



### KYIV UNDER ATTACK

Ukrainian National Guard servicemen take positions in central Kyiv; bodies of Russian servicemen wearing Ukrainian service uniform lie inside and beside a vehicle after Ukrainian forces foiled their attempt to infiltrate in the capital; and a woman with a child walks in front of a damaged residential building at Koshytsa Street, a suburb of Kyiv, where a military shell allegedly hit. These photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



## Ukraine ‘left alone’ to fight Russia

Says Zelensky, vows to stay in country despite being the ‘number one target’

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's president said Friday his country had been left on its own to fight Russia after the Kremlin launched a large-scale invasion.

“We have been left alone to defend our state,” Volodymyr Zelensky said in a video address to the nation after midnight.

“Who is ready to fight alongside us? I don't see anyone. Who is ready to give Ukraine a guarantee of Nato membership? Everyone is afraid,” he added.

Zelensky also said that Russian “sabotage groups” had entered the capital Kyiv, and urged the city's citizens to remain vigilant and observe a curfew.

The president added that he and his family remained in Ukraine, despite Russia identifying him as “target number one”.

“They want to destroy Ukraine politically by taking down the head of state,” Zelensky said.

Wearing military fatigues, he accuses European leaders of taking insufficient action to slow the Russian advance.

“The columns of tanks and the air strikes are very similar to what Europe saw a long time ago, during WW2 - something about which it said “never again,” he says.

“But here it is, again. Now, in 2022. 75 years after WW2 ended.”

Zelensky adds it isn't too late to stop Russian “aggression” if European leaders act swiftly, and calls on citizens across the EU to protest and force their governments into more decisive action.

European Union leaders agreed at an emergency summit Thursday what they said was a sweeping package of economic sanctions that would have “massive and severe consequences” on Russia. But they stopped short of cutting Russia off from the global SWIFT banking system after economic powerhouse Germany pushed back at calls for the tough move from other member states.



## ‘Pariah’ Putin mocks global isolation

AFP, Moscow

Russia's invasion of Ukraine risks making President Vladimir Putin an international pariah, but he does not fear such isolation – quite the contrary, experts say.

The attack on Thursday led the United States and its allies to agree on a “devastating” sanctions package against Russia, after Nato, EU and G7 leaders condemned the invasion and vowed to hold Moscow accountable.

“Putin is now recognised as THE most imminent threat to our system of Western liberal market democracy,” said Timothy Ash, an emerging markets strategist at BlueBay Asset Management.

Western leaders “feel totally let down and threatened by Putin”, who has marked himself out as “the number one pariah” of the West, he added in a note to clients.

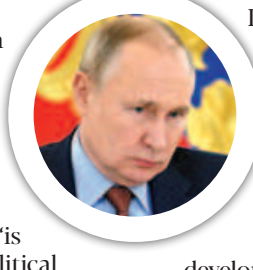
The result, said Comfort Ero, president and CEO of the International Crisis Group think-tank, is that Russia “is likely to find itself in unprecedented political and economic isolation for a long time”.

Russia was already targeted with rounds of sanctions after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and after the poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in 2020.

But no measure seemed to have any effect on the Russian president, other than increasing his intransigence.

“For a year and a half the Kremlin has actively prepared for the fact that the West will impose the most severe sanctions possible,” Tatiana Stanovaya, founder of the R.Politik analysis firm, told AFP.

For Putin, “sanctions don't have the aim of preventing Russian aggression but of curbing Russia's development,” she said, adding that



Moscow expects a long confrontation with the West.

Among possible further measures, Washington and Brussels could cut Russia off from SWIFT, the global financial messaging system used to move money around the world, although US President Joe Biden noted on Thursday that is not a step much of Europe yet “wishes to take”.

Russia has prepared itself, particularly by growing its foreign exchange reserves, which total about \$640 billion.

“Abundant currency reserves, the soaring price of oil and a low debt-to-GDP ratio will help Russia weather the immediate hit of the sanctions,” said Oleg Ignatov, a Russia expert with the International Crisis Group.

“But in the longer-term, they will compound the country's economic stagnation.”

Russia is one of the world's leading producers of crude, which soared to levels not seen since 2014 after the invasion began.

The Kremlin says it has foreseen such developments. “In order that this emotional period be as temporary as possible, all necessary measures have been taken,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

He also downplayed the diplomatic impact. “Of course we could have problems with a number of states. But we were having problems with these states even before,” Peskov said.

Isolated diplomatically and economically from the West, Putin could turn elsewhere, such as China or Iran. Both of those countries have so far seemed hesitant to condemn Russia.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan was visiting Moscow on Thursday.

Beijing said it understands Moscow's “reasonable concerns on security issues” over Ukraine, while Tehran said “the Ukraine crisis is rooted in Nato's provocations.”

