

Failure of U.S. Patriot ADS and Western Combat Systems. Does Kiev Possess the Means to Win the Conflict?

The hard truth is that Kiev remains unable to create a single control system or an interface for the various Western air defense systems and their different components

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On May 16, Ukraine claimed its air defenses intercepted six Russian Kinzhal hypersonic missiles and shot them down amid "exceptionally dense" barrage fired - supposedly thanks to the arrival of Patriots, among other Western combat systems. Kinzhals are supposed to be able to overcome all existing air defense systems, and Moscow denies its Kinzhals were intercepted.

Kiev also claims to have shot down 29 of 30 Russian rockets on May 18, an obviously inflated number. However, a Ukrainian infrastructure facility in Khmelnytskyi has been hit by a missile, with no casualties reported. The barrage came as a response to Kiev's advancements in Bakhmut. Ukrainian forces are reportedly preparing to launch a counteroffensive. Ukraine's defense systems, however, should not be overestimated.

While Western powers are finally coming to realize that Kiev simply does not possess the necessary means to win the ongoing conflict, much is being written about Western air defenses supposedly being key for Western victory in its [proxy war](#) in Eastern Europe against Moscow. Despite Ukrainian denials, American officials have confirmed US-made Patriot was indeed damaged by Russian strikes. According to the Russian defense ministry, on 16 May Kinzhal **destroyed a Patriot missile defense system (five launchers and a multifunctional radar). This is one of the most advanced US air defense systems.** Albeit trying to minimize the damage, US authorities speaking to Reuters on the condition of anonymity said that they would have a better understanding of the situation "in the coming days" and that "information could change".

In the past days, Ukrainian **President Volodymyr Zelensky** has been busy touring different European countries and so far he has been promised billions of dollars in military equipment by allies such as the United Kingdom (UK) and France. How much different can those make?

The hard truth is that Kiev remains unable to create a single control system or an interface for the various Western air defense systems and their different components, as these possess a large range of functional features and thus are poorly integrated into the already existing systems. This means that they would operate ineffectively if included in a single circuit. NATO's anti-aircraft systems can fully control one defined sector of airspace at a time, but cannot intercept operational-tactical missiles that move along an aeroballistic trajectory, such as the Russian hypersonic Kinzhais. For Ukraine, it would therefore be necessary to construct a whole new system, which is no simple task during a confrontation – not to mention doing so quickly enough.

Moreover, according to defense and IR journalist S. Tiwari of the EurAsian Times, the Patriot, IRIS-T and NASAMS systems cannot protect Ukrainian troops from guided bombs, such as the ones massively used by Russian forces. Ukrainian Lieutenant Colonel Denis Smazhny, an aerial defense specialist, in turn has confirmed the low effectiveness of the US-sent NASAMS and IRIS-T complexes (supplied by Germany) to face Russian ballistic missiles such as the Iskanders and Kinzhals. The Russian weapons, unlike cruise missiles, are capable of rising to very high altitudes to fall almost vertically onto the target at great speeds. Thus, targeting them in flight is very difficult. How can one make them fall when they are in fact “already falling”?

Thus, in Colonel Smazhny's words, “Western air defense systems will not be able to protect us.” Even with the Western systems, quickly creating an integrated and effective system for airspace defense is a challenge for Ukraine, to say the least. This is why Kiev has been eyeing an Israeli system called Iron Dome, which could suit its needs better. However, military and technical issues are often entangled with political and diplomatic matters.

During a US Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces session (about missile-defense matters), last week, American Senator Angus King asked why Iron Dome had not been deployed in the Eastern European nation. The answer is quite simple: the main producer of such systems is Israel and thus it would have to grant Washington permission to send it to any other country, such as Ukraine. Despite several requests, this has not happened.

Tel Aviv sees Russia as a regional great power with which it must engage in a number of issues in the Middle East. For one thing, Moscow and Tel Aviv currently have a working relationship in the Levant, and Israeli **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** himself has stated he has no reason to damage bilateral relations. Moreover, even if Israeli approval were to happen, which remains unlikely, this would still not necessarily make a great difference other than a symbolic one: Russian weapons are indeed more sophisticated than the Palestinian rockets the Iron Dome routinely shoots down. To have a huge impact, Ukraine would need dozens of Iron Domes, which do not currently exist.

Besides these military issues, Ukraine is struggling with a domestic political crisis amid several corruption scandals. This week, for instance, the chair of its Supreme Court, chief justice Vsevolod Knyazev was removed from his post over bribery accusations amounting to \$2.7 million. In addition, former US **President Donald Trump** stated last week he will not

commit to backing Kiev, should he win the Republican presidential nomination and the upcoming elections. Despite the [legal controversies](#), Trump remains a clear Republican favorite, while [Republican senators](#) are increasingly opposing advancing aid for Ukraine and some, like Senator JD Vance, are calling for investigating a possible [Democrat money laundering scheme in Ukraine](#).

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