

Kremlin: Ukraine’s NATO Ambitions Remain Threat to Russia



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - The Kremlin said on Wednesday that Ukraine’s ongoing ambitions to join the Western NATO military alliance presented a threat to Russia’s security and highlighted the necessity for Russia to conduct what it calls a “special military operation” in Ukraine.

In a conference call with reporters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the idea of Ukraine joining NATO was “the main threat” to Russia which “emphasizes the relevance and urgent need to ensure our security and our national interests.”

Before Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in February,

Moscow was demanding legal guarantees that Ukraine never be admitted to the military alliance.

Moscow Issues Apocalyptic Warning to West over Ukraine

On Tuesday, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev wrote on his Telegram channel that western “half-wits” from “stupid think tanks” are leading their countries down the road of nuclear armageddon with their hybrid war against Moscow.

Endlessly funneling weapons and support to Ukraine while pretending not to be directly involved in the conflict will not work, added the deputy chair of the Russian Security Council, RT reported.

The “security guarantees” proposal unveiled by Kiev on Tuesday was “really a prologue to the Third World War”, said Medvedev, calling it a “hysterical appeal” to Western countries engaged in a proxy war against Russia.

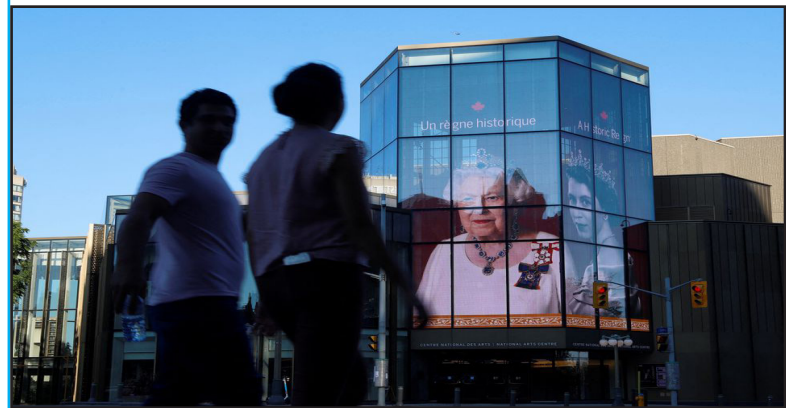
If the West continues its “unrestrained pumping of the Kiev regime with the most dangerous types of weapons”, Russia’s military campaign will move to the next level, where “visible boundaries and potential predictability of actions by the parties to the conflict” will be erased and the conflict will take on a life of its own, as wars always do, Medvedev argued.

“And then the Western nations will not be able to sit in their clean homes, laughing at how they carefully weaken Russia by proxy. Everything will be on fire around them. Their people will harvest their grief in full. The land will be on fire and the concrete will melt,” Medvedev wrote, before citing a Bible verse from Revelations 9:18.

“Yet still the narrow-minded politicians and their stupid think tanks, thoughtfully twirling a glass of wine in their hands, talk about how they can deal with us without entering into a direct war. Dull idiots with a classical education,” Medvedev wrote.

His comments were prompted by Kiev’s publication of a “security treaty” proposal, developed under the tutelage of former NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

More Canadians See Monarchy as ‘Outdated’



People walk by as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth appears on the National Arts Centre, after Queen Elizabeth’s passing, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, September 8, 2022.

OTTAWA (Dispatches) - A growing number of Canadians do not want a foreign monarch to represent them despite deep historical ties to Britain.

Britain colonized Canada beginning in the late 1500s, and the country formally remained part of the British empire until 1982. Now it is a member of the Commonwealth of former empire countries that have the British monarch as head of state.

Dozens of Canadian city names, like London and Windsor, reflect the enduring ties. But according to an Angus Reid Institute poll from April, 51% of Canadians do not want the monarchy to continue as its ceremonial figurehead, up from 45% in January 2020.

Only 26% of respondents said it

should and 24% were unsure.

Further, according to a Leger poll published on Tuesday, some 77% of Canadians said they feel no attachment to the British monarchy.

“Canada is the only G7 country whose head of state is another country’s citizen,” said Flavio Volpe, president of Canada’s Automotive Parts Manufacturers’ Association.

“I prefer someone from Windsor than from the House of Windsor” to be head of state, said Volpe, referring to the Canadian city across the river from Detroit.

“We should have serious conversations as a country about whether we can find a Canadian to fill a ceremonial post.”

The death of Queen Elizabeth last

week triggered a huge outpouring of affection in Canada, but most find their relationship with a foreign sovereign awkward. A ceremony was held in Ottawa on Saturday to proclaim the accession of Britain’s King Charles.

“The monarchy is outdated and has no relevance in our government. I think it’s time we just stood on our own,” said John Nielsen, 61, a contractor in Ottawa.

Those from Quebec, the mostly French-speaking province, feel even less kinship with Britain, with 71% in the Angus Reid poll saying they no longer see a need for monarchy, and 87% saying they feel no attachment to the royal family in the Leger poll.

