

NATO to train hundreds of Ukrainian troops in US, Germany

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The United States and Germany have announced they will expand their training of Ukrainian troops inside their own borders, further embroiling them in a war with Russia.

The Pentagon announced Tuesday that it will train Ukrainian troops at Fort Sill, Oklahoma on how to operate the Patriot missile system, the most advanced weapon sent to Ukraine to date.

The Pentagon's announcement is, in the words of the *Washington Post*, the "latest test of Russian President Vladimir Putin's threshold for Western intervention in the conflict."

Last month, the Biden administration announced that it would send a Patriot missile battery, capable of downing Russian aircraft flying over Russian territory, to Ukraine. Last week, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz officials announced they would send another battery of their own.

"Training for Ukrainian forces on the Patriot air defense system will begin as soon as next week at Fort Sill, Oklahoma," Pentagon spokesman Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder said on Tuesday. "The training will prepare approximately 90 to 100 Ukrainian soldiers to operate, maintain and sustain the defensive system over a training course expected to last several months."

Pointing to the extent of interoperability that already exists between the NATO military command structure and the Ukrainian military, Ryder added, "There has been training of Ukrainian forces in the United States before, as well as development. Ukrainians have attended our professional military education schools, they have embedded in headquarters of some of our units."

The Pentagon official also confirmed that the US aims to train approximately 500 troops at a time at a US military facility in Germany on "combined arms warfare" involving both the Bradley infantry fighting vehicles that are already being sent to Ukraine and the main battle tanks that NATO is expected to provide in the near future.

Ryder implied the Ukrainian troops sent to the US Army Garrison Bavaria in Germany will be training with some of the same armored vehicles that will subsequently be sent alongside them into the battlefield. "So the Bradleys should be available ... at Grafenwoehr and that will be part of the training, the combined arms training that they do in Germany."

The Pentagon's announcement comes after US President Joe Biden announced a \$3 billion arms shipment to Ukraine—the largest to date—and after Congress passed a bill allocating another \$50 billion to the war. The latest weapons package included the deployment of dozens of Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, which essentially function as small tanks.

Even as they pour unprecedented amounts of weapons into Ukraine, the NATO powers are preparing to even further escalate their involvement in the war.

A major inflection point is expected to come with the January 20 summit of the Ukraine Contact Group in Ramstein, Germany.

Commenting on the upcoming summit, the *Guardian* wrote, "A key moment is expected to come next week when western defense ministers meet on 20 January for the next Ukraine contact group meeting to discuss future military aid. Reports suggest the US is now considering announcing at that meeting it will send Stryker armored combat vehicles."

On Tuesday, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock visited Ukraine, declaring Germany's "solidarity and support," which "includes further arms deliveries."

Last week, Germany announced that it would send 40 Marder infantry fighting vehicles into combat.

Poland and Lithuania have announced that they plan to send Leopard 2 main battle tanks to Ukraine, but that this would require Germany's permission, as these country signed export agreements as a condition of receiving the

tanks.

After meeting with Baerbock, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba commented, “Every minute during the visit, the topic of Leopards invisibly accompanied us.”

He added, “I think that the German government, somewhere deep down, understands that this decision will be made, and the tanks will be transferred to Ukraine.”

Commenting on the discussions about sending main battle tanks, a US official told *Politico*, “If they want to take back territory they need tanks.”

To date, the war in Ukraine has killed or injured over 200,000 Ukrainians and Russians, according to statistics cited by US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Mark Miley.

But as the war intensifies in ferocity, it risks directly drawing in NATO members in Eastern Europe. In an interview on Tuesday, Poland’s Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak announced the formation of a new infantry division in the Eastern part of the country specifically targeting Russia.

“We know who threatens us and where... For Poland, the main threat is Russia and its imperial tendencies. That is why more troops are needed in the east of the country and that’s why a new division is being set up.” Poland, he said, is “in direct contact with the war.”

He concluded, “We take on a lot of responsibility, but we do it consciously because the further we manage to push Russia away and the greater the losses inflicted on it—the better it is for us and for the future of the democratic world.”

Expressing the reality of the growing involvement by NATO in the war, Nikolai Patrushev, a security adviser to Russian president Vladimir Putin, said the conflict is “not a clash between Moscow and Kyiv,” but a “military confrontation between NATO, and above all the United States and England, with Russia.”



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