



Washington Insider

M A G A Z I N E

Democratic Delegate Raises Concerns Over Biden Campaign

Whitmer Suggests Cognitive Test for Biden Amid Rising Concerns

BY HENRY NICHOLAS

05

The European Union Becomes a Full Participant in the Register of Damage for Ukraine

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

17

Hungary Assumes Rotating Presidency of the EU: Navigating Challenges Ahead

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

28



OUR TEAM



Danielle Campbell



Athena Nagel



Henry Nicholas



Kathy Malouf



Mandilee Hecht



Seb Jenkins



ZACH SCHRADER



ERIC GAHAGAN



Christina Levandowski



TRENT R. NELSON



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

Table of Contents

04

Capitol Hill Politics

10

US Nationwide

17

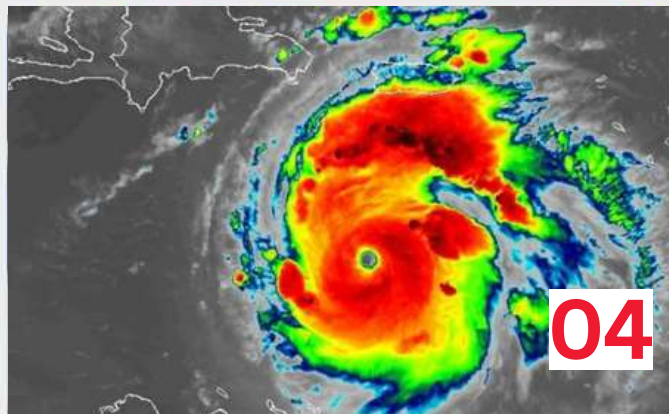
Europe

23

Security & Defense

31

Middle East



HURRICANE BERYL: A RECORD-SETTING CATEGORY 5 STORM DEVASTATES THE CARIBBEAN



THE EUROPEAN UNION BECOMES A FULL PARTICIPANT IN THE REGISTER OF DAMAGE FOR UKRAINE



U.S. ARMY'S MANUFACTURING MODERNIZATION: A GAME-CHANGER FOR 2025

Democratic Delegate Raises Concerns Over Biden Campaign

BY JAN FRAZIER

A Democratic delegate from California has raised concerns about a recent interaction with the Biden re-election campaign, which he interpreted as an attempt to stifle internal discussion among party delegates regarding President Joe Biden's candidacy. The delegate, who requested anonymity to speak freely, told CNN on Wednesday that he received a call from a member of the "Biden-Harris delegate operations" team that left him feeling uneasy.

The delegate recounted that the campaign official's first question was whether he understood his obligations as a "Biden-Harris pledged delegate." The delegate, who has participated in previous Democratic conventions, confirmed that he was aware of his responsibilities. However, the follow-up questions—asking if he had any other inquiries and confirming his phone number—struck him as odd.

According to the California delegate, another colleague from the state had a similar



experience with the same campaign staffer. Both found the outreach unsettling, especially since they had expressed concerns about Biden's viability as the party's 2024 candidate in conversations with fellow delegates.

When CNN reached out to the Biden campaign for comment, a spokesperson from the Democratic National Convention redirected inquiries,

explaining that the campaign had been regularly engaging with state parties and delegations since 2023, but did not address the specifics of the calls.

This incident has added to the ongoing debate within the Democratic Party over Biden's candidacy and how the campaign manages internal party dynamics.

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker Expresses Concerns Over 2024 Presidential Race

By Jan Frazier



Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker was overheard on Wednesday expressing dissatisfaction with the current state of the presidential race, raising questions about his stance on the 2024 election.

“We’re just going to keep fighting, I don’t know what to say. You know, gotta go with what we have to do.”

He was then pulled away from the conversation, leaving his comment open to interpretation.

Jordan Abudayyeh, the deputy chief of communications for Pritzker’s office, later clarified to CNN affiliate WBBM that the governor appeared to be referring to the state of the presidential race. CNN has reached out to Pritzker’s office for further comment.

When speaking to reporters directly on Wednesday, Pritzker voiced his support for President Joe Biden’s increased visibility, stating,

“I think now, more and more he has been out there. He is talking to the public, he is talking to reporters. That is what we need him to do.”

Pritzker’s remarks come amid growing uncertainty within the Democratic Party regarding the 2024 election.

Whitmer Suggests Cognitive Test for Biden Amid Rising Concerns

By Henry Nicholas

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer recently stated that it “wouldn’t hurt” President Joe Biden to take a cognitive test, especially following criticisms of his mental fitness after a challenging debate performance in June. During an interview with CNN’s Abby Phillip, Whitmer, a fellow Democrat, was asked

about the necessity of such tests for Biden and former President Donald Trump. She maintained that the scrutiny was warranted but did not advocate for Biden to withdraw from the 2024 race.

Acknowledging Biden’s less-than-stellar debate

performance, Whitmer argued that the president is dedicated to serving the American public.

“He shows up every day and fights for the American public. He cares about other people more than he cares about himself,”

she said. Whitmer emphasized the high stakes of the current political climate, particularly with Trump facing serious legal challenges, including 34 felony convictions.

“We can’t lose sight of how high these stakes are,”

In a recent interview with ABC News, Biden downplayed concerns about his cognitive abilities, stating that being president requires a daily mental assessment. When questioned about undergoing cognitive tests, he replied,

“No one said I had to. ... They said I’m good.”

Despite this, there has been mounting pressure from some Democrats for Biden to step aside to preserve party chances in upcoming elections. Nine House Democrats have publicly called for Biden to reconsider his reelection bid, with Vermont Senator Peter Welch being the first in the Senate to voice similar sentiments.

hitmer, often mentioned as a potential candidate should



Biden withdraw, recently participated in a meeting with Biden and other Democratic governors. She refrained from making public comments immediately afterward but expressed concern over the energy being spent discussing Biden’s performance rather than focusing on Trump, whom she described as an existential threat to democracy.

Moreover, she raised concerns about the potential ramifications of a Trump presidency, referencing the Supreme Court’s recent ruling that grants presidents significant immunity from prosecution for official acts.

“I think everyone who is critical or has a mind of their own should be concerned about someone who is willing to abuse power and misuse it,”

she cautioned, highlighting the precarious situation if Trump were to regain the White House.

Whitmer’s comments reflect a growing anxiety among Democrats regarding Biden’s viability as a candidate and the broader implications for the party’s future. While she stands firmly behind the president, she acknowledges the tough conversations happening within the party as they prepare for the 2024 elections.

Senator Chris Coons Clarifies Nancy Pelosi’s Comments on Biden’s Political Future By Jan Frazier

Democratic Senator Chris Coons of Delaware has stepped forward to clarify former Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s remarks regarding President Joe Biden’s

potential candidacy for the 2024 presidential election. In a recent CNN interview, Coons asserted that Pelosi was not calling for Biden to make immediate

decisions about his re-election but rather reflecting broader Democratic concerns about the upcoming election and Biden’s performance.



The Party's Internal Dynamics

The current situation underscores a complex dynamic within the Democratic Party, where some members are increasingly vocal about their apprehensions regarding Biden's electability. Reports indicate that numerous congressional Democrats have urged him to reconsider his candidacy, citing polling data that suggests he may struggle against Trump. Despite this internal dissent, Coons emphasized that Biden should have the space to evaluate his options without feeling pressured by party leaders.

In conclusion, while Pelosi's comments have sparked speculation about Biden's political future, Coons has staunchly defended the president's position and expressed unwavering support for his candidacy. The ongoing dialogue within the Democratic Party highlights the challenges Biden faces as he navigates both internal dissent and external pressures in the lead-up to the 2024 election.

