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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Ukraine seeks more Western air defence help, NATO tightens security

KYIV, Oct 11 (Reuters) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy appealed to leaders of the Group of Seven nations on Tuesday for more air defence capabilities and the G7 vowed to support Kyiv for "as long as it takes" while warning Russia against any use of nuclear weapons.

NATO said it was closely monitoring Russia's nuclear forces following a string of Russian battlefield defeats in Ukraine and that the allies were also boosting security around key infrastructure after recent attacks on Baltic Sea gas pipelines.

Russian missiles again hit Ukrainian cities but with less intensity than on Monday, when dozens of strikes killed 19 people, wounded more than 100 and knocked out power supplies across the country in Moscow's biggest aerial offensive since the start of its invasion on Feb. 24.

More missile strikes killed at least one person in the southeastern Ukrainian town of Zaporizhzhia and left part of the western city of Lviv without power, local officials said. Air raid sirens earlier wailed across Ukraine for a second day.

Prayers and release of birds to mark 20 years since Bali bombing



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"When Ukraine receives a sufficient quantity of modern and effective air defence systems, the key element of Russia's terror, rocket strikes, will cease to work," Zelenskiy told G7 leaders at a virtual meeting where he again ruled out peace talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ukraine on Tuesday received the first of four IRIS-T air defence systems Germany promised to supply, a German defence ministry source said.

The White House later said the United States was speeding up the shipment of sophisticated NASAMS air defenses to Ukraine. Washington has provided more than \$16.8 billion worth of security aid to Ukraine during the war.

Zelenskiy's government has mixed gratitude for such aid with pleas for more powerful weapons and faster deliveries.

'UNCONTROLLED ESCALATION'
The G7 - which groups the United States, Germany, France, Japan, Britain, Italy and Canada - pledged continued "financial, humanitarian, military, diplomatic and legal support...for as long as it takes" to Ukraine, it said in a statement.

It also condemned "indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilian populations" as war crimes and said Putin would be held to account for them.

Moscow, which calls its actions in Ukraine a "special military operation" to eliminate

dangerous nationalists and protect Russian-speakers, has accused the West of escalating and prolonging the conflict by supporting Kyiv.

"We warn and hope that they realise the danger of uncontrolled escalation in Washington and other Western capitals," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was quoted as saying by RIA news agency on Tuesday.

Kyiv and its Western backers accuse Russia of an unprovoked imperialist land grab in Ukraine.

Belarus, Moscow's closest ally, said it had begun an exercise to assess its "combat readiness" after ordering troops on Monday to deploy with Russian forces near its border with Ukraine. Belarus allowed Russia to use its territory to invade Ukraine but has not sent its own troops across the border.

Zelenskiy denied Minsk's claim that Ukraine planned to attack Belarus but told the G7 he wanted to make sure there was no threat from its northern neighbour, and he called for a mission of international observers to monitor the border area.

Putin, under domestic pressure to ramp up the war as his forces have lost ground since early September, said he ordered Monday's strikes as revenge for an explosion that damaged Russia's bridge to annexed Crimea last weekend.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

10/10/2022

Houston City of Diplomacy



consuls and representatives who have built a bridge between Houston and the world.

We entered the party room in alphabetical order where there were splendid fireworks and a large-scale LED that lit up when the consuls entered the venue.

There were gorgeous flowers set up on the tables and a French lamb chop dinner. A band was also playing music and singers were singing songs to entertain all the guests.

This is the second time I have represented the West African country of Guinea after participating in the Houston Mayor's Consular Ball. More than 90 consulates now have offices in Houston. I spent a very friendly and pleasant night thanks to the city's detailed arrangements, which shows that we are a very important international city in the world.

Mayor Turner took photos with all of the guests and personally thanked all of the people who have supported him in the last seven years.

I personally had the opportunity to meet consuls general from Qatar, Korea and Guyana.

In his welcome speech, Mayor Turner expressed his appreciation to all the

event, and all of us had a very good time.



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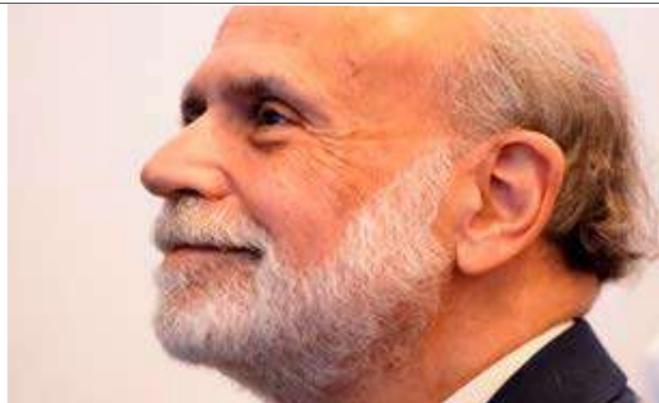


Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Combines harvest sunflowers in a field, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Chernihiv region, Ukraine. REUTERS/Viacheslav Ratynskiy



Former Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke waits after he was named among three U.S. economists awarded the 2022 Nobel Economics Prize, during a news conference at the Brookings Institution in Washington. REUTERS/Ken Cedeno



A man carries an empty water tank through a flooded area after the impact of the tropical storm Julia, in Progreso, Honduras. REUTERS/Yoseph Amaya



People shelter inside a subway station during a Russian missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine. REUTERS/Viacheslav Ratynskiy



People run while police fire tear gas during a protest demanding the resignation of Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry after weeks of shortages, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. REUTERS/Ralph Tedy Erol



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un attends the opening ceremony of the Ryonpho Greenhouse Farm to mark the anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party, in North Korea. KCNA via REUTERS

What Does Omicron's Fast Spread Mean For The U.S. - And The World?

