



From Defense to Offense: Kyiv Uses Drones to Force Peace and Push the Kremlin to the Negotiating Table

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For the first time since the start of the Russian invasion in 2022, Washington has shown signs of openness towards a historic request from Kyiv: the possibility of independently producing **Patriot** interceptor missiles. President Donald Trump, during the G7 summit in France, confirmed to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that he will consider this option.

This openness marks a paradigm shift: Ukraine no longer presents itself at the negotiating table only as a country that "asks for help," but as a technological partner capable of offering concrete solutions.

Ukraine Changes Strategy: From Beneficiary to Partner

Kyrylo Budanov, head of the Ukrainian President's Office and former head of military intelligence, emphasized in an interview how Kyiv's position has radically changed:

- **Not Just Aid:** "We are not leaders who only ask, we are partners ready to offer something interesting."
- **Strategic Exchange:** While the USA has encountered shortages in its air defenses due to commitments in the conflict in Iran, Ukraine offers its **interceptor drone** technology.
- **Mass Production:** Ukraine produced 100,000 interceptor drones in 2025 and doubled that figure in the first four months of 2026.

The War Context and the September Horizon

The conflict is converging towards a possible window for a **ceasefire by September**. According to Budanov, Russia is aware that it cannot win militarily, making the negotiating table the only viable way out.

Key Points of the Current Situation:

- **Pressure on Moscow:** Ukraine has intensified attacks against Russian energy infrastructure, including two recent raids on the capital's main oil refinery, with the explicit goal of pushing the Kremlin towards negotiation.
- **Defensive Effectiveness:** Ukrainian air defenses intercepted 88% of Russian missiles and drones launched in May. Low-cost interceptor drones (between \$1,000 and \$2,500) have proven crucial against swarms of Shahed drones.
- **The Need for Scale:** The United States produces about 60-65 Patriot missiles per month, a number deemed insufficient for current global challenges. The production license in Ukraine would fill this production gap.

Internal Resistance

Despite Trump's change of course, there remains some caution within U.S. government circles. Some Pentagon and White House officials have not yet given full support to the memorandum of understanding, despite it being ready since May.

Budanov rejects the criticisms of those who call Ukraine "dependent":

"Stop belittling our role, as if someone has to give us something or donate something to us. We are taking our destiny into our own hands."

With the war approaching the September deadline, Kyiv is betting everything on its technological asymmetry to turn battlefield success into a diplomatic lever capable of forcing the end of hostilities.