

The U.S. Justice Department Has Announced the Arrest of an Iranian National and U.S. Permanent Resident Over Alleged Exports of Sensitive Electronics to Iran, in Violation of American Sanctions

IRAN NEWS

Iran's Army Chief, Major General Amir Hatami, Has Asserted That the Country's Armed Forces Will Never Permit Even a Single Inch of Iranian Territory to Be Separated

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Iranian Armed Forces maintain Perfect Level of Capability



TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's top military official has hailed that the country's Armed Forces currently maintained a "perfect" level of capability, commenting less than a month after the servicemen's prompt and successful retaliation forced Israeli aggressors to request a ceasefire.

Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi made the remarks in the capital Tehran on Friday, attending a memorial ceremony held in honor of a former senior commander serving the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Quds Force.

The official paid tribute to the former commander, Mohammad-Saeid Izadi, who was martyred by the regime before it pleaded for a ceasefire.

Commenting on Izadi's lifelong service, Mousavi underlined the enduring legacy of the former commander and other martyred military officials, including those who were assassinated by the regime last month.

Also on Friday, Major General Amir Hatami, Iran's Army commander, reaffirmed the force's unwavering commitment to protecting the entirety of the country's expanse.

He cited lessons learned from former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein's eight-year imposed war against Iran, during which the Islamic Republic fought hard and effectively without ceding any territory.

Hatami asserted, "We will never allow an inch of Iranian land to be separated," pledging the Army's continued dedication to the nation's sovereignty and independence.

Currency Policies Shouldn't Hinder National Trade Strategies



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - At a specialized meeting between economic stakeholders, members of the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, and the Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, participants discussed major economic issues, currency policies, customs challenges, and production obstacles. The meeting underscored the need for the gradual transfer of economic affairs to the private sector.

According to the public relations office of the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, the session highlighted Isfahan's vital role in the national economy and stressed the importance of addressing the challenges faced by local industrialists. Key topics included a review of currency policies, facilitating customs clearance processes, and better utilization of banking resources to support production.

Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade, referred to the country's recent situation, noting: "The 12-day war elevated the honor of Iran and Iranians globally, thanks to the sacrifices of our martyrs."

He added that timely and decisive actions by the Commander-in-Chief led to a strong and effective response to the enemy, and during this period, deputy ministers met with factory owners affected by the conflict.

Atabak praised the united efforts of guilds, chain stores, bakeries, and the public in contributing to the country's resilience.

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - The Iranian judiciary announced it will handle cases against those accused of "treason and collaboration with foreign enemies" without delay, assuring the public that such cases will not be allowed to face prolonged legal processes.

Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir also revealed that, in cooperation with security and intelligence agencies, several internal networks linked to hostile forces have been uncovered, promising to share more detailed information with the public soon.

Speaking at his weekly press briefing, Jahangir began by offering condolences to the nation during the mourning days of Muharram. He highlighted how this year's ceremonies were marked by an exceptional spirit of unity and resilience, noting, "Tasua and Ashura demonstrated that our 90-million-strong nation is always ready to stand firm. We must cherish and respect this vigilant and brave nation, for they have steadfastly defended national dignity and Islamic values."

Jahangir described Muharram as a powerful display of national solidarity that delivered a clear message to adversaries. "Despite threats and conspiracies prepared by the enemy, the ceremonies were held peacefully and passionately thanks to the people's cooperation with the leadership and security institutions," he said. "The Iranian people proved they belong to Imam Hussein's nation, and they showed they are willing to sacrifice everything to defend every inch of their land, delivering a harsh blow to those dreaming of dividing Iran."

Referring to the Supreme Leader's attendance at the Ashura ceremonies, the spokesman emphasized that the Iranian people, empowered by faith and social capital, will force any aggressor to retreat. "Our country relies on God's power, and the people's faith in Islam and love for Iran has disrupted and will continue to disrupt the enemy's calculations," he declared.

On international issues, Jahangir condemned Israel's attack on Iran, stating it violated all international norms. "The judiciary, the Human Rights Headquarters, and the international affairs division, alongside the Foreign Ministry, have begun pursuing this case in international forums," he noted. "The whole world knows Iran did not start this war, and that our response was a legitimate act of self-defense under international law."

Jahangir urged global judicial bodies to finally end the impunity that Israel, described by

him as a "child-killing regime," has long enjoyed. He assured citizens that the judiciary would firmly and swiftly prosecute those accused of selling out the nation, ensuring no delays in their legal proceedings. "With help from security and intelligence services, enemy networks inside the country have been identified, and soon the public will receive important information on these actions," he added.

Discussing measures to maintain public safety, Jahangir said that, as instructed by the judiciary chief in coordination meetings with security bodies, the judiciary remains fully engaged in supporting intelligence agencies to secure the nation. "The enemy focused its efforts on undermining our point of strength: national security. Through rumors and internal agents, they tried to create unrest, but thanks to people's support and divine help, we neutralized those efforts."

He praised citizens for actively sharing information with police and security forces, contributing significantly to national stability. "I call on everyone to remain vigilant. If they encounter suspicious activity, they should immediately inform law enforcement or judicial authorities," he urged. Jahangir also explained that during the recent 12-day conflict, the judiciary canceled staff leave and held continuous coordination meetings to keep legal proceedings on track and address potential threats quickly.

The spokesman detailed further actions, including monitoring individuals who spread fear and misinformation on social media. "We issued warnings to some; if they changed their behavior, the matter ended there. If not, legal action was taken," he said. "Thanks to reports from the public, other suspects were identified, prosecuted, and had their cases documented."

Beyond security, Jahangir highlighted efforts to protect citizens' economic and social welfare. The judiciary, working closely with various government bodies—including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture, the Organization for Protecting Consumers and Producers, and representatives from trade unions—aimed to prevent disruption to economic stability and safeguard people's livelihoods.

"We hope this cooperation and unity will deepen, allowing us to serve the people even better," Jahangir concluded.

Germany Complicit in Israeli Aggression on Iran



TEHRAN - Iran has issued a scathing rebuke of Germany, decrying Berlin for endorsing the Israeli regime's imposed war against the Islamic Republic that took place last month, and noting how this endorsement amounted to complicity in the aggression.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmacel Baghaei made the remarks in a post on X on Friday, addressing German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and denouncing him for backing the regime's "lawless behavior and atrocity crimes."

Baghaei said Merz's support violated "the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and international law," adding pointedly that the German official, himself a trained lawyer, "must [rather] know very well that Tel Aviv's unprovoked armed attack against Iran was a flagrant violation of Article 2(4) of the Charter ... and a blatant act of AGGRESSION."

The spokesman stressed that endorsing such injustice made Germany an accomplice. "The German government cannot shrug off its international responsibility for acting as an accomplice in Israel's wrongful and criminal acts," he warned.

The remarks came after Merz said he had "no doubt about the legitimacy and legality under international law" of the unprovoked war that claimed the lives of at least 935 Iranians, including senior military commanders, nuclear scientists, and civilians.

He claimed that the Israeli war had come in the context of lingering "military threat" from Iran, alleging that the regime would come under "daily" attacks by the Islamic Republic before launching the war.

Yemenis Flood Streets in Support of Gaza



SANAA (Dispatches) - Hundreds of thousands of Yemenis gathered in the capital, Sana'a, and other cities on Friday in large-scale demonstrations expressing support for Gaza and vowing to escalate military operations against Israel-linked targets amid the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Al-Sabeen Square in central Sana'a was filled with demonstrators on Friday, rallying under the banner "Support for Gaza... Our Marches Continue, Our Operations Escalate."

Protesters voiced pride in the operations conducted by the Yemeni Armed Forces against Israeli targets, particularly in maritime zones. They pledged ongoing mobilization and resistance, reaffirming their readiness to confront any new Israeli attacks or pressure from its allies.

Participants carried banners and chanted slogans such as: "O Gaza, this is your front... The sea is yours", "All Yemeni fronts... Are Palestinian fronts", and "O Gaza, we are with you... You are not alone." A statement delivered by Mohammed Al-Bukaiti, President of Sana'a University, on behalf of the rally, stated: "In response to Allah's call, striving in His path, and seeking His pleasure, we have gathered today in our million-man marches in support of the oppressed Palestinian Muslim people and in confrontation of the tyranny and crimes of the Zionist-American aggression."

He added that Gaza has faced an "unprecedented genocide" through killing, siege, starvation and thirst for nearly two years, and stressed that "our operations will not stop until this aggression ends," Yemen's Saba News Agency reported.

Al-Bukaiti also hailed a major naval success by Yemeni forces, probably referring to a recent military operation that targeted the ETERNITY C, a ship en route to Israel's port of Eilat (Umm al-Rashrah).

Iran Studying U.S. Messages on Resumption of Nuclear Talks

TEHRAN - A senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, has confirmed receiving messages from the United States on the resumption of nuclear talks, saying Tehran is studying them.

"After the [Israeli-U.S.] war, we have no trust in the US at all," Ali Larjani said in an interview with Al-Jazeera TV Channel.

The Israeli regime launched a blatant and unprovoked act of aggression against Iran on June 13, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders and nuclear scientists in addition to civilians.

On June 22, the United States officially joined the war against Iran by launching attacks on three nuclear facilities in the country in violation of the United Nations Charter and the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Israeli strikes came as Iran and the United States had held five rounds of indirect negotiations, mediated by Oman, over Iran's nuclear program since April and were preparing to hold fresh talks in the Omani capital on June 15, which was cancelled.

"The theory of the US, led by [President Donald] Trump, is based on the principle that you either surrender or enter into war," Larjani said.

He added that a new "Middle East" is emerging, which would be a "resilient and independent" region.

On a separate occasion, Larjani said on Friday the US president and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu are pursuing a reactionary theory of "peace through power" and noted,



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"This is the same perspective that all the bloodthirsty individuals in history have had, and it is nothing new."

The Leader's aide was speaking during a ceremony to commemorate the martyrdom of Brigadier General Mohammad Saeed Izadi – known as Haj Ramezan – who headed the Palestine section of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force.

General Izadi's martyrdom was confirmed by the IRGC late in June, several days after he sustained critical injuries in an Israeli attack.

Larjani said the US has inflicted damage and caused massacres in the international scene, but the people of Palestine and Gaza did not surrender.

"Iran, under the wise leadership of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, responded decisively and did not allow this theory to manifest in our

country. Therefore, Trump's theory has failed," he added.

Larjani, who is also a member of Iran's Expediency Council, emphasized that Trump and Netanyahu are attempting to force weak countries to surrender and achieve their objectives through hue and cry and bullying; however, "with the blessing of the blood of martyrs, a resilient Middle East is in the making."

He said the US and Israeli leaders claimed that they have eliminated the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, but "now, more than 21 months have passed...and Hamas is still carrying out military operations, so Hamas is alive."



Tehran, Kabul Aim to Return Illegal Afghan Citizens Home Gradually and Respectfully

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The caretaker ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Kabul says that Iran and Afghanistan are increasingly working to return Afghan nationals residing in Iran illegally to their home country gradually and respectfully.

