

# US, Germany poised to send tanks to Ukraine, answering Kyiv's pleas

BERLIN/KYIV — The United States (US) and Germany are poised to provide a significant boost to Kyiv's war effort with the delivery of heavy battle tanks to Ukraine, sources said, a move Moscow condemned as a "blatant provocation".

Washington was expected to announce as soon as Wednesday that it will send *M1 Abrams* tanks and Berlin has decided to dispatch *Leopard 2* tanks, the sources said, a reversal in policy that Kyiv has said would help reshape the conflict.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky again pressed Western allies to provide their most modern battle tanks, saying in his nightly video address that "discussions must be concluded with decisions".

Germany and the United States have until now held back on providing heavy armor, wary of moves that could give the Kremlin reason to widen the conflict.

Moscow has warned that supplies of modern offensive weaponry to Ukraine will escalate the war, with some Russian officials warning that Kyiv's allies were leading the world into a "global catastrophe". Moscow has now repeatedly said that it is fighting the collective West in Ukraine.

The possible deliveries of battle tanks by Washington to Ukraine would be a "another blatant provocation" against Russia, Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the United States, said on Wednesday.

"It is obvious that Washington is purposefully trying to inflict a strategic defeat on us," Mr. Antonov said in remarks published on the embassy's Telegram messaging app.

Two US officials told Reuters on Tuesday that Washington was ready to start a process that would eventually send *M1 Abrams* tanks to Ukraine, just days after it had argued against granting Kyiv's requests.

A third official said the US commitment could total about 30 tanks delivered over the coming months.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had

decided to send *Leopard 2* tanks to Ukraine and allow other countries such as Poland to do so as well, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

*Spiegel* magazine, which first reported the news, said Germany was planning to supply at least one company of *Leopard 2 A6* tanks, which usually comprises 14 tanks. Other allies, in Scandinavia for example, intend to go along with Germany in supplying their *Leopard* tanks to Kyiv, the magazine reported.

While there was no official confirmation from Berlin or Washington, officials in Kyiv hailed what they said was a potential gamechanger on the battlefield in a war that is now 11 months old — even if the rumored tank numbers fell short of the hundreds they say they need to liberate all occupied areas.

"A few hundred tanks for our tank crews .... This is what is going to become a real punching fist of democracy," Andriy Yermak, the head of Zelensky's administration, wrote on Telegram.

## FRONT LINES FROZEN

Front lines in the war, which stretch more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) through eastern and southern Ukraine, have been largely frozen for two months despite heavy losses on both sides. Russia and Ukraine are widely believed to be planning new offensives.

Mr. Zelensky said on Tuesday night that Russia was intensifying its push toward Bakhmut, an industrial town in eastern Ukraine that has been the focus of intense fighting. "They want to increase the pressure on a larger scale," he said.

Whether to supply Ukraine with significant numbers of heavy modern battle tanks has dominated discussions among Kyiv's Western allies in recent days.

Berlin has been pivotal because the German-made *Leopards*, fielded by some 20 armies around the world, are seen as the best option. The tanks are available in large numbers and easy to deploy and maintain. — *Reuters*

## FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link [bit.ly/Kyiv012623](https://bit.ly/Kyiv012623)

# North Korea locks down capital city over 'respiratory illness' — report

SEOUL — Authorities in the North Korean capital Pyongyang have ordered a five-day lockdown due to rising cases of an unspecified respiratory illness, Seoul-based NK News reported on Wednesday, citing a government notice.

The notice did not mention COVID-19, but said that residents in the city are required to stay in their homes through the end of Sunday and must submit to temperature checks multiple

times each day, according to NK News, which monitors North Korea.

On Tuesday, the website reported that Pyongyang residents were appeared to be stocking up on goods in anticipation of stricter measures. It is unclear if other areas of the country have imposed new lockdowns.

North Korea acknowledged its first COVID-19 outbreak last year, but by August had declared victory over the virus.

The secretive country never confirmed how many people caught COVID, apparently because it lacks the means to conduct widespread testing.

Instead, it reported daily numbers of patients with fever, a tally that rose to some 4.77 million, out of a population of about 25 million. But it has not reported such cases since July 29.

