

Russia Warns West of 'Preemptive Strikes' as U.S. Missiles Head to Ukraine



Russia says weapons supplied to Ukraine by the West threaten to escalate the war.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has said that Moscow should consider launching “preemptive strikes” against the West as the U.S. and its NATO Patriot missile systems are being delivered to Ukraine.

“The statements of Western politicians on this topic are complete nonsense,” Medvedev, deputy chair of Russia’s security council, said in an interview with state media outlet Tass, according to Reuters reporting.

“We need to act accordingly. To respond in full. And if necessary, launch preemptive strikes,” he added.

Medvedev’s comments come just two days after President Donald Trump announced secondary tariffs

on Moscow by slapping 100% tariffs on nations that purchase Russian oil if the Kremlin does not enter into a peace agreement with Ukraine within the next 50 days.

Reports also surfaced this week claiming that Trump had mulled the possibility of Ukraine hitting the Russian capital while in a call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy earlier this month.

Trump this week said the U.S. would be sending Patriot missiles to NATO nations that would then be routed to Ukraine, and on Wednesday he suggested the sophisticated weaponry was already en route to Germany.

“They’re already being shipped,” Trump told reporters from Joint Base

Andrews in Maryland. “They’re coming in from Germany and then replaced by Germany. And in all cases, the United States gets paid back in full.”

“I cannot confirm that anything is currently on the way. That is not known to me,” the spokesman reportedly told Swiss broadcasting outlet SRF, before noting that a virtual meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) will be held on Monday, when delivery specifications of U.S. Patriot systems will be hashed out.

But the quick delivery of the U.S. missile systems appears to be a top priority for Washington and NATO as Switzerland, which is not a NATO nation, also announced on Thursday that its anticipated receipt of five Patriot batteries, purchased from the U.S. in 2022 with a pledged delivery date to begin in 2026, had been delayed.

Medvedev on Thursday said the action by NATO amounted to a full-blown war against Russia by the West.

European Union agreed an 18th package of sanctions against Russia, including measures aimed at dealing further blows to the Russian oil and energy industry.

Medvedev said that the Russian economy would withstand the European Union’s latest sanctions package and said Moscow would intensify its strikes against Ukraine.

Lula Hits Back at Trump Tariff Threat as ‘Unacceptable Blackmail’



SAO PAULO (Reuters) - Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has said he would not take orders over tariffs from a foreigner, referring to U.S. President Donald Trump, and later called the United States’ threatened duty “unacceptable blackmail.”

The comments, made during two separate events, mark a continuation of a spat between the two leaders that escalated when the U.S. announced a 50% tariff on Brazil last week.

Trump attributed the tariff, set to start in August, to Brazil’s treatment of former president Jair Bolsonaro and to trade practices against U.S. compa-

nies that he said are unfair. The tariff announcement came days after Lula called Trump an “emperor” the world does not want.

Lula and members of his cabinet have rejected the reasoning behind the tariffs and insisted on Brazil’s sovereignty, while calling for trade negotiations with the United States.

“No foreigner is going to give orders to this president,” Lula said in a speech, using the slang word ‘gringo’, which in Brazil is a common term for foreigners without the pejorative sense it carries in other parts of Latin America.

He added that Brazil would go ahead

with regulation and taxation of U.S. tech firms, telling a gathering of leftist student activists in the state of Goias that tech firms are conduits of violence and fake news disguised as freedom of expression.

Later on Thursday, during an evening TV and radio address to the nation, Lula said the defense of Brazil’s sovereignty extends to protecting itself against the actions of foreign digital platforms.

During the near five-minute address, Lula said Brazil has been negotiating with the U.S. over tariffs, and repeated that the Latin America country had sent a proposal in May.

“We expected a response, and what we received was unacceptable blackmail, in the form of threats to Brazilian institutions and false information about trade between Brazil and the United States,” Lula said.

Brasilia has been holding discussions with industry groups and companies that will be affected by the U.S. tariff, while also readying potential retaliatory measures if talks fall through.

****Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva gestures as he speaks during a meeting with African agriculture ministers at the Itamaraty Palace in Brasilia on May 19, 2025.**

Trump Administration to Incinerate 500 Tons of Emergency Food Meant for Children

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The Trump administration has ordered 500 metric tons of emergency food aid—enough to feed 1.5 million malnourished children for a week.

The high-energy biscuits, intended for children under five living in war and disaster zones, are currently being stored in a warehouse in Dubai and were meant to be shipped out this year, but will instead go to waste due to cuts by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) effectively halting nearly all forms of foreign aid.

Current and former aid workers, speaking anonymously for fear of retaliation, told media that the sheer scale of waste is unprecedented. Despite re-

peated assurances from the administration not to eliminate food aid, U.S. warehouses around the world currently house 60,000 tons of food, including peas and cereal originally bound for famine-stricken Sudan, which the administration is now unable to deliver even if it wanted to after gutting US-AID and firing logistical experts.

The amount of food set to be incinerated would be enough to feed every single child currently starving in Gaza.

A U.S. State Department spokesperson said, “USAID is continuously consulting with partners on where to best distribute commodities at USAID prepositioning warehouses for use in emergency programs ahead of their ex-

piration dates.”

However, contract cancellations and frozen funds under the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) have caused food stocks to be stuck in warehouses in Djibouti, South Africa, Dubai, and Houston.

UNICEF warned in late March that supplies of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) were running low in 17 countries due to funding cuts. This shortage risks leaving 2.4 million severely malnourished children without treatment for the rest of the year.

Action Against Hunger, a non-profit relying on the US for over 30% of its budget, said U.S. aid cuts have already led to at least six child deaths.

Germany Rejects EU’s €2 Trillion Budget Plan as Maneuvers Begin



Flags of the European Union flutter outside The Europa Building in Brussels on March 17, 2025.

BERLIN (Bloomberg) - Germany has rejected the European Commission’s €2 trillion (\$2.3 trillion) budget proposal, hours after it was announced by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels.

“A comprehensive increase in the EU budget is unacceptable at a time when all member states are making considerable efforts to consolidate their national budgets,” the German government chief spokesman said in a statement. “We will therefore not be able to accept the commission’s proposal.”

The statement by the EU’s largest member state points to the battle ahead for the bloc’s executive arm as it tries to get buy-in for the next seven-year budget which begins in 2028.

Earlier on Wednesday, the commission unveiled the draft proposal after intense negotiations that stretched late into Tuesday night and resumed on Wednesday morning.

The figure of €1.98 trillion represents a substantial jump from the €1.2 trillion — equivalent to 1 percent of EU’s output — that was allocated during the last budgetary cycle, between 2021 and 2027.

Included in the draft plan is a €590 billion competitiveness, prosperity and security fund, of which €451 billion is earmarked for helping European companies keep pace with their international rivals.

In order to direct resources to those areas, funding for agriculture — traditionally one of the bloc’s biggest expenses — will be slashed. Farmers will get at least €300 billion in direct payments, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters in Brussels.

That compares with €387 billion in the current agriculture budget, although the mix of targets for the funding will change

somewhat.

The commission also proposed €100 billion in funding for Ukraine for the seven-year period covered by the budget. Bloomberg previously reported that the commission was weighing the move.

Von der Leyen said the money would support Ukraine’s recovery and resilience, as well as the country’s path to EU membership.

Wednesday’s proposal kicks off a laborious process that will see the European Parliament and the European Council, representing member states, weigh in on the process. EU leaders need to give their unanimous backing. The budget must be agreed by the end of 2027.

Debates about the EU’s budget have long been contentious, as the EU grapples with competing demands from agriculture to regional funding for poorer member states.

This year’s proposal, which will govern the bloc’s spending priorities between 2028 and 2034, is even more sensitive given the EU’s aim to bolster its defense capabilities and improve its competitiveness as it faces economic threats from the U.S. A report by former European Central Bank President Mario Draghi last year warned that the EU is facing a €800 billion a year investment gap.

The current long-term budget supports around 50 EU funds from research to energy projects. It is financed primarily by contributions from member states, with richer economies being net contributors to the common pot.

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said the parliament — which must approve the proposal — would ensure that every cent of the budget will count. “Fiscal discipline is not a choice, it is not a responsibility,” she said.

