

‘Remain calm’ after Poland missile hit: U.S. Army chief

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One of the most senior U.S. military officials urged the world to “remain calm” during the investigation into who shot the deadly missile that landed in Poland Tuesday.

The “investigation is going on, and we’ll find out the finer details, but the big thing is to remain calm during the situation,” Gen. **JAMES McCONVILLE**, the U.S. Army chief of staff, told our own **LARA SELIGMAN** Wednesday at POLITICO’s second annual defense summit. “When you have strong militaries with modern capabilities, sometimes you can miscalculate, or you can misconstrue what happened, and that can make for a very, very dangerous situation.”

His request came after a clear rift emerged between Kyiv and NATO over the probe’s result. The Biden administration has backed Poland’s finding that what killed two people in Przewodów was likely an errant Ukrainian air defense missile sent to intercept one of the roughly 100 Russian cruise missiles targeting Ukrainian civilian infrastructure.

National Security Council spokesperson **ADRIENNE WATSON** said that “we have seen nothing that contradicts” the Polish assessment.

But Ukrainian President **VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYY** doubled down on his administration’s stance that a Russian projectile was at fault, not a Ukrainian one. “I have no doubt...that it was not our missile or our missile strike,” he said, citing his conversations with senior brass.

It’s perhaps hard for Zelenskyy to backtrack after he immediately blamed Russia following the explosion and his top diplomat labeled the idea that a Ukrainian missile crash landed in Poland a “conspiracy theory.” Still, some Ukrainian officials are using the presumed accident to push for greater American and European involvement in the war, namely by establishing and enforcing a no-fly zone.

Some experts say that Ukraine has lost a bit of its credibility over the last 24 hours. “The unnerving question is whether the Ukrainian leadership is unaware of important battlefield developments and just shot from the hip blaming Russia, or whether they knew or suspected it was their SAM but said it was Russia anyway,” the Cato Institute’s **JUSTIN LOGAN** told NatSec Daily. “Retaking Kherson was a big deal, but so is Kyiv’s misinformation on this.”

An unnamed diplomat from a NATO country unloaded on Ukraine to the Financial Times' **CHRISTOPHER MILLER**: “This is getting ridiculous. The Ukrainians are destroying [our] confidence in them. Nobody is blaming Ukraine and they are openly lying. This is more destructive than the missile.”

There likely won't be any consequences for Ukraine. Officials in the U.S. and Europe recognize it was an accident and blame Russia for putting Kyiv in the position to have to launch air-defense missiles anyway.

“It is clear that the party ultimately responsible for this tragic incident is Russia, which launched a barrage of missiles on Ukraine specifically intended to target civilian infrastructure. Ukraine had — and has — every right to defend itself,” Watson said in her statement.