

NATO Members Deny Reaching Deal to Supply Ukraine With Arms

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NATO approved wide-ranging plans on Friday to boost its defences in eastern Europe, aiming to reassure allies nervous about Russia's intervention in Ukraine that the U.S.-led alliance will shield them from any attack.

KIEV — A senior aide to Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko said Kiev has agreed on the provision of weapons and military advisers from five NATO member states, but four of the five swiftly denied such a deal had been reached.

NATO officials have previously said the alliance would not send arms to nonmember Ukraine, but have also said individual allies may do so if they wish.

"At the NATO summit agreements were reached on the provision of military advisers and supplies of modern armaments from the U.S., France, Italy, Poland and Norway," Poroshenko aide Yuri Lytsenko said Sunday on his Facebook page.

Lytsenko gave no further details. He may have made his comment for domestic political reasons to highlight the degree of NATO commitment to Ukraine and to its pro-Western

president.

Poroshenko, whose armed forces are battling pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, attended the two-day summit in Wales that ended Friday.

A senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, denied that the U.S. had made such a pledge. The official said: "No U.S. offer of lethal assistance has been made to Ukraine."

Asked about Lytsenko's comments, defense ministry officials in Italy, Poland and Norway also denied plans to provide arms.

In France, an aide at the Elysee palace declined to comment.

"This news is incorrect. Italy, along with other EU and NATO countries, is preparing a package of nonlethal military aid such as bullet-proof vests and helmets for Ukraine," an Italian defense ministry official said.

Norwegian Defense Ministry spokesman Lars Gjemle, speaking to the NTB news agency, said, "We're participating with staff officers in two military exercises in Ukraine, but it's not correct that we're delivering weapons to Ukraine."

A Polish defense ministry spokesman, Lieutenant Colonel Jacek Sonta, said by email, "There [was] no agreement concerning supply of modern arms from Poland to Ukraine at the NATO summit."

NATO officials have said the alliance will not send weapons to Ukraine, which is not a member state, but they have also said individual allies may choose to do so.

Russia is fiercely opposed to closer ties between Ukraine and the NATO alliance.

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