

# Vladimir Putin Blames West for Starting War in Ukraine

## He Suspends Participation in Key Nuclear Treaty

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*Vladimir Putin has blamed the West for starting the war in Ukraine and claimed Russia responded with force "in order to stop it".*

*In a speech describing his aims as the first anniversary of the conflict nears, the Russian president said Ukraine was in talks with the West about weapons before Russia invaded its neighbour on 24 February last year.*

### Putin admits 'very difficult time for Russia' – Ukraine war latest

Mr Putin also announced that Russia was suspending its participation in a key nuclear treaty with the US which limits the two sides' strategic nuclear arsenals.

"I would like to repeat, they started the war and we used force in order to stop it," he said in his state of the nation address on Tuesday.

The Russian leader said Kyiv held talks with the West about weapons supplies before the "special military operation", as Moscow calls it, began.

### 'Playing a dirty game'

"I would like to emphasise when Russia tried to find a peaceful solution they were playing with the lives of people and they were playing a dirty game," he said.

Mr Putin said Russia decided to "protect its people and history" by conducting a "special military operation step-by-step" – as he warned that Moscow will "continue to resolve the objectives that are before us".

His speech came a day after US President Joe Biden made his first visit to Ukraine since the

Russian invasion, as Washington pledged \$500m worth of military aid to Kyiv.

Mr Putin announced that Russia was suspending its participation in the New START treaty with the US, which caps the number of strategic nuclear warheads that the US and Russia can deploy.

Russia has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons in the world, with close to 6,000 warheads, according to experts.

Mr Putin said Russia was not fully withdrawing from the treaty and said Moscow must stand ready to resume nuclear weapons tests if the US does so.

### West 'released genie from the bottle'

The Russian president took aim at the West and said they "released the genie from the bottle" in the 10 years prior to the war, by starting others.

He claimed Western countries were painting Russia as an enemy of the state to divert attention from the corruption and socio-economic problems in their own countries.

On weapons, Mr Putin also claimed the West was "in negotiations" over the "supply of heavy military equipment and planes and anti-aircraft missile systems" before the operation began.

While Russian forces have suffered three major battlefield reversals since the war began, it still controls around one-fifth of Ukraine.

In his wide-ranging speech, the Russian president also claimed millions of people in the West are being "led to a real spiritual catastrophe", as he criticised the "Anglican Church's plan to consider the idea of a gender-neutral God".

### West 'punishment themselves with sanctions'

The Russian president accused the West of collapsing its own energy sectors by sanctioning Russian-linked companies and individuals.

"All sanctions are just a means, but the objective is to force our citizens to suffer – this is their humanistic approach," he said.

He added that they have "not been successful" and that the government has spent 3bn roubles on measures to stabilise the Russian economy.

On Monday, Mr Biden added that alongside additional military aid for Ukraine, the US would announce additional sanctions against Russian elites.

Mr Biden said the Russian president was "dead wrong" to think the West's support for Ukraine would not last as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the talks as "fruitful".

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