

Saudi warplanes intensify airstrikes against various residential areas across Yemen

Saudi Arabia has upped the ante in the war on Yemen by conducting a new round of airstrikes against various areas across the war-ravaged Arab country, as Riyadh and its regional allies press ahead with their devastating war and brutal siege against the Yemeni nation.

Saudi warplanes carried out four air raids against the outskirts of the northwestern Yemeni city of Sa'ada early on Saturday, Yemen's Almasirah television network said.

Initial reports suggest that two civilians were killed and a woman sustained injuries in the strikes, Press TV reported.

Hours earlier, Saudi fighter jets had launched 45 airstrikes against different areas in Yemen's southern province of Shabwah.

Almasirah TV reported that the aerial assaults hit Usaylan, Bayhan and Ain districts. There were no immediate reports of casualties or extent of damage.

Saudi aircraft also bombarded Al-Balaq area in the Wadi Ubaidah district of Yemen's oil-producing central province of Marib, located some 175 kilometers (109 miles) east of the capital, Sana'a, on 16 occasions, though no reports about possible casualties were quickly available.

Three other aerial assaults targeted Al-Jubah and Sirwah districts in the same Yemeni province.

Saudi warplanes also conducted seven airstrikes against an area in the Abs district of Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah.

Saudi military aircraft launched two air raids against the Khabb wa ash Sha'af district in the northern Yemeni province of Jawf as well. There were no immediate reports about possible casualties.

Saudis violate Hodeida truce 126 times in 24 hours

Separately, forces of the Saudi-led military coalition and their mercenaries violated 126 times during the past 24 hours a ceasefire agreement between warring sides for the western coastal province of Hodeida.

Almasirah television network, citing an unnamed source in Yemen's Liaison and Coordination Officers Operations Room, reported that the violations included three reconnaissance flights over various regions, in addition to 35 counts of artillery shelling and 63 shooting incidents.

Yemenis rally to slam Saudi war

In Hodeida Province, people took to the streets after Friday prayers to denounce the ongoing Saudi-led military aggression against their homeland.

Local media reports said the participants in the rally chanted vociferous slogans against the Yemen war while carrying the country's tricolor flag and pictures of top resistance leaders.



They also praised Yemeni naval forces for seizing a United Arab Emirates-flagged cargo vessel as it was engaged in "hostile acts," warning the Abu Dhabi regime against continuing its acts of aggression.

The demonstrators underscored that Yemeni people reserve the 'legitimate right' to defend their land, waters and airspace by all available means.

They called on people from all walks of the Yemeni society to

mobilize forces to battlegrounds, and support Yemeni Army troops and fighters from Popular Committees in their battles against Saudi-led coalition troops, Saudi-backed militants loyal to former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi as well as the Daesh Takfiri terrorists.

Saudi Arabia, backed by the United States and regional allies, launched the war on Yemen in March 2015, with the goal of bringing Hadi's government back to power and crushing the popular An-

sarullah resistance movement.

The war has left hundreds of thousands of Yemenis dead and displaced millions more. It has also destroyed Yemen's infrastructure and spread famine and infectious diseases there.

Despite heavily-armed Saudi Arabia's incessant bombardment of the impoverished country, the Yemeni armed forces and the Popular Committees have grown steadily in strength against the Saudi-led invaders and left Riyadh and its allies bogged down in the country.

Omicron variant may have come from mice, new study says

The Omicron variant has reshaped the state of the coronavirus pandemic. Events have been canceled. Cases are rising. And we've barely passed into January.

Researchers have been wondering, though, where the Omicron variant came from. Scientists in China recently published a study that suggests the Omicron variant may have come from mice, deseret.com reported.

The study — published in the Journal of Genetics and Genomics and can be read on the pre-print server bioRxiv — looked into why the Omicron variant is so different compared to other COVID-19 variants.

A team of scientists from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing found that the Omicron variant "closely resembled the mutations associated with virus evolution in mouse cells," according to IFL Science.

"Furthermore, they say that the mutations show that the virus has adapted to infecting mouse cells," IFL Science reports.

The scientists suggest that the Omicron variant may have jumped from mice to humans at some point, affecting our entire lives.

