



Ukraine's Military Says Russia Now Partially Withdrawn From Kiev; Pentagon Calls It Deceptive "Repositioning"

Description

Update (1510ET): Ukraine's *The Kyiv Independent* English language news portal is citing the country's military who say Russian forces have partially withdrawn from Kyiv and Chernihiv, after the Kremlin said coming off "constructive" negotiations in Istanbul that the military would drastically reduce operations near the two major cities.

"According to Ukraine's military, the Russian army is regrouping in the east to concentrate its military power in the area. In the south, Russia is preparing to resume offensive operations," the Kyiv-based outlet wrote.

??General Staff: Russia partially withdraws military units from Kyiv, Chernihiv oblasts.

According to Ukraine's military, the Russian army is regrouping in the east to concentrate its military power in the area. In the south, Russia is preparing to resume offensive operations.

— The Kyiv Independent (@KyivIndependent) [March 29, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, offering further confirmation that Tuesday's meeting could be the start of the kind of positive breakthrough the world has been waiting for, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu [cited that the Istanbul talks marked](#) the "most significant progress" since the invasion last month.

Cavusoglu described "**the most significant progress since negotiations began.**"

US leaders are still doubting Moscow's "good faith" intentions, however, suggesting that we're in reality witnessing a "redeployment" and not a withdrawal, also as Russia's military has stated it aims to focus efforts in liberating the Donbas region.

- PENTAGON CONFIRMS THERE HAS BEEN SOME MOVEMENT BY SMALL NUMBERS OF RUSSIAN FORCES AWAY FROM KYIV BUT THIS IS A REPOSITIONING, NOT WITHDRAWAL
- UKRAINE'S ZELENSKIY SAYS SIGNALS FROM TALKS WITH RUSSIA COULD BE CALLED POSITIVE, BUT THESE SIGNALS DON'T DROWN OUT EXPLOSIONS OF RUSSIAN SHELLS

U.S. believes any movement of Russian forces from around Kyiv is a 'redeployment, not a withdrawal', world should be prepared for continued major offensives on other areas in Ukraine, U.S. official says – Reuters News

— Phil Stewart (@phildstewart) [March 29, 2022](#)

* * *

Update (1210ET): Following Blinken's earlier urging to focus on Russia's "actions" on the ground and "not just what it says" coming out of the Istanbul talks, some top officials are charging that Russia's potential "compromises" being offered are but a ploy to buy more time on the battlefield.

Via Newswires: "Western official says nothing we have seen so far has demonstrated that Russia is particularly serious about peace talks and **seems to be more of a tactical exercise to play for time.**"

Concerning a draft ceasefire deal in the works, each side has confirmed they will return to their respective capitals to discuss the proposals on the table. In terms of specifics, the following is from Kiev-based "Ukrainian Independent Information Agency of News" or UNIAN's transcript of the interview in English...

1. Ukraine needs guarantees that are more solid than NATO's Article 5
2. Guarantees must be in the form of a treaty signed by all guarantors
3. In the event of an aggression against Ukraine, consultations must be held within 3 days, after which guarantor states provide assistance in the form of armed forces, weapons, airspace closure.
4. Among guarantors Ukraine envisions: Britain, China, Russia, US, France, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Italy, Poland.
5. Temporarily guarantees will not apply to Crimea and occupied Donbass
6. Guarantor will not oppose and will in fact help Ukraine's accession to the EU

Russia's deputy defense minister says Moscow has decided to "fundamentally cut back military activity in the direction of Kyiv and Chernigiv" in order to "increase mutual trust for future negotiations to agree and sign a peace deal with Ukraine."

pic.twitter.com/2qDY0zAzDp

— max seddon (@maxseddon) [March 29, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, the US has issued statements suggesting Russia's military escalation in Ukraine has only continued...

- RUSSIA HAS REPEATEDLY FIRED HYPERSONIC MISSILES AT UKRAINIAN MILITARY TARGETS – SENIOR U.S. GENERAL
- U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS RUSSIA 'SHIFTING GEARS', WORLD SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR CONTINUED MAJOR OFFENSIVES ON OTHER AREAS IN UKRAINE
- U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS NO ONE SHOULD MISTAKE RUSSIAN TROOP MOVEMENT FOR MOSCOW ENDING THE CONFLICT
- U.S., ALLIES ARE DISCUSSING A POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL \$500 MLN IN ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE -SOURCE
- HEAD OF SELF-PROCLAIMED DONETSK REPUBLIC IN EAST UKRAINE SAYS MAY CONSIDER ISSUE OF JOINING RUSSIA – REPUBLIC'S NEWS AGENCY

Shoigu reports that the main tasks of the first stage of the special operation in Ukraine have been completed.