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Omicron variant detected around world



Omicron spurred a rapid rise in positive coronavirus tests in South Africa. Compared with three previous coronavirus variants, the newly identified omicron variant is sparking a faster surge in the percentage of positive tests in South Africa.

The first country to really get hit by omicron was South Africa. Before the new variant took off last month, coronavirus cases there were low - only several hundred per day in mid-November.

The reason for their concern? Omicron is starting to gain traction in countries where the pandemic looks very different from South Africa - places where the highly transmissible delta variant is currently dominant and where vaccination levels are relatively high.

Worrisome signs from Europe

The clearest signs of trouble come from how quickly omicron is growing in Europe and the U.K., says Matt Ferrari, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics and a professor of biology at Penn State University.

A man is vaccinated against COVID-19 at a clinic in Johannesburg, South Africa. The omicron variant appears to be driving a surge in South Africa. New studies suggest that vaccines might not be as effective

against this variant but that a booster shot can be helpful. (Photo/Shiraz Mohamed/AP) Early data show that one person who catches omicron is currently going on to infect two to four other people - that's at least twice as many as someone who gets the delta variant.

Europe and reinfecting people who previously had COVID in South Africa, but also the many mutations on the spike protein. Scientists believe those mutations could make omicron's spike protein more adept at evading the body's antibody defenses that prevent the coronavirus from infecting cells.

Grubaugh is one of many scientists who say it's likely the vaccines will still help ward off severe disease because the immune system relies on other defenses like T-cells.

Assessing the risk in the U.S. Some experts caution against early predictions about what may happen in a place like the U.S. based on the situation in other countries.

Escaping antibodies Exactly why omicron is spreading so quickly comes down to two key questions. Is this strain of the virus intrinsically more contagious - in the way that delta was compared to the variant that dominated before it arrived?

Looking at these early omicron cases, what we've anticipated from immune escape is turning out to be true and the [intrinsic] transmissibility seems to be at least that of delta.

This concern is not only based on how the variant is spreading in well-vaccinated places like

Europe and reinfecting people who previously had COVID in South Africa, but also the many mutations on the spike protein. Scientists believe those mutations could make omicron's spike protein more adept at evading the body's antibody defenses that prevent the coronavirus from infecting cells.



cause the immune system relies on other defenses like T-cells. But if omicron can more easily infect those with prior immunity, that will give it a distinct competitive advantage over delta because it will gain a foothold in populations where delta has trouble getting past the protection afforded by the vaccines.

It will probably end up replacing Delta - it's a little too early to tell how fast, but probably fairly quickly," he says.

Some experts caution against early predictions about what may happen in a place like the U.S. based on the situation in other countries. John Moore, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Weill Cornell Medical School, says it's not at all certain that omicron will take over.

By next week, we will see clear evidence of an omicron wave in European countries, and I suspect the U.S. is at most a week behind that," he predicts.

Early reports from health officials and doctors in South Africa suggest the omicron wave of infection



Early reports from health officials and doctors in South Africa suggest the omicron wave of infection

while breathtaking in its speed - isn't yet causing the same level of severe disease as delta did when it hit the country. For example, ICU admissions are much lower. But many experts caution it's far too early to draw any firm conclusions.

The silver lining right now is we do not have any evidence that omicron is more severe," says Penn State's Matt Ferrari. Then again, he notes: "Everybody wants me to say it's milder, and we really just don't have convincing evidence that it is."

Even if omicron does end up being less severe than delta and not as many people get very ill, Barrett of the Wellcome Sanger Institute says there's plenty of reason for concern given just how contagious it appears to be: "A small proportion of a huge number all at once can still overwhelm health care systems."

Studies Suggest Sharp Drop In Vaccine Protection Against Omicron - Yet Still Cause For Optimism



With the omicron variant continuing to spread in a number of countries, including the U.S., scientists have been anxiously awaiting data to answer this question: How well will the vaccines work against this new variant?

Early reports from health officials and doctors in South Africa suggest the omicron wave of infection

the reduction," says Pei-Yong Shi, a virologist at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston who has been doing similar experiments to determine the effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine against the coronavirus.



UTMB researcher Pei-Yong Shi's work puts Galveston lab in front lines of COVID battle. (Photo/The Daily News)

"We seem to see a drastic reduction in neutralizing activity, far more than with previous variants," virologist Florian Krammer, who's at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, wrote on Twitter. "Little activity was left in vaccinated individuals."

