



**PLEASE NOTE:**

We are rapidly approaching 2 wonderful Holidays. Christmas and Hannukah which coincide this year. I will be very involved with family issues for the entire next week and the News will be somewhat abbreviated. Thank you for your understanding and our family wishes you a very wonderful, meaningful Christmas celebration as well as a great meaningful Happy Hannukah, The festival of Lights. Thank you RDB



## Missile fired from Yemen explodes in south Tel Aviv, lightly injuring 16

*IDF says interception attempts failed; sirens send millions rushing to shelters throughout central Israel in the middle of the night, in second Houthi attack in as many days*

By *Tol Staff Today*, 6:02 am Updated at 7:29 am

**A missile fired by Yemen's Houthis exploded in a public park in Jaffa, south Tel Aviv, overnight Friday-Saturday after attempts to intercept it failed.**

**Medics said 16 people were lightly injured by shattered glass, including a three-year-old girl, while 14 were bruised while rushing to shelters.**

**Footage from the park showed a crater where the missile had impacted.**

**The missile launch caused sirens to sound throughout central Israel at 3:44 a.m., sending millions rushing to shelters from their beds.**

**It was the second time in as many days that a Houthi missile sparked sirens in the country's center in the middle of the night.**

The military confirmed that a missile originating in Yemen impacted in Tel Aviv, saying "attempted interceptions did not succeed."



*This picture shows debris in a bedroom in Tel Aviv early on December 21, 2024, after a projectile fired from Yemen struck near the building (Jack GUEZ / AFP)*



*A crater next to a child's play area in a park in a residential area of Tel Aviv caused by a missile fired from Yemen early on December 21, 2024. (Jack GUEZ / AFP)*

It said details of the event were being looked into. Videos on social media showed the moment of impact and the failed interceptions.

ראשוני: שריפה פרצה בתל אביב כנראה בעקבות הירי מתימן | לכל העדכונים <<<

[https://t.co/s35YXgWTOI@AnnaPines@\\_hadasgrinberg](https://t.co/s35YXgWTOI@AnnaPines@_hadasgrinberg) pic.twitter.com/8HnzAAcS9K

— כאן חדשות (@kann\_news) December 21, 2024

מערך ההגנה האווירית של חיל האוויר שיגר שני מיירטים מסוג חץ וכיפת ברזל לעבר הטיל החותי. שניהם [pic.twitter.com/SYAZ18vdll](https://pic.twitter.com/SYAZ18vdll)

— Or Heller אור הלר (@OrHeller) December 21, 2024

A video showed the impact site in the park in Tel Aviv.

[pic.twitter.com/ZoethESH46](https://pic.twitter.com/ZoethESH46) זירת הנפילה במרכז.

— אור רביד | Or Ravid (@OrRavid) December 21, 2024

Footage also showed exploded windows and debris in several surrounding apartments, apparently as a result of the shockwave.

נוק נרחב לדירות ובתים באזור הנפילה ביפו, בעיקר חלונות וזכוכיות. 14 פצועים קל פונו עד כה. כך נראית הדירה של בת' שמספרת שלא הספיקה לרדת למקלט בזמן שכל הזכיות התנפצו בביתה מהפיצוץ בגינה שמתחת לבית [pic.twitter.com/UCyD7xmu17](https://pic.twitter.com/UCyD7xmu17)

— Bar Peleg (@bar\_peleg) [December 21, 2024](#)

מכתש בגן משחקים, בין בניינים | תיעוד ההרס בת"א – וזה הציוץ של בכיר

<https://t.co/TFuwE6Rld2> [pic.twitter.com/8vfo3QYkkG](https://pic.twitter.com/8vfo3QYkkG)

— ynet עדכוני (@ynetalerts) [December 21, 2024](#)

**On Thursday, a drone was intercepted off the Tel Aviv coast and on Monday a missile triggered sirens across the country.**

**The latest missile attack from Yemen came only two days after the last one, and after the Israeli Air Force carried out a major strike on the country.**

**Early on Thursday morning, a Houthi projectile was partially intercepted outside Israeli airspace** by air defenses. However, the warhead didn't explode in the air and [crashed into an empty school building](#) in the city of Ramat Gan, causing severe damage but no injuries.



*The damage caused from a ballistic missile fired from Yemen, at a school in Ramat Gan, December 19, 2024. (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)*

Shortly afterwards, **the IDF carried out intense airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen (the operation had been planned for weeks, with the planes already in the air when the missile was launched)**. Dozens of planes struck Houthi targets along Yemen's western coast and, for the first time, in the rebel-held capital Sana'a,

**Fourteen fighter jets**, alongside refuelers and spy planes, flew some 2,000 kilometers and dropped over 60

munitions on Houthi military targets, the IDF said.

Israeli **military sources said the strikes in Yemen were aimed at paralyzing all three ports** used by the Iran-backed group. The targets included fuel and oil depots, two power stations, and eight tugboats used at the Houthi-controlled ports.

All tugboats used to bring ships into ports were struck in the Israeli attack, as were power stations. A previous attack on the Hodeida port targeted cranes used to unload shipments.

Israel now believes that all activity at the ports controlled by the Houthis is paralyzed, sources said Thursday.

The military, which released videos of the strikes and the aerial refueling amid the operation, called the destruction of the targets a major blow to the military operations of the Houthis.

**Footage released by the IDF shows Israeli airstrikes in Yemen and aerial refueling operations, early December 19, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)**

**Houthi rebels have repeatedly fired drones and missiles toward Israel, with most being shot down but some managing to reach the country and cause death and destruction. Thursday's strikes marked Israel's third counterattack on areas in Yemen held by the rebel group.**

The **Houthis began their attacks following Hamas's October 7 massacre** in Israel, seeking to add pressure on Israel, along with other Iran-aligned groups such as Hezbollah. The Houthis have launched more than 200 missiles and 170 drones at Israel in the past year. According to the IDF, the vast majority did not reach Israel or were intercepted by the military and Israeli allies in the region.

The **group has also carried out repeated missile and drone attacks on some 100 merchant vessels** attempting to traverse the Red Sea, forcing many carriers to avoid the key waterway and hamstringing global shipping.

After Thursday's strikes in Yemen, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the rebel group was among the last Iranian proxies still active "after Hamas, Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria." The Houthis, he said, "are

learning and they will learn the hard way that anyone who attacks Israel pays a very heavy price.”  
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/missile-from-yemen-explodes-in-south-tel-aviv-park-lightly-injuring-16/>

## **A gap in Israel's defense: The reasons behind failure to intercept Houthi missile**

**Analysis: Recent failures to intercept Yemeni munitions targeting Israel could be linked to a vulnerability in its air defense system or an increase in Iranian missile sophistication**

*Ron Ben-Yishai* | 04:25

Several reasons may explain the IDF's failure Saturday overnight to intercept the ballistic missile launched by the Houthis, which struck a playground and caused extensive damage in the area. This incident follows the "partial interception" of another missile that hit a school in Ramat Ef'al and the drone that infiltrated Israeli airspace and struck a building in Yavne.

These incidents might expose a critical vulnerability in the IDF's air defense system protecting Israel's civilian and military home front. The military's [Iron Beam laser interception system](#) is expected to address the challenges posed by such launches, but until operational, Israel must gather intelligence on the missiles' launch and production sites and target them. The [Houthis](#), operating under their patron Iran, reportedly only own several dozens of them.

