

VOA NEWS

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

A full-scale firefighting effort stretched into Saturday in the upscale Los Angeles neighborhood of Pacific Palisades. Lisa Bernhard from Reuters has more.

"The Palisades incident is now at 21,596 acres and 11 percent contained."

The Palisades Fire on the city's western edge was reportedly heading east towards the Brentwood neighborhood and San Fernando Valley foothills. It is one of six blazes that have ripped across LA County since Tuesday, killing several people and destroying thousands of structures.

The fierce Santa Ana winds that fanned the infernos are expected to wreak more havoc in the coming days, said LA County Fire Chief Anthony Morrone.

"Elevated to critical fire weather conditions are predicted to continue through Wednesday. These winds, combined with dry air and dry vegetation, will keep the fire threat in Los Angeles County high."

Seven neighboring states, the federal government and Canada have rushed to aid California.

Beyond those who lost their homes, tens of thousands of people remained without power and millions have been exposed to poorer air quality as the fires carry traces of metals, plastics and other synthetic materials.

That was Reuters correspondent Lisa Bernhard.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is sending the director of the Mossad foreign intelligence agency to cease-fire negotiations in Qatar in a sign of progress and talks on the war in Gaza.

It wasn't immediately clear on Saturday when David Barnea would travel to Qatar's capital for the latest round of indirect talks between Israel and the Hamas militant group. But there is U.S. pressure for a deal before the presidential inauguration on January 20.

Just one brief cease-fire has been achieved in 15 months of war and that was in the early weeks of fighting.

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The two black boxes on the Jeju Air jet involved in the worst aviation disaster on South Korean soil stopped recording about four minutes before the accident which killed 179 people. Reuters correspondent Rachel Judah has more.

That's according to a statement released on Saturday by the country's Ministry of Transport which added authorities now plan to investigate why they stopped recording.

It's a setback for investigators who believe the flight data and cockpit voice recorders were key to finding the cause of the worst aviation disaster on South Korean soil.

The plane which had departed the Thai capital of Bangkok for Muan in southwestern South Korea on December 29 crash landed and burst into flames after overshooting the regional airport's runway. Just minutes before the crash, the pilot reported a bird strike. Two cabin crew survived and 179 people were killed.

The recovered voice recorder was initially analyzed in South Korea, but when data was found to be missing it was sent to a U.S. laboratory.

That was Reuters correspondent Rachel Judah.

Special counsel Jack Smith has resigned from the Justice Department after submitting his investigative report on President-elect Donald Trump. It was an expected move that comes amid legal wrangling over how much of that document can be made public in the days ahead.

The department disclosed Smith's departure in a court filing Saturday saying he had resigned one day earlier. The resignation 10 days before Trump is inaugurated follows the conclusion of two criminal prosecutions against Trump that were withdrawn following his White House win in November.

At issue now is the fate of a two-volume report that Smith and his team prepared about their twin investigations of Trump.

A tram collision in Strasbourg has injured numerous people. VOA's Christina Menenti reports.

According to the French media on Saturday, at least 20 people were injured when two trams collided in a tunnel in the eastern French city of Strasbourg. One of the trams appeared to have derailed as a result of the impact.

BFM TV reported that the crash occurred after one of the trams switched tracks and collided with the stationary tram at Strasbourg's central station.

The Bas-Rhin region's Fire and Rescue Service asked people to avoid the area to facilitate access for emergency services.

Christina Menenti, VOA News.

The French territory of Mayotte is on red alert again with another cyclone heading toward the islands off Africa that were devastated by their worst storm in nearly a century last month.

The prefecture of Mayotte says the red alert warning was issued at 10 p.m. local time in preparation for the arrival of Cyclone Dikeledi.

The storm made landfall in northern Madagascar earlier Saturday and was moving west toward Mayotte. Mayotte has not yet recovered from the impact of Cyclone Chido, which ripped through the archipelago a month ago.

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