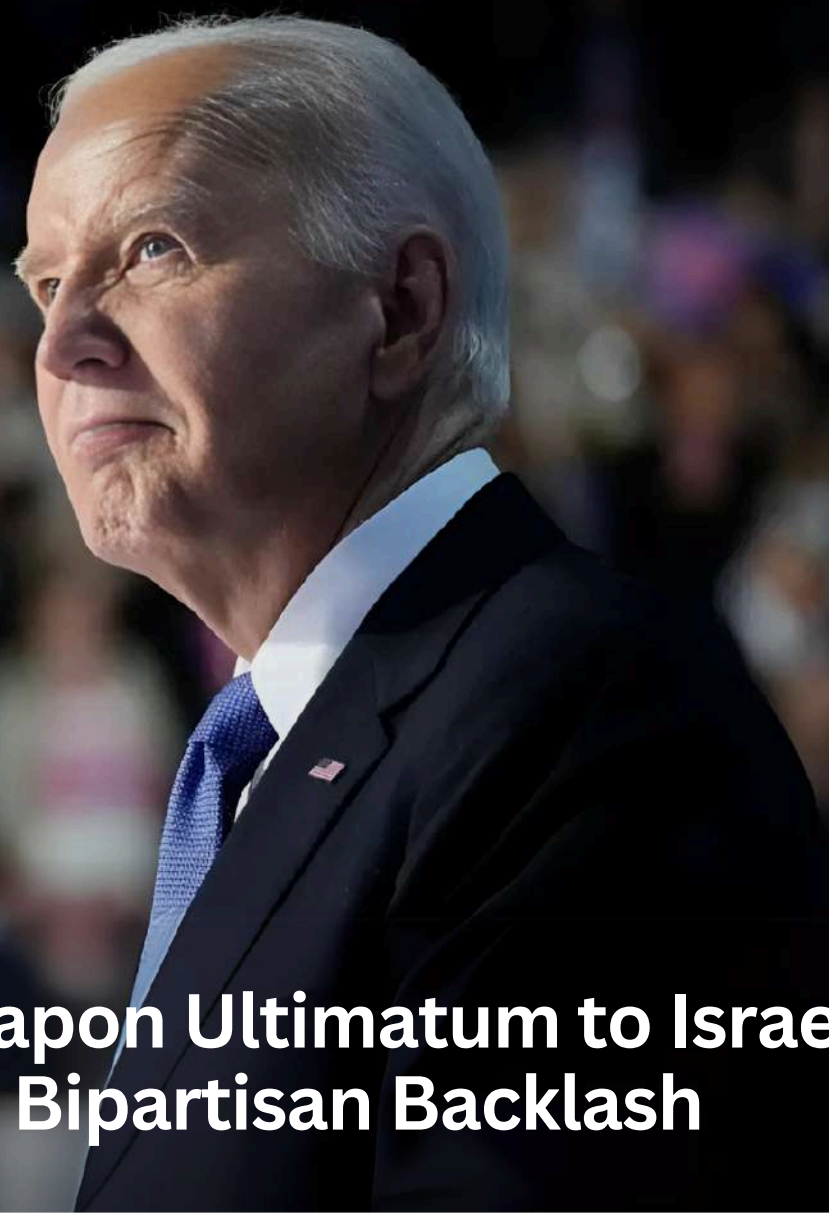




Washington Insider

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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-

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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.

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Hamas Declines Further Ceasefire Talks Amid Gaza Conflict, Calls for Comprehensive Agreement if Israel Halts War

BY JAN FRAZIER

Hamas has informed mediators that it will no longer participate in indirect ceasefire talks while Israel's military actions in Gaza continue, but remains open to a "complete agreement," including a swap of hostages and prisoners, should Israel halt its offensive.

Efforts by mediators from Qatar, Egypt, and the United States to arrange a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have repeatedly stalled, with each side blaming the other for lack of progress.

On Thursday, Hamas issued a statement while Israeli forces continued their assault on Rafah in southern Gaza, disregarding an International Court of Justice (ICJ) order to cease the operation. Hamas expressed it had approached past rounds of negotiations with a "positive" outlook and stated it had accepted a mediator's proposal on May 6, despite Israel's ground offensive on Rafah.

In recent communications, Hamas has declared it would no longer participate in negotiations under conditions it describes as aggression, siege, and deprivation for the



Palestinian people. Instead, it emphasized willingness to establish a "comprehensive exchange deal" if Israel's assault is stopped.

Sticking points in previous talks include Hamas's demands for a permanent ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and allowing displaced families to return. Israel has dismissed these demands, stating its goal is to eliminate Hamas from Gaza and citing the ongoing Rafah offensive as part of a hostage rescue and anti-Hamas operation.

According to an Al Jazeera tally, more than 240 individuals were captured during an October 7 Hamas incursion into southern Israel, which

reportedly left at least 1,139 Israelis dead. Israel responded with extensive strikes on Gaza, which have resulted in the reported deaths of over 36,000 Palestinians and displacement of the majority of the population, per local health authorities.

Earlier negotiations between Israel and Hamas in November yielded a limited prisoner exchange but have since stalled. On Thursday, the situation escalated as Israel declared control of a buffer zone on Gaza's border with Egypt, restricting access to Gaza's land crossings.

Medical reports indicate at least 12 Palestinians were killed in Rafah during an Israeli airstrike while attempting to

retrieve a civilian's body. Elsewhere, airstrikes and ground battles were reported in various Gaza locales, including Shati refugee camp in the north.

As a result of ongoing fighting, communications were

cut off in Rafah, per the telecommunications provider Jawwal. Meanwhile, the United States has voiced opposition to a major Israeli ground offensive but did not confirm the start of such an operation.

Despite growing

from aid organizations, Israel has signaled it will continue the offensive. In Gaza, a scarcity of food and supplies has led to severe malnutrition and heightened fears of famine, as warned by the United Nations.

ICC Calls for End to Intimidation Amid Possible War Crimes Charges on Gaza Conflict

By Jan Frazier

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has appealed to end what it describes as intimidation tactics against its staff, warning that such threats may interfere with the “administration of justice” at the global war crimes tribunal.

The ICC’s prosecutor’s office, led by Karim Khan, issued a statement from The Hague on Friday, insisting that any attempts to obstruct, pressure, or unduly influence its officials should cease. Although the statement did not specifically mention Israel, it follows warnings from Israeli and U.S. officials against the ICC’s possible prosecution of Israeli officials for actions in Gaza.

“The Office seeks constructive engagement with all parties within the framework of its independent mandate under the Rome Statute,” the statement read, adding that its independence is compromised if individuals threaten or retaliate against court decisions on cases within its jurisdiction.

The Rome Statute, the ICC’s founding treaty, strictly prohibits any form of threat or interference directed at the court and its personnel.

Media sources have recently reported that ICC arrest warrants could be issued for senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, related to Gaza operations that have resulted in thousands of Palestinian casualties and widespread destruction since October 7.

News of possible ICC actions sparked strong pushback from Israeli and U.S. officials. Netanyahu posted a video statement, urging “leaders of the free world” to reject the ICC’s steps, which he termed an “outrageous assault” on Israel’s self-defense.

In the U.S., lawmakers urged President Joe Biden to intervene. Democratic Senator John Fetterman criticized the ICC’s potential actions, calling for Biden’s intervention to

counter them as part of the administration’s “ongoing commitment to Israel.”

