

Russia: AUKUS Shocked NATO More Than Potential Adversaries



The security pact enables Australia to build nuclear-powered submarines for the first time

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told the Soloviev Live YouTube channel on Wednesday that the move by Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States to create a security partnership surprised its NATO allies more than their potential adversaries.

"It came as a total surprise and a shock for NATO," she pointed out, TASS reported.

"It came as an absolute surprise not for those whom the U.S., Australia and the UK call their opponents and whom they are collaborating against, but for their allies and the military and political blocs that the U.S. and the UK are part of," Zakharova added.

"The developments that are unfolding around Australia, a seemingly a faraway land, what is happening there is not just interesting - though it is interesting indeed - but it also requires

special attention from the political analyst community, including experts on international relations and military and strategic issues," the Russian diplomat noted.

On September 15, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced the formation of a new security pact called AUKUS. Australia particularly intends to use American technologies to build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines, the first of which will become operational in 2036, as well as to equip its armed forces with US-made cruise missiles.

The move broke an earlier defense deal inked with France, the biggest in Australia's history. Paris slammed Canberra's decision as "a stab in the back" and recalled its ambassadors from the US and Australia for consultations. France later expressed its determination to defend its interests during discussions of a trade agree-

ment between the European Union and Australia.

'AUKUS Alliance Pursues Anti-China, Anti-Russia Policies'

A senior Russian security official says the new military pact between Australia, Britain and the U.S. is a hostile step aimed both at China and Russia.

Nikolay Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, said on Tuesday that the AUKUS alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States was a military bloc directed against Russia and China, stressing that the "venture" puts the entire security architecture in Asia at risk.

Patrushev said the accord would see the U.S. and UK team up with Australia to station nuclear submarines deep down in the Pacific Ocean, a partnership that mainly pursues "anti-China and anti-Russia policies."

"A short while ago, a new military bloc was formed in the region, the U.S.-UK-Australian AUKUS, which pursues the same goals. Remarkably, the Americans squeezed their French partners out, grabbing a profitable deal for the construction of nuclear submarines for Canberra. Apparently, Atlantic solidarity has a price," the Russian security council chief said.

"For the sake of translating another White House's venture into action, for the sake of strengthening control over the promising Asia-Pacific region, the entire security architecture in Asia is exposed to danger and prerequisites are being created to damage the prestige of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other regional associations," he added.

UN Warns U.S. Deportations of Haitians May Violate International Law



U.S. Border Patrol horses coming close to trampling children as agents harass Haitian migrants and use whip-like lengths of cord to enforce their orders.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The United Nations has expressed deep concern at mass deportations of Haitian migrants from the United States, warning they could go against international law.

The White House has faced a torrent of criticism after the U.S. started sending paneloads full of Haitian nationals back to their crisis-ravaged country over the weekend, AFP reported.

The crisis intensified after pictures by AFP photographer Paul Ratje that spread quickly over social media appeared to show the U.S. Border Patrol horses coming close to trampling children as agents harass Haitian migrants and use whip-like lengths of cord to enforce their orders.

The head of the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR Filippo Grandi said he was "shocked by images of the deplorable conditions beneath the concrete highway overpass in Del Rio, Texas, where more than 14,000 Haitians had gathered after arduous journeys".

He also lashed out at the U.S. gov-

ernment's Title 42 policy, which was brought in by the previous administration of Donald Trump to stop most arrivals at the Southern border on the grounds that migrants could spread COVID-19.

"The summary, mass expulsions of individuals currently under way under the Title 42 authority, without screening for protection needs, is inconsistent with international norms and may constitute refoulement," Grandi said in a statement.

"Refoulement" - returning asylum seekers to places where they risk persecution and threats to their life - is illegal under international law. Earlier in the day, the UN human rights and refugee agencies joined up to criticise the deportations.

"We are seriously concerned by the fact that it appears that there has not been any individual assessment in the (Haiti) cases," Human Rights Office Spokesman Marta Hurtado told reporters in Geneva.

This, she said, indicated that "maybe some of these people have not received the protection that they needed".

Cuba: U.S. Lacks Moral Authority to Promote Peace in World



Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez

HAVANA (Dispatches) - Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez has criticized the United States for pursuing a divisive strategy in the world, saying Washington lacks the moral authority to promote peace, human dignity and development.

Rodriguez made the remarks in a post on his Twitter account, following U.S. President Joe Biden's speech at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, during which he highlighted his commitments to multilateral organizations.

"President Biden's administration

is making a serious mistake, with consequences for all, in its efforts to split the world between those who submit to it and those who defend their sovereign right to self-determination with dignity," he stated.

The Cuban diplomat further noted that the disguised application of former US President Donald Trump's wrong and dangerous foreign policy makes the current administration responsible for the damage caused to international peace and stability, and its serious consequences.

He also stressed that the greatest threat to the U.S. "is the growing political polarization and extremism within its territory", adding that for Latin America, it's "the imposition of the imperialist Monroe Doctrine".

Biden sought to distance himself from his predecessor in his Tuesday speech at the UN, saying the United States is "back at the table in international forums, especially at the United Nations, to focus attention and boost global actions on shared challenges".

South Korea Cites 'Power of Dialogue' in Fostering Peace With North



South Korea has called for the "speedy resumption" of dialogue with North Korea and between Pyongyang and Washington.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - South Korea has called for the "speedy resumption" of dialogue with North Korea and between Pyongyang and Washington.

"To ensure that a complete, lasting peace will begin taking firm root on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea remains fully committed to doing its part," President Moon Jae-in said in his address to the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.