Alireza Bikkdeli wrote on his X account on Friday that Iran's Ministry of Interior and other relevant organizations emphasize the unbreakable commonalities between the two neighboring countries and aim to repatriate Afghan nationals residing in Iran illegally with dignity and care.

Bikkdeli noted that with increased coordination between Tehran and Kabul, the process is being accelerated.

“Khoramabad Valley” Recognized as World’s Earliest Scientifically Proven Human Habitat



TEHRAN - The Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has described the inscription of the “Prehistoric Sites of Khoramabad Valley” on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a historic milestone for global culture, announcing that scientific data confirm it as the world’s oldest verified human habitat.

According to IRNA, following the inclusion of the “Prehistoric Sites of Khoramabad Valley” at the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, spoke live on IRINN’s 9 pm news on Monday, July 10, 2025. He hailed this achievement as a turning point in Iran’s cultural diplomacy and a testament to the nation’s deep civilizational legacy.

Explaining the significance of this global registration, Salehi-Amiri said: “The valleys of Khoramabad, now the 29th Iranian site on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, are remarkable not only for their historical value but, based on carbon-14 dating and other advanced scientific analyses conducted in leading international laboratories, have been recognized as the earliest scientifically proven human habitat in the world, dating back over 65,000 years.”

Salehi-Amiri added that during the committee’s review, the chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee emphasized three times that no other historical site anywhere in the world has been scientifically verified to be this ancient. “Therefore,” he noted, “this inscription is unprecedented and extraordinary not only for Iran but for all humanity and the global collective memory.”

Highlighting Iran’s vast and diverse historical assets, the minister remarked: “Iran is home to an unparalleled treasure of human heritage. Given the ongoing efforts in recent years, we expect to submit and register one or more new sites on the UNESCO list every year for the next 50 years. Our dear people should know that our potential goes far beyond the already registered sites; this is only the beginning of a bright path to introduce cultural Iran to the global community.”

One-Third of Iran’s National Income Relies on Earth Sciences



TEHRAN - Earth sciences play a vital role in Iran’s economy and sustainable development, yet in recent years there has been a dramatic decline in students choosing this field. Experts warn this trend threatens the future of mineral exploration, water and energy management, and could ultimately jeopardize national security.

In an interview with Eghtesad Online, Mansour Ghorbani, President of the Geological Society of Iran, described the situation as alarming. “It’s not just earth sciences — unfortunately, science in general isn’t seen as central to development, daily life, or environmental protection in our country,” he said.

Ghorbani criticized current academic standards, which focus on the quantity of scientific papers rather than real-world impact. “True science is that which directly benefits society and national interests,” he stressed. This disconnect, he argued, discourages young people from pursuing science, especially geology.

Highlighting the economic significance, Ghorbani noted that around 30–35% of Iran’s gross national income is directly or indirectly tied to earth sciences. This includes oil and gas, petrochemicals, and mineral industries, alongside factories that rely on domestic raw materials. “Industries like ceramics, glass, cement, and steel all depend on geology, but policymakers and even society at large often fail to recognize this,” he warned.

Ghorbani also emphasized a serious gap in education. “From primary to secondary school, students aren’t properly taught about the earth’s role in human life and the environment,” he said, adding that this lack of awareness leads to limited public and political support for the field.

Discussing mineral exploration, Ghorbani expressed concern that most surface reserves are now depleted, while deep and modern explorations have not advanced due to inadequate long-term planning. “Iran has enormous mineral potential, but exploiting it responsibly requires sustainable strategies that also protect the environment,” he stated.

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Over 772,000 Afghan Migrants Leave Iran

TEHRAN - The head of Iran’s Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) at the Ministry of Interior has announced the return and departure of over 772,000 Afghan migrants from Iran to Afghanistan through the country’s border crossings.

According to ILNA, citing the Public Relations Department of the Khorasan Razavi Governorate, Nader YarAhmadi made the statement during a press conference held at the Taybad governor’s office.

“Since the beginning of this year, more than 772,000 Afghan nationals have returned to their country via the Dogharoon, Milak, and Mahirood border crossings—an increase of 350,000 compared to the same period last year,” YarAhmadi said.

He urged Afghan nationals to return home and obtain proper identity documents so they can later enter Iran legally as ordinary citizens with visas.

Highlighting the issue of identification documents, YarAhmadi noted that facilities are available at camps to issue ID cards for those without documents. By registering fingerprints, all personal information becomes accessible, although passports must still be issued by Afghanistan’s diplomatic missions.

The official added that all Afghan residents holding special residence permits and “Amayesh” cards can register for schooling by obtaining a registration slip. However, he forecasted a decline in the number of foreign students in the coming academic year.

“Afghan nationals, like other foreigners, can invest in Iran by presenting valid identification,” YarAhmadi said.

He further explained that returning migrants can resolve any disputes from their time living in Iran by visiting Iranian embassies and consulates in Afghanistan.

“We want to see a strong Afghanistan and believe that citizens of our neighboring country can help rebuild their homeland,” he added.

YarAhmadi emphasized that only those whose life-threatening risks are confirmed by security authorities will be covered under the 1951 Refugee Convention and supported by Iran.

He acknowledged that due to exceptional national circumstances, some migrants headed directly to the borders without passing through camps, which led to crowding at land exits.

In Khorasan Razavi province, YarAhmadi said government agencies, military forces, and local communities have mobilized to manage the return of migrants through the Dogharoon border crossing, expressing gratitude for the province’s coordination efforts.

He also pointed out that census slips issued to foreign nationals were invalidated as of July 6, 2025, and are no longer recognized. However, agencies responsible for migrant affairs will issue exit permits to Afghan nationals wishing to return home.