The ICC has been investigating alleged abuses in Palestinian territories since 2021, and Khan recently confirmed that his office is examining potential war crimes by both Hamas fighters in Israel and Israeli forces in Gaza. In 2021, the Biden administration had lifted sanctions imposed by former President Donald Trump on ICC personnel.

While the U.S. and Israel have not ratified the Rome Statute, Palestine, an observer state at the UN, has accepted ICC jurisdiction.



Israel Rejects Hamas Ceasefire Amid Gaza Escalation and Political Pressures

By Adriana Montes

“The Office seeks constructive engagement with all parties within the framework of its independent mandate under the Rome Statute,” the statement read, adding that its independence is compromised if individuals threaten or retaliate against court decisions on cases within its jurisdiction.

For many analysts, the message is clear: Israel aims to continue its operations in Gaza, despite the catastrophic humanitarian impact on Gaza’s population. According to Mairav Zonszein, a senior analyst for the International Crisis Group, Israel’s actions suggest that any possibility of a permanent ceasefire remains distant as long as the military campaign continues.

Israel justifies its offensive on Rafah as part of a broader mission to dismantle Hamas battalions and to close the alleged weapon smuggling routes through the Gaza-Egypt crossing. Humanitarian groups, however, warn that closing the border will worsen conditions for Gaza’s residents, especially the hundreds of thousands displaced and now crowded in Rafah.



Meanwhile, the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, alongside CIA Director William Burns, have worked to mediate a truce. Yet, reports indicate that Israel considers the terms of this Hamas ceasefire agreement inconsistent with prior proposals and remains unwilling to accept a lasting ceasefire.

Analysts point to the broader political pressures on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. With strong public support for the Gaza offensive, Netanyahu’s political future could be jeopardized by halting the conflict. Key coalition members, including far-right ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, have

reportedly threatened to collapse the government if a ceasefire is agreed upon.

Hugh Lovatt of the European Council for Foreign Relations explains that Israel’s reluctance may stem from the optics of agreeing on terms perceived as favorable to Hamas. Taking control of Rafah may be an attempt to demonstrate military gains before considering any truce.

However, escalations in Rafah pose both strategic and humanitarian risks for Netanyahu and could strain relations with the U.S., which has already delayed precision weapon sales to Israel. While the U.S.

Iran Warns of Nuclear Shift if Existential Threats Persist from Israel

By Jan Frazier

Iran may reconsider its nuclear policy if its existence faces serious threats, according to a senior adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Kamal Kharrazi, speaking on Thursday, reiterated Iran's official stance against building nuclear weapons but hinted that this could change under extreme pressure.

"We have no decision to build a nuclear bomb," Kharrazi said, "but should Iran's existence be threatened, there will be no choice but to change our military doctrine," reported Iran's Student News Network.

This statement has intensified scrutiny of Iran's nuclear intentions, which it has long claimed to be peaceful. Iran's uranium enrichment, now at 60 percent, remains below the 90 percent purity needed for weapons-grade material but is a level that has alarmed international observers.

Khamenei, who holds the final decision on Iran's nuclear policies, issued a religious edict, or fatwa, in the early 2000s declaring nuclear weapons "haram," or forbidden under Islamic law. Despite this, Iran's intelligence ministry warned in 2021 that continued Western pressure could force the country



to reassess its position.

Regional tensions have escalated as Israel has increased strikes on Iran-linked targets in Syria. Just this April, Israel allegedly attacked Iran's embassy compound in Damascus, killing members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Iran retaliated with missile and drone strikes on Israel, marking

a notable intensification in the long-standing shadow war between the two nations.

Early Thursday, Syrian air defenses intercepted Israeli missiles targeting the outskirts of Damascus, according to Syrian state news agency SANA. These ongoing confrontations underscore the regional volatility.

UN Nuclear Chief Urges Iran to Take Concrete Steps Toward Cooperation

By Adriana Montes



The United Nations nuclear watchdog chief, Rafael Grossi, called on Iran to implement “concrete” measures to improve cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Speaking in Isfahan on Tuesday, Grossi stressed that tangible actions are needed to advance oversight of Iran’s nuclear program, which has faced setbacks despite a 2023 agreement.

We are focused on practical and tangible steps to accelerate cooperation,” Grossi said, adding that such actions could make the 2023 agreement operational. However, gaps remain between the IAEA and Iran on certain terms.

Mohammad Eslami, head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, echoed Grossi’s sentiments, describing the discussions as productive while highlighting “political” hurdles. Both officials indicated no new agreement had been reached, though they pointed to last year’s joint statement as a roadmap.

Iran Declares National Mourning After Fatal Helicopter Crash Claims Top Leaders

By Adriana Montes

Iran announced five days of national mourning following the tragic death of President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, and several other senior officials who were killed in a helicopter crash near the Azerbaijan border. Crowds gathered in mosques and squares across the nation on Monday, paying respects to the leaders lost in Sunday’s crash amid severe weather.

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei appointed First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber as interim president, while Ali Bagheri Kani will act as foreign



minister until new elections on June 28. A national holiday was declared for Wednesday, aligning with funerals, and Raisi will be buried in Mashhad on Thursday.

Abdulkadir Uraloglu noted the helicopter lacked an active signal system, complicating emergency response efforts.



The crash site revealed the wreckage after an overnight search in blizzard conditions. Turkish Transport Minister

Raisi and Amirabdollahian’s absence is not expected to shift Iran’s foreign policy drastically, as it remains influenced by the National Security Council and Supreme Leader Khamenei.

EU Urges China to Help Address Russian Aggression and Iranian Arms Proliferation

BY LIAM FLYNN



The European Union is looking to China to help persuade Russia to conclude its war in Ukraine and to mitigate Iran's weapons build-up. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen raised this hope on Monday following discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Paris, which also touched on trade matters. The EU seeks Beijing's influence over its ally Russia and aims to curb Iran's missile and drone proliferation, as stated by von der Leyen.

"We count on China to use all its influence on Russia to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine," von der Leyen remarked after meeting with Xi alongside French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace. She acknowledged Xi's

significant role in de-escalating Russia's nuclear threats and expressed confidence that he would continue these efforts amid ongoing tensions.

The discussions coincided with the Kremlin's announcement of nuclear drills ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, which Moscow claimed were a response to Western countries' troop deployment statements regarding Ukraine. Macron mentioned last week that France would consider sending ground troops to Ukraine if requested by Kyiv.

Von der Leyen also expressed optimism that China could help limit the irresponsible proliferation of Iranian ballistic missiles and drones.

In addition to security concerns, von der Leyen and Macron addressed trade issues, urging Xi to promote a more balanced trade relationship with the EU. Macron stated, "The future of our continent will also very clearly depend on our capacity to further develop in a balanced way our relationship with China," during the roundtable discussions.

Xi's visit to Europe marks his first in five years amid rising business tensions, including EU investigations into Chinese industries like electric vehicles and China's scrutiny of French brandy. Von der Leyen criticized the relationship for being affected by unequal market access and state subsidies in China, asserting that Europe cannot absorb the oversupply of Chinese goods flooding its markets. "Europe will not waver from making tough decisions needed to protect its market," she emphasized.

In his brief remarks before the talks, Xi highlighted the importance of EU-China relations as a priority in China's foreign policy, advocating for adherence to partnership, dialogue, and cooperation amidst global turbulence.

