

# GLOBAL TIMES

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## WEEKEND



### M503 route to benefit passengers across Straits

The M503 flight path's connecting routes of W122 and W123 have been activated starting Friday, a move beneficial for people from both sides of the Straits **3**

### 135th Canton Fair ends 1st phase with strong results

The 135th China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) concluded first phase of the year in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong Province on Friday, with impressive results **5**

### China, US to ensure panda pair arrive in San Francisco by 2025

China is pleased to see the cooperative units on both sides have reached an intention to collaborate on giant panda conservation, as the giant panda also serves as an ambassador and bridge of friendship: FM **3**

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A man crosses a street as motorists drive past a billboard depicting Iranian ballistic missiles in service in Tehran on April 19, 2024. Iran's state media reported explosions in the central province of Isfahan on April 19, as US media quoted officials saying Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes on Iran. Photo: AFP

▶ Latest round of conflict further affects geopolitical stability

## Intl community calls for restraint amid Iran-Israel escalation fears

By GT staff reporters

With sounds of explosions reverberating around central Iran on Friday morning, concerns of an all-out war in the Middle East are growing all over the world, as media reported that it was Israel that launched the strike, just a few days after Iran's first direct attack in retaliation to Israel's bombing of

its diplomatic mission in Syria on April 1.

ABC News earlier quoted a senior US official as saying that Israel had launched a missile attack against Iran. Quoting an Israeli official, the Washington Post said that it was Israel's military that carried out strikes inside Iran "in response to the Iranian retaliatory assault on April 13."

After the incident, Iran suspended flights in several areas including at Tehran and Isfahan airports, and activated its air defense. However, flight restrictions were lifted hours later. Explosions were also found in a radar battalion in southern Syria and in the Al-Imam area of Babel, Iraq.

Lin Jian, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson,

said Friday that China has noted the relevant reports and stressed it opposes any action that further escalates tensions.

More and more countries called for restraint and de-escalation on Friday. G7 foreign ministers urged "all parties" to "work to prevent further escalation" in the region during a meeting in Italy.

### China slams US 'overcapacity' narratives as economic bullying

By Wang Cong and Yin Yeping

China on Friday markedly sharpened its criticism of the US' accusation of overcapacity in China, saying that the claim, while sounding like an economic concept, is a disguise for its malign attempt to curb China's industrial development and amounts to economic coercion and bullying, and urged Washington to be prudent in words and deeds and refrain from imposing additional tariffs.

The latest remarks from Chinese officials underscored their intensifying efforts to counter some US and European officials' attempt to create a pretext for taking further protectionist and punitive actions against Chinese products and firms, while also calling for global cooperation and dialogue to tackle global issues such as production capacity, experts noted.

Commenting on the US' accusation of overcapacity at a regular press briefing in Beijing, Lin Jian, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, said that such claims are not new, as the US has long accused China of overcapacity due to its exports of a large amount of high-quality, affordable products to the world.

"The so-called overcapacity claim raised by the US seems to be an economic concept, but behind it is a vicious attempt to curb and suppress China's industrial development. It aims to seek a more favorable competitive position and market advantage for itself. It is blatant economic coercion and bullying," Lin said.

Also on Friday, Lin responded to US President Joe

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US

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Officials



# US' delicate ties with Israel show dilemma in its Mideast strategy

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Countries including France, Germany, Russia, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and Sweden have also expressed their concerns and called for de-escalation.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Friday that "it is high time to stop the dangerous cycle of retaliation" in the Middle East.

## Tacit agreement

In contrast to what US and Israeli officials claimed was a "drone and missile attack," the Iranian side is seemingly downplaying the incident.

Iran's Fars news agency said on Friday that "three explosions" were heard near the Shekari army airbase near Isfahan. The Iranian state-owned news network Press TV reported that there was "no sign of explosion or damage" at a nuclear site near the city of Isfahan.

Iran's space agency spokesperson Hossein Dalirian said on X that several drones "have been successfully shot down by air defense, there are no reports of a missile attack for now."

Moreover, a senior Iranian official, told Reuters "We have not received any external attack, and the discussion leans more toward infiltration than attack." According to the official, the Iran side has "no plan" for immediate retaliation, and the external source of the incident has to be confirmed.

According to Liu Zhongmin, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, the latest attack reportedly launched by Israel was more symbolic than substantive.

Compared to Iran's retaliation against Israel's deadly bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus earlier

this month, the latest strike has less intensity and scale, Liu said.

