

Trump Sends Nuclear Subs Near Russia as Tensions Rise



Nuclear submarines are one of three ways the ways the US is able to fire nuclear weapons.

WASHINGTON (AFP) – U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the deployment of two nuclear submarines in an extraordinary escalation of what had been an online war of words with a Russian official over Ukraine and tariffs.

Trump and Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chairman of Russia's security council, have been sparring on social media for days.

Trump's post on his Truth Social platform abruptly took that spat into the very real -- and rarely publicized -- sphere of nuclear forces.

Trump did not say in his post whether he meant nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed submarines. But in an interview with Newsmax that aired Friday night, Trump said the submarines were "closer to Russia."

Trump's remarks came hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow had started mass producing its hypersonic nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile, and could deploy them to Belarus, a close Russian ally neighboring Ukraine, by year-end.

The nuclear saber-rattling came against the backdrop of a deadline set by Trump for the end of next week for Russia to take steps to ending the Ukraine war or face unspecified new sanctions.

Despite the pressure from Washington, Russia's onslaught against its pro-Western neighbor continues to unfold at full bore.

Putin, who has consistently rejected calls for a ceasefire, said Friday that he wants peace but that his demands for ending the nearly three-and-a-half year war were

"unchanged".

Those demands include that Ukraine abandon territory and end ambitions to join NATO.

Putin, speaking alongside Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, said Belarusian and Russian specialists "have chosen a place for future positions" of the Oreshnik missiles.

The United States and Russia control the vast majority of the world's nuclear weaponry, and Washington keeps nuclear-armed submarines on permanent patrol as part of its so-called nuclear triad of land, sea and air-launched weapons.

Trump told Newsmax that Medvedev's "nuclear" reference prompted him to reposition U.S. nuclear submarines.

Medvedev had criticized Trump on his Telegram account Thursday and alluded to the "fabled 'Dead Hand'" -- a reference to a highly secret automated system put in place during the Cold War to control the country's nuclear weapons.

This came after Trump had lashed out at what he called the "dead economies" of Russia and India.

Medvedev had also harshly criticized Trump's threat of new sanctions against Russia over its war in Ukraine.

Accusing Trump of "playing the ultimatum game," he posted Monday on X that Trump "should remember" that Russia is a formidable force.

India to Continue Buying Russian Oil Despite U.S. Threat



The Russian vessel Tantal, an oil/chemical tanker, is berthed at the far eastern city of Vladivostok, Russia April 3, 2016.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Indian officials have said they would keep purchasing oil from Russia despite the threat of penalties that U.S. President Donald Trump said he would impose, the New York Times reported on Saturday.

Trump last month indicated in a Truth Social post that India would face additional penalties for purchase of Russian arms and oil. However, he later said that he did not care what India does with Russia.

On Friday, Trump told reporters

that he had heard that India would no longer be buying oil from Russia.

Two senior Indian officials said there had been no change in policy, according to the NYT report, which added that one official said the government had "not given any direction to oil companies" to cut back imports from Russia.

Reuters had earlier reported that Indian state refiners stopped buying Russian oil in the past week as discounts narrowed in July.

On July 14, Trump threatened 100% tariffs on countries that buy Russian oil unless Moscow reaches a major peace deal with Ukraine. Russia is the top supplier to India, responsible for about 35% of India's overall supplies.

Tighter Western sanctions aimed at cutting Russia's oil revenue, seen as funding its war against Ukraine, have been increasingly hitting Russian oil supplies for India, which buys more than a third of its oil needs from Russia.

Brazil Lawyer Slams U.S. Meddling in Bolsonaro's Coup Case

BRASILIA (Guardian) -- The supreme court judge presiding over the trial of Brazil's ex-president, Jair Bolsonaro, has said a "cowardly and treacherous" plot is afoot to pave the way for another attack on the South American country's democracy.

Judge Alexandre de Moraes was put under sanctions by the U.S. on Wednesday, as part of an apparent push by Donald Trump to help his ally Bolsonaro escape punishment for allegedly masterminding an attempted coup after losing the 2022 election to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Trump also slapped a 50% tariff on Brazilian imports in response to what he called the "witch-hunt" against the far-right former president.

On Friday, Moraes, a shaven-headed Muay Thai practitioner known by the nickname Xandão ('Big Al'), came out swinging. He told the court that Trump's tariffs and the "spurious" sanctions targeting him and other supreme court justices recently stripped of their U.S. visas, were part

of an "illegal and immoral" ruse to obstruct justice that was being engineered by a group of Brazilian "traitors" who had lobbied foreign authorities to carry out "hostile acts" against the country's economy.

Moraes said the campaign's objectives were identical to those of the January 8, 2023 riots in the capital, Brasília, when hardcore Bolsonaro supporters stormed the supreme court, congress and presidential palace in an attempt to reverse his election defeat. Those rioters, Moraes said, had hoped to generate social chaos that would provoke a military intervention and make way for a coup.

