

# CNN: Russia Plans Test of Nuclear-Powered Missile



The Admiral Gorshkov frigate of the Russian Northern Fleet launches a Tsirkon hypersonic missile from the White Sea against a sea target at a distance of 450 km in the Barents Sea on October 6, 2020.

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- New satellite images obtained by CNN indicate Russia is preparing to resume test flights of its nuclear-powered cruise missile at a previously-dismantled launch site near the Arctic Circle, according to experts who have analyzed the photos.

The images, captured by Planet Labs in September, show high levels of activity at a site known as Pankovo, previously used by Russia to test its Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile, according to Michael Duitsman and Jeffrey Lewis, researchers at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

Russia appeared to pause testing of the missile after 2018, when it dismantled the launch site but "the new satel-

ite photographs indicate that the pause is over," they added.

"The activity and new construction are consistent with a resumption of test flights of the Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile," Lewis and Duitsman wrote in a new report, noting that the images show Russia has rebuilt the site's launch pad and reveal "large numbers of shipping containers at two support areas, including the probable missile checkout building."

Russia conducted at least one test flight of the nuclear-powered cruise missile from the same site near the Arctic Circle in November 2017. It reportedly carried out multiple other tests in the months that followed, though none were considered to be successful, ac-

cording to Lewis and Duitsman.

In March 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin released a video of a nuclear-powered cruise missile test, which allowed open-source researchers including analysts at the Middlebury Institute to identify the location, they added.

Two U.S. officials told CNN that they are aware that Russia has been preparing to test missiles as part of its advanced weapons program.

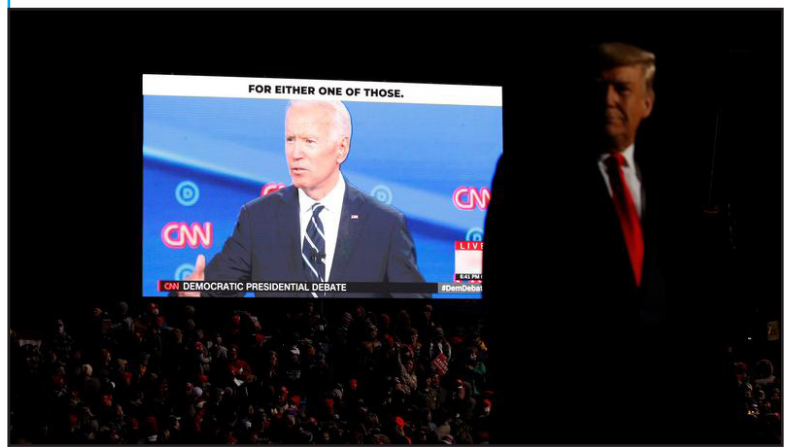
Earlier this month, the Kremlin said it successfully test-fired a hypersonic cruise missile from a naval ship in the White Sea. And on Tuesday, Russia's Ministry of Defense posted a video of Oniks cruise missile launch conducted from a military base in the Arctic.

Evidence that Russia may now be preparing to resume testing of its nuclear-powered cruise-missile comes as Washington and Moscow are working to extend the New START treaty, a key arms control agreement that is set to expire in coming months.

The top U.S. negotiator, Marshall Billingslea, suggested in a tweet Friday that talks between the two countries had reached an impasse.

But on Tuesday, Russia's Foreign Ministry said it is willing to agree to freeze its nuclear arsenals in order to extend New START if the U.S. does not pose any other requirements -- an offer that the State Department spokesperson welcomed with urgency saying the U.S. is "prepared to meet immediately to finalize a verifiable agreement."

## Trump, Biden Trade Personal Attacks in Frantic Campaign



A screen shows Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden as U.S. President Donald Trump holds a campaign rally at Erie International Airport in Erie, Pennsylvania, U.S., October 20, 2020.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Former president Barack Obama held his first rally Wednesday in support of U.S. election front runner Joe Biden, while Donald Trump campaigned frantically and accused his opponent, who stayed home in Delaware, of going "into hiding."

