

Russian Forces Strike Western Weapon Depots in Ukraine



Ukrainian troops open fire in the Donbas, an eastern region of Ukraine, on May 15.

KYIV (Dispatches) – Russian forces struck Western weapon depots in Ukraine, the Russian Defense Ministry said. Russian forces delivered a massive strike at Ukrainian power facilities in response to Kyiv's attempts to damage Russian energy infrastructure, the Russian Defense Ministry said. "Also, Western weapon depots [in Ukraine] were hit," the ministry said in a report, TASS reported. Russian air defense forces also downed 62 Ukrainian drones, 14 HIMARS rockets and three Hammer bombs in the past day, it added. "Air defense systems downed 62 unmanned aerial vehicles, 14 US-supplied HIMARS multiple launch rockets and three French-made Hammer guided aerial bombs over the

past day," the ministry specified. Ukrainian officials also said on Saturday that Russia fired a combined 100 missiles and drones at targeted energy sites across the country. Russia has launched hundreds of aerial attacks at Ukraine's power facilities throughout the two-year war, causing significant damage and energy shortages as Ukraine's stretched air defenses struggle to repel the waves of drones and missiles. "The enemy launched 53 missiles of various types and 47 attack drones," the air force said, adding that it shot down 35 of the missiles and all but one of the drones. Two thermal power plants were damaged in the attack, the DTEK op-

erator said, without specifying where they were located. "It was another extremely difficult night for the Ukrainian energy sector. The enemy struck two of our thermal power plants. The equipment was seriously damaged," the company said in a statement on Telegram. It was the sixth major attack on DTEK thermal power plants since mid-March, it added. Ukraine's Energy Minister German Galushchenko said Russia had targeted sites in five regions — Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kirovograd, Ivano-Frankivsk and Zaporizhzhia — stretching from near the eastern frontlines to Ukraine's west, which borders the EU. The ministry warned that power restrictions were likely on Saturday evening as a result of the attacks. President Volodymyr Zelensky said Moscow was trying to "exploit" a lack of "determination" among Ukraine's key Western backers and repeated his call for more air defense systems. The latest missile and drone operation came a day after the U.S. announced the easing of a ban on Ukraine using its weapons inside Russian territory to help the country defend its northeastern Kharkiv region from attacks. The move came as France and other European countries also indicated that Ukraine would be allowed to use their weapons on military targets inside Russia.

China: U.S. Seeks to Establish Asian NATO to Build Hegemony



U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin speaks during the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on Saturday.

BEIJING (Dispatches) – A Chinese defense official has warned the United States against its years-long efforts to build an Asia-Pacific version of NATO to establish global hegemony. China's People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s Jing Jianfeng said Saturday the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is to build "an Asia-Pacific version of NATO." Jing, who is deputy chief of the Joint Staff Department of China's Central Military Commission, described U.S. efforts as the "greatest challenge to regional peace and stability." He said to establish U.S. global hegemony, the Americans would make every effort "to create division, provoke confrontation and undermine stability." Jing pointed out that Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy, devised to serve America's "selfish" interests, is now outdated and fails to take into account the stability and aspirations of regional countries. "It only serves the selfish geopolitical interests of the US and runs counter to the trend of history and the shared aspirations of regional countries for peace, development and win-win cooperation," Jing

said. Meanwhile, United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a gathering of top security officials Saturday that war with China was neither imminent nor unavoidable, despite rapidly escalating tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, stressing the importance of renewed dialogue between him and his Chinese counterpart in avoiding "miscalculations and misunderstandings." Austin's comments at the Shangri-La defense forum in Singapore came the day after he met for more than an hour on the sidelines with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun, the first in-person meeting between the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing. Neither side budged from their longstanding positions on Taiwan — which China claims as its own and has not ruled out using force to take — and on China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea, which has led to direct confrontations between China and other nations in the region, most notably the Philippines.

News in Brief

TOKYO (TASS) – The European Union does not have evidence of Chinese weapons supplies to Russia, the bloc's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said at a forum in Singapore. "China has committed not to supply arms [to Russia] and we don't have evidence that this is happening," he said, taking questions from participants in the Shangri-La Dialogue forum. "But there is not a clear border between arms and non-arms because there are things which can be dual-use," he added. However, Borrell alleged that components made in Western countries, including the United States, Europe, and Great Britain, may be used in the production of Russian military equipment. "But the problem is not only China," he explained. Beijing noted earlier that Washington's shifting the blame for igniting the Ukraine conflict will not resolve the current crisis. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Wang Wenbin has refuted accusations that China has been supplying weapons to Russia. "China has always handled the export of military products in a prudent and responsible way, and strictly controls the export of dual-use articles," he emphasized.