Context of Pelosi's Remarks

During an appearance on MSNBC's "Morning Joe," Pelosi emphasized that the decision on whether President Biden will seek re-election lies solely with him, noting that "time is running short." Her comments have ignited discussions among Democrats, particularly following Biden's lackluster debate performance, which has raised questions about his viability against former President Donald Trump. Coons, a close ally of Biden and co-chair of his campaign, downplayed any interpretations that Pelosi's remarks were a covert suggestion for Biden to step aside. He assured that if Pelosi had a specific message for the

president, she would communicate it directly.

Coons' Support for Biden

Reaffirming his confidence in Biden, Coons stated, "He's gonna be our nominee at the convention. He is gonna be our candidate for president in the fall."

This assertion comes amidst mounting concerns within the party, as several Democratic lawmakers have voiced doubts about Biden's re-election prospects. However, Coons maintained that Biden remains optimistic about revitalizing his campaign and garnering the necessary support from lawmakers.

Unrest Among Democrats as Biden's Re-election Campaign Faces Turbulence

By Randy Whitehead

In the last 24 hours, many anxious Democrats have expressed surprise at the swift developments surrounding President Joe Biden's re-election campaign. Following this week's NATO conference,

which took place just blocks from the White House, expectations were high for a decisive moment. However, the emergence of troubling headlines has left many in the party unsettled as Biden juggles

various global responsibilities. "This seems to be moving more rapidly than I thought," noted one senior Democrat, highlighting the growing unrest within the party.

Several significant events have unfolded recently, including a lack of consensus among party members regarding Biden's future. Formal discussions have not produced a clear agreement, leaving many uncertain about the path forward. Notably, nine House Democrats and one senator have publicly urged Biden to step aside, raising serious concerns about his viability as a candidate for the 2024 election. Additionally, Colorado Senator Michael Bennet has suggested that Biden should reassess his campaign, echoing fears about its sustainability. Former Speaker Nancy Pelosi stated, "It's up to the president to decide if he is going to run," a remark that some colleagues interpreted as a subtle hint for Biden to reconsider his candidacy.

As Biden prepares for a visit to Michigan on Friday, the situation appears precarious. Swing-



district Representative Elissa Slotkin will not accompany him and has refrained from confirming her support for his campaign, further indicating potential fractures within the party. These events illustrate the mounting pressure on Biden from within his own party. Concerns about his age and performance are leading to a potential shift in support as Democrats grapple with the implications of his candidacy

With growing dissent and public calls for him to step aside, the upcoming weeks will be crucial in determining whether Biden can maintain his status as the Democratic nominee for the 2024 election. As the political landscape continues to evolve, the ability of Biden and his campaign to address these internal challenges will be pivotal in shaping the Democratic Party's future.

Concerns Among Superdelegates Regarding Biden's Reelection Viability

By Valerie Ann

In a recent interview with CNN, Democratic superdelegate Bart Dame from Hawaii expressed uncertainty about supporting President Joe Biden's reelection, reflecting growing concerns among party members. Since Biden's underwhelming debate performance last month, Dame has been inundated with

messages from constituents questioning the president's viability as a candidate.

"I started getting phone calls, text messages, emails... people say, what can we do to save this situation?" Dame shared, underscoring a collective desire among Democrats to defeat Donald Trump while also

acknowledging varying opinions on Biden's strengths. "I think where we might disagree is whether Joe Biden is the strongest candidate to do that," he stated during his conversation with CNN's Erin Burnett.

As a member of the Democratic National Committee and a

superdelegate, Dame wields considerable influence within the party. Superdelegates, who are senior party leaders and elected officials, automatically qualify as delegates for the convention. Should Biden withdraw from the race, it would prompt a delegate selection process to determine the party's nominee. While superdelegates typically cannot vote on the first ballot if their votes could influence the nomination, they can participate in subsequent ballots per party rules.

Dame's remarks highlight a growing apprehension among some Democrats regarding Biden's chances for reelection. CNN reports that several prominent party figures have also voiced doubts about Biden's ability to secure victory in the upcoming election, a sentiment that resonates amid recent events and Biden's debate performances.

As the Democratic National Convention approaches, the situation remains fluid. With Biden grappling with internal challenges and external pressures, the dynamics of support among delegates could shift significantly leading up to the convention.



Hurricane Beryl: A Record-Setting Category 5 Storm Devastates the Caribbean

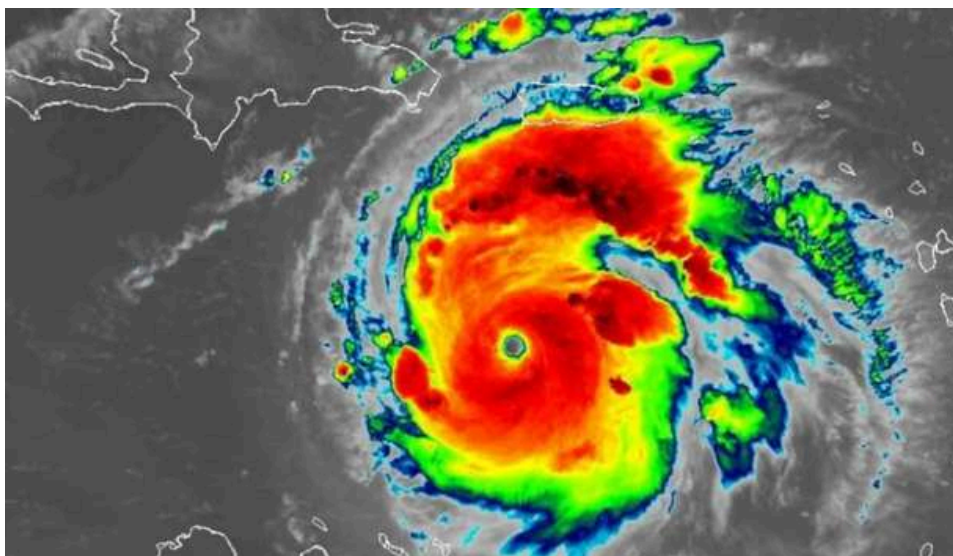
BY JAN FRAZIER

Hurricane Beryl has intensified into a Category 5 storm—the earliest on record—causing destruction across the Caribbean after making landfall in the Windward Islands. At least one fatality has been confirmed as the hurricane swept through the region.

According to the National Hurricane Center (NHC), Beryl's maximum sustained winds reached near 160 mph, with gusts even higher. This marks only the second time an Atlantic hurricane has achieved Category 5 status in July, following Hurricane Emily, which reached that intensity on July 17, 2005.

The NHC forecasts fluctuations in Beryl's strength over the next day, but the storm is expected to maintain major hurricane status as it moves toward the central Caribbean and approaches Jamaica on Wednesday.

Beryl made landfall on Grenada's Carriacou Island shortly after 11:00 a.m. EDT, with maximum winds recorded at 150 mph. It is the most powerful hurricane documented to traverse the Grenadines since records began in 1851.



Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell of Grenada reported widespread destruction in Carriacou and Petite Martinique during a news briefing. “In half an hour, Carriacou was flattened,” he said, noting no immediate reports of fatalities or injuries in Grenada, though he cautioned that the situation could change.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, at least one death has been reported, with Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves indicating extensive damage to hundreds of homes and buildings. Many areas are currently without water or electricity, exacerbating the situation. Gonsalves described the aftermath of Beryl as leaving “immense destruction, pain,

[and] suffering” across the nation. Union Island, situated just north of Grenada, suffered particularly severe damage, with reports indicating that up to 90% of its homes have been destroyed.

In Grenada, approximately 95% of the island has lost power due to the hurricane. Neila K. Ettienne, press secretary for the Prime Minister's office, confirmed that telecommunications are down, and many residents have lost internet access. All schools and businesses are closed, including the airport, with only hospitals and the national police force remaining operational. The airport recorded a sustained wind speed of 92 mph.

Escalation in Khan Younis: Mass Evacuation Ordered Amid Renewed Military Actions

By Eric Gahagan



In a significant escalation of military operations, the Israeli army has issued a mass evacuation order for residents of Khan Younis, signaling an impending ground assault on Gaza's second-largest city. This development highlights Israel's ongoing efforts to dismantle Hamas, particularly as the region continues to grapple with the aftermath of earlier offensives.

