

As Ukrainian offensive in east & south continues, U.S. provides more air defense against attacks on cities & energy infrastructure and urges Kyiv to keep door open for peace talks.



UK Defence Intelligence update on Russian attacks and troop locations as of Nov. 9.

Last Friday, the White House announced that National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and other officials had met in Kyiv with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Head of the Office of the President Andriy Yermak, Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov and others “to underscore the United States’ steadfast support to Ukraine and its people as they defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Toward that end, Sullivan announced an additional \$400 million security assistance package, which includes funding to refurbish HAWK air defense missiles for inclusion in a future package, 45 refurbished T-72B tanks, 1,100 Phoenix Ghost Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems, 40 Armored Riverine Boats; funding to refurbish 250 M1117 Armored Security Vehicles, tactical secure communications systems and surveillance systems, and funding for training, maintenance, and sustainment. The tanks are part of a trilateral, coordinated effort with the Netherlands and the Czech Republic. The Netherlands will provide 45 additional T-72B tanks with the support of the Czech Ministry of Defense. The package brought the total commitment in security assistance to Ukraine to more than \$18.2 billion since President Vladimir Putin began his “special military operation” on Feb. 24.

As that package was announced, news reports indicated the Biden administration has been privately encouraging Ukraine’s leaders to signal their openness to negotiate with Russia and drop their public refusal to engage in peace talks unless Putin is removed from power – something that is highly unlikely to happen. Zelenskyy has said on several occasions Ukraine won’t negotiate with Russia until Putin is replaced. Indeed, after Putin unilaterally annexed the

regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in eastern and southern Ukraine last month, Zelenskyy signed a decree prohibiting any talks with Russia. The U.S. is reportedly concerned that Zelenskyy's hard line against a negotiated settlement of the conflict, although understandable, concerns some governments in Europe and elsewhere that have experienced substantial disruptions in supplies of fuel and other commodities and dramatic increases in prices. As one U.S. official put it, "Ukraine fatigue is a real thing for some of our partners."

But the private encouragement that Ukrainian leaders signal their openness to talks reflects something else as well – the fact that, while the war continues to be immensely costly for Ukraine, in terms of the loss of lives, destruction of homes, apartments, hospitals, schools, and businesses, and damage to the country's energy infrastructure, the battle lines have largely stabilized across much of eastern and southern Ukraine. Ukraine has taken back all of Kharkiv region in the northeast, has been slowly regaining some territory in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, and has been steadily advancing in Kherson region in the south to such an extent that late last month Russia moved its administrative offices in the region from the city of Kherson and began organizing the evacuation of citizens to the eastern side of the Dnipro River. And yesterday, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, acting on the recommendation of Gen. Sergey Surovikin, the overall commander of Russian forces in Ukraine, ordered the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kherson to the eastern side of the Dnipro. Nevertheless, except for the territory between Lyman and Horlivka in Donetsk region in the east and the territory west of the Dnipro in Kherson region, there has been little change in the alignment of forces in recent weeks. Indeed, yesterday's daily map of Russian attacks and locations issued by British Defence Intelligence (above) was virtually unchanged from those of the last several weeks. Russia continues to hold all of Luhansk region, roughly half of Donetsk region, most of Zaporizhzhia region, and all of Kherson region east of the Dnipro. Ukraine is likely to retake the city of Kherson and the territory west of the Dnipro in the near future. But beyond that and perhaps some small gains in the Donbas, the alignment of Russian and Ukrainian forces is likely to remain largely unchanged as winter sets in – which is why some in Europe and elsewhere are increasingly concerned that, after the winter hiatus and with both sides restocked and resupplied, the war will resume in the spring and continue indefinitely, and, in so doing, will impose even greater economic costs on their citizens.

On Monday, Mykhailo Podolyak, an influential adviser to Yermak, the head of Zelenskyy's office, poured cold water on the notion of negotiations with Russia, repeating what Zelenskyy had said earlier that Ukraine would negotiate only with Putin's successor. He tweeted, "Important: Ukraine has never refused to negotiate. Our negotiating position is known and open. 1. First, RF [Russian Federation] withdraws troops from Ukraine. 2. After everything else. Is Putin ready? Obviously not. Therefore, we are constructive in our assessment: we will talk with the next leader of RF." And soon thereafter, clearly signaling continuation of the war, Ukrainian Defense Minister Reznikov tweeted, "Look who's here! NASAMS and Aspide air defence systems arrived in Ukraine! These weapons will significantly strengthen Ukraine and will make our skies safer. We will continue to shoot down the enemy targets attacking us. Thank you to our partners: Norway, Spain and the US." NASAMS (National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System) is an advanced missile system built by Kongsberg, a Norwegian firm, and Raytheon that

can destroy unmanned aerial vehicles and cruise missiles. Aspide is a medium-range supersonic surface-to-air missile system built by an Italian company that can engage and destroy an enemy plane before it delivers its missiles. The Aspides were given to Ukraine by Spain.

Nevertheless, there is some reason to think that, notwithstanding Podolyak's tweet, the message conveyed by American officials last Friday about keeping the door open to possible negotiations was heard. In a televised address Monday evening, Zelenskyy, speaking of the address he delivered that day to the climate summit in Egypt, said, "I delivered an important international address today. Climate summit in Egypt. A very significant event, a very representative gathering. Dozens of state leaders and heads of government. The main thing for us is to inform the world about the ongoing Russian aggression, about the destabilizing influence that Russia exerts. When the world is focused on combating war, energy and food crises, the destruction of customary international relations, the climate agenda is clearly suffering... Therefore, anyone who is serious about the climate agenda should also be serious about the need to immediately stop Russian aggression, restore our territorial integrity, and force Russia into genuine peace negotiations. Into such negotiations, which we have repeatedly proposed, and to which we always received insane Russian responses with new terrorist attacks, shelling or blackmail. Once again – restoration of territorial integrity, respect for the UN Charter, compensation for all damages caused by the war, punishment of every war criminal and guarantee that this will not happen again. These are completely understandable conditions."

There may well be a ceasefire at some point and, based on what Zelenskyy said in his televised address Monday evening, there may even be peace talks aimed at agreeing on the terms of a treaty formally ending the conflict. But even if there are such talks at some point, there's little reason to believe the two sides would agree on the terms of a treaty ending the conflict. Ukraine would undoubtedly insist that Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson be returned, and Russia would undoubtedly insist that the five regions remain, as they are now, integral parts of the Russian Federation. And since each side realizes the other side will remain committed to its position regarding the five regions, both sides realize it's highly unlikely that, after a ceasefire, they would agree to the terms of a treaty ending the war. And so, despite the immense human suffering and damage to the cities and towns of Ukraine, the war goes on.

David R. Cameron
November 10, 2022