

As Putin warns Russian nuclear forces “ready” for war

Pentagon sends \$300 million in additional weapons to Ukraine

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The US Defense Department will send another \$300 million in weapons to Ukraine, amid growing warning signs that the US-NATO war with Russia is on the verge of a significant escalation.

In an interview published Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia's nuclear forces are “ready” in the event of a full-scale war between Russia and NATO.

Asked by an interviewer from Rossiya-1 television and news agency, “Are we really ready for nuclear war?” Putin replied, “From a military-technical point of view, we are, of course, ready.”

Putin continued, “Our nuclear triad is more modern than any other triad, and only we and the Americans have such a triad. We have made much more progress here. Ours is more modern, with all the nuclear components.”

Putin concluded, “But this does not mean that, in my opinion, they [NATO] are ready to start this nuclear war tomorrow. If they want to? We are ready.”

Putin’s remarks were a response to statements by five NATO countries, France, Canada, Lithuania, and the Netherlands, expressing their openness to sending NATO troops to fight Russia in Ukraine. On Saturday, Polish foreign minister Radek Sikorski, declared that sending troops to Ukraine was “not unthinkable.”

To this, Putin replied, “If, say, Polish troops enter the territory of Ukraine, as it sounds, to cover the Ukrainian-Belarusian, say, border or in some other places in order to free up Ukrainian military contingents to participate in hostilities on the contact line, then I think that Polish troops will never leave there.”

The growing calls within NATO for the direct deployment of NATO troops to Ukraine come amid the backdrop of a series of military debacles for the Ukrainian armed forces.

Last month, the Ukrainian military was forced to retreat from the city of Avdiivka, and then retreated once again under the pressure of continued Russian offensives.

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines painted a devastating picture of the current state of Ukraine's armed forces.

“Ukraine’s retreat from Avdiivka and their struggle to stave off further territorial losses in the past few weeks have exposed the erosion of Ukraine’s military capabilities with the declining availability of external military aid,” she said. “Without that assistance, it is hard to imagine how Ukraine will be able to maintain the extremely hard-fought advances it has made against the Russians.”

The Zelensky government is desperately seeking to drum up soldiers for its army, which has been depleted by massive casualties. Ukraine’s parliament is set to vote later this month on a new recruitment bill that would set the framework for the recruitment of another half-million people.

The advanced US military hardware sent to Ukraine has not changed the tide of the battle. While Ukraine appears to have so far fielded 30 US Abrams battle tanks, three have already been destroyed, mostly through the use of anti-tank drones.

Despite a series of devastating battlefield losses, Ukraine continues to carry out strikes deep inside Russia. For the second day in a row, Ukraine carried out drone strikes on Russian energy refineries hundreds of miles away from the Ukrainian border, accounting for approximately 10 percent of Russia's refinery capacity.

The Biden administration has called on Congress to pass more than \$60 billion in funding for Ukraine. On Wednesday, the funding appeared to move closer to

passage after a campaign, led by the Democratic Party, to advance the bill in the House despite opposition from House Speaker Mike Johnson.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon, in its announcement of another \$300 million in weapons to Ukraine, declared that its accounts for Ukraine weapons funding are overdrawn by \$10 billion.

The European Union, meanwhile, announced that it would send another \$5 billion in weapons to Ukraine through the so-called “European Peace Facility.” Other NATO countries are expanding their funding of the war on an individual basis, with Denmark announcing Tuesday that it would send a \$340 million weapons package.

While the Biden administration has publicly ruled out sending troops to Ukraine, there are growing calls within the US political establishment for such a move. In an interview with Radio Free Europe, retired US Army Colonel Alexander Crowther called for the proposal to be taken “seriously.”

“Ukrainians are running out of soldiers, just like we did in 1944, when in Europe, we took cooks and handed them rifles and said, ‘You are now an infantryman,’” he said. “And so Ukraine is at the point where they’re having to do that.”

He added, “If you could get Americans or Western Europeans, or whoever, running a very tight air-defense system to knock down all those missiles - the Kinzals and all the Iskanders that are coming across the [Dnieper] River - if you could do that, that would be very helpful, and it wouldn’t threaten any Russian life.”

He concluded, “You’d have to be really clear to Putin [and] say, ‘We’re sending people to Ukraine, they’re not going to be doing offensive combat against you... Anything that crosses the Dnieper is dead.’... It’s not a no-fly zone, it’s air defense.”



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