

MIDDLE EAST

U.S. rescues downed pilot deep inside Iran

Tehran embraces something better than A-bomb: Control over strait

By JOHN T. SEWARD
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The aim of Tehran's decades of pursuit of a nuclear bomb was always twofold: The mullahs wanted to threaten Israel and also to warn the U.S. and the rest of the world that attacking Iran would carry a cost no adversary would be willing to bear.

The joint U.S.-Israeli war has diminished the threat to Israel, but Tehran's unbroken chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz shows that the regime doesn't need a nuclear weapon

to inflict enormous pain on the world. The strait has quickly become the focal point of the war. Iranian military forces and proxies in the region are attacking tankers and harassing shipping via a toll system.

"Iran has discovered that controlling the Hormuz Straits is better for them than having a nuclear bomb," said Marwan Muasher, vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington-based think tank.

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By BEN WOLFGANG
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

U.S. forces launched a daring raid that retrieved an American fighter pilot deep behind enemy lines in Iran, President Trump said Sunday, just hours before he warned Tehran to "open the f----- Strait" of Hormuz or face major strikes on its power plants and bridges.

The harrowing mission to rescue the crew member, whose F-15E Strike Eagle went down over Iran early Friday, represented the most significant U.S. ground operation in Iran since the start of the war five weeks ago.

Hundreds of U.S. personnel and dozens of aircraft were involved, military sources said, and the injured pilot was extracted as Iranian forces closed in on his location.

The capture of an American by

Trump threatens to strike major infrastructure over Strait of Hormuz

Iranian forces would have immediately changed the dynamics in the Middle East and in Washington. The regime in Tehran was keenly aware of that and offered rewards to Iranian citizens to help locate the airman.

One of the fighter jet's crew members was rescued Friday just hours after the first shoot-down of a U.S. aircraft over enemy territory since the early days of the Iraq War in 2003.

The other airman spent two days avoiding enemy forces and waiting for

U.S. rescue teams to arrive. Mr. Trump and other U.S. officials described the situation as a race against time.

"The Iranian Military was looking hard, in big numbers, and getting close," Mr. Trump said in a Truth Social post. "This type of raid is seldom attempted because of the danger to 'man and equipment.' It just doesn't happen! The second raid came after the first one, where we rescued the pilot in broad daylight, also unusual, spending seven hours over Iran."

The exact condition of the airman, who has not been identified but who the president said was a colonel, was not immediately clear. Mr. Trump said he was "seriously wounded."

Iranian state-run media claimed that Iran's military destroyed several U.S.

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DEMOCRATS

Emanuel takes swing at party's far left wing

Political brawler tests a 2028 run

By SETH McLAUGHLIN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Rahm Emanuel tells audiences that plenty of rivals have learned the hard way what happens when they get in his way.

"Nobody walked into the ring with Rahm Emanuel and didn't walk out with a broken nose," he told WMUR during a recent stop in New Hampshire. "I know how to fight, but more importantly, I know how to win."



Emanuel

That line is part of a two-track pitch Mr. Emanuel is test-driving as he weighs a 2028 run.

One track is aimed at ending what he describes as Trump-era chaos, the other at stopping what he casts as the cultural left's drift.

The scrappy 66-year-old is leaning on a long resume as a political brawler in Congress, the Obama White House, Chicago City Hall and, most recently, the U.S. Embassy in Japan. He is now directing much of that energy at his own party.

From his perspective, Democrats have "lost the plot." He said the party's brand is too elitist and "weak and woke."

He faults the party for embracing "defund the police," branding law enforcement as racist and wading into culture war fights in schools.

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EASTER PRAYERS



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS



Pope Leo XIV delivered a message of peace at the Vatican during his first Easter Mass as pontiff. He sprinkled holy water with a bunch of hyssop sprigs (above), symbolizing purification, cleansing from sin and deliverance. At the end of Mass, Leo greeted the faithful of all ages in St. Peter's Square. Story, A8.

ACCOUNTABILITY

California at center of early 2028 fraud fight

Vance, Newsom go head to head

By SUSAN FERRECHIO
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Trump has shifted his fraud cleanup blitz to California, pitting Vice President J.D. Vance, his new fraud czar, against Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Mr. Newsom, a Democrat positioned to run against Mr. Vance in the 2028 presidential race, lashed out at the vice president after the Justice Department announced that it had arrested a group of health care workers accused of bilking Medicare of \$50 million in fake hospice care.

The sting operation was conducted in coordination with the new White House fraud task force, headed by Mr. Vance, who announced the raid on social media.

"Our task force isn't wasting any time cracking down on fraud," Mr. Vance said.

Mr. Newsom, who ranks near the top in 2028 Democratic presidential polls, posted a statement on social media belittling Mr. Vance's announcement.

The Trump administration, the governor said, is "home to the biggest fraudsters on earth." He said he is "glad to see the Feds finally taking seriously the fraud in the programs they themselves manage ... only 15 months after Trump took office."

Mr. Newsom has long claimed that Mr. Trump's accusations of massive fraud in California are "baseless" and politically motivated.

The governor is gearing up to battle his likely 2028 presidential rival over the task force's fraud sting in California.

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IMMIGRATION

Toddler's brutal death highlights the tragic choices of deported migrants

By STEPHEN DINAN
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

By the time doctors finally saw Samuel Antonio Maldonado Erazo's 3-year-old nephew, authorities said, the boy had been struck on the head at least 17 times, had burn marks consistent with someone pressing a lighter against his skin and suffered a severed pancreas, a fractured collarbone and broken ribs so bad that they detached from the boy's spine.

How the boy, whose name wasn't released by authorities, came to Mr. Maldonado Erazo's custody is a troubling tale of illegal immigration, deportation and parents' agonizing decision to either take their children with them or leave them behind.

The toddler's mother, Wendy Esther Hernandez Reyes, was deported in January. She left her son with her brother, Mr. Maldonado Erazo, an illegal immigrant who has now been indicted in Escambia

County, Florida, on a first-degree murder charge stemming from the boy's abuse and death.

Florida authorities say the 3-year-old died of cardiac arrest connected to the abuse.

Department of Homeland Security officials called the case "absolutely sickening" and said the decision to leave the child in the U.S. belonged entirely to the mother.

"I encourage parents to self-deport

with their children, but even if they choose not to do that, ICE gives them the opportunity to be removed with their kids. But despite that option, Reyes chose to leave her son here with a violent murderer who took his life," Todd Lyons, acting director at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said last month as he revealed the details of the horrifying situation.

ICE said Mr. Maldonado Erazo entered the U.S. in 2021 with his daughter,

a Honduran citizen, and they took advantage of Biden-era catch-and-release policies to gain a foothold in the country. He had no criminal record in the U.S. until last month.

His criminal arrest and that of his wife have left their three children, the youngest two of them U.S. citizens, in the custody of the Florida Department of Children and Families.

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POLITICS

Trump wants to boost defense spending, cut domestic programs. A2

NATION

Artemis astronauts set sights on distance mark with lunar loop. A6

SPORTS

UCLA wins 1st women's title with victory over South Carolina. B12



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