



# Washington Insider

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## Washington Insider

### ABOUT US

Transatlantic Today delighted to present the Washington Insider Magazine, a product that we present to our readers in Washington DC and beyond. Our magazine publishes unique and independent coverage on transatlantic relations with a Washington perspective. Transatlantic Today covers policymaking, politics and business related to the transatlantic relationship.

Our magazine strives to be become a key news analysis source for news on politics and policymakers in the US with particular focus on DC. Our coverage is designed with nonpartisan journalism and real-time tools create, inform and engage a those seeking timely and concise news.

We believe in providing our audience with indepen-

dent journalism throughout expert writers, analysts and journalists. Our culture is distinguished by unwavering grit, honesty, and a focus on innovation.

Our work is designed by relentless grit, integrity and a prioritization of urgent and newsworthy topics.

In both of our website and and this magazine we cover topics about Diplomacy, Security, Defence, Counter Terrorism, foreign policy and international affairs. Indeed our reporting, OPeds, interviews with various stakeholders provide unique insights and analysis as well as the tools to arm you with the intel you need to make informed decisions.

Here I wish to commend.

*Editorial Team*

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# GEORGE SANTOS: FROM RISING POLITICAL STAR TO FACING EXPULSION

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

George Santos, a freshman Congressman from New York, finds himself embroiled in scandal and facing expulsion less than a year into his tenure. Known for a highly embellished biography, the 35-year-old lawmaker has become a symbol of deceit within the political sphere. He faces an array of federal charges, including wire fraud, identity theft, and conspiracy, raising questions about his future in the House of Representatives.

Santos admitted to being a “terrible liar,” as allegations of falsehoods shadowed him even before taking office. His fabrications include claims of a non-existent real estate portfolio, fraudulent college degrees, and a dubious narrative about his family history. These claims, alongside a fabricated career on Wall Street and ties to the Jewish faith, painted a picture he used to position himself as a self-made success.

Santos ran on a platform as an openly gay, first-generation American and a champion of the “American dream.” However, the story unraveled quickly as investigative reports questioned his educational and career



claims. Notably, The New York Times discovered that Santos had never attended Baruch College or worked for Goldman Sachs and Citigroup, as he'd claimed. Further scrutiny revealed that his family history and connection to 9/11 were similarly exaggerated.

In a series of legal blows, Santos was indicted on multiple charges in May, including fraud and theft of public funds. Additional indictments followed in October, accusing him of money laundering, conspiracy, and making false statements to the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Prosecutors

allege that Santos misused campaign funds for personal expenses and fraudulently claimed unemployment benefits. Santos, however, maintains his innocence and plans to stand trial in September 2024.

Despite these controversies, Santos remains defiant, expressing intentions to seek re-election. Yet, his future hangs in the balance, with a recent push from New York Republicans to expel him from Congress. If two-thirds of the House vote in favor, Santos could join the ranks of only five members expelled from the House in U.S. history.

# House Blocks Resolution to Expel Rep. George Santos, Dividing GOP

By Christina Levandowski



In a significant move on Wednesday, the House voted against expelling Representative George Santos, a decision that preserves the Republican Party's thin majority but has sparked debate across the political spectrum. The resolution, filed by members of Santos's own New York delegation, aimed to oust him due to a series of criminal charges, including money laundering, theft of public funds, and identity theft. Santos, who pleaded not guilty to all 23 counts, continues to face legal challenges and growing scrutiny.

The vote required a two-thirds majority but fell short, ending with a 213-179 split that did not even achieve a simple majority. This outcome maintains Santos's position, even as he remains embroiled in controversy over allegedly fabricating his resume and has faced repeated calls to step down from both parties.

House Republicans showed stark division on the matter. Speaker Mike Johnson voiced opposition to Santos's expulsion, suggesting it was premature since Santos has yet

to be convicted. Some Republicans warned that expelling him without a conviction could set a risky precedent, while others emphasized the moral imperative to act against what they call "unfit" behavior. Only five members in the history of Congress have been removed through expulsion, and three of those were for Civil War-related treason, underscoring the rarity of such a measure.

The House Ethics Committee, investigating Santos, has pledged to provide an update by November 17, potentially offering clarity on the legal front. The outcome of this vote raises questions about accountability standards in Congress and reveals the complexities facing Republicans as they balance party interests with public trust.

The failed vote allows Santos to remain in Congress, where he plans to seek reelection in 2024, further testing the GOP's stance on ethical responsibility.

## Colorado Rep. Ken Buck Won't Seek Reelection, Criticizes GOP Election Denialism

By Irene Taschek

Colorado Representative Ken Buck announced he won't seek reelection, citing growing frustration with the Republican Party's embrace of election denialism. In a strongly worded

statement, Buck condemned narratives that he says undermine Americans' faith in democracy and justice. "Too many Republican leaders are lying to America," Buck said in a

video posted on social media, criticizing claims that the 2020 election was stolen and that the January 6 Capitol riot was merely an "unguided tour."

Buck, a former prosecutor and five-term congressman, argued that these false narratives erode trust in the rule of law and prevent the party from tackling real issues. He stated that the GOP's fixation on "retribution for contrived injustices of the past" hinders it from offering effective solutions for the future.

This stance has set Buck apart from some Republican colleagues. He has been vocal in his criticism of election denialism, a position that has put him at odds with many GOP voters. During the recent House leadership crisis, Buck helped block Rep. Jim Jordan's speakership bid, calling for Jordan to acknowledge that "Donald Trump didn't win the election." Buck also voted with Democrats and seven other Republicans to remove Rep. Kevin McCarthy from his role as Speaker, citing issues

Reflecting on his decision to leave Congress, Buck noted that the party has shifted away from traditional values of "liberty" and "economic



freedom," embracing what he called "self-serving lies" instead. Buck expressed concern that the GOP, in its current state, cannot adequately address America's challenges. "Americans are rightfully concerned about our nation's future and are looking to Republicans for a course correction," he said, "but their hope may be in vain."

His announcement came as Texas Rep. Kay Granger, chair of the House Appropriations Committee, also stated she would not seek reelection,



marking a significant shift in the House GOP leadership. Granger expressed gratitude for her years in Congress, calling on the next generation to continue serving the people with strength and dedication.

Buck's departure underscores his belief that genuine change in the GOP will require "a steadfast commitment to truth," an effort he believes must go beyond popular narratives and social media engagement.

