

# Germany Announces \$3bn Military Aid Package for Ukraine, Borrell Urges Long-Range Weapons



An industrial building destroyed by a Ukrainian missile strike in Luhansk, Russian-controlled Ukraine, on May 12, 2023

**BERLIN (AP/ Reuters) – Germany will provide Ukraine with additional military aid worth more than 2.7 billion euros (\$3 billion), including tanks, anti-aircraft systems and ammunition, the government said Saturday.**

The announcement came as preparations were underway in Berlin for a possible first visit to Germany by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky since the war with Russia broke out last year.

Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said that Berlin wants to show with the latest package of arms “that Germany is serious in its support” for Ukraine.

“Germany will provide all the help it can, as long as it takes,” he said.

While Zelensky’s visit on Sunday has yet to be officially confirmed, it would be a sign that relations between Ukraine and

in more than a million Ukrainian refugees. Scholz eventually visited Kiev with French President Emmanuel Macron and other leaders in June.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell also called on Saturday for European nations to provide long-range weapons for Ukraine, while accelerating arms deliveries overall.

“The Russians are bombing from far away so the Ukrainians have to have the capacity to reach... the same distance, the same range,” Borrell said after a meeting with Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Stockholm.

“But we have to speed up,” he said. “I welcome the German effort and invite all member states to follow this example,” Borrell said.

As for the developments on the ground, Russia said on Friday that Ukrainian forces had attacked Russian positions along almost 100 km (60 miles) of the front line near Soledar, a small mining town near Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine that Moscow’s forces seized in January.

As anticipation grows of a Ukrainian counteroffensive aiming to drive Moscow’s forces out of the land they have seized in the last 15 months, Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar confirmed earlier reports that Ukraine had made some gains near Bakhmut, but appeared to play down suggestions of a wider push.

The Russian Defense Ministry said 26 attacks involving over a thousand troops and up to 40 tanks near Soledar on Thursday had been repulsed. In one area, Russian forces had fallen back to “more favorable positions” near a reservoir northwest of Bakhmut.

Germany have improved markedly after a rocky patch.

Kiev has long been suspicious of Germany’s reliance on Russian energy and support for the Nord Stream gas pipelines circumventing Ukraine, defended by then Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Her successor, Olaf Scholz, agreed to phase out Russian energy imports after the invasion but initially hesitated to provide Ukraine with lethal weapons, fearing Germany could be drawn into the conflict.

With Washington, Warsaw and London more overtly supportive of Ukraine, Berlin got the cold diplomatic shoulder from Kiev.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier was disinvented from Ukraine last year, prompting annoyance in Germany, which pointed out that it has given considerable financial aid to Kiev and taken

## Thousands of Rohingya Refugees Flee as Raging Cyclone Approaches Myanmar, Bangladesh

**SITTWE (AFP) – Thousands fled Myanmar’s west coast and officials in neighboring Bangladesh raced to evacuate Rohingya refugees on Saturday as the most powerful cyclone in the region for over a decade churned across the Bay of Bengal.**

Cyclone Mocha was packing winds of up to 220 kilometers per hour (136 miles per hour), according to India’s meteorological office, equivalent to a category four hurricane.

It is expected to weaken before making landfall on Sunday morning between Cox’s Bazar, where nearly one million Rohingya refugees live in camps largely made up of flimsy shelters, and Sittwe on Myanmar’s western Rakhine coast.

On Saturday Sittwe residents piled possessions and pets into cars, trucks and tuk-tuks and headed for higher ground, according to AFP reporters.

“We have our grandma in our family and we have to take care of her,” Khine Min told AFP from a truck packed with his relatives on a road out of the state capital.

“There is only one man left in Sittwe to take care of our homes.”

Shops and markets in the town of about 150,000 people were shuttered, with many locals sheltering in monasteries.

Kyaw Tin, 40, said he could not leave the area as his son was in a local hospital. “I hope this cyclone won’t come to our state. But if this fate happens we can’t ignore it,” he said.

“I’m worried that this cyclone will



Locals stand the bank of sea before Cyclone Mocha hits, in Sittwe, Rakhine State, Saturday, May 13, 2023.

affect our state just like Nargis did,” he added, referring to a 2008 storm that killed more than 130,000 people in southern Myanmar.

Myanmar’s junta authorities were supervising evacuations from villages along the Rakhine coast, state media reported Friday.

Myanmar Airways International said all its flights to Rakhine state had been suspended until Monday.

In neighboring Bangladesh officials moved to evacuate Rohingya refugees from “risky areas” to community centers, while hundreds of people fled a top resort island.

“Cyclone Mocha is the most powerful storm since Cyclone Sidr,” Azizur Rah-

man, the head of Bangladesh’s Meteorological Department, told AFP.

That cyclone hit Bangladesh’s southern coast in November 2007, killing more than 3,000 people and causing billions of dollars in damage.

Bangladeshi authorities have banned the Rohingya from constructing permanent concrete homes, fearing it may incentivize them to settle permanently rather than return to Myanmar, which they fled five years ago.

“We live in houses made of tarpaulin and bamboo,” said refugee Enam Ahmed, who resides at the Nayapara camp near the border town of Teknaf.

“We are scared. We don’t know where we will be sheltered. We are in a panic.”

## ‘Foundation of Int’l Order Shaken’ Japan FM: China, Russia Increasing Military Cooperation

**STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) – Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said Saturday Russian and Chinese military cooperation in Asia.**

Speaking at a meeting of Asian and Indo-Pacific foreign ministers in Sweden, Hayashi said the war in Ukraine had “shaken the very foundation of the international order” and must face a united response by the international community.

“Otherwise, similar challenges will arise in other regions and the existing order which has underpinned our peace and prosperity could be fundamentally overturned,” Hayashi said.

Japan firmly backs Ukraine in the war but China says it remains neutral while declaring a “no limits” relationship with Moscow and blaming the U.S. and NATO for provoking the conflict. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, in March at the same time as Chinese President Xi Jinping met Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

“In addition, China and Russia are strengthening their military collaboration, including joint flights of their bombers and joint naval exercises in the vicinity of Japan,” Hayashi

said.

China, which claims most of the South China Sea as well as Japanese-held islands in the East China Sea, says it has the right to defend its sovereignty and development interests.

Hayashi also claimed that North Korea was “escalating provocations” in the region by conducting ballistic missile launches “with a frequency and in a manner that are unprecedented.”

North Korea says it launches the missile in the face of the threats from the joint drills by the U.S. and South Korea.

He joined dozens of ministers from the European Union and the Indo-Pacific region for the meeting just north of the Swedish capital. China was not invited to the talks.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar said the whole world was affected by the war in Ukraine, adding to global challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We all try and address it in our own different ways,” she said. “I think a lesson a country like Pakistan has learned is that percolation of conflict is never the answer; that we want an end to hostilities, an end to conflict, so people can go back to building lives rather than destroying more lives.”

## Blasts Rock Khartoum as Warring Sides Affirm Humanitarian Pledge



Smoke rises above buildings in Khartoum as fighting between the forces of two rival generals continues.

**KHARTOUM (AFP) – Air strikes pummeled Khartoum Saturday, with representatives of Sudan’s warring factions meeting in Saudi Arabia for talks to prevent a “humanitarian catastrophe” as the fighting entered a fifth week.**

A witness in west Khartoum reported army air strikes on paramilitary forces, as brutal urban warfare continued in Sudan’s densely-populated capital.

More than 750 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced since fighting erupted on April 15 between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy turned rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Over half a million people have fled Khartoum alone, according to the UN, with hospitals there having been shelled and rampant looting reported as residents suffer under chronic shortages of food, electricity and medicine.

Representatives of both generals have been in the Saudi city of Jeddah for a week, for talks intended “to protect Sudan from any escalation that will lead to a humanitarian catastrophe”, a Saudi diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

The diplomat also said Burhan had been invited to attend the Arab League summit planned to take place in Jeddah on May 19 but it was unclear who would be representing Sudan.

“We didn’t receive the name of the delegations, but we’re really expecting Sudan will be present in the Arab summit,” the diplomat said.

Envoys in Jeddah agreed on Thursday to “affirm our commitment to ensure that civilians are protected”.

However the deal, dubbed the

Jeddah Declaration, did not amount to a truce and the situation on the ground appeared unchanged as battles raged throughout the week of negotiations and into Saturday.

In the capital’s twin city of Omdurman, “houses are shaking from the force of explosions”, a witness told AFP Saturday, reporting “clashes using all kinds of weapons”.

Thursday’s deal commits both sides to let in badly needed humanitarian assistance and also calls for the restoration of electricity, water and other basic services.

Sudan launched on Saturday a call to the international community, including the United Nations, the African Union, and other regional organizations, “to provide humanitarian assistance”, according to a statement from the foreign ministry.

The government committed to “dedicating the port and airports of Port Sudan” on the Red Sea, Dongola airport in the country’s north and Wadi Seidna air base near the capital “to receive aid”.

Civilians and aid groups have repeatedly pleaded for humanitarian corridors to secure vital assistance, as aid agencies have been systematically looted and at least 18 humanitarian workers killed.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed hopes the Jeddah deal would “ensure that the relief operation can scale up swiftly and safely to meet the needs of millions of people in Sudan”, where a third of the population relied on aid even before the current conflict.

Guterres also reiterated “his call for an immediate ceasefire and expanded discussions to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities”, in a Friday statement.

## Data of 237,000 U.S. Government Employees Breached

**WASHINGTON (Reuters) – The personal information of 237,000 current and former federal government employees has been exposed in a data breach at the U.S. Transportation Department (USDOT), sources briefed on the matter say.**

The breach hit systems for processing TRANServe transit benefits that reimburse government employees for some commuting costs. It was not clear if any of the personal information had been used for criminal purposes.

USDOT notified Congress Friday in an email seen by Reuters that its initial investigation of the data breach has “isolated the breach to certain systems at the department used for administrative functions, such as employee transit benefits processing.”

USDOT said in a statement to Reuters the breach did not affect any transportation safety systems. It did not say who might be responsible for the hack.

The department is investigating the breach and has frozen access to the

transit benefit system until it has been secured and restored, it said.

The maximum benefit allowance is \$280 per month for federal employee mass transit commuting costs. The breach impacted 114,000 current employees and 123,000 former employees.

Federal employees and agencies have been target of hackers in the past.

Two breaches at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 2014 and 2015 compromised sensitive data belonging to more than 22 million people, including 4.2 million current and federal employees along with fingerprint data of 5.6 million of those individuals.

Hackers who used SolarWinds and Microsoft software to burrow into U.S. federal agencies breached unclassified Justice Department networks and read emails at the Treasury, Commerce and Homeland Security departments. Nine federal agencies were breached, Reuters reported in 2021.



**LONDON (Dispatches) – A British think tank has warned that nearly 1.6 million British households are yet to encounter a 2,300 pound (\$2,903) payment surge following the mortgage rate increase amid the UK’s persisting housing crisis. According to the Resolution Foundation’s report, which focuses on living standards, only about half of the 7.5 million households holding mortgage loans have so far witnessed a change in their mortgage rate and payments. This development comes after the Bank of England (BoE) began increasing interest rates in December 2021, which according to the report, will mostly impact poorer and younger borrowers. The BoE raised the Bank rate from 4.25 to 4.5 percent last week in an effort to bring the highest rate of inflation in Western Europe from 10.1 percent back to its 2-percent target. Homeowners on fixed-rate mortgages feel the impact of the increase in costs once their mortgage terms expire and they need to renew their housing loans. Simon Pittaway, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation, said while the BoE’s rate rise run could be nearing an end, the majority of households still face mortgage pain. “Two thirds of the 12 billion pounds a year increase in mortgage costs that British households face as a result of rising rates is still to come,” Pittaway said as quoted in a Reuters report.**

