

Putin: Western Weapons for Ukraine Ending Up in Militants' Hands



Ukrainian soldiers load a truck with a U.S.-made FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missile on its delivery at Kiev's Boryspil Airport on Feb. 11, 2022.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russian President Vladimir Putin says that some Western weapons supplied to Ukraine were finding their way to West Asia through the illegal arms market and being sold to the Taliban. “Now they say: weapons are getting into the Middle East from Ukraine. Well of course they are because they are being sold,” Putin said. “And they are being sold to the Taliban and from there they go onto wherever.” Since Russia sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 last year, Western powers have sent Ukraine tens of billions of dollars worth of weapons in an attempt to defeat Russian troops. Ukraine says it keeps tight control over any weapons supplied to it, but some Western security officials have raised concerns and the United States

has asked Ukraine to do more to tackle the broader issue of corruption. In June 2022, the head of Interpol, Jürgen Stock, warned that some of the advanced weapons sent to Ukraine would end up in the hands of organized crime groups. A report about the Ukraine war and the illegal arms trade by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime said in March that there was “currently no substantial outflow of weapons from the Ukrainian conflict zone. “However, every precedent suggests that, especially if the threat is not addressed proactively and imaginatively, when the current war ends, Ukraine’s battlefields could and will become the new arsenal of anarchy, arming everyone from insurgents in Africa to

gangsters in the streets of Europe,” the report said. Since Russia launched its campaign in eastern Ukraine in February 2022 to stop Kiev’s persecution of its population, while preventing NATO’s eastward encroachment, the US-led Western countries have supplied Kiev with numerous shipments of weapons and munitions worth more than \$100bn. In this regard, the United States announced its latest \$425mn package of weapons and munitions for Kiev’s forces on Friday. The eight biggest Western donors to Ukraine led by the United States have made military commitments to Ukraine totaling at least 84 billion euros (\$90 billion), according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, which tracks donors. U.S. military support includes 160 155mm howitzers, 109 Bradley fighting vehicles, more than 111 million rounds of small arms ammunition and 38 high mobility artillery rocket systems. To date the United States and its allies have provided Ukraine with over 100 million rounds of a small arms ammunition, over a million rounds of artillery shells, and over 100,000 tank rounds. This is in addition to providing Ukraine with some of the most advanced weapons in the U.S. arsenal, including the Armored Gun, the Patriot anti aircraft systems, the HARM anti radar missile, and Harpoon anti ship missile.

Nepal Scrambles to Rescue Survivors of Quake, Dozens Killed



An earthquake-affected area in northwestern Nepal, Saturday, November 4, 2023

KATHMANDU (AP) – At least 157 people were killed in an overnight earthquake that struck a remote pocket of Nepal, officials said Saturday, as security forces rushed to assist with rescue efforts. The 5.6-magnitude quake hit the far west of the Himalayan country late Friday and was measured by the U.S. Geological Survey at just 18 kilometers (11 miles) deep. Videos and photos posted on social media showed locals digging through rubble in the dark to pull survivors from the wreckage of collapsed homes and buildings. Mud houses were flattened or damaged as survivors crouched outside for safety, the sirens of emergency vehicles wailing. The quake was felt as far away as India’s capital New Delhi, nearly 500 km from the epicenter, 42 km south of Jumla. “Ninety-two people died in Jajarkot and 40 in Rukum,” home ministry spokesman Narayan Prasad Bhattarai told AFP, referring to the two districts hit worst by the quake. National police spokesman Kuber Kathayat said that authorities had tallied more than 100 others injured across both districts. Security forces have been deployed to assist with search and

rescue operations, Karnali Province police spokesman Gopal Chandra Bhattarai told AFP. “The remoteness of the districts makes it difficult for information to get through,” he added. “Some roads had been blocked by damage, but we are trying to reach the area through alternate routes.” The district hospital was packed with residents bringing in injured victims. Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal arrived at the site of the quake on Saturday after expressing “his deep sorrow over the human and physical damage caused by the earthquake”. In neighboring India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was “deeply saddened” by the loss of lives. Nepal lies on a major geological faultline where the Indian tectonic plate pushes up into the Eurasian plate, forming the Himalayas, and earthquakes are a regular occurrence. Nearly 9,000 people died and more than 22,000 were injured in 2015 when a 7.8-magnitude quake struck Nepal, destroying more than half a million homes. It damaged or destroyed nearly 8,000 schools, leaving almost one million children without classrooms.

