

The latest News Around Us in Feb #16



Russia 'increasingly frustrated' by lack of momentum: US defense official

'We continue to believe, based on what we've observed, that this resistance is greater than what the Russians expected.' Link in bio.



All 13 Ukrainians guarding the island were killed.

Ukraine to get \$350M more in US defense aid, including anti-armor, small arms, munitions

Blinken said the US has now committed more than \$1 billion to Ukraine in the past year

Peter Aitken - Fox News

Fox News correspondent Steve Harrigan reports from Kyiv, Ukraine, where small arms battles took place overnight.

The U.S. will further bolster Ukraine's defense in the face of Russian invasion with an unprecedented third payment of \$350 million, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced Saturday.

The defense aid will include anti-armor, small arms and various munitions, and body armor and related equipment, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Saturday.

"I have authorized, pursuant to a delegation by the President, an unprecedented third Presidential drawdown of up to \$350 million for immediate support to Ukraine's defense," Blinken said Saturday.

"This brings the total security assistance the United States has committed to Ukraine over the past year to more than \$1 billion."

Blinken previously authorized an initial payment of \$60 million last fall and another payment of \$200 million in December.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken addresses the United Nations Security Council, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022. (AP Photo/Richard Drew) (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

"This package will include further lethal defensive assistance to help Ukraine address the armored, airborne, and other threats it is now facing," Blinken added.

"It is another clear signal that the United States stands with the people of Ukraine as they defend their sovereign, courageous, and proud nation."

The economic fight that has taken place around the war remains a key element in trying to hold Russia accountable and limit its impact as well as keep Ukraine on even footing where possible.

"While there may not be an Article 5 from NATO in our future, there's certainly nothing to stop the United States from checking his power with air power space assets, cyber assets, shows of force," Brig. Gen. Blaine Holt [told Fox News](#).

And blockchain analytics firm Elliptic reported that NGOs and volunteer groups [raised over \\$4 million in cryptoasset donations](#) for Ukraine as of Friday, with over \$3 million coming from a single unknown donor.

European leaders [approved to personal sanctions](#) on Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov, but have yet to agree to cut Russia from the SWIFT banking system.

Some experts fear that Russia may turn to alternative currencies, such as cryptocurrencies, in order to get around the severe economic sanctions already imposed.



'Putin must also understand that the Atlantic alliance is a nuclear alliance... That is all I will say about this.'

Russian forces face 'determined resistance' in push towards Kyiv ***Maria Tsvetkova & Aleksandar Vasovic - Europe***

KYIV, Feb 26 (Reuters) - A defiant President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Ukrainian forces were repelling Russian troops advancing on Kyiv on Saturday, as Western nations announced they were shipping more weapons to help the country's outgunned military.

Reuters witnesses in Kyiv reported occasional blasts and gunfire in the city on Saturday evening, but it was not clear exactly where it was coming from. The capital and other cities have been pounded by Russian artillery and cruise missiles.

A U.S. defence official said Ukraine's forces were putting up "very determined resistance" to the three-pronged Russian advance that has sent hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing westwards, clogging major highways and railway lines.

"We have withstood and are successfully repelling enemy attacks. The fighting goes on," Zelenskiy said in a video message from the streets of Kyiv posted on his social media.

Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what he called a special military operation before dawn on Thursday, ignoring Western warnings and saying the "neo-Nazis" ruling Ukraine threatened Russia's security.

The Kremlin said its troops were advancing again "in all directions" after Putin ordered a pause on Friday. Russia's assault is the biggest on a European state since World War Two and threatens to upend the continent's post-Cold War order.

The crisis has galvanized the NATO Western military alliance, which has announced a series of moves to reinforce its eastern flank. While NATO has said it will not deploy troops to Ukraine, a string of countries are sending military aid.

U.S. President Joe Biden approved the release of up to \$350 million worth of weapons from U.S. stocks, while Germany, in a shift from its long-standing policy of not exporting weapons to war zones, said it would send anti-tank weapons and surface-to-air missiles. [read more](#)

CAPITAL UNDER CURFEW

Ukraine, a democratic nation of 44 million people, won independence from Moscow in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union and wants to join NATO and the EU, goals Russia opposes.

Putin has said he must eliminate what he calls a serious threat to his country from its smaller neighbour, accusing it of genocide against Russian-speakers in eastern Ukraine - a charge dismissed by Kyiv and its Western allies as baseless propaganda.

The United States has observed more than 250 launches of Russian missiles, mostly short-range, at Ukrainian targets, the U.S. defence official said.

A Ukrainian presidential adviser said about 3,500 Russian soldiers had been killed or wounded and that Russian troops had not made serious gains on the third day of fighting. Western officials have also said intelligence showed Russia suffering higher casualties than expected and its advance slowing.

