

# US Won't Return Nuclear Weapons to Ukraine, Says National Security Adviser

'That is not under consideration, no,' says Jake Sullivan in response to multiple reports.

73

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White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan speaks during a press briefing at the White House on April 24, 2024. Jim Watson/AFP via Getty Images



By Jack Phillips

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The United States will not return nuclear weapons to Ukraine that the country gave up following the dissolution of the Soviet Union decades ago, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Dec. 1.

When asked about a New York Times article that, citing anonymous Western officials, alleged Washington was considering providing Ukraine with nuclear weapons before President Joe Biden leaves office next month, Sullivan said the move is not being considered.



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That is not under consideration, no. What we are doing is surging various conventional capacities to Ukraine so that they can effectively defend themselves and take the fight to the Russians, not [giving them] nuclear capability,” he [told](#) ABC News on Dec. 1.

President-elect Donald Trump during the 2024 campaign has signaled he would end the war in Ukraine quickly, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has suggested the war will end quicker under Trump. Washington has been the single largest provider of military aid, weapons, and ammunition to Kyiv since the conflict erupted in February 2022.

Sullivan reiterated in his Dec. 1 interview that the United States is still aiming to provide more aid to Ukraine before Biden leaves office on Jan. 20, 2025.

“We are going to do everything in our power for these 50 days to get Ukraine all the tools we possibly can to strengthen their position on the battlefield so that they’ll be stronger at the negotiating table,” he said.

“And President Biden directed me to oversee a massive surge in the military equipment that we are delivering to Ukraine so that we have

spent every dollar that Congress has appropriated to us by the time that President Biden leaves office.”

In the meantime, Ukraine has been encouraged to engage with the incoming Trump administration as well as U.S. allies amid the conflict, he said.

“Again, on Jan. 21, the war in Ukraine doesn’t just go away,” Sullivan said. “Obviously, the new team will have its own policy, its own approach, and I can’t speak to that, but what I can do is make sure that we put Ukraine in the best possible position when we hand off the baton.”

Also in his interview, Sullivan said that the transition from the Biden administration to the Trump administration is “smooth,” saying: “I’ve been gratified so far by the coordination I’ve been able to have with the incoming Trump team. They seem focused also on a smooth transition, because they want to be able to hit the ground running.”

Following the New York Times report, Russia responded by saying the idea of providing nuclear weapons to Ukraine was “suicidal,” and added that preventing such a scenario was a major reason why Moscow sent soldiers into Ukraine, among others.

“We regard this as insanity,” Maria Zakharova, a spokeswoman for the Russian foreign ministry, told reporters last week in response to the article. “This is absolute insanity being foisted upon a certain part of the political establishment in Ukraine by Westerners.”

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine inherited nuclear weapons but handed them over in 1994 under the Budapest Moratorium in exchange for security assurances from Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Trump last week named retired Gen. Keith Kellogg to be his special envoy to Ukraine and Russia, and he will likely play a central role in attempting to resolve the conflict. Kellogg was the chief of staff for the White House National Security Council during Trump’s 2017–2021

term and national security adviser to Vice President Mike Pence during that time.

“Keith has led a distinguished military and business career, including serving in highly sensitive national security roles in my first administration,” Trump said on social media.

*Reuters contributed to this report.*

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