"Our results suggest that the progenitor of Omicron jumped from humans to mice, rapidly accumulated mutations conducive to infecting



JEREMIAS GONZALEZ/AP Employee work on an assembly line at NG Biotech, a start-up that makes an array of medical tests, including kits for use at home and by medical professionals to detect COVID-19 infection, in Guipry, western France, on Jan. 7, 2022.

that host, then jumped back into humans, indicating an inter-species evolutionary trajectory for the Omicron outbreak," the authors of the study wrote.

Scientists in South Africa discovered the Omicron

variant during the Thanksgiving weekend, sounding the alarm on the emerging new variant. However, it's unclear where the variant first came from.

Per BBC News, some scientists in South Africa have a "highly plausible hypothesis" that the Omicron variant came from an immunocompromised patient, who was infected with COVID-19.

"Normally your immune system would kick a virus out fairly quickly, if fully functional," Linda-Gayle Bekker, a professor who leads the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation in Cape Town, South Africa, told BBC News.

"In someone where immunity is suppressed, then we see virus persisting. And it doesn't just sit around, it replicates. And as it replicates it undergoes potential mutations. And in somebody where immunity is suppressed that virus may be able to continue for many months — mutating as it goes," she added.



SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES From left: Travis McMichael, William "Roddie" Bryan, and Gregory McMichael during their trial in Brunswick, Georgia

Three White men who chased and murdered 25-year-old black jogger Ahmaud Arbery in South Georgia were sentenced to life in prison Friday, with two having no chance of parole.

Travis McMichael, 35, his father, Gregory McMichael, 66, and neighbor William "Roddie" Bryan were convicted in November on a raft of charges, including felony murder, for Arbery's death.

Judge Timothy Walmsley sentenced the McMichaels to life in prison without the possibility of parole, while Bryan was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. The 52-year-old will be eligible for parole under Georgia law only after he has served 30 years in prison because he was convicted of serious violent felonies.

Before handing down the sentence, Walmsley held a minute of silence, saying it "represents a fraction of the time Ahmaud Arbery was running" through the neighborhood outside Brunswick before he was killed on February 23, 2020.

He described the killing as a "chilling, truly disturbing scene," telling the court, "When I thought about this, I thought from a lot of different angles. And I kept coming back to the terror that must have been in the mind of the young man running through Satilla Shores."

Arbery's mother and father cried as the sentences were

Three white men sentenced to life in prison for black jogger Ahmaud Arbery's murder

handed down, according to a pool reporter present. Gregory McMichael leaned back in his chair and appeared visibly shaken, the reporter added, after his son was sentenced.

Earlier in the day, Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones delivered a victim impact statement aimed at achieving a stiffer sentence, asking the judge to impose the maximum sentence.

"I made a promise to you the day I laid you to rest," she said, speaking directly to her late son. "I told you I love you, and someday, somehow, I would get you justice."

"Son, I love you as much today as I did the day you were born. Raising you was the honor of my life, and I'm very proud of you."

The judge imposed additional prison time for each of the defendants for other felony charges. For the McMichaels, that additional time will be served concurrent to each other but consecutive to the life sentence, Walmsley ruled. As a result, both face total sentences of life without parole plus 20 years.



For Bryan, Walmsley imposed additional imprisonment sentences of 10 years for his false imprisonment conviction and 5 years for his criminal attempt to commit a felony conviction. Unlike the sentence for the McMichaels, the additional sentence for Bryan totaling 15 years will be suspended, resulting in a total sentence of life in prison with the possibility of parole.

Sentencing, Walmsley said, "does not generally provide closure," though that may be what Arbery's family and the community are seeking.

