

War in Ukraine

Joe Biden rules out US sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine

Blow to Kyiv's push for combat aircraft comes after US and Germany agree to supply tanks



Ukrainian officials say F-16 fighter jets will help maintain a crucial advantage in the skies © Reuters

Felicia Schwartz in Washington YESTERDAY

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US president Joe Biden has ruled out sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, delivering a blow to Kyiv's push to secure the combat aircraft just a week after Washington and Berlin agreed to supply it with tanks.

Asked by reporters on Monday whether the US would provide F-16 jets to Ukraine, Biden simply responded: "No."

The decision by the US and Germany to [provide main battle tanks to Kyiv](#) has reignited discussions about whether western countries will send F-16 jets, which Ukrainian officials have said will help maintain a crucial advantage in the skies.

F-16s are made by [Lockheed Martin](#), the largest US defence contractor. The US government must approve sales, and transfers to third countries, of any American-made fighter jets.

Biden's comments mark the first time he has addressed the matter publicly, though it is unclear whether he will rule out sending the jets indefinitely.

German chancellor Olaf Scholz has [also dismissed sending fighter jets to Ukraine](#).

However, the US and other powers have reversed their position on weapons before, previously saying they would not supply Kyiv with main battle tanks, only to backpedal later.

Last week, the Financial Times reported that some more hawkish European countries were having preliminary discussions about re-exporting F-16s directly to Ukraine. Other countries have encouraged focusing on the smooth delivery of the tanks committed by western allies.

Even if the US did approve the sale or transfer of F-16s to Ukraine, training pilots to use the advanced aircraft takes months. Lockheed Martin said it [stood ready to help backfill other countries](#) that may choose to transfer the jets.

Ukrainian officials are pressing to secure as much lethal assistance from the US and other partners to prepare for a renewed offensive in the spring.

Washington has so far rebuffed calls to send F-16s, fearing the move could be escalatory, though some American officials have recently expressed openness to discussing the matter.

Asked whether the US is considering sending fighter jets last week, deputy national security adviser Jon Finer told MSNBC the administration would be “discussing this very carefully” with the Ukrainians and had not ruled out specific systems.

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