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Russia says tank promises show direct and growing Western involvement in Ukraine

January 26, 2023 *usnews.com* reported: "Russia said on Thursday it saw the promised delivery of Western tanks to Ukraine as evidence of direct and growing U.S. and European involvement in the conflict.

The Kremlin was reacting for the first time to announcements by the United States and Germany on Wednesday that they would arm Ukraine with dozens of battle tanks in its fight against Russia.

"There are constant statements from European capitals and Washington that the sending of various weapons systems to Ukraine, including tanks, in no way signifies the involvement of these countries or the alliance in hostilities in Ukraine," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We categorically disagree with this, and in Moscow, everything that the alliance and the capitals I mentioned are doing is seen as direct involvement in the conflict. We see that this is growing."

U.S. President Joe Biden said the tanks pose "no offensive threat" to Russia and that they were needed to help the Ukrainians "improve their ability to maneuver in open terrain".

Ukraine has been seeking hundreds of modern tanks to form what President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called a "fist of freedom" that could give its troops the firepower to break Russian defensive lines and reclaim occupied territory in the south and east. Until now, both Ukraine and Russia have been relying primarily on Soviet-era T-72 tanks." ..."

German government approves Leopard tanks deliveries to Ukraine

January 25, 2023 *jpost.com* reported: "Germany will supply its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, it announced on Wednesday, overcoming misgivings about sending heavy weaponry that Kyiv sees as crucial to defeat the Russian invasion but Moscow cast as a needless provocation.

Pressure has been building for weeks on German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government to send the tanks and allow other NATO allies to do the same ahead of expected spring offensives by both sides that could help turn the tide of the war.



German Leopard Tank

Scholz's government had stalled on the decision, wary of moves that could prompt Russia to escalate or suck the NATO alliance into becoming party to the conflict. Germany's decision paves the way for other countries such as Poland, Spain and Norway to supply their stocks of Leopard tanks to Ukraine.

"This decision follows our well-known line of supporting Ukraine to the best of our ability. We are acting in a closely coordinated manner internationally," Scholz said in a statement..."

Saudi FM rules out normalization with Israel without a two-state solution

January 25, 2023 *timesofisrael.com* reported: "Saudi Arabia will not normalize ties with Israel in the absence of a two-state solution with the Palestinians, the kingdom's top diplomat has said, according to a tweet by the foreign ministry on Friday. The comments by Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos came as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed normalization with Saudi Arabia in talks with White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Jerusalem on Thursday.

"True normalization and true stability will only come through... giving the Palestinians a state," Prince Faisal told Bloomberg at the summit. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, is a close partner of the United States but it has repeatedly refused to normalize ties with US-ally Israel due to its military rule of the West Bank. The US-brokered Abraham Accords in 2020 saw the kingdom's neighbors — the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain — establish full diplomatic ties with Israel. Netanyahu has repeatedly expressed his desire to see Saudi Arabia join the list." ..."

UN Atomic Energy Head Says Iran Has Processed Enough Material for 'Several Nuclear Weapons'

January 25, 2023 *voanews.com* reported: "The head of the United Nations's nuclear monitoring agency says he will travel to Iran next month in hopes of reviving the 2015 accord aimed at curbing Tehran's nuclear activities.

Speaking Tuesday in Brussels before members of the European Parliament’s security and defense subcommittee, Rafael Grossi, the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said the Islamic Republic has accumulated 70 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60% purity, with another 1,000 kilograms enriched to 20% purity, “enough nuclear material for several nuclear weapons — not one at this point.”

The threshold for making nuclear weapons is considered to be 90% purity. But Grossi told the panel that Iran’s huge stockpile of enriched uranium does not mean it has a nuclear weapon. Grossi also said the IAEA is no longer monitoring Iran’s nuclear program because the regime has disconnected 27 of the agency’s cameras installed at its declared nuclear sites.” ...”

Israel’s Netanyahu, King Abdullah meet in Jordan on Temple Mount tensions

January 24, 2023 jpost reported: “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with King Abdullah of Jordan on Tuesday amid tensions between the two countries over the Temple Mount.



Prime Minister Netanyahu meets King Abdullah

‘The two leaders discussed regional issues, emphasizing the strategic, security and economic cooperation between Israel and Jordan, which contributes to the stability of the region,’ the Prime Minister’s Office said.

The two leaders also underscored the ‘long-standing friendship and partnership between the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan,’ the PMO said.

It’s the first visit Netanyahu has made abroad let alone to Amman since he returned to office last month, during his last tenure as prime minister relations and cooled between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom. The last government had worked to restore those ties, with former prime minister Yair Lapid meeting twice with the monarch during his six months at Israel’s helm.” ...”

Russia rolls out more threats against the West

January 23, 2023 jpost reported: “Russia, which invaded Ukraine almost a year ago, continues to use threatening rhetoric to try to dissuade the West from increasing its military support for Kyiv. Western countries want to send more air defenses and armored vehicles to Ukraine this year, beefing up Ukraine’s ability to defend itself and go on the offensive. For Moscow, this presents another problem because Russia continues to be frustrated by its inability to achieve any semblance of victory in Ukraine.

Every time Russia feels it is failing it tries to roll out new threats, mostly aimed at convincing western media that Moscow might use nuclear weapons or escalate the war in some way. The latest comments are by State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin. He gave new warnings on Sunday that ‘Weapons supplies to Ukraine by the United States and NATO for attacks on Russia would lead to retaliatory use of more powerful armaments,’ Russia’s state media *TASS* reported

“Supplies of offensive weapons to the Kyiv regime would lead to a global disaster. If Washington and NATO countries send arms that will be used for attacks on peaceful cities or attempts at occupying our lands, a threat they have been making, this would provoke retaliatory measures with the use of more powerful weapons,” Volodin wrote on his Telegram channel. ...”

China Issues Veiled Warning to US Over Taiwan

January 23, 2023 voanews.com reported: “Chinese President Xi Jinping issued a veiled warning to the United States in his new year message to the country, stressing that China will be engaged in ‘serious struggles’ against separatism and interference in its relations with Taiwan, state media, *CCTV* and the *Xinhua* news agency reported Friday.

In a Lunar New Year reception in the Great Hall of the People attended by top party leaders in the Politburo, Xi said in a speech to the Chinese people that his party and the military have in the past year risen to the challenge of ‘high winds and choppy waters in the international situation,’ a reference he also made in his speech at the 20th Party Congress in a warning about what he saw as a hostile international environment.

In a subtle message that referred to the United States and its relations with Taiwan, Xi vowed to ‘resolutely carry out major struggles against separatism and interference’ and ‘firmly grasp the initiative in cross-strait relations,’ state television, *CCTV* and *Xinhua* reported...

In recent years, the leadership has increasingly emphasized the importance of asserting a China-centered diplomatic and historical narrative and a determination to shift away from a Western-dominated world order...”