

US not trying to ‘outdo’ world powers in Africa

Says Blinken ahead of policy announcement on Washington’s new Africa strategy

AFP, Pretoria

The United States is seeking a “true partnership” with Africa and not trying to “outdo” other world powers in vying for influence on the continent, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday.

Blinken arrived in South Africa for an official visit on Sunday during a three-nation African trip which follows hot on the heels of an extensive tour of the continent by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Speaking in the South African capital Pretoria yesterday, Blinken said the United States did not see the region as the “latest playing field in a competition between great powers”.

“That is fundamentally not how we see it. It’s not how we will advance our engagement here,” Blinken told a press briefing, speaking alongside his local counterpart Naledi Pandor.

“Our commitment to a stronger partnership with Africa is not about trying to outdo anyone else.”

For his first stop, the US top diplomat chose South Africa, a leader in the



developing world which has remained neutral in the Ukraine war.

Pretoria has refused to join Western calls to condemn Moscow, which had opposed apartheid before the end of white-minority rule in 1994.

His comments came ahead of a policy announcement on the US government’s new Africa strategy, which Blinken is expected to lay out in a speech at the University of Pretoria later yesterday.

“What we seek most of all is a true partnership between the United States and Africa. We don’t want an imbalance or transactional relationship,” Blinken said.

Vulnerable countries in Africa and elsewhere in the world have been hard hit by the fallout from the Ukraine war that has sent prices of fuel and food soaring.

Powerhouse South Africa belongs to a group of emerging economies called BRICS.

In June, Russian President Vladimir Putin urged BRICS countries -- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa -- to cooperate in the face of “selfish actions” from the West.



Deminers examine the site of a reported cluster munition fall next to a burnt car after a rocket attack on a residential area in northern Kharkiv, yesterday, amid the Russian military invasion launched on Ukraine. The attack killed a resident and injured another.

PHOTO: AFP

Iran examining EU’s ‘final text’ at nuclear talks

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it is examining a “final text” presented by the European Union at the negotiations in Vienna aimed at restoring a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers.

“As soon as we received these ideas, we conveyed our initial response and considerations... but naturally, these items require a comprehensive review, and we will convey our additional views and considerations”, state news agency IRNA quoted an unnamed foreign ministry official as saying.

The comments came after a European official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the EU has tabled the “final” version of the text, negotiations are finished, “and it will not be renegotiated.”

Talks aimed at reviving the agreement over Iran’s nuclear programme resumed on Thursday in Vienna, months after they had stalled.

Iranian sources have suggested an International Atomic Energy Agency probe is a key sticking point in reviving the nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

But the European official said: “That has nothing to do with” the JCPOA. Iran on Sunday said the IAEA should “completely” resolve the issues related to questions over nuclear material at its undeclared sites.

The IAEA’s board of governors adopted a resolution in June, censuring Iran for failing to adequately explain the discovery of traces of enriched uranium at three previously undeclared sites.

China holds fresh military drills around Taiwan

Defends its behaviour as ‘firm, forceful and appropriate’ to American provocation; Taipei condemns

AFP, Beijing

China carried out fresh military drills around Taiwan yesterday, Beijing said, defying calls to end its largest-ever exercises encircling the island in the wake of a visit by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Beijing has raged at the trip by Pelosi -- the highest-ranking elected US official to visit Taiwan in decades -- ripping up a series of talks and cooperation agreements with Washington, most notably on climate change and defence.

It has also deployed fighter jets, warships and ballistic missiles in what analysts have described as practice for a blockade and ultimate invasion of the self-ruled democratic island that China claims as its territory.

Those drills had been expected to draw to a close on Sunday, but China said yesterday they were still ongoing.

“The eastern theatre of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army continued to carry out practical joint exercises and training in the sea and airspace around Taiwan island,” the military said.

The exercises, the PLA’s Eastern Command said, were “focusing on organising joint anti-submarine and sea assault operations”.

