

Biden says threat of Putin using tactical nuclear weapons is 'real'



A small number of the Iskander tactical missile systems - seen here - can be used to launch nuclear weapons and has already been transferred to Belarus.
● REUTERS

US President Joe Biden said on Monday the threat of Russian President Vladimir Putin using tactical nuclear weapons is "real", days after denouncing Russia's deployment of such weapons in Belarus.

On Saturday, Biden called Putin's announcement that Russia had deployed its first tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus "absolutely irresponsible," Reuters reported.

"When I was out here about two years ago saying I worried about the Colorado river drying up, everybody looked at me like I was crazy," Biden told a group of donors in California on Monday.

"They looked at me like when I said I worry about Putin using tactical nuclear weapons. It's real," Biden said. Last week, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said his country has started taking delivery of Russian tactical nuclear weapons, some of which he said were three times more powerful than the atomic bombs the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The deployment is Russia's first move of such warheads - shorter-range, less powerful nuclear weapons that could be used on the battlefield - outside Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The US has said it has no intention of altering its stance on strategic nuclear weapons in response to the deployment and has not seen any signs that Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon.

In May, Russia dismissed Biden's criticism of its plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, saying the US had for decades deployed such nuclear weapons in Europe.

The Russian deployment is being watched closely by the US and its allies as well as by China, which has repeatedly cautioned against the use of nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine.

France to shut down climate NGO after protest violence

The French government said Tuesday that it would shut down an activist climate group over a series of recent demonstrations including one that led to fierce clashes with police over a controversial irrigation project.

Government spokesman Olivier Veran accused the Uprisings of the Earth (SLT) coalition of encouraging violence at protests in March against an irrigation reservoir near Sainte-Soline in western France, AFP reported.

"You don't dissolve an association because of its ideas. You dissolve it because there is violence or a risk for public safety," Veran told CNews television. SLT denounced "a very political and extremely worrying dissolution that was demanded from the head of state by the agriculture industry and the FNSEA farmers' union."

"This is a vain attempt to break the thermometer instead of worrying about the temperature," it said. President Emmanuel Macron, who has defended reservoir projects like the one at Sainte-Soline, said in March that while many of the protesters at the site were peaceful, "you had thousands of people who simply came to wage war".

Veran said SLT "whipped up violence at Sainte Soline by inviting rioters, who came from across Europe with metal bars and petanque balls to try and kill police officers".

"The climate question does not justify throwing rocks at police in a field," he said.

SLT is a coalition of several activist associations, which was also behind a recent protest against a sand quarry in western France where protesters tore up fields and equipment at a farm.

The group was also one of several organisers of a banned demonstration at the weekend against a new rail link between the eastern city of Lyon and Turin in Italy. It is part of a new wave of more radical climate activist groups, including Extinction Rebellion, which use direct action to underline their warnings about the dangers to the planet.

On Tuesday, prosecutors also said they had detained 14 people for questioning over vandalism at a protest supported by SLT, against a Lafarge cement plant near the southern city of Marseille. Protesters called the company "one of the most destructive in the world".



● SEBASTIAN SALOM-GOMIS/AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Shootings, violence leave dead and injured across US

AP - Mass shootings and violence killed and wounded people across the US this weekend, including at least 60 shot in the Chicago area alone. Four people were found shot to death in a small Idaho town, a Pennsylvania state trooper was killed in an ambush, and bullets struck 11 teenagers, killing one, at a party in Missouri. "There's no question there's been a spike in violence," said Daniel Nagin, a professor of public policy and statistics at Carnegie Mellon University. "Some of these cases seem to be just disputes, often among adolescents, and those disputes are played out with firearms, not with fists."

Turkish drone strike kills three in Syria

AFP - A Turkish drone strike killed three employees of Syria's Kurdish-run northeast village of Tal Shaeer on Tuesday, a spokesman said.

The strike targeted "a vehicle transporting civilian employees, killing two Kurdish women and a Christian" man, said Farhad Shami, spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). A fourth employee was wounded, he added. Turkish state media on Tuesday cited security sources saying Turkey's MIT intelligence agency had "neutralised" a senior figure in the Kurdish YPG in the area of Tal Rifaat some 27 km northwest of Tal Shaeer. It said he had been active in operations targeting the Turkish military. It did not say that any civilians were killed, or mention Tal Shaeer.

EU nations to train 30,000 Ukraine troops in 2023: Kyiv

European Union member states plan to train as many as 30,000 members of Ukraine's armed forces this year, including from territorial defence units, Kyiv said on Tuesday.

