

NATION & WORLD

DIGEST

Ukraine fires over 100 drones toward Russia

KYIV, Ukraine — More than 100 Ukrainian drones were shot down over Russia Sunday, officials said, sparking a wildfire and setting an apartment block alight in one of the largest bar-rages seen over Russian skies since Moscow invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia's Ministry of Defense reported that it had shot down 125 drones overnight across seven regions. The southwestern region of Volgograd came under particularly heavy fire, with 67 Ukrainian drones reportedly downed by Russian air defenses.

Seventeen drones were also seen over Russia's Voronezh region, said Gov. Aleksandr Gusev.

Freedom Party scores big victory in Austria

VIENNA — The Freedom Party secured the first far-right national parliamentary election victory in post-World War II Austria on Sunday, finishing ahead of the governing conservatives after tapping into anxieties about immigration, inflation, Ukraine and other issues. But its chances of governing were unclear.

Preliminary official results showed the Freedom Party finishing first with 29.2% of the vote and Chancellor Karl Nehammer's Austrian People's Party was second with 26.5%. The center-left Social Democrats were in third place with 21%. The outgoing government — a coalition of Nehammer's party and the environmentalist Greens — lost its majority in the lower house of parliament.

Herbert Kickl, a former interior minister and longtime campaign strategist who has led the Freedom Party since 2021, wants to be chancellor, but to become Austria's new leader, he would need a coalition partner to command a parliamentary majority. Rivals have said they won't work with Kickl in government.

BRIEFLY

BRUSH FIRE: Crews were trying to contain a brush fire Sunday that prompted evacuations in the Gila River Indian Community southwest of Phoenix, authorities said. Tribal officials said the fire broke out Saturday and was estimated at 671 acres by Sunday morning.

PHILADELPHIA: The University of Pennsylvania law school says it is imposing a one-year suspension at half-pay and other sanctions on Professor Amy Wax over her comments about race in recent years.

GEORGIA: Some residents east of Atlanta were evacuated while others were told to shelter in place to avoid contact with a chemical plume after a fire at a chemical plant. Rockdale County Fire Chief Marian McDaniel told reporters that a sprinkler head malfunctioned around 5 a.m. Sunday at the BioLab plant in Conyers, causing water to mix with a water-reactive chemical.

CALIFORNIA: An earthquake registering magnitude 4.2 shook part of central California early Sunday, the United States Geological Survey reported. The earthquake was detected at 2:47 a.m. local time about 2 miles northwest of Aromas, the science agency said.

BORDER FENCE: Norway may put a fence along part or all of the 123-mile border it shares with Russia, Justice Minister Emilie Enger Mehl said, a move inspired by a similar project in Finland.

PAKISTAN: Gunmen stormed a camp in Pakistan's southwest and kidnapped 20 laborers, police said Sunday. It's the second assault in as many days in Balochistan province, where separatist and militants are stepping up their insurgency.

— Associated Press



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SHIPPING INDUSTRY

Dockworkers may strike

US retailers concerned as ILA walkout could shut down 36 ports

TOM KRISHER
Associated Press

With a dockworkers' strike threatening to close ports on the East and Gulf coasts beginning this week, Chris Butler is growing worried.

Butler is CEO of the National Tree Co., and, like many businesses, his is counting on shipments that are en route from Asia but won't reach their ports before an expected strike by longshoremen starting at 12:01 a.m. Eastern time Tuesday.

The company, based in New Jersey, is an importer of artificial Christmas trees and other holiday decorations. If a strike were to last

just a few days, there might be time afterward to unload the trees, transport them to warehouses and have them ready for customers this season.

Yet if a strike were to keep ports closed until, say, November, about 150,000 trees might not arrive in time for the peak shopping season, imposing costs on National Tree and other businesses. In a worst-case scenario, those costs, multiplied across industries, could fuel inflation and pressure the U.S. economy.

"Definitely not an ideal situation," Butler said.

Other businesses face the same predicament, with goods that could be stranded at sea if 45,000 members of the International Longshoremen's Association make good on their threat to strike. They could shut down 36 ports from Maine to Texas

that handle about half the goods shipped into and out of the United States. (West Coast dockworkers belong to a different union and aren't involved in the strike.)

A prolonged strike would force companies to pay shippers for the delays, and goods could arrive too late for the high point of holiday shopping season. On Friday, top Biden administration officials met with port operators and told them they should negotiate with the union ahead of Tuesday, according to a White House official who insisted on anonymity to discuss an ongoing meeting.