During a visit to observe the repatriation process at Dogharoon, YarAhmadi stated that Afghan migrants who voluntarily report themselves for departure will receive special benefits, while those arrested for violations will face blacklisting for years.

He noted that in some provinces, such as Khorasan Razavi, nearly 70% of Afghan migrants have opted to leave voluntarily.

Addressing migrants’ concerns about financial and legal matters, YarAhmadi explained that provincial offices for foreign nationals are prepared to form dispute resolution committees to help settle issues without legal costs.

Regarding the transfer of assets, he clarified that Afghan nationals face no restrictions on taking cash out of Iran, provided customs regulations are followed.

Speaking on the possibility of returning to Iran after departure, YarAhmadi said foreign nationals with valid passports can apply for visas, although the final decision rests with the Iranian government.

Rejecting claims that some Afghan nationals face life-threatening danger, he reiterated that only those whose risk is confirmed by security officials will qualify for refugee protection.

“Iran has for years provided facilities to Afghan nationals, but with relative stability in Afghanistan, there is no longer a need to continue at the same scale,” he said.

In response to complaints of mistreatment during the departure process, YarAhmadi noted that migrants can use the same complaint mechanisms available to Iranian citizens and take cases to judicial authorities.

He concluded by highlighting cooperation with the Taliban, saying Afghan officials have pledged during formal and informal meetings to prevent deported migrants from returning to Iran.

No Disruption in Iran-Russia Trade During 12-Day War

TEHRAN - The recent 12-day war in the region had no significant impact on trade between Iran and Russia, according to Hadi Tizhoush Taban, President of the Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce. He also reported a notable increase in Iranian exports to Russia during the first quarter of the current Iranian year (spring 2025).

Speaking to ILNA, Tizhoush Taban explained that field surveys conducted in Astara, a key border city central to Iran’s trade with Russia, confirmed that commercial exchanges between the two countries remained stable throughout the conflict period. “There was no meaningful change in trade volumes during the war,” he said, emphasizing that goods and commercial products continued to be exported and imported as usual, both during and after the conflict.

Highlighting the resilience of economic ties, Tizhoush Taban noted that Iran and Russia enjoy a strong relationship supported by significant economic agreements. “Iran’s participation in organizations like BRICS and the Eurasian Economic Union underlines the depth of these relations,” he added. Consequently, neither the outbreak of hostilities nor the subsequent ceasefire had a major effect on bilateral trade.

Regarding the volume of trade in spring 2025, Tizhoush Taban cited official data from the Astara Customs Office. Between March 20 and June 20, Iran exported approximately 274,070 tons of goods, valued at over \$145 million, through Astara’s rail and road customs facilities. This represents an 18% increase in export volume



compared to the same period last year. The exported goods were destined not only for Russia but also for countries including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

On the import side, Iran brought in about 54,910 tons of goods worth around \$44.6 million via Astara’s rail, road, and sea customs points. However, this figure shows a 36% decrease in import volume compared to spring 2024. These imports came mainly from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Switzerland, Belarus, and other countries.

Tizhoush Taban stressed that, despite the decline in import volumes, there is no fundamental issue affecting trade between Iran and Russia. “We have not faced specific problems in this area,” he remarked. He also mentioned that air shipments to Russia, which had been temporarily disrupted, are expected to return to normal with the resumption of flights.

Overall, the data indicate that Iran’s trade with Russia remains resilient even in the face of regional tensions, backed by deep-rooted economic cooperation and strategic agreements. According to Tizhoush Taban, official foreign trade statistics are regularly published by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration and can be accessed through its website.

The report concludes that while external conflicts may pose challenges, the solid trade infrastructure and diplomatic ties between Iran and Russia continue to support stable and, in some areas, growing economic exchanges.

Iran Issues 90 Foreign Investment Licenses During 12-Day War



TEHRAN - Despite ongoing conflict, Iran has issued nearly 90 foreign investment licenses in just 12 days, according to a senior official at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

Speaking to Tasnim, Abolfazl Koudei, Deputy Minister of Economy, said that in the face of war and sanctions, the country must remain flexible. “God willing, after recent developments, we will witness an increase in national strength,” he added.

Koudei noted that various scenarios and necessary tools to handle potential crises have been reviewed and selected. He explained that Iran has diversified its channels for attracting and facilitating investment. “We have also leveraged tools of economic diplomacy and plan to use innovative financing, which will include the digital economy and smart government initiatives,” he said.

The deputy minister emphasized that Iran welcomes investors from all countries, but its strategic priority is given to those with greater investment potential, especially neighboring countries and nations with strategic ties to Iran.

Koudei described the country’s investment outlook as forward-looking and stressed that Iran will utilize all legal and economic instruments in the international arena to secure foreign capital and strengthen economic interdependence with neighboring and other partner countries.

Referring to what he called Iran’s political and military victory during the recent 12-day conflict, Koudei acknowledged that risks such as war and sanctions do affect the flow of investment, but he underlined that Iran’s strategies aim to mitigate these risks.

Iran Seeks Independence in Livestock Feed Supply



TEHRAN - Iran is moving toward independence in livestock feed production, signaling the end of its heavy reliance on imported soybean meal. According to Alireza Aghashahi, head of the Animal Nutrition Research Department at the country’s Animal Science Research Institute, an integrated program has been launched to introduce new feed sources, optimize the use of agricultural residues, and advance nutritional technologies.

Speaking with a Tasnim, Aghashahi explained that the institute’s research and development agenda focuses on utilizing agricultural byproducts—such as beet leaves and tops, sugarcane residues, and cereal straw—by applying biotechnology and developing better methods for storing and using alfalfa.