European Commission to Resolve Rule of Law Dispute with Poland

By Liam Flynn



The European Commission has announced the resolution of a long-standing dispute with Poland regarding the rule of law. In a statement on Monday, the commission indicated its intention to withdraw the Article 7 procedure initiated in December 2017, following the formation of a new centrist government in Warsaw that is taking steps to restore judicial independence.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen heralded this development as a “new chapter for Poland,” attributing the breakthrough to the country’s determined reform efforts. The EU acknowledged that Poland has undertaken a series of legislative and non-legislative measures to address concerns about the independence of its judiciary.

Poland has also affirmed its commitment to EU law supremacy and agreed to implement the judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights.

Polish Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar expressed gratitude on social media, stating, “Great news from Brussels today! Thank you President @vonderleyen for the cooperation and support! Poland is consequently bringing back rule of law. We are determined and devoted to our common European values.”

The conflict between the EU and Poland escalated after the nationalist Law and Justice party took power in 2015, implementing reforms perceived to undermine judicial independence. In response, the EU had restricted Poland’s access to EU funds and initiated the Article 7 procedure to suspend the country’s voting rights. This measure, often referred to as the EU’s “nuclear option,” has never been fully executed due to the requirement for unanimous agreement in the European Council.

EU Approves Major Migration and Asylum Policy Overhaul Ahead of Elections

By Mandilee Hecht



The European Union has officially approved a significant overhaul of its migration and asylum policies, aimed at establishing stricter borders and shared responsibilities among member states. This decision marks the culmination of over eight years of work on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and comes as the EU prepares for elections set for June 6-9.

The reform package, consisting of ten legislative pieces, received broad support from EU member nations, despite opposition from Hungary and Poland, which have resisted mandatory burden-

sharing for incoming migrants. The new rules, set to take effect in 2026, will streamline the process of screening individuals to determine eligibility for asylum or potential deportation

Supporters, particularly from mainstream political parties, believe this pact addresses longstanding divisions that emerged following the influx of over one million refugees in 2015, primarily from conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. They hope the new measures will mitigate the appeal of far-right parties during the upcoming European Parliament elections.

In 2023, over 1.14 million individuals applied for international protection within the EU, according to a report by the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

Critics, however, argue that the reforms will enable countries to detain refugees at borders and fingerprint children, potentially undermining their rights to

claim asylum. Amnesty International has cautioned that these changes may exacerbate human rights violations, claiming that negotiations have led to a deteriorating outcome that fails to resolve existing gaps in the EU's asylum system.

As populist, anti-immigration parties gain traction, polls indicate a strong showing for the Identity and Democracy (ID) group and the eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) in the upcoming elections. Estimates suggest that their combined voter base could rival that of the center-right European People's Party (EPP), the largest group in the European Parliament.

Xi Jinping's European Tour Highlights Ukraine War, Economic Tensions, and Human Rights Concerns

By Mandilee Hecht

Chinese President Xi Jinping's first European tour in five years has begun, focusing on

relations with France and economic and geopolitical tensions between China and the

EU. Xi arrived in Paris for discussions on May 6 with French President Emmanuel

Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Key topics include Russia's war in Ukraine, economic friction over Chinese business practices, and potential resolutions to global crises.

Following his France visit, Xi will travel to Serbia and Hungary. Beijing views both nations as strategic allies in Eastern Europe. Matt Geracim of the Atlantic Council remarked that Xi's goals include mending ties strained by China's perceived support for Russia, countering the EU's economic policies aimed at China, and strengthening alliances with Belgrade and Budapest.

In France, Macron will emphasize Europe's security stance and urge Xi to advocate for peace in Ukraine, where China has taken a neutral position without condemning Moscow. Economic concerns will also feature, as EU officials raise questions about Chinese subsidies in the electric vehicle sector, which they claim harm European industries.



Human rights concerns have prompted protests by Tibetan and Uyghur activists in Paris, calling for Macron to address China's policies in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong. Human Rights Watch and other organizations urge Macron to press Xi on human rights, especially concerning China's treatment of Uyghurs and restrictions in Tibet and Hong Kong.

Xi's European tour will conclude in Hungary on May 8, where he will meet with Hungarian President Viktor Orban. Hungary, a participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative, has aligned with Beijing and Moscow, raising concerns within the EU over Chinese influence in Europe.

EU Launches Disinformation Probe into Meta's Compliance with Digital Services Act

By Jan Frazier

The European Commission has opened a formal investigation into Meta, the company behind Facebook and Instagram, citing concerns over possible violations of the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) related to disinformation

control.

EU digital chief Margrethe Vestager stated Tuesday that the investigation focuses on Meta's moderation practices, including transparency in ads and disinformation mitigation.

The probe comes as the EU ramps up efforts to combat disinformation in advance of its June elections.

Meta's previous disinformation-tracking tool, CrowdTangle, was recently retired, and the EU raised

concerns about its delayed replacement, Content Library. Meta responded by emphasizing its commitment to compliance and cooperation with EU authorities.

As one of 23 “very large” platforms under the DSA’s jurisdiction, Meta could face significant penalties, including fines up to 6% of its global revenue, if found non-compliant. The company has five days to report any corrective actions to the EU.



NATO Issues Strong Warning on Russian “Hybrid Activity” Across Europe

By Jan Frazier

NATO has raised alarms over “hostile” Russian activities across Europe, expressing “deep concern” about Moscow’s escalating “hybrid operations” that threaten Western security. The alliance’s Thursday statement pointed to recent incidents in Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the UK, citing disinformation, sabotage, cyber interference, and violent acts.

NATO emphasized solidarity with affected member nations and committed to strengthening defensive measures to counter Russia’s hybrid tactics. The warning follows heightened Russia-West tensions, worsened since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, which has led to Western nations rallying behind Kyiv.



Recent hybrid warfare examples include Estonia accusing Moscow of using migrants as “hybrid” tools, and Baltic nations reporting GPS jamming that disrupted air travel. Other cases involve espionage charges against a German army captain,

allegations of Russian-linked killings in Bavaria, and claims of MEPs spreading Russian propaganda.

NATO’s statement also underscored that these actions will not prevent continued military and financial aid.

White House Plans Over \$1 Billion Arms Package for Israel Amid Gaza Conflict

BY CHRISTINA LEVANDOWSKI

The White House has informed Congress of intention to send over \$1 billion (£800 million) in additional weaponry to Israel, despite U.S. opposition to a full-scale Israeli military invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza. This announcement follows a recent decision to pause the shipment of bombs to Israel due to concerns about civilian casualties in densely populated areas.



Borders has ceased operations at one of its field hospitals due to safety concerns.

The notification of the arms package is likely to provoke objections from some congressional members. However, historically, Congress has never successfully blocked an arms sale funded by previously approved funds. Democratic Senator Chris Van Hollen criticized the decision, urging that no further arms transfers should occur until the Israeli government addresses President Biden's concerns regarding Rafah and humanitarian assistance.

A recent U.S. State Department report indicated that some American-made weapons supplied to Israel may have been used in violation of

international law. Although the report criticized some Israeli military operations in Gaza, it refrained from definitively stating that the Israel Defense Forces' actions violated international law. It noted that assurances received from Israel about the lawful use of U.S. weapons were "credible and reliable."

This arms-sale notification is the first since Biden paused arms transfers to Israel last week. The president cited concerns over the use of 2,000-pound (900 kg) bombs in ground operations, acknowledging that such bombs had resulted in civilian casualties in Gaza.

