

Protesters attack U.S. Embassy in Iraq

Supporters of Shia militias breach the outer walls of the compound, chanting ‘Death to America’

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE BAGHDAD
Iraqi supporters of pro-Iran factions attacked the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Tuesday, breaching its outer wall and chanting “Death to America!” in anger over weekend air strikes that killed two dozen fighters.

It was the first time in years protesters have been able to reach the U.S. Embassy, which is sheltered behind a series of checkpoints in the high-security Green Zone. A stream of men in military fatigues, as well as some women, marched through those checkpoints to the Embassy walls with no apparent reaction from Iraqi security forces.

The demonstrators waved flags in support of the Hashed al-Shaabi, a mostly Shia network of Iraqi armed groups that has received training and weapons from Iran.

They threw rocks and wrenched security cameras off the walls, ignoring calls over megaphones to leave the Embassy compound.

In response, U.S. guards fired an initial volley of bullets, then switched to tear gas and flash bang stun grenades to disperse the crowd.

The Hashed said at least 62 people were wounded.

Caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi said that the crowds that had stormed the U.S. Embassy should leave the compound “immediately”.

“We recall that any aggression or harassment of foreign embassies will be firmly prohibited by the security forces,” Mr. Abdel Mahdi’s office said several hours after the attack began.

Following his statement, some of the crowd pulled back but others set up tents, swearing to pursue a sit-in.

The demonstrators were



Under siege: Protesters burning property outside the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad on Tuesday. ■ AP

protesting U.S. air strikes that killed at least 25 fighters from a hardline Hashed faction known as Kataeb Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades) on Sunday.

Those strikes were in response to a volley of 36 rockets last week that killed one U.S. contractor at an Iraqi base, the first American casualty in a string of rocket attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq.

The U.S. has around 5,200 troops deployed across Iraq to train security forces and prevent any resurgence of the Islamic State jihadist group.

The rocket attacks have not been claimed but U.S. security assessments have largely blamed them on Kataeb Hezbollah.

‘Oust U.S. troops’

Following the deadly strikes, the Iraqi government announced three days of mourning while Kataeb Hezbollah and other pro-Iran factions in the Hashed demanded the “withdrawal of the American enemy”.

Protesters echoed those

calls on Tuesday, carrying posters reading: “Parliament should oust U.S. troops, or else we will.”

Others carried banners with Mr. Trump’s face crossed out.

They scrawled “No to America!” and “Soleimani is my commander” on the Embassy walls, referring to a leading commander in Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps and Tehran’s pointman for Iraq, Major General Qasem Soleimani.

Among those at the protests were Iraq’s National Security Adviser Faleh al-Fayyadh – who is also the head of the Hashed – and other top Hashed officials.

Some Hashed figures drew parallels between Tuesday’s attack and the hostage crisis at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979.

The U.S. Embassy in Iraq is already operating at a fraction of its full diplomatic staffing after the State Department pulled out non-essential employees in May.

U.S. Ambassador Matthew Tueller has been outside Iraq

for two weeks on holiday but other staff were present and had not been evacuated, a diplomatic source said.

The U.S. shut down its consulate in the southern port city of Basra last year after indirect fire it blamed on Iran-backed factions.

It still operates a consulate in the northern Kurdish city of Erbil.

Iraq had long feared being caught in the middle of escalating tensions between its two main allies, the U.S. and Iran. But now it appears that ties between Washington and Baghdad are fraying fast, with Mr. Abdel Mahdi’s government threatening to summon the U.S. Ambassador.

Dozens of lawmakers also called on the government to review an agreement allowing the U.S. troop deployment, saying the strikes amount to a violation of sovereignty that renders the pact obsolete.

The U.S., meanwhile, accused Iraq of failing to “protect” U.S. interests in the country.

‘Iran will be held fully responsible’

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he expects Iraq to “use its forces” to protect the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad as he blamed Iran for orchestrating an “attack” that breached the wall of the compound.

Iraqi supporters of pro-Iran factions protested at the Embassy on Tuesday, chanting “Death to America,” throwing rocks, tearing down security cameras and setting a sentry box ablaze in anger over weekend air strikes that killed two dozen fighters.

