

# Russia: Ukraine War to Go on Until Putin's Goals Met



Russian service members stand on T-72 tanks during military drills in the southern Krasnodar region, Dec. 2, 2024.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- The Kremlin said on Tuesday that the Ukraine war would continue until the goals set by President Vladimir Putin were achieved by military action or by negotiation. Putin has demanded that Ukraine abandon its ambition to join NATO and withdraw fully from four regions of the country that Russia has claimed as its own - terms Kyiv has rejected as tantamount to surrender. "The special military operation will end when all the objectives set by the president and commander-in-chief have been achieved," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, using Moscow's term for the conflict. "These goals can be achieved as a

result of the special military operation or a result of relevant negotiations." Peskov said no talks between Moscow and Kyiv were currently under way because "the Ukrainian side refuses any negotiations". Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday made the case for a diplomatic settlement to the war and raised the idea of foreign troops being deployed in Ukraine until it could join NATO. Putin's foreign intelligence chief said Russia was close to achieving its goals in Ukraine with Moscow holding what he said was the strategic initiative in all areas in the war. "The situation on the front is not in Kyiv's favor," Sergei Naryshkin,

the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), told Razvedchik, the official publication of the foreign intelligence agency. "The strategic initiative in all areas belongs to us, we are close to achieving our goals, while the armed forces of Ukraine are on the verge of collapse," Naryshkin said. Naryshkin added that for Russia, Zelensky had lost legitimacy and "the ability to negotiate". Naryshkin, who heads the main successor organization to the Soviet-era KGB's First Chief Directorate, is one of the few senior Russian officials to have relatively regular contacts with senior U.S. and Western officials. His views give an insight into thinking at the top levels of the Kremlin - which views the West's support for Ukraine as evidence that the United States is fighting a proxy war against Russia aimed at toppling Moscow's rulers. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Sunday called for an immediate ceasefire and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia to end "the madness" of war. Trump, who has vowed to swiftly end the conflict, is returning to the White House at a time of Russian ascendancy. Moscow controls a chunk of Ukraine about the size of the American state of Virginia and is advancing at the fastest pace since the early days of the 2022 invasion.

## Taiwan: China Deploys Largest Navy Fleet in Decades



China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, takes part in a military display in the South China Sea, accompanied by warships and fighter jets.

TAIPEI (Reuters) -- China is deploying its largest navy fleet in regional waters in nearly three decades, posing a threat to Taiwan that is more pronounced than previous Chinese war games, the Taiwanese defense ministry said on Tuesday. Speaking in Taipei, defense ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said the scale of the current Chinese naval deployment in an area running from the southern Japanese islands down into the South China Sea was the largest since China held war games around Taiwan ahead of 1996 Taiwanese presidential elections. China, which views Taiwan as

its own territory over the island's rejection, had been expected to launch drills to express its anger at President Lai Ching-te's tour of the Pacific that ended on Friday, which included stopovers in Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam. Taiwan's military raised its alert on Monday after saying China had reserved airspace and deployed naval and coast guard vessels. "The current scale is the largest compared to the previous four," Sun said. "Regardless of whether they have announced drills, they are posing a great threats to us." Senior ministry intelligence officer Hsieh Jih-sheng told the same press

conference there have so far been no live fire drills in China's seven "reserved" air space zones, two of which are in the Taiwan Strait, but there had been a significant increase in Chinese activity to the north of Taiwan over the last day. The number of China navy and coast guard ships in the region, which a Taiwan security source told Reuters remained at around 90, was "very alarming", and China was taking aim at other countries in the region and not only Taiwan, he added. China's deployment in the First Island Chain - which runs from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines and on to Borneo, enclosing China's coastal seas - is aimed at area denial to prevent foreign forces from interfering, Hsieh said. The ministry said China's navy is building two "walls" in the Pacific, one at the eastern end of Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone and the other further out in the Pacific. "They are sending a very simple message with these two walls: trying to make the Taiwan Strait an internal sea" of China, said Hsieh. Earlier on Tuesday, the defense ministry said it detected 47 military aircraft operating around the island over the past 24 hours, as well as 12 navy vessels and nine "official" ships, which refers to vessels from ostensibly civilian agencies such as the coast guard.

