

U.S., Ukraine Leaders Discuss Current Situation in Russia-Ukraine War

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By Jim Garamone, DOD News



U.S. and Ukrainian defense leaders discussed the attack on the Russian province of Kursk as well as the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia, said Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh today.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III spoke with Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov yesterday "trying to get a better understanding of their objectives," Singh said. "It's something we're continuing to engage on [and] going to continue to monitor."

The current offensive towards Kursk does not change what weapons the coalition supporting Ukraine is providing the embattled nation, she said. She noted that weapons provided to the Ukrainian armed forces have changed

since the Russian invasion in February 2022.

Singh said the Ukraine Defense Contact Group — a coalition of more than 50 nations — began sending basic anti-armor and anti-aircraft weaponry to Ukraine. That has morphed as the war continued and changed with Ukrainian pilots now flying F-16s, Ukrainian infantrymen receiving sophisticated training, Ukrainian tankers driving German Leopard and U.S. Abrams tanks and more.

"You've seen us modify and give different capabilities over time, and we reserve that right [to] continue to do that," Singh said.

There is some indication that the Ukrainian attack in Russia is drawing Russian forces away from Russian efforts in the Eastern provinces of Ukraine, she said.

There are early reports of some movement of Russian units being directed towards Kursk, Singh said. She had no comment on the number of units or their possible objectives. "We have seen some Russian units be redirected from operations in Ukraine," she said.

U.S. officials believe the Ukrainians have been effective on the battlefield and are pushing Russian forces back from areas they captured. The United States is worried about escalation between Russia and Ukraine, Singh said, "that's something that the administration is always weighing, but you have to remember what Ukraine has been able to do. ... They've been very successful at being able to take back their sovereign territory, and they still continue to do it."

The war in Ukraine could end in a day if Russian President Vladimir Putin withdrew his troops, but Ukraine is prepared to continue the fight. "What I will tell you is ... that our commitment is with Ukraine for the long haul," she said.

In the Middle East, U.S. deterrence forces continue to arrive, Singh said. Austin ordered F-22 Raptor aircraft to the region and ordered the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group to accelerate its arrival in U.S. Central Command. The secretary also ordered more U.S. naval vessels to the waters off Israel. "The U.S. government also remains very focused on cease-fire as part of [an effort] to bring all hostages home and to end the war in Gaza," she said.

A cease-fire in Gaza would serve to help de-escalate the situation in the region. Iran and Iranian-backed groups have threatened to attack Israel, and

Singh said the Iranians would do well to look at what happened in April when Iran and its proxies launched drones and missiles at Israel. "Iran did attack Israel, but I'll remind you, we shot out of the sky 90% of what they threw at Israel," she said. "That was an incredibly intricate operation with the Israeli military, our military and our allies in the region."