Former Colonial Ruler France Hands Over Last Military Bases in Senegal



After more than six decades of continuous presence, France formally closed its last army bases in Senegal.

PARIS (AFP) - The French military completed its withdrawal from Senegal on Thursday, the last West African country with a permanent troop presence, amid Paris’ waning regional influence.

France has faced opposition from leaders of some of its former colonies in Africa over what they described as a demeaning and heavy-handed approach to the continent.

The French military handed over Camp Geille, its largest base in Senegal, along with a nearby air facility, to the Senegalese government during a ceremony in the capital Dakar.

About 350 French soldiers, who had primarily been tasked with conducting joint operations with the Senegalese army, are now leaving the country, marking the end of a departure process that began in March.

Senegalese Chief of the General Staff Mbaye Cisse said the handover marked “an important turning point in the rich and long military journey of our two countries”.

France is “reinventing partnerships in a dynamic Africa”, Ianni said. “We are turning a page in the military history of our two countries, ... a very special relationship and one essential for the countries of the region.”

The pullout ends the French army’s 65-year presence in Senegal and comes after similar withdrawals across the continent as former colonies increasingly turn their backs on the nation that once ruled them.

Only the tiny Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti will be home to a permanent French army base after Thursday’s withdrawal.

News in Brief

WASHINGTON (Xinhua) - Twenty U.S. states -- most of them led by Democrats -- have sued the administration of President Donald Trump for pulling funding for disaster relief. The group filed a suit that aimed to block the Trump administration from halting billions of U.S. dollars in grants, destined for paying upgrades to infrastructure projects meant to defend against natural disasters. The lawsuit was filed in the federal court in Boston. It alleges that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had no authority to terminate the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program in April, after the program was given the green light by Congress.

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - Dozens of demonstrators gathered outside the U.S. embassy in Kuala Lumpur on Friday to protest against the proposed appointment of Nick Adams, a self-styled “alpha male” influencer, as the United States’ envoy to Malaysia. President Donald Trump last week named outspoken author and political commentator Adams as the White House’s nominee for U.S. ambassador to Malaysia. Adams, a naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Australia, has cultivated a brash social media persona, using a macho, “alpha male” branding to weigh in on cultural issues and appeal to an audience of mainly young men. But it is his posts harshly criticizing Islam and showing support for Israel’s military campaign in Gaza that has angered Muslims in Malaysia, triggering a rare protest against a foreign diplomatic appointment in the Southeast Asian country.

GENEVA (AFP) - Massive cuts to humanitarian budgets risk leaving more than 11 million refugees without desperately needed aid, the United Nations warned Friday. That corresponds to a full third of the number reached last year by the UN refugee agency, UNHCR. In a new report, the agency highlighted a deadly confluence of factors pummeling millions of refugees and displaced people globally: “rising displacement, shrinking funding and political apathy.” “We are right now facing a deadly cocktail,” UNHCR’s head of external relations, Dominique Hyde, told reporters in Geneva. UNHCR has said it needs \$10.6 billion to assist the world’s refugees this year, but so far it has received just 23 percent of that amount. As a result, the agency said it was seeing \$1.4 billion of essential programs being cut or put on hold.

SEOUL (Reuters) - Heavy rains pounded South Korea for a third day on Friday in a deluge that has killed at least four people, forced thousands of people to evacuate their homes and destroyed property and infrastructure. Warnings of torrential rain remained in effect for most of the country’s western and southern regions and the weather service advised extreme caution with landslides and flooding possible through Saturday. More than 5,000 people were evacuated at one time, but the number of people in shelters had fallen to 3,297 as of 11 a.m. (0200 GMT), the Interior and Safety Ministry said.

BEIJING (Reuters) - China has lodged “stern representations” to the Philippines over recent “negative moves” concerning Taiwan, as well as maritime and security issues, a Chinese foreign ministry statement said on Friday. Department of Asian Affairs Director-General Liu Jinsong conveyed the “stern representations” and “strong dissatisfaction” to Philippine Ambassador to China, Jaime FlorCruz, on Friday, the statement added. The Philippine embassy in Beijing did not immediately respond to a request for comment.