Not exactly sure what they were. pic.twitter.com/HPBfmpQaXZ

— OSINTtechnical (@Osinttechnical) [March 29, 2022](#)

At the same time, concerns grow that Biden's series of what the White House has sought to walk back as emotional gaffes are only serving to escalate US-Russia tensions, already on a knife-edge.

Joe Biden may have 'inadvertently escalated tensions' with Russia:

<https://t.co/NHcUEfqPvm>

— Max Abrahms (@MaxAbrahms) [March 29, 2022](#)

As for Blinken's earlier expression of caution regarding Russia's intent at the negotiating table, here's what [he said](#):

"I would leave it to our Ukrainian partners to characterize whether there is any genuine progress and whether Russia is engaging meaningfully," Blinken told reporters, [according to CBS News](#).

"What I can say is this: There is what Russia says, and there is what Russia does. We're focused on the latter. And what Russia is doing is the continued brutalization of Ukraine and its people. And that continues as we speak."

And on the question of the Russian military's declared intent to de-escalate near Kiev and Chernihiv, Blinken said to a reporter, "I can't tell you whether these statements reflect a reorientation on eastern and southern Ukraine or **whether this is a means by which Russia is trying to deflect and deceive**

”
.

* * *

Update (1045ET): Not long after Washington downplayed reports of a Russian drawdown of troops around Kiev and Chernihiv, Interfax reports (citing Russia’s top negotiator, Vladimir Medinsky) that the de-escalation doesn’t necessarily mean a ceasefire is near.

He added that talks still have a long way to go.

* * *

Update (1030ET): To be expected, it doesn’t seem Washington shares in the optimism coming out of the day’s concluded Russia-Ukraine talks in Istanbul, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken commenting negatively on Russian assertions that its military will draw down operations near Kiev and Chernihiv. Blinken while traveling in the Middle East said the US has **not seen signs of “real seriousness from Russia”** – this after the Pentagon also said it has yet to observe a reduction of fighting from Russian units near Kiev.

Blinken underscored in the fresh comments to reporters that the US and world must focus on “Russia’s actions” and “not just what it says” or pledges at the negotiating table. Blinken also urged that Moscow must “end to aggression now” and “pull its forces back” immediately if there is to be progress.

U.S. Secretary of State Blinken says U.S. has not seen signs of real seriousness from Russia. From [@humeyra_pamuk](#) , who is travelling with him.

— Idrees Ali (@idreesali114) [March 29, 2022](#)

In the scenario that Russia does follow through with its earlier in the day declaration that it will cut military operations around the two named major Ukrainian cities, it’s likely to consolidate forces in the east in order to focus on the Donbas region. Russian deputy defense minister said [the following Tuesday](#):

Alexander Fomin said the country has **decided to “fundamentally cut back” operations to “increase mutual trust” at talks aimed at ending the fighting.**

Within the last days, Russia’s military stated it will start limiting the scope of operations to the Donbas, also as Kiev officials have accused the Kremlin of seeking to divide the country into East and West.

Russia analyst Michael Kofman [said](#) in the wake of the Istanbul negotiations: “...we are likely to see consolidation around Kyiv and an attempt by the Russian military to fix Ukrainian forces there, while **shifting the bulk of available fighting power to Donbas.**”

* * *

Update (0900ET): As markets increasingly hope that a ceasefire deal in Ukraine might finally be at hand, media reports claim that Russia’s high command has already started to withdraw forces from

around Kiev in what the US believes represents a “major” policy shift.

Breaking: Russia is beginning to withdraw some forces from around the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, in what the US assesses is a “major” strategy shift, two senior US officials tell me. US is already observing movements underway of Russian Battalion Tactical Groups (BTGs) 1/

— Jim Sciutto (@jimsciutto) [March 29, 2022](#)

2/ In the US view, this is not a short-term adjustment to regroup, but a longer-term move as Russia comes to grips with failure to advance in the north. Russian MOD said Tuesday it has decided to “drastically reduce hostilities” in the Kyiv and Chernihiv directions.

