

# VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

Both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump have landed in Texas to visit the U.S.-Mexico border. It's a sign of how central immigration has become in the 2024 campaign. VOA's Rick Pantaleo has the story.

President Joe Biden and his likely Republican challenger, the former President Donald Trump, arrived Thursday in Texas, some 300 miles apart, for visits to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Biden, who wants to spotlight how Republicans tanked the bipartisan border security deal on Trump's orders, went to the Rio Grande Valley city of Brownsville, which is described as once being the busiest corridor for illegal crossings, but has dropped sharply in recent months.

Trump, meanwhile, headed to Eagle Pass, roughly 325 miles northwest of Brownsville, in the corridor that is currently seeing the largest number of crossings. Trump was to speak from a state park that has become a Republican symbol of defiance against the federal government immigration enforcement practices it mocks.

Rick Pantaleo, VOA News.

U.S. officials reacted with concern at the news of civilians killed while trying to get humanitarian aid in Gaza. VOA's Jeff Caster reports.

Speaking to reporters as he left the White House Thursday, U.S. President Joe Biden said they were still gathering information on the incident and as he understood it there were two versions of what happened.

U.S. Agency for International Development chief Samantha Power, who was in the West Bank Thursday, said regardless of the circumstances, the incident should never have happened.

"I know investigations are underway to find out exactly. Again, a core that applies everywhere USAID and our partners work around the world is that desperate civilians trying to feed their starving families should not be shot at."

Jeff Caster, VOA News.

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Former career U.S. diplomat admits secretly spying for Cuban intelligence for decades. AP correspondent Jackie Quinn reports.

A former career U.S. diplomat says he'll plead guilty to charges that he served as a secret agent for Cuba. Seventy-three-year-old former ambassador Manuel Rocha changed his plea from not guilty to guilty, telling a federal judge in Miami he'll admit to two counts of conspiring to act as a foreign agent in exchange for 13 other charges being dropped.

Not only did Rocha work for the State Department, he was a special adviser to the head of the military's U.S. Southern Command.

Rocha had been caught on tape calling the U.S. the enemy and bragging about being a Cuban mole for some 40 years of service.

I'm Jackie Quinn.

Colombia's President Gustavo Petro says his government is suspending purchases of weapons from Israel after Palestinians say Israeli troops fired at people seeking food in Gaza.

Petro announced the move in a tweet Thursday, in which he also blamed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the deaths and described them as, quote, "genocide." Petro's remarks came months after Israel suspended security exports to Colombia in a diplomatic spat over online messages by Petro comparing Israel's siege of Gaza to the actions of Nazi Germany.

Over the past two decades, Colombia has been one of Israel's closest partners in Latin America.

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Democratic Republic of Congo, known as MONUSCO, started its withdrawal from the country after 25 years by transferring the base of Kamanyola to Congolese authorities on Wednesday. Reuters correspondent Olivia Chang reports.

On Wednesday, MONUSCO Chief Bintou Keita handed over the base of Kamanyola to Congolese authorities in a ceremony. She expressed hopes that the transfer would set a precedent for the mission's disengagement process.

Established in 2005, the Kamanyola base was tasked with protecting civilians and maintaining security in the eastern South Kivu province.

Keita reiterated the commitment to work jointly with Congolese authorities for an orderly and responsible withdrawal.

The currently 13,500 strong force took over an earlier U.N. operation in 2010 to help quell insecurity in the east of the Central African country, where armed groups fight over territory and resources.

Olivia Chang from Reuters.

The first U.S. spacecraft to land on the moon since the Apollo astronauts has fallen silent a week after breaking a leg and tipping over near the lunar south pole.

Intuitive Machines' lander, Odysseus, lasted longer than the company anticipated after it ended up on its side with hobbled power and communications.

The end came as Thursday flight controllers received (one) last photo from Odysseus and commanded its computer and power systems to standby.

I'm Alexis Strobe, VOA News.