

Russia's Missile Attack on Odesa Kills At Least One, Damages Cathedral



A medical worker runs past a burning car after a Russian attack in Kiev, Ukraine.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – A Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian port city of Odesa has killed at least one person, wounded 19 and badly damaged an Orthodox cathedral, according to officials.

Oleg Kiper, the governor of Odesa, said on the Telegram messaging app that those wounded in Sunday's air attack included several children. "Odesa, another night attack of the monsters," he said.

"Fourteen people were hospitalized in the city's hospitals, three of them were children," he said.

The attack also destroyed six houses and apartment buildings, he added.

Russia has been pounding Odesa and other Ukrainian food export facilities nearly daily over the past week after it withdrew from a United Nations-brokered sea corridor agreement that allowed for the safe shipment of Ukrainian grain.

Ukraine's air force said on Telegram on Sunday that Russia launched high-precision Onyx missiles and sea-to-shore Kalibr cruise missiles on Odesa.

The city's military administration said air defense systems destroyed a "significant part" of the missiles, which they said included Iskander ballistic missiles.

A day earlier, Russia blamed the U.S. after an attack conducted by the Ukrainian military forces using Washington-supplied cluster munitions killed Russian military correspondent Rostislav Zhuravlev and injured several other journalists.

"Rostislav died as a result of Ukrainian armed forces strike with cluster munitions," the Russian Embassy in Washington said in a statement on Saturday.

The statement said civilians in residential areas had been targeted by Ukrainian forces, blaming

the U.S. for providing Kiev with the widely-banned cluster munitions.

"Ukrainian radicals use these shells to hit cities and villages of our country, destroying homes of civilians. Kiev receives such weapons from the United States," it added.

"American officials assured the world community that the Ukrainians would use these munitions 'selectively and carefully.' The nullity of these words is evident to everyone," the statement said.

It further said the use of the cluster bombs against civilians demonstrated that Washington is "losing control over its puppets."

Cluster shells, bombs, and munitions contain dozens of small bomblets that rain shrapnel over a wide area and are banned in most countries due to the potential danger they pose to civilians.

Putin Hosts Lukashenko

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Ukraine's counteroffensive "has failed" as he hosted Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, his close ally, for talks in St Petersburg on Sunday.

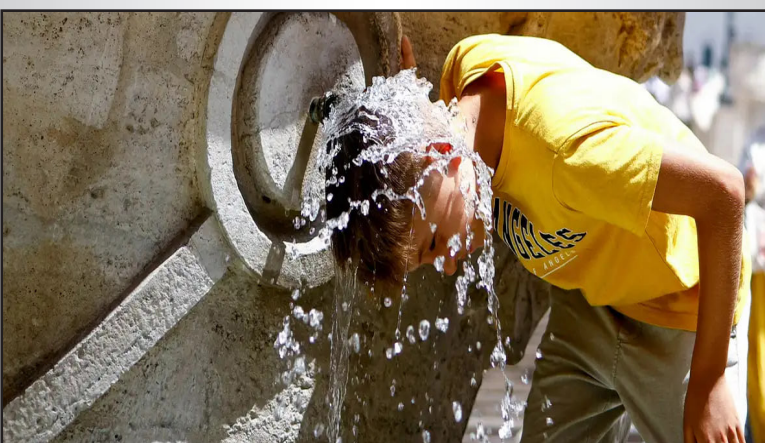
"There is no counteroffensive," Russian news agencies quoted Lukashenko as saying.

Putin replied: "It exists, but it has failed."

Ukraine began its long-anticipated counter-offensive last month but has so far made only small gains against well entrenched Russian forces who control more than a sixth of its territory after nearly 17 months of war.

U.S. General Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Tuesday the Ukrainian drive was "far from a failure" but would be long, hard and bloody.

July Expected to Be Even Hotter Record Temperatures Continue to Sizzle Across Globe



Global temperatures have been steadily rising decade-on-decade, throughout the last four decades.

PHOENIX (Dispatches) – A wave of heat is not loosening its grip on the globe.