These findings confirm what scientists have been predicting since omicron was first detected several weeks ago. The virus contains many mutations already known to weaken the power of the antibodies made by the immune system.

On top of all that, the study from Germany shows that a third booster shot, with either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, increases the neutralizing ability of the antibodies to levels seen with the delta variant, at least for several weeks after the booster.



The vaccine manufacturer Pfizer also released a press statement Wednesday supporting these new findings. "Preliminary neutralisation studies indicate that 2 doses of vaccines may not be sufficient to prevent *infection* w/ omicron (not severe disease), but regular boosters will help restore this decline to an extent," wrote Dr. Muge Cevik on Twitter.

COMMUNITY

Majority Of COVID-19 Cases And Deaths In State Are Unvaccinated Texans, New State Data Reveals



A pharmacist prepares the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at Houston Independent School District's Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center. HISD partnered with Kroger to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to educators, police officers and school nurses as part of Phase 1A and 1B of the vaccine rollout. Jan. 9, 2021.

Credit: May-Ying Lam for The Texas Tribune

Key Point The new state survey is the first time Texas health officials have been able to statistically measure the vaccine's true impact on the pandemic.

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

New data from the Texas health department released Monday proves what health officials have been trying to tell vaccine-hesitant Texans for months: The COVID-19 vaccine dramatically prevents death and is the best tool to prevent transmission of the deadly virus.

Table with 2 columns: Cases, Deaths. Rows for Unvaccinated, Partially vaccinated, Fully vaccinated.

inated people were among Texans older than 75, the age group that is most vulnerable to the virus, the study shows.

COVID-19 was deadlier for unvaccinated Texans across age groups

Reported deaths from mid-January to October show that most COVID-19 deaths occurred among unvaccinated younger and older Texans.

Table showing COVID-19 deaths among Texans by age group and vaccination status.

Note: Most people became eligible for COVID-19 vaccines in late March. (Source: Texas Department of State Health Services Credit: Mandi Cai)

"We've known for a while that vaccines were going to have a protective effect on a large segment of our population," said Dr. Jennifer A. Shuford, state epidemiologist. "By looking at our own population and seeing what the impact of the vaccines have been on that population, we're hoping just to be able to reach people here

in Texas and show them the difference that being fully vaccinated can make in their lives and for their communities."

The state health department study covers most of the positive cases and COVID-19 deaths reported in Texas among residents from Jan. 15 to Oct. 1. It's the first time state officials have been able to statistically measure the true impact of the vaccine on the pandemic in Texas - which has one of the highest death tolls in the nation.

Only 3% of 1.5 million positive COVID-19 tests examined since mid-January occurred in people who were already vaccinated. State researchers matched electronic lab reports and death certificates with state immunization records, and measured cases and deaths since mid-January, a month after the first shots were administered in Texas.



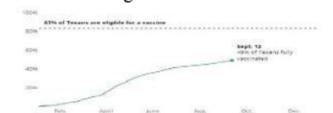
The study was done using data similar to those used by other states that conducted similar studies and methods recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Shuford said.

In Texas, it literally requires a disaster - like a pandemic - before the state records precise information about vaccinations. As a result, there is a record for every single COVID-19 vaccine dose of the name and age of the person who received it plus the date it was administered.

The state's new health data comes as Republican state leaders grapple with local cities and school districts about masking, which has been proven to reduce transmission of the virus, and with federal officials over vaccine mandates.

Percentage of Texans fully vaccinated

As of Nov. 14, about 53.9% of Texas' 29.1 million people have been fully vaccinated. According to the Census Bureau's 2019 Vintage population estimates, 93% of Texans are age 5 and older and thus eligible for a vaccine.



Sources: Vaccination data from the Texas Department of State Health Services, statewide population from the 2020 U.S. census, population by age from Census Vintage 2019 estimates. (Photo Credit: The Texas Tribune)

Immunity heading into the holidays The new report is particularly well-timed, officials say, because gatherings throughout the holiday season could touch off another surge as families get together - many of them for the first time since last year - and around 9 million Texans remain unvaccinated.

The Texas CARES study found that fully vaccinated participants showed significantly higher antibody levels than those who were unvaccinated but had been infected. A week ago, the CDC found that while both vaccination and natural infection provide about six months of protection from infection by the virus, the vaccine provides a "higher, more robust, and more consistent level of immunity" than natural infection does.

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"Those susceptible populations can still get infected, and the holidays are the perfect time for that," she said. "Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's. These are all times that people gather together, and COVID-19 can easily be transmitted at these gatherings." (Courtesy https://www.texastribune.org)

Where can I get the COVID-19 vaccine in Texas?

Most chain pharmacies and many independent ones have a ready supply of the vaccine, and many private doctors' offices also have it. Texas has compiled other options for finding vaccine appointments here, and businesses or civic organizations can set up vaccine clinics to offer it to employees, visitors, customers or members.

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