

West to Support Ukraine With Retired Weaponry



Three Sea King helicopters will form part of a new package of military support for Ukraine that will also include 10,000 rounds of artillery shells

LONDON (Dispatches) – UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace announced on Wednesday that the country will send helicopters to Ukraine, which will be the first manned aircraft provided to Kiev by London since the start of its conflict with Russia.

According to the BBC and The Times, the shipment includes three former British military Sea Kings, one of which has already been delivered to Ukraine.

The UK defense secretary made the announcement in Oslo, where he was discussing military support for Kiev with London's allies. He said Ukrainian service members had been training in Britain to operate and maintain the aircraft, which are intended to be used in search and rescue operations.

Wallace also noted that Britain would provide Ukraine with an additional 10,000 shells for unspecified artillery pieces.

"Our support for Ukraine is unwavering," he said, as quoted by The Times, adding that this aid would "help Ukraine to secure the land it has reclaimed from Russia in recent weeks."

The Westland Sea King is a license-built version

of the U.S. Sikorsky S-61 and undertook its maiden flight in 1969. It was designed for anti-submarine warfare but was also used in early warning and assault transport roles. The aircraft was retired from the UK's military service in 2018.

The helicopter shipment comes after UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a new £50 million (\$59.5 million) security assistance package last week, which included 125 anti-aircraft guns as well as some other military equipment.

A bipartisan group of 16 U.S. senators asked the President Joe Biden administration to consider giving Ukraine advanced drones to fight Russian forces.

In letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, the signatories, including members on the Senate Armed Services Committee, urged the secretary to supply Ukraine with MQ-1C, also known as Gray Eagle, drones, The Wall Street Journal reported.

"The long-term upside of providing Ukraine with the MQ-1C is significant and has the potential to drive the strategic course of the war in Ukraine's favor," the legislators wrote in the letter.

"The timely provision of effective lethal aid to stabilize Ukrainian defenses and enable long-term

resistance against future Russian aggression remains urgent," they wrote.

The legislators asked Austin to explain by November 30 why the Pentagon had so far refused to provide Ukraine with MQ-1C drones.

Among the signatories were Sen. Joni Ernst (R., Iowa), Sen. James Inhofe (R., Okla.), who is the outgoing ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. Tim Kaine (D., Va.), Sen. Joe Manchin (D., W.Va.) and Sen. Mark Kelly (D., Ariz.).

The Biden administration has been opposed to providing Kiev with the MQ-1C over concerns that the Russians might get hold of one or more of the drones and find access to the technology used in the aircraft.

Military Aid Depleted Western Arsenals

The arsenals of Western countries are currently depleted to a critical point due to arms deliveries to Kiev, while manufacturers' ability to replenish them is limited, according to a report.

"In order make Ukrainians able to withstand Russian strikes, the West pushed the doors of its arsenals wide open. This is particularly true of the United States, whose deliveries account for nearly two thirds of all military aid to Ukraine," France's Le Monde newspaper reported mentioning over 1 million of projectiles, tens of thousands of anti-tank weapons and man-portable air defense systems, drones and guided missiles.

"As a result, Western arsenals, including those across the Atlantic Ocean, have been depleted to the critical point," Le Monde continued.

The paper referred to a number of analysts, who estimate U.S. stockpiles of certain kinds of weapons to be "below the level necessary for military planning and education".

The report says Washington was forced to request the purchase of 100,000 155-mm artillery shells from South Korea for further delivery to Ukraine. However, Seoul is reluctant to authorize the deal since it opposes arms deliveries to the conflict sides.

China Blasts NATO for Setting Up 'Gang' Rules, Meddling in Others' Affairs



BEIJING (The Global Times) - China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Wednesday that it is not in the rights of NATO to act beyond its authority and seek breakthroughs by establishing its own "gang" rules.

"As a regional defensive alliance, NATO should strictly observe its geographical scope," Lijian told a press conference in Beijing.

NATO has extended its tentacles deeper and wider after the Cold War. It has not only expanded to cyberspace and space, which should have been dealt with by the United Nations and specialized international agencies, into the scope of the collective defense of its member states, but also increased its meddling in a wide range of civil areas such as climate change, infrastructure, supply chain, health and energy, Zhao said.

