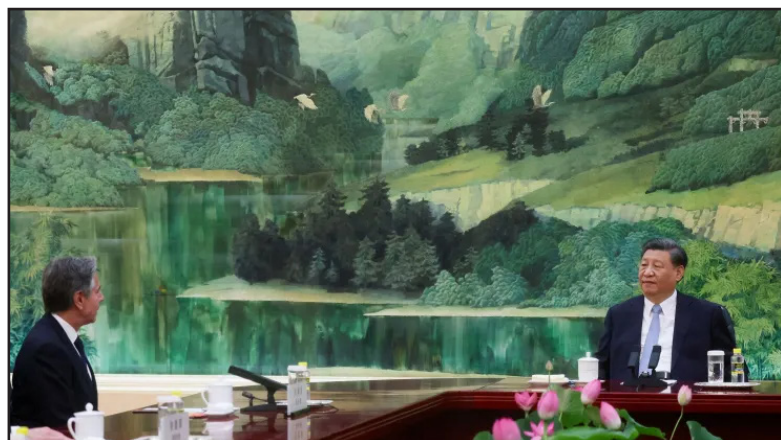


# China, U.S. Vow to Stabilize Deteriorating Ties



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) attends a meeting with China's President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on June 19, 2023.

BEIJING (AP) — The United States and China have pledged to stabilize their badly deteriorated ties during a critical visit to Beijing by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who met Monday with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Xi pronounced himself satisfied with progress made during talks in Beijing. But, Blinken told media China refused to resume military-to-military communications, a U.S. priority.

It remains to be seen whether the two countries can resolve their most important disagreements, many of which have international financial, security and stability implications.

The two sides expressed a willingness to hold more talks, but

there was little indication that either is prepared to bend from its positions on issues including trade, Taiwan, human rights conditions and Russia's war in Ukraine.

Blinken said later that the U.S. set limited objectives for the trip and achieved them. Blinken added that he had raised the issue of military to military communications "repeatedly."

"It is absolutely vital that we have these kinds of communications," he said. "This is something we're going to keep working on."

According to a transcript of the meeting with Blinken, Xi pronounced himself pleased with the outcome of Blinken's earlier meetings with two top Chinese diplomats and said the two countries had agreed to resume a program of un-

derstandings that he and President Joe Biden agreed to at a meeting in Bali last year.

"The Chinese side has made our position clear, and the two sides have agreed to follow through the common understandings President Biden and I had reached in Bali," Xi said.

That agenda had been thrown into jeopardy in recent months, notably after the U.S. shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon over its airspace in February, and amid escalated military activity in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

But Xi suggested the worst could be over.

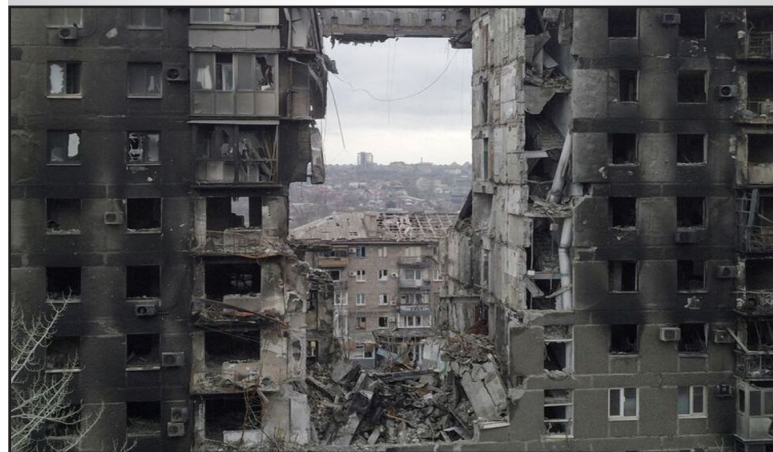
"The two sides have also made progress and reached agreement on some specific issues," Xi said without elaborating, according to a transcript of the remarks released by the State Department. "This is very good."

"I hope that through this visit, Mr. Secretary, you will make more positive contributions to stabilizing China-U.S. relations," Xi added.

In his remarks to Xi during the 35-minute session at the Great Hall of the People, which was not announced until an hour before it started, Blinken said "the United States and China have an obligation and responsibility to manage our relationship."

Despite his presence in China, Blinken and other U.S. officials had played down the prospects for any significant breakthroughs on the most vexing issues facing the planet's two largest economies.

# Ukraine Offensive Leaves Heavy Casualties



A view shows a residential building destroyed in the course of Ukraine-Russia conflict in the southern port city of Mariupol, Ukraine April 14, 2022.

KYIV (Reuters) -- Ukraine said on Monday it had driven Russian forces from an eighth village in its two-week-old counteroffensive, a settlement on a heavily fortified part of the front line near the most direct route to the country's Azov Sea coast.