A fifth of Canada’s population are newcomers with little connection to Britain, and indigenous peoples tend to harbor little fondness for the colonial power. In one example of their feelings, indigenous activists pulled down a statue of the queen on the grounds of the Manitoba legislature in 2021.

“The massive constitutional effort of removing the Crown would inevitably invite many other suggestions for constitutional change. Canada went down this road in the 1980s and 1990s and the country nearly collapsed from all the competing demands,” said Jonathan Malloy, professor of political science at Ottawa’s Carleton University.

At least seven provincial legislatures representing more than 50% of the population, plus parliament, must approve constitutional amendments.

As Britain Shuts Down for Queen’s Funeral, Thousands Face Disruption

LONDON (Reuters) - While Queen Elizabeth’s funeral will be observed across Britain, thousands of people face cancelled doctor appointments, closed food banks and shut supermarkets because of a surprise national holiday.

Many patients have been left frustrated after being told that National Health Service (NHS) appointments they had waited months to secure were suddenly cancelled.

“For patients who may have been waiting up to two years for elective surgery or appointments — if they are then cancelled on the 19th, this will be incredibly distressing,” Ellen Welch, co-chair of doctors’ lobby DAAUK, told Reuters.

“As frontline NHS staff, DAAUK are left wondering if the decision makers in government really understand how their decisions play out on the ground,” Welch said.

Britain’s state-run NHS is already facing its worst ever staffing crisis and has more than 6 million people on waiting lists for hospital treatment. It handles an average 888,000 general practice appointments each day, according to Reuters calculations from data from the last six months.

There are also concerns about the NHS resources needed to rebook appointments and doctors having to make childcare arrangements at short notice.

“The issue is the short notice, really. We can always organise around planned holidays,” said Helen Salisbury, a doctor and Oxford University professor.

“If you think about people who are waiting for cancer diagnostics, or chemotherapy, it’s really difficult to know how they’re going to proceed.”

As with any national holiday, NHS staff will ensure urgent and emergency services are available, a spokesperson said.

The NHS will “continue to operate and operate at scale on that day,” a spokesman for Prime Minister Liz Truss said.

“Obviously individual trusts are monitoring for any possible impacts due to postponements.”

Other organizations have faced criticism for their decisions to suspend services as a mark of respect.

British Cycling was forced to withdraw guidance asking people to limit bike rides on Monday after facing ridicule.

Many supermarkets, which usually operate for limited hours during other national holidays, have declared they will be closed on Monday. They include Britain’s biggest retailer Tesco, as well as Asda, Iceland, Aldi and Poundland.

Other retailers including Primark, Ikea, Harrods and WH Smith, besides cinema operator Cineworld have also said they will be shut.

Even people hankering for a cheeseburger will have to wait. McDonald’s said all of its restaurants in Britain would be shut until 5 p.m. on Monday. Some food banks - a lifeline for poorer households - have also announced closures, while several striking workers’ unions have also suspended planned industrial action as a mark of respect.

Other events that were cancelled during the mourning period include London Fashion Week shows, English Premier League soccer matches and a range of other sporting fixtures.

London’s Heathrow, Britain’s busiest airport, said it expects changes to its operations on Monday, while warning of disruption to flights for nearly two hours on Wednesday as the Queen’s coffin was carried in a procession in central London.

Armenia-Azerbaijan Fighting Flares Again After Deadly Exchanges



Fighting was the most recent flare-up in tensions between the Azerbaijan and Armenia since scores were killed in the war.

TBILISI (Dispatches) - New clashes erupted between Azerbaijan and Armenia on Wednesday as international peace efforts intensified a day after nearly 100 soldiers were killed in the worst fighting between the ex-Soviet republics since 2020.

“The situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border remained tense,” it said, stressing that Baku has launched attacks on its sovereign territory.

Azerbaijan also accused Armenia of firing mortars and artillery against its military units.

“Our positions are periodically being fired against at the moment,” Azerbaijan’s Defense Ministry said. “Our units are taking the necessary response measures.”

Fighting on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan on Tuesday left at least 49 Armenian and 50 Azerbaijani soldiers dead.

The conflict erupted at midnight, minutes after a ceasefire agreement between the two countries came into force.

Armenia accused Azerbaijan of firing in the direction of the southern Armenian towns of Goris, Kapan, and Jermuk with the help of drones.

However, Azerbaijan rejected the Armenian claim, saying its forces were carrying out counter-measures in retaliation for “large-scale Armenian provocation.”

Tuesday’s fighting was the most recent flare-up in tensions between the two estranged neighbors since thousands were killed in a 44-day war over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh that ended in November 2020.

The deadly conflict, which claimed over 65,000 lives on both sides, ended with a Russian-brokered ceasefire, but tensions continued.

Last week, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of killing one of its soldiers in a border shootout.

In August, Azerbaijan said one of its soldiers had been killed while Ar-

menia said two of its troops had been killed and more than a dozen injured in border clashes.

On Tuesday, Russia urged both parties “to refrain from further escalation and show restraint.”

