

N Korea threatens nuclear retaliation over US displays of military force



North Korea said on Thursday deployment of US aircraft carriers, bombers or missile submarines in South Korea could meet criteria for its use of nuclear weapons, state media KCNA reported, citing the country's Defence Minister Kang Sun Nam. The comments raise the stakes as each side steps up displays of military force in a standoff over the isolated country's nu-

clear weapons and ballistic missile programs, Reuters reported. The defence minister's statement also accused the United States and South Korea of escalating tensions in the region while criticizing the first meeting by their Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG). "The ever-increasing visibility of the deployment of the strategic nuclear submarine and other strategic

assets may fall under the conditions of the use of nuclear weapons specified in the DPRK law," the statement said. DPRK is short for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Kang's remark was aimed at the nuclear-armed Ohio-class US ballistic missile submarine that arrived at a port in the southern city of Busan

earlier this week. "The phase of a military clash on the Korean Peninsula has surfaced as a dangerous reality," the KCNA report said. South Korea's Ministry of National Defense said on Friday the NCG meeting and the deployment of the USS Kentucky were "just defensive countermeasures" against the North's nuclear and missile threats.

The KCNA report came after a US soldier crossed the border into North Korea on Tuesday at a time of heightened tension between the two Koreas and the United States. North Korea has yet to comment on the incident involving the US soldier. Last year, the state codified a new, expansive nuclear law declaring its status as a nuclear-armed state "irreversible".

Zelenskiy sacks Ukraine's ambassador to UK after criticism



President Volodymyr Zelenskiy dismissed Vadym Prystaiko as Ukraine's ambassador to Britain on Friday, days after the envoy publicly criticised the president. A presidential order, which said Prystaiko had also been removed as Ukraine's representative to the International Maritime Organization, gave no reason for the dismissal, Reuters reported. In an interview with Sky News last week, Prystaiko was asked about remarks by outgoing British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace suggesting Kyiv should show more gratitude for weapons deliveries from its allies to fight Russian forces.

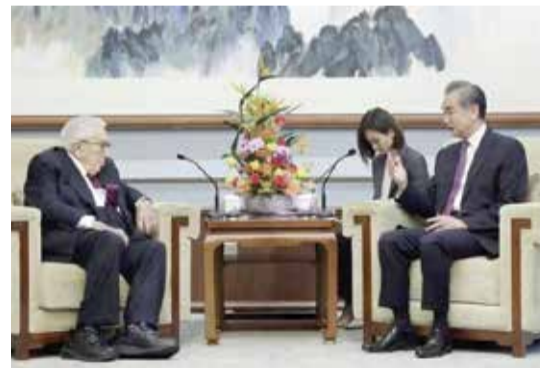
Zelenskiy responded by saying Ukraine was always grateful to Britain, a staunch ally. He was also quoted by British media as saying Wallace could let him know how to express his gratitude or how "we could get up in the morning and express our words of gratitude to the minister." Asked whether Zelenskiy was being sarcastic, Prystaiko told Sky there was "a little bit of sarcasm" when the president "said that each and every morning he will wake up and call Ben Wallace to thank him." "I don't believe that this sarcasm is healthy," he said, adding that the Russians "have to know that we're working together." Zelenskiy's order did not say who would replace Prystaiko, 53, an experienced diplomat and former vice prime minister who had held the post as ambassador to Britain for three years.

Ukraine's ambassador to the UK
Vadym Prystaiko
TOM NICHOLSON/REUTERS

White House regrets Kissinger had better access in Beijing than US officials

The White House on Thursday expressed regret that Henry Kissinger was able to get more of an audience in Beijing than some sitting US officials, after the former top diplomat held talks in China. Kissinger - an architect of normalizing ties between Washington and Beijing in the 1970s as secretary of state and national security advisor in the administrations of Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford - was welcomed warmly as an "old friend" by Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday amid efforts by Beijing and Washington to mend frayed ties, Reuters reported.

The White House said it was aware of the trip but that it was a private visit by a citizen. As part of those meetings, Kissinger, 100, also met with China's top diplomat Wang Yi and with defense minister Li Shangfu, who has declined direct talks with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. General Li, appointed in March, remains sanctioned by the US over his role in a 2017 weapons purchase from Russia's largest arms exporter, Rosoboronexport. Chinese officials have repeatedly said they want those sanctions, imposed in 2018, dropped to facilitate discussions. "It's unfortunate that a private citizen can meet with the defense minister and have a communication and the United States can't," said White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby. "That is something that we want to solve. This is why we continue to try to get the military lines of communication back open because when they're not open and you have a time like this when tensions are high, miscalculations also, then the risk goes high." Kirby said that administration officials "look forward to hearing from Secretary Kissinger when he returns, to hear what he heard, what he learned, what he saw." Tensions between the world's two largest economies have heightened over a range of issues, including the war in Ukraine, Taiwan and trade curbs. Washington has tried to reestablish communication channels on these and other issues through recent high-profile diplomatic visits.



In this photo released by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger (l.) meets with Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi in Beijing on July 19, 2023.
AP

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN: World moving toward new multipolar era



AP - Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the world's nations Thursday that the post-Cold War period is over and the world is moving toward a new multipolar era already marked by the highest level of geopolitical tensions and major power competition in decades. He warned that these divisions are undermining the cornerstone of the UN - having all countries work together to solve global challenges.

Erdogan urges West to address Russia's expectations



AFP - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on "Western countries to follow up on Putin's expectations over the Black Sea grain deal, as he warned Moscow's withdrawal from the wartime initiative would have a significant negative impact. He said Friday he wants to convince his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to re-join the agreement on Ukrainian grain exports via the Black Sea.

British PM avoids wipeout in local polls



REUTERS - British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's governing Conservatives lost two strategically important parliamentary seats on Friday but unexpectedly retained former leader Boris Johnson's old constituency in a setback for the opposition Labour Party. The Conservatives' narrow victory in Uxbridge and South Ruislip gave Sunak some breathing space to try to narrow Labour's large lead in the polls by tackling inflation and a cost-of-living crisis before a national vote expected next year.