Footage of Houthi missile strike  
(Video: Magen David Adom, Fire and Rescue Authority)

Two main reasons might explain Saturday's interception failure. The first is that the missile was launched in a "flat" ballistic trajectory, possibly from an unexpected direction. As a result, Israeli or U.S. detection systems in Saudi Arabia may not have identified it in time, leading to its late discovery and insufficient time for interceptors to operate.

The second and more likely reason is that the Iranians have developed maneuvering warheads. These warheads separate from the missile during the final third of their trajectory and execute programmed maneuvers — changing direction and course — before striking their target.

The warhead of any ballistic missile is hypersonic. After re-entering the atmosphere, it moves using small rocket engines installed in the warhead or its fins. Such maneuvering is challenging for air defense systems, especially when the warhead travels at Mach 5 (five times the speed of sound).

This explains why the warhead of the missile launched early Thursday morning struck the building in Ramat Ef'al.



*Missile impact site in Jaffa (Photo: Shaul Golan)*

It's known that Iran possesses missiles with maneuvering warheads, such as the Khaibar-Shekan and Emad 4. According to foreign reports, several of these missiles struck Israeli air bases at Tel Nof and Nevatim in Iran's latest attack. It seems that Iran, in collaboration with the Houthis, has developed a method to launch these missiles in low ballistic trajectories, complicating their interception.

The pressing question now is why none of the other of Israel's air defense layers managed to intercept the warhead. The likely explanation is the late detection and the flat trajectory, which prevented the operation of all available defense apparatuses.

The threat posed by maneuvering warheads on Iran's heavy, long-range missiles would become existential for Israel should Iran succeed in developing nuclear warheads for these missiles.

A single nuclear-maneuvering warhead breaching Israel's air defense system could cause catastrophic destruction and loss of life.



**Damages following missile hit in central Israel (Photo: Shaul Golan)**



**(Photo: Shaul Golan)**

**The Houthis claimed responsibility for the missile strike in central Israel on Saturday, asserting they targeted a "military target in Jaffa using the 'Palestine 2' hypersonic ballistic missile."**

Senior Houthi official Mohammed Ali al-Houthi talked following the strike, saying, "The Arrow system doesn't provide Israel with safety against 'Palestine 2' missiles. Our capabilities continue to develop and the U.S., Europe and Israel's defense systems failures continue." <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/b16grzes1e#autoplay>

## **Eilat port lays desolate amid Houthi threat**

**After challenges faced by Israel's southernmost city during the war in Gaza, port officials say lack of work due to Houthi threat is a danger to Israeli economy**

[Ilana Curiel](#)|06:15

**Over a year ago, in November 2023, an [NYK Line shipping company cargo ship was hijacked by Yemen's Houthi terror organization](#). Since then, a threat in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait has prevented ships from docking at [Eilat port](#).**

**Starting in December 2023, roll-on/roll-off ships (carrying wheeled cargo) stopped visiting the port entirely.** The number of bulk carrier ships (carrying materials like potash) initially dropped from six per month to just one or two, with some months seeing no ships arriving at all.



**Eilat Port (Photo: Reuters)**

**Eilat Port employs 120 workers, including its management. With no solution found to retain workers and no state support, proposals to transfer employees to Ashdod and Haifa ports were unsuccessful.** By the end of summer, the port's management placed about 30 employees on unpaid leave and reduced the work hours of 20 others to two-thirds of their positions.

**Moshe Azulay, chair of the Histadrut Labor Federation's (Israel's national trade union center) Eilat branch, explained, "Bulk carrier ships occasionally arrive, about once every two or three months. The ship is unloaded and then it leaves. The port is effectively closed. Importers don't want to pay high costs. They can go through the [Suez Canal](#) — it's an economic issue."**

**"There's no ongoing activity. We managed to keep the workers employed for a year and two months. Eventually, management began flexing its muscles, claiming they don't have money to pay salaries. A decision was made to place employees on unpaid leave because the alternative was layoffs," he added.**

**"The Finance Ministry is involved in discussions with the Histadrut's transportation division. We hope to reach an agreement soon so all employees can return to work and receive financial aid from the ministry to cover their wages. But the workers will also need to contribute their share."**



Houthi fighters in Sanaa, Yemen (Photo: AP)

**Azulay, himself a resident of Eilat, described the contrast in the city. "The city operates 24/7 and hotel occupancy is at its peak. The city is bustling but the port is desolate,"** he said. "It's disheartening to see the port inactive when it used to be a strategic employment hub."

**"We all know each other in Eilat and are aware of the crisis. We're doing everything we can,** but there's a serious problem

because there's no work to do. While the port still provides services to security forces and isn't entirely shut down, many facets are inactive." He explained.

**"Eilat Port is a crucial, significant asset that directly and indirectly employs hundreds of workers.** It serves as Israel's southern gateway to Asia, Africa and the Gulf states and acts as a land bridge to Europe," said Eilat Mayor Eli Lankri.

**He stressed that the decline in port activity harms the city's economy,** which has already endured multiple crises in recent years — from the closure of Sde Dov Airport to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and war in Gaza, during which the city paid a heavy price in the early months and only began recovering recently.



Eilat Mayor Eli Lankri (Photo: Meir Ohayun)

**"For over a year, I've repeatedly warned about the implications of closing an international shipping route and the security and economic consequences of Houthi missile launches,** as well as those by pro-Iranian militias from Iraq and Syria. I've demanded threats against the city and the country be removed," Lankri said.

He highlighted the port's importance for regional economic security, particularly with Gulf states that signed peace agreements with Israel. "Successive Israeli governments have declared Eilat a vital strategic asset. I'd add that a strong Eilat isn't just a local interest — it's a national one. Eilat is Israel's southern gateway and it must remain open and secure."

**Lankri also expressed his gratitude to lawmakers and the IDF for their management of the war and its achievements.** "These efforts are laying the groundwork for a new and hopeful reality in the Middle East." "A decisive victory will, of course, include the return of hostages, but it won't be complete without removing the Houthi threat to Eilat, which endangers the city's security and economy. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait must be reopened and the additional threat posed by the Jordanian border must also be addressed," he added.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/business/article/sjmt8mnhjg>

## Report: Families of several hostages receive signs of life from loved ones

Sides said to have agreed on list of Palestinian prisoners to be released but are in contention over whether dangerous convicts should be sent abroad or freed in West Bank

By [Tol Staff](#) Today, 9:49 am



Protesters outside the IDF's Kirya military headquarters in Tel Aviv call for the release of the hostages on December 17, 2024. (AP/Ariel Schalit)

**Some hostages' families have recently received signs of life from their loved ones who are still held captive by Hamas in Gaza, Channel 12 news reported on Friday night.**

The report did not identify the families' identities in order to protect their privacy, nor did it specify what form the signs of life took.

After months in which no signs of life were seen from any of the hostages, Hamas released two videos in the last month of hostages Edan Alexander and Matan Zangauker

that were seemingly filmed in the last few weeks.

The families were told by unnamed officials familiar with the issue that the efforts to reach a hostage deal with Hamas are always ongoing, the report said, and that preliminary agreements could be reached within a week to 10 days. They added, however, that Hamas could stall the efforts at any point but that the military pressure of the ongoing war was helping.

“The regional situation in general, the American influence, the status of the war, and more have led to a combination of circumstances that advances the possibility for effective negotiations,” the families were reportedly told.

“Still, it’s important to note that even though the conditions have improved, there are still challenges ahead, and we’re working and hoping for a breakthrough,” the families were told.