He added that the institute is also working closely with private sector partners and relevant research institutions to develop technical know-how for using alternative resources, including aquatic plants like water hyacinth, banana residues, forage beans, and millet.

Among this year’s top priorities, Aghashahi highlighted reducing corn silage waste, improving barley harvesting practices to boost water-use efficiency, and promoting complete feed silage in small- and medium-sized livestock operations to increase overall feed productivity.

As part of broader national strategies, he said the institute is exploring the use of unconventional water sources to grow fodder and alternative oilseed meals to cut dependence on soybean meal imports. “By leveraging domestic capabilities, technological innovation, and national cooperation, success is possible even in the most challenging circumstances,” Aghashahi stated, expressing hope that 2025 will mark a turning point for livestock nutrition in Iran.

Aghashahi noted that in recent years, climate change has emerged as one of the most serious threats to agriculture and livestock feed production in Iran. Reduced rainfall, rising temperatures, and repeated droughts have led to declining water resources, soil quality degradation, and shrinking forage crop acreage—posing structural challenges to the feed supply chain.

U.S. Sanctions Cuban President Four Years After Historic Protests

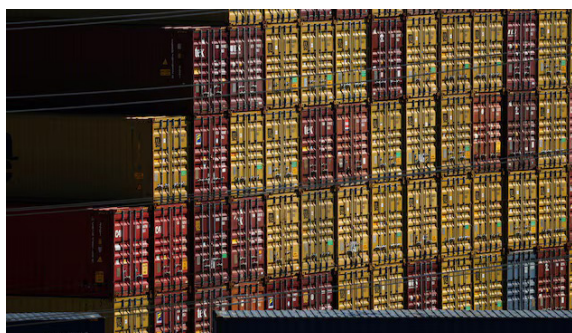
WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - It is the latest in a series of measures by US President Donald Trump's administration to increase pressure on the Cuban government.

The United States was restricting visas for the Cuban president and other high-ranking government officials, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in an X post on the fourth anniversary of historic anti-government protests in Cuba. Demonstrations rocked the island in July 2021 as thousands took to the streets to protest shortages of basic goods and worsening economic conditions.

Hundreds were arrested, one person died and dozens were injured in the latest protests since Fidel Castro's 1959 communist revolution.



U.S. Customs Duties Top \$100b for First Time in a Fiscal Year



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. customs duty collections surged again in June as President Donald Trump's tariffs gained steam, topping \$100 billion for the first time during a fiscal year and helping to produce a surprise \$27 billion budget surplus for the month, the Treasury Department reported.

The budget data showed that tariffs are starting to build into a significant revenue contributor for the federal government, with customs duties in June hitting new records, quadrupling to \$27.2 billion on a gross basis and \$26.6 billion on a net basis after refunds.

The budget results are likely to reinforce Trump's view of tariffs as a lucrative revenue source and as a hammer to enforce non-trade foreign policy. He said on Tuesday that "the big money" would start to flow in after he imposes higher "reciprocal" tariffs on U.S. trading partners on August 1.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on X that the results show the U.S. "reaping the rewards" from Trump's tariff agenda.

"As President Trump works hard to take back our nation's economic sovereignty, today's Monthly Treasury Statement is demonstrating record customs duties - and with no inflation!" Bessent said.

For the first nine months of fiscal 2025, the customs take reached records of \$113.3 billion on a gross basis and \$108 billion on a net basis, nearly double the prior-year collections. The government's fiscal year ends on Sept. 30.

Based on those results, tariffs have now grown into the fourth-largest revenue source for the federal government, behind individual withheld receipts at \$2.683 trillion for the fiscal year, non-withheld individual receipts at \$965 billion and corporate taxes at \$392 billion.

ASEAN Warns South China Sea Tensions Rising Over Land Reclamation



KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - ASEAN Foreign Ministers have reiterated the regional bloc's firm commitment to peace and stability in the South China Sea, amid growing concern over land reclamation activities and serious incidents that risk escalating tensions in the contested maritime area.

The ministers said in a Joint Communiqué issued here yesterday following the 58th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting that some members expressed concern over ongoing developments, including activities that threaten maritime safety, damage the marine environment, and undermine regional trust and confidence.

"Concerns were expressed by some ministers on the land reclamations, activities, and serious incidents in the area, including actions that put the safety of all persons at risk, damage to the marine environment, which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions, and may undermine peace, security, and stability in the region," they said.

The ministers reaffirmed the importance of exercising self-restraint and avoiding actions that could complicate or escalate disputes, while emphasizing the peaceful resolution of conflicts under universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

They also stressed the importance of non-militarization and restraint by all parties, in line with the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties (DOC) in the South China Sea, and called for the full and effective implementation of the DOC in its entirety.



UN Slams Israel as 10 More Palestinians Killed Seeking Aid in Gaza

JERUSALEM (Dispatches) - Ten Palestinians were reported killed while waiting for rations in Gaza, adding to nearly 800 similar deaths in the last six weeks, according to the UN, with Israel's army saying it issued new instructions to troops following repeated reports of fatalities.

Friday's reported violence came as negotiators from Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas were locked in indirect talks in Qatar to try to agree on a temporary ceasefire in the more than 21-month conflict.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday he hoped a deal for a 60-day pause in the war could be struck in the coming days, and that he would then be ready to negotiate a more permanent end to hostilities.

Hamas has said the free flow of aid is a main sticking point in the talks, with Gaza's more than two million residents facing a dire humanitarian crisis of hunger and disease amid the grinding conflict.

