

VOA NEWS

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Hi, I'm VOA's Alexis Strobe with your worldwide news update.

Former President Jimmy Carter began his final journey through his home state of Georgia on Saturday. Current and former special agents from the U.S. Secret Service Carter Protective Division carried his casket from Phoebe Sumter Medical Center to the hearse and accompanied it off the medical center grounds.

Members of the Carter family gathered for the transfer, which marks the beginning of Carter's state funeral.

Mourners holding U.S. flags gathered along the roadside to honor Carter as the procession passed. The motorcade carried Carter through his hometown of Plains, Georgia to Atlanta with a stop at the state capital and then the Carter Presidential Center, where he lies in repose until Tuesday.

He will then be flown to Washington. There, he will lie in state in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

A funeral service will be held at the Washington National Cathedral on Thursday at 10 a.m. local time, after which he will be flown back to Georgia for a private burial.

The Biden administration has notified Congress of a planned \$8 billion weapons sale to Israel. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

The State Department has informed Congress of a planned \$8 billion weapons sale to Israel. U.S. officials say some of the weapons could be sent through current U.S. stocks, but the majority of the package would take a year or several years to deliver.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity the sale includes medium-range air-to-air missiles to help Israel defend against airborne threats, 155-millimeter projectile artillery shells for long-range targeting, Hellfire AGM-114 missiles, 500-pound bombs and more.

It would add to a record of around (\$)18 billion in military aid that the U.S. has provided Israel since the war began more than a year ago.

I'm Julie Walker.

This is VOA News.

Russian rescue workers have cleared nearly 95,000 tons of contaminated sand and earth on either side of the Kerch Strait following an oil spill in the Black Sea last month, according to the emergencies ministry on Saturday. Reuters correspondent Trevor Koroll reports.

Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, and its annexation has not been recognized by most other countries.

The Russia-installed governor of Sevastopol said new traces of minor pollution required urgent elimination and declared a state of emergency in the city, giving authorities more power to take swift decisions such as ordering citizens to evacuate their homes.

The oil leaked from two aging tankers that were hit by a storm on December 15. One sank and the other ran aground.

Russia's transport ministry said this week experts had established that about 2,600 tons of oil products had spilled into the sea.

That was Reuters correspondent Trevor Koroll.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Democratic philanthropist George Soros and actor-director Denzel Washington were among those awarded the nation's highest civilian honor.

President Joe Biden bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Saturday afternoon to 19 of the most famous names in politics, sports, entertainment, civil rights, LGBTQ+ advocacy and science.

Argentine President Javier Milei welcomed Venezuelan opposition leader Edmundo González on Saturday for the first stop in the popular politician's Latin American trip. VOA's Cristina Menenti reports.

Venezuelan opposition leader Edmundo González arrived in Argentina on Saturday and was welcomed by his Argentine counterpart during the first stop in his Latin American trip. González is expected to travel to Uruguay later on Saturday.

González's, quote unquote, "international tour" comes days ahead of the planned January 10 inauguration of President Nicolás Maduro for his third term.

González has repeatedly said he plans to return to Venezuela to be inaugurated as president despite the pending warrant for alleged conspiracy and a \$100,000 reward for information leading to his arrest announced earlier on Thursday by the Venezuelan police investigations unit.

Cristina Menenti, VOA News.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz says he's staying "cool" against critical personal comments made by Elon Musk but finds it worrying that Musk is getting involved in Germany's general election by endorsing the far-right Alternative for Germany party.

Scholz was reacting to Musk calling the chancellor a "fool" after his coalition government collapsed in November and later backed the AfD in an opinion piece he wrote for a major newspaper in Germany.

Scholz, head of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, said in comments published Saturday by the German magazine *Stern* that there is "nothing new" in criticism by "rich media entrepreneurs who do not appreciate social democratic politics."

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website. I'm Alexis Strobe, VOA News.