

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

Israel's military confirmed Thursday its forces have stormed the main hospital in southern Gaza hours after Israeli fire killed a patient and wounded six others in the complex. AP correspondent Karen Chammas reports.

The Israeli army said it was a limited operation, seeking the remains of hostages taken by Hamas. The raid comes a day after Israel's army sought to evacuate thousands of displaced Palestinians who are seeking shelter at the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis.

The military said it had "credible intelligence" that Hamas had held hostages at the hospital and that the remains of hostages might still be inside.

Nasser Hospital has been the latest focal point of Israel's ground offensive. Israeli troops, tanks and snipers have surrounded Nasser Hospital for at least a week. Surrounded by heavy fire, several people inside the compound have been killed, according to health officials.

I'm Karen Chammas.

President Vladimir Putin said that Russia would prefer to see U.S. President Joe Biden win a second term, describing him as more experienced and predictable than Donald Trump. VOA's Rick Pantaleo reports.

Speaking to reporters ahead of a meeting with NATO defense ministers, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg says the alliance's European members and Canada have ramped up defense spending to record levels.

"And we should not pursue any path that indicates that we are trying to divide Europe from North America. The strength is that we have Europe and North America together in NATO. We have to remember that non-EU NATO Allies account for 80 percent of NATO's defense spending ..."

Concern is growing in Europe about the future U.S. commitment to NATO should Donald Trump return to office. With a war in Ukraine weighing on resources, European leaders agree they should do more without relying on U.S. help.

Rick Pantaleo, VOA News.

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[Greece has become the first Orthodox [Christian] Christian country to legalize same-sex civil marriage. AP's Lisa Dwyer has more.]

At Florida's Cape Canaveral, "... 3, 2, 1, ignition and liftoff. Go SpaceX, go IM-1 and the Odysseus lunar lander.

A SpaceX rocket took Intuitive Machines lunar lander for a trip to the moon. Travel time is about a week and if the touchdown is successful, it would be the first U.S. moon landing in more than 50 years.

NASA has some experiments on board as well, hoping to get a head start on a moon mission that's slated for later this decade.

I'm Jackie Quinn.

[The Italian Senate has given final approval.]

Official data released Thursday showed gross domestic product contracted by a worse-than-expected 0.3 percent in the three months to December. That follows another decline over the period between July and September of 0.1 percent

Britain's Office For National Statistics said the Q4 fall in GDP was the biggest since the first quarter of 2021 in the depths of the health crisis.

It further indicated manufacturing, construction and wholesale sectors were the largest contributors to the decrease.

The country's economy has stagnated for nearly two years, though the Bank of England expects it to pick up slightly in 2024.

Greece has become the first Orthodox Christian country to legalize same-sex civil marriage. AP's Lisa Dwyer has more.

Despite opposition from church officials, a cross-party majority of 176 lawmakers in the 300-seat Greek parliament voted in favor of the same-sex civil marriage bill drafted by the prime minister's center-right government.

The new law recognizes parental rights for same-sex couples, but will not allow gay men to acquire biological children by using surrogate mothers in Greece, an option currently available to women who can't have children for health reasons.

Supporters of the bill say same-sex couples will now be able to pick up their children from school, be able to travel, go to the doctor or take children to the hospital.

Same-sex civil partnerships have been allowed in Greece since 2015, but that only conferred legal guardianship to the biological parent, leaving their partners in a bureaucratic limbo.

I'm Lisa Dwyer.

Elon Musk is looking to move the legal home of SpaceX to Texas from Delaware after a judge in that state voided the billionaire's \$55.8 billion Tesla pay package. A certificate of conversion for Space Exploration Technologies Corp. was filed to reincorporate in Texas from Delaware, which became effective on Wednesday.

Most corporations set up legal shop in Delaware because state law is typically favorable to corporations and experts say the change could backfire on Musk.

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