The evacuation notice specifically affects the eastern half of Khan Younis and a large section of the southeastern Gaza Strip. Earlier in the day, the Israeli army reported that rockets had been launched from Khan Younis, raising concerns about renewed conflict in the area. The evacuation follows a history of destruction in Khan

Younis, which had already suffered extensive damage during previous assaults earlier this year. Despite this, many Palestinians had returned after fleeing earlier violence in Rafah, further complicating the humanitarian situation.

The evacuation coincides with the recent release of Mohammed Abu Selmia, the former director of the Al-Shifa Hospital, who had been detained by Israeli authorities for seven months without charge. Israel accused the hospital of being used as a Hamas command center, a claim that Abu Selmia and other health officials have vehemently denied. The circumstances surrounding his detention, including allegations of torture,

have raised serious questions about Israel's handling of the situation and its claims regarding the hospital.

The decision to release Abu Selmia has sparked a political backlash in Israel, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office describing it as a "grave mistake." Political leaders across the spectrum have expressed outrage, asserting that Abu Selmia had ties to Hamas. Such claims, however, often fail to account for the Israeli security services' protocols regarding prisoner releases.

As the evacuation unfolded, streams of civilians made their way out of the designated zone. Witnesses reported seeing families struggling to carry their belongings, with some resorting to makeshift transport methods. One displaced woman, Zeinab Abu Jazar, shared her distress, lamenting the lack of transportation and the plight of her children. "We did not find a car to ride in," she said, while dragging a suitcase alongside a young girl.

As the evacuation unfolded, streams of civilians made their way out of the designated zone. Witnesses reported seeing families struggling to carry their

belongings, with some resorting to makeshift transport methods. One displaced woman, Zeinab Abu Jazar, shared her distress, lamenting the lack of transportation and the plight of her children. “We did not find a car to ride in,” she said, while dragging a suitcase alongside a young girl.

Israel has designated Muwasi, a coastal area, as a “safe zone,” but it has become overcrowded and unsanitary, filled with makeshift tent camps. The evacuation order suggests that a military offensive in Khan Younis is imminent, despite Israel previously claiming to have decimated Hamas battalions during earlier operations.

The potential for renewed fighting in Khan Younis raises alarms about access to essential resources, including potable water. The evacuation zone includes a critical water line, which Israel had installed after facing criticism for cutting off water access during the war. Additionally, the area encompasses the Kerem Shalom crossing, a key humanitarian aid route.

With a staggering majority of Gaza’s 2.3 million residents already displaced, the ongoing conflict exacerbates the humanitarian crisis, leading to severe shortages of food, water, and medical supplies. The U.N. Secretary-General, Antonio

Guterres, condemned the evacuation order, stating, “No place is safe in Gaza for Palestinian civilians,” and calling for an immediate cease-fire to halt the cycle of violence.

As the situation unfolds, the international community watches closely, concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian conditions and the ongoing conflict’s implications for regional stability.

Bolivia Summons Argentine Ambassador Over Coup Comments Amid Rising Tensions

By Jan Frazier

The Bolivian government has summoned the Argentine ambassador in response to statements from President Javier Milei’s office, which labeled claims of an attempted coup in La Paz as “fraudulent.”

Interim Foreign Minister Maria Nela Prada addressed the media, stating that Bolivia “energetically rejects” the comments made by Milei’s administration. This diplomatic tension follows an incident on June 26, when General Juan Jose Zuniga led military units to assemble in La Paz’s main square, which houses the presidential palace and Congress. In a dramatic display,

an armored vehicle breached the palace doors, allowing soldiers to storm the building.

Zuniga later claimed he was acting under orders from President Luis Arce, who has denied any involvement or prior knowledge of the military operation. In a statement released on Sunday, Milei’s office dismissed the Bolivian government’s assertions as “not very credible” and firmly rejected the accusation of a coup, calling it “fraudulent.”

The Milei administration, known for its far-right libertarian stance, further warned that Bolivia’s socialist

government poses a danger to the country, referencing the imprisonment of former President Jeanine Anez and Santa Cruz Governor Luis Fernando Camacho.

In response to these claims, Prada criticized Argentina’s remarks as “skewed and uninformed,” describing them as an “excessive and unacceptable form of denial.” The situation has escalated, drawing condemnation from former President Evo Morales, a political rival of Arce. On social media platform X, Morales stated,

“No matter our differences with the current government, we do not lose sight of the fact that Milei is an enemy of the people.”

As diplomatic tensions continue to rise, the implications of this exchange between Bolivia and Argentina remain to be seen, highlighting the fragility of regional relations amid political strife.



Australia Doubles International Student Visa Fees Amid Migration Pressures

By Jan Frazier

In a significant policy shift, Australia has more than doubled its visa fee for international students, a move designed to manage soaring migration rates that have strained the housing market. Effective July 1, the fee for an international student visa has increased from A\$710 (\$471) to A\$1,600 (\$1,068). Additionally, holders of visitor and temporary graduate visas are now prohibited from applying for student visas while in Australia.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil emphasized that these changes aim to enhance the integrity of Australia’s international education system and create a more balanced migration framework. “The changes coming into force today will help restore integrity to our international education system and create a migration system .

Recent data revealed a staggering 60% increase in net immigration, reaching a record 548,800 people in the year ending September 30, 2023. The significant rise in visa fees now positions Australia as a more expensive option for international students compared to countries like the U.S. and Canada, where student visa fees are approximately \$185 and C\$150 (\$110), respectively.

To address concerns over visa compliance, the government is also closing loopholes that previously allowed foreign students to extend their stays in Australia indefinitely. In 2022–23, the number of students on a second or subsequent visa surged by over 30%, exceeding 150,000.

These measures follow a series of regulatory changes

introduced since late last year, in response to a spike in migration after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in 2022. Earlier this year, English language requirements were tightened, and the savings threshold for international students seeking a visa was raised to A\$29,710 (\$19,823) from A\$24,505.

The CEO of Universities Australia, Luke Sheehy, expressed concerns over the government’s ongoing pressure on the sector. “This is not good for our economy or our universities, both of which rely heavily on international student fees,” he remarked in an email response.

As Australia navigates these changes, the long-term implications for its international education sector and overall economy remain to be seen.



South Africa's New Power-Sharing Cabinet: A Historic Shift

By Jan Frazier

In a groundbreaking political development, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has appointed a coalition Cabinet comprising seven different parties. This unprecedented power-sharing arrangement comes in the wake of the African National Congress (ANC) losing its parliamentary majority in a historic election held in late May.

A New Political Landscape

Ramaphosa's announcement on Sunday night marks a significant departure from the ANC's 30-year dominance in South African politics, a tenure that began

after the end of apartheid in 1994. The new multiparty Cabinet is the result of a month of intense negotiations, primarily between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance (DA), the former leading opposition party now willing to share power.

The coalition consists of 11 parties, with seven securing Cabinet positions, but the primary alliance remains between the ANC and the DA. This collaboration is notable, given their longstanding ideological differences and decades of rivalry.

Key Cabinet Positions Retained by the ANC

Despite the new multiparty Cabinet, the ANC retains control over vital ministries. Ramaphosa reappointed Paul Mashatile as Deputy President and kept ANC members in charge of critical portfolios, including finance, trade and industry, foreign affairs, defense, and justice. The ANC, which garnered 40% of the votes in the recent election, holds 20 of the 32 Cabinet minister positions.

The ANC's continued leadership in the foreign ministry suggests a persistent pro-Palestinian

stance, especially as South Africa pursues a sensitive case against Israel at the United Nations. The nation is also set to assume the presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) in the coming year, amplifying its influence in international affairs.

Concessions Made to the DA

In a significant move, Ramaphosa allocated six ministerial positions to the DA, appointing its leader, John Steenhuisen, as Minister of Agriculture. Although the DA sought the trade and industry portfolio, it received deputy minister roles instead, which will serve as critical tests for their collaboration with the ANC.