“We expect Iraq to use its forces to protect the Embassy, and so notified!” Mr. Trump tweeted, saying Iran “will be held fully responsible” for the unrest.

In his tweet, Mr. Trump said the U.S. had “strongly responded” to the attack that killed the U.S. contractor, and “always will.”

Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the Pentagon was deploying extra troops to Baghdad to provide security for the Embassy.

“The Department of Defense is working closely with the Department of State to ensure the security of our Embassy and personnel in Baghdad,” Mr. Esper said in a statement.

Mr. Esper gave no details, but the deployment is likely to involve a small number of U.S. marines, according to a source.

The State Department said that the U.S. personnel at the Embassy were safe and there was no plans to evacuate them.

Taiwan passes law to combat China influence

It aims at curtailing Beijing’s impact on the island’s politics

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE TAIPEI

Taiwan passed a controversial bill on Tuesday aimed at countering China’s influence on the self-ruled island, less than two weeks before it goes to the polls to elect a new President.

The “anti-infiltration Bill” pushed by President Tsai Ing-wen’s Beijing-sceptic ruling party became law despite strong objection from the Opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party.

It bans “hostile” foreign forces from activities such as campaigning, lobbying, making political donations, disrupting social order or spreading disinformation related to elections. Violators face a maximum five-year prison term and a fine of up to around \$3,32,000.

‘Green Terror’

KMT lawmakers displayed a placard reading “Protest evil law” during a parliamentary sit-in and abstained from voting on the Bill. They urged voters to punish Tsai’s



Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) at the polls.

Outside Parliament, dozens of pro-China activists waved banners reading “down with Tsai Ing-wen” and “Green (DPP) Terror”.

The Bill has been a hot topic in the run-up to the elections as relations with China have dominated the campaign. Ms. Tsai, who has described the vote as a fight for Taiwan’s freedom and democracy, is seeking a second term against the KMT’s Han Kuo-yu, a city Mayor who favours warmer relations with Beijing.

She has said the Bill was a response to “fears in Tai-

wan’s society over China’s infiltration from all sides”.

“We passed the Bill to prevent China, which is Taiwan’s only threat, from using its sharp power and its capital to pollute, manipulate or sabotage Taiwan’s democratic activities,” said DPP lawmaker Wang Ting-yu after the Bill was passed.

The Mainland Affairs Council, Taiwan’s top China policy-making body, said the new law would help strengthen the island’s “democratic defences”.

In Beijing, the Taiwan Affairs Office lashed out at the DPP over the new law.

“The DPP imposes ‘Green Terror’ for its political and election gains to damage cross-strait exchanges while creating hostility and confrontation between the two sides,” office spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian said, according to the Xinhua news agency.

China still sees self-ruling, democratic Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to one day reunify it – by force if necessary.

China, U.S. will sign ‘Phase One’ trade deal on Jan. 15: Trump

REUTERS WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday that ‘Phase One’ of the trade deal with China would be signed on January 15 at the White House, though considerable confusion remains about the details of the agreement.

The President wrote in a tweet that he would sign the deal with “high level repre-

sentatives of China” and that he would later travel to Beijing to begin talks on the next phase.

Last week, Mr. Trump said he and Chinese President Xi Jinping would host a signing ceremony to ink the deal.

The deal, struck earlier this month, is expected to reduce tariffs and boost Chinese purchases of American

farm, energy and manufactured goods while addressing some disputes over intellectual property.

However, no version of the text has been made public, and Chinese officials have yet to publicly commit to key planks, such as increasing imports of American goods and services by \$200 billion over the next two years.

ELSEWHERE



Tear gas fired as Hong Kong rings in New Year

HONG KONG
The Hong Kong police fired tear gas a few minutes into 2020 as pro-democracy protesters took their movement into the new year with midnight countdown rallies and a massive march planned for January 1. AFP

China probes pneumonia outbreak amid SARS fears

BEIJING
China is investigating an outbreak of viral pneumonia, state media reported on Tuesday, amid online speculation that it might be linked to SARS, the flu-like virus that killed hundreds of people a decade ago. AFP

Al-Shabab claims deadly bombing in Somalia

At least 79 people died in the attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS NAIROBI

Somali Islamist group Al-Shabab has claimed responsibility for a truck bomb in the capital, Mogadishu, that killed at least 79 people last week, including many students.

