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Allies Urged to Ramp Up Ukraine Support at Munich Meet

By Sam Reeves for AFP

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Munich Security Conference in Munich, Saturday, Feb. 18, 2023. The 59th Munich Security Conference (MSC), which is taking place from Feb. 17 to Feb. 19, 2023. **AP Photo/Petr David Josek/TASS**

Ukraine's Western backers on Saturday urged allies to give Ukraine what it needs to beat Russia, with NATO's chief warning of the risks of victory for Moscow, ahead of the anniversary of the war's outbreak.

World leaders are meeting at the Munich Security Conference with conflict still raging almost a year after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine, upending the global security landscape.

Dozens of senior figures are attending, including the leaders of Germany and France, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and China's top diplomat Wang Yi.

Allies, led by the United States, have sent billions of dollars of armaments to Kyiv, from

artillery to air defense systems, but the government says it needs more to launch a successful counter-offensive.

On the second day of the Munich gathering, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg led calls to step up military support for Kyiv, saying it is the only way to counter Moscow.

"We must give Ukraine what they need to win and prevail as a sovereign, independent nation in Europe," he said.

"The biggest risk of all is if Putin wins. If Putin wins in Ukraine, the message to him and other authoritarian leaders will be that they can use force to get what they want."

European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen also called for bolstered military support in areas such as ammunition supplies.

"We have to double down and we have to continue the really massive support that is necessary," she said.

Opening the conference on Friday via video link, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had urged allies to speed up their efforts.

Berlin last month agreed German-made heavy battle tanks could be sent to Ukraine after weeks of hesitation, in what was seen as a breakthrough that could help Kyiv's forces to punch through Russian lines.

But Germany — which has pledged to send some tanks from its own military stocks — is now struggling to get allies to agree to join them in delivering the armaments to Kyiv.

Zelensky has recently stepped up calls for Western backers to give it combat jets, although its allies have downplayed the prospect of that happening any time soon.

Stoltenberg also warned Russia's invasion has exposed the dangers of Europe's over-reliance on authoritarian regimes and should serve as a lesson.

"We should not make the same mistake with China and other authoritarian regimes," he said.

The Ukraine war has stoked fears among Western powers that China could try something similar in Taiwan, a self-ruled democratic island that Beijing claims as part of its territory.

On the battlefield, Moscow on Friday claimed a small gain in its grinding offensive, with mercenary group Wagner reporting the capture of a village near Bakhmut — the scene of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war.

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