

IRAN REPORT Iran report US defense Intel chief removed

AFP, Washington

The head of the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and two other senior officers are being removed, officials said Friday -- the latest in a series of military firings this year.

The removal of Lieutenant General Jeffrey Kruse, who led the DIA since early 2024, comes after the agency produced a preliminary assessment that said US strikes on Iran set back Tehran's nuclear program by just a few months.

The assessment -- which was widely reported on by US media -- contradicted claims from President Donald Trump that the strikes totally destroyed the nuclear sites, drawing the ire of both him and officials within his administration.

Kruse "will no longer serve as DIA director," a senior defense official said on condition of anonymity, without providing an explanation for the general's departure.



Prior to becoming director of the DIA, Kruse served as the advisor for military affairs for the director of national intelligence, and also held positions including director of intelligence for the coalition against the IS jihadist group.

A US official separately said on condition of anonymity that two other senior officers -- Vice Admiral Nancy Lacore, chief of Navy Reserve, and Rear Admiral Milton Sands, commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command -- were also leaving their positions.

In June, the US launched a massive operation against three Iranian nuclear sites, an effort that involved more than 125 US aircraft as well as a guided missile submarine.



A plane drops retardant over the Pickett Fire in Napa County, California, US. Besides the US, wildfires are also raging in Europe. A fourth Portuguese firefighter died of injuries sustained battling a wildfire yesterday as Spain slowly got the upper hand over fires that have scorched vast swathes of territory.

PHOTO: REUTERS

STALEMATE OVER UKRAINE PEACE DEAL

Trump again threatens Russia with sanctions

REUTERS, Washington/Kyiv

US President Donald Trump renewed a threat to impose sanctions on Russia if there is no progress toward a peaceful settlement in Ukraine in two weeks, showing frustration at Moscow a week after his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

"I'm going to make a decision as to what we do and it's going to be, it's going to be a very important decision, and that's whether or not it's massive sanctions or massive tariffs or both, or we do nothing and say it's your fight," Trump said on Friday.

He said he was unhappy about Russia's strike on an American factory in Ukraine this week, which caused a fire that injured some of the facility's employees.

"I'm not happy about it, and I'm not happy about anything having to do with that war," Trump told

reporters at the White House.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, meanwhile, said on Friday that Russia was doing everything it could to prevent a meeting between him and Putin, while Russia's foreign minister said the agenda for such a meeting was not ready.

Zelensky has repeatedly called for Putin to meet him, saying it is the only way to negotiate an end to the war.

Trump had said he had begun the arrangements for a Putin-Zelensky meeting after a call with the Russian leader on Monday that followed their Alaska meeting on August 15.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told NBC there was no agenda for such a summit.

"Putin is ready to meet with Zelensky when the agenda would be ready for a summit. And this agenda is not ready at all," he said.

The statement echoed Moscow's

established rhetoric about a leaders' meeting being impossible unless certain conditions were met.

Asked for his response to Lavrov's comments and what the next steps are, Trump told reporters earlier on Friday: "Well, we'll see. We're going to see if Putin and Zelensky will be working together. It's like oil and vinegar a little bit."

Russia has maintained its longstanding demand for Ukraine to give up land it still holds in two eastern regions while proposing to freeze the front line in two more southerly regions Moscow claims fully as its own and possibly hand back small pieces of other Ukrainian territory it controls.

Zelensky meanwhile has dropped his demand for a lengthy ceasefire as a prerequisite for a leaders' meeting, although he has previously said Ukraine cannot negotiate under the barrel of a gun.



With the arrival of President Trump, I think that a light at the end of the tunnel has finally loomed.

And now we had a very good, meaningful and frank meeting in Alaska. The next steps now depend on the leadership of the United States, but I am confident that the leadership qualities of the current president, President Trump, are a good guarantee that relations will be restored.

Vladimir Putin
Russian president

'They fear he might return to power'

Lanka opposition says about
Wickremesinghe's jailing

AFP, Colombo

Opposition parties in Sri Lanka yesterday accused the government of jailing the country's former president over fears he could return to power.

Former leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, 76, who lost the last presidential election in September to Anura Kumara Disanayake, was remanded in custody Friday on charges of misusing state funds for foreign travel.

Anti-graft units have ramped up investigations since Disanayake came to power on a promise to fight endemic corruption in the island nation, which is emerging from its worst economic meltdown in 2022.

Wickremesinghe's own United National Party (UNP), which has two seats in the 225-member parliament, said the government felt threatened by the former president.

"They fear he might return to power, and that is why this action," UNP General Secretary Thalatha Athukorala told reporters in Colombo.

Wickremesinghe stands accused of using state funds to finance a private visit to Britain in September 2023, while returning from attending the G77 summit in Havana and the UN General Assembly in New York.

The offences carry a maximum punishment of 20 years in jail and a fine not exceeding three times the value of the misappropriated funds.

Wickremesinghe denies the charges.

Trump names close political aide as ambassador to India

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump on Friday tapped close political aide Sergio Gor as US ambassador to India, sending one of his feared enforcers at a delicate time in ties with New Delhi.



The 38-year-old Gor rose quickly in conservative politics to become one of the most powerful, if low-profile, aides in the White House with a task of vetting some 4,000 appointees to ensure utmost loyalty to Trump.

Gor's influence does not include extensive experience in foreign policy.

"For the most populous Region in the World, it is important that I have someone I can fully trust to deliver on my Agenda and help us, MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "Sergio will make an incredible Ambassador," he wrote.

Trump wrote that Gor would also hold a role of special envoy for South and Central Asia.



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