

# Russia Vows Response After Ukraine Uses U.S.-Made ATACMS to Strike Airfield



U.S.-supplied ATACMS missiles being launched.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia said on Wednesday that Ukraine had struck a military airfield on the Azov Sea with six U.S.-made ATACMS ballistic missiles, a move that could prompt Moscow to launch another experimental intermediate-range hypersonic missile at Ukraine.

Russia's defense ministry said two of the missiles fired by Ukraine were shot down by a Pantsir missile defense system and the rest were destroyed by electronic warfare.

"On the morning of December 11, 2024, the Kyiv regime launched a missile strike with Western precision weapons at the Taganrog military airfield in the Rostov region," the defense ministry said.

"This attack by Western long-range weapons will not go unanswered and appropriate measures will be taken," it said.

Russia fired a new intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile known as «Oreshnik», or Hazel Tree, at Ukraine on Nov. 21 in what President Vladimir Putin said was a direct response to strikes on Russia by Ukrainian forces with U.S. and British missiles.

A U.S. official said on Wednesday that Russia could launch another hypersonic ballistic missile in Ukraine in the coming days, but Washington does not consider the Oreshnik weapon a game-changer in the war.

After approval from the administration of President Joe Biden, Ukraine struck Russia with six U.S.-made ATACMS on Nov. 19 and with British Storm Shadow missiles and U.S.-made HIMARS on Nov. 21.

Putin, after those attacks, said that the Ukraine war was escalating towards a global conflict after the United States and Britain allowed Ukraine to hit Russia with their weapons, and warned the West that Moscow could strike back.

The war is entering what some Russian and Western officials say could be its final and most dangerous phase as Moscow's forces advance at their fastest pace since the early weeks of the conflict.

On Wednesday, Russian troops destroyed or captured several Ukrainian positions near the eastern city of Pokrovsk. After months of accelerating advances toward Pokrovsk, Moscow's forces are now as close as 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) from the southern outskirts of the city, according to Ukraine's DeepState, which maps the front lines using open sources. "As a result of prolonged clashes, two of our positions were destroyed, one was lost.

Currently, measures are being taken to restore positions," Nazar Voloshyn, Ukraine's military spokesman for the eastern front, said in televised comments. Pokrovsk, situated about 18 kilometers (11 miles) from the boundary of Ukraine's Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk regions, has for months been the area of the fiercest battles in Russia's 33-month-old full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The fall of Pokrovsk, an important logistics center for the Ukrainian military in the east, would amount to the biggest military setback for Kyiv in months. The city also hosts Ukraine's only domestic coking coal supplier for its once-giant steel industry.

The International Atomic Energy Agency on Tuesday said that a drone hit and severely damaged an official vehicle of the agency on the road to Ukraine's Russian-geld Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant on Tuesday.

# Tractors Block London Streets as Farmers Protest Tax Change



Farmers say a so-called "tractor tax" will destroy family farms and reduce food production.

LONDON (Reuters) - Hundreds of tractors blocked streets in central London on Wednesday, the latest protest by farmers against the government after it ended an exemption from inheritance tax for agricultural families.

The measure, dubbed the "tractor tax" by critics, was introduced by the government to boost funds to pay for strained public services, but farmers say it will destroy family farms and reduce food production.

Farmers lined their tractors up close to the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday, hoping to convince the government to change course, or face escalating protests.

"It's the final nail in our agricultural coffin," farmer Gareth Wyn Jones told Sky News, standing in front of rows of stationary tractors as protesters held up signs saying "No Farmers, No Food, No Future".

Farmers say their income has been squeezed over the years by Britain's competitive supermarket sector, cheap imports from abroad and subsidy cuts following Brexit.

The passing down of farms through generations was previously tax-free but in October the government said farmers would be subject to a tax from 2026. Protests in different parts of the country swiftly followed.

The biggest was in mid-November when 13,000 people gathered in Westminster, including Britain's most high profile farmer Jeremy Clarkson, the former Top Gear presenter whose program Clarkson's Farm is one of Amazon's top UK shows.

