

Vladimir Putin answered media questions

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Question: Over the weekend, you visited a command post of the Joint Group of Forces and brought the capture of the city of Krasnoarmeysk in sharp focus. Is it now fully controlled by the Russian Federation Armed Forces? And why is this city so important?

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: This city has indeed been given special importance both by the Ukrainian side and by the Russian Armed Forces, because it is not just a major infrastructure site that is part of the network of regional transport links. Most importantly, speaking in military terms, it is a good bridgehead for accomplishing all the objectives set at the beginning of the special military operation. That is, from here, from this bridgehead, this sector, the Russian army is well positioned to advance in any direction the General Staff deems most appropriate.

That is why it has always been designated by the Ukrainian side as a priority in the Donetsk People's Republic, and our Armed Forces thought so of it and a number of other fortified areas as well. Krasnoarmeysk was a strong fortified area too. Today, it is fully in the hands of the Russian army, as the commander of the Centre group of forces reported not long ago.

Clearly, this question continues to arise, because some people are still not sure whether this is really so. For those who still have doubts – we have addressed this matter earlier – and I suggested that your colleagues from foreign and even Ukrainian media – we will let Ukrainian reporters visit Krasnoarmeysk and see for themselves, with their own eyes, the actual state of affairs and who actually controls this city.

I remember that when we did this a week ago, the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry issued a warning, stating it was totally against this idea and began threatening journalists. This time, however, the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine has nothing to do with this, as the city is fully in the hands of the Russian Armed Forces.

Of course, a certain level of danger remains, since the line of contact is very close to the city and drones are patrolling the airspace all the time. But Russian war correspondents are working there. I am sure that there are reporters in the West who honestly perform their professional duty and are ready to objectively inform their audience and readers about the developments around the world, Ukraine included. We will do everything to ensure their safety. We will be ready to take them around all parts of Krasnoarmeysk and Kupyansk, for that matter.

Question: Could you clarify the situation in Kupyansk? Just yesterday, President Zelensky said that Ukrainian forces were still in the city. What do you think he meant?

Vladimir Putin: You should ask Zelensky because Kupyansk has been effectively under our control for several weeks, completely and in its entirety.

I think the Ukrainian leadership appears focused on issues other than the situation in the active combat zone and seems to be living on another planet.

Perhaps, travelling and begging for money leave little time for dealing with current domestic matters, either in the economy or on the frontline.

Regarding Kupyansk. The city is divided into two parts: a larger central part of it is on the right bank of the river and a smaller part is on the left bank. Russian troops control both the right-bank and left-bank areas, entirely. A separate nearby settlement, Kupyansk-Uzlovoy, is located a bit further south along the river. I believe there are 2,000 buildings there. Fighting is ongoing there. The Russian army holds about 600 to 650 buildings and is advancing. I believe that the settlement will also come under full Russian control within a few days. But this is a different settlement.

I would also like to remind you that an enemy force of 15 battalions is blocked on the left bank of the river. Russian troops have begun eliminating it.

Question: You are about to meet with Steven Witkoff, who has come to Moscow specifically for this purpose. In effect, negotiations are currently taking place only with the American side. Why are the Europeans silent – why are they so removed from this process?

Vladimir Putin: The Europeans are not silent. They are insulted by what they perceive as their exclusion from the negotiations. However, I must note that no one has excluded them. They have excluded themselves. We once maintained close contact with them. Then they abruptly cut off contact with Russia. That was their initiative. Why did they do this? Because they embraced the concept of inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia and, by all appearances, continue to live under this illusion. Intellectually, they understand – they understand perfectly well – that this possibility has long since vanished, that it was never feasible; they once believed what they desired but they still can't and won't admit it. They withdrew from this process of their own accord – that is the first point.

Secondly, now, seeing that the outcome does not please them either, they have begun to sabotage the efforts of the current United States administration and President Trump to achieve peace through negotiation. They themselves abandoned peace talks and are now impeding President Trump.

Thirdly, they have no peace agenda; they are on the side of war. Even when they ostensibly attempt to introduce amendments to Trump's proposals, we see this clearly – all their amendments are directed towards one single aim: to completely obstruct this entire peace process, to put forward demands that are utterly unacceptable to Russia (they understand this), and thereby subsequently to place the blame for the collapse of the peace process upon Russia. That is their objective. We see this plainly.

Therefore, if they truly wish to return to reality, based on the situation that has developed "on the ground," as they say in such cases – let it be, we have no objection.

Question: [Foreign Minister of Hungary] Szijjártó said today that we might find ourselves in a state of war with Europe literally today. He says that the European portion of NATO plans to bring its forces to full combat readiness by 2029, and that by 2030 there is a risk of an armed conflict. This is a very serious, almost sensational statement. What do you think about it? Are we really preparing for something?

Vladimir Putin: We are not planning to go to war against Europe. I have said that a hundred times. But if Europe wants to wage a war against us and suddenly starts a war with us, we are ready. There should be no doubt about that. The only question is if Europe suddenly starts a war against us, I think very quickly... Europe is not Ukraine. In Ukraine, we are acting with surgical precision. You see my point, don't you? It is not

a war in the direct, modern sense of the word. If Europe suddenly decides to go to war against us and actually follows through with it, then a situation may arise very quickly where we will be left with no one to negotiate with.

Question: Please provide a comment on the attacks on tankers off the coast of Turkiye. Another such incident occurred just today.

Vladimir Putin: Frankly, I have not yet received that information. I am aware of the attacks on tankers in neutral waters, not even in neutral waters, but in the exclusive economic zone of a third state. This is nothing short of piracy. The Ukrainian armed forces tried to hit our seaports before as well. We responded – we did not start these operations – with reciprocal strikes. I assure you that ours were much more effective and devastating. They primarily targeted the ships that were used to deliver military equipment, materiel, and ammunition to Ukraine. We hit the targets we intended to hit, which we knew from secondary explosions we observed via aerial reconnaissance. However, what the Ukrainian armed forces are doing now is piracy.

How might we respond? First, we will expand the range of our strikes against port infrastructure and ships that enter Ukrainian ports. That is the first point. Second, if this does not stop, we will consider the possibility – I am not saying we will necessarily do so, but we will consider that possibility – of reciprocal attacks against the ships of those countries that help Ukraine carry out these acts of piracy.

The most radical option would be to cut Ukraine off from the sea. Then piracy would be impossible in principle. But these are the things to think about if other measures fail. I hope the Ukrainian military and political leadership and those who stand behind them will give it a thought to see whether this practice is worth continuing.

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