Al-Nassr star Sadio Mane | Retired star Rio Ferdinand | Retired star Patrice Evra | Cranes defender Semakula | Cranes defender Lwaliwa

IS RONALDO SAFE?

By Fred Kaweesi

Money can't buy life! But it can save it from danger. Ask Cristiano Ronaldo.

Football's first billionaire is suspected to have flown out of Saudi Arabia aboard his £61million (sh294b) private jet following the escalation of tension across the Middle East.

While several international sports personalities are stranded in the Middle East after Iran launched missile strikes across the region, reports indicate 41-year-old Ronaldo is in Madrid, enjoying an impromptu holiday.

Ronaldo, who plays for Saudi Arabia club Al-Nassr and is based in Riyadh, owns a Bombardier Global Express 6500 jet, and when it was time to run for his life, Ronaldo just flew out of there.

He has lived in Riyadh since joining Al-Nassr from Manchester United in December 2022.

Ronaldo, whose estimated net worth is $1.4b (sh5 Trillion), earns $200m (sh720b) per year, $16.6m (sh60b) per month, $4m (sh14b) per week, $548,000 (sh2m) per day, $22,833 (sh82m) per hour, $380 (sh1.3m) per minute and $6.34 (sh22,000) per second.

Football in Saudi Arabia has since been suspended.

Recent explosions in Riyadh have sparked concerns over the safety of Ronaldo **(pictured right)** and other international football stars playing in the Saudi Pro League amid the conflict between Iran, Israel and the U.S.

Riyadh serves as the home base for several of the Saudi Pro League's top clubs, including Ronaldo's Al Nassr and Al Hilal, Al Shabab and Al Riyadh.

Sadio Mane (Al-Nassr), Brazilian Roberto Fermino, Algerian Riad Mahrez (Al-Ahli), French Karim Benzema (Al-Hilal) are some of the prominent football stars in Saudi Arabia. Uganda Cranes defenders Kenneth Semakula and Halid Lwaliwa also play for Saudi Arabian First Division and Second Division sides, Al Adalah and Al Ain FC respectively.

Iran has targeted Saudi Arabia in recent days, with the country's Ministry of Defense confirming that the US embassy in Riyadh had been attacked by two drones yesterday. Iran also struck Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura refinery, the world's largest oil refinery, causing a spike in worldwide oil prices.

The attacks came in response to what the United States and Israel described as a "pre-emptive" strike that reportedly killed Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

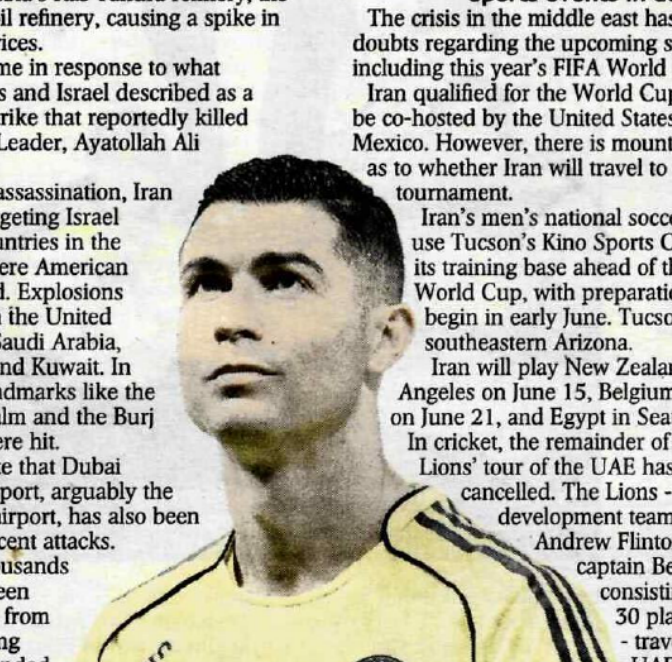
Following the assassination, Iran fired missiles targeting Israel and multiple countries in the Middle East, where American bases are located. Explosions were reported in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait. In Dubai, major landmarks like the Fairmont The Palm and the Burj Al Arab hotel were hit.

Reports indicate that Dubai International Airport, arguably the world's busiest airport, has also been struck during recent attacks.

As a result, thousands of flights have been cancelled to and from the region, leaving several stars stranded.

Dubai Tennis Championships winner Daniil Medvedev is among the tennis players struggling to fly out of Dubai.

Former Manchester United legends Rio Ferdinand and Patrice Evra, who are residents in the United Arab Emirates have broken their silence on being stuck in a Dubai lockdown. Ferdinand and his family have since shifted to the basement of their apartment.



Sports events in doubt?

The crisis in the middle east has raised doubts regarding the upcoming sporting events including this year's FIFA World Cup.

Iran qualified for the World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. However, there is mounting uncertainty as to whether Iran will travel to the US for the tournament.

Iran's men's national soccer team will use Tucson's Kino Sports Complex as its training base ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with preparations set to begin in early June. Tucson is located in southeastern Arizona.

Iran will play New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15, Belgium in Los Angeles on June 21, and Egypt in Seattle on June 26.

In cricket, the remainder of the England Lions' tour of the UAE has been cancelled. The Lions - England's development team led by coach Andrew Flintoff and Test captain Ben Stokes and consisting of about 30 players and staff - travelled to the UAE for matches against Pakistan Shaheens.

Several sporting events across the region have been suspended, including Asian Champions League football matches and fixtures in the Qatari league.

Printed and published by The New Vision Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, P.O. Box 9815, Kampala. Tel: 041 4337000. Fax: 4235843. Registered at GPO as a newspaper. Advertising offices are situated at Pike House, Plot 17 First Stre