

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday during a lightning tour of the Middle East said Washington was reviewing Hamas's response to a cease-fire proposal and he would discuss it with Israeli officials when he visits the country on Wednesday.

"There's still a lot of work to be done, but we continue to believe that an agreement is possible and, indeed, essential. And we will continue to work relentlessly to achieve it."

U.S.-designated terrorist group Hamas earlier issued a statement saying it had submitted its response.

U.S. President Joe Biden blamed former President Donald Trump for blowing up a bipartisan border security agreement. Details from VOA's chief national correspondent Steve Herman in Washington.

The likely Republican Party presidential nominee, Donald Trump, is responsible for intimidating Republicans to back away from the bipartisan border security bill, according to President Biden, because Trump would prefer chaos ahead of this November's election.

"So, Republicans have to decide: Who do they serve - Donald Trump or the American people? Are they here to solve problems or just weaponize those problems for political purposes?"

The \$118 billion package also includes aid for Israel and Ukraine

S(teve) Herman, VOA News, Washington.

Chile's former President Sebastián Piñera, a billionaire tycoon who twice held the South American nation's top job, died Tuesday in a helicopter crash, his office said in a statement.

The 74-year-old Piñera often flew himself around in his own helicopter and was a former shareholder in the country's national airline with stakes in television and football among other businesses.

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Lower temperatures on Tuesday brought relief to central Chile where firefighters tried to extinguish the remnants of wildfires that have killed at least 131 people in recent days, while families combed the rubble in a search for missing relatives.

Only 35 victims have been identified and hundreds remain missing because of the fires, which broke out late last week and then spread to large swaths of central Chile, the worst natural disaster to strike the South American nation since the 2010 earthquake and tsunami that left more than 500 dead.

Crowds gathered in Antakya on Tuesday, the capital of the southern Turkish province of Hatay, on the one-year anniversary of the devastating earthquake that struck Turkey and neighboring Syria, killing tens of thousands. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Millions across Turkey are mourning the loss and more than 53,000 friends, loved ones and neighbors killed in the country's catastrophic earthquake a year ago to mark what it calls the "Disaster of the Century."

The government has put on commemorations. But crowds angry with how officials handled the tragedy jostled with police chanting "government resign" while crowds walking on the banks of Orontes River called for Lutfu Savas, the mayor of Hatay, to resign.

Amid the fog by the Orontes River, people chanted "Can anyone hear" us - echoing the voice of those buried under the rubble.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

A U.S. Federal appeals court Tuesday unanimously rejected Donald Trump's claim he's immune from criminal charges that he plotted to overturn his 2020 election defeat. Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman reports.

The ruling is a rebuke to the former president, who is once again seeking the White House, as he fends off numerous criminal cases.

The election subversion case landed before the three-judge appeals panel after Trump was criminally charged by Special Counsel Jack Smith with a number of illegal schemes to try and stay in power after losing at the polls.

Trump denies wrongdoing and claims he's immune from prosecution for acts taken while president.

Trump is almost certain to appeal Tuesday's decision all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Even if his claims are ultimately rejected, he may achieve his aim of delaying trial until after the November election.

If Trump wins the election, he could seek to pardon himself or direct the Justice Department to shut down the case.

Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman.

U.S. President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that the bipartisan immigration bill is falling apart under political pressure from Republican Party rival Donald Trump and urged lawmakers to have a, quote, unquote, "spine" and pass the much needed measure.

I'm Joe Ramsey, VOA New(s).