The ANC and DA's ideological divides are evident, particularly regarding economic policies. The ANC defends its Black Economic Empowerment initiative aimed at correcting historical injustices, while the DA advocates for a race-neutral policy framework.

Navigating Racial Dynamics

The coalition faces broader challenges linked to South Africa's complex racial dynamics. The ANC, a symbol of liberation from white minority rule, now partners with the DA, which is often perceived as representing the interests of the country's small white minority, comprising just 7% of the 62 million population. While the DA maintains support among many Black South Africans, the



historical context of apartheid complicates perceptions.

Ramaphosa's Cabinet also includes the leader of the Freedom Front Plus party, which has roots in right-wing politics. Their inclusion raises further questions about whether South Africa can overcome its racial divides within this unprecedented coalition.

Steep Challenges Ahead

Despite pledging to collaborate, both Ramaphosa and Steenhuisen face significant obstacles. While the DA supported Ramaphosa's bid for a second term in Parliament, the coalition must navigate South Africa's pressing socio-economic issues. With soaring inequality and an official unemployment rate of 32%, reaching 45% among youth, the coalition's effectiveness will be tested.

Additionally, South Africa grapples with high violent crime rates and deteriorating public services, exemplified by a series of severe electricity blackouts throughout 2023. These systemic challenges contributed to the ANC's decline in the recent election, compelling a reevaluation of governance in the country.

Conclusion

As South Africa embarks on this new political journey, the success of the coalition government will hinge on its ability to address the pressing issues facing the nation while managing the complex interplay of its diverse political landscape. The coming months will be pivotal in determining whether this historic arrangement can foster stability and progress in South Africa.

Australia Sets Six-Month Deadline for Internet Industry to Protect Children from Inappropriate Content

By Randy Whitehead



Australia has issued a six-month ultimatum to the internet industry, requiring the development of an enforceable code to prevent children from accessing pornography and other harmful materials online. If the industry fails to meet this deadline, a regulatory code will be imposed.

The Safety Commissioner has formally requested that industry stakeholders submit a plan by October 3 detailing how they will shield minors from high-impact content, including themes related to suicide and eating disorders. This initiative aims to establish standards across various platforms, such as app

websites, search engines, social media networks, chat services, and multiplayer gaming platforms.

“Parents and caregivers are understandably concerned about children’s exposure to violent and extreme pornography,” stated eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant. “However, the responsibility cannot rest solely on them; the industry must implement effective barriers as well.”

This initiative marks the beginning of a second phase in the regulatory oversight of industry codes, which have

previously addressed issues such as the dissemination of terrorism-related content and child sexual exploitation.

Potential measures outlined in the forthcoming code may include age verification systems, default parental controls, and software solutions that filter or obscure inappropriate sexual content.

Representatives from major tech companies are responding to the call for action. A spokesperson for Google, a subsidiary of Alphabet, indicated that the company is committed to collaborating closely with the industry to develop the new code. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, affirmed that they are actively engaging with the eSafety Commissioner.

While representatives from X (formerly Twitter) and Apple were unavailable for immediate comment, DIGI, an industry body representing major internet companies, expressed its eagerness to continue collaborating with the government and the eSafety Commissioner on this important initiative.

The European Union Becomes a Full Participant in the Register of Damage for Ukraine

BY ERIC GAHAGAN

The European Union (EU) has officially advanced its role in the Register of Damage for Ukraine, transitioning from an Associate Member to a Full Participant. This move, welcomed by the European Commission, is a significant step in ensuring accountability for damages caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Register of Damage, established on 12 May 2023 by the Council of Europe, serves as a repository of evidence and claims for losses, injuries, and damages sustained during the conflict. To date, 43 states, including 26 EU Member States, have joined the initiative, reinforcing international support for Ukraine's reconstruction.

EU's Strengthened Commitment

On 30 May 2024, the European Commission proposed upgrading the Union's status to a full Participant to enhance its commitment to the Register. This change enables the EU to play a more active role in ensuring that violations of international law by Russia result in proper compensation. Additionally, the EU has pledged an annual financial contribution, providing the Register with crucial financial stability.



Didier Reynders, EU Commissioner for Justice, remarked, "Russia must pay for the damage caused by its aggression against Ukraine. The Register of Damage is a critical step towards securing compensation for Ukrainians affected by this war."

Handling of Claims Begins

As of April 2024, the first claims for damage or destruction of

residential property in Ukraine have been registered. The total claims in this category are expected to reach between 300,000 and 600,000. By August, additional categories of claims, including those related to critical infrastructure and war-affected individuals, will be open for submission.

The Register aims to ensure that all claims are securely recorded for future adjudication.

EU Takes Strong Steps to Safeguard Democratic Elections

By Randy Whitehead



In December 2023, the European Commission adopted a new set of recommendations aimed at enhancing the integrity and resilience of elections across Europe. As part of the Defence of Democracy package, the Commission's recommendation on inclusive and resilient elections urges political parties to assess risks associated with foreign donations and contributions potentially linked to criminal activity.

Building on this recommendation, all European political parties have signed a code of conduct committing to avoid amplifying narratives

driven by entities outside the EU, especially those attempting to undermine European values.

Regulation 1141/2014 and the Need for Reform

The Commission and European Parliament evaluated Regulation 1141/2014 in 2021 and found overall positive results but acknowledged certain shortcomings. In response, the Commission introduced a proposal to recast the regulation in November 2021. However, an agreement was not reached before the European Parliament elections. Discussions are set to continue during the new parliamentary term.

Tackling Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)

The EU has developed substantial expertise in identifying and countering Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI). A dedicated toolbox outlines strategies for addressing these threats at the EU level, ensuring a robust defense against foreign interference in democratic processes.

Digital Services Act and Election Integrity

The Digital Services Act plays a crucial role in protecting election integrity. The Commission has already initiated several non-compliance cases and issued guidelines for large online platforms and search engines to mitigate systemic risks during electoral processes.

Through these initiatives, the EU is committed to safeguarding democracy and ensuring fair, transparent elections across its Member States.

EU Takes Note of ICJ Advisory Opinion on Israel's Actions in Occupied Palestinian Territory

By Randy Whitehead



The European Union has acknowledged the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning the

“Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.”

Unlawful Presence of Israel:

The ICJ has declared Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) unlawful, urging that it must be ended swiftly.

Immediate Halt to Settlements: Israel is obligated to immediately cease all new settlement activities and evacuate settlers from the OPT.

Global Non-Recognition of Israel's Actions:

All states are under an obligation not to recognize the situation as legal or provide any assistance that would maintain the unlawful presence.

These findings align with the European Union's long-standing positions, which are rooted in United Nations resolutions addressing the status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Meta Description:

The EU acknowledges the ICJ's opinion that Israel's actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are unlawful, urging an end to settlements and global non-recognition.

EU Approves €15 Million Support Package for Mauritania Under European Peace Facility

The European Union has approved a €15 million assistance measure under the European Peace Facility (EPF) to bolster the armed forces of Mauritania. This move is aimed at enhancing Mauritania's land and maritime surveillance and strengthening its deterrence capabilities.

Boosting Mauritania's Security

This EU support is critical for Mauritania's efforts to protect its national territory and territorial waters. By reinforcing surveillance and defense measures, the aid package will assist in combating illegal activities at sea that threaten

Mauritania's stability. It will also improve security for civilians within the country and the surrounding region.

Key Components of the Support

The assistance package includes:

- Individual protective gear for military personnel
- Medical equipment
- Multi-purpose aeronautical equipment
- A patrol boat to enhance maritime defense

Strengthening EU-Mauritania Ties

The decision comes in response to a request from Mauritania's government, highlighting the European Union's commitment to deepening its partnership with the country. By providing critical defense resources, the EU aims to help maintain stability and security in Mauritania and the broader region.

