



UKRAINE

Ukraine Now IAEA Board of Governors Member

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his daily address Thursday that Ukraine is now a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors.

"This not only underscores our international security role but also provides real opportunities for Ukraine to influence the adoption of decisions that are binding for all IAEA members and the entire international community," Zelenskyy said.

He said Ukraine will do everything it can to ensure regional nuclear and radiation security, and liberate Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant from its Russian occupiers, to secure Europe from "Russian radiation blackmail."

Meanwhile, hundreds of fighters previously associated with the Wagner Group, "have likely started to redeploy to Ukraine" as individuals and in small groups that are fighting for a variety of pro-Russian units, the British Defense Ministry said Friday in its daily intelligence update on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It said reports suggest a concentration of Wagner veterans around the eastern city of Bakhmut, a sector where their past experience could be useful.

Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin was killed in a plane crash in Russia last month, raising questions about the future of his forces.

The cause of the plane crash that killed Prigozhin and other Wagner leaders has not been determined, but many Western officials believe it was Russian President Vladimir Putin's retribution for the uprising Prigozhin led, a troop movement toward Moscow that he abruptly called off.

In the weeks that followed, Prigozhin met with Putin at the Kremlin and traveled freely in Russia before the plane crash.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Thursday that Ukrainian forces are "gradually gaining ground" in the face of fierce fighting and that he is constantly urging allies to provide more aid, boost defense production and speed up arms deliveries to Ukraine.

"The stronger Ukraine becomes, the closer we come to ending Russia's aggression," Stoltenberg told reporters in Kyiv.

Speaking alongside Zelenskyy, Stoltenberg said NATO has framework contracts in place for \$2.5 billion in key ammunition for Ukraine.

Stoltenberg said it is in NATO's security interest to provide Ukraine what it needs to win the war.

In the United States, as the federal government prepares for a possible shutdown, the country's aid in the Ukrainian war effort could falter, according to Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh.

Those affected by the shutdown would include Pentagon civilians involved in English-language training for Ukraine's F-16 pilots, so if there is a government shutdown, "there could be impacts to training," Singh said. "At this point right now, I just don't have more specific details to offer."

France has pledged its continued support of Ukraine, and the two countries have been in talks to maintain the continuous securing of arms for Kyiv.

"Dozens of projects have either been launched or are under discussion, aimed at organizing joint production of new weapons or maintenance of weapons already with us," Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov told a news conference alongside his French counterpart, Sebastien Lecornu.

France will "continue to help Ukraine as much as is necessary," Lecornu said.

No specific details were given on the arms Paris intends to send to Kyiv.

Some information in this report was provided by The Associated Press, Agence France-Presse and Reuters.

