

# Strikes hit south Lebanon city as Israel expands ground operations

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Several strikes hit the southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh yesterday after an Israeli evacuation warning, an AFP correspondent said, as an Israeli military official confirmed ground operations had expanded deeper into the country.

An AFP correspondent in Nabatieh reported airstrikes following the warning on Tuesday and saw plumes of smoke rising

from various locations within the city.

An Israeli military official told AFP that troops had begun operating beyond the Israel-announced "Yellow Line" in south Lebanon, which runs around 10 kilometers (six miles) deep inside Lebanese territory.

As Israel's operations moved deeper into south Lebanon, Hezbollah said its fighters

confronted Israeli troops trying to advance into a town that overlooks Nabatieh city on Tuesday.

Hezbollah said in a statement that its fighters repelled an Israeli force early Tuesday that had advanced toward Zawtar al-Sharqiyah following airstrikes and heavy artillery fire.

The group said it used drones and was fighting with Israeli soldiers

diers in the town.

Largely deserted since the start of the latest Israel-Hezbollah war on March 2, Nabatieh has faced relentless strikes despite an April 17 truce.

Avichay Adraee, the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman said on X on Tuesday that residents of the entire city "must evacuate your homes immediately and move north of the Zahrani River".

Rescuers were still clearing the rubble in the eastern town, the ministry added.

The Israeli military in a statement said it launched "several strikes... in the area of Mashghara" on "Hezbollah infrastructure sites where terrorists' activity was identified".

Later on Tuesday, it issued an evacuation warning for the town as well as Sohmor near it.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) also reported several Israeli strikes across the south and east.

A strike on Sriba in the south killed a rescuer and wounded two others from the Risala Scouts association, linked to the Hezbollah-allied Amal movement, according to the health ministry, raising the rescuer death toll in the war to 120.



Smoke billows following an Israeli strike on the area of the Rawdat al-Salihin Mosque and the nearby cemetery in the southern city of Nabatieh

## Russian call for diplomats to leave Kyiv draws Western backlash

Almost 50 countries condemned what they said were threats by Russia

● European countries, Japan, South Korea and others signed

● Guterres said he was "deeply concerned"

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia's call for diplomats to leave Kyiv over the threat of fresh strikes drew a sharp backlash from Western countries yesterday, some of whom accused Moscow of escalating the more than four-year war.

Russia announced Monday it had started a campaign of "systematic" strikes on Kyiv, after battering Ukraine with hundreds of drones and a hypersonic missile over the weekend. It said the strikes would target the Ukrainian capital's "decision-making centers" and urged foreign citizens and diplomats "to leave the city as soon as possible", as well as for Kyiv residents to avoid public buildings.

Ukraine called the threats "blackmail" and encouraged its allies to ignore the warning, while several Western diplomatic missions announced they had no plans to evacuate their staff.

Almost 50 countries condemned what they said were threats by Russia against embassies in Ukraine in a joint statement at the United Nations on Tuesday.



Deputy Prime Minister for Restoration of Ukraine Oleksii Kuleba (L) talks to Mayor of Le Havre and president of French party Horizons Edouard Philippe (2ndL) as they walk past destroyed Russian military equipment in an open-air exhibition in Kyiv

"We also condemn recent threats by Russia to diplomatic institutions and embassies in Kyiv. This is something which we cannot accept," the joint statement delivered by Ukrainian UN representative Andriy Melnyk said.

The statement was signed by European countries, Japan, South Korea and others.

The European Union also lashed out at Russia's threat, saying it had no plans to move its staff, while Germany and Norway summoned Russia's ambassador over the move.

**Both sides deny targeting civilians**

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday he was "deeply concerned" by Russia's announcement.

"We condemned the attack on the school - as we condemn all attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, wherever they occur," he said.

"Now more than ever, it is imperative to avoid any escalation of a conflict that has already exacted a devastating toll on civilians, and that risks making the search for peace even more distant, prolonging the suffering of people," Guterres added.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday that Washington remained ready to mediate in the conflict.

"Every time you see these big strikes from one side or the other, it's a reminder of why this is a terrible war that's now gone on longer than the Second World War, and it needs to come to an end," Rubio told reporters

during an official visit to India.

He was referring to the length of WWII for Moscow, which entered the war in June 1941 when Nazi Germany invaded the USSR, with the conflict ending in May 1945 with Germany's surrender.

**Drone threats**

Both Russia and Ukraine exchanged strikes on Tuesday.

A Ukrainian drone attack killed one person in Russia's Belgorod border region, local authorities said, while Russian strikes on Ukraine left several wounded, according to Ukrainian officials.

Drones have also routinely crossed the airspace of the three Baltic nations, incidents that have forced citizens to seek shelter and prompted NATO to scramble jets.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Tuesday that Russia bore ultimate responsibility for the incidents.



Russia currently occupies around a fifth of Ukraine: the entirety of the Crimean peninsula, which it annexed in 2014, most of the eastern regions of Donetsk and Lugansk -- collectively referred to as the Donbas -- and large parts of the southern Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

## Mexico captures US-wanted nephew of drug lord 'El Chapo'

AFP | Mexico City, Mexico

Mexican security forces captured the US-wanted nephew of drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman in the border state of Sonora, authorities said Tuesday.

Omar Garcia Harfuch, secretary of security, said on X that the suspect is the "nephew of 'El Chapo,'" the former leader of the Sinaloa cartel now serving a life sentence in US prison.

He said the nephew is also wanted by the United States.

Though authorities identified the suspect only as Isai "N," Mexican media identified the suspect as Isai Martinez Zepeda.

Isai "N", the US-wanted nephew of drug lord Joaquin

"El Chapo" Guzman.. Credit: Jamaica Observer

The press contact for the secretary of security told AFP they didn't have further details on Mexican media reports that the suspect was captured in 2008 in possession of high-calibre weapons. It was not immediately clear when he had gotten out of captivity.

El Chapo was extradited in 2017 after escaping twice from Mexican prisons. He is imprisoned at a maximum security facility in Colorado on multiple charges, including drug trafficking and money laundering. Two of the sons of El Chapo, Ovidio and Joaquin, are also imprisoned in the United States on narcotrafficking charges.

## S. Korea says it will build nuclear-powered submarines at home

AFP | Seoul

South Korea will build its nuclear-powered submarines at home, the defense minister said on Tuesday, with a plan to launch its first vessel in the mid-2030s.

Seoul is seeking to bolster deterrence against nuclear-armed North Korea, with the South set to join a small circle of countries that operate nuclear-powered submarines after receiving US approval for the supply of restricted nuclear fuel.

"We will develop and build nuclear-powered submarines with our own technology to launch the first vessel in the mid-2030s," Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back told a defense strategy meeting attended by President Lee Jae Myung.

Ahn said the first subma-

rine would enter operational service "in the latter half of the 2030s."

South Korea has long sought to acquire nuclear-powered submarines to counter North Korea's growing military threats, although it had been constrained by a nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States.

Lee said in November Seoul had received Washington's approval for the construction of nuclear-powered submarines as part of a long-awaited security and trade agreement.

That included US approval for uranium enrichment and reprocessing spent fuel.

However, there had not yet been any firm indication about where the submarines would be built, with Trump saying they would be built "right here in the good ol' USA.."