



7 killed in Israeli strike on Lebanon as hostilities continued despite ceasefire



Weather forecast table for various cities including Beijing, Colombo, Dhaka, Dubai, Houston, Istanbul, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Moscow, New York, Singapore, Toronto, and Washington.

NATO rift deepens as US to pull 5,000 troops from Germany

Announcement comes days after Berlin said Washington being 'humiliated' by Iran

WASHINGTON

THE United States will withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany in the next six to 12 months, the Pentagon said Friday as a rift in transatlantic ties deepens over the West Asia war.

Trump had threatened to withdraw some troops from the NATO ally earlier this week after Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the US was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership and criticised Washington's lack of strategy in the war.

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement that the "decision follows a thorough review of the Department's force posture in Europe and is in recognition of theatre requirements and conditions on the ground."

Germany hosts several US military facilities, including the headquarters of its European and Africa commands, Ramstein Air Base and a medical centre in Landstuhl, where casualties from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were treated. US nuclear missiles are also stationed in the country.

The number of troops leaving Germany would be 14 per cent of the 36,000 American service members stationed there.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius called it "fore-seable" that the US would withdraw troops from Europe and Germany, while he sought to stress mutual benefit from the US military presence on the European continent.

"The presence of American soldiers in Europe, and especially in Germany, is in our interest and in the interest of the US," Pistorius told the German



File photo of US Army personnel participating in a military exercise at 7th Army Training Command Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany | AFP

news agency dpa, while adding that European allies needed to adjust their defence postures - and were doing so. "We Europeans must take on more responsibility for our security," he said, stressing recent efforts by Germany to boost its armed forces, accelerate procurement and develop infrastructure.

News of the troop withdrawal drew swift pushback from Democrats in Congress as well as a hawkish Washington think tank. They said the move will benefit Russian President Vladimir Putin and weaken US security interests.

The withdrawal "suggests American commitments to our allies are dependent on the president's mood," said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee. "The president should immediately cease this reckless action before he causes irreversible consequences for our alliances and long-term national security," Reed said. Trump wrote on Wednesday on social media that the US was reviewing possible troop reductions in Germany, with a "determination" to be made soon. AFP

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Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi hospitalised in Iran

Detained Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi has been hospitalised in Iran, her supporters said, "following a catastrophic deterioration of her health". Mohammadi, who won the peace prize in 2023 in recognition of more than two decades of rights campaigning, was arrested in December in Iran's eastern city of Mashhad after speaking out against the country's clerical authorities at a funeral ceremony. Her supporters had been warning for months about her health, saying in late March that she had suffered a suspected heart attack but received inadequate medical treatment. In a statement posted by her foundation on Friday, she said she was "urgently transferred to a hospital in Zanjan today" after a rapid deterioration, "including two episodes of complete loss of consciousness and a severe cardiac crisis"



Narges Mohammadi

Renewed fighting with US likely: Iran

DUBAI/WASHINGTON

A senior Iranian military officer said on Saturday that renewed fighting with the US was "likely", hours after President Donald Trump said he was not satisfied with an Iranian negotiating proposal.

On Saturday morning, Mohammad Jafar Asadi, a senior figure in the Iranian military's central command, said "a renewed conflict between Iran and the United States is likely", in quotes published by Iran's Fars news agency.

"Evidence has shown that the United States is not committed to any promises or agreements," he added.

Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said on Friday that his country had "never shied away from negotiations", but would not accept an "imposition" of peace terms.

The White House has declined to provide details on the latest Iranian proposal, but news site Axios reported that US envoy Steve Witkoff had submitted amendments to a previous one putting Tehran's nuclear programme back on the negotiating table. The changes reportedly in-



An anti-US billboard referring to President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz, installed on a building at the Valfar Square in Tehran on Saturday | AFP

clude demands that Iran not move enriched uranium from bombed sites or resume activity there during talks.

News of the Iranian proposal briefly pushed oil prices down nearly five percent, though they remain about 50 percent above pre-war levels amid the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has maintained a stranglehold on the strait since the war began, choking off major flows of oil, gas and fertiliser, while the United States has imposed a counter-blockade on Iranian ports.

President Trump said the US Navy was acting "like pirates" as he described an operation seizing a ship amid the tit-for-tat American blockade of Iranian ports. "We... land on top of it and we took over the ship. We took over the cargo, took over the oil. It's a very profitable business," Trump said at a rally in Florida. The US announced a blockade of Iranian ports after the initial peace talks in Pakistan failed to achieve a breakthrough.

"The location of the tanker has been determined, and work is under way to take the necessary measures in an attempt to recover it..." Agencies

ANTI-SEMITISM

British govt weighs ban on pro-Palestine demonstrations

LONDON

BRITAIN'S Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in an interview broadcast on Saturday that banning some pro-Palestinian marches could be justified, especially when they call for the intifada to spread.

Labour leader Starmer is under pressure to act after a spate of antisemitic incidents, including this week, when two men were stabbed in the north London suburb of Golders Green, which is home to a large Jewish community.

A 45-year-old British national who was born in Somalia was remanded in custody when he made his first appearance in court on Friday accused of attempted murder.

Starmer visited the scene of the attacks and a Jewish volunteer ambulance service on Thursday and was booed by some locals, who accused him of not doing enough to protect them. They also denounced pro-Palestinian activists holding marches in British cities, which began after Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that sparked the war in Gaza.

The prime minister, a former human rights lawyer and chief public prosecutor whose wife is of Jewish origin, said many Jewish people had told them they were affected by "the repeat nature" of the protests.

"I'm a big defender of freedom of expression, peaceful protests," he told the BBC. "But when there are chants like 'globalise the intifada', that's completely off limits." "Clearly, there should be tougher action in relation to that."

The intifada refers to the Palestinian civilian uprisings against Israel in 1987-1993 and the early 2000s. AFP



Keir Starmer

Soaring fuel cost forces US low-cost carrier Spirit to fold

WEST PAM BEACH

SPIRIT Airlines, an impish upstart that shook the industry with its irreverent ads and deep discount fares, announced Saturday that it has gone out of business after 34 years.

The ultralow cost airline that once operated hundreds of daily flights on its bright yellow planes and employed about 17,000 people said it had "started an orderly wind-down of our operations, effective immediately".

Spirit's President and CEO Dave Davis said the company in March "reached an agreement with our bondholders on a restructuring plan that would have allowed us to emerge as a go-forward business."

But skyrocketing jet fuel prices since the start of the Middle East war "left us with no alter-



native but to pursue an orderly wind-down of the Company," Davis said in the press release.

"Sustaining the business required hundreds of millions of additional dollars of liquidity that Spirit simply does not have and could not procure. This is tremendously disappointing and not the outcome any of us wanted."

The company said that the lack of additional funding

meant that Spirit "had no choice but to begin this wind-down".

The airlines announced in February an "agreement in principle" to restructure its debt with creditors, saying it expected to emerge from bankruptcy by early summer.

But a spike in fuel prices sparked by the US-Israeli war on Iran that started a few days later delivered a heavy blow to the struggling carrier.

The Trump administration had considered a government bailout for the cash-strapped business to keep it from going under, but a deal was not reached. President Donald Trump had floated the idea of a bailout last week after the airline found itself in bankruptcy proceedings for the second time in less than two years with jet fuel prices soaring because of the Iran war. AP

Around 20,000 flock to dangerous military site in France for illegal rave

CORNUSSE

AROUND 20,000 partygoers gathered on Saturday for an illegal rave at a military site in France, defying warnings about the risk of unexploded ordnance and possible blasts.

The rave near the town of Bourges in central France kicked off on Friday and organisers expect as many as 30,000 people from France and neighbouring countries to arrive at the peak of the event this weekend.

"Despite its illegal nature, the government has mobilised to ensure the safety of this event and limit any disturbances, particularly by nearby residents," the prefecture said in a statement.

Speaking to AFP, Philippe Le Moing Surzur, the top regional of-

ficial, said the site was "extremely dangerous due to the unexploded ordnance it may contain."

"This is a site that has been in use for 150 years, and we know there are potentially old artillery shells there," he said, adding that bomb disposal experts discover them regularly.

Revelers see the giant party not only as a chance to unwind, but also as a protest against tighter legislation targeting illegal techno gatherings.

"I heard there were going to be a lot of people, but once you're there, it's still a shock to see so many people gathered in one place," a 22-year-old man told AFP who wants to keep anonymity. Around 600 police and 45 firefighters have been deployed at the site. AFP

EXPRESS READ

Pak slams remarks by UK envoy on Af clashes

Islamabad: Pakistan on Saturday rejected remarks by British Special Representative for Afghanistan on tensions along its border with Afghanistan, terming them "devoid of a deeper understanding of the situation" Lindsay had said

REGIONAL OFFICE, ERNAKULAM. SIB Building, Infopark Road, Rajagiri Valley P.O., Kakkanad, Ernakulam, Kerala - 682026. Phone No: 0484-2771361, 2771363, 2771369. Email: r1903@sib.co.in Website: www.southindianbank.com

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Canara Bank ARM BRANCH 2nd Floor, Canara Bank Building Chittoor Road, Ernakulam South, Ernakulam - 682016. Ph: 0484-2353072, 2353071. Email: cb2875@canarabank.com