The government has repeatedly said there will be no U-turn on the inheritance tax policy. Environment minister Steve Reed said the government was working to help farmers via rural support schemes.

"We are focused on supporting our farmers, supporting rural economics growth and boosting Britain's food security," he said in a statement on Wednesday.

Under the new inheritance tax rules, from 2026 a 20% tax will be paid on the value of a farm above 1 million pounds. Existing personal allowances, which a married couple can combine, takes the threshold for a farm and associated property up to 3 million pounds.

Environment minister Steve Reed said the government was working to help farmers via rural support schemes.

"We are focused on supporting our farmers, supporting rural economics growth and boosting Britain's food security," he said in a statement on Wednesday.

# Sudan 'Biggest Humanitarian Crisis Ever Recorded', Int'l Rescue Committee Says



Sudanese people who fled escalating violence in al-Jazira state rest at a camp for the displaced in the eastern city of Gedaref on November 23, 2024.

NEW YORK (AFP) - Sudan has become the «biggest humanitarian crisis ever recorded» after 20 months of devastating war between rival generals, the International Rescue Committee said in a report released Wednesday.

"The country accounts for 10 percent of all people in humanitarian need, despite being home to less than 1 percent of global population," the New York-based organization said in their 2025 Emergency Watchlist.

Since April 2023, a war between the Sudanese regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted 12 million.

Nearly nine million of those are displaced within Sudan, most in areas with decimated infrastructure and facing the threat of mass starvation.

Across the country, nearly 26 million people -- around half the population -- are facing acute hunger, according to the United Nations.

Famine has already been declared in the Zamzam displacement camp in the western Darfur region, and the United Nations has said Sudan is facing the worst humanitarian crisis in recent memory.

IRC's report highlights the 20 countries at greatest risk of humanitarian deterioration, with Sudan ranking highest on the list for the second year in a row.

They said a total of 30.4 million people were in humanitarian need across the northeast African country, making it "the largest humanitarian crisis since records began", the IRC said.

There is no end to the war in sight, with both parties intensifying strikes on residential areas in recent weeks.

The IRC warned of total "humanitarian collapse", as the health crisis was set to worsen and both sides continued to "choke humanitarian access".

Around 305 million people worldwide are in need of humanitarian support, according to IRC, with 82 percent of them in watchlist areas such as the occupied Palestinian territories, Myanmar, Syria, South Sudan and Lebanon.

"It is clear that 'the world is on fire' is a daily reality for hundreds of millions of people," IRC chief David Miliband said. At least 127 people, mostly civilians,

die down, but arid conditions were to continue throughout the day, forecasters said.

# Wildfire Burns Homes, Forces Evacuations in California's Malibu



The wind whips embers from the trees while a firefighter works as the Franklin Fire burns in Malibu, California, U.S., December 10, 2024.

MALIBU, Calif. (Reuters) - A wildfire in the beach community of Malibu, California, raged unchecked on Wednesday after destroying several structures and forcing residents to flee and schools to close in the area.

More than 1,500 firefighters were battling the Franklin Fire, which was 3,900 acres (1,578 hectares) and 0% contained, as it burned in the steep, rugged terrain northwest of Los Angeles.

The fire, which started on Monday night, has destroyed at least seven structures and damaged eight others, the city of Malibu said in a statement online on Tuesday evening.

The fire's cause remains unknown, fire officials have said.

A red flag warning issued by the National Weather Service remained in effect on Wednesday as strong Santa Ana winds and low humidity were expected in the area. The winds were expected to

Evacuation orders and warnings remained in place on Wednesday for parts of the city of 10,000 people. Roadways, including a portion of the Pacific Coast Highway, were shut down as the fire burned nearby.

The public school system canceled classes for Wednesday and Thursday due to the fire, local media reported.

Governor Gavin Newsom said California had obtained a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to secure resources to suppress the fire.