Wang Jin, an associate professor at the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at Northwest University in Xi'an, said that Israel's target was not a nuclear site, but the airbase related to Iran's previous missile and drone attack, which makes it more likely that Israel's intention was to warn Iran by flexing its muscles over military strike capability.

"Israel wants to show toughness without raising the stakes too high. There was no immediate offensive response from Iran either, and it even downplayed the incident," said Liu. "It's clear that both sides are curbing the conflict from escalating into all-out war through some tacit agreement."

While the situation is not yet out of control, experts also warned of the risks under the new pattern.

There are no direct channels of communication between Iran and Israel, said Wang, noting that the way the two countries understand each other's strategic intentions comes more from the practice of "you punch me, I kick you."

In a highly hostile situation, such a pattern could easily lead to the conflict spiraling out of control when there's no international push for de-escalation, Wang said.

In addition, this round of conflict between Israel and Iran has extended the scope of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from the eastern Mediterranean region to the eastern Persian Gulf region, which will affect the geopolitical stability there, Liu added.

## US' Mideast dilemma

Before the reported Israeli attack against Iran, the US and UK announced sanctions on Tehran in

response to its missile and drone attack on Israel.

However, analysts believed the sanctions are more of a symbolic gesture that will have very little substantial effect, and are only meaningful in pacifying Israel.

According to CNN and NBC, citing sources familiar with the matter, the US received advance notification on Thursday of an intended Israeli strike, but Washington did not endorse or play any part in the operation.

The Biden administration is facing mounting pressure from the international community to curb its support for Israel in the Gaza war, especially after Washington's representative once again and unsurprisingly vetoed the Palestinian request for full UN membership at Thursday's UN Security Council meeting.

The US wants to demonstrate its support for Israel by sanctioning Iran, while at the same time distancing itself from Israel and not wanting to get involved in a potential regional war triggered by the Israeli-Iranian conflict, Liu said. "It is a sign of deepening rifts between the US and Israel on specific issues."

According to Liu, Washington had been contemplating a strategic retrenchment in the Middle East, and did not even exclude the possibility of resuming nuclear negotiations with Iran. But with the latest escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its spillover, none of this is possible anymore.

US favoritism toward Israel makes it increasingly difficult for Washington to achieve its goal of controlling the Middle East through pursuing a strategic balance in the region, Liu said.

# Officials sharpen criticism as US tries to create pretext for new curbs

► China, from Page 1

Biden's calls for substantially higher tariffs against Chinese steel products during a speech in the US steel production base of Pittsburgh on Wednesday. Biden also accused China of offering subsidies to expand steel production capacity, which harms US businesses.

In response, Lin said that the claims made by the US side are completely untrue and could harm China-US economic and trade relations. "China is seriously concerned and strongly dissatisfied with this," he said. "China will take all necessary measures to resolutely defend its rights and interests."

"Chinese remarks are aimed at urging all parties to tackle global challenges through cooperation, instead of looking at some issues from one's own self-interests," Zhou Mi, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, told the Global Times on Friday.

## Dangerous narrative

The intensifying pushback from Chinese officials against the accusations both reflected their respect for market laws, as well as efforts to safeguard not only China's interests but the stability of the world economy, Zhou said.

"If the US continues to mislead the public on this issue, it will be very detrimental to global economic and trade cooperation and recovery," he told the Global Times.

Lü Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told the Global Times that the groundless allegation of "overcapacity" by some US politicians defied economic rules, and was aimed at providing a cover for US companies with backward capacity, such as those that make internal combustion engine cars.

"Taking electric cars as an example, the current global capacity cannot meet the surging demand of the global transformation for new energy, and there is about 70-80 percent room for growth in the sector," said Lü.

This highlights significant potential demand for new energy products in many developing countries, experts said.

The overcapacity accusation also puzzled some Western economists. Nicholas Lardy, a senior fellow at Washington DC-based think tank the Peterson Institute for International Economics, told Xinhua last week that the concept of excess capacity is "potentially harmful."

"So Boeing should cut its production? US soybean farmers should limit their production to what can be sold within the US? The US appears to have a comparative advantage in these products so why shouldn't Boeing and US farmers produce more than can be absorbed domestically, with the 'excess' exported?" he said.

## Military inspection



Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (second right), visits a factory workshop on April 19, 2024, as he checks the implementation of the state defense order at an enterprise of the military-industrial complex in the Omsk region of Russia, which produces tanks and heavy flamethrower systems. Photo: VCG