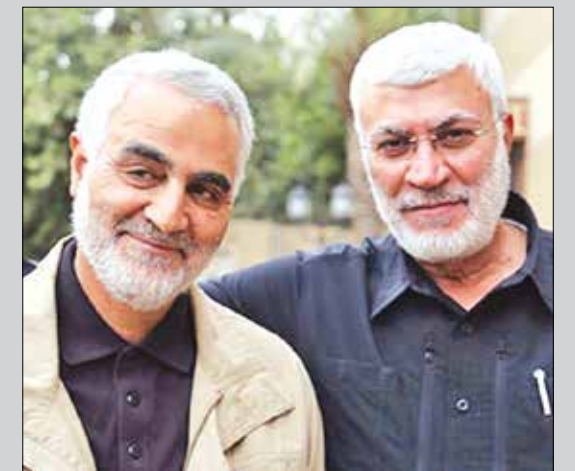
"Instead of closure, maybe it would be best to see today's proceeding as an exercise in accountability," the judge said. "We are all accountable for our own actions. Today demonstrates that everybody is accountable to the rule of law. Taking the law into your own hands is a dangerous endeavor."

At a news conference after the sentencing, Arbery's mother was asked how important was it for her to respond to comments from Gregory McMichael's defense attorney Laura Hogue, who called Arbery's toenails long and dirty in her closing arguments.

Cooper-Jones responded saying, "The long toenails that she brought up in her closing argument, she failed to mention that Ahmaud was laying there in the middle of the road with a big hole in his chest. She left that part out," she said. "I didn't want to mention that today, but I wanted to reiterate that Ahmaud was bigger, he was bigger than that."

The sprawling legal saga isn't over: The men's attorneys say they'll appeal the verdicts; a federal hate crime trial is slated for next month; Arbery's mother has filed a civil lawsuit; and the original prosecutor faces charges over her alleged handling of the case.

EU lawmaker: General Soleimani, commander Muhandis 'heroic struggles will never be forgotten'

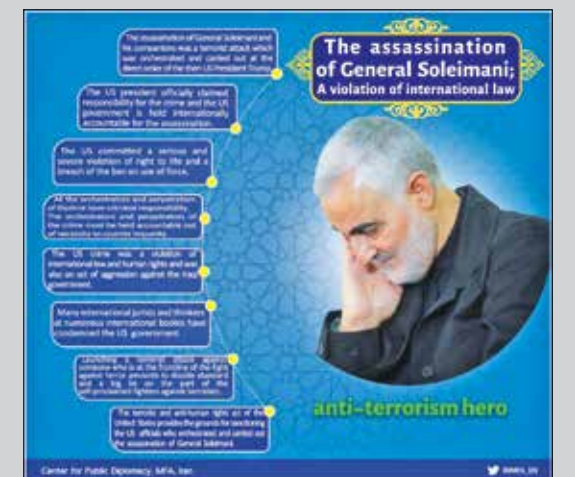


The picture shows Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani (L), the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Quds Force, and his Iraqi comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), assassinated in a US drone strike near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

A member of the European Parliament has condemned "unlawful" US assassination of Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and his Iraqi trenchmate, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Clare Daly said the two commanders' heroic efforts to combat terrorism will never be forgotten and that their legacy will prevail.

"Thinking today of #GeneralSoleimani & #AbuMahdiAlMuhandis unlawfully assassinated by the #US on this day two years ago. #Anti-terrorism will never be forgotten. their legacy will prevail," Daly said in a tweet on the second martyrdom anniversary of the two anti-terror commanders.



Daly embedded in her tweet a Twitter post by the Iranian Embassy in Croatia, in which the diplomatic mission had hailed General Soleimani's effort to restore regional peace and fight against the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group.

The embassy said former US president Donald Trump, who ordered the assassination, aimed to save Daesh terrorists and protect the legacy of his predecessor, Barack Obama, by conducting such a heinous act.

"Efforts to bring peace to the region and the fight to save defenseless people from a demon called Daesh, were great concerns of Qassem Soleimani. With the assassination of the Iranian general, Trump sought to save Daesh criminals and protect Obama's legacy," the Iranian Embassy tweeted.

General Soleimani, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Quds Force, and his Iraqi comrade Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), were martyred along with their companions in a US drone strike authorized by Trump near Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

Both commanders were highly revered across the Middle East because of their key role in fighting Daesh in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

Five days after the barbaric crime, in a military operation codenamed Operation Martyr Soleimani, the IRGC launched a volley of ballistic missiles at the Ain al-Asad airbase in Iraq's western province of Anbar.

Iran said the missile strike was only a "first slap" in its process of taking "hard revenge" and that it would not rest until the US military leaves the Middle East in disgrace.