



UKRAINE INVASION REACTIONS

The prayers of the entire world are with the people of Ukraine tonight as they suffer an unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russian military forces. ... The world will hold Russia accountable.

US President Joe Biden

In the name of humanity, do not allow to start in Europe what could be the worst war since the beginning of the century. The conflict must stop now.

UN chief Antonio Guterres

We don't have Nato troops in Ukraine, and we don't have any plans to send Nato troops into Ukraine.

Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg

These are among the darkest hours of Europe since the Second World War. The EU will respond in the strongest possible terms and agree on the harshest package of sanctions we have ever implemented.

EU Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell

We will respond without weakness to this act of war, with calm, determination and unity.

French President Emmanuel Macron

President Putin has chosen a path of bloodshed and destruction by launching this unprovoked attack on Ukraine. The UK and our allies will respond decisively.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson

You are using a typical Western media question method of using the word invasion. China is closely monitoring the latest situation. We call on all sides to exercise restraint to prevent the situation from getting out of control.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying



(From bottom, anti-clockwise) Ukrainian military vehicles move past Independence square in central Kyiv, yesterday and rescuers work at the crash site of the Ukrainian Armed Forces' Antonov aircraft, which, according to the State Emergency Service, was shot down in Kyiv region, Ukraine, in this handout picture released yesterday. Air raid sirens rang out in downtown Kyiv yesterday as cities across Ukraine were hit with what Ukrainian officials said were Russian missile and artillery strikes.

PHOTO: AFP

Tears, defiance in Ukraine as Russia attacks

AFP, Chuguiy

A son wept over the body of his father among the wreckage of a missile strike in a residential district in the eastern Ukrainian town of Chuguiy as the country reeled yesterday from Russia's invasion.

"I told him to leave," the man in his 30s sobbed, next to the twisted ruins of a car.

Nearby a woman screamed curses into the wintry sky.

A missile crater, some four to five metres wide, was scoured into the earth between two devastated five-storey apartment buildings. Firefighters battled to extinguish the remains of a blaze.

Several other buildings on the street were seriously damaged, their windows shattered and doorframes hanging in the frigid morning air.

It was among the first reported damage after Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine early yesterday, with explosions heard in several locations across the country in the early morning hours.

Residents said a 13-year-old was among those killed in the town, but there was no definitive death toll from the authorities.

Sergiy, 67, tried to use the leg of an Ikea table to block up his smashed window. He had received a few bruises but said he was fine.

"I'm going to stay here, my daughter is in Kyiv and it's the same there," he told AFP.

Sergiy thought the target had been the nearby military airfield, close to Ukraine's second city Kharkiv and just 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the Russian border.



"It was one of the targets that Putin had cited, I'm not even surprised," he said, refusing to give his surname.

"We will hang in there."

Thick black smoke could be seen billowing from the direction of the airfield – one of a raft of strategic locations across the country pounded by Moscow's firepower in an opening barrage.

A few hours later teacher Olena Kurilo, 52, emerged from the town's hospital with her face swathed in bandages. A missile had blasted shards of glass from her windows into her face.

Doctors said 20 wounded people remained in hospital for treatment.

"I only managed to think in that second 'My God, I'm not ready to die,'" Kurilo said.

"I was in shock, I felt no pain."

She said she "never thought" that such an attack would come, but now it has she was in no mood to surrender.

"I will do everything for Ukraine, as much as I can," she said. "Never, under any conditions will I submit to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin. It is better to die."

Across Ukraine's vulnerable eastern front civilians and soldiers scrambled to react as one of the world's most powerful militaries began what authorities warned was a "full-scale invasion".

Some 250 kilometres to the south – along the frontline where Russia-backed separatists have been fighting Ukraine – authorities were rushing to evacuate civilians as fighting raged.

Local administrations reported heavy missile bombardments as Russian forces sought to advance – cutting gas and electricity, and making evacuations impossible in some areas.

Europe braces for influx of refugees

REUTERS, Warsaw

Central European countries yesterday braced for the arrival of refugees fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with Poland setting up reception points on its border and Hungary and Slovakia planning to send troops to manage the likely influx.

Ukrainians started trickling into Poland, with dozens arriving at the normally quiet Medyka crossing, some carrying luggage and accompanied by children.

Small groups of people also fled into Hungary yesterday through the Beresgovany crossing, some coming from as far as Kyiv, a Reuters eyewitness said.

Hungary has also said it will send troops to its border to help process refugees.



Ukrainian citizens protest against Russia's military operation in Ukraine in front of the Russian embassy in Paris, France, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'INVASION' OF UKRAINE Developments

AGENCIES

Russia has begun a large-scale military attack on Ukraine, its southern neighbour, on the orders of Russian President Vladimir Putin. There are reports of attacks on Ukrainian military infrastructure across the country, and Russian convoys entering from all directions. Here is what we know so far.

PUTIN ORDERS ATTACK

In a televised speech at 05:55 Moscow time, Putin announced a "military operation" in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, a mainly Russian speaking region.

Putin said Russia was intervening as an act of self-defence. Russia did not want to occupy Ukraine, he said, but would demilitarise and "de-Nazify" the country. He urged Ukrainian soldiers in the combat zone to lay down their weapons and go home, but said clashes were inevitable and "only a question of time". And he added that any intervention from outside powers to resist the Russian attack would be met with an "instant" response.

RUSSIAN MILITARY OFFENSIVE

The full scope of the Russian military operation was not immediately clear. According to Ukrainian officials, the initial wave of strikes appeared to

involve cruise missiles, artillery and airstrikes which struck military infrastructure and border positions, including airbases. Three hours into the attack, the Russian defence ministry was claiming to have "neutralised" Ukraine's airbases and air defences.

Although most of the airstrikes were concentrated to the east, strikes were also reported in the west of Ukraine including in Lutsk and Ivano-Frankivsk. Ukrainian officials from the border guard service and elsewhere were also reporting an armoured incursion from Belarus through the Senkiivka border crossing in the north of the country backed by Belarusian troops. There were also reports of Russian troops crossing the border to the east of Kharkiv and Russian armour moving into Ukraine from Crimea suggesting a three-pronged attack from north, south and east, with Reuters releasing video of Russian tanks in Mariupol. However earlier reports of an amphibious landing in Odessa were denied by some Ukrainian officials.

UKRAINE'S FIGHTBACK

The Ukrainian armed forces have said they have shot down five Russian planes and a helicopter and inflicted casualties on invading troops. However Russia's defence ministry has denied that its aircraft were shot down. Ukraine has declared martial law – which

means the military takes control temporarily – and has cut diplomatic ties with Russia. President Zelensky urged Russians to protest against the invasion and said weapons would be distributed to anyone in Ukraine who wanted them.

Meanwhile Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba implored the world to impose devastating sanctions, including banning Russia from the international Swift bank transfer system. The Russian attack followed the declaration of a no-fly zone for civilian aircraft in the north-east of Ukraine via a so-called Notam – notice to airmen – in the early hours of Thursday. A few hours later Ukrainian officials announced the suspension of internal civilian air traffic.

RESIDENTS SEEK SHELTER

In Kyiv there are huge jams on expressways as people flee the city. Social media testimonies speak to a growing sense of panic, with some saying they are being rushed into bomb shelters and into basements. Television footage has showed people praying in the streets. Many people in Kyiv have sought shelter in underground metro stations. There are also long queues

at petrol stations and cash machines. Further east in Kramatorsk, in the eastern Donetsk region, the BBC's Eastern European Correspondent Sarah Rainsford said people did not expect such a full-on assault.

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