Zelenskyy says Trump will give Ukraine license to produce Patriot interceptor missiles

Presidents Zelenskyy and Trump at the UN General Assembly Tuesday.

Today, President Zelenskyy said President Trump has approved granting Ukraine a license to produce the interceptor missiles for the Patriot air defense systems. Subjected as Ukraine has been to drone and missile attacks every day and night, its supply of interceptor missiles has long since run out and Zelenskyy has for some time asked for a license to produce the interceptor missiles, which are the only ones capable of destroying incoming Russian ballistic missiles.

On July 28, following a meeting with President Trump at the White House, President Zelenskyy said Trump had “accepted that he will give us licenses” to build the Patriot interceptor missiles. But following a cabinet meeting three days later, in response to a question about whether Ukraine would get a license to build the Patriot missiles, Trump said, “We have not agreed to that. We're talking about it, but it's a hard thing to give away that kind of technology," adding that it would be a “big step” and that the government has to be very careful about divulging information about American defense technology: "These weapons are incredible. We have to be very careful about letting somebody build them. ... I don't think this would ever happen, but you know those people that you give that technology, they can someday turn on you. You know, that is possible."

When asked in an interview three weeks ago if the U.S. would provide Ukraine with the production blueprints for the missiles, Secretary of State Rubio said, “That's being negotiated as we speak." But, he added, “ramping up production, even if you have a license, is something that takes multiple years to build these factories.” Which means,

he said, that while Ukrainian production of the missiles “may come to fruition, it really won’t solve the short-term challenge.” Nevertheless, today President Zelenskyy said that President Trump had told him about the “final decision” during their meeting Tuesday on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly: "At our meeting, President Trump stressed that he had made his final decision: Ukraine will receive licenses to produce Patriot missiles," He didn’t say when Ukraine would be able to begin production and how many missiles it will be able to produce over a particular period of time. But at least it finally will have the license to produce the missiles.

Hopefully in the meantime, until Ukraine starts producing the interceptor missiles, it will receive enough of them from the U.S. and its European allies to protect its people from the incoming missiles that rain down on them every night.

David R. Cameron
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