

Official: Russia Ready for Long Confrontation With U.S.



This photo shows a Russian Su-27 approaching the back of the MQ-9 drone and beginning to release fuel as it passes, over the Black Sea.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia must prepare for a long confrontation with the United States and has sent repeated warnings to Washington over the crisis in relations, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as saying on Tuesday.

The 2-1/2-year-old Ukraine war has triggered the gravest confrontation between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis - considered to be the closest the two Cold War superpowers came to intentional nuclear war.

The conflict is entering what Russian officials say is the most dangerous phase to date. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been urging Kyiv's allies for months to let Ukraine fire longer-range Western missiles deep into Russia to limit Moscow's ability to launch attacks.

Ryabkov, who oversees arms control and relations with Washington, said Moscow had no illusions about relations, given the "bipartisan anti-Russian consensus" in the United States.

"We must prepare for a long-term confrontation with this country. We are ready for this in every sense," Ryabkov was quoted as saying by state news agency RIA.

"We are sending all the warning signals to our opponent so that it does not underestimate our determination," Ryabkov said.

President Vladimir Putin warned the West last week that Russia could use nuclear weapons if it was struck with missiles, and that Moscow would consider any assault on it supported by a nuclear power to be a joint attack.

On Monday, Putin ordered the conscription of 133,000 new servicemen in Russia's autumn draft, according to a Kremlin decree published.

The decree, published in Russian state-run newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta, calls to carry out the draft of citizens "aged 18 to 30 years, who are not in the reserve and are subject to conscription in accordance with the Federal Law ... in the amount of

133,000 people."

Russia also launched several waves of drones targeting Kyiv early, with air defense units successfully defending the city during the attack which lasted over five hours, Ukraine's military said.

The Ukrainian air force said that it shot down 67 out of 73 drones and one of three missiles launched by Russia during the attack.

Governor Ruslan Kravchenko reported no damage to critical or residential infrastructure in the region surrounding the capital. He said that the attack caused fires in five districts of the region, but there were no casualties.

Mykolaiv governor Vitaliy Kim said the attack caused a fire at a critical infrastructure facility in the southern region.

Russia has launched multiple air attacks on Kyiv and Ukraine throughout September, targeting Ukraine's energy, military and transport infrastructure in attacks which have killed dozens of civilians.

FBI to Pay \$22mn to Settle Claims of Sexual Discrimination



NEW YORK (AP) - The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has agreed to pay more than \$22 million to settle a class-action lawsuit alleging female recruits were singled out for dismissal in training and routinely harassed by instructors with sexually

charged comments about their breast size, false allegations of infidelity and the need to take contraception "to control their moods."

"The payout to 34 women dismissed from the FBI's training academy in Quantico, Virginia,

still subject to approval by a federal judge, would rank among the biggest lawsuit settlements in the history of the bureau," said the report.

"These problems are pervasive within the FBI and the attitudes that created them were learned at the academy," David J Shaffer, the lawyer for the women, was quoted as saying.

"This case will make important major changes in these attitudes." Filed in 2019, the lawsuit contends that female recruits had been subjected to a hostile working environment in which they were judged more harshly than their male peers and "excessively targeted for correction and dismissal in tactical situations for perceived lack of judgment" and subjective "suitability" criteria.

Kashmiris Vote in Final Phase of Polls to Elect Local Government

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Voting in the final phase of the election to choose a local government in Indian-controlled Kashmir began Tuesday, the first such vote since Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government stripped the disputed region of its special status five years ago.

Over 3.9 million residents were eligible to cast ballots to choose 40 lawmakers out of 415 candidates in

the region's seven districts during the third — and last — phase of the election.

Thousands of armed government forces patrolled the voting districts and guarded over 5,000 polling stations. Lines of voters stretched across the stations. The region's chief electoral office said about 56% turnout was recorded by 1 p.m.

India's unprecedented move in

2019 downgraded and divided the former state into two centrally governed union territories, Ladakh and Jammu-Kashmir. Both are ruled directly by New Delhi through its appointed administrators along unelected bureaucrats and security setup. The move — which largely resonated in India and among Modi supporters — was mostly opposed in Kashmir as an assault on its identity and autonomy.

New NATO Boss Pledges Support for Ukraine, Plays Down Trump Fears



Mark Rutte being unveiled as NATO's new Secretary-General

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - NATO's new chief Mark Rutte voiced strong support for Ukraine on Tuesday and said he was not worried about the upcoming U.S. election as he could work with former president Donald Trump or Vice President Kamala Harris.

Rutte, a former Dutch prime minister, took over from Jens Stoltenberg as NATO secretary general just weeks before the Nov. 5 U.S. presidential vote that pits Democrat Harris against Republican Trump, who has been highly critical of NATO.

But Rutte played down concerns within the transatlantic alliance about the vote in NATO's predominant power, telling reporters at NATO headquarters: "I'm not worried."

"I worked for four years with Donald Trump. He was the one pushing us to spend more (on defense), and he achieved - because ... we are now at a much higher spending level than we were when he took office," Rutte said.

NATO estimates that 23 of its 32 members will meet its target of spending at least 2% of GDP on defense this year, compared to just

three countries a decade ago.

On the war in Ukraine, he avoided a direct answer when asked whether Kyiv was winning. NATO members provide the vast majority of weapons and ammunition supplied to Ukraine.

Rutte said the situation on the battlefield was "difficult" and Russia had made "limited" gains this year but at a high cost.

Signalling continuity with Stoltenberg, Rutte said he had three main priorities - making sure NATO had the capabilities to protect against any threat, supporting Ukraine and addressing global challenges by working with partners "near and far".

The Kremlin said on Tuesday it did not expect any improvement in relations with NATO under Rutte.