Two weeks before the polls, the contrast in campaign strategies between Trump, 74, and Biden, 77, has never been more pronounced: the Republican president led another rally in the battleground state of Pennsylvania Tuesday, while Democrat Biden stayed mostly out of sight ahead of a pivotal televised debate later in the week.

Polls show Biden ahead and, with the clock running down, he appears confident.

Trump's message with a fortnight left to go has boiled down to a mix of optimism, telling Americans that the coronavirus

pandemic is practically over, and ever more extreme attempts to tar Biden as corrupt -- even saying Tuesday that he wants the attorney general to open an investigation ahead of the election.

But, underlining how hard it is for him to escape the subject of the Covid-19 crisis, Trump's wife Melania canceled plans to accompany him to Pennsylvania at the last minute, complaining of a "lingering cough" following her own bout with the virus.

This was to have been her first appearance alongside Trump at a rally in more than a year, possibly boosting his dire standing among women voters.

Both candidates will get something of a reality check on Thursday when they meet for their second and final televised debate.

To try and impose some sense of order after a chaotic first clash in September, the

moderator will this time switch off each candidate's microphone when their opponent is speaking, thereby trying to thwart interruptions.

In what could be seen as foreshadowing, Trump's microphone cut out briefly at his Erie rally Tuesday. When it came back on, he blamed "Crooked Hillary" for the interruption -- a reference to his 2016 opponent, Hillary Clinton.

At the debate Biden is sure to go after Trump for his record on the pandemic, which has killed around 220,000 Americans and, despite the president's frequent claims, is surging back rather than going away.

A New York Times report Tuesday was likely to give Biden additional ammunition, revealing how Trump spent years cultivating business projects in China and even maintains a previously unknown bank account in the country.

As for Trump, he has made clear his priority is to pursue his claim that Biden's son Hunter sold access to his father in Ukraine and China when he was vice president under Obama.

Trump upped his offensive Tuesday by calling on US Attorney General Bill Barr to investigate his "criminal" opponent "before the election." And he told Fox News that the accusation has sent Biden "into hiding."

Trump is the subject of multiple allegations of sexual assault, corruption, and also is the first president to run for reelection after being impeached.

However, he won in 2016 in part thanks to the success of a last-minute push to sow doubt about Clinton's honesty.

## Johnson: London Mayor 'Bankrupted' the Capital

LONDON (Reuters) -- Britain is looking to force the body responsible for running London to sell off land and cut running costs as part of a fractious financial COVID-19 bailout designed to keep the capital's transport system running.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, from the opposition Labour Party, has called for a 5.7 billion pound (\$7.4 billion) package for Transport for London (TfL) after commuters deserted public trains and busses during the pandemic.

Khan says in return the government is insisting on higher fares and a raft of other revenue raising mechanisms such as increasing the size of the congestion zone which requires drivers to pay a fee to drive in the city. "There has to be a resolution with him," Housing minister Robert Jenrick told LBC Radio. "It can be for example... selling off TfL land so we get homes built in parts of London, there's a lot of opportunity to do that. It can also mean bearing down on some of the costs." Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government is locked in negotiations

with several city mayors over how businesses should be compensated when they are forced to close during lockdowns and how public services can continue.

Khan, who had frozen the cost of single fares, said in a statement the government's proposals would deter Londoners from travelling, further damaging any economic recovery.

He said the government had previously given a much more supportive bailout to private national train operators which have suffered a similar drop in income.

Jenrick said it had "to resolve the fact that the mayor has bankrupted TfL and the Greater London Authority."

"We've already given multiple billions of pounds to him over the last few years to bail him out," he said. "How do we take this forwards. Well, I'm afraid it can't keep falling back to the taxpayers of the whole of the United Kingdom."

## Deadly Shooting of Protesters Shocks Nigerians



Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu visits injured people at a hospital in Lagos, in this handout picture obtained by Reuters on October 21, 2020, Nigeria.

LAGOS (AFP) -- Nigerians were in shock on Wednesday after a deadly shooting of peaceful protesters in the biggest city Lagos that Amnesty International blamed on security forces.

There was no immediate death toll from the incident on Tuesday evening in which witnesses said armed gunmen opened fire on a crowd of over 1,000 people to disperse them after a curfew was imposed to end spiraling protests over police brutality.

