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Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Publisher: Wea H. Lee
President: Catherine Lee
Editor: John Robbins

Address: 11122 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072
E-mail: News@scdaily.com

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West warns Russia is moving troops towards, not away from, Ukraine

MOSCOW/KYIV, Feb 16 (Reuters) - Russia's military build-up near the Ukrainian border is continuing, the United States warned on Wednesday as Estonia said battle groups were approaching ahead of a likely attack to occupy "key terrain", despite Moscow's insistence of a pullback.

There have been sightings of additional armoured vehicles, helicopters and a field hospital moving towards Ukraine's borders, Britain's defence intelligence chief Jim Hockenhull said in a rare public statement. read more

World powers are engaged in one of the deepest crises in East-West relations for decades, jostling over post-Cold War influence and energy supplies as Russia wants to stop Ukraine ever joining the NATO military alliance.

Western nations have suggested arms control and confidence-building steps to defuse the standoff, which has prompted them to urge their citizens to leave Ukraine because an attack could come at any time. Russia denies it has any plans to invade.

"There's what Russia says. And then there's what Russia does. And we haven't seen any pullback of its forces," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in an interview on MSNBC.

"We continue to see critical units moving toward the border, not away from the border."

Estonian intelligence is aware of around 10 battle groups of troops moving toward the Ukrainian border, where it estimates about 170,000 soldiers are already deployed, said Mikk Marran, director general of the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service.

The attack would include missile bombardment and the occupation of "key terrain", he added.

"If Russia is successful in Ukraine, it would encourage it to increase pressure on the Baltics in the coming years," he said. "The threat of war has become main policy tool for Putin."

Russia's defence ministry said its forces were pulling back after exercises in southern and western military districts near Ukraine.

It published video that it said showed



tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and self-propelled artillery units leaving the Crimean peninsula, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

But NATO military commanders are drawing up plans for new combat units that diplomats said could be deployed in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.

Such units - designed to buy time for additional troops to reach the front line if needed - already exist in Poland and the Baltic states.

Britain will double the size of its force in Estonia and send tanks and armoured fighting vehicles to the small Baltic republic bordering Russia as part of the NATO deployment.

'DAY OF UNITY'

Ukraine also increased the number of border guards on its frontier with Belarus, Russia's ally, where some 9,000 Russian troops are estimated to be involved in military exercises.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who is criss-crossing the country to help bolster Ukrainians' morale, observed drills by his armed forces that included Javelin anti-tank missiles. Wednesday is a patriotic holiday in response to the reports Russia could invade on that day. "No one can love our home as we can. And only we, together, can protect our home," he said. read more

People raised flags and played the national anthem to show unity against fears of an invasion.

The government said a cyber attack that hit the defence ministry was the worst of its kind the country had seen, pointing the finger at Russia, which denied involvement. read more

U.S. officials were as yet unable to say who was responsible, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said.

She reiterated U.S. claims that a Russian attack could be preceded by a 'false flag' operation and misinformation.

The risk of Russian aggression against Ukraine would remain high for the rest of February and Russia could still attack Ukraine "with essentially no, or little-to-no, warning", according to a senior Western intelligence official.

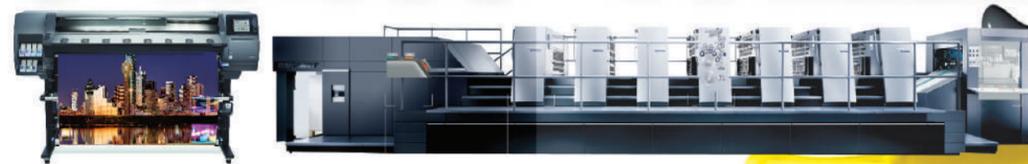
NATO said it could prove Russia's failure to pull back its troops with satellite imagery. "More troops are on their way," said Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

Moscow's ambassador to Ireland insisted forces in western Russia would be back to their normal positions within three to four weeks.

Russia sees Ukraine joining NATO as a threat to its security and that it is ready to reroute energy exports to other markets if it were hit by sanctions, which Washington and its allies have threatened if it invades.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

02/16/2022

Houston International TV Theatre Is About To Debu



Wea H. Lee
Wealee@scdaily.com

Chairman of International District Houston Texas
Publisher Southern Daily Wea H. Lee
 Southern News Group Chairman / CEO
 Chairman of International Trade & Culture Center
 Republic of Guiana Honorary consul at Houston Texas

The STV studio is currently under construction to build the Houston International TV Theatre at the Southern News Group Center. This theatre will use the ITC International Pageant as the audition stage. This mini theatre will be equipped with state-of-the-art lighting, a huge LED screen and professional cameras with editing personnel to technically ensure

that the show will be televised and streamed around the world.

