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Iranian president warns Trump against risking 'war'

January 16, 2025 manilatimes.com reported: "Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran was not seeking 'nuclear weaponry' and warned US President-elect Donald Trump against risking 'war' with the Islamic republic, according to a US televised interview broadcast Tuesday.

'I do hope that Trump will conduce to peace in the region and the world not, conversely, contribute to bloodshed or war,' Pezeshkian said in an interview with NBC News, less than a week before Trump returns to the White House.



Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian

Washington has not maintained formal diplomatic relations with Tehran for nearly 45 years, and Trump threatened during his recent presidential campaign that US ally Israel could strike Iranian nuclear facilities.

'We will react to any action. We do not fear war, but we do not seek it,' Pezeshkian said about the prospect of US-endorsed Israeli military strikes on Iran's nuclear sites.

Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi reported Tuesday that European powers were serious about resuming nuclear program negotiations..."

Russia strikes Ukraine energy sites in 'massive' barrage

January 16, 2025 spacewar.com reported: "Russia launched a wave of missiles and drones at Ukrainian energy facilities on Wednesday, intensifying a months-long bombing campaign at a precarious moment of the war for Ukraine. The barrage came a day after Kyiv said it had carried out its largest aerial attack of the war on Russian army factories and energy hubs hundreds of kilometres from the front line.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia launched 43 cruise and ballistic missiles as well as 74 attack drones in the barrage, which targeted sites mainly in western Ukraine.

Oleksandra Komuna, an elderly resident of the western Ukrainian village of Sknyliv, was at home during the attack when lamps and plaster began falling.

'All the doors and windows were blown out, everything was blown out. The car was damaged, and the roof was damaged. There were cracks everywhere,' she told *AFP*. 'It's such a disaster.'

President Volodymyr Zelensky was quick to condemn the strikes and called for more robust security assistance from allies abroad.

'Another massive Russian attack. It is the middle of winter, and the target for the Russians remains the same: our energy sector,' he wrote on social media..."

China's Smart Dragon 3 rocket launches satellites from sea

January 15, 2025 spacedaily.com reported: "China successfully launched its Smart Dragon 3 carrier rocket on Monday morning from a sea-based platform near Haiyang, Shandong province, deploying 10 satellites into space. The mission highlighted the growing capability of sea-based launches as a strategic tool for satellite deployment.

The rocket lifted off at 11 a.m. from a dedicated launch service ship, releasing the satellites into a low-Earth orbit approximately 650 kilometers above the planet's surface. The China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology (CALT), the rocket's manufacturer, confirmed the success in a statement following the event. This marks the fifth sea-based mission for the Smart Dragon 3 series.

Standing 31 meters tall and with a diameter of 2.65 meters, the Smart Dragon 3 is a solid-propellant rocket weighing 140 metric tons at liftoff. It is powered by a high-performance solid-propellant engine containing 71 tons of propellant, capable of producing a thrust of 200 tons. The rocket's design allows it to transport payloads of up to 1.5 tons to a typical sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 kilometers.

China's sea-based launch systems are a critical component of the nation's space ambitions. These systems provide unique advantages, such as enhanced launch flexibility, reduced costs, and minimized risks to populated areas. Launch platforms are typically retrofitted ships that serve as mobile launch bases, enabling missions to be conducted closer to the equator for optimal orbital efficiency..."

Report: Hamas accepts terms of ceasefire agreement draft, release of hostages

January 14, 2025 jpost.com reported: "Hamas has agreed to the proposed ceasefire deal in Gaza and the release of numerous hostages, according to two officials involved in the negotiations, the *Associated Press* reported on Tuesday. According to the report, an Israeli official noted that while progress had been made, the final details were still under discussion.

The *Associated Press* obtained a copy of the draft agreement, which was authenticated by both an Egyptian and a Hamas official. All three officials spoke anonymously due to the sensitive nature of the closed-door negotiations. Qatar, a key mediator in the talks, described the current situation as the 'closest' the parties have come to an agreement..."

Iran drills air defenses, touts fortified 'missile city' in challenge to Israel, Trump

January 13, 2025 timesofisrael.com reported: "Iran was holding air defense exercises Saturday, state media reported, as the country braced for more friction with Israel and the United States under incoming US president Donald Trump. The war games came a day after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps released footage of what it called an underground 'missile city,' claiming that weapon production had ramped up, contrary to Israeli claims.



Iran airs pictures of underground missile bases

Iranian leaders are thought to be readying for the possibility that Trump could empower Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to attack Iran's nuclear sites, while further tightening US sanctions on its oil industry through his 'maximum pressure' policy. 'In these exercises... defense systems will practice the fight against air, missile and electronic warfare threats in real battlefield conditions... to protect the country's skies and sensitive and vital areas,' Iranian state television said. The drills were part of two months of exercises launched on January 4 that have already included war games in which the elite Revolutionary Guards defended key nuclear installations in Natanz against mock attacks by missiles and drones, state media said..."

Atheist Writer Asserts That True Christianity Is the Key to Saving America

January 10, 2025 crosswalk.com reported: "A prominent atheist writer argues that the United States needs to embrace more Christian values to get back on track but that the church is failing in its role of representing Jesus.

Jonathan Rauch, a self-identified atheist and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, says as much in a new book, *Cross Purposes: Christianity's Broken Bargain with Democracy*, in which he says the modern church is too secular, too fearful and lacking true faith.

Rauch summarized his arguments in a new interview with *Matter of Opinion*, a New York Times podcast. 'What really needs to happen to get our country on a better track is for Christianity not to become more secular or more liberal, but to become more like itself, to become more truly Christian,' Rauch said.

The 'three fundamentals of Christianity,' Rauch asserted, align well with 'Madisonian liberalism.' He defined those three fundamentals as 1) imitating Jesus, 2) not being afraid, and 3) forgiving one another..."