

FM Kuleba calls on partners to provide Ukraine with military aircraft

Daniel Vajdich <dvajdich@yorktownsolutions.com>

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To: Daniel Vajdich <dvajdich@yorktownsolutions.com>

**Dmytro Kuleba** ✓

@DmytroKuleba

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Our aces heroically defend our skies. But Russia has advantage. Dear partners who still have not provided Ukraine with military aircraft: how can you sleep when Ukrainian children are under bombs in Mariupol, Kherson, Kharkiv, other cities? You can take this decision now. Do it!

2:50 PM · Mar 3, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

Politico: European plan to donate fighter jets to Ukraine collapses

The dissolution of the deal comes as European countries lined up Monday to announce new weapons packages for Ukraine, from anti-armor and anti-air rockets to artillery and medical supplies.

By PAUL MCLEARY

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A proposed deal to allow Ukrainian pilots to fly fighter jets donated by European Union countries has fallen apart.

Over the course of a confusing 48 hours, the EU announced it had brokered an arrangement for member states to allow Ukrainian pilots to start flying their used Russian fighter planes, only to have those countries deny there was any such deal even as Kyiv trumpeted the impending arrival of the jets.

The dissolution of the deal comes as European countries lined up Monday to announce new weapons packages for Ukraine, from anti-armor and anti-air rockets to artillery and medical supplies.

But the announcement Sunday by EU security chief Josep Borrell that fighter jets were also on their way appeared to be a game-changer for European military assistance. Borrell was forced to walk his pronouncement back somewhat by Monday, acknowledging that any transfers wouldn't come from the EU itself, but would instead be donated "bilaterally" by individual EU countries.

Soon after, a Ukrainian government official told POLITICO their country had sent pilots to Poland to pick up the jets and the Ukrainian parliament announced that the planes from Slovakia, Bulgaria and Poland would soon be on their way. But by Tuesday, Bulgaria and Slovakia said there was no deal to send fighters, and the Polish president, appearing at a Polish air base alongside NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, said no planes would be flying any time soon.

"We are supporting Ukrainians with humanitarian aid. However, we are not going to send any jets to Ukrainian airspace," President Andrzej Duda said.

Slovakia's small fleet of MiG-29s are the country's only fighter jets, and they are being serviced by Russian workers under contract, making their transfer a tough sell in Bratislava.

The Slovakian government is also engaged in talks with Poland to provide protection of Slovak airspace, and until that deal is reached, they need their MiG-29s.

Asked in an interview with a Slovak newspaper Tuesday if the country would ever transfer its MiGs to Ukraine, Minister of Defense Jaroslav Nad said "there is a theoretical chance, but I do not know when we will reach an agreement with the Poles, when the Poles will be able to start protecting our airspace. And the second thing, what will be happening in Ukraine in two weeks, three weeks? And in two months? I do not know."

In a move likely aimed at increasing pressure on Europe to act, the Ukrainian parliament on Monday tweeted that Europe was sending 70 fighter planes to Ukraine, including 28 MiG-29s from Poland, 12 from Slovakia and 16 from Bulgaria, along with 14 Su-25s from Bulgaria.

The fighter plane drama came on top of a flurry of announcements over the weekend that saw European leaders promise a flood of new weaponry for the Ukrainian military to assist in fighting off invading Russian troops, an overt and very public acknowledgment of Europe's newfound will to inflict pain on the Kremlin for its military adventurism.

With the air corridors to Kyiv closed by Russian anti-aircraft weapons and fighter jets, U.S. and European powers have started pushing weapons into the country by road.

Poland, Estonia and Latvia were some of the first to act, sending ammunition, Javelin anti-armor weapons, fuel and medical supplies to the Ukraine border for hand-off to Ukrainian forces.

On Monday, Finland announced it would join the club, pledging 2,500 assault rifles, ammunition, 1,500 anti-tank weapons and 70,000 ration packages to Ukraine. Sweden is also readying a large arms and aid package, announcing the upcoming delivery of 135,000 field rations, 5,000 helmets, body armor and 5,000 anti-tank weapons.

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly is heading to Poland Tuesday to coordinate the shipment of 100 Carl Gustaf anti-armor rocket launchers, along with 2,000 munitions and other aid.

Speaking with reporters before the trip, she said "we will be able to make sure to send lethal aid to Ukraine. My role in this is to make sure that this aid gets in the arms of Ukrainian soldiers that are fighting for their life and fighting for their motherland. That's exactly why I've been able to get an agreement from Poland to make sure that that delivery could be done through their borders."

One of the biggest surprises in recent European political history came Saturday, when German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced he was sending 1,000 anti-tank weapons and 500 Stinger missiles to Ukraine, a reversal of the German post-war policy of barring the transfer of arms to warring parties. He also pledged an immediate \$100 billion infusion into the German military.

President Joe Biden also ordered the release of up to \$350 million worth of weapons from U.S. stocks to Ukraine on Friday. Speaking with reporters at the Pentagon Monday, a senior U.S. Defense Department official declined to go into detail about what will be included, but said "there will be capabilities in there to help them with both their ground defensive capabilities as well as airborne defensive capabilities."

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/28/ukrainian-pilots-arrive-in-poland-to-pick-up-donated-fighter-jets-00012560>



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Daniel P. Vajdich
Yorktown Solutions
601 13th Street NW Suite 900S
Washington, D.C. 20005

www.yorktownsolutions.com



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