

# U.S., Allies Continue Arming Ukraine



Members of U.S. 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command stands next to a Patriot surface-to-air missile battery east of the capital Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 20, 2017.

**KYIV, Ukraine (Dispatches) — Ukraine's defense minister said Wednesday his country has received the U.S.-made Patriot surface-to-air guided missile systems it has long craved and which Kyiv hopes will help shield it from Russian airstrikes during the war.**

Ukrainian officials have previously said the arrival of Patriot systems, which Washington agreed to send last October, would be a major boost and a milestone in the

war against Moscow. It's the latest contribution from Kyiv's Western allies, who have also pledged tanks, artillery and some types of fighter jets as Ukraine gears up for an expected counteroffensive.

China, which has repeatedly criticized the U.S. and other countries' support for Ukraine as "adding fuel to the fire" of the war, has an "objective and fair stance" and seeks peace, the statement insisted.

The Patriot can target aircraft,

cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles.

Germany's federal government website on Tuesday listed a Patriot system as among the military items delivered within the past week to Ukraine, and German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock confirmed that to lawmakers in Berlin on Wednesday.

Baerbock also said Germany has delivered the second of four medium-range IRIS-T air defense systems that it pledged last year.

South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol said that his country might extend its support for Ukraine beyond humanitarian and economic aid.

In an interview with Reuters ahead of his state visit to the U.S. next week, Yoon said his government has been exploring how to help defend and rebuild Ukraine.

The Kremlin on Wednesday warned any decision by South Korea to supply arms to Ukraine would make Seoul a participant in the conflict, after President Yoon Suk Yeol opened the door to such deliveries.

Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev suggested Moscow could offer advanced weapons to North Korea if South Korea begins to supply military aid to Ukraine.

## German Unions to Hit Railway, Airports With New Strikes



ICE high-speed trains are parked in a depot of German railway company Deutsche Bahn during a nationwide strike called by the German trade union Verdi over a wage dispute in Hamburg, Germany, March 27, 2023.

**BERLIN (Dispatches) - German transport union EVG on Wednesday called for a rail strike as workers demand higher wages to cope with high rates of inflation, the latest industrial action in Europe's largest economy.**

Rail workers across the country will walk out on Friday between 3:00 am (0100 GMT) and 11:00 am, the EVG said in a statement.

The short "warning strike" was intended to "encourage employers to bring reasonable offers" to pay talks, EVG's deputy chairwoman Cosima Ingenschay told journalists outside Berlin's main station.

"If that does not happen then we will have to think about even bigger strikes," she said.

EVG represents 230,000 workers across some 50 transport companies, including national rail operator Deutsche Bahn.

The industrial action will heap on more transport woes for travellers, who were already facing disruption this week.

Separately, Germany's second largest union Verdi had on Tuesday called on employees working in security at the airports in Duesseldorf, Cologne-Bonn and Hamburg to strike through Thursday and Friday.

EVG's industrial action would have a "massive" impact across the rail network, Deutsche Bahn said in a statement.

Urban, regional and long-distance train services would be halted by the walkout, the operator said.

Local services would begin operating again shortly after the end of the strike with Deutsche Bahn promising to offer "as many connections as possible".

Long-distance links would "progressively" resume service from 1:00 pm but would suffer disruptions into the "early hours of the evening".

The strike was "completely useless, completely unnecessary", Deutsche Bahn's human resources chief Martin Seiler told journalists.

The disruption to services would affect "hundreds of thousands" of commuters ahead of the weekend, Seiler said, accusing EVG of losing all "proportion".

"It is now about finding solutions at the negotiating table and not just wantonly announcing strikes," Seiler said.

Negotiations between the EVG and Deutsche Bahn will continue

next week. EVG is demanding a 12-percent pay rise over one year for the workers it represents, with a minimum increase of 650 euros (\$712) a month.

The union rejected Deutsche Bahn's first offer of a five percent increase in two steps, covering 27 months, plus an "inflation bonus" of 2,500 euros.

The pay increase demanded by the union would help employees cope with "financial burdens that have increased sharply", EVG said in a statement.

Inflation in Germany stood at 7.4 percent in March, remaining very elevated despite having fallen from a peak of 8.8 percent in October.

The strong increases in consumer prices has been driven by rising costs of energy in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the beginning of 2022.

Over the last months, workers in different sectors including health-care, childcare and transport have gone on strike to demand better conditions.

The rail system was largely brought to a halt in a major strike at the end of March led by EVG and Verdi.

In Canada, more than 155,000 federal public servants have gone on strike across the country over low wages after failing to reach an agreement on a pay hike.