State media have continued to report on anti-pandemic measures to

battle respiratory diseases, including the flu, but had yet to report on the lockdown order.

On Tuesday, state news agency KCNA said the city of Kaesong, near the border with South Korea, had intensified public communication campaigns "so that all the working people observe anti-epidemic regulations voluntarily in their work and life." —

*Reuters*

# California massacres heighten immigrants' fears of gun violence

HALF MOON BAY/MONTEREY PARK, California — America was supposed to be a place of safety for Jose Romero when he arrived some two years ago to work on a California farm alongside other immigrants from Mexico and China.

Mr. Romero was killed on Monday, shot dead by a gunman along with six other farm workers in Half Moon Bay, just south of San Francisco. Even in a nation all too familiar with gun violence, the shooting was stunning, coming just two days after another gunman opened fire at a ballroom in Monterey Park, an Asian American enclave outside Los Angeles.

In all, 18 people died in the back-to-back shootings, rattling two close-knit communities that had drawn immigrants seeking opportunities.

"You look to improve your life and then you end up with this," said Mr. Romero's cousin, Jose Juarez, quiet and sullen on Tuesday as he took a break from cooking at a Mexican *taqueria* in a Half Moon Bay strip mall.

That police said the attacks were carried out by assailants known within the community — Huu Can Tran, 72, frequented the Monterey Park dance studio and Chunli Zhao, 66, worked on a Half Moon Bay farm — only added to the sense of fear felt by immigrant groups that have been the targets of racist rhetoric and attacks in the United States.

As many as 32% of Asian immigrants and 23% of Latino immigrants in California say they are "very worried" about becoming victims of gun violence in their adopted home — three times the level of fear reported by people born in the United States, according to data



CANDLES and mementos are left at the entrance of the Star Ballroom after a mass shooting during Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations in Monterey Park, California, US, Jan. 24.

gathered by the University of California, Los Angeles, and shared with Reuters.

The massacres heightened those concerns for some people.

Antonio Perez, who now lives in Half Moon Bay after moving from Mexico in 1983, said he feels stuck between cartel violence in his homeland and gun violence in the United States.

"We never expected this kind of extreme here," Mr. Perez said, shaking his head. "What a tragedy."

About 380 miles (610 km) south, in Monterey Park, residents expressed fears in the aftermath of the dance hall shooting that the poison of America's gun culture and epidemic of mass shootings was infecting Asian-American communities.

"Americans can have guns, there are guns everywhere," said Frank Hio, 36, who is originally from China. "It's dangerous here."

In the thriving suburb known for its Asian stores and restaurants, some people expressed anguish that the gunman came from within the community.

"The shooters are Asian, and the victims are Asian," said Rolando Favis, 72, who moved to the United States from the Philippines 38 years ago.

But many also said they had been more fearful of their safety for several years, following the rise in hate crimes against Asians in the wake of the pandemic and rhetoric from then-President Donald Trump blaming China.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, Asian American gun ownership increased. A third of those who owned guns said they carried weapons more frequently amid the anti-Asian incidents, and another third said they kept guns loaded or unlocked in their homes, according to a study by the University of Michigan.

At the Euro Arms, Inc. gun store in Alhambra, three miles (5 km) from the scene of the Monterey Park massacre, store assistant Wesley Chan said gun sales had risen since the start of the pandemic, including among Asian Americans in the area.

"Everyone was scared and wanted to protect themselves," he said.

About 9.3% of Asian immigrants keep guns in their homes in California, compared with 5.6% of Latino immigrants and 12% of white immigrants, said Ninez Ponce, the lead researcher on the UCLA study. Overall, about 17.6% of Californians of all backgrounds keep a gun at home.

Both Tran and Zhao used semi-automatic pistols. Police have not said where or when they were acquired. — *Reuters*

## Agricultural, from SI/1

Recent typhoons Karding (international name: Noru) and Paeng (international name: Nalgae) caused agricultural damage worth P3.12 billion and P6.4 billion, respectively.

"We were actually expecting a worse performance," Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Q. Montemayor said in a Viber message.

