

VOA NEWS

March 18, 2024

This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

Russian President Vladimir Putin won a record post-Soviet landslide in Russia's election on Sunday, cementing his grip on power though thousands of opponents staged a noon protest at polling stations. And the United States said the vote was neither free or (nor) fair.

For Putin, a former KGB lieutenant colonel who first rose to power in 1999, the result is intended to underscore to the West its leaders will have to reckon with an emboldened Russia whether in war or in peace for many more years to come.

Ukraine early on Sunday launched a new massive wave of drone attacks on Russia as its defense ministry reported downing 35 drones, including four in the Moscow region. AP correspondent Lawrence Brooks reports.

Moscow's Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said a drone was downed near one of the capital's airports. No casualties or damage were reported.

According to Russia's Defense Ministry another two drones were shot over the Kaluga region just south of the Russian capital. A drone attack on the Yaroslavl region, located about 800 kilometers from the Ukrainian border, was some of the farthest launched by Ukraine so far.

More drones were said to have been downed over the Belgorod, Kursk and Rostov regions that border Ukraine and the southern Krasnodar region.

I'm Laurence Brooks.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Sunday said he spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the need to provide comprehensive humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza.

Scholz, at a joint news conference with Netanyahu in Jerusalem, added a negotiated two-state solution for the Palestinian people is the key to lasting security for Israel.

"We cannot stand by and watch Palestinians risk starvation. That's not us. That is not what we stand for."

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu snaps back against growing U.S. criticism after being accused of losing his way on Gaza. AP correspondent Jackie Quinn reports.

On "Fox & Friends," Benjamin Netanyahu says, "We're going to destroy the remaining Hamas terrorist battalions in Rafah. That is, is both important for eradicating the Hamas rule, but also important for getting the hostages out."

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has called for the prime minister to be replaced through an election, which Netanyahu calls "inappropriate."

"We're not a banana republic. The people of Israel will choose when they'll have elections, who they elect, and it's not something that will be foisted upon us."

He says most Israeli voters support his actions in Gaza after the brutal October 7 attack that killed over 1,000 Israelis.

I'm Jackie Quinn.

North Korea fired a ballistic missile toward the sea to the east of the Korean Peninsula on Monday, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said without elaborating.

The launch, which is the first firing of a ballistic missile by North Korea in two months, comes as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is visiting South Korea to attend a conference hosted by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on advancing democracy.

The European Union has announced a 7.4 billion euro or \$8 billion aid package for cash strapped-Egypt as concerns mount that economic pressure and conflicts in neighboring countries could drive more migrants to European shores. [Anthony] Anthee Carassava reports from Athens.

Greece has been a favored gateway to the European Union for migrants and refugees from the Middle East, Africa and Asia since 2015, when nearly one million people landed on its islands, causing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Thousands of others have since then died at sea.

The migration crisis has seen Greece take a strong-arm approach to fending off illegal flows, triggering, however, accusations that it is pushing back migrants on rickety rafts, endangering their lives, even torturing them upon arrival.

Anthee Carassava, VOA News, Athens, Greece.

U.S. President Joe Biden attended the annual Gridiron Club and Foundation dinner this weekend, the first time during his presidency. It came as the 2024 election looms and the night was jam-packed with politicians and other leaders.

In one of several digs at his rival, Donald Trump, Biden quipped that of the two presidential candidates, one was mentally unfit, while, quote, "The other's me."

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