

VOA NEWS

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

U.S. President Donald Trump says his Ukrainian counterpart will visit the White House this week to sign a long-sought minerals deal. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

The president said the deal will give the U.S. access to Ukraine's deposit of rare earth minerals, vital for high-tech industries. He bills it as a chance for Kyiv to pay back the U.S. for hundreds of billions in war aid under Joe Biden.

"Now we're gonna be getting all of that money back plus a lot more."

Meantime, Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the framework of a deal's been reached, but it does not include security guarantees.

"If we don't have it, nothing will work."

The president's noncommittal.

"I'm not gonna make security guarantees beyond very much."

And the full deal could hinge on Friday's meeting.

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer heads to Washington on a trip aimed at persuading President Trump to maintain military support for Ukraine. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Starmer's told lawmakers Kyiv must be at the table for any negotiations.

"This is about the sovereignty of Ukraine and their ability to decide for themselves the future of their country."

He adds Britain's ready to play a role in providing security guarantees to Ukraine, but reiterates the plan would require U.S. backing.

"It's vital that we continue in that role. And that's why my message to President Trump is that the relationship between our two countries needs to go from strength to strength."

Britain's leader echoed earlier prime ministers in emphasizing the special relationship.

Starmer's due to meet Trump at the White House on Thursday.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

This is VOA News.

Israelis have mourned a family that was a symbol of the trauma their country suffered in the Hamas-led October 7, 2023 terror attack. Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman reports.

Israelis on Wednesday mourned three members of the Bibas family. They lined the funeral procession that carried the bodies of mother Shiri and her sons, four-year-old Ariel and nine-month-old Kfir, on the way to their funeral. The two children were the youngest hostages seized during the attack on Israel.

Their bodies were returned to Israel last week as part of a Gaza cease-fire meant to facilitate the return of captives and the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel. Thousands of people, some in tears, carrying blue and white Israeli flags or photographs of the family, walked in procession or waited as a convoy bearing the coffins passed their way to the funeral.

The Hamas attack killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. Militants took 251 captives back to Gaza. Israel's air and ground war in Gaza, in response, has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities, and destroyed most of the coastal enclave.

But fighting has stopped since the fragile cease-fire agreement brokered by Egyptian and Qatari mediators last month. Under the deal, Hamas agreed to hand over 33 Israeli hostages in exchange for some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from some of their positions in Gaza, as well as a massive influx of aid.

On Wednesday, Egyptian mediators confirmed they had secured a breakthrough that should allow the handover of the final four hostage bodies due in the first phase of the deal this week after a days-long impasse.

Reuters correspondent Zachary Goelman.

President Trump says he backs billionaire Elon Musk's U.S. government cost-cutting effort. Reuters correspondent Alex Cohen has more.

Musk addressed Trump's first cabinet meeting of the new administration, saying his mission to cut government spending was urgent.

"It was spending, like, over a trillion dollars on interest. If this continues, the country will go, become de facto bankrupt. It's not an optional thing. It is an essential thing. That's the reason I'm here."

Trump continued to give his full backing to Musk's Department of Government Efficiency cost-cutting team known as DOGE.

Federal workers are unhappy with Musk's approach and have sued to protect their jobs, as have other groups who are seeking to block DOGE from accessing government systems and slashing programs.

While Musk has waved a chainsaw on stage at a political event in a bold display of his group's efforts, his official role remains unclear, which has complicated the lawsuits against DOGE.

Reuters correspondent Alex Cohen.

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.