

Under Iran fire, UAE president writes poem to nation's defenders

The musical tribute is titled 'Men, by God, Truly Men'

AFP | Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

The UAE President wrote a patriotic poem that was performed by the national orchestra, state media said yesterday, as his country faced the attacks unleashed by Iran after US-Israeli strikes.

"The UAE National Orchestra has released a special musical tribute, titled 'Men, by God, Truly Men', featuring the poem 'Rijal Wallah Rijal' written by President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, honouring those who dedicate themselves to protecting the nation," WAM said.

WAM shared a video of the performance, which kicked off with a recent interview in which Sheikh Mohamed said the UAE had "thick skin and bitter flesh. We are no easy prey".

Men dressed in dark kandouras, the traditional dress for men in the Gulf, and white head-dresses, then went on to sing, accompanied by an orchestra that included foreigners as well as women.

The footage was interspersed with shots of fighter jets.

"We call the honourable, the brave. The Sons of Zayed answer the call. Theirs is victory, no matter the cost," one of the verses says, referring to Sheikh Mohamed's father and founder



UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan meeting with Vice President and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid al-Maktoum at al-Marmoom in the gulf emirate of Dubai

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Since Iran's attacks began on February 28, the UAE has seen 262 ballistic missiles and roughly 1,500 drones target its territory -- more than all of the other nations that have faced Iranian attacks combined.

Most have been intercepted.

A total of six people were killed, mostly civilians, but also two Emirati troops who died when a helicopter malfunctioned.

The UAE has sought to reassure its population, roughly 90

percent of whom are foreigners, that the country is safe and able to defend itself.

Last weekend, in an interview with Abu Dhabi TV, Sheikh Mohamed said the UAE will emerge "stronger" after the Middle East war.

Russia says internet outages to last as long as 'necessary'

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Mobile internet outages in Russia will last as long as "necessary" to ensure citizens' safety, the Kremlin said yesterday, after network disruptions were recorded in Moscow and other Russian cities.

It is the latest in a string of curbs imposed by the Russian authorities on internet access, after Moscow ordered restrictions on messaging apps WhatsApp, owned by US social media giant Meta, and Telegram.

Russia cited the need to combat criminal activity and has been pushing state-backed Russian rival Max instead. But Kremlin critics say it is an attempt to bolster surveillance online.

When asked at a daily briefing about how long the outages will last, Kremlin spokesman

Dmitry Peskov said "as long as additional measures are necessary to ensure the safety of our citizens."

He also accused Ukraine of using "increasingly sophisticated attack methods" and said that "more technologically advanced counter-measures are needed" to repel them.

Russian security services have frequently claimed that Ukraine was using Telegram to recruit people or commit acts of sabotage in Russia.

The outages have "gotten worse lately", Nikolay, a 20-year-old student who refused to give his full name, told AFP in Moscow, adding that "using the internet has become less convenient".

"I have problems with messaging apps, I can't contact my loved ones," he said.

UN urges 'humanitarian exemptions' to get aid through Strait of Hormuz

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations aid chief warned yesterday that the Middle East war was impacting aid routes and urged "exemptions" so humanitarian supplies could get through.

The war in the Middle East has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, while fuel supply disruptions are sending freight rates soaring.

UN aid chief Tom Fletcher warned that the escalating war and the impact on the strait was having "a direct impact on our humanitarian supplies, including going to areas of key need in sub-Saharan Africa".

"I'm worried that further escalation will damage other supply routes," he told reporters in Geneva, warning

that this was happening as the war "drives up the prices and... drives more people into greater need".

"So we're appealing to all the parties to try and secure those routes, including the Strait of Hormuz for our humanitarian traffic... so we can reach anyone, anywhere, on the basis of greatest need, and not on the basis of politics." "We're living through a moment right now of grave peril," Fletcher said.

"We're seeing these crises escalate rapidly and increasingly collide in dangerous ways," he said, calling for "calmer heads to prevail".

The last two weeks of fighting are further confirmation that "we're living in a time of brutality, impunity and indifference", he said.

Lebanon says war toll rises to 634 dead, more than 800,000 displaced

Oil prices jump despite strategic reserve release

● Tehran has retaliated to US and Israeli attacks that began on February 28 by attacking targets across the oil-rich Gulf

AFP | London, United Kingdom

A record release of oil from strategic reserves by IEA nations failed to ease concerns about the impact from the Middle East war, with crude prices pushing further higher and stocks sliding yesterday.

The move to release oil stocks came as Iran said it was ready for a long war of attrition that would "destroy" the world economy, after firing on two commercial ships and threatening any vessels from the US or its allies.

