

Russia: Ukraine Plans to Strike Crimea With Missiles



Ukrainian servicemen near Velyka Novosilka, close to the front lines in southern Ukraine.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday that Moscow had information that Ukraine was planning to strike Russian-controlled Crimea with longer-range U.S. and British missiles and warned Russia would retaliate if that happened.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, but considers it to be outside the scope of what it calls its "special military operation" which is focused in eastern and southern Ukraine where Ukraine is fighting to retake territory.

Kyiv, which says it is battling for its survival in a war of colonial conquest, says it wants to reclaim all of its territory however, including the Crimean peninsula which hosts Rus-

sia's Black Sea naval base.

Shoigu told a meeting of military officials that Moscow had information that Ukraine planned to strike Crimea with U.S.-supplied HIMARS long-range rocket systems and with British-supplied Storm Shadow cruise missiles.

"The use of these missiles outside the zone of our special military operation would mean that the United States and Britain would be fully dragged into the conflict and would entail immediate strikes on decision-making centers in Ukraine," said Shoigu.

He said Ukraine's armed forces had carried out 263 attacks on Russian forces' positions since June 4, referring to what Moscow regards as the

start of Ukraine's counteroffensive.

"Thanks to the smart and selfless actions of our units all of them (the attacks) have been repelled, the enemy has not accomplished its goals," said Shoigu.

Ukraine says it has recaptured eight villages in the early stages of its counteroffensive and a defense official has promised that Kyiv's "biggest blow" lay ahead despite tough resistance from Moscow's troops.

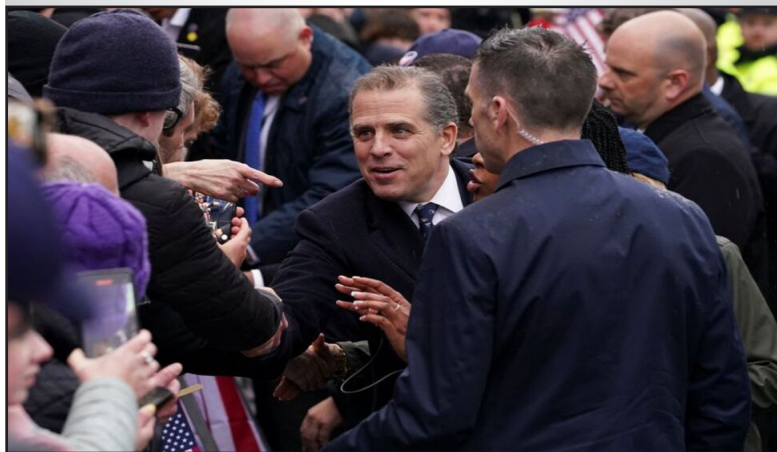
Kyiv said Tuesday that European Union member states plan to train as many as 30,000 members of the Ukrainian armed forces this year, including personnel of Ukraine's territorial defense units.

Russia on Tuesday struck at military and infrastructure targets in Ukraine's capital Kyiv and across other parts of the country, including western areas far from the front lines, Ukrainian officials said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said for its part that Russian forces had hit and destroyed eight ammunition warehouses across Ukraine in the last 24 hours and repelled Ukrainian attacks in three different directions.

Also on Tuesday, Ukrainian forces struck the Russian-controlled town of Nova Kakhovka in the southern Kherson region with drones and three civilians were wounded, TASS news agency reported, citing the local Russian-appointed authorities.

Biden's Son Agrees to Please Guilty to Tax Crimes



Hunter Biden greets people on a street as U.S. President Joe Biden visits Dundalk, Ireland, April 12, 2023.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- U.S. President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden has agreed to plead guilty to two charges of willfully failing to pay income taxes and to enter into an agreement that could enable him to avoid a conviction on a gun-related charge, according to a court filing on Tuesday.

The federal charges against Hunter Biden resulted from an investigation by David Weiss, the U.S. attorney in the Democratic president's home state of Delaware, who was appointed by Republican then-President Donald Trump.

Hunter Biden, 53, for years has been the focus of unrelenting attacks by Trump and his Republican allies, who have accused him of wrongdoing relating to Ukraine and China, among other matters. The president's son has worked as a lobbyist, lawyer, investment banker and artist, and has publicly detailed his struggles with substance abuse.

According to court filings, Hunter Biden received taxable income in excess of \$1.5 million in 2017 and 2018, but he did not pay income tax those years despite owing in excess of \$100,000. The two counts are misde-

meanors.

His attorney, Christopher Clark, said the government would file a firearm charge against his client that would be subject to a pretrial diversion agreement, an alternative to prosecution that is sometimes used to allow defendants to avoid prison time or a criminal conviction.

Hunter Biden described in a 2021 memoir dealing with substance abuse issues in his life, including crack cocaine use and alcoholism. He was discharged from the U.S. Navy Reserve in 2014 after testing positive for cocaine, sources said at the time.

President Biden has long expressed support and pride in his son for overcoming his addiction.

The Weiss inquiry initially examined potential violations of tax and money laundering laws in foreign business dealings, principally in China, sources told Reuters. The investigation headed by Weiss began as early as 2018, according to U.S. media reports.