He added peace on the Korean Peninsula "begins always with dialogue and cooperation".

"I call for the speedy resumption of dialogue between the two Koreas and between the United States and North Korea," said Moon, who physically attended the General Assembly.

Moon added Seoul stands for a "denuclearized, prosperous" Korean Peninsula.

"South Korea has steadily carried forward the Korean Peninsula peace process, and amid the support of the international community achieved historic milestones," he stated, referring to various declarations signed with Pyongyang.

"I hope to see that the Korean Peninsula will prove the power of dialogue

and cooperation in fostering peace," noted Moon, reiterating what he called "zero tolerance for war, mutual security guarantees and co-prosperity as the three principles in resolving issues related to the Korean Peninsula".

"I once again urge the community of nations to mobilize its strengths for the end-of-war declaration on the Korean Peninsula and propose that three parties, of the two Koreas and the US, or four parties of the two Koreas, the US and China come together and declare that the War on the Korean Peninsula is over," he continued.

The Korean War in the 1950s between the North and South ended in an armistice on July 27, 1953, but there has never been a peace treaty between the divided Koreas.

"When the two Koreas and the surrounding nations work together, peace will be firmly established on the Korean Peninsula and prosperity fostered across all of Northeast Asia," he said.

"That will go down as a Korean Peninsula model in which peace is attained through cooperation," he added.

He also urged North Korea to "brace for changes that befit the era of global community".

Thousands Flee Fighting in Myanmar Town Near India

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - Most of the population of a Myanmar town near the Indian border have fled after buildings were set ablaze by artillery amid fighting between militia forces opposed to military rule and the army, according to residents and media reports.

About 10,000 people normally live in Thantlang in Chin State, but most had left to seek shelter in surrounding areas including in India, a community leader said.

In India's neighboring state of Mizoram, the head of a civil society group said 5,500 people from Myanmar had arrived in just two districts over the past week, as they scrambled to escape a military crackdown.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a government led by pro-democracy veteran Aung San Suu Kyi was toppled on Feb. 1, sparking nationwide anger, strikes, protests, and the emergence of anti-junta militia.

During fighting last weekend in Thantlang, about 20 homes were set ablaze, with photographs on social media showing buildings engulfed in flames.

Soldiers shot dead a Christian pas-



People displaced by fighting in north-western Myanmar between junta forces and anti-junta fighters walk in Chin State, Myanmar, May 31, 2021.

tor who tried to extinguish a blaze, the Myanmar Now news portal reported, although state media disputed the report.

The Global New Light of Myanmar said the pastor's death was being investigated and that soldiers had been ambushed by about 100 "terrorists" and both sides exchanged fire.

Salai Thang, a community leader, said four civilians had been killed and 15

wounded in several weeks of conflict with the military also using air strikes after an army base was overrun.

The Chin Defense Force, a militia opposed to the military, said in a statement 30 soldiers had been killed.

Reuters could not independently confirm any of the claims and a military spokesman did not answer calls seeking comment.

News in Brief

SYDNEY/MELBOURNE, (Reuters) - A magnitude 6.0 earthquake struck near Melbourne on Wednesday, Geoscience Australia said, one of the country's biggest quakes on record, causing damage to buildings in the country's second-largest city and sending tremors throughout neighboring states. The quake's epicentre was near the rural town of Mansfield in the state of Victoria, about 200 km (124 miles) northeast of Melbourne, and was at a depth of 10 km (six miles). An aftershock was rated 4.0. Images and video footage circulating on social media showed rubble blocking one of Melbourne's main streets, while people in northern parts of the city said on social media they had lost power.

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Brazil's Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga has tested positive for COVID-19 after attending the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the first world leader to speak. The Brazilian government said on Tuesday that Queiroga, who had received a COVID-19 vaccine, was the second member of Bolsonaro's entourage to test positive for the virus since arriving in New York for the 76th session of the annual UN gathering. Queiroga was with Bolsonaro, who last year survived a bout of the virus, at several events, including a meeting with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday.

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela has said a Colombian military drone violated its airspace in what it called a "blatant threat" to its national security that took place during a visit by a U.S. military commander to the neighboring nation. General Vladimir Padrino said in a statement that a Colombian Air Force drone flew over the Venezuelan border state of Zulia on Monday afternoon. "This was neither involuntary nor coincidental, as it coincides with the presence in Colombia of Admiral Craig Faller, chief of the United States Southern Command ... to supposedly discuss 'cooperation on security matters,'" Padrino said in the statement posted on the defense ministry's Twitter account. Colombia's Air Force and the U.S. State Department did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - The World Health Organization (WHO) has strengthened its air quality guidelines, or AQGs, as it warned that air pollution was one of the biggest environmental threats to human health, causing seven million premature deaths a year. The United Nations health agency said on Wednesday that urgent action was needed to reduce exposure to air pollution, ranking its burden of disease "on a par with other major global health risks such as unhealthy diet and tobacco smoking". The WHO said the burden of disease attributable to air pollution was "WHO has adjusted almost all the air quality guideline levels downwards, warning that exceeding the new ... levels is associated with significant risks to health," it said. "Adhering to them could save millions of lives."

VIENNA (Reuters) - A judge questioned Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz for hours this month as part of an investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors into whether Kurz gave false testimony to a parliamentary commission. Kurz said on Wednesday. Kurz could be charged with perjury as a result of the investigation, which began in May. He denies any wrongdoing. read more The investigation is also a serious political challenge for Kurz. No sitting chancellor has been charged with a crime and it is unclear whether his conservative party's junior coalition partner, the left-wing Greens, would maintain their alliance if he were charged or found guilty.