**A protest march organized by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, calling for the release of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas terrorist in Gaza, seen marching through Central Park in New York City on December 15, 2024. (Israel Hadari/Flash90)**

Channel 12 also claimed that the sides have agreed on the list of Palestinian security prisoners who will be released during the first phase of the ceasefire in exchange for female, elderly and sick hostages.

However, Kan reported on Friday that a recent point of contention in the talks has been regarding where the prisoners will be released to.

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According to the report, unnamed officials said that Israel was demanding for the more dangerous prisoners to be released abroad and not to the West Bank in order to prevent release parties and to stop them from returning to terrorism.

However, the demand is not fully agreed upon within Israel either as other officials told Kan they opposed sending prisoners abroad because they could still perpetrate terrorism or help terrorists in Israel from abroad.

Some officials involved in the negotiations have appeared cautiously optimistic in the last week as they say that progress is being made in the efforts to reach a hostage deal as CIA Director William Burns arrived in Qatar on Wednesday to aid in ongoing talks.

Israeli officials appear more optimistic, however, as they have been telling Hebrew media in recent days that a deal could be days away while an [Arab diplomat](#) told The Times of Israel on Thursday that it would more likely be weeks.



**CIA Director William Burns (C) departs after testifying before the US Senate on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, March 11, 2024. (Mandel Ngan / AFP)**

Numerous attempts to reach a new hostage deal have repeatedly failed over the last year or so as Israel and Hamas have accused each other of sabotaging efforts and have refused to budge on key issues.

However, the current round of negotiations has seemingly come close to securing a deal that would guarantee the release of at least some of the 96 hostages who were abducted during Hamas’s October 7 attack on Israel last year and are still being held captive in Gaza.

Advertisement

During the attack, some 3,000 terrorists rampaged through Israel’s southern communities, murdering

some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages.

Hamas released 105 civilians during a weeklong truce in late November, and four hostages were released before that. Eight hostages have been rescued by troops alive, and the bodies of 38 hostages have also been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by the military as they tried to escape their captors.

Hamas is also holding two Israeli civilians who entered the Strip in 2014 and 2015, as well as the bodies of two IDF soldiers who were killed in 2014. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-families-of-several-hostages-receive-signs-of-life-from-loved-ones/>

## 'Palestinian armed actors' seize UNRWA's Jenin health center, agency says

**The UNRWA West Bank office stated that it gained knowledge of the ongoing "presence of Palestinian armed actors" in the Health Centre on Tuesday.**

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) DECEMBER 21, 2024 14:20 Updated: DECEMBER 21, 2024 16:04



*A man walks with a weapon, amid clashes between Palestinian security forces and terrorists, in Jenin camp in the West Bank, December 15, 2024. (photo credit: REUTERS/RANEEN SAWAFTA)*

"Palestinian armed actors" took over UN Palestinian refugee agency [UNRWA](#)'s Jenin health center in the West Bank, and agency staff have been unable to access the site, UNRWA announced on Friday.

Without naming the "Palestinian armed actors," the UN agency noted that international grants and donations had allowed UNRWA to repeatedly restore the center from the "destruction incurred in the context of Israeli Security Forces operations since mid-2023."

The UNRWA [West Bank](#) office stated that it gained knowledge of the ongoing "presence of Palestinian armed actors" in the Health Centre on Tuesday. UNRWA said that it no longer has control over the facility.

"This forced entry and presence of Palestinian armed actors is a new blatant disregard of UN premises. It has occurred while the Palestinian Security Forces are conducting an operation in and around the camp, ongoing since 14 December," UNRWA's statement read. "UNRWA's service provision in the camp has been severely undermined by the volatile security situation since the beginning of December, with residents unable to consistently access basic services."

UNRWA's Friday announcement comes after the IDF said that the Palestinian Authority was dealing with levels of terror [comparable to that of the second intifada](#).



*A damaged sign is pictured at the headquarters of UNRWA, following an Israeli raid, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Gaza City, July 12, 2024. (credit: REUTERS/DAWOUD ABU ALKAS)*

### Third front: West Bank Terror

The *Post* asserted that the IDF viewed terror in the areas controlled by the PA as its third front in the current war but that the military said that it was set to trend downward.

The PA has been continually fighting against Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists in Jenin throughout December, potentially in a campaign to prove their abilities to rule Gaza after Hamas. The terrorists had gradually gained more sway in the refugee camp with complex weapons from Iran.

Notably, the *Post* reported that during the second intifada, 450 Israelis were killed. The onset of the Israel-Hamas war saw approximately 40 Israelis in the West Bank in 2024. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-834335>

### US judge finds Israel's NSO Group liable for hacking in WhatsApp lawsuit

***The head of WhatsApp said the ruling is a win for privacy, since 'spyware companies could not hide behind immunity.'***

By REUTERS DECEMBER 21, 2024 03:10 **Updated:** DECEMBER 21, 2024 16:40

A US judge ruled on Friday in favor of Meta Platforms' [WhatsApp](#) in a lawsuit accusing Israel's NSO Group of exploiting a bug in the messaging app to install spy software allowing unauthorized surveillance.

US District Judge Phyllis Hamilton in Oakland, California, granted a motion by WhatsApp and found NSO liable for hacking and breach of contract.

The case will now proceed to a trial only on the issue of damages, Hamilton said. [NSO Group](#) did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Will Cathcart, the head of WhatsApp, said the ruling is a win for [privacy](#).

"We spent five years presenting our case because we firmly believe that spyware companies could not hide behind immunity or avoid accountability for their unlawful actions," Cathcart said in a social media post.

#### **'Illegal spying' intolerable**

"Surveillance companies should be on notice that illegal spying will not be tolerated."

A WhatsApp spokesperson said they were grateful for the decision.

"We're proud to have stood up against NSO and thankful to the many organizations that were supportive of this case. WhatsApp will never stop working to protect people's private communication," he said.

Cybersecurity experts welcomed the judgment.

John Scott-Railton, a senior researcher with Canadian internet watchdog Citizen Lab — which first brought to light NSO's Pegasus spyware in 2016 — called the judgment a landmark ruling with "huge implications for the spyware industry."

"The entire industry has hidden behind the claim that whatever their customers do with their hacking tools, it's not their responsibility," he said in an instant message. "Today's ruling makes it clear that NSO Group is in fact responsible for breaking numerous laws."

WhatsApp in 2019 sued NSO seeking an injunction and damages, accusing it of accessing WhatsApp servers without permission six months earlier to install the Pegasus software on victims' mobile devices. The lawsuit alleged the intrusion allowed the surveillance of 1,400 people, including journalists, human rights activists and dissidents.

NSO had argued that Pegasus helps law enforcement and intelligence agencies fight crime and protect national security and that its technology is intended to help catch terrorists, pedophiles and hardened criminals.

NSO appealed a trial judge's 2020 refusal to award it "conduct-based immunity," a common law doctrine protecting foreign officials acting in their official capacity.

Upholding that ruling in 2021, the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals called it an "easy case" because NSO's mere licensing of Pegasus and offering technical support did not shield it from liability under a federal law called the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, which took precedence over common law.

