



# Washington Insider

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## Washington Insider

### ABOUT US

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

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

We believe in providing our audience with indepen-

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

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

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

Here I wish to commend.

*Editorial Team*



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# GEORGIA WORKERS SEEK GIULIANI'S ASSETS FOR \$148M DEFAMATION RULING

BY JAN FRAZIER

Two Georgia election workers have taken legal action to seize Rudy Giuliani's assets in an attempt to enforce a \$148 million defamation judgment against him. Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Shaye Moss, have asked a federal judge to grant them control over Giuliani's New York City apartment, worth over \$5 million, as well as his Palm Beach condominium. They are also seeking personal property, including a 1980 Mercedes-Benz SL500, jewelry, luxury watches, and sports memorabilia, such as Yankees World Series rings and autographed jerseys by Joe DiMaggio and Reggie Jackson. Additionally, they want access to \$2 million in legal fees that Giuliani claims he is owed by Donald Trump's campaign and the Republican National Committee.

Freeman and Moss are also requesting the court issue a separate order allowing them to seize any assets Giuliani fails to turn over. This legal push follows months of Giuliani avoiding payment of the defamation judgment, which stems from his false claims about the two women during the 2020 election. Giuliani attempted to declare bankruptcy, but the case was



dismissed after a judge determined he was not transparent about his finances. Despite his claims of financial difficulty, Giuliani's high spending has been noted.

The defamation case centers on Giuliani's role in spreading disinformation about Freeman and Moss, who were election workers in Atlanta during the 2020 election. Giuliani circulated a misleading video of them counting ballots, which

has since been debunked. Both women have been cleared of any wrongdoing, but they continue to face harassment. Last year, a federal judge entered a default judgment against Giuliani for failing to turn over documents, leading to the \$148 million verdict.

Giuliani's spokesperson, Ted Goodman, called the lawsuit an effort to intimidate and censor Giuliani, framing it as an attack on free speech. The case is part of a broader legal trend

exploring whether libel law can be used to hold individuals accountable for spreading

disinformation in the United States. Giuliani also faces additional defamation lawsuits

and criminal charges related to his attempts to overturn the 2020 election in Georgia and Arizona.

# Kamala Harris to Accept Democratic Nomination at Chicago Convention

By JanFrazier



The convention will run from August 19 to 22, with events held at two prominent Chicago week.

**venues:** the United Center for evening programming and McCormick Place for daytime sessions. Notable speakers include former President Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Bill Clinton. Harris is set to deliver her acceptance speech on the final night, while Biden and Walz will take the stage earlier in the week.

## Protests Expected During the Convention

Amid the political festivities, the convention is also expected to draw large-scale protests, particularly against the ongoing war in Gaza. Chicago's Palestinian community, the largest in the U.S., will be a focal point for these demonstrations. Thousands are expected to march, demanding the Democratic Party take a stronger anti-war stance. Protests of this scale are common for both major parties' conventions, with similar demonstrations held against Donald Trump at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee earlier this year.

This week, Chicago will be the centre of American politics as Kamala Harris officially accepts the Democratic Party's nomination for president, following Joe Biden's recent decision to step out of the race. Harris will be joined by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, who is her vice-presidential pick.

The Democratic National Convention will also celebrate Joe Biden's long career in public service, with tributes planned from figures like Jill Biden and a keynote address by Biden himself on Monday night.

## Convention Details and Key Speakers



# Republican-Controlled Georgia Election Board Grants Local Officials More Power Over Votes

By Jan Frazier

The Georgia State Election Board, led by Republicans, has introduced a new rule granting local officials more authority to investigate votes after Election Day. This move has raised alarms about potential disruptions to the upcoming fall elections. The newly approved regulation allows any member of a county election board to review all election-related documents before certifying results, sparking concerns among voting rights advocates and legal experts that this could delay the certification process and sow confusion.

Despite Georgia's law mandating that election results be certified by 5 p.m. the Monday following Election Day, the changes are seen by many as giving election deniers an opportunity to prolong the certification process. Critics argue that the rule offers no safeguards against bad-faith requests, allowing individuals to request unnecessary documents without justification.

In a letter to the board, the American Civil Liberties Union, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), and the Public Rights Project expressed concern that this new rule would allow for obstructive



tactics aimed at disrupting lawful certification. They warned that the rule could empower local officials to make unreasonable demands for documents, potentially delaying or even preventing certification of legitimate election results.

This latest rule follows a series of procedural changes spearheaded by Republican members of the board, many of whom have been publicly praised by former President Donald Trump. In a separate decision earlier this month, the board granted local election boards the authority to conduct "reasonable inquiries" into election results before certification, without clearly defining what constitutes such an inquiry.

Julie Adams, a Republican member of the Fulton County

election board, has refused to certify elections in Georgia's largest county, citing a lack of access to adequate election documents. Supported by the Trump-aligned America First Policy Institute, Adams is now suing her county's election board and director for greater transparency. Her stance reflects a broader effort by a network of election deniers, some of whom played a role in shaping the rule adopted by the state board.

Voting rights groups and Democratic leaders have raised concerns about the intent behind these rule changes. Lauren Groh-Wargo, CEO of Fair Fight, accused Trump and his allies of using these changes to subvert Georgia's election process to favor the former president, even if he does not win a majority of votes.

Another contentious aspect of the new rule requires county election boards to compare voter ID numbers with ballots in each precinct by 3 p.m. on the Friday after Election Day. If any discrepancies arise, the board has the authority to determine how to adjust the vote count. This has raised fears that minor, routine discrepancies could be used as a pretext to delay or alter election outcomes.

Critics within the board, including Republican chairman John Fervier, have voiced opposition to these new measures,

arguing that they overstep the board's authority and could create unnecessary delays. Election experts noted that small discrepancies, such as voters leaving with their ballots before casting them, are not uncommon but rarely affect election results.

The Georgia board is also considering additional proposals, including one to require hand-counting of ballots. Although this rule has yet to be finalized, Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger, has criticized the proposed changes, warning that

they could lead to significant delays and undermine public confidence in the election process.

As concerns grow about election integrity and the possibility of chaos in the 2024 elections, Georgia's new rules have become a flashpoint in the ongoing debate over election security and the influence of political forces on democratic processes.

## Trump Blames Wind Energy for High Bacon Prices, Sparking Criticism

By JanFrazier

At a recent campaign town hall in Wisconsin, former President Donald Trump made a surprising claim, blaming wind energy for the rising cost of bacon and the decrease in its consumption. The remarks came after a question from the audience about his plans to tackle inflation if elected in the upcoming November election.



In his response, Trump veered into an unusual critique of wind power, stating, "You take a look at bacon and some of these products – and some people don't eat bacon anymore. We are going to get the energy prices down. When we get energy down, you know ... this was caused by their horrible

The former president's comments quickly went viral, with video clips circulating widely online. Critics were swift to label the remarks as "incoherent" and "word salad," questioning the connection between renewable energy sources and the price of pork products.

Mehdi Hasan, a broadcaster and columnist, shared the video on social media, questioning whether Trump's statements would receive the same level of scrutiny as those made by Democratic figures like Kamala Harris or Tim Walz. Hasan pointed out the disparity in media attention, suggesting that

Trump faced less pressure to exit the race despite his erratic remarks compared to Joe Biden's decision to suspend his re-election campaign after a lackluster debate performance earlier in the year.

Adding a humorous twist, a cooking-themed fundraiser for Kamala Harris, held on the same night as Trump's comments, featured bacon recipes, a subtle nod to the controversy. Democratic Congressman Eric

Swalwell, who hosted the event, later highlighted the bacon-themed moments in his promotional emails.

## Trump's Pennsylvania Rally: Media Attacks and Harris's Campaign Momentum

By JanFrazier

On Friday afternoon, Donald Trump took center stage at a rally in Pennsylvania, revisiting his favorite themes. He criticized the media, reiterated his call for death sentences for drug dealers, and unleashed a series of derogatory nicknames for his opponents. This rally was one of two scheduled for the day, as Trump prepares to head back to Washington, D.C., to address the national summit of Moms for Liberty, a conservative group advocating for the removal of LGBTQ+ discussions and critiques of structural racism from school curricula.

In contrast, Kamala Harris is working to maintain her momentum with voters following her first interview as a presidential candidate on CNN, conducted alongside her running mate, Tim Walz. Her campaign has announced plans for a bus tour focusing on abortion rights, which will travel through key swing states. Reports indicate a surge in new voter registrations in Georgia, particularly among demographics likely to support Democrats.



In other news, Harris's campaign responded sharply to Trump's recent statement that he would support government

or private insurance backing for IVF care, accusing him of lying "as much if not more than he breathes."



# Trump Critiques Florida's Six-Week Abortion Ban, Says More Time is Needed

By JanFrazier



In a recent interview with NBC News, former President Donald Trump addressed Florida's controversial six-week abortion ban, which was signed into law by Republican Governor Ron DeSantis last year.

"I think the six weeks is too short; there has to be more time," Trump stated, emphasizing his position that women should have more weeks to consider their options.

Despite this critique, a Trump campaign adviser clarified that Trump has not officially declared how he will vote on the amendment, merely reiterating his view that six weeks is inadequate.

The remarks come as the political landscape surrounding abortion rights continues to evolve, with significant implications for the upcoming election. As Trump navigates his position, his comments reflect the ongoing debate within the Republican Party regarding reproductive rights and state laws.

As voters prepare for the November ballot, Trump's mixed signals may influence public perception and the outcome of the initiative in a state where abortion rights are a critical issue.

# Kishida Fumio Announces Departure: A Dual Legacy of Global Engagement and Domestic Struggles

BY JAN FRAZIER



Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio has declared he will not seek reelection as leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and will step down as prime minister when his term ends in September. Kishida, who took office in October 2021, will serve just under three years, making him the third-longest-serving prime minister in Japan since 2000, trailing only Abe Shinzo and Koizumi Junichiro. His tenure is marked by a dichotomy in legacy: a strong international reputation contrasted with low domestic approval ratings.

## Kishida's Global Impact: Strengthening Alliances and Multilateral Engagement

On the international stage, Kishida has proven to be a

steady leader for Japan. He has worked diligently to enhance Japan's security ties and economic partnerships globally while steering clear of the extreme positions that have historically strained relations with neighboring countries. His administration has focused on bolstering the U.S.-Japan alliance, a vital aspect of Japan's defense strategy. Kishida has advocated for increased defense spending and operational integration between Japanese and U.S. forces, aligning closely with Washington's policy preferences.

Kishida has demonstrated his commitment to the U.S. alliance through significant actions, such as adhering to U.S.

semiconductor export restrictions to China and swiftly implementing sanctions against Russia. A highlight of his tenure was his address to a joint session of the U.S. Congress in April 2024, where he affirmed Japan's status as America's "closest ally" and "global partner."

In addition to U.S. relations, Kishida has actively pursued multilateral and bilateral trade agreements with neighboring countries and other global powers, including Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and ASEAN nations. His recent meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked a reaffirmation of Japan-India ties in various sectors, celebrating a decade of strategic partnership. Kishida has also championed regional collaborations through initiatives like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).

Kishida's administration has seen a notable warming of relations with South Korea, facilitated by President Yoon



Suk-yeol. The two leaders met multiple times to strengthen security and communication frameworks, showcasing a commitment to regional cooperation. Kishida's leadership at the G7 summit in Hiroshima in 2023 further underscored Japan's active role in global governance, particularly regarding emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.

Despite identifying China as Japan's primary security threat, Kishida managed to hold two diplomatic summits with Chinese President Xi Jinping, demonstrating a balanced approach to foreign relations.

### **Domestic Challenges: Economic Strains and Political Scandals**

Domestically, Kishida's premiership has been plagued by significant challenges that have hindered his popularity. His strengths as a conciliatory leader and a good listener have not translated into effective governance amid economic turmoil and political scandals. Kishida's inability to implement bold reforms during times of rising inflation and a weakening yen has frustrated the public, who seek more substantial measures to alleviate economic pressures.

His approval rating peaked in May 2022 at 66 percent but began to decline sharply following political scandals. By July 2024, his approval rating had plummeted to 28 percent, with a disapproval rating of 64 percent. Inflation, which had not been a significant concern in decades, added to the pressures on Kishida's administration. Although he urged employers to raise wages, his administration's relief measures, such as cash handouts and fuel subsidies, were viewed as insufficient and temporary.

Kishida faced substantial political fallout from the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe in July 2022, which revealed troubling ties between LDP members and a controversial religious cult. Despite taking action against implicated cabinet ministers, public sentiment demanded more decisive action against the organization.

The most severe blow to Kishida's leadership came from a fundraising scandal within the LDP. Allegations surfaced that significant amounts of money raised through fundraising events had been underreported, leading to accusations of

corruption. Kishida's faction was among those implicated, and while he dissolved his faction in response, the public perceived him as unable to impose necessary reforms within his party.

Despite attempts to pass a new campaign financing law in June 2024, public trust in the LDP had already been severely eroded, and Kishida's approval ratings failed to recover. A recent poll indicated that 80 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with his handling of the scandal.

### **Conclusion**

Kishida Fumio's tenure as Prime Minister of Japan will be remembered for its duality: a foreign policy marked by engagement and stability, contrasting sharply with a domestic landscape characterized by economic challenges and political turmoil. As he prepares to step down, his legacy remains a subject of debate, reflecting the complexities of leadership in a rapidly changing global and domestic environment.

## **Freshwater Ecosystems Under Threat: UN Reports Highlight Urgent Need for Action**

**By JanFrazier**

Recent reports from UN-Water and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) reveal alarming trends in the state of the world's freshwater ecosystems, with half of all countries experiencing significant degradation. Rivers, lakes, and aquifers are suffering from diminished flows, shrinking water bodies, increased pollution, and ineffective management practices. These findings, detailed in a triennial series of reports, emphasize the importance of restoring and protecting freshwater resources to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of "clean water and sanitation for all."

The reports call for heightened support for Member States to confront these challenges through the UN's strategy for water and sanitation, which is accompanied by a forthcoming Collaborative Implementation Plan. Dianna Kopansky, Head of the Freshwater and Wetlands Unit at UNEP, expressed grave concerns: "Our blue planet is rapidly losing its healthy freshwater resources, which poses severe risks to food security, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Although global political commitments to sustainable water management have increased, including a recent water resolution passed at the UN Environment Assembly, they are not matched by the necessary financial and



actionable support. We need more tailored protection and restoration policies that can reverse this degradation."

### Global Patterns of Degradation

Currently, 90 countries, primarily in Africa and parts of Asia, are facing the degradation of one or more freshwater ecosystems. Contributing factors include pollution, dam construction, land conversion, over-extraction, and the impacts of climate change. River flow has decreased in 402 basins globally, a sharp increase since 2000, while only a limited number of basins are experiencing growth in river flow.

Human activities, particularly in Southeast Asia, have led to significant mangrove loss, jeopardizing coastal communities and biodiversity due to the vital water filtration and carbon sequestration roles these ecosystems play. Although the overall deforestation rate has stabilized in the past decade, the loss of mangroves remains critical.

In total, 364 basins worldwide have reported shrinking lakes and surface water bodies. High levels of nutrients and particulates in many large lakes can trigger harmful algal blooms, largely due to urbanization and agricultural practices. Conversely, the construction of reservoirs has resulted in a net increase in permanent water, notably in North America, Europe, and Asia.

### Monitoring Gaps Highlight Urgent Need for Improvement

The disparity in water quality monitoring is stark, with the poorest half of the world contributing less than 3% of global water quality data, including a mere 4,500 lake quality measurements out of almost 250,000. This highlights an urgent need to enhance monitoring capabilities, as many countries will face inadequate water quality data by 2030, complicating efforts to manage drought, floods, and agricultural runoff.



Where reliable data exist, trends indicate declining freshwater quality since 2017. In regions lacking sufficient data, the outlook is less encouraging. Report authors recommend expanding government-funded monitoring programs and integrating citizen science, along with utilizing satellite-based Earth observations to address data gaps.

### Slow Progress in Water Resource Management

Over 100 countries are making inadequate progress in implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), which is essential for balancing societal and economic water needs. Only 47 countries have fully or nearly achieved IWRM, while 63 require acceleration, and 73 have limited capacity for its implementation. At the current pace, sustainable water management will not be achieved until 2049, leaving approximately 3.3 billion people

in more than 100 countries without effective governance frameworks for water management by 2030.

