

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

FBI Director Christopher Wray [told a wine] told a House of Representatives panel on Thursday the FBI is concerned about the possibility of an organized attack in the United States similar to the one that killed scores of people at a Russian concert hall last month. Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner reports.

U.S. officials have been worried about the possibility of an attack inspired by the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. But Wray said concerns have escalated following the concert massacre in Russia that killed at least 144 people. Wray also pressed lawmakers to renew a U.S. surveillance program set to expire this month.

"... that Congress can give us in our fight against foreign adversaries is the reauthorization of Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act."

Wray cited the FBI's concerns about terrorism to help persuade lawmakers to boost funding for the agency. But he is likely to face strong pushback from congressional Republicans as the FBI has become a prime target for former President Donald Trump.

Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner.

AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports the World Central Kitchen team in Gaza had established a deconfliction plan ahead of time with Israel.

Aid organizations use complex systems to try to keep their teams safe in Gaza. Typically they send an advanced plan to COGAT, an Israeli defense arm, which then shares it with the army. As deliveries unfold, the aid groups can communicate with the military in real time.

Workers for World Central Kitchen carry GPS transmitters to track their locations, according to an organization employee. But many relief workers have expressed concerns about the deconfliction system.

"It hasn't been working well," says Chris Skopec, a Washington-based official with the aid group Project Hope, citing poor communication and coordination. "And when it doesn't work well," he says, people can die.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

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In a statement read on state television late Wednesday, Mali's ruling military junta has issued a decree halting political party activities. Reuters correspondent Olivia Chang has more.

Government spokesperson Abdoulaye Maiga announced in a statement that the decree has been issued.

It suspends until further notice all activities by political parties and "associations of a political nature" on the grounds of maintaining public order, according to the statement.

Mali has been under military rule since August 2020. The country's current junta seized power in a second coup in 2021 and later promised to restore civilian rule by March 26, 2024, following elections in February this year.

However, the junta said in September last year that it would indefinitely postpone February elections for technical reasons, sparking outrage among political groups.

Olivia Chang from Reuters.

Thousands more firearms dealers across the United States will have to run background checks on buyers at gun shows or other places outside brick-and-mortar stores. That's according to a Biden administration rule that will soon go into effect.

The rule aims to close a loophole that has allowed tens of thousands of guns to be sold every year by unlicensed dealers who don't perform background checks to ensure the potential buyer is not legally prohibited from having a firearm. It's the administration's latest effort to combat gun violence.

The rule is likely to be challenged in court by gun rights activists. But administration officials are confident [it would] it would withstand such lawsuits.

Instagram begins blurring [nudity image] nudity in messages to protect teens and fight sexual extortion. AP correspondent Haya Panjwani reports.

Instagram is adding new features to protect young people and combat sexual extortion. The social media company announced in a blog post that it's trying to fight sexual scams and other forms of "image abuse" to try and stop criminals from contacting teenagers. That includes a new nudity protection feature for direct messages that blurs any images with nudity and, quote, "encourages people to think twice before sending nude images," unquote.

The feature will be turned on by default globally for teens under 18 and adult users will get a notification encouraging people to activate it.

Instagram says they'll also be testing new ways to hide teens from criminal accounts.

I'm Haya Panjwani.

Poland's parliament is holding a long-awaited debate on [liber...] liberalizing the country's strict abortion law, but many women terminate pregnancies at home with pills mailed from abroad.

A 1993 law passed [on the] under the influence of the Catholic Church bans abortion in most cases. And a 2020 constitutional court ruling prevents abortion [in] in case of fetal abnormalities.

New Prime Minister Donald Tusk has vowed to legalize abortion until the 12th week of pregnancy. Conservatives in his coalition government had delayed the debate until now.

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