Phoenix has broken its own streak of blistering hot days, while southern Europeans and millions of people on vacation there broiled under near-record temperatures, and parts of the Middle East tested the limits of what the human body is capable of enduring.

Parts of southern Europe have also gone up in flames, with wildfires raging in Greece that forced evacuations and highway closures this week. People returned to their homes on Tuesday when a fire finally receded, after they had spent the night on beaches, in hotels and in public facilities.

The heat is expected to worsen again over the next few days.

People around the world have been seeking shade and water for respite, including in Lebanon, Spain and Turkey, where even those used to high temperatures felt an unusually sweltering summer.

This June was the hottest on record, and July is expected to be even hotter. The world has been in uncharted hot territory for most of the month, according to the University of Maine's Climate Reanalyzer.

Climate change from the

burning of coal, oil and natural gas is causing the world to warm, with the Earth's average temperature about 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than pre-industrial times. That is causing more record-breaking heat and extreme weather events around the world.

Climate change has caused flash floods in different parts of the world as well.

A provincewide state of emergency was declared in the eastern Canadian province of Nova Scotia on Saturday in response to severe flooding, authorities said.

The Nova Scotia Government's Emergency Management Office said in a news release that the order is in place to protect the entire province as the storm progresses.

"This is a very serious event. This flooding has been fast and furious, and we are taking strong action to ensure Nova Scotians are protected," said John Lohr, minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office.

Some areas in the province received up to 300 mm of rain in less than 24 hours since Friday afternoon. According to Environment Canada, some areas could expect an additional 75 to 150 mm of rain.

Cuban President Denounces U.S. Embargo's Damage to Economy

HAVANA (Xinhua/Reuters) – Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has denounced the U.S. embargo's damage to the island's economy.

Addressing legislators at Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power in Havana, he said that the U.S. embargo is an external factor that harms the economic development of the Caribbean nation.

"This huge external factor gravitates against the country's development," he said, adding that capitalism has increased inequality and exclusion worldwide.

Diaz-Canel said that the U.S. economic war on Cuba, the global economic crisis, the slow pace of post-pandemic recovery and war conflicts negatively affect the economic recovery strategy of the island.

"The measures adopted, without meeting the expected results, reveal a slight recovery trend," he said.

He said the Cuban economy is projected to implement structural transformation and macro-economic stabilization programs over the next three years, which will benefit development funding in the mid-term.

Diaz-Canel said that foreign investment programs in energy, agriculture, and sugar industry

will be implemented in the year's second half.

Meanwhile, the country's Economy Minister Alejandro Gil said on Saturday Cuba's economic growth is less than 2% this year and remains 8 percentage points below pre-pandemic levels, while production in sectors such as agriculture, mining and manufacturing was further behind.

Speaking before the country's parliament, Gil said the primary sector, which includes agriculture, mining and other basic production, was down 34.9% compared with 2019, while manufacturing was off 20%. A third sector that includes services such as tourism, communications and education was down 4.9%.

Cuba, heavily dependent on food, fuel and other imports, largely blames U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic for more than a 50% decline in its export earnings, which are needed to purchase imports, while admitting that market-oriented reforms have moved too slowly in the Communist-run country.

Gil said export earnings so far this year were \$1.3 billion, 35.7% of what had been expected, while imports were \$4.4 billion, also well below the Cuban government's forecast.

60% of Americans Say Nation on 'Wrong Track', Economy 'Weak', Biden 'Mentally Unfit'

MOSCOW (RIA Novosti) – Well over half of Americans believe their country is heading in the wrong direction, and that President Joe Biden is unfit to serve, a fresh Harvard CAPS-Harris poll found.

61 percent told pollsters that the country is on the "wrong track" overall, with just 29 percent saying it's on the "right track". 62 percent agree that the nation's economy is also on the "wrong track", with 29 percent saying it is on the "right track". 61 percent of Americans believe the economy is "weak", compared with 39 percent who say it is "strong".

35 percent of respondents believe the U.S. is already in a recession, with 39 percent expecting it to be in a recession a year from now, and 27 percent expressing confidence that the country can avoid a recession.

The poll also found that 44 percent of Americans continue to either "strongly approve" or "somewhat approve" of Joe Biden's job as president, while 55 percent expressed disapproval.

34 percent listed price increases and inflation as the number one issue facing the country, with the economy/jobs

(26 percent), immigration (24 percent), guns (21 percent) and crime/drugs (17 percent) rounding out the top five, respectively. Between 53 and 58 percent of respondents said the Biden administration has spent too much and increased the deficit too much, respectively, with 60 percent saying they are "not confident" in President Biden's ability to handle the nation's economic problems.

59 percent of Americans also said they "have doubts" about President Biden's mental fitness for the presidency, with 41 percent saying he is "mentally fit". A whopping 68 percent agreed that he "too old", with 32 percent saying he remains "fit" for the office.

54 percent expect former President Donald Trump to win the Republican primaries. On the Democratic side, 62 percent of respondents said they would pick Biden, with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. polling second at 16 percent. If Biden were to drop out, 44 percent said they would vote for Kamala Harris, and 22 percent for RFK Jr.

If Biden and Trump had a rematch of 2020 today, 45 percent of voters said they would pick Trump, with 40 percent

picking Biden. If Harris ran in Biden's place, Trump would win 47 percent, and Harris 38 percent.

64 percent of respondents said Biden should not run for a second term, with 57 percent saying the same about Trump. 57 percent said they would "consider an independent moderate candidate" if the choice in the election comes down to Biden and Trump.

Asked about Trump's potential third indictment, this time related to his actions/inaction on January 6, 49 percent of those polled said they believe the president was "personally responsible" for the violence, while 51 percent said the storming of the Capitol was the "act of an unruly mob". 53 percent said his calls on supporters to go to the Capitol to demonstrate peacefully were protected by the 1st Amendment, while 47 percent said he "committed a crime".

56 percent expect another indictment to hurt Trump, but also agreed with the sentiment that it would be a "distraction" that "adds more drama to the 2024 election". The same 56 percent say Trump would likely be acquitted if tried.

Europe Scrambles to Curb Flow of Migrants

ROME (AFP) – Italy hosted numerous national leaders in Rome on Sunday, at a conference aimed at extending an EU-backed deal with Tunisia to curb the arrival of migrants to European shores.

As presidents, premiers and ministers prepared to huddle for the talks, Pope Francis appealed to them to help the scores of people who try to enter Europe each year in search of a better life as they flee poverty and conflict.

"The Mediterranean can no longer be the theatre of death and inhumanity", the pontiff said during his weekly Angelus prayer.

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni opened the talks shortly after 1100 GMT and was expected to hold a press conference after 1700 GMT, following the closed-door talks.

Meloni said talks would focus on illegal and legal immigration, refugee support and "the most important... wide cooperation to support development in Africa".

During the 2022 election campaign that brought her to power, the far-right Meloni vowed to "stop the disembarkment" of migrants in Italy, which the government puts at nearly 80,000 coastal arrivals since January, compared to 33,000 in the same period last year.

But while the government has put obstacles in the path of humanitarian ships rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, it has failed to stop the departures themselves, which mostly originate in Tunisia and Libya.

Italy and the European Commission have sought to step up engagement with Tunisia,



Italy's far-right government has vowed to crack down on boat migrants.

providing funding if it stems emigration from its territory.

Meloni has also sought to act as an intermediary between Tunisia – cash-strapped and on the cusp of a major debt crisis – and the International Monetary Fund, where a nearly \$2 billion bailout package for the North African country has stalled amid an IMF demand for structural reforms.

Last week, the EU signed a memorandum of understanding with Tunisia that provides for 105 million euros (\$117 million) in direct European aid to prevent the departure of migrant boats and combat smugglers.

The deal also provides for more illegal Tunisians to be repatriated, and for sub-Saharan

African migrants in Tunisia to be sent back to their countries of origin.

A much larger EU package to Tunisia, a long-term loan of around 900 million euros proposed by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in June, is conditional on approval of the IMF loan.

A senior European diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity confirmed that the EU is hoping for similar partnerships with Egypt and Morocco.