A Russian-installed official said on Sunday that Ukraine had taken control of the village, Piatykatky, in the southern Zaporizhzhia region. He later said Moscow had pushed them out and on Monday morning he said Ukraine was attacking again.

Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said Ukrainian forces had not only retaken Piatykatky but had advanced by up to seven km (4.3 miles) into Russian lines in two weeks, capturing 113 square km (44 square miles) of land.

"In the course of two weeks of offensive operations in the Berdiansk and Melitopol directions, eight settlements were liberated," Maliar said on Telegram, referring to two cities on the Russian-occupied coastline.

The reported capture of the villages reflects incremental gains for Ukraine that highlight the challenge of breaking through lines Moscow has spent months strengthening. Piatykatky is significant, however, as lies around 90 km from the coast.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he would continue talks with Western

allies to get weapons and ammunition supplies to them as soon as possible.

On Monday, the Russian Defense Ministry said its forces had thwarted a Ukrainian attempt to take the village of Novodonetske in the eastern Donetsk region, another area where Kyiv's counteroffensive has been focused.

It released a video showing what a soldier heard talking in it said was a captured French-made tank.

Ukraine has acknowledged attacks along several parts of the 1,000 km front line in its long-anticipated counteroffensive to retake the 18% of its territory occupied by Russia. But Kyiv has imposed an information blackout on current and future battles for security reasons. Analysts say the main phase of the counteroffensive is yet to begin.

Both sides appear to have taken heavy losses in recent fighting and both say they have lost fewer troops than their foes.

"The enemy's 'wave-like' offensives yielded results, despite enormous losses," Russian-installed official Vladimir Rogov said on Telegram in reporting the Piatykatky fighting.

The conflict has killed thousands of civilians, destroyed towns and cities and driven millions of people from their homes as well as exacerbating global inflation and reshaping security.

## News in Brief

LUCKNOW, India (Reuters) -- At least 54 people died in a district in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh over the last few days, the Times of India newspaper reported on Monday, as authorities probed if the loss of lives was due to the heat wave in the region. Another 45 people died in neighboring Bihar state, local newspapers reported. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert warning last week for extreme heat in some regions of the country, including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The government said it was investigating the cause of the deaths that occurred over three days last week in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia district, about 970 km (600 miles) southeast of New Delhi. Temperatures have soared close to 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in recent days in Ballia with a severe power crisis compounding the situation. In Bihar, 45 people lost their lives due to heat-related illnesses, the Hindustan Times newspaper reported. Officials in Patna, the capital of Bihar, did not answer phone calls.

SEOUL (AFP) -- North Korea's ruling party slammed a recent failed satellite launch in a high-level meeting, state media reported on Monday, "bitterly" criticizing the officials responsible. North Korea attempted to put its first military spy satellite into orbit on May 31, but the projectile and its payload crashed into the sea shortly after launch due to what Pyongyang said was a rocket failure. In the report from the meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, the ruling party "bitterly criticized the officials who irresponsibly conducted the preparations for satellite launch" and demanded a probe into the "serious" failure, state-run KCNA said. The committee reiterated a pledge to soon successfully launch its spy satellite, which Pyongyang has previously said it needs in order to counterbalance the growing U.S. military presence in the region. The May 31 launch was denounced by the United States, South Korea and Japan, which said it violated United Nations resolutions barring the nuclear-armed country from any tests using ballistic missile technology. Analysts have said there is significant technological overlap between the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles and space launch capabilities.

JAKARTA (Reuters) -- Indonesia and Elon Musk's rocket company SpaceX on Monday launched the country's largest telecommunication satellite from the United States, in a \$540 million project intended to link up remote corners of the archipelago to the internet. Roughly two-thirds of Indonesia's 280 million population already use the internet, but connectivity is limited in far-flung, underdeveloped eastern islands of the Southeast Asian country. "Satellite technology will accelerate internet access to villages in areas that cannot be reached by fiber optics in the next 10 years," Mahfud MD, senior Indonesian minister, said in a statement ahead of the launch. The 4.5-tonne Satellite of the Republic of Indonesia (SATRIA-1) was built by Thales Alenia Space and deployed into orbit from Florida by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, which then returned to an offshore site in a precision landing.

MADRID (Reuters) -- Spain's conservative People's Party is set to win the most seats in the lower house of parliament in next month's national election, far ahead of the ruling Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), a poll released by El Pais newspaper showed on Monday. The survey, carried out between June 12 and 14, showed the PP widening its lead over Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's PSOE, pollster 40DB said. The poll, commissioned by El Pais newspaper, estimated that the PP would get between 128 and 142 seats in the 350-member lower house, up from 131 in the previous poll held between May 31 and June 1. The PSOE would get between 99 and 109 seats, it showed, compared with 107 in the previous such survey. An alliance between the PP and the far-right Vox party, seen garnering between 37 and 41 seats, would exceed the 176 seat absolute majority in the lower house needed to rule. Sanchez on May 29 called a surprise snap election after his party and its junior coalition partner Podemos were routed in regional and municipal ballots. Sanchez said he would lead his party and seek to remain prime minister.