Taipei condemned Beijing for extending the drills. “China’s provocation and aggression have harmed the status quo of the Taiwan Strait and raised tensions in the region,” the island’s foreign ministry said in a statement.



Beijing was also set to carry out live-fire drills yesterday in parts of the South China Sea and the Yellow Sea. Taiwan has remained defiant throughout the Chinese drills.

Its military said it would hold anti-landing exercises in Taiwan’s south today and Thursday.

They will include the deployment of hundreds of troops and about 40 howitzer guns, the military said.

Taiwan has insisted that no Chinese planes or ships have entered Taiwan’s territorial waters during the drills.

But to show how close it came to Taiwan’s shores, the Chinese military released a video of an air force pilot filming the island’s coastline and mountains from his cockpit.

The Eastern Command also shared a photo it said was of a warship on patrol with Taiwan’s shoreline visible in the background.

Ballistic missiles were fired over Taiwan’s capital during the exercises last

week, according to Chinese state media.

The scale and intensity of China’s drills -- as well as its withdrawal from key talks on climate and defence -- have triggered outrage in the United States and other democracies.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said Washington is “determined to act responsibly” to avoid a major global crisis.

But Beijing yesterday defended its behaviour as “firm, forceful and appropriate” to American provocation.

“(We) are only issuing a warning to the perpetrators,” foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a regular briefing, promising China would “firmly smash the Taiwan authorities’ illusion of gaining independence through the US”.

“We urge the US to do some earnest reflection, and immediately correct its mistakes.”

Experts say the drills have revealed an increasingly emboldened Chinese military capable of carrying out a gruelling blockade of the island and obstructing US forces from coming to Taiwan’s aid.

“In some areas, the PLA might even surpass US capabilities,” Grant Newsham, a researcher at the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies and a former US Navy officer, told AFP.

“If the battle is confined to the area right around Taiwan, today’s Chinese navy is a dangerous opponent -- and if the Americans and Japanese do not intervene for some reason, things would be difficult for Taiwan.”

EU MIGRANT CRISIS Over 250 ‘rescued’ off Tunisia

AFP, Tunis

Tunisian coastguards “rescued” more than 250 migrants who were attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Italy, the North African country’s National Guard said on Sunday. Maritime authorities “were able... to rescue 255 would-be migrants, including 170 people of various African nationalities, with the remainder Tunisians,” the National Guard said in a statement on Facebook. The attempted crossings -- 17 in total -- took place on the night of Friday to Saturday from the east of Tunisia, according to National Guard spokesman Houcem Eddine Jebabli. The statement did not indicate whether any vessels had got into difficulty or sunk, but did note that an unspecified sum of cash was seized during the operations.

Twitter hacker steals 5m accounts’ personal info

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A Twitter breach has allowed hackers to find the account names and email addresses associated with five millions of accounts. This includes accounts of people who would rather keep their information pseudonymous, such as whistleblowers and celebrity accounts. “We want to let you know about a vulnerability that allowed someone to enter a phone number or email address into the log-in flow in the attempt to learn if that information was tied to an existing Twitter account, and if so, which specific account”, Twitter said in a blog post confirming the attack. It also said there is nothing that users can do to protect their information in this issue, but users should enable two-factor authentication on all accounts to better protect against future breaches.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian children salvage belongings from the rubble of their house which was destroyed during the latest three days of conflict with Israel ahead of a truce, in Rafah town in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. Inset, relatives mourn during the funeral of four teenage Palestinians from the Najm family in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday after they were killed during the three days of conflict.

MR. SHINZO ABE

FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

We deeply mourn for tragic and sudden death of Mr. Shinzo Abe, Former Prime Minister of Japan. We adore his sincere support and co-operation to strengthen bilateral relation between Japan and Bangladesh. We pray for his eternal peace. Our sincere condolences to our Japanese friends who are in mourning for his sudden demise.