Israel began easing a more than two-month total blockade of aid in late May. Since then, a new US- and Israel-backed organisation called the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) has effectively sidelined the territory's vast UN-led aid delivery network.

There are frequent reports of Israeli forces firing on people seeking aid, with Gaza's civil defence agency saying 10 Palestinians were killed Friday while waiting at a distribution point near the southern city of Rafah.

The UN, which refuses to cooperate with GHF over concerns it was designed to cater to Israeli military objectives, said Friday that 798 people have been killed seeking aid between late May and July 7, including 615 "in the vicinity of the GHF sites".

"Where people are lining up for essential supplies such as food and medicine, and where... they have a choice between being shot or being fed, this is unacceptable," UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday's deaths, but has previously accused militants of firing at civilians in the vicinity of aid centres.

Asked about the UN figures, the military said it had worked to minimise "possible friction" between aid seekers and soldiers, and that it conducted "thorough examinations" of incidents in which "harm to civilians who arrived at distribution facilities was reported".

"Instructions were issued to forces in the field following lessons learned," it added in a statement.

GHF called the UN report "false and misleading", claiming that "most deadly attacks on aid sites have been linked to UN convoys".

Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, told AFP that Israeli forces killed 45 people overall in the territory on Friday.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties accessing many areas mean AFP is unable to independently verify tolls and details provided by the agency and other parties.

In Gaza's south, a witness said Israeli tanks were seen near Khan Yunis, reporting "intense gunfire, intermittent air strikes, artillery shelling, and ongoing bulldozing and destruction of displacement camps and agricultural land".

Israel's military said troops were operating in the area against "terrorist infrastructure sites, both above and below ground".

Hamas has said that as part of a potential truce deal it was willing to release 10 of the hostages taken during its attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which sparked the Gaza war.

Netanyahu, who is under pressure to end the war after mounting military losses, said that would leave 10 living hostages still in captivity.

"I hope we can complete it in a few days," he said of the initial ceasefire agreement and hostage release in an interview with US outlet Newsmax.

"We'll probably have a 60-day ceasefire, get the first batch out, then use the 60-day ceasefire to negotiate an end to this."

Netanyahu has said that a key condition of any deal is that Hamas first gives up its weapons and its hold on Gaza, warning that failure to do so on Israel's terms would lead to further conflict.

Another issue holding up a deal is disagreement on the number of Palestinian prisoners to be released in exchange for hostages, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar has said.

Hamas has said it wants "real guarantees" for a lasting truce and Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza, and that it opposes any Israeli moves to push Palestinians into "isolated enclaves".

PKK Fighters Destroy Weapons at Key Ceremony in Iraqi Kurdistan

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) - Thirty PKK fighters destroyed their weapons at a ceremony in Iraqi Kurdistan Friday, two months after the Kurdish rebels ended their decades-long armed struggle against the Turkish state.

The ceremony marks a turning point in the transition of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from armed insurgency to democratic politics, as part of a broader effort to draw a line under one of the region's longest-running conflicts.

Analysts say the PKK's military weakness makes disarmament a face-saving move, while allowing Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to claim victory over a decades-long insurgency.

Outside the ancient cave of Casene, a group of 30 PKK fighters, both men and women, gathered on a stage in their khaki fatigues, their faces uncovered in front of an audience of around 300 people, an AFP correspondent at the scene said.

One by one, they walked down to lay their weapons in a pit which was then set on fire. Most were rifles but there was one machinegun and one rocket-propelled grenade.

As they looked on, people in the crowd started cheering while others could be heard weeping.

"In order to ensure the practical success of the 'peace and democratic society' process... we voluntarily destroy our weapons as a step of goodwill and determination," read a PKK statement.

"We wish that this step will bring about peace and freedom."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said he hopes the start of the PKK weapons handover will lead to the country's security and lasting peace in the region.



"May God grant us success in achieving our goals on this path we walk for the security of our country, the peace of our nation, and the establishment of lasting peace in our region," Erdogan said in a post on X.

The ceremony followed months of indirect negotiations between jailed PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan and Ankara that began in October with Erdogan's blessing, and were facilitated by Turkey's pro-Kurdish DEM party.

Ocalan, a hero for many Kurds, who refer to him as "Apo" (uncle), has been in prison since 1999.

Following Friday's ceremony, a top PKK commander said Turkey must release Ocalan to ensure the success of the peace process.

"Ensuring Leader Apo's physical freedom legally, via legal guarantees, is essential... This is our primary condition and demand. Without this development, it is highly unlikely that the process will continue successfully," Besse Hozat, one of the PKK's two top leaders, told AFP in an interview.

The Turkish state must also grant demobilised PKK militants who want to return to Turkey and enter democratic political life to exercise their rights, said Hozat, who is one of the group's joint leaders.

"The Turkish state needs to grant us the right to enter democratic politics... We are ready and willing to go to Turkey to engage in democratic politics... to pursue our struggle for freedom and democracy, and to promote democratic socialism in Turkey," added Hozat.

The PKK took up arms in 1984, beginning a string of bloody attacks on Turkish soil that sparked a conflict that cost more than 40,000 lives.

But more than four decades on, the PKK in May announced its dissolution, saying it would pursue a democratic struggle to defend the rights of the Kurdish minority in line with a historic call by Ocalan, who has been serving a life sentence in Turkey since 1999.

Tensions rose ahead of the ceremony as two drones were shot down overnight near Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga bases, one in Sulaimaniyah, and the other in Kirkuk, according to officials who did not say was behind the attacks.

Throughout the morning, cars could be seen pulling up to Casene cave, a symbolic location that once housed a Kurdish printing press, Firat news agency said.