Two and a half years later, Moraes claimed that by lobbying foreign authorities to impose tariffs, the Brazilians behind the alleged plot were trying to trigger "an economic crisis, that would create a social and then a political crisis so that, once again, there might be social instability and the chance of a new putschist attack".

"To the disappointment of these

Brazilian traitors, [that] will not occur," the judge added.

Moraes did not name the "supposedly patriotic Brazilians" he claimed were leading the supposed plot from overseas. But his comments were an unmistakable reference to Bolsonaro's third son, the congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, who moved to the U.S. in February and has admitted to lobbying Trump officials to pressure Brazil over his father's plight.

The supreme court's coup trial is expected to conclude in the coming weeks and Bolsonaro -- who has denied leading a power grab -- is expected to be convicted and sentenced to up to 43 years, meaning the 70-year-old could spend the rest of his life in jail.

Trump's attempt to pressure Brazil's government and judiciary over Bolsonaro's fate has sparked the most severe diplomatic crisis between Brazil and the U.S. in decades. "The U.S. government's interference in the Brazilian justice system is unacceptable," Lula said on Wednesday.

West Pushes Ukraine Deeper Into War With \$10bn Arms Pact



Ukrainian service members walk next to a launcher of a Patriot air defence system, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in an undisclosed location, Ukraine August 4, 2024.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – The United States and NATO are pushing forward with a novel weapons supply mechanism for Ukraine that critics say effectively prolongs the war by using Kyiv as a frontline proxy and forcing it to absorb the heaviest costs of the on-going conflict.

According to sources familiar with the plan, NATO countries will pool funds to purchase U.S. arms from a so-called Priority Ukraine Requirements List (PURL), with a goal of supplying roughly \$10 billion worth of weapons. The mechanism involves NATO allies coordinating payments into a holding account—likely managed by the U.S. Treasury or an escrow fund—to expedite the transfer of U.S. military equipment without the usual lengthy arms sale procedures. This approach aims to replenish Western stockpiles while keeping Ukraine locked in battle.

While framed as a demonstration of solidarity, the scheme highlights a disturbing Western strategy to sustain the war indefinitely by relying on Ukraine to serve as a frontline buffer against Russia. Rather than pursuing a diplomatic solution, Western powers appear focused on escalating Kyiv's military capacity, even as Russian forces continue to control roughly one-fifth of Ukrainian territory.

President Donald Trump, who initially

sought rapprochement with Moscow, recently threatened to impose tariffs on Russia if no progress is made toward ending the war by August 8. Meanwhile, Republican lawmakers have introduced the PEACE Act, legislation that would formalize a U.S. Treasury fund allowing allies to finance the replenishment of U.S. military equipment donated to Ukraine.

Critics warn this approach deepens Ukraine's role as a proxy in a wider geopolitical contest, leaving the country to bear devastating human and material costs. Kyiv's military needs remain constant and severe, including air defense systems, interceptors, rockets, and artillery—evidence of the grinding conflict's toll.

A European official described the \$10 billion arms supply target as ambitious, but the broader implication is a Western commitment to prolong the conflict by funneling ever-larger volumes of lethal aid. A senior NATO military official described the program as a "voluntary effort," but many question the sustainability and morality of continuing to use Ukraine as the frontline for Western strategic aims.

NATO, the White House, and the Pentagon declined to comment. Observers warn that without a meaningful diplomatic path, this new mechanism risks fueling an endless war, with Ukraine paying the highest price.

‘Capitulation’: Columbia University’s Deal With Trump Sparks Outrage



Columbia University students participate in a pro-Palestinian encampment on their campus on April 26, 2024 in New York City.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Columbia University's \$200 million agreement with President Donald Trump's administration marks the end of a months-long showdown, but academics warn it is just the first round of a government "assault" on higher education.

Academics from Columbia and beyond have expressed concerns that the deal -- which makes broad-ranging concessions and increases government oversight -- will become the blueprint for how Trump brings other universities to heel.

The New York institution was the first to be targeted in Trump's war against elite universities, for what the U.S. president claimed was its failure to tackle anti-Semitism on campus in the wake of pro-Palestinian protests.

It was stripped of hundreds of millions of dollars of federal funding and lost its ability to apply for new research grants. Labs saw vital funding frozen, and dozens of researchers were laid off.

But Columbia last week agreed to pay the government \$200 million, and an additional \$21 million to settle an investigation into anti-Semitism.

According to Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, the lack of due process -- with the govern-

ment slashing funding before carrying out a formal investigation -- left Columbia in an "untenable position."

Columbia law professor David Pozen agreed, saying the "manner in which the deal was constructed has been unlawful and coercive from the start" and slamming the agreement as giving "legal form to an extortion scheme."

