

WORLD

Gaza peace deal moves ahead with disarmament

CAIRO/WASHINGTON — Hamas and Palestinian factions have agreed on a plan to implement the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, including a gradual process for inventorying and storing their weapons, Egypt's state TV reported on Friday.

The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza would oversee and implement the gradual and sequential process of inventorying and storing the weapons, the report said, citing an informed Egyptian source.

The start of the weapons inventory process would be linked to the committee's entry into the Gaza Strip and the deployment of the International Stabilization Force, it added.

The agreement also includes the committee's entry into Gaza, the deployment of international forces and early recovery efforts in the enclave, the source said.

Hamas and the Palestinian factions had informed the mediators of their approval of the plan, while a meeting involving the mediators would be held soon in Cairo to reaffirm all parties' commitment to implementing the agreement, the broadcaster added.



A girl lies on a damaged mattress at the site of Israeli strikes in Gaza on Thursday. DAWOUD ABU ALKAS / REUTERS

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said in a statement posted on his Truth Social platform that the so-called Board of Peace had reached a “historic agreement” on the complete disarmament of Hamas and all other armed groups in Gaza.

The agreement will be carried out in structured phases, according to Trump, who noted that once disarmament is completed, Israeli forces will withdraw, and the International Stabilization Force will work with a

new Palestinian police force to take responsibility for Gaza's security.

Israel has not commented on the deal by the time of press. In a statement on Thursday, an Israeli official said on condition of anonymity that there will be no Israeli withdrawal from the areas it holds in Gaza before the militant group is disarmed and the strip demilitarized, The Associated Press reported.

A person with knowledge of the situation said Israel is fully involved, but it is not a signatory to the deal,

which is between Hamas and several countries helping to negotiate and guarantee the ceasefire.

Despite the deal, several Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza, medics in the strip said.

The latest development came amid talks in Cairo involving a Hamas delegation, representatives of other Palestinian factions and mediators from Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye, Egyptian media reported.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Desperate passage



Migrants arrive at the Spanish border in Ceuta on Friday, as they cross into Ceuta by sea and land. At least 34 migrants have died trying to reach the enclave after thousands of people breached the frontier with Morocco and poured in. Spain is sending dozens more police to Ceuta, as it faces an unprecedented migration crisis there with some 50,000 arrivals over the past two days, according to authorities estimates. FABIAN BIMMER / REUTERS

Asian soccer body joins opposition to boycott FIFA over private equity plan

GENEVA — Asia's soccer body joined opposition to FIFA's plan for private investors to buy stakes in the World Cup and said on Friday the agency must urgently review its management style.

The Asian Football Confederation said it “stands in solidarity” with European body UEFA and North America's CONCACAF, which on Thursday threatened to boycott FIFA competitions and rejected FIFA President Gianni Infantino's offer of one-off \$20 million payments to each member federation.

“Football should never have been placed in such a position,” said the Asian soccer body, which counts 46 of FIFA's 211 member federations that Infantino gave a Sept 19 deadline to accept the \$20 million offer.

Infantino has proposed spinning off FIFA's commercial businesses — including World Cups and Club World Cups for men and women — into a \$20 billion subsidiary with 20 percent owned by private investors.

“(T)he proposed (FIFA Forward Enterprise) cannot realistically achieve the necessary broad consensus and unity required to move forward” and must be reconsidered, the AFC said.

The statement did not name Infantino but criticized FIFA for problems beyond the content of the private equity plan and for failing to consult on a secretive proposal that was revealed on Tuesday in media reports.

Infantino's senior adviser on Friday quit over the plan, calling it a “bad deal” for the sport.

“It is a bad deal for FIFA's member associations, a bad deal for football, and a bad deal for the long-term future of the game,” wrote Carlos Cordeiro, a former head of the US Soccer Federation.

Cordeiro, appointed in 2021 by Infantino to help shape FIFA's future, said the soccer body was “mortgaging football's future without any compelling justification”.

Cordeiro added that he had no involvement in the proposal and opposed it “unequivocally”.

On Thursday, European nations agreed to boycott the World Cup and all other FIFA competitions to protest the plan. The North American soccer body rejected his plan later the same day.