To address these challenges, the reports suggest unlocking financing through revenue generation and cost recovery, investing in infrastructure, enhancing institutional capacity, and improving monitoring networks.

As the state of global freshwater ecosystems continues.

## Bangladesh in Turmoil: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Resigns Amid Unprecedented Protests

By JanFrazier



In a dramatic turn of events, Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has resigned and fled the country following weeks of widespread protests that resulted in the deaths of hundreds. The political crisis, the worst in her 15-year rule, escalated after student-led demonstrations against a controversial quota system for

government jobs morphed into a broader call for her resignation.

On Monday, the 76-year-old Hasina left Dhaka in an army helicopter, accompanied by her sister, as tens of thousands of protesters surrounded government offices and residences in the capital. In her

absence, General Waker-Uz-Zaman, the chief of Bangladesh's army, announced the establishment of an interim government to oversee the country of 170 million people, though he provided few details about the transition.

Reactions to Hasina's resignation and the ongoing unrest have poured in from various quarters, both domestic and international.

Reactions to Hasina's resignation and the ongoing unrest have poured in from various quarters, both domestic and international.

### Opposition Voices

Tarique Rahman, the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and

iving in exile in the UK, celebrated Hasina's departure on social media, stating,

"Hasina's resignation proves the power of the people."

### International Responses

In the UK, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesperson expressed grave concern over the violence and loss of life, calling it "completely unacceptable." The spokesperson emphasized the need to protect the right to peaceful protest and urged the authorities to release peaceful demonstrators and ensure due process for those facing charges. Foreign Secretary David Lammy added that the people of Bangladesh deserve a thorough UN-led investigation into recent events.

In Whitechapel, London, home to a large Bangladeshi community, celebrations erupted as many took to the streets waving flags and chanting, "Bangladesh! Bangladesh!" Local resident Abu Sayem remarked,

"We achieved our second independence now... Hasina has snatched away our rights."

Germany's Federal Foreign Office called for Bangladesh to remain on its democratic path amid the unrest, while the European Union urged a "peaceful transition" to a democratically elected government. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell underscored the importance of respecting human rights during this transition.

The United States commended the army's restraint and urged all parties to avoid further violence. Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller highlighted the tragic loss of life over recent weeks and called for calm. Miller acknowledged reports that the army resisted pressure to crack down on peaceful protests, stating that if true, this would be a positive development. The White House added that the formation of an interim government should be democratic and inclusive, praising the army's restraint.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer stated that Hasina's violent response to legitimate protests rendered her rule untenable, urging justice for those killed and advocating for a balanced interim government that respects all citizens' rights.

### United Nations Stance

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for calm and emphasized the need for a peaceful and democratic transition in Bangladesh. His spokesman, Farhan Haq, affirmed Guterres's solidarity with the Bangladeshi people and highlighted the necessity for an independent investigation into the violence. Irene Khan, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression, acknowledged the challenging road ahead for the army, stressing the importance of human rights in this transitional period.

As Bangladesh grapples with its political future, the focus remains on establishing a government that prioritizes democracy and accountability.

## France Faces Political Turmoil as Macron Rejects Left-Wing Prime Minister Candidate

By Eric Gahagan

France is once again engulfed in political turmoil following President Emmanuel Macron's refusal to appoint a prime minister from the left-wing coalition that emerged victorious in last month's snap

election. The political landscape has become increasingly complex, with the Assemblée Nationale divided into three roughly equal factions—left, centre, and far-right—none holding an outright majority.

Despite initial hopes that consultations would help resolve the impasse created by the election, which saw the left-wing New Popular Front (NFP) winning the most parliamentary seats, Macron's decision not to



Following two days of discussions with party and parliamentary leaders aimed at breaking the deadlock, the Elysée Palace described the meetings as “fair, sincere, and useful,” yet ultimately unproductive in producing a viable solution. Macron explained that appointing a government led by the NFP, which includes France Unbowed (LFI), the Socialist Party (PS), the Greens (EELV), and the Communist Party (PCF), would likely lead to a vote of no confidence, resulting in the government’s collapse.

“Such a government would immediately face a majority of over 350 MPs against it, effectively crippling its ability to function,” Macron stated. He emphasized the need for institutional stability and indicated that further consultations with party leaders and seasoned politicians would commence on Tuesday.

In a statement from the Elysée, Macron called on all political leaders to demonstrate a spirit of responsibility, acknowledging the high expectations of the French public during this unprecedented time in the Fifth Republic. “My responsibility is to ensure that the country is neither blocked nor weakened,” he asserted.

Following Macron’s announcement, the NFP announced it would withdraw



from further discussions unless the focus shifted to forming a government. The coalition, which successfully countered the far-right National Rally (RN) in the legislative elections, insists that any new prime minister should come from its ranks. They have nominated Lucie Castets, a 37-year-old economist and director of financial affairs at Paris City Hall, as their candidate.

In response to the president’s refusal, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of LFI, condemned Macron’s actions as creating an “exceptionally serious situation.” He called for swift and firm public and political

responses, announcing plans for demonstrations to urge the president to “respect democracy.” LFI also indicated its intention to introduce a motion of impeachment against Macron, accusing him of disregarding the results of universal suffrage that placed the NFP at the top of the polls.

Marine Tondelier, secretary general of the Greens, described the president’s decision as “a disgrace” and a “dangerous democratic irresponsibility.” The unfolding events signal a turbulent period ahead for French politics, as the nation grapples with the consequences of a divided legislature.

# Tunisian President Kais Saied Sacks Prime Minister Ahmed Hachani Ahead of Elections

By Eric Gahagan



Tunisian President Kais Saied has dismissed Prime Minister Ahmed Hachani and appointed Kamel Madouri, the former social affairs minister, as his replacement. The announcement from the president's office came late Wednesday, though no reason was given for Hachani's removal. Hachani had been in office since August 1, 2023, succeeding Najla Bouden, who was also dismissed without an official explanation by Saied.

Just hours before his dismissal, Hachani addressed the nation in a video message, highlighting the government's progress in addressing key issues despite global challenges, including efforts to secure the country's food and energy supply.

Madouri, who takes over as prime minister, had only assumed the social affairs portfolio in May. A brief social media statement from the president's office depicted Saied shaking hands with Madouri and confirmed his new role, stating, "The president has decided to assign him to head the government, succeeding Mr. Ahmed Hachani."

This leadership change occurs just ahead of Tunisia's presidential election on October 6, where Saied is vying for a second term amid widespread dissatisfaction over ongoing water and electricity outages in various regions. The government has attributed these issues to a persistent drought, which has led to the implementation of a water

distribution quota system. However, Saied has dismissed these claims, suggesting that the water shortages are a conspiracy aimed at undermining his electoral campaign, insisting that the country's dams are adequately filled.

Contradicting Saied's claims, the agriculture ministry reported that dam levels are critically low, currently at only 25 percent capacity. Saied, who was democratically elected in 2019, faced significant backlash after orchestrating a power grab in 2021, leading to accusations from opposition parties, human rights groups, and political candidates of suppressing and intimidating rivals to facilitate his reelection.

In a further escalation of political tensions, an opposition figure and potential presidential candidate, Abir Moussi, was sentenced to two years in prison earlier this week. Moussi, a lawyer, was arrested last year for criticizing the electoral process and was investigated under a controversial cybercrime law that criminalizes the dissemination of false information. Her sentencing is seen as part of a broader

crackdown on dissent that many observers believe is politically motivated against Saied's critics, regardless of their political affiliations.

Moussi appeals to segments of the population nostalgic for Tunisia's pre-revolutionary past

and has been a vocal critic of leaders such as the imprisoned Ennahdha party leader Rached Ghannouchi. Notably, she held a position in the ruling party of long-time President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

In 2022, Tunisia's constitution

was rewritten to establish a presidential regime, significantly limiting the powers of the parliament, and raising further concerns regarding the democratic process in the country.

