

# UK govt again delays China embassy decision

They fear the site could be used to surveil and harass dissidents

● If approved, would become the largest embassy in the UK

● Deadline was previously extended to December 10

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Britain's government has delayed into the new year a decision on whether to allow China to build a sprawling and controversial new embassy complex in London, officials said yesterday.

A letter written to interested parties by the government department responsible for weighing the request showed that the housing minister has pushed the deadline back to January 20.

"We aim to issue the decision as quickly as possible," said the letter, released by the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivers a speech during the Lady Mayor's Banquet at the Guildhall in central London

(IPAC).

Residents, rights groups and China hawks from across the UK political spectrum oppose the development, which, if ap-

proved, would become the largest embassy in the UK.

They fear the site could be used to surveil and harass dissidents.

A spokesman for Starmer suggested that "particular security implications" meant that more time was needed to consider the planning application.

"The Home Office and Foreign Office have provided views on particular security implications, and have been clear throughout that a decision shouldn't be taken until we affirm that those considerations have been completed or resolved.

"MHCLG (the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) considers that more time is needed for full consideration of the applications," he told reporters.

Housing minister Steve Reed had previously extended the deadline to December 10.

The decision is viewed as a key issue in Starmer's attempted reset of relations with China, which remain strained by accusations of spying and by tensions over the fate of Hong Kong, a former British colony.

## Oil tanker hit by 'external explosions' off coast of Dakar



Representative picture

AFP | Dakar, Senegal

An oil tanker off the coast of Dakar was struck by four external explosions last week, causing it to take on water, AFP learned from the Turkish shipowner and Senegalese port authorities.

Security measures were implemented about 10 kilometres (six miles) off the coast of Dakar to stabilise the Mersin, a Panamanian-flagged tanker operated by the Turkish shipping company Besiktas, which was carrying nearly 39,000 tonnes of fuel.

"While the vessel was at anchor off the coast of Dakar, Senegal, four external explosions occurred", Besiktas Shipping said in a statement Monday, adding that "seawater ingress into the engine room" had occurred.

According to the shipowner, there were no injuries or loss of life and "the situation was

immediately brought under control".

It additionally stated that "no pollution" occurred and the vessel remained "safe and stable". The cause of the explosion was not known as of Tuesday afternoon.

Dakar port authorities told AFP Tuesday that they had responded to a distress call from the Mersin on Thursday, before evacuating the predominantly Turkish crew and deploying resources to address the damage.

According to ship-tracking website myshiptracking.com, the Mersin had sailed from the port of Taman, located on the Kerch Strait which connects Russia to Crimea, a Ukrainian territory annexed by Moscow.

Dakar is a major west African port located along several Atlantic shipping routes that connect Africa and Europe, as well as Africa and the Americas.

## Under Trump pressure, Honduras vows accurate vote count

AFP | Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Honduras' electoral body, under pressure from Donald Trump, vowed yesterday its final tally of votes cast in a weekend presidential election would "scrupulously respect the popular will."

The US president, who backs one of two right-wing front-runners, on Monday accused Honduran election officials of "trying to change" the outcome of the November 30 vote.

Trump had given his support to businessman Nasry Asfura, 67, and intervened in his favor even before the final outcome was known.

"Looks like Honduras is trying to change the results of their Presidential Election. If they do, there will be hell to pay!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform without providing proof of his accusation.

Honduras's National Electoral Council (CNE) called Monday for



Honduras' presidential candidate of the National Party Nasry Asfura (2-L) point at a screen projecting a map of Honduras during a press conference in Tegucigalpa

"patience" as it finalizes the vote count in one of Latin America's most impoverished and violent countries.

The final result could take days, even weeks, but the CNE said a partial electronic count showed Asfura leading 72-year-old rival Salvador Nasralla by just 515 votes, making it a "technical tie" -- prompting Trump's threatening post.

On Tuesday, the CNE reported "technical problems" with the portal disseminating vote results, saying it had requested a full report and "the fastest possible" solution.

"The CNE is enabling public access... for the media and political parties so they can follow the processing of the information in real time," it said.

The council vowed to announce the final result within the legally required timeframe of one month, and said "the declaration of results will scrupulously respect the popular will

expressed by the citizens in the exemplary voting process."

**'I've already won'**

Trump has become increasingly vocal in his support for allies in the region, having threatened to cut aid to Argentina and Honduras if his picks did not win.

Ally Javier Milei was victorious in Argentina's mid-term elections, and last week former Tegucigalpa mayor Asfura also won the Republican leader's backing. Rival Nasralla told reporters on Monday that despite Trump's endorsement of Asfura, he was confident the election would go in his favor.

"I know I've already won. This morning, they sent me a figure that puts me ahead," he told reporters about the preliminary count.

Nasralla clarified in a social media post that "we are not declaring ourselves winners, we are just projecting the results."

## Afghan man arrested in Texas threatened suicide attack: Justice Dept

AFP | Washington, United States

An Afghan man has been charged in Texas with threatening to build a bomb and carry out a suicide attack, US officials said yesterday as the Trump administration vows a crackdown on Afghan migrants after a deadly shooting.

Mohammad Dawood Alokozay, 30, of Fort Worth, allegedly made the threats in a November 23 video that he shared on TikTok, X and Facebook, the Justice Department said in a statement.

In the video, Alokozay allegedly praises the Taliban and threatens to carry out a suicide attack on Americans.

"Thanks to public reports



U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth (2nd-R) speaks alongside (L-R) U.S. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, U.S. President Donald Trump and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick during a meeting of his Cabinet in the Cabinet Room of the White House

of a threatening online video, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force apprehended this individual before he could commit an act of violence," FBI Dallas special agent in charge Joseph

Rothrock said.

Attorney General Pamela Bondi said Alokozay "came into America during the Biden administration and as alleged, explicitly stated that he came

here in order to kill American citizens."

He faces up to five years in prison if convicted of making a threatening interstate communication.

Alokozay's arrest comes a week after the shooting near the White House in Washington of two National Guard members.

A 29-year-old Afghan national, Rahmanullah Lakanwal, has been charged with first degree murder in connection with the attack which left one of the soldiers dead.

Lakanwal had been part of a CIA-backed "partner force" fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, and entered the United States as part of a resettlement program following the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

President Donald Trump said Sunday his administration intends to pause asylum deci-

sions for "a long time" after the shooting. "We don't want those people," he said on social media.



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