

NATO members move toward formal alliance with Ukraine

Andre Damon
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As Ukraine's offensive against Russian forces moves into full swing, NATO members are accelerating their efforts to initiate a formal military alliance with Ukraine or even have Ukraine join NATO.

On Saturday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited Ukraine to pledge, in writing, his government's support for Ukraine joining NATO.

Commenting on the meeting, Ihor Zhovkva, the deputy head of the Office of the Ukrainian President, wrote that Canada's support for Ukraine's acquisition of NATO membership "as soon as conditions allow" is "the strongest wording among all the G7 countries that are NATO members."

He added that it was "[A]nother practical step on the Euro-Atlantic path, another powerful voice in support of Ukraine and another stage of preparation for the successful holding of the Vilnius NATO Summit in July."

Zhovkva claimed that Canada was one of 20 NATO member states to agree in writing that they support Ukraine becoming a member of NATO.

Under conditions in which Ukraine is actively involved in a war with Russia, for Ukraine to join the military alliance would require NATO members to go to war with Russia.

Last month, Colonel Alexander S. Vindman, who had been an early advocate of sending US tanks and F-16s to Ukraine, endorsed an article in *Foreign Affairs* headlined "To Protect Europe, Let Ukraine Join NATO—Right Now," by former Ukrainian Defense Minister Andriy P. Zagorodnyuk.

In May, French President Emmanuel Macron said he supports a "path" for Ukraine into NATO. In April, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared, "Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO," adding, "All NATO allies have agreed that Ukraine will become a

member."

The flurry of diplomatic activity is meant to set the stage for the July 11-12 NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, whose central focus will be the expansion of the NATO alliance with the accession of Sweden and moves to engineer a formal alliance between NATO and Ukraine.

The ongoing Ukrainian offensive is timed to create the best possible circumstances for the formalization of this alliance.

As the *New York Times* wrote on Saturday:

Some battlefield success, whether by decimating Russia's army, claiming some territory or both ... would build more support in Europe for some sort of long-term security guarantee for Kyiv.

Both Ukraine and Western allies have invested in the counteroffensive because, no matter the precise result, it will set the stage for the next phase of the war. The American and British plan to help secure Ukraine involves building support for robust security guarantees from the United States and NATO countries.

Over the weekend, the battlefield situation remained unclear, with indications that Ukrainian forces were able to seize multiple villages after incurring horrific casualties, including the loss of several main battle tanks and dozens of Western armored personnel carriers.

Over the weekend, the *New York Times* confirmed the Russian claim that at least three German Leopard 2 tanks and eight American Bradley vehicles were

destroyed in recent days.

The Institute for the Study of War claimed, “Ukrainian forces conducted counteroffensive operations in at least three areas of the front and made territorial gains on June 10 and 11.” It added, “Ukrainian forces made visually verified advances in western Donetsk Oblast and western Zaporizhia Oblast, which Russian sources confirmed but sought to downplay.”

In his meeting with Trudeau, Zelensky officially confirmed the counteroffensive had begun, saying, “Counteroffensive and defensive actions are being taken in Ukraine.” He added, “At what stage, I will not disclose in detail.”

In this supercharged climate, NATO is preparing to launch what the German Luftwaffe (air force) called “the largest air force deployment exercise in NATO’s history” based in Germany.

The Luftwaffe said that the war game “scenario is modeled on a NATO Article 5 assistance scenario.” This is a reference to the treaty commitment by all NATO members to go to war if any member is attacked. In this simulation, the Luftwaffe will attempt to do what its commander-in-chief, Hermann Göring, failed to do in the Second World War: militarily defeat Russia.

During the exercise, scheduled to begin on Monday, the 10,000 military personnel and 250 aircraft will be involved in missions flying from Germany to the NATO member states bordering Russia.

The *Wall Street Journal* described the war games as follows:

The Air Defender exercise will practice the mass deployment of troops and hardware from the U.S. to Europe in response to various scenarios involving Russian attacks on NATO members.

The baseline scenario involves the enemