



# Kremlin: Russia Will Defend Ships in Baltic Sea With All Means



On Russia's Navy Day July 28, President of Russia Vladimir Putin held a speech and reviewed the Main Naval Parade held in St Petersburg.

MOSCOW (Reuters) - The Kremlin said on Wednesday that Russia would defend its ships using the Baltic Sea with all means available and that a failed Estonian attempt to seize a tanker there recently showed that Moscow could respond with tough action if it had to.

Estonia said on Thursday last week that Moscow had briefly sent a

fighter jet into NATO airspace over the Baltic Sea during an Estonian attempt to stop a Russian-bound oil tanker thought to be part of a "shadow fleet" defying Western sanctions on Moscow.

Russia, the world's second-largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia, on Sunday then detained a Greek-owned oil tanker in Russian waters after it had left an Estonian port,

Estonian public broadcaster ERR reported on Tuesday.

The detention of the vessel, since released by Russia, fuelled concerns about potential shipping disruption in busy Baltic Sea lanes used to transport oil.

Asked what Russia could do to protect its shipping interests in the Baltic Sea from what Moscow has described as hostile action from EU member states and Britain, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters:

"As the latest events related to the attempted pirate attack on one of the tankers showed, Russia demonstrated it is capable of responding quite harshly."

Peskov said Russia was ready to use "all means" at its disposal in future to respond to such incidents within the framework of international law and had a wide range of response options to choose from.

A spokeswoman for Russia's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday accused NATO of carrying out what she called aggressive actions in the Baltic Sea that impeded the freedom of shipping after Estonia tried and failed to seize the Russia-bound tanker.

## China Rejects New EU Sanctions Against its Companies



BEIJING (Reuters) - China on Wednesday strongly deplored the European Union's unwarranted sanctions on its companies after the group and the United Kingdom announced a new round of sanctions against Russia with Chinese enterprises also on the sanctions list.

"China has always opposed unilateral sanctions that lack a basis in international law or authorization from the UN Security Council," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a daily news briefing on Wednesday.

She urged the EU to cease undermining the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese businesses, vowing that China will take necessary

measures to resolutely safeguard its lawful rights and interests.

On the Ukraine crisis, Mao emphasized that China has consistently committed itself to promoting peace and dialogue. It never provides lethal weapons to parties involved in the conflict while strictly controlling the export of dual-use items, she added.

Mao further noted that at present, most countries, including those in Europe and North America, continue to have trade relations with Russia.

"The normal exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Russian enterprises should not be disrupted or affected," Mao said, calling on the EU to stop applying double standards on trade and economic cooperation with Russia.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. administration has reportedly started deporting Myanmar and Vietnamese migrants to South Sudan, despite a court order prohibiting such removals to third countries, media reported, citing court documents filed by the migrants' attorneys. Deportees from several countries told the judge that U.S. immigration authorities "may have sent" them to Africa, according to the US media report. As some countries refuse to accept deportees from the United States, the Donald Trump administration has made deals with other nations, such as Panama, to take them in.

SAO PAULO (Reuters) - Massive fires fueled by climate change led global forest loss to smash records in 2024, according to a report issued on Wednesday. Loss of tropical pristine forests alone reached 6.7 million hectares (16.6 million acres), an 80% spike compared to 2023 and an area roughly the size of Panama, mainly because Brazil, the host of the next global climate summit in November, struggled to contain fires in the Amazon amid the worst drought ever recorded in the rainforest. A myriad of other countries, including Bolivia and Canada, were also ravaged by wildfires.

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese farm minister Taku Eto resigned on Wednesday after remarks he made about rice triggered a firestorm of criticism from voters and lawmakers, posing a fresh challenge to Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's embattled government. Eto has been in hot water since media reports exposed comments, he made at a weekend political fundraising party that he had "never had to buy rice" thanks to gifts from supporters. The comment led to a frenzy of criticism from voters, already angry about the historically high price of the staple food due to a poor harvest and elevated demand from a boom in tourism. "I made an extremely inappropriate remark at a time when citizens are suffering from soaring rice prices," Eto told reporters after handing in his resignation at the prime minister's office.

SYDNEY (AFP) - Fast-moving floodwaters rose Wednesday in eastern Australia, inundating homes and leaving residents stranded on their roofs overnight, as authorities warned more rain was expected in coming days. Storms have already dumped more than four months of rain in just two days in parts of New South Wales, engulfing homes, businesses and roads in muddy waters, authorities said. "We have a situation where the rain has been falling quite heavily and hard and it has not been moving away. Part of that is because the ground is saturated and the rivers are swollen," the state's emergency minister Jihad Dib told reporters.

BERLIN (AP) - German authorities on Wednesday arrested five adolescents suspected of forming a far-right terrorist group and said the charges included attempted murder and severe arson. The arrests follow arson attacks on a community center and a refugee shelter. Federal prosecutors said in a statement the five were male culpable minors who formed a group which styled itself as the "last wave of defense" to protect the "German nation". They listed eight German members of the group, disclosing their first names and the initial of their last names, including three who had been previously arrested. Their ages were not disclosed.

## Trump Unveils 'Golden Dome', Sparking Space War Fears



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks during an event with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House, Tuesday, May 20, 2025, in Washington.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. President Donald Trump has unveiled new details on his plan for a missile defense system known as "Golden Dome" which he claimed is even capable of intercepting missiles launched from the other side of the world, or launched from space.

