

Syria drone strike kills one U.S. contractor, wounds several; back-and-forth airstrikes ensue earlier this year



U.S. troops in northern Syria, December 16, 2020
(Sp. Tarako Braswell, Wikimedia Commons)

Kirby Ramores
Staff Writer

A U.S. maintenance facility in Syria was the target of a deadly drone strike on March 23. Alongside several U.S. troops injured was one casualty: a U.S. weapons contractor.

The drone was associated with east-Syrian militia groups receiving support from Iran. In response to the attack, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III authorized precision strikes at Iranian-backed facilities in Syria. The morning following the strikes, the Pentagon held a press conference in which press secretary Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder responded to questions of further counteraction, stating, “as far as any type of future action, I'm not going to talk about or preview potential future operations other than to say we will always reserve the right to respond appropriately if our forces are threatened.”

How did the attack occur?

The U.S. facility near Hasakah was attacked around 1:38 PM local time amid technical difficulties with its air defense system. According to the Department of Defense, a “one-way unmanned aerial vehicle” struck the facility, exploding on contact. Five U.S. servicemen and one U.S. contractor were injured. Another U.S. contractor, identified as Scott Dubis, age 53, was killed in the attack. “Two of the wounded service members were treated on site, while three additional service members and the U.S. contractor were medically evacuated to Coalition medical facilities in Iraq,” the Department of Defense wrote in a press release shortly after the attack.

In the same press release, the Department of Defense stated its belief that the drone was made in Iran and directed by groups affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

How did the U.S. respond?

Hours after the attack, President Biden directed Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to authorize retaliatory airstrikes at several eastern Syrian facilities, believed to be housing IRGC-affiliated militia groups. The strikes were launched before 3:00 AM on March 24. The Pentagon estimated a total of eight militants were killed in the attack.

According to the Middle Eastern Media Research Institute (MEMRI), an Iran-backed group named Liwa Al-Ghaliboun (The Brigade of Those who Prevail) released a statement on March 25 claiming responsibility for the attack. However, the U.S. has not responded to the claim.

Why did the attack occur? A brief overview of United States - Iran relations

U.S.-Iranian tensions have existed since the Islamic Revolution and the overthrow of the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1979. Its last Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, rose to power with the support of the U.S. and other Western allies after a successful coup d'état in 1953.

According to Dr. Ray Takeyh, a Hasib J. Sabbagh senior fellow for Middle East studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), under Mohammad Reza's autocratic rule, Iran saw economic and social reform modeled after Western schools of thought. This extended to continued relations with Western allies, including the United States. Despite this, the Shah was known to violently suppress opposition, which was one of many grievances leading to his deposition.

The Shah's fiercest opposition came from Islamic traditionalists, notably Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution. The movement's goals of Islamic revival went alongside its rejection of Western culture.

In his final year of rule, the Shah faced rising political unrest and declining health. In January of 1979, Mohammad Reza fled to the United States. The remnants of the Pahlavi Dynasty were overthrown by revolutionary factions under the leadership of longtime opposer Ruhollah Khomeini.

By 1980, Supreme Leader Khomeini had established the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IRGC, a branch of the Iranian armed forces that aimed “to defend the country's Islamic system, and to provide a counterweight to the regular armed forces,” according to BBC News. On April 7 of the same year, the U.S. severed ties with Iran.

Since then, U.S.-Iran relations have only declined. In the Iran-Iraq War, the U.S. was one of Iraq's many allies against Iran. In 2002, President George W. Bush listed Iran among Iraq and North Korea as part of an “Axis of Evil”—state sponsors of terrorism. Since the War on Terror, the U.S. has attempted to undermine recognized terrorist organizations, including the IRGC. As part of this objective, the U.S. began occupation of Syria in 2014 to deter the Islamic State, an internationally recognized terrorist organization.

More recent events have only served to further deteriorate U.S.-Iran relations. The assassination of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, carried out by a U.S. drone, escalated tensions into a brief series of military engagements.

As of 2023, the Department of Defense, in regards to the Middle East, considers Iran “a source of instability all around the region,” as stated in a press release on March 24. In a March 23 House Armed Services Committee hearing, General Michael “Erik” Kurilla of CENTCOM testified that since January 1, 2021, “the number is about 78 times that we have been attacked” by IRGC-adjacent forces.

How did Syria respond? What does this mean for the future of U.S.-Iran relations?