European Peace Facility: Background

Established in March 2021, the European Peace Facility is a financial instrument designed to support conflict prevention, peace preservation, and international security. It allows the EU to fund military and defense capacity-building initiatives in third countries, as part of its broader foreign and security policy.



The Ongoing Division of Cyprus and the Urgent Need for a Solution

By Zach Schrader

This week marks the somber anniversary of the events of 1974, a turning point in the history of Cyprus that continues

to cast a long shadow over the island. Half a century has passed, yet the division of Cyprus, an EU Member State,

remains unresolved, with profound consequences for its people.

This week marks the somber anniversary of the events of 1974, a turning point in the history of Cyprus that continues to cast a long shadow over the island. Half a century has passed, yet the division of Cyprus, an EU Member State, remains unresolved, with profound consequences for its people.

The division, forced upon the nation, is not a sustainable solution. However, hope persists for a unified Cyprus, where all its citizens can live in peace. To achieve this, a renewed commitment is essential from all parties involved, including the two Cypriot communities and Türkiye. The United Nations has long sought a peaceful resolution based on its Security Council resolutions, and now is the time for genuine action.



As the world faces broad geopolitical shifts and crises, it is crucial to come together to find a fair

, comprehensive, and lasting solution to the Cyprus issue. Stability in the Eastern Mediterranean depends on it, as does the future of all Cypriots.

European Commission Clears Major Merger in July 2024 Decision By Eric Gahagan

The European Commission has announced its approval of a significant merger, confirming that the concentration does not pose a threat to competition within the EU's internal market. This decision, made under Article 6(1)(b) of Council Regulation (EC) No. 139/2004, reflects the Commission's ongoing role in regulating large-scale mergers and acquisitions in the European Union.

Legal Framework and Decision Rationale

The approval is based on the European Union's Merger Regulation, designed to prevent concentrations that could restrict competition. By evaluating the market impact, the Commission determined that this merger would not result in a "significant impediment to effective competition," as defined by the regulation. This legal safeguard ensures that market dynamics remain fair and competitive.

Access to the Full Decision

Once business-sensitive information is removed, the full text of this decision will be made public. Interested readers can find it on:

- **The Competition Policy Website:** Offers detailed records of merger decisions, searchable by various criteria such as company names and case numbers.

- **EUR-Lex:** The primary gateway to EU legal documents, including this decision, which is listed under document number 32024M11619.

Broader Implications

The European Commission's green light signals a continuation of its balanced approach to mergers—allowing business consolidations while safeguarding competitive markets. This approval could set a precedent for future mergers, guiding companies through the EU's rigorous regulatory environment.

Key Takeaways:

- The decision reflects an increasing regulatory comfort with mergers that promise market efficiencies without distorting competition.
- It highlights the importance of compliance with EU regulations for companies pursuing mergers.

The Commission's decision exemplifies the delicate balance between fostering economic efficiency and maintaining market fairness within the European Union.



U.S. Army's Manufacturing Modernization: A Game-Changer for 2025

BY ERIC GAHAGAN



The U.S. Army is gearing up for a transformative year in 2025, focusing on significant advancements in organic manufacturing modernization. In an exclusive interview with Breaking Defense, Brig. Gen. Michael B. Lalor, the head of the Army Tank-Automotive & Armaments Command (TACOM), revealed exciting developments on the horizon, particularly the construction of a Long Range Precision Fires Facility at Watervliet Arsenal in New York.

A New Era of Manufacturing Capabilities

Set to cover an impressive 350,000 square feet, this state-of-the-art facility will specialize in the manufacturing of 155mm and larger cannon tubes,

marking a critical step in enhancing the Army's artillery capabilities. Designed to function for at least 40 years, the facility will incorporate modernized technologies and capabilities, ensuring the Army remains at the forefront of defense innovation. This initiative is part of a comprehensive 15-year upgrade strategy for the Army's Organic Industrial Base, which aims to bolster domestic manufacturing capacity and reduce reliance on external suppliers. Brig. Gen. Lalor also indicated plans for component remanufacturing facilities at Anniston and Red River Army Depots, with these efforts aimed for completion by 2028 to 2029.

Insights from Industry Leaders

For those interested in hearing directly from TACOM leaders about these groundbreaking initiatives, the Future Indirect Fires Summit, hosted by the Institute for Defense and Government Advancement (IDGA), will take place on January 14-15 in Austin, Texas. This summit will provide a platform for discussions on the Army's modernization efforts and opportunities for collaboration in the defense sector.

Supporting Small Businesses in Defense Contracting

In parallel with its manufacturing modernization efforts, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) is launching a new program aimed at revitalizing small businesses within the defense industrial base. The DLA's Office of Small Business is integrating the DoD's oldest continuously operating federal program to assist small enterprises navigating the complex world of defense contracting. The mentor-protégé program will offer a wide range of support, including business development, proposal development training, and human resources training. This initiative is particularly crucial

as the number of small businesses in the defense sector has dwindled over the past decade. A 2021 report by the Government Accountability Office indicated a staggering 43% decline in small business

contracts with the DoD. Mentor-protégé agreements typically last for three years, with potential extensions of up to five years contingent upon written

Conclusion

The U.S. Army's commitment to enhancing its manufacturing capabilities and supporting small businesses underscores a proactive approach to strengthening the defense industrial base.

Advancements in Military Technology: Recent Defense Initiatives

By Henry Nicholas

C-UAS Capabilities Testing at Yuma Proving Ground

In June, the Joint Counter-small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-sUAS) Office (JCO) conducted its most ambitious field demonstration to date at Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona. Over four weeks, the JCO showcased prototype systems developed by various private firms, focusing on their effectiveness against drone threats. This year's demonstration emphasized countering swarm attacks, featuring a coordinated assault from 50 unmanned aircraft of different types targeting a single objective.

While the JCO continues to analyze data from this extensive exercise, an initial report will be distributed to military services, combatant commanders globally, and the eight participating vendors: Clear Align, Trakka, ICR, ELTA, Teledyne, FLIR, SAIC, ATSC, and Anduril. Col. Michael Parent, chief of acquisitions and resources at the JCO, noted, "No one capability, whether kinetic



or non-kinetic, in itself could really just beat this kind of attack profile. What we saw was they really do need a full system of systems approach, a layered approach." The next JCO field demonstration is tentatively scheduled for early 2025.

Collaborative Combat Aircraft Program Update

In related developments, the head of General Atomics' aeronautics division informed Breaking Defense that flight tests for the prototype of the Air Force's Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program could begin by mid-2025. This

announcement follows the Air Force's decision in April to award the initial phase of the CCA contract to General Atomics and Anduril, bypassing major players like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman.

Both companies will compete to develop uncrewed aircraft designed to engage fighter jets at a significantly lower cost than traditional crewed fighters. While General Atomics is tasked with delivering a limited number of CCAs for testing and development, the Air Force has indicated the possibility of acquiring over 1,000 drones

Annual Competition for Small Unmanned Aerial Systems (sUAS)

The Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) is spearheading efforts to incorporate commercial technology, including small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS). This November, the DIU will launch an annual competition aimed at fostering innovation within the sUAS sector. Participants will have the opportunity to be included in the Defense Logistics Agency's (DLA) Blue UAS Cleared List, which features platforms and components vetted for security and compliance with U.S. laws and cybersecurity standards.

The competition seeks to keep the Blue List aligned with end-user needs, addressing key issues such as modularity, interoperability, and operational capabilities in contested environments without GPS or reliable electromagnetic spectrum access.

Pentagon Inspector General Reviews Hypersonic Threats

In July, the Department of Defense (DoD) Inspector General (IG) announced an investigation into the military's capacity to defend against hypersonic threats and the efficacy of the Combined Joint All Forces Command and Control (CJADC2) initiative. The IG's evaluation will assess the DoD's ability to use existing U.S. weapon systems for hypersonic missile defense amid rising concerns over advancements made by adversaries like China and Russia.

