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Hamas signals major concessions as Israel negotiates prisoner release and deportation

December 19, 2024 ynetnews.com reported: “Negotiations between Israel and Hamas, mediated by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar, are now in their final stages, the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds* reported Wednesday.

According to sources quoted in the newspaper, at this stage, discussions are underway regarding the identity of the Palestinian prisoners who will be released as part of the deal. The report claims that ‘heavyweight’ terrorists serving life sentences will probably be deported to Turkey, and also to Iran—a country whose name has not been mentioned so far as a possible destination for exile. The rest, according to the report, will be released to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Saudi channel *Al Hadath* claimed that these are ‘crucial hours’ following a significant breakthrough achieved on some issues, particularly after Hamas gave up its demand for a complete end to the war in the first phase of the cease-fire, and agreed to the deportation of senior prisoners to Turkey or Qatar. Iran was not mentioned in this report...”

Putin says Russia is moving closer to achieving goals in Ukraine

December 19, 2024 voanews.com reported: “President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that Russian forces were moving towards achieving their primary goals on the battlefield in Ukraine and touted what he said was the invincibility of Russia’s new hypersonic missile.

Fielding questions on state TV during his annual question and answer session with Russians, Putin said Moscow’s forces were advancing along the whole of the battle front. ‘I must say that the situation is changing dramatically... There is movement along the entire front line. Every day,’ he said.

Western and Russian military analysts say Russia is advancing in eastern Ukraine at the fastest pace since 2022, taking village after village and threatening strategically important cities such as Pokrovsk, a major road and rail hub.

‘Our fighters are reclaiming territory by the square kilometer every day,’ Putin said. He said the fighting was complex, so it was ‘difficult and pointless to guess what lies ahead... (but) we are moving, as you said, towards solving our primary tasks, which we outlined at the beginning of the special military operation.’

RTX’s laser weapon system tested successfully by British Army

December 18, 2024 spacewar.com reported: “Raytheon UK, a division of RTX’s Raytheon business, announced the successful live-firing of its High-Energy Laser Weapon System (HELWS) by the British Army, targeting and neutralizing moving aerial threats. The demonstration, conducted in Wales, was part of the Ministry of Defense’s Land Laser Directed Energy Weapon (LDEW) program.

During the trial, British Army soldiers trained in the operation of the HELWS system effectively engaged moving aerial targets, marking a significant milestone in the program. According to James Gray, chief executive and managing director of Raytheon UK, ‘Our High-Energy Laser Weapon System has been used in operations globally, and now the British Army is experimenting with this game-changing capability. The success of this test is the result of the skill, dedication, and vision of our scientists and engineers who have collaborated with the British Army to help fulfil its commitment to staying at the forefront of technological innovation.’

This experiment represents the first instance of the British Army testing a high-energy laser weapon mounted on an armored vehicle. The trial included comprehensive training for soldiers on the weapon’s tracking and targeting systems, underscoring its practical application in operational scenarios...”



China's space journey continues apace

December 18, 2024 spacedaily.com reported: “The first-ever samples retrieved from the moon’s far side, an iconic feat achieved by China’s most recent lunar expedition, Chang’e 6, were on display at the 15th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, which took place in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, from Nov 12 to 17.

This was the first time the valuable lunar substances had been shown to the public since they were brought back to Earth in June.

The Chang’e 6 mission, representing the world’s first attempt to bring back samples from the far side of the moon, was launched on May 3 from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province.

After a series of complex maneuvers, the lander of the Chang’e 6 probe touched down at the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the lunar far side on June 2, and then began to collect surface and underground samples.

It was the second-ever landing of a spacecraft on the lunar far side. The vast region had never been reached by any spacecraft until January 2019, when the Chang’e 4 probe landed in the South Pole-Aitken Basin. Chang’e 4 surveyed areas surrounding its landing site, but did not collect samples.

The lander worked for 49 hours on the far side, using a mechanical arm and a drill to collect surface and underground materials.

The unmanned mission successfully concluded on June 25 with a total of 1,935.3 grams of samples from the far side retrieved. The samples have unique scientific value and will further expand knowledge about the moon’s history and help to gear up the exploration and exploitation of lunar resources, according to the China National Space Administration...”

Turkey amasses force on Syrian border for ‘immanent’ assault on Kurds

December 17, 2024 ynetnews.com reported: “Senior U.S. officials told the Wall Street Journal on Tuesday that Turkey and allied militias are amassing forces along the Syrian border, raising concerns that Ankara was planning a large-scale invasion of the country’s Kurdish-held territory backed by the United States.

The forces include militias and Turkish commanders in civilian clothing, along with significant artillery units concentrated near Kobani, a key Kurdish city in Syria close to the Turkish border.

According to the officials — one of whom noted that an ‘immanent’ Turkish assault could take place — within hours or days, the troop buildup began after the fall of Bashar Assad’s regime in early December.

The current buildup resembles Turkey’s preparations for its 2019 incursion into northeastern Syria. ‘ We are focused on it and pressing for restraint,’ one U.S. official said.

In a press conference held on Monday, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump addressed the turmoil in Syria, saying that the rebels who overthrew Assad’s regime were ‘controlled’ by Turkey...”

Bomb kills senior Russian general in Moscow

December 17, 2024 voanews.com reported: “Russian officials said a bomb exploded Tuesday on a Moscow street, killing two people, including the commander of Russia’s Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Defense Forces.

The blast happened as Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov and his deputy were leaving an apartment building in southeastern Moscow, according to Russia’s investigative committee. Authorities said the bomb was hidden in an electric scooter parked near the building’s entrance.

Video from the blast site showed a charred façade, crumpled bricks and broken windows. The bombing came a day after Ukrainian prosecutors charged Kirillov in connection with the use of chemical weapons by Russian forces in their nearly three-year-old war in Ukraine...”



Lt. Gen Igor Kirillov

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