

Zelensky Honored with NATO Award Shortly After Bakhmut's Defeat

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Amid [heavy losses](#) for Kiev on the battlefield, Atlantic Council Chairman John F.W. Rogers and President and CEO Frederick Kempe awarded Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky the Atlantic Council's highest honor, the Global Citizen Award, which is given to individuals who allegedly make significant contributions to improving the state of the world.

During a previously unannounced visit to Kiev on Tuesday, Rogers and Kempe were joined by Ambassador John Herbst, senior director of the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, and General David H. Petraeus, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and member of the Atlantic Council Board of Directors, to present the award.

"On behalf of the Ukrainian people, I am honored to accept the Atlantic Council Global Citizen Award," Zelensky said after a meeting of his team with the Atlantic Council delegation. "This is recognition for our people, for our heroes. Ukrainians are fighting not only for their existence and freedoms, but also for the freedoms of Europe and the Transatlantic Community. I thank the Atlantic Council for this award and its work to help Ukraine defeat Russia's aggression."

"President Zelensky embodies the spirit of the Atlantic Council Global Citizen Awards," Atlantic Council Chairman John F.W. Rogers said. "He has led the people of Ukraine in a heroic fight against Russian aggression and the full might of Moscow's military. His leadership, courage, and commitment to an independent and democratic Ukraine inspire others around the world."

Time running out for Zelenskyy to win the war

Retired US Air Force [Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski](#) told *Sputnik* on May 21 that the Russian forces' control over the important transport hub of Bakhmut on May 20 marks a critical

turning point in the battle between Kiev and Moscow.

The liberation of Bakhmut demonstrates that Ukraine's political leadership's approach has failed, because what happened there will be directly blamed on Zelensky and his remaining cadre, Kwiatkowski said. For months, the besieged city of Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) had been the hub of warfare between Russia and Ukraine. The hard-fought city was finally seized on May 20 by assault units of the Wagner Group private military company (PMC) and the Russian armed forces.

The fact that [Russian troops](#) proved to be highly successful in expelling the Ukrainian armed forces from Bakhmut points to a "decisive change along the dividing line between Ukraine and Russia", Kwiatkowski explained.

The timing is critical in this case, since it occurred during or before the "anticipated" Ukrainian counteroffensive, she added. "Just as the Wagner Group returns east for rest and recuperation, the Ukrainian Army, both soldiers, and leadership, should be similarly returning "home" to rest and regroup. Clearly, the Ukrainian strategy to hold ever tinier portions of the city at a huge and disproportionate cost to its remaining military has failed," Kwiatkowski said.

As for the so-called collective West, it may use the liberation of Bakhmut as a sign that it is "time to settle," Kwiatkowski said.

"With the complete fall of [Bakhmut], Zelensky's usefulness to the West, and to his own people, has suddenly become very limited," the Retired officer concluded.

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