## Donald Trump Jr Testifies in NY Fraud Trial, Distances Himself from Financial Statements

By Jan Frazier

Donald Trump Jr took the stand on Wednesday in a New York fraud trial involving his father, Donald Trump, and the family business. Trying to distance himself from the financial statements central to

the case, Trump Jr, 45, was the first family member to testify in the civil lawsuit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James. His brother Eric is expected on Thursday, with Donald Trump and Ivanka

scheduled for next week.

In court, Trump Jr maintained a courteous demeanor, jokingly remarking,

"I should have worn makeup" as photographers



During questioning, Trump Jr detailed his role, along with his father and former CFO Allen Weisselberg, as trustees of the Donald J Trump Revocable Trust. When asked if Donald Trump remained a trustee, he claimed,

“I don’t recall,”

“The accountants worked on it. That’s why we pay them,”

when pressed on his role in preparing the disputed financial statements.

Earlier in the week, Trump Jr struck a more combative tone in a Newsmax interview, alleging that

“mainstream media and [Washington] DC want to throw Trump in jail for a thousand years... Truly sick stuff, but this is why we fight.”

Attorney General James alleges that Trump and his business associates fraudulently inflated the former president’s wealth to secure favorable loan



terms. She noted, for instance, Trump’s claim that his Trump Tower apartment was 30,000 square feet, when it actually measured just 10,996 square feet. Judge Arthur Engoron has already ruled that the Trumps committed fraud and is now determining penalties. James seeks \$250 million in damages and the cancellation of Trump’s New York business licenses, which would prevent him from operating businesses in the state.

Testimony from Michiel McCarty, chair of MM Dillon &

Co, estimated that Trump’s inflated asset claims cost banks over \$168 million in lost interest payments. Trump’s attorney, Christopher Kise, argued that banks were not misled, but Judge Engoron dismissed this, emphasizing his own finding of

“ill-gotten gains.”

Donald Trump, not present in court, condemned the trial on social media, saying,

“Leave my children alone, Engoron. You are a disgrace to the legal profession!”

## Progressive Senator Fetterman Faces Cease-Fire Backlash Amid Israel-Hamas War

By Eric Gahagan

In the wake of Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel, which killed over 1,400 people, Democratic leaders, including President Joe Biden, have largely backed Israel’s right to retaliate. Among them, Pennsylvania Senator John Fetterman, a prominent progressive, strongly supported

military, intelligence, and humanitarian aid for Israel, stating the U.S. must stand “in lockstep” with its ally.

This stance, while aligning with much of the Democratic Party, has sparked unexpected backlash, particularly from

Fetterman’s progressive base. Recently, about 200 pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered outside his Philadelphia office, demanding his support for an immediate cease-fire. Former campaign staffers have also voiced disapproval, with some feeling

“gutted” by his stance, as reported by The Intercept.



Fetterman’s uncompromising support for Israel is consistent with his campaign views, influenced by personal experiences with rising antisemitism, including the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting near his Pittsburgh home. Acknowledging the complexities, he calls for ongoing humanitarian aid to Gaza but



rejects a cease-fire until Hamas is neutralized, arguing it’s a necessary step to protect both Israeli and Palestinian lives.

## Age and Perception: Trump and Biden’s Political Standing in 2024

By Athena Nagel

As Donald Trump criticizes President Joe Biden’s age and mental acuity, he faces scrutiny over his own gaffes. Trump recently mixed up cities during a campaign event and misidentified Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán as the leader of Turkey. With Trump at 77 and Biden at 80, the age factor is crucial in the 2024 election narrative.

Notably, Biden keeps speeches concise, often under 30 minutes, while Trump frequently speaks for over 90 minutes, leading to slip-ups. At a recent rally in Iowa, Trump mistakenly welcomed attendees to Sioux Falls instead of Sioux City. Such incidents challenge his strategy of portraying Biden as confused.

Concerns about his own age, asserting that Biden’s issues stem from mental decline rather than age itself.

The age issue remains a pivotal topic as both candidates navigate their campaigns, influencing voter perception ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

Polling indicates that many Americans view Biden’s age as a liability, with 77% of U.S. adults perceiving him as too old for effective governance, compared to 51% who feel the same about Trump. This age debate fuels contrasting expectations: voters seek stability and competency from

Biden, while Trump’s supporters may overlook significant flaws due to his vigorous campaign style.





# US Pushes for Global AI Safety with New Protections and Oversight

BY ATHENA NAGEL



The United States is intensifying efforts to regulate artificial intelligence, with Vice President Kamala Harris asserting that leaders bear a “moral, ethical and societal duty” to mitigate AI’s risks. As she spearheads the Biden administration’s agenda for a global AI safety roadmap, Harris emphasizes the need for international cooperation to protect society.

In her remarks, Harris stressed the necessity for a shared understanding among nations to manage AI’s impacts. “We must be guided by common rules and norms,” she said, committing the U.S. to collaboration with allies to both

apply existing regulations and forge new standards for AI.

As AI applications expand, analysts agree that human oversight is essential to prevent misuse. This technology is transforming sectors from military intelligence to healthcare and even artistic creation. President Joe Biden reinforced the administration’s commitment by signing an executive order setting new AI standards. This includes a requirement for major AI developers to report safety test results to the government, supporting transparency.

The administration also launched an AI Safety Institute

and released preliminary policy guidelines for federal AI use and military AI applications. Days earlier, the Defense Intelligence Agency announced its AI-powered military intelligence database would soon be operational, demonstrating the rapid integration of AI across defense sectors.

Amid these developments, industry leaders like Elon Musk continue to voice concerns. Musk, who sees AI as a major threat, advocates for a regulatory “third-party referee” to prevent harm. Earlier this year, Musk joined over 33,000 people in calling for a pause in AI model training to assess safety risks.

Critics highlight AI’s potential for bias, as Jessica Brandt from the Brookings Institution explains: “AI is only as good as the data it’s trained on.” This concern is echoed by Amba Kak of AI Now, who points out that current AI systems can be manipulated and often spread misinformation.

While the U.S. works on specific initiatives, experts like Bill Whyman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies predict a “bottom-up”

regulatory approach, contrasting with Europe's likelihood of broad AI legislation. The focus,

Whyman suggests, will remain on targeted measures like

funding for AI research and safety, rather than a sweeping national law.

## Antisemitic Incidents Surge in U.S. Amid Gaza Conflict

By Jan Frazier

Since the outbreak of conflict between Israel and Hamas on October 7, antisemitic incidents across the United States have sharply increased. Reports of demonstrators chanting Hamas slogans, defaced synagogues, and antisemitic online content have become alarmingly frequent, sparking deep concern within Jewish communities nationwide.

