

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

The World Health Organization on Thursday said both the Israeli military and the Palestinian militant group Hamas have agreed to abide by three separate short cease-fires in specific areas of the Gaza Strip to allow for a massive vaccination program to protect children from polio in the war-ravaged enclave. Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman reports.

The WHO official overseeing the Palestinian territories said the campaign is due to start Sunday. Each pause in fighting will last three days, with hostilities halted between 6:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. local time each day.

"... and we start with central Gaza for three days, followed by south Gaza and then followed by the north of Gaza."

The campaign comes after the WHO last week confirmed at least one baby has been paralyzed by the type 2 polio virus. It's the first such case in the territory in 25 years.

Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman.

Israel's military says its troops killed a local commander of the Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad movement in the West Bank and four other militants on Thursday in a gun battle during one of the largest assaults in the Israeli-occupied territory for months.

The operation began in the early hours of Wednesday, with hundreds of Israeli troops backed by helicopters, drones and armored personnel carriers raiding areas in the Jordan Valley.

Yemen's Houthi rebels on Thursday released footage showing they boarded and intentionally set explosives aboard a Greek-flagged tanker that was earlier abandoned after they repeatedly attacked it, putting the Red Sea at risk of a major oil spill.

The tanker carried one million barrels of oil when the Houthis initially attacked it last week. Since then, the West and United Nations have warned about a devastating oil spill.

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Ukraine announced on Thursday one of its Western-donated F-16 warplanes has crashed. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

The Ukrainian military says the pilot died when an F-16 went down Monday. It was the first reported loss of an F-16 in Ukraine after at least six were delivered last month.

Kyiv's Defense Ministry says it's investigating just what happened.

The jet went down as Russia launched a major missile and drone barrage on Ukraine, which says F-16 shot down 4 missiles.

At the Pentagon, "Broadly speaking, combat aviation is incredibly complex."

Spokeswoman Sabrina Singh says the U.S. has trained some Ukrainian pilots on flying the F-16s, but could not give any details about the crash.

Sagar Meghani Washington.

The European Union's top diplomat is pressing Ukraine's international backers to lift restrictions on the use of weapons they provide so the country's armed forces can strike military targets inside Russia.

The U.S. restricts the use of long-range ballistic missiles it provides and some EU countries also limit the use of their weapons. Ukraine is desperate to target airfields and other military installations inside Russia that are used to stage attacks on its armed forces and civilians.

Starlink this week indicated that it had begun operations in Botswana three months after the company received approval.

The SpaceX-operated broadband service enters a market dominated by Botswana's major mobile network operators. From Gaborone, Mqondisi Dube reports.

Starlink is rapidly expanding across Africa. Zimbabwe-based digital expert Sean Ndlovu says this is a positive "shake up."

"It gives access to the underserved populations whether in the rural areas and even in high density areas. It's gonna bring about innovation. The more access our people have to the internet, they can learn."

He also says Starlink's satellite service will lead to better, more reliable internet connections. Concerns, however, remain over Starlink's pricing structure, with fears it could be expensive for rural dwellers and low-income earners.

Mqondisi Dube, VOA News, Gaborone, Botswana.

Telegram boss Pavel Durov's lawyer said on Thursday it was, quote unquote, "absurd" to suggest he should be held responsible for any crimes committed on the app amid growing frictions between governments and tech titans over content on their platforms.

France's arrest of Durov, a first for a CEO of a major messaging platform, has sent a warning to social media bosses unwilling to tackle alleged illegality on their apps.

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