## Zimbabwe Must End Crackdown on Opposition Ahead of SADC Summit, Urge Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

By Eric Gahagan

As Zimbabwe prepares to host the Southern African

Development

Community (SADC) summit on August 17, 2024, in Harare, human rights organizations Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are calling on authorities to halt their ongoing crackdown on opposition and civil society members. They demand the immediate and unconditional release of individuals arrested for exercising their rights.

The groups emphasize the need for a thorough and effective investigation into allegations of torture and mistreatment of detainees, insisting that any suspected perpetrators be held accountable through fair legal proceedings. With the SADC leadership soon transitioning to Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa, there is a pressing need for the regional



body to take a firm stand against these human rights violations.

Khanyo Farise, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, highlighted the severity of the situation: "Since mid-June, Zimbabwean authorities have conducted a massive crackdown on dissent. Over 160 individuals have been arrested, including elected officials, opposition members, union leaders, students,

and journalists." He emphasized that authorities must cease these violations and release all detainees immediately.

The crackdown began on June 16 when police raided the home of Jameson Timba, leader of the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), during a private gathering, leading to the arrest of 78 individuals. Security forces employed tear gas and batons, resulting in serious injuries to attendees, one requiring



surgery. The detained were charged with “gathering with intent to promote public violence and disorderly conduct,” and held unlawfully for over two days without being brought before a court. Although two children were released and one adult granted bail, 75 people remain in arbitrary detention.

Subsequent arrests continued, including 44 members of the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) on June 24, who were forced to pay fines for “disorderly conduct.” President Mnangagwa warned on June 27 against “opposition political parties bent on peddling falsehoods,” following which police violently disrupted peaceful protests demanding the release of those arrested at Timba’s residence. Further intimidation came from Information Minister Jenfan Muswere, who threatened opposition elements and civil society organizations.

The crackdown intensified as the SADC summit approached. On July 31, state agents forcibly removed four activists from a plane at Harare Airport, detaining them for eight hours and subjecting them to torture. These activists were charged with “disorderly conduct” for participating in a protest. Since August 1, more than 30 individuals have been arrested across Zimbabwe, primarily in relation to protests and opposition support.

Idriss Ali Nassah, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch, criticized the Zimbabwean government for its failure to uphold basic human rights: “The serious violations we are witnessing, including violent attacks, abductions, torture, arbitrary arrests, and other abuses against the opposition, are a clear indication of this failure.” He also noted that SADC has remained silent on these issues, urging the bloc to take a

decisive stance against the ongoing crackdown.

The organizations underscore that the deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe is directly connected to the government’s preparations for the SADC summit. As President Mnangagwa prepares to assume leadership, it is crucial for SADC to leverage this opportunity to advocate for human rights throughout the region, in accordance with the SADC treaty.

In conclusion, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are calling on SADC leaders, particularly President João Lourenço of Angola and Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema, to publicly condemn the Zimbabwean government’s actions and demand the release of all unjustly detained individuals. The time to act is now, before the situation deteriorates further.

# China Raises Alarm Over U.S. Missile Deployment in the Philippines, Manila Responds

BY RANDY WHITEHEAD

Tensions in the Asia-Pacific have risen following China's expression of concern over the recent deployment

of a U.S. mid-range missile system to the Philippines. Chinese officials warned that the presence of the weaponry could destabilize the region, though Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo sought to ease Beijing's fears, clarifying that the deployment was temporary.

In a discussion last month with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, held during the ASEAN summit in Laos, Manalo addressed China's alarm. "They made it very dramatic," Manalo commented during a press briefing in Manila. He reassured Wang that there was no cause for alarm, emphasizing that the missile system was not intended as a permanent fixture in the Philippines.

China's primary concern centered around the possibility that the U.S. missile system, which can launch the Standard Missile-6 and Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles, could disrupt the balance of power in the region. Manalo, however,



disagreed with this perspective, maintaining that the deployment posed no destabilizing threat.

The missile system had been brought to the northern Philippines in April as part of joint military exercises between U.S. and Filipino forces. Despite its deployment, the system was not fired during the drills, and the Philippine military has indicated that it may be removed from the country as early as next month.

China remains strongly opposed to increased U.S. military presence in the region, including

in the Philippines, arguing that such moves could threaten regional peace. Meanwhile, the U.S. and the Philippines have consistently criticized China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, particularly its territorial claims and confrontations between Chinese and Philippine coast guard vessels.

The South China Sea, a critical global shipping lane, is claimed by multiple countries, including China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. The ongoing territorial disputes continue to fuel tensions in the region, with the recent missile deployment.

# Strengthening U.S.-India Defense Ties: A New Era of Cooperation

By Jan Frazier



In a significant display of partnership, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh convened at the Pentagon to discuss the accelerating momentum in U.S.-India relations. Austin emphasized the countries' expanding collaboration on critical defense matters, particularly in bolstering supply chains and enhancing military interoperability.

Austin articulated a shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region, remarking on the strengthening ties in defense cooperation. He stated, "We're expanding our defense industrial ties and working to co-produce more capabilities and strengthen supply chain resilience." This collaboration extends to operational cooperation across

all military domains, underscoring the increasing synergy between the two nations.

Highlighting India's vital role, Austin noted the Indian Navy's contributions in the Indian Ocean, particularly its assistance to mariners in distress and its defense of global commerce. He reiterated the commitment to deepen naval collaboration, emphasizing the need for advancements in unmanned technologies and improved undersea domain awareness.

Minister Singh echoed these sentiments, affirming that the growing partnership spans all aspects of human endeavor, supported by strong people-to-people connections, shared democratic values, and aligned

interests on various global issues.

The meeting followed the recent finalization of a nonbinding "security of supply" agreement aimed at addressing unexpected supply chain challenges related to national security. Under this arrangement, the U.S. and India will prioritize the provision of goods and services that bolster national defense capabilities.

Vic Ramdass, principal secretary of defense industrial base policy, highlighted the significance of this agreement, stating it represents a critical step forward in the U.S.-India major defense partner relationship. Ramdass expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming meeting of the U.S.-India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative, scheduled for this fall, aiming to further strengthen cooperation in defense industrial capabilities and collaborative initiatives.

This meeting between Austin and Singh marks a pivotal moment in the U.S.-India defense partnership, paving the way for enhanced collaboration and innovation in addressing regional and global security challenges.



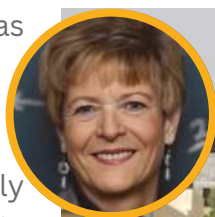
# The Future of U.S. Military Presence in Chad Amid Shifting Alliances in Africa

By Jan Frazier

The United States has restarted discussions about the future of its military presence in Chad, a country that has recently expressed uncertainty about its relationship with American forces. Over the past month, senior officials from the State and Defense Departments visited Chad's capital, N'Djamena, to meet with the government and military to renegotiate the terms of their security cooperation.

This dialogue comes at a crucial time, not just for U.S.-Chad relations but for America's broader role on the African continent. Earlier this year, Chad requested a renegotiation of its agreement with the U.S., resulting in the withdrawal of around 75 U.S. special operations forces from a disputed base near N'Djamena. This request followed a regional trend, as neighbouring Niger also expelled American military forces, forcing the U.S. to relinquish control of a \$100 million military base to Niger's ruling junta.

While the U.S. had developed a strong counterterrorism partnership with Niger, Chad's relationship with the American military has been less



A senior U.S. defence official hinted that the future U.S. military footprint in Chad may be smaller and more decentralized than before. Rather than resuming previous operations, the focus will likely shift to aligning U.S. and Chadian goals, with a view to allowing Chad to take the lead, while the U.S. provides support.

This shift in approach marks a notable departure from past practices, where the U.S. often conducted direct operations. As one official put it, many African partners now prefer to lead security efforts, with the U.S. offering facilitation instead of direct military intervention.

Despite the drawdown, U.S. officials remain hopeful about a future agreement. Chris Maier, Assistant Secretary of Defense

for Special Operations, expressed optimism, suggesting that the conclusion of Chad's presidential elections could open the door for more productive discussions. The Pentagon, while labelling the withdrawal as temporary, is exploring options for a new arrangement.

