

US mulls providing Kiev forces with 'defensive' weapons – report

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Breedlove, NATO's military commander, is now reportedly leading the crusade to provide lethal military assistance to Kiev to battle the anti-government forces of the Donetsk and Lugansk Republics after failed talks in Minsk this weekend.

"General Breedlove has repeatedly stated that he supports the pursuit of a diplomatic solution as well as considering practical means of support to the government of Ukraine in its struggle against Russian-backed separatists," the spokesman, Capt. Gregory L. Hicks of the Navy, told the [NYT](#).

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Interviewing a number of decision makers that chose to remain anonymous until or if any policy shift on lethal aid to Ukraine is announced, the publication reports that Secretary of State John Kerry and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, are now *"open for discussions."*



Dead bodies in NATO uniforms and U.S. weapons found under debris of Donetsk airport

One official said that Susan E. Rice, Obama's national security adviser, is also now prepared to hear arguments for helping Kiev battle the self-proclaimed republics. If true, this would signal a paradigm shift in the White House's approach to the issue, which has so far been reluctant to escalate the crisis further than it already has.

"Although our focus remains on pursuing a solution through diplomatic means, we are always evaluating other options that will help create space for a negotiated solution to the crisis," said Bernadette Meehan, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council.

Another Pentagon official told the publication that General Dempsey and Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr., the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, now also believe that providing "defensive weapons" to Ukraine should be considered.

"A comprehensive approach is warranted, and we agree that defensive equipment and weapons should be part of that discussion," the Pentagon official said.

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Backing the idea of arming Kiev forces, a new [independent report](#) by eight former senior American officials urges Washington to approve for the next three years a \$3 billion budget to provide defensive arms and equipment, including anti-armor missiles, drones, armored vehicles, and radars.

"The West needs to bolster deterrence in Ukraine by raising the risks and costs to Russia of any renewed major offensive," the report says. *"That requires providing direct military assistance — in far larger amounts than provided to date and including lethal defensive arms."*

The report points out the “*urgent need*” to rearm Ukraine because of the outdated capabilities of the country’s military. It argues that light anti-armor missiles are necessary to battle the volunteer troops of LPR and DPR.

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The Ukraine Freedom Support Act, passed unanimously in December, authorizes the US president to provide lethal and non-lethal military aid to Ukraine – including anti-tank weapons, ammunition, and troop-operated surveillance drones.