Russia has not released casualty figures and it was impossible to verify tolls or the precise picture on the ground.

"We know that (Russian forces) have not made the progress that they wanted to make, particularly in the north. They have been frustrated by what they have seen is a very determined resistance," the U.S. official said, without providing evidence.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, a close Putin ally, said on Saturday his fighters were also deployed in Ukraine. He said Russian forces could easily take Kyiv and other large cities but their task was to avoid loss of life.

Kyiv's mayor Vitali Klitschko said there was no major Russian military presence in the capital, but that saboteur groups were active and he was imposing a curfew from Saturday evening.

Klitschko, a former world heavyweight boxing champion, later told Germany's Bild tabloid the city was "nearly encircled".





A damaged vehicle is seen at the site of a fighting with Russian raiding troops after Russia launched a massive military operation against Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine February 26, 2022. REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko

Ukrainians faced lengthy queues for money at cash machines and for fuel at petrol stations, where individual sales are mostly limited to 20 litres. Many shops in the city centre were closed and the streets were largely empty on Saturday afternoon.

"I was smart enough to stock up food for at least a month," said Serhiy, out for a walk before the curfew. "I did not trust the politicians that this would end peacefully."

At least 198 Ukrainians, including three children, have been killed and 1,115 people wounded so far in Russia's invasion, Interfax quoted Ukraine's Health Ministry as saying. It was unclear whether the numbers comprised only civilian casualties.

Interfax later cited the regional administration in Donetsk, eastern Ukraine, saying 17 civilians had been killed and 73 wounded by Russian shelling. Moscow says it is taking care not to hit civilian sites.

REFUGEES, SANCTIONS AND PROTESTS

Russia's Defence Ministry said its forces had captured Melitopol, a city of 150,000 in southeastern Ukraine. Ukrainian officials did not comment and Britain cast doubt on the report.

If confirmed, it would be the first significant population centre the Russians have seized.

The city of Mariupol, a key port on the Sea of Azov in southeast Ukraine, remained under relentless shelling on Saturday, its mayor Vadim Boychenko said in a televised address.

"They are shelling schools, apartment blocks," he said.

About 100,000 people have crossed into Poland from Ukraine since Thursday, including 9,000 who have entered since 7 a.m. on Saturday, Polish Deputy Interior Minister Pawel Szefernaker said. [read more](#)

"The most important thing is that people survive," said Katharina Asselborn, wiping away tears while waiting at the Polish border for her sister, aunt and her three children to arrive from their home in Ukraine's Black Sea port of Odessa. "The last 30 kilometres to the border they went on foot."

Ukrainians were also crossing the borders into Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Western nations have also announced new sanctions on Russia, including blacklisting its banks and banning technology exports.

They have stopped short of forcing Russia out of the SWIFT system for international bank payments, though Germany's foreign and economy ministers and French presidential official indicated on Saturday that such a move may come soon. [read more](#)

Several European countries, including Russia's Baltic neighbours Lithuania and Latvia, said they were closing their airspace to Russian airliners. [read more](#)

Protests against the war took place in Berlin, Bern, London, Tokyo, Sydney and other cities worldwide. [read more](#)

Abramov Kiril, a 33-year-old Ukrainian living in Romania who still has grandparents in southern Ukraine, was among around 1,000 people demonstrating against Putin's move outside the Russian embassy in Bucharest.

"If they will not stop him in Ukraine he will go forward," he said. "Somehow, together with everybody, with all the countries in Europe and ... all the world, we need to stop him."

(Reporting by Aleksandar Vasovic, Natalia Zinets and Maria Tsvetkova in Kyiv, Aleksandar Vasovic in Mariupol, Alan Charlish in Medyka, Poland, Fedja Grulovic in Sighetu Marmatiei, Romania and Reuters bureaus; Writing by Robert Birsel, Gareth Jones and Alex Richardson; Editing by William Mallard and David Clarke)

Zelensky refuses US offer to evacuate, saying 'I need ammunition, not a ride'
Sharon Braithwaite - CNN



(CNN)Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has turned down an offer from the United States of evacuation from the capital city Kyiv, the Ukraine embassy in Britain said Saturday on Twitter.

"The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride," Zelensky told the US, according to the embassy.

"Ukrainians are proud of their President," the tweet adds.

In a video posted on Saturday morning entitled "do not believe the fakes," Zelensky revealed that he is still in Kyiv.

"I am here. We are not putting down arms. We will be defending our country, because our weapon is truth, and our truth is that this is our land, our country, our children, and we will defend all of this," he said.

"That is it. That's all I wanted to tell you. Glory to Ukraine," he added.

