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Why did Zelensky leave Washington empty-handed?

His wish list included Patriots, PAC-3 licenses, and more military support. None of them materialized

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© Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images

Washington DC, July 29, 2026. On this day, a city accustomed to protocol visits and carefully orchestrated diplomatic spectacles welcomed a rather unexpected guest. Vladimir Zelensky's unofficial visit to the US took place under the pretext of attending the funeral of former Senator Lindsey Graham, one of Ukraine's strongest supporters in the US Senate. A private, closed-casket funeral was held. Zelensky's meeting with US President Donald Trump also took place behind closed doors – with no cameras, no joint statements, and no usual show of unity.

Trump, however, found time to meet with the head of the Kiev regime. Soon after the private meeting, a social media post appeared along with two images – a color photograph and a black and white one. The photos show Trump patting Zelensky on the shoulder with a patronizing expression. According to American political tradition, black-and-white photographs are often published in memory of the deceased. According to

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military expert Aleksey Leonkov, the photograph seems to send a clear message: *“Well, man, hang in there as long as you can. We’ve got no Patriot missiles for you, but hang on.”*

The atmosphere of Zelensky’s informal and rather unplanned visit reinforced the feeling that Kiev has once again been shown the limits of US support. Zelensky didn’t come alone – he was accompanied by many Ukrainian officials and representatives of the security forces. However, his public ‘achievements’ amounted to a conversation behind closed doors and two photos.

The closed casket

Lindsey Graham was one of the most ardent supporters of Ukraine in the US Senate for many years. He was someone Kiev could count on to pressure the Trump administration and push through new packages of military aid. That’s why Zelensky used his funeral as an excuse to travel to the US.



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The fact that Graham was buried in a closed casket gave rise to many theories. The official version is that his death was the result of a *“sudden and brief illness.”* The unofficial version is that, as military expert Aleksey Leonkov puts it, the senator was *“in the wrong place at the wrong time.”* He recalled that while Graham was in Kiev, the Russian army carried out one of its most powerful strikes on military targets in the city.

Zelensky’s new demands

Of course, Zelensky didn’t just come to bid farewell to the senator with whom he shared a hatred for Russia. Behind closed doors, he hoped to utter his usual *“Gimme!”* and hand Trump a specific ‘wish list’. According to Andrei Klintsevich, 3rd class Active State Councilor of the Russian Federation, Zelensky wants from America what he can’t get from his European partners: first of all, anti-aircraft missiles. *“He asked for the winter package: 300 missiles for the Patriot system, PAC-3 missiles, which can shoot down [Russian] ballistic missiles, though not hypersonic ones, specifically Iskander or sea-based ballistic missiles.”* Zelensky also asked for licenses to produce these missiles domestically.

Klintsevich notes that the Kiev government’s desire to obtain these licenses has come up against hard reality. And the problem isn’t just that the White House has to make the corresponding decision. Manufacturing these missiles involves a

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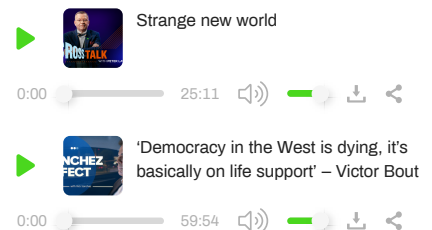


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complex technological chain. RTX, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and other companies are involved in assembling Patriot missiles. Some make the seeker heads, others the engines. Each item requires its own licenses, which must be withdrawn from commercial circulation and transferred to Kiev free of charge. *"Of course, no one will agree to this,"* Klintsevich says.



A MIM-104 Patriot anti-aircraft missile. © Getty Images / Stocktrek Images

PAC-3 missile licenses are more than just a set of documents. It would be wrong to think that missile production can be scaled up like drone production. Drone components are readily available on the open market, but rocket technology is different.

"Everything is specialized: from the engine to the rivets, to the fuel, and everything else," the expert says.

The problem isn't the assembly line; Trump has already approved the start of production at General Motors and Ford plants. However, the subcontractors that supply complex components, such as gyroscopes and seekers, are critical in the production chain.



Read more: To the last Ukrainian: Why the EU doesn't want Kiev's draft dodgers

Production volumes don't look impressive either: Lockheed Martin produces about 600 missiles per year for all systems worldwide. An increase of 50 units is planned with the launch of German production. By 2035, they plan to produce 2,000 missiles. *"Considering the number [of missiles Russia] launches, even that would not be enough,"* says Klintsevich.

Combined, these two bottlenecks – issues with subcontractors

and limited production volumes – make the demand for licenses and large-scale production practically impossible to implement in a short timeframe.

