

‘Learn the word of reparations’

Zelensky vows to rebuild Ukraine, says Russia will pay

AFP, Kyiv

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday promised Ukrainians that damage to infrastructure inflicted by invading Russian forces would be repaired and that Moscow would foot the bill.

“We will restore every house, every street, every city and we say to Russia: learn the word of reparations and contributions. You will reimburse us for everything you did against our state, against every Ukrainian in full,” Zelensky said in a video statement.

In a late night video posted on the Telegram messaging service on Wednesday, he said that his country had thwarted Russia’s “sneaky” plans, saying he was proud of the “heroic” resistance to Moscow’s invasion.

“We are a nation that broke the enemy’s plans in a week. Plans written for years: sneaky, full of hatred for our country, our people,” Zelensky said.

The president said he “sincerely admired the heroic residents” of cities who have resisted the advance of Russian forces.

He added that around 9,000 Russian soldiers had been killed since the invasion began a week ago, a claim not immediately verifiable as Moscow does not report its losses.

On Twitter, Zelensky wrote that he had spoken to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and “thanked him for the leadership in imposing anti-Russian sanctions”.

“Stressed the need to expand restrictive measures,” he added. “The bombing of civilians in Ukraine must be stopped immediately.”



Two women sit on the ground with a child at the train station in Lviv, western Ukraine, yesterday. Russian forces have taken over the Ukrainian city of Kherson, local officials confirmed on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

Army of cyber hackers rise up to back Ukraine

AFP, Paris

An army of volunteer hackers is rising up in cyberspace to defend Ukraine, though internet specialists are calling on geeks and other “hacktivists” to stay out of a potentially very dangerous computer war.

According to Livia Tibirna, an analyst at cyber security firm Sekoia, nearly 260,000 people have joined the “IT Army” of volunteer hackers, which was set up at the initiative of Ukraine’s digital minister Mykhailo Fedorov.

The group, which can be accessed via the encrypted messaging service Telegram, has a list of potential targets in Russia, companies and institutions, for the hackers to target.

It’s difficult to judge the effect the cyber-army is having.

The actions reported so far seem to be limited to “denial of service” (DOS) attacks, where multiple requests are sent to a website in a coordinated manner to saturate it and bring it down. Defacement actions, in which the targeted site displays a hacked page, have also been briefly observed on Russian sites.

The “cyber-army” could also ask hackers to try to identify vulnerabilities of certain Russian sites, and send that info to more seasoned specialists.

Russia moving cluster munitions

Says US envoy to UN; UNGA in historic vote denounces Russia over Ukraine invasion



AFP, United Nations

The United States ambassador to the United Nations accused Russia Wednesday of moving cluster munitions and other arms banned under the Geneva Convention into Ukraine as Moscow seeks to escalate the attack on its eastern European neighbour.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield spoke as Russian forces shelled several Ukrainian cities Wednesday and massed outside the capital Kyiv, raising fears of an imminent assault.

“It appears Russia is preparing to increase the brutality of its campaign against Ukraine,” Thomas-Greenfield told the United Nations General Assembly.

“We have seen videos of Russian forces moving exceptionally lethal weaponry into Ukraine, which has no place on the battlefield. That includes cluster munitions and vacuum bombs – which are banned under the Geneva Convention.”

She also cited published images of a 40-mile long convoy of Russian troops which she said were “charging toward Kyiv.”

Thomas-Greenfield spoke ahead of an extraordinary vote which saw the General Assembly demand Russia withdraw its forces from Ukraine “immediately.”

An overwhelmingly majority of nations at the global body voted in favour of the non-binding resolution deploring Moscow’s attack, in a powerful indicator of Russia’s isolation on the world stage.

After more than two days of extraordinary debate, which saw the Ukrainian ambassador accuse Russia of genocide, 141 out of 193 United Nations member states voted for the non-binding resolution.

“The world is rejecting Russia’s lies,” US President Joe Biden said in a statement later Wednesday. “Russia is responsible for the devastating abuses of human rights and the international humanitarian crisis that we are watching unfold in Ukraine in real time.”

China was among the 35 countries which abstained, while just five – Eritrea, North Korea, Syria, Belarus and of course Russia – voted against it.

The resolution “deplores” the invasion of Ukraine “in the strongest terms” and condemns President Vladimir Putin’s decision to put his nuclear forces on alert.

Russia has defied massive economic and diplomatic sanctions to push on into pro-Western Ukraine, where its forces have encountered stiff resistance.

‘Ukrainians go first’

People of colour struggle to escape Russian invasion

AGENCIES

Over one million refugees have fled the conflict in Ukraine so far, with neighbouring countries opening their doors to tens of thousands of people since the Russian invasion began last week.