The issue of weapons transfers to Israel has become politically contentious for

The proposed arms package, which can be blocked by Congress if a majority objects, is reported to include \$700 million in tank ammunition, \$500 million in tactical vehicles, and \$60 million in mortar rounds, according to the Associated Press. This notification is part of a process mandated by U.S. federal law for arms sales to foreign nations exceeding a certain threshold. Last month, Congress approved a military aid package totaling \$95 billion for Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan.

As Israeli tanks advance deeper into residential neighborhoods of Rafah, approximately a mile from the city center, medical services in the area are rapidly depleting. Aid agency Doctors Without

Biden, particularly in the lead-up to the November 2024 presidential election. Activists have urged voters to protest against what they perceive as Biden's preferential treatment of Israel amid the ongoing Gaza conflict.

In response, Republican lawmakers have introduced legislation to prevent further pauses in arms shipments to Israel.

The House of Representatives is expected to vote on a measure requiring the State and Defense Departments to ensure the "prompt delivery" of military equipment. The White House has pledged to veto this bill if it passes the Senate, which is considered unlikely.

Israel launched its military campaign against Hamas following a cross-border attack

on October 7, which resulted in around 1,200 deaths and 252 hostages taken in southern Israel. Since then, more than 35,170 people have been reported killed in Gaza, including 82 in the last 24 hours, according to the Hamas-run health ministry in the territory.

Biden Increases Tariffs on Chinese Goods Amid Election Pressure

By Christina Levandowski

U.S. President Joe Biden is intensifying tariffs on a range of Chinese imports, including electric cars, solar panels, and steel, with a focus on protecting American jobs. Among the most significant measures is a 100% border tax on electric vehicles (EVs) imported from China. The White House claims these tariffs respond to unfair trade practices, but China has vowed to retaliate.



Analysts view these tariff increases as largely symbolic, aimed at rallying votes in a challenging election year. Biden's actions come after sustained criticism from former President Donald Trump, who argues that Biden's pro-electric vehicle stance threatens the U.S. auto industry.

During a speech, Biden emphasized the need to prevent China from "unfairly controlling the market" for essential goods

like electric vehicles, batteries, and medical supplies. He stated, "If the pandemic taught us anything, it's that we need a secure supply of essentials here at home."

The newly announced tariffs are projected to impact approximately \$18 billion in imports. Specifically, tariffs on electric vehicles will rise from 25% to 100%, and solar cell levies will increase from 25% to 50%. Tariffs on certain steel and

aluminum products will more than triple, going from 7.5% to 25%.

In response, China's commerce ministry condemned the tariff hikes, asserting they would "severely affect the atmosphere for bilateral cooperation" and criticizing the politicization of economic issues. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson stated that the country would take "all necessary measures" to protect its interests.

leaders Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif, and Ismail Haniyeh could bear “criminal responsibility” for alleged war crimes during the Gaza conflict.

These tariffs build upon the extensive border taxes initiated under Trump, aimed at addressing perceived unfair trade practices. In reviewing these measures, the Biden administration received nearly 1,500 comments, primarily from business owners warning that the tariffs would raise consumer prices and calling for their removal.

Biden’s choice to maintain and expand these tariffs, even amid persistent inflation and declining approval ratings, signals a significant shift in trade policy for both major political parties in the U.S. Traditionally supportive of global commerce, both sides are now favoring protectionist measures.

Biden’s choice to maintain and expand these tariffs, even amid persistent inflation and declining approval ratings, signals a significant shift in trade policy for both major political parties in the U.S. Traditionally supportive of global commerce, both sides are now favoring protectionist measures. mWendy Cutler, a former U.S. trade official now

with the Asia Society Policy Institute, noted that Americans may accept higher car prices in exchange for safeguarding domestic companies and jobs. She stated, “It’s all about trade-offs; maybe cars become more expensive in the short term, but we aim for a competitive industry long-term.”

White House officials have denied that domestic politics influenced the tariff decision, insisting that China shows no signs of rectifying harmful practices, such as requiring Western companies to share sensitive information and offering subsidies that distort market competition. Biden asserted, “They’re flooding the market. It’s not competing—it’s cheating.”

Despite the existing steep tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, which have significantly curtailed their sales in the U.S., the administration is wary of rising competition from Chinese firms in Europe and elsewhere. Officials stress the importance of ensuring that green technologies are not monopolized by any single country.

While the immediate impact of the electric vehicle tariffs is expected to be minimal, the

business community is closely monitoring whether European nations will adopt similar measures. Natasha Ebtehadj from Artemis Investment Management remarked that investors and Chinese companies anticipated such tariffs, especially with both U.S. presidential candidates displaying anti-China sentiments.

Since the onset of a trade war in 2018 initiated by Trump’s tariffs on two-thirds of Chinese imports, both countries have faced economic repercussions. Although these measures have generated over \$200 billion in new border taxes for the U.S. government, they have also led to increased costs for everyday Americans, reflected in higher prices for various consumer goods.

Despite the potential for minor inflationary effects, Oxford Economics characterized the latest tariff proposals as “more symbolic bark than bite,” estimating they would only marginally impact inflation by 0.01 percentage points and growth similarly, labeling the effects as a “rounding error.”

Biden’s ‘Xenophobic’ Remarks on Japan and India Spark Controversy

By Eric Gahagan

U.S. President Joe Biden recently described Japan and India as “xenophobic,” aligning them with Russia and China as nations that resist immigration. This criticism of Japan comes shortly after Biden hailed the U.S.-Japan alliance as “unbreakable” during Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s state visit. Despite ongoing concerns about human rights and religious freedoms in India, it remains a crucial partner for the U.S.

During a campaign fundraising event targeting an Asian-American audience, Biden stated that the upcoming U.S. election is centered around “freedom, America, and democracy,” emphasizing that “we welcome immigrants.” He attributed economic stagnation in countries like China, Japan, and Russia to their xenophobic attitudes, suggesting that their reluctance to accept immigrants hinders their growth.

Responses to Biden’s comments have been mixed. The BBC reached out to embassies in Japan, India, China, and Russia for reactions, but did not receive immediate replies. However, U.S. commentators criticized Biden’s remarks. Elbridge Colby, a former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense, expressed on X (formerly Twitter) that Japan and India are vital allies deserving of respect, asserting that applying a “parochial progressive” lens to these countries is both patronizing and foolish.



While Japan and India have relatively few foreign-born workers, Russia relies heavily on migrant labor, particularly from Central Asia. Japan and China have struggled with sluggish economic growth, whereas Russia’s militarized economy has shown slight recovery amidst ongoing conflict in Ukraine. India, however, has witnessed steady growth, recently surpassing the UK to become the world’s fifth-largest economy.

The White House has clarified that Biden did not intend to offend, with national security spokesman John Kirby explaining that the president was making a broader point about U.S. immigration policy. Kirby stated, “Our allies and partners know well in tangible ways how President Biden values them, their friendship, their cooperation,” emphasizing Biden’s commitment to alliances.

Sadanand Dhume, a South Asia expert at the American Enterprise Institute, noted that Biden’s comments might be poorly received in India, particularly given the country’s current nationalist sentiment. He remarked that such remarks could reinforce perceptions among some Indians that Biden is not friendly toward their country, especially being grouped with authoritarian regimes like China.