The investigation will also scrutinize CJADC2's effectiveness in modernizing information-sharing among mission partners.

INDOPACOM to Receive Joint Fires Network (JFN)

By the end of 2024, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) will receive a "combat representative"

version of the Joint Fires Network (JFN), an initiative under the CJADC2 umbrella. This system aims to enhance command and control capabilities across multiple domains, especially amid growing tensions related to China's potential military ambitions in Taiwan.

The JFN will match weapons to targets in complex combat scenarios, and continuous upgrades are planned, with JFN 2.0 expected in 2025 to address the evolving demands of military operations.

Conclusion

The recent advancements in military technology and defense initiatives reflect the U.S. Department of Defense's commitment to enhancing its capabilities against emerging threats. From counter-drone measures to collaborative combat systems and small unmanned aerial systems

Executive Action on the Southern Border By Jan Frazier

In a significant policy shift, President Biden announced an executive order on Tuesday that restricts migrants from accessing the U.S. asylum screening system at the southern border. This action is triggered when undocumented border crossings average 2,500 per day, a threshold currently exceeded. As a result, asylum seekers will be unable to cross

until daily crossings fall below 1,500.

The executive order not only suspends the entry of non-citizens crossing the southern border without documentation but also aims to fortify the asylum screening process and enhance immigration enforcement. President Biden emphasized the need for this

proclamation, stating it is essential to address the unprecedented levels of migration and improve the efficiency of processing migrants given current resources.

U.S. Army Issues RFI for Software Development Support

In a move to bolster its technological capabilities, the U.S. Army has released a Request for Information (RFI) for a new ten-year, multiple-award indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract, potentially valued at over \$1 billion. Managed by the Army Materials Command (AMC) and Army Contracting Command (ACC), this initiative seeks to procure software development support for military operations.

The contract will require the awardee to develop custom software products, modify existing systems, facilitate software as a service, and enhance software security and hosting. Responses to the RFI are due by June 10.

Palantir Secures DoD Contract for AI Platform

The Department of Defense (DoD) has awarded Palantir a \$480 million contract for its prototype called Maven Smart System. This advanced AI intelligence-gathering platform consolidates data from various sources to pinpoint military points of interest and streamline the work of intelligence analysts. The contract is expected to conclude in May 2029.

Maven Smart Systems is currently operational across multiple commands, including the Joint Staff at the Pentagon and Combatant Commands such as Central Command and European Command. With this contract, the Pentagon may



expand Maven Smart Systems to additional Combatant Commands.

U.S. Marines Acquire Tactical Robots

Amidst the growing demand for unmanned platforms, the U.S. Marine Corps has procured 200 tactical robots from Israeli company Roboteam for \$30 million. This order includes the 15-kilogram Micro Tactical Ground Robot (MTGR), a man-portable system equipped with treads and a manipulator arm for object investigation, communication, and optics handling.

The initial order encompasses 130 units, with plans for Roboteam to complete the delivery of the full order of 200 by the first quarter of 2025.

NATO to Enhance Intelligence Sharing with Ukraine

NATO member states, including the U.S., are set to bolster cooperation with Ukraine in defense technology and intelligence sharing regarding Russia's electronic warfare capabilities. A formal agreement outlining new frameworks for information sharing is expected to be finalized before the alliance's upcoming July Summit in Washington.

This initiative aims to transform Ukraine into a significant tech provider post-war while also allowing NATO to learn from Ukraine's rapid adoption and deployment of technology since the conflict began in 2021.

European Political Community's Fourth Meeting: A New Era for UK-EU Relations

By Eric Gahagan



The fourth meeting of the European Political Community (EPC) is set to take place on Thursday at Blenheim Palace, marking a pivotal moment for the United Kingdom and its relationships with European nations. Launched in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EPC is a collaborative initiative envisioned by French President Emmanuel Macron, designed to address shared concerns among European countries.

This summit, hosted by newly elected UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, will bring together approximately 50 European leaders, offering a significant platform for dialogue and cooperation. Starmer's leadership at this meeting represents his first engagement with international leaders since Labour's decisive victory in the General Election, highlighting a renewed commitment to re-

establishing the UK's role on the global stage.

Restoring Confidence and Building Bridges

The EPC serves as a forum for European nations, including the UK, to coordinate responses to common challenges, akin to the G7 or G20. With the backdrop of Brexit and its repercussions on the UK's international standing, this meeting is viewed as an essential opportunity for Starmer to restore confidence in British diplomacy and demonstrate that the UK is ready to engage with its European partners.

Notably, Russia and Belarus will not participate in the EPC discussions, having been excluded due to Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine, which Belarus has supported. In attendance will be key European leaders, including the presidents of the European

Council, European Commission, and European Parliament. The new European Parliament will also vote on whether Ursula von der Leyen will continue leading the European Commission for another five years.

Perspectives on the EPC's Impact

Several prominent figures within the EU have voiced their expectations for the upcoming meeting. German centre-right MEP David McAllister, who chairs the influential foreign affairs committee in the EU Parliament, emphasized the EPC's potential to strengthen UK-EU ties. He noted that the platform could facilitate dialogue on shared challenges, providing networking opportunities since UK officials no longer attend EU summits or preparatory meetings.

Sir Graham Watson, a former senior British Liberal Democrat MEP, remarked on the significance of the EPC for Starmer's leadership. He pointed out that the Prime Minister's commitment to hosting the meeting and advocating for Ukraine could help mend the UK's reputation within Europe, especially given Starmer's previous statement ruling out a return to the EU's.

Polish deputy and former EU commissioner Danuta Hubner expressed cautious optimism about the EPC, stating that meetings of like-minded democratic states often yield positive outcomes. She highlighted the importance of the upcoming discussions on foreign and defense policy cooperation between the UK and EU, especially in light of the challenges posed by Russian aggression.

Looking Ahead

EPC meetings occur biannually, alternating between EU member states holding the EU Council Presidency and non-EU members. Previous summits have been held in Granada, Spain, Chisinau, Moldova, and Prague, Czechia. As the UK prepares to host this critical gathering, the upcoming discussions will not only focus

on immediate issues but also set the stage for long-term collaboration and stability in the face of ongoing geopolitical challenges.

The significance of the fourth EPC meeting cannot be understated. It represents a chance for the UK to reassert its influence in Europe, foster stronger ties with its neighbors, and work collaboratively towards a more secure .

Hungary Assumes Rotating Presidency of the EU: Navigating Challenges Ahead

By Eric Gahagan

Hungary has officially taken on the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union during a critical period for Europe, marked by significant political transitions within EU institutions and pressing challenges for the Union. This leadership change has sparked debate over Hungary's suitability for the role, particularly in light of ongoing concerns regarding Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government and its past conflicts with the EU.

Despite these apprehensions, support for Hungary's presidency has emerged from various quarters, including the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). During a plenary session on July 10, EESC President Oliver Röpké facilitated a discussion with Hungarian Minister for European Union Affairs, János Bóka, who

outlined the priorities for Hungary's six-month tenure

Priorities of the Hungarian Presidency

Minister Bóka emphasized the critical role Hungary aims to play in addressing the multiple crises facing Europe, stating, "The 2024 Hungarian Presidency of the Council comes at a time of multiple crises." He pointed to several pressing issues, including ongoing conflict in neighboring Ukraine, a decline in European competitiveness, escalating trade tensions, demographic challenges, uncontrolled migration, and the uncertain future for European farmers.

A central focus of the Hungarian Presidency will be the adoption of a New European Competitiveness Deal. Bóka stressed the need to create conditions for sustainable

growth, enhance the internal market, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and promote the green and digital transitions in collaboration with European stakeholders. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of fostering international cooperation and ensuring the stability of quality jobs.