"The minimal 1% decline in the crops subsector, including palay, is suspect, given the major increases in fertilizer, fuel and other input prices which should have led farmers to reduce their hectare or scrimp on inputs. To some extent, the value of production could have been propped up by higher farmgate prices," he added.

## DECLINE IN CROPS, FISHERIES

Crop production, which accounts for more than half or 59.1% of total agricultural output, fell by 1% in the fourth quarter and full year, reversing the 2.6% and 2.2% expansion in the fourth quarter and full year 2021, respectively.

PSA data showed fourth-quarter crop production declined by 2.5% for palay (from 0.2% growth in the same period in 2021) and 6.9% for corn (from 28.6% growth).

"The slight decrease in the production of rice and corn is expected due to the increase in cost of inputs like fertilizers, fuel and natural calamities," Danilo V. Fausto, president of the Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, said in a Viber message.

China Banking Corp. Chief Economist Domini S. Velasquez noted the DA had already warned of a drop in rice production as elevated fertilizer prices discouraged farmers to plant.

"The size of their production was actually smaller. They were planting less," she said in an interview on One News.

Lower production was also seen in rubber (-9%), mango (-5.8%), ampalaya (-4.7%), calamansi (-2.5%), mongo (-1.9%), banana (-0.8%), cabbage (-0.8%), and eggplant (-0.4%).

Only onion and sugarcane production registered double-digit growth in the fourth quarter, with onions up by 23.3% and sugarcane up by 18.7%.

Increments were also recorded in tobacco (8.5%), pineapple (6.6%), potato (5.4%), sweet potato (3.4%), abaca (2.9%), cacao (2.6%), coffee (2.3%), and coconut (1%).

At current prices, the value of crop production amounted to P334.24 billion last year, up 8.2% from 2021.

PSA data also showed fisheries production slumped by 6.6% in the

fourth quarter, worse than the 1.1% growth a year earlier. It accounted for 13.8% of the agricultural production during the period.

For the full year, fisheries output shrank by 5%, a reversal from the 0.1% increase in 2021.

"The decline in fish catch had been noted since the beginning of 2000 due to the depletion of our coastal resource areas," Mr. Adriano said, noting that the country is slow in developing aquaculture due to huge capital requirements and strict bureaucratic processes.

Mr. Fausto noted the fisheries sector needs to be upgraded due to the slowdown in commercial fishing.

"There is a need to expedite the development of our aquaculture farms and the establishment of more mariculture parks with more fish cages, to increase fisheries output," he added.

During the fourth quarter, double-digit declines were seen in bigeye tuna or *tambakol/bariles* (-43.7%), mudcrab or *alimango* (-37%), slimpouth or *sapsap* (-34.3%), cavalla or *talakitok* (-34.2%), threadfin bream or *bisugo* (-31.4%), Indian mackerel or *alumahan* (-30.9%), grouper or *lapu-lapu* (-26.3%), Bali sardinella or *tamban* (-19.8%), tilapia (-14.6%) and tiger prawn or *sugpo* (-14.4%).

A drop in production was also seen in milkfish or *bangus* (-9.1%), blue crab or *alimasag* (-3.8%), roundscad or *galunggong* (-2.9%), and frigate tuna or *tulingan* (-1.7%).

On the other hand, production improved for skipjack or *gulyasan* (23.4%), bigeye scad or *matangbaka* (18.6%), yellowfin tuna or *tambakol/bariles* (11.9%), fimbriated sardines or *tunsoy* (8.1%), and squid or *pusit* (2.3%).

"At current prices, the value of fisheries production, which amounted to P89.9 billion, was 6.2% higher compared to the previous year's level in the same period," the PSA added.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

Livestock and poultry were the bright spots in agricultural production last year.

Mr. Montemayor said he expected the rebound in livestock and poultry production as both sectors were coming from a low base.

"Gains were registered in livestock and poultry as limited repopulation was already happening in the livestock sector and that the previous year's benchmark was very low because of the African Swine Fever (ASF). In other words, with the opening of the economy and higher demand for meat, there was nothing to go for these sectors but upwards," Mr. Adriano added.

## FULL STORY



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