The claim of responsibility was made by the group’s spokesman Sheikh Ali Mohamud Rage in an audio post on pro-Al-Shabab websites. Al-Shabab, which is allied to Al-Qaeda, carries out frequent bombings in the capital.

Rage said the bombing targeted a “hostile Turkish convoy” near a busy checkpoint at an entrance to the city. Two Turkish brothers

were among the dead and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the attack, the second worst bombing in Somalia’s history. The explosion came at rush hour on Saturday as Somalia returned to work after its weekend. Most of those killed were university and other students returning to class.

Al-Shabab is now able to make its own explosives, its “weapon of choice,” United Nations experts monitoring sanctions on Somalia said earlier this year.

The group had previously relied on military-grade explosives captured during assaults on an African Union peacekeeping force.

Ominous glow



Tough task: Firefighters trying to save a property from nearby bushfires in the town of Sussex Inlet in Sydney, Australia on Tuesday. More than 200 fires are burning across the States of New South Wales and Victoria, threatening several towns. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Pak. media mogul rejects rape charges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ISLAMABAD

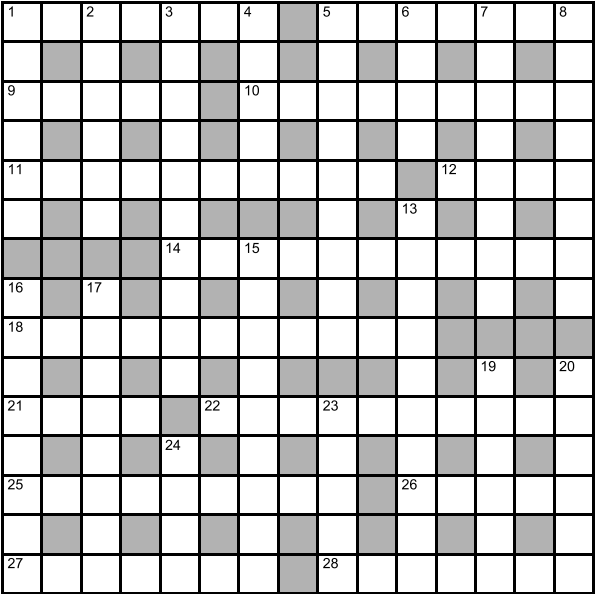
The chief executive of one of Pakistan’s most influential newspapers has denied accusations that he raped an acclaimed filmmaker, in a case that has spotlighted sexual abuse targeting men and added momentum to the #MeToo movement.

Director Jamshed Mahmood Raza took to social media over the weekend to allege that Dawn newspaper’s Hameed Haroon raped him 13 years ago.

Mr. Haroon, who hails from one of Pakistan’s wealthiest families, issued a denial in Dawn on Monday, calling the accusations “simply untrue and intentionally fabricated”.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12821

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To play an interactive version of this crossword online, scan the QR code

■ ACROSS

- 1 We get back in a career with woman who runs a bar (7)
- 5 Pressure on steeplechaser to get new horse (7)
- 9 Leaf on left-overs bowled (5)
- 10 Pained when abstinent surrounds soldiers and correspondent (9)
- 11 Evaluation of performance left coach in red (6,4)

■ DOWN

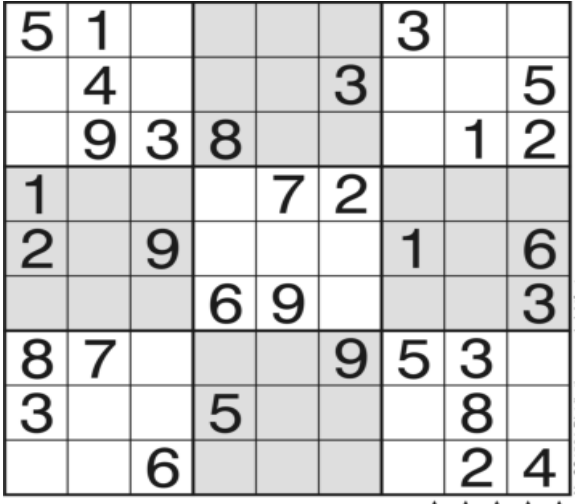
- 1 For example, oddly dead brave perhaps (6)
- 2 Catch out finally moving to the end in ecstasy (6)
- 3 Damaged air-conditioner iced emergency food supply (4,6)

