

US ship fires warning shots in encounter with Iranian boats

Mon, 2021-05-10 21:32

WASHINGTON: A US Coast Guard cutter fired two volleys of warning shots Monday as a group of 13 Iranian fast boats sped toward US Navy vessels in the Persian Gulf's Strait of Hormuz in what the Pentagon called "unsafe and unprofessional" maneuvers by the naval arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said the Iranian vessels maneuvered at high speed toward six Navy ships that were escorting the guided missile submarine USS Georgia through the Strait. After the Coast Guard cutter Maui unleashed a second volley of warning shots, the Iranian boats backed off, Kirby said.

"They were acting very aggressively," Kirby told reporters at the Pentagon. He said they got within 150 yards of the US ships, which included the guided missile cruiser USS Monterey. A day earlier, the Monterey had intercepted an arms shipment aboard a dhow in the Arabian Sea apparently headed for Yemen, whose Houthi rebels are supported by Iran.

Kirby said the Maui fired two rounds of warning shots from its .50-caliber machine gun – the first round when the Iranian boats got to within 300 yards of the US ships, and the second when they got within 150 yards.

"After the second round of warning shots the 13 fast attack craft from the IRGC-N broke contact," he said, ending the encounter.



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US nuclear submarine passes through Strait of Hormuz
South Korean tanker seized by Iran in Strait of Hormuz

[US names ambassador Richard Norland as special envoy for Libya](#)

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Mon, 2021-05-10 17:42

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday named Richard Norland, US ambassador to Libya, as the US special envoy for the country, the US State Department said, to lead diplomatic efforts for a negotiated political solution in the North African country.

The appointment comes as the Presidency Council, which functions as Libya's head of state for now, was chosen through a United Nations-facilitated process that also selected a new Government of National Unity that took office in March, replacing rival administrations in east and west.



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US calls for 'immediate withdrawal' of foreign forces from Libya at G-7 meeting
Merkel tells Turkey's Erdogan withdrawal of troops from Libya would be 'important signal'

[Palestinian protests deter Jewish extremists](#)

Sun, 2021-05-09 21:16

JERUSALEM: Israeli authorities appear set to re-route the traditional Jerusalem Unity Day parade which has been known to be provocative and anti-Arab.

Israeli media reported that security officials on Sunday urged the government to rethink the annual event, a flag-waving display of Israeli claims to all of the contested city set to take place Monday, following days of unrest and Israeli-Palestinian clashes in the capital.

Ynet reported that Israeli security officials "called for the government to reconsider the route, the number of marchers, and even the event itself."

Persistent and widespread protests in Jerusalem have brought worldwide condemnation of Israel, and the security establishment appears to have won the day in pressing right-wing politicians to lower tensions.

Protests continued in the Old City and in the streets of East Jerusalem, with Red Crescent officials reporting injuries and saying that Israeli police were obstructing their work.

Parades are also scheduled to coincide with an Israeli court decision about an appeal request against eviction orders for Palestinian families living in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

Tens of thousands of people, including many Palestinian citizens of Israel, flooded Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque to commemorate the holy night of Laylat Al-Qadar, the first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad.

Most people have vowed to stay in Al-Aqsa to protect it from public calls from Jewish extremist groups.

The mosque's preacher Ekrima Sabri said that what happened on Monday would depend on the occupiers.

"For our part, we are holding onto our mosque and our faith and will defend it until the last breath," he told Arab News.

Prof. Sari Nusseibeh, the former president of Al-Quds University, said what was happening in the city was a wake-up call.

"Events in Jerusalem have reminded Israel and the rest of the world that peace with the continued occupation is impossible, as is Israeli sovereignty over Arab Jerusalem," he told Arab News. "Palestinians will not disappear with the passing of time, nor will justice. Israel will not have a future if it continues to trample on Palestinian rights and their national and religious sites and symbols."

Ahmad Budeiri, Al-Ghad TV reporter in Jerusalem, summarized the situation as favoring the Palestinians in the short-term as long as the protests on the ground kept the pressure on.

"There is no doubt that the protests in Jerusalem and the persistence of Jerusalemites to defend their homes in Sheikh Jarrah and their holy places is what moved the international community as well as the Israeli security forces and to react," said Ahmad Budeiri.

But it might be a temporary victory because the overall strategy of the Israelis would not be easily changed, he added.

In Amman, there were protests calling on the government to close down the Israeli embassy in Jordan and to recall the Jordanian ambassador from Tel Aviv.

