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HEATHER COX RICHARDSON

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On Sunday, April 14, 2024, Iran fired about 170 drones, more than 120 ballistic missiles, and more than 30 cruise missiles from Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and areas controlled by Hezbollah in Lebanon toward Israel. The strike was in retaliation for a strike on Iran's diplomatic complex in Damascus, Syria, on April 1, which killed two top commanders in Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, along with other officials. Israel has not claimed responsibility for the Syrian strike, but officials from other countries believe Israel is responsible. Iran warned its attack was coming, and Israel and the U.S., along with Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and France, shot the missiles down. Israel sustained almost no damage. One Arab-Israeli girl was critically injured.

In the leadup to the attack, Arab countries shared intelligence and radar tracking, opened their airspace while closing it to Iran, and even supplied forces to withstand Iran's attack. According to David S. Cloud, Dov Lieber, Stephen Kalin, and Summer Said of the *Wall Street Journal*, in March 2022, top military officials from Israel and Arab countries met in Egypt at the invitation of U.S. Marine General Frank McKenzie, then the top U.S. commander in the region, to discuss coordination against Iran's growing military capabilities.

That prospective coordination had never been tested, but the fact that Arab states stood alongside Israel against Iran

highlights changing dynamics in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the attack, a source connected to the Saudi royal family charged Iran with instigating the Gaza war to stop normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel. Hamas, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hezbollah in Lebanon are Iran's proxies.

Since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and kidnapping more than 250 others, President Joe Biden's apparent top priority has been making sure the crisis doesn't spread. On October 10, he warned: "to any country, any organization, anyone thinking of taking advantage of this situation, I have one word: Don't. Don't."

The U.S. moved two of its eleven carrier battle groups, which usually consist of an aircraft carrier, at least four other ships, and about 7,500 personnel, to the region. At the same time, while Biden has been careful to note that the U.S. cannot dictate policy to another country, he warned Israel against a planned preemptive strike against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The U.S. has also led the effort to stop Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen from attacking ships in the Red Sea. The attacks have disrupted global shipping, forcing ships to reroute around Africa.

Since the early days of the conflict, the approach of Israel's government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to destroying Hamas has caused a deepening rift with the Biden administration. While the U.S. supports Israel's right to self-defense and "legitimate military objectives," it has repeatedly called out mounting Palestinian civilian casualties. Then, while the administration has consistently called for the establishment of a Palestinian state, the plan for a postwar settlement

Netanyahu finally proposed in February rejected that policy and instead called for Israel to maintain military control of Gaza indefinitely.

Increasingly, the Israeli government has rejected U.S. requests to protect civilian lives, including by allowing more humanitarian aid into Gaza, where people are starving. After a brief humanitarian pause in fighting in November, efforts to achieve another pause to get more humanitarian aid into Gaza have failed repeatedly. Frustration in the U.S. over mounting civilian deaths and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has led to widespread protests against Biden as well as against Israel, and has led Democratic critics of Israeli policy to demand that the U.S. condition military aid to Israel on a ceasefire.

Tensions rose higher when Israel announced it would launch a ground offensive against Hamas in Rafah, the southernmost city in Gaza, without a plan for protecting civilians. More than a million Palestinians have taken shelter there. In March, national security advisor Jake Sullivan said that the president would not support “a military operation in Rafah that does not protect civilians, that cuts off the main arteries of humanitarian assistance and that places enormous pressure on the Israel-Egypt border.”

Israel did not notify the U.S. when on April 1 it attacked the Iranian diplomatic complex in Syria, a strike U.S. defense officials believed put U.S. forces at risk. Also on April 1, Israeli forces killed seven aid workers—including individuals from Australia, Poland, and the United Kingdom, as well as a Palestinian and a dual U.S.-Canadian citizen—with the humanitarian aid group World Central Kitchen. The workers had coordinated with the military and were in three separate

marked vehicles.

On April 3, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin directly called out Israel's silence about its attack on Iranian leaders in Syria in a telephone call to his Israeli counterpart, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

On April 4, in a telephone call, Biden told Netanyahu that “the strikes on humanitarian workers and the overall humanitarian situation are unacceptable.” He said Israel must “announce and implement a series of specific, concrete, and measurable steps to address civilian harm, humanitarian suffering, and the safety of aid workers.” He reiterated support for Israel but appeared to distinguish between Israel and its current government. Vice President Kamala Harris, who was on the call, told a reporter: “The president made clear we will make sure Israel isn't left without the ability to defend itself. At the same time, if there are no changes to their approach, we are likely to change our approach.”