The US Supreme Court last year turned away NSO's appeal of the lower court's decision, allowing the lawsuit to proceed. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-834304>

### How Iran recruits minors in Europe for attacks on Israeli targets: report



**Bloomberg reveals growing concern in Europe, especially Scandinavia, over Iranian operatives recruiting teens via social media to target Israeli sites; officials hope Iran's setbacks may shift its focus to rebuilding internally instead of spreading terror**

Ynet|08:53

**In a series of unsettling incidents across Europe, young criminals, some as young as 13, are being recruited by Iranian-linked operatives to target Israeli and Jewish interests, according to a Bloomberg report.**

**~The report lists several disturbing incidents of teenagers and adolescents directed by their handlers to carry out such attacks.**



*Swedish police near the offices of Elbit Systems in Gothenburg (Photo: Adam Ihse/TT / various sources / AFP)*

**In Sweden, a 15-year-old boy attempted to locate the Israeli embassy with a loaded gun in a taxi, while in Gothenburg, a 13-year-old fired shots at an Israeli defense firm. In another case, a 16-year-old planted explosives outside the same facility. Authorities attribute these actions to Iran-affiliated actors exploiting local criminal networks to further Tehran's agenda in Europe.**

**The attacks, as reported by Bloomberg, underscore how Iran's covert operations against Israel are extending beyond the Middle East, raising**

concerns among European governments about social tensions tied to immigration. Both Sweden and Norway have issued warnings about Iranian-backed operations, with Norway temporarily raising its terror alert in October and deploying armed police to its borders.

The report notes that Iranian operatives are using social media platforms like Telegram, TikTok and WhatsApp to recruit minors and young adults, often from immigrant communities. Payments for these illicit activities range from €120 for a petrol bomb attack to €1,500 for an assassination. While some recruits are motivated by ideological frustrations over Israel's actions in Gaza, others are drawn by financial incentives and, in some cases, are unaware they are acting on behalf of a foreign power.

Attack in Brussels, October of last year

The Swedish Security Service confirmed instances of recruits being oblivious to their Iranian connections. "There are cases where the proxies aren't aware or don't realize that they are acting on behalf of a foreign power," the agency said in a statement earlier this year.

For example, a 15-year-old suspect targeting the Israeli embassy in Stockholm in May was intercepted by police before reaching his destination. The suspect had to call for directions to the embassy, highlighting the amateur nature of some of these plots.

The incidents detailed in the report are part of a broader Iranian effort to destabilize Europe while maintaining its regional influence amid setbacks in its proxy network. The October 2023 Hamas-led attacks on Israel prompted a severe Israeli response, weakening Iran's regional allies such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Despite these losses, experts warn that Iranian-linked operations in Europe remain a significant threat.



*Police near the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm, last October (Photo: TT News Agency/Anders Wiklund/via REUTERS)*

**Peter Nesser, a terrorism researcher at Norway's defense research institute, explained to Bloomberg that Iranian actors "reach out to potential mercenaries on platforms like Telegram, TikTok or WhatsApp." These platforms are also used to "direct and advise recruits during their illegal operations."**

**One high-profile attack involved a 16-year-old in Sweden using homemade explosives against Israeli defense company Elbit Systems. The report**

notes that while investigations were unable to trace the financiers, prosecutors believe the attackers were acting under Iranian direction.

**Sweden's immigrant communities, struggling with integration and economic disparity, have become fertile ground for recruitment. Around 20% of Sweden's population is foreign-born**, with 40% of migrants reporting a lack of integration. Organized crime gangs, already entrenched in these communities, are being exploited by hostile state actors like Iran.



*Police near the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm after the shooting last May (Photo: Henrik Montgomery / TT / various sources / AFP)*

**Neighboring Norway has begun observing similar patterns, with warnings of "Swedish conditions" becoming a regular feature in political debates.** Norwegian authorities are increasingly concerned about the spread of youth-driven violence and gang recruitment.

**The report highlights how the rise in youth-driven violence has fueled support for far-right parties in Sweden and Norway.** In Sweden, the far-right Sweden Democrats have influenced policies, including the introduction of youth prisons for offenders under 15.

**Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store has also pledged tougher measures on youth crime**, while the opposition Progress Party is advocating stricter policies ahead of next year's elections.

As European governments navigate these challenges, warn that Iran might intensify its covert operations in Europe. Nesser told the publication that Tehran could either retreat to rebuild domestically or escalate attacks to project power abroad. "They might also try to create more havoc," Nesser said.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hyp9b8er1l#autoplay>

## **'The Jews must go': Neo-Nazis protest outside Victoria's Parliament House**

*The group leader claimed that Jews may have set fire to the synagogue in Melbourne in early December.*



*'The Jews must go': Neo-Nazis protest outside Victoria's Parliament House (photo credit: SCREENSHOT/X)*

While shouting "race traitor" toward those who took issue with their demonstration, a group of neo-Nazis holding a sign reading "[Jews hate freedom](#)" demonstrated outside Victoria's Parliament House in [Australia](#) on Friday night, according to police, Australian media reports, and footage circulating online.

The group chanted, "The Jews must go" and "Freedom for the white man," and the leader of the group claimed that Jews were trying to remove the freedom to protest in the country.

The neo-Nazi scenes in Melbourne are truly horrifying and terrifying. This should be a wake up call to both state and federal governments to act URGENTLY. [pic.twitter.com/EDVngri0aC](https://pic.twitter.com/EDVngri0aC)

— Sharri Markson (@SharriMarkson) [December 21, 2024](#)

The group's leader also claimed that the Jewish community may have attacked their own synagogue in Melbourne - a reference to the devastating fire that destroyed [Melbourne's Adass synagogue](#) in early December.



*Firefighters work at the scene of a fire at the Adass Israel Synagogue in Ripponlea, Melbourne, Australia, December 6, 2024. (credit: AAP Image/Con Chronis via REUTERS)*

### **Condemnations and investigations**

Victoria Police Acting Superintendent Kelly Walker said it appeared the men were having "some type of photoshoot."

"They showed up with their own photographer," she said at a press conference.

Walker added that police arrived five minutes after they were called, but the men were quick to disperse themselves, although one man has since been identified. Police are currently searching for the identified man and are working to identify the others.

Looking to ID the men is our priority, so we'll be looking through the extensive CBD network of footage that exists and we'll seek advice under the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act," Walker said. "The behaviour was disgusting and the members of the public were outraged."

Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan condemned the incident, according to Australian media.

"Masked Nazis on the front steps of our democracy with a mission to make Jews in our state feel unsafe," she said. "Antisemitism is rising around the world. I refuse to let Victoria succumb to it."

"We want to make it impossible for Nazis to function in this state – not just by banning their symbols and salutes of hate, but by putting their vilifying threats and incitements in the crimes act, where they belong."

<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-834338>

## **Department of Ed resolves Title VI antisemitism complaints against 5 U of California campuses**

*The Education Department's Office of Civil Rights claimed the universities were 'engaged in different treatment of students based on actual or perceived national origin.'*

*By ANDREW LAPIN/JTA DECEMBER 21, 2024 03:36*



*Police officers clash with pro-Palestinian demonstrators at the University of California at Irvine (UCI) on May 15, 2024 in Irvine, California. (photo credit: Qian Weizhong/VCG via Getty Images)*

(JTA) — The [US Department of Education](#) announced it had resolved nine antisemitism- and Islamophobia-related civil rights complaints made against five campuses inside the [University of California system](#) on Friday, including some involving a prominent pro-Palestinian encampment in Los Angeles that had descended into violence in the spring.

The sweeping resolution comes in the final weeks of President Biden's term, and as [President-elect Donald Trump](#) has threatened to eliminate the department altogether, which could potentially move antisemitism

investigations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to the Justice Department.

