low as Americans worried about high gasoline prices and appeared ready to punish his Republican Party in the November 3 congressional elections, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll that closed on Monday.

Some 31 percent of Americans approve of Trump's performance in office, down a percentage point from two weeks earlier and the lowest level in either of his presidential terms, the four-day poll showed.

Asked which party they would vote for if the congressional elections were held today, some 47 percent of registered voters in the nationwide poll picked Democrats and 35 percent chose Republicans. The 12-point Democratic advantage was the widest over the current election cycle and could bolster Democratic hopes of seizing control of the US House of Representatives and the US Senate.

Much of the drop in support for Republican congressional candidates was due to a larger share of women saying they would pick Democrats.

Albertans vote to remain part of Canada

REUTERS, *Calgary*

Alberta residents voted to remain part of Canada in the province's first-ever referendum on separation, in a much-needed win for Prime Minister Mark Carney as he attempts to unify the country amid a trade war with the US.

CBC News, Canada's government-funded national broadcaster, called the result late Monday after 33 percent of the vote had been counted. At the time of the call, 76 percent of tallied votes were in support of the "remain" side versus 23 percent in favour of the province moving forward with a binding vote on separation. The referendum was nonbinding.

"Albertans made a clear choice. They chose unity, to build together, and to take care of each other": Canada PM Mark Carney

"Albertans made a clear choice," Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement. "They chose unity, to build together, and to take care of each other."

"Canada is greater than the sum of its parts," he said. Pollsters and analysts had repeatedly dismissed the possibility of a separatist victory, citing data that showed about one-third of residents in the province supported a future referendum on leaving.



19.2m Afghans facing acute food insecurity by April: UN

AFP, *Geneva*

The number of people facing acute food insecurity in Afghanistan is set to rise to 19.2 million during the winter season between November and April, the United Nations said yesterday.

The food crisis in Afghanistan is projected to affect millions of children in 2027, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said.

Between September and October, 15.9 million people -- or nearly one in three Afghans -- were facing food insecurity at crisis levels or worse, including 3.4 million in emergency conditions, the agency said.

But the outlook is set to deteriorate further. "The number facing acute food insecurity is projected to rise to 19.2 million, of which five million are expected to face emergency levels of hunger," which is "one step away from famine", said OCHA's Afghanistan spokeswoman Olga Cherevko.

The food crisis is not simply about whether the food is available, but also about whether people can afford it, she said.



People wait outside a gas station to fill cooking gas cylinders in the southwestern Yemeni city of Taiz yesterday. The United Nations said more than 250,000 people have been internally displaced in Yemen since the civil war reignited. PHOTO: REUTERS

WESTERN UKRAINE

Russia expands strikes on energy facilities

Six killed; Rubio says interceptors may not have been delivered, but not for political reasons

AGENCIES

Russia has expanded strikes from eastern and central Ukraine to energy facilities in previously untargeted western regions, causing waves of blackouts, energy ministry officials and local authorities said yesterday.

In October, before the start of the cold season, Russia resumed attacks on Ukraine's energy sector, targeting power plants and electricity transmission systems.

"Unfortunately, the enemy continues to deliberately and systematically attack our energy infrastructure," Artem Nekrasov, deputy Ukrainian energy minister, said in a televised statement.

He said Russia struck energy facilities in the central Kirovohrad region, western Zhytomyr, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil and Khmelnytskyi regions and in the southern region of Odesa.

Meanwhile, a Russian drone strike near Kyiv killed three people and wounded four others, Ukrainian prosecutors said yesterday. The attack took place in Chabany, a town located next to the M05 highway linking Ukraine's capital to the southern city of Odesa,



prosecutors added. Another Russian strike killed three civilians in Kramatorsk region.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday acknowledged that a batch of interceptors purchased for Ukraine may not have been delivered, but that this was not because of any political intent.

Intensified Russian attacks in the Black Sea targeting Ukraine's grain exports are worsening a "perfect storm" facing global food supplies, the EU's top diplomat said yesterday. "Six attacks in 10 days by suspected Russian drones marks a dangerous and unacceptable escalation in the Black Sea," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told the European Parliament.