Tomorrow's Affairs
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Zelenskyy hosted regional leaders to deepen cooperation on security and economy

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hosted leaders and representatives from seven regional countries for talks on deepening cooperation on Friday, as overnight Russian strikes in multiple regions sparked fires and caused several deaths and injuries.

The inaugural summit of the so-called "Carpathian Eight" brings together Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary, with the European Union also involved.

It comes as U.S.-mediated efforts to end Russia's 4 1/2-year full-scale invasion have stalled, with the issue of territorial concessions in eastern Ukraine among the central sticking points. Ukraine is also seeking security guarantees from partners for a deal.

The summit also comes as three days of voting began in Russia's first wartime parliamentary election, which features virtually no opposition to President Vladimir Putin's party and is all but certain to secure the Kremlin's political dominance.

Some of the nations attending the meeting in western Ukraine's Ivano-Frankivsk region, such as Poland and Romania, have been staunch supporters of Ukraine. Others, such as Hungary, Serbia and Slovakia, have refused to provide Kyiv with direct military assistance.

Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram that the summit was a "significant beginning" of a movement intended to "further strengthen ties between our countries and create another strong element of cooperation at the EU level."

He added that the participating countries would work together on security, energy, logistics, cross-border economic ties and support for local communities.

European countries concerned over Russian hybrid threats

The meeting in the western Ukrainian ski resort of Bukovel came amid increasing concern among many European countries that Russia is ramping up hybrid threats including sabotage, cyberattacks, disinformation and potential drone incursions into NATO territory.

Tusk, Poland's prime minister, warned on Thursday before departing for Ukraine that Moscow is planning hybrid strikes with drones or rockets on European countries supporting Kyiv, among them Poland.

Officials in Poland, Germany and Denmark have in recent weeks accused Russia of involvement in drone incursions, sabotage, arson, surveillance of defense facilities and planning to use a drone carrying explosives to attack an airport.

Ursula von der Leyen said that the EU needs a NATO-like mechanism to better respond to hybrid attacks blamed on Russia

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday that the EU needs a NATO-like mechanism to better respond to hybrid attacks blamed on Russia, and to develop "a consensus on how to respond to certain incidents ... that fall below armed aggression but clearly threaten our national security."

Meanwhile, Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Friday it had summoned the British Chargé d'Affaires to strongly protest the United Kingdom's continued increase in the supply of drones and other weapons systems to Ukraine.

The ministry said the U.K.'s "fiercely confrontational stance" was aimed at "prolonging and escalating the armed conflict

by every possible means." It added that Russia reserves the right to take necessary countermeasures in self-defense, and that "any British military facilities in Ukraine used to strike Russian territory represent legitimate targets."

In a statement, Britain's Foreign Office said the U.K. will remain committed to providing the equipment Ukraine needs to defend itself. The office called the diplomatic reprimand "yet another attempt to deflect attention from Russia's barbaric full scale invasion of Ukraine and discredit the U.K. on the world stage."

Ukraine receives nearly $4 billion in EU support

Following a phone call with von der Leyen on Friday, Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post that Ukraine has received a 3.3 billion-euro tranche (roughly $3.8 billion) from an EU financial support package meant to strengthen Ukraine's defense capabilities including the purchase of missiles and drones.

The funding comes as Kyiv faces a projected budget deficit of roughly $27 billion this year.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine was also preparing for a meeting with von der Leyen at the United Nations General Assembly in New York next week focused on the country's financial stability.