



**WASHINGTON (CNN)** - A former staffer who accused Joe Biden of sexual assault has defected to Moscow, telling state media that she felt "safe" in Russia and would seek citizenship there. Tara Reade, who drew headlines during the 2020 presidential race by accusing then-candidate Biden of sexually harassing and assaulting her, said she decided to go to Russia after receiving threats in the U.S. Biden has strongly denied Reade's allegations, and no ex-Biden staffer has come forward to say they ever witnessed or heard about any kind of sexual misconduct in his Senate office. In an interview with MSNBC in 2020, Biden said he is "never unequivocally, it never, never happened. It didn't. It never happened."

**BERLIN (AP)** - The German government said Wednesday that it has told Russia to close four out of its five consulates general in Germany in a tit-for-tat move after Moscow set a limit for the number of staff at the German Embassy and related bodies in Russia. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Christofor Burger told reporters in Berlin that the measure was intended to create a "parity of personnel and structures" between the two countries. Russia has consulates in Bonn, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Leipzig and Munich, with Moscow deciding which four they will close and which one they will keep open.

**JEDDAH (Reuters)** - Sudan's army suspended talks with a rival paramilitary force on Wednesday over a ceasefire and aid access, raising fears the six-week-old conflict will push Africa's third largest nation deeper into a humanitarian crisis. The general command of the armed forces said in a statement it suspended talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah, accusing the other side of a lack of commitment in implementing any terms of the agreement and a continuous violation of the ceasefire. The negotiations with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which began in early May, had produced a declaration of commitments to protect civilians and two short-term ceasefire deals, although those deals were repeatedly violated.

**PARIS (AFP)** - Curbing global heating at 1.5 degrees Celsius will avert runaway climate change but not mass suffering in developing nations, a consortium of 50 researchers warned Wednesday. Some 200 million people in poorer regions will be exposed to unlivable heat, and half a billion will face the destructive ravages of rising seas even if the world meets the more optimistic Paris target of a 1.5C cap, they reported in a major study. If exposing large swathes of humanity to "significant harm is to be avoided, the just boundary should be set at or below 1C," the scientists said. The Earth's average surface temperature has already risen 1.2C. These are sobering conclusions because greenhouse gas emissions remain at record levels, and current policies are on track to see 2.7C of warming by century's end.

**ALIFAX, Nova Scotia (Reuters)** - Canadian fire officials warned on Wednesday gusty winds and low humidity could fuel a raging wildfire in Halifax that has forced thousands to evacuate while causing poor air quality hundreds of miles away in the U.S. The blaze, dubbed the Tantallon Fire, in the eastern Canadian city of Halifax, grew by 49 hectares to 837 hectares (2,068 acres) since Tuesday, David Steeves of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources said in a news conference. "Today could possibly be a very difficult day," he said on Wednesday morning, noting forecasts for 25 kilometers an hour wind gusts out of the south and low humidity.

## Beijing Blasts 'Provocative' U.S. Fly-Bys Over South China Sea



An undated file photo shows a Chinese J-16 fighter jet at an undisclosed location. Photo: Taiwan defense ministry via AP

**BEIJING (SCMP)** - Beijing on Wednesday condemned U.S. military fly-bys in the South China Sea as "provocative" after Washington described a Chinese jet as "unnecessarily aggressive" during an encounter last week.

Mao Ning, spokeswoman for China's foreign ministry, said the United States had "frequently" sent ships and aircraft to conduct reconnaissance against China, seriously endangering its national sovereignty and security.

"Such provocative and dangerous actions are the root cause of maritime security issues, and the U.S. should immediately stop such dangerous provocative actions," Mao said during a regular briefing.

China will continue to take necessary measures to firmly safeguard its sovereignty and security, she added. Mao made the comments in response to a question about a video published by the U.S. military on Tuesday, which the Pentagon said showed a Chinese fighter jet making an "unnecessarily aggressive" maneuver against its pilots over the South China Sea.

In a statement accompanying the video, the U.S. military command responsible for the Indo-Pacific, also known as "Indopacom", said the Chinese J-16 jet carried out the maneuver over international waters last week, forcing the U.S. RC-135 reconnaissance plane to fly through its wake turbulence.

The Chinese pilot "flew directly in front of the nose of the RC-135", Indopacom said in the statement with embedded video showing a fighter jet passing in front of the U.S. plane's nose.

"The RC-135 was conducting safe and routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace, in accordance with international law," it said.

#USINDOPACOM Statement on #PRC Unprofessional Intercept: "We expect all countries in the Indo-Pacific region to use international

airspace safely and in accordance with international law."

"The United States will continue to fly in international airspace with due regard for the safety of all vessels and aircraft under international law," it said, adding, "We expect all countries in the Indo-Pacific region to use international airspace safely and in accordance with international law."

The incident occurred during a week in which two U.S. officials have decried Beijing's denial of invitations to set up high-level, military-to-military talks.

Speaking in New York last week, U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander Admiral John Aquilino accused the Chinese government of holding out on such invitations as a "bartering chip" and condemned that approach as a failure "to mitigate risk and to avoid miscalculation".

U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely Ratner reiterated on Thursday that Washington hoped for open lines of communication but that China had yet to reciprocate.

The Chinese government considers most of the South China Sea its territorial waters, and routinely denounces US military operations there. To strengthen its claim, in 2021 it issued a notification directive for foreign vessels plying these waters.

The order issued by China's Maritime Safety Administration applies to submersibles, nuclear vessels, ships carrying radioactive materials, ships carrying bulk oil, chemicals, liquefied gas and other toxic and harmful substances and other vessels deemed a threat to the country's maritime traffic safety.

Bilateral tension on the military front appeared to escalate earlier on Tuesday, after Beijing's Foreign Ministry blamed Washington for its rejection of an invitation for Chinese Defense Minister General Li Shangfu to meet his U.S. counterpart Lloyd Austin at the coming Shangri-La Dialogue defense summit.

# Envoy: U.S. Encouraging Ukraine to Attack Russia



Russian defense ministry said eight drones targeted Moscow overnight.

**MOSCOW (Dispatches)** - Russian Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov said on Wednesday that the U.S. has been encouraging Ukraine to strike Russian territory, despite claiming the opposite.

Antonov argued that Washington's statements in response to the recent drone raid on the Russian capital "sounded like an encouragement for Ukrainian terrorists."

"Doesn't the U.S. administration understand that no one believes their slogans about non-support of Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory?!" the diplomat said, according to a statement on the embassy's Telegram channel.

Antonov's remarks came after a White House spokesperson told reporters that "as a general matter, we

do not support attacks inside of Russia." The goal of the drone attack was to "sow fear among Russians" and undermine trust in the authorities, he said.

"The Russian Federation has been sentenced to 'capital punishment' in the West long ago. But simply, they don't have it in them to achieve this goal," the ambassador stated.

Drones carrying explosives crashed into residential buildings in Moscow on Tuesday morning. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, eight UAVs were involved in the attack, and all of them were either destroyed by air defenses, or veered off course due to the use of jamming equipment. Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin said that no one was killed or seriously injured.

Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky's senior adviser, Mikhail Podoliak, denied Kiev's involvement in the attack, but suggested that more raids would come.

On Tuesday, a U.S. military aid package for Ukraine that is expected to be announced this week will total up to \$300 million and will include additional munitions for drones, U.S. officials said. The drone ammunition comes after new attacks by unmanned aircraft targeted Moscow.

There has been no suggestion that U.S.-made drones or munitions were used in the recent attacks on Moscow, and U.S. officials have repeatedly said that Ukraine has agreed not to use any American-provided weapons for attacks on Russian soil.

But the new aid package comes at a tense moment in the war. The latest drone attack on Moscow follows Russia's seizure of the eastern Ukrainian city Bakhmut after a nine-month battle that killed tens of thousands of people.

U.S. officials did not provide details on the drone munitions in the new aid package or specify which unmanned aircraft would use them. The Defense Department has given Ukraine a variety of unmanned aircraft over the last year, for both surveillance and attacks, including at least two versions of the Switchblade, a so-called kamikaze drone that can loiter in the air and then explode into a target.

## Efforts to Defuse Kosovo Crisis Mount as Ethnic Serbs in Kosovo Rally

**ZVECAN, Kosovo (AP)** - International efforts to defuse a crisis in Kosovo intensified Wednesday as ethnic Serbs held more protests in a northern town where clashes with NATO-led peacekeepers earlier this week left dozens injured and sparked fears of renewed conflict in the troubled region.

Hundreds of Serbs repeated at a rally that they want the Kosovo special police and ethnic Albanian officials they call "fake" mayors to withdraw from northern Kosovo where they are a majority. The crowd then spread a huge Serbian flag.

Working to avert any escalation, European Union officials met with Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti on the sidelines of a conference in Bratislava, Slovakia, while the leaders of France and Germany announced plans to meet top Serbia and Kosovo officials on Thursday at a summit in Moldova.

"The current situation is dangerous and unsustainable," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. "We need urgent de-escalation."



Polish soldiers, part of the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo KFOR, guard a municipal building in the town of Zvecan, northern Kosovo, Tuesday, May 30, 2023.

Speaking in Slovakia, Kurti flatly rejected Serb demands but left the door open for fresh local elections.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday that Moscow is monitoring the situation in Kosovo and spoke in support of the Serbs.

