

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

In his State of the Union [and] address Thursday night, President Joe Biden [will] will announce a plan for a temporary port on Gaza's coast to increase the flow of humanitarian aid. VOA's Rick Pantaleo has more.

According to senior administration officials, President Joe Biden will announce a plan in his State of the Union address Thursday night for the U.S. military to help establish a temporary port on the Gaza coast aimed at increasing the flow of humanitarian aid into the beleaguered territory during the Israel-Hamas war.

The officials speaking on the condition of anonymity said the operation would not require that American troops be on the ground to build the pier that is intended to allow more shipments of food, medicine and other essential items. The officials did not provide details about how the pier would be built. They said it would likely take weeks before it was operational.

Rick Pantaleo, VOA News.

Sweden has formally joined NATO as the 32nd member of the transatlantic military alliance ending decades of post-World War II neutrality. VOA's Jeff Caster reports.

Sweden and Finland each applied to join the alliance in 2022, both abandoning long-standing neutrality that was a hallmark of the Nordic states after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Finland joined NATO last year, but Sweden's bid had been held up by NATO members Turkey and Hungary until just days ago.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken presided at a Washington ceremony Thursday when the "instrument of accession" for Sweden to join NATO was deposited at the State Department.

At the ceremony, Blinken credited Sweden's perseverance.

"... good things come to those who wait. No better example. ... let me be the very first to welcome Sweden as ... the 32nd member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization."

Jeff Caster, VOA News.

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As they wrap up a three-day summit, leaders attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations called for all maritime disputes in the region to be resolved without threats or the use of force. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese says he's concerned by "unsafe and destabilizing behavior" in the South China Sea, such as the latest collision between Chinese and Philippine ships.

He spoke after wrapping up a Southeast Asian leaders summit that called for disputes to be resolved through dialogue rather than threats.

Asian leaders have now adopted a declaration calling for a peaceful resolution of disputes in the South China Sea through legal and diplomatic processes without resorting to the threat or use of force.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

Authorities and locals in Nigeria say gunmen attacked a primary school in the northwest of the country on Thursday morning and abducted at least 100 pupils as they were about to start classes.

Authorities were still trying to confirm the exact number of people[s] abducted, but the chairman of the local council in Kaduna state says there were, quote, "far more than 100."

It marks the second mass abduction in the West African nation in less than a week. Dozens of armed groups in the northwest and central regions target villagers and travelers for huge ransoms.

The guest list for President Joe Biden's State of the Union address speaks volumes about what Democrats and Republicans want to focus on as the 2024 election heats up. VOA's Kim Lewis reports.

Biden and fellow Democrats have invited several health care workers and women whose lives have been impacted by stricter abortion laws following the Supreme Court ruling that stripped away constitutional protections for abortion.

Senator Patty Murray of Washington introduced Kayla Smith, who traveled from Idaho to Washington state while she was pregnant after she and her husband learned that their baby had fatal anomalies.

"I wanna make it abundantly clear that we did not want an abortion. We needed an abortion (and) we were not able to receive the care."

Access to abortion and fertility treatments is expected to be a key component of Biden's speech Thursday evening.

Kim Lewis, VOA News.

A bill that could lead to the popular video sharing app TikTok being unavailable in the United States is quickly gaining traction in the House. Lawmakers advanced legislation against TikTok Thursday as they voiced concerns about the potential for the platform to surveil and manipulate Americans.

The measure gained the support of House Speaker Mike Johnson on Thursday and could soon come up for a full vote in the House. The White House has provided technical support in the drafting of the bill though White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the TikTok legislation, quote, "still needs some work" to get to a place where President Joe Biden would endorse it.

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