

# Russia Warns of Resumption of War in East Ukraine



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy looks on as he visits the war-hit Donbas region, eastern Ukraine, April 8, 2021.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) — The Kremlin said Friday it fears the resumption of full-scale fighting in eastern Ukraine and could take steps to protect civilians there, a stark warning that comes amid a U.S. military buildup in the region.

The statement by Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, reflected the Kremlin's determination to prevent Ukraine from using force to try to reclaim control over separatist-controlled territory in the country's east.

Ukrainian forces and pro-Russia separatists have been fighting in eastern Ukraine since shortly after Crimea Peninsula's decision to rejoin Ukraine in 2004. More than 14,000 people have

died in the conflict, and efforts to negotiate a political settlement have stalled.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited soldiers in the Donbas region on Thursday.

Peskov said Russia is free to deploy its troops wherever it wants on its territory. He accused the Ukrainian military of an "escalation of provocative actions" along the line of control in the east that threatens Russia's security.

"The Kremlin has fears that a civil war could resume in Ukraine, and if a civil war, a full-scale military action resumes near our borders that would threaten the Russian Federation's security," Peskov said. "The ongoing escalation of tensions is quite unprecedented."

Dmitry Kozak, a Putin aide who serves as Russia's top negotiator with Kyiv, warned Ukraine on Thursday against using force to retake control of the east, where many residents have Russian citizenship. Such a move would mark "the beginning of an end for Ukraine," he said.

Kozak said Russia will likely act to protect civilians if they faced a potential massacre like the one that took place during the Bosnian War in Srebrenica in 1995.

Asked about Kozak's comment, Peskov said that in the case of a Srebrenica-like threat, "all countries, including Russia, will take steps to prevent such tragedies." He said that virulent nationalist rhetoric in Ukraine was inflaming hatred against the mostly Russian-speaking population of the east.

A Turkish Foreign Ministry official said Friday that the United States has notified Turkey that two U.S. warships will sail to the Black Sea on April 14 and April 15 and stay there until May 4 and May 5, respectively.

Such visits by the U.S. and other NATO ships have vexed Moscow, which long has bristled at Ukraine's efforts to build up military ties with the West and its aspirations to eventually join NATO.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned Friday that Ukraine's NATO bid "wouldn't only lead to a massive escalation of the situation in the southeast but could also entail irreversible consequences for the Ukrainian statehood."

# Japan to Release Radioactive Fukushima Water Into Sea



The storage tanks for treated water are seen at the tsunami-crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Okuma town, Fukushima prefecture, Japan March 1 2021.

TOKYO (Kyodo News) — The Japanese government is poised to release treated radioactive water accumulated at the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea despite opposition from fishermen, sources familiar with the matter said Friday.

It will hold a meeting of related ministers as early as Tuesday to formally decide on the plan, a major development following over seven years of discussions on how to discharge the water used to cool down melted fuel at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

The government has said it cannot continue postponing a decision on the disposal issue, given that the storage capacity of water tanks at the Fukushima complex is expected to run out as early as

fall next year. It asserts that space needs to be secured on the premises, such as for keeping melted fuel debris that will be extracted from the damaged reactors, to move forward with the decades-long process of scrapping the complex.

Plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc. says it will take around two years for the discharge to start.

The government had initially hoped to make a decision on the discharge of the treated water in October last year but later decided it would need more time for discussions amid concerns about reputational damage to marine products.

But Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said Wednesday his govern-

ment will decide "in a few days" whether to release the water after meeting with Hiroshi Kishi, head of the national federation of fisheries cooperatives, who conveyed his organization's continued strong opposition to the plan.

On media reports that Japan is poised to discharge the water into the sea, China and South Korea responded by calling on Tokyo to consider it carefully and with transparency.

China urged Japan to make a cautious decision on the matter, saying, "The radioactive material leakage caused by the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan has had a profound impact on the marine environment, food safety and human health."

The Japanese government should disclose adequate information and "make a careful decision based on full consultation with neighboring countries," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters in Beijing.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry said in a statement, "Our government has always emphasized that the Japanese government needs to transparently open up information over how it deals with contaminated water."

China and South Korea are among 15 countries and regions that continue to restrict imports of Japanese agricultural and fishery products more than 10 years after the Fukushima nuclear crisis, caused by a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

# China: U.S. Hypocrisy Exposed Through Foreign Wars



Soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division rest while waiting to pack their weapons for shipment back to the United States at Camp Virginia, Kuwait on December 19, 2011.

BEIJING (Dispatches) — China accused the U.S. of causing humanitarian disasters through foreign military interventions in a report Friday that was the latest broadside by Beijing in increasingly contentious relations with the Biden administration.

The report from the government-backed China Society for Human Rights Studies said foreign wars launched under the banner of "humanitarian intervention" have not only cost the belligerent parties a large number of military lives but also caused extremely serious civilian casualties and property damage, leading to horrific humanitarian disasters.

