



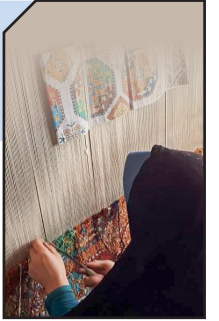
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Heart of Asia

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ANDSF Kill Over 1,500 Militants During Previous Week: General Shinwarai

Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces spokesperson General Ajaml Shinwarai said that the forces have conducted 154 military operations in which 1,528 insurgents were killed and over 800 more wounded. During the operations conducted in 20 provinces, 16 militants were taken hostages, Shinwarai added. The operations include land operations, airstrikes, and artillery shells. The spokesperson of ANDSF said that the forces have been out of defensive stance and are currently in offensive one during the latter stance some attacks have also been repelled. On casualty of civilians... **P3**



China calls on US to step up and take responsibility for deteriorating situation in Afghanistan

China urged the United States on Monday to aid a smooth transition in Afghanistan. by accepting responsibility for the worsening situation, as the US intensified air strikes there. "What needs to be emphasized is that the United States suddenly announced the complete withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan. This is the root cause of the deteriorating security situation in the country and it's a serious threat to the peace and stability of Afghanistan and the regional national security interests," said Zhao Lijian, spokesman for China's Foreign Affairs ministry. "As the country who unleashed Afghanistan's terrorism problem, the US should shoulder its due responsibilities, take concrete actions to ensure a smooth transition of the situation in Afghanistan, prevent terrorist forces from taking the opportunity to grow bigger, and maintain... **P3**

UN: Civilian Casualties in Afghanistan Are Up 47% From 2020



The period January-April 2021 saw 2,791 civilian casualties (876 killed and 1,915 injured), said the UN. "I implore the Taliban and Afghan leaders to take heed of the conflict's grim and chilling trajectory and its devastating impact on civilians. The report provides a clear warning that unprecedented numbers of Afghan civilians will perish and be maimed this year if the increasing violence is not stemmed," said Deborah Lyons, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. The UN envoy, who is also the head of UNAMA, called on the Taliban and Afghan leaders to "intensify your efforts at the negotiating table, stop the Afghan against Afghan fighting" and to "protect the Afghan people and give them hope for a better future." "The pursuit of a military solution will only increase the suffering of the Afghan people," the report said. The UN urged the parties to follow their obligations under international law to protect civilians. The report noted that what is "particularly shocking" and of "deep concern" is that women, boys and girls made up "close to half of all civilian casualties in the first half... **P3**

Resulting from a spike in violence in May that corresponded with the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, the civilian casualties reported in the country for the first half of 2021 have reached record levels, the UN said in a report released on Monday. The UN has warned that without significant de-escalation, 2021 will witness the

highest ever number of documented civilian casualties in a single year since UNAMA recording began. The UN report said that 1,659 civilians were killed and 3,254 others were wounded, which is a 47 percent increase compared to the same period in 2020. Of serious concern is the acute rise in the number of civilians killed and injured in the

period from May 1, with almost as many civilian casualties in the May-June period as recorded in the entire preceding four months, according to the report. The number of civilian casualties during May and June - 783 killed and 1,609 wounded - is the highest for those months since UNAMA began its systematic documentation in 2009.

Afghan Army Chief Postpones India Visit

Afghan Army chief General Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai has postponed a visit to India this week amid the offensive by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ahmadzai was scheduled to visit India on July 27 to meet senior political and military leadership, sources said. The cancellation of the visit comes as Afghanistan is witnessing a surge in violence. Taliban has intensified its offensive against civilians, Afghan defense and security forces as foreign forces are withdrawing from the war-torn country. As the Taliban have taken control of several districts across the country, US intelligence assessments have suggested the country's civilian government could fall to the terror group within months of US forces withdrawing.



