

VOA NEWS

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(Israeli) war cabinet member Benny Gantz said on Wednesday there (were) promise of progress on a new deal to release hostages from Gaza amid regional talks to secure a pause in the war.

Gantz said in a televised press briefing, "There are ongoing attempts to promote a new hostage deal and there are promising early signs of possible progress," adding "We will not stop looking for a way and we will not miss any opportunity to bring our girls and boys home."

But he added if no deal were struck, the Israeli military would keep fighting in Gaza even into the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins next month.

Egypt's economy is facing serious hurdles after revenue from the country's most strategic asset, the Suez Canal, dropped by nearly half. Edward Yeranian has more on the story from Cairo.

The Greek-flagged grain ship, Sea Champion, was slightly damaged Wednesday by two ballistic missiles fired by the northern Yemen-based Houthi group, which says it is attacking Western ships in solidarity with Hamas militants fighting Israel.

Because of such attacks, many ships that normally pass by Yemen headed to or from the Suez Canal are now avoiding the area. This has deeply cut the revenue Egypt typically receives from ships going through the canal, according to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi.

Edward Yeranian, VOA News, Cairo.

The Houthis are a U.S.-designated terrorist group.

Brazil's foreign minister is calling for reforms of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions as his country kicked off its presidency of the Group of 20 nations on Wednesday, with a meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

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As Ukraine enters a third year of war, it's running out of soldiers and ammunition. Reuters correspondent Alice Rizzo reports.

Reuters reporters spent two weeks near the frontline ahead of the February 24 anniversary speaking to more than 20 soldiers and commanders. While still motivated to fight the Russian invaders, they described the challenges of holding off a larger and better supplied enemy. One of them is a company commander who goes by the call sign "Limousine."

"We have a big problem with manpower. We simply lack men. People have lost their enthusiasm, which they had at the beginning of the full-scale invasion."

Another commander estimated that just 60 to 70 percent of the several thousand men in the brigade at the start of the conflict were still serving. The rest had been killed, wounded or signed off.

Reuters correspondent Alice Rizzo.

The mother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has filed a lawsuit at a court in an Arctic city, contesting officials' refusal to release her son's body.

Russia's state news agency TASS reported a closed-door hearing has been scheduled for March 4.

Ludmila Navalnaya has been trying to retrieve her son's body since Saturday following his death in a penal colony in Russia's far north a day earlier.

A U.S. delegation to Gabon on Tuesday again called for a quick return to constitutional order six months after the nation's August 30 coup. Moki Edwin Kindzeka reports from neighboring Cameroon.

Gabon officials say military ruler General Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema received a United States delegation led by Vernelle Trim FitzPatrick. FitzPatrick has been United States ambassador to the Central African state for about a month.

Gabon's military, led by Nguema, ousted President Ali Bongo Ondimba in an August 30, 2023 bloodless coup.

After the coup, Washington suspended most non-humanitarian aid and asked for a quick return to constitutional order in Gabon

Moki Edwin Kindzeka, VOA News, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Somalia has announced a defense deal with Turkey that includes support for the [Horn of Africa's nation] Horn of Africa nation's sea assets and appears aimed at deterring Ethiopia's efforts to secure access to the sea by way of the breakaway region, Somaliland.

Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland on January 1. The document has rattled Somalia, which said it's prepared to go to war over it because it considers Somaliland part of its territory.

Somaliland says Ethiopia agreed to recognize its independence in return for a naval port.

I'm Joe Ramsey, VOA News.