Sporadic gunshots could be still be heard in Lagos on Wednesday morning, an AFP journalist said.

Lagos state governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu said 25 people were wounded, with two receiving intensive care, as local authorities vowed to investigate.

Amnesty International said several people were killed by security forces and that they were "working on verifying" the death toll.

The Nigerian army did not issue a direct statement, but labelled reports of soldiers shooting on protesters as "fake news" on Twitter.

Anger over abuses by the police's loathed Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) erupted into widespread protests about two weeks ago, drawing thousands of people on to the streets.

Sanwo-Olu had announced an indefinite curfew from Tuesday afternoon across Africa's largest city after claiming the

demonstrations had been hijacked by criminals.

The police chief also ordered anti-riot units to be deployed around the country.

Pictures and videos showing scenes of chaos from the shooting were widely shared on social media.

"Sam. We're still getting calls from people from Lekki. All through the night. Some hiding near there, some hurt, some just completely panicked," Nigerian podcaster Feyikemi Abudu, who has been actively involved in the protests, said on Twitter.

US presidential candidate Joe Biden urged the president and military "to cease the violent crackdown on protesters in Nigeria, which has already resulted in several deaths."

Protests have snowballed from anger over police violence to broader demands from the youth for sweeping changes in Africa's most populous nation.

Nigeria, where the median age is 18, is a tinderbox of profound economic and social grievances.

Several celebrities who have supported the protesters have added their voices to calls for President Muhammadu Buhari to resign.

Up until Tuesday some 18 people had died in the demonstrations as clashes were reported between protesters and assailants wearing civilian clothes.

## Japan Denies 'Asian NATO' to Contain China



Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi (centre R) greets U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (centre L) prior to their bilateral meeting in Tokyo on October 6, 2020 ahead of the four Indo-Pacific nations' foreign ministers meeting.

JAKARTA (Dispatches) -- Japan opposes any actions that escalate tension in the East and South China Seas, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said on Wednesday, but added that Tokyo was not aiming at an "Asian NATO" to contain any specific country.

Suga was wrapping up a four-day trip to Vietnam and Indonesia, his first overseas since taking office last month, as part of Japan's efforts to bolster ties with key Southeast Asian nations.

"Japan is opposed to any actions that escalate tensions in the South China Sea," Suga told a news conference in the Indonesian capital.

"Let me stress anew the importance of all the countries concerning the South China Sea issues not resorting to force or coercion, but working toward peaceful resolutions of the disputes based on international law."

The trip follows this month's meeting in Tokyo of the "Quad", an informal grouping of India, Australia, Japan and the United States that Washington sees as a bulwark against China's growing regional influence.

China has denounced the grouping of the four democracies as a "mini-NATO" aimed at containing its development.

"Our response in the South China Sea is not aimed at any one country," Suga said, when asked if Japan wanted to create an Asian ver-

sion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Suga must balance Japan's deep economic ties with China against security concerns, including Beijing's growing push to assert claims over disputed East China Sea isles.

Some in his ruling party want to see a harder line, after ties warmed under his predecessor, Shinzo Abe.

"Japan is determined to defend its territory, territorial waters and air space," Suga said, adding that Japan also opposed actions that raised tension in the East China Sea.

Several members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have territorial disputes with China in the vital South China Sea, but are wary of alienating the group's major economic partner and getting entangled in an intense confrontation between Washington and Beijing.

But some welcome Japan's greater engagement in the region.

Suga agreed with President Joko Widodo on Tuesday to speed talks on the export of Japanese defense gear and technology to Indonesia and have their defence and foreign ministers meet soon.

A day earlier, the Japanese leader and Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc also agreed in principle on a military equipment and technology export pact.

