

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

U.S. President Joe Biden signs a package of spending bills passed by Congress just hours before a shutdown deadline. AP correspondent Jackie Quinn reports.

The president in signing the stop gap legislation is thanking leaders from both parties for keeping the government funded.

At a meeting last month, he noted the danger of allowing a shutdown.

"A shutdown would damage the economy significantly, and I think we all agree to that."

This package helps fund the hiring of more air traffic controllers, housing assistance for veterans and other programs.

Congressional negotiators are working on a second package, including defense spending, in an effort to have all federal agencies fully funded by March 22.

I'm Jackie Quinn.

A ship with Gaza aid is preparing to inaugurate a sea route from Cyprus to the war-ravaged strip. AP correspondent Karen Chammas reports.

Speaking from Larnaca in Cyprus, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters.

"Despite all the challenges and this is truly inspiring, we are now very close to the opening of the corridor, ..."

The launch of the new sea routes is a sign of the international community's increasing frustration with the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It's also showed a new international willingness to work around Israeli restrictions.

A ship belonging to Spain's Open Arms will make a pilot voyage to test the sea corridor. Open Arms founder Oscar Camps told the AP "No, we're not concerned at all about security. We're concerned about the security and lives of the people who are in Gaza, who have neither food nor medicine to treat chronic pathologies."

Israel said it welcomes the maritime corridor, but cautioned it would also need security checks.

I'm Karen Chammas.

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Boeing says it can't find work records related to [a, the] the door panel that blew out on an Alaskan Airlines flight. AP Correspondent Julie Walker reports.

Boeing is acknowledging in a letter to Congress that it cannot find records for work done on a door panel that blew out on an Alaska Airlines flight over Oregon two months ago.

The executive VP and chief government lobbyist wrote on Friday that Boeing believes the records about the panel's removal and reinstallation were never created even though it's required.

The letter followed a contentious Senate committee hearing Wednesday in which Boeing and the NTSB argued over whether the company had cooperated with investigators. The NTSB's preliminary report found four bolts that kept the door plug in place were missing.

I'm Julie Walker.

Pope Francis has said in an interview that Ukraine, facing possible defeat, should have the courage to negotiate an end to the war with Russia and not be ashamed to sit at the [ta...] same table to carry out peace talks.

The Pope made his appeal during an interview recorded last month with Swiss broadcaster RSI, which was partially released on Saturday. Francis said, quote, "I think that the strongest one is the one who looks at the situation, thinks about the people and has the courage of the white flag, and negotiates."

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni stressed that Francis was picking up the, quote, "white flag" term that had been used by the interviewer.

A surge of illegal homemade machine guns has helped fuel gun violence in the U.S. AP correspondent Nathan Ellgren reports.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives says today's threat comes in the form of little pieces of metal or plastic made with a 3D printer or bought online.

"Auto sears, Glock switches, forced reset triggers different kinds of devices, all aimed at doing the same thing, which is making illegal firearm into an illegal machine gun. And people invent new ways to do it cheaper ways, quicker ways, more dangerous ways."

Guns with conversion devices have been used in several mass shootings, including one that left four dead at a Sweet Sixteen party in Alabama last year and another that left six people dead in 2022 at a bar district in Sacramento.

Nathan Ellgren, The Associated Press.

Authorities in Zanzibar say eight children and an adult have died from eating sea turtle meat on Pemba Island, while 78 others were hospitalized.

Sea turtle meat is considered a delicacy by residents of the East African archipelago even though it periodically results in deaths from chelonitoxism, a type of food poisoning.

The district medical officer said Saturday that the adult who died was the mother of one of the children who succumbed earlier [this] in the week.

Dr. Haji Bakari says laboratory tests confirmed that all the victims had eaten sea turtle meat.

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