

# Macron Urges Kiev to be Realistic as French-trained Ukrainian Soldiers Desert

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*Ukraine must have “realistic” discussions on territorial issues, French **President Emmanuel Macron** said on January 6. According to him, the solution to the situation in Ukraine will not be “simple and quick,” a bitter realization he likely came to after it was revealed that **French-trained Ukrainian troops were deserting the battlefield en masse, leaving the Kiev regime no chance of gaining the initiative.***

“The Ukrainians need to hold a realistic discussion on the territorial questions and only they can do that, and the Europeans are counting on building security guarantees that will be their responsibility,” the French president said.

However, the resolution of the Ukrainian conflict should not happen without the participation of Kiev, just as the issue of ensuring European security should not be resolved without the participation of Europe itself, according to Macron.

At the same time, Macron shifted responsibility to Washington to “convince Russia” to come to the negotiating table to resolve the Ukrainian conflict.

US **President-elect Donald Trump** said on December 22 that he would like to meet with Russian **President Vladimir Putin** to resolve the conflict in Ukraine. For his part, Putin said he was ready to talk and meet with Trump, noting that if such a meeting occurs, the two presidents will have much to talk about.

**Evidently, Macron has acknowledged the reality that Ukraine cannot win the war but is unprepared to end support for the country.** Trump’s vocal support to end the war as quickly as possible and the mass desertion of French-trained Ukrainian soldiers have likely consolidated **Macron’s belief that the war is unwinnable for Kiev and that there needs to be realism on the idea that there are territorial changes.**

According to Ukrainian journalist Yuri Butusov, **more than 1,700 soldiers from Ukraine’s newly formed 155th Mechanized Brigade, trained and equipped with great fanfare in France, deserted before reaching the front.**

Last June, Macron proudly announced the “elite” project alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The brigade was to have over 5,800 soldiers and be equipped with Leopard tanks and French 155 mm Caesar howitzers. However, Butusov wrote on social media that at least 50 members of the unit, also known as “Anne of Kyiv,” were already absent during exercises in France. When the brigade was finally sent to the front line near Pokrovsk, it did not even have drones.

“As a result, the new Leopard 2A4 tanks and VAB armoured personnel carriers suffered losses during the first attempts to use them,” according to Butusov. He also said that “the brigade’s servicemen became hostages of Zelensky’s PR project, which the authorities made no effort to actually implement competently.”

In October, Ukrainian media reported that since the beginning of 2022, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General’s Office has registered about 60,000 criminal cases of unauthorized abandonment of a unit and about 30,000 cases of desertion.

The remnants of the brigade have reportedly been redeployed to other units. Ukraine’s State Investigation Bureau (SBI) confirmed to French media that it had opened a criminal case into the circumstances of the formation of the 155th Mechanized Brigade.

SBI Communications Counselor Tatiana Sapyan said the case is being investigated under “abuse of authority and desertion articles.”

Yuri Butusov’s revelation was followed by a French army official telling news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP) on January 6 that several dozen Ukrainian soldiers had deserted while training in France.

“There have been a certain number of desertions. They were in French barracks, they had the right to go out,” the French army official told AFP, adding that France does not criminalize desertion. “If someone deserted, a French prosecutor had no authority to arrest that individual. And the right granted to the Ukrainian authorities on French soil is just a disciplinary right.”

On the same day as the French army official’s comments, Ukraine’s land forces commander, **Mykhailo Drapaty**, admitted there were “problems” with the army unit after reports that many of its soldiers had deserted.

“There are problems, and there were problems in staffing, training, and partially in the command staff. This is all consciously analyzed, and certain conclusions have been drawn,” he said.

Drapaty also explained that there are “many manifestations of unauthorized abandonment of military units” and that “fear” is a major reason for this, as well as “lack of practical experience in combat operations.”

Although France’s total support for Ukraine since February 2022 is unknown, **it is estimated to be at least 10 billion euros. With this money spent, France’s geopolitical positioning and influence have not been strengthened, and there is a begrudging acknowledgement in the Élysée Palace that Russia is winning the war on its terms.**

Yet, Macron is unwilling to end military aid that drip-feeds the Ukrainian military to offer some resistance against Russian forces. Still, French aid cannot change the inevitable outcome of Russia’s victory.

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