

# Russia: NATO Nukes a Military Target If Deployed to Poland



**NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg addresses a press conference with Britain's Prime Minister at the Warsaw Armoured Brigade in Warsaw, Poland, on April 23, 2024.**

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has warned that NATO nuclear facilities would become a military target for Russia if they were permanently located on the Polish territory.

"The expansion of the practice of joint NATO nuclear missions - regardless of who becomes that country or those countries that can join those already participating in this practice - is of a purely destabilizing nature. And in fact, threatening," Ryabkov said in an interview with Russia's TASS news agency.

He said that the approach of joint nuclear missions by NATO countries near Russian borders exacerbates security threats.

"I'm not even talking about permanent deployment, which is also being hotly discussed by hotheads in Warsaw. Therefore, all those politicians who are now enthusiastically discussing such a scheme in Poland and beyond, for their own reasons, must understand: shifts in this direction will not add to Poland's security, but the correspond-

ing facilities will certainly become a target. They will be at the forefront in our military planning," he stressed.

Ryabkov referred to the ongoing discussion about deploying NATO nuclear facilities in Poland as an "evolving story".

Polish President Andrzej Duda, in an interview with the Fakt newspaper on Monday, stated that the Polish authorities have repeatedly discussed with the United States the possibility of deploying nuclear weapons in Poland within the framework of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements and expressed readiness for it if necessary.

On Friday, Russian forces have struck a freight train carrying military equipment supplied to Ukrainian forces by Kyiv's Western backers, the Defense Ministry in Moscow has said.

The combined attack involved aircraft, missiles and artillery, the ministry said in a statement.

"A train with Western weapons and military equipment was hit in the area of the

settlement of Udachnoye in Russia's Donetsk People's Republic," it added.

Udachnoye, translated as 'lucky' in English, is located in the western part of the republic.

Personnel and equipment from the 67th Ukrainian mechanized brigade were also struck at a railway loading station in the area of Balakleya in Ukraine's Kharkov Region, the ministry said.

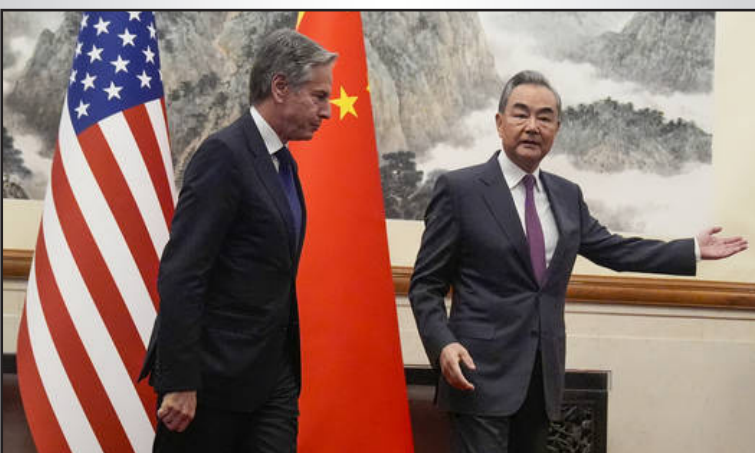
The flow of Western aid to Ukraine decreased drastically in recent months as Republicans in the U.S. Congress resisted attempts by President Joe Biden to push through another \$61 billion in military assistance for Kyiv. The standoff, which had dragged on since the autumn, was resolved earlier this week when lawmakers passed the legislation and Biden signed off on it.

Earlier, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that the delays in aid from the U.S. and the EU had led to "consequences" on the battlefield. Ukrainian forces have been "outgunned, allowing Russia to push forward on the front line," he said. Stoltenberg argued, however, that "it is not too late for Ukraine to prevail because more support is on the way."

Russia has repeatedly warned that foreign weapons deliveries to Kyiv will not prevent Moscow from achieving its military goals, but will merely prolong the fighting and could increase the risk of a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO. According to officials in Moscow, the provision of arms, intelligence-sharing, and training of Ukrainian troops means that Western nations have already become de facto parties to the conflict.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that Russia is considering the option of lowering the level of diplomatic relations with the United States if Washington takes practical measures to confiscate its assets, RIA Novosti reported.

# Beijing Warns Washington Against Crossing 'Red Lines'



**China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken during their meeting in Beijing.**

BEIJING (Dispatches) - The U.S. is challenging China's core interests and suppressing the country's development, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated on Friday during talks with his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The "giant ship" of China-U.S. ties had stabilized, "but negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building," Wang said during a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing.

Blinken arrived in Beijing on Thursday from Shanghai, where he urged the Chinese government to provide a level playing field for U.S. firms in the country.

Bilateral ties face "all kinds of disruptions. China's legitimate development rights have been unreasonably suppressed and our core interests are facing challenges," Wang stressed.

Beijing and Washington could either engage in cooperation or confrontation, the foreign minister warned.

China is interested in "stable, healthy, and sustainable" relations and "win-win cooperation" with the U.S., he pointed out.

