

# Ukraine war ‘corrosive’ for Putin, ‘opportunity’ for CIA

## Says spy chief; Russia targets Kyiv in overnight drone attack

AFP, Washington

Russia's war in Ukraine has had a "corrosive" effect on Russian President Vladimir Putin, CIA Director William Burns said Saturday, with discontent over the conflict creating a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" for the spy agency.

Speaking at the Ditchley Foundation in the UK, Burns called Putin's invasion of Ukraine "the most immediate and acute geopolitical challenge to international order today."

Meanwhile, Russia has attacked Kyiv in an overnight drone attack after a 12 day break, Ukrainian officials said yesterday, with air defence forces destroying all targets.

"Another enemy air attack on Kyiv," Sergiy Popko, head of the Kyiv city military administration, said on social media. He said it was the first drone attack on the Ukrainian capital in 12 days.

"All enemy targets in the airspace around Kyiv were detected and destroyed," Popko said.

The CIA director's address came one week after the head of Wagner mercenary group Yevgeny Prigozhin led his forces in a brief mutiny against Russia's military command.

Prigozhin accused Russia of targeting his forces with deadly missile strikes in Ukraine and launched broadsides against Moscow's narrative of the conflict: saying it was started "for the self promotion of a bunch of bastards" and that Russia's troops were retreating in Ukraine's east and south.

"The impact of those words and those actions will play out for some time, a vivid reminder of the corrosive effect of Putin's war on his own society and his own regime," Burns said.

He called the war a "strategic failure" for Moscow that has exposed military weaknesses, hurt the economy and spurred a bigger and stronger NATO.

"Disaffection with the war will continue to gnaw away at the Russian leadership ... That disaffection creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us at CIA," he said.

"We're not letting it go to waste," he added, noting the CIA recently posted on Telegram to let Russians know how to reach the CIA via the dark web.

"We had 2.5 million views in the first week, and we're very much open for business."

Burns did not mention a recent trip to Ukraine.



A French firefighter works to extinguish a burning motorbike during the fifth day of protests following the death of Nahel, a 17-year-old teenager killed by a French police officer in Nanterre during a traffic stop, in Paris, France, July 2, 2023. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Fighting shakes Khartoum

## Displaced Sudanese combat disease

AFP, Khartoum

Fierce fighting between the forces of rival generals shook the Sudanese capital Khartoum yesterday as disease and malnutrition threatened the rising number of displaced.

A Khartoum resident said he was shaken from sleep by "violent fighting in which various weapons were used". Another said he was awakened by warplanes.

Battles since mid-April between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have killed nearly 3,000 people.

Another 2.2 million have been forced from their homes inside the country while almost 645,000 have fled across borders for safety, according to the International Organization for Migration.

"The situation is grave," the medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said in a statement detailing the hardships of displaced Sudanese stuck in nine camps in White Nile State which borders South Sudan.

The death toll is believed to be much higher than recorded, as WHO says about two-thirds of health facilities are "out of service" in combat-affected areas.

"There are suspected cases of measles, and malnutrition among children has become a vital health emergency."

"From June 6 to 7 we treated 223 children with suspected measles, 72 were hospitalised and 13 have died," MSF said.

# French riots an unwelcome, perilous crisis for Macron

AFP, Paris

The riots in France sparked by the police killing of a teenager represent a deeply unwelcome and perilous crisis for President Emmanuel Macron, just as he was looking to press ahead with his second mandate.

The violence erupted just after Macron finally saw off half a year of protests over his controversial pension reform, which dominated the domestic agenda for most of this year.

But the images of shops ransacked and buses burned across the country also risk hurting Macron's international standing at a time he wants to play an instrumental role in ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine and be seen as Europe's number one powerbroker.

In a hugely embarrassing development for Macron, the rioting has forced him to cancel a state visit to Germany that was due to start this weekend and was to have been the first such trip by a French head of state in 23 years.

The postponement is doubly awkward for the Elysee as Macron had earlier this year put off a planned state visit by the UK's King Charles III -- which would have been his first foreign trip as monarch -- due to the often-violent pensions protests.

He also cut short his attendance at an EU summit in Brussels this week, rushing back to Paris to chair a crisis meeting without giving a press conference.

After a first term that became dominated by combating the anti-government Yellow Vests protests and then the Covid-19 pandemic, the centrist's second term again risks being marked by troubleshooting rather than implementing policy.

The rioting "is very bad news for the president", who had been hoping for a

smooth ride into the summer capped by a cabinet reshuffle to re-energise the government and move on from the pensions crisis, said Bruno Cautres, researcher at the Political Research Centre of Sciences Po university.

"People are amazed to see how our country is confronted by tensions, violence and crises, one after the other," he added, warning: "No leader can take the risk of having another conflagration like this in a



few months."

The riots broke out this week just as Macron was finishing a major three-day trip to the southern city of Marseille where he had sought to push an agenda of getting to grips with urban problems in France's most disadvantaged areas.

He was also mocked in foreign media, which accused him of attending the farewell concert of Elton John in Paris on Wednesday hours before some of the worst rioting in recent days erupted.

"With Covid, the Yellow Vests and the war on Ukraine, nothing has spared him,"

a source close to Macron told AFP, asking not to be named.

Macron, whose ruling party lost its overall majority in parliament in the 2022 legislative elections, needs to tread a fine line domestically.

He is acutely aware that far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen has her eyes on taking the Elysee in 2027 elections -- which would wreck his legacy even if he cannot stand in those polls -- and has nudged the government to the right on security matters.

The eyes of the world -- astonished to see near-apocalyptic images taken outside tourist cities like Paris and Lyon -- are also on France as Paris gears up to host the Olympics in just over a year.

In dealing with the riots Macron has been eager to balance anger over the police killing -- which he called "unforgivable" -- with stern calls for order including pleas to parents to keep their children home.

"He will be judged on his ability to ease tensions. For him the danger is to appear weak and irresolute," said Jean Garrigues, a historian specialising in political history.

But Macron has so far stopped short of declaring a state of emergency in the areas affected -- which would give police greater powers -- as urged by the right.

The Le Monde daily said he had tried to "stop the cycle of urban violence by greatly stepping up the means (used by the police) and using political communication, while stopping short of declaring a state of emergency".

Taking a hard line on the outburst of urban rioting in 2005 after the deaths of two youths who were being chased by police proved hugely beneficial for then-interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy, who would later claim the presidency.

"A policy of firmness could also pay off for Emmanuel Macron," said Garrigues.

# BALUCHISTAN ATTACK

## Pakistan Taliban kill 4 police

AFP, Quetta

Four security officers were killed in a shootout in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province yesterday, officials said, in an attack claimed by the Pakistan Taliban.

About a dozen gunmen attacked policemen and paramilitary Frontier Constabulary officers at a highway checkpoint in Zhob district, prompting a two-hour gunbattle.

"Four of the security officials, including three policemen and one Frontier Corps officer, were killed in the attack. One of the suspected attackers has also been killed but not yet identified," Zhob's commissioner, Saeed Umrani, told AFP.

Three others were wounded.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) later claimed the attack in a statement, identifying the attacker shot dead by police.

The TTP is separate from Afghanistan's Taliban but shares a similar ideology.

Attacks, mostly targeting security forces, have been on the rise again since the Afghan Taliban seized control in Kabul in 2021 and a shaky ceasefire between the TTP and Islamabad ended in November last year.

# 2 die in Baltimore shooting

AFP, Washington

At least two people were killed and 28 wounded in a mass shooting at a street party early yesterday in the US city of Baltimore, police said.

Police received multiple calls about a shooting in the city's Brooklyn neighborhood just after 12:30 am yesterday (0430 GMT), Acting Police Commissioner Rich Worley told a press conference.

"Upon officers' arrival we located multiple victims suffering from gunshot wounds," Worley said.

One 18-year-old woman was found dead at the scene in the East Coast port city, and a 20-year-old man died after being taken to hospital, a police statement said.

The wounded were being treated at area hospitals, he added, with three of them in critical condition.

# Twitter restricts number of posts users can read

AFP, New York

Elon Musk announced Saturday that Twitter would temporarily restrict how many tweets users could read per day, in a move meant to tamp down on the use of the site's data by artificial intelligence companies.

The platform is limiting verified accounts to reading 10,000 tweets a day. Non-verified users -- the free accounts that make up the majority of users -- are limited to reading 1,000 tweets per day.

New unverified accounts would be limited to 500 tweets.

# NETHERLAND'S INVOLVEMENT IN SLAVERY

## King makes historic apology

AFP, Amsterdam

Dutch King Willem-Alexander issued a historic royal apology Saturday for the Netherlands' involvement in slavery, saying he felt "personally and intensely" affected.

His speech before thousands of descendants of slaves from the South American nation of Suriname and the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao got a positive reception.

"Today I'm standing here in front of you as your king and as part of the government. Today I am apologising personally," Willem-Alexander said to loud cheers.

# Prigozhin's Russian media group shuts

REUTERS

Yevgeny Prigozhin's media holding group is to shut down, the director of one of its outlets said.

Patriot Media, whose most prominent outlet was the RIA FAN news site, had taken a strongly nationalist, pro-Kremlin editorial line, while also providing positive coverage of Prigozhin and his Wagner Group.

"I am announcing our decision to close down and to leave the country's information space," RIA FAN director Yevgeny Zubarev said in a video clip posted late on Saturday on the holding's social media accounts.



Former US President and 2024 Presidential hopeful Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally in Pickens, South Carolina, on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP