

Zelensky offers Russia energy ceasefire to help ease Iran war oil crisis

Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday urged Russia to agree to a mutual halt on strikes against energy sites to help ease a global oil crisis triggered by the war in the Middle East.

"If Russia is ready to stop hitting Ukrainian energy facilities, we will not respond against their energy sector," Zelensky told journalists.

Israel army withdraws West Bank battalion after CNN journalist assault

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel's military said yesterday it had pulled a battalion out of the West Bank after a soldier assaulted a CNN photojournalist last week in a village in the occupied Palestinian territory.

A CNN team was reporting on the aftermath of an assault by Israeli settlers and the establishment of an illegal outpost near the Palestinian village of Tayasir on Thursday when they were detained by Israeli soldiers, the Foreign Press Association said in a statement.

On Monday, the military, in a rare move, withdrew a battalion from the West Bank following the incident.

"The operational deployment currently being carried out by the reserve battalion will be suspended," it said in a statement.

"The battalion will remain in reserve service and will undergo a process aimed at reinforcing its professional and ethical foundations."

he battalion would resume operational activity once the process is completed, the military added.

Sisi asks Trump to 'help us stop the war'

AFP | Cairo, Egypt

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi yesterday urged his US counterpart Donald Trump to help end the Middle East war, now in its second month.

"I say to President Trump: no one will be able to stop the war in our region, in the Gulf... Please, help us to stop the war, you are capable of it," Sisi said in joint remarks to the press in Cairo alongside Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides.



A first responder stands next to the wreckage of a vehicle at the site of an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese village of Hanouiyeh, east of Tyre

Rubio says US hopeful in private talks after Iran 'fractures'

AFP | Washington, United States

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday voiced hope for working with elements

within Iran's government, saying the United States privately had received positive messages. Rubio said there were internal

"fractures" inside the Iran and that the United States hoped that figures with "power to deliver" take charge. "We are hopeful that

that's the case," Rubio told ABC News program "Good Morning America." "There are clearly people there talking to us in ways

that previous people in charge in Iran have not spoken to us in the past, some of the things they're willing to do," he said.

Trump eyes Iran oil

An earlier Trump comment warning of a possible assault by US ground troops to seize Iran's Kharg Island oil facilities had already sent prices higher

● **Israeli army says struck Tehran university run by Iran Guards**

● **Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said they had discussed how to "bring an early and permanent end to the war."**

● **Speaker of Iran's parliament accused Washington of using diplomacy as a smoke screen**

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump pushed concerns about surging world prices aside yesterday and threatened to destroy Iran's oil wells, power plants and main export terminal if Tehran does not quickly accept a peace deal.

Trump expressed confidence



that a negotiated settlement would soon be reached but warned that if it was not -- or if Iran continued to block the Strait of Hormuz to most sea traffic -- US forces would "blow up" Kharg Island and all of Iran's oil wells and electricity generation.

Market experts warned that any US ground operation or wider Iranian retaliation could send oil prices to levels not seen since the July 2008 commodity boom, when the cost of world benchmark crude Brent hit close to \$150 per barrel -- and could rise

far more. Brent has already risen in price by nearly 60% this month, and the US benchmark WTI by more than half.

"If the US were to launch a ground invasion of Iran, possibly taking the Kharg Island, or if Tehran were to intensify retaliatory strikes on energy infrastructure or fully close the Strait, projections of \$200 (a barrel) oil will not be an otherworldly supposition anymore," analyst Tamas Varga of PVM Energy said. As Israel pressed its offensive

against Iran-backed Hezbollah in south Lebanon -- hitting, an official told AFP, an army checkpoint and killing a Lebanese soldier -- Indonesia confirmed on Monday that one of its peacekeepers was killed after the UN force said a projectile hit one of its positions.

Separately, the Israeli military said one of its soldiers was killed on Sunday in combat in southern Lebanon, bringing to six the number of troops killed since fighting with Hezbollah began this month.

Diplomatic efforts

On the ground there appeared to be no let-up in hostilities. Israel said its air defence batteries responded to "missiles launched from Iran", after earlier announcing it was striking "terror regime military infrastructure across Tehran".

Israel confirmed that in recent days it had hit the Imam Hossein University in Tehran, which it says is used by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) for advanced weapons research. Tehran has warned it could strike US universities

across the Middle East. On the diplomatic front, Pakistan -- acting as a go-between for Washington and Tehran -- hosted foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt in Islamabad on Sunday for talks on the crisis.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said they had discussed how to "bring an early and permanent end to the war."

He said Iran and the United States had expressed "confidence in Pakistan to facilitate the talks" and that he had spoken to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi as well as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and other foreign ministers who also backed the idea.

Nevertheless, the speaker of Iran's parliament accused Washington of using diplomacy as a smoke screen.

Despite making diplomatic overtures, including proposing a 15-point plan to end the war, the United States has also been sending more military assets into the region, including an amphibious assault ship carrying 3,500 Marines.

Turkey says fourth missile intercepted

Istanbul, Turkey

Turkey's Defence Ministry said yesterday that NATO forces had intercepted a new missile fired from Iran -- the fourth since the start of the Middle East war.

"A ballistic munition, which has been determined to have been fired from Iran and to have entered Turkish airspace, was neutralized by NATO air and missile defence forces deployed in the eastern Mediterranean," said a ministry statement.

Saudi Arabia says intercepted five ballistic missiles headed to Eastern Province

AFP | Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's defence ministry said its forces detected and intercepted five ballistic missiles aimed at the kingdom's

Eastern Province.

The brief statement posted on X did not specify where the missiles originated.

Since the Middle East war erupted at the end of Febru-

ary, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have been regularly targeted by Iranian missile and drone strikes in retaliation for the US-Israeli campaign, now in its second month.