According to the UN, more than 100,000 migrants arrived by sea to Europe -- most to Italy -- in the first six months of 2023, from the coasts of North Africa, Turkey and Lebanon.

News in Brief

ATHENS (Reuters) – Nine people were killed and injured following a bridge collapse in Patras, Greece. Part of a bridge collapsed on Sunday along a ring road in Patras, Greece's third-largest city, killing one person and injuring eight, the fire brigade said. Fire brigade rescuers were on the scene to pull out any people trapped, fire brigade spokesman Ioannis Artopoios said. Part of the bridge was reduced to a mass of broken concrete slabs and iron rods and dozens of rescuers were working at the spot, footage from Greek media showed. Another fire brigade official said that the bridge had been closed last week due to reconstruction works.

MADRID (Xinhua) – Voters went to the polls in Spain on Sunday for a snap general election, and 37.4 million Spaniards were eligible to vote. The snap election was called by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez following the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party's (PSOE) disappointing display in the local and regional elections held at the end of May. Polls opened at 09:00 local time and remained open until 20:00 local time. The latest opinion polls gave a slim margin of victory to the right-wing People's Party (PP) who could possibly form a coalition government with the far-right Vox party. In his speech at the PSOE's end of campaign rally on Friday, Sanchez said the party was "coming back" into the race, stressing the possibility of victory to allow the PSOE to continue its progressive policies together with the left-wing Sumar coalition. Sanchez cast his vote in Madrid, less than 10 minutes after the polls opened and made a call for "all I can do is ask the biggest possible mobilization of voters, to give Spain a strong government that can continue to advance." "The general elections are not only important for us, but also for the world and Europe," said Sanchez.

KINSHASA (Reuters) – At least 13 people were killed when a soldier in the east Democratic Republic of Congo opened fire on people gathered to mourn his deceased child on Saturday night, the army and a local official said on Sunday. The shooting occurred in the village of Nyakova on the banks of Lake Albert in Congo's eastern Ituri province. "The soldier opened fire on all those around him. A dozen people died," Ituri army spokesman Jules Ngongo said via telephone. Search teams are looking for the soldier, a member of Congo's navy, and an investigation into the incident has been opened, he said. Village chief Oscar Baraka Muguwa said 13 people were killed, including nine children. It was unclear what led the soldier to begin shooting. According to Muguwa, the soldier was concerned his child would be buried without him there.

SYDNEY (Xinhua) – Police in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) announced that three people were injured in a public place shooting in Greenacre, a suburb in Southwestern Sydney, on Sunday morning. A man, aged 25, was found injured in one parked vehicle, as well as a man, aged 22, and a woman, aged 19, in a separate parked vehicle. All three people had been taken to hospital. Among them, the two men were in critical condition, according to the police. Detective Superintendent Simon Glasser told local media that the investigation is in its infancy, but the police believe it is a targeted attack.

PHNOM PENH (AP) – The party of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen declared a landslide victory in a general election on Sunday, a vote that critics widely dismissed as a sham aimed at cementing the party's rule before an expected transfer of power to his eldest son. The contest was effectively a one-horse race, with Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP), a political behemoth with a vast war chest, facing no viable opponent. Polls closed with a turnout of 84% according to the election committee, with 8.1 million people voting in a much-criticized contest between CPP and 17 mostly obscure parties, none of which won seats in the last election in 2018. The only opponent with any real clout was disqualified from running. "We've won in a landslide ... but we can't calculate the number of seats yet," said CPP spokesperson Sok Eysan.

TOKYO (Reuters) – Top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi proposed high-level talks between China, Japan and South Korea in a meeting with the Japanese foreign minister in Indonesia this month, Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday. The proposal is seen as signaling a willingness to resume talks among the three countries and Japan would accelerate preparations to make it happen by the end of the year. Kyodo reported, citing unidentified diplomatic sources. U.S. allies Japan and South Korea are wary of China's increasing military assertiveness and of growing tensions between China and the U.S. over a range of issues including trade and Taiwan. China's foreign ministry did not immediately comment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo could not be reached for comment on Sunday, outside business hours. Wang and Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi met on the sidelines of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meeting in Indonesia on July 14.