

As attacks inside Russia continue, Macron calls for NATO membership “path” for Ukraine

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As Ukraine continued drone strikes and artillery bombardments of Russian territory for a second day in a row Wednesday, French President Emanuel Macron said he supports a “path” for Ukraine to join the NATO military alliance.

On Tuesday, eight explosive drones were launched at Moscow, the capital city of Russia, damaging an apartment complex. It was the second Ukrainian drone strike on Moscow since the start of the war.

The attacks continued Wednesday with a series of drone strikes against two oil refineries in the region of Russian Krasnodar and the shelling of the Belgorod region of Russia near the Ukrainian border. On Tuesday, Belgorod Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said shelling had killed one person and injured four. Shelling in the region continued Wednesday.

In response to Tuesday’s attacks, both US and UK officials pared back their previous claims that they did not support Ukrainian strikes inside Russia.

UK Foreign Minister James Cleverly said that Ukraine had “the right to project force beyond its borders,” and that such attacks are “internationally recognized as being legitimate as part of a nation’s self-defense.”

Commenting on the US and UK response, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Russia “would have preferred to hear at least some words of condemnation” of the attacks.

The attacks inside of Russia follow the announcement at the G7 Summit on May 19 that the US would allow its NATO allies to send F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, and the announcement earlier in May by the UK that it would send long-range missiles to Ukraine.

While the US had previously claimed that it did not

“encourage or enable” strikes inside of Russia, it is becoming increasingly clear that the fighter jets and long-range missiles are being provided with the aim of striking deep inside Russian-held territory, or even inside Russia itself.

The attacks follow last week’s incursions launched by far-right forces aligned with Ukraine, which carried out raids inside of the Belgorod territory using US-supplied vehicles.

Speaking Wednesday in Slovakia, French President Emanuel Macron called for Ukraine to be provided with “tangible and credible” security guarantees.

Macron said that “if we want to hold our own against Russia... we must give Ukraine the means to prevent any new aggression and to include Ukraine in any new security architecture.”

The French president said he favored a “path” to NATO membership for Ukraine.

Commenting on the announcement, the *Financial Times* wrote that Macron’s “call for a ‘path towards’ NATO membership for Ukraine also represents a change in position for France, which alongside Germany and the US had earlier this year pushed back against demands from the UK, Poland and other eastern European members to offer Ukraine some form of tangible ‘path’ to membership at the July summit.”

Macron said that discussions on Ukraine’s membership were ongoing and would be a major theme at the NATO summit in Lithuania in July.

In April, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared that “Ukraine’s rightful place is in NATO,” adding, “All NATO Allies have agreed that Ukraine will become a member.”

On Wednesday, the United States announced another

\$300 million arms spending for the Ukraine war, including artillery and long-range missiles. Germany, meanwhile, announced on Wednesday that it would shut down four of Russia's five consulates in Germany.

On Wednesday and Thursday, NATO foreign ministers are meeting in Oslo, Norway to discuss moving forward with the accession of Sweden to the military alliance. Earlier this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Sweden to call for its entry into the alliance as well.

The accelerated pace of attacks inside Russia, the increasing openness with which these attacks are welcomed by the US and other NATO members, the rapid expansion of NATO to Russia's borders and the open talk of Ukraine joining NATO point to the escalation and transformation of the war into a direct conflict between NATO and Russia.



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