

# VOA NEWS

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

A senior Trump administration official said Thursday that Ukraine was given a fair warning by the White House before U.S. President Donald Trump this week ordered a pause on American military assistance and intelligence sharing with Kyiv. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

A Trump envoy says Ukraine has itself to blame for a pause on American military aid and intelligence sharing.

"... they brought it on themselves."

Keith Kellogg, the president's special envoy to Ukraine and Russia, tells the Council on Foreign Relations Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy was told last week's Oval Office talks would focus on signing a rare earth minerals deal with the U.S.

"The best way I can describe it is sort of like hitting a mule with a two-by-four across the nose. You got their attention ..."

Zelenskyy says he's still willing to sign the minerals deal. Kellogg says he cannot guarantee weapons will again flow to Ukraine even if that happens.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Top U.S. and British defense officials met Thursday to work on how to best quickly bring an end to the fighting between Russia and Ukraine. VOA national security correspondent Jeff Seldin has more from the Pentagon.

British Defense Secretary John Healy: "He challenged us to step up on Ukraine, on defense spending, on European security, and I say to you that we have, we are, and we will further."

On potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, Healy said Britain believes Kyiv is ready to make the most of a, quote, "unique opportunity."

But as for whether the U.S. has seen enough to resume intelligence sharing with Ukraine, the U.S. defense secretary said that's up to President Trump.

Jeff Seldin, VOA News, the Pentagon.

This is VOA News.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas on Thursday brushed off President Trump's latest threat and reiterated that it will only free the remaining Israeli hostages in exchange for a lasting cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. AP correspondent Joe Fetterman has more from Jerusalem.

The Trump administration is talking to Hamas. White House officials acknowledged that an envoy recently met a Hamas delegation in the Qatari capital of Doha.

There are no reports of any breakthroughs during this meeting in ongoing cease-fire efforts between Israel and Hamas. Nonetheless, this marks the first time a U.S. administration has publicly acknowledged meeting with the militant group. Both the U.S. and Israel consider Hamas to be a terrorist organization.

This meeting comes at a sensitive time when cease-fire efforts are at a standstill. The first phase of the cease-fire ended and since then, the sides have been unable to find a way forward.

President Trump is taking a tough public line. He met with a group of recently released Israeli hostages at the White House and afterwards he said he was issuing his last warning to Hamas to release all remaining hostages in Hamas captivity.

The militant group responded with its own tough statement. It says no more hostage releases unless it is part of a lasting cease-fire agreement.

So for the time being, we are seeing very tough public posturing by the various sides. At the same time, we now know of an ongoing dialogue between the U.S. and Hamas that could open the door to some backroom negotiations.

AP correspondent Joe Fetterman.

The Trump administration suffered a legal blow on Thursday after a second judge ruled to block its sweeping spending freeze on programs that don't align with the U.S. president's agenda. Reuters correspondent ??? reports.

U.S. District Judge John McConnell said the Trump administration had, quote, "put itself above Congress." His ruling builds on an earlier temporary order he issued in January blocking the freeze.

The funding freeze was initially announced in a since-rescinded memo from the White House Budget Office. It directed federal agencies to temporarily pause spending on grants until the administration could determine that the funding complied with Trump's executive orders. That includes orders ending diversity, equity and inclusion programs and pausing spending on projects that combat climate change.

The Trump administration is expected to appeal the decision, though they have tried to do so before and were denied.

Reuters correspondent ???.

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