However, the uncertainty surrounding U.S. military involvement in Chad is compounded by the lack of a clear West Africa policy from the Biden administration. The recent coup in Niger and the subsequent loss of the U.S. military base there have exposed internal pressures within the U.S. government. One defense official acknowledged that different parts of the administration are grappling with how to respond to the

o the shifting dynamics in the region, which has seen a rise in coup d'états and terrorist activities.

According to the Global Terrorism Index, the Sahel region's share of global terrorist-related deaths surged from 1% in 2007 to 43% in 2022..

Cameron Hudson, a specialist in African security issues, argues that the threat in the Sahel does not directly endanger the U.S. homeland, calling into question the need for such a footprint.

As Chad and other African nations reconsider their

relationships with foreign military forces, the U.S. must adapt its approach to reflect local preferences for leadership and autonomy. Whether this leads to a reduced presence or a reimagined partnership remains to be seen, but the stakes are high for both regional security and U.S. interests in Africa.

## U.S. Approves \$20 Billion Arms Deal with Israel Amid Regional Tensions

By Eric Gahagan

The United States has approved a \$20 billion arms deal with Israel, which includes the sale of fighter jets and advanced weaponry, the State Department announced. Congress has been notified of the proposed sale, which features over 50 F-15 fighter jets, Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs), tank ammunition, high explosive mortars, and tactical vehicles. The deal aims to enhance Israel's military capacity, although the delivery of these systems is not expected until at least 2026, with some components not arriving until 2029.

This arms sale comes at a time of heightened concern that Israel may become involved in broader conflicts in the Middle East. Despite the urgency of the geopolitical situation, the weapons are intended to boost Israel's long-term defence capabilities.



"The United States remains committed to Israel's security, and it is essential to U.S. national interests to help Israel maintain a robust self-defence system,"

the State Department stated in its release. The Biden administration has been balancing its support for Israel with growing pressure from U.S. lawmakers and citizens to pause military aid, particularly due to rising civilian casualties in Gaza. One delivery of 2,000-pound

bombs has already been delayed due to Israel's ongoing airstrikes in densely populated areas.

In addition to new F-15 jets, the agreement includes upgrade kits for Israel's existing fleet, providing new engines and radars to modernize the aircraft. These upgrades and new planes make up the bulk of the \$20 billion deal, with Boeing expected to handle production.

# Pentagon and Congress Clash Over Future of Defense Production Act Funding

By Randy Whitehead



The Pentagon and Capitol Hill are currently divided over the future of the Defense Production Act (DPA), a Korean War-era law that plays a critical role in rapidly boosting key industries in times of national security crises. Over the years, the DPA has been instrumental in producing essential items, from armoured vehicles during the Iraq War to vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, it is vital for strengthening America's defense industry, which has been under strain as the U.S. supports military efforts in Ukraine and Israel.

The central issue lies in how much money the Pentagon is requesting for the DPA's Title III investment account and how those funds are being allocated. Congress has expressed frustration, arguing that the

Pentagon is not asking for enough and that the funds are being directed toward projects viewed as speculative. These concerns came to light in August when the Senate unveiled its defence spending bill, which more than doubled the Pentagon's initial request but imposed restrictions on how the money could be spent. This was an unusual move, as the Pentagon typically controls such funding.

A defence official voiced concerns about the prescriptive nature of the bill, stating that while the extra funds were appreciated, it could limit the Pentagon's flexibility in addressing key defense industry needs. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that the DPA is valuable for rebuilding parts of the U.S. defense sector, but

debates remain over how to best achieve that goal.

The DPA allows the Pentagon to expedite defense production by investing directly in lower-level suppliers, bypassing the usual delays of waiting for defense companies to increase supply. This has been particularly useful in the Ukraine aid effort. For fiscal year 2024, the Pentagon requested nearly \$1 billion in DPA funding, an increase of about \$300 million from the previous year. Congress, however, trimmed the amount to just under \$600 million, citing doubts about the Pentagon's capacity to manage such large sums.

Concerns over staffing and contracting inefficiencies have been noted, but the Pentagon has made efforts to address these issues, increasing personnel and streamlining contracting processes. Despite executing \$850 million in DPA funds in 2024, some remain skeptical about the department's ability to manage larger budgets efficiently.

One controversial shift in DPA priorities has been a substantial increase in funding for biomanufacturing. This emerging field, which aims to develop new production



methods, has been earmarked for a significant portion of the DPA budget. However, some in Congress argue that biomanufacturing is displacing more urgent defense priorities,

such as microelectronics and hypersonic weapons components.

As the debate over the DPA continues, Congress and the

Pentagon must strike a balance between long-term investments and immediate defense needs. Both sides are expected to reach a resolution later in the fiscal year, but questions about the effectiveness

## U.S. Air Force Expects 60% Surge in Foreign Military Sales Amid Global Instability

By Randy Whitehead



The U.S. Air Force is projecting a significant increase in foreign military sales, expecting a 60% jump this fiscal year due to rising demand for F-35 and F-16 fighter jets. During the Life Cycle Industry Days conference in Dayton, Ohio, Air Force officials announced anticipated sales of over \$46 billion for fiscal 2024, a substantial rise from \$28.7 billion in 2023.

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Geraghty, who leads the Air Force Security Assistance and Cooperation Directorate (AFSAC), attributed this surge to global instability, which is prompting U.S. allies to strengthen their defense

capabilities. “Business is booming,” Geraghty said, noting that nations are increasingly aware of the growing threats around the world.

Key deals include a \$23 billion agreement with Turkey for up to 40 new F-16s, along with modernization packages for an additional 79 fighters. This sale, approved earlier this year, faced opposition from lawmakers over concerns about Turkey’s human rights record and strategic issues but ultimately passed the Senate. Greece has also been approved to purchase up to 40 F-35s, with the first batch of 20 aircraft costing \$3.8 billion as part of a larger \$8.6 billion .

Despite the influx of new deals, Geraghty noted that AFSAC hasn’t received additional manpower to meet the rising demand. However, reforms within the Defense Department and the Pentagon’s Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) have helped streamline the sales process. The DSCA’s recent recommendations include faster technology approvals for international partners and enhanced coordination between U.S. agencies, which have allowed AFSAC to improve processing times.

Deputy Director Shawn Lyman confirmed that while demand has surged, efforts to speed up internal processes have allowed AFSAC to manage the increased workload efficiently.

**Meta Description:** The U.S. Air Force projects over \$46 billion in foreign military sales for 2024, driven by rising demand for F-35s and F-16s as global instability increases.

# President von der Leyen in Slovenia: Attending the Bled Strategic Forum

On Monday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will visit Slovenia for the 2024 Bled Strategic Forum and to assess recovery efforts in areas affected by the August 2023 floods.

In the afternoon, President von der Leyen will deliver a keynote speech at the forum's opening session, which can be watched live on EbS at 14:00 CEST. Later, she will join a leaders' panel discussion titled 'A World of Parallel Realities' alongside Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob.



Earlier in the day, President von der Leyen, accompanied by Prime Minister Golob, will travel to Črna na Koroškem. There, the local mayo

Romana Lesjak, will guide them through a photo exhibition and discuss the ongoing recovery efforts in the flood-hit areas.

They will also visit a reconstruction site before addressing the media, with live coverage on EbS at 9:55 CEST.

## The EU's Vital Role in Promoting Culture Across Member States

By Jan Frazier

The European Union (EU) plays a pivotal role in nurturing and advancing culture throughout its member countries, recognizing culture's significance to society, the economy, and international relations. Through various initiatives and funding programs, the EU is committed to

preserving Europe's rich cultural heritage while fostering vibrant ecosystems for cultural and creative industries and promoting cultural diversity.

Although individual EU member states manage their cultural policies, the EU actively

addresses common challenges, including the impact of digital technologies, evolving models of cultural governance, and the pressing need to support innovation within the cultural and creative sectors.

A cornerstone of the EU's support for these sectors is the Creative Europe program, which has been the main source of funding for culture and creativity since its inception in 2014. This program champions projects that enhance cultural diversity, promote artistic expression, and harness the economic potential of creative industries. It comprises two primary strands: Culture and MEDIA, along with a cross-sectoral strand that encourages innovative actions and collaboration among diverse cultural and creative sectors.

Under the Culture strand, initiatives such as Culture Moves Europe promote cultural mobility across Europe and beyond. This program offers mobility grants to artists and cultural professionals in 40 participating countries.

