

International

Zionists conduct first air strikes against Lebanon in seven years

Beirut condemns escalation, UN urges restraint

JERUSALEM: The Zionist air force said it carried out air strikes on neighboring Lebanon for the first time in seven years yesterday, following a second day of rocket fire across the border. Lebanon condemned the strikes as an “escalation” that could mark a change of tactics by the Zionist entity, while UN peacekeepers urged restraint. “Earlier yesterday, rockets were fired from Lebanon into Zionist territory,” the Zionist air force tweeted. “In response... fighter jets struck the launch sites and infrastructure used for terror in Lebanon from which the rockets were launched.” The air force said, “An additional target in the area from which rockets have been launched in the past was struck as well.”

Zionists’ jets routinely strike Palestinian militant targets in Gaza, and suspected Hezbollah or Iranian targets in Syria. But it was the first time since 2014 that they had hit targets in Lebanon, the air force said. Lebanon’s Al-Manar television, run by the powerful militant group Hezbollah, said Zionist aircraft carried out two strikes at around 12.40 am (2140 GMT) outside the town of Mahmudiya, some 11 kilometers (seven miles) from the border. Lebanon’s official National News Agency also reported the strikes, but provided few details.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun said, “Zionist entity use of its air force to target Lebanese villages is the first of its kind since 2006, and suggests an intention to escalate attacks” against Lebanon. The UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL, which has been deployed in Lebanon since 1978 and has patrolled the

border since the 2006 conflict, said yesterday that Zionist entity and Lebanon should “act with urgency” to deescalate tensions. Meeting with Zionist and Lebanese military officers at a UN position in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL’s head of mission Stefano Del Col called on the sides “to explore ways to reinforce security and stability along the Blue Line,” referring to the UN-demarcated border. “In the most imperfect times, this mechanism has served you well, and now is the time to recommit to it, not allow the spoilers to have the better of us,” Del Col said, in remarks relayed by UNIFIL.

Lebanese army investigating

Zionist warplanes last struck Lebanese territory near the border with Syria in 2014, but they have not targeted Hezbollah’s south Lebanon strongholds since the militants fought a devastating conflict with Zionist entity in 2006. Yesterday was the second straight day that Zionist entity had reported rocket fire from Lebanon. Three rockets were fired on Wednesday, two of which reached Zionist entity, striking near the northern town of Kiryat Shmona, where four people were treated for “stress symptoms”. In response to that attack, the Zionist army said it had carried out three rounds of retaliatory shelling of south Lebanon.

It triggered multiple brush fires in the tinder-dry conditions, but there were no reports of casualties. The Lebanese army said 92 artillery shells fired by Zionist entity landed in southern



AL-KHIYAM, Lebanon: A picture shows the vehicles of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), patrolling in Sahi Al-Khiyam (Khiyam plain) near the border with Zionist entity. —AFP

Lebanon following the Wednesday rocket fire. It said it was investigating who fired the rockets. The exchange came as thousands of grief-stricken Lebanese marked the first anniversary of a devastating explosion in Beirut port, that killed at least 214 people and irreparably scarred the nation’s psyche. —AFP

Top Italian crime boss arrested in Spain

MADRID, Spain: Spanish police said yesterday they have arrested one of the leaders of Italy’s most powerful organized crime syndicate, the ‘Ndrangheta, which controls much of Europe’s cocaine trade. Officers detained Domenico Paviglianiti, “one of Italy’s most wanted fugitives”, on the streets of Madrid’s working-class Cuatro Caminos neighborhood on Monday in a joint operation carried out with Italian police, Spain’s National Police said in a statement. He was carrying fake Portuguese documentation at the time of his arrest as well as nearly 6,000 euros (\$7,000) in cash as well as six mobile phones, it added. Paviglianiti helped control mafia operations in Italy’s north and in South America.

Called “the boss of the bosses” by Italian media for his role in crimes committed in the 1980s and 1990s, including murder and drug trafficking, Paviglianiti was arrested in Spain in 1996. He was extradited three years later to Italy, where he began serving a life sentence, one typically given for top mafia criminals. But his lawyers argued that Spain’s extradition conditions did not recognize life imprisonment, a technicality that allowed his early release after serving over 20 years.

Italian prosecutors issued an arrest warrant for him followed a ruling by a high court that found that he had been erroneously released in 2019. Spanish police located part of Paviglianiti’s family in Barcelona, where he lived for several months before moving to Madrid. Police regularly detain members of Italian mafia in Spain, the main entryway into Europe for cocaine from Latin America and hashish from north Africa. —AFP

24 Chadian troops killed in suspected jihadist attack

N’DJAMENA, Chad: Twenty-four Chadian soldiers were killed in an attack by jihadist fighters in the troubled Lake Chad region, a senior local official said yesterday. “Troops from a returning patrol were resting when they were attacked by Boko Haram” on Wednesday, the region’s deputy prefect, Haki Djiddi, told AFP. “Twenty-four troops were killed, several were wounded and others have scattered into the countryside.” Army spokesman General Azem Bermandoa Agrouna confirmed that an attack had taken place at Tchoukou Telia, an island 190 kilometers (118 miles) northwest of the capital N’Djamena, but refused to give any toll. Troops from “three army sectors have joined the soldiers who came under attack yesterday,” Mahamat Fodoul Makay, the governor of Lake province, told AFP.

Lake Chad is a vast area of water and marshland bordered by

Russia-led drills begin on Afghanistan border

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan: The Russian military’s chief of staff arrived in Central Asia yesterday as Russia held military drills in two ex-Soviet countries bordering Afghanistan where Kabul is struggling to contain a ferocious Taliban offensive.

Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian military’s General Staff flew into Uzbekistan-Central Asia’s most populous country-to observe joint Russian-Uzbek military drills. Both armies also took part in separate exercises with neighboring Tajikistan yesterday. During a meeting with Uzbek counterpart Shukhrat Khalmukhamedov, Gerasimov said the drills took place amid a worsening situation in the region and “to practise actions to repel terrorist threats.”

Gerasimov also said Moscow was increasing supplies of weapons to the region

Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon as well as Chad. Jihadists from Boko Haram and a rival splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), have been using the region for years as a haven from which to attack troops and civilians. The Chadian authorities tend to call the jihadists “Boko Haram” regardless of their affiliation. In March 2020, around 100 Chadian troops were killed in an overnight attack on the lake’s Bohoma peninsula, prompting an offensive the following month led by Chad’s then president, Idriss Deby Itno. After pursuing the militants deep into Niger and Nigeria, Deby said there was “not a single jihadist anywhere” on the Chadian side of the lake region. Attacks have continued, however.

In July, 11 Cameroonian troops and a civilian were killed in two attacks in Cameroon’s Far North region, the tongue of land that lies between Chad to the east and Nigeria to the west. Deby was killed in April 2021 during fighting against rebels in northern Chad and was succeeded by his son, Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, at the head of a military junta. Boko Haram launched a revolt in northern Nigeria in 2009 before extending its campaign into neighboring countries. According to UN figures, more than 36,000 people, most of them in Nigeria, have died and three million have fled their homes. In 2016, Boko Haram split over its indiscriminate targeting of Muslim civilians and use of women suicide bombers. —AFP

amid a deterioration in Afghanistan that he blamed on the “hasty” withdrawal of US-led forces. “The main threat to the Central Asian region today comes from the Afghan direction,” said Gerasimov, who was expected to meet with other top Uzbek officials, according to a Russian defense ministry statement. Moscow has positioned itself as a bulwark against potential spillover from Afghanistan into Central Asia, while casting a suspicious eye on military cooperation between the countries of the region and the United States. —AFP