"The selfishness and hypocrisy of the United States have also been fully exposed through these foreign wars," said the report, which cited a list of what it called U.S. aggression, from its intervention in Greece in 1947 to its opposition to the Venezuelan government in 2019. It cited conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria as major U.S. wars.

"Choosing to use force irrespective of the consequences reveals the hegemonic aspirations of the United States," the report said. "Only by discarding the hegemonic thinking, which is chiefly motivated by self-interest, can we prevent humanitarian intervention from becoming humanitarian disasters."

Relations between Washington and Beijing have been fractious over U.S. support for Chinese Taipei and sanctions against

China, which many observers say are aimed at containing China's rise.

There have been no major changes on those issues since President Joe Biden replaced Donald Trump. Congress, meanwhile, is preparing to take up new legislation that would underscore the competition with Beijing in foreign affairs, trade and other fields.

Asked Thursday about that pending legislation, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said the administration has been "heartened that there is a good deal of bipartisan agreement when it comes to how we should and could approach the government in Beijing."

China has struck back with visa bans against U.S. officials and others it deems to have damaged its interests.

Chinese officials delivered unusually sharp remarks at an initial meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last month, in apparent response to U.S. sanctions against Chinese and Hong Kong officials.

Congress should abandon any legislation targeting China and Washington should "do more things that are conducive to the healthy and stable development of China-U.S. relations," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing on Friday.

"Relevant Americans should abandon the Cold War zero-sum game mindset, treat China and Sino-U.S. relations in an objective and rational manner" and cease interfering in China's internal affairs, Zhao said.

# Medical Experts Testify: Floyd Died of Lack of Oxygen



Protesters hold banners in front of the Capitol Hill during a rally against the death in Minneapolis police custody of African-American man George Floyd in Washington, May 30, 2020.

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — George Floyd died of a lack of oxygen from being pinned to the pavement with a knee on his neck, medical experts testified at former Officer Derek Chauvin's murder trial, emphatically rejecting the defense theory that Floyd's drug use and underlying health problems killed him.

"A healthy person subjected to what Mr. Floyd was subjected to would have died," prosecution witness Dr. Martin Tobin, a lung and critical care specialist at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital and Loyola University's medical school in Illinois, testified Thursday.

Using easy-to-understand language to explain medical concepts and even loosening his necktie to illustrate a point, Tobin told the jury that Floyd's breathing was severely constricted while Chauvin and two other Minneapolis officers held the 46-year-old Black man down on his stomach last May with his hands cuffed behind him and his face jammed against the ground.

The lack of oxygen resulted in brain damage and caused his heart to stop, the witness said.

Tobin, analyzing images of the three officers restraining Floyd for what prosecutors say was almost 9 1/2 minutes, testified that Chauvin's knee was "virtually on the neck" more than 90% of the time.

He said several other factors also made it difficult for Floyd to breathe: officers lifting up on the suspect's handcuffs, the hard pavement, his prone position, his turned head and a knee on his back.

Chauvin kept his knee on Floyd's neck for 3 minutes, 2 seconds, after Floyd took his last breath, Tobin said. After that last breath, Floyd's oxygen levels went down to zero and Floyd "reached the point where there was not one ounce of oxygen left in the body," he said.

As prosecutors repeatedly played a video clip of Floyd on the ground, Tobin pinpointed what he said was a change in the man's face that told him Floyd was dead. That moment happened around five minutes after police began holding Floyd down.

"At the beginning, you can see he's conscious, you can see slight flickering, and then it disappears," Tobin said. He explained: "That's the moment the life goes out of his body."

Chauvin, 45, is charged with murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death May 25. Floyd was arrested outside a neighborhood market after being accused of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill. Bystander video of Floyd yelling that he couldn't breathe as onlookers cried at the white officer to get off him sparked protests and scattered violence around the U.S.

# News in Brief

LONDON (Dispatches) — Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth's husband and a pivotal figure in the British royal family for almost seven decades, has died aged 99, Buckingham Palace said on Friday. The Duke of Edinburgh, as he was officially known, had been by his wife's side throughout her 69-year reign, the longest in British history. During that time he earned a reputation for occasional gaffes. A Greek prince, Philip married Elizabeth in 1947. He spent four weeks in hospital and to have a heart procedure, but returned to Windsor in early March. He died just two months before he was to celebrate his 100th birthday. The death of the queen's husband and closest confidant will raise questions over whether she might consider abdication, but royal commentators say there is little or no chance that this will happen. In recent years, the queen has cut the number of official engagements she carries out and has passed many royal duties and patronages onto Prince Charles, his son William and other senior royals. But she still carries out the most symbolic of the monarchy's state duties, such as the opening of parliament.

