

Slovakia and Poland Want American-made F-16's in Exchange for Delivering MiG-29's to Ukraine

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Slovakia and Poland want to deliver MiG-29's to Ukraine and are incessantly urging all other EU members with these fighter jets follow suit, but with the caveat of receiving American-made F-16's in exchange. In addition, these are old Soviet-made fighter jets that have not been modernised, and because of this, they will not be able to change the course of the Russian special military operation in Ukraine.

In a recent [interview](#) with CNN, Polish President Andrzej Duda said his country was ready to hand over their remaining operational MiG-29's to Ukraine.

Responding to Duda's remark, Slovak Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said on March 9 that he talked to his Polish counterpart at the meeting of the EU defence ministers in Sweden on March 8 and received confirmation that Poland "would agree with the joint progress of Slovakia and Poland in handing over the redundant MiG-29s of both countries to Ukraine."

For his part, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN, Dmitry Polyansky, warned NATO countries that the delivery of fighter jets to Ukraine would mean their direct involvement in the Ukraine conflict.

"Imagine that those planes take off in Poland, enter Ukrainian airspace, and then return to Poland for maintenance. Will Poland be involved in that case? I think it will. It's direct involvement. So, a lot of questions and not enough thought in the West," said Polyansky.

None-the-less, any final decision by Poland and Slovakia to deliver MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine would not surprise Moscow at all. Although these countries are former Warsaw Pact members, they are today heavily anti-Russia and choose to serve the interests of Washington and Brussels.

Since Poland and Slovakia have virtually no relationship with Russia today, they are unable to modernise their fleet of MiG-29's or receive spare parts. It is for this reason that the two countries want to give away their fighter jets, especially if they can receive American-made F-16 fighter jets in exchange.

At the same time, the expected deliveries of MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine from Slovakia and Poland indicates that the US is unlikely to deliver F-16's to Ukraine. It is likely that the US will adopt the German model of encouraging allied states to send their old military equipment to Ukraine in exchange for more modern replacements.

If Slovakia and Poland do eventually deliver the MiG-29's to Poland, it would amount to about 140 fighter jets. These are unlikely to make a difference in Ukraine's war effort as they are primitive versions compared to the Russian fleet. Russia's fleet includes many fourth-generation fighter jets like MiG-31 and fifth generation fighter jets like Sukhoi Su-57. Meanwhile, Slovakia's and Poland's MiG-29 fighter jets are third generation.

Even if these fighter jets were delivered to Ukraine, there is still the issue that nearly all airports are destroyed. Due to this issue, it cannot be discounted that the MiG-29's could remain in Slovakia and Poland but be operated by Ukrainian pilots. If this is the case, not only would it justify a Russian retaliation against these countries, but it would make very little difference in the war effort since, like already said, they are inferior aircraft, and, for the fact that virtually all of Ukraine's airspace is under Russian control. Due to this, any Ukrainian fighter jet would be immediately shot down by Russia's superior fighter jets and air defence systems like the S-400, S-500 and Buk missile systems.

The Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN Dmitry Polyansky said that Kiev wants a direct NATO involvement in the conflict because it is the only chance for Volodymyr Zelensky to maintain power.

Kiev has regularly demanded fighter jets from Western countries. In this context, Ukrainian authorities mention the American-made F-16 in spite of the reality it would take a minimum of six months for Ukrainian pilots to become somewhat capable in using them.

At a recent congressional hearing, the US Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Affairs Colin H. Kahl said that Kiev has asked Washington for up to 128 fourth-generation fighter jets. However, NATO does not have a unified position on the issue.

For example, US President Joe Biden stated on February 25 that Ukraine does not need F-16's for now and that he currently rules out their delivery to Kiev. At the same time, Biden noted that at this stage of the conflict, Washington considers other support a higher priority – such as supplying Ukraine with tanks, artillery, and air defence systems.

Although Washington has promised to continue supporting the Kiev regime, there is likely a contradictory acknowledgement that Russia will achieve its aims in Ukraine. For this reason, the US is using the war as an opportunity for its defence industries to profit. It is also under this context that Slovakia and Poland hope to attain new fighter jets under the guise of supplying Ukraine.

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