Just days after returning to the White House in January, Trump unveiled his intentions for the system, aimed at countering "next-generation" aerial threats to the US, including ballistic and cruise missiles.

One week after beginning his second term, Trump directed the Pentagon to develop plans for an aerial defense system, citing what the White House called "the most catastrophic threat" to national security.

Speaking in the Oval Office on Tuesday, Trump stated "All of them will be knocked out of the air," and added "The success

rate is very close to 100%."

He also said that it should be operational in about three years, by the end of his time in office.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth, speaking alongside Trump, stated the Golden Dome would complement current ground defenses to shield the U.S. against all missile threats - cruise, ballistic, hypersonic, and drone attacks, whether armed with conventional or nuclear payloads.

Inspired by Israeli regime's Iron Dome, the Golden Dome would be allegedly far more expansive, targeting advanced threats like hypersonic missiles and orbital strikes.

Officials noted the Dome would intercept missiles at multiple phases: pre-launch, mid-flight, and re-entry.

Trump named Space Force General Michael Guetlein, currently the vice chief of space operations at Space Force, to lead the Golden

Dome project.

He also announced the program needs \$25 billion, with a total cost of \$175 billion over time.

However, the Congressional Budget Office projects costs for just the space components could reach \$542 billion over two decades.

Military leaders have consistently cautioned that U.S. defenses lag behind advanced missile tech from Russia and China.

"There really is no current system," Trump admitted in the Oval Office, adding "We have certain areas of missiles and certain missile defense, but there is no system... there has never been anything like this."

He added that Canada had asked to be a part of the system.

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning on Wednesday expressed "serious concern" over the plan, saying it undercut "global strategic balance and stability."

"The United States puts its own interests first and is obsessed with seeking its own absolute security, which violates the principle that no country's security should come at the expense of others," he said.

"(The plan) heightens the risk of space becoming a battlefield, fuels an arms race, and undermines international security," Mao added.

Earlier this month, Russia and China condemned the Golden Dome proposal as "deeply destabilizing," warning it could transform space into a "battlefield."

## Philippines, U.S. Hold Joint Maritime Drills in South China Sea

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) - MANILA--Coast Guard vessels of the Philippines and the United States have taken part for the first time in joint maritime exercises with naval and air force units in the contested South China Sea, Manila's armed forces said on Wednesday.

The exercises, held in waters off Palawan and Occidental Mindoro, involved the Philippine Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard, alongside

the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stratton and a U.S. Navy P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

The "maritime cooperative activity," which was the second for the year and sixth overall since the allies launched the joint activities in 2023, included communication drills and search-and-rescue scenarios, the military said in a statement.

"Joint activities like the MCA reaffirm the Armed Forces of the Philip-

pin's commitment to modernizing its capabilities and strengthening defense partnerships to secure our national and regional maritime interests," AFP Chief Romeo Brawner said.

Relations between the Philippines and China have been strained by disputes over sovereignty in the South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce.

## Report: Global Forest Loss Tops Record as Wildfires Drive Destruction



PARIS (AFP) - Global loss of tropical and boreal forests surged to a record high last year as unprecedented temperatures fueled fires, releasing more than four times the emissions of all air travel in 2023.

That's according to the latest annual assessment by Global Forest Watch, a platform run by the non-profit World Resources Institute, which drew on data from the University of Maryland.

"It's a global red alert," Elizabeth Goldman, co-director of Global Forest Watch, said in a statement. "This level of forest loss is unlike anything we've seen in over 20 years."

Tropical primary forests, defined as those that have experienced little to no human disturbance, store billions of tons of carbon. They also help regulate weather, recycle water and offer a home to millions of species of plants and animals. At the 2021 United Nations climate conference, COP26, more than 140 nations pledged to halt the loss of all types of forest by the end of the decade.

However, the latest data shows that many of the countries that signed the deforestation pledge are falling woefully short on their commitment. The loss of tropical primary forests reached 6.7 million hectares last year. That's almost double the loss in 2023 and roughly equivalent to 18 soccer fields disappearing every minute.

Fifteen of the 20 countries with the largest area of primary forests that signed the 2021 forest pledge are now losing trees faster than they were at that time, according to the World Resources Institute.

All of this is occurring after the hottest year on record, with Earth's warming exceeding 1.5C over pre-industrial levels on an annual basis for the first time. The United Nations has warned that temperatures will continue to rise unless drastic action is taken to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Globally, fires emitted 4.1 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions last year, adding to planetary heating.

Outside of the tropics, fires in Canada and Russia also contributed to the loss of tree cover last year equal to the size of Italy, WRI reported. Tree-cover loss refers to the removal of tree canopy, which is the branches and leaves at the top of a tree.

Cutting deforestation and raising funds to do so are among the top priorities for COP30, which is scheduled for November in the Amazonian city of Belém. Brazil aims to launch a \$125 billion fund at the summit that would provide financing to nations to protect their forests.

Bolivia, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo are other countries experiencing dramatic forest loss, according to WRI. By contrast, Indonesia and Malaysia reduced their rates of forest loss, mainly because of land-restoration programs and fire-control efforts.

Globally, fires overtook agriculture as the leading cause of forest loss, accounting for almost half of the damage, up from an average of about 20 percent in previous years, according to WRI. Other contributors include illegal mining and coca production in Colombia, and conflict and poverty in DRC.