

# King Charles honours fallen US troops on last day of visit

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AFP | Washington, United States

King Charles III paid respects to fallen US troops at a military cemetery on Thursday, the final day of a state visit aimed at healing ties between Britain and the United States strained by the war in Iran.

By all accounts, the four-day visit has been a success, with President Donald Trump serving as solicitous host-in-chief who kicked off the monarch's stay with a pomp-filled welcome and lavish white-tie banquet at the White House.

"He's a great king -- the greatest king in my book," Trump

told reporters as Charles and Queen Camilla arrived at the White House for a brief farewell



Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla, escorted by US Army Maj.

ceremony under bright spring sunshine on Thursday morning. As the royal couple drove off following handshakes and a bit of chat, Trump added: "Great people. We need more people like that in our country."

Charles and Camilla then visited Arlington National Cemetery just outside Washington, where they laid a wreath and flowers at the hilltop Tomb of the Unknown Soldier honoring America's unidentified war dead.

The pair stood solemnly as a bugler played "Taps," before visiting the adjacent display room of military exhibits and artifacts.

Next on the agenda was a "block party" to mark 250 years since American independence from Britain and meetings with Native Americans at a national park, before departing for the British island territory of Bermuda in the Atlantic.

Light moments

The centerpiece of the whirlwind trip was Charles's speech Tuesday to the US Congress, the first by a British monarch since Queen Elizabeth II in 1991.

The address was warmly received, even as Charles ranged over subjects from climate change and the need for re-



Britain's King Charles III shakes hands with a veteran military member

straints on presidential power to the importance of NATO and defense of Ukraine -- sensitive issues for Trump's ruling Re-

publicans.

The 77-year-old monarch skirted around tensions between Trump and Prime Minister Keir Starmer over Britain's refusal to join the war against Iran, insisting the partnership between the two countries was "born out of dispute, but no less strong for it."

The royals visited New York on Wednesday, where they stopped at the 9/11 memorial and met leftist Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

Charles, who is passionate about gardening and the environment, later visited an urban sustainable farming project in Harlem, while Camilla celebrated the 100th birthday of Winnie the Pooh at the New York Public Library.

Security has been tight for the royal visit, which came just days after an alleged assassination attempt against Trump at a Washington media gala.

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## India considers stronger safeguards as online fraud surges



AFP | New Delhi, India

India's central bank is seeking recommendations to tackle a surge in online fraud as scammers siphon off billions of dollars annually from users of its widely used digital payments network.

The South Asian country's vast digital payment ecosystem has received global acclaim as a model of low-cost innovation and financial inclusion.

But it has also spawned online crimes, with fraudsters cheating users of nearly \$3 billion in 2025 -- a nearly 40-fold increase since 2021.

"The potential of digital payments is impeded by complaints related to frauds," the Reserve Bank of India said in a note published earlier this month that sought suggestions for stronger defences against frauds.

Users can send the bank recommendations until May 9.

Most scams are a result of "manipulation of users through social engineering, coercion, or impersonation" rather than a "technical compromise of systems", according to the central bank.

Instances of fraudsters posing online as law enforcement officials and blackmailing people to transfer huge amounts of money are notoriously rampant in the world's most populated country.

"Almost all sections of society especially the vulnerable groups such as senior citizens have fallen prey to" online fraud, the note said.

"Therefore, there is an urgent need to put in place systems and processes to address these issues."

Among the measures being considered by the central bank is "a short delay" before the execution of payments above a certain amount.

"It can act as a preventive control by disrupting the fraudster's psychological influence over the victim and by giving the payer an opportunity to reconsider the transaction," the bank reasoned.

The bank said it was also considering an extra layer of authentication by a "trusted person for high-value digital transactions".

Over the past decade, digital transaction volumes in India have increased by 38-fold, while transaction values have more than tripled, according to the central bank's data.

# Gaza flotilla organisers say 211 activists 'kidnapped' by Israel

AFP | Athens, Greece

Organisers of a Gaza-bound aid flotilla yesterday said Israel's army had "kidnapped" 211 activists including a Paris city councillor in a raid in international waters off Greece.

Helene Coron, a spokeswoman for the Global Sumud France, told an online news conference that the operation had taken place near the Greek island of Crete, at an "unprecedented" distance from the Gaza coast.

Yasmine Scola, an activist on board the flotilla, said her colleagues had been "kidnapped" by Israel.

Coron said those intercepted included Paris Communist local councillor Raphaëlle Primet and another 10 French nationals.

"We don't have the information for the other nationalities, but the boats were mixed in terms of nationality, so there were crew members from all 48 delegations," she said.

Rome, in a government statement, called for the immediate release of "all the unlawfully detained Italians".

**Some ships still on route**

The organisers of the latest flotilla of pro-Palestinian activists seeking to break Israel's



Boats of a new humanitarian flotilla bound for the Gaza Strip make a symbolic leave from Barcelona's Port Vell on April 12, 2026 as the departure of the flotilla has been postponed due to bad weather.

## Israel says arrested 175 activists from Gaza flotilla far from its waters

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel's army arrested around 175 activists from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla in international waters off Greece, the Israeli foreign ministry and the flotilla's organisers said Thursday.

"Approximately 175 activists from more than 20 boats

blockade on Gaza announced early on Thursday that their

of the condom flotilla are now making their way peacefully to Israel," the ministry said in a statement, using its latest epithet to poke fun at the flotilla after prophylactics were found in a previous convoy.

The statement included a video of the activists aboard an Israeli navy ship.

boats had been surrounded by Israeli military ships while off

the coast of Crete.

"At the time of publishing this statement (06:30 am Paris time, 04:30 GMT), at least 22 of the flotilla's 58 boats have been stormed by Israeli forces in complete violation of international law," the Global Sumud Flotilla said in a statement.

According to an AFP verification, based on tracking data from the organisers, the boats were intercepted in the Greek exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Around thirty boats from the flotilla are still en route, most now in Greek territorial waters south of Crete, according to the same source.

Coron said the operation had taken place over 1,000 kilometres from the Gaza Strip. The longest such operation to date had been 185 kilometres in June 2025, she said.

Scola said her ship had been carrying school supplies and food.

The flotilla set sail in recent weeks from Marseille in France, Barcelona in Spain and Syracuse in Italy.

Overnight from Wednesday to Thursday, the flotilla said its boats had been "illegally surrounded" by Israeli vessels.



Israeli military operations carried out in retaliation have killed more than 72,000 people in the Palestinian territory, also mostly civilians, according to the Gaza health ministry.