US to Increase Aerial Strikes Supporting Afghan Forces: Mckenzie

Head of Central Command General Frank Kenneth McKenzie told a press conference in Kabul that the US army has increased airstrikes in support of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and added to continue the strikes. The CENTCOM commander was responding to journalists in former RS headquarter situated in the US embassy based in Kabul, Sunday. The Taliban are trying to create a sense of inevitability which is wrong and their victory is not inevitable in Afghanistan, said McKenzie. The top US commander affirmed that the US army will continue giving logistical support to Afghan Forces even post full withdrawal-August 31- but the support will be over the horizon. US army's recent airstrikes hit fighting positions of the Taliban and equipment in



southern Kandahar and Helmand provinces. McKenzie in his press conference on Sunday evening acknowledged the Afghan government to face tough days ahead and added that it will be clear in upcoming days and weeks whether ANDSF is able to defend the country from the Taliban. He too denied the potential eruption of any civil war in Afghanistan.

The top US commander in Afghanistan talks about their aerial support to ANDSF at a time when the forces are busy fighting the Taliban in almost all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. In recent confrontations, the Taliban toppled two districts of eastern Kunar province but the Afghan forces have launched counterattacks.

Biden, Kadhim...

ahead of Kadhim's visit. The reference was reminiscent of the large "Mission Accomplished" banner on the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier above where Bush gave a speech declaring major combat operations over in Iraq on May 1, 2003. "If you look to where we were, where we had Apache helicopters in combat, when we had US special forces doing regular operations, it's a significant evolution. So by the end of the year we think we'll be in a good place to really formally move into an advisory and capacity-building role," the official said. US diplomats and troops in Iraq and Syria were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks earlier this month. Analysts believed the attacks were part of a campaign by Iranian-backed militias. The senior administration official would not say how many US troops would remain on the ground in Iraq for advising and training. Kadhim is seen as friendly to the United States and has tried to check the power of Iran-aligned militias. But his government condemned a US air raid against Iran-aligned fighters along its border with Syria in late June, calling it a violation of Iraqi sovereignty. The US-Iraqi statement is expected to detail a number of non-military agreements related to health, energy and other matters. The United States plans to provide Iraq with 500,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine under the global COVAX vaccine-sharing program, the senior administration official said. The United States will also provide \$5.2 million to help fund a UN mission to monitor October elections in Iraq.

By: AARTI BETIGERI

Another proxy war in Afghanistan?

With the US in the process of withdrawing the last of its troops from Afghanistan, it has taken little time for fierce fighting to flare up in several parts of the country, as the Taliban seeks to wrest control from the elected government. Already, it has overrun large swathes of territory and is moving closer to the capital. Talks between the Ashraf Ghani-led government and the Taliban in Doha this month failed to produce a ceasefire agreement, and it is considered highly likely that the country is heading for another civil war. This time, however, there is the very real potential that the conflict could bear the hallmarks of a proxy war between two of its closest allies, both nuclear-armed: India and Pakistan. For its part, New Delhi is watching developments nervously, having invested heavily in infrastructure projects in Afghanistan over the past decade, to the tune of around US\$3 billion. With reports in recent days that 10,000 Pakistanis have crossed the border to fight alongside the Taliban – and with specific instructions to target Indian-delivered installations, India is rightly concerned that its work could be reduced to rubble, bringing with it the very fragile regional security across the entire region. India and Afghanistan have historical ties, dating back centuries. The territory covered by modern-day Afghanistan was once part of India's ancient Maurya Empire, and later, Mughals from the region travelled to India and taking control for centuries. More recently, Indian and Pashtun independence leaders lent support to one another in the 1940s, as India sought to break away from British rule and Pashtuns also worked to gain an autonomous state, while in 1950 the two signed a five-year Treaty of Friendship, signalling the start of official diplomatic ties. In October 2011 the two countries agreed to a Strategic Partnership Agreement, which solidified their ties. It provided for assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, support

education, encourage investment in Afghanistan's natural resources, and to advocate for a long-term commitment to Afghanistan by the international community.

It is highly likely that India will be playing a larger role in Afghanistan's internal security.

