



NATO admits US, UK, and Canada have been training Ukrainian troops “for years”

Description

Several NATO states have been providing military training to the Ukrainian army “for years” prior to Russia’s military campaign against the eastern European country, the alliance’s secretary general has said.

Speaking to CNN’s Dana Bash on Sunday, Jens Stoltenberg said that “*NATO allies have supported Ukraine for many, many years,*” adding that military aid has been “*stepped up over the last weeks since the invasion.*” The official clarified that “*NATO allies like the United States, but also the United Kingdom and Canada and some others, have trained Ukrainian troops for years.*”

According to Stoltenberg’s estimates, “*tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops*” had received such training, and are now “*at the front fighting against invading Russian forces.*” The secretary general went on to credit the Brussels-based alliance with the fact that the “*Ukrainian armed forces are much bigger, much better equipped, much better trained and much better led now than ever before.*”

In fact, Stoltenberg’s remark came after the host asked him to comment on recent reports that the alliance was allegedly planning to provide Ukraine with “*Soviet-era tanks,*” despite French President, Emmanuel Macron last month describing such a move as a “*red line*” which could potentially make NATO a “*co-belligerent in the war.*” When asked the same question again directly, the NATO chief refused to either confirm or deny the claims, adding that it would be unwise for him to go into detail regarding the kind of military aid the alliance was supplying Ukraine with.



Stoltenberg simply noted that *“allies provide support with modern advanced weapons systems,”* which are *“making a difference on the battlefield every day.”* The official emphasized that it was thanks to the *“systems they receive from NATO allies”* that the Ukrainian military was *“able to take out Russian armored vehicles, Russian planes.”* He also noted that NATO member states had confirmed, during the March 24 summit in Brussels, their commitment to providing support to Kiev.

Since February 24, when Russian forces crossed the Ukrainian border, several NATO member states, including the US, UK, Germany and a few others, have been delivering large amounts of ammunition and lethal weapons to Ukraine, including anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems.

Following the coup in 2014, several consecutive administrations in Kiev had pronounced NATO membership as one of the key foreign-policy objectives of Ukraine. The country’s military has participated in a number of joint military drills with alliance forces.

Russia considers the prospect of NATO military bases popping up on its border as a threat to its security.

Ukraine has now apparently given up on its NATO aspirations, as members of both Russian and Ukrainian negotiating teams have revealed that the two warring nations agreed in principle to a future neutral status for Ukraine, akin to those of Austria and Sweden.

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