Pepperdine University in Malibu said the threat of fire has greatly diminished after it issued a shelter-in-place order for some students. There was little to no damage to structures around campus.

Pepperdine University in Malibu said the threat of fire has greatly diminished after it issued a shelter-in-place order for some students. There was little to no damage to structures around campus.

Pepperdine University in Malibu said the threat of fire has greatly diminished after it issued a shelter-in-place order for some students. There was little to no damage to structures around campus.

Pepperdine University in Malibu said the threat of fire has greatly diminished after it issued a shelter-in-place order for some students. There was little to no damage to structures around campus.

Pepperdine University in Malibu said the threat of fire has greatly diminished after it issued a shelter-in-place order for some students. There was little to no damage to structures around campus.

# South Korean Police Raid President's Office

SEOUL (AFP) - South Korean police raided President Yoon Suk Yeol's office on Wednesday as the investigation into his declaration of martial law gathered pace. Prison authorities, meanwhile, said the country's former defense minister tried to kill himself shortly before his formal arrest over the events of the night of December 3. The extraordinary drama saw troops and helicopters sent to parliament in an apparent — but failed — attempt to prevent lawmakers from voting down Yoon's martial law declaration.

The deeply unpopular Yoon is already under a travel ban as part of an "insurrection" probe into his inner circle.

On Wednesday, a special investigation unit of South Korea's police said it raided the presidential office as well as the National Police Agency, the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency and the National Assembly Security Service. A statement gave no further details. Former defense minister Kim Yong-hyun tried to kill himself shortly before midnight on Tuesday while in custody, authorities said.

Kim was first detained on Sunday. The suicide attempt took place shortly before he was formally arrested, the justice ministry and a prison official said. They added that he was in good health on Wednesday.

Kim was arrested on charges of "engaging in critical duties during an insurrection" and "abuse of authority to obstruct the exercise of rights." The former defense minister said through his lawyers that "all responsibility for this situation lies solely with me" and that subordinates were "merely following my orders and fulfilling their assigned duties." He had already been slapped with a travel ban along with the former interior minister and the general in charge of the martial law operation. Cho Ji-ho, commissioner general of the Korean National Police Agency, and Kim Bong-sik, head of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, were also arrested early Wednesday, police said.



MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia said on Wednesday that relations with Washington were so confrontational that Russian citizens should not visit the United States, Canada and some EU countries in coming weeks because they risked being "hunted" down by U.S. authorities. Russian and U.S. diplomats say the relationship is worse than at any time since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, when the two Cold War superpowers came closest to intentional nuclear war, due to a confrontation over the Ukraine war. "We urge you to continue to refrain from trips to the United States of America and its allied satellite states, including, first of all, Canada and, with a few exceptions, European Union countries, during these holidays," she said.

BERLIN (Reuters) - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz sent a request to parliament on Wednesday to hold a vote of confidence on Dec. 16, setting a path to an early federal election next year after the collapse of his coalition last month. Policymaking in Europe's biggest economy has largely ground to a halt since Scholz's fractious coalition of Social Democrats (SPD), Greens and neoliberal Free Democrats (FDP) imploded, leaving him heading a minority government.

LONDON (Reuters) - Nearly 300 British doctors, nurses and other health workers with long COVID are suing the health service for compensation, saying they were not given proper protection during the pandemic. They say their lives have been devastated by a host of severe health complications. Most cannot return to work and many are housebound. "This is life changing. People are really suffering financially. Some are living in poverty," said nurse Rachel Hext, one of the claimants.

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Thousands of members of youth and student bodies belonging to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party on Wednesday held a road march procession from Bangladesh's capital toward its eastern border with India to protest against an attack on a diplomatic mission earlier this month and alleged desecration of Bangladeshi flags in India. They drove in cars to reach a border point at Akhaura in Brahmanbaria district to register their protest. Before starting for the border area, they rallied briefly in Dhaka where leaders criticized what they called "Indian aggression" against Bangladesh.

NAIROBI (Reuters) - Kenyan police have fired teargas and arrested at least three people 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.