## Officer: South Korean President Ordered to 'Drag Out' MPs

SEOUL (Reuters) -- South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol gave an order to "drag out" lawmakers from parliament after he declared martial law on Dec. 3, an army commander said on Tuesday amid concerns of a power vacuum with Yoon's office saying it had "no official position" on who was running the country. Yoon is now the subject of criminal investigations on insurrection charges. He has apologized for the failed attempt to impose martial law but has not accepted growing calls for him to step down, even from some members of his own party. Yoon said on Saturday he was entrusting his legal and political fate in the hands of his ruling People Power Party (PPP). The party said on Tuesday that it was discussing Yoon's potential resignation as early as February and holding a snap election in

April or May. Yoon's surprise martial law declaration stunned the country and plunged Asia's fourth-largest economy and a major U.S. ally in the region into a constitutional crisis, sending shockwaves through diplomatic and economic fronts. Yoon's office, when asked by Reuters who was running South Korea, said it had "no official position to offer" but referred to past statements by the foreign and defense ministries. The defense ministry spokesman said on Monday Yoon was still commander in chief and the foreign ministry spokesman said state affairs including foreign affairs "were being conducted under a process laid out in the Constitution and the law." Kwak Jong-geun, the commander of the Army Special Warfare Command, told a parliament committee that he had received multiple tele-

phone calls from Yoon as the events unfolded overnight after the martial law declaration. "He said break the door down right now and get in there and drag out the people inside," Kwak, referring to members of parliament who were starting to gather inside the main chamber to vote on ordering Yoon to rescind the martial law order. Kwak said he decided not to execute Yoon's order. Yoon rescinded the martial law six hours later after parliament's vote. The testimony by the special forces commander differed from earlier statements by military officers that it was the defense minister at the time, Kim Yong-hyun, who gave the order to extract lawmakers from parliament chamber. Yoon was banned from leaving the country, and faces a second impeachment vote planned for Saturday.

## National Strike Disrupts Power Supply in France



French energy workers on strike gather with dockers in the port of Saint-Nazaire.

PARIS (Reuters) -- A national strike against planned pension reforms reduced France's power supply and disrupted petrol deliveries from French refineries on Tuesday. Strikes have been taking place since mid-January as unions protest against the government's plans to make people work longer before retirement. Public transport and schools have also been affected. Total power supply was reduced by about 6.3%, or 4.3 gigawatts (GW) due to decreased supply at two nuclear reactors, and several thermal- and hydro plants, data from power utility EDF showed. Nuclear capacity was lowered by 1.8 GW and thermal plants were reduced by 2.3 GW, while hydropower disruptions totaled 220 megawatts (MW). No imports were needed at 1215 GMT after peaking earlier at 2.8 GW,

grid operator RTE data showed. Strike participation at EDF totaled some 30.3% of employees by mid-day, the utility said. This compares to the midday rate of 40.3% recorded on Jan. 31. On the refining side, the shipping of petrol products from French sites was interrupted by the strike, TotalEnergies said. The company added that there was no shortage of petrol at fueling stations and supply levels were generally satisfactory. About 56% of the operators working in the TotalEnergies' French refineries and depots were on strike this morning, the company said. At Esso, a subsidiary of ExxonMobil, about 75% of the workforce at the Fos site was on strike and blocking deliveries while the Port Jerome site was operating normally, a CGT spokesperson said.

## France Begins Withdrawing Troops From Chad



French soldiers stand at attention during a morning drill at the French military base in Chadian capital N'Djamena, Oct. 26, 2014.

PARIS (Dispatches) -- France has started the withdrawal of its military from Chad with the departure of two warplanes that were based in the capital N'Djamena, the French army said, two weeks after Chad said it was ending its defense cooperation pact with Paris. In a surprise move, the government of Chad - an ally of the West in the alleged fight against takfiri militants in the region - ended the defense cooperation pact on Nov. 28. Terms and conditions of the withdrawal and whether any French troops will remain in the central African country altogether have yet be to agreed, but on Tuesday the first Mirage warplanes returned to their base in eastern France. "It marks the beginning of the return of French equipment stationed in N'Djamena," Army spokesperson Colonel Guillaume Vernet said after two Mirage fighter jets left Chad. France has already pulled its soldiers out of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger following military coups in those West African countries and spreading anti-French sentiment. The departure from Chad will end decades of French military presence in the Sahel region and ends direct French military operations there. France still has about 1,000 troops in Chad. Vernet said a calendar to draw-down its operations would still take several weeks for the two countries to

finalize. There were no indications Paris received advance notice of Chad's decision to end its defense cooperation although a French envoy to President Emmanuel Macron delivered a report last month containing proposals on how France could reduce its military presence in Chad, Gabon and Ivory Coast. Last week, Chad's foreign minister said his country was putting an end to its military cooperation with former colonial power France, saying "Chad has grown up, matured and is a sovereign state that is very jealous of its sovereignty". The announcement came just hours after a visit by French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot. The announcement also came just days after Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye indicated in an interview with AFP that France should close its military bases in that country. Landlocked Chad faces a potent threat from Boko Haram and other takfiri groups. It borders the Central African Republic, Sudan, Libya and Niger, all of which host Russian paramilitary forces. Chad's President Mahamat Idriss Deby has sought closer ties with Moscow in recent months, but talks to strengthen economic cooperation with Russia have yet to bear concrete results.

## News in Brief

SAO PAULO (Reuters) -- Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was rushed to Sao Paulo overnight for emergency surgery to drain a bleed on his brain linked to a fall in October and he will remain in hospital for a couple more days, the government said on Tuesday. The 79-year-old Lula is "well" and being monitored in the intensive care unit after the successful operation, a medical note published by the government said. Presidential spokesperson Paulo Pimenta said in a radio interview that Lula would likely remain in the ICU for another 48 hours, with contact limited to his medical team. There have been increasing health concerns about the aging president, a standard bearer of the Latin American left who is halfway through his third non-consecutive term. Weak results for his Workers Party in this year's municipal elections underscored the lack of a clear leftist successor if he chooses not to run for re-election in 2026.

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met with Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk at the U.S. president-elect's Mar-a-Lago home in Florida, the European leader announced on social media platform X. "USA today. The future has begun! An afternoon in Mar-a-Lago with @realDonaldTrump, @elonmusk and @michaelsvaltz," Orban said, without sharing more details. Orban, a nationalist leader and long-time Trump supporter, has grown increasingly isolated within the European Union for his ties to Russia and opposition to military aid for Ukraine. He has praised Trump as a "man of peace" who would quickly end the Ukraine war and expects his close personal ties with the president-elect will elevate his standing in a politically fractious Europe and bolster support for his far-right allies, at a time when he faces serious headwinds at home.

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MAIDUGURI (Reuters) -- A gang of gunmen kidnapped more than 50 women and children in a raid on Kakin Dawa village in Nigeria's northwest Zamfara state, police and residents said. Kidnapping for ransom by gunmen, known by locals as bandits, is rife in northwest Nigeria due to high levels of poverty, unemployment and the proliferation of illegal firearms. Zamfara police said the incident took place on Sunday and that additional security forces were being deployed to the area. Residents said dozens of assailants riding on motorcycles arrived in the village at around 1230 GMT, armed with assault rifles, and went from house to house kidnapping residents. There is widespread insecurity in northwest Nigeria, while a 15-year takfiri insurgency has plagued the northeast of the country and gang and separatist violence affects the southeast.

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NAIROBI (Reuters) -- Kenyan police fired teargas and arrested at least three people on Tuesday as hundreds protested against a wave of femicides, a Reuters reporter and human rights activists said. Several hundred people - mostly women - marched in the capital Nairobi, where they blew whistles and chanted, "Stop killing women!" They were repeatedly dispersed by police officers firing teargas from moving vehicles before regrouping anew. Protests also took place in the cities of Mombasa and Lodwar, according to videos posted on social media. Between August and October, at least 97 women in Kenya were killed in femicides - intentional killings with a gender-related motivation, according to the National Police Service. Patriarchal views and insufficient legal protections are major factors behind Kenya's high levels of gender-based violence, researchers say.

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AMSTERDAM (Reuters) -- Dutch police have arrested three people following an explosion that killed six people and injured four in an apartment building in The Hague, the police said on Tuesday. A criminal investigation has been launched into the cause of Saturday's blast, which caused the apartment building to collapse and destroyed several neighboring buildings in the residential area in a suburb of The Hague. The police said the three people arrested late on Monday were possibly connected to the blast, but gave no further details. Several cars have been confiscated following the explosion. The police said it was unclear whether any of the vehicles was a car witnesses said they saw speeding away from the scene shortly before the explosion.

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KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) -- Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad denied allegations that he betrayed the country on Tuesday, after a royal inquiry called for a criminal probe against him over a 2018 government decision to drop claims on two disputed islets. In a report published last week, a royal commission of inquiry (RCI) recommended 99-year-old Mahathir face investigation for the decision, made while he was in office, to withdraw Malaysia's bid to overturn a World Court ruling over the sovereignty of the Pedra Branca islet between Malaysia and Singapore. Malaysia had also requested clarification from the court on the status of another disputed islet, according to the RCI report. Both applications, made in 2017, were withdrawn after the election of a coalition led by Mahathir the following year. Mahathir told reporters on Tuesday the decision to drop the claims had been made by the then cabinet on the advice of legal experts.