The flare-up in violence has triggered international concern, with Russia, the United States, France and the European Union calling for restraint and stepping up diplomatic efforts.

French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, in a call with her counterparts from both countries, also called for the “end of strikes against Armenian territory”.

EU Special Representative Toivo Klaar was due in the south Caucasus on Wednesday to facilitate dialogue.

Since then, skirmishes have erupted periodically despite a Russian-brokered ceasefire and tentative steps on both sides towards implementation of a peace settlement.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also called on Armenia and Azerbaijan “to take immediate steps to deescalate tensions, exercise maximum restraint and resolve any outstanding issues through dialogue” and implement previous agreements.

The UN Security Council scheduled closed-door consultations Wednesday on the renewed fighting.

Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan but has been populated by ethnic Armenians. Russia has deployed 1,960 peacekeepers to the region for an initial five-year period. Since the truce, the two sides have accused each other of breaching the peace deal amid sporadic fighting. Since February 24, when Russia started a military offensive in Ukraine, the European Union has been functioning as the key mediator between the two sides.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev held a meeting late last month in Brussels to discuss ways to reach a peace agreement.

Ten Killed in Air Strikes on Capital of Ethiopia’s Tigray Region - Source

NAIROBI (Reuters) - A second day of air strikes against the capital of Ethiopia’s northern Tigray region killed 10 people on Wednesday, hospital officials said, while local forces accused troops from neighboring Eritrea of again joining the war against them.

Ethiopia’s government, which has been fighting the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) since late 2020, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the air strikes, fighting, or presence of Eritrean troops.

Wednesday’s reported drone strikes in Mekelle followed a TPLF ceasefire offer at the weekend.

Among the casualties in Mekelle were a father killed in the second strike and his son, a doctor, wounded when tending victims, said Fasika Amdeglasie, a surgeon at Mekelle’s Ayder Referral Hospital.

Some 13 people were wounded.

Five of the victims died en route to the hospital, said Ayder’s CEO Kibrom Gebreselassie. Another five died at the scene in an area called Dagim Amsal, he said, citing Me-

kelle’s emergency coordinator.

Kibrom said the hospital was struggling to save the wounded because of supply shortages in a region largely cut off from aid. “I don’t know what to do. Am I to lose every salvageable victim because there is no oxygen or medicine?” he said.

The conflict has killed thousands of civilians, uprooted millions, destroyed hundreds of schools and clinics, and caused starvation in the already impoverished region of Tigray.

With fighting flaring in several parts of Tigray and neighbouring Amhara region, TPLF commander-in-chief Tadesse Werede said in an interview broadcast on Tigrayan television on Tuesday that Eritrea’s military had taken the town of Shiraro near the border.

Yemane Gebremeskel, Eritrea’s minister of information, did not respond to requests for comment.

Ethiopia’s military spokesperson Col. Getnet Adane and government spokesperson Legesse Tulu also did not respond to requests for comment on latest events in Tigray.

News in Brief

BISHKEK (Reuters) - Kyrgyz and Tajik border guards exchanged fire in three separate incidents on Wednesday after a dispute over the border between the two Central Asian nations, officials on both sides said. The clashes, which come on the eve of a regional security body meeting and against the background of fighting between Russia and Ukraine as well as Azerbaijan and Armenia, started after Kyrgyz border guards accused the Tajiks of taking positions at a part of the border that has not been demarcated.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India has conveyed its concern to the United States over Washington’s decision to provide a sustenance package for Pakistan’s fleet of F-16 fighter aircraft, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday. “We discussed growing convergence of strategic interests and enhanced defense & security cooperation,” Singh said on Twitter, after speaking to U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin over the telephone.

NUR-SULTAN, Kazakhstan (AP) — Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday started his first foreign trip since the outbreak of the pandemic with a stop in Kazakhstan ahead of a summit with Russia’s Vladimir Putin and other leaders of a Central Asian security group. Wearing a blue suit and a face mask, Xi was met on the airport tarmac by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and an honor guard, all of whom wore masks. Xi’s trip underlines the importance Beijing places on asserting its role as a regional leader amid tension with Washington, Japan and India.

SANTIAGO (AFP) - Higher temperatures and rainfall that weaken ice walls caused part of a hanging glacier to break off at a national park in Chile’s Patagonia region in an event captured on video by tourists. In a video that went viral Monday, a glacier that sits atop a mountain about 200 meters high rumbled and broke off at Queulat National Park, located more than 1,200 kilometers south of Chile’s capital.

JOHANNESBURG (AP) - Africa is losing 5 percent to 15 percent of its per capita economic growth due the effects of climate change and is facing a gaping climate finance shortfall, according to the African Development Bank (AfDB). Africa has been hit disproportionately hard by the fallout from climate change, which has aggravated droughts, flooding and cyclones across the continent in recent years. African nations received around \$18.3 billion in climate finance between 2016 and 2019, Kevin Urama, the AfDB’s acting chief economist, said in a statement released on Tuesday. But they are staring down a nearly \$1.3 trillion climate finance gap for the 2020 to 2030 period.