"In 2023, the EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine plans to train 30,000 Ukrainian armed forces personnel, including soldiers of the territorial defence forces," the Defence Ministry in

Kyiv said, AFP reported. The statement follows a pledge from EU officials in February this year that it would train 30,000 Ukrainian troops, building on an initial target of 15,000

personnel. The announcement came as Brussels asked EU member states to back a 50-billion-euro (\$55 billion) package to support Ukraine over the next four years.



● vanguardngr.com

China-US diplomacy ...

However, as time has progressed, this competition has spilled over into the military domain, intensifying their rivalry.

Page 1 > Drawing upon the wisdom of English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, conflicts can be summarized by two key factors: "greed" and "fear." Within this framework, China seeks to ascend and enhance its power, while the United States is apprehensive about losing its international standing.

Over the past few years, tension-generating issues have emerged, exacerbating the existing divisions between the two nations. For instance, the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic remain disputed, with the Americans believing that China deliberately unleashed the virus to undermine the US economy. This divergence in perception has widened the rift between them. Moreover,

incidents such as Chinese balloons hovering in American airspace have further strained their relationship, leading to the suspension of several normal interactions.

The war of words and threats exchanged by authorities on both sides regarding Taiwan also contribute to the mounting tensions.

This implies that the previous economic competitions have gradually transcended into the political and even military realm. From this perspective, Blinken's visit can serve as a platform for normalizing political relations between Washington and Beijing, aiming to prevent the escalation of their differences. The conflict in Ukraine holds immense significance for the Americans, as they are concerned about China aligning with Russia. Notably, it has been five years since a US Secretary of State last visited China, underscoring the

importance of Blinken's visit as an initial step toward political reconciliation with China.

Regarding Ukraine, Blinken said that he had urged China to assist in establishing peace between Russia and Ukraine.

While the United States has made this request to China, it is contingent upon China clearly stating its position concerning Ukraine. The Americans are resolute in their desire to prevent Russia from emerging victorious in the conflict.

Can these diplomatic discussions, seemingly aimed at managing major tensions, ultimately contribute to global peace?

Obviously, the nature of relationships between world powers has a profound impact on global developments. However, it is essential to assess these rela-

tionships through the lens of China's and the United States' national interests. From this perspective, it becomes evident that sharp differences persist between them in key areas. America's adherence to the one China policy and its refusal to formally recognize the independence of Taiwan may appear as mere rhetoric. If China were to pursue military action in Taiwan, the US would undoubtedly respond, perceiving it as a substantial failure on its part.

Notably, European nations, who previously maintained closer ties with China, now officially see Beijing as a threat and have aligned themselves more closely with the United States. In the Asia Pacific region, the US endeavors to uphold its security policies concerning China through various agreements.

Therefore, such diplomatic visits alone cannot yield a comprehensive policy

framework that fosters a tangible vision of world peace. These consultations primarily serve as attempts to manage crises and mitigate the risk of armed conflict.

There is also an element of competition between China and the United States in the Middle East. Can these efforts to manage or control crises contribute to greater stability in this region? Can we anticipate a similar approach by China in improving the relationship between Iran and the West, akin to its role in normalizing Iran-Saudi Arabia relations?

The United States supports the de-escalation process in the Middle East region, as it aims to avoid opening another front amid its competition with China and its involvement in the Ukrainian conflict. However, the dynamics between Iran and Saudi Arabia dif-

fer significantly from those between Iran and the United States. Tehran and Riyadh face fewer internal, regional, and international obstacles to normalize their relations, unlike the numerous obstacles that exist in Iran-US relations. Consequently, unlike China's mediation in the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia, China does not hold a mediatory role between Tehran and Washington. Furthermore, China has not signaled any intention to facilitate the normalization of Iran-US relations. Similarly, the United States does not grant China the same privileges and seeks to contain it. While Washington acknowledges China as a global economic power, it has not recognized China as an international power in areas such as military, political, or cultural influence.

In my view, Iran should take the initiative in this matter on its own.

UN: Over 500k have fled Sudan



AFP - The head of the UN's refugee agency Filippo Grandi said on Tuesday that the number of people who have fled the fighting in Sudan was now more than 500,000 while two million are internally displaced. "Today we pass the mark of half a million refugees from Sudan following the beginning of the conflict," he said at a press conference in Nairobi. Sudan has been riven by conflict since April 15, with the army led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan battling the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces commanded by his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.