The deal goes beyond addressing anti-Semitism and makes concessions on international student admissions, race and ethnicity considerations in admissions and single-sex spaces on campus, among other issues.

Columbia also agreed to appoint an independent monitor to implement the deal, share ethnicity admissions data with the government and crack down on campus protests.

Many of the provisions "represent significant incursions onto Columbia's autonomy," said Pozen.

"What's happened at Columbia is part of a broader authoritarian attack on civil society," he said, pointing to similar pressures on law firms and media organizations to fall in line.

According to the law professor, the deal "signals the emergence of a new regulatory regime in which the Trump administration will periodically and unpredictably

News in Brief

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK (Reuters) -- President Donald Trump fired a top Labor Department official on the heels of a market-shocking weak scorecard of the U.S. job market, accusing her without evidence of manipulating the figures and adding to already growing concerns about the quality of economic data published by the federal government. In a second surprise economic policy development, the door for Trump to make an imprint on a Federal Reserve with which he clashes almost daily for not lowering interest rates opened much earlier than anticipated when Fed Governor Adriana Kugler unexpectedly announced her resignation on Friday afternoon. Trump accused Erika McEntarfer, appointed by former President Joe Biden, of faking the jobs numbers. There is no evidence to back Trump's claims of data manipulation by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the statistical agency that compiles the closely watched employment report as well as consumer and producer price data.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Authorities are scouring a mountainous area of western Montana for a military veteran who they say opened fire at a bar, killing four people. Michael Paul Brown, 45, fled The Owl Bar in the small town of Anaconda in a white pickup truck but ditched it at some point, said Lee Johnson, administrator of the Montana Division of Criminal Investigation, which is overseeing the case. He urged residents late Friday to stay at home and on high alert. Brown served in the U.S. Army as an armor crewman from 2001 to 2005 and deployed to Iraq from early 2004 until March 2005, said Lt. Col. Ruth Castro, an Army spokesperson. Brown was in the Montana National Guard from 2006 to March 2009, Castro said. He left military service in the rank of sergeant.

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki, one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, erupted for a second straight day, sending a column of volcanic materials and ash up to 18 kilometers (11 miles) into the sky early Saturday and blanketing villages with debris. No casualties were immediately reported. Another eruption Friday evening had sent clouds of ash up to 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) high and had lit up the night sky with glowing lava and bolts of lightning. The two eruptions happened in a span of less than five hours. Indonesia's Geology Agency recorded an avalanche of searing gas clouds mixed with rocks and lava traveling up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) down the slopes of the mountain. Drone observations showed deep movement of magma, setting off tremors that registered on seismic monitors.

BEIJING (AP) -- A Japanese woman living in China was attacked and injured by a man in a Suzhou subway station, Japanese media outlets said, hours after two Chinese men were seriously injured in violence in Tokyo. The attacks on Thursday raised concern about xenophobic sentiment in both China and Japan that have been blamed for assaults in both countries. It was the third attack involving Japanese living in China since last year. In the two previous cases in China, Chinese authorities have insisted they were isolated incidents. The Japanese broadcaster NHK did not identify the woman injured in Suzhou by name but, citing the Japanese Consulate General in Shanghai, said she was with her child inside a subway station when the attack took place. The child was not injured, and the mother had returned home after reportedly getting treated at a hospital, NHK reported. In Tokyo earlier Thursday, two Chinese men were seriously injured in attacks, and four male assailants wielding unspecified weapons remained at large, according to a statement released by the Chinese Embassy in Japan. The identities of the assailants were unclear.

BOGOTA (Reuters) -- Former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe was sentenced by a judge to 12 years of house arrest for abuse of process and bribery of a public official, in a long-running case over connections to former right-wing paramilitaries. Uribe was convicted of the two charges on Monday by Judge Sandra Liliana Heredia in a witness-tampering case that has run for about 13 years. He has always maintained his innocence. Heredia read the sentence to the court in an afternoon hearing on Friday. Uribe will be fined \$578,000, Heredia's ruling said, and barred from public office for more than eight years. Uribe, whose legal team has said it will appeal, is to report to authorities in Rionegro, in Antioquia province, where he resides, and then "proceed immediately to his residence where he will comply with house arrest," the ruling said.

MERRITT ISLAND, Florida (AFP) -- An international team of four astronauts aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule docked Saturday with the orbiting International Space Station (ISS). "Docking confirmed!" SpaceX posted on social media, along with a video showing the spacecraft making contact with the ISS at 2:27 am Eastern Time (0627 GMT), far above the southeast Pacific Ocean. American astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japan's Kimiya Yui, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Platonov are joining the ISS on a six-month mission. They lifted off Friday morning from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, their capsule mounted on a Falcon 9 rocket. It is the 11th crew rotation mission to the ISS under NASA's Commercial Crew Program, created to succeed the Space Shuttle era by partnering with private industry.