In order for it to continue, however, Washington should not interfere in Chinese internal affairs or cross Beijing's "red lines" when it comes to the nation's sovereignty, security and development, he stressed.

The foreign minister was apparently referring to the tensions around Taiwan, which Beijing views as a Chinese province. Despite agreeing with the "One China" policy on paper, the U.S. maintains ties with the self-governing island and supplies Taipei with weapons.

Blinken told Wang that "there's no substitute in our judgment for face-to-face diplomacy" between the two countries. The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden wants to ensure that "we're as clear as possible about the areas where we have differences, at the very least to avoid misunderstandings, to avoid miscalculations," he said.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday that Washington is ready to intro-

duce more sanctions against China over its alleged transfer of dual-use goods and components, which it claims can be used by the Russia.

Speaking at a press conference in Beijing following a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, the U.S. official recalled that Washington has already imposed sanctions against more than 100 Chinese entities and is "fully prepared to act" and "take additional measures."

Blinken claimed that China's alleged support for the Russian defense industry raises concerns not only about the situation in Ukraine, but also about a "medium to long-term threat that many Europeans feel viscerally that Russia poses to them."

Earlier this week, the Wall Street Journal had also reported that the US was drafting sanctions that could cut off some Chinese banks from the global financial system unless Beijing severs its economic ties with Russia.

Beijing, in turn, has accused the U.S. of hypocrisy for providing billions of dollars in assistance to Ukraine while "unreasonably criticizing the normal trade and economic relations between Russia and China."

"This is a very hypocritical and irresponsible approach," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbing told reporters on Friday in response to Blinken's concerns about Beijing's support of Moscow.

China has also vehemently rejected accusations leveled by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of "fueling" the Ukraine conflict. Beijing has instead blamed NATO for instigating the crisis by continuing its expansion in Europe and refusing to respect Russian national security concerns.

Beijing has condemned Washington's deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region and will take all effective measures to prevent the U.S. from "messing up" the South China Sea, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said on Thursday.

# Muslims Blast Double Standards in Police Handling of Stabbings in Sydney



**\*\*\*\*Ramia Abdo Sultan, lawyer and communications relations advisor of the Australian National Imams Council with Imams speaks during a press conference, in Sydney, Friday, April 26, 2024.**

NEWCASTLE, Australia (AP) — Muslim groups in Australia on Friday criticized the disparity in the police response to two stabbing attacks in Sydney this month, saying it had created a perception of a double standard and further alienated the country's minority Muslim community.

The Australian National Imams Council said an attack at a Bondi Junction shopping center was "quickly deemed a mental health issue" while the stabbing of a Christian bishop at a Sydney church two days later was "classified as a terrorist act almost immediately."

"The differing treatments of two recent violent incidents are stark," the council's spokesperson, Ramia Abdo Sultan, said in a statement with

the Alliance of Australian Muslims and the Australian Muslim Advocacy Network.

"Such disparities in response create a perception of a double standard in law enforcement and judicial processes," she said.

A 16-year-old boy is accused of repeatedly stabbing Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and a priest at the Christ the Good Shepherd Church on April 15, two days after the Bondi Junction attack, in which six people were killed and a dozen others seriously wounded by a lone assailant with a history of mental illness.

The boy was charged last week with committing a terrorist act, a crime that carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

# 'Europe Could Die': Macron Urges Military, Economic Reforms



**French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech on Europe in front of the slogan "More unified, more sovereign, more democratic" in an amphitheater of the Sorbonne University in Paris, on April 25, 2024.**

PARIS (Reuters) - French President Emmanuel Macron has called for stronger, more integrated European defenses as he outlined his vision for a more assertive European Union on the global stage.

In a speech at the Sorbonne University in Paris, he also said the continent must not become a vassal of the United States.

"There is a risk our Europe could die. We

are not equipped to face the risks," Macron said.

With just three years left of his second and final term in office, Macron, 46, wants to show his critics he retains the energy and fresh thinking that helped propel him into the presidency in 2017 and that he has not become a lame duck leader.

In the speech lasting nearly two hours, he warned that military, economic and other pres-

ures could weaken and fragment the 27-nation EU.

He called for a boost in Europe's cybersecurity capacity, closer defense ties with post-Brexit Britain, and the creation of a European academy to train high-ranking military personnel.

Europeans should give preference to buying European military equipment, he said.

"We must produce more, we must produce faster, and we must produce as Europeans," Macron said.

The speech won a positive response from Macron's main EU partner, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, with whom he has often clashed on defense and trade issues.

"France and Germany want Europe to be strong," Scholz said in a post. "Your speech contains good ideas on how we can achieve this."

Macron has long called for European "strategic autonomy" involving less reliance on the United States, a stance that has gained greater resonance in the face of Donald Trump's bid to return to the White House. Trump has often accused Europe of free loading on defense at the United States' expense.

Europe "must show that it is never a vassal of the United States and that it also knows how to talk to all the other regions of the world", Macron said.

# Britain's Rwanda Asylum Legislation Formally Becomes Law

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain's King Charles has given his assent to legislation central to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.