His remarks came after NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg, during a visit to Spain, warned about "growing Chinese efforts to control" critical infrastructure, supply chains and key industrial sectors. Stoltenberg also said Western countries must be careful not to create "new dependencies on China" as they are weaning themselves off Russian energy supplies

amid the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, according to a Reuters report on Monday.

"The formation and development of global industrial chain and supply chain is the result of joint action of market laws and corporate choices. Over recent years, China has carried out sound and equal cooperation with countries and enterprises in various regions, including NATO member states, in related fields, which has greatly benefited people on both sides," Zhao said.

It is not the first time for the NATO chief to hype so-called "China control" narrative after NATO described China as a "challenge" to the military alliance's "interests, security and values" in its new strategic concept in June. China is labeled for the first time as a "systemic challenge" in the Strategic Concept, its once-in-a-decade set of priorities and goals, at the Madrid summit in June.

"China pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. It does not interfere in other countries' internal affairs or export ideology, still less engage in long-arm jurisdiction, economic coercion or unilateral sanctions. How could China be labeled a 'systemic challenge'?" Zhao asked.

Russian, Cuban Presidents Pledge to Strengthen Bilateral Ties



Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel (left) meets Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on November 22, 2022.

MOSCOW (Xinhua) — Russian President Vladimir Putin and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and Cuban

President Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez have voiced common readiness to deepen relations between the two countries.

"The Soviet Union and Russia

have always supported the Cuban people in their struggle for independence and sovereignty. We have always opposed any restrictions, embargoes, blockades and so on. We have always backed Cuba on international platforms," Putin said in a meeting.

"Relying on the firm foundation of friendship, we must certainly move forward and enhance our cooperation in the current conditions," he told Diaz-Canel, who is paying an official visit to Russia.

Cuba appreciates Russia's efforts and role in orienting the world toward multi-polarity and wants to continue to promote relations with Russia, Diaz-Canel said.

Before their talks, Putin and Diaz-Canel took part in an unveiling ceremony for the monument to Cuba's late leader Fidel Castro in Moscow.

UK Top Court Rules Against Scottish Independence Vote Plan



Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon holds a press conference in Edinburgh on Nov 23, 2022 after the UK Supreme Court blocked a new vote on independence. The UK Supreme Court rejected a bid by the devolved Scottish government in Edinburgh to hold a new referendum on independence without the consent of London.

LONDON (AP) — The UK Supreme Court ruled Wednesday that Scotland does not have the power to hold a new referendum on independence without the consent of the British government. The judgment is a setback for the Scottish government's campaign to break away from the United Kingdom.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she would respect the ruling but continue the fight for independence, saying Scotland's "democratic right to choose our own future" was at stake.

The top court ruled that the Scottish Parliament "does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence."

Supreme Court President Robert Reed said the five justices were unanimous in the verdict, delivered six weeks after lawyers for the pro-independence Scottish administration and the Conservative UK government argued their cases at hearings in London.

Independence supporters rallied outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and at other sites later Wednesday.

The semi-autonomous Scottish government wants to hold a referendum next October with the question "Should Scotland be an independent country?"

The UK government in London refuses to approve a vote, saying the question was settled in a 2014 referendum that saw Scottish voters reject independence by a margin of 55% to 45%.

The pro-independence government in Edinburgh wants to revisit the decision, though, arguing that Britain's departure from the European Union — which a majority of Scottish voters opposed — has radically changed the political and economic landscape.

Sturgeon argues that she has a democratic mandate from the Scottish people to hold a new secession vote because there is an independence-supporting majority in the Scottish Parliament.

During Supreme Court hearings last month, Dorothy Bain, the Scottish government's top law officer, said the majority of Scottish lawmakers had been elected on commitments to hold a fresh independence referendum. She also said a referendum would be advisory, rather than legally binding — though a "yes" vote would create strong momentum for Scotland to break away.

UK government lawyer James Eadie argued that power to hold a referendum rests with the UK Parliament in London, because "it's of critical importance to the United Kingdom as a whole," not just Scotland.

South Korea Braces for Supply Disruptions as Trucker Strike Looms

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea said on Wednesday it would consider deploying military trucks for urgent transport as it prepares for a planned strike by truckers that is stoking fears over the nation's post-pandemic recovery and global supply chains.

