

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

[the United States and Britain] The United States and Britain struck 36 Houthi sites in Yemen in a second wave of assaults meant to further disable Iran-backed groups in the region. The groups have relentlessly attacked American and international interests in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin says the military action, quote, "sends a clear message to the Houthis that they will continue to bear further consequences if they do not end their illegal attacks on international shipping and naval vessels."

The latest strikes follow an air assault in Iraq and Syria on Friday. The Houthi targets were in 13 different locations and were struck by U.S. F/A-18 fighter jets and Tomahawk missiles fired from the Red Sea.

The U.S. designates the Houthi rebels as a specially designated global terrorist group.

The U.S. struck 85 targets in Iraq and Syria on Friday in response to drone attacks in Jordan that killed three U.S. soldiers. Officials in Iraq, Iran and Russia are responding to the strikes. VOA's Edward Yeranian has more.

Iraqi state TV reported that government spokesman Basem Al-Awadi denied U.S. reports it had consulted with the Iraqi government before the U.S. strikes, claiming the U.S. was trying to mislead world opinion, adding that the U.S. attacks put Iraq on the brink of a precipice.

Iran, which supports the militia forces targeted by the U.S., called the attacks a violation of Syrian and Iraqi "sovereignty" and their "territorial integrity."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani termed the U.S. attacks a serious "strategic mistake." Russia, which is an ally of both Syria and Iran, accused the U.S. of "sowing chaos and destruction" in the Middle East.

Edward Yeranian from VOA.

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Officials in Chile report Saturday intense forest fires burning around a populous area of central Chile [after a] have left at least 19 people dead and destroyed about 1,100 homes. VOA's Jeff Caster reports.

Chile's Interior Minister Carolina Tohá said Saturday there were 92 forest fires burning in the center and south of the country, where temperatures have been unusually high this week.

The deadliest of the fires were occurring in the region of Valparaíso, where authorities urged people not to leave their homes so fire trucks, ambulances and other emergency vehicles could transit with greater ease.

Tohá did not offer any details about the 19 people killed. She said the two fires near Quilpué and Villa Alemana had burned through at least 8,000 hectares since Friday.

The El Niño weather had caused droughts and hotter than usual temperatures along the west of South America this year, increasing the risk of forest fires.

Jeff Caster, VOA News.

Kenya's president says corruption and officials' incompetence allowed a liquid petroleum plant to operate in one of Nairobi's most crowded residential neighborhoods where its explosion and fire killed three people and injured more than 280 others.

President William Ruto says the officials who gave licenses to the plant must be dismissed and prosecuted.

The National Environment Management Authority board says in a statement it has suspended four officials and asked police to investigate them.

Police say they are also looking for the plant's owners.

Transgender people are marginalized in Pakistan as in many places. As the country goes to polls next week, three transgender people are on the ballot for provincial and national assemblies. Rights activist Nayyab Ali is among them running for a national assembly seat from the nation's capital, Islamabad. VOA's Pakistan bureau chief Sarah Zaman met Ali on the campaign trail.

Out of 5,000 candidates for the national assembly's 266 general seats, Ali is the only transgender person.

"Society has seen transgender people begging for money, doing sex work, dancing at weddings, blessing babies. They have not seen a transgender politician or professor or lecturer."

Her campaign, run by a bunch of her transgender friends, barely has any funds. Ali knows winning won't be easy, but for her, victory is not just at the ballot box.

"I'm seeing this campaign as an awareness campaign. I might not win, but people will definitely realize that transgender people are human beings and have the same rights as others."

Sarah Zaman, VOA News, Islamabad.

Tourists have barely started trickling back into the Mexican resort of Acapulco, but the gangland killings on the beaches have already returned.

At least three people were shot to death on the beach in Acapulco last weekend. One of them was killed by gunmen who arrived and escaped aboard a boat.

The violence continues despite the presence of about 10,000 soldiers and National Guard officers deployed after Acapulco was hit by Category 5 Hurricane Otis in late October.

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