On March 24, one day after the initial attack and U.S. retaliation, three more airstrikes targeting U.S. mission support site Green Village were carried out by Iran-backed Syrian militia groups. Two service members sustained traumatic brain injuries, Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Patrick Ryder said in a news briefing.

In a March 24 news conference, President Biden stated that “the U.S. does not seek conflict with Iran, but be prepared for us to act forcefully to protect our people.” The White House's adamant continued into a March 27 statement in which White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby stated “there's been no change in the U.S. footprint in Syria as a result of what happened the last few days.” The White House's intentions to maintain Syrian occupation were made clear. “We're not going to be deterred ... by these attacks from these militant groups,” said Kirby.



Amped for Camp?

Join Bridge to Betterment

A 4-week online summer camp focused on enhancing skills in:
Math, Debate, Science, and Programming

JULY 3RD - JULY 28TH

JUNIORS: 9:30 A.M - 11:30 A.M EST
SENIORS: 1:30 P.M - 3:30 P.M EST

Registration Form:

Registration and donation is due before June 30th
<https://forms.gle/uEJjW8xvqJyCW6Fo8>

Price:
\$25/week

All proceeds go towards the Payir Foundation
More information @ www.payir.org/

Contact us:
BridgeToBetterment@gmail.com

Groups:

Juniors:
Rising 4th-5th Graders

Seniors:
Rising 7th-8th Graders

Contact 860-327-2736 on
WhatsApp for more
information!

Academy Times

WHO Ends COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

Alessandra Sono-Ampuero
Staff Writer

When the World Health Organization declared the end of the Covid-19 pandemic on May 11, 2023, the news undoubtedly brought relief and hope to people worldwide.

Over the past few years, the pandemic has indeed presented numerous challenges and hardships for individuals, communities, and healthcare systems. During the pandemic, many lives were lost, and people had to take precautions physically, emotionally, and mentally.

People wore masks and socially distanced themselves to mitigate the spread of the virus. These essentials were mandatory to protect ourselves and our loved ones from the disease.

Additionally, with the dedication of healthcare workers, we were able to overcome these difficulties and reach a point where the pandemic is no longer a threat.

However, it's important to note that even



The logo of the World Health Organization

after the end of a pandemic, the world may not return to the exact same state as before. The experience of living through a global-health crisis has undoubtedly left its mark on society. Changes in public health practices, travel protocols, and economic...

See COVID-19, p. 3

Welcoming Goodbyes

Guillermo Rivera
Staff Writer

As if mimicking waves
The flow of time
Stops for no one
Pushing the past further behind
And pulling us forward into the future
As seniors now graduate.

And the time for school comes to an end
Welcoming in warmer weather
Telling us to welcome in the future
And leave the past behind as memories
We too say goodbye to those who graduate.

Seniors who've left lasting impressions
On teachers and peers alike
Leaving those younger to lead the way
For the rest of the school
They now leave to find a place in the world
With only their hopes taken with them.

Cinco de Mayo

Janelly Cruz
Staff Writer

Cinco de Mayo is a celebration that happens every year on May 5 in both Mexico and the United States to commemorate Mexico's victory over the Second French Empire during the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Cinco de Mayo is often confused with Mexican Independence Day, but it's something totally different. It's to celebrate the war that took place in Puebla, Mexico. The Mexican army was considered underdogs, but they ended up overtaking the French and winning the war.

To celebrate, people have parades, parties with mariachi music and Mexican folk dancing; they serve traditional food like tacos and Mole Poblano, which is the official dish of Cinco de Mayo. It's a brown sauce made with chilis, fruit, nuts, seeds, and Mexican chocolate.

The colors of Cinco de Mayo correspond to the red, white, and green in the Mexican flag. The meaning of the flag's colors has evolved over time, with green representing hope and independence; white, unity and purity; and red signifies the blood of religious and national heroes.

Kent State Shooting Remembrance

Arelys Otranto-Centeno
Staff Writer

On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of anti-war demonstrators at Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine others.

This catastrophic event had a radiating impact on nations all over the world. Kent State students rebelled, and hundreds of colleges and universities were temporally closed.

This traumatizing event opened the eyes of people all over the world and will always be remembered by the families of Jeffrey Miller, Allison Krause, William Schroeder, Sandra Scheuer, and the injured nine.



Kent State Shooting Memorial

In remembrance of this tragic event, everyone is encouraged to stop all violence and offer peace.

Music Review - Oracular Spectacular

Sebastian Munera
Staff Writer

MGMT is an electronic/indie rock duo made up of two Connecticut residents, Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser. MGMT gained a lot of mainstream popularity during the late 2000s and early 2010s with early singles like “Kids” and “Electric Feel” from their debut album “Oracular Spectacular” released in 2007.