The nationwide strike by trucker unions, expected to start at midnight (1500 GMT), would be the second in less than six months to disrupt manufacturing and fuel supplies in the world's 10th-largest economy.

Lead organizer Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union (CTSU), which is pushing for an extension of minimum wage guarantees, has warned of stopping oil supplies at major refineries as well as transport at major ports and industrial plants.

Land Minister Won Hee-ryong said that the government would consider deploying military trucks to areas needed for urgent transport.

He also threatened to suspend the licenses of striking drivers if the walkout was prolonged.

"I am asking the Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union to withdraw the plan to strike now," Won said in a video posted on the ministry's YouTube channel, adding that he is open to communications with the union to minimize the damage.

In June, an eight-day strike by truck-



A member of the Cargo Truckers Solidarity union stands next to a LPG lorry in Ulsan, South Korea, June 10, 2022.

ers delayed cargo shipments for industries from autos to semiconductors in Asia's fourth-largest economy, costing more than \$1.2 billion in lost output and unmet deliveries.

Industry giants including Hyundai Motor (005380.KS) and steelmaker POSCO (005490.KS) were forced to cut output due to the June strike, and POSCO has warned the fresh action could slow repair works at a major plant hit by floods this summer.

The Korea Oil Station Association is asking gas station owners to secure enough inventories ahead of the strike, an association official said on Wednesday.

"We learned some lessons from the last strike," said the official, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

CTSU has demanded that the government extend its "Safe Launching Freight Rate", a scheme launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to guarantee a minimum annual wage that is due to expire in December.

The government and ruling party offered a three-year extension of the rate policy on Tuesday, but refused to accept the unions' demand to cover truckers in other industries, including fuel and steel. CTSU rejected that compromise deal.

News in Brief

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — More than three weeks after losing a reelection bid, President Jair Bolsonaro has blamed a software bug and demanded the electoral authority annul votes cast on most of Brazil's nation's electronic voting machines, though independent experts say the bug doesn't affect the reliability of results. Such an action would leave Bolsonaro with 51% of the remaining valid votes — and a reelection victory, Marcelo de Bessa, the lawyer who filed the 33-page request on behalf of the president and his Liberal Party, told reporters.

BEIJING (AFP) - Violent protests have broken out around Foxconn's vast iPhone factory in central China, as workers clashed with security personnel over pay and living conditions at the plant. In videos shared on Weibo and Twitter that AFP has verified, hundreds of workers can be seen marching on a road in daylight. Some were confronted by riot police and people in hazmat suits. A Foxconn worker shared live footage from the ongoing protest at the Zhengzhou factory. He said workers had marched out from their dorms this morning to demand compensation, now they are facing riot police. China's unrelenting zero-COVID policy has caused fatigue and resentment among wide swaths of the population, some of whom have been locked down for weeks at factories and universities or been unable to travel freely.

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia's king met with lawmakers Wednesday and will next consult other royal families in a continuing search for a prime minister. Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's Pakatan Harapan, or Alliance of Hope, topped Saturday's poll with 82 parliamentary seats, but failed to reach the 112 needed for a majority. Former Prime Minister Muhyiddin's Malay-centric Perikatan Nasional, or National Alliance, won 73 seats. The hung parliament renewed a leadership crisis in Malaysia that saw three prime ministers since 2018.

LONDON (Reuters) - Strikes by British postal workers in the run up to Christmas look set to go ahead after Royal Mail's largest labor union rejected the latest pay offer from the company on Wednesday. The post and parcel company said it would increase wages by up to 9% over 18 months, instead of the previously planned two years, in its "best and final" offer, as it urged workers to call off strikes. However, the Communication Workers Union (CWU) said industrial action planned for Thursday and Friday - Thanksgiving and Black Friday, respectively - would go ahead after talks ended without an agreement.

BERLIN (AP) — A huge horde of ancient gold coins dating back to around 100 B.C. has been stolen from a museum in southern Germany, police said. Bavarian state police said it was stolen early Tuesday from the Celtic and Roman Museum in Manching, 60 kilometers (37 miles) north of Munich. The 483 coins were discovered in 1999 during excavations of an ancient settlement in Manching and are considered the biggest trove of Celtic gold found in the 20th century. The German news agency dpa reported that authorities estimate the value of the coins, which together weighed about 4 kilograms (8.8 pounds), at several million euros (dollars).