India has invested heavily in the Central Asian nation. Perhaps the biggest investment is the 218 kilometre Zaranj-Delaram Highway, near the border with Iran. The \$150 million road connects to a ring road linking Kandahar in the south, Ghazni and Kabul in the east, Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and Herat in the west, making it a particularly strategically important route. In 2015 the Afghan parliament house was inaugurated, another of India's projects. There is also the 42 megawatt Salma Dam in Herat, which the Taliban recently claimed to have taken under its control. India has also reconstructed a children's hospital in Kabul, provided Jaipur Foot prosthetics to people who lost limbs in mines, has rebuilt various power infrastructure plants, restored the Stor Palace in Kabul, donated hundreds of buses, utility vehicles, military cars and ambulances, as well as three aircraft, among other projects. In all, India has undertaken more than 400 projects in all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces – and arguably, has invested more in its Central Asian neighbour than it plugs into its own underdeveloped regions. The projects underscore just how vital a partner India sees Afghanistan to act as a bulwark against Islamic militancy, and in particular, the country that lies between them, Pakistan. Each country has a lot to gain from shoring up its relationship with Afghanistan, and will go about it in different ways: India uses the soft power that results from its projects and investments, while Pakistan harnesses militant groups as proxies, which zigzag across its borders on both sides – including the Taliban. For its part, Islamabad appears intent on destabilizing the relationship of its two neighbors, clearly feeling vulnerable and



threatened. With the Taliban now asserting its might in the vacuum left by US troops, could there be the potential for Afghanistan to become the site of a proxy war played out by its antagonistic neighbors? Even if not, it is highly likely that India will be playing a larger role in the country's internal security. In recent weeks, the Taliban has launched multiple offensives against Afghan forces and the government of President Ghani, capturing entire districts and border crossings. However, its claims to have taken more than 50 percent of Afghan territory (in some cases up to 85 per cent) are unconfirmed. The Taliban is said to be moving closer to the capital and tightening its grip on the north. As a precaution, India has moved all of its Indian staff out of the Kandahar consulate. Kandahar, in the south, was the Taliban's headquarters when it was in control of the country in the 1990s. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with Ghani this month during a conference in Tashkent, along with US officials, to discuss the rapidly unravelling security situation in Afghanistan. And this week, Afghan Army Chief General Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai is expected to visit India. It is this visit that will raise eyebrows: India does not have any of its troops in Afghanistan, maintaining that it doesn't want to securities its

presence in the country. But Wali is likely to seek assistance during expected talks with India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his Indian army counterpart General MM Naravane. According to a report in India's Financial Express, Ahmadzai is expected to ask for military assistance such as aircraft technicians, along with technical equipment. Already, India has reportedly donated seven helicopters to Kabul and has been delivering military training to Afghan cadets. But as India supports an Afghan-led administration and installations that are owned and controlled domestically, it is highly unlikely that India will be keen to get boots on the ground. But the screws are tightening, and not just between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The 26-year-old daughter of the Afghan Ambassador in Pakistan was abducted earlier this month and held for several hours in Islamabad. The ambassador and senior diplomats have since been recalled home. The incident also sparked a sharp exchange between officials from India and Pakistan. It's a sign of a deterioration in ties between the neighbors, and an indication that Pakistan might be agitating to destabilize Afghanistan, in whatever way it can. It is all deeply concerning, as the last thing Kabul needs right now is a cross-border conflict to add into the mix.

By: Julian Borger

As US Troops Leave Afghanistan, What Will Future Policy Look Like?

As the US nears completion of its military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Pentagon is supposed to switch to "over-the-horizon" counter-terrorist operations in the country. But it is far from clear yet what those will look like in practice. The Biden administration has made it clear that after the end of August it will not provide air support for Afghan forces intended to bolster the Kabul government, though it is possible that will be reappraised if provincial capitals fall to the Taliban. However, Gen Kenneth McKenzie, head of the US Army Central Command, said on Sunday that the US would continue airstrikes in support

of Afghan forces "in the coming weeks, if the Taliban continue their attacks". The stated objective of future operations is to pursue the original war aims of 2001: to stop Afghanistan being a training ground and launching pad for attacks on the US by al-Qaida. After 20 years of fighting, al-Qaida still has a presence in the country, alongside another threat, Islamic State.