Israel has pointed to the inefficient distribution of aid within Gaza as a cause of hardship, but three hours after the call, Israel announced that it would open the Erez crossing into northern Gaza for the first time since October 7, use the Port of Ashdod in Israel as a hub for supplies, and allow more Gaza-bound aid trucks into Israel from Jordan. Days later, Israeli officials dropped the plan to open Erez, and the Ashdod port is not yet accepting aid shipments; Defense Minister Gallant said, “We plan to flood Gaza with aid and we are expecting to reach 500 trucks per day,” but he did not say when that would happen.

While this was taking place, according to the four *Wall Street Journal* reporters, the administration pressed Arab states for

intelligence about a retaliatory strike from Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia shared intelligence, and Jordan allowed warplanes to use its airspace while also intercepting Iranian missiles with its own planes. The White House coordinated Israeli and Arab defensive measures. According to U.S. officials, officials from the State Department, the Defense Department, and the National Security Council were “in constant, ongoing, continuous contact with Israelis, with other partners in the region, as well as Iran with a series of direct communications through the Swiss channel and other relevant players,” as well as with “Turkey and China,” “in anticipation of the events that transpired.”

This was the background when Iran attacked Israel on Sunday.

In the aftermath of the attack, Iran’s mission to the United Nations said, “The matter can be deemed concluded.” The White House immediately gathered the leaders of the Group of 7 wealthy democracies, who issued a statement calling on all parties to “avoid further escalation.” Then Biden urged Netanyahu to “think very carefully and strategically” about retaliation and noted that Israel had “got the best of it,” as it had killed senior Iranian military commanders but lost none of its own leaders. Netanyahu is under great pressure from his right-wing coalition to retaliate, but some members of his war cabinet have stressed that they want “to establish an international coalition and strategic alliance to counter the threat posed by Iran.”

The U.S. warned Israel it would not participate in any offensive counterstrike against Iran, although it has announced new economic sanctions against Iran. Matt Bradley of NBC

News pointed out that an aggressive Israeli response would run the risk of dissolving the fragile cooperation between Arab states and Israel that helped to repel the Iranian attack. That cooperation illustrated that Iran is increasingly isolated, but as Oraib Al Rantawi, director of a Jordanian think tank, told Bradley, “Those Arab countries are in a very critical situation. There is no easy position to take....”

In the U.S., Republicans, including House Intelligence Committee chair Mike Turner (R-OH) and Trump’s former national security advisor John Bolton, immediately said the U.S. should join Israel if it launched a retaliatory attack, saying they hoped to destroy Iran’s nuclear program. (David Sanger of the *New York Times* reminded readers yesterday that in 2015, in a deal with seven countries after two years of negotiations, Iran agreed to surrender 97% of its uranium, but Trump pulled out of that deal in 2018, and Iran returned to developing weapons-grade uranium.)

In the House, Republicans who have been refusing to pass the national security supplemental bill that provides additional funding for Ukraine and Israel, as well as the Indo-Pacific and humanitarian aid to Gaza, have suddenly snapped to and are demanding additional funding for Israel. A researcher at an Israeli think tank estimated the cost of Israel’s interception of the Iranian weapons on Sunday at more than \$550 million.

The Senate passed the measure in February, and the House is expected to as well if House speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) brings it up for a vote. But Johnson is facing a revolt from MAGA Republicans who are so adamantly opposed to aiding Ukraine they threatened to oust him as speaker if he tries to pass it. Yesterday, Johnson said he would break the measure

up and try to pass it in four pieces. Extremists don't like this either. Two Republicans—Georgia's Marjorie Taylor Greene and Kentucky's Thomas Massie—have said they will challenge Johnson's speakership, meaning that Johnson will have to rely on Democratic votes not only to pass an aid measure, but also to keep his speakership.

The House is due to recess from Thursday, April 18, until Monday, April 29. This afternoon, House Intelligence Committee chair Turner and the top Democrat on the committee, Jim Himes (D-CT), released a statement: "We must pass Ukraine aid now," they wrote. "Today, in a classified briefing, our Committee was informed of the critical need to provide Ukraine military aid this week. The United States must stand against Putin's war of aggression now as Ukraine's situation on the ground is critical."

Today the House finally delivered impeachment articles against Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to the Senate, two months after approving them, and demanded a full trial.

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