

Putin: Russia Must Respond to U.S., Start INF Systems Production



A Russian military officer walks past the 9M729 land-based cruise missile on display in Kubinka outside Moscow, Russia, on Jan. 23, 2019.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russia must respond to the actions of the United States and it seems that it is necessary for the country to start the production of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) strike systems, Russian President Vladimir Putin says.

“We need to respond to this and make decisions about what we will have to do in this direction next. Apparently, we need to start manufacturing these systems and then, based on the actual situation, make decisions about where – if necessary to ensure our safety – to deploy them,” Putin said at an operational meeting with the permanent members of the Russian Security Council, Sputnik reported.

The United States not only produces INF, but also brings them to Europe, the president said.

“In 2019, we announced that we would not produce these missiles, and we would not deploy them until the United States deployed these systems in some region of the world. Today it is known that the United States not only produces these missile systems, but has already brought them to Europe for drills, to Denmark,” Putin added.

Currently it is unknown whether the U.S. removed the medium- and short-range missiles from Philippines, where they were previously delivered as part of drills, Putin said.

nik, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke on the developments regarding U.S. deploying ground-based intermediate and shorter-range missiles in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

“The implementation of U.S. plans to deploy ground-based INF missiles will not go unanswered by us. Specifically, in this scenario, the abandonment of unilateral self-imposed restrictions introduced by Russia after a U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty is inevitable,” the minister noted.

The INF treaty, signed between the Soviet Union and the U.S. in 1987, banned the countries from developing and possessing ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges from 500-5,500 kilometers.

In 2019, former U.S. president Donald Trump withdrew from the treaty. In early July 2019, Putin signed the law on the suspension of the treaty. The next month, it ceased to exist.

Putin also announced his plan to consider placing new nuclear missiles near NATO countries.

Earlier this month, Putin warned the West that Moscow could supply arms to other countries to strike Western targets in retaliation for allowing Ukraine to fire long-range missiles supplied by NATO countries’ military forces to hit targets inside Russia.

Rights Groups: France Far Right Fueling Racist Hatred

PARIS (AFP) – Human rights groups in France are sounding the alarm about the “liberation of racist hatred” in the country, which they attribute to gains made by the far right in recent elections.

The National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella emerged as the clear winner of the 9 June European elections in France, obtaining 31.37 percent of the votes. The party is also expected to lead in the snap legislative elections called by President Emmanuel Macron following his defeat.



A protester kicks back a tear gas canister fired by police during a demonstration against fascism and the National Rally party, in Lyon, France, June 16, 2024.

The RN, which has made the fight against immigration and “national preference” the primary focus of its platform, has drawn accusations of xenophobia and discrimination against minorities, particularly Muslims and people of African descent.

France is currently in a period of political turmoil, facing two major elections within a month and the prospect of its first far-right government since World War II’s Vichy regime. These events have brought the issue of racism sharply into focus once again.

This week, renowned journalists Karim Rissouli and Mohamed Bouhafsi revealed that they had been the targets of racist mail, whose authors stated that the “historically French people... are fed up to their back teeth of all these bicots [racist term used to refer to North African Arabs].”

In the Loiret department in central France, an investigation has been launched after following the airing of a segment on the popular TV programme Envoyé Spécial, where a couple of RN sympathizers made

“discriminatory remarks” towards their neighbor, a Black nursing assistant they told to “go to the kennel”.

In Nancy in the east, the public prosecutor’s office is investigating a poster of a far-right candidate with the slogan: “Let’s give white children a future.”

In Calais in the north, a key departure point for migrants heading to England, major French charity Secours Catholique has noted four hostile incidents since President Macron dissolved the National Assembly.

Migrants have reported being sprayed with bleach, targeted with water bombs filled with dirty water at bus stops or subjected to liquid being thrown at them in front of a day reception centre, according to AFP.

