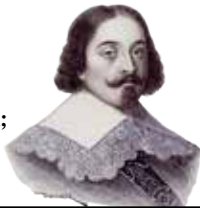


1577

Francis Drake sets sail from England on an epic three-year circumnavigation of the world aboard the “Pelican,” later renamed the “Golden Hind”

1642

Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sights the South Island of present day New Zealand; initially he calls it Staten Landt and changes it a year later to Nieuw Zeeland



1920

League of Nations establishes the International Court of Justice in The Hague

2003

Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is captured near his home town of Tikrit, during Operation Red Dawn by US forces

US slaps sanctions on Maduro relatives as war fears build

Washington expands pressure campaign with sanctions, naval actions and tanker seizure

● Six Venezuelan oil shippers blacklisted

● Siezed tanker heading to Texas port

● Caracas calls action “piracy”

AFP | Washington

The United States imposed sanctions against relatives of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro and six companies shipping the South American country’s oil.

The move came as the White House said it will bring an oil tanker seized by American forces off the Venezuelan coast to a port in the United States, adding to growing fears of open conflict between the two countries.

President Donald Trump’s administration has been piling pressure on Venezuela for months, with a major naval buildup in the region that has been accompanied by deadly strikes on alleged drug-trafficking boats, killing nearly 90 people.

In a dramatic raid this week that Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said was aimed at Maduro’s “regime,” Washing-



Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro gestures during a rally

ton took control of the tanker, with US forces roping down from a helicopter onto the vessel.

Caracas condemned the raid as “an act of international piracy.”

Russian leader Vladimir Putin expressed support on Thursday during a phone call with his ally Maduro, but with Moscow’s forces tied down in a grinding war in Ukraine, its capacity to provide aid is limited.

The US Treasury announced

sanctions against three nephews of Maduro’s wife Cilia Flores, labeling two of them “narco-traffickers operating in Venezuela”.

“Nicolas Maduro and his criminal associates in Venezuela are flooding the United States with drugs that are poisoning the American people,” Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

Six companies shipping Venezuelan oil were also slapped with

sanctions.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told journalists that the seized tanker “will go to a US port and the United States does intend to seize the oil”.

“We’re not going to stand by and watch sanctioned vessels sail the seas with black-market oil, the proceeds of which will fuel narco-terrorism of rogue and illegitimate regimes around the world.”

Nicolas Maduro and his criminal associates in Venezuela are flooding the United States with drugs that are poisoning the American people

TREASURY SECRETARY SCOTT BESSENT

The tanker was expected to dock in Galveston, Texas, two unnamed US officials told NBC News, adding that the crew would be released upon arrival.

‘Blatant theft’

Noem told a congressional hearing earlier on Thursday that the tanker operation was “pushing back on a regime that is systematically covering and flooding our country with deadly drugs” -- a reference to US allegations of narcotics smuggling by Maduro’s government.

A video released Wednesday by US Attorney General Pam Bondi showed American forces descending from a helicopter onto the tanker’s deck, then entering the ship’s bridge with weapons raised.

Bondi said the ship was part of an “illicit oil shipping network” that was used to carry sanctioned oil.

White House blames Trump’s bandaged hand on handshakes



President Donald Trump sports a bandage on his right hand as he delivers remarks during an event

AFP | Washington

The White House said the high volume of handshakes by President Donald Trump explains the adhesive bandages he has worn on the back of his right hand in recent days.

His spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt reiterated a response she gave months ago after the 79-year-old president was seen with a bruise on his right hand covered by a thick layer of make-up.

“As for the bandages on the hand, we’ve also given you an explanation for that,” Leavitt told reporters.

“In the past, the president is literally constantly shaking hands,” she said.

“He’s also on a daily aspirin regimen, which is something his physical examinations has said in the past as well, which can contribute to the bruise that you see,” she added.

As the oldest President ever elected in the United States, Trump has fiercely defended his personal health, contrasting that with his predecessor Joe Biden, whom Trump claims was losing his faculties to the point of being unable to govern by the end of his term.

Trump posted a long message defending his health on his Truth Social platform on Tuesday night, calling investigations by news organizations into his physical fitness as equivalent to “sedition, maybe even treason.”

Germany blames Russia for cyberattack on air safety, election interference

AFP | Berlin

Germany on Friday accused Russia of a cyberattack targeting its air traffic control and spreading disinformation ahead of February’s general election, charges dismissed by Russia as “absurd” and “baseless”.

A German foreign ministry spokesman said security services had proof that hacker groups run by Russia’s military intelligence service GRU were responsible for the attack and influence operations.

“Based on comprehensive analysis by the German intelligence services, we have been able to clearly identify the handwriting behind it and prove Moscow’s responsibility,” said the spokesman.

“We can now clearly attribute the cyberattack against German Air Safety in August 2024 to the hacker collective APT28, also known as Fancy Bear,” he told a regular press briefing.

“Our intelligence findings prove that the Russian military intelligence service GRU bears responsibility for this attack,” added the spokesman.

He also said Russia had sought to influence February’s parliamentary election, which was won by the conservatives of Chancellor Friedrich Merz,



Passengers queue for check-in at Terminal 1 of Berlin Brandenburg BER Airport Willy-Brandt in Schoenefeld, southeast of Berlin

with the far-right AfD scoring its best-ever result in second place.

“Second, we can now state definitively that Russia, through the Storm 1516 campaign, sought to influence and destabilise the most recent federal election,” he added at a press conference.

The spokesman said a GRU-supported Moscow think tank and other groups had spread artificially generated or deepfake images and other content, and that the goal was to divide society and “undermine trust in democratic institutions”.

The Russian embassy in Ber-

lin said in a statement sent to AFP that it “categorically rejected” that Russia was behind any of the activity.

“The accusations of Russian state structures’ involvement in these incidents and in the activities of hacker groups in general are baseless, unfounded and absurd,” the statement said.

According to security sources, much of the material spread by the Storm 1516 campaign involved spurious claims about Merz and other prominent politicians such as former foreign minister Annalena Baerbock and former vice chancellor Robert Habeck, both prominent Greens party members.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Health is not a luxury. Health is a human right, and the promise of #SDG3. Yet, half the world still lacks essential care. This #UHCday, let’s choose affordable health coverage and a life of dignity for all.

@AminaJMohammed

02



We’re deeply concerned about reports of over 30 people killed in a strike this week on a hospital in Rakhine State. Dozens of health facilities have been hit in Myanmar this year alone. Attacks on hospitals & places where children & families seek services are unconscionable.

@unicefchief

03



Cyclone Ditwah has caused severe flooding and landslides across Sri Lanka, affecting 2 million people. I’ve allocated \$4.5 million from @UNCERF to help partners reach the most affected people with cash for food, clean water and shelter.

@UNReliefChief

04



Pandemic security needs national leadership. Sustained investment in preparedness is not optional—it is a cornerstone of economic stability, public trust, and global safety.

@mvankerkhove

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)