## News in Brief

BEIJING (AFP) -- India on Wednesday returned a Chinese soldier detained after straying across a disputed border where the two countries have clashed in recent months, China's army announced. Corporal Wang Ya Long was handed over early Wednesday, the Chinese military said in a statement. New Delhi on Monday said it had detained Wang after he crossed into Indian-controlled territory in the harsh mountainous area of Ladakh. China said Wang had got "lost after being asked by herders to search for yaks". The two countries have moved tens of thousands of troops and weapons into the high-altitude region after a violent clash in June left 20 Indian soldiers dead and an unknown number of Chinese casualties. Several rounds of talks have failed to significantly ease tensions. The neighbors are now digging in for a harsh winter at an altitude of 4,200 meters (14,000 feet), in a region where temperatures regularly fall below minus 30 degrees Celsius (minus 22 Fahrenheit).

BRUSSELS (AFP) -- EU chief Charles Michel urged Britain on Wednesday to decide what kind of a future it wants for itself rather than trying to win an advantage in negotiations with Brussels. "You can't have the butter, the money from the butter and the milkmaid's smile," the president of the European Council said, a French maxim that means: "You can't have your cake and eat it." Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson has described himself as a "cakeist" and he has accused Brussels of thwarting negotiations on a free trade deal by insisting the UK submit to EU rules. Michel said, "Our UK friends say they want an ambitious and close relationship. We welcome this, because we want the same," said Michel, whose Council represents the leaders of EU member states. "But the UK wants access to our Single Market, while at the same time, being able to diverge from our standards and regulations, when it suits them," he complained, in an address to the European Parliament.

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan (AFP) -- Kyrgyzstan will hold fresh parliamentary elections on December 20, the Central Asian country's electoral authority said Wednesday, after a previous vote was annulled over unrest that unsettled a president. Members of the Central Electoral Commission agreed to the new date unanimously, a statement from the CEC said. Allegations of vote-buying in the October 4 parliamentary vote raised by a mission of international monitors and losing parties sparked a protest that morphed into clashes between police and demonstrators. Central government all but disappeared in the week that followed as rival groups contested executive positions. Sooronbay Jeenbekov resigned as president last Thursday, allowing populist Sadyr Japarov, who had been approved as prime minister the day before, to take over as acting head of state. Parliament must now set a date for presidential elections. According to the current constitution, 51-year-old Japarov will be unable to run for office unless he leaves his posts before the electoral period begins.

KHARTOUM (AFP) -- Sudanese security forces closed off major thoroughfares in the heart of the capital before dawn on Wednesday following online calls for renewed protests against a worsening economic crisis. Police manned roadblocks on the main bridges across the Nile as well as on roads leading to army headquarters, the site of a long-running protest camp during the unrest that led to the ouster of longtime president Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. Vehicles carrying armed soldiers deployed across the city, an AFP correspondent reported. The Sudanese Professionals Association, a trade union alliance that spearheaded the protests against Bashir, has called for fresh demonstrations against economic conditions that have continued to deteriorate since his overthrow. Sudan has embarked on a rocky three-year transition during which civilian politicians have agreed to share power with the generals who removed Bashir in a palace coup. A chronic shortage of hard currency has led to long queues for staple foods and fuel, and power cuts lasting up to six hours a day.

GENEVA (AFP) -- The UN's Libya envoy said Wednesday she was "quite optimistic" about the prospects of a ceasefire emerging from ongoing talks between the two warring factions. Two days into the talks at the United Nations in Geneva, scheduled to last until Saturday, the two sides agreed to open internal land and air routes. "I'm quite optimistic... there is an air of seriousness and commitment," Stephanie Williams, the head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), told a press conference, on the prospect of a ceasefire. Libya has been wracked by conflict since the overthrow and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Rival power centers as well as a myriad of militias are vying for control, while human rights violations are often overlooked.

BRUSSELS (AFP) -- European Union ministers agreed Wednesday to overhaul its big budget farm policy with tighter rules to protect the environment and fight climate change. The new policy adopted by the 27 EU countries will now be the subject of negotiations with the European Parliament, which this week will vote on its own proposals. The member states and members of the European Parliament must decide together between now and next year on rules that will apply starting in January 2023. With a budget set for around 387 billion euros over seven years, the CAP accounts for the biggest share of EU spending. Under the agreement, all farmers will be forced to respect stricter environmental regulations if they want to benefit from financial aid. Small farms will be subjected to simple checks "which would reduce the administrative burden, while guaranteeing at the same time their contribution to environmental and climate objectives," it says.