Maria Haberfeld, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, recalls her traumatic childhood experiences with antisemitism in Poland. At just 10 years old, she endured physical assault and verbal abuse fueled by government-stoked antisemitism. Now, seeing similar hatred resurface in the U.S., Haberfeld finds herself grappling with fear and disgust. The pro-Palestinian demonstrations she witnesses near her workplace, including calls for Israel's destruction, have reignited memories she hoped to leave behind when her family sought refuge in America.



The surge in antisemitic incidents is part of a broader increase in hate-related acts, with both antisemitism and Islamophobia on the rise in response to the conflict. As Jewish and Muslim communities face this unsettling wave of

intolerance, the White House has responded by urging peace and condemning hate-fueled violence and harassment. However, many, like Haberfeld, continue to feel unsafe amid these heightened tensions.

## U.S. Diplomats Show Dissent on Israel-Hamas War Amid Blinken's Middle East Tour

By Eric Gahagan



Following an intensive tour across the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken addressed the regional crisis sparked by the Israel-Hamas conflict. In a message sent on October 20, he acknowledged the challenges faced by U.S. diplomats, urging a balance between supporting Israel's defense and adhering to humanitarian laws.

As he navigated complex diplomacy, dissent grew among U.S. officials, concerned over Washington's perceived "blank check" support for Israel's military actions in Gaza, which have led to severe humanitarian repercussions for Palestinian civilians. This dissent has highlighted a rift, especially as the Biden administration initially backed Israel robustly but now grapples with an outcry over the humanitarian crisis.

Internally, members of the State Department and National Security Council expressed shock at the administration's stance, which has also sparked backlash from progressive Democrats and Arab American voters. Recent polls reveal a significant decline in Biden's .

Despite steadfast support for Israel's defense needs, Blinken recently advocated brief "humanitarian pauses" in Gaza to allow for essential aid. The call came amidst mounting pressure from humanitarian organizations and regional allies, stressing the

need to mitigate civilian suffering. While a permanent ceasefire remains off the table, U.S. officials have pressed Israel to restore some water supplies to Gaza, marking a subtle shift towards addressing humanitarian concerns amid a highly polarized conflict.



## Biden Administration Speculates on Netanyahu's Political Future Amid Israel-Gaza Conflict

By Eric Gahagan

The Biden administration has quietly raised concerns over Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu's political future. Amid intensifying conflict between Israel and Hamas, Joe

Biden and senior aides have discussed Netanyahu's potentially short tenure.

Following Biden's recent visit to Israel, the president urged Netanyahu to consider the legacy he may leave for his successor, signaling doubts about Netanyahu's hold on power.

According to officials, Biden conveyed these concerns to Netanyahu directly. Some in the administration believe Netanyahu might remain in office only until Israel's military efforts in Gaza transition beyond the immediate fighting phase. This sentiment follows widespread frustration in Israel over lapses in intelligence leading to Hamas' October 7 attack, which left over 1,400 Israelis dead.

In recent meetings, U.S. officials have noted Netanyahu's slipping approval ratings, which are compounded by international criticism of Israel's military actions in Gaza. While



publically supporting Israel's security efforts, Biden's team is reportedly in contact with other Israeli leaders, including Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid, preparing for potential political shifts in Israel.

Some within the U.S. administration view Netanyahu's response to the Hamas attack as detrimental to his leadership. Though the

Biden administration remains publicly focused on supporting Israel, discussions around Netanyahu's succession reflect broader uncertainties about Israel's future political landscape, especially if the conflict continues.

## Progressive Group If Not Now Demands Ceasefire on Capitol Hill

By Irene Taschek

Last week, the progressive Jewish group If Not Now took their message to Capitol Hill, rallying for a ceasefire in the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. As they sang a call-and-response of "cease-fire now" and "not in our name" by the Reflecting Pool, spokesman Matan Arad-Neeman expressed concern over the limited congressional support for their cause.

"We've only seen 17 members of Congress so far call for a ceasefire. I'm grateful for their moral courage, but the rest of Congress needs to step up and end this bloodshed,"

he stated.

Currently, only 18 House members have backed a resolution calling for a ceasefire, reflecting a significant divide

within the Democratic Party. A recent Gallup poll indicated that for the first time in over two decades, more Democrats sympathize with Palestinians than Israelis—about half compared to 40% for Israelis. This shift represents a long-standing transformation in party sentiment.

Historically, the U.S. has maintained strong support for



Israel since its founding, with President Harry Truman being the first to recognize the state in 1948. This support intensified during the Cold War, as American leaders sought a democratic ally in the Middle East. Stephen Walt, a Harvard professor, points to the influence of pro-Israel groups like AIPAC as a key factor in sustaining this alliance, noting the lack of substantial counterforces advocating for Palestinian rights.



Despite this alliance, political and generational rifts have emerged within the Democratic Party. Israeli leaders' actions, such as Prime Minister Netanyahu's alignment with the Republican Party during the Obama administration, have alienated some Democrats. Additionally, Israel's rightward political shift has contributed to a decline in support among progressive factions.

Polling indicates that younger Americans are increasingly critical of Israel, drawing parallels between its policies and broader issues of systemic oppression faced by marginalized communities. Many young progressives view Israel's treatment of Palestinians through the lens of historical injustices, aligning their advocacy with other social justice movements.

While prominent progressive voices in Congress, like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar, have gained visibility, they still represent a minority within the party. Arad-Neeman believes that the Democratic Party's shift on this issue is likely to continue, as younger generations question decades of U.S. and Israeli policy that they perceive as maintaining a system of oppression.

## Youngkin's Education Policies Face Resistance in Fairfax County

By Irene Taschek

FALLS CHURCH, Va. — Glenn Youngkin's election as governor was anticipated to signal the decline of so-called woke ideology in Virginia's public schools. However, halfway through his term, his policies have faced significant resistance in Fairfax County, the state's largest school district and a racially diverse community.

After Youngkin, a Republican,

signed an executive order banning the teaching of "divisive concepts" and critical race theory, Fairfax County Public Schools implemented an equity policy aimed at fostering a "culturally responsive environment." This included surveying students on how effectively their schools support them in combating racism.

