

WORLD

Ex-Philippine president Duterte petitions court over govt role in arrest

By PRIME SARMIENTO
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Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte submitted a petition to the Philippine Supreme Court on Tuesday, challenging the government's cooperation with the International Criminal Court in sending him to custody.

Shortly after arriving at the Manila International Airport on Tuesday morning from a weekend trip abroad, Duterte was taken into police custody.

The Philippine Presidential Communications Office said in a statement that Interpol's Manila office received a copy of the International Criminal Court arrest warrant earlier on Tuesday.

The country's prosecutor general presented the ICC notification, confirming the arrest warrant for Duterte, which accused him of "crimes against humanity".

Duterte questioned his detention. In a video released by his family on social media, the former president said: "What is the crime I committed? ... I was brought here not on my own volition. It's somebody else's."

Barely 12 hours after Duterte was detained, a chartered plane flew him to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the Netherlands, on Tuesday night.

A social media post by one of his lawyers, Martin Delgra, showed a picture of a small plane that would take the 79-year-old to The Hague.

Delgra also told a group chat open to journalists on messaging app Viber that Duterte boarded the plane with three others.

The Presidential Communications Office has not issued a statement on Duterte's departure.

Veronica Duterte, the former president's youngest daughter, said on Instagram he had boarded the plane but the family had not been informed of its destination, accompanying the post with a picture of a small bus on an airfield.

"They took dad from us, put him on a plane and wouldn't say where to. People, wake up," she posted.

When asked about Duterte's detention, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo said, "This is a development which is being handled by other agencies, especially the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Philippine National Police and the Department of Justice."

Manalo made the statement on the sidelines of a meeting with his

Slovenian counterpart in Manila, the Philippine News Agency reported.

Enrico Gloria, an assistant professor of international relations at the University of the Philippines, told China Daily that the issuance of the arrest warrant was "a significant case, as it raises questions about accountability and justice on an international scale".

The Philippines unilaterally withdrew from the International Criminal Court in 2019 under the Duterte administration.

His successor, Ferdinand Marcos Jr., did not rejoin the ICC after being elected president in 2022 with Duterte's daughter, Sara Duterte, as vice-president.

In January last year, Marcos said during an interview with local media that the ICC has no jurisdiction over the Philippines and his government would not cooperate in the investigation into Duterte's "war on drugs".

Marcos altered his stance in November, saying his government would not block the ICC if Duterte agrees to be investigated.

The Philippines will not cooperate with the ICC but it has obligations with Interpol, he added.

Responding to reports on Duterte's arrest, China said on Tuesday it is closely monitoring the developments.

"China has noticed the relevant news and is closely following the developments," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a daily news conference.

Mao said China has always maintained that the ICC should strictly follow the principle of complementarity in jurisdiction.

The ICC should "exercise its powers prudently in accordance with the law and avoid politicization and double standards", she added.

Arie Afriansyah, a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Indonesia, told China Daily that the ICC's arrest would only be possible if Manila allows it and waives any immunity to the person.

"An investigation does not necessarily lead to an arrest warrant. If the prosecutor has enough evidence, it would issue an arrest warrant. This situation will only prove how (the) national state has a critical role in making the arrest possible," Arie said.

Jan Yumul in Hong Kong, Zhang Yunbi in Beijing, Xinhua and agencies contributed to this story.



Delegations from Ukraine and the United States, accompanied by Saudi Arabian officials, hold a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday. WANG DONGZHEN / XINHUA

Saudi talks focus on Ukraine concessions

Kyiv seeks partial truce, minerals deal amid major drone attack on Moscow

By CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE
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High-level delegations from Ukraine and the United States held talks in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, with Kyiv ready to sign a key minerals deal with the Donald Trump administration and poised to propose a partial cease-fire with Moscow — in an effort to mend ties and restore support from Washington.

The three-day meeting in the Red Sea port city of Jeddah started as the US was gauging if Ukraine is willing to make concessions for Trump's efforts to swiftly end Europe's biggest conflict since World War II. Since taking office in January, the US president has engaged directly with Russia, while halting military assistance to and intelligence sharing with Ukraine.

Ukrainian presidency chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, who is part of the Ukrainian delegation, said the discussions had begun positively. "The meeting with the US team started very constructively, we continue our work," he wrote on X.

China supports all efforts conducive to a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis and hopes all parties can reach a just, lasting and acceptable solution, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Tuesday.

China is willing to continue to work with the international community to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the crisis, she told a news briefing in Beijing.

However, Ukraine on Tuesday launched its biggest drone attack on Moscow to date, deploying at least 91 drones, killing at least three people, injuring 18 others and causing a short shutdown of the Russian capital's four airports, according to Russian officials.

The Jeddah talks were expected to also focus on a minerals deal between the US and Ukraine. Trump has framed the deal as key to continued US support and compensation for \$65 billion in US military aid to Ukraine in three years.