The Education Department's Office of Civil Rights, which handles [Title VI cases](#), wrote in an open letter to Michael Drake, president of the UC system, that it had "identified compliance concerns that the Universities appear not to have responded promptly or effectively" to allegations of harassment. In addition, OCR said, three of the schools "appear to have engaged in different treatment of students based on actual or perceived national origin."

Four of the resolved cases involved the University of California, Los Angeles, where an unruly spring encampment — and pro-Israel counterdemonstrations — ended in violence and arrests. UCLA received complaints on behalf of both Jewish and pro-Palestinian students that the school had failed to protect them during the encampments, which also recently earned the campus a legal rebuke based on accusations that protesters blocked Jewish students' access to parts of campus. (An internal antisemitism task force at UCLA also recently found that the school had fostered an antisemitic environment, including as a result of the encampments.)

Two more complaints involved UC Davis, where a faculty member in October 2023 posted threats to "Zionist journalists" on social media, and where Muslim and Palestinian students alleged they had been doxxed and stalked.



**PROTESTERS SUPPORTING Palestinians in Gaza gather at UCLA in May. School campuses have become toxic for Jews, hearkening back to the time when they were not fully welcome at America's elite universities less than a century ago, the writer argues. (credit: DAVID SWANSON/REUTERS)**

### **'Pleased' with resolution**

The other three cases involved the targeting of a Jewish student body president at UC Santa Barbara; allegations of "anti-Zionist propaganda" posted in the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department of UC Santa Cruz; and UC San Diego's alleged failure to respond to harmful activity from its Students for Justice in Palestine chapter.

In a statement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the UC system said it was "pleased" with the resolution agreement and that it "unequivocally rejects anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of harassment and discrimination." The statement pointed to other steps the school said it had taken lately to address the issue, including establishing its own office of civil rights, an anti-discrimination policy, and new limits on protests and other activities.

As part of the resolution agreement, the UC system agreed to annual Title VI training for staff and campus police, to report more information to OCR about how its campuses will respond to harassment complaints, and annual audits and regular campus climate assessments for the five campuses mentioned in the complaint.

Six of the nine complaints involved harassment against Jewish and Israeli students; OCR said it dismissed one of those complaints, involving a Jewish UCLA student who said SJP had blocked her from joining the group, due to lack of evidence. The other three complaints involved harassment against Muslim, Arab or Palestinian students.

Justin Samuels, a non-Jewish conservative legal activist whose complaint triggered one of the UC Davis investigations, told JTA he was "happy to have helped" in their resolution. Samuels has been active in filing Title VI complaints related to campus antisemitism in the wake of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks.

He added, "I expect the Trump administration to be a lot more proactive on shared ancestry discrimination."

OCR has continued to resolve antisemitism-related Title VI cases since the election, though dozens more remain active in its system. A separate resolution agreement, also announced Friday, ruled that the University of

Cincinnati did not appropriately respond to complaints of discrimination against Jewish students related to a "Spooky Zionist" student gathering.

The university similarly agreed to regularly report its handling of discrimination cases to the office, and to additional employee training and campus climate assessments.

"The university appeared to operate under the mistaken understanding that if a complainant could not identify a perpetrator by name; the conduct was not directed at a specific individual; the conduct involved multiple perpetrators or a registered student organization; or the conduct occurred off campus, the university did not have an obligation to address alleged harassment," the office determined in a statement.

<https://www.jpost.com/international/article-834306>

## Third time this year: Shots fired at Jewish school in Canada

***The current incident is the third time gunshots were fired at the school this year, with similar incidents recorded in October and May.***

By [DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD](#) DECEMBER 20, 2024 18:19 Updated: DECEMBER 20, 2024 20:43



Canadian Jewish day school targeted by shooting on Yom Kippur 2024 (photo credit: SCREENSHOT/X)

Gunshots were fired at Bais Chaya Mushka Girls Elementary School in Toronto at 2:33 a.m., Toronto Police confirmed on Friday.

FIREARM DISCHARGE:Sheppard Ave W & Chesswood Dr2:33 am-at Bais Chaya Mushka Elementary School-evidence of firearm discharge-no injuries reported-Integrated Gun and Gang Task Force investigating, supported by Hate Crime Unit#GO2742311^sm

— Toronto Police Operations (@TPSOperations) [December 20, 2024](#)

Toronto Police's hate crime service unit is investigating the incident after "evidence of firearm discharge" was found, police confirmed.

Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow confirmed the school sustained damage from the attack, according to CBC News.



Members of JForce and Magen Herut Canada at the University of Toronto pro-Palestine protest, Friday 6th 2024 (credit: Screenshot/Instagram)

"Enough is enough. Antisemitism and antisemitic attacks have no place in Toronto. The latest shooting at the Bais Chaya Mushka Elementary School is unacceptable. Once again students, families, and neighbours are waking up to safety concerns." Chow said.

"Every single antisemitic act is one too many in Toronto. The students and community of Bais Chaya Mushka have the right to learn and teach in a safe environment, free from hate and violence."

The shooting was also condemned by Toronto MP Kevin Vuong, who wrote on X/Twitter, "How full of hate do

you have to be to fire at a school?...We must not allow this blatant antisemitism to be normalized further by our feckless leaders. "

We must not allow this blatant antisemitism to be normalized further by our feckless leaders. The Oct. shooting, alongside the rash of violent thefts & robberies, that saw one minor arrested highlight the need to overhaul the Youth Criminal Justice Act. <https://t.co/e7HAjGWgKq>

— Kevin Vuong (@KevinVuongMP) [December 20, 2024](#)

### Previous shootings at the school

The current incident is the third time gunshots were fired at the school this year, with similar incidents recorded in October and May.

In October, at 4:05 a.m., shots were fired on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar - Yom Kippur, [the Jerusalem Post reported at the time](#). Police later [arrested a 20-year-old and 17-year-old](#) in connection with the shooting.

[In May, two men opened fire at the school](#) just before 5 a.m.

The latest attack also comes just a day after President Isaac Herzog confirmed he spoke with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after a number of attacks targeted Jewish centers in Canada.

Following the abhorrent - repeated - attack on the Beth Tikvah synagogue in Montreal, I spoke this evening with Prime Minister of Canada [@JustinTrudeau](#). I reiterated to him my great concern over the intolerable wave of antisemitic attacks against the Canadian Jewish community. I...

— יצחק הרצוג Isaac Herzog (@Isaac\_Herzog) [December 19, 2024](#)

On Wednesday, [Montreal synagogue was burnt in an arson attack](#). CBC cited the police as saying that one incendiary device was found at the scene. <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-834287>

## **Eight convicted in France over murder of teacher who showed Prophet caricature** **Last year, a court found six adolescents guilty of participating in a premeditated conspiracy and helping prepare an ambush.**

By REUTERS DECEMBER 21, 2024 11:56



A photograph taken on October 16, 2023 shows a commemorative plaque for slain teacher Samuel Paty (portrait) near the Bois d'Aulne school in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, outside Paris. France was set to hold tribute ceremonies for Samuel Paty, the history-geography teacher who was beheaded on October 1 (photo credit: Bertrand Guay/Reuters)

A French court sentenced eight people to prison terms ranging from one to 16 years for their roles in a hate campaign that culminated in the murder of [a teacher](#) who had shown caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad in class, local media reported.

