

US to supply Ukraine with cluster bombs for first time

The US will supply Ukraine with cluster munitions for the first time after President Joe Biden approved the transfer despite the controversial bombs being banned by most countries. US officials familiar with the decision said cluster munitions would be included in a new military aid package to be unveiled as Washington and western allies try to boost Ukraine's counteroffensive and help its forces regain territory captured by Russia.

The support is set to be announced ahead of next week's NATO summit in Lithuania, but immediately drew criticism from human rights groups as well as from some Democrats in Washington.

While the US has never joined an international convention banning the use of cluster bombs, signed by around 120 countries, it has placed certain internal constraints on the use and transfer of the munitions. Under previous administrations, Washington has also criticized countries such as Syria for

deploying the bombs.

Cluster munitions are weapons that break apart in the air and spread smaller bomblets across an area the size of a football pitch. They are often fired from artillery but can also be dropped from the air.

The bomblets are designed to explode on impact, spraying high-velocity pieces of shrapnel. But a high percentage of the submunitions — between 10 percent and 40 percent, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross — often fail to detonate, in effect turning them into landmines that can pose a threat for years after their initial use.

This has made them a highly contentious form of weaponry, which the United Nations has long urged countries to avoid using in war. Marta Hurtado, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on Friday urged Russia and Ukraine not to deploy them. "The use of such munitions should stop immediately and not be used in any place," she said.



Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday Washington's decision is an "act of desperation" that will have no effect on Moscow's campaign in Ukraine. "It is an act of desperation and shows weakness

against the backdrop of the failure of the much-touted Ukrainian counteroffensive," ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement.

"The latest 'miracle weapon' which Washington

and Kyiv are betting on, without thinking about the grave consequences, will have no effect on the special military operation," she said, using Russia's official term for its campaign in Ukraine.

Dutch government collapses over bitter migration row



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's coalition government collapsed Friday over "insurmountable" differences on how to tackle migration, with

elections expected in November.

Rutte, 56, the Netherlands' longest-serving leader and one of Europe's most experienced

politicians, said days of crisis talks between the four parties failed to produce a deal, according to AFP.

They fell out over Rutte's plans to tighten curbs on reuniting families of asylum seekers, a bid to curb numbers following a scandal last year over overcrowded migration centres.

"It is no secret that the coalition partners have very different views on migration policy," Rutte, the leader of the centre-right VVD party, told a press conference after talks broke down.

"This evening, we have unfortunately reached the conclusion that the differences are insurmountable. For this reason, I will shortly present my written resignation to the king in the name of the whole government." The coalition was Rutte's fourth since he took office in 2010. But it had only taken office in January 2022 after a record 271 days of negotiations and was deeply divided on many issues.

Rutte -- dubbed "Teflon Mark" after the non-stick pan coating for his ability to avoid political ca-

tastrophe -- added that he had the "energy" to stand for a fifth term but that he had to "reflect" first.

The earliest that elections can be held is in mid-November, the Dutch election commission said. Rutte said he would lead a caretaker government until then that would focus on tasks including support for Ukraine.

The sudden collapse sparked bitter recriminations between the four parties in the year-and-a-half-old coalition, which had been dubbed "Rutte IV".



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte delivers a press conference following a cabinet meeting after the collapse of the Rutte IV cabinet in The Hague on July 7, 2023.

PHIL NIJHUIS/ANP/AFP

EU envoy blasts Israel over deadly Jenin raid

A European envoy blasted Israel Saturday over the "proportionality" of the force it uses, as international envoys toured Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank following this week's deadly raid. His remarks echoed UN chief Antonio Guterres who on Thursday told reporters "there was an excessive force used by Israeli forces" in its 48-hour operation, the largest Israel has staged in the Palestinian territory for years, according to AFP.

It included air strikes and armoured bulldozers ripping up streets.

Jenin is a centre for multiple resistance Palestinian groups.

European Union representative to the Palestinian territories Sven Kuehn von Burgsdorff made his comments as he led a delegation of UN officials and diplomats from 25 countries to the camp in the northern West Bank.

"We are concerned about the deployment of weaponry and weapons systems which question the proportionality of the military during the operation," Kuehn von Burgsdorff said of the operation in which 12 Palestinians

and one Israeli soldier were killed.

"This cycle of violence has to end, it cannot continue. If there is no political solution to the conflict, we are going to stand here in a week's time, in a month's time, in a year's time, with nothing changed," he added.

Jenin camp has been the site of several large-scale raids by the Israeli military this year, but this week's was the biggest such operation in the West Bank since the second Palestinian "intifada" or uprising of the early 2000s.



The camp's infrastructure was severely damaged during the raid, which Israel claimed was targeting Palestinian fighters.



European Union representative to the Palestinian territories Sven Kuehn von Burgsdorff gestures during a visit to the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on July 8, 2023.

ZAIN JAAFAR/AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bosnians mark 1995 Srebrenica genocide

AP - A solemn peace march started on Saturday through forests in eastern Bosnia in memory of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, Europe's only acknowledged genocide since World War II.

The annual 100-kilometer (60-mile) march retraces a route taken by thousands of men and boys from the Bosniak ethnic group, made up primarily of Muslims, who were slaughtered as they tried to flee Srebrenica after it was captured by Bosnian Serb forces late in the 1992-95 war. Nearly 4,000 people joined this year's march, according to organizers. The event comes as ethnic tensions in Bosnia still persist with Bosnian Serbs continuing to push for more independence and their open calls for separation.

Japan marks a year since Shinzo Abe assassination



REUTERS - Japan on Saturday marked one year since former prime minister Shinzo Abe was gunned down during an election speech by a man angry at his links to the Unification Church.

The death of Japan's longest serving prime minister, which was caught on video, rattled a nation unused to gun violence.

France protesters rally against police violence

AFP - More than 1,000 people defied a ban and on Saturday gathered in central Paris for a memorial rally, with dozens of marches planned throughout France to denounce police brutality and racial profiling.

Seven years after the death of Adama Traore, his sister had planned to lead a commemorative march north of Paris in Persan and Beaumont-sur-Oise.

But with tensions running high following the riots that were sparked by the June 27 police killing of 17-year-old Nahel M. of Algerian origin at a traffic stop near Paris, a court ruled the chance of public disturbance was too high to allow the march to proceed.