

MIDDLE EAST

IRAN RAMPS UP ATTACKS AFTER INCREASED THREATS



ARIEL SCHALIT, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Israeli security forces survey a site Sunday that was struck by an Iranian missile in Dimona, southern Israel.

Leaders also threaten to close crucial Strait of Hormuz

ALON BERNSTEIN, SAM METZ AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

ARAD, Israel — The United States and Iran threatened to target critical infrastructure Sunday as the war in the Middle East, now in its fourth week, puts lives and livelihoods at risk throughout the region.

Iran said the Strait of Hormuz, crucial to oil and other exports, would be “completely closed” immediately if the U.S. follows up on President Donald Trump’s threat to attack its power plants. Late Saturday, Trump set a 48-hour deadline to open the strait.

Israeli leaders visited one of two southern communities near a secretive nuclear research site struck by Iranian missiles late Saturday, with scores of people wounded. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was a “miracle” no one was killed. Israel detected more Iranian missiles fired toward the area Sunday evening.

Netanyahu claimed Israel and the U.S. were well on their way to achieving their war goals. The aims ranged from weakening Iran’s nuclear program, missile program and support for armed proxies to

enabling the Iranian people to overthrow the theocracy.

The developments signaled the war, which the U.S. and Israel launched Feb. 28, was moving in a dangerous new direction, despite Trump’s comment last week he is considering “winding down” operations. It has killed more than 2,000 people so far, rattled the global economy and sent oil prices surging.

Iranian-backed Hezbollah claimed responsibility for an airstrike that killed a man in northern Israel, while Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called Israel’s targeting of bridges in the south “a prelude to a ground invasion.”

Plants threatened

Iran practically closed the Strait of Hormuz that connects the Persian Gulf to the rest of the world. About one-fifth of global oil supply passes through it, but attacks on ships and threats of further strikes stopped almost all tanker traffic. Some of the largest oil producers made cuts because their crude has nowhere to go.

Iranian officials said they would keep

providing safe passage through the strait to vessels from countries other than its enemies.

The U.S. and its allies in Europe and Asia rely heavily on the oil to meet energy demand. In its most recent attempt to relieve pressure on energy prices, the U.S. lifted some sanctions on Iranian oil at sea.

Trump said on social media if Iran didn’t open the strait, the U.S. would destroy its “various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!”

Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf responded that if Iran’s power plants and infrastructure are targeted, then vital infrastructure across the region — including energy and desalination facilities — would be considered legitimate targets and “irreversibly destroyed.”

Under international law, power plants that benefit civilians can be targeted only if the military advantage outweighs the suffering it causes to civilians, legal scholars say.

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Idaho House passes bill that would expand AG’s powers

State’s top justice official could bar local officials from office for violating state law

KYLE PFANNENSTIEL
Idaho Capital Sun

The Idaho House on Friday passed a bill that would let Attorney General Raúl Labrador seek to temporarily disqualify local elected officials and government employees from holding office or working for the government if they “willfully” violate state law.

House Bill 896 would let the state attorney general enforce state laws that enact bans. The bill would allow the attorney general to sue a government agency, official or employee if they fail to correct the alleged violation after being issued a warning.

The bill would exempt state lawmakers and judges from lawsuits to enforce state law by the attorney general. The Legislature routinely blocks local governments from enacting certain policies or requires

local governments to do certain things, through preemption laws, the Idaho Capital Sun reported.

After little debate, the House passed the bill on a party-line vote Friday, with all nine House Democrats opposing the bill and all 60 House Republicans present supporting it.

The bill is sponsored by the House’s top two Republicans: House Speaker Mike Moyle, R-Star, and House Majority Leader Jason Monks, R-Meridian.

Last year, the city of Boise declared an LGBTQ+ pride flag as an official city flag to work around a state law banning the display.

“This is a bill that shouldn’t be necessary. It really shouldn’t. But unfortunately we are in a place in our state where laws that we passed just are not being followed,” said Rep. John Shirts, R-Weiser, who presented the bill.

Rep. John Gannon, D-Boise, said the bill politicizes the enforcement of state laws.

“That to me is problematic in injecting politics into, too much, into our ... public enforcement of our laws and our



Labrador

proceedings,” Gannon said. “That’s why we have three branches of government.”

The bill now heads to the Senate. To become law, Idaho bills must pass the House and Senate and avoid the governor’s veto. Only the governor, the House speaker, the Senate president pro tempore, or the chairman of a board of county commissioners could refer cases to the attorney general under the bill.

The attorney general could notify elected officials, government employees or agencies of an alleged violation if the attorney general “has reason to believe” that they violated a state law. Then there could be a 14-day “curing” period, which is when an official or entity that admits to a violation can correct it before being sued.

state law can be charged with contempt.

For elected officials or government employees who “willfully violate” state law, the attorney general can seek to disqualify them from holding public office or working for the government. Such a court order would apply for up to five years “if the attorney general proves by clear and convincing evidence that the person willfully violated a prohibition.” State elected officials would be exempt.

The bill does not clearly spell out what disqualification would entail, such as whether it would involve a process to impeach and remove elected officials from public office, or whether they would serve the remainder of their terms before becoming ineligible to run for elected office.

An earlier version of Moyle’s bill would’ve let the state freeze funding for local governments if the state’s attorney general suspected they violated state law.

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