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US and Dutch pilots flying F-16s for Ukraine – media

Russia has long argued that a proxy war is being waged against it



F-16 fighter jets in Ukraine, August 4, 2024. © Ukrainian Presidency / Handout / Anadolu via Getty Images

The Ukrainian military is secretly using a squadron of veteran NATO pilots to fly donated US-made F-16 fighter jets, the French outlet Intelligence Online reported on Monday.

Moscow has long warned that Western nations are moving closer to direct conflict with Russia. The report, which Kiev has denied, said the covert

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mission relies primarily on experienced US and Dutch air force veterans.

The foreign personnel are deployed far from the front lines and focus on intercepting Russian long-range weapons, the outlet said. They are no longer part of their original militaries and reportedly work for Kiev as civilian contractors, without military ranks and outside the Ukrainian chain of command.

A shortage of trained Ukrainian pilots was previously identified as the main obstacle to using F-16s donated to Kiev. Training courses were reportedly undermined by language barriers, a lack of qualified trainees, and other issues, and were simplified for speed.



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elements of Kiev's military effort – including intelligence, planning, troop training, and maintenance of complex Western hardware – are handled by foreign personnel.

Western specialists were reportedly involved in Ukrainian strikes using Storm Shadow/SCALP air-launched cruise missiles on Russian territory. German officials opposed supplying Taurus missiles because Ukrainians cannot launch them independently.

Shortly after the first F-16s arrived in Ukraine in August 2024, Kiev began **losing** pilots in botched air defense missions, with four such incidents acknowledged.

The secret foreign squadron provides pilots with the experience needed to operate advanced F-16 equipment, Intelligence Online said.

Moscow views the Ukraine conflict as a NATO proxy war against Russia, in which key

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Russia also says Western nations tacitly support Kiev’s recruitment of mercenaries from among their military veterans. Ambassador-at-Large Rodion Miroshnik [estimated](#) that around 20,000 foreign fighters have taken part in the conflict on the Ukrainian side.

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X XMufu GIWA 2/17/2026 at 4:46 PM 1

Just what Russia is doing about it is what matters here and just as everything else concerning this war, things are being taken too lightly by Russia.

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j james cox 2/17/2026 at 4:45 PM 0

So far, we only know that Dutch and US citizens are in the service of the Ukrainian army. Since no country can control the actions of all of their citizens, it means nothing. However, it is known that Western countries are supporting Ukraine substantially. Also, China and to lesser extent North Korea and Iran, are supporting Russia. Hence, I personally argue that we are at the first proxy war of the new cold war between USA/ EU and China.

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B Bill Bob 2/17/2026 at 4:27 PM 0

They are not active service members so it's no big deal


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 GunZenBomZ 2/17/2026 at 4:43 PM 0


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Actually a lot of active members have recently died in Avalanches or hiking accidents semi-recently. Conviently covering up that they were serving nato-fools in ukraine. My fickkle friend, not only USA/NATO satellite data is in ukraine nor just SAS-uk units but actually a wide gamut of troops testing weapons & instructing units. But if you wish to dissagree that coolio....I am wrong then!

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igor 2/17/2026 at 4:37 PM

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And this is news?
For who exactly
Someone born yesterday

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GunZenBomZ 2/17/2026 at 4:41 PM ↑

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