

News in brief

Five climbers die on Russia's Mount Elbrus



Five climbers died after a blizzard on Mount Elbrus, Russia's emergencies ministry said, in one of the worst tragedies in recent years on Europe's highest peak. Elbrus, a dormant volcano in Russia's North Caucasus region, is the highest mountain in Europe at 5,642 metres (18,510 feet) and is seeing a domestic tourist boom due to the coronavirus pandemic. The incident struck when the weather turned on a group of climbers at an altitude of over 5,000 metres (16,000 feet).

Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian man and injured others during clashes at a protest against Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry and medics said. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the incident, which occurred in an area south of the Palestinian city of Nablus that has seen frequent Palestinian protests against Israeli settlements.

Israeli troops shoot dead Palestinian man



France worried as Mali junta flirts with Russians



France and its European allies are casting a worried eye at Mali's military junta over its plans to hire Russian mercenaries to help fight jihadist insurgents. European nations in a French-led campaign to shore up Mali have warned of far-reaching consequences at a time when the junta is already under scrutiny over its progress to restore civilian rule. Alarm bells sounded last week after sources in the French presidency and security services said Mali's rulers were close to hiring a thousand paramilitaries from the so-called Wagner group.

Hundreds of people protested in Kabul

Hundreds protest in Kabul to demand release of Afghan foreign reserves



Yesterday, demanding that the United States release billions of dollars in central bank reserves blocked outside Afghanistan as the new Taliban government struggles to contain a deepening economic crisis. The well organized demonstration, featuring banners with messages printed in English, came as Taliban officials stepped up demands for more than \$9 billion in foreign reserves held abroad to be handed over.

Firefighters retreat as La Palma volcanic explosions intensify



Intensifying volcanic explosions on the Spanish island of La Palma forced firefighters to retreat and authorities to evacuate three more towns yesterday, while airlines cancelled flights due to a cloud of gas and ash, the biggest since the volcano erupted. Firefighters pulled out of clean-up work in the town of Todoque on Friday afternoon as a new vent opened up in the flank of the volcano and videos shared on social media showed a massive shockwave emanating from the eruption site.

CIA removes Vienna station chief over handling of Havana syndrome cases

Reuters | London

The CIA removed its Vienna, Austria station chief recently amid criticism the person did not take seriously a surge in mysterious "Havana syndrome" cases, the Washington Post reported.

Dozens of cases affecting embassy staff and Central Intelligence Agency officers and family members have been reported in Vienna recently, but the unnamed station chief expressed skepticism and showed insensitivity, the Post said, citing intelligence sources.

A CIA spokesperson declined to confirm or deny the report, but said the agency takes seriously scores of possible incidents of the mysterious ailment in US diplomatic missions around the world.

The cause and source remains enigmatic, CIA Deputy Director David Cohen said last week.

"Have we gotten closer? I think the answer is yes -- but not close enough to make the analytic judgment that people are waiting for," he said.

The US government, including the CIA and Pentagon, has ramped up staff to investigate and provide treatment for the cases.

Dubbed "Havana syndrome" because reports of the condition first showed up in the Cuban capital, the ailment is marked by bloody noses, headaches, vision problems and other symptoms that resemble concussions.

Some people experiencing it have reported hearing focused, high-pitched or sharp sounds that left them nauseated.



The seal of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is seen on the floor during a visit of United States President Donald Trump the CIA headquarters



Dubbed "Havana syndrome" because reports of the condition first showed up in the Cuban capital, the ailment is marked by bloody noses, headaches, vision problems and other symptoms that resemble concussions

The incidents are little understood and have sparked theories that they were caused by a weapon that used focused microwaves, ultrasound, poison or are even a reaction to crickets.

But for several years, senior government officials dismissed the complaints, judging them to be the symptoms of people

under stress or reacting with hysteria to unknown stimuli.

The administration of Joe Biden has geared up the investigation into what have been renamed anomalous health incidents, or AHI.

If the cases are caused by something like a directed energy attack, US officials suspect Russia could be behind it.

The Post called Vienna, where the United States has a large embassy and intelligence collection operation, a "hotbed" of AHI incidents, with dozens of people reporting unexplained symptoms.

The issue has US officials around the world jittery. In August Vice President Kamala Harris delayed by several hours a visit to Vietnam after the US embassy there reported a possible case involving "acoustic incidents."

And during a visit to India by CIA Director William Burns in early September, an official in his retinue reported symptoms and sought medical assistance, according to the Post.