Additionally, several other EU funding programs support culture and creativity. Applicants can access the CulturEU funding guide, an interactive web tool that outlines available funding opportunities for the cultural and creative sectors within EU programs for 2021-2027.

To enhance the visibility of Europe's cultural and audiovisual sectors, the EU endorses various actions, initiatives, and awards aimed at recognizing achievements and raising awareness of Europe's cultural heritage. Notable initiatives include the European Capitals of Culture, an annual designation celebrating cities with exceptional cultural offerings that stimulate local economies and tourism. The European Heritage Label highlights sites of significant

European importance, while the European Union Prize for Literature and the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture honour excellence in their respective fields. Additionally, Music Moves Europe provides a framework for the Commission's initiatives supporting the European music sector.

By investing in culture, the EU not only reinforces European identity and unity but also contributes to economic growth, social cohesion, and the overall well-being of its citizens. This commitment to culture underscores the EU's recognition of the essential role that cultural vitality plays in shaping a prosperous and harmonious society.





# New Law Aims to Restore Biodiversity and Address Climate Change in the EU

By Eric Gahagan

The Nature Restoration Law came into effect on August 18, marking a significant step towards reviving biodiversity across the European Union. This law is essential for halting biodiversity loss, achieving climate neutrality by 2050, and bolstering food security for EU citizens. Its implementation is also vital for fulfilling other European goals, such as enhancing water security.



This legislation is a crucial tool for the EU and its member states in meeting international biodiversity commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It initiates a continuous and sustained recovery process for ecosystems across both land and sea, fostering sustainable economic growth and agricultural practices while supporting the development of renewable energy.

The law sets ambitious targets, requiring member states to implement restoration measures on at least 20% of EU land and sea areas by 2030. By 2050, these efforts should encompass all ecosystems needing restoration. The legislation mandates the restoration of key habitats and urban green spaces, including

maintaining and expanding urban tree canopies.

A significant objective of the law is to restore at least 25,000 kilometers of rivers to their natural state by 2030. It also aims to reverse the decline in pollinator populations, enhance biodiversity in agricultural and forest ecosystems, and meet the EU commitment to plant an additional three billion trees by 2030.

## National Restoration Plans

Each member state will create a national restoration plan tailored to its unique ecological context. These plans will outline restoration needs and the specific measures necessary to meet the law's targets. They should include a timeline for implementation, financial

requirements, and intended financing strategies, emphasizing the expected benefits for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Member states must submit draft plans to the European Commission within two years of the law's enactment. These plans should set milestones for 2030, 2040, and 2050, developed through transparent public engagement. The Commission will review these drafts, providing feedback that member states must incorporate into their final plans. The European Environment Agency will regularly report on progress towards meeting these targets.

Member states can access funding from a variety of public and private sources, including

EU funds like the Common Agricultural Policy, regional funds, the LIFE Programme, Horizon Europe, and the European Maritime, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Fund.

### Specific Targets and Obligations

The regulation establishes quantified and time-sensitive restoration targets for various habitats, including forests, peatlands, grasslands, rivers, and lakes, as specified in the Habitats Directive. It also addresses habitats of protected species and essential marine habitats as covered by existing directives.

To ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services, the law requires member states to:

- Preserve and enhance urban green spaces and tree canopies.
- Restore the natural connectivity of rivers and their floodplains.
- Combat the decline of pollinators and restore peatlands used for agriculture.
- Promote measures to increase farmland bird populations and improve biodiversity indicators in agricultural systems.

- Foster positive trends in biodiversity within forest ecosystems.
- Support the EU goal of planting at least three billion additional trees by 2030.

This comprehensive approach underscores the EU's commitment to restoring nature and promoting biodiversity while addressing climate change and ensuring a sustainable future for its citizens.

## Iran Rejects European Calls for Restraint Amid Rising Tensions with Israel

By Jan Frazier



Iran has firmly dismissed appeals from France, Germany, and the United Kingdom urging it to reduce its threats against Israel following the assassination of Hamas's political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, in Tehran last month. Nasser Kanaani, the

spokesman for Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, characterized these requests as lacking political logic and contradictory to international law, asserting that they effectively endorse Israeli actions.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Kanaani criticized the European nations for failing to condemn what he termed "international crimes" committed by Israel. He highlighted their perceived hypocrisy in demanding that Iran refrain from retaliating against violations of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Kanaani emphasized Iran's commitment to deterring Israeli actions and urged the three nations to confront the ongoing war in Gaza and Israel's aggressive tactics. The backdrop of these tensions includes the assassination of Haniyeh, who was killed on July 31 while

attending the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. This attack occurred shortly after the Israeli strike that killed Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut, further escalating regional hostilities amid Israel's military campaign in Gaza, which has resulted in nearly 40,000 casualties.

Kanaani attributed the escalation of the Gaza crisis to the inaction of the United Nations Security Council and the unwavering political and military support provided by Western governments to Israel.

In response, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer released a joint statement on Monday, advocating for de-escalation and calling on Iran and its allies to avoid actions that could exacerbate tensions. Scholz and Starmer separately communicated with Pezeshkian, expressing their concerns.

## Early Peak Season and Logistics Challenges in Europe and Beyond

By Randy Whitehead

Recent observations indicate that Europe is experiencing an earlier-than-usual peak season, influenced by several factors. Businesses are proactively getting cargo to European ports ahead of schedule to mitigate potential disruptions, while rising consumer spending has amplified demand. This proactive strategy comes as key trade routes face disruptions, impacting ocean freight rates and capacity. To maintain adequate inventory levels in target markets, companies are securing space early, which is expected to affect cargo storage dynamics across Europe. Customers are encouraged to connect with their local Maersk representatives to explore available options.

In Bangladesh, ongoing political instability has disrupted logistics operations in and out of the country. Although the situation is gradually improving, it remains fluid. Maersk teams are closely monitoring



developments and taking necessary precautions to ensure employee safety and the smooth functioning of customer supply chains. For the latest updates, please visit our dedicated advisory page.

To prevent further disruptions and manage delays effectively, our teams are focused on enhancing service reliability, minimizing the ripple effects of these delays on European operations. Terminal yard density remains high, and we urge customers to expedite

the clearance of their cargo.

At Hutchinson Port Delta II, a summer labor shortage, coupled with delays from vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, has resulted in approximately 24-hour waiting times. A full recovery is anticipated by week 35.

Bremerhaven is witnessing positive terminal performance and improved yard density at both facilities. While vessel waiting times are improving, the MSC Gate is experiencing a





slower recovery compared to the North Terminal. Ongoing negotiations regarding the Collective Labour Agreement have led to strike actions in July, but no further strikes have been announced. Our teams continue to monitor the situation closely and will keep customers informed.

In Felixstowe, congestion has led to vessel wait times of two to four days. To recover schedules and enhance service reliability, our teams have implemented a series of omissions in recent weeks.

The overall situation in Mediterranean hubs is stable, although some terminals are experiencing vessels arriving outside of their scheduled timelines.

In Algeciras, for instance, productivity and lineup are being impacted by crane maintenance and pavement repairs, which are expected to continue until the end of the year. Our teams are diligently monitoring load and discharge patterns as well as yard density to minimize disruptions for customers.

The Port of Barcelona has seen an improvement in congestion levels, yet yard density remains high. Customers are kindly requested to pick up their import containers promptly after discharge and adhere to gate-in times for export containers.

#### Air Freight Update

Last month, Maersk welcomed the first of two new Boeing 777 freighter aircraft, making it the first Danish airline to include a 777 in its fleet. These new additions will enhance service on the existing route between Hangzhou, China, and Billund, Denmark, initially offering three flights per week with plans to increase to six weekly flights. Maersk customers can benefit from increased capacity, shorter transit times, and advanced technology designed for oversized and temperature-controlled cargo. To learn more about the 777 additions, click [here](#) or listen to our expert's insights.

## EU Reaffirms Unwavering Support for Ukraine on Independence

By Jan Frazier

As Ukraine marks its Independence Day, the European Union has reiterated its steadfast support for the nation in its fight against Russian aggression, pledging to stand by Ukraine for as long as necessary.