In the crowd were officials representing Nechirvan Barzani, president of Iraq's Kurdistan region, veteran Iraqi Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), an AFP correspondent said.

U.S.-China Tensions Ease Slightly After Positive Rubio-Wang Meetings

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Chinese top diplomat Wang Yi had a "positive" meeting in Malaysia, both sides said, in an apparent bid to ease tensions between the rival powers.

Rubio and Wang's first face-to-face meeting since US President Donald Trump returned to office came as Washington and Beijing are locked in disputes ranging from trade to Taiwan - and both countries vie for greater influence in the region.

"I thought it was a very constructive and positive meeting," Rubio told reporters after the hour-long talks in capital Kuala Lumpur, but he stressed: "It was not a negotiation."

"I think we left it feeling as there's some areas we're gonna be able to work together on."

Rubio was also optimistic that a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping would happen.

"There's a strong desire on both sides to do it," Rubio said, adding no date was set.

Beijing said in a statement "both sides agreed that the meeting was positive, pragmatic



and constructive".

Both countries agreed to "enhance communication and dialogue through diplomatic channels... and explore expanding cooperation areas while managing differences," China's foreign ministry said.

The sit-down between Wang and Rubio, a longtime China hawk, came as Asian foreign ministers wrapped up three days of talks at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations gathering in Kuala Lumpur.

Top diplomats from Russia, the European Union, Australia, Britain and Canada also attended.

U.S. officials said ahead of Rubio's first trip to the region as secretary of state that Washington was "prioritizing" its commitment to East and Southeast Asia.

While U.S. tariffs overshadowed the gathering, Rubio said he was "warmly received" by Asian partners as he sought to placate concerns over the duties.

Sinner Defeats Djokovic to Set Up Alcaraz Showdown in Final



LONDON (Dispatches) - Top seed Jannik Sinner ensured Novak Djokovic will be absent from a Wimbledon men's singles final for the first time in eight years after handing the Serbian great a brutal Centre Court battering.

Italian Sinner lost both his previous Wimbledon duels with Djokovic but turned the tables in emphatic fashion as his power and precision proved too much for the seven-time champion who, at 38, looked every bit his age in a humbling 6-3 6-3 6-4 loss.

In his first Wimbledon final, the 23-year-old Sinner will face Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in a tantalising re-match of their recent French Open humdinger which the Italian lost after battling for more than five hours, squandering three championship points.

Alcaraz stayed on course for a Wimbledon three-peat with a 6-4 5-7 6-3 7-6(6) defeat of Taylor Fritz.

"I don't know what to expect, you saw the last final and you never know," Sinner, just the third Italian to reach a Wimbledon singles final and hoping to become his country's first champion at the grasscourt slam," said on court.

"It's a huge honour to share the court with Carlos, we try to push ourselves to the limit. I love watching him. Hopefully it will be a good match like the last one, I don't know about better, I don't think that's possible."

Djokovic, who arrived in London bidding to equal Roger Federer's men's record eight Wimbledon titles and claim an unprecedented 25th major trophy, had not lost an All England Club semi-final since the Swiss got the better of him in 2012.

But his 52nd Grand Slam semi-final proved a bridge too far as Sinner repeated his victory at the same stage of Roland Garros to confirm that a new order has now firmly established itself at the top of men's tennis.

Djokovic has often looked superhuman on Wimbledon's most historic stage, but on Friday Father Time chased him down as he looked defenceless against a sublime Sinner who dropped only six points on serve in the first two sets.

He briefly stemmed the tide in the third set to move 3-0 ahead but it proved an illusion as Sinner, bidding to add the Wimbledon title to his two Australian and one U.S. Open crowns, nipped any hope of a famous

comeback in the bud.

Djokovic appeared to struggle physically in the closing stages after needing treatment and Sinner wasted no time in putting the old warrior out of his misery in less than two hours to complete his set of Grand Slam finals.

Sinner joined in the applause as Djokovic left Centre Court, giving a thumbs up to a cheering crowd who may have thought they had witnessed his last Wimbledon hurrah.

Djokovic, who has reached the semi-finals of every Grand Slam this year -- retiring against Alexander Zverev in Australia and losing to Sinner in Paris and now here -- later said he plans to be back, but admitted the wear and tear of battling the new generation takes its toll.

"When I'm fresh and fit I can still play really good tennis but playing best of five, particularly this year, has been a struggle physically," he told reporters.

"The longer it goes, the worse the condition gets. I reached the semis of every slam this year but had to play these guys who are fit and young and I feel like I go into the matches with the tank half empty."

The day's second semi-final had been given top billing but it proved an anti-climax for the fans, many of whom chanted "Nole Nole" as the match sped away from Djokovic.

Earlier twice defending champion Alcaraz tamed the towering Fritz to reach his third straight Wimbledon final, rediscovering his A-game when it mattered most to battle past the American in a 6-4 5-7 6-3 7-6(6) victory.

Eyeing a sixth Grand Slam title, the Spaniard was too strong for the metronomically consistent Fritz, whose biggest weapons were still not damaging enough to unsettle the second seed under a fiery sun on Centre Court.

Alcaraz's victory set the stage for a tantalising final against world number one Jannik Sinner, who teed up a rematch of their epic French Open duel by swatting aside Novak Djokovic in straight sets in the other semi-final.

Alcaraz, who last tasted defeat at the Barcelona Open in April and fought back to beat Sinner in five brutal sets to claim the title in Paris, has now won a remarkable 24 matches in a row.

Chelsea Aim to Defy Odds and Deny PSG Clean Sweep



EAST RUTHERFORD (Dispatches) - Chelsea must somehow try to stop an irresistible Paris Saint-Germain side from adding the Club World Cup trophy to their UEFA Champions League title as the final of the first edition of FIFA's expanded competition takes place on Sunday.