In late April, a U.S. Department of State report highlighted “significant” human rights abuses in India, which the Indian government criticized as biased and lacking understanding. However, Dhume suggested that Biden’s comments are more of a “tempest in a teacup” and unlikely to severely impact U.S.-Indian relations.

Japan has historically maintained stringent immigration policies but has

recently begun facilitating the entry of foreign workers to address its declining population. Biden, who frequently labeled

former President Donald Trump as xenophobic during his 2020 campaign, has adopted a more restrictive immigration stance

amid widespread frustration over his administration's management of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Student Protests Across US Colleges Demand Action on Gaza Conflict

By Eric Gahagan



Thousands of students across more than 130 colleges and universities in the U.S. are protesting against the ongoing war in Gaza, staging demonstrations and encampments. Over 2,000 protesters have been arrested, yet the protests persist as graduation ceremonies approach.

Reasons for the Protests

Since Hamas's attack on October 7 and Israel's subsequent military response, students have organized rallies, sit-ins, fasts, and encampments to voice their opposition to the war. They are demanding that their universities, many of which have significant endowments, divest from Israel. This divestment would involve

cutting ties with Israeli companies or those that conduct business with Israel, as well as ending academic partnerships with Israeli institutions.

Activists argue that institutions investing in these companies are complicit in the ongoing violence in Gaza. University endowments finance various programs, from research to scholarships, relying on returns from substantial investments.

The Spark for Protests

The encampments began last month at Columbia University when dozens of students pitched tents on campus as the university's president testified before

Congress regarding antisemitism. Following police intervention and subsequent arrests, the movement quickly spread to other colleges nationwide.

Protest Spread

Columbia's actions inspired similar protests across the country, including notable institutions such as:

- **Northeast:** Harvard, Yale, NYU, Georgetown, and more
- **West Coast:** UCLA, UC Berkeley, and USC
- **Midwest:** University of Wisconsin, Northwestern, University of Michigan
- **South:** Emory, Tulane, University of North Carolina
- **Southwest:** University of Texas, Rice, Arizona State

The BBC reports that protests have emerged in 45 states and Washington, D.C., with similar gatherings occurring in Australia, Canada, France, Italy, and the UK.

University Responses

Universities have varied in their responses to the protests. Some have engaged in negotiations with student activists, while others have

issued ultimatums that have led to police interventions. For instance, Northwestern University reached an agreement that limited the size of the encampment, while Brown University agreed to hold a vote on divestment in exchange for removing an encampment.

National politicians have urged colleges to take action, addressing antisemitic incidents that have occurred during some protests. Jewish students have reported feeling uncomfortable or unsafe, citing chants and signs supportive of Hamas as well as physical confrontations.

Arrests and Consequences

The protests have resulted in over 2,000 arrests nationwide, with significant numbers during the first days of May at campuses such as Yale, Stony Brook, and UCLA.

At Columbia, police cleared occupied spaces and made 282 arrests, which included detentions at City College of New York.

Impact of Protests

While pro-Palestinian groups have long advocated for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, no U.S. university has formally adopted the BDS framework. Despite the potential negligible impact of divestment on the conflict, protesters believe it raises awareness about those profiting from war.

Historical Context

Activists have drawn parallels to protests against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War during the late 1960s.

Significant protests led to numerous arrests and violent clashes, with four students killed by the National Guard in 1970, which ignited a nationwide student strike.

Effect on Graduation Ceremonies

As graduation ceremonies commence this weekend, protests are anticipated, particularly at Indiana University and the University of Michigan. Some institutions, like the University of Southern California, have canceled their commencement ceremonies due to potential protests, opting instead for alternative celebrations.

US Report Indicates Possible Misuse of American Weapons by Israel in Gaza

By Jan Frazier

The U.S. has expressed concerns that Israel may have utilized American-supplied weapons in ways that breach international humanitarian law during its military operations in Gaza. According to the State Department, it is “reasonable to assess” that these arms have been used inconsistently with Israel’s obligations, although it acknowledged that its assessment lacks complete information and that arms shipments could continue.

This report, which was submitted to Congress after a delay, is part of a White House-ordered review examining how the U.S. and six other nations involved in conflict have employed American-supplied arms since the beginning of the previous year.

While the report criticizes certain Israeli actions in Gaza, it stops short of definitively stating that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have violated

international law. It notes the “extraordinary military challenge” Israel faces in combating Hamas and acknowledges that assurances received from Israel regarding the lawful use of U.S. weapons are “credible and reliable.”

The document also highlights the complexities of the situation, stating that Hamas often uses civilian infrastructure for military purposes, making it difficult to

ascertain legitimate targets in an active war zone. However, it argues that given Israel's heavy reliance on U.S.-made weapons, they have likely been used in ways inconsistent with international humanitarian law and best practices to minimize civilian harm.

The report indicates that while Israel possesses the knowledge and tools to implement effective practices for mitigating civilian casualties, the high levels of civilian deaths raise serious questions about the IDF's effectiveness in doing so. It cites UN and humanitarian organizations that describe Israeli efforts to mitigate civilian harm as "inconsistent, ineffective and inadequate."

Additionally, the State Department found that Israel initially did not fully cooperate with U.S. efforts to maximize humanitarian aid into Gaza, although this situation has reportedly improved. The report states, "We do not currently assess that the Israeli government is prohibiting or otherwise restricting the transport or delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance."

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One contributor to the report, David Satterfield, a former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, described it as unprecedented and emphasized that the U.S. will continue to review Israeli actions.

The report's release came shortly after President Joe Biden warned that the U.S. might withhold certain munitions from Israel if it proceeded with an offensive against Rafah, the last Hamas stronghold in Gaza, which is densely populated with over a million Palestinians. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed Biden's warnings, asserting that Israel would "stand alone" if necessary.

The United Nations reports that over 80,000 people have fled Rafah since Monday, as Israeli tanks are positioned near populated areas amid ongoing bombardments. Israeli troops have also taken control of the Rafah crossing with Egypt, making it too dangerous for UN staff and supplies to reach the reopened Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel.

Israel initiated its military campaign in Gaza to dismantle Hamas following an attack on southern Israel on October 7, which resulted in approximately 1,200 deaths and 252 kidnappings. Since then, over 34,900 individuals have been killed in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.



97% of Campus Protests on Gaza in the US Remain Peaceful, Reports Show

By Jan Frazier

An independent non-profit organization that monitors political violence and protests globally has reported that 97% of campus demonstrations in the U.S. regarding the Gaza

conflict since mid-April have been peaceful. An analysis of 553 demonstrations from April 18 to May 3 found fewer than 20 resulted in serious interpersonal violence or property damage,

according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (Acled).

During the same period, Acled noted over 70 instances

of forceful police intervention at U.S. campus protests, which included arrests and the use of physical dispersal tactics such as chemical agents and batons. Nearly half of the protests categorized as violent involved clashes between protesters and law enforcement during these interventions.

Protest encampments in support of Gaza have emerged on college campuses across the U.S. since April, with students advocating for a range of demands, including calls for universities to support a ceasefire, divest from Israeli companies, and sever ties with Israeli institutions. Similar protests have also occurred in the UK, Europe, India, and Lebanon.

Following the arrest of 108 students at Columbia University on April 18, many universities called in law enforcement to dismantle encampments, leading to over 2,600 arrests across more than 50 campuses, as tracked by the Associated Press. University leaders have expressed concerns that these protests disrupt campus life, threaten safety, and create a hostile environment, with University of Southern California President Carol Folt warning of a “dangerous direction.”