The industrial action by workers from the public sector started on Wednesday after their representatives failed to come up with a new wage agreement with the federal government.

Cleaners and cooks on military bases, clerks and maintenance workers, tradespeople, Coast Guard search and rescue teams, teachers, firefighters and workers who process employment insurance, passport applications and immigration documents were now expected to walk out of their jobs.

The workers' union warned the public to be prepared for disruptions in government departments tending to taxes and passport services as well as the infamous immigration offices, which are notorious for being especially chaotic.

The call for strike came after the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) said they had failed to reach an agreement with the federal government over cost-of-living raises to keep up with the soaring

### News in Brief

**WASHINGTON / UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) - The United States eavesdropped on conversations of the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and other UN officials, according to a report by The Washington Post citing leaked classified intelligence documents the newspaper obtained.** Guterres expressed to UN officials and world leaders his "outrage" over being denied an opportunity to visit Ethiopia's war-torn Tigray region, *The Post* said in a report, citing four documents, two of them previously unreported. The United Nations officially expresses concern to the United States about reports of Washington's spying on the world body's Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, "We have made it clear that such actions are inconsistent with the obligations of the United States as enumerated in the Charter of the United Nations and the convention on the privileges and immunities of the United Nations."

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**LONDON (AFP) - More than half of British people do not want the upcoming coronation of King Charles III to be funded by taxpayers, a new poll conducted and published found.** The YouGov poll found 51 percent of respondents believe the May 6 ceremony to crown Charles and Camilla should not be paid for by the government. Nearly a third, 32 percent, said it should, while around 18 percent did not know. It comes with the UK in the grip of a cost-of-living crisis and wide-ranging strikes by employees across the public and private sectors, as decades-high inflation eats away at earnings. The situation is seen as factoring into the muted enthusiasm so far for the long weekend of celebrations.

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**NEW DELHI (AP) — India is on track to become the world's most populous nation as its young population soars, and will surpass China by mid-2023, according to data released Wednesday by the United Nations. While there are hopes that India's young citizenry could drive the country's economic growth for years to come, it also might just as easily become a demographic liability if they are not adequately employed. Economists have cautioned that even as India's economy is among the fastest-growing as its population rises, joblessness has also swelled.**

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**WASHINGTON (BBC) -Thousands of flights have been delayed in the United States after Southwest Airlines was forced to temporarily ground all flights because of a "technical glitch".** The airline said it would work to accommodate passengers disrupted by the one-hour nationwide stoppage. Flight Aware says over 5,400 flights were delayed into our out of the U.S. More than 100 were cancelled. It's the latest setback for the budget airline. "This morning Southwest Airlines experienced a technical issue with one of their internal systems," the FAA said. It added that all departures had been paused at the airline's request while the Dallas-based carrier addressed the issue.

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**BEIJING (AP) — The death toll from a fire at a Beijing hospital rose to 29, including 26 patients, authorities said Wednesday, and a dozen people had been detained including the hospital's head and her deputy. The fire broke out at the private Changfeng Hospital and forced dozens of people to evacuate. Some who were trapped had to escape from windows using bedsheets tied together. A nurse, a medical assistant and a family member also died in the incident, said Li Zongrong, deputy head of Fengtai district.**

## Macron Heckled on First French Outing Since Bitter Pension Battle

**PARIS (AFP) - French President Emmanuel Macron was loudly booed by crowds in eastern France on Wednesday as he embarked on his first trip to a French region since signing his unpopular pensions reform into law.**

The French president was heckled during a visit to the small town of Sélestat, in the Alsace region, with protesters banging pots and chanting slogans including "Macron resign!" "You'll fall soon, just wait and see," one man told the French leader, describing his government as "corrupt". "We don't want this pension (reform), what don't you get?" asked another.

Electricity was briefly cut while he visited a local factory, where demonstrators had gathered holding hostile banners.

Asked by a journalist how he felt, the president replied: "I have had it worse."

Police pushed back dozens of protesters banging kitchenware earlier in the day ahead of the president's arrival in the village of Muttersholtz.

"Saucepans will not allow France to move forward," Macron said as he visited a wood factory in the village.

"The reality across the country is not just those making noise with pans or grumbling," he added.

Pot-banging, a form of protest with a long history in France, began during Macron's address to the nation on Monday evening after he signed the bill into law over the weekend.

The president made very few public appearances to speak to voters during the three months after announcing the deeply unpopular pension reform,



President Emmanuel Macron talks to an opponent of his pension reform in the town of Sélestat, in France's eastern Alsace region, on April 19, 2023.

whose flagship measure is hiking the retirement age from 62 to 64.