PSG travelled to the United States fresh from becoming European champions with a stunning 5-0 demolition of Inter Milan in Munich in late May, and they have lived up to their favourites tag at the Club World Cup.

Luis Enrique's side put four goals past Atletico Madrid in the group stage, four more past Lionel Messi's Inter Miami in the last 16, and then proved too strong for Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals.

They appeared to hit new heights as they tore apart Kylian Mbappe's Real Madrid in the last four, when their 4-0 winning margin could have been far greater.

The Parisians now stand on the verge of an extraordinary achievement, as they look to complete a clean sweep of trophies in this marathon 2024/25 season and add the world title to their French and European crowns.

"That is the objective we have had since the beginning but it is always very difficult to achieve these things -- very few teams can do what we are trying to do," said Luis Enrique after the semi-final.

PSG are therefore overwhelming favourites for the game which will be played at the 82,500-capacity MetLife Stadium in New Jersey -- with the Manhattan skyline as a backdrop -- and which is set to be attended by Donald Trump.

However Desire Doue, one of their standout performers during a remarkable campaign, insisted there were no concerns about complacency.

"We are not over-confident, not at all," France international Doue told reporters before PSG trained at Rutgers University, south of New York City, yesterday.

Pogacar Back in Yellow After Winning Tour de France Stage Seven

PARIS (Dispatches) - Defending champion Tadej Pogacar (UAE Team Emirates) is back in the yellow jersey after the Slovenian fought off Dane Jonas Vingegaard (Visma-Lease a Bike) to win stage seven of the Tour de France.

Pogacar, three-times winner, claimed his second stage of this year's Tour at the end of a 197km ride from Saint-Malo to Mur-de-Bretagne, outsprinting Vingegaard at the summit finish, with Britain's Oscar Onley taking third place.

Mathieu van der Poel began the day with a one-second lead over Pogacar but the Dutchman finished 22nd on the stage and slipped to fifth overall, with Belgian Remco Evenepoel now in second place and 54 seconds behind the Slovenian.

On his 19th career Tour de France stage win, the 26-year-old Pogacar gained four seconds on Vingegaard with ten bonus seconds to the Dane's six.

"It was super-hot today, and super fast but we had a plan and we stuck to it," said the Team UAE rider who was champion in 2021, 2022 and 2024.

In the overall standings, Remco Evenepoel is second overall 54 seconds off first as he came sixth on the day, two seconds adrift.

"The Tour de France isn't over yet," said Evenepoel, who lost



time in a cross wind on stage 1 before winning the stage five individual time-trial.

French starlet Kevin Vauquelin continues his bright run in third at 1min 11sec while two time champion Vingegaard is fourth at 1min 17.

Fans cheered for Vauquelin along much of the route. On Thursday a hot-air balloon flew over the peloton with his face on it.

"All you could hear was 'Kevin, Kevin' all along the road, it's so good to have a new face competing with us," said Pogacar.

Overnight leader Van der Poel rounds out the top five at 1min 29sec after wilting on the final climb, scene of his 2021 coming of age win and his first yellow jersey.

"Matthieu and I both wanted to win on this iconic climb, but maybe he left too much on the road yesterday," Pogacar said of his friend Van der Poel who climbed top of the overall rankings Thursday.

The day's action revolved around two ascents of the Mur de Bretagne, a 2km climb at an average of 6 percent, that has been written into Tour de France folklore.

Liverpool Retire Diogo Jota's No. 20 Shirt in Emotional Tribute



LIVERPOOL (Dispatches) - Liverpool are to retire Diogo Jota's number 20 shirt in honour of the Portugal forward who was killed with his brother Andre Silva in a car crash this month.

"After consultation with his wife, Rute, and family, the club can announce the squad number will be retired in honour and memory of Diogo across all levels, including LFC Women and Academy," the club announced.

"I believe this is the first time in Liverpool Football Club's history that such an honour has been bestowed upon an individual," the club's chief executive Michael Edwards noted.

"Therefore, we can say this is a unique tribute to a uniquely wonderful person," he added.

Liverpool return to action for the first time since the July 3 tragedy at English Championship side Preston in a pre-season friendly on Sunday.

A rendition of Liverpool's anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" will be played prior to the 1400 GMT kick-off and Preston will lay a wreath in front of the away supporters.

A minute's silence will then be observed, digital tributes displayed on the stadium big screen and on pitchside advertising boards and players from both teams will wear black armbands.

Crystal Palace Dumped to Conference League Over UEFA Ownership Rules

LONDON (Dispatches) - Crystal Palace have been demoted from the Europa League to the Conference League by UEFA for a breach of multi-club ownership rules, European football's governing body confirmed.

US businessman John Textor owns a stake in the Eagles and is the majority owner of French club Lyon, who have also qualified for the Europa League.

Under UEFA multi-club ownership rules, Lyon have been allowed to keep their place in the second-tier competition of European football as they finished higher in Ligue 1 (6th) than Palace (12th) in the Premier League last season.

Palace qualified for European competition for the first time by winning the FA Cup in May - the club's first ever



major trophy.

Textor has since agreed to sell his 43 percent stake in the London club to New York Jets owner Woody Johnson.

However, that deal is yet to be completed and was struck well after UEFA's deadline of March 1 for multi-club conflicts to be resolved.

A decision on Palace's fate had been delayed by a separate case that initially saw Lyon relegated to the second tier of French football due to financial problems.

The seven-time French champions won an appeal against that decision on Wednesday after Textor stood aside from the day-to-day running of the club.