

VOA NEWS

July 20, 2024

This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

Russia sentenced Evan Gershkovich to 16 years in prison Friday in a trial widely seen as a sham. VOA's Steve Baragona narrates this report from Liam Scott and Cristina Caicedo Smit.

The White House reiterates that Gershkovich is wrongfully detained and that, quote, "journalism is not a crime." The U.S. State Department shares that view.

Vedant Patel is the U.S. State Department deputy spokesperson.

"... this whole legal process is a sham for Evan. He is being wrongfully detained; he did nothing wrong. We have been clear about that from the onset."

Gershkovich is one of two American journalists detained by Russia. Alsu Kurmasheva, who works for VOA's sister network Radio for Europe/Radio Liberty has been in custody since October.

The journalist traveled to Russia to care for her mother. Since her arrest, she has been denied U.S. consular access and contact with her husband and daughters back in Prague.

Kurmasheva and her network deny the charges.

For Liam Scott and Cristina Caicedo Smit, Steve Baragona, VOA News.

A large blast from a Houthi drone attack rocked central Tel Aviv early on Friday, killing one person and wounding several others. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Yemen's Houthi rebels are claiming responsibility for an early morning drone strike that hit a part of central Tel Aviv near the U.S. Embassy, killing one person and injuring a number of others.

The strike rumbled through the street, causing shards of shrapnel to rain down and leave a large explosion radius.

The Houthis have launched drones and missiles toward Israel throughout the Israel-Hamas war, but until Friday all were intercepted by either Israel or Western allies, with forces stationed in the region.

The Houthis claimed its newest drones are capable of permeating Israel's aerial defense system. But Israel attributed the hit to human error.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

For additional stories, visit our website voanews.com. This is VOA News.

The head of President Biden's reelection campaign insists the president is not stepping down despite more calls from Democrats that he do so. AP correspondent Jackie Quinn has more.

Six more members of Congress are publicly calling on President Biden to drop out, making that 30 Democrats who've gone public. But campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon says he's staying in.

"Joe Biden has to do the work to reassure the American people that he's in it to win it and he can do that."

On MSNBC's "Morning Joe," Dillon says he can get the electoral votes needed.

"He has beat Donald Trump before. We have the path forward."

While admitting that Biden has slipped in the polls, "We've definitely seen some slippage in support, but it has been a small movement."

Some in the party are pushing to see a new candidate before a virtual roll call planned before August 7.

I'm Jackie Quinn.

Two top Biden administration officials say Iran is talking more about getting a nuclear bomb and has made strides in developing one key aspect of a weapon in recent months.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke at separate panels during a security forum Friday in Colorado.

[sv...] Sullivan says the U.S. has seen an uptick in Iranian officials talking about getting a nuclear bomb. Crucially, however, Sullivan says he has seen no sign Iran has decided to actually weaponize its nuclear program.

Blinken says Iran recently has stepped up work on fissile material to fuel a bomb.

Chicago is getting ready to host the Democratic National Convention. AP correspondent Rita Foley has more.

Milwaukee, which hosted the Republican National Convention, has wrapped up its week in the national spotlight with lessons for Chicago, which hosts the Democratic National Convention next month.

Like Milwaukee, Chicago has been preparing for months, including a controversial move to relocate a large camp for homeless people. The crowds in Chicago are expected to be much bigger. Activists predict tens of thousands of people will show up at demonstrations.

Chicago police have been getting additional training. Milwaukee Police Chief Jeffrey Norman has some advice: "Get lots of sleep, drink lots of water. Make sure you understand your roles."

The Democratic National Convention begins August 19.

I'm Rita Foley.

Nguyễn Phú Trọng, General Secretary of [*Vietnama] Vietnam's ruling Communist Party and the country's most powerful politician, has died following months of ill health. He was 80.

Trọng had dominated Vietnamese politics since 2011, when he was elected party chief. During his tenure, he worked to consolidate the Communist Party's power in Vietnam's single-party political system.

Born in 1994 (1944) in Hanoi, Trọng was a Marxist-Leninist ideologue who earned a degree in philosophy before becoming a member of the Communist Party at the age of 22. He viewed corruption as the single greatest threat in maintaining the party's legitimacy.

I'm Alexis Strobe, VOA News.