The Democratic-led district has also countered Youngkin's proposed social studies standards, arguing that they prioritize white men over women and people of colour. In response, the state revised these standards. Furthermore, this summer, the district announced it would not enforce Youngkin's directive requiring students to use bathrooms and join sports teams corresponding

to their sex assigned at birth.

As the election for all 12 school board seats approaches on Nov. 7, conservatives in Fairfax County are eager to overcome the Democratic opposition.

Despite typically voting for Democrats, right-leaning parent activists were instrumental in Youngkin's unexpected 2021 victory, which galvanized a national GOP focus on educational culture wars. Next week's non-partisan school board race will test whether voters will reward Democratic incumbents for resisting conservative policies or whether the "parental rights" movement continues to be influential.

stated Rachna Sizemore Heizer, a Democratic school board member.

"But if we lose seats, it suggests that divisive politics are effective."

Conversely, conservatives argue that it is the Democrats who are bringing divisive national issues into the race. Frustrated by the district's resistance, they hope to secure at least a few seats to raise concerns. GOP-endorsed candidates criticize the historically high-performing district for alleged mismanagement, including mishandling sexual assault cases and inadequate special education services, despite a budget of \$3.5 billion and

180,000 students to manage.

Rory Cooper, a Fairfax County father and former advisor to congressional Republicans, believes many residents are more concerned about local school issues than national politics.

"People are still voting based on what's happening in our schools, not the larger political landscape, which could lead some Democrats to support more conservative candidates,"

he noted.

Despite these dynamics, Democratic-backed candidates have significantly outfunded their GOP counterparts, with some candidates raising ten times more. Early voting data suggests that most ballots were cast by voters who typically lean Democratic.

A spokesperson for Fairfax County Public Schools emphasized that the district's SAT scores remain above state and global averages and that fewer teachers resigned last year compared to the previous one. However, they declined further comment, citing appropriateness concerns regarding political candidates. Current board members contend that many challenges faced by the district reflect broader national issues.

Virginia is among 16 states with school board elections next week, where typically low-turnout races have recently garnered heightened attention due to growing polarization and discontent surrounding pandemic policies and conservative activism on race and gender issues.





# G7 Leaders Unite Over Israel-Hamas Crisis and Broader Security Issues

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

Following a Middle East tour, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has directed his diplomatic focus on the Israel-Hamas war towards the G7 summit in Tokyo, Japan, urging unity among the world's leading democracies. As foreign ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and Italy gathered, Blinken emphasized the need for a united stance on Gaza, similar to their coordinated response on the Ukraine conflict. Highlighting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the importance of stability, he advocated for solidarity, underscoring the G7's role in supporting global security.

The G7 meeting, which will also address Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine, North Korea's nuclear threats, and China's global influence, aims to foster a cohesive strategy that includes preventing further destabilization in the Middle East. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa reaffirmed their commitment to strong security and humanitarian measures, underscoring support for Israel's right to defend itself within international law.



Germany and the United Kingdom have voiced cautious support for targeted humanitarian pauses in Gaza, although the U.S. remains focused on bolstering military aid to Israel. Meanwhile, G7 ministers are expected to address new sanctions against Russia, and discussions will include expanded cooperation

between the U.K. and Japan on defense, cyber, and space technology, aligning with the Japan-UK Hiroshima Accord.

Adding to this diverse agenda, G7 outreach to Central Asia reflects a growing interest in securing ties with resource-rich former Soviet nations, amidst the ongoing instability posed by global conflicts.

# Pentagon's PFAS Dependency Under Scrutiny Amid Health Risks and Readiness Concerns

By Irene Taschek



The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) relies on numerous products—ranging from uniforms to complex microelectronics—that contain PFAS, a group of chemicals linked to serious health risks, including cancer. Known as “forever chemicals” due to their resistance to breaking down, PFAS compounds accumulate in the body and environment. While health studies reveal risks, Pentagon officials argue that eliminating these chemicals would compromise military readiness, citing their critical role in essential equipment.

PFAS, or per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, have long been used across a broad array of military equipment, including weaponry, electronic systems, and protective gear. However, environmental and health advocates, backed by recent research, urge a re-evaluation. A federal study in July confirmed a link between testicular cancer and PFOS (a type of PFAS) found in military personnel. The 2023 National Defense Authorization Act requires the DoD to review its PFAS use, but its recent report downplays health concerns,

emphasizing instead the chemicals’ role in national security.

Officials argue that PFAS provides vital properties, such as water resistance and durability, that are difficult to replace. Despite its assurances, the Pentagon announced it would phase out PFAS firefighting foam by 2024, citing emerging alternatives.

However, critics, including advocacy group Environmental Working Group, highlight that safer, PFAS-free alternatives exist for items like tents and textiles. While PFAS alternatives are being explored, the Pentagon report also expresses concerns about overly restrictive regulations, which they claim could disrupt military operations.

In response, some experts and industry voices argue for a nuanced, risk-based regulation approach rather than an outright ban. Such assessments aim to balance health, environmental needs, and military efficiency.

# Japan-Philippines Begin Talks for Defense Pact Amid Rising Regional Tensions

By Christina Levandowski



In a strategic move to counter regional security threats, Japan and the Philippines have initiated negotiations on a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), a significant defense pact allowing military cooperation between the two countries. This agreement would enable Japanese and Filipino forces to access each other's territories for joint exercises, strengthening their collective defense against growing assertiveness from China in the East and South China Seas.

During his visit to Manila, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced additional military support to the Philippines, including a coastal radar system funded through Japan's new security assistance program. As the program's first beneficiary, the Philippines will also receive patrol vessels and radars aimed at boosting its maritime law enforcement capacity. Japan's support underscores its commitment to Philippine defense, especially concerning territorial interests in the contested South China Sea.

Prime Minister Kishida also voiced Japan's strong opposition to unilateral attempts to alter the status quo in the East and South China Seas, referencing recent confrontations between Chinese and Philippine vessels. Japan has experienced similar tensions over disputed islands in the East



China Sea, aligning its security concerns closely with those of the Philippines.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. acknowledged the RAA's potential to bolster regional peace and stability while enhancing both nations' defense and military capabilities. The RAA negotiations align with broader efforts to strengthen alliances with the United States, creating a security framework that deters aggressive actions by reinforcing Philippine and Japanese sovereignty.

Kishida's trip to Manila also highlights Japan's expanding role in Asia, moving beyond a self-defense-only policy to proactively support allies like the Philippines. This shift, announced in Japan's recent defense strategy, leverages development aid to fortify the security infrastructures of partner nations.