The selection of Miss International will be divided into five continents, including Asian, North America, Africa, Latin America, Central and South America and Europe. We are going to let them use the international theatre and let the experts teach them the procedures and



dance performance routines.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and diplomats and consul from the Houston area along with local chambers of commerce will all participate in the event.

all the social media outlets to the entire world.

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Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Cattle cross polluted waters of the river Sabarmati on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. REUTERS/Amit Dave



Trucks block a downtown road as truckers and their supporters continue to protest against coronavirus vaccine mandates in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. REUTERS/Patrick Doyle



People queue to be tested for COVID-19 in Times Square, New York City, December 20. REUTERS/Andrew Kelly



Sarah Palin, 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate and former Alaska governor, speaks to the media as she exits the court during her defamation lawsuit against the New York Times, at the United States Courthouse in the Manhattan borough of New York City. REUTERS/Eduardo Munoz



Gold medalist Alexander Hall of the United States and silver medalist Nicholas Goepper of the United States embrace after winning Men's Freeski Slopestyle - Final - Run 3 at the Beijing Olympics. REUTERS/Lisi Niesner



Samuel Knazko of Slovakia and teammates celebrate victory after Men's Ice Hockey Playoffs Quarterfinals - United States v Slovakia at the Beijing Olympics. REUTERS/Brian Snyder

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Covid Crisis On Campus

How Colleges Are Dealing With High-COVID Case Counts On Campus

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



resources

In the past two years, colleges have worked non-stop to adapt to the pandemic and return to in-person classes safely. By the fall of 2021, more than 1,100 campuses required vaccines and many more instituted indoor masking policies; the collective sense among schools was they'd cracked the code of living with COVID-19. Plus, colleges are some of the most vaccinated places in the country. By September 2021, 74% of college students had received one dose of the vaccine - compared to 54% of the general population in that same month, according to a study by the COVID States Project. But still, the omicron variant has taken campuses by storm.

"It's a crisis," says Gerri Taylor, co-leader of the COVID Task Force for the American College Health Association. "I think the numbers we're hearing about are, at this point, underreported." Taylor says the biggest worry for colleges is their capacity to handle "rapidly increasing" case numbers.

"In trying to isolate [students], they need resources in terms of housing, staffing to track them," says Taylor. "They need staff to test them and to record all that ... to have a sense of how many kids on campus are sick."

You feel the stress on campus ... people, I think, don't feel safe ... you see that double masking and you see those N95s that I've never seen people wear before.

A big part of Taylor's job is to work with health directors on campus to coordinate their COVID response. One campus director recently told her: "We have never, through even this entire pandemic, been in a situation as difficult as this one right now in January of 2022."

Colleges are deploying emergency measures as they scramble to deal with the surge in cases. Some schools are using hotels to house students who test positive. At California Polytechnic State University, students who test positive are offered a \$400 gift card to the campus store if they move home to isolate.

Students are in limbo as they anxiously watch case counts go up

For students, there's a lot of uncertainty around how this semester will pan out. Senior Sophia Kriz is back on campus at Dartmouth College. The school is requiring all students to get a booster shot by the end of this month. It also implemented weekly testing and moved most of the social activities online, although classes remain in-person.

Even with all those precautions, Kriz is worried the high numbers of positive cases on campus could shut it all down.



"It sort of feels like we're in a state of limbo," she says, "We're all on campus, but you know, we're all just sort of waiting to hear...how things are going..."

Kriz is in the middle of planning rush for her sorority. They know the first round of recruitment events will be virtual, but beyond that, it's all up in the air. So, they're planning for two alternate universes - one where their social life stays virtual, and one where omicron eases up. For Kriz, a lot of things in the near future are laced with that same uncertainty. As she dives into her final semester of college, Kriz is just glad to be on campus and getting as close to a typical senior year as possible.

"All I can do from there is just hope that, you know, things get a little more normal," she says. (Courtesy npr.org)

Related

Colleges with high vaccination rates must now decide if they'll require boosters

This week, Wesleyan University in Connecticut held its first booster vaccine clinic on campus. CJ Joseph, a first-year student still figuring out what to major in, wasted no time signing up.

"I was like, 'Heck, yes, I will be the first person to get it,'" says Joseph, who was one of the first students to get the shot at Wednesday's clinic at Beckham Hall.

Convenience was a major selling point. "I have a lot of work to do," Joseph explains. "Being able to walk like a good four minutes just to get my COVID vaccine made it so much easier for me and I didn't have to spend money to get an Uber to go over to Walgreens or to CVS."

The liberal arts campus, which serves about 3,000 students, will require COVID-19 booster shots for those on campus this spring. It is one of the first colleges to do so.