News in Brief

OHIO (CBS News) – One person was killed and five others were wounded in a shooting in Cincinnati, U.S. State of Ohio, on Friday night, authorities said. In a news briefing, Cincinnati Police Chief Teresa Theetge said the incident occurred a little before 9:30 p.m. local time on a street in the city’s West End neighborhood, located near downtown. Theetge said officers arrived to find one person, a male, dead at the scene. Five others were rushed to local hospitals. Their conditions were not confirmed. Some of the victims were juveniles, Theetge disclosed. The deceased victim was not immediately identified. “This is absolutely unacceptable in our city, unacceptable, that on a Friday night, six people were shot in one incident,” the police chief said.

ISLAMABAD (AP) – A number of militants have briefly stormed an air base in central Pakistan, damaging aircraft, a day after gunmen killed more than a dozen soldiers in the country’s restive southwest. On Saturday morning, at least nine militants attacked the Pakistan Air Force Training Airbase Mianwali, in the central-eastern province of Punjab, damaging three “non-operational” aircraft, the Pakistani army said in a statement. It added that security forces killed all militants, three of them before entering the base while the rest had been cornered before the clearance operation began. “No damage has been done to any of the Pakistan Air Force’s functional operational assets, while only some damage was done to three already phased-out non-operational aircraft during the attack,” it said. In an earlier statement, the military had said that “a fuel bowser” had also been damaged in the attack. “Due to the swift and effective response by the troops, (the attack) has been foiled and thwarted, ensuring the safety and security of personnel and assets,” the statement further noted. The Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), a newly-emerged militant group that is an affiliate of the home-grown Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) movement, has claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement to the media.

MADRID (Reuters) – More than 500 migrants were rescued in the Atlantic Ocean off Spain’s Canary Islands, the Spanish coastguard said on Saturday, as the number of people arriving on the archipelago so far this year neared an all-time record posted in 2006. The coastguard said they had also found two dead bodies among those rescued from four boats in the waters off El Hierro, the smallest and most westerly of the Canary Islands. Two other people died later in hospital, said the Spanish Civil Guard, which also took part in the rescue in which women and children were among those saved. The number of arrivals has recently jumped as milder weather and calmer seas since September have made it more feasible to attempt the still perilous crossing from Africa. Spain’s Interior Ministry said on Thursday that a total of 30,705 undocumented migrants had reached the Canary Islands in the first 10 months of this year, representing a 111% increase from the same period in 2022.

TOKYO (Reuters) – Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Saturday his country, the Philippines and the United States were cooperating to “protect the freedom” of the South China Sea as he committed to help enhance Manila’s security capabilities. “In the South China Sea, trilateral cooperation to protect the freedom of the sea is under way,” Kishida, on an official visit, said in an address before the Philippine congress in the capital Manila, reported. Kishida and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr agreed on Friday to start negotiations on a reciprocal troop access deal to strengthen military cooperation as China becomes increasingly assertive in the region. The Philippines and Japan, two of the United States’ closest Asian allies, have taken a strong line against what they see as “aggressive” behavior by Chinese vessels amid decades-old disputes over maritime sovereignty. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, including parts of the exclusive economic zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

AYOLAS, Paraguay (AFP) – Three people have died and thousands have had to leave their homes due to heavy rains and flooding in southern South America this week, according to officials who pointed to the El Niño weather phenomenon. All three deaths – of two elderly people aged 70 and 84 and an 11-year-old girl – were reported due to collapsed homes in two towns in Paraguay, which has been battered by downpours accompanied by tornadoes and rainstorms. “We are doing our best to reach families in need. We have reports of major damage in about 40 locations,” the head of the national emergency office Arsenio Zarate said Friday. Some 30,000 people in Paraguay have been affected by storms, he added, with more than 600 families evacuated in Ayolas on the banks of the Parana River. “We can say that El Niño has arrived in Paraguay and will probably remain until the first three months of 2024,” meteorologist Eduardo Mingo told AFP. El Niño is typically associated with warming ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

Striking Bangladesh Garment Workers Clash With Police as Factories Reopen

DHAKA (AFP) – Striking Bangladesh garment workers clashed with police on Saturday near the capital as factories reopened in defiance of a protest campaign demanding a near-tripling of wages. Bangladesh’s 3,500 garment factories account for around 85 percent of the South Asian country’s \$55 billion annual exports, supplying many of the world’s top names in fashion including Levi’s, Zara and H&M. But conditions are dire for many of the sector’s four million workers, the vast majority of whom are women whose monthly wages start at 8,300 taka (\$75). Police said some 600 businesses shuttered over the week had reopened in areas worst-hit by the strike, which saw some factories ransacked and set alight. But clashes broke out in the industrial town of Ashulia, west of the capital Dhaka, after around 10,000 workers attempted to prevent their colleagues from returning to their shifts. “They hurled stones and bricks at officers and factories and tried to block roads,” Ashulia police chief Mohammad Sarwar Alam told AFP. “We dispersed them by firing



Bangladesh police fire tear gas to disperse striking garment workers in Ashulia who are demanding a near-tripling of their wages to about \$209 a month.

tear gas,” he said, adding that 1,500 security forces personnel had been deployed there and in nearby Savar to keep order. Workers also returned to their shifts after a week of violent protests in Gazipur, an industrial neighborhood on Dhaka’s northern outskirts, local police chief Sarwar Alam told AFP. Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation president Kalpona Akter told AFP Friday that the weeklong protests had disrupted production for some of the world’s

top fashion brands. Garment workers say that a sharp increase in living costs has left them struggling to provide for their families. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), which represents factory owners, has offered workers a 25 percent pay raise. That is significantly short of the 23,000 taka (\$209) monthly wage that the protest campaign has called for.

