

Blast at mosque in Syria's Homs kills 5; 21 hurt

REUTERS, Damascus

Five people were killed in an explosion at a mosque of the Alawite minority sect in the Syrian city of Homs yesterday, Syrian state news agency SANA said.

SANA cited Syrian Health Ministry official Najib al-Naasan as saying 21 others were wounded and that the figures were a preliminary toll, indicating they could rise.

Homs city's press office said an explosive device had detonated inside the Imam Ali bin Abi Talib Mosque and that security forces had cordoned off the area.

Local official Issam Naameh told Reuters the blast took place during Friday noon prayers, typically the busiest time for mosques.

Syrian state media SANA published footage of rescuers and security forces examining debris splayed across the mosque's green carpet.



Acehnese children pour water while visiting the Ulee Lheue mass grave, where victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami are buried, during the 21st anniversary of the disaster in Banda Aceh, Aceh province, Indonesia, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Israeli air strikes hit Lebanon's south

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli military announced a series of strikes on "Hezbollah targets" in Lebanon yesterday, including weapons depots and a training complex.

"A number of weapons storage facilities and terrorist infrastructure sites were struck, which were used by Hezbollah to advance terror attacks against the state of Israel," a military statement said.

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) reported a "series of airstrikes" by Israeli aircraft on mountainous areas in Nabatiyah and Jezzine districts in the south, and the Hermel district in the east of the country.

Despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah group, Israel has continued to strike in Lebanon and has maintained troops in five areas it deems strategic.

More than 340 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon since the ceasefire.

The strikes yesterday came a day after similar Israeli attacks near the Syrian border and in southern Lebanon left three people dead.

The Israeli military had reported on Thursday it had killed a member of arch-foe Iran's elite Quds Force in a strike in Lebanon.

UKRAINIAN PEACE DEAL

Putin sends a signal to Trump on proposals

Zelensky-Trump meeting planned in Florida tomorrow

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy aide spoke to members of the US administration after Moscow received US proposals about a possible Ukrainian peace deal, the Kremlin said yesterday.

Kremlin foreign policy aide, Yuri Ushakov, spoke by telephone to several members of the administration of US President Donald Trump, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. He did not say when the call took place.

Putin envoy Kirill Dmitriev brought paper copies of US proposals for peace back to Moscow after a meeting in Miami at the weekend - and the details were being analysed by the Kremlin, Peskov said.

"The information was analysed, and on behalf of President Putin, contact took place between representatives of the administrations of Russia and the United States," Peskov said. "It was agreed to continue the dialogue."

When asked how the Kremlin viewed the documents, Peskov said that he did not want to comment as Russia felt making remarks in public could undermine the negotiations, reports Reuters.

Russia's Kommersant newspaper reported that Putin told some of Russia's top businessmen that he might be open to swapping some territory controlled by Russian forces in Ukraine but that he wanted the whole of Donbas.

Asked about the report, Peskov

said that the Ukrainian peace discussions were touched upon "in general" and mentioned at the meeting. He gave no further details on the details of what was discussed.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that he

drone attacks damaged Slovakia, Palau- and Liberia-flagged vessels in ports in Ukraine's Odesa and Mykolaiv regions, Ukraine's deputy prime minister said yesterday.

In recent weeks, Russia has escalated attacks on the southern Odesa region, and Ukrainian



In this photo taken on Thursday and released yesterday, a service member of the 152nd Jaeger Brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces walks through frosted bushes at a frontline position amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Donetsk region, Ukraine. PHOTO: REUTERS

would soon meet US leader Donald Trump, as part of efforts to end the Russian invasion, reports AFP.

"We have agreed on a meeting at the highest level - with President Trump in the near future. A lot can be decided before the New Year," Zelensky said on social media.

The latest plan would freeze the frontline and remove a requirement for Kyiv to legally renounce its bid to join Nato, Zelensky said in a briefing Wednesday.

Meanwhile, Russian overnight

officials said Moscow aimed to cut Ukraine off from the Black Sea and sow chaos among civilians.

There were no casualties in yesterday's strikes, Oleksiy Kuleba said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app, but the attacks caused power cuts and damaged elevators and civilian warehouses in the Odesa region.

Separately, Kuleba added, drones damaged a locomotive and a freight car at the northwestern Kovel railway station.

WEST BANK

Israeli soldier rams vehicle into Palestinian

REUTERS, Jerusalem

An Israeli reservist soldier rammed his vehicle into a Palestinian man as he prayed on a roadside in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, after earlier firing shots in the area, the Israeli military said.

"Footage was received of an armed individual running over a Palestinian individual," it said in a statement, adding the individual was a reservist and his military service had been terminated.

The reservist acted "in severe violation of his authority" and his weapon had been confiscated, the military said. Israeli media reported that he was being held under house arrest.

The Israeli police did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. The Palestinian man went to hospital for checks after the attack, but was unhurt and is now at home.

Video which aired on Palestinian TV and was verified by Reuters shows a man in civilian clothing with a gun slung over his shoulder driving an off-road vehicle into a man praying on the side of the road.

This year was one of the most violent on record for Israeli civilian attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank, according to United Nations data that shows more than 750 injuries.

Saudi air raids hit Yemen's Hadramawt

Say UAE-backed separatists

AFP, Al Mukalla

UAE-backed separatists accused Saudi Arabia, the main backer of Yemen's internationally-recognised government, of striking their positions in Hadramawt yesterday, a day after the kingdom urged them to return recently-seized territory.

There were no immediate reports of casualties in the air strikes, which raised fears of escalation after years of relative quiet in a conflict that has for more than a decade drawn in regional players such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The separatist advances have added pressure on ties between regional powers Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which support rival groups within Yemen's internationally-recognised government.

The government is a patchwork of groups, including the separatists, held together by their opposition to the Iran-backed Houthis.

"The Saudi Air Force bombed positions of the Hadrami Elite Forces in Wadi Nabb in Hadramawt," the separatist-affiliated Aden Independent Channel said in a social media post, referring to a group within the separatist faction.

They shared a video that showed a plume of smoke rising from the desert, with four-wheel white cars in the foreground. In December, the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council expelled other government forces and their allies from large parts of the country.



Make more missiles in 2026

N Korea's Kim orders factories; Seoul to ease access to N Korean paper

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered officials to step up production of missiles and construct more factories to meet his military's growing need for the projectiles, state media said yesterday.

Pyeongyang has significantly increased missile testing in recent years - aimed, analysts say, at improving precision strike capabilities, challenging the United States as well as South Korea, and testing weapons before exporting them to key ally Russia.

In a visit to munitions factories accompanied by top officials, the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Kim had ordered the factories to prepare for a busy year ahead.

The North Korean leader said they needed "to further expand the overall production capacity" to keep pace with demand from Pyongyang's armed forces and ordered the building of new munitions plants, KCNA reported.

"The missile and shell production sector is of paramount importance in bolstering up the war deterrent," Kim said.

Meanwhile, South Korea said yesterday it will reclassify North Korea's long-banned state newspaper as general information, easing public access, in the latest overture from the administration of dovish President Lee Jae Myung.

North Korea and Russia have drawn closer since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine nearly four years ago.



Displaced Sudanese react after spending the night in Gedaref city, eastern Sudan, yesterday, after the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) took control of the Heglig area in western Sudan. PHOTO: AFP

OUR CUSTOMERS SPEAK FOR US



"bti's amazing reputation for on-time handovers is why I chose them as my developer. I highly recommend their services for developing land!"

Md. Shawkat Ali | Joint Venture Customer | Lyrics

