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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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29.01.2023

White House “discussing” sending US fighter jets to Ukraine

The White House confirmed Thursday that the United States is considering sending Western fighter jets to Ukraine to fight Russia.

Asked whether the “United States is willing to consider” sending fighter jets to Ukraine, White House deputy national security advisor Jon Finer told MSNBC Thursday that the United States will be “discussing this very carefully.”



[Photo: Tech Sgt. Micahel Ammons, USAF]

The announcement Wednesday by President Joe Biden that the United States would send the Abrams main battle tank to Ukraine was immediately met with demands within the media and political establishment to send the F-16 multi-role fighter jet as well.

The F-16 is a fourth-generation supersonic fighter. It is capable of deploying the 1.2 megaton B83 nuclear bomb. It is a major component of NATO’s “nuclear sharing” system of frontline deployed tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

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The statement by Finer came the same day that Thomas Gassilloud, the chairman of the French defense committee, said that France would “leave all the doors open” to sending Western fighter aircraft into the war with Russia.

Netherlands Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra, asked last week if the country would consider sending fighters to Ukraine, replied, “When it comes to things that the Netherlands can supply, there are no taboos.”

On Wednesday, ArmyINFORM, an information agency for Ukraine’s ministry of defense, reported that Ukrainian fighter pilots have already begun training in the United States. “Our military pilots went to the United States, funds were allocated for the training of our pilots,” wrote the publication, quoting a Ukrainian ministry of defense official.

The publication reported that the type of aircraft the United States will send to Ukraine has already been decided. “The type of aircraft, which is likely to be provided to Ukraine, and the corresponding terms of training have already been determined.”

These plans have been underway for months, according to earlier statements by US officials. In July, Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chief of staff of the US Air Force, told the *Washington Post* that “discussions are ongoing” about sending fighter jets to Ukraine. Speaking at the Aspen Security Conference that month, Brown was asked, “[I]s it possible the US could sell or provide Ukraine more US fighter platforms?” To this, Brown replied, “[I]t’ll be something non-Russian, I could probably tell you that.”

While these plans have been ongoing—including the reported training of Ukrainian pilots on US fighter jets—for months, they have received renewed public attention after the announcement that the US would send Abrams main battle tanks to Ukraine.

On Friday, leading Democratic and Republican senators called on the White House to send F-16 fourth-generation nuclear-capable fighter aircraft to Ukraine.

Rhode Island Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham and Connecticut Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal demanded that the jets be provided to “erode Russia’s capability to continue fighting in Ukraine.”

The senators added, “While the tanks represent a tremendous upgrade in Ukraine’s military, we urge the Biden administration and our allies to send more long range artillery, such as ATACMS, and fighter aircraft such as F-16s.”

They continued, “The combination of tanks, fighter aircraft, and ATACMS will help Ukraine confront the upcoming Russian offensive and go on offense in both the East and the South.”

The letter concluded, “Let’s give the Ukrainians everything they need to win—now.”

An intelligence analyst cited by the *Kyiv Post* embraced the senators' call to send fighter jets and long-range missiles, declaring that with these weapons, it "will be within Ukraine's possibility to take out rail lines and bridges leading into Ukraine from Russia. Ukraine's ability to wipe out the Kerch Bridge would become realistic."

The analyst praised the "abject fear it would project into the hearts of Russian battle commanders. Using Ukraine's incredible human intelligence and America's geospatial precision—every Russian commander in Ukraine would become a target."

Plans for supplying NATO jets are already underway. The *Financial Times* reported that Lockheed Martin has already increased production of F-16 fighters to compensate for countries planning to transfer them to Ukraine. The company is "going to be ramping up production on F-16s in Greenville [South Carolina] to get to the place where we will be able to backfill pretty capably," said Frank St. John, chief operating officer of Lockheed Martin.

"We will get F-16s," Yuriy Sak, an advisor to Ukraine's Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov, told CNBC Thursday.

These discussions are taking place as Ukrainian troops are pouring into NATO countries to undergo training. The first Ukrainian soldiers arrived in Germany Thursday to undergo training on Marder Infantry fighting vehicles.

To an even greater degree than the M1 Abrams battle tank, sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine would involve the deployment of a massive logistical infrastructure and supply lines into Ukraine from the NATO countries, likely including the deployment of American civilian contractors to help maintain these sophisticated systems.

In the second mention of the deployment of US "contractors" to Ukraine this week, CNN speculated that the deployment of F-16s would mean that "Western contractors could be sent to Ukraine, putting them at risk of Russian attack."

The deployment of these massive logistic networks for NATO weapons, staffed by "civilian contractors" for NATO, would greatly intensify pressure for military escalation, including calls for the creation of no-fly zones and the direct deployment of NATO troops to the war zone.

World Socialist 28.01.2023