

VOA NEWS

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I'm VOA's Joe Ramsey with this worldwide news update.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio says Hamas must be eradicated. He spoke alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he echoed President Donald Trump's vision for a Gaza free from the influence of Hamas. VOA's Arash Arabasadi has more.

Three male hostages taken by Hamas returned to Israel after more than 15 months of captivity. The hostage release is part of a fragile cease-fire deal with Israel in which both parties agreed to lay down arms during hostage and prisoner swaps.

The freed hostages arrived at a hospital as U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio began a regional tour of the Middle East.

"Hamas cannot continue as a military or government force. And frankly, as long as it stands as a force that can govern or as a force that can administer or as a force that can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible. They must be eliminated. It must be eradicated."

Both Rubio and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke of unity against Iran's regional influence.

"Today, Secretary Rubio and I had a very productive discussion with our staffs on a number of issues. None of them are more important than Iran. Israel and America stand shoulder to shoulder in countering the threat of Iran."

As part of the hostage deal, Israel released 369 Palestinian prisoners and detainees. Thirty-six were serving life sentences. Israel calls these people terrorists. Palestinians call them freedom fighters.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump continued his push last week for the United States to seize control of Gaza and develop it.

Arash Arabasadi, VOA News.

This is VOA News.

French President Emmanuel Macron will host European leaders Monday for an emergency summit on the Ukraine war after U.S. officials suggested Europe would have no role in any talks on ending the conflict. Reuters correspondent Emma Jehle reports.

Leaders from Germany, Poland, Italy, as well as NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa from the European Union are expected to be at the summit.

President Trump stunned European allies last week when he announced he had a call with Russian President Vladimir Putin and would start a peace process.

Trump's Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg, said on Saturday that Europe would not have a seat at the table for Ukraine peace talks.

Washington had sent a questionnaire to European capitals last week asking what they could contribute to security guarantees for Kyiv and what the size of any European-led force might be, according to a document seen by Reuters.

U.S. officials have insisted they will only settle for a durable peace deal and that Ukraine will be at the table.

It was revealed later on Saturday that the U.S. and Russian officials will meet in Saudi Arabia in the coming days to start Ukraine peace talks.

Reuters correspondent Emma Jehle.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has told the Associated Press he directed his ministers not to sign a proposed agreement to give the U.S. access to Ukraine's rare earth minerals. AP correspondent Donna Warder reports.

The proposal was a key part of Zelenskyy's talks with Vice President J.D. Vance on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference on Friday. And Zelenskyy says the offer was too focused on U.S. interests.

"It's important that Vice President understood me that if we want to sign something, we have to understand that it will work and it will be very positive for both nations and it will bring money and security."

The White House says the offer was an excellent opportunity and by Zelenskyy not signing it, he's being shortsighted.

I'm Donna Warder.

The Vatican says Pope Francis is in stable condition at a hospital being treated for a respiratory tract infection. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

The 88-year-old pontiff spent Sunday watching Mass on TV and alternating between reading and resting. Well-wishers were outside the Rome hospital praying for him.

The pope was admitted to the hospital Friday as a young man. He had part of his lung removed after an infection and is prone to respiratory issues.

I'm Julie Walker.

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