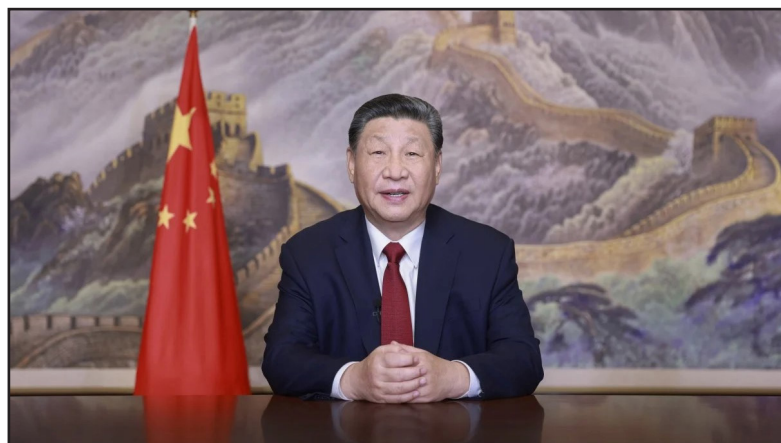


# Xi: No One Can Stop 'Reunification' With Taiwan



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a New Year's message on Tuesday in Beijing to ring in 2025.

BEIJING (Reuters) -- No one can stop China's "reunification" with Taiwan, Chinese President Xi Jinping said in his New Year's speech on Tuesday, laying down a clear warning to what Beijing regards as pro-independence forces within and outside of the island of 23 million people.

In the past year, Beijing has stepped up military pressure near Taiwan, sending warships and planes almost daily into the waters and air space around the island in what Taiwanese officials view as a creeping effort to

"normalize" China's military presence.

China regards Taiwan as its own territory. But Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's claims and says only its people can decide their future and Beijing ought to respect the choice of the Taiwanese people.

"The people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are one family. No one can sever our family bonds, and no one can stop the historical trend of national reunification," Xi said in a speech televised on China's state broadcaster CCTV.

In his New Year's speech last year, Xi said China's "reunification" with Taiwan is inevitable, and that people on both sides "should be bound by a common sense of purpose and share in the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

Tensions have remained high throughout the year in the sensitive Taiwan Strait, especially after Lai Ching-te, deemed a "separatist" by Beijing, became the island's latest president in May.

Earlier this month, China staged a large massing of naval forces around Taiwan and in the East and South China Seas after Lai stopped over in Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam on a Pacific trip criticized by Beijing.

China, which never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control, conducted two rounds of war games around the island this year, saying they were warnings against "separatist acts" and vowed to take further actions if needed.

U.S. arms sales to Taiwan have also continued to strain Beijing's ties with Washington.

China has regularly warned the U.S. against any military ties with Taiwan, and slapped sanctions on military suppliers and their executives.

## Russian Gas Flow to Europe Via Ukraine Ends



A section of the Soyuz gas pipeline near Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, in 2014.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- Russian energy company Gazprom said it would pump a reduced volume of gas to Europe via Ukraine on Tuesday, the last day before the expiry of a deal that had kept the gas flowing throughout nearly three years of war.

Barring a last-minute surprise deal, gas flows are likely to stop on Jan. 1 after the expiry of the five-year transit agreement between Russia and Ukraine, marking an almost complete loss of Moscow's gas to the European market.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Dec. 26 there was no time left this year to sign a new deal on the transit of gas via Ukraine.

Stopping the gas flow would have a much bigger geopolitical significance.

For Europe, the loss of cheap Russian gas supplies contributed to a major economic slowdown, a spike in inflation and a worsening of a cost-of-living crisis.

While Europe has been quick to find alternative energy sources, the loss of Russian gas has exacerbated long-term concerns about its declining global competitiveness and in particular about Germany's industrial future.

Russia and the Soviet Union spent half a century building up a major share of the European gas market, which at its peak stood at 35%, but the war in Ukraine has all but destroyed that business for Gaz-

prom.

Most Russian gas routes to Europe are shut, including Yamal-Europe via Belarus and Nord Stream under the Baltic that was blown up in 2022.

The Soviet-era pipeline via Ukraine brings gas from Siberia via the town of Sudzha - now under the control of Ukrainian soldiers - in Russia's Kursk region. It then flows through Ukraine to Slovakia. In Slovakia, the gas pipeline splits into branches going to the Czech Republic and Austria.

Kyiv has refused to negotiate a new transit deal.

Ukraine is giving up some \$800 million a year in fees from Russia, while Gazprom will lose close to \$5 billion in gas sales to Europe via Ukraine.

Russia shipped about 15 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas via Ukraine in 2023 - only 8% of peak Russian gas flows to Europe via various routes in 2018-2019.

Gazprom said it would send 37.2 million cubic meters it Tuesday compared to 42.4 mcm on Monday.

The halting of supplies via Ukraine will be a major blow to Moldova, a country that was once part of the Soviet Union.

Hungary will continue to receive Russian gas from the south, via the Turk-Stream pipeline on the bed of the Black Sea, although it had been keen to keep the Ukrainian route as well.