The production and sound of the whole album, I believe, set the stage for the EDM pop and indie pop scene in the late 2000s with more artists like Empire of the Sun, Phoenix, and M83 having their own respective mainstream hits with singles like Walking on a Dream (Empire of the Sun), 1901 (Phoenix), and Midnight City (M83), as well as the EDM pop era of the early 2010s.

The album starts with a tone-setter, thematically and production-wise. “Time to Pretend” starts with a build up to the duo's signature and always unique-sounding synth leads. The group’s vocals match the rebellious and cheery sound of the song, but the lyrics are surprisingly darker in tone and explicit, explaining a fantasy about a rockstar lifestyle they could live until their death.

“Weekend Wars” introduces the tribal theme that continues in the entire album (as hinted by the album cover) through the mentions of Christ, “Mental mystics,” curses, and evil. The lyrics are metaphorical, and it is not unanimously decided what they mean. Other than that, the song doesn’t have much else and is a weaker part of the album for me.

“The Youth” lyrics, like “This is a call to arms to live and love and sleep together” sound like a speech from a leader to their followers. To me, this song is the peak of the album thematically and sound-wise. While the production is much simpler and calmer, it adds to the emotional meaning of the song and allows for Andrew’s songwriting and chorus abilities to shine. He starts with the usual storytelling-rant vocals that beautifully build up to the hauntingly falsetto-lead repetitive chorus of the song. The key change in the middle of the chorus at the end of the song is so simple, yet so effective as an ending to a song with the simple concept of youth and

change.

“Electric Feel” is clearly the most popular and recognizable sound on the album and for good reason; it’s just an objectively good song in every aspect. If you don’t know already, the whole song is a metaphor for a specific type of pleasure which they call “electric feel” that can only be given by a certain girl. Not very subtle but if you just don’t pay attention, the tribal themes can perfectly continue through these lyrics.

“Kids” is the last song of the electronic half of the album that also ends with a bang. More iconic -lead synths and sounds of kids screaming and having fun are littered throughout the track. The album then starts its second half with “4th Dimensional Transition” which switches the production from primarily electronic to more simplistic and acoustic. It becomes a lot more lyrical and metaphorical as well. Although the second half is not nearly as memorable as the first, one song that is worth shouting out is the ending track “Future Reflections.”

National Anxiety Disorder Day

Maddox Judson
Staff Writer

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day is a day to raise awareness for anxiety disorders and advocate for screening, early intervention, and treatment. It is observed on the first Wednesday of May and was observed on May 3 in 2023.

Anxiety is a relatively common mental health condition. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), anxiety disorders affect 40 million adults in the United States alone (approximately 19.1% of the U.S. population). Despite its commonality, anxiety is a victim of misinformation and stigmatization.

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day is an attempt to destigmatize anxiety disorders, spread awareness, and provide access to resources that educate and provide support. Screenings are available both in-person and online, and these tests help to identify anxiety disorders and

provide recommendations for treatment and management. Anxiety is very treatable, and treatments such as psychotherapy, medication, and self-help strategies such as mindfulness and exercise all aid in helping people with anxiety disorder live fulfilling lives.

As students, we all experience anxiety due to academic stress, peer pressure, or uncertainties about our future (especially as seniors). It is important to recognize when anxiety begins to interfere with your everyday life and seek help early in order for effective intervention.

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day provides opportunities for students to educate themselves about anxiety disorders and to access resources to help manage their anxiety.

National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day is important to raise awareness for mental health and the importance of early intervention. It helps recognize the importance of taking care of our mental health and encouraging others to do so. If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental wellbeing, reach out for help. You are not alone.

Cinco De Mayo Celebrations



Guillermo Rivera
Staff Writer

Cinco de Mayo or May 5 is a way to celebrate Mexican American culture and is not as relevant in Mexico as it is in the United States. It essentially commemorates the culture and heritage belonging to Mexican Americans that started in California in the 1800’s.

Today’s celebrations usually involve festivities such as parades, block parties, street food and mariachi competitions, with whirling dancers wearing shiny ribbons, braids, and bright, ruffled dresses. Although for people with non-Mexican ancestry, Cinco de Mayo is just another holiday to party on while drinking tequila shots and gorging on tortilla chips smothered with melted cheddar cheese.

