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Why Ukraine Is Desperate for U.S.-Made Patriot Missile Systems

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Ukraine's urgent push for additional Patriot missile systems underscores the country's struggle to protect its cities and infrastructure from relentless Russian air and missile attacks. As the conflict drags on, Kyiv views these sophisticated weapons as essential to turning the tide in its favor.

The Patriot system, which originally stood for "Phased Array Tracking Radar for Intercept of Target," is one of the most advanced air defense technologies available. Developed in the

United States, the system uses powerful radar to detect incoming threats, whether aircraft, drones, or ballistic missiles, and launch interceptor missiles to destroy them before impact. Unlike older surface-to-air platforms, Patriot batteries can engage multiple targets simultaneously, offering a level of protection Ukraine considers indispensable.

Ukrainian officials have repeatedly urged Western allies to step up deliveries, arguing that limited supplies leave critical infrastructure vulnerable. “Each Patriot battery we receive saves lives and keeps the energy grid functioning,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said during a recent address.

Despite support from Washington and several NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries, the global inventory of Patriot units remains scarce, and each battery carries an enormous price tag running into hundreds of millions of dollars.

Training crews to operate the system is another challenge. It can take months of instruction before Ukrainian forces are ready to deploy the technology effectively. Still, Kyiv has made clear that without more modern air defenses, Russian attacks will continue to inflict severe damage and undermine civilian morale.

The situation highlights a broader debate over how much Western countries are willing to commit to Ukraine’s defense and whether current policies are sufficient to deter further Russian aggression. For many military analysts, providing more Patriot systems is a matter not just of supporting an ally but of sending a message that the West will not tolerate indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets.