

War in Ukraine

Jake Sullivan says US military aid will help Ukraine mount counteroffensive in 2025

National security adviser says supplies and weapons approved by Congress could help stop Russian gains



Ukrainians light candles ahead of an Orthodox Easter mass at St Volodymyr Cathedral in Kyiv on Saturday © SERGEY DOLZHENKO/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

James Politi in Washington and **Isobel Koshiw** in Kyiv YESTERDAY

Ukraine will look to mount a new counteroffensive in 2025 after receiving a \$61bn infusion of US military aid to help it stop Russia from making additional gains this year, Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser said.

Speaking at the FT Weekend Festival in Washington on Saturday, Sullivan said that he still expects “Russian advances in the coming period” on the battlefield, despite the new US funding package approved last month, because “you can’t instantly flip the switch”.

But he said that with the new aid from Washington, Kyiv would have the capacity to “hold the line” and “to ensure Ukraine withstands the Russian assault” over the course of 2024.

And pointing to the scenario for the war next year, Sullivan said Ukraine intended to “to move forward to recapture the territory that the Russians have taken from them”.

His comments about a potential counteroffensive by Ukraine represent the White House’s clearest articulation of how it views the conflict evolving if president Joe Biden wins re-election in November.

Any new offensive in 2025 by Ukraine would be dependent on more funding from Congress, and approval by the White House.

But Donald Trump, the former president and presumptive Republican nominee, has been sceptical of Ukraine aid and has vowed to try to end the conflict quickly and seek a negotiated settlement.

Ukrainian officials have expressed hope that the country's armed forces may be able to turn the tide next year.

In an address to Ukrainians to mark the third Orthodox Easter since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked the soldiers on Ukraine's frontline and said Russia had broken "all the [bible] commandments, demanded our home, came to kill us".

"God has a chevron with the Ukrainian flag on his shoulder [and] with such an ally, life will definitely win over death," he said on Sunday.

Residents of Kyiv lined the cities' churches to receive Easter blessings, as fighting continued in the southern and eastern front lines and Russia continued to target key infrastructure with missile and drone barrages.

Attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure have caused \$1bn in damages since March 22, energy minister German Galushchenko said during an interview on national television on Sunday.

Delays to the US, mostly military, aid package compounded by Ukraine's existing manpower shortages has weakened Ukraine's ability to hold the line.

Since February, Russia has used the strategic advantage it gained after capturing the Donetsk town of Avdiivka to push into more than half a dozen villages in the region. Russia's defence ministry claimed on Sunday that its forces had taken Ocheretyne, a village in Donetsk.

While Ukraine has said it is preparing for a renewed counteroffensive, its officials have also said that May could be one of its toughest months of the war while it waits for US-supplied weapons to reach the frontline.

Speaking to Germany's Bild last month, Zelenskyy said there is a plan for another counteroffensive but that it is contingent on more weapons, including from the US.

But while much-needed supplies and weapons are on their way to the front lines

after the US aid was approved last month, resolving Ukraine's personnel shortages is crucial to its chances against Russia.

Many Ukrainian men have been unwilling to join the mobilisation drive which began almost a year ago, citing fear of poor commanders and a lack of weaponry.

Ukraine's leadership has been attempting to solve these issues with a mix of more liberal recruitment methods and better conditions for soldiers. But it remains to be seen what impact it and the new aid packages will have on the mood.

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