

WORLD

Zelensky says troops active inside Russia

Presence confirmed for 1st time in Belgorod as border battles intensify

KYIV — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky confirmed for the first time on Monday that his country's troops have been active in Russia's Belgorod region, as they seek to protect Ukrainian towns near the border.

Ukrainian troops remain in parts of the neighboring Russian region of Kursk eight months after a cross-border incursion, though Russian forces have recaptured much of the lost territory.

In his nightly video address, Zelensky said Ukraine's top commander, Oleksandr Syrskiy, had presented a report "on the front line, our presence in the Kursk region and our presence in the Belgorod region."

"We continue active operations in the enemy's border areas and this is absolutely justified. The war must return to where it came from," he said. "Our main objective remains the same: to protect our land and our communities in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions from Russian occupiers."

It is the first time in the more than three years since the conflict broke out that Zelensky has explicitly mentioned a Ukrainian presence in Belgorod, a region with a population of about 1.5 million people.

The Russian military acknowledged facing Ukrainian land attacks in the region last month, at a time when Ukrainian forces were under pressure in Kursk.

Zelensky repeated Kyiv's long-held contention that despite Russia's recapturing of areas in Kursk in recent weeks, the operation was successful in that it drew Russian forces away from the conflict's main front line in the eastern Donetsk region.

"Due to the entire Kursk operation, we have managed to reduce

pressure on other front-line sectors, particularly in the Donetsk region," he said.

According to the DeepState military blog, which is considered close to Ukraine's army, troops have occupied a 13-square-kilometer area in the Russian region, near the border village of Demidovka.

Russian military bloggers had reported battles in Belgorod region between Russian and Ukrainian troops.

Meanwhile, the Ukraine air force said on Tuesday that Russia launched 46 drones and an Iskander-M ballistic missile during an overnight attack.

The air force shot down nine drones, with another 31 drones not reaching their targets, likely because of electronic warfare countermeasures, it said on Telegram. It did not say what happened to the remaining six drones or the missile.

In another development, the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih held vigils on Monday to begin three days of mourning for 11 adults and nine children allegedly killed by a Russian missile last week.

Friday evening's strike on Zelensky's home city sprayed shrapnel across a dense residential area, including a playground.

Russia said the strike had targeted a meeting of Ukrainian service members and foreign trainers and killed up to 85 of them, a claim rejected by Kyiv as disinformation.

"No strikes are carried out on social facilities and social infrastructure," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters during a briefing on Monday when asked about Friday's attack.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Next stop: space



From left: NASA astronaut Jonny Kim and Russian cosmonauts Alexey Zubritsky and Sergey Ryzhikov wave from inside a bus ahead of the launch of the Soyuz MS-27 spacecraft, at the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Tuesday. The crew reached the International Space Station just over three hours later. ALEXEI FILIPPOV / TASS

Warmest March raises climate concern

By JULIAN SHEA in London  
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The world is "very firmly in the grip of human-caused climate change", an environmental scientist has said, after data from Europe's climate monitor revealed that the continent had recorded its warmest March, extending a sustained period of record temperatures.

Frederike Otto, from the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial College London, said it was "remarkable" that figures showed that March was 1.6 degrees warmer than before the Industrial Revolution, keeping up a near-unbroken run of record-breaking readings dating back to July 2023.

This March was the warmest on record by a significant margin, 0.26 degrees above the previous monthly record set in 2014, which in addition to causing heat-related issues has led to erratic rainfall patterns.

Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate at the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service, or CCCS, said some areas of Europe had recorded their

driest March on record, whereas others had experienced their wettest in nearly half a century.

The figures for March back up an alarming pattern noted by CCCS at the start of the year, when it reported that 2024 was the warmest year on record globally, and the first calendar year where average global temperatures had passed the symbolic milestone of being 1.5 degrees higher than pre-industrial levels.

"All of the internationally produced global temperature datasets show that 2024 was the hottest year since records began in 1850," CCCS Director Carlo Buontempo said at the time.

Own destiny

"Humanity is in charge of its own destiny, but how we respond to the climate challenge should be based on evidence. The future is in our hands — swift and decisive action can still alter the trajectory of our future climate," he said.

Mauro Facchini, head of earth observation at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Defense Industry and Space, called

the EU's environmental and climate targets "ambitious", but added that "with science, innovation and flagship programs in earth observation such as CCCS, we can make informed decisions to mitigate and adapt to climate change".

