

West Speeding Aid to Ukraine For Air Defense

Current Shield Works, but Has Some Holes

This article is by **Michael Schwirtz, Lara Jakes and Eric Schmitt.**

KYIV, Ukraine — In just two days this week, Russian forces fired more than 100 cruise missiles and dozens of exploding drones at cities across Ukraine, many more than the nation’s aging air defenses were ever expected to encounter. And yet fewer than half made it to their targets, Ukrainian officials say.

Ukraine’s success in knocking down those projectiles, and the death and destruction caused wherever missiles slipped through, have reinvigorated calls by officials in Kyiv for Western countries to provide more sophisticated defensive weapons systems. At a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday, the United States and other allies readily agreed, pledging to rapidly provide the weaponry.

Germany began delivery of four units of a missile defense system so advanced even its own forces have yet to use it. The Netherlands promised millions of dollars in air-defense missiles, and President Emmanuel Macron of France said his country would send “radars, systems and anti-air missiles.”

And a day after the Biden administration said it was working to speed up delivery of two advanced missile systems, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III said, “The systems will be provided as



A German IRIS-T air defense system. Ukraine is getting four.

fast as we can physically get them there.”

But for all the gaps made clear by the bombardment, which killed at least 19 people and scarred some two dozen Ukrainian cities, Ukrainian patchwork air defenses have proved to be one of the great successes of the war, and among the most unexpected. And Ukraine’s response to the attacks underscored how far the air defense units have come since President Vladimir V. Putin ordered his forces to invade on Feb. 24.

On Monday, the first day of the bombardment, the country’s air defenses took out more than half

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A grave prepared for a military funeral in Bucha on Wednesday. Ukrainian forces remain on the offensive against Russian troops.

In Long View, Biden Strategy Aims at China

By **DAVID E. SANGER**

President Biden declared on Wednesday that the overwhelming challenge for the United States in the coming years would be “out-competing China and restraining Russia” while focusing on restoring a damaged democracy at home.

In his 48-page national security strategy, which every new administration is required to issue, Mr. Biden made clear that over the long term he was more worried about China’s moves to “layer authoritarian governance with a revisionist foreign policy” than he was about a declining, battered Russia. More than six months after the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian military appears less fearsome than it did when the first drafts of the document circulated in the White House in December.

“Russia and the P.R.C. pose different challenges,” Mr. Biden wrote, using the abbreviation for the People’s Republic of China. “Russia poses an immediate threat to the free and open international system, recklessly flouting the basic laws of the international order today, as its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has shown.”

China “is the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic,

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The Hidden Hand Guiding Conservative Causes

By **KENNETH P. VOGEL**

Millions of dollars in television advertisements blasting schools for teaching critical race theory and assailing corporations like BlackRock, Uber and American Airlines for catering to “woke politicians.”

A lawsuit pending before the Supreme Court to radically reshape how federal elections are conducted. Complaints against President Biden for violating election law and against school districts that allow information to be withheld from parents about children’s gender identities.

These initiatives were advanced in the past year or so by a handful of new or reconfigured

Millions Flow Through Network Assembled by Veteran Activist

conservative groups — each with their own leadership and mission.

Behind the scenes, though, these groups have something in common: They are part of an ambitious coalition developed in recent years by the conservative activist Leonard A. Leo, who until now has been best known for his role in pushing the appointments of conservative judges to the center of the Republican Party’s agenda.

Most of the initiatives were financially supported, or in some cases launched, by an opaque, sprawling network shaped by Mr. Leo and funded by wealthy patrons, usually through anonymous donations that critics call “dark money.”

An investigation by The New York Times of Mr. Leo’s activities reveals new details of how he has built that network, with relatively little public attention, into one of the best-funded and most sophisticated operations in American politics, giving him extraordinary influence as he pushes a broad array of hot-button conservative causes and seeks to counter what he sees as an increasing leftward

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A Daring Addiction Strategy

Rhode Island aims to prevent overdoses with supervised drug consumption sites. Cristina Ramsey, left, who died after a long battle with drugs, felt such programs might have helped her. Page A12.