As Kishida prepares to address the Philippine Congress—the first Japanese leader to do so since World War II—the deepening Japan-Philippines alliance symbolizes a new era of strategic partnership.

# Pentagon Urged to Train Taiwanese Troops in the U.S. for New Weapon Systems

By Athena Nagel

A congressionally mandated commission has recommended that the Pentagon train Taiwanese forces on U.S. soil to help them operate new weapons systems they have purchased. The suggestion, presented in the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission's annual report, aims to prepare Taiwan's military for the delayed delivery of weaponry, including F-16 fighters and other advanced platforms.

Taiwan's purchase backlog, caused by supply chain delays and lengthy security reviews, currently totals approximately \$19 billion. The commission's chair, Carolyn Bartholomew, emphasized the importance of training Taiwanese troops before the delivery of new equipment. She stressed that delays in training, similar to those seen in Ukraine, hinder the effective use of advanced weaponry.

Alex Wong, the commission's vice chair, noted that while some training, such as for F-16 fighter jets, is already in progress, new weapons platforms will require additional



training efforts. Taiwan's \$8 billion purchase of 66 F-16 fighters is a significant part of the backlog.

Taiwanese Defense Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng confirmed plans to send troops to the U.S. for training, and reports suggest that two battalions of Taiwanese ground troops, potentially up to 1,200 soldiers, could travel for instruction. This move signals Taiwan's commitment to enhancing its military capabilities and is seen as a strategic signal to China, which views Taiwan as a breakaway province.

The Pentagon has not confirmed specifics but reiterated its strong support for Taiwan's defense. China remains opposed to any actions that it views as formal recognition of Taiwan's independence, and tensions over Taiwan's defense capabilities continue to escalate.

# Pentagon Fails Sixth Annual Audit Amid Progress and Challenges

By Irene Taschek

WASHINGTON — For the sixth consecutive year, the Pentagon has failed its annual audit. The

result is not surprising, given the massive and decentralized nature of the Department of

Defense (DoD), which oversees \$3.8 trillion in assets and \$4 trillion in liabilities spread.



Since 2018, the Pentagon has been attempting to audit itself, making incremental progress each year. However, the complexity of its financial operations continues to hamper its efforts. While the Pentagon has addressed some of its easier accounting issues, the audits remain mostly unchanged, with only seven of nearly 30 sub-audits receiving clean results.

In addition to the seven clean audits, one received a “qualified” rating, three remain in progress, and 18 failed outright. Despite these results, Pentagon officials, including Comptroller Mike McCord, insist that progress is being made.

McCord highlighted three key improvements:

**1. Fund Balance Resolution:**

The Pentagon is getting closer to matching its financial records with the Treasury Department, which is crucial for preventing fraud.

**2. Increased Automation:** The use of automated programs has saved significant time. In the Navy and Air Force, bots have saved over 600,000 hours.

**3. Better Stockpile Management:**

The Pentagon’s experience with Ukraine’s war has improved its ability to manage and track its defense stockpiles, which proved useful when supporting Israel during its conflict with Hamas.

While these changes are important, the Pentagon still faces significant challenges. Half of its assets do not meet auditing standards, and the audit process continues to uncover thousands of new and recurring issues. McCord acknowledged that much more needs to be done.

One notable issue arose earlier this year when the Pentagon realized it had been overvaluing aid to Ukraine, leading to accounting discrepancies. This error was discovered while managing stockpiles for Israel’s ongoing conflict with Hamas.

The Pentagon is now facing a narrow path to continue aiding Israel, as Congress has yet to approve additional funding, unlike the more extensive support available for Ukraine.

On Capitol Hill, frustration is mounting. The Pentagon’s inability to pass its audits has drawn sharp criticism from lawmakers. This summer, House Republicans held a hearing on the issue, and recent legislation has made it harder for the Pentagon to resolve its financial challenges. The continuing resolution passed this week to fund the government.



# Geert Wilders' Dutch Election Victory: What it Means for the Future of Europe

BY JAN FRAZIER

After 25 years in parliament, Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (PVV) secured a decisive victory in the Dutch elections, winning 37 seats, far ahead of the second-placed left-wing alliance with 25 seats. Wilders declared,

"The PVV can no longer be ignored. We will govern."

His victory marks a significant shift in Dutch politics, and the ripple effects will be felt across Europe. However, to become prime minister, Wilders must form a coalition, aiming for 76 seats in the 150-seat parliament.

At 60 years old, Wilders was met with cheers from his supporters as he addressed the media after the win. He expressed his willingness to negotiate with other parties, despite prior resistance due to his far-right policies. His primary platform included a promise to close borders and postpone controversial plans like banning the Koran. In his victory speech, Wilders emphasized, "We want to govern, and we will govern. This responsibility is enormous."

Before the elections, three major parties had rejected the possibility of collaborating



with Wilders, but his overwhelming success could force them to reconsider. Dilan Yesilgöz of the centre-right VVD, a former candidate for prime minister, expressed doubt about Wilders' ability to secure enough support. Nonetheless, she stopped short of ruling out a coalition altogether, leaving the door slightly ajar for collaboration.

Frans Timmermans' left-wing alliance, which came second, firmly rejected any participation in a Wilders-led government, prioritizing the defense of Dutch democracy and rule of law.

Wilders' win has drawn international attention, with nationalist leaders across Europe celebrating the result. In France, Marine Le Pen hailed it

as a victory for national identities. Wilders, who has previously advocated for a "Nexit" referendum, may face challenges in convincing coalition partners to align with his EU exit stance. His success, however, stems largely from tapping into the widespread frustration with migration and the previous government's collapse over asylum policies.

The Netherlands' electorate had been sharply divided, with nearly half of voters undecided leading up to election day. Wilders' emphasis on tackling migration, including the rise in asylum seekers and housing shortages, resonated with many voters. His policies garnered significant support, even from those conflicted by his stance on Islam.



# EU Parliament Backs Stronger Right to Repair for Consumers

By Eric Gahagan

On Tuesday, the European Parliament adopted a landmark proposal to strengthen the “right to repair” for consumers, passing it with 590 votes in favor, 15 against, and 15 abstentions. The proposal aims to promote sustainable consumption by making it easier for consumers to repair faulty products, thus reducing waste and supporting the repair sector.



## Repair Over Replacement, Even After Warranty Expiry

Under the new rules, sellers must prioritize repairs over replacements if it is equally or less costly during the legal guarantee period unless repair is impractical. Additionally, the legal guarantee would be extended by one year once a product is repaired.

