

VOA NEWS

February 21, 2025

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

The Israeli military said on Friday that one of the bodies released by Hamas did not belong to any of the hostages held in Gaza, accusing Hamas of violating an already shaky cease-fire.

The military said two of the bodies were identified as infant Kfir Bibas and his four-year-old brother Ariel, while a third body that was supposed to be their mother Shiri was found not to match with any hostage and remain unidentified.

The military said in a statement, "This is a violation of utmost severity by the Hamas terrorist organization, which is obliged under the agreement to return four deceased hostages."

The family of hostage Oded Lifshitz said in a statement that his body had been formally identified.

Palestinian militants handed over four black coffins in a carefully orchestrated public display as a crowd of Palestinians and dozens of armed Hamas militants watched.

The purported remains of the boys, their mother, and Lifshitz were handed over under the Gaza cease-fire agreement reached last month with the backing of the U.S. and the mediation of Qatar and Egypt.

A series of explosions Thursday on three parked buses has rattled central Israel in what authorities suspected was a militant attack. No injuries were reported. AP correspondent Haya Panjwani reports.

Police rushed forces to the scene in Bat Yam, a Tel Aviv suburb, as they searched for suspects. Bomb disposal searched buses and trains nationwide for additional bombs.

A police spokesperson told local TV that explosives were found on two other buses.

The mayor of Bat Yam says it's a miracle no one was hurt. He says the buses had finished their routes and were in a parking lot.

I'm Haya Panjwani.

This is VOA News.

A top White House official said Thursday that U.S. President Donald Trump's increasingly tough criticism of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reflects the administration's growing frustration with what they see as Zelenskyy creating roadblocks to finding an endgame to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

"His frustration with President Zelenskyy is, that you've heard, is multifold."

For starters, "there needs to be a deep appreciation for what the American people, what the American taxpayer, what President Trump did in his first term."

And White House National Security Advisor Mike Waltz says Zelenskyy has not shown that. Instead, "Some of the rhetoric coming out of Kyiv, frankly, and insults to President Trump were unacceptable."

It comes a day after Zelenskyy said the president's living in a Russian disinformation space, and the president called Zelenskyy a dictator.

Asked if the president also sees Russia's Vladimir Putin the same way, Waltz did not respond and also did not directly respond when asked which leader the president thinks is more responsible for the war, "(inaudible)."

The rhetoric comes as Zelenskyy met with Trump Ukraine envoy Keith Kellogg. The news conference that was supposed to follow their talks was canceled, and Zelenskyy's spokesman says that was by U.S. request.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

With European leaders scrambling to bolster their militaries amid doubts about the U.S. commitment to Europe's defense, Turkey, which boasts NATO's second largest army, could be a key part of Europe's plans, especially in any peacekeeping operation in Ukraine. Dorian Jones reports from Istanbul.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy used a visit to Turkey on Tuesday to emphasize the importance of Ukraine's allies deploying soldiers to guarantee any peace agreement reached with Russia.

Zelenskyy said he had discussed the issue with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, but that it was too early to reveal the outcome of the talks.

While Erdoğan has close ties with Zelenskyy, the Turkish leader has also maintained good relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The importance of the Turkish army to European security could be on the rise, with the United States demanding that Europe take more responsibility for its own defense.

Dorian Jones, VOA News, Istanbul.

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.