“Europe will always be at Ukraine’s side because Ukraine is Europe,”

declared European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a recent video message. This celebration comes as Ukraine enters its third year of conflict following Russia’s illegal invasion in February 2022.

Since the onset of the invasion, the EU has provided crucial support to Ukraine, encompassing financial, humanitarian, military, diplomatic, and moral assistance. To date, nearly €114 billion has been allocated to support Ukraine and its people. The EU has also offered temporary protection to over four million individuals fleeing the war and mobilized financial resources from frozen Russian assets, including its €50 billion Ukraine Facility, to help Ukraine resist and recover from the ongoing conflict.

The EU and its member states remain committed to addressing Ukraine’s urgent military and defense needs. This support is channeled through initiatives such as the European Peace Facility and the EU Military Assistance Mission, alongside direct bilateral assistance from individual member states. Concurrently, Ukraine is making swift progress toward EU membership, in line with the EU’s firm conviction that Ukraine belongs in Europe.

The EU's ongoing support for Ukraine aims to foster a comprehensive, just, and sustainable peace that restores the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

This commitment reflects the sentiments of a vast majority of Europeans; a recent Eurobarometer survey indicates that nearly 87% of Europeans support humanitarian aid for .

In a show of solidarity on Ukraine's Independence Day, the EU displayed the Ukrainian flag in front of the European Parliament and illuminated several key buildings in Brussels in the colors of the Ukrainian flag.



# Hamas Appoints Yahya Sinwar Amid Escalating Violence in Israel

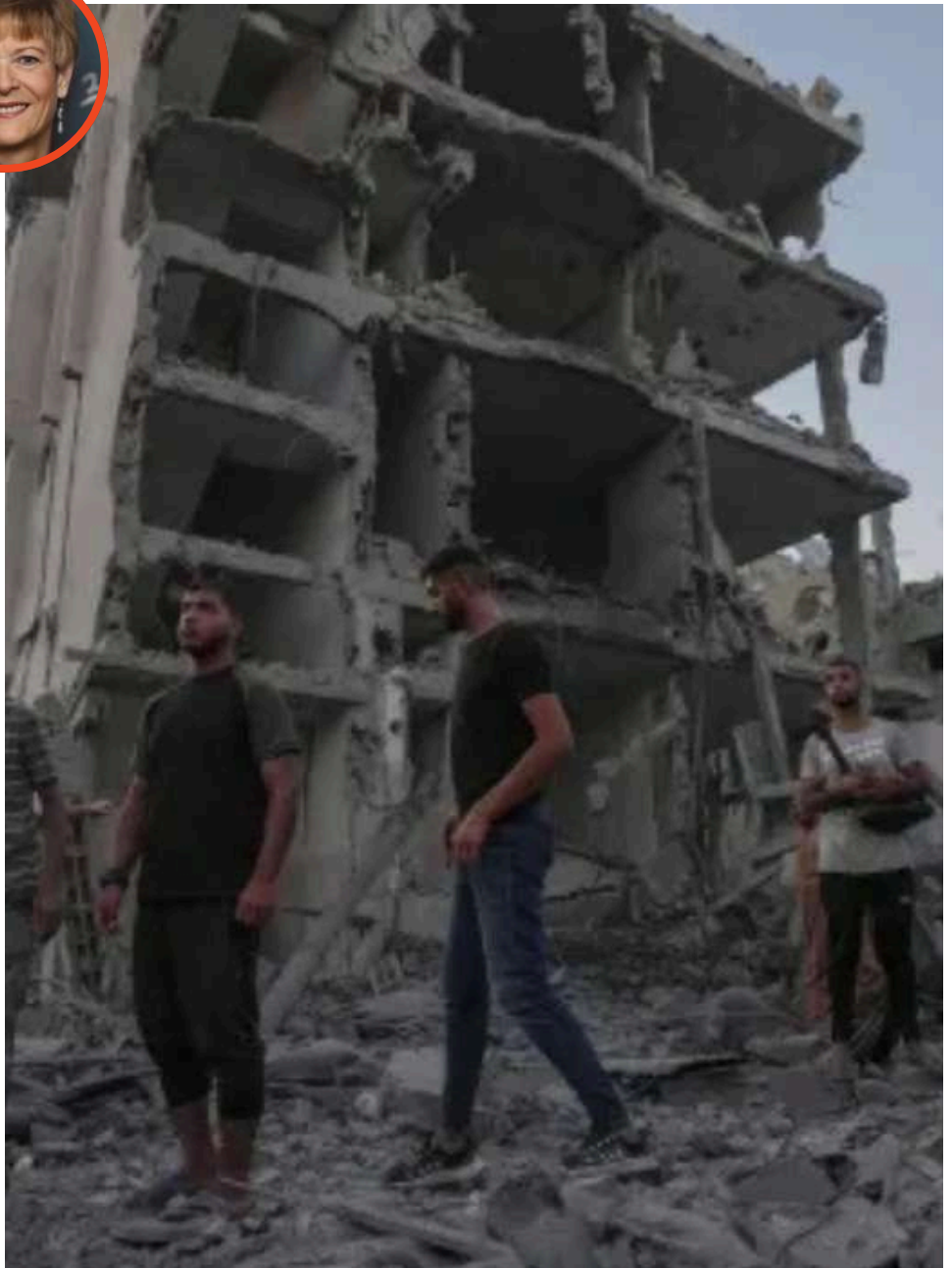
BY JAN FRAZIER

Hamas has appointed Yahya Sinwar as its new political chief, signalling a potential shift in the group's leadership dynamics. Meanwhile, tensions in the region continue to escalate, as Israeli forces reportedly killed at least 12 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. This includes eight fatalities in and around Jenin, where drone strikes were conducted.

In a separate incident, the latest Israeli airstrikes on Deir el-Balah resulted in at least three deaths and left over ten individuals wounded. The violence extends beyond the West Bank, with Israeli military actions also affecting Lebanon; a strike on a building in Mayfadoun led to the deaths of five Hezbollah fighters.

In response, Hezbollah has launched a counter-offensive, firing a "swarm of drones" at northern Israel, specifically targeting a military barracks located approximately 20 kilometers from the border.

The situation is further complicated by domestic unrest in Israel, where clashes have erupted for a second consecutive day.



Ultra-Orthodox Israelis protesting against military conscription have clashed with police forces, adding another layer of tension to an already volatile landscape.

These developments reflect the ongoing complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, highlighting the intertwined fates of regional and domestic issues.



# Biden Administration Pushes for Gaza Cease-fire Amid Rising Regional Tensions

By Jan Frazier

The Biden administration is actively pursuing a cease-fire in Gaza as concerns grow over a potential wider conflict in the Middle East, particularly with Iran and its proxies. U.S. officials have reiterated President Joe Biden's recent message to key mediators, including Qatar, emphasizing that discussions have entered their final stages and must conclude swiftly.



State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller indicated optimism regarding an impending agreement, stating,

"We really do think we are in the final stage of agreement on a framework."

However, this optimism is contrasted by escalating tensions in the region, especially following Iran's vow to retaliate for the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, widely believed to have been orchestrated by Israel. Aaron David Miller, a former U.S. negotiator for the Middle East, cautioned that

"we're on the cusp of a major regional war."

Israel is also bracing for retaliation from Hezbollah in

southern Lebanon after airstrikes in Beirut last week that killed Iranian-backed commander Fuad Shukr. Miller warned that Hezbollah is likely to launch a significant attack on Israel imminently.

In recent weeks, other Iran-aligned militias have intensified assaults on U.S. military positions in Iraq and Syria, marking a shift from months of relative calm.

## The Political Landscape

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu believes that recent assassinations may compel Hamas to accept favorable terms for a cease-fire, even if the situation remains precarious. Mairav Zonszein from the International Crisis Group noted that Biden has

voiced disapproval of Netanyahu's actions, arguing that they undermine efforts to reach a truce.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has echoed Biden's call for all parties to halt escalatory actions and focus on reaching an agreement. Despite U.S. pressure, Zonszein pointed out that Netanyahu's defense establishment doubts his willingness to accept the current deal on the table.

Intense diplomatic efforts are underway, with U.S. officials engaging allies, Iran, and Israel directly. Additionally, Biden has conferred with Jordan's King Abdullah II to discuss de-escalation and has deployed more U.S. military resources to the region as a cautionary measure against Iranian aggression.

