

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday the deadly Crocus City Hall attack was carried out by Islamist militants, but said the shooting fit a wider campaign of intimidation by Ukraine, which has denied any involvement. Reuters correspondent Emma Jehle reports.

Using rhetoric Putin has employed since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Putin said Russia must find out who benefited from the attack and who ordered it.

More than 130 people were killed when four men burst into the Crocus City Hall on Friday night, spraying bullets at concert goers. Islamic State has said it was responsible for the attack.

France has joined the United States in saying the Islamic State was responsible, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying it would be, quote, "critical and counterproductive for Russia to try and turn it against Ukraine." He also said the same group tried to commit several actions on French soil.

Reuters correspondent Emma Jehle.

Senegal opposition presidential candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye, a political newcomer popular among young people, promised on Monday to govern with humility and transparency.

Faye, said to be declared the next president after his main rival called on him to concede defeat, thanked President Macky Sall and other candidates for respecting Senegal's democratic tradition by recognizing his victory well before official results.

Israel will stop working with the U.N. Relief[s] Works Agency, UNRWA, in the Gaza Strip, a government spokesperson said on Monday.

"UNRWA are part of the problem, and we will now stop working with them. We are actively phasing out the use of UNRWA because they perpetuate the conflict rather than try and alleviate the conflict."

UNRWA (which,) provides aid and services to Palestinian refugees in Gaza and across the region, has been in crisis since its staff has been accused of helping the October 7 attack.

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Israel's prime minister has canceled a planned trip to Washington to protest the United Nations resolution demanding a cease-fire in Gaza. AP correspondent Jackie Quinn reports.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is accusing the U.S. of retreating by allowing the U.N. Security Council vote without conditioning a cease-fire on the release of Israeli hostages.

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield says they're trying to stop the bloodshed.

"We're getting closer to a deal for an immediate cease-fire with the release of all hostages, but we're not there yet."

An Israeli delegation was expected to present the White House with its plans for an expected ground invasion in Rafah.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby: "We're very disappointed that they won't be, be coming to Washington, D.C."

I'm Jackie Quinn.

Donald Trump will in three weeks become the first former U.S. president to face a criminal trial, a judge ruled Monday hours after an appeals court threw the tycoon a lifeline in his bid to stave off an unrelated, half billion-dollar civil fraud judgement, reducing it to a near \$175 million and giving him 10 more days.

New York Judge Juan Merchan rejected demands from Trump's attorneys to further delay his trial on charges of paying hush money to a porn star and ordered jury selection to begin on April 15.

The Republican presidential candidate denounced the upcoming trial and other cases brought against him as "election interference" by Democrat Joe Biden, his likely opponent in the November White House vote.

Turkey says it is preparing to launch a major military operation into Iraq against Kurdish rebels operating from there. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan vows to end what he says is the threat posed by the Kurdish rebel group PKK. Dorian Jones reports from Istanbul.

For two years, Turkish forces have been carrying out military incursions into neighboring northern Iraq against bases of the PKK, which has been fighting for Kurdish minority rights in Turkey for decades.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is now vowing to permanently end the threat posed by the PKK and its affiliates in neighboring Syria.

Dorian Jones, for VOA News, Istanbul.

North Korea says Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has offered to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un soon, but stressed prospects for any summit would depend on Tokyo tolerating its weapons program and ignoring past abductions of Japanese nationals.

In a parliamentary session, Kishida said a meeting with Kim is crucial to resolve the abduction issue, a major sticking point in bilateral ties.

I'm Joe Ramsey.