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Read Putin's Warning to NATO on Ukraine's Use of Long-Range Weapons

The Russian president said Western support for Ukrainian strikes deep inside Russia would put his country and NATO "at war."



Russia's President Vladimir V. Putin on Thursday in St. Petersburg, Russia, in a photo released by Russian state media. Credit...Alexander Kazakov/Sputnik

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President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia warned the United States and its Western allies on Thursday that should they permit Ukraine to fire weapons deeper into Russia, they would put his country "at war" with NATO.

Mr. Putin's comments to a state television reporter came just a day before Prime Minister Keir Starmer of Britain was set to [meet President Biden in Washington](#) to discuss the prospect of lifting restrictions on Kyiv's use of Western-supplied long-range weapons in its war with Russia.

In 30 months of war, Ukraine's Western backers have made a series of concessions to Kyiv's war effort, supplying Ukraine with increasingly powerful weapons including tanks, fighter jets and long-range missiles. Despite previous threats, Mr. Putin has yet to bring his

war past Ukraine's borders. But in his comments on Thursday — some of his most direct yet about the prospect of war with NATO — Mr. Putin said the West would have to supply not just hardware to Ukraine but also intelligence and technology, changing the West's involvement and the prospects for a Russian response.

Here is what Mr. Putin said on Thursday:

Russian state media: Over the past few days, we have been hearing statements at a very high level in the United Kingdom and the United States that the Kyiv regime will be allowed to strike targets deep inside Russia using Western long-range weapons. Apparently, this decision is either about to be made, or has already been made, as far as we can see. This is actually quite extraordinary. Could you comment on what is going on?

*President Putin: What we are seeing is an attempt to substitute notions. Because **this is not a question of whether the Kyiv regime is allowed or not allowed to strike targets on Russian territory.** It is already carrying out strikes using unmanned aerial vehicles and other means. But using Western-made long-range precision weapons is a completely different story.*

The fact is that — I have mentioned this, and any expert, both in our country and in the West, will confirm this — **the Ukrainian army is not capable of using cutting-edge high-precision long-range systems supplied by the West. They cannot do that. These weapons are impossible to employ without intelligence data from satellites, which Ukraine does not have. This can only be done using the European Union's satellites, or U.S. satellites — in general, NATO satellites.** This is the first point.

The second point — perhaps the most important, the key point even — is that only NATO military personnel can assign flight missions to these missile systems. Ukrainian servicemen cannot do this.

Therefore, it is not a question of allowing the Ukrainian regime to strike Russia with these weapons or not. It is about deciding whether NATO countries become directly involved in the military conflict or not.

If this decision is made, it will mean nothing short of direct involvement — it will mean that NATO countries, the United States and European countries are parties to the war in Ukraine. This will mean their direct involvement in the conflict, and it will clearly change the very essence, the very nature of the conflict dramatically.

This will mean that NATO countries — the United States and European countries — are at war with Russia. And if this is the case, then, bearing in mind the change in the essence of the conflict, we will make appropriate decisions in response to the threats that will be posed to us.