

Trump administration pauses flow of intel to Kyiv

It comes a day after Trump said Zelensky is ready for talks on ending war, finalisation of mineral deal with US

WASHINGTON

The US has paused its intelligence sharing with Ukraine, cutting off the flow of vital information that has helped the war-torn nation target Russian invaders, but Trump administration officials said Wednesday that positive talks between Washington and Kyiv mean it may only be a short suspension.



Donald Trump

Information about Russia's intentions and military movements has been critical to Ukraine's defense and a strong indication of support from the US and other Western allies. The suspension comes after Trump paused military aid to Ukraine and is another indication of how he has transformed America's relationship with close allies.



V Zelensky

"We have taken a step back and are pausing and reviewing all aspects of this relationship," national security adviser Mike Waltz said Wednesday.

intelligence could begin flowing to Ukraine again soon. CIA Director John Ratcliffe called the suspension a "pause" and said it came after the disastrous meeting between Trump and Zelensky in the Oval Office last week. Ratcliffe said Trump wanted to know that Zelensky was serious about peace.

"On the military front and the intelligence front, the pause that allowed that to happen will go away, and I think we'll work shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine as we have," Ratcliffe said.

The CIA declined to respond to questions about the change in intelligence sharing. Ukraine could soon be receiving intelligence from the U.S. once Zelensky shows to Trump he is serious about participating in talks on Trump's terms, Waltz said on Fox News Channel's Fox & Friends.

"I think if we can nail down these negotiations and move towards these negotiations and, in fact, put some confidence building measures on the table, then the president will take a hard look at lifting this pause," he said.

Comments from top Trump administration officials suggest the pause is part of the broader negotiations between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to negotiate a peace deal with Russia, and that

GERMANY EYES REARMAMENT AS DIVIDE WITH U.S. DEEPENS

BERLIN

GERMANY is set to rearm in a way not seen since World War II after likely next chancellor Friedrich Merz said his government would vastly increase defence spending.

Conservative Merz and his probable future coalition partners from the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) said Tuesday they wanted to ease Germany's strict constitutional "debt brake" to boost the defence budget by hundreds of billions of euros over the next years.

The announcement came just over a week after national elections and while Europe is fretting over its own defence and a weakening of the US security umbrella.

The plans were revealed as part of speeded-up talks between Merz's centre-right CDU/CSU bloc and the Social Democrats over a possible new governing alliance.

Their tempo was stepped up further after Friday's televised row between US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, with the White House subsequently freezing aid to Kyiv.

"There are moments in which the history of a country takes an unexpected turn," the Zeit newspaper said on Wednesday, adding that Merz's plans "may turn out to be one such moment". Merz, a longtime Atlant-



Friedrich Merz, leader of Germany's conservative Christian Democratic Union party, leaves after a meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin on Wednesday | AFP

list who had previously balked at financing public spending through large-scale debt, has quickly changed his tune given the head-spinning pace of events.

Germany's EU partners, who are gathering for a key

summit on Thursday to discuss Ukraine and defence, had been waiting for action from Berlin after months of political paralysis since the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government in November. AFP

US to wage war on Mexican drug cartels

Washington: US President Donald Trump vowed Tuesday to "wage war" on Mexico's drug cartels, which he accused of rape and murder as well as "posing a grave threat" to national security. "The cartels are waging war on America, and it's time for America to wage war on the cartels, which we are doing," he told Congress in his first address since returning to power. The warning came hours after Trump slapped 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada

Merz, a longtime Atlant-

US in direct talks with Hamas to secure release of hostages

JERUSALEM

THE US administration of Donald Trump is reportedly holding direct talks with Hamas to secure the release of American hostages held in Gaza, Axios reported quoting highly-placed sources.

The US has never before engaged directly with Hamas.

The talks were secret, and even Israel, was not kept in the loop. Axios reports says Israel only learned about specific aspects through other channels.

There is one remaining American hostage in Gaza who is believed to still be alive. Hamas is also holding the bodies of a few American-Israeli hostages. Israel's new military chief Eyal Zamir said his country's mission to defeat Hamas remained unfinished as he took office Wednesday, with uncertainty hanging over the fragile Gaza ceasefire.



Relatives of Israeli hostages taken captive by Palestinian militants in Gaza Strip mourn outside the morgue where his body has been kept | AFP

Speaking before Zamir at a ceremony at military headquarters in Tel Aviv, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was "determined" to achieve victory in the multi-front war that began with Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack. "Hamas has indeed suffered a

severe blow, but it has not yet been defeated. The mission is not yet accomplished," Zamir said, amid a deadlock in negotiations on the next steps in the ceasefire with Hamas in Gaza. Zamir is replacing Herzi Halevi, who announced his resignation as armed forces chief in January over the military's shortcomings on October 7.

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HOMECOMING

Malala Yousafzai visits hometown first time after being shot at by Taliban

ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN'S first Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai on Wednesday visited her hometown in the troubled northwest of the country for the first time after being shot by the Taliban.



Malala Yousafzai

She flew by helicopter to Barkana in Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where she met her uncle, Ramadan, who recently underwent surgery in Islamabad after suffering from heart problems, and later visited her ancestral graveyard, The Dawn newspaper reported.

Local Karora Station House Officer (SHO) Amjad Alam Khan told Dawn.com that Malala was accompanied by her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, and her husband, Aseer Malik, who she married in 2021.

college she had established in Barkana in 2018 to provide free education to approximately one thousand girls in the district, which previously had no functional government college for girls. "Malala met students, inspected classes and spoke to students while urging them to study and make their future brighter," the SHO said, adding that the Malala Fund would ensure a high standard of education at the college free of charge. Malala also visited her maternal family, where she met education activist Shahzad Roy, who runs the Shangla Girls School and College under Zindagi Trust.

Malala returned to Islamabad after her short visit. This was her first visit to Pakistan since being shot was in 2018. Following that, she visited Pakistan in 2022, but not her hometown. PTT

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Flights halted due to air pollution

EXPRESS READ

THAILAND: One of Thailand's main airlines is suspending flights between Bangkok and a northern province for more than a month because of poor visibility caused by air pollution, the carrier confirmed on Wednesday. Air pollution spikes in Thailand between December and April as farmers burn stubble to prepare land for the next crop season.

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