Days after [Samuel Paty, 47](#), showed his pupils the caricatures in October 2020, an 18-year-old Chechen assailant stabbed and beheaded him outside his school in Conflans-Sainte-

Honorine, near Paris. The assailant was shot dead by police moments after.

Among those convicted on Friday was the father of a student whose false account of Paty's use of the caricatures triggered a wave of social media posts targeting [the middle-school teacher](#).

### The sentencing

The court sentenced Brahim Chnina to 13 years in prison for criminal terrorist association, according to broadcaster Franceinfo. Chnina had published videos falsely accusing the teacher of disciplining his daughter for complaining about the class, naming Paty and identifying his school.

Abdelhakim Sefrioui, the founder of a hardline Islamist organization, received a 15-year sentence. Both Sefrioui and Chnina were found guilty of inciting hatred against Paty.



*A man waves a French national flag during a silent march to pay tribute to Samuel Paty, the French teacher who was beheaded on the streets of the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, France, October 20, 2020 (credit: REUTERS/LUCIEN LIBERT)*

Many Muslims consider any depiction of the Prophet Mohammad to be blasphemous. Sefrioui's lawyer said his client would appeal the decision, according to French media.

Two associates of Paty's killer, Abdullakh Anzorov, were also convicted. Naim Boudaoud and Azim Epsirkhanov were sentenced to 16 years in prison for complicity in a terrorist killing. Both had denied wrongdoing, according to Franceinfo.

Last year, a court found Chnina's daughter and five other

adolescents guilty of participating in a premeditated conspiracy and helping prepare an ambush.

Chnina's daughter, who was not in Paty's class when the caricatures were shown, was convicted of making false accusations and slanderous comments.

French media reported that the 13-year-old made the allegations after her parents questioned why she had been suspended from school for two days. <https://www.jpost.com/international/islamic-terrorism/article-834318>

## **Saudi Arabia warned Germany ahead of Christmas market ramming, source claims**

*German reports claim that the driver was a man from Saudi Arabia and is approximately 50 years old.*

By [DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD](#), REUTERS DECEMBER 20, 2024 21:17 **Updated:** DECEMBER 21, 2024 18:13



*Saxony-Anhalt, Magdeburg: Rescue workers in action at the Christmas market in Magdeburg, December 20, 2024. (photo credit: Dörthe Hein/picture alliance via Getty Images)*

The death toll in a car-ramming attack at a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg has risen to five people, and more than 200 have been injured, many of them seriously, state premier Reiner Haseloff said on Saturday.

The BBC reported that the Magdeburg Municipal Hospital's medical director said that over 80 people were treated yesterday.

"Some patients had to undergo emergency surgery, some are now in intensive care," he said, as reported by the BBC.

The driver has since been arrested, according to multiple German media reports. Police said the driver drove "at least 400

meters across the Christmas market" through the crowds in three minutes.

Prosecutors expect to charge the suspect with murder and attempted murder, the head of the local prosecutor's office said on Saturday.

German newspaper Welt published that the driver was a doctor from Saudi Arabia and is approximately 50 years old. The site also claimed the driver had a number of suitcases with him, and police were searching to see if any contained explosive materials. No explosives were found in the driver's belongings.

The motive for the attack remains unclear, but the suspect's dissatisfaction with Germany's treatment of

Saudi refugees may have played a role, the prosecutor in the central city of Magdeburg told a press conference following Friday's attack.

*German police secures the cathedral in central Cologne, Germany, December 23, 2023. (credit: THILO SCHMUELGEN/REUTERS)*

### **Anti-Islam activist**

Germany's FAZ newspaper said it interviewed the suspect in 2019, describing him as an anti-Islam activist.

"People like me, who have an Islamic background but are no longer believers, are met with neither understanding nor tolerance by Muslims here," he was quoted as saying. "I am history's most aggressive critic of Islam. If you don't believe me, ask the Arabs."



The suspect arrested in connection with a deadly car-ramming attack at a Christmas market in the German city of Magdeburg was Islamophobic, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser told reporters on Saturday.

"This was clear to see," Faeser said.

The minister declined to elaborate on the man's political affiliations.

Emergency services have set up tents to care for the wounded, while 10-20 have reportedly arrived at Magdeburg University Hospital for emergency treatment.

The spokesperson for Magdeburg, located some 150 kilometers (93 miles) south-west of Berlin, said the incident appeared to be a deliberate attack.

A Saudi source told Reuters that Saudi Arabia had warned German authorities about the attacker after he posted extremist views on his personal X account that threatened peace and security.

A video posted on social media from a position above the market shows a car driving at speed through a crowd walking between two rows of market stalls. People can be seen knocked to the ground and running away. Reuters was able to verify the location, with the trees, outline and design of the buildings matching file and satellite imagery of the area.

Footage from a local broadcaster showed people wrapped in blankets on the ground receiving care in the wake of the attack.

Bild newspaper quoted a witness named only as Nadine saying she had been walking arm-in-arm with her boyfriend, Marco, when the car came hurtling towards them.

"He was hit and ripped away from my side," Bild cited her as saying, adding that he had been injured on his leg and head and taken to hospital, but she did not know where to find him.

"The uncertainty is unbearable," she told Bild.

### **Local reactions**

"It is a catastrophe for the city of Magdeburg, for the state and for Germany in general," Reiner Haseloff, premier of the state of Saxony-Anhalt said, adding that the death toll could rise given the severity of some of the injuries.

Haseloff described the attacker as a 50-year-old male doctor from Saudi Arabia with permanent residency in Germany, where he had lived for almost two decades.

"As things stand at the moment, we are talking about a lone offender, which means that there is no further danger to the city because we were able to arrest him."

"This is a terrible event, especially now in the days before Christmas," Haseloff told MDR, adding that he was on his way to Magdeburg.

Matthias Schuppe, a government spokesman in the province of Saxony-Anholt, said it was an "attack" in comments to local media.

A spokesperson for local police said: "We do not yet know exactly what happened."

An unknown number of people were wounded, although Bild reported the figure was over 60. Hospitals as far as 80 km away are preparing to receive those wounded in the attack, according to Bild.

Despite Bild's estimates, the city spokesman Michael Reif told MDR it was still too early to give exact figures. "I estimate there are at least 20 ambulances here, a lot of firefighters, and I can see the police helicopter circling in the sky," an MDR reporter said during a live broadcast, adding that there were a lot of armed police on site.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the Magdeburg events "suggest something terrible."

"My thoughts are with the victims and their loved ones," he wrote on X/Twitter in German. "We stand by them and the people of Magdeburg. My thanks go to the dedicated rescue teams during these anxious hours."

He is expected to visit the scene on Saturday together with Interior Minister Nancy Faeser.

### **Germany's Christmas markets**

Christmas markets have been eyed as potential target sites by terrorists in Germany for some time. Only two weeks ago, German authorities arrested an [Iraqi national suspected of targeting a Christmas market.](#)

Last year, Christmas markets in [Germany and Austria](#) were put on high alert for fears of a potential attack.

In 2016, [a truck rammed into a Christmas market in Berlin](#) killing 12 people and wounding 48.

### **International reactions**

Saudi Arabia condemned the ramming attack, the Gulf country's foreign ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

Saudi Arabia's statement made no mention of the suspect, who is of Saudi origin.



US billionaire Elon Musk, set to join President-elect Donald Trump's administration as an outside adviser, called on German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to resign after the incident.

"Scholz should resign immediately," Musk posted on X, adding: "Incompetent fool."