A senior Republican congressman, James Comer, in 2022 accused the U.S. Treasury Department of withholding financial "suspicious activity reports" to shield Hunter Biden's business dealings.

UK Parliament Confirms Johnson Lied Over Partygate



Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson leaves his home in London, March 21, 2023.

LONDON (Reuters) -- Britain's parliament delivered another blow to the political career of former prime minister Boris Johnson when it endorsed a report that concluded that he deliberately lied over rule-breaking parties.

Johnson abruptly resigned from parliament earlier this month after seeing an advance copy of the findings of a yearlong investigation into his conduct during the COVID-19 pandemic when lockdown-breaking parties were held in Downing Street.

The committee published its findings last week concluding that Johnson had deliberately lied to col-

leagues when he assured the House of Commons that all COVID-19 rules had been followed at all times in government buildings.

The report recommended Johnson should be denied a pass giving him automatic access to parliament and would have recommended suspending him from the House of Commons for 90 days if he had not already resigned.

Lawmakers in the House of Commons voted on Monday 354 to 7 to endorse the committee's report after a five-hour debate on its findings.

Parliament's decision to back the conclusions of the report does not

stop Johnson from standing again to be a member of the House of Commons, but it is an embarrassing punishment for a politician who was still prime minister a year ago.

Most politicians who spoke in parliament on Monday criticized Johnson's behavior, while a handful of his supporters questioned the impartiality of the committee.

Former Prime Minister Theresa May warned Johnson's supporters not to vote against the committee's report, saying that doing so would erode the public's faith in democracy.

Johnson, prime minister from the middle of 2019 until September 2022, was one of Britain's most controversial leaders in recent decades.

Opinion polls show that Johnson is currently unpopular with most of the public, but he retains the backing of some Conservative Party members.

Senior politicians in the governing Conservative Party, including Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and many members of the cabinet, skipped the debate and avoided voting on Monday to avoid increasing tensions with party members who remain loyal to the former prime minister.

Johnson has characterized the committee as a "kangaroo court" and said the report was "intended to be the final knife-thrust in a protracted political assassination".

Rescuers Search for Boat Bound for Titanic Site



This undated photo provided by OceanGate Expeditions in June 2021 shows the company's Titan submersible.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Rescuers in a remote area of the Atlantic Ocean raced against time early Tuesday to find a missing submersible carrying five people on a mission to document the wreckage of the Titanic.

The carbon-fiber submersible named the Titan, part of a mission by OceanGate Expeditions, carried a pilot, a renowned British adventurer, two members of an iconic Pakistani business family and a Titanic expert. Authorities reported the vessel overdue Sunday night about 435 miles (700 kilometers) south of St. John's, Newfoundland, according to Canada's Joint Rescue Coordination Center.

Every passing minute, however, puts the Titan's crew at greater risk. The submersible had a 96-hour oxygen supply when it put to sea at roughly 6 a.m. Sunday, according to David Concannon, an adviser to OceanGate. That means the oxygen supply could run out by approximately 6 a.m. Thursday.

"It is a remote area — and it is a challenge to conduct a search in that remote area," said Rear Adm. John Mauger, a commander for the U.S. Coast Guard, which also is searching for the Titan.

Mauger told NBC's "Today" show on Tuesday that his crews were working to prioritize underwater search ef-

forts and get equipment there that can be helpful to the search.

The Canadian research icebreaker Polar Prince, which was supporting the Titan, reportedly lost contact with the vessel about an hour and 45 minutes after it submerged. The Polar Prince was to continue to do surface searches throughout the night and a Canadian Boeing P-8 Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft will resume their surface and subsurface search in the morning, the U.S. Coast Guard said on Twitter. Two U.S. Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft also have conducted overflights.

The Canadian military also dropped sonar buoys to listen for any possible sounds from the Titan.

OceanGate's expeditions to the Titanic wreck site include archaeologists and marine biologists. The company also brings people who pay to come along, known as "mission specialists." They take turns operating sonar equipment and performing other tasks in the five-person submersible.

The submersible, named Titan, is capable of diving 2.4 miles (4 kilometers) "with a comfortable safety margin," OceanGate said in its court filing.

It weighs 20,000 pounds (9,072 kilograms) in the air, but is ballasted to be neutrally buoyant once it reaches the seafloor, the company said.



WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- President Joe Biden said the threat of Russian President Vladimir Putin using tactical nuclear weapons is "real," days after denouncing Russia's deployment of such weapons in Belarus. "When I was out here about two years ago saying I worried about the Colorado river drying up, everybody looked at me like I was crazy," Biden told a group of donors in California. "They looked at me like when I said I worry about Putin using tactical nuclear weapons. It's real," Biden said. Last week, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said his country has started taking delivery of Russian tactical nuclear weapons, some of which he said were three times more powerful than the atomic bombs the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. In May, Russia dismissed Biden's criticism of its plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, saying the U.S. had for decades deployed such nuclear weapons in Europe.

