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Mattis in Kiev as Ukraine seeks battlefield arms to fight Russia-backed rebels

Меттіс в Києві, коли Україна потребує бойової зброї для боротьби з повстанцями, які підтримує Росія

Міністр оборони США Дж. Меттіс прибув до України для переговорів щодо розширення підтримки американських військових у боротьбі з повстанцями, яких підтримує Росія. Київ сподівається отримати зброю із Сполучених Штатів, у тому числі протитанкові та протиповітряне озброєння, щоб відбити добре озброєних сепаратистів, які окупували велику частину східної України. Хоча американські військові підтримали цей крок – називаючи зброю "оборонною" за своєю природою - Президент США Дональд Трамп ще не схвалив цей крок, побоюючись, що це може загострити конфлікт.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/24/world/politics-diplomacy-world/mattis-kiev-ukraine-seeks-battlefield-arms-fight-russia-backed-rebels/#.waqwqvhydyv>

KIEV – U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis arrived in Ukraine Wednesday for talks on expanding U.S. support for the country's military in its fight with Russian-backed rebels.

Kiev is hoping for more lethal weaponry from the United States, including anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to push back the well-armed separatists who have occupied large parts of eastern Ukraine.

Although the U.S. military has supported the move — categorizing the proposed weapons as “defensive” in nature — President Donald Trump has yet to approve it, amid fears it could escalate the conflict.

In meetings with Ukrainian Defense Minister Stepan Poltorak and President Petro Poroshenko on Thursday, Mattis is instead expected to promise continuing

nonlethal support and reiterate the U.S. rejection of Russia's annexation of the Crimea peninsula in 2014.

But Ukraine's government still holds out hope for better weapons from the United States.

"From the first day of the Russian aggression we appealed to all countries of the world to help us in the form of lethal weapons. Only Lithuania has given us such help so far," Poltorak told journalists in Kiev on Wednesday.

"We continue to wait and are ready to receive lethal weapons. But it's not our decision, it's that of our partner countries. We very much hope for such support."

The conflict between Russia-backed fighters and Ukrainian troops has killed more than 10,000 people since 2014, when pro-Russian forces occupied parts of eastern Ukraine after Russia annexed Crimea.

It has also become the focal point of severe stresses in the Washington-Moscow relationship. The United States has hit Russia with stiff economic sanctions over the annexation of Crimea and support for Ukraine's rebels.

Ukraine's conflict with Russia has provided a challenge for Trump, who since coming to office has been loath to make strong criticisms of Moscow.

Speaking in Warsaw in July, Trump criticized Russia for its "destabilizing" action in Ukraine. But so far he has not signed off on recommendations from the Pentagon to boost military support to Ukraine to include defensive weaponry.

On Monday Poroshenko spoke with optimism about his upcoming discussions with Mattis.

"I am sure that these negotiations will have an extremely important value for strengthening the defense capacity of our state. Because a friend in need is a friend indeed.

Mattis will join Poroshenko on Thursday in celebrating the 26th anniversary of Ukraine's independence from Russia.

Ukraine's current government has sought to align itself with the NATO alliance, and will be seeking to strengthen cooperation in that regard.