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Tiangong 2 destroyed in controlled fall to earth

● **Tiangong-2 -- or "Heavenly Palace" -- was launched into orbit in 2016**

● **A space lab dubbed Tiangong-1 disintegrated as it plunged back to Earth in April 2018**

● **The International Space Station is due to be retired in 2024.**

Beijing, China

China's Tiangong-2 space lab successfully re-entered the Earth's atmosphere Friday under controlled conditions, completing the latest round of experiments in Beijing's ambitious space programme.



Xinhua said the space lab has worked in orbit for over 1,000 days, much longer than its 2-year designed lifespan

Tiangong-2 -- or "Heavenly Palace" -- was launched into orbit in 2016 and re-entered the earth's atmosphere under control at around 9:06 pm local time (1306 GMT) yesterday, China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) said.

A small amount of the space-

craft's debris fell into a "pre-determined safe sea area in the South Pacific", according to the agency.

Xinhua said the space lab has worked in orbit for over 1,000 days, much longer than its 2-year designed lifespan.

Zhou Jianping, chief designer of China's manned space programme, told Xinhua that the controlled re-entry marked the successful completion of all the tasks in the space lab phase of the programme.

Efforts are now being made to step up preparations for constructing China's space station, Xinhua said, citing CMSA.

The controlled return represents a success in China's military-run space programme, which has encountered some glitches on its way.

A space lab dubbed Tiangong-1 disintegrated as it plunged back to Earth in April 2018, two years after it ceased functioning.

Tiangong-1 was placed in or-

bit in September 2011 to serve as a testing ground for China's efforts to build its own space station by 2022, but ceased functioning in 2016.

Chinese authorities denied that the lab was out of control.

The International Space Station -- a collaboration between the United States, Russia, Canada, Europe and Japan -- has been in operation since 1998 but is due to be retired in 2024.

Beijing will then have the only space station in orbit, though it will be much smaller than the ISS which weighs 400 tonnes and is as large as a football pitch.

China in 2003 also became the third country able to launch humans into space, following the former Soviet Union and the United States.

Beijing sees its space programme as symbolising the country's progress and a marker of its rising global stature.

Panic as strong quake shakes Athens

Athens, Greece

A strong 5.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Athens on Friday, knocking out phone connections, damaging buildings and causing power outages, as panicked residents rushed into the streets.

State TV ERT reported that at least two people were lightly hurt -- a pregnant tourist and a young boy -- and at least two abandoned buildings in the capital collapsed, while several more suffered damage.

"It was a very intense quake, we were terrified, everyone started coming out (of the building)," a young woman named Katerina told AFP outside the six-storey cosmetics store where she works.

The epicentre of the shallow quake was northwest of Athens, close to where a 5.9-magnitude quake in September 1999 left 143 people dead in and around the capital.

Friday's emergency was the second in just over a week for the new conservative administration of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who took office



People stand outside buildings in central Athens after an earthquake

after a July 7 election.

In the city centre, the marble cupola cross of a historic 19th century church came loose and shattered onto the street below.

Another Athens church had its cupola cross snapped by the tremor, and a disused cargo conveyor belt at the port of Piraeus collapsed, TV footage showed.

'Like an explosion'

The culture ministry said the pregnant tourist was visiting the National Archaeological Museum and was struck by another

visitor rushing for the exit.

She was hospitalised as a precaution, the ministry said.

The boy was struck by a falling chimney, ERT said.

News channels broadcast images sent in by viewers which also showed parked cars in central Athens damaged by fallen masonry.

Cracks also appeared in some walls in Greece's 170-year-old parliament building.

"It was more like an explosion," another woman told ERT on the city's central Syntagma Square. "We were all very afraid,

so we'll stay here for a couple of hours."

Government spokesman Stelios Petsas said on television that there were no reports of serious injuries, while a small number of other buildings had suffered minor damage.

Petsas added that phone networks had become "overcharged" by the sheer number of users calling to check up on friends and family.

SKAI TV said there were 20,000 calls per second, more than on New Year's Eve.

US offers \$7 million to find Hezbollah agent

Washington, United States

The United States yesterday offered a \$7 million reward to find a Hezbollah operative accused of masterminding a deadly 1994 attack on a Jewish center in Buenos Aires, as it vowed to pursue the group worldwide.

The United States also imposed sanctions on the senior Hezbollah figure, Salman Raouf Salman, in tandem with his blacklisting by Argentina as it marks the 25th anniversary of the bombing, which killed 85 people.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was visiting Argentina on the anniversary of the attack, along with ministers from several Latin American nations visiting Buenos Aires for talks on counter-terrorism.

The State Department said



Picture courtesy of Infobae

it would give \$7 million to anyone who provides information that leads to the location of Salman, also known as Salman al-Reda.

The Treasury Department said that Salman masterminded the 1994 attack and "has directed terrorist operations in the Western Hemisphere for Hezbollah ever since."

Runaway truck kills 8 children in Philippines: officials

Manila, Philippines

Eight schoolchildren were among nine people killed yesterday aboard a runaway truck that crashed in central Philippines while transporting them to a sports activity, the authorities said.

The dump truck's brakes failed while it descended a mountain road outside Boljoon town centre with about 30 children and a few parents and teachers crammed on the truck bed, town mayor Merlou Derama told AFP.

"The driver tried to slow the vehicle by brushing its side against the mountain," Derama said, adding it fell on its side instead.

Three girls and five boys aged between 11 and 12 and a mother died immediate-



A relative mourns beside the covered body of a child

ly, while five other children were taken to hospital, he added.

The local government lent the vehicle to the remote school to transport its athletes to a competition in Boljoon because transport options are limited in the area, Mayor Derama said.

Kurds identify suspected shooter of Turkish diplomat

Arbil, Iraq

Iraqi Kurdish authorities Friday identified a Kurdish man from Turkey as the suspected shooter in the murder of a Turkish diplomat, as Turkish state media said he's the brother of an opposition lawmaker.

Mazloum Dag, 27, is "wanted" for Wednesday's murder of Turkish Vice Consul Osman and two Iraqis at a restaurant in the regional capital Arbil, the area's counterterrorism unit said.

A wanted notice released by the unit showed two photos of a black-haired young man with



Mazloum Dag. (Courtesy of kurdistan24)

a close-cut beard, with one image apparently taken from CCTV footage.

"We call on all citizens to

provide security services with information about this suspect as soon as possible," the counterterrorism unit said, adding that Dag is from Diyarbakir in Turkey.

It called the murder a "terrorist" act.

Turkey's Anadolu state news agency said the suspect is the brother of Dersim Dag, a member of Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party, the People's Democratic Party (HDP).

The HDP, the country's second largest opposition group, is regularly accused by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of links

to Turkey's outlawed separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

It "strongly" condemned the Arbil attack, calling it an "absolutely unacceptable provocation attempt". The HDP also slammed the accusation that one of its deputies was "designated as a target because of his brother", without mentioning any names.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack but Ankara on Thursday launched a "comprehensive air operation" against the PKK "terror organisation" in Iraqi Kurdistan's Qandil mountain area, defence minister Hulusi Akar said.