President Joe Biden has also voiced criticism, stating, “dissent must never lead to disorder” and emphasizing that



“violent protest is not protected.” He condemned acts such as vandalism and intimidation as not constituting peaceful protest.

According to Acled’s analysis, only two demonstrations were classified as violent due to significant property damage: one at Portland State University, where protesters damaged furniture and computers, and another at Columbia University, where windows were broken. Acled’s North America research manager, Kieran Doyle, clarified that graffiti or spray paint do not count as serious property destruction.

Among the 3% of protests categorized as violent, most involved physical confrontations with police rather than clashes between pro-Palestinian protesters and counter-demonstrators. The most notable incident occurred at UCLA, where a pro-Palestinian encampment was attacked by masked counter-demonstrators, resulting in clashes lasting several hours, with law enforcement reportedly

retreating.

Other incidents of violence included a skirmish at UC Berkeley and confrontations between motorists and demonstrators in Portland and St. Louis.

Much of the criticism of pro-Palestinian protests in the U.S. has focused on the rhetoric used, particularly regarding allegations of antisemitism and the impact on Jewish students’ safety on campus. The recent tensions have sparked debate about whether police interventions in response to campus protests are justified.

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Acled’s U.S. protest statistics are compiled from extensive research across local news outlets, independent journalists, and verified social media accounts.

Faculty and Students Protest Honorary Degree for President Biden at Morehouse College

BY MIRZA

France, Belgium, and Slovenia have expressed their backing for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its chief prosecutor's request for arrest warrants for leaders of Israel and Hamas. This move has drawn sharp criticism from both Israel and the United States.

The arrest warrants are based on accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity occurring in the Gaza Strip and Israel. The warrants are sought for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders: Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif, and Ismail Haniyeh. Although Netanyahu and Gallant are not facing immediate arrest, the announcement on Monday is a symbolic blow that deepens Israel's diplomatic isolation over the ongoing conflict in Gaza. In response, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz is traveling to France.

Meanwhile, the situation on the ground remains dire. One of the last operational hospitals in northern Gaza, Kamal Adwan, was forced to evacuate after coming under fire from Israeli forces. Another hospital, Awda, has been surrounded by troops for three days. The Palestinian Health Ministry reports ongoing



violence in the occupied West Bank, including a raid by Israeli forces in Jenin that resulted in at least seven fatalities and numerous injuries.

Israel's military operations in Gaza were initiated after Hamas attacked on October 7, leading to the deaths of approximately 1,200 people in southern Israel, mostly civilians, and the abduction of around 250 individuals. The toll in Gaza has been staggering, with at least 35,000 Palestinians reported dead, according to the territory's Health Ministry. The humanitarian situation

continues to worsen, with around 80% of Gaza's 2.3 million residents displaced multiple times due to the conflict.

The ongoing conflict has devastated Gaza's health sector, with about two-thirds of its original 36 hospitals shuttered and the remaining facilities operating at limited capacity. Both Kamal Adwan and Awda hospitals had previously been besieged by Israeli troops, leading to significant damage and operational shutdowns. Despite Israeli claims that Hamas uses hospitals for military purposes, hospital staff deny these allegations.

India and France to Start Negotiations for 26 Rafale Marine Fighter Jets

By Mirza



India and France are set to initiate contract negotiations for a deal worth over ₹50,000 crore for 26 Rafale Marine (Rafale M) fighter jets on May 30, following the arrival of a high-level French

delegation. Once finalized, the Rafale M aircraft will be operated by the Indian Navy from its two aircraft carriers, INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya, according to defense ministry officials, as reported by ANI.

Currently, the Indian Navy utilizes Russian Mikoyan MiG-29K fighter jets aboard both carriers.

Latest Developments in the Rafale M Fighter Jet Deal

The Indian government aims to complete negotiations with France and sign the agreement for the Rafale jets by the end of the current financial year, as indicated by unnamed government sources. To expedite the process, the Navy Chief has instructed his team to significantly reduce the deal's timeline to facilitate the early induction of the new aircraft.

US and China Defense Chiefs Clash Over Taiwan at Shangri-La Dialogue

By Mirza

During their first in-person meeting in two years, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun engaged in a heated discussion regarding Taiwan, emphasizing the necessity of maintaining open military communications. The meeting took place on Friday in

Singapore at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's premier defense summit, where discussions were also expected to address sensitive issues surrounding the South China Sea, with the Philippines' president scheduled to speak later in the day.

The U.S.-China relationship is a focal point of the dialogue, alongside ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, and tensions in the South China Sea. Austin raised concerns about recent Chinese military activities around Taiwan, particularly in light of the island's presidential election

and the inauguration of President Lai Ching-te. U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryder reported that Austin expressed worries about “provocative PLA activity” and stressed that Taiwan’s political transitions should not be used by China as a justification for coercive measures.

In response, Dong cautioned Austin against U.S. interference in China’s dealings with Taiwan, asserting that the U.S. stance undermines commitments and signals support for “separatist forces.” Beijing views President Lai as a separatist due to his administration’s pro-independence stance.

Despite the tensions, both sides recognized the importance of maintaining military-to-military ties and discussed broader regional security issues, including the South China Sea and the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

Later on Friday, Philippine President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is expected to address the Philippines’ legal and geopolitical stance on the South China Sea, emphasizing its significance for global trade. China claims sovereignty over nearly all of the South China Sea, including areas contested by the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam, despite a 2016 ruling from the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated Beijing’s



Taiwan’s Defense Minister Wellington Koo remarked that easing tensions around Taiwan could be achieved if China ceased its military drills. He stated, “If China stops its provocation and intimidation, then peace and stability can be maintained.” A report from the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) noted a significant increase in military exercises in the region in recent years. Although both the U.S. and China have ramped up military activities across Asia, China’s drills remain smaller in scale and complexity compared to those of the U.S.

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Houthi Threats Expand as Weapons Reach Mediterranean Sea, US Officials Warn

By Mirza

Senior defense officials have indicated that Houthi militants in Yemen possess weaponry capable of reaching the Mediterranean Sea, supporting the group's threats to extend attacks on shipping beyond their immediate borders. Concerns have arisen within the US government regarding the Iran-backed group's potential to target vessels in the Mediterranean, following reports of their advanced weaponry, including anti-ship ballistic missiles and drones.

This assessment coincides with a meeting between US defense officials and the Gulf Cooperation Council in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where discussions are focused on enhancing air and missile defense integration, sharing radar data, and developing early-warning capabilities. A US official highlighted the success of Israel, the US, the UK, and regional partners in repelling over 300 missiles and drones launched by Iran and its proxies on April 13, showcasing the effectiveness of Washington's integrated defense alliances.

The Houthis announced earlier this month their intention to target vessels in the eastern Mediterranean, initiating these threats in solidarity with Hamas amid the Gaza conflict. However,



the US official noted that no attacks in the Mediterranean have been confirmed, and it remains unclear whether the Houthis can accurately hit moving maritime targets at such distances, as most successful strikes have occurred close to Yemen.

Since October, the Houthis have threatened vessels linked to Israel, the US, and the UK, effectively restricting access to

the southern Red Sea for most Western shipping. This situation has prompted shipping and freight executives to consider avoiding the Suez Canal, opting instead for routes around southern Africa due to safety concerns.