Consumers will also have the right to request repairs for items such as washing machines, smartphones, vacuum cleaners, and bicycles after the warranty expires. MEPs propose offering consumers replacement devices on loan while their product is being repaired. If the repair is not feasible, a refurbished item may be provided.

## Building a Competitive Repair Market

Many consumers are often deterred from repairing products due to high costs, limited access to services, or designs that complicate repairs. The new proposal ensures that independent repairers and consumers have access to spare parts, tools, and repair information at reasonable prices.

To further assist consumers, online platforms will help locate local repair services and refurbished goods. Financial incentives, including vouchers and national repair funds, will make repairs more affordable and appealing.

### Supporting Repairers

Rapporteur René Repasi (S&D, DE) highlighted that the initiative responds to public demand for longer-lasting products. “We’ve adopted measures to encourage

consumers to repair, not replace, focusing on supporting independent repairers and creating financial incentives,” he said. “We hope Council will soon adopt their position so we can negotiate and turn these measures into law, paving the way for a circular economy.”

### Next Steps

The Council is expected to adopt its position on November 22, with talks set to begin in December, aiming for a final agreement.

### Environmental and Economic Impact

Throwing away repairable goods has significant environmental consequences, leading to 30 million tonnes of resource usage, 261 million tonnes of CO2 emissions, and 35 million tonnes of waste annually in the EU. The economic impact is also substantial, with consumers losing €12 billion

### Independent

annually by replacing products instead of repairing them. A European Commission study shows that 77% of EU citizens prefer repairing items over buying new ones.

This proposal complements other EU initiatives, including Ecodesign and efforts to empower consumers in the green transition. It aligns with

recommendations from the Conference on the Future of Europe, advocating for sustainable product use and a circular economy.

## Canada Joins Horizon Europe, World's Leading Research & Innovation Programme By Christina Levandowsk



Canada has officially joined the EU's €95.5 billion Horizon Europe research and innovation programme as an associate member, a move heralded by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during a visit from top EU politicians on November 24.

Trudeau praised the programme, calling it "the greatest research and innovation mechanism in the world." He emphasized that this partnership will contribute to a brighter future for all citizens through collaborative research and innovation.

### Horizon Europe: A Gateway for Global Collaboration

Horizon Europe, the EU's flagship research and innovation initiative, has opened its doors to non-EU countries like Canada, allowing them to access funding and work closely with European institutions. This collaboration aims to address global societal challenges and foster industrial competitiveness.

The agreement with Canada comes after a year of negotiations and is expected to be finalized in 2025. It will focus on Horizon Europe's second pillar, which addresses key

global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The deal will enhance cooperation between European and Canadian research communities, ultimately driving sustainable economic growth and creating jobs.

### Strengthening Partnerships

### Global

The EU and Canada share core values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, which are essential for participation in Horizon Europe. These shared values provide a strong foundation for collaboration on circular, climate-neutral, and inclusive economies.

Horizon Europe's extension beyond the European neighborhood is also paving the way for other countries, including Japan, South Korea, and the UK, to join the programme. Canada's participation marks a significant step in expanding the global impact of EU-led research initiatives.



## A Welcome Step for the Scientific Community

Leading figures in European research welcomed Canada's association with Horizon Europe. Kurt Deketelaere and Mattias Björnmalm, from the League of European Research Universities and Cesaer, hailed the decision as an opportunity to collaborate with more excellent, like-minded countries.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also expressed her enthusiasm, stating that the partnership with Canada will lead to transformative breakthroughs, particularly in areas like artificial intelligence and quantum technologies.

## Looking Ahead: Collaborative Innovation for the Future

As Canada joins Horizon Europe, the focus shifts to the innovative breakthroughs that will emerge from this cross-continental collaboration. With shared goals of tackling global crises and advancing digital technologies, the partnership promises to push the boundaries of scientific discovery and build a more resilient and prosperous world for future generations.

# Temporary Protection Status for Ukrainian Refugees in the EU

By Athena Nagel

As of 30 September 2023, nearly 4.2 million non-EU citizens who fled Ukraine due to the Russian invasion of 24 February 2022 were granted temporary protection in EU countries. The European Union, responding to the mass displacement, implemented temporary protection measures to offer refuge to those affected by Russia's aggression.

The largest host countries for Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection were Germany, Poland, and Czechia. Germany hosted 1,194,900 individuals, accounting for 28.3% of the total, followed by Poland with 958,655 beneficiaries (23.1%), and Czechia with 357,960 (8.8%).

Compared to August 2023, the number of temporary protection beneficiaries in the EU saw a slight increase of 31,920 (+0.8%). Germany led the

increase with an additional 19,205 beneficiaries (+1.6%), while the Netherlands and Ireland also experienced notable gains. The Netherlands saw an increase of 3,685 (+2.8%), and Ireland gained 2,875 (+3.2%).

In contrast, five countries reported a decrease in the number of individuals under temporary protection. Czechia saw the largest decline (-7,125; -2%), followed by France (-2,155; -3.2%), Poland (-1,895; -0.2%), Slovenia (-405; -4.6%), and Luxembourg (-10; -0.2%).

These statistics are in line with the EU's implementation of the Council's Decision 2022/382, which declared a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine and activated the temporary protection mechanism. On 28 September 2023, the European Council extended temporary protection until 4 March 2025 for those fleeing the conflict.

At the end of September 2023, the distribution of temporary protection across EU countries revealed some disparities. Czechia (33.1), Estonia (26.2), Poland (26.1), Bulgaria (25.8), and Lithuania (25.5) recorded the highest numbers of beneficiaries per thousand residents, well above the EU-wide average of 9.3.

Ukrainian nationals made up over 98% of those granted temporary protection, with women comprising nearly half of the beneficiaries (46.5%). Children represented about one-third (33.7%), while adult men accounted for just under 20% (19.9%).

The data underscores the continued need for EU support for displaced Ukrainians and highlights the evolving trends in refugee distributions across member states.



## EU Provides €25 Million in Humanitarian Aid to Gaza, Bringing Total Assistance to €100 Million

By Irene Taschek

As part of its ongoing commitment to support Gaza, the European Union has announced an additional €25 million in humanitarian aid, bringing its total contribution for 2024 to over €100 million. This funding is aimed at alleviating the ongoing crisis in Gaza, particularly by addressing urgent needs such as water and sanitation, health, food, and other essential supplies.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made the announcement today, emphasizing the EU's dedication to providing life-saving assistance. "By increasing our aid by another €25 million, the European Union demonstrates its unwavering support for the civilians of Gaza. Our total

humanitarian assistance this year will reach €100 million," von der Leyen stated. She also highlighted the EU's collaboration with Israel, Egypt, and the United Nations to ensure that humanitarian convoys reach Gaza through coordinated corridors and pauses to facilitate aid delivery.