The US says it will continue to target those groups if and when they strengthen their foothold in the growing share of territory under Taliban control, but it will do so from bases outside the country.

President Joe Biden briefs the

press on military withdrawal from Afghanistan on 8 July. Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

Among the questions that have not been answered, at least not publicly, is the extent of future US involvement. Will it seek to have a constant "unblinking eye" in the skies above Afghanistan, or make periodic forays? What level of al-Qaida or Isis presence would trigger an attack? Would the Taliban be targeted on suspicion of cooperating with terrorist groups? And what bases would the US be able to use? How far away is the horizon going to be? All these issues were debated more than a decade ago when

Barack Obama was considering withdrawal from Afghanistan, as advocated by then Vice-President Biden. But Obama was ultimately persuaded to conduct a troop surge instead and so no conclusions were reached. "There was a lot of effort put into casting about for what the over-the-horizon options might look like. The fact that they were all suboptimal was one of the factors that contributed to perpetuating the American military presence in Afghanistan," said Laurel Miller, a former acting special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, now Asia programme director at the International Crisis Group. The horizon US aircraft will be flying over could be very distant indeed. The Biden administration has been holding talks with central Asian

states in recent days in which the subject of possible bases is very likely to be on the top of the agenda. A delegation is heading to Uzbekistan this week, but there is no sign of progress so far. "I'm sceptical that the central Asian options are going to work out," Miller said. "At a minimum, I don't see how you pull that together very quickly." David Petraeus, who served as head of US Central Command, commander of US and allied forces in Afghanistan and director of the CIA, said there would be no straightforward way of continuing military operations after withdrawal. "Over the horizon' in Afghanistan will be enormously challenging, vastly more so than most other countries," Petraeus told the Guardian. "Obviously it is landlocked... **P3**

Afghan Carpet Industry Facing Major Challenges: ACCI

Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said on Sunday that the Afghan carpet industry is facing numerous challenges despite the foreign aid that has been injected into the industry. The ACCI said that the lack of a dedicated industrial park and a suitable place to produce carpets are a key challenge that they face. Carpet makers also said that the drop in exports of Afghan carpets is a major problem. Abdul Jabar Safi, head of the craftsmen association said despite millions of dollars having been spent and funding from USAID being received no dedicated industrial parks have been established in Andkhoy and

Jalalabad – both carpet making hubs. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry meanwhile said efforts are being made to resume the traditional craft of carpet making in order to preserve the Afghan carpet industry's uniqueness. The ministry said that they have assisted carpet producers recently. "It (new carpet industry) undermines the credibility of Afghan carpets. One good point of the Afghan carpet sector is that it provides 100,000 jobs for people especially for women," said Fawad Ahmadi, spokesman for the ministry. Analysts say that the carpet production industry will come to an end if government does not address the carpet producers' challenges.



ANDSF Kill Over...

he said, a large number of ANDSF operations were suspended in order to prevent civilian casualties in the country. General Ajlam Shinwarai accused the Taliban of killing 14 civilians and wounding nearly thirty more during the previous week. The claim over civilian casualty comes after UNAMA in its latest report said that the past two months were the deadliest in terms of civilian casualties. As per the report, nearly 4,500 civilian people have been killed and wounded in Afghanistan which is the highest ever since UNAMA started recording the death toll in 2009. The Taliban in a statement reacted to the number and dubbed it one-sided.

China calls on US...

the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan," Zhao said. Zhao said Afghanistan was at a crucial juncture, facing challenges from war, chaos and governance. "China always believes that political negotiations are the only correct way to resolve the Afghan issue." Zhao's remarks came after the situation in Afghanistan quickly deteriorated following US President Joe Biden's announcement in April that US troops would be withdrawn by September, ending a 20-year foreign military presence and leaving a power vacuum for the Taliban to fill.

UN Chief Calls...

goal, increasing adaptation and resilience support to at least 50 percent of total climate finance and getting public and multilateral development banks to significantly align their climate portfolios to meet the needs of developing countries, he said. Guterres said he intended to use the opportunity of the upcoming UN General Assembly high-level session to bring leaders together to reach a political understanding on these critical elements of the package needed for Glasgow.