BEIJING (Dispatches) — China said Thursday the UK is sheltering "wanted criminals" by granting political asylum to fugitives from Hong Kong, China's global financial hub city. "The UK is clearly a platform for Hong Kong independence agitators, and provides so-called shelter for wanted criminals," said China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian at a press conference. His remarks came just a day after London granted political asylum to Hong Kong separatist Nathan Law, angering Beijing. Zhao called Law, a 27-year-old former Hong Kong lawmaker, a "criminal suspect" and described the provocative move by the British government as "gross interference" in Hong Kong's judiciary. "The UK should immediately correct its mistake, and stop interfering in Hong Kong affairs and China's internal affairs," the Chinese official added.

SEOUL (Dispatches) — The United States and South Korea on Thursday officially signed a cost-sharing agreement to maintain the presence of American troops in the East Asian country. South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun and Rob Rapson, charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, signed the deal, known as the Special Measures Agreement (SMA), in a ceremony at the Foreign Ministry building. Under the SMA, Seoul is to pay 1.05 billion dollars this year for the upkeep of the 28,500-strong U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) until 2025. The South Korean Foreign Ministry said the government would send the deal to the National Assembly for final ratification at the earliest date. Seoul used to pay Washington about 920 million dollars a year. Negotiations for a new agreement stalled when former U.S. President Donald Trump demanded a total of 5 billion dollars from South Korea and rejected Seoul's offer to pay 13 percent more.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for waging another "arduous march" to fight severe economic difficulties, for the first time comparing them to a 1990s famine that killed hundreds of thousands. Kim had previously said his country faces the "worst-ever" situation due to several factors, including the coronavirus pandemic, U.S.-led sanctions and heavy flooding last summer. But it's the first time he publicly drew parallel with the deadly famine. "There are many obstacles and difficulties ahead of us, and so our struggle for carrying out the decisions of the Eighth Party Congress would not be all plain sailing," Kim told lower-level ruling party members on Thursday, according to the Korean Central News Agency. "I made up my mind to ask the WPK (Workers' Party of Korea) organizations at all levels, including its Central Committee and the cell secretaries of the entire party, to wage another more difficult 'arduous march' in order to relieve our people of the difficulty, even a little," Kim said.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — An explosive eruption rocked La Soufriere volcano on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent on Friday following mandatory evacuation orders from the local government. Evacuation management officials said the ash column was about 20,000 feet (6 kilometers) high and that the ash was headed east into the Atlantic Ocean. However, heavy ashfall also was reported in communities around the volcano, said Erouscilla Joseph, director of the University of the West Indies Seismic Center. "More explosions could be expected, adding that it was impossible to predict whether any potential upcoming explosions would be bigger or smaller than the first one. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The volcano last erupted in 1979, and a previous eruption in 1902 killed some 1,600 people. The new eruption followed mandatory evacuation orders issued Thursday for people who live near the volcano.

NAYPYITAW (Reuters) — Myanmar's military junta said on Friday that a protest campaign against its rule was dwindling since people wanted peace, while 18 ambassadors to the country called in a joint statement for the restoration of democracy. The junta will hold elections within two years and hand over power to the elected government, military spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun told a news conference in the capital, Naypyitaw. It was the first time the junta has given for elections since it ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1.

# Sisi Warns of War Over Ethiopia's Giant Dam on Nile

CAIRO (Reuters) -Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi warned of the risk of conflict over Ethiopia's giant dam on the Blue Nile after talks involving the two countries and Sudan ended without progress.

Ethiopia is pinning its hopes of economic development and power generation on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which Egypt fears will imperil its supply from the Nile. Sudan is also concerned about the impact on its own water flows.

Delegations from the three governments met earlier this week in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo but failed to bridge their differences.

Speaking at the opening of a new government complex, Sisi said Sudan and Egypt were coordinating on the issue and that "cooperation and agreement are much better than anything else".

Referring to past regional conflicts, he said: "We have witnessed the costs of any confrontation." "I am telling our brothers in Ethiopia, let's not reach the

point where you touch a drop of Egypt's water, because all options are open," he said.

Ethiopia's water minister Seleshi Bekele sought to defuse tensions. "There is no need to enter an unnecessary war. A war can't start because of water. Water flows if you fight today, it'll continue to flow tomorrow," he told reporters.

In a text message to Reuters he rebuffed accusations that Ethiopia was using another country's water.

"We are not utilizing water generated from Egypt or Sudan as water doesn't flow upstream to Ethiopia," he said.

"We are utilizing water from Ethiopia for our dire need following equitable and reasonable utilization without causing significant harm to our neighbours."

Egypt and Sudan, in statements after the Kinshasa meeting, accused Ethiopia of intransigence on restarting negotiations in advance of a second filling of the dam this summer.

Ethiopia said on Tuesday it could not enter into an agreement that infringed on its rights to utilize the Nile.