— Jim Sciutto (@jimsciutto) [March 29, 2022](#)

Russia has reportedly said it wouldn't mind if the Ukrainians joined the EU, so long as they remain militarily neutral. But whether or not this is a genuine breakthrough remains to be seen.

* * *

As the first statements coming off now concluded for the day Russia-Ukraine ceasefire talks trickle out, both Interfax and Reuters are reporting the potential for a major breakthrough, as Russia's Defense Ministry has said it's seeking to create conditions for dialogue towards **halting military activity around the capital of Kiev and major northern city of Chernihiv.**

The New York Times suggests this possible overture comes as Russian forces are facing stiff resistance near the capital, as also yesterday Ukraine said it retook the major Kiev suburb of Irpin. “Diplomats from Ukraine and Russia were discussing a possible cease-fire on Tuesday at talks in Turkey, an effort that comes as a Ukrainian counteroffensive pushed back Russian forces in a hard-fought area near Kyiv, the capital,” [NY Times](#) writes.



Tuesday's Ukraine and Russia delegations hosted in Istanbul, Turkey

The talks were called “constructive” by the Russian top negotiator Vladimir Medinsky, who said he will take Ukraine’s proposals for stopping the war directly to Putin, which crucially is centered on a pledge of ‘neutrality’ vis-a-vis NATO. The meeting, held in Istanbul, lasted four hours.

“The two delegations also discussed international security guarantees for Ukraine, according to Mykhailo Podolyak, an aide to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.” Negotiations will likely continue Wednesday, according to NY Times: “The Kremlin’s spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, told reporters that the talks, which he said **could continue on Wednesday, could be of great consequence**, without offering details on the shape of a possible deal.” Following this, there’ve been reports that talks could continue through into the night.

Ukraine’s top negotiator said Ukraine is now offering to discuss the Crimea question – and there could be **enough substantial agreement on the scope of negotiations to hold a direct Putin-Zelensky meeting**, something which Putin has thus far clearly rejected. According to the full quote from [the Russian side](#):

“Due to the fact that negotiations on the preparation of an agreement on the neutrality and non-nuclear status of Ukraine, as well as on the provision of security guarantees to Ukraine, are moving into practice, taking into account the principles discussed during today’s meeting, by the Russian Ministry of Defense in order to increase mutual trust and **create the necessary conditions for further negotiations and achievement of the ultimate goal of agreeing on the signing of the above agreement, a decision was made to radically, at times, reduce military activity in the Kiev and Chernigov direction**“, Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin told reporters.

And on a possible Putin and Zelensky meeting while implementing terms of agreements, Medinsky further told reporters:

“After today’s meaningful conversation, we have agreed and are proposing a solution according to which **the meeting of the heads of state is possible simultaneously with the initialing of the treaty by the foreign ministers**. Moreover, at the time of this initialing and consideration of the details of the treaty, various political nuances and details can be discussed.”

“We have received written proposals from Ukraine confirming their **readiness for a neutral, non-aligned and non-nuclear status, along with a refusal to produce and deploy all types of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and bacteriological ones, and a ban on the presence of foreign military bases and foreign troops** on the territory of the country”, Medinsky said.

However, for the first time, Medinsky said that such a meeting of presidents is now “possible” – according to statements given to TASS, suggesting that Tuesday’s talks appear to be the most

substantive so far since the invasion and conflict began.



Image: Russian Consulate General/TASS

But one significant future hurdle to anything final leading to a complete cessation of hostilities is that Ukraine has **insisted that a national referendum would be needed** for any central terms of agreement with Russia – for example on giving up Crimea.

The Ukraine side also reportedly stipulated that it would need “full peace” across the country for any final peace agreement to be deemed in force. Ukraine is further open to keeping neutral status if the peace holds up.

As for a possible halt in fighting near Kiev, the **Pentagon issued a quick statement saying it’s seen no signs of withdrawal** on the part of Russian army units from near the capital, which would likely take some significant time to implement.

On the positive headlines, notes *Bloomberg*, “Stoxx Europe 600 Index extends gains to 1.8% as Russia decided to cut military activity near Ukraine’s Kyiv, Chernihiv, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin tells briefing after bilateral talks in Istanbul.”

by Tyler Durden

Category

1. Army-Wars-Conflict Zones-Military Tech.
2. Main
3. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

Date Created

March 2022