The Arab League has agreed to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the issues around Jerusalem, including the Israeli attacks against worshippers in Al-Aqsa and Israeli plans to evict Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah.

In Kuwait, football players wore the Palestinian keffiyeh as a sign of support for the people of Jerusalem.

Luis Miguel Bueno, an EU diplomat who is the bloc's official Arabic spokesman, condemned the attacks and the incitement against the faithful.

"The occupation forces must respect its obligations according to international law," he tweeted in Arabic. "We call for the immediate de-escalation. East Jerusalem is part of the occupied territories for which international humanitarian law applies."

The Jerusalem Waqf Council called on people to stay overnight at Al-Aqsa as a precaution to ensure that radical Jewish groups would be deterred from entering the mosque.

It promised to provide iftar and suhoor to all free of charge.



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Netanyahu says Israel firm on Jerusalem as global concern mountsIsraeli

violence against Al-Aqsa worshippers condemned

[Houthis defy US, UN calls for halting offensive on Marib](#)

Sun, 2021-05-09 20:00

AL-MUKALLA: Iran-backed Houthis have defied US and UN calls to halt their deadly offensive on Yemen's central city of Marib by drumming up supporters to join the battlefields.

A day after the US slammed the militia for snubbing the UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths in Muscat and refusing to halt their military operations, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthis, the president of the militia's supreme revolutionary committee, said on Twitter that the movement would continue reinforcing the battlefields with new fighters and equipment and would keep fighting until they outright defeat their opponents.

Thousands of rebel fighters and government troops have been killed in fierce fighting since February, when the Houthis renewed a major offensive to seize control of Marib, the government's last stronghold in the country's north.

Local and international aid organizations and officials warned that the Houthi invasion of Marib would trigger a displacement that would fuel the humanitarian crisis, as the city hosts more than 2 million people who have already fled fighting and Houthi suppression.

Briefing the Yemeni Cabinet on the military situation during an online meeting on Saturday, Defense Minister Mohammed Al-Maqdishi said that the Houthis suffered "big" losses in fighters and equipment and the Yemeni Army and allied tribesmen took the initiative on the battlefields and foiled many "suicidal" assaults on Marib, the official news agency SABA reported.

The cabinet urged the international community to take a "firm and clear" stand against the Houthis' repeated rejection of peace initiatives and their determination to worsen the humanitarian crisis.

"Hazy positions would push this militia and its supporters in Tehran into increasing the suffering (of Yemenis) and the humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen," the Cabinet said in a statement.

Last week, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi dispatched Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed to Marib in a show of support to government forces.

Saeed was ordered to increase military support to the army and tribesmen who are battling the Houthis close to the city.

At the same time, government officials and activists have launched on Sunday an online campaign in support of government troops battling the Houthis in Marib.

“We call on all Yemenis from all walks of life and political and social groups to participate in the media campaign to support the steadfastness of the heroes of the National Army and the Popular Resistance and the tribes on various fronts in Marib province,” Muammar Al-Eryani, minister of information, culture and tourism, said in a Twitter post.



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US slams Houthis for boycotting UN Yemen envoy, not stopping Marib offensive
Yemen PM visits Marib in show of strength as Houthi assault falters

[Fire erupts in engine of tanker near](#)

Syrian coast

Sun, 2021-05-09 15:45

AMMAN/CAIRO: A small fire occurred in one of the engines of a tanker off the coast of Syria's Mediterranean port of Baniyas, state media said. The fire was extinguished by the crew quickly with no casualties, it said. "The technical fault took place in one of the engines of the oil tanker near the coast...it caused a small fire and a plume of smoke," state media said. Local radio station FM Sham earlier said an explosion had hit a tanker during maintenance works after it had caught fire a few days earlier while offloading its oil cargo. Last month, Syria's oil ministry said firefighters put out a fire on an oil tanker off the Baniyas refinery after a suspected attack by a drone coming from the direction of Lebanese waters. Baniyas houses a refinery which, along with another in Homs, covers a significant part of the country's demand for diesel, heating fuel, gasoline and other petroleum products, according to industry experts. Syria has grown more dependent on Iranian oil shipments in recent years but tightening Western sanctions on Iran, Syria and their allies, as well as a foreign currency crunch, have made it more difficult to get enough supplies.



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Syria says fire erupts in main Homs refinery
Lebanese security forces foil attempt to smuggle fuel across Syria border