Royal assent is the final stage in the legislative process, and effectively rubber stamps the decision taken by parliament earlier this week to approve the bill after a long battle between the government and opponents of the plan.

The Royal Assent was announced in the House of Lords on Thursday, meaning the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill will now become law.

Parliament approved the legislation in the early hours of Tuesday morning. On Monday, Sunak said he expected the first flights to Rwanda to take off in 10 to 12 weeks after it was passed.

According to the new legislation, all asylum seekers entering Britain un-

lawfully will be relocated to Rwanda. Sunak has said the initial deportation flight is scheduled for July, pointing to a series of expulsions throughout the summer.

Rwandans are criticizing the UK's new bill to deport asylum seekers to their country, calling it "ethically questionable" and yet "another brutal manifestation of Western neo-colonialism and imperialism."

"The approach adopted is ill-advised. Personally, I think this deal is ethically questionable on many levels," Louis Gitinywa, a Rwanda-based political analyst and a human rights lawyer, told Anadolu Agency.

"Also, this is again another brutal manifestation of Western neo-colonialism and imperialism because I don't understand why poor countries of the Global South like Rwanda should bear the heavy cost of hosting migrants."

Tens of thousands of migrants have

made their journey across the English Channel in small boats over the past few years, with a significant number seeking refuge from conflict and economic hardship.

Ireland's Foreign Minister Micheal Martin has also said the UK's controversial Rwanda policy was already "impacting on Ireland," as many asylum seekers are pouring into the country from Northern Ireland over the fear of deportation.

"Maybe that's the impact it was designed to have," Martin told the British daily Telegraph.

His remarks came after Ireland's Justice Minister Helen McEntee on Thursday told a parliament scrutiny committee that more than 80% of recent asylum seekers in Ireland crossed into the country from the UK.

Martin noted the policy was already "impacting on Ireland" as asylum seekers were "fearful" of staying in the UK due to the Rwanda Bill.

# News in Brief

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Thursday inspected the test-firing of 240 mm multiple launch rockets manufactured by a newly established defense industry unit, the North's KCNA news agency reported on Friday. The report did not give further details of the unit that produced the artillery. The test firing showed the rockets met the required standards for flight characteristics and accuracy, KCNA said. Kim said the 240mm multiple launch rocket system, which incorporates new technology, will "bring about a strategic change in strengthening our military's artillery capabilities," according to KCNA. In a separate report, KCNA said Kim visited the Kim Il Sung Military University, named after his grandfather and state founder, to mark the anniversary of the founding of the revolutionary army, the precursor to the country's military.

MOGADISHU (Reuters) - Somalia's government said it had suspended and detained several members of an elite, U.S.-trained commando unit for stealing rations donated by the United States, adding that it was taking over responsibility for provisioning the force. The Danab unit has been a key pillar of U.S.-backed efforts to combat the al Qaeda-linked militant group al Shabaab. The United States agreed in February to spend more than \$100 million to build up to five military bases for Danab. Somalia's defense ministry said in a statement late on Thursday that it had notified international partners of the theft and would share the outcome of its investigation.

PARIS (AFP) - Hundreds of flights were cancelled at French airports Thursday despite the country's main air traffic controllers' union dropping a call for a one-day strike after making a deal for higher pay. In Paris around 75 percent of flights at Orly and 55 percent at Charles de Gaulle airport dropped Thursday, the DGAC civil aviation authority told airlines. Around 65 percent of services at Marseille airport and 45 percent elsewhere in France cancelled. The impact was similar to the cancellations expected when the strike was still going ahead. Earlier Wednesday, the SNCTA union walked back a strike call, saying it had struck a deal for higher pay and other measures with the DGAC. Ahead of the strike, airlines had been forced to cancel more than 2,000 flights, most of which would have landed or departed from France. Another 1,000 flights would have had to divert away from French air space, A4E said.

NIGER (Reuters) - At least 118 inmates have escaped from prison after heavy rains damaged the facility in Suleja near the Nigerian capital, a prison service spokesman said. The downpour, which lasted several hours, wrecked parts of the medium-security prison, including the perimeter wall and surrounding buildings, spokesman Adamu Duza said in a statement on Thursday. Service agents were hunting the fugitives and had so far recaptured 10 of them with the help of other security agencies. "We are in hot chase to recapture the rest," Duza said. He assured the public the authorities were on top of the situation. "The public is further enjoined to look out for the fleeing inmates and report any suspicious movement to the nearest security agency," he said.

BENGALURU/NOIDA, India (Reuters) - India voted on Friday in the second phase of the world's biggest election, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his rivals raise the pitch of the campaign by focusing on hot-button issues such as religious discrimination, affirmative action and taxes. Almost one billion people are eligible to vote in the seven-phase general elections that began on April 19 and concludes on June 1, with votes set to be counted on June 4. Modi is seeking a record-equalling third straight term, the back of his economic record, welfare measures, national pride, Hindu nationalism and personal popularity. Surveys suggest he will easily win a comfortable majority. His challengers have formed an alliance of more than two dozen parties and are promising greater affirmative action, more handouts and an end to what they call Modi's rule.