

Ukrainian MiG-29 and Su-24 Jets Are Firing American HARM Anti-Radar Missiles

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Ukrainian aircraft are firing American-made AGM-88 High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) at Russian air-defenses in Ukraine.

It’s an unexpected development, considering that the HARM normally isn’t compatible with the Soviet-designed MiG-29 and Su-27 fighters and Su-24 and Su-25 attack jets that the Ukrainian air force operates.

But it’s possible to guess how the Ukrainians and Americans have made the 800-pound, radar-seeking missile work.

Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine’s minister of defense, back in July teased the country’s acquisition of anti-radiation missiles. But the first evidence of American HARMs in Ukraine came Sunday, when [photos](#) circulated online depicting wreckage of a missile somewhere in Ukraine—wreckage with the distinctive stenciling of an AGM-88. [More photos](#) followed Thursday.

The photos sparked widespread speculation. Since no air force ever has integrated the HARM on a Soviet plane type, **some observers wondered aloud whether a NATO ally of Ukraine fired the missiles.**

That always was unlikely, of course, as NATO—while a strong supporter of Ukraine—carefully has avoided direct involvement in the Russia-Ukraine war, for obvious escalatory reasons.

Alternatively, **some observers pointed out that later models of the Raytheon-made**

AGM-88, which first entered service in the 1980s, are compatible with ground launchers. Perhaps the Ukrainians had cobbled together some kind of improvised truck-launcher for older HARMs.

On Monday, U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy **Colin Kahl** ended the speculation. The Ukrainian air force was firing HARMs that the administration of U.S. **President Joe Biden** transferred to Ukraine under Biden’s “presidential draw-down authority,” which **allows him to dispatch overseas surplus U.S. weaponry.**

“We’ve included a number of anti-radiation missiles that can be fired off of Ukrainian aircraft that can have effects on Russia radars and other things,” Kahl [said](#). “So there are also things that we’re doing to try to make their existing capabilities more effective.”

Kahl even hinted at which of Ukraine’s roughly 100 remaining front-line warplanes are carrying the 14-foot anti-radiation missile. **Kahl noted speculation that Ukraine quietly has been acquiring—or at least seeking to acquire—second-hand MiG-29s from NATO countries.**

“A lot was made about the MiG-29 issue several months ago,” Kahl said. “Not very much has been noticed about the sheer amounts of spare parts and other things that we’ve done to help them actually put more of their own MiG-29s in the air and keep those that are in the air flying for a longer period of time.”

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Featured image: A U.S. Navy EA-6B fires an AGM-88 HARM in 1999. (Source: US Navy photo)

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