This latest contribution is part of the EU's broader effort to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and ensure that civilians receive the necessary resources to survive the ongoing conflict. With continued support from the international community, efforts to alleviate suffering.





# Prime Minister Denkov Urges European Integration and Geopolitical Unity

By Irene Taschek

During his “This is Europe” address, Bulgarian Prime Minister Denkov expressed concerns over Russia’s efforts to exploit economic and cultural ties to divide Bulgarian society. He emphasized that Bulgaria’s greatest security lies in its EU and NATO membership, urging the completion of the country’s European integration by joining both the Schengen Area and the Eurozone.

Denkov reaffirmed that Bulgaria has met all Schengen requirements and that any further delays in accession would be demotivating for the nation. He stated,

“The entry of Bulgaria and Romania into Schengen will improve Europe’s border security and strengthen the continent’s unity.”

On the current geopolitical landscape, Denkov warned that the conflict in the Middle East, sparked by Hamas’ brutal attacks and Israel’s military response, must not be underestimated. He highlighted that while there is growing war fatigue over Ukraine, defending Ukraine is crucial for Europe’s security. Denkov stressed the importance of a united European front, advocating for stronger ties with NATO allies and the potential creation of a single European army.



## MEP Reactions and Calls for Action

In response to Denkov’s speech, many MEPs called for an end to the discrimination of Bulgarian and Romanian citizens and urged the Council to vote on their Schengen accession by the end of 2023. They praised Bulgaria’s pro-European reforms but urged quicker use of EU funds, stricter enforcement against Russian sanctions circumvention, and greater protection of environmental, minority, and human rights.

Additionally, they emphasized the importance of supporting EU enlargement in the Western Balkans.

Prime Minister Denkov’s address underlined the need for Bulgaria to continue its European journey while maintaining a strong stance on international security, both for its future and Europe’s broader stability.

# Foreign Nationals Exit Gaza as Rafah Crossing Reopens Amid Humanitarian Crisis

BY ATHENA NAGEL



The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt reopened briefly, allowing a group of 335 foreign passport holders, including British nationals, to exit the besieged region. This temporary reopening marks the first time foreign nationals have been permitted to leave Gaza since the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel, which led to widespread border closures. Officials expect the Rafah crossing to open intermittently to permit the departure of additional foreign citizens and injured Palestinians, with exit lists coordinated by Egyptian and Israeli authorities.

Western embassies are being notified in advance, enabling nations to prepare for the arrival of their citizens. In a statement, U.S. President Joe Biden confirmed that the efforts of American leadership facilitated safe passage for wounded Palestinians and foreign nationals, with Americans among those permitted to leave.

The U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly acknowledged this initial movement as a significant step, with further plans to ensure the safe evacuation of British nationals

in the coming days. Approximately 200 Britons remain in Gaza, hoping to secure safe passage as the humanitarian crisis escalates.

Over three weeks of intensified airstrikes have devastated Gaza, where over 8,700 residents have reportedly died, and supplies of essentials like food, water, and medicine are dangerously low. Gaza's health ministry states that over 20,000 people have been injured, while hospitals struggle to operate amid severe supply shortages. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus commended Egypt's medical evacuations but emphasized that many patients within Gaza are too fragile to be moved, calling for an urgent increase in medical aid.

At Rafah, ambulances transported dozens of wounded people, including children, to medical facilities on the Egyptian side, with some relocated to field hospitals. Meanwhile, as Israel continues its airstrikes and ground operations, it urges residents of northern Gaza to evacuate south.

# China's Role in Middle East Peace Talks Amid Israel-Gaza Conflict

By Irene Taschek

As the Israel-Gaza conflict intensifies, China has shown a cautious but strategic stance in its Middle East policy. In July, a spokesperson for China's embassy expressed optimism about Beijing's potential role in fostering peace talks between Israel and Palestine. This came amidst the growing diplomatic thaw between Iran and Saudi Arabia, a trend China has encouraged, hoping to catalyze a "wave of reconciliation" across the region.

Earlier, in June, Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and extended an invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. These diplomatic efforts underscore China's growing interest in Middle East stability and its influence over peace initiatives.

However, Beijing's approach took a nuanced turn after Hamas's October 7 assault on Israel, which led to a deadly escalation. China's initial response was measured, calling for restraint and urging the protection of civilians without condemning Hamas directly. Analysts point out that this cautious approach reflects



Beijing's historical support for Palestinian rights and a non-interventionist posture on global conflicts.

China's stance aligns with its broader Middle Eastern strategy, prioritizing economic ties with Gulf states like Saudi Arabia while balancing its longstanding support for the Palestinian cause. Trade and investment in Saudi Arabia have surged, with China becoming the largest buyer of Saudi oil, further cementing its economic influence in the region. In contrast, its investments in Palestinian territories remain modest, highlighting its economic pragmatism alongside diplomatic involvement.

Amid escalating violence, China's diplomatic engagement remains limited to calls for a ceasefire and condemnation of civilian casualties. Although China has not assumed a central mediation role, its vocal criticism of U.S. support for Israel highlights a deepening divide. Beijing's alignment with Russia and opposition to U.S. vetoes at the UN underscore its pursuit of a multipolar influence in the Middle East.

As Security Council president in November, China has made the Israel-Gaza crisis a top priority, with plans for further deliberations.

## Israel-Hamas Conflict: Unfolding Complexities and Emerging Realities

By Christina Levandowski



The Israel-Hamas conflict since October 7 remains complex, with no one having a complete picture. The ongoing violence has created uncertainty, with fast-evolving events hinting at new realities in the Middle East. This conflict, shaped by deep-seated history and recent escalations, has sparked concerns over wider regional implications.

### **Military Campaign and Israeli Support**

Public support within Israel for the military campaign against Hamas remains high, driven by anger over the attack that killed more than 1,400 Israelis. The brutal assault and the ongoing hostage crisis have fueled calls for a forceful response against Hamas and its ally, Islamic Jihad. Many Israelis, reflecting the sentiment of figures like retired general Noam Tibon, believe military action is essential despite its toll on civilians.

