The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Zelensky Says ‘No One Knows’ When War in Ukraine Will End

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December 19, 2023



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President Volodymyr Zelensky said Tuesday that there was no end in sight to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as fatigue builds among Kyiv's allies nearly two years into the war and the Kremlin voices growing confidence of victory.

Zelensky said he had turned down a request from the military — for now — to mobilize as many as 500,000 Ukrainians for the army, an unpopular proposal that could hit his worsening poll ratings among Ukrainians.

His meeting with local and foreign journalists wraps a difficult year in Ukraine, with Kyiv's forces under pressure on the front and allies wavering on military and financial backing.

"No one knows the answer," Zelensky told reporters in response to a question of whether the war with Russia could end next year.

"Even respected people, our commanders and our Western partners, who say that this is a war for many years, they do not know," he said.

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The question of how long Western countries will provide essential support for Kyiv has grown increasingly urgent.

Zelensky last week embarked on a tour of Western countries to make the case for more military and political support as Russia's invasion grinds closer to its two-year-anniversary in February.

But he failed to convince the U.S. Congress to immediately approve $60 billion in support, while in Brussels, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban blocked and aid package of around 50 billion euros ($55 billion).

Washington will 'not betray us'

Zelensky said Tuesday that he wanted to organize talks with Orban to "find solutions" to their differences, and voiced confidence that Washington would follow through on aid.

"I am confident that the United States will not betray us," he said.

With elections looming in the United States next year, Zelensky acknowledged that the result of the ballot could have a "very strong impact" on the course of the war, saying the Republican favorite Donald Trump "will surely have a different policy" from Joe Biden.

Those setbacks on the diplomatic front come in the wake of a disappointing counteroffensive that Kyiv launched in June using Western-supplied tanks and weapons stockpiled over months.

Responding to growing weariness over the war, UN human rights chief Volker Turk said Tuesday that the world had become "jaded" by the Ukraine conflict, where war crimes continue to be committed "primarily by the forces of the Russian Federation."

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By contrast, Russian President Vladimir Putin has vowed victory and said during a meeting with defense officials on Tuesday that society had rallied behind the war effort.

Putin, who has announced he will run for re-election in March, lashed out at the West and claimed it was seeking Moscow's destruction.

"Well, we are not going to give up the goals of the special military operation, either," he said, using the Kremlin's term for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Trust in leader waning

Zelensky was facing growing discontent before Russia invaded before becoming the global face of Ukraine's resistance, but he is again feeling political pressure at home.

Recent polling shows that the number of Ukrainians who trust Zelensky has dropped to 62% compared to 84% one year ago, when Kyiv's forces were celebrating gains in the east and south.

The advances from this year's counteroffensive were much more modest, with just a few villages in the south and east recaptured after months of fighting against entrenched Russian forces.

Zelensky said that he had received a request from the army to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to replenish Kyiv's forces, but that he had told the military it "needed more arguments to support this idea."

Hours before Zelensky was due to speak, Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces had foiled a drone attack on a facility in Moscow.

But a senior Ukrainian military official at the same time conceded that fighting with Russian forces in the eastern Kharkiv region was "complicated," with Ukrainian forces outgunned and outnumbered.

Despite recent setbacks, Ukrainians still overwhelmingly back both the armed forces and its commander, Valery Zaluzhny.

In a move that illustrates growing political divides, Kyiv residents have been gathering in the city center to demand more funds to help the military reclaim territory.

'Big victory' on Black Sea

Despite setbacks on the battlefield and concerns over Western support for Kyiv, Zelensky has highlighted the Black Sea as a recent success story.

Ukrainian drones have forced some Russian warships to redeploy following several successful attacks.

Ukraine also re-opened a maritime corridor for commercial cargo ships using its Black Sea ports, despite threats from Moscow that vessels using the hubs could be treated as military targets.

"Everyone can appreciate that the Russian fleet was deprived of their almost total dominance in the Ukrainian Black Sea," Zelensky said Tuesday.

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