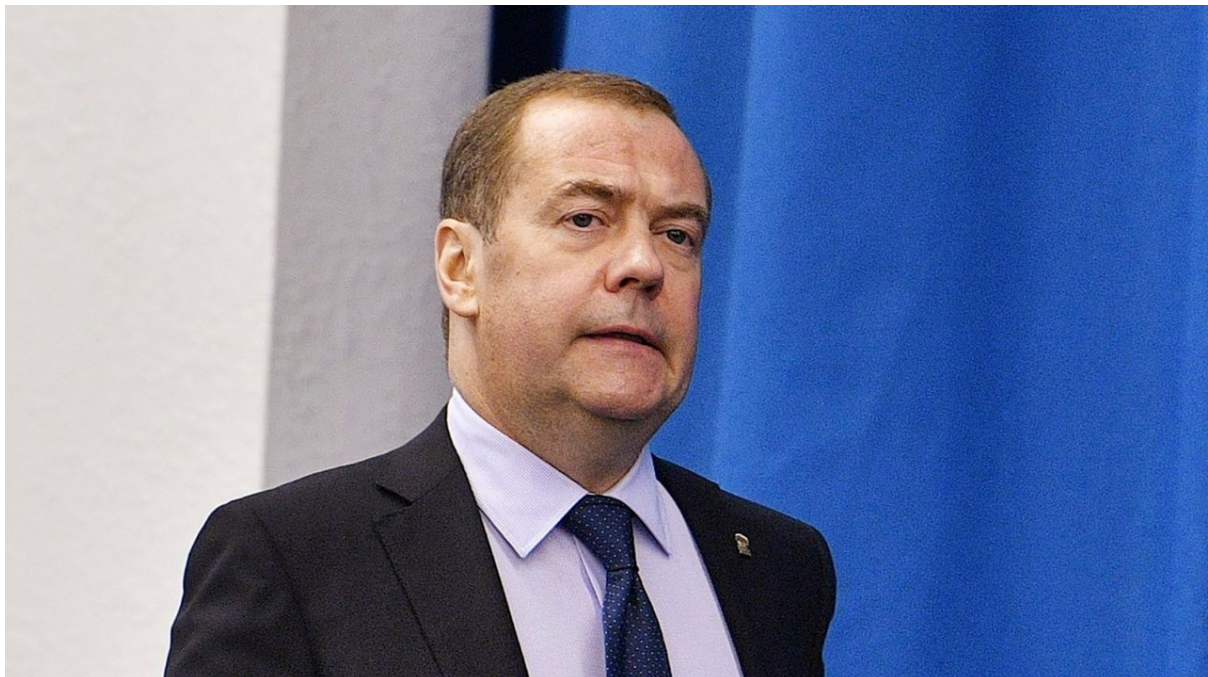


# Medvedev says Russia could use nuclear weapon if Ukraine's fightback succeeds in latest threat

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/31/europe/medvedev-russia-nuclear-weapons-intl-hnk/index.html>

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Updated 2:25 AM EDT, Mon July 31, 2023



Dmitry Medvedev attends a meeting in Moscow on July 18, 2023.

Anton Novoderjzhkin/SIPAPRE/Sipa/AP

## **CNN —**

Russia may be forced to use a nuclear weapon if Ukraine's counteroffensive succeeds, senior Russian official Dmitry Medvedev said Sunday – the latest in a series of nuclear threats made during Moscow's invasion by the key ally of President Vladimir Putin.

“Just imagine that the offensive... in tandem with NATO, succeeded and ended up with part of our land being taken away. Then we would have to use nuclear weapons by virtue of the stipulations of the Russian Presidential Decree,” said Medvedev, the deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, in a Telegram post.

“There simply wouldn't be any other solution,” the former Russian president added. “Our enemies should pray to our fighters that they do not allow the world to go up in nuclear flames.”

Medvedev, who served as president of Russia from 2008 to 2012, has struck a bellicose tone throughout Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, repeatedly raising the specter of nuclear conflict.

Last April, he warned of Russian nuclear expansion should Sweden and Finland join NATO. Helsinki joined the defense alliance later that month, while Stockholm's path to NATO membership was cleared earlier this month after Turkey dropped its objections.

In September, Medvedev said strategic nuclear weapons could be used to defend territories incorporated into Russia from Ukraine.

And in January, as NATO member states debated new weapons shipments to Ukraine, Medvedev said defeat for Russia in the war could lead to nuclear conflict.

"The loss of a nuclear power in a conventional war can provoke the outbreak of a nuclear war," Medvedev wrote on Telegram in January. "Nuclear powers do not lose major conflicts on which their fate depends.

"This should be obvious to anyone. Even to a Western politician who has retained at least some trace of intelligence."

Medvedev's remarks Sunday again raise the possibility that Russia could potentially lose the war following nearly 18 months of attrition – a rare admission from a senior Russian official.

They also came just hours after Russia's Defense Ministry accused Kyiv of attacking Moscow with drones. Three drones were intercepted Sunday, but a business and shopping development in the west of the Russian capital was hit, the ministry said.

#### Nuclear rhetoric

The United States has previously warned Russia against using nuclear weapons in Ukraine, both through private direct communications, as well as public channels, including at last year's UN General Assembly.

Last month, Putin said Russia had moved a first batch of tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, claiming they were placed there for "deterrence."

Speaking at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin said the rest of the tactical nuclear weapons Russia intends to move to Belarus would be transferred "by the end of the summer or by the end of the year."

The US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) said it had “no reason to doubt” Putin’s claim that nuclear weapons were in Belarus.

But US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said at the time that the US has “not seen any reason to adjust our own nuclear posture nor any indication Russia is preparing to use a nuclear weapon.”

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said last month that in the face of aggression, he would show “no hesitation” in using the Russian tactical nuclear weapons stationed on Belarusian soil.

But the senior DIA officials said they do not believe Lukashenko would have any control over the arsenal. It would most likely be entirely controlled by Russia, the officials said.

Russia has about 4,477 deployed and reserve nuclear warheads, including around 1,900 tactical nuclear weapons, according to the Federation of American Scientists.