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Ukraine Marches With NATO Allies on 30th Independence Anniversary

By AFP

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More than 5,000 Ukrainian servicemen saluted President Volodymyr Zelenskiy during the parade, marching with dozens of soldiers from countries including the United States, Britain and Canada. **president.gov.ua**

Ukrainian soldiers marched through Kiev Tuesday alongside servicemen of NATO member countries as the country marked the 30th anniversary of its independence from the Soviet Union.

The show of solidarity came after Ukraine and its Western allies agreed in a summit in Kiev on Monday to work towards ending Russia's "occupation" of Crimea.

Ukraine is not a member of NATO, despite wanting to join.

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Polish President Andrzej Duda, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian were in attendance.

Most of the marching Ukrainian soldiers had fought against pro-Russia separatists in an ongoing conflict in the eastern Donbass region that broke out in 2014 after Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula.

"On this holiday we need to remember those who have made it possible for us to be here. These are our defenders of Ukraine, our independence," Zelenskiy said at the parade.

"It is possible to temporarily occupy territories, but it is impossible to occupy people's love for Ukraine," he said, adding that the Donbass and Crimea "will come back."

Thousands of spectators waving Ukrainian blue-and-yellow flags watched as more than 400 tanks and armored vehicles rolled past.

As part of the show, some 100 helicopters and jets including Polish F-16 fighters and British Eurofighter Typhoon jets flew over the Ukrainian capital.

Ukrainian Navy ships also took part in a parade in the Black Sea around the port city of Odessa as part of the commemorations.

The conflict in the east, which has claimed more than 13,000 lives, has seen at least 45 Ukrainian soldiers killed since the start of the year compared with 50 in all of 2020.

Ukraine and its Western allies accuse Russia of sending arms to back the separatists, which Moscow denies.

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