(set by Karaoke)

- 12 In the smallest interval, money is lost resulting in a senseless state (4)
- 14 He resolves issues out of court (5,6)
- 18 Professional cheat on racket implicating senate at ancient city (11)
- 21 Felt remorse for Christ’s Cross, I hear (4)
- 22 He is addicted to work constructing a minor cage (10)
- 25 To suggest indirectly, what would you do to get reminder out of balance? Take advice! (4,1,4)
- 26 Textile on the wagon discharged due to deportation (5)
- 27 A place for works has some lathe at regular intervals (7)
- 28 Runs a risk losing head and shoulders (5,2)

- 4 Orderly escort has no right to carry short sword (5)
- 5 Returning snare drum for game bird (9)
- 6 Aid in wrongdoing like a daily double? (4)
- 7 Intoxicating to have Tom for coal-fired adherent (8)
- 8 Spreads out back up support, cutting costs (8)
- 13 Wisecrack’s never-ending story in sailing vessel (5,5)
- 15 On the job during church worship (2,7)
- 16 Give recognition to democratic transition? Not a second! (8)
- 17 Ruminant worker goes to North Pole on first employment (8)
- 19 With the eye-curtain raiser we see the brightest star (6)
- 20 Block out roguish time-barred centres (6)
- 23 The G-8 will regularly force treaty (5)
- 24 Stiff knight walks out of ridicule (4)

SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 12820

DEATH BEHAVIOUR
NITWITS PERMUTE
A H G E O T L N
SEETH STRIDENT
T N T S E C Q R
YETI PAINLESSLY
I T L U S T
LACHRYMOSE RAGE
U I O E B R N
DISDAINS LAMBIC
D A N E M N O R
ILLEGAL ATARAXY
T V L L O N R P
EXONERATE AUDIT

Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku

5 1 2 9 3 7 4 6 8
7 4 8 6 1 5 3 2 9
6 9 3 2 8 4 5 7 1
8 2 1 7 5 3 9 4 6
4 5 9 8 6 2 1 3 7
3 7 6 1 4 9 8 5 2
1 8 5 3 2 6 7 9 4
9 6 4 5 7 1 2 8 3
2 3 7 4 9 8 6 1 5

FAITH

True bhagavatas

Hari, a yogiswara, and son of Rishbaha Deva, tells King Nimi how bhagavatas behave. Hari lists many qualities that a bhagavata has, said P.T. Seshadri in a discourse. One quality of a Bhagavata is that he never treats another Bhagavata disrespectfully just because he does not hail from a sacred place. Suppose two devotees call upon a bhagavata – one from a pilgrim centre and the other from an ordinary town. The bhagavata will treat both with the same respect.

Sometimes it happens that a relative of ours may be a great bhagavata, but because he is related to us, we do not think highly of him. A bhagavata will never think thus. Jnanis do not seek fame or popularity. A bhagavata does not mock them because of this. Each of us gives to the Lord according to our capacity. No offering is rejected by the lord when it is given with bhakti. But we tend to think that when we give expensive things, we are more important than someone whose offerings are more modest. A person may pluck flowers from the plants in his garden and offer these flowers to God. Are these flowers inferior to the gold that a rich man offers? Certainly not, and a bhagavata will never mock a man because his offerings are simple.

Each of us has a profession or an occupation. No honest way of making money is wrong, or to be looked down upon. A man can resort to legitimate means to fulfil his duties towards his family.

A true bhagavata will not think that the man who earns a lot deserves more respect, than a man who earns much less. To a bhagavata, no man is inferior because of his profession or the work he does. We come across accounts about the Lord’s devotees in Itihasas and Puranas. A bhagavata will never make fun of these devotees.