

以卵擊石

yi3 luan3 ji1 shi2

An airport service van hit a taxiing Airbus A330 passenger jet at the Hong Kong International Airport. The news picture showed the front of the small van totally destroyed.

The driver was lucky to be alive. His vehicle could have been sucked into the rotating blades of the engine, in which case the consequence would be too horrifying to contemplate. There is an ongoing investigation, and it would be quite baffling if the driver had failed to see an airplane with a wing span of 200 feet.

When a 2,000-kg van and a 242-tonne aircraft collide, it is a clear case of “以卵擊石” (yi3 luan3 ji1 shi2).

“以” (yi3) is “to use,” “卵” (luan3) “an egg,” “an ovum,” “擊” (ji1) “to hit,” “to strike,” “to attack,” and “石” (shi2) “rock,” “stone.” “以卵擊石” (yi3 luan3 ji1 shi2) is, literally, “use an egg to hit a rock,” “to throw an egg

Idiom by Lon Yan

against a rock,” the result of which needs no explaining. “以卵擊石” (yi3 luan3 ji1 shi2) means “to court defeat by fighting against overwhelming odds,” “to fight a hopeless battle.”

The idiom is used to describe a weak party putting up a fight against a much stronger opponent, like an unknown candidate running against a hugely popular incumbent in an election.

The fight between David and Goliath could also be considered one in the category of “以卵擊石” (yi3 luan3 ji1 shi2), but apparently if you are clever enough, the egg can actually beat the rock.

Terms containing the character “擊” (ji1) include:

擊劍 (ji1 jian4) – fencing

擊中 (ji1 zhong1) – to make a hit; to hit a target

擊敗 (ji1 bai4) – to defeat; to beat

衝擊 (chong1 ji1) – to assault; to attack