Political opponents and trade unions have urged protesters to maintain their campaign against the law and called for a new day of mass protest on May 1.

Around a hundred people from the CGT and CFTD unions gathered in front of the mayor's office in Muttersholtz earlier on Wednesday, using frying pans and pan lids as well as whistles and horns to make noise.

After several requests from police to move back from the area, where local authorities have banned demonstrations, officers used force to push them 200 metres (650 feet) away.

On Tuesday evening, a private trip by Macron to Saint-Denis, northeast of Paris, also saw around 300 demonstrators voice their anger at his pension changes, which were signed into

law last week.

"People will make themselves heard but that's part of the moment," an aide to the president told reporters on Wednesday, adding that there would be "expressions of anger most probably, support perhaps."

The scenes recall Macron's visits around France during the so-called "Yellow Vest" protests of 2018-19, when the head of state was frequently confronted by angry hecklers or protesters.

He was slapped in the face in 2021 by a 28-year-old unemployed mediaeval history enthusiast during a visit to a small town in southeastern France.

After Wednesday's visit to a construction company in Muttersholtz, Macron is set to visit a school in the southern Hérault region on Thursday.

## Kim Orders Launch of North Korea's First Surveillance Satellite

**SEOUL (AFP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the country has finished building its first military reconnaissance satellite and gave the green light for its launch, state media said Wednesday.**

"Possessing and operating military reconnaissance means is the most crucial primary task for increasing the military effectiveness and utility of different war deterrence means," Kim emphasized as he hailed Pyongyang's remarkable core space sci-tech achievements during a visit to the country's National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA), state news agency KCNA reported.

He further underlined the significance of developing the space-based surveillance system to counter continued U.S.-led military threats against the nation, citing what he referred to as the serious security threats posed by "the most hostile rhetoric and explicit action" by the United States and South Korea's actions this year.

Kim also noted that Pyongyang must launch several satellites to firmly establish its intelligence-gathering capability to effectively use its methods of war deterrence.

The North Korean leader then went on to lash out at the U.S. and South Korea for expanding their hostile military campaigns in the name of bolstering their alliance, blaming Washington for transforming South Korea into "an advanced base for aggression" by deploying strategic assets like aircraft carriers and nuclear-capable bombers.

"In the light of the present situation, in which the U.S. imperialists

are deploying nuclear carriers, nuclear strategic bombers and other huge strategic assets of various missions on a permanent basis on the Korean peninsula and its vicinity to turn south Korea into an advanced base for aggression and an arsenal for war, and of the prospective concern that the military actions of the U.S. and South Korea threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) under the pretext of the allied readiness would get more undisguised," Kim pointed out.

One of the objectives of developing the military reconnaissance satellite is to acquire capability to "use pre-emptive military force when the situation demands," he added.

This is while Western military experts have discounted Pyongyang's possession of sophisticated cameras to use on an advanced military reconnaissance satellite arguing that photos it has released from previous test launches were low-resolution imagery.

However, Kim Yo-jong, the North Korean leader's sister and a powerful advisor, dismissed such assessments, noting that the test satellite carried a commercial camera because there was no reason to use an expensive, high-resolution camera for a single-shot test.

Kim further explained that the nation's recent weapons tests, including North Korea's first test-launch of a solid-fueled intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the U.S. mainland, were in response to the continuous and beefed up war games jointly conducted by the U.S. and key regional allies, South Korea and Japan.

## Nicaragua Withdraws Approval of EU Ambassador to Country

**MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Nicaragua has withdrawn its approval of the European Union's ambassador to the country, the Central American nation's foreign ministry said Tuesday, after an EU statement calling for a "return to the rule of law" in Nicaragua.**

In a statement, the foreign ministry said the decision was due to the "interventionist, daring and insolent" position from the EU on Nicaragua.

Earlier in the day, the EU said in a statement it condemned the systemic repression Nicaraguans had faced since nationwide protests broke out five years ago on April 18, 2018.

"On this sad anniversary, the EU confirms its readiness to support all efforts aimed at a democratic, peace-

ful and negotiated solution to the protracted political crisis in Nicaragua," it added.

Nicaragua has declared the anniversary of the protests "The National Day of Peace."

Nicaragua's foreign ministry accused the EU of "crimes against humanity," without citing evidence. It said it "will not receive" the EU's nominee for ambassador to the country, Fernando Ponz.

Ponz was nominated for the role after Nicaragua declared the previous ambassador to the country, Bettina Muscheidt, "persona non grata" in September.

Press officials for the EU Commission did not immediately respond to a request for comment.