### **Civilian Impact and International Concerns**

As Israel's operations continue, the humanitarian cost is devastating. Gaza's health ministry reports over 9,000 Palestinian deaths, many of them women and children. Although U.S. President Biden backs Israel's right to defend itself, he has urged restraint, highlighting the importance of minimizing civilian casualties. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's recent comments show

an unprecedented call for adherence to international humanitarian laws, reflecting U.S. concerns about civilian impacts.

### **Political Fallout and Leadership Criticism**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces significant criticism. He has not taken responsibility for security lapses that allowed Hamas's incursion. Recent remarks blaming intelligence agencies were met with public outrage, further eroding his support among Israel's defense community. Prominent Israeli figures are openly questioning his role in leading.

### **The Broken Status Quo and Regional Dynamics**

The old, unstable status quo between Israel and the Palestinians has shattered, casting doubts on Netanyahu's.

Israel's decades-old "divide and rule" strategy in Gaza and the West Bank now appears flawed. Attempts to weaken the PA and bolster Hamas have contributed to today's crisis, complicating future peace prospects.

### **The Elusive Solution: A Palestinian State?**

The Israel-Hamas conflict reinforces the need for a viable peace framework, potentially through a two-state solution. Past negotiations, such as the Oslo Accords, aimed to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel but failed due to opposition from both sides. Without a fresh approach to peace, future generations may be trapped in an unending cycle of conflict. The current violence might yet pressure both sides to re-evaluate entrenched positions, though such change remains uncertain.



# Gaza Bombing Alert: Mahmoud's Harrowing Evacuation Story

By Jan Frazier

On October 19, 2023, Gaza resident Mahmoud Shaheen received a call from Israeli intelligence as Israeli airstrikes on Gaza entered their twelfth day. Living in al-Zahra, a northern Gaza neighborhood previously untouched by the violence, he was suddenly thrust into a terrifying role. The caller, speaking in fluent Arabic, ordered Mahmoud to evacuate nearby buildings, issuing a grave warning about targeted bombings.



Despite initial disbelief and warnings from neighbors that the call might be fake, Mahmoud asked for a warning shot, which was fired and confirmed the urgency of the evacuation. Over the next hour, he led a frantic escape, urging hundreds of residents to flee. As the towers were destroyed, he witnessed the obliteration of his neighborhood—a thriving community of modern apartment blocks, parks, and schools—now reduced to rubble.

As night fell, a second call ordered further evacuations, this time targeting an entire row of towers. With no electricity, people filled the streets, grabbing only essential items. Mahmoud continued to guide his neighbors, even as his phone battery drained. With each new bombing, the anonymous voice on the line informed him of the next target.

By dawn, the bombing had subsided, but Mahmoud's community was shattered. While his building survived, the entire neighborhood's infrastructure was devastated. Forced to relocate, Mahmoud reflects on the loss of his home and community, now left in ruins amidst Gaza's humanitarian crisis.

## Blinken Warns Israel Ceasefire Risks Hamas Regrouping, Urges Civilian Protections

By Eric Gahagan

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has expressed concerns that an immediate ceasefire in Gaza could enable Hamas to regroup and plan further attacks against Israel. Speaking in Jordan after meeting with Arab leaders, Blinken emphasized that Israel must take

“every possible measure” to minimize civilian casualties during its operations. However, Arab leaders, including Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, have called for an urgent ceasefire, accusing Israel of committing war crimes and stating that the violence against

civilians cannot be justified.

Safadi described the ongoing conflict as

“a raging war that is killing civilians, destroying homes, hospitals, schools, mosques, and churches.”



He argued that this level of destruction won't secure Israel's safety or bring lasting peace to the Middle East.

While Blinken disagreed with some Arab leaders on the method to achieve regional stability, he stressed a shared commitment to seeking a better path forward. Blinken has advocated for humanitarian pauses in fighting to allow aid to reach Gaza. This differs from a full ceasefire, which the Biden administration believes could compromise Israel's security.

Tensions have been rising, with regional actors like Hezbollah clashing with Israeli forces along Lebanon's border. Blinken, who recently met with Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, also visited Israel to discuss the situation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu reiterated that a humanitarian pause would only be considered if hostages taken by Hamas on October 7 are released



In addition, Blinken has been advocating for increased humanitarian aid through the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Access to basic necessities has been severely limited, as Israel's siege has cut off power, food, and water supplies to Gaza.

The escalating conflict has drawn the attention of global leaders, and Blinken's regional diplomatic mission will continue with a planned visit to Turkey to discuss the crisis with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

## Netanyahu's First Comments on Gaza's Future Security After the War

By Henry Nicholas

In his first public comments on Israel's post-war plans for Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel would likely maintain security control over Gaza for an indefinite period. This revelation, made during an interview with ABC News, highlights Israel's intent to

ensure Hamas, which has ruled Gaza since 2007, no longer poses a threat. While Netanyahu refrained from detailing the specific security mechanisms, he stressed Israel's need for continued oversight to prevent further attacks, recalling the deadly October 7 incident when Hamas gunmen crossed into

Israel, killing over 1,400 people and capturing 242 hostages.

Following this unprecedented attack, Israel launched a large-scale military operation against Hamas, attacking Gaza by land, sea, and air. According to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry, more than 10,000 Palestinians have since



been killed in the ongoing conflict.

Addressing the question of Gaza's governance after the war, Netanyahu hinted that only groups unaffiliated with Hamas should lead, yet firmly stated that Israel's overall security responsibility in Gaza would be essential. "When we don't have that security responsibility, we have the eruption of Hamas terror on a scale that we couldn't imagine," he said.

Before the current conflict, Israel and Egypt blockaded Gaza to prevent weapon supplies from reaching Hamas. Israel maintained strict border and airspace control, allowing limited entry of goods such as food and medical supplies. However, this blockade did not deter Hamas and other militant groups from carrying out periodic attacks on Israel, which often responded with airstrikes.



While Netanyahu's vision for Gaza's security future remains unclear, the prospect of a permanent security role could draw international criticism. U.S. President Joe Biden cautioned against re-occupation, suggesting it would be a significant misstep. Although Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the United Nations still

views the territory as under Israeli occupation due to Israel's comprehensive border control.

Netanyahu's comments signal a pivotal shift in Israel's stance toward Gaza, emphasizing a cautious approach to post-war governance aimed at preventing further hostilities from Hamas and securing long-term peace for Israeli communities.



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