Laura Blumenfeld from Johns Hopkins remarked,

Laura Blumenfeld from Johns Hopkins remarked,

“The F-22A Raptors jetting to the Middle East are high-tech messenger pigeons carrying a one-word note: ‘Don’t.’”

### Changes Within Hamas

In the wake of Haniyeh’s assassination, Hamas appointed Yahya Sinwar as its new leader, a move that may solidify the group’s alignment with Iran and intensify its commitment to violent resistance against Israel. Devorah Margolin from The Washington Institute noted that this appointment indicates a return to Hamas’s foundational goals of armed struggle.

John Kirby, White House national security communications adviser, minimized fears that Sinwar’s leadership would complicate cease-fire negotiations, emphasizing that Sinwar has always been a key decision-maker in the group’s dealings.

### Conclusion: A Critical Juncture

Despite the Biden administration’s assertions that cease-fire negotiations are nearing completion, skepticism remains among analysts. Brian Katulis from the Middle East Institute likened the U.S. message to a “Jedi mind trick,” suggesting it might serve as a strategic incentive for Iran and other parties to exercise restraint.

As regional and U.S. pressure mounts for a cease-fire and the Israeli public increasingly demands a resolution to return hostages, Netanyahu may find political space to navigate a breakthrough while maintaining his coalition.

As Blumenfeld noted,

“It could go either way, in the coming days — cease-fire or regional wildfire.”

## Tensions Rise as Blinken Warns of Potential Iran-Hezbollah Attack on Israel

By Randy Whitehead

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has issued a stark warning regarding the possibility of an attack on Israel by Iran and Hezbollah within the next 24 to 48 hours. This unverified information, reported by Axios, surfaces amid escalating fears of a broader conflict in the Middle East following the recent killings of top leaders from Hamas and Hezbollah.

In a conference call with G7 foreign ministers, Blinken shared insights from three unnamed sources, suggesting that both Iran and Hezbollah are poised to

retaliate against Israel as early as Monday. Axios reported that while the exact timing and nature of any potential attacks remain uncertain, the U.S. believes that these entities are planning a response.

In light of the rising tensions, Blinken emphasized the need for collective action, urging his G7 counterparts—including representatives from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom—to apply diplomatic pressure on Iran and Hezbollah to limit their aggression. The G7 later

In response to the recent surge in hostilities, the United States has bolstered its military presence in the region, describing the deployment as defensive in nature. U.S. Central Command Chief General Michael Kurilla is expected to arrive in Israel to coordinate preparations with the Israeli military ahead of the anticipated threat.

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant warned of severe consequences for any attack, stating, “If they dare to attack us, they will pay a heavy price.”

The ongoing conflict in Gaza, which has lasted nearly ten months, has heightened tensions between Israel and Iranian-aligned groups, including Hezbollah. While neither side appears ready for an all-out war, the risk of significant escalation remains high.

As a precaution, several countries have advised their citizens to leave Lebanon immediately. Japan, Saudi Arabia, and France have joined the U.S. and various European nations in issuing these warnings, urging travelers to depart while commercial flights are still operational. The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs has underscored the urgency of this recommendation, advising nationals against travel to Lebanon and suggesting immediate departure for those currently in the country.



## Western Nations Urge Iran and Allies to Avoid Attacks on Israel Amid Ongoing Tensions

By Randy Whitehead

Five Western nations have united in a call for Iran and its allies to refrain from potential retaliatory attacks against Israel following the recent killings of senior Hamas and Hezbollah leaders. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy issued a joint statement on Monday, emphasizing their commitment

to de-escalating tensions in the Middle East and advocating for a ceasefire in the ongoing Gaza conflict.

The leaders expressed grave concerns over Iran's threats of military action against Israel, warning of severe repercussions for regional security if such actions are undertaken. They endorsed the latest diplomatic

efforts spearheaded by the US, Qatar, and Egypt to negotiate a truce to end the protracted 10-month war.

Global anxieties have surged over the risk of an all-out regional conflict, particularly following the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and



The leaders expressed grave concerns over Iran's threats of military action against Israel, warning of severe repercussions for regional security if such actions are undertaken. They endorsed the latest diplomatic

The joint statement highlighted the urgency for hostages held by Hamas to be released and called for immediate, unrestricted delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Scholz and Starmer engaged in direct discussions with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, with both leaders expressing their concerns over escalating violence.

Pezeshkian responded by underscoring Iran's commitment to diplomatic solutions but emphasized the nation's right to respond to aggression, rejecting any pressure or sanctions. Meanwhile, John Kirby, the White House national security spokesperson, indicated that the US is bracing for potential attacks in the near future, signaling heightened vigilance amid rising tensions.

Iran is reportedly expected to carry out directives from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to impose severe repercussions on Israel, whom it holds responsible for the assassinations. Hezbollah has similarly vowed retribution, escalating fears of a broader conflict.



Despite increasing calls for restraint, hostilities continue. An Israeli airstrike on Sunday reportedly killed two Hezbollah fighters, while the group retaliated by launching rockets into northern Israel. Concurrently, the US has heightened its military presence in the region, deploying a guided missile submarine and accelerating the movement of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group in response to the escalating situation.

The urgent calls for de-escalation from Western leaders

echo a recent framework endorsed by US President Joe Biden, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, aimed at facilitating an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the return of captives, and the effective distribution of humanitarian aid.

While diplomatic efforts are underway, the supply of arms to Israel from the US, France, Germany, and Italy continues, albeit with reports suggesting that the new UK government has suspended new export licenses pending a review of the situation.

# Skepticism Surrounds Ceasefire Agreement in Ongoing Conflict

By Randy Whitehead



Omar Rahman, a fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs, expressed doubts regarding the prospects of a ceasefire agreement in the ongoing conflict. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Rahman noted that the absence of detailed information raises concerns about overcoming significant obstacles to a potential deal.

He highlighted that past negotiations have not faltered over logistical details such as the timing of prisoner releases, but rather over fundamental issues that remain unresolved. “The core divide lies in Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s stance, as he has indicated no intention to end the conflict in the near future,

” Rahman stated from New York. He added that Netanyahu’s plan to resume military action after the release of hostages stands in stark contrast to Hamas’s demands for a permanent cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip.

This fundamental disagreement complicates the negotiation process, leaving many uncertain about how these issues might be resolved. Rahman further emphasized the lack of assurance that any agreement would transition from the initial phase—focused on hostage releases—to a broader and lasting cessation of violence.

## Abbas Vows to Stand with Palestinian People Amid Gaza Crisis

By Jan Frazier

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has vowed to travel to the besieged Gaza Strip, expressing his commitment to stand by the Palestinian people, even at the risk of his own life. Speaking to Turkey’s Grand National Assembly, Abbas condemned the international community’s silence amid escalating violence,

as the death toll from the ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza surpassed 40,000.

“I have decided to head to the Gaza Strip along with all the brothers from the Palestinian leadership,”

Abbas stated. He emphasized his dedication to halting what he termed

“barbaric aggression,” declaring, “Our life is not more valuable than that of the smallest child in Gaza.”

While details about the timing and logistics of his journey remain uncertain, the situation in Gaza is dire, compounded by a suffocating Israeli blockade. The Rafah crossing, the primary

Abbas's remarks come amidst ongoing tensions between his Fatah movement and Hamas, the governing authority in Gaza since 2005. Despite his criticisms of Hamas, there are continuous efforts to foster Palestinian unity, as evidenced by recent reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas representatives in Beijing.

Following the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran in late July, Abbas denounced the killing as a "cowardly act" and called for patience and unity among Palestinians.

"Gaza is an integral part of the unified Palestinian state. There will be no state in Gaza alone. The Palestinian people will not be broken and will never surrender," Abbas asserted, pledging to rebuild Gaza and heal its wounds with the support of Arab and Islamic nations.



He expressed gratitude towards Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his "principled and courageous support" for the Palestinian cause. Abbas also demanded accountability for Israeli actions in Gaza, where military operations have resulted in widespread displacement and devastation.

"The murderers and war criminals will not escape punishment, and we will continue our struggle and fight to achieve justice in Palestine,"

he concluded.





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