## INVASION OF UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

AGENCIES

### KYIV UNDER ATTACK

Gunfire has been heard in central Kyiv and there are reports of heavy fighting in the city's northern suburbs after Ukraine said it expected a Russian armoured attack on the capital and its outskirts. The defence ministry urged citizens to resist when Russian forces entered Kyiv, telling residents to inform authorities of all troop movements, and “make molotov cocktails and neutralise the enemy”. Explosions rocked Kyiv in the early hours in preparations for the Russian advance, with Ukraine claiming it had shot down a Russian military aircraft flying over the capital. Officials said a tower block had been set on fire.

### RUSSIAN MILITARY GAINS

Russia has “eliminated” Ukraine's air defences and has complete air superiority but Ukraine is putting up stiff resistance, according to a senior Western intelligence officer.

However British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace said Russian army failed to deliver on the first day of its invasion. Moscow's defence ministry said its military has destroyed over 70 Ukrainian military targets, including 11 airfields. Earlier

Russian forces captured Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Moscow also claimed to take Gostomel airfield and key Hostomel airfield near Kyiv.

### SANCTIONS BUT NO TROOPS

EU leaders agree to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine with “severe” sanctions targeting its financial, energy and transport sectors. US President Joe Biden had earlier announced new sanctions on Russia, including freezing assets of major banks and cutting off high-tech exports to the country. He says excluding Moscow from the SWIFT international banking system is also an “option”. Biden says he will not send US troops but will “defend every inch of Nato territory”.

### ANTI-WAR PROTESTS AND ARRESTS

Anti-war protests have attracted thousands of people in cities across

Russia, with local authorities swiftly cracking down on the unsanctioned rallies. Police had made at least 1,702 arrests in 53 Russian cities. Protests against the Russian aggression have been held around the globe demanding

end of war.

### SIGNS OF DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION

China's foreign ministry said Putin told his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in a call that Russia is willing to hold high level talks with Ukraine. China has refused to call Russia's action in Ukraine an “invasion” or criticise Moscow despite intensifying assaults from Russia's military. Putin also held talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emanuel Macron, who called for cessation of hostilities. However Putin got support from Iran and Myanmar leaders who said the offensive was justified against western aggression.

### 5M TO FLEE ABROAD: UN

Fuel, cash and medical supplies are running low in parts of Ukraine after Russia's invasion, which could drive

up to 5 million people to flee abroad, UN aid agencies said. At least 100,000 people are uprooted in Ukraine after fleeing their homes since Russia launched its assault on Thursday, while several thousand have already crossed into neighbouring

countries including Moldova, Romania and Poland, UN refugee agency spokesperson Shabia Mantoo said.



## Covid cases continue retreat, except in Asia

AFP, Paris

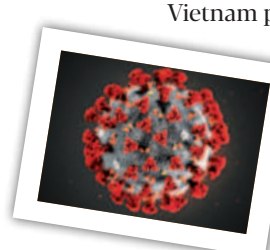
The Covid-19 pandemic continued its strong retreat this week around the world, with the number of cases cut by half since their peak a month ago.

But in Asia the number of cases remained stubbornly high, increasing by a fifth.

The average number of global daily cases dropped for the fourth week in row, by 16 percent to 1.66 million, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

Over a month the decrease in cases is more spectacular: they have been cut by half since they soared to peaks of 3.37 million in the week of January 21, due to the highly contagious Omicron variant.

There were 39 percent fewer cases in the Middle East, 37 percent fewer in the United States-Canada zone, down 24 percent in both Africa and the Latin America-Caribbean zone, a fifth fewer in Europe and 12 percent less in Oceania.



Hong Kong saw the biggest increase in new cases this week, with the number increasing by 331 percent compared to the previous week, prompting it to toughen its testing and social distancing requirements.

New Zealand followed with 187 percent more, South Korea with 85 percent more, Vietnam plus 71 percent, while cases were up 36 percent in Singapore.

Germany overtook Russia to record the highest number of new cases, with an average of 164,600 infections a day, which was still a drop of nine percent. Russia had 155,400 new cases, a drop of 17 percent, while South Korea took third place with 121,900, an increase of 85 percent.

The number of Covid-linked deaths continued its decline, dropping by 10 percent globally, to 9,348 per day.

The US again mourned the most deaths over the week, with an average of 1,905 per day, followed by Brazil (784) and Russia (772).



Members of the Israeli security forces chase a Palestinian protester during clashes following a demonstration to commemorate the 1994 Ibrahimi Mosque massacre, in the centre of the West Bank town of Hebron, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Seven dies in Sumatra quake

AFP, Padang

Seven people died and dozens more were injured when a 6.2-magnitude earthquake rocked Indonesia's Sumatra island yesterday, with residents shuttling loved ones to safety as buildings crumbled around them.

The quake came just minutes after a less violent tremor, as terrified residents had begun evacuating their houses.

The quake hit the island's north at a depth of 12 kilometres, about 70 km from the town of Bukitingggi in West Sumatra province, according to the United States Geological Survey.

The quake was felt in the neighbouring provinces of Riau and North Sumatra and as far away as Malaysia and Singapore.

No tsunami warning has been issued.