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Russia Conflicted on Ukraine Winter Offensive, Senior U.S. Official Says

By AFP

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Grad multiple-launch rocket systems of the Western Military District of Russia at the front in Ukraine.
Russian Defence Ministry / TASS

The Russian leadership has conflicting views on whether to launch a winter offensive in Ukraine, which has warned of a fresh Russian attempt to seize Kyiv, a senior U.S. official said Tuesday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has publicly called for his top military brass to present him with "short- and medium-term" plans on how to proceed with the war he launched 10 months ago.

"I think there are conflicting things that we see," the U.S. official said of the Russian government deliberations.

"Certainly, there are some who, I think, would want to pursue offensives in Ukraine. There are

others who have real questions about the capacity for Russia to actually do that," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The official said the United States would "adjust and adapt quickly" if the nature of the invasion changed.

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"What we've been doing — what we continue to do — is to make sure, to the best of our ability, the Ukrainians have, within their hands, the means to effectively defend themselves against Russian aggression."

For their part, the Ukrainians "show no intention of slowing down" due to the weather in their quest to take back territory, the official said.

"I think the Russians have to factor that in," the official said.

Ukrainian military leaders have warned that Moscow is gearing up for a major winter offensive, including an attempt to seize Kyiv once the ground freezes.

Russia failed to seize the capital after invading on Feb. 24 despite predictions in many quarters of a swift victory.

The new Ukrainian warnings come as the United States prepares new military aid.

Ukraine's Western allies last week also promised an additional 1 billion euros ($1.1 billion) in winter aid including financing for electricity generation as Russia targets the country's power grid.

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