Zelensky remains a "prime target for Russian aggression," US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said Thursday evening amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Battle moves into Kyiv as Ukrainians fight to keep control of their capital

It echoed Zelensky's own words that his intelligence said he has become a key target.

"According to our information, the enemy marked me as target №1, my family - as target №2," Zelensky said Thursday.

"They want to destroy Ukraine politically by destroying the head of state. We have information that enemy sabotage groups have entered Kyiv."

Merchant ships have been targeted by Russian missiles, while the French Navy intercepted a cargo vessel heading for St. Petersburg, reports say
Sam Tabahriti - Business Insider



Merchant ships appear to have been targeted. Vadim Ghirda/AP

The movements of merchant and cargo ships are being scrutinized amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine. BBC News reported Saturday that France stopped a cargo ship en route to Russia's St Petersburg.

On Friday, a tanker crew had to abandon ship after reportedly being hit by a Russian missile. The movements and activities of merchant and cargo ships are under renewed scrutiny as the Ukraine invasion continues.

BBC News reported Saturday that the French Navy had intercepted a cargo ship in the English Channel that was bound for St Petersburg, Russia. French border forces are inspecting the cargo to establish whether it belongs to a company targeted by EU sanctions against Moscow, the outlet reported.

Meanwhile, merchant ships are increasingly becoming the target of Russian missiles, The Maritime Executive reported.

In one incident on Friday, the crew of a small chemical tanker was forced to abandon ship, the outlet reported, adding that two crew members were injured. It cited a tweet from Ukraine's OSINT Academy.

The secretary-general of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Kitack Lim, is urging "all parties to take steps to ensure" safe passage across the seas.

Lim told Insider he supports and stands with UN secretary-general António Guterres' call for hostilities to cease immediately. He added: "I am gravely concerned about the spillover effects of the military action in Ukraine on global shipping, and logistics and supply chains."

"Along with the people of Ukraine, innocent ships, seafarers and port workers engaged in legitimate trade should not be adversely impacted by this growing crisis. Shipping, particularly seafarers, cannot be collateral victims in a larger political and military crisis — they must be safe and secure," Lim said.

Russia was seen sailing into the Black Sea earlier in February, bringing military power closer to Ukraine, Insider reported. Russia's Ministry of Defense had said the ships were moving into the area to "work out the actions of the Navy and Aerospace Forces to protect Russian national interests in the world ocean."

In a statement issued on the IMO's website, on Friday, Lim said: "The security situation in Ukraine is impacting trade by sea. The safety of marine personnel including seafarers is vital. Shipping is essential to global trade — as has been proven during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic."

He added: "I urge all parties to take steps to ensure the protection of seafarers, vessels, and cargo."

Ukraine accuses Russian soldiers of stealing uniforms and vehicles to enter Kyiv



Footage which Ukrainian officials say shows Ukrainian vehicles that had been stolen by Russian soldiers, being used on February 25, 2022, as a disguise to get closer to Kyiv. State Special Communications Service of Ukraine/Facebook

Ukrainian officials on Friday accused Russian soldiers of dressing up in Ukrainian uniforms. They claimed Russian soldiers used the uniforms and stolen vehicles to approach the capital, Kyiv.

Officials posted video purporting to show the vehicles. It comes as Russian forces

Ukrainian officials accused Russian soldiers of stealing Ukrainian uniforms and vehicles early Friday and using them to lead a convoy towards the capital, Kyiv.

In a Facebook post made around 9 a.m. local time, Deputy Defense Minister Anna Malyar claimed that Russian forces "seized two Ukrainian army vehicles and changed into Ukrainian uniforms."

At the time, they were "moving at speed to the center of Kiev" from the side of Oblon, a district to the north of the city. "They are followed by a column of Russian military trucks," she added. "They will surely be destroyed."

It came on the second day of President Vladimir Putin's all-out invasion of the country. Malyar's claim was repeated on Facebook by the Ukrainian State Service for the Special Communications and Information Protection. It accused Russia of "cunningly trying to break into Kyiv."

The vehicles stolen were two armored personnel carriers and three military trucks, the service said.

The service also added a video which purports to show the convoy, which Insider was unable to verify. The grainy footage appears to be video of a surveillance monitor, showing two APCs and an unidentifiable vehicle speeding along a wide street.

According to Kyiv Independent reporter Anastasiia Lapatina, the Russian soldiers were "neutralized." She did not provide a source.

Representatives for the Ministry of Defense and the Special Communications Office did not immediately respond to Insider's request for further details.

The accusation comes after CNN reported large explosions in the capital overnight. International opinion is divided on whether disguising oneself as the enemy constitutes a war crime.

Some experts say it is a legitimate tactic so long as the soldiers are not disguised at the moment of opening fire, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