SEOUL (AFP) – North Korea again sent trash-carrying balloons into the South on Saturday, the South Korean military said, a day after Seoul warned of countermeasures against such activity. Earlier this week, North Korea sent around 260 balloons carrying bags of trash, including waste batteries, cigarette butts and what appeared to be manure, according to the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff. Authorities in Seoul condemned that act as "low-class," and the South Korean unification ministry warned Friday that the government would take countermeasures if Pyongyang did not cease such provocations. North Korea is "once again floating balloons carrying waste toward the South," the JCS said in a text message to reporters. Pyongyang defended its release of the balloons earlier this week, saying the "sincere gifts" were retaliation for the balloons sent into North Korea with propaganda against leader Kim Jong Un. North Korea has long been infuriated by the balloons sent by South Korean activists, which carry anti-Pyongyang leaflets. Sometimes, they have also sent cash, rice or USB thumb drives with South Korean drama series.

NEW YORK (AP) – Donald Trump sought to move past his historic criminal conviction on Friday and build momentum for his bid to return to the White House with fierce attacks on the judge who oversaw the case, the prosecution's star witness and the criminal justice system as a whole. Speaking from his namesake tower in Manhattan in a symbolic return to the campaign trail, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee delivered a message aimed squarely at his most loyal supporters. Defiant as ever, he insisted without evidence that the verdict was "rigged" and driven by politics. "We're going to fight," Trump said from the atrium of Trump Tower, where he descended a golden escalator to announce his 2016 campaign nine years ago next month. The machinations during the final, dramatic weeks of that campaign ultimately led to the charges that made Trump the first former president and presumptive presidential nominee of a major party to be convicted of a crime, exposing him to potential prison time.

JAKARTA (Reuters) – A volcano in Indonesia's eastern island of Halmahera erupted on Saturday spewing a five-kilometer high ash cloud, the country's volcanology agency (PVMBG) said, while its disaster agency warned of potential flash floods and cold lava flow. The eruption of Mount Ibu at 11:03 a.m. (0203 GMT) follows a series of eruptions in May, after authorities noticed an uptick of volcanic activity starting in April, leading to the evacuation of seven nearby villages. "The ash column is grey with thick intensity and leaning toward the southwest," the agency said, adding that residents and tourists should maintain a distance of at least 7 km from the active crater. Footage shared by the agency showed the volcano spewing ash that grew thicker and eventually dispersed. Indonesia's disaster management agency BNPB told local authorities to anticipate secondary disasters such as flash floods and cold lava flow. Analysts by the nation's meteorology agency shows the region has the potential for moderate to heavy rain, although it did not say when.

SAN SALVADOR (Reuters) – El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele was set to be inaugurated for a second term on Saturday, as his sky-high approval rating for a fierce crackdown on crime faces fresh challenges to rejuvenate a stagnant economy and tackle poverty in the Central American country. The 42-year-old former nightclub manager, reelected in a landslide victory with more than 80% of the vote in February, will be sworn in for another five years following a court decision that paved the way for his re-election even though the country's constitution prohibits it. The swearing-in ceremony in the capital San Salvador took place amid security concerns after police said they had thwarted a bomb threat. Seven people were arrested for plotting to detonate explosives at locations across the country, police said on Thursday adding that the suspects were part of the so-called Salvadoran Insurrection Brigade.

Thousands Rally to Back Hungary's Orban Ahead of EU Vote

BUDAPEST (Reuters) – Tens of thousands of Hungarians marched through downtown Budapest on Saturday in support of nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who faces an unexpected challenge from a political newcomer ahead of next week's European Parliament election. Orban, in power since 2010, hopes his Fidesz party, which is not affiliated with any grouping in the European Parliament (EP), will benefit from a rise in far-right support across Europe as he prepares to take over the European Union's rotating presidency in the second half of the year.



Supporters of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban march in Budapest.

Orban has long been at odds with fellow EU members over a range of issues, including refusing to send weapons to Ukraine and maintaining economic ties with Moscow after Russian forces launched a war on Ukraine in 2022. The flag-waving crowd, chanting "Hungary-Hungary" and holding banners saying "Give us peace, Lord", marched from Budapest's Chain Bridge alongside the parliament building to Margaret Island, where Orban addressed supporters. "Never before have so many people lined up for peace. We are the biggest peace corps, the largest peacekeeping force in Europe," Orban said. "Europe must be prevented from rushing into war, into its own destruction. Europe today is preparing for war,

with daily announcements of the handing over of a new section of the road to hell," he added. "We are fighting for peace," said Zoltán, 62, who took part in the march. "We have to turn the European Union in a different direction to avoid war ... The rhetoric coming from the direction of France, the United Kingdom and Germany clearly wants war, with the help of the U.S." Midway through his fourth successive term in power, Orban has struggled to contain the fallout from a scandal that brought down two of his key political allies, former President Katalin Novak and former Justice Minister Judit Varga. Since then, Fidesz has been in damage

control mode, while fending off Peter Magyar, a former government insider, who launched a political movement after delivering incendiary comments about the inner workings of Orban's government. "The results of the EP and local elections on June 9 will reveal how big Orban's domestic political challenges are and whether Magyar poses a greater threat to Fidesz or other opposition parties," said Andrius Tursa at think tank Tenet. "A disappointing performance by Fidesz would likely force Orban to rethink electoral strategy ahead of the 2026 parliamentary vote."

India PM Projected Winner as Voting Ends in Marathon Election

NEW DELHI (Reuters/AFP) – Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance is projected to win a majority in the general election that concluded on Saturday, an exit poll summary by the NDTV news channel said. The summary of two exit polls projected the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) could win more than 350 seats in the 543-member lower house of parliament, where 272 is needed for a simple majority. The NDA won 353 in the 2019 election. The opposition INDIA alliance led by the Congress party was projected to win more than 120 seats. Exit polls have a patchy record in India as they have often got election outcomes wrong, with analysts saying it is a challenge to get them right in the large and diverse country. Nearly one billion people were eli-

gible to vote in the seven-phase election that began on April 19 and was held in scorching summer heat in many parts. The Election Commission will count votes polled in electronic voting machines on June 4 and results are expected the same day. A victory for Modi, 73, will make him only the second prime minister after independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru to win three consecutive terms. India's grueling heatwave is set to abate soon but that was no consolation to housewife Bindwasini Devi, one of the millions braving Saturday's scorching sun to vote in the final day of national elections. Crowds lined up early outside polling booths to beat the heat in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi, where a week of unbearable temperatures has brought daily life to a standstill.

With temperatures peaking at 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) in the afternoon, many were keen to dispense with their democratic duty as soon as possible and return home to bunker down until the heat recedes. "It made a lot more sense to be out before the sun gets stronger," Devi, 42, told AFP on Saturday, a booth in her neighborhood soon after polls opened, admitting even at that early hour that the heat was taking a toll. "The last few days have been very tough and we've tried to stay hydrated and avoided going out as much as possible." Even in the morning hours, polling officials and voters alike had faces coated in a sheen of sweat. Many queuing up grumbled among themselves over long wait times outdoors and in corridors without overhead fans or air conditioning.

South Africa Election Ends Three Decades of ANC Dominance

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) – South Africans have slashed support for the African National Congress (ANC) to 40% in this week's election, ending three decades of dominance by the party that freed the country from apartheid. A dramatically weakened mandate for the legacy party of Nelson Mandela, down from the 57.5% it got in the previous 2019 parliamentary election, means the ANC must share power with a rival in order to keep it - an unprecedented prospect. "We can talk to everybody and anybody," Gwede Mantashe, the ANC chair and current mines and energy minister, told reporters in comments carried by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), dodging a question about who the party was discussing a possible coalition deal with. Vote tallying from Wednesday's poll was entering its final stages on Saturday, with results from 99.53% of polling stations giving the ANC 40.21%. The main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), had 21.80%, uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK), a new party led by former president Jacob Zuma, managed to grab 14.60%, while the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, got 9.48%. "We have achieved our mission: ... to bring the ANC below 50%. We want to humble the ANC," Malema told journalists at the results centre. "We are going to negotiate with the ANC" for a possible coalition deal,

he said, although that would not be quite enough to clinch a majority without including another party on the current count. The ANC has won every previous national election by a landslide since the historic 1994 vote that ended white minority rule, but over the last decade its support has dwindled as the economy stagnated, unemployment rose and roads and power stations crumbled. MK's strong performance, especially in Zuma's home province of KwaZulu-Natal, is one of the main reasons the ANC failed to secure a majority. Analysts say one option for the ANC could be a "government of national unity" involving a broad spectrum of many parties, rather than a formal coalition between a few - an arrangement similar the one set up after 1994's historic all-race vote. Malema said the EFF was against that idea and preferred to be part of a coalition. Political parties' share of the vote determine their seats in the National Assembly, which elects the nation's president. Investors in Africa's most industrialized economy will hope the uncertain picture can quickly become clear and that the country avoids an extended period of wrangling if the main political players struggle to agree how they can cooperate. Some parties have questioned what they say are vote-counting inconsistencies that may lead to some results being contested.