Commitment to European Values

Röpké reiterated the EESC's commitment to working alongside the Hungarian Presidency to prioritize urgent issues facing Europeans. He stated, "Our Committee is committed to working closely together with the Hungarian Presidency to ensure that the EU is taking action on what Europeans feel are the most urgent priorities." He emphasized that civil society would have a strong voice in the discussions, and the EESC

Addressing Competitiveness and Social Issues

The debate also featured insights from key EESC members. Stefano Mallia, President of the EESC's Employers' Group, highlighted the need for a conducive regulatory environment to safeguard and enhance the EU's stature. He pointed out, "Too many businesses and too many young people are leaving Europe. We need to tackle the issue of declining competitiveness: a healthy business community is only possible with better-designed regulation."

Lucie Studničná, President of the EESC's Workers' Group, added to the conversation by addressing the rise of political extremism fueled by economic hardships. She painted a stark picture of Europe grappling with social challenges, stating, "A Europe dotted with queues for food banks and people who might not have heating this winter, if they have a home at all, cannot be 'great again.'"



Conclusion: A Crucial Leadership Moment

As Hungary embarks on its presidency, the country faces the dual challenge of fostering cooperation within the EU while addressing deep-seated social and economic issues. The upcoming months will be critical as Hungary navigates these

complexities, aiming to restore confidence in its leadership while promoting a unified European response to shared challenges. With both support and skepticism surrounding its presidency, Hungary's actions will be closely watched as the EU seeks to forge a path toward stability and growth in these turbulent times.

Fresh Condemnation of Russia's Attack on Kyiv, Including Children's Hospital

By Henry Nicholas

This week, Russia's missile strikes on Kyiv have drawn strong condemnation, particularly after a tragic attack on the Ohmatdyt Children's Hospital, Ukraine's largest pediatric facility. The hospital was severely damaged in the

assault, resulting in the deaths of two individuals and injuring many others. Overall, the recent strikes across Ukraine claimed the lives of 36 people and left 140 injured.

The European Cancer Organisation (ECO) has voiced its outrage over the "horrific scenes" emerging from the attack. In an official statement, the organization condemned Russia's military tactics targeting vulnerable

populations, stating, “Russia’s military targeting of children, hospitals, and healthcare facilities is appalling.” They expressed deep sympathy for those affected, particularly the most vulnerable patients, healthcare professionals, and families.

The ECO emphasized that this attack strengthens their commitment to supporting cancer patients and healthcare workers in Ukraine. They are actively monitoring the situation and consulting with partners in the region to understand the emerging needs arising from the conflict. “We will continue to collaborate closely with the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) through our Emergencies & Crises Network of over 400 organizations worldwide to leverage global support for Ukraine’s health and cancer care systems,” they added.

The organization unequivocally labeled the attacks on healthcare facilities as war crimes and called for immediate action to ensure that those responsible are held accountable. In their efforts to advocate for Ukraine, ECO intends to communicate with the new European Parliament and European Commission, reiterating the urgent need for sustained financial support for the country’s healthcare infrastructure, particularly for the maintenance and reconstruction of cancer.



ECO concluded with a powerful message: “Humanity must triumph over barbarity, and we all must play our part in achieving that.”

In response to the backlash, Russia has denied targeting the hospital, claiming it was struck by fragments from a Ukrainian air defense missile. However, Ukrainian officials insist they found remnants of a Russian cruise missile at the scene.

This latest episode of violence highlights the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, particularly concerning vulnerable populations, and reinforces the urgent need for international solidarity and support for those affected by the conflict.

Haniyeh's Assassination: Implications for Middle East Stability and Ceasefire Negotiations

BY JAN FRAZIER

In the early hours of Wednesday, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was reportedly targeted in a missile strike, with Hamas swiftly attributing the attack to Israel, which has not yet commented on the incident. Haniyeh was in Tehran attending the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and was staying at a residence for veterans in northern Tehran, according to state-affiliated news sources.

Around 2 a.m. local time, Iranian state media outlet IRNA reported that an “airborne coached projectile” hit the location where Haniyeh was present, resulting in the death of one of his bodyguards. IRNA noted that further investigations are underway to determine the specifics of the operation, including the launch site of the projectile.

In response, Hamas condemned the strike, labeling it a “Zionist attack” and a “serious escalation” in its longstanding conflict with Israel. A Hamas official asserted the group is prepared to “pay different prices,” declaring, “This assassination will not achieve the goals of the occupation nor will it compel Hamas to surrender.” When asked for comments, an Israeli military



Haniyeh's Background and Role in Hamas

Ismail Haniyeh, 62, hails from a refugee camp near Gaza City and joined Hamas during the First Intifada in the late 1980s. As Hamas gained power, Haniyeh rose through its ranks and became part of its secret “collective leadership” in 2004. He was appointed the political leader of Hamas in 2017 and was designated a “specially designated global terrorist” by the United States in 2018.

Unlike many in Hamas' military command, Haniyeh traveled internationally, engaging with global leaders as the political face of the organization. He played a crucial role in negotiations during conflicts with Israel, especially concerning hostage and

ceasefire talks. Earlier this spring, he expressed Hamas' willingness to negotiate, contingent on Israel withdrawing from Gaza and committing to a permanent ceasefire—conditions Israel deemed “unacceptable.”

Potential Consequences for Ceasefire Negotiations

Haniyeh's recent communications with mediators from Qatar and Egypt indicated progress toward a framework agreement, but his assassination could severely disrupt these discussions. Sources suggest that Haniyeh was vital in achieving breakthroughs in negotiations and was considered a key decision-maker alongside Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas military commander in Gaza.

Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, who has been involved in mediation efforts, raised concerns about the implications of Haniyeh's assassination for future negotiations. He questioned the feasibility of peace talks when one party targets the other's negotiator, emphasizing the need for serious commitment to peace and a global stance against the disregard for human life.

Global Reactions to Haniyeh's Assassination

The assassination has drawn reactions from leaders across the region, many of whom condemned the act and expressed concern over its potential ramifications. Palestinian leaders, despite

historical conflicts with Hamas, denounced the killing and called for Palestinian unity.

The White House acknowledged reports of Haniyeh's death but refrained from making further comments. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin stated he does not believe war in the Middle East is inevitable but affirmed that the U.S. would support Israel if attacked.

Internationally, leaders from Russia and Turkey condemned the assassination, warning it could escalate tensions in the region. Support for Haniyeh also emerged from Iran-backed militant groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, signalling broader implications for regional stability.

Haniyeh's assassination for future negotiations. He questioned the feasibility of peace talks when one party targets the other's negotiator, emphasizing the need for serious commitment to peace and a global stance against the disregard for human life.

Conclusion

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh marks a significant escalation in the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel, raising serious concerns about the future of ceasefire negotiations and regional stability. The international community is watching closely as the situation unfolds, hoping for a resolution that prioritizes peace and security for all parties.

The Ongoing Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa

By Randy Whitehead

The conflict in the Middle East and North Africa remains dire, with renewed efforts for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. As the world watches and hopes for peace, the violence continues unabated, resulting in tragic loss of life and displacement. Recently, Israeli forces have intensified operations in areas where Hamas has reestablished a presence, leading to further suffering for already displaced individuals. The intensity of the shelling in Gaza City has surged, with 116 hostages still

unaccounted for since their abduction by Hamas.

A Community in Crisis

Among the small Christian community in Gaza, estimated at around 1,000 individuals, about one-third have either fled the region or lost their lives in the ongoing conflict. The Holy Family Church has become a refuge for approximately 600 people. However, the church compound was hit by an Israeli airstrike last week, targeting classrooms and resulting in the

deaths of four people, including a Hamas labor minister.

In a poignant appeal for peace, 12-year-old Faeqa Ayyad, sheltered in the Holy Family Church, expressed her desire for the conflict to end during a live broadcast on SAT-7. She recounted the fear experienced by her younger siblings and implored for a return to normalcy, where children could play and enjoy their youth.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has condemned the attack, calling for an end to actions that jeopardize civilian

safety. Recently, the Patriarchate's cardinal had visited the local community, aiming to support and uplift them during these trying times. The airstrike on the Holy Family Church coincided with a major Israeli offensive in Gaza City, which also led to the closure of the church-run Al Ahli hospital. The area was designated a Red Zone, and patients had to be evacuated to the already strained Indonesia Hospital. Both Jerusalem Archbishop Hosam Naoum and Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby voiced their opposition to the hospital's closure. Fortunately, reassurances were given by the army that the hospital could reopen.



