

# VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday mistakenly referred to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as President Putin before correcting himself at the NATO summit in Washington.

"And now I wanna hand it over to the president of Ukraine, who has as much courage as he has, determination. Ladies and gentlemen - President Putin. President Putin. He's gonna beat President Putin, President Zelenskyy. I'm so focused on beating Putin, we got to worry about it."

Biden has been under intense scrutiny in recent days and has faced doubts, including from members of his own Democratic Party, about his reelection chances after a week in faltering performance in a debate.

Israel is ordering all Palestinians to leave Gaza's largest city. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Israel is ordering all Palestinians to leave Gaza City in the north as bombardments escalate throughout the besieged territory. Israel says it's pursuing Hamas fighters who regrouping in parts of Gaza that had been targeted earlier in the war.

Israel's heavy strikes throughout Gaza in recent days, which have killed dozens of people, could be aimed at increasing pressure on Hamas during negotiations for a cease-fire.

U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators are meeting with Israeli officials in Qatar for talks trying to push through a deal.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

Officials say the U.S. is now considering abandoning efforts to reinstall the pier that has been used to get badly needed humanitarian aid to starving Palestinians.

The White House and the Defense Department say the pier will cease operations, quote, "soon," but will not specify timing.

The initial plan earlier this week had been to reinstall the pier for a few days to move the final pallets of aid onto the shore and then permanently remove it. But rough seas have prevented the reinstallation.

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A Palestinian paramedic's account of mistreatment is among others by Gazan ex-detainees that have concerned human rights groups. Lucy Fielder from Reuters has more.

Al-Hafy said he was shot below the knee by Israeli forces as he helped the injured onto stretchers after an Israeli airstrike last November. He briefly became a patient there, but when the hospital came under attack, his father carried him across his back, heading for another medical center. But soldiers at an Israeli military checkpoint accused al-Hafy of being a terrorist. He says they held him in a prison tent for 35 days. He says he was beaten and humiliated and did not receive medical care and that he was blindfolded and cuffed by his arms and legs to a bed in the tent the whole time.

"The whole time I was in prison, the blindfold was not taken off my eyes at all, except on interrogation days. Food was once every three to four days. It was a pack of liquid vitamins."

Israeli authorities did not respond to a request for comment.

Lucy Fielder from Reuters.

Four Indo-Pacific countries attending the NATO summit have issued a joint statement to, quote, "strongly condemn the illicit military cooperation between Russia and North Korea."

It shows how the military alliance and its Pacific partners are forging closer ties to counter what they see as shared security threats.

For the third year in a row, leaders or their deputies from Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia attended the NATO summit. This year they launched joint projects with NATO on Ukraine, cybersecurity, disinformation and artificial intelligence.

Washington has expressed interest in formalizing the grouping.

Authorities in Western U.S. states are warning of greater risk of wildfires as the temperature gets hotter. AP correspondent Donna Warder has the story.

National Weather Service meteorologist Morgan Stessman says some places in the West are hotter than they've ever been.

"We hit 120 on Sunday, so that set our new all time record."

And the hot conditions and low humidity that dry out the landscape increase the chances of a wildfire in California.

Joe Tyler, director of the state's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, says the recent heat wave has exacerbated the problem, consuming thousands of acres.

On Wednesday, California crews were battling at least 19 major wildfires and scorching temperatures and single-digit humidity.

I'm Donna Warder.

Officials say that two Polish coal miners remain unaccounted for and at least 17 have been injured after a powerful tremor shook a coal mine. Rescuers are struggling to reach the two miners.

The Polish coal mining [c...] group says the accident took place Thursday morning. Officials say a total of 78 miners were in the area at the time. They say 76 have been brought to the surface, including 17 who were hospitalized, one among them with serious injuries, was airlifted to a hospital.

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