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar condemned the incident and confirmed that he contacted German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in a post on X/Twitter on Saturday.

"Shocking images from Magdeburg, Germany last night," he wrote. "Israel stands with the German people in their mourning and offers any assistance required." <https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-834294>

## **Biden's officials trying to destroy Trump's push for peace – Moscow**

***The outgoing US administration's policies are "risky, even self-destructive," according to Russian deputy FM Sergey Ryabkov***

Dec, 2024 14:59



***HOTO: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov delivers a speech.***  
© Evgeny Biyatov

The outgoing administration of US President Joe Biden is doing everything to make sure that President-elect Donald Trump will not be able to facilitate peace in the Ukraine conflict once he returns to the White House in January, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has said.

The policy currently pursued by the White House is "quite risky, even self-destructive," Ryabkov told RT in an exclusive interview on Saturday.

"We caution them against it," the diplomat added.

He was referring to the permission given by Washington to Kiev to carry out strikes deep into Russian territory with American-made weapons, and an increase in arms deliveries to Ukraine, which happened after Biden's loss to Trump in November's election.

"The outgoing US administration demonstrates a unique capability of doubling down and destroying the chances of its successor," Trump, of fulfilling his campaign promise of swiftly finding a diplomatic solution to the conflict between Moscow and Kiev, the deputy FM stressed.

There have been several strikes with US- and UK-supplied missiles on internationally recognized Russian territory in recent weeks, with the deadliest coming on Friday as five people were killed and twelve others wounded after the Kiev forces targeted the town of Rylsk in Russia's Kursk Region with an American HIMARS system.

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned last month that Russia will respond to all such attacks and could go as far as using "weapons against military facilities of those countries that allow the use of their weapons against our facilities."

Ryabkov also commented on various ideas voiced in the West about how peace between Russia and Ukraine could look, saying that Moscow is considering them, but views them as "informal."

"They are a way to probe our position, but that is absolutely unnecessary as the President has repeatedly laid it out in full," he explained.

Speaking at his end-of-year press conference on Thursday, Putin reiterated that Moscow remains open to negotiating with Kiev without any preconditions, except those that had already been agreed upon in Istanbul in 2022, which envisaged a neutral, non-aligned status for Ukraine, as well as certain restrictions on deploying foreign weaponry. He also noted that such talks would have to respect the realities on the ground that have developed since that time. <https://www.rt.com/news/609736-ryabkov-trump-biden-ukraine/>

## **Ukrainian drones strike residential buildings deep inside Russia – officials (VIDEO)**

***Explosives-laden UAVs hit high-rises in Kazan, setting fire to the buildings, according to local authorities***

21 Dec, 2024 06:36

Up to three kamikaze drones have struck a number of residential high-rises in the Russian city of Kazan, local officials reported on Saturday morning. Several news



outlets have published what appear to be video clips shot by eyewitnesses, which depict the moment of the attack and its aftermath.

Earlier on Saturday, the Russian Defense Ministry said on its own Telegram channel that its air defenses had shot down one *“Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicle over the Republic of Tatarstan,”* of which Kazan is the capital. The statement was later cited by the city administration.

In a separate message later in the day, military officials reported that the *“Kiev regime”* had deployed three waves of fixed-wing drones, targeting Kazan’s civilian infrastructure. According to the ministry, Russian air defenses shot down three of the incoming UAVs, and that three more were downed with the help of electronic warfare systems.

Since the start of Russia’s special military operation in February 2022, Kiev’s drones have on multiple occasions been intercepted over Moscow and various regions of the country. Only some of these UAVs have reached their targets.

Most such cases have happened in relative proximity to the border between the two countries. Kazan, however, is situated some 1,379 kilometers (857 miles) away from Ukraine.

Russia’s Federal Agency for Air Transport (Rosaviatsiya) announced that it had imposed temporary restrictions at Kazan airport.

Local authorities reported that the Saturday morning attack resulted in no casualties. Soon after the drones struck the apartment buildings, the residents were safely evacuated. Minnikhanov’s press office has stated that accommodation for the evacuees has already been arranged.

[READ MORE: Five dead after Ukrainian strikes using US-made HIMARS – Russian governor](#)

According to regional authorities, a total of eight UAVs exploded over Kazan, with six of those impacting residential areas. In light of the attack, some schools have been evacuated as well, with students taking cover in basements. <https://www.rt.com/russia/609721-ukrainian-drones-strike-two-residential/>

## Ukraine a ‘gold mine’ for Western military-industrial complex – Moscow

***Russian UN envoy Vassily Nebenzia says Western arms supplies to Kiev benefit defense firms and just fuel the conflict further***

21 Dec, 2024 14:33



***Russia UN Ambassador Vasily Nebenzia addresses the United Nations Security Council, Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024. © AP Photo/Richard Drew***

Ukraine has become a lucrative opportunity for Western arms manufacturers, who profit from weapons supplies that prolong the conflict, Russia’s UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia has claimed.

Speaking at a United Nations Security Council briefing on Friday, Nebenzia accused NATO member states of exploiting the conflict in Ukraine to enrich their defense industries.

*“It is well known that Ukraine has become a genuine gold mine for the military-industrial complex of the [US and UK] and their allies. But it is American companies that are profiting the most from the conflict,”* he stressed.

The Russian diplomat alleged that Western countries are prioritizing economic gains over peace.

*“According to the latest data, half of total arms sales in 2023 were processed by 41 US corporations out of the top 100. They received \$317 billion, or 50% of global arms-sales revenues,”* Nebenzia said.

The Russian UN representative cited a recent report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), noting that the combined revenues of the world’s 100 largest weapons manufacturers in 2023 reached \$632 billion.

*“It would be naive to expect that these unscrupulous traders, who have tasted the flavor of lucre, will give up riding this gravy train for the sake of those miserable Ukrainians,”* he argued.

Nebenzia went on to suggest that Western military companies *“often act in cahoots with the Kiev regime,”* citing the example of 25 foreign lobby and consulting firms that began representing Ukraine’s interests free of charge after the conflict began. He specifically mentioned BGR Government Affairs, whose leadership has publicly advocated for increased military assistance to Kiev and which also represents Raytheon Company, a major US arms supplier. Nebenzia also alleged that the US military-industrial complex funds think tanks, whose conclusions

are later cited by the media.

On Wednesday, the Defense Ministry in Moscow reported that Ukraine fired six US-donated ATACMS and four UK-made Storm Shadow air-launched cruise missiles, at the Kamensky chemical plant in Rostov Region in southern Russia. On Friday, in retaliation to the attack, the Russian military claimed it struck a Ukrainian command center and targeted installations of US-supplied Patriot anti-aircraft missile systems.

[READ MORE: Russia strikes Kiev in retaliation for Ukrainian use of Western-made missiles – MOD](#)

Russia has consistently stated that Western aid cannot prevent its forces from accomplishing the objectives of their military operation or alter the final outcome of the conflict. Moscow has argued that by supporting Kiev, they only prolong the conflict. <https://www.rt.com/russia/609737-west-profit-prolonging-ukraine-conflict/>

## **Trump Reportedly Plans To Continue Aid To Ukraine But Will Raise NATO Spending To 5%**

by Tyler Durden Saturday, Dec 21, 2024 - 07:45 AM

**President-elect Donald Trump is expected to continue sending military aid to Ukraine, despite Trump earlier on the campaign trail mocking Zelensky for being the "greatest salesman on earth" for his getting tens of billions of US taxpayers' money with ease.**

**A new Financial Times report has cited European officials who say Trump's team told them he plans to continue military aid to Kiev after his inauguration. He's reportedly trying to calm fears of an immediate US withdrawal of support,** and this is connected to an expected Trump policy for NATO member states to **increase defense spending to 5% of their GDP.**

**"Donald Trump's team has told European officials that the incoming US president will demand Nato member states increase defense spending to 5% of GDP,** but plans to continue supplying military aid to Ukraine," [FT](#) writes.