Escalating Tensions in Lebanon

Concerns are mounting that the conflict between Israel and Gaza could spill over into Lebanon. Since the beginning of October, Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militant group, has engaged in skirmishes with Israeli forces, offering support to Hamas. This has led to significant evacuations on both sides of the border.

Lebanon's political leaders, already grappling with a severe economic crisis and the aftermath of the 2020 Beirut port explosion, are anxious to avoid further conflict. Prime Minister Najib Mikati stated that another war "is in no one's interest." Over the past five years, around half a million Lebanese have emigrated, and

the potential for war is exacerbating this trend. The country's Christian community, in particular, has voiced strong opposition to Hezbollah's actions. In a recent incident, residents of Rmeich, a predominantly Christian town, successfully forced Hezbollah operatives to dismantle a rocket launcher set up near their homes, ringing church bells to rally community support.

Humanitarian Crisis in Sudan

In Sudan, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating rapidly, with three-quarters of a million people on the brink of famine, according to outgoing UN aid chief Martin Griffiths. Catastrophic conditions are affecting 8.5 million individuals, while approximately 9 million

have been displaced due to the ongoing conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces militias. Thousands continue to flee as fighting spreads. Recently, representatives from the army-aligned government refused to participate in peace talks with civilian leaders, including the former prime minister, in Cairo. This month, new efforts to negotiate a ceasefire are set to begin through a committee of African heads of state on behalf of the African Union.

The plight of Christians in Sudan is particularly concerning, as the situation continues to unfold. For more insights into the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, listen to our recent briefing highlighting the struggles faced by the Christian community in the country.

The Tragic Case of Muhammed Bhar in Gaza

By Henry Nicholas

In a harrowing incident that has drawn international attention, 24-year-old Muhammed Bhar, a Palestinian man with Down syndrome, was reportedly left to die by Israeli soldiers after being attacked by a military dog during an operation in Gaza. This tragic event has raised serious questions about the treatment of civilians in conflict zones and the responsibilities of military forces.



Incident Overview

On July 3, 2023, Israeli soldiers raided the Bhar family's home in the Shujaiya neighborhood of eastern Gaza City. During the operation, combat dogs were unleashed, leading to a brutal attack on Muhammed. His mother, Nabila Bhar, recounted the horrifying moment when the dog mauled her son while she pleaded for mercy, emphasizing his vulnerability due to his disability.

The Israeli army has acknowledged that after the attack, soldiers abandoned Muhammed to assist fellow soldiers injured in a separate incident involving a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) attack. The family was ordered to evacuate their home at gunpoint, leaving Muhammed behind in a separate room

where he was left alone and bleeding.

Family's Desperation and Aftermath

In the days following the incident, Nabila and other family members desperately contacted the Red Cross, seeking assistance for Muhammed. However, they were informed that the Israeli army was not cooperating with their requests for medical help. Tragically, it wasn't until a week later that the family was able to return to their home, only to find Muhammed's decomposing body covered in blood and infested with worms.

Jebril Bhar, Muhammed's brother, described the scene upon their return: "He was lying on his stomach... based on the state of his body, it was evident he had died several days earlier." The family had no means to transport his body for

burial due to the devastation caused by ongoing military operations in the area. Consequently, they buried him near their home.

Reactions and Calls for Accountability

The incident has sparked outrage among human rights advocates and organizations. Many are calling for an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Muhammed's death and broader concerns regarding civilian safety during military operations. The Israeli military stated that they "regret the harm to civilians," but this acknowledgment has done little to assuage public anger over the treatment of vulnerable individuals like Muhammed.

Nabila Bhar expressed her profound grief and disbelief

over her son's tragic fate: "I cannot bear to think of what they did to him or how they left him to die like this." Her account reflects not only personal loss but also highlights systemic issues related to military conduct in conflict zones.

Conclusion

The case of Muhammed Bhar serves as a stark reminder of the human cost of conflict and raises critical ethical questions about military engagement in civilian areas. As calls for accountability grow louder, it is

imperative that all parties involved reflect on their responsibilities toward vulnerable populations during times of war. The tragic loss of Muhammed Bhar will not be forgotten as his family continues to seek justice for his untimely death.

Declining Vaccination Rates in the MENA Region Threaten Children's Health

By Randy Whitehead

Millions of children across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) remain at risk of preventable diseases due to a significant decline in vaccination coverage. According to the latest WHO and UNICEF estimates (WUENIC), released in 2023, the number of "zero-dose" children—those who have not received even the first dose of the diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP) vaccine—has surged to a staggering 1.64 million. This represents a sharp increase from 1.2 million in 2022 and more than double the 872,000 zero-dose children reported in 2019.

UNICEF Regional Director for MENA, Adele Khodr, expressed alarm over the growing number of under-vaccinated children, warning of the real threat posed by diseases that could be prevented through vaccination. The MENA region ranks sixth out of seven UNICEF regions for DTP1 vaccine coverage, which fell to 85 percent in 2023—down seven percentage points from 2019.

Conflicts and humanitarian crises are among the primary drivers of this worrying trend, with war-torn countries like Sudan, Yemen, and Syria accounting for nearly 87 percent of the zero-dose children in the region. Sudan alone is home to 42 percent of these children. Even in traditionally high-coverage countries such as the State of Palestine, conflict has started to erode immunization rates, and the ongoing violence in Gaza threatens to worsen the situation in 2024 unless urgent action is taken.

Measles vaccination rates have also suffered, with coverage dropping by four percentage points since 2019, leaving almost 2 million children in MENA without their first dose of the vaccine. While vaccination coverage varies across the region, 13 out of 20 countries have maintained a coverage rate of 90 percent or higher. Encouragingly, five middle-income countries are showing signs of recovery from the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, putting them on track to meet the goals

of the Immunization Agenda 2030.

Khodr emphasized the need for governments to prioritize investments in health systems and ensure that every child receives the necessary vaccines. She also highlighted the importance of supporting frontline workers and ensuring safe humanitarian access, especially in conflict zones, to prevent further backsliding in immunization efforts.

If the region is to protect its children from preventable diseases, urgent action is needed to reverse these declining vaccination rates.



U.S. Envoy Backs Israel's Right to Defend Itself at UN Security Council

By Randy Whitehead

The U.S. representative to the United Nations has voiced strong support for Israel's right to defend itself against Hezbollah and other militant groups during a recent address at the UN Security Council. His remarks came as tensions escalated in the region following an Israeli airstrike on Beirut that resulted in the death of Fuad Shukur, a senior Hezbollah commander.



While affirming Israel's defensive actions, the U.S. envoy made it clear that the United States had no involvement in the airstrike. His speech underscored the need for global solidarity with Israel as it confronts continued attacks from Hezbollah, urging the Security Council to send a strong and unified message against the militant group.

The envoy also highlighted concerns about the increasing influence of Iran-backed groups in the region, particularly the Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have been exploiting the ongoing conflict in Gaza to further destabilize the Middle East. He stressed the importance of standing firm against threats to regional stability and pointed to the broader U.S. strategy of countering Iranian influence, while supporting Israel's actions to neutralize perceived security risks.



The U.S. position at the UN reflects a continued commitment to ensuring Israel's security and addressing the broader challenge posed by groups aligned with Iran.

As the conflict continues to unfold, international attention remains focused on efforts to maintain stability and prevent further escalation in the region.



Washington Insider

M A G A Z I N E

**ILLINOIS GOVERNOR J.B. PRITZKER EXPRESSES
CONCERNS OVER 2024 PRESIDENTIAL RACE**

Scan Me Now

