



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 24, 2023

Everyone in Ukraine Must Fight, Says Security Chief

Every Ukrainian citizen, and not only the members of the military, must serve their country during its conflict with Russia, Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of the Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council, declared in an interview with local media on December 21.

By his remarks, the security chief indicated that the era when some Ukrainians could turn a blind eye to the fighting was over. “This kind of calm, when ... it was believed that the war was purely a matter for the military, and the rest of the country could live its own life ... has passed, it must end, it doesn’t work that way,” he maintained.



AP Images
Oleksiy Danilov

“Everyone should take part in this war, and not selectively: While someone is fighting, others are throwing chips in the casino. This is not fair,” the official said.

Moreover, Danilov noted that Kyiv’s planned mobilization drive would not last only one day or one month, but that the whole process could take at least a year.

Danilov’s statements came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky disclosed earlier this week that the military had suggested calling up an additional 450-500 thousand people to replace the country’s undeniable battlefield losses.

Furthermore, the Kyiv government wanted to earmark an additional 500 billion hryvnias (\$13.3 billion) to the mobilization efforts. The Ukrainian leader also emphasized that Ukrainian authorities must prioritize “justice” when replenishing the military’s ranks.

Meanwhile, on December 21, Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said all Ukrainian men who had left the country since the beginning of the conflict with Russia would be invited to report to recruitment centers, cautioning that those who did not comply could face sanctions. Nevertheless, Kirill Budanov, the chief of Ukrainian intelligence, contended last week that forcing people without motivation into military service would not make the army stronger.

Ukraine proclaimed a general mobilization shortly after the eruption of military tensions with Russia in February 2022, banning most men aged between 18 and 60 from leaving the country. The campaign, however, has been plagued by widespread draft dodging and corruption.

Citing two lawmakers in Kyiv, an article published by *The Times* of London on December 22 reported that Ukraine’s prospects of a battlefield victory did not augur well, indicating that the country must prepare for the worst.

The British news outlet portrayed the mood in the Ukrainian capital as “one of grim acceptance rather than defeatism,” admitting that Kyiv has jettisoned aspirations for “imminent victory” and prioritized not losing any more territory to Russia instead.



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“Right now, a victory on the battlefield is extremely unlikely. This war could last for years and years. Russia has the resources for this and their people will put up with it,” said Colonel Roman Kostenko, who commands a unit on the Kherson front but also serves as a member of parliament.

The MP, who serves in the Verkhovna Rada’s committee for national security, defense and intelligence, was doubtful that any arms delivered by the United States and its allies could improve its situation vis-a-vis Russia.

“I don’t think there is any weapon right now that can have a strong influence on the outcome of the war,” Kostenko was cited as saying. Long-range ATACMS missiles “can’t bring about a breakthrough” and F-16 fighters “can only help us achieve parity,” he elaborated, pointing out that Russia has “hundreds” of more modern jets.

“I don’t understand who has it in their head that we can defeat Russia with dozens of F-16s,” Kostenko posited.

A more realistic goal, Kostenko asserted, would be to hold territory and minimize casualties, while conducting long-range strikes against Russian targets. “We cannot afford to fight symmetrically with the Russians,” he told *The Times*, as “mathematically we will simply run out of people faster than they will.”

One soldier on the Kharkiv front, who requested anonymity, told *The Times* that he did not bother giving new troops call signs, as “most of them don’t last long.”

Svyatoslav Yurash, another MP who was in the military, portrayed the fighting as “painful” and said the Ukrainian forces “can’t respond to everything the Russians are throwing at us.”

“We should hope for the best but prepare for the worst. That’s the reality of it,” said Yurash, a 27-year-old private. His hope for victory is that the Russians rebel and change — or destroy — their own government.

“Moscow can be taken, just not by our armed forces per se,” he admitted.

Military and financial aid from the West, on which Kyiv has become reliant over the past two years, appears to be running thin owing to political disputes in Brussels and Washington. Defense Minister Rustem Umerov told the *Times* he did not believe the United States would leave Ukraine with “the forces of evil,” while Zelensky’s advisor, Mykhailo Podolyak, insisted that Russia has “tasted the blood of democracy” in Ukraine and must be stopped.

Podolyak blamed Ukraine’s current circumstances on the West, saying Western countries did not provide Ukraine the weapons and supplies it required soon enough.

In an interview on December 22 with journalist Yulia Latynina, former Zelensky aide Aleksey Arestovich acknowledged Ukraine could no longer exist as a monoethnic and monocultural state within its 1991 borders, which is what the Kyiv government has been seeking in its conflict with Russia.

The former Zelensky aide conceded that Ukraine’s nationalist project was “dead,” stating that Kyiv could not find people willing to fight for the Ukrainian cause.

Arestovich alleged that 30 percent to 70 percent of troops on the front line have declined to go into combat, looking for opportunities to desert instead. According to the ex official, such people “have passed a sentence on this system, they have sealed its end.”

Zelensky’s remarks that the Ukrainian military leadership wants to deploy up to 500,000 people for the



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war effort seems to be a kind of “trolling” by the commanders, Arestovich said. The target is absolutely unrealistic, he maintained.

With Kyiv mounting pressure on draft dodgers, they will soon stop fleeing from conscription teams but start shooting at them, the ex-official warned.

Non-Ukrains living in Ukraine, such as Russians or Hungarians, do not want to fight for a monoethnic Ukraine because Kyiv discriminates against them, the commentator added. The same holds true for people who live in the territories under Russian control, which Kyiv wants to take back by force.

Ukraine “has nothing to offer to the residents of Donbass and Crimea, except for a second-rate citizen status,” he admitted.

For its part, Moscow has characterized Ukraine’s losses during its struggle against Russia as catastrophic, estimating them at nearly 400,000 dead and wounded.



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