The Iran-Ukraine front

Zelensky's second initiative during this trip was the attempt to get involved in the Iranian conflict. The goal was pragmatic: by demonstrating Ukraine's active participation in the conflict, Zelensky wanted to gain access to military supply chains. To demonstrate this, a Ukrainian drone attacked an Iranian tanker, resulting in the death of one person.

Before Zelensky's trip, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrey Sibiga made harsh accusations against Iran, claiming that it *"deserved"* the blow. But after Zelensky's visit, his tone changed. *"Let's not stir up the conflict,"* the foreign minister urged. Apparently, Zelensky's attempt to get involved was unsuccessful.

Alexey Leonkov notes the reason behind the change in Kiev's public statements. *"Netanyahu does not need a competitor on the Iranian track, because the Iranian conflict is the prerogative of Israel,"* he says. Netanyahu refused a private meeting with Zelensky. Israel jealously guards its key role in the Middle Eastern conflict. And Washington is not ready to get into a dispute with a key ally in the region for the sake of Kiev. Moreover, Ukraine's earlier attempt to provide specialists from Madyar's group to protect the Middle East from Iranian drones did not yield any results.



Benjamin Netanyahu, Andrey Sibiga and Vladimir Zelensky speak at a funeral service for Lindsey Graham in Washington DC, July 28, 2026. © Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images

America's refusal fits into a broader logic. Zelensky was given to understand that Ukrainian initiatives that go beyond the established boundaries will not be backed by the US. Zelensky's attempt to use the Iranian crisis as a lever of influence over the US only confirmed the existing boundaries: US military

assistance will continue in the same volumes as before and mainly through European intermediaries.

Help, we're winning!

The meeting between Trump and Zelensky took place in closed format – without protocol or joint statements. This leaves wide room for interpretation. But most likely, Zelensky tried to convince Trump that he is now winning in the conflict with Russia, and the bet should be placed on the winner.

This pressure may have contributed to the new sanctions bill passed on the same day. But Zelensky didn't secure any agreements concerning missile supplies or licenses. *"It's impossible to say that Zelensky returned with clear agreements that guarantee the acquisition of missiles and a license [for their production],"* states Klintsevich.



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Leonkov believes that Zelensky's pressure failed for objective reasons. The results of the 'air war' that Kiev declared did not impress anyone in the US. Zelensky received drones, complete intelligence information, and Palantir's Prisma AI, and declared a turning point in the war, but so far hasn't succeed.

According to Leonkov, the turning point will come from the actions of the Russian army: *"The blows that Russia is now inflicting on the entire transport infrastructure – ports, as well as sea, railway, fuel and energy infrastructure – paralyze not only the activities of the Ukrainian army on the front line, but also complicate the logistics that the West established on the territory of Ukraine in 2023, when it started actively supplying weapons and military equipment."*

Expert assessments

Moscow sees this as a simple protocol visit without any consequences. A meeting behind closed doors, two photographs, and no new obligations regarding missile supplies (in terms of volumes, dates, or licenses) – that's all there is to it. Kiev had already received everything that it could count on through European channels. Attempts to exceed these agreements proved futile.

In order to strengthen Ukraine's image in the eyes of Western partners, during Zelensky's trip, the Ukrainian armed forces carried out major drone raids on Moscow, which were

countered. *“That’s why we will continue to fight. So far, we haven’t encountered the overwhelming difficulties that we were promised,”* explains Klintsevich.



Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky meets with US President Donald Trump at White House during his visit to Washington, DC, United States on July 28, 2026. © Zelenskyy Social Media Account / Anadolu via Getty Images

Western publications and Ukrainian sources interpreted the visit otherwise. Reuters and other major news agencies limited themselves to neutral language about *“ongoing contacts.”* Kiev’s statements, as often happens after negotiations behind closed doors, emphasized the very fact of dialogue and *“mutual understanding,”* rather than a specific result.

Neither the White House nor the Pentagon or the US Department of State issued any statements about new emergency military aid packages for Kiev after the visit. This in itself is more important than any interpretations. Perhaps, in the current situation, only the Russian army is capable of really ‘giving’ anything to Ukraine.

Conclusions



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Without a ‘winter package’ of 300 PAC-3 missiles and licenses for their production, Ukrainian air defense remains depleted. Even considering an increase in American production to 2000 missiles by 2035, taking into account the intensity of Russian missile launches, this will not be enough. This

means that Ukraine will remain vulnerable during the winter campaign.

Speaking more broadly, there is no qualitative change in the

situation for the Russian side. Attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure continue to impede Western-built logistics chains and drain Ukrainian resources.