BERLIN/MUNICH/FRANKFURT (Reuters) -- China's Premier Li Qiang told Germany's top CEOs that a lack of cooperation was the biggest risk during a visit to lobby for stronger ties even as Europe seeks to reduce its dependence on Asia's rising superpower. Li met with the heads of corporate titans like Mercedes-Benz, SAP and Siemens Energy on Monday in Berlin ahead of Chinese-German government consultations on Tuesday at the start of his first official trip overseas. The premier will also head to Paris for an official visit and to attend a financial conference on June 22 to 23. The fact his first trip overseas started in Germany underscores the weight of the ties between Asia and Europe's largest economies. China is Germany's largest trade partner and is a key market for German companies to export goods and procure materials.

BEIRUT (Reuters) -- Former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn has sued the company for more than \$1 billion in a lawsuit filed to Lebanon's public prosecutor last month, according to a copy of the lawsuit filed with Reuters. The lawsuit filed on May 18 accuses Nissan along with two other companies and 12 named individuals of crimes including defamation, slander, libel and the fabrication of material evidence. A judicial source said the prosecutor has a scheduled a court session on Sept. 18 to begin proceedings. Ghosn, once a titan of the global car industry, was arrested in Japan in late 2018 and charged with financial misconduct. He denied the charge and said his detention was part of a plot by Nissan executives to block a merger. He escaped Japan hidden in a box aboard a private jet in December 2019, fleeing to Lebanon, his childhood home.

KATHMANDU (Reuters) -- Glaciers in Asia's Hindu Kush Himalaya could lose up to 75% of their volume by century's end due to global warming, causing both dangerous flooding and water shortages for the 240 million people who live in the mountainous region, according to a new report. A team of international scientists has found that ice loss in the region, home to the famous peaks of Everest and K2, is speeding up. During the 2010s, the glaciers shed ice as much as 65% faster than they had in the preceding decade, according to the assessment by the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), an intergovernmental scientific authority on the region. "We're losing the glaciers, and we're losing them in 100 years' time," said Philippus Wester, an environmental scientist and ICIMOD fellow who was the lead author of the report. The Hindu Kush Himalaya stretches 3,500 km (2,175 miles) across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

BAMAKO (AFP) -- Mali's ruling junta has asked prosecutors to probe the UN's peacekeeping mission for "espionage" following a report which said hundreds of people were massacred last year by Malian troops and their allies. In a statement published on social media on Tuesday, the public prosecutor's office said a unit specializing in "terrorism and transnational crime" had received a complaint from the state over members of the MINUSMA mission. MINUSMA's human rights division investigated events that unfolded in the central town of Moura between May 27-31, 2022. According to a report published last month by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), at least 500 people were executed by the Malian army and "foreign" fighters. The junta's complaint describes the MINUSMA members as "co-authors or accomplices in crimes, among others, of espionage, harming the morale of the army or air force, use of false documents and harming external state security," said the statement, which was dated Monday.

HELSINKI (AFP) -- Finland's parliament on Tuesday elected conservative Petteri Orpo as prime minister at the head of a four-party coalition including the far-right Finns Party which plans a major crackdown on immigration. Parliament voted in favor of Orpo, who won April elections and has been in thorny negotiations to build a coalition since then, by 107 in favor, 81 opposed and 11 absent. Orpo was to be formally appointed as prime minister later Tuesday by President Sauli Niinisto, taking over from Sanna Marin, whose Social Democrats finished third in the election behind Orpo's National Coalition Party (NCP) and the Finns Party. In addition to the NCP and the Finns Party, the new coalition is made up of the smaller Swedish People's Party (RKP) and the Christian Democrats.

South Korea to Drop 'Killer Questions' From Entrance Exam

SEOUL (AFP) -- South Korea will drop its notorious "killer questions" from so-called "killer questions" from its notoriously tough college entrance exam in a bid to reduce reliance on private cram schools, the education ministry said Tuesday.

More than half a million students sit the annual nine-hour test, known as "suneung", which plays a crucial role in deciding a student's college, career and even marriage prospects.

The inclusion of "killer questions", which cannot be answered by simply studying the curriculum taught at state schools, was meant to help distinguish top students.

But it has created an arms race of extra educational spending as parents and students flock to expensive private tutoring centers known as "hagwons" to get ahead.

"I will do everything I can in my capacity as the education minister... to exclude questions outside of the public education system to make the test a fair test," education minister Lee Ju-ho said Monday.

On Tuesday the education ministry told AFP it would press ahead with the reform, saying it "stood by" Lee's comment.

Previous efforts to change the system have flopped, including an attempt this year to remove "killer questions" from the mock exam.

The importance of the test is reflected in extraordinary measures that authorities take to prevent any disturbance, including suspending take-offs and landings at airports during the English listening test.

Enormous pressure placed on stu-

dents in South Korea's ultra-competitive education system has been blamed for teenage depression and suicide rates that are among the highest in the world.

Lee said officials should "reflect on themselves" for previously failing to address the test's difficulty, which he called the "driving force" behind explosive growth in private education.

While the government stood idly by, the pockets of cram schools "got fatter", he added.

South Korean households spent more than \$20 billion on private education for primary, middle and high-school students last year, according to Statistics Korea.

The figure translates to a monthly average spending of \$320 per student.