JOS, Nigeria (AFP) -- Clashes between farmers and herders killed at least 13 people in central Nigeria over the weekend, community leaders and local authorities told AFP. In recent weeks, the central state of Plateau has seen a resurgence of violence between herding and farming communities fighting over access to land and resources. On Friday, five herders taking cattle to market "were stopped and killed" in the Rawuru community by suspected "Berom youths", a farming community, a local Fulani herders' representative Nuru Abdullahi, told AFP. In what appeared to be a revenge attack, eight Berom farmers were killed in the same area by suspected Fulani herders, Berom youth representative Pius Dalyp Pam told AFP. Nigeria's northwestern and central regions regularly see deadly violence over land and water exploitation between farming and herding communities. They have worsened in recent years because of population pressure and climate change.

# Study: Europe Should Brace for Deadly Heatwaves



Temperatures in Europe have risen 1.5C above preindustrial levels over the last 30 years.

BRUSSELS (AFP) -- Europe should brace for more deadly heatwaves driven by climate change, said a sweeping report on Monday, noting the world's fastest-warming continent was some 2.3 degrees Celsius hotter last year than in pre-industrial times.

Crop-withering drought, record sea-surface temperatures and unprecedented glacier melt are among the consequences laid out in a report by the World Meteorological Organization and the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

The continent, which has been warming twice the global average since the 1980s, saw its warm-

est summer on record last year, with countries including France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom experiencing their warmest year on record.

The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2C since the mid-1800s, unleashing a devastating cascade of extreme weather, including more intense heatwaves, more severe droughts in some areas and storms made more ferocious by rising seas.

Hardest hit are the most vulnerable people and the world's poorest countries, who have done little to contribute to the fossil fuel emissions that drive up temperatures.

But impacts are becoming increasingly severe across the world, with

regions in the northern hemisphere and around the poles seeing particularly rapid warming.

In Europe, the high temperatures "exacerbated the severe and widespread drought conditions, fuelled violent wildfires that resulted in the second largest burnt area on record, and led to thousands of heat-associated excess deaths," said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.

Temperatures across the continent rose 1.5C in 30 years, from 1991 to 2021, according to the report, the State of the Climate in Europe 2022.

Severe heat left more than 16,000 people dead last year, the report said, while floods and storms accounted for most of the \$2 billion in damages from weather and climate extremes.

"Unfortunately, this cannot be considered a one-off occurrence or an oddity of the climate," said Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo in the report.

"Our current understanding of the climate system and its evolution informs us that these kinds of events are part of a pattern that will make heat stress extremes more frequent and more intense across the region."

Increasing temperatures have taken a toll on economies and ecosystems, the report said.

In the Alps, glaciers saw a new record mass loss for a single year in 2022, caused by very low winter levels of snow, a hot summer as well as deposits of wind-blown Saharan dust.

# UN Chief: Sudan Slipping Into 'Death and Destruction'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) -- Sudan is descending into death and destruction at an unprecedented speed, UN chief Antonio Guterres said Monday as he urged donors to step in and curb the unfolding catastrophe.

"The scale and speed of Sudan's descent into death and destruction is unprecedented," the United Nations secretary-general told a pledging conference.

"Without strong international support, Sudan could quickly become a locus of lawlessness, radiating insecurity across the region."

The Sudanese army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has since April 15 been battling military forces commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, after the two fell out in a bitter power struggle.

The United Nations has two appeals for tackling the crisis -- the humanitarian response within Sudan, and the refugee crisis outside its borders.

The appeals need \$3 billion this year, but are less than 17 percent funded so far.

Money poured into the UN's Ukraine appeals within weeks following military operation in February last year, but the international response has not been so quick for the crisis in Sudan, now more than

two months in. The largely-virtual pledging conference is an attempt to breathe some life into the Sudan appeals.

"The situation in Darfur and Khartoum is catastrophic. Fighting is raging with people attacked in their homes and on the street," Guterres said.

"In little more than two months, two million people have been forced from their homes, seeking refuge in safer parts of Sudan or across borders. Close to half a million people have already crossed borders into neighboring countries."

"Before this conflict erupted, Sudan was already grappling with a humanitarian crisis. This has now escalated into a catastrophe affecting more than half the country's people," he said.

"It is crucial to preventing the situation from deteriorating even further."

Multiple truces have been agreed and broken in the war, which has claimed the lives of more than 2,000 people and driven another two million from their homes, including at least 528,000 who fled abroad.

Guterres said the only way to end the crisis was through a return to peace and the restoration of civilian rule via the transition to democracy.