Previous row

On Feb 28, Trump and Vice-President JD Vance accused Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky of avoiding a cease-fire with Russia, and of being ungrateful to the US and Trump for supplying military and other assistance.

Zelensky later said he is still willing to sign the deal on critical minerals, though US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said it would not be the focus of Tuesday's meeting.

Two senior Ukrainian officials said earlier their delegation is ready to sign the minerals accord and will propose a partial cease-

fire covering the Black Sea and long-range missile strikes, as well as the release of prisoners.

Rubio signaled that Trump would likely be pleased by such a proposal. "We have to understand the Ukrainian position and have a general idea of what concessions they'd be willing to make. You're not going to get a cease-fire and an end to this war unless both sides make concessions," he told reporters.

However, Rubio declined to specify the concessions each side has to make, but said Kyiv would have difficulty reclaiming all of its lost territory. "The Russians can't conquer all of Ukraine, and obviously it'll be very difficult for Ukraine in any reasonable time period to sort of force the Russians back all the way to where they were in 2014," he said.

Rubio and Zelensky landed a few hours apart on Monday in Saudi Arabia, but did not meet. They both met with the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday.

According to a joint statement published on Tuesday by the Saudi state news agency, the crown prince and Zelensky discussed efforts to achieve "sustainable, fair, and comprehensive" peace in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Trump's Middle East Special Envoy Steve Witkoff plans to visit Moscow to meet President Vladimir Putin, a person briefed on the plans said on Monday.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Virgin eyes train routes from UK to EU capitals

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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Businessman Richard Branson's Virgin Group is seeking to raise 700 million pounds (\$905 million) in a bid to launch a rival train service to current monopoly holder Eurostar on routes between the United Kingdom and mainland Europe.

The Virgin Group began in the music industry but has grown to include finance, airlines, and the running of intercity train services across the UK. It is understood that it would initially want to run rival services to those of Eurostar — from London to Paris and Brussels by the end of the decade, adding Amsterdam at a later date.

"The cross-Channel route is ripe for change and would benefit from competition," said a Virgin Group representative. "While Virgin is not committing to launching a service just yet, we are seeking investment from like-minded partners to invest alongside Virgin and we are delighted with the progress made so far."

Currently, all passenger services between London St. Pancras International and cities including Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam are run by Eurostar, as has been the case since November 1994. It makes the journey under the sea through the Channel Tunnel, which was completed in the same year, after six years of construction work.

There is also a separate rail service carrying road vehicles, called Euro-tunnel Le Shuttle, between Folkestone, England, and Calais, France.

In December, Robert Sinclair, chief executive of London St. Pancras High-speed, which owns the terminus, told the Financial Times that it was keen to double passenger numbers.

"Our high-speed line has 50 percent spare capacity ... There's a significant opportunity that is sitting there waiting underutilized," he said.

Potential new player

Another potential new player in services between London and other European capitals is the Spanish Evolyn group, which announced in October 2023 that it wanted to take on Eurostar's monopoly. The company's CEO Jorge Cosmen told the House of Commons' All-Party Parliamentary Rail Group that his group could offer more than \$1 billion of investment.

However, any company seeking to challenge Eurostar's monopoly faces a problem over access to the Temple Mills depot in east London, where Eurostar trains are parked and maintained.

The British government's Office of Rail and Road has commissioned an independent study, which is due to report back soon, into the capacity of the facility, because Eurostar has said it is already full.

Project leader for the Virgin Group, Phil Whittingham, told The Daily Telegraph the company did not think "the economics would work for three operators competing" and that it was ready to move as soon as the independent study delivered its verdict.

Australian anti-China think tank decried

By ZHAO JIA
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China on Tuesday strongly criticized the Australian Strategic Policy Institute for fabricating and spreading lies about China, following the think tank's suspension of its anti-China "research" because of funding cuts from the United States.

An ASPI analyst recently posted on social media that the freezing of US aid had left the organization without sufficient anti-China materials, making it difficult to produce content attacking China while urging the US or other entities to immediately resume funding for its anti-China operations.

Speaking at a daily news briefing,

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the post was a self-exposure of the ASPI's own scandal, once again revealing its "hypocritical anti-China nature" of manufacturing lies and smearing China under US sponsorship.

"There is no credibility to speak of for this so-called institute," she said, adding the ASPI has received

long-term funding from the US Department of Defense, diplomatic agencies, and arms manufacturers, serving the interests of its financial backers.

The Wall Street Journal reported that US government grants have accounted for roughly 10 to 12 percent of the ASPI's funding and financed about 70 percent of its China research since 2019.

In its latest annual report, the ASPI said it received nearly \$1.9 million in US State Department grants

during the 2022-23 financial year.

Mao said the ASPI's "research findings" lack basic factual grounding, violate the professional ethics expected of academic research, and have repeatedly been exposed as disinformation.

She said she hoped that all sections of Australian society and the international community can distinguish right from wrong and collectively denounce and resist the ASPI's disgraceful acts of fabricating and spreading false information.

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