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MIDDLE EAST

Iran keeps up attacks; Tehran hit

Trump threatens to step up bombing if passage stays closed to oil tankers

By Jon Gambrell and David Rising
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran kept up its attacks on Israel and its Persian Gulf neighbors on Wednesday as airstrikes pounded Tehran and President Donald Trump again made contradictory statements about whether he was ready to wind down the war or escalate it.

Trump struck a belligerent tone Wednesday in a Truth Social post, demanding that Iran stop blocking the Strait of Hormuz — the waterway vital to global oil supplies — or the U.S. would bomb the Islamic Republic “back to the Stone Ages.” A day earlier, Trump said the U.S. “will not have anything to do with” ensuring the security of ships passing through Hormuz; that was an apparent back-track from a previous threat to attack Iran’s power grid if it didn’t open the strait by April 6.

Trump, who was scheduled to give a televised address Wednesday evening, said Tuesday he could walk away from the war in two to three weeks once he felt confident Iran would not be able to build a nuclear weapon, even if Tehran does not agree to a ceasefire.

But his latest Truth Social post struck a harder line as more American troops move into the region for a possible ground offensive after weeks of airstrikes targeting Iran.

Trump also claimed Wednesday that “Iran’s New Regime President” wanted a ceasefire. It wasn’t clear to whom the U.S. president was referring since Iran still has the same president. Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, called Trump’s claim “false and baseless,” according to a report on Iranian state television.

Speaking earlier to Al Jazeera, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi signaled Tehran’s willingness to keep fighting.

“You cannot speak to the people of Iran in the language of threats and deadlines,” he said. “We do not set any deadline for defending ourselves.”

Since the war began Feb. 28, Trump has offered shifting objectives and repeatedly has said it could be over soon while also threatening to widen the conflict. Thousands of additional U.S. troops are heading to the Middle East, and speculation abounds about the purpose of their deployment.

Just days ago, Trump threatened to attack Iran’s Kharg Island oil export hub. And there has also been speculation about whether the U.S. could decide to send in military forces to secure Iran’s uranium stockpile — a complex and risky operation, fraught with radiation and chemical dangers, according to experts and former government officials.

Adding to the confusion is what role Israel, which has been bombing Iran alongside the U.S., might play in any of these scenarios.

Trump has been under growing pressure to end the war as oil prices have skyrocketed, pushing up the cost of gasoline, food and other goods.

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ONLINE: Find more about President Donald’s Trump’s speech on the Iran war at dailybulletin.com

CAPE CANAVERAL

Moon mission team blasts off



NASA’s Artemis II Space Launch System rocket carrying the Orion spacecraft lifts off from Launch Complex 39B at Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday in Cape Canaveral, Fla. Four astronauts will fly around the moon and back, traveling 230,000 miles out into space, the farthest any human has ever traveled from Earth. CHIP SOMODEVILLA — GETTY IMAGES

Artemis II astronauts embark on quick journey that will see no orbiting or landing

The Associated Press

Four astronauts embarked on a high-stakes flight around the moon Wednesday, humanity’s first lunar voyage in more than half a century and the thrilling leadoff in NASA’s push toward a landing in two years.

NASA’s launch team loaded more than 700,000 gallons of fuel into the 32-story Space Launch System rocket early Wednesday, setting the stage for blast off in the evening at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Artemis II astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover of Pomona, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen are on board. They’ll hurtle several thousand miles beyond the moon, hang a U-turn and then come straight back. No circling around the moon, no stopping for a moonwalk — just a quick out-and-back lasting less than 10 days. NASA promises more boot prints in the gray lunar dust, but not before a couple of practice missions.

Unlike the Apollo missions that sent astronauts to the moon from 1968 through 1972, Artemis’ debut crew includes a woman, a person of color and a Canadian citizen.



Mission specialist Jeremy Hansen, left, of the Canadian Space Agency, pilot Victor Glover, Cmdr. Reid Wiseman and mission specialist Christina Koch walk out of the Neil A. Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building at NASA’s Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday in Cape Canaveral, Fla. JOE RAEDLE GETTY IMAGES

SUPREME COURT

Arguments made on birthright citizenship

Justices appear poised to reject Trump’s curbs

By Mark Sherman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court seemed poised Wednesday to reject President Donald Trump’s restrictions on birthright citizenship in a momentous case that was magnified by his unparalleled presence in the courtroom.

Conservative and liberal justices questioned whether Trump’s order declaring that children born to parents who are in the United States illegally or temporarily are not American citizens comports with either the Constitution or federal law.

Arguments lasted more than two hours in a crowded courtroom that included not only Trump, the first sitting president to attend arguments at the nation’s highest court, but also Attorney General Pam Bondi and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and in seats reserved for the justices’ guests, actor Robert De Niro.

The case frames another test of Trump’s assertions of executive power that defy long-standing precedent for a court with a conservative majority and a robust view of presidential power, which has largely ruled in the Republican president’s favor. In the notable exceptions when the court has not, Trump has responded with starkly personal criticisms of the justices. A definitive ruling is expected by early summer.

Trump, the media-savvy president, spent just over an hour inside a courtroom that prohibits cameras and all electronic devices for arguments made by the Republican administration’s top Supreme Court lawyer, Solicitor General D. John Sauer. The president departed shortly

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TERRY PIERSON STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ONTARIO

New team, stadium step up to the plate

Leading off the 2026 minor league baseball season: a new team and stadium.

The first pitch is set for tonight at ONT Field in Ontario, home of the Los Angeles Dodgers’ new affiliate, the Ontario Tower Buzzers. The squad will debut in a sold-out contest against Lake Elsinore inside its aviation-themed stadium packed with amenities from luxury suites to a replica plane that will go into action after home runs.

The Tower Buzzers’ new home also will feature food choices from the Buzzer Dog to ice cream, batting cages near the entry gates and architectural nods to its big brother, Dodger Stadium. See A8

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Media coalition seeks to unseal ballot probe records

By Jeff Horseman
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The Southern California News Group joined a coalition of media outlets Wednesday in going to court to unseal search warrants and other documents related to the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department’s investigation of ballots cast in the county during November’s special election.

In a Riverside Superior Court

filing on Wednesday, media attorneys wrote that the public’s right to know more about the probe outweighs any argument to keep the warrants and other documents under seal.

The coalition wants to unseal “all documents and records relating” to the investigation’s three search warrants as well as supporting documents for those warrants and “any other judicial records in this matter,” the filing read.



Bianco

publication and dozens of others throughout California.

“If there is evidence of wrongdoing

or vote tampering, there should absolutely be an investigation. But that investigation should be conducted openly and transparently so that the public can be confident in the security and integrity of our elections,” said Frank Pine, executive editor of the Southern California News Group and the Bay Area News Group.

Other members include ABC News, CalMatters, CBS News, Fox Television Stations, KCRA/KQCA

in Central California, the Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, USA Today and The Riverside Record.

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco on Monday said the investigation is “on hold because of the politically motivated lawsuits and court filings.” The probe comes as Bianco is running as a Republican for governor this year.

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