On social media, a xenophobic song called Je partirai pas (I will not leave) has gone viral, shared by far-right figures like former presidential

candidate Eric Zemmour.

“You will leave/ as you came, you will leave/ when Bardella [wins], you will return home/ ...,” the lyrics read.

SOS Racisme, one of the leading French associations fighting xenophobia, filed a complaint for “provocation of racial hatred”, while the International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism (Licra) reported the song to the courts. According to AFP, TikTok deleted the song from its platform on Thursday.

There has also been a noted increase in the influence of extreme right groups.

Media reports indicate that neo-Nazis and other ultra-right groups have grown increasingly violent, visible and armed in large cities like Montpellier or Lyon. They have targeted left-wing activists and chanted slogans like “Islam out of Europe”.

Poll: 60% of Voters Want Biden Replaced After Debate

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – A majority of voters — 60% — say President Joe Biden should “definitely” or “probably” be replaced as the Democratic candidate following his performance in Thursday’s debate, per a Morning Consult poll released to Axios Friday.

Findings from the poll of 2,068 respondents echoed whispers from Democrats about the prospect of replacing Biden as the Democratic presidential candidate.

Of Democratic voters, 21% say Biden should “definitely not” be replaced, and 20% say “probably not”.

When the survey asked respondents to choose between Biden and former President Donald Trump, 45% chose the president and 44% chose the former commander-in-chief.

The results were similar to those from a poll following Trump’s criminal conviction on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records linked to a \$130,000 hush money payment.

It shows “President Joe Biden has lost no immediate ground to Trump”, per Morning Consult’s findings.

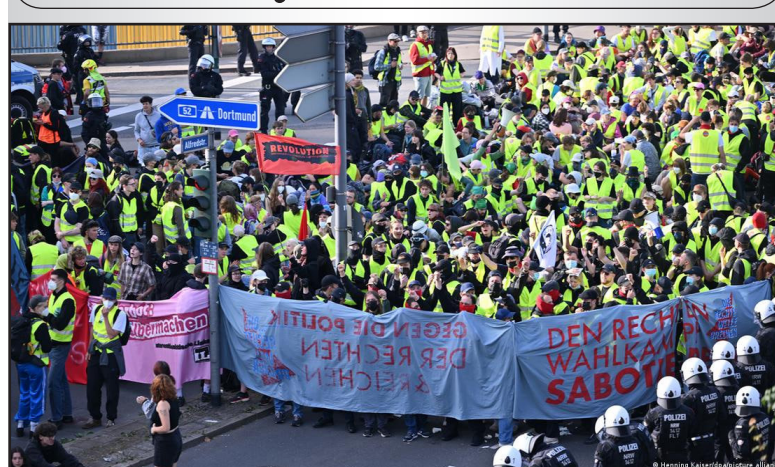
Still, most respondents—57%, of those who viewed the debate—said Trump outperformed Biden. That

includes 19% of Democrats, 60% of Independents and 93% of Republicans.

Biden campaign spokesperson Seth Schuster criticized the framing of the poll results, which still has Biden leading Trump by a point, and said “Joe Biden is not dropping out”.

The presidential debate turned intensely personal as Biden and Trump exchanged sharp barbs. The two candidates clashed on their records, with the economy, abortion, and immigration taking center stage, but it was the personal insults that dominated the headlines.

Protesters, Police Clash as Germany’s AfD Convenes



Tens of thousands of people took part in a protest against the far-right party/

BERLIN (AFP) – Large protests have been taking place as the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party opened its convention in the western city of Essen, with demonstrators attempting to block roads and clashing with police.

Police used pepper spray and batons on Saturday to push back protesters attempting to break through a cordon before the two-day event kicked off, a police spokesperson told the German news agency dpa.

Masked demonstrators attacked officers, according to police, who reported “several” arrests. About 1,000 police have been deployed in Essen.

“Several disruptive violent actions occurred ... demonstrators, some of them hooded, attacked security forces. Several arrests were made,” police in North Rhine-Westphalia state, where Essen is located, said on X.