UN: Civilian...

of 2021," it said. "Comprising 46 percent of all civilian casualties, 32 percent were children – 1,682 in total (468 killed and 1,214 injured) and 14 percent were women – 727 in total (219 killed and 508 injured)," the report said, adding: "It is sickening to report that more women and more children were killed and wounded than ever before recorded by UNAMA for the first half of any calendar year." "Anti-Government Elements (AGEs) were responsible for 64 percent of the total civilian casualties: 39 percent by

Taliban, nearly nine percent by Daesh and 16 percent by undetermined AGEs," the report said. "Pro-Government Forces (PGFs) were responsible for 25 percent of civilian casualties: 23 percent by Afghan national security forces, and two percent by pro-Government armed groups or undetermined PGFs," according to the report. UNAMA attributed 11 percent of all civilian casualties to "crossfire" during ground engagements where the exact party responsible could not be determined and other incident types,

including unattributable unexploded ordnance/explosive remnants of war. UNAMA is also concerned about the "increasing number of reports of killing, ill-treatment, persecution and discrimination in communities affected by the current fighting and its aftermath," the report said, adding that it is "particularly important, especially during times of heightened conflict, that all parties respect the human rights and dignity of people and prevent such abuses and violations."

As US Troops...

and a considerable distance from our closest bases in the Gulf states. "It seems pretty clear that we're not going to keep anything in-country, and we will probably not have a base in a neighboring country, so unless an aircraft carrier is parked off southern Pakistan, any drones, close air support and other aircraft will have to fly a substantial distance going to and from Afghanistan, with very limited time on-station for drones that are not air-refuellable, and with many aerial tankers required to keep on-station aircraft that can be refueled in flight."

Maintaining an aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea as a base for Afghan operations would be prohibitively expensive as it would have to be constantly supplied and its crew rotated, using far more resources and troops than the 3,5000-strong military presence that has just been withdrawn from Afghanistan. US commanders may also be restricted by host governments in the Gulf on

the use of bases to launch Afghan air operations. "All of this is just enormously challenging and difficult. And the truth is, it didn't have to happen. We could have easily maintained a sustainable, in terms of blood and treasure, commitment, which I think the history of the last 20 years tells us is necessary," Petraeus said. "If you actually take your eye off al-Qaida and the Islamic State, if you don't keep pressure on them, if you stop disrupting them, then at a certain point you're going to end up having to re-engage, and it is always more difficult when you have, as in Iraq, given up your bases and infrastructure and reduced your intelligence presence." An Afghan National Army soldier guards the Bagram US air base on 5 July, after all US and Nato troops left. Photograph: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images

Jason Dempsey, a former infantry officer who served in Afghanistan, argued that the logistical difficulties were not that different from those in other parts of the world where the

US flies counter-terrorist operations, and the obstacles could have the benefit of focusing minds on non-military means to meet US objectives in Afghanistan. "America has to get beyond the idea that the only way it can influence other nations is with the military," Dempsey, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said. "We have to find out how to use the levers that we do have to keep things in check," he added. "The Taliban doesn't want to be a pariah state, so that's one of the levers we have. So long as we're willing to commit to supporting Afghanistan, I think we can continue to have leverage." However, Dempsey said there appears to have been surprisingly little urgency in putting non-military measures in place. "One of the head-scratchers is the fact that we still don't have an ambassador in Afghanistan," he said. "So, if that indicates our level of seriousness, that's pretty embarrassing."

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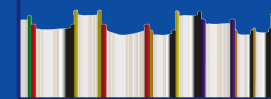
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China Urges U.S. to Change Misguided Mindset

The China-U.S. relationship is in a stalemate, fundamentally because some Americans portray China as an “imagined enemy,” said Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng, urging the United States to change its highly misguided mindset and dangerous policy. Xie made the remarks on Monday during talks with U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, who is on a visit to north China’s port city of Tianjin from July 25 to 26. For quite some time, when talking about conflict with China and challenges facing the United States, the “Pearl Harbor moment” and the “Sputnik moment” have been brought up by some Americans, Xie said. Some international scholars, including some U.S. academics, perceive this as comparing

China to Japan in the Second World War and the Soviet Union in the Cold War. It seems as if by making China an “imagined enemy,” a national sense of purpose would be reignited in the United States. The hope may be that by demonizing China, the United States could somehow shift domestic public discontent over political, economic and social issues and blame China for its own structural problems, he said. It seems that a whole-of-government and whole-of-society campaign is being waged to bring China down. It is as if when China’s development is contained, all U.S. domestic and external challenges would go away, and America would become great again and Pax Americana would continue to go on, Xie said.



