

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

U.N. Secretary-General, António Guterres on Wednesday described the U.N. Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA, as "the backbone of all humanitarian response in Gaza."

"I appeal to all member states to guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's lifesaving work."

The United States is the biggest donor but has temporarily paused its funding, along with several other countries, after Israel accused some agency staff of taking part in the October 7 attack by Hamas militants.

The accusations became public on Friday when UNRWA announced it had fired some staff after Israel provided the agency with information.

South Africa's foreign minister said on Wednesday Israel has ignored the ruling by the U.N.'s top court last week by killing hundreds more civilians in a matter of days in Gaza. Hamas is a U.S.-designated terrorist group.

The U.S. has decided who was responsible for the drone strike that killed three American soldiers in Jordan. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

It wasn't one group.

"This was done by the umbrella group called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq," which National Security Council spokesman John Kirby says U.S. intelligence believes planned, resourced and facilitated the attack. The umbrella group also includes the militant group Kata'ib Hezbollah.

Kirby says President Biden still weighing options for what comes next.

"He's made his decision. There will be a response."

Iran is threatening its own decisive response to any U.S. attack on the Islamic Republic after the Biden administration said it holds Tehran in part responsible for the strike for backing the militias.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

The three soldiers were the first Americans killed in action this year.

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Kenya's delayed polio vaccination campaign targets high risk counties in the northeast. But Kenya isn't the only country affected by a resurgence of polio. [VIA] VOA Nairobi Bureau chief Mariama Diallo reports.

After three decades of being polio-free, Burundi had 16 cases last year. And as of August 2023, 187 confirmed cases of circulating variant poliovirus have been reported in 21 countries in the Africa region, according to the World Health Organization.

Polio is a highly infectious and debilitating disease that affects children under 5 causing permanent paralysis. It can also cause death in 2 to 10 percent of those paralyzed, according WHO.

Mariama Diallo, VOA News, Nairobi.

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has been found guilty of corruption and sentenced to 14 years. Wednesday's ruling was yet another blow to the imprisoned populist leader[s] days before his political movement attempts a return to power in parliamentary elections.

It was his second conviction in as many days and the harshest yet, and was the latest episode in the long-running battle between the powerful military and civilian leaders in the troubled Western ally.

U.S. senators grilled the leaders of the biggest social media and messaging firms on Wednesday in a hearing focused on efforts to better protect children on their platforms from sexual exploitation. Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman reports.

The tone was set almost immediately. Here's the ranking Republican member, Senator Lindsey Graham, to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

"You and the companies before us, I don't mean for it to be so, but you have blood on your hands. You have a product, you have a product that's killing people."

The hearing marks the latest effort by lawmakers to address the concerns of parents and mental health experts that social media companies put profits over making sure their platforms do not harm children.

Zuckerberg testified along with X CEO Linda Yaccarino, Snap CEO Evan Spiegel, TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew and Discord CEO Jason Citron.

And the executives defended their efforts to protect their users.

Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman.

American actor Alec Baldwin has pleaded not guilty to an involuntary manslaughter charge in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer during a rehearsal on a movie set in the U.S. state of New Mexico. Baldwin's plea was made public Wednesday a day before he is scheduled to be arraigned remotely over video conference.

Baldwin claims he pulled back the hammer but not the trigger, and the gun fired.

I'm Joe Ramsey, V...