Reluctance to Fire Employees Could Help Stabilize Economy

By **JEANNA SMIALEK and SYDNEY EMBER**

PROVO, Utah — Chad Pritchard and his colleagues are trying everything to staff their pizza shop and bistro, and as they do, they have turned to a new tactic: They avoid firing employees at all costs.

Infractions that previously would have led to a quick dismissal no longer do at the chef’s two places, Fat Daddy’s Pizzeria and Bistro Provenance. Consistent transportation issues have ceased to be a deal breaker. Workers who show up drunk these days are sent home to sober up.

Employers in Provo, a college

town at the base of the Rocky Mountains where unemployment is near the lowest in the nation at 1.9 percent, have no room to lose workers. Bistro Provenance, which opened in September, has been unable to hire enough employees to open for lunch at all, or for dinner on Sundays and Mondays. The workers it has are often new to the industry, or young: On a recent Wednesday night, a 17-year-old could be found torching a crème brûlée.

Down the street, Mr. Pritchard’s pizza shop is now relying on an

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New York Finds Hasidic School Fails to Offer a Basic Education

By **ELIZA SHAPIRO and BRIAN M. ROSENTHAL**

New York State officials have determined that a private Hasidic Jewish boys’ school in Brooklyn is violating the law by failing to provide a basic education, a ruling that could signal profound challenges for scores of Hasidic religious schools that have long resisted government oversight.

The ruling marks the first time that the state has taken action against such a school, one of scores of private Hasidic yeshivas across New York that provide robust religious instruction in Yiddish but few lessons in English and math and virtually none in science, history or social studies.

It also served as a stern rebuke of the administration of Mayor

Signals Challenges for Scores of Others

Eric Adams, whose Education Department this summer reported to the state that, in its judgment, the yeshiva was complying with a law requiring private schools to offer

an education comparable with what is offered in public schools.

The decision, issued last week by the state education commissioner, Betty Rosa, stemmed from a 2019 lawsuit brought by a parent against the school, Yeshiva Mesivta Arugath Habosem, which enrolls about 500 boys in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

The ruling requires the yeshiva

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Explaining a Wildlife Drop

A study found a 69 percent fall in global wildlife from 1970 to 2019, but it may not mean exactly what you think. PAGE A10

Policy Change on Migrants

A new program will provide a narrow legal pathway to the United States for up to 24,000 Venezuelans. PAGE A6

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More Access to New Boosters

Federal regulators authorized the shots for children as young as 5 to bolster protection against the now-dominant version of the coronavirus. PAGE A15

Staff Failed Trainee, Navy Says

Kyle Mullen’s fellow SEAL candidates tried to get help for him as his health declined but were repeatedly rebuffed, a report on his death found. PAGE A19

Avoiding Talk of Abortion

G.O.P. candidates have been changing their positions, erasing references from their websites and trying to focus on other topics on the trail. PAGE A16



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Back to the Office, and 2010

A survey of return-to-work outfits at Brookfield Place shows that men’s suits are stuck in the Obama years. PAGE D3

A Fake Heiress in a Walk-Up

Released from jail, Anna Sorokin talks about her first night of house arrest in her new Manhattan apartment. PAGE D1

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Mass Testing Strained in China

There are no signs that Beijing plans to rethink a cornerstone of its “zero Covid” policy even as the bills pile up and infections keep spreading. PAGE B1

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A Liberating Run

With a new division for nonbinary runners, the Chicago Marathon gave one athlete a reason to come home. Sports of The Times. PAGE B9

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Lydia Polgreen

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Connecting All That Jazz

The dancer LaTasha Barnes invites the audience into a social dance and music space in a joyous program that dissolves imposed boundaries. PAGE C5



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