**DAKAR (AFP) – The Malian army and foreign fighters executed at least 500 people during an anti-militant operation in Mali in March 2022, according to a much-awaited UN report. The figures by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) amount to the worst atrocity the Sahel country has experienced since a militant insurgency flared in 2012. It is also the most damning document yet against Mali’s armed forces and their foreign allies. Their nationality is not explicitly identified in the report. Describing events that unfolded in the central town of Moura between March 27-31 2022, the OHCHR said it had “reasonable grounds to believe that at least 500 people were killed in violation of norms, standards, rules and/or principles of international law.” The victims were “executed by the FAMA (Malian Armed Forces) and foreign military personnel” who had complete control over the area, it said. The report was published after a lengthy investigation by the human rights division of the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA. Around 20 women and seven children were among those killed, while evidence suggests 58 women and girls were victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, the report said.**

**BALUCHISTAN, Pakistan (Al Jazeera) – At least 13 people including soldiers have been killed in an attack on a security facility in southwestern Pakistan. A Frontier Corps camp in the Muslim Bagh area of northern Balochistan was attacked in the early hours of Friday. The military launched an operation to rescue hostages and clear the area, the military’s media wing, Inter-Services Public Relations, said in a statement on Saturday. In the process of the operation, “at least six soldiers and a civilian were killed”, it said. Another six people including a woman were wounded. The dead included all six attackers who the military said were well-equipped and stormed the compound. “The complex clearance operation involved a hostage rescue operation as well to save three families from a residential block. The terrorists had not even spared children of their horrendous approach,” the statement said. “The security forces, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart all attempts at sabotaging the peace, stability and progress of Balochistan,” it said.**

**WASHINGTON (CBS) – A 17-year-old migrant child from Honduras, who arrived in the U.S. without a parent or guardian, has died in government custody in Florida, officials have confirmed. The child was identified as Angel Eduardo Maradiaga Espinoza by Enrique Reina, the Honduran secretary of foreign affairs. Reina was called for a thorough investigation into the death. Espinoza was located in Safety Harbor, Florida, a small city west of Tampa, where a shelter is used to house unaccompanied children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) acknowledged the death but provided limited details about the circumstances. In a statement, the agency expressed deep sadness and extended condolences to the family, with whom they are in contact. According to a U.S. official, there was no altercation involved in the death. Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services, the shelter in Safety Harbor, declined to comment on the teenager’s death and directed inquiries to HHS.**

**LAHORE (AFP) – Pakistan’s former prime minister Imran Khan arrived at his Lahore residence on Saturday after being freed on bail following days of legal drama and nationwide riots over his arrest on corruption charges. Khan was swooped on by dozens of paramilitary troops and arrested during a routine court appearance on Tuesday, triggering violent clashes in several cities between his supporters and security forces. “The head of the country’s largest party was abducted, kidnapped from the court, and in front of the entire nation,” Khan told AFP from Islamabad High Court on Friday. “They treated me like a terrorist, this had to have a reaction,” he said of the protests that followed. Khan has repeatedly clashed with Pakistan’s powerful military since being booted from power, and told reporters after being granted bail that “one man, the army chief” was behind his arrest. His detention came just hours after he was rebuked by the army for claiming it was involved in an assassination attempt against him last year. After his arrest, thousands of protesters began setting fire to government buildings, blocked roads and damaged military installations in a country wracked by a spiraling economic crisis.**

**NEW DELHI (Reuters) – Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday conceded defeat in a crucial regional election in Karnataka, losing its sole bastion in southern India. The vote in the state, which is India’s technology hub and home to 65 million people, was the first of a series of crucial state polls seen as setting the tone for the general elections due in April and May 2024, when Modi will seek a third term. The BJP had been in power in Karnataka since 2019 and campaigned hard to hold on to it – the only one out of southern India’s five states that was under its rule. As the ballots were counted, it became clear that the opposition Congress party had won an overwhelming majority in the state, and Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai admitted the defeat. For Congress, the win is a major boost to its morale. The party has been on the margins of Indian politics since the rise of Modi’s nationalist BJP in 2014. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi – a scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, which has given India four prime ministers – has been seen as the main opponent to Modi’s rule. In March, he was convicted of defaming Modi and excluded from parliament.**