



US urges shutdown of Europe's largest nuclear plant

Description

USA/RUSSIA/EU: The Russian military had earlier suggested that taking the Zaporozhye facility offline could be necessary due to Ukrainian attacks

Senior US officials have urged a full shutdown of Ukraine's Zaporozhye nuclear power plant, which is under Russian control.

A *"controlled shutdown"* of the facility *"would be the safest and least risky option in the near-term,"* White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told journalists on Monday. The same call came from an unnamed senior US defense official, who briefed journalists the same day.

The power plant and the city of Enerhodar that hosts it have been under Russian control since March, though Ukrainian civilian workers continue to operate the facility. For several weeks now, the site has been under constant artillery and drone attacks.

Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of being behind the strikes. Kiev has also claimed that Russian forces have used the Zaporozhye facility as a military base and have deployed heavy weapons there, which Moscow has denied.

This week, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, is expected to visit the plant for an on-site inspection. The agency's delegation will be led by its head, Rafael Grossi, and may arrive at the site as soon as Wednesday.

The Soviet-built Zaporozhye nuclear power plant is the largest facility of its kind in Europe. It hosts six of Ukraine's 15 power-generating reactors, which are spread across four plants. The facility reached its full capacity of over 6,000 MW for the first time in December 2021, when all of its VVER-1000 units became operational at the same time. At the moment, only reactors five and six remain online.

Despite hostilities between Russia and Ukraine, the Zaporozhye plant supplies power to parts of Ukraine controlled by both sides, according to the head of the Russia-allied administration of

Zaporozhye Region, Vladimir Rogov.

The Russian military suggested in mid-March that shutting down the reactors could become necessary due to Ukrainian attacks on the plant. Such a proposal was voiced by Lt. Gen. Igor Kirillov, who heads the unit of the Russian armed forces trained in dealing with the consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction, including radiation contamination.

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