But while international praise is heaped upon countries like Romania, Hungary and Poland for accepting asylum seekers from Ukraine, not all refugees are being welcomed with open arms.

As border queues continue to form, reports are emerging of black and brown people being stopped and – in some cases – turned away completely from neighbouring nations.

“We went to the border of Ukraine and Poland, but we African foreigners had problems crossing,” said Jean-Jacques Kabeya, a Congolese pharmacy student living in the Ukrainian city of Lviv.

“It’s normal for women and children to be given priority, but for men, we stayed from morning to night in the cold, standing up, without food. We stayed four days without eating anything.”

“The soldiers there, they tell you: ‘you are going to stay here, you are fleeing the war, stay here, you are going to fight with us, you are not going to leave, especially you black people.’”

Jean-Jacques has now returned to Lviv, where he hopes the Congolese Ambassador to Germany will help him secure safe passage across the Ukrainian border.

RUSSIA’S WAR IN UKRAINE

Developments

AGENCIES

RUSSIA ADVANCES IN SOUTH
Russian forces take the Black Sea port of Kherson in southern Ukraine, the first major city to fall after a string of setbacks for Moscow. They also pound and encircle the strategic port city of Mariupol, which is without water or electricity.

OBSERVER KILLED IN KHARKIV
A Ukrainian observer for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is killed in the country’s second city Kharkiv, which has come under intense bombardment.

MOSCOW’S MILITARY ‘DISASTER’
Russia’s invasion so far has been astonishingly badly managed, a blundering “disaster, through and through”, US defence experts say. It is like Moscow “tripped over the doorframe on the way into the house,” one expert says, citing food and fuel shortages, poor intelligence and planning.

KYIV COLUMN ‘STALLED’
A senior US defence official says the massive column of Russian military vehicles amassed north of Kyiv has “stalled” due to fuel and food shortages and Ukrainian resistance.



NOT THINKING OF NUCLEAR WAR: LAVROV
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accuses of raising thoughts of “nuclear war” because of the invasion of Ukraine but says the idea is “not in the heads of Russians”.

ONE MILLION FLEE
More than one million people have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded, the UN’s refugee agency says, with the number rising rapidly.

FIRST RUSSIAN TOLL
Russia says 498 of its troops have been killed in Ukraine, its first death toll since President Vladimir Putin launched his invasion a week ago.

HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS
Russia’s Defence Ministry announces “humanitarian corridors” for civilians to leave the most battered Ukrainian cities including Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol.

CEASEFIRE TALKS
Russia floats the possibility of a ceasefire with talks with Ukraine due to restart on the Belarus-Poland border.



PARALYMPICS BAN
Russian and Belarusian athletes are banned from the Beijing Winter Paralympics, reversing an earlier decision to allow them participate.

‘JUNK’ DEBT RATING
Ratings agencies Fitch and Moody’s slash Russia’s credit rating to “junk” status, signifying it risks not being able to repay its debts.

MOSCOW RADIO SILENCED
The liberal Ekho Moskvy radio station, a symbol of media freedom in post-Soviet Russia, is taken off air over its coverage of the invasion.

WAR CRIMES PROBE
The International Criminal Court’s chief prosecutor says a probe into possible war crimes in Ukraine “will immediately proceed” after his office received the backing of 39 countries.

RUSSIAN JETS IN SWEDISH AIRSPACE
The Swedish Armed Forces say four Russian fighter jets entered Sweden’s airspace to the east of the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea.

DEBATE OVER JOINING NATO

Finnish president urges ‘cool head’

AFP, Helsinki

Finland’s president yesterday called for the country to remain calm while deciding whether to apply to join Nato as a defence against potential Russian aggression.

“In the midst of an acute crisis it is particularly important to keep a cool head and carefully assess the impact on our security” from the Ukraine crisis, President Sauli Niinisto said in a statement after meeting senior MPs and defence chiefs.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has sparked a lively debate in Finland over whether the militarily non-aligned country should join Nato, with a recent poll showing majority support for membership for the first time.

Petitions in favour of a referendum on Nato membership have amassed tens of thousands of signatures in the last week, meaning the issue will be debated by MPs in parliament, the Eduskunta.

Finland, which shares a 1,300 kilometre (800 mile) border with Russia, remained neutral during the Cold War in exchange for assurances from Moscow that Soviet troops would not invade.

The Nordic country of 5.5 million people has since joined the EU and enjoys a close partnership with Nato, sharing intelligence and resources.

“Our security environment is now undergoing rapid and dramatic change,” Niinisto said.



Flemming Moeller Mortensen (R), Danish Minister for Development Aid, hoists the Ukrainian flag in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen, Denmark, yesterday, in support of those suffering from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP