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# Ukraine war: Western allies send Kyiv mixed messages on war planes

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Russia-Ukraine war



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| Ukraine has long been pushing its allies to provide advanced fighter jets to defend its skies from Russian attacks

**By Kathryn Armstrong & Jaroslav Lukiv**

BBC News

**US President Joe Biden has ruled out providing F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, despite renewed calls from top Kyiv officials for urgent air support.**

Asked on Monday if the US would be sending the planes, Mr Biden said "no". The UK also said it was "not practical" for it to send its aircraft to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, France's Emmanuel Macron said "by definition, nothing is excluded" ahead of meeting a Ukrainian minister.

Ukraine says advanced jets will help protect its skies from Russian attacks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the country's top military officials say there should be no taboos on such military aid - but the US and its partners fear this would lead to further escalation with a nuclear-armed Russia.

On Tuesday, Ukraine's Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat was quoted by the Ukrainska Pravda news website as saying that Kyiv needed up to 200 multi-role fighter jets - such as F-16s - to defend its skies.

He said that Russia currently outnumbered Ukraine by five to six times in terms of the number of war planes.

The US-made F-16s would be a significant upgrade on the Soviet-era fighting jets - mostly MiGs - Ukraine is currently using, which were made before the country declared independence from the USSR in 1991.

However, Mr Biden has repeatedly rebuffed Ukraine's pleas for the jets, instead focussing on providing military support in other areas.

Other Western allies have been less definitive though. On Monday, President Macron did not rule out sending its war planes to Ukraine - but he stressed that it must neither further inflame the situation nor limit France's ability to defend itself.

Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov is now in Paris, where he is expected to discuss the issue with Mr Macron and French military officials later on Tuesday.

Poland - another key ally of Ukraine - has also not ruled out sending F-16s to Kyiv. However, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said any such move would only be possible "in complete co-ordination" with other Nato members.

The US announced last week it would supply Kyiv with 31 Abrams tanks, reversing its earlier stance on the issue. The UK and Germany also **pledged similar support**.