Australian PM ‘Pleased to Be in Shanghai’ on Landmark Visit

SHANGHAI (AFP) – Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said that he was “pleased to be in Shanghai” on Saturday at the start of a landmark state visit to China, marking a long-awaited thaw in ties between Beijing and Canberra. It is the first such visit by an Australian leader in seven years as the two nations look to shore up their relationship after a diplomatic spat that affected billions of dollars in trade. “Pleased to be in Shanghai, marking the first visit to China by an Australian Prime Minister since 2016,” Albanese posted on X, formerly Twitter, along with photos of his arrival late Saturday. “I look forward to continuing the dialogue between our two countries over the coming days.” Albanese will spend four days in China, dividing his time between the eastern megacity of Shanghai and the capital Beijing. His administration has sought more amicable ties with Australia’s biggest trading partner while also pushing back against Beijing’s growing influence in the Pacific. China’s foreign ministry has said that Albanese would meet Chinese leaders and “have an in-depth exchange of views on international and regional issues of common concern”. “China is willing to work with

Australia to take this visit as an opportunity to strengthen communication, increase mutual trust, broaden cooperation, deepen friendship and push for the continued improvement... of bilateral relations,” ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a news briefing. “A healthy and stable China-Australia relationship accords with the fundamental interests of both countries and peoples,” he added. The bonhomie contrasts with the picture three years ago, when bilateral ties were in a deep freeze. China slapped punitive tariffs on a range of Australian commodities in 2020 after Canberra’s then-conservative government barred tech giant Huawei from 5G contracts and called for an investigation into the origins of Covid-19. But under Albanese’s liberal administration, those tariffs have been lifted, and Beijing has also indicated it will abolish similar penalties on Australia. “China-Australia relations are now at a crucial juncture of setting off and sailing off again,” China’s ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian wrote in an opinion piece ahead of Albanese’s trip. The ambassador hailed the return of Australian coal, timber and barley exports to the Chinese market through “the relentless efforts of both sides”.

Heavy Gunfire in Guinea Capital, Borders Sealed

CONAKRY (AFP/AP) – Heavy fire erupted on Saturday in the center of the Guinean capital Conakry and security forces blocked off the area, witnesses told AFP. The reason for the sustained weapons fire was unclear in this West African country, led since September 2021 by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya who took power in a coup after 11 years of civilian rule. “There is gunfire from both automatic and weapons of war in Kaloum,” the political and administrative heart of the seaside city, a witness from the area said, speaking on condition of anonymity. “The city center has been sealed since dawn, we can neither enter, nor leave,” a shopkeeper added, also speaking on condition of anonymity. “I wanted to go to the port area where I work but was prevented from leaving (Kaloum), where armored vehicles have been deployed”. Several witnesses said the roads were empty and armored vehicles stationed in several points. Kaloum is located on a peninsula and houses the presidency and several top government and administrative offices as well as the military headquarters and the main prison. Several witnesses said the firing took place near the jail and the 8 Novembre bridge -- the sole access route to the city center.

Gunmen stormed the main prison in Guinea’s capital early Saturday and freed former dictator Moussa “Dadis” Camara, the country’s justice minister said, announcing the closure of the West African nation’s borders. The announcement by Justice Minister Charles Alphonse Wright came several hours after heavy gunfire erupted in the Kaloum district of the capital, Conakry. Among the others who escaped were Claude Pivi and Blaise Goumou, Wright said. “We will find them. And those responsible will be held accountable,” Wright told local Radio Fim FM. An airport source said no flights had taken off from Conakry’s international airport on Saturday morning as air traffic staff could not get to the airport from Kaloum. The coastal country in West Africa is among several countries to have seen coups since 2020, along with Mali, Burkina Faso and this year, Niger and Gabon. In September 2021, and after 11 years of civilian rule, Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, the head of Guinea’s junta assumed power through a coup. Kaloum is where the former head of the 2008 military junta, Moussa Dadis Camara, is behind bars along with other soldiers. Unconfirmed reports said that the shooting was linked to an armed attempt to break Camara and others out of prison.