Wednesday's protest outside the

city hall in Zvecan, 45 kilometers (28 miles) north of the capital, Pristina, ended peacefully. On Monday, ethnic Serbs tried to storm municipal offices and fought with both Kosovo police and the peacekeepers, leaving 30 NATO soldiers and 50 rioters injured.

## North Korea Reconnaissance Satellite Launch Fails as Rocket Falls Into Sea

**SEOUL (Dispatches)** - North Korea's first military reconnaissance satellite launch has ended in failure after the rocket's newly developed second-stage thruster malfunctioned, state media said.

Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported on Wednesday that the launch of the new-type satellite carrier rocket "Chollima-1" failed because of instability in the engine and fuel system, sending the booster and payload plunging into the sea.

According to KCNA, the National Aerospace Development Administration launched "Malligyong-1" loaded on the "Chollima-1" as scheduled at the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground in Cholsan County of North Pyongan Province at 06:27 local time on Wednesday.

The carrier rocket with the West Sea of Korea along with the loss of thrust because of an abnormal start of the second-stage motor after the first-stage separation while making a normal flight, the report said, adding that "the reliability and stability of the new engine system" was "low" and the fuel used "unstable," leading to the mission's failure.

A spokesman for the National Aerospace Development Administration said the cause of the failure is being investigated by the

scientists, technicians, and specialists at the institute.

North Korean officials have underscored that a second launch would be held "in the nearest future" once authorities are able to correct the technical issues, after conducting new interstage tests.

Reuters cited George William Herbert, an adjunct professor at the Middlebury Institute's Center for Nonproliferation Studies, as saying that the images showed at least part of a rocket, including an "interstage" section designed to connect to another stage.

Herbert said North Korea's new rocket was probably a liquid-fuel rocket and the round, brown object inside is likely a propellant tank for either fuel or oxidizer.

North Korea's rocket launch triggered a series of emergency alert systems and sirens in Japan and South Korea as residents of both nations were urged to seek shelter. Shortly after the initial reports were aired, the South Korean Interior Ministry admitted to having issued "erroneous" warnings in Seoul.

Before launching the satellite, North Korea announced that it would be launching a reconnaissance satellite in response to ongoing military drills being carried out near the Korean Peninsula.

## Artificial Intelligence Could Lead to Extinction, Experts Warn

**LONDON (BBC)** - Artificial intelligence could lead to the extinction of humanity, experts - including the heads of OpenAI and Google Deepmind - have warned. Dozens have supported a statement published on the webpage of the Centre for AI Safety.

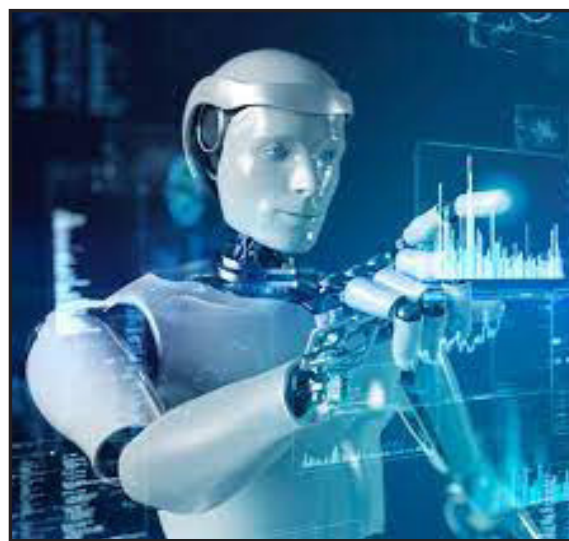
"Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war" it reads.

But others say the fears are overblown. Sam Altman, chief executive of ChatGPT-maker OpenAI, Demis Hassabis, chief executive of Google DeepMind and Dario Amodei of Anthropic have all supported the statement.

The Centre for AI Safety website suggests a number of possible disaster scenarios:

- AIs could be weaponised - for example, drug-discovery tools could be used to build chemical weapons
- AI-generated misinformation could destabilize society and "undermine collective decision-making"
- The power of AI could become increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, enabling "regimes to enforce narrow values through pervasive surveillance and oppressive censorship"
- Enfeeblement, where humans become dependent on AI "similar to the scenario portrayed in the film Wall-E"

Dr Geoffrey Hinton, who issued an earlier warning about risks from super-intelligent AI, has also supported the Centre for AI Safety's call.



Yoshua Bengio, professor of computer science at the University of Montreal, also signed. But Centre for AI Safety director Dan Hendrycks told BBC News future risks and present concerns "shouldn't be viewed antagonistically". "Addressing some of the issues today can be useful for addressing many of the later risks tomorrow," he said.