One of Rutte's key tasks will be to persuade NATO members to come up with the extra troops, weapons and spending to fully realize the new defense plans, diplomats and analysts say.

"We have to invest more and close the capability gaps and try to achieve all the targets NATO has set here," Rutte said.

PM: France's 'Colossal' Debt 'Sword of Damocles'



France's Prime Minister Michel Barnier delivers a speech at the National Assembly, in Paris, Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024.

PARIS (AP) — New French Prime Minister Michel Barnier warned Tuesday that "colossal" and spiraling debts are a "sword of Damocles" hanging over the finances of the European Union's second-largest economy and announced belt-tightening and more taxes to reverse the trend.

Tuesday's opening of parliament and Barnier's address kicked off what promised to be months of tumult in the National Assembly — which is sharply divided from surprise elections three months ago that produced no clear winner.

Barnier made a priority in his address of remedying France's indebted public finances. He made clear that he aims to curb spending, saying France has "much to do" but adding: "We must make do with little." Barnier announced an "exceptional" tax on France's wealthiest individuals — but did not specify who, exactly, falls into that tax bracket. He also said an extra contributory "effort" will be asked of large companies making big profits.

"The true sword of Damocles is our colossal debt," Barnier said. "If we are not careful, it will take our country to the edge of the precipice."

France is under pressure from the European Union's executive arm to reduce its debt.

Still, tax hikes would go against the fiscal philosophy of French President Emmanuel Macron, who consistently

cut taxes when he still had a government with a clear majority in parliament.

Barnier said his government will seek to reduce France's deficit from an estimated 6% of Gross Domestic Product now to 5% next year and under 3% by 2029.

To do so, he promised to cut state expenses, spend money more "efficiently" and fight tax evasion and other frauds.

Barnier, who had pledged a hardline stance on migration, said he wanted to "better control" the numbers of people coming to France.

He proposed to "facilitate" the detention of foreigners who are staying illegally in the country pending the implementation of deportation orders.

He said France will continue "as long as needed" to implement controls at its national borders in the passport-free area in Europe.

Barnier's wide-ranging speech covered his plans to tackle problems as diverse as mental health and aid for farmers to wind power and sexual violence.

Left-wing lawmakers kept up a steady drumbeat of shouted comments throughout but failed to throw the veteran politician off his stride. He responded to the heckling with flashes of wry humor and said he aims to listen to and respect all lawmakers "even if this respect is not always reciprocal."

News in Brief

SWANNANOVA, N.C. (AP) — Rescuers fanned out across the mountains of western North Carolina on Tuesday in search of anyone still unaccounted for since Hurricane Helene's remnants caused catastrophic damage to the Southeast, with a death toll nearing 140 people. Many of those who survived what was one of the deadliest storms in U.S. history were left without electricity or any way to reach out for help. Some cooked food on charcoal grills or hiked to high ground in the hopes of finding a signal to call loved ones. The devastation was especially bad in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where at least 40 people died in and around the city of Asheville, a tourism haven known for its art galleries, breweries and outdoor activities.

BANGKOK (AFP) - A bus carrying young students with their teachers caught fire in suburban Bangkok on Tuesday with 25 of those on board feared dead, according to officials and rescuers. The bus was carrying 44 passengers from central Uthai Thani province to Ayutthaya for a school trip when the fire started around a noon in Pathum Thani province, a northern suburb of the capital, Transport Minister Suriya Jungtrungruangkit told reporters at the scene. Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said officials could not yet confirm the number of fatalities as they have not finished investigating the scene, but based on the number of survivors, he said 25 people are feared dead.

KYIV (Reuters) - Ukraine's defense minister is dismissing three of his deputies in a reshuffle as Kyiv struggles to fend off Moscow's 2 1/2-year-old invasion, he said on Tuesday. Rustem Umerov said in a social media post he had asked the government to relieve Stanislav Haider, Oleksandr Serhiy and Yuriy Dzhhygry of their duties as deputy defense ministers, and Liudmyla Darahan as ministry secretary. "I have set the task of completing the process of cleansing the system of procurement in close cooperation with law enforcement and anti-corruption authorities," Umerov said. New appointments will be announced shortly. Ukrainian officials have sought to streamline bureaucracy and crack down on corruption.

SANTAREM, Brazil (Reuters) - Fires in Brazil's Amazon rainforest region surged to the highest number for September in almost a decade and a half, preliminary government data showed on Tuesday, after reaching similar highs in the two preceding months. A prolonged drought across much of South America, linked to climate change, means the fires in Brazil's Amazon have burned more intensely this year and at times smoke has covered more than half of the continent. Satellites detected 41,463 fire hot spots in Brazil's Amazon in September, the largest number for that month since 2010, data from the National Institute for Space Research (Inpe) showed. Fires in the first nine months of the year are also the worst for that period since 2007. A Reuters reporter traveling on Monday on a flight to Santarem in the Amazonian state of Para saw hundreds of miles of haze. Para also recorded the highest number of fire hot spots for the month of September since 2007, the data showed.

ZURICH (Reuters) - Swiss glaciers melted at an above-average rate in 2024 as a blistering hot summer thawed through abundant snowfall, monitoring body GLAMOS said on Tuesday. Earlier this year, glaciologists had celebrated heavy winter and spring snow dumps in the Alps, hoping this would signal a halt to years of hefty declines or even a reversal of losses. But with average August temperatures a few degrees above freezing even at the 3,571 meter high Jungfraujoch station perched above the Aletsch glacier, scientists measured record ice losses across the country that month. Overall, GLAMOS said Swiss glaciers lost 2.5% of their volume this year which was above the average of the past decade. "It is worrying to me that despite the perfect year we actually had for glaciers, with the snow-rich winter and the rather cool and rainy spring, it was still not enough," said Matthias Huss, Director of GLAMOS.