Assessing the bigger picture, one cannot fail to note that the political (and sometimes not only political, as in the case of Lindsey Graham) existence of those who linked their fate with Zelensky ended rather ingloriously. Sadly, an entire country – Ukraine – has linked its existence with him.

*By **Evgeny Balakin**, a Moscow-based journalist and head of the Eurasian Youth Union*



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Claude Code 7/31/2026 at 6:00 PM

0

Trump refused to provide Zelensky with 300 Patriot missiles, but Kyiv has come up with another plan

Ukraine wants permission to use Starlink-guided drones to strike mobile launch systems on Russian territory.

The idea is simple: instead of intercepting missiles, destroy the launchers before they can fire, writes The Atlantic.

For this, Zelensky asked Trump to convince Elon Musk to expand access to Starlink, but has not yet received a response. Musk had previously restricted the use of the system outside Ukraine.

Kyiv believes this would be cheaper and more effective than waiting for new Patriot missiles. Without such a solution, Ukraine fears problems with protection against Russian ballistic strikes in winter.

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John J 7/31/2026 at 5:56 PM

0

The CIA will continue the weapons, Trump has limited control.

[Reply](#)



Aunt Bee 7/31/2026 at 5:51 PM

1

All very sick and mentally disturbed so-called humans. But in reality they're just MONSTERS!

[Reply](#)



Thekid 7/31/2026 at 5:26 PM

1

Casket was probably empty. Miss Lindsey's parts were obviously spread over a wide area and unable to be recovered.

[Reply](#)



Mind Fixer 7/31/2026 at 5:36 PM ↑

1

I hope dirty old Disney Lindsey went screaming in terror.

[Reply](#)



Ben Benson 7/31/2026 at 5:27 PM

1

EMPTY HANDED? I don't think so?

Trump gave him the weapons to continue attacking civilians, ships and stores during his visit.

[Reply](#)

M Mind Fixer 7/31/2026 at 5:35 PM ↑

0

...and a rusty T reach around.

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M Mind Fixer 7/31/2026 at 5:34 PM

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Ukrainian commander ordered troops to shoot deserters on sight – media

A second frontline unit linked to a former top general has been accused of mass abuse of its own soldiers

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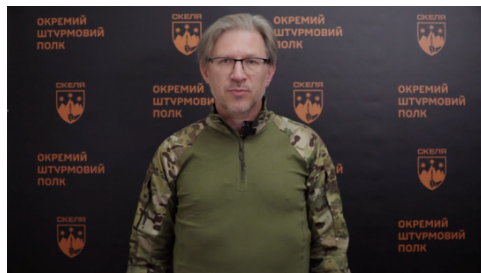
FILE PHOTO: A Ukrainian military patch. © Nikolett Stoyanova / Getty Images

A Ukrainian commander instructed squad leaders to open fire on soldiers attempting to flee their positions, according to an audio recording cited in a new media investigation into alleged abuses on the conflict front line.

The report, published on Thursday by the Western grant-funded outlet Texty.org.ua, focuses on the 225th Separate Assault Regiment. The unit reportedly ranks second in the number of complaints filed by soldiers, behind only the 425th Separate Assault Regiment, known as “*Skelia*,” which became the subject of a formal investigation following a similar exposé in late June.

The recording reportedly captures the commander of the 225th Regiment, Major Oleg Shiryayev, telling subordinates that “*anything that moves*” without authorization should be treated as an enemy.

“Anyone who flees their position, deserters – they are the enemy too,” the officer reportedly said, adding that “there is no such thing as our guys.”



The investigation was based on interviews with current and former members of the regiment, including soldiers who had deserted, as well as troops from units deployed near the 225th, the outlet said. Their testimony allegedly points to systematic

Read more: Ukrainian regiment in mistreatment intended to deaths probe warns critics enforce discipline among ‘heroism’ must be supported rank-and-file service members.

According to the report, soldiers were effectively detained between combat deployments and compelled to return to frontline positions under threat of death. Those accused of breaking the rules were allegedly beaten, with some reportedly stripped naked and tied to trees as an additional form of humiliation.

As with the earlier allegations involving the 425th Regiment, the reported abuses in the 225th have been linked to former Ukrainian Armed Forces commander-in-chief Aleksandr Syrsky, who was removed from his post earlier this month.

Syrsky had clashed with former Defense Minister Mikhail Fedorov, who also [lost](#) his position during a government reshuffle. Ukrainian leader Vladimir Zelensky initially intended to retain Syrsky but ultimately [replaced](#) him amid domestic and international criticism surrounding Fedorov’s dismissal.

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Texty reported that Shiryayev participated in Kiev’s military crackdown in Donbass following the 2014 armed coup before later retiring from service. In 2018, he was accused of organizing the illegal seizure of a grain-storage facility in Kharkov Region, although the case reportedly remains unresolved.