A nurse administers a dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine during a City of Long Beach Public Health mobile vaccination clinic at the California State University, Long Beach campus. Patrick T. Fallon/AFP via Getty Images

"There's no good reason to hesitate," says Michael

Roth, the president of Wesleyan University. "Some people don't like to be first. But in this case, being first for public health doesn't seem to be a particularly risky place to be."

More than 1,000 colleges across the country required COVID-19 vaccines for students and staff this year, according to data from the Chronicle of Higher Education.

With the CDC recommendation that all adults get booster shots, colleges now must weigh how to incorporate the additional dose into their pandemic response plans.

For now, many schools are simply encouraging students and staff to get the extra dose. Among them are Duke University, an early adopter of a campus vaccine mandate last spring. Rutgers, largely cited as the first U.S. university to require COVID-19 vaccinations, issued a statement saying "we have no impending plans to require boosters for any community member." But administrators are encouraging "everyone to take advantage of booster shots as a way of increasing their personal protection against the virus."



For one small college, a booster requirement was an easy decision

At Wesleyan, Roth says there were some colleagues who questioned making it a requirement, insisting that compliance would be high anyway among a student population that was already nearly all vaccinated. He says requiring the booster makes it a social norm rather than an individual decision.

"The majority of our people would have gotten the booster without the encouragement," he says, "but we want to get the rate up as high as possible." He points to other vaccine requirements on the college campus, like meningitis and measles, mumps and rubella, noting that much of the ambivalence he sees comes from the politicization of the COVID-19 vaccine. "It just seemed like our obligation," he says.

Joseph, who is at high risk due to asthma, is grateful for that clear message.

"I really appreciate the fact that it is required that we get our booster shots," Joseph says, "because I feel like there are people who kind of view next step shots as a 'Oh, whatever. I don't really have to get it.'"

The mandate, Joseph says, plus the ease of access, makes the campus feel safer.

About an hour after Joseph got the booster, Hallie Stemberg, a junior studying history and French, waited in line to get hers. She saw friends in line; she caught up with them to talk about Thanksgiving break and the upcoming needle they were

bracing for.



"People are excited and ready to have it over with," she said after she'd gotten the shot. "Everyone's like, 'I'm just going to manifest that I will not be sick [with side effects] because we don't have time. We have finals.' I have presentations next week and papers to do the week after that, so I'm just trying to get it out of the way."

Will more campuses require a booster shot?

One question that colleges and universities still need to answer is, will the CDC update the definition of what "fully vaccinated" means, given that boosters are now encouraged for all adults? "Fully vaccinated, that term is extremely important to determine what that means for the community," explains Gerri Taylor, co-chair of the American College Health Association's COVID-19 task force. "If, in fact, the CDC says that fully vaccinated means having a booster within six months of getting your vaccine, as an example, then the colleges may put that into their requirements."

Her organization will issue guidance to colleges once that happens, but in the meantime, she recommends that colleges set up booster clinics on campus and encourage their communities to get an extra shot.

"Colleges are well prepared to do boosters," she says. They "have a captive population, and the stakes are there: We want students to be back in school and we've heard that over and over from the American Academy of Pediatrics and from students."



She points to two complicating factors: staffing and timing. A recent survey by the American College Health Association found the top two concerns for college health centers were staffing and burnout, because of the intensity and the duration of the pandemic.

When it comes to timing, there's not much left of the fall semester before finals and winter break. "Timing is so critical and has been throughout this pandemic," says Taylor. "So, do you start a booster clinic now? Or do you do it in January or February when students return for this spring semester?" Those, she says, are decisions colleges are making right now. (courtesy npr.org)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

2,120 Hate Incidents Against Asian Americans Reported During Coronavirus Pandemic

Coronavirus: What Do Attacks On Asians Tell About American Identity?



Attacks on East Asian people living in the US have shot up during the pandemic, revealing an uncomfortable truth about American identity. (Photo/ Getty Images)

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

More than 2,100 anti-Asian American hate incidents related to COVID-19 were reported across the country over a three-month time span between March and June, according to advocacy groups that compile the data. The incidents include physical attacks, verbal assaults, workplace discrimination and online harassment. The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council and Chinese for Affirmative Action launched a hate incident reporting website on March 19 when the coronavirus was becoming widespread across the U.S. and the media began reporting violent incidents targeting Asian-Americans. The online tool is available in multiple languages and allows users to report the information with the promise that personal information will be kept confidential. On Wednesday, the advocacy groups released an analysis of the incidents reported through June 18 in California, where about 40 percent of the 2,120 hate incidents took place. The groups released the national data to CBS News after an inquiry. Of the 832 incidents reported in California, many included anti-Asian slurs and

references to China and the coronavirus. One assailant yelled about "bringing that Chinese virus over here" during an attack against an Asian-American man at a San Francisco hardware store on May 6.