**NATO's existing target of 2%** of GDP for defense spending certainly has not been met by all members... not even close. The 2% is being met by only 23 of the alliance's 32 members, and so a significantly higher bar set of more than double that is certainly going to rile Europe.

European NATO leaders have long been trying to figure out how to 'Trump proof' future defense aid for Ukraine, as has the Biden administration.

**But there's at least one severe critic - Hungary's Viktor Orban. He estimated in a radio interview on Friday that the US and the EU have pumped over \$300 billion in financial aid and military assistance into Kiev's coffers since the war's start.**

"During the negotiation with the Americans, I received the figure that Europe and America together have spent €310 billion so far. **Those are huge numbers!**" the Hungarian prime minister [declared](#). He went to describe that such a massive amount **"could have done wonders"** for European people themselves, instead of sinking the funds into an unwinnable war, while avoiding the necessity of negotiations with Moscow.

**The 5% defense spending for NATO members could also be a 'tough' tactic as the new administration deals with NATO allies. According to more from [Financial Times](#):**

**One person said they understood that Trump would settle for 3.5 per cent, and that he was *planning to explicitly link higher defense spending and the offer of more favorable trading terms with the US.***

**"It's clear that we are talking about 3 per cent or more for [Nato's June summit in] The Hague summit," said another European official briefed on Trump's thinking.**

Meanwhile...

I told the European Union that they must make up their tremendous deficit with the United States by the large scale purchase of our oil and gas. Otherwise, it is TARIFFS all the way!!!

Donald Trump Truth Social 01:09 AM EST 12/20/24

— Donald J. Trump Posts From His Truth Social (@TrumpDailyPosts) [December 20, 2024](#)

**As for Trump pledging to keep the money flowing, this is likely for the purposes of keeping leverage on the table while planning to quickly push Kiev into negotiations with Moscow.** Earlier this week, former US diplomat Jim Jatras evaluated the prospects for Trump succeeding toward achieving peace at the negotiating table, which can be [accessed here](https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/trump-reportedly-plans-continue-aid-ukraine-will-raise-nato-spending-5). <https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/trump-reportedly-plans-continue-aid-ukraine-will-raise-nato-spending-5>

## OP ED

# What Was So Different This Time About Trump's Election?

*Victor Davis Hanson | Dec 20, 2024*

In the weeks before the 2016 Trump Electoral College victory, Donald Trump was polling between 35 and 40 percent.

He would average only about 41% approval over his tumultuous four-year tenure.

No one knows what lies ahead over the next four years. But for now, Trump already polls well over 50% approval.

His inauguration in a few weeks will likely not resemble Trump's 2016 ceremony.

In the 2016-7 transition, Democratic-affiliated interests ran commercials urging electors to become "faithless," and thus illegally to reject their states' popular votes and instead elect the loser, Hillary Clinton.

Massive demonstrations met Trump on Inauguration Day.

In less than four months after assuming the presidency, Special Counsel Robert Mueller was appointed to investigate the hoax of Russian collusion.

That wasted 22-month, \$40 million investigation found no collusion, but did derail the first two Trump years.

What followed the collusion ruse was a consistent effort to undermine the Trump presidency -- two subsequent impeachments, the laptop "disinformation" hoax, the COVID-19 nationwide lockdown, and news suppression of any mention of the Chinese lab origin of the virus or questioning the closing of schools.

In the Trump administration's last summer of 2020, 120 days of riot, arson, looting, assault, and murder followed, with the denouement of the January 6 turmoil.

In contrast, the 2024-5 Trump transition has all but assumed the presidency. Over 100 foreign leaders have elbowed each other to be invited to Mar-a-Lago or to phone in their congratulations to the newly elected Trump.

Remember that in 2016 the Left screamed "Logan Act" if a Trump transition appointee even talked with foreign officials.

So why is newly elected Trump a veritable cultural hero in 2024 in a fashion unimaginable eight years ago when the media had rendered him a near demon?

One, Trump is seen now as a welcome relief.

A departing and unpopular President Joe Biden leaves with about a 36% approval rating.

The prior Biden years are now seen as abnormal.

The Left's cultural revolution championed fringe policies never quite seen before: destroying the border, welcoming in 12 million illegal aliens, nihilist critical race and legal theories, institutionalizing a third sex, and mandating woke/DEI quotas and indoctrination sessions.

Yet Biden had inherited from Trump a secure border, an economy rebounding after the COVID quarantines, 1.23% inflation, no wars abroad, and cheap energy.

Four years later, the outgoing Biden administration is widely unpopular. Almost every one of its policies polls before 50%.

In reaction, Trump promises not just to restore his first-term success, but to expand it.

Two, Trump personally remains transparent and energetic -- eager to talk and meet anyone, anytime, and just about anywhere.

His energy offers a sharp contrast with the non-compos-mentis Biden. The change is welcomed by an electorate exhausted by the past four years of presidential stumbling, wandering, incoherence, mind-freezes, and angry, "get-off-my-grass" aged fragility.

Advertisement

Three, Trump is grudgingly admired, now even by some of his enemies who once sought but failed to destroy him.

He endured two impeachments, five civil and criminal court indictments, incessant lawfare, a 95% negative media coverage, attempts to remove him from states' ballots, and two assassination attempts.

Yet all these unprecedented hostile efforts to end Trump may only have made him stronger -- and more empathetic when seen as a target of increasingly fanatical enemies.

Four, Trump has expanded his MAGA base and permanently branded it as an ecumenical movement that welcomes shared class interests rather than the tired old tribal racial and ethnic chauvinism.

Trump also brought in disaffected Democrats, independents, and minorities in a way the Democrats could

not with the evaporating "Never Trump" dead enders.

Trump's veritable campaign menagerie of RFK, Jr., Tulsi Gabbard, Elon Musk, Joe Rogan, Dana White, and Kid Rock made it impossible for the Left to demonize MAGA Republicans as right-wing aristocrats or laissez-fair capitalists.

Fifth, the endorsements of the Biden-Harris legacy media, calcified Hollywood endorsers, blowhard university faculties, and tech barons proved vastly overrated.

It was trumped by more popular and dynamic Internet influencers, podcasters, bloggers, and maverick entrepreneurs.

Sixth and finally, Trump himself proved more experienced, and more measured and reflective than in 2016. His team too was more disciplined and street smart, led by savvy chief of staff Susan Wiles.

The past year has seen truly pivotal moments of Trump as an everyman -- posing for a mugshot after being railroaded by a weaponized lawfare indictment, serving MacDonald's drive-up customers, riding in a garbage truck cab, raising his fist and yelling "fight, fight, fight" -- and after nearing have his head blown off by a would-be assassin.

Add all of these once unimaginables up, and the people trusted more -- and liked better -- the Trump reboot than grouchy Biden or inane and inauthentic Vice President Kamala Harris, as well as their shared extremist agendas.

<https://townhall.com/columnists/victordavishanson/2024/12/20/what-was-so-different-this-time-about-trumps-election-n2649357>