The International Energy Agency announced its member countries would unlock 400 million barrels of oil from their reserves to ease the impact from a lack of supplies transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran has retaliated to US and Israeli attacks that began on February 28 by attacking targets across the oil-rich Gulf and effectively shutting down the crucial Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20% of the world's oil usually transits to world markets.

Despite the IEA announce-

Key figures at around 1630 GMT

Brent North Sea Crude:	▲ 5.6% at \$92.74 per barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 5.5% at \$88.03 per barrel
New York - Dow:	▼ 0.9% at 47,292.13 points
New York - S&P 500:	▼ 0.3% at 6,764.60
Nasdaq Composite:	▲ at 22,695.84
London - FTSE 100:	▼ 0.6% at 10,353.77 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▼ 0.2% at 8,041.81 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	▼ 1.4 percent at 23,640.03 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 1.4% at 55,025.37 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▼ 0.2 at 25,898.76 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ 0.3% at 4,133.43 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▼ at \$1.1574 from \$1.1612 on Tuesday
Pound/dollar:	▼ at \$1.3407 from \$1.3415
Dollar/yen:	▲ at 158.81 yen from 158.06 yen
Euro/pound:	▼ at 86.33 pence from 86.48 pence

ment oil prices added to gains.

While it may be a record reserves release, it still only replaces part of the lost supplies, noted analyst Helge Andre Martinsen at DNB Carnegie.

He estimated that releases from strategic reserves could total 1.75 million barrels per day, while lost supply is approximately 11 million barrels per day of crude and around four million barrels per day of oil products.

"Hence, it will help, but it won't make a massive difference for the very short-term global oil balance," he said.

Equity markets were not

reassured either. Wall Street was mostly lower in afternoon trading and European markets closed in the red.

"With the IEA's record oil reserves release unable to push prices lower today, this is keeping risk appetite downbeat, with stock markets struggling and currencies of oil importing regions lower," said Forex.com analyst Fawad Razaqzada

Oil volatility Fears that the conflict could drag on -- choking off energy supplies -- sent both main crude contracts soaring on Monday to within a whisker of \$120 a barrel, the highest since 2022.

Natural gas prices also rocketed.

Prices dropped on Tuesday after US President Donald Trump said the war was "going to be ended soon", before turning higher again.

"Markets are likely to grow increasingly fearful over the long-term implications with each day that passes," said Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at Scope Markets.

Forex.com's Razaqzada said the markets were paying attention to Iran's warnings to disrupt oil flows and a reported shift to continued attacks from retaliatory strikes.

Such a move "suggests the conflict could intensify rather than cool", he said.

New attacks hit three commercial ships in the Gulf on Wednesday, officials said, leaving one vessel in flames as Iran pressed its campaign against its oil-exporting neighbours.

Sentiment was also dampened by US group Citi, consultancies Deloitte and PwC and other firms in Dubai, which closed offices or asked employees to evacuate Wednesday after Iran threatened US and Israel-linked economic assets in the Middle East.

The evacuations at the heart of the Middle East's financial hub come as the Gulf but especially the UAE has borne the brunt of Iran's attacks in response to US-Israeli strikes.

Spain without ambassador to Israel in new blow to ties

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Spain has formally dismissed its ambassador to Israel, further degrading poor relations after recalling her six months ago in a spat over the Gaza war, according to a decree released yesterday.

Ana Maria Salomon was officially relieved of her duties on Tuesday at the proposal of Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares, in a decree signed by King Felipe VI and published in the official state journal.

She was recalled from Tel Aviv in September after Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez unveiled measures aimed at stopping what he called "genocide" in Gaza,

where Israel fought a devastating war following the 2023 attacks by Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar then accused Sanchez of antisemitism and barred two of his ministers from entry, plunging already frayed ties to new depths.

Israel withdrew its ambassador to Madrid in 2024 after Spain's recognition of Palestinian statehood and has since been represented by a charge d'affaires.

Sanchez, one of the most vocal critics of Israel's war in Gaza, has also opposed the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran launched on February 28.

Three brothers arrested over US embassy blast in Oslo: police

AFP | Oslo, Norway

Norwegian police said yesterday that three brothers had been arrested on suspicion of a "terrorist bombing" over a weekend explosion at the US embassy in Oslo.

Police prosecutor Christian Hatlo told a press conference the brothers, who were

Norwegian citizens of Iraqi origin, had been arrested in Oslo.

"We are still working from several hypotheses. One of them is whether this is an order from a government entity" because of the target, Hatlo said. He added that police were not ruling out further arrests.