COVID-19

(Continued from page 1)

systems may persist for some time. The concept of a "new normal" has been used to describe the post-pandemic period, where adaptations to the challenges faced during the crisis continue to shape our lives. This could involve public health measures, the integration of remote work or education, and changes in social dynamics. While the declaration of the end of a pandemic is a significant milestone, it's essential to remember that public health situations can evolve, and new challenges may arise in the future. Remaining informed, staying adaptable, and continuing to prioritize public health measures can help ensure a smoother transition to the post-pandemic world.

My Experience at AAE

Lydianis Santos Cappas
Staff Writer

Mis años en la escuela CREC academy of engineering a llegado a un final este año en junio 20 seré oficialmente una graduanda de la dicha escuela. Estuve 3 años en esta escuela y puedo decir que han sido 3 años de muchas lecciones y muchos dolores de cabeza. Tuve muchos maestros que siempre estuvieron para mí y siempre me ayudaron a seguir adelante, en especial la mejor maestra Ms. Montross ella siempre se aseguraba que yo tuviera mis notas en buen estado y que yo hiciera todos mis trabajos. No fue fácil para mí, ya que pase por muchas situaciones que afectaron mi año académico de muchas formas, ya yo no quería seguir yendo a la escuela ya no tenía ánimos para nada y me sentía triste porque al mismo momento yo quería que mi madre se sintiera orgullosa de mí so yo no me rendí yo seguí adelante y le demostré a mi mamá que yo pedía hacerlo y con la ayuda de mis maestros y con la ayuda de Dios puedo decir que lo logre di lo mejor de mí y estoy en High Honors y ahora me graduó y continuo mi camino hacia Springfield College donde estaré estudiando Enfermería. No sé cuál sea tu obstáculo que te pueda estar aguantando para seguir adelante, pero no importando lo que sea, no te des por vencido, no te rindas porque al final del camino todo valdrá la

pena, el esfuerzo valdrá la pena, sigue tus sueños cumple tus metas.

My years at CREC Academy of Engineering ends on June 20, 2023, when I will officially graduate high school. I spent three years at this school, and I can say that it has been three years of many lessons and many headaches.

I had many teachers who were always there for me and always helped me to keep going, especially the best teacher, Ms. Montross,. She always made sure that I had my grades in good order and that I did all my work. It was not easy for me, since I went through many situations that affected my academic years in many ways, and I no longer wanted to continue going to school. I no longer had the spirit to do anything, and I felt sad because at the same time I wanted my mother to be proud of me.

So, I did not give up. I went ahead and showed my mom and with the help of my teachers and with the help of God, I can say that I did my best. I am in high honors and now I will continue to Springfield College where I will be studying nursing.

I do not know what obstacles may be holding you back from moving forward, but no matter what it is, don't give up at the end of the road, it will all be worth it. The effort will be worth it. Follow your dreams and reach your goals.

Mental Health

Sasha Gabrielle Smith Peterkin
Staff Writer

In today’s world, so many people, especially teenagers, are dealing with multiple dilemmas until important things like mental health are overlooked.

Some parents may accuse their children of making excuses and associate their illness with laziness. Some teachers may think students are “unfocused,” and colleges may assume students are academically incompatible.

These are just a few of the complaints that surface when a teen’s mental health may interfere with normal, daily tasks.

There should be more resources available for teens to help deal with these problems instead of offering assumptions about teens’ “behavior.”

Some suggestions are easier access to counselors, ways for teens to channel their voices without feeling shut down, and more activities and programs that would benefit them.

AAE Art Students Visit: NYC & The MET!

Patrick Woble
Staff Writer

On May 16, students in Mr. Wright and Mr. Howe’s art classes visited The Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET), which exhibits art from around the world, in addition to visiting contemporary art museums in the Chelsea District.

The students first went to Manhattan and ate lunch on the steps of the MET, which houses art collections representing more than 5,000 years of work, including paintings, sculptures, artifacts found in ancient Greek cities, swords, and suits of armor.

After visiting the MET students took a walking tour of Grand Central Park where they saw New York City's reservoir where most residents get their water supply.

After walking through the park, students took a short bus ride to The High Line, an elevated freight rail line transformed into a public park on Manhattan’s West Side

The above-ground promenade consists of a garden with various trees and plants on one side, and on the other side is a walkway where people stroll and admire the plants and the city underneath.

After a long day, AAE students ate dinner at Chelsea Market before heading back to Connecticut.



“Classical Landscape with a Shepherd” by Jean Victor Bertin (from the MET’s collection)