

# VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is rejecting Hamas's terms for a cease-fire and hostage release deal. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

After meeting with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who's in the Middle East again in hopes of brokering a cease-fire, Netanyahu called the Hamas terms, which include ending the war, "delusional" and vowed to keep fighting until absolute victory.

Hours later, Blinken said while the Hamas proposal does have some "non-starters," "we do think it creates space for agreement to be reached."

Hamas says it will send a delegation to Cairo for more talks.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

The United States military said it carried out a drone strike on a vehicle in Baghdad on Wednesday, killing a leader of an Iranian-backed militant group in Baghdad. VOA Pentagon correspondent Carla Babb reports.

It was a unilateral strike conducted by U.S. forces against a major commander for Kata'ib Hezbollah. Kata'ib Hezbollah is the Iranian-backed militant group that has been responsible for striking U.S. forces in Iraq, Syria and Jordan.

Hear more from Pentagon correspondent Carla Babb on VOA News's international edition.

Republican Party U.S. senators on Wednesday defeated a bipartisan effort to bolster border security that had taken months to negotiate, but said they could still approve aid for Ukraine and Israel that had been tied up in the deal.

By a vote largely along party lines, the Senate failed to approve a \$118 billion bipartisan package that would tighten immigration laws, help Ukraine fight a Russian invasion and bolster Israel in its war with Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist group.

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Two explosions near electoral candidates' offices in Pakistan's southwestern province killed more than 25 people and wounded dozens on Wednesday. Reuters correspondent Fiona Jones reports.

On the eve of a general election, the blasts in the southwestern province of Baluchistan raised concerns over security.

Pakistan goes to the polls on Thursday amid rising militant attacks and the jailing of Imran Khan, the winner of the last national election. Khan has been dominating the headlines despite an economic crisis and other woes threatening the nuclear armed country.

Authorities have said they are boosting security at polling booths.

Reuters correspondent Fiona Jones.

Residents say one of eastern Congo's most active rebel groups is attacking a community considered the last line of defense before the region's largest city of Goma. The M23 rebels claimed they have no intention to seize Goma again, but warned that attacks targeting its forces "will be dealt with at their source."

The group rose to prominence a decade ago by seizing Goma, which is an important base for Congolese forces and for humanitarian workers.

United Nations agencies are appealing for \$4.1 billion to provide urgent aid for more than 17 million civilians inside war-torn Sudan and those who have fled to neighboring countries. Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva.

U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffith says the international community has largely forgotten the country amid high profile crises in Gaza, Ukraine and elsewhere.

"But I don't think there's anywhere quite so tragic in the world today as Sudan. The figures speak for themselves. [There's] There're 25 million people in Sudan who need assistance, half of them are children. That's an astonishing figure."

He says the expansion of fighting in Sudan, including to Al Jazeera, the country's so-called bread basket, has worsened the situation.

Lisa Schlein, for VOA News, Geneva.

Thousands rallied in front of Slovakia's Parliament on Wednesday to condemn a plan by the new government of the populist prime minister to eliminate the office of the special prosecutor dealing with major crime and corruption.

A final vote is Thursday.

A number of people linked to the [prime minister party's] prime minister's party face prosecution in corruption scandals. European Union institutions have questioned the planned changes to the penal code, which also include[s] reducing punishment for corruption and a significant shortening of the statute of limitations.

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