



By: TA | AP Insight

Can NATO boost the faltering European military aid to Ukraine?



NATO defense ministers will meet on Wednesday to try to drum up more military support for Ukraine amid a sharp drop in deliveries of weapons and ammunition to the war-ravaged country in **recent** months.

The ministers will also debate a call from NATO's commander to lift restrictions on the use of their aircraft and other equipment so they can be used to defend the alliance's eastern border with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine more effectively.

A series of mysterious drone **incidents** and airspace **violations** by Russian war planes has fueled concerns that President Vladimir Putin might be testing NATO's defensive reflexes.

Some leaders have accused him of waging a **hybrid** war in Europe. Moscow denies probing NATO's defenses.

Military support for Ukraine dwindling

Russia's conventional war on its neighbor is now focused on Ukraine's power grid ahead of winter.

Moscow's latest **campaign** is aimed at disabling Ukraine's power supply, denying civilians heat and running water as temperatures drop.

At the same time, new data on Western military aid to Ukraine is showing that it plunged by 43% in July and August compared to the first half of the year, according to Germany's Kiel Institute, which tracks defense and financial support to Kyiv.

The fall occurred even after European allies began buying American weapons for Ukraine under a financial **arrangement** known as the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List, or PURL.

The United States does not donate any equipment to Ukraine, either through the scheme or bilaterally.

Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have been buying U.S. weapons to send to Ukraine.

But Italy and Spain, among other members of the 32-nation alliance, are sending very little compared to these NATO partners.

Time and again, some countries are lagging far behind what they should do - Senior NATO diplomat

"Time and again, some countries are lagging far behind what they should do," a senior NATO diplomat said ahead of the meeting. "If Ukraine falls," he said, "defense expenditure will be much higher than 5%" of gross domestic product, NATO's current and ambitious spending **target**.

The diplomat briefed reporters about the concerns on condition that he not be named as they weren't allowed to speak to the press.

Many countries – Italy among them – are struggling with economic challenges. France believes European money would be better invested in Europe's defense industry rather than that of the U.S. and it does not intend to take part in PURL.

Defending NATO's eastern front

The deployment of air defenses to NATO's eastern flank has not yet deprived Ukraine of military resources.

But the alliance's top officers want countries to lift restrictions on the equipment they sent there to defend NATO airspace against threats from Russia.



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countries early next year.

"We still have some of these national caveats, and they are holding us back. They are making us less effective," NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte told lawmakers in Slovenia on Monday.

NATO set up an air defense operation dubbed Eastern **Sentry** last month after several Russian drones entered Polish airspace.

It's one of three air defense operations along the eastern flank. The second works in the Baltic Sea region, and a third covers Poland's border with Ukraine.

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But he wants to be free to use aircraft in any one of those missions elsewhere, providing a unified air shield with common rules of engagement.

Restrictions on when fighter jets are allowed to fire weapons also pose challenges.

"The more national caveats are on, especially our fighter jet assets, the harder it is for SACEUR," U.S. NATO envoy Matthew Whitaker told reporters ahead of Wednesday's meeting.

Grynkeiwich is conducting a review of what he thinks NATO needs to manage the new challenges it is facing, diplomats say. He's expected to share his plans with member