## Treasury: Hackers Access U.S. Documents in 'Major Incident'



A bronze seal for the Department of the Treasury is shown at the U.S. Treasury building in Washington, Jan. 20, 2023.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Chinese state-sponsored hackers breached the U.S. Treasury Department's computer security guardrails this month and stole documents in what Treasury called a "major incident," according to a letter to lawmakers.

The hackers compromised third-party cybersecurity service provider BeyondTrust and were able to access unclassified documents, the letter said.

According to the letter, hackers "gained access to a key used by the vendor to secure a cloud-based service used to remotely provide technical support for Treasury Departmental Offices (DO) end users. With access to the stolen key, the threat actor was able to override the service's security, remotely access certain Treasury DO user workstations,

and access certain unclassified documents maintained by those users."

"Based on available indicators, the incident has been attributed to a China state-sponsored Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) actor," the letter said.

The Treasury Department said it was alerted to the breach by BeyondTrust on Dec. 8 and that it was working with the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the FBI to assess the hack's impact.

Treasury officials didn't immediately respond to an email seeking further details about the hack. The FBI did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment, while CISA referred questions back to the Treasury Department.

"China has always opposed all forms of hacker attacks," Mao Ning,

a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry, told a regular news conference on Tuesday.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington rejected any responsibility for the hack, saying that Beijing "firmly opposes the U.S.'s smear attacks against China without any factual basis."

A spokesperson for BeyondTrust, based in Johns Creek, Georgia, told Reuters in an email that the company "previously identified and took measures to address a security incident in early December 2024" involving its remote support product. BeyondTrust "notified the limited number of customers who were involved," and law enforcement was notified, the spokesperson said. "BeyondTrust has been supporting the investigative efforts."

The spokesperson referred to a statement posted on the company's website on Dec. 8 sharing some details from the investigation, including that a digital key had been compromised in the incident and that an investigation was under way. That statement was last updated on Dec. 18.

Tom Hegel, a threat researcher at cybersecurity company SentinelOne, said the reported security incident "fits a well-documented pattern of operations by PRC-linked groups, with a particular focus on abusing trusted third-party services - a method that has become increasingly prominent in recent years," he said, using an acronym for the People's Republic of China.

## Bangladeshis Rally to Mark Ouster of Sheikh Hasina

DHAKA (Reuters) -- Thousands of Bangladeshis rallied at a 'March for Unity' in the capital Dhaka on Tuesday to mark the student-led uprising five months ago that led to the ouster of longstanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and remember the more than 1,000 killed in the violence.

The Students Against Discrimination (SAD) group that led the protests, dropped a plan to call for changes to the country's 1972 constitution at the rally, after the interim government announced on Monday that it would prepare a proclamation.

SAD says a 'Proclamation of the July Revolution' is essential to honor the sacrifice of the protesters who died or were wounded, and to serve as a document reflecting the people's aspirations. Some political

analysts had expressed concern that there could be fresh instability if students sought changes to the constitution without broader consensus.

The press office of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, who leads the interim government, said it would seek national consensus on a 'Declaration of the July Uprising', focusing on unity, state reform, and the broader goals of the uprising. It expressed hope that a declaration would be finalized soon.

On Tuesday, groups of students arrived from across the country and families of those killed in the unrest also joined the rally. They carried the national flag and chanted slogans against Hasina.

"My son Shahriar, a ninth-grade student, was killed (during the protests)," Abul Hasan told the rally. "Our tears will never stop, this pain

will never end."

The protests were initially sparked by opposition to public sector job quotas. What started as a student-led movement quickly morphed into a broader, nationwide uprising against Hasina's government.

The unrest reached its peak on Aug. 5, when violence forced Hasina to resign and flee to India, just before protesters stormed her official residence. Over 1,000 people were killed during the protests, marking the country's deadliest period since its 1971 independence war.

An interim government was formed, tasked with restoring stability and preparing elections. The interim administration includes two representatives of the students.

Yunus has said elections could be held by the end of 2025.

## Court Approves Arrest of South Korean President



Demonstrators opposing the court's approval of an arrest warrant for impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol protest outside his official residence in Seoul, Dec. 31, 2024.

SEOUL (Reuters) -- A South Korean court gave authorities approval on Tuesday to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol in a criminal investigation into his martial law decree, marking the first time that a sitting president of the country has faced arrest.

The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) confirmed the Seoul Western District Court approved an arrest warrant requested by investigators examining Yoon's short-lived imposition of martial law.

Yoon, who has been suspended from office, is facing investigation on allegations that he was the leader of an insurrection, one of the few criminal charges from which a South Korean president does not have immunity. Separately, his trial on impeachment is being heard at the Constitutional Court.

The arrest warrant for an incumbent president is unprecedented, and deepens the political crisis that has engulfed South Korea, Asia's fourth-largest economy and a key U.S. ally.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who took over from Yoon as acting president, has also been impeached by parliament, which is dominated by the opposition.

Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, who took over as acting president after Han's impeachment, has been dealing with Sunday's crash of Jeju Air flight 7C2216,

which killed 179 people in the deadliest air disaster on South Korean soil.