A look at the world

UN Chief Calls for Leadership of G20 on Climate Action

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday called for leadership of the Group of 20 (G20) on global climate action. “The world urgently needs a clear and unambiguous commitment to the 1.5-degree goal of the Paris Agreement from all G20 nations. There is no pathway to this goal without the leadership of the G20,” he said in a statement on the G20 ministerial meeting on environment, climate and energy. “This signal is desperately needed by the billions of people already on the front lines of the



climate crisis and by markets, investors and industry who require certainty that a net-zero climate-resilient future is inevitable,” he said. Science shows that in order to meet this ambitious, yet achievable goal, the world must achieve carbon neutrality before 2050 and cut dangerous greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent by 2030 from 2010 levels. But the world is way off track, said Guterres. With less than 100 days left before the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, he urged all G20 and other leaders to commit to net-zero by mid-century, present more ambitious 2030 national climate plans and deliver on concrete policies and actions aligned with a net-zero future, including no new coal after 2021, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and agreeing to a minimum international carbon pricing floor as proposed by the International Monetary Fund. The Group of Seven and other developed countries must also deliver on a credible solidarity package of support for developing countries, including meeting the 100-billion-U.S.-dollar... **P3**

Biden, Kadhimi to Seal Agreement on Ending US Combat Mission in Iraq



US President Joe Biden and Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on Monday will seal an agreement formally ending the US combat mission in Iraq by the end of 2021, more than 18 years after US troops were sent to the country. Coupled with Biden’s withdrawal of the last American forces in Afghanistan by the end of August, the Democratic president is completing US combat missions in the two wars that then-President George W Bush began under his watch. Biden and Kadhimi are to meet in the Oval Office for their first face-to-face talks as part of a strategic dialogue between the United States and Iraq. A statement to be issued after the meeting will announce the end of the US combat mission in Iraq, a senior Biden administration official said. There are currently 2,500 US troops in Iraq focusing on countering the remnants of Islamic State. The US role in Iraq will shift entirely to training and advising the Iraqi military to defend itself. The shift is not expected to have a major impact since the United States has already moved toward focusing on training Iraqi forces. A US-led coalition invaded Iraq in March 2003 based on charges that then-Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s government possessed weapons of mass destruction. Saddam was ousted from power, but such weapons were never found. In recent years the US mission was dominated by helping defeat Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. “Nobody is going to declare mission accomplished. The goal is the enduring defeat of ISIS,” a senior administration official told reporters... **P2**

Israeli Military Confirms Airstrikes on Hamas Base in Gaza

Israel’s military confirmed on Sunday it struck a military base of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Gaza Strip, hours after arson balloons were launched into southern Israel. An Israeli military spokesperson said in a statement that Israeli war jets attacked a Hamas base which contained “infrastructure and means used for terror activity.” The base was located near civilian sites, including a school, the spokesperson said. “The



strikes were made in response to the arson balloons fired toward Israeli territory,” the statement read. Israel’s Fire Department said in a statement that the balloons, which were attached with incendiary materials, sparked three fires in southern Israel, causing no injuries. The Israeli military warned it will “continue to respond firmly against terror attempts from the Gaza Strip.” Also on Sunday, Israel reduced the allowed Gaza offshore fishing zone from 12 nautical miles to six. The latest violence came amid the Egyptian-brokered efforts to establish a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which clashed for 11 days from May 10-21, during which 256 Palestinians in Gaza and 13 people in Israel were killed. The Gaza Strip has been under a crippling Israeli blockade since 2007, when the Hamas took over control of the coastal enclave.



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