

News in brief

Taiwan president vows full inquiry into deadly metro attack



a deadly metro attack as he visited hospitals yesterday. A 27-year-old suspect set off smoke bombs in Taipei's main metro station during the Friday evening rush hour before launching into a stabbing rampage, according to authorities. He killed three people in an attack that spanned the main station, an underground shopping district and another metro stop, while at least 11 others were wounded, according to a revised count from the police yesterday.

Iran has put to death a man accused of spying for Israel, the latest execution since a 12-day June war between the archenemies, the judiciary's press agency announced yesterday.

"The death sentence for Aghil Keshavarz, found guilty of spying for the Zionist regime, communicating and cooperating with the regime, and taking photographs of military and security sites, was carried out after being upheld by the Supreme Court and following legal procedures," the Mizan agency reported. The man, described as an agent of Israel's Mossad foreign intelligence service, had been arrested between April and May in Urmia in northwestern Iran, it added.

Iran executes man accused of spying for Israel



Trump doesn't rule out war with Venezuela



leftist firebrand's "days are numbered."

US President Donald Trump left open the possibility of war with Venezuela, as his top diplomat

Marco Rubio vowed Friday to enforce a blockade on the country's oil wealth.

Asked in an interview with NBC News conducted Thursday about a war with Venezuela, Trump said, "I don't rule it out, no." Trump declined to say whether he wants to oust President Nicolas Maduro, after saying in an earlier interview that the

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Trump's name added to Kennedy Center facade, a day after change



A blue tarp is dropped after the renaming of The John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts in honor of US President Donald Trump

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump's name was affixed to the Kennedy Center in Washington on Friday, one day after his hand-picked board members voted to rename the arts venue in spite of legal questions.

Workmen on scissor lifts added metal lettering to the building's facade, before dropping a blue tarpaulin to reveal the sign saying "The Donald J. Trump and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Center For the Performing Arts."

But family members of president Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1963, have criticized the move as "beyond wild" and said an act of Congress is needed to alter the name of the US national cultural center.

Trump said Thursday that he was "surprised" by the re-branding -- even though he personally purged the board of the center after calling it too woke, and had already talked about having his name added to it.

The 79-year-old Republican

even appointed himself as its chairman of the board earlier this year.

"Today, we proudly unveil the updated exterior designation -- honoring the leadership of President Donald J. Trump and the enduring legacy of John F. Kennedy," the center said on its newly rebranded X account, along with photos of the lettering.

Naming a national institution after a sitting president is unprecedented in US history. Landmarks like the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial and indeed the Kennedy Center were all named after their deaths.

But Trump, who long emblazoned his name on his skyscrapers and casinos during his career as a property magnate, has shown little hesitation about doing the same thing as president.

He has stamped his mark on the Kennedy Center since the start of his second term as part of an assault on cultural institutions that his administration has accused of being too left-wing.

US hits IS targets in Syria

Over 70 targets hit in retaliation for a deadly attack on US personnel last weekend

Five IS members killed overnight

Jordan confirms participation in strikes

Intense bombardment lasted five hours

AFP | Damascus

Syria monitor said yesterday that five Islamic State jihadist group members were killed in US strikes overnight as Jordan confirmed it participated in the raids, after a deadly attack on American troops last weekend.

US forces said they struck more than 70 IS targets in what President Donald Trump described as "very serious retaliation" for the December 13 attack that killed two US soldiers and a US civilian.

Washington had said a lone IS gunman carried out the attack in central Syria's Palmyra, which is home to UNESCO-listed ancient ruins and was once controlled by jihadist fighters.

It was the first such incident since the overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December last year, and Syrian authorities said the perpetrator was a security forces member who was due to be fired for his "extremist Islamist ideas".

IS has not claimed the attack. Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP that "at least five members of the Islamic State group were killed" in eastern Syria's Deir Ezzor province,



US Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt II taxis at a base in the US Central Command area of responsibility

including the leader of a cell responsible for drones in the area.

Jordan's military said its air force joined the operation "to prevent extremist organisations from exploiting these areas as launching pads to threaten the security of Syria's neighbours and the region, particularly after terrorist organisation IS reconstituted itself and rebuilt its capacities in southern Syria".

'Intense bombardment'

A Syrian security source told AFP that the US strikes targeted IS cells in Syria's vast Badia desert including in Homs, Deir Ezzor and Raqa provinces, and did not include ground operations.

Most of the targets were in a



The operation employed more than 100 precision munitions and targeted an IS cell leader responsible for drones in the Deir Ezzor region, according to a war monitor

mountainous area running north of Palmyra including towards Deir Ezzor, the source said, requesting anonymity.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement that the United States "struck more than 70 targets at multiple locations across central Syria with fighter jets, attack helicopters and artillery".

"The operation employed more than 100 precision munitions targeting known ISIS infrastructure and weapons sites," CENTCOM said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group.

A Syrian security official, also requesting anonymity, told AFP that "the bombardment was intense" and lasted around five hours.

Zelensky says US mooted direct Ukraine-Russia talks on ending war in Miami

AFP | Miami

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that Washington had proposed the first face-to-face negotiations between Ukraine and Russia in half a year, as diplomats converged on Miami for fresh talks on ending the war.

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev said he was heading to Miami, while Ukrainian and European teams were also in the sunny American city for the negotiations, mediated by Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and the US president's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

"They pushed this format as far as I understand: Ukraine, America, Russia," Zelensky said, adding that the Europeans could be present and it would be "logical to hold such a joint meeting... after we understand the potential results of the meeting that has already taken place".

Trump's envoys have pushed a plan in which the United States would offer security guarantees to Ukraine, but Kyiv will likely be expected to surrender some territory, a prospect resented by



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (R) and Portugal's Prime Minister Luis Montenegro (L) attends a wreath-laying ceremony at the Memory Wall of Fallen Ukrainian Defenders, in Kyiv

many Ukrainians.

However, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Friday promised not to force Ukraine into any agreement, saying "there's no peace deal unless Ukraine agrees

to it". He added that he may join the talks yesterday in Miami, his hometown.

Dmitriev wrote in an X post that he was "on the way to Miami", adding a peace dove

emoji and attaching a short video of a morning sun shining through clouds on a beach with palms.

"As warmongers keep working overtime to undermine the US peace plan for Ukraine, I remembered this video from my previous visit -- light breaking through the storm clouds," he added.

The last time Ukrainian and Russian envoys held official direct talks was in July in Istanbul, which led to prisoner swaps but little else in the way of concrete progress.

Russian and European involvement marks a step forward from before, when the Americans held separate negotiations with each side in different locations.

However, it is unlikely Dmitriev would hold direct talks with European negotiators as relations between the two sides remain extremely strained.

Moscow, which sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, argues that Europe's involvement in the talks would only hinder the process and tends to paint the continent's leaders as pro-war.