“UEFA and its national associations will not participate in FIFA competitions,” the European soccer body said after an urgent online meeting of its 55 member nations.

FIFA issued a statement on Friday saying that “nobody is selling football” and that it plans to continue the consultation process. But it appeared to back off from establishing the public equity move — what it calls the FIFA Forward Enterprise — if member countries do not agree.

The next FIFA event targeted by the threatened European boycott is in the next few weeks — the Women's Under-20 World Cup, hosted by Poland from Sept 5. The four British federations comprise FIFA's only bidder to host the 2035 Women's World Cup. That decision is due Nov 23.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Australia mulls building oil refinery to boost supply

By XIN XIN and ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney

Australia is looking into building a major oil refinery as part of efforts to secure its fuel resources, exploring the plans against the backdrop of unstable global supply chains amid the conflict in the Middle East.

According to a government statement on Tuesday, the facility in Western Australia state “could be the first new large-scale petrol refinery built in Australia since the 1960s”.

The authorities will conduct a A\$4 million (\$2.8 million) pre-feasibility study, part of a A\$15 billion federal government package “to secure Australia's fuel security now and ensure our energy sovereignty into the future”, it said.

Australia currently has two oil refineries — one in Brisbane, the capital of the state of Queensland, and the other in Geelong, Victoria.

“The longer war in the Middle East goes on the greater the impact on Australia will be, and my government will continue to do everything we can to shield Australia from the worst effects — and set us up for the future,” Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

Following the outbreak of the Mid-east crisis in February, the Australian government signed agreements with some neighboring countries to boost and secure its fuel supplies.

Australia's fuel stockpile, updated on July 25, showed that it had the equivalent of 42 days of gasoline, 38 days of diesel and 32 days of jet fuel.

Temporary fuel excise relief, introduced as part of measures to help Australian motorists and consumers cope with higher costs from the Middle East conflict, is set to expire in August.

The average price of premium 95 gasoline across Australia's New South Wales state hit A\$2.11 a liter on Wednesday, compared to the highs of more than A\$2.50 in recent months,

according to figures from the state's fuel price monitoring platform.

Tim Buckley, founder and director of the Australian think tank Climate Energy Finance, told China Daily that the latest decision for a pre-feasibility study into a new oil refinery is “a massive own goal, one that will do nothing to build Australia's energy security in the short or medium term”.

Any resulting plant is operational in five to 10 years, which will “undermine Australian energy security by locking in our dependence on imported fossil fuels for many decades to come, undermining our energy system transformation in alignment with the climate science”, he said.

“The refinery aims to process crude oil, but given our declining domestic oil reserves, this will do very little to improve energy security and independence — we will remain locked in to our current reliance on imports of diesel and oil from the Middle East,” Buckley said.

He said funds used for the fossil fuels would be “far better deployed in enabling and accelerating the adoption of zero emissions industries of the future, starting with boosting our enabling infrastructure investments in electric vehicles”.

Australia needs to invest in green electrification and decarbonization technologies, Buckley said, in part by leveraging technology, manufacturing and export capacities with “our most important two-way trading partner, China”.

Buckley said Australia risks using the US war against Iran as an excuse to delay permanent solutions that are already available. He questioned why the country is again wasting a global crisis to turn it into an opportunity to accelerate investment in the obvious solutions, arguing that vested fossil fuel interests are yet again undermining Australia's national interests.

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Volcanic vigor



A plume of ashes rises from a crater of the Mount Etna volcano during an eruption on Thursday. Mount Etna is one of the most monitored volcanoes in the world. GIUSEPPE DISTEFANO VIA AFP

Pentagon list threatens US science edge

New curbs on intl academic partners could weaken research, experts say

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco liazhu@chinadailyusa.com

The Pentagon's expansion of a research security blacklist to include some of China's most prominent universities marks a significant shift in US science policy that could further damage bilateral academic ties and impose substantial costs on US research and innovation, experts said.

The Pentagon last week updated its Section 1286 list, identifying 130 academic and research institutions in China, Russia and Iran. This expands the list from universities and institutions for traditionally having so-called links with military research to leading comprehensive institutions, such as Fudan University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China.

Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the Pentagon is barred from using funds for fundamental research involving collaboration with any listed institution. The restrictions cover grants, contracts, equipment sharing, co-authorship and other research activities involving personnel affiliated with the designated institutions.

Failure to report relevant connections or the continuation of prohibited engagements could result in compliance violations and loss of eligibility for federal funding.

China's Ministry of Commerce said on Wednesday that China was very dissatisfied with and firmly opposed to the expanded list, accusing Washington of continuing to “politicize, weaponize and instrumentalize” scientific research cooperation between the two countries.

US experts said the addition of prestigious comprehensive universities signals that Washington is moving toward treating China's broader academic and scientific system as an extension of its strategic and military capabilities.

“I would characterize this as a watershed moment in US science policy,” said Denis Simon, a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

“Fudan and Shanghai Jiao Tong are ... among China's flagship comprehensive universities, comparable in stature to major American research universities,” he told China Daily.

“Their inclusion suggests that Washington is becoming less willing to distinguish between elite civilian universities and institutions traditionally associated with defense research,” he added. “That represents a major change in the philosophy governing US-China scientific engagement”.

Fred S. Teng, president of the America China Public Affairs Institute, said the expansion list suggested Washington was moving beyond efforts to protect clearly defined sensitive technologies and was beginning to treat broad areas of Chinese academic strength as security threats.

“It raises a fundamental question: What concrete goal is the US government trying to achieve — preventing identifiable military applications, slowing China's scientific development or simply reducing engagement?” Teng told China Daily.

‘No clear objective’

“Without a clearly defined objective, blacklisting leading civilian universities risks becoming a policy of indiscriminate academic containment,” he said.

The new restrictions have already prompted responses from US universities, which are seeking to minimize potential financial, legal and reputational exposure.

Some institutions have issued notices urging faculty members to exercise greater caution in international research and have strengthened screening of foreign

partners, co-authorships and informal academic exchanges.

Universities and researchers are also confronting uncertainty over how broadly the rules will be interpreted, including whether previous employment, informal scholarly communication or co-authorship alone constitutes meaningful collaboration with a listed institution.

The effects are likely to extend well beyond the universities explicitly named, Simon said.

US institutions may become more cautious about collaboration with Chinese universities generally because of the growing complexity of compliance and the risk that future additions to the list could retroactively affect research relationships, he said.

The policy is therefore likely to accelerate the fragmentation of the US-China scientific relationship, including in fields that have traditionally relied on open exchanges and multinational research teams. It could also limit US researchers' access to some of the world's most productive scientific institutions, Simon said.

Fudan and Shanghai Jiao Tong conduct internationally recognized research in medicine, artificial intelligence, materials science, engineering, chemistry, physics and other disciplines. Because major scientific advances increasingly emerge from cross-border research networks, restrictions on collaboration with leading contributors could narrow the networks available to US scientists, he said.

Teng noted that the restrictions could weaken joint research programs, disrupt scholar exchanges and reduce US universities' access to highly qualified researchers and important global scientific networks.

Insufficient consideration

Washington, he said, appeared to have given insufficient consideration to the effects on the United States itself, including the potential isolation of US scientists, reduced access to global talent and erosion of US scientific leadership.

“The greater danger is that the United States may impose substantial costs on its own universities, scientists and innovation system without achieving a measurable strategic benefit,” Teng said.

Both experts said the restrictions were unlikely to halt China's scientific and technological development.

Teng said the measures might slow some forms of US-China collaboration, but China would probably respond by expanding its domestic research capacity and deepening scientific partnerships with other countries.

The result could be a reorientation of international research networks rather than the suppression of Chinese scientific progress, he said, while US universities could lose access to discoveries, data and talent that would otherwise contribute to US research.

The widening separation could also impede cooperation on global challenges that cannot be effectively addressed by any one country, the experts said.

Pandemic preparedness, infectious disease surveillance, climate science, clean energy, biodiversity, agriculture and basic biomedical research all depend heavily on sustained international collaboration, access to data from multiple regions and the ability of scientists to communicate across borders.

Simon said continued deterioration in scientific relations could make progress in those areas slower and more fragmented.

Teng said scientific separation in public health, climate change, energy and artificial intelligence could leave the United States “less informed, less connected and ultimately less competitive”.