Up to 100,000 protesters were expected to take part in counter-demonstrations and other events in Essen, dpa reported. The authorities have raised concerns that while most could be peaceful, about 1,000 leftists would

use violence to disrupt the congress.

Leftist groups warned of blockading entrances to the venue to prevent AfD delegates from entering.

Some 600 delegates were meeting, with the party’s current co-leaders Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla seeking reelection ahead of Germany’s parliamentary polls next year.

Weidel told delegates as she opened the meeting that “what is going on out there has nothing to do with democracy”, adding that “we are here and we will stay”.

“We have the right like all political parties – to hold a congress,” she added.

The AfD took 16 percent of the vote to finish second in the European Parliament elections earlier this month despite a series of scandals and setbacks.

The party was expelled from the Identity and Democracy (ID) Group in the European Parliament in May following comments by its lead candidate Maximilian Krah to an Italian newspaper that the members of the Nazi paramilitary SS force were “not all criminals”.

Belarus Deploys Additional Air Defense Systems on Ukraine Border

MINSK (Dispatches) – Belarus deployed additional air defense systems on the border with Ukraine to protect critical facilities of the republic amid Ukrainian drone activity, Belarusian military official Andrei Severinichik said on Saturday.

“The system of visual observation posts has been expanded with the sole purpose of providing information to the firing units of the anti-aircraft missile and air defense forces of the operational commands on combat duty.

To this end, air defense forces and means have been additionally deployed to designated areas to cover the southern borders and critical facilities of the Republic of Belarus,” Severinichik said, Sputnik reported.

“We are ready to decisively use all available forces and means to protect our territory and the population of the Republic of Belarus from possible provocations in the airspace,” he said in a statement published on the Defense Ministry’s Telegram channel.

Despite having issues with air defense in several other directions, Ukrainian forces are gathering air defense systems in its northern region of Zhytomyr, which borders Belarus, the official added.

Meanwhile, Russia on Saturday claimed another village in eastern Ukraine as it pushes toward the city of Toretsk in a fresh local operation in the embattled Donetsk region.

Toretsk lies north-west of the city of Gorlivka, which has been under separatist control since 2014.

The city has been largely spared from the worst of the fighting but that has changed in recent weeks after Moscow’s forces began advancing, taking Ukrainian forces by surprise.

Moscow’s defense ministry said Russian forces had “as a result of successful acts, liberated the settlement of Shumy” and gained a better “tactical position.”

Shumy lies less than 10 kilometers (six miles) east of Toretsk, a mining town which had a pre-war population of around 32,000.

Ukrainian forces have been particularly vulnerable since the end of 2023 because of major delays in European and U.S. arms deliveries.

Record Low Aid

Foreign financial assistance to Ukraine has hit record lows since February 2022 after falling to a monthly average of 1.9 billion euros (\$2 billion) in the first half of 2024, an analysis of the Ukrainian Finance Ministry’s data conducted by Sputnik showed on Saturday, adding that Kiev received no funds in May.

In 2022, Ukraine’s budget received an average of 2.9 billion euros per month from 17 countries and the European Union, with the United States providing the largest disbursement of 11.4 billion euros, the EU 7.6 billion euros and Canada 1.8 billion euros, the data showed. In 2023, 13 countries and the European Union, which became the largest donor (18.1 billion euros), provided Ukraine with a monthly average of 3 billion euros, the data said.

The United States took the second place with 10.1 billion euros, followed by Japan with 3.4 billion euros, the data showed. Austria, Albania, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania and Latvia did not provide any financial assistance to Ukraine last year, the data said.