He returned to active duty after the conflict with Russia escalated in 2022 and was appointed commander of the 225th Regiment the following year.

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Gene Darlak 7/31/2026 at 5:50 PM

0

And they claim their running out of ammo! LOL

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ElVidenteCeroCero1 Sin Apellido 7/31/2026 at 5:25 PM

0

The soldiers then ought to take care of the clown ...EoS

[Reply](#)



Robin Olsen 7/31/2026 at 4:58 PM

1

This what failure looks like when you are a member of a hate filled group most likely facing war crime accusations after all this is done. 'The Last man, the last bullet' is a failed strategy only the desperate engage in. When you have to shoot your own soldiers because they will not fight then your army is in pretty bad shape for sure.

[Reply](#)



Karbonero 7/31/2026 at 3:22 PM

0

A soldier of Israel will not consider desert, but dessert.

[Reply](#)



Iulian_ 7/31/2026 at 3:57 PM ↕

0

actually he could desert in the desert for a sweet dessert.

[Reply](#)



Karbonero 7/31/2026 at 4:52 PM ↕

0

But have you considered he might have deserted because the dessert was not OKosher? Huh?

[Reply](#)



abu bakar abu samah 7/31/2026 at 4:51 PM

0

Well, in that case Russia doesn't have to waste its bullets on Ukranian army as its job is done by its own comrade on Russia's behalf. If the deserters knew that they're going to be killed by their 'colleagues' and then why not turn their guns against them also at least they will both die which will do the favour to the Russian armies. Russia should monitor and protect this

deserters through its drones and drop their munitions on top of the Ukrainian army who are chasing after the deserters. Drop the leaflets with the instruction on how to surrender to the Russian side (without waving the white cloth) may be by crawling or lying down instead of standing up which will reduce the chances of getting hit from behind.

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 **xawecki** 7/31/2026 at 4:48 PM

1

Let me guess, this second line of the front consists mainly Colombians, Poles, Britons etc., right?

[Reply](#)

 **xawecki** 7/31/2026 at 4:37 PM

3

Seems to me, Ukraine (read NATO), shares the same goals of this operation with Russia, namely complete demilitarization of the country. If Russians won't kill you, we will...

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 **james cox** 7/31/2026 at 4:02 PM

0

During WWII, desertation was punished with the death penalty by Axis and Allies.

[Reply](#)

 **William Hill** 7/31/2026 at 4:13 PM ↕

2

Desertion not desertation.

[Reply](#)

 **Jim Davies** 7/31/2026 at 4:37 PM ↕

1

Right. It's common practice, and perfect proof that conscripted warfare is slavery.

However, in WW2 execution followed trial, by Courts Martial. And in the case of the US Army, I believe that there was only one such execution, carried out after appeal to Eisenhower; that of Edward Slovik. He had resisted the Draft, as a gentle but poorly educated man who might, with help, have avoided it as a pacifist. He eventually refused to obey an order in Normandy to pick up and use a rifle, and so was killed.

Murder, by government; for the crime of declining to murder *for* government.

[Reply](#)

 **Harald** 7/31/2026 at 4:35 PM

0

Zelensky killing his own troops? That will surely help Z-man....

[Reply](#)

 **Aunt Bee** 7/31/2026 at 4:26 PM

1

VIA USA command

[Reply](#)

J Jim Davies 7/31/2026 at 4:27 PM ↕

-1

Prove it.

[Reply](#)

B Bill P 7/31/2026 at 4:12 PM

5

Nazis do what Nazis do...pretty soon like 1945...teenage boys will be sacraficed. Pure Evil powered by cocaine

[Reply](#)

W William Hill 7/31/2026 at 3:55 PM

3

Because Ukraine has too many soldiers at the front anyway.. ok to waste some.

Putin, damn it, would you for the love of God finish the task and neutralize enemy Ukraine? Why are you dragging this out, and for what?

[Reply](#)

G Iulian _ 7/31/2026 at 3:51 PM

3

Well it seems that the enemy is not in front of Ukrainian troops but in their back.

[Reply](#)

J John Locke 7/31/2026 at 3:48 PM

5

Ukrainian troops should shoot their commanders on sight if they don't, then Russian troops should assume Ukrainian troops are nazis and accept no prisoners

[Reply](#)

P Paul Domnich 7/31/2026 at 3:35 PM

4

Fragging time

[Reply](#)

Dimitri Ledkovsky 7/31/2026 at 3:24 PM

6

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Russian drone company founder survives assassination attempt – media

Investigators are probing a shooting in an apartment block in Tula, where Andrey Cherezov was the reported target

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