N Korea South d

North Korea says call

Kim Yo Jong demands South Korea drop hostile policies

Reuters | Washington

South Korea's call for a formal end to the Korean War is premature but the door for dialogue is open if it scraps its double standards and hostile policy, a senior North Korean official said in comments published by state media yesterday.

The 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice not a peace treaty, leaving US-led UN forces technically still at war with North Korea. The question of formally ending the war has become caught up in a US-led effort to get North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

South Korea President Moon Jae-in repeated a call for a formal end to the war in an address to the UN General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, read more

Senior North Korean official Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong Un, said Moon's proposal was "interesting and admirable" but conditions were not right because of South Korea's persistent double standards, prejudice and hostility.

"Under such a situation it does not make any sense to declare the end of the war with all the things, which may become a seed of a war between parties that have been at odds for more than half a century, left intact," Kim said in a statement carried by the North's

US returns ancient Gilgamesh tablet to Iraq

Reuters | London

A 3,500-year-old tablet recounting the epic of Gilgamesh was returned to Iraq after being stolen three decades ago and illegally imported to the United States.

Iraqi Cultural Minister Hassan Nazim accepted the tablet during a ceremony in Washington.

"To me, it means restituting self-esteem and the confidence in Iraqi society," he said.

Despite its small size, the ancient artifact has immense cultural and historical value. It contains portions of the "Epic of Gilgamesh," considered one of the oldest works of literature in human history, which tells the story of a powerful Mesopotamian king on a quest for immortality.

"It's a story which has influenced all the great monotheistic religions, leaving traces also on the Iliad and the Odyssey," said UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay, who called the tale a "treasure" for "our common humanity."

She added that the stone's return to its rightful home is "a major victory for the international community over those who mutilate heritage."

"Its repatriation itself is a tale of epic proportions," said US Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Polite.



The tablet of Gilgamesh and a 5,000-year-old sculpture of a sheep are displayed September 23, 2021 in Washington



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The clay tablet, carved with cuneiform characters, is be-

lieved to have been stolen from an Iraqi museum in 1991, around the time of the first Gulf War.

It reappeared in Britain in 2001, according to Polite.

An American art dealer bought it from a London-based Jordanian family in 2003, before sending the piece to the United States without declaring its true nature to customs. It was then sold to antique dealers in 2007 for \$50,000 under a false certificate of origin.

The tablet was sold once again in 2014 for \$1.67 million to the owners of craft chain Hobby Lobby, the Green family, fundamentalist Christians who wanted to display the stone at their Museum of the Bible in Washington.

Trump allies B in Congress' pr

Reuters | Washington

The US House of Representatives Select Committee investigating the deadly Jan. 6 riot at the Capitol has subpoenaed four former members of Donald Trump's administration, including Mark Meadows and Steve Bannon, the panel's chairman said.

Former White House Deputy Chief of Staff Dan Scavino and former Defense Department official Kash Patel were also subpoenaed and instructed to produce materials and appear for depositions, committee Chairman Bennie Thompson said in a statement.

Meadows, a former congressman, served as Trump's White House chief of staff. Bannon was a White House adviser to Trump.

A representative for Meadows said he declined to comment. Bannon and Scavino could not be reached for immediate comment.

Patel said in a statement he was "disappointed, but not surprised" the committee issued a subpoena before seeking his voluntary cooperation.

A mob of Trump supporters

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	43,541,811	703,058	231,661,959
2 India	33,623,072	446,690	
3 Brazil	21,308,178	593,018	Deaths
4 UK	7,601,487	135,983	
5 Russia	7,376,374	202,273	4,746,351
6 Turkey	6,987,494	62,745	
7 France	6,977,722	116,371	Recovered:
8 Iran	5,508,885	118,792	
9 Argentina	5,246,998	114,772	208,325,268
10 Colombia	4,946,811	126,032	
11 Spain	4,946,601	86,229	New cases
12 Italy	4,653,696	130,603	
13 Indonesia	4,204,116	141,258	+301,595
14 Germany	4,190,920	93,893	

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	299,710		17,074		252,471	30,165
Saudi Arabia	546,843	+51	8,688	+4	535,842	2,313
UAE	734,275	+303	2,086	+3	726,408	5,781
Kuwait	411,406	+48	2,444	+1	408,283	679
Oman	303,551		4,093		295,168	4,290
Qatar	236,123	+107	604		233,998	1,521

Figures as of closing