Iran continues to provide military training and intelligence support to the Houthis, crucial for effectively targeting moving vessels.

Taiwan Reports Increased Chinese Military Activity Amid Heightened Tensions

By Mirza

On Sunday, Taiwan's Ministry of Defence (MND) reported the detection of seven aircraft from China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) and over 14 vessels from the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) operating near Taiwan. The ministry's statement indicated that these PLA aircraft, PLAN vessels, and four China Coast Guard (CCG) ships were tracked in the vicinity of the island until 6 a.m. local time.

In response to these activities, Taiwan's armed forces closely monitored the situation and acted accordingly. The MND shared the update on X, stating, "7 PLA aircraft, 14 PLAN vessels, and 4 CCG vessels operating around #Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

This incident follows a previous report from Saturday, where the MND identified 62 PLA aircraft and 27 PLAN vessels in the region. Notably, 47 of these aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, entering Taiwan's southwest, southeast, and eastern Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ).



The Taiwan Ministry expressed concern over the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) military exercises, stating that such activities reflect a hegemonic mindset that undermines regional peace and stability. The recent military maneuvers have escalated tensions in the Taiwan Strait, further complicating the geopolitical landscape.

In a recent speech, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te reaffirmed his commitment to defending the island against external threats, emphasizing the importance of freedom and democracy. "Faced with external challenges and threats, we will continue to defend the values of freedom and democracy, and safeguard peace and stability in the region," he stated.

Poland Unveils \$2.5 Billion Security Initiative to Fortify Eastern Border with Belarus

By Jan Frazier



2021. The current pro-EU administration asserts that these defenses need to be reinforced.

Historically, the three Baltic states were part of the Soviet Union, and Poland was a satellite state before the 1990s. Moscow continues to view this region as falling within its sphere of influence.

On Monday, defense officials in Poland, a NATO member, announced plans to enhance security along its eastern border with Belarus, an ally of Moscow. The Polish government, which supports Ukraine against Russian aggression, claims it is facing hostile actions from both Russia and Belarus, including cyberattacks, attempted arson, and illegal migrant crossings. These actions are perceived as efforts to destabilize the European Union, of which Poland is a member.

Under Prime Minister Donald Tusk's administration, a comprehensive suite of security measures is being implemented, which includes significant investments in cyberspace defense and a \$2.5 billion initiative called Shield-East. Tusk revealed last week that work on this security project has already commenced.

Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz and armed forces chief Gen. Wiesław Kukuła

detailed the enhancements to border protection, which will include modern blockades, fortifications, and surveillance systems aimed at deterring potential aggressors.

The Defense Ministry emphasized that this system will contribute to a regional defense infrastructure being developed in collaboration with the Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—also positioned along NATO's eastern flank.

The Shield-East initiative aims to “significantly strengthen the nation's resilience to military threats from the east, limit the mobility of adversarial troops, and provide greater operational freedom and survival for our own forces and civilians,” according to the ministry.

Poland's previous right-wing government constructed a \$400 million wall along the Belarus border to manage a surge of migrants starting in

Faculty and Students Protest Honorary Degree for President Biden at Morehouse College

BY RANDY WHITEHEAD



Morehouse College faculty members are pushing to prevent President Joe Biden from receiving an honorary doctorate at the May 19 commencement. During a recent virtual meeting with Morehouse President David Thomas, faculty discussed the issue, with a majority opposing the honorary degree. Their concerns centered on Biden's policies on policing, incarceration, Gaza, and student protests. Supporters argued Biden's actions in Gaza were wrongly criticized.

Though Morehouse previously announced the honorary degree, faculty must still vote on it due to a procedural oversight. The vote is scheduled for Thursday, just days before the ceremony. Cedric Richmond, Biden's campaign co-chair and Morehouse alumnus, defended Biden, highlighting his achievements for Black communities, including poverty reduction and historic judicial appointments.

In response to ongoing student and faculty protests, Morehouse clarified that the vote was procedural, emphasizing its commitment to a full range of perspectives on campus. Some faculty members circulated a dissent letter criticizing Biden's foreign policies, which was read aloud during a campus rally. Protesters urged Biden to engage directly with students instead of delivering a traditional commencement speech.

Despite the opposition, the White House expressed Biden's enthusiasm to address Morehouse students. Protesters, meanwhile, view Biden's visit as a political move to gain Black voters' support in his re-election campaign. Richmond countered, saying Biden's visit aligns with his tradition of speaking at HBCUs annually.

Trump Allies Intensify Attacks on Witnesses as Gag Order Limits Trump's Speech in Hush Money Trial

By Kathy Malouf

Facing a gag order in his New York hush money trial, former President Donald Trump

risks jail time if he attacks witnesses directly. However, his allies are increasingly taking on

that role, with remarks targeting key witnesses, especially Michael Cohen, Trump's former

lawyer and “fixer.”

On Monday, as Cohen testified about Trump’s involvement in efforts to suppress damaging stories during the 2016 election, GOP Senators J.D. Vance of Ohio and Tommy Tuberville of Alabama sharply criticized Cohen. Tuberville dismissed Cohen’s testimony, calling him “a convicted felon” and suggesting his statements were “an acting scene.” Vance, in a series of sarcastic posts on X, questioned Cohen’s credibility, highlighting inconsistencies in his recollections.

The gag order has led Trump’s allies, including his sons Donald Jr. and Eric, to step up public defenses and criticisms at the courthouse. Both sons, though not implicated in this case, have attended trial sessions, with Eric Trump showing visible support for his father.



The court-imposed gag order, enforced by Judge Juan Merchan, restricts Trump’s comments on witnesses and court officials but does not limit his allies. Despite Trump’s continued public objections to the order, Judge Merchan has enforced it rigorously, fining Trump multiple times and warning that further violations could lead to jail time.

Legal experts are divided on whether Trump will testify in his defense, though his attorneys may advise against it. Meanwhile, additional allies, including Rep. Nicole Malliotakis and Republican attorneys general Brenna Bird and Steve Marshall, have shown their support by appearing at the courthouse as Trump’s trial continues.

Capitol Hill Friendship Spurs Bipartisan Support for Ukraine Aid

By Jan Frazier

The unlikely alliance between Rep. Josh Gottheimer, a New Jersey Democrat, and Sen. Markwayne Mullin, an Oklahoma Republican, highlights how personal connections can influence major policy moves. Their camaraderie, built in the Capitol gym, helped push through a \$10 billion aid package to support Ukraine in its conflict with Russia.

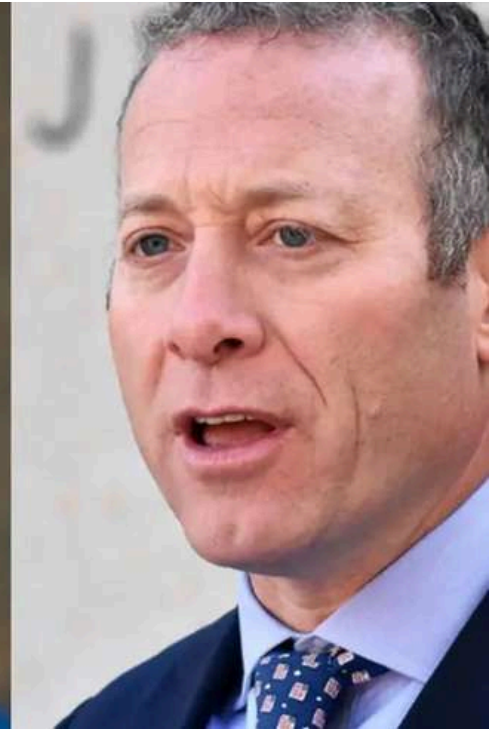
Gottheimer, a former speechwriter for Bill Clinton, and Mullin, a mixed martial arts champion and Trump ally, forged a friendship through frequent workouts. Despite their contrasting political views, they developed mutual respect and trust, setting the stage for collaboration on Ukraine aid. Their partnership proved pivotal as Congress struggled to

pass the package amidst Republican opposition and fears of former President Donald Trump’s influence.