The current arrest warrant is viable until Jan. 6, and gives investigators only 48 hours to hold Yoon after he is arrested. Investigators must then decide whether to request a detention warrant or release him.

Once arrested, Yoon is expected to be held at the Seoul Detention Center, Yonhap news agency said, citing the CIO.

Yoon Kab-keun, a lawyer for the impeached president, said the arrest warrant was illegal and invalid because the CIO did not have the authority under South Korean law to request a warrant.

He said the president's legal team will file for an injunction at the Constitutional Court to stop the warrant.

Hundreds of Yoon supporters gathered outside his residence on Tuesday to protest against the warrant, some tussling with police.

The district court issued the warrant due to the likelihood that Yoon will not respond to summons without a justifiable reason, and there being a substantial reason to suspect Yoon of a crime, Yonhap said. The court declined to comment.

It was unclear when or how the arrest warrant for Yoon will be carried out. South Korea's presidential security service said in a statement on Tuesday that it will treat the arrest warrant according to due process.

## News in Brief

BEIJING (Reuters) -- Chinese President Xi Jinping said China and Russia have always moved forward "hand in hand" on the right path, the official Chinese news agency Xinhua said on Tuesday, months after the two countries struck a "new era strategic partnership" on key issues. The two leaders agreed in May to deepen bilateral ties and cooperate on areas of mutual interest such as Taiwan, Ukraine and mutual rival the United States. Russia's state-run RIA news agency also quoted Moscow's ambassador to Beijing as saying last Friday that Xi will visit Russia in 2025. In an exchange of New Year greetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Xi lauded the mutual trust and strategic coordination between both countries and expressed his desire to maintain close ties with Putin. China-Russia cooperation in various fields will continue to lead to new development opportunities, Xi added. The Chinese president was received in the Kremlin as a "dear friend" in 2023 after he obtained an unprecedented third term in office.

BERLIN (Reuters) -- U.S. billionaire Elon Musk's support for Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is a "logical and systematic" play for a weak Europe that will not be able to regulate as strongly, Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck said in his New Year's address. The calls by Musk are not made out of ignorance, said Habeck, who is the chancellor candidate for the Greens party in German national elections due in February. "It is logical and systematic. Musk is strengthening those who are weakening Europe. A weak Europe is in the interest of those for whom regulation is an inappropriate limitation of their power," added Habeck. The German government on Monday accused Musk, who owns social media platform X and is CEO of Tesla and SpaceX of trying to influence the upcoming election with a guest opinion piece for the Welt am Sonntag newspaper.

NEW YORK (AP) -- Six people were shot at a New York City convenience store Monday, including a 12-year-old girl and her mother, as one of the intended targets used the woman as a shield, police said. The mother ended up shot in the stomach while the person who grabbed her went unscathed, police interim Chief of Department John Chell said. There was no immediate information on the condition of those wounded in what Chell called "a brazen and heartless attack on innocent New Yorkers and cowardly intended victims." Police believe the two shooters were aiming for people in a group standing outside the store on White Plains Road, a commercial thoroughfare in the Bronx. Chell said police have video showing the attackers opened fire around 5 p.m. as they ran across the road to the store, then kept shooting as their targets ran into the store.

SAN JUAN (Reuters) -- Puerto Rico woke up in darkness on Tuesday morning, after a power grid failure left nearly all of the island without electricity. Around 90% of clients on the island were without power at 9 a.m. local time, according to energy distribution company Luma Energy's real-time portal. It was not immediately clear what caused the collapse, though local media reported that a chain reaction began in the Guayama province on the southern coast. A spokesperson for power generator Genera told local TV station WAPA that there was no estimate for when power could come back online. Genera's website showed just one backup plant producing energy on the U.S. territory.

GAROWE, Somalia (Reuters) -- Security forces in Somalia repulsed an attack by Daesh suicide bombers on a military base in the northeastern region of Puntland on Tuesday, the local state broadcaster and a military official said. It was the first time Daesh has attempted such a large and sophisticated attack in the country, coming weeks after the semi-autonomous state announced a major offensive against Daesh and a rival takfiri group, the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab. The deputy speaker of Puntland's parliament was visiting the base at the time of the attack, Captain Yusuf Mohamed, an officer in Puntland's counter-terrorism forces, told Reuters. He said nine suicide bombers had been killed and several soldiers had been injured. Puntland State TV said on Facebook eight suicide bombers were among those killed in the raid near the town of Dharjaale in the Bari region.

BENGALURU (Reuters) -- The chief minister of India's northeastern state of Manipur apologized on Tuesday for months of ethnic unrest that has killed at least 250 people and prompted criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's federal government. The strife between the majority Meitei and the tribal Kuki communities in the state of 3.2 million people broke out in May 2023 and has displaced 60,000 people. Despite peace efforts, many Kukis and Meiteis have moved out of ethnically mixed areas. Violence erupted after a court ordered the state government to consider extending the special economic benefits and quotas in government jobs and education enjoyed by the Kuki people to the Meitei population as well. Manipur's two largest ethnic groups are in effect competing for land, jobs and political clout, with large quantities of weapons in circulation, including automatic rifles stolen from the police or smuggled from neighboring Myanmar.