In addition to the direct effects of climate change through higher temperatures, there are other consequences, compounding the impact and leading to other environmental problems.

Besides the impact in Europe, CCCS scientists said that climate change was a contributory factor to an extreme heat wave affecting Central Asia in March, and affected rainfall in South America, leading to the deaths of 16 people in Argentina.

Last week, Australia's Bureau of Meteorology said that the country's hottest 12-month period on record had ended with its highest March temperature.

"I am sure everyone is now getting fatigued that these records keep falling," said Australian National University climate scientist Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick. "It's now incredibly predictable."

Briefly

REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
Warning shots as DPRK soldiers cross border

The Republic of Korea's military said on Tuesday it fired warning shots when about 10 soldiers of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea briefly crossed the demarcation line. The military "conducted a warning broadcast and fired warning shots", and the DPRK soldiers moved north, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. "Our military is closely monitoring the movements of the DPRK soldiers and taking necessary measures," it said. Some of the DPRK soldiers were armed, according to the ROK military.

UNITED STATES  
Boeing settles to avoid civil trial over 2019 crash

Boeing has reached a last-minute settlement to avoid a civil trial that was due to start on Monday over the fatal 2019 crash of an Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max plane, the plaintiffs' lawyers said. The Chicago trial was to feature two plaintiffs who lost family members in the calamity, but both cases were settled on Sunday evening, the Clifford law firm told AFP. The Boeing plane crashed on March 10, 2019, just six minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa on its way to Kenya, killing all 157 people on board. Relatives of 155 of the victims had sued Boeing between April 2019 and March 2021 for wrongful death, negligence and other charges.

Court allows DOGE's data access for now

A divided federal appeals court on Monday put on hold an injunction that blocked Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency from accessing US citizens' private data at the treasury and education departments and the Office of Personnel Management. In a 2-1 vote, the 4th United States Circuit Court of Appeals stayed the March 24 preliminary injunction issued by US District Judge Deborah Boardman in Greenbelt, Maryland, while the government pursues its appeal. The Richmond, Virginia-based appeals court separately voted 8-7 against taking up the matter "en banc", meaning all active judges would decide.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Tiny arms, big protection



A health worker collects a blood sample from a child for a malaria diagnostic test in Apac district, Uganda, on Monday, as part of a malaria vaccine rollout program that aims to immunize 1.1 million children under the age of 2. HAJARAH NALWADDA VIA GETTY IMAGES

Rescue efforts wind down in Myanmar, recovery in focus

BANGKOK — Long-shot efforts to find survivors from Myanmar's devastating March 28 earthquake were winding down on Monday, as rescue efforts were supplanted by increasing relief and recovery activity. The death toll surpassed 3,600 and was still climbing.

A situation report issued on Monday by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said more than 17.2 million people are living in the affected areas, and urgently need food, drinking water, healthcare, cash assistance and emergency shelter.

In the capital Nay Pyi Daw, people cleared debris and collected wood from their damaged houses under

drizzling rain, and soldiers removed wreckage at some Buddhist monasteries.

Myanmar Fire Services Department said on Monday that rescue teams had recovered 10 bodies from the rubble of a collapsed building in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-biggest city.

It said international rescuers from Singapore, Malaysia and India had returned to their countries after their work to find survivors was considered completed. The number of rescue teams operating in the residential areas of Nay Pyi Daw has been steadily decreasing.

The magnitude 7.9 quake hit a wide swath of the country, causing

significant damage to six regions and states. The earthquake left many areas without power, telephone or cell connections and damaged roads and bridges, making the full extent of the devastation hard to assess.

Zaw Min Tun, a spokesman for the State Administration Council, said on Monday that the quake's death toll has reached 3,600, with 5,017 injured and 160 missing. Search and rescue operations involved 1,738 personnel from 20 countries, and had helped find and extract 653 survivors, he said.

The quake has been officially named the Big Mandalay Earthquake to ensure consistency in future documentation and referencing, he

added. Previous significant earthquakes also received official names.

The UN report said: "Entire communities have been upended, forcing people to seek shelter in makeshift conditions, disrupting markets, worsening psychosocial distress and bringing essential services — including running water, sanitation and health — to the verge of collapse."

"People left homeless by the earthquakes are exposed to extreme heat during the country's hottest and driest month of the year, and rains have already started in Mandalay — posing an additional threat to those sheltering in the open."

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