Butler says he's hoping for an agreement or for government intervention to halt a strike. But the U.S. Maritime Alliance, which represents shippers and ports, and the longshoremen's union haven't met since June. And no talks are scheduled before their contact

expires late Monday.

"ILA unity remains strong and is growing," James McNamara, spokesman for the International Longshoremen's Association, said in a statement Sunday. He said the union would update the public on any new developments by 11 a.m. Monday.

The union is demanding significantly higher wages and a total ban on the automation of cranes, gates and moving containers in the loading and unloading of freight.

The Toy Association, the nation's leading toy trade group, was among about 200 organizations that asked President Joe Biden in a letter this month to work with both sides to reach an agreement. The National Grain and Feed Association also urged Biden to take action to avert a strike, which would come just as harvest season gets underway.

SOUTHEASTERN US | HURRICANE HELENE



GERALD HERBERT, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jose Salazar dumps debris as he helps gut a property that took on a storm surge in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene on Sunday in Steinhatchee, Fla.

Death toll rises as cleanup begins

Officials warn of long, difficult rebuild in flood-stricken areas

KATE PAYNE, JEFFREY COLLINS AND PATRICK WHITTLE
Associated Press

PERRY, Fla. — The U.S. Southeast grappled Sunday with rising death tolls, a lack of vital supplies in isolated, flood-stricken areas and the widespread loss of homes and property while the devastating toll of Hurricane Helene became more clear and officials warned of a lengthy and difficult rebuild.

A North Carolina County that includes the mountain city of Asheville reported 30 people killed due to the storm, pushing the overall death toll to at least 84 people across several states.

Supplies were being airlifted to the region around Asheville.

Buncombe County Manager Avril Pinder pledged that she would have food and water into the city — which is known for its arts, culture and natural attractions — by Monday.

"We hear you. We need food and we need water," Pinder said on a Sunday call with reporters. "My staff has been making every request possible to the state for support and we've been working with every single organization that has reached out. What I promise you is that we are very close."

The storm upended life throughout the Southeast. Deaths also were reported in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper predicted the toll would rise as rescuers and other emergency workers reached areas isolated by collapsed roads, failing infrastructure and widespread flooding.

He implored residents in western North Carolina to avoid travel, both for their own safety and to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles. More than 50 search teams spread throughout the region in search of stranded people.

One rescue effort involved saving 41 people north of Asheville. Another mission focused on saving a single infant. The teams found people through both 911 calls and social media messages, North Carolina National Guard Adjutant General Todd Hunt said.

Hurricane Helene roared ashore late Thursday in Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane with 140 mph winds. A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded creeks and rivers and strained dams.

There have been hundreds of water rescues, including in rural Unicoi County in East Tennessee,

where dozens of patients and staff were plucked by helicopter from a hospital rooftop Friday.

Several million were still without power Sunday afternoon.

The storm unleashed the worst flooding in a century in North Carolina. One community, Spruce Pine, was doused with over 2 feet of rain from Tuesday through Saturday.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said the federal disaster agency was actively engaged across six states, meeting the requests of governors and state-level responders. She noted the Appalachian regions across North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia presented particular concerns. Criswell toured south Georgia on Sunday and planned to be in North Carolina on Monday.

"It's still very much an active search and rescue mission" in western North Carolina, Criswell said.

California governor vetoes bill aimed at AI safety

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a landmark bill Sunday aimed at establishing first-in-the-nation safety measures for large artificial intelligence models.

The decision is a major blow to efforts attempting to rein in the homegrown industry that is rapidly evolving with little oversight. The bill would have established

some of the first regulations on large-scale AI models in the nation and paved the way for AI safety regulations across the country, supporters said.

Earlier this month, the Democratic governor told an audience at Dreamforce, an annual conference hosted by software giant Salesforce, that California must lead in regulating AI in the face of federal inaction but that the pro-

posal "can have a chilling effect on the industry."

"While well-intentioned, SB 1047 does not take into account whether an AI system is deployed in high-risk environments, involves critical decision-making or the use of sensitive data," Newsom said in a statement. "Instead, the bill applies stringent standards to even the most basic functions — so long as a

large system deploys it. I do not believe this is the best approach to protecting the public from real threats posed by the technology."

Newsom on Sunday instead announced that the state will partner with several industry experts, including AI pioneer Fei-Fei Li, to develop guardrails around powerful AI models.

Li opposed the AI safety proposal.