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Biden seeks to head off escalation after Israel's defense

BY PETER BAKER
NYT News Service

President Joe Biden and his team, hoping to avoid further escalation leading to a wider war in the Middle East, advised Israel that its successful defense against Iranian airstrikes

constituted a major strategic victory that might not require another round of retaliation, U.S. officials said.

The interception of nearly all of the more than 300 drones and missiles fired against Israel on Saturday night demonstrated that Israel had come out ahead in its confrontation with

Iran and proved to enemies its ability to protect itself along with its American allies, meaning it did not necessarily need to fire back, the officials said.

Whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and his government will agree to leave it at that was not immediately clear. Although dam-

age from the attack was relatively light, the scope of the strikes went well beyond the small-bore tit-for-tat shadow war between Iran and Israel in recent years, crossing a red line by firing weapons from Iranian territory into Israeli territory. Had defenses not held, scores or hundreds could have been killed.

Emotions were running high among Israeli officials during phone calls with American partners late into the night, and the pressure to fire back was consequently strong. The U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe sensitive discussions, stressed that the decision was ultimately up to Israel. Israeli

SEE BIDEN, 5A

Harris hammers Trump, Arizona's abortion ban

BY SEEMA MEHTA
Los Angeles Times

Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday continued to hammer Arizona's new abortion ban and former President Donald Trump's role in overturning Roe v. Wade during a surprise appearance in Century City.

"Here's the thing about what they're doing and the cruelty of it: No exception in some states even for rape and incest. You are saying to a survivor of a crime of violence to their body, a violation to their body, that they have no right to make a decision about what happens to their body next," Harris said. "That's immoral."



Kamala Harris

Harris made the remarks at the Power Leadership and Influence of Black Women luncheon, where Sen. Laphonza Butler, D-Calif., was being honored. As she was answering a question about abortion rights, Butler paused to introduce "one of our biggest champions in this movement" and "one of my best friends," as Harris emerged onstage from the wings.

The vice president has been a vocal force for the Biden administration on the issue since Arizona's Supreme Court on Tuesday reinstated a law from 1864 — decades before Arizona became a state — banning abortions except when the mother's life is at risk. Her comments Saturday reiterated what she said Friday in Tucson and what is expected to be a major theme of President Joe Biden's reelection campaign.

"There is no ambiguity about who is to blame. The former president Donald Trump hand-selected three members of the United States Supreme Court with the intention that they would undo Roe, and they did exactly as he intended," Harris said.

"And now he walks around talking about, 'Well, you know, the states can do what they want to do,'" she continued. "Well, look at what the states are doing. The states are passing Trump abortion bans. So we're not going to fall for the 'okey-dokey.' We are not going to be gaslit about what is at play and who is to blame."

The previous night, Harris headlined a fundraiser at "Family Guy" creator Seth MacFarlane's Spanish revival mansion in Beverly Hills. About \$1.5 million was raised for the Biden Victory Fund at the event, which was attended by 30 people, including Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass.

"When I was asked to host this event, I immediately agreed, because I realized if it's at my house, I can drink as much as I want," MacFarlane said. "I'm not going to get a DUI on the way to bed."

He then turned to second gentleman Doug Emhoff, who was in attendance.

"Anyway, now I wanted to get everything right to this introduction. So I practiced how to pronounce your name. Is it Doug?" MacFarlane said, a reference to some Republicans' refusal to properly pronounce Harris' first name.



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KINGS EARN HOME PLAYOFF PLAY-IN GAME

Sacramento Kings fans cheer on the team Sunday against Portland at Golden 1 Center during the final regular-season game of the season. The Kings defeated the Trail Blazers 121-82 to finish ninth in the Western Conference, earning a home play-in game Tuesday against the Golden State Warriors. Read more in Sports, Page 1B, and at sacbee.com.

PG&E customers billed for TV ad touting undergrounding work

BY ARI PLACHTA
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Many PG&E customers have likely seen an upbeat commercial promoting the utility's effort to put 10,000 miles of power lines underground to protect against wildfires. Little did those customers know they would be asked to pay for it.

Pacific Gas & Electric spokesperson Jennifer Robison said in an emailed statement Thursday that PG&E billed customers for the advertisement, called "Undergrounding 10,000 miles of Powerlines for Safety," in filings to its regulator.

In the 30-second ad, which was shown during a recent Golden State Warriors basketball game and has 1.4 million views on YouTube, CEO Patti Poppe shakes hands with workers while sporting a hard hat. She says in a voiceover, "we're transforming your hometown



Patti Poppe
CEO of PG&E

PG&E

Pacific Gas & Electric CEO Patti Poppe appears in an ad called "Undergrounding 10,000 miles of Powerlines for Safety" that the utility billed to its customers.

utility from the underground up."

Robison said this ad and similar television spots have cost to up to \$6 million since April 2022. As part of the company's accounting process with the California Public Utilities

Commission, PG&E requested those costs be covered by a ratepayer funded fire risk mitigation account.

PG&E said this particular TV ad falls into the category of safety communications, which are legally allowed to be cov-

ered by customers. Promotional advertising, meanwhile, is required to be paid for by shareholders.

The purpose of the Fire Risk Mitigation Memorandum Account, according to state law, is to record activities including system hardening, event response and vegetation management.

Katy Morosny, an energy attorney for the Utility Reform Network, believes that the ad is a clear example of brand advertising, not safety messaging.

"This ad is a message about a program that they claim has an impact on safety," Morosny said, "and something they want public support for."

The rate request comes amid a new year of rate hikes, with the average PG&E household paying an additional \$34.50 on its monthly bill, and fears that electricity prices will continue to rise.

Proposed legislation called the Utility Accountability Act, moves through the state legislature. Authored by Senator Dave Min, D Orange County, Senate Bill 938 aims to prevent Cali-

SEE PG&E, 5A



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