When aid discussions stalled, Mullin leveraged his ties to Trump, while Gottheimer maintained communication with the White House and Democratic leaders. Together, they crafted a loan-based aid

package to meet Trump's terms, allowing GOP members to support it without breaking with Trump. The measure ultimately passed, with President Biden's approval, bolstering Ukraine's defenses.

Gottheimer and Mullin's story underscores a rare moment of bipartisanship. "You bull—, you get to know each other," Gottheimer said. Their collaboration, forged in the gym and fueled by mutual understanding, offers a hopeful example of lawmakers bridging divides to achieve critical goals.



Biden's Weapon Ultimatum to Israel Sparks Bipartisan Backlash

By Randy Whitehead

President Joe Biden's ultimatum to limit weapon supplies to Israel, following a potential major offensive in Rafah, has ignited criticism from both parties. Biden's stance, voiced publicly in a CNN interview, drew condemnation from Republicans and raised concerns among Democrats, showing bipartisan divisions on US-Israel policy.

Senator JD Vance questioned the rationale, arguing that withholding weapons could inadvertently increase civilian casualties. Biden's policy review may affect future weapons sales, including JDAM kits, though these transfers remain speculative. Earlier, Biden approved a hold

on 3,500 bombs, citing risks to civilians in Rafah, where thousands of civilians are sheltering.

Republicans like Lindsey Graham and Rick Scott called the decision a "horrible message" to Israel, with Scott accusing Biden of aligning with a "pro-Hamas wing" within the Democratic Party. A faction of 26 House Democrats echoed concerns, suggesting the decision could embolden Iranian-backed groups and requesting a briefing from the White House for clarity.

Rep. Adam Smith and Senator Chris Murphy defended Biden's approach, clarifying that the president withheld only specific munitions deemed

excessively destructive. Murphy emphasized Biden's intent to avoid the mistakes of past US conflicts, where civilian harm strengthened terrorist groups, and underscored the strategic need for minimizing casualties to counter Hamas.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken also called for Israel to mitigate civilian deaths, citing that current operations in Gaza have resulted in extensive casualties. Meanwhile, the State Department report noted potential misuse of US weapons, though it stopped short of outright violations of humanitarian law. Some, like Sen. Chris Van Hollen, felt this report lacked transparency, worrying it set a low standard for civilian protections.

As Biden balances supporting Israel with calls for caution, his administration faces challenges navigating bipartisan pressures and safeguarding both civilian lives and strategic alliances.



Maryland Democratic Voters Face Tough Choice in Race to Succeed Rep. Sarbanes

By Henry Nicholas

In Maryland's deep-blue 3rd Congressional District, Democratic voters must choose between national figure Harry Dunn and state Senator Sarah Elfreth in the primary election to replace retiring Rep. John Sarbanes. Voters face a choice between Dunn, a former Capitol Police officer known for his role in defending Congress on Jan. 6, 2021, and Elfreth, a seasoned lawmaker focused on state-level issues.

After defending the Capitol during the January 6th attack, Dunn, 40, emerged as a prominent voice against former President Trump, leveraging his platform in televised hearings and media appearances. Despite living just outside the district, Dunn has raised around \$4.6 million, drawing on his national reputation. He emphasizes his commitment to protecting democracy and standing against

Trump's agenda, which he sees as a threat.

State Senator Elfreth, 35, known for her legislative achievements, has fostered goodwill in her community by addressing health care and environmental issues. For some voters, like Kathryn Schulke, Elfreth's local responsiveness and problem-solving approach have been pivotal. Elfreth has raised \$1.5 million, significantly less than Dunn but has benefitted from over \$4 million in TV ads funded by a pro-Israel super PAC.

Senator Clarence Lam, a physician and another primary contender, has focused on health policy and affordability, distinguishing himself as the only Asian American and physician in Maryland's Senate. He emphasizes his legislative work on capping insulin costs and expanding Medicaid access.

As Dunn's campaign criticizes Elfreth for her PAC support, which includes donations from Trump-affiliated figures, Elfreth defends her bipartisan record, underscoring her commitment to working across the aisle.

For Dunn, the campaign is about more than January 6. He supports a range of progressive issues, from affordable housing to gun reform. The outcome of this race will indicate whether Maryland voters prefer a national figure ready to battle Trump's influence or a dedicated state legislator focused on community-driven issues.



2024 Election Spotlights Senate Filibuster Debate as Key Democrats Push for Change

By Jan Frazier

The 2024 election has brought the Senate filibuster back into the spotlight, with Democrats increasingly advocating for reforms to the 60-vote threshold, especially to pass legislation on issues like abortion rights and voting protections.

If President Joe Biden secures re-election and Democrats control the Senate, they might finally have the votes to alter the filibuster. Key Democratic senators and candidates support reforms, which has made the issue a litmus test for the party. With Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, who previously blocked such changes, not returning, the path to change may be clearer.

Currently, Senate rules require 60 votes to end debate on most legislation, allowing 41 senators to effectively veto bills. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., believes this is a chance to restore “a talking filibuster” that would demand continuous debate for a minority to block bills. “Making the Senate work again” is a shared goal for most Democrats who are staying, Merkley says.

The stakes are high. Reforming the filibuster could reshape lawmaking by allowing a simple majority to pass laws. Progressives argue that the filibuster stalls popular legislation and frustrates majority rule. Even some moderate Democrats say the threshold stifles productivity. Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., likens

Senate rules to a rocket that “would never leave the launchpad” under similar restrictions.

Republicans, however, warn that scrapping the filibuster could be disastrous, with conservative voices like Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., calling it “a bulwark against socialist policies.” Johnson and other Republicans argue that even with potential executive authority, the filibuster remains essential to prevent drastic policy swings.

Democrats aiming to secure an anti-filibuster Senate majority must retain seats in battleground states like Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Arizona. Arizona’s likely Democratic Senate candidate,

Rep. Ruben Gallego, has pledged to waive the filibuster to protect abortion rights. Other prominent Democratic candidates, such as Adam Schiff and Elissa Slotkin, have also called for the filibuster's end to ensure votes on gun safety, voting access, and other priorities.

President Biden has previously endorsed carve-outs to the filibuster for issues like voting and abortion rights. Some believe his position may expand to other legislative areas if Democrats gain control.

Meanwhile, former President Donald Trump has urged Republicans to scrap the filibuster for stricter immigration laws. Senate GOP leaders, like Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C.,



resist, arguing that such a move could undermine the Senate's unique role, with Tillis even suggesting he'd resign if Republicans "nuke it."

The filibuster debate will likely persist, framing a divisive issue for both parties as they approach the November election.



Washington Insider

M A G A Z I N E

**US AND CHINA DEFENSE CHIEFS CLASH OVER
TAIWAN AT SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE**

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