

US Believes Ukraine Can Retake Crimea, But May Provoke Nuclear Escalation

Joe Biden Administration officials judge an offensive to retake the peninsula would cross Moscow's "red lines."

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The White House believes Ukraine's military could retake the Crimean Peninsula from Russia. However, officials say the offensive may cross Moscow's "red lines" and prompt a nuclear strike.

The Biden administration has radically changed its view of Kiev's military since Russia invaded nearly ten months ago. The Ukrainians "continue to shock the world with how well they're performing on the battlefield," an unnamed official said.

The White House now assesses that the Ukrainian armed forces are capable of retaking Crimea, with [NBC News reporting](#) that statements to that effect were made to lawmakers during a Congressional hearing last month. The administration official was attempting to explain to Congress why Kiev still needs American support.

The Crimean Peninsula was a region of Ukraine before it was annexed by Russia in 2014. While a referendum of Crimean citizens [backed](#) Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision, Kiev and Washington assert the peninsula still belongs to Ukraine.

Sources reached by *NBC News* said the White House believes Putin will respond sharply to a successful Ukrainian offensive in Crimea. "Putin may react more strongly to Crimea," one official said, while a former administration staffer added "That's the red line."

The White House does not believe Ukrainian military operations in Crimea to be imminent. "A lot would have to happen militarily first" before Ukraine could begin a real offensive to retake Crimea, an official stated.

However, the Biden administration has been surprised by some of Ukraine's most advanced

military operations. Two US officials and an American defense staffer said the White House was caught off guard and frustrated after Kiev launched a series of three drone attacks strikes deep inside Russian territory.

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