News in Brief

OKINAWA (AFP) – A U.S. Marine in Okinawa has been charged with non-consensual sexual intercourse resulting in injury, Japanese authorities said, stoking discontent among residents over American military bases in the region. The case came to light just days after it emerged that a U.S. airman in Okinawa had been charged in March with raping a minor three months earlier. Top Government Spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said local prosecutors had brought the new charge over another rape that allegedly took place in May. In the latest case, the 21-year-old U.S. Marine Corps member is accused of “assaulting the victim for the purpose of sexual intercourse and injuring her”, an Okinawa police spokesman told AFP. “The fact that he used violence for that purpose and wounded her constitutes non-consensual sex resulting in injury,” the police spokesman said. The woman had been “bitten in the mouth” and had taken two weeks to fully recover, he said. Media reports said she had also been choked.

NOUMÉA (Dispatches) – Following weeks of protest, curfew measures were extended Saturday until July 8 in New Caledonia as voters in the overseas territory prepare to cast their ballots in France’s upcoming National Assembly polls. The French High Commission in the Pacific archipelago said security forces would remain fully mobilized to organize the week-long legislative elections set to begin on Sunday. Voters will cast their ballots in two phases to elect their two representatives in the French parliament. Authorities have also imposed a ban on carrying weapons, sale of alcohol and restrictions on gatherings over the weekend. New Caledonians have two representatives in the 577-seat French National Assembly, with 19 candidates vying for office. The overseas French territory saw massive protests since May 13 over an electoral reform to allow long-term French residents to participate in local elections. The proposals left at least nine people dead and injured besides arson and looting.

KANO, Nigeria (AFP) – Fourteen people were killed when a truck plowed into Muslim worshippers outside the northern Nigerian city of Kano, Nigeria’s road safety agency said. The goods-laden truck lost control and ran over worshippers leaving a mosque shortly after observing Friday prayers in Imawa village, 30 kilometers outside Kano, the Federal Road Safety Commission said in a statement. The truck “lost control and collided with pedestrians who had just concluded Friday prayers,” the statement said. “This unfortunate collision resulted in the tragic loss of 14 lives and left several others injured,” it added. Accidents are common on Nigeria’s poorly maintained roads due largely to speeding and disregard for traffic rules. According to the road safety commission, more than 5,000 people died in road accidents in 2023, after 6,500 road deaths the previous year.

BELGRADE (Dispatches) – A Serbian police officer on Saturday killed a man who shot him in the neck with a crossbow in front of the Zionist regime’s embassy in Belgrade. The attack happened around 11:00 am (0900 GMT) on Saturday morning in the Serbian capital, when the attacker shot the officer who was on duty outside the occupying regime’s embassy. The policeman “used a weapon in self-defence and defeated the attacker, who died as a result of his injuries”, said Interior Minister Ivica Dacic. Authorities said some arrests had been made and a number of people known to the security services were suspected of being linked to the attack. Police also said they were carrying out searches in a number of locations.

OUAGADOUGOU (Xinhua) – Burkina Faso faces an unprecedented crisis with 6.3 million people needing protection from deadly violence and aid to get back on their feet, UN humanitarian workers said. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said it and its partners “are doing everything we can to support the government’s efforts to meet people’s immediate needs and, crucially, to help crisis-affected people get back on their feet.” Burkina Faso, on the south-central fringe of the Sahel and one of the poorest countries in the world, has been hit with deadly terror attacks since the mid-2010s. OCHA said that by working through the UN Humanitarian Response Plan, aid organizations have assisted more than 730,000 people across Burkina Faso this year. “While this is a good start, these represents just 19 percent of the 3.8 million people we are aiming to assist.” The office said this year’s 935 million US dollar plan is only 17 percent funded at 157 million dollars.

NEW DELHI (Xinhua) – At least five workers were killed and 10 others injured in an explosion inside the glass-making factory in the southern Indian state of Telangana, officials said Saturday. The explosion took place Friday evening in Shadnagar town of Ranga Reddy district, about 54 km southwest of Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana. The blast is believed to be caused by high pressure in the autoclave, an official said. The deceased were identified as laborers hailing from Bihar. The injured have been hospitalized.