The assailant reportedly also said "Go back to China," "F--- you, Chinaman" and "F--- you, you monkey." In another San Francisco incident on June 9, someone threw a glass bottle at a woman putting her child in a car seat and yelled, "Go home Ch---k." And in Santa Clara on June 16, a man kicked a woman's dog and then spat at her, saying, "Take your disease that's ruining our country and go home."

"These are real people just living their lives and encountering this kind of hate," said Cynthia Choi, the co-executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, on

Wednesday. Though she was not born in the US, nothing about Tracy Wen Liu's life in the country felt "un-American." Ms Liu went to football games, watched Sex and the City and volunteered at food banks. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the 31-year-old didn't think anything of being East Asian and living in Austin, Texas. "Honestly, I didn't really think I stood out a lot," she says.

That has changed. With the outbreak of the pandemic that has killed around 100,000 people in the US, being Asian in America can make you a target - and many, including Ms Liu, have felt it. In her case, she says a Korean friend was pushed and yelled at by several people in a grocery store, and then asked to leave, simply because she was Asian and wore a mask.



Members of the Asian American Commission gather in Massachusetts to condemn racism. (Photo/Getty Images)

In states including New York, California, and Texas, East Asians have been spat on, punched or kicked - and in one case even stabbed. Whether they have been faced with outright violence, bullying or more insidious forms of social or political abuse, a spike in anti-Asian prejudice has left many Asians - which in the US refers to people of east or southeast Asian descent - wondering where they fit in American society.

"When I first came here five years ago, my goal was to adapt to American culture as soon as possible," says Ms Liu. "Then the pandemic made me realize that because I am Asian, and because of how I look like or where I was born, I could never become one of them." 201

After her friend's supermarket altercation, she decided to get her first gun. Authorities in New York City and Los Angeles say that hate incidents against people of Asian descent have increased, while a reporting centre run

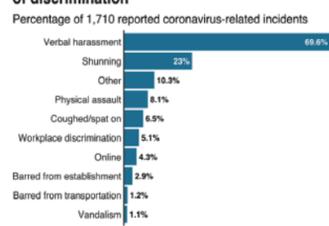
by advocacy groups and San Francisco State University says it received over 1,700 reports of coronavirus-related discrimination from at least 45 US states since it launched in March. Police in at least 13 states, including Texas, Washington, New Jersey, Minnesota and New Mexico, have also responded to reported hate incidents. Critics say those at the very top have made things worse - both President Donald Trump, and Democratic hopeful Joe Biden have been accused of fuelling anti-Asian sentiment to varying degrees with language they've used while talking about China's role in the outbreak.

And for many Asian Americans, it can feel as though, in addition to being targeted, their identity as Americans is being attacked.

Statistics on Anti-Asian incidents in the US:

One third of people surveyed said they had witnessed someone blaming Asian people for the pandemic; 1,710 incidents reported to STOP AAPI HATE - 15% of those cases involved physical assault or being coughed on or spat at; More than 100 individual incidents reported in the media; 133 incidents of anti-Asian discrimination recorded by the New York City Commission on Human Rights - compared to 11 in the same period last year. The commission has intervened in 91 cases; 14 Asian-bias hate crimes investigated by police in New York.

Verbal harassment the most common form of discrimination



More than 100 alleged hate incidents reported to civic groups and police departments in Los Angeles
Six reports of bias incidents reported to police in Seattle
There has been a surge in anti-Asian hate on extremist web communities
Sources: Ipsos, STOP AAPI HATE, New

York City Commission on Human Rights, New York City Police, Los Angeles County Commission on Human Rights, Seattle Police, Network Contagion Research Institute, BBC research

Some Asians have also reported being refused service from hotel rooms, or Uber rides, as a result of their ethnicity.

Matt (not his real name), a Chinese American emergency room doctor in Connecticut, noticed that several patients asked to be admitted to hospital because they said an Asian person had coughed near them. He experienced what appeared to be anti-Asian bias more personally, when he tried to treat a patient thought to have Covid-19.

"I had my protective equipment on, walked in and introduced myself. Once they heard my surname, they were like 'don't touch me, can I see someone else - can you just not come close to me?'"

Many other minorities face more "overt types of discrimination which are worse", Matt says - but he fears that incidents such as what he experienced would be demoralising for medical workers.

"This is a pretty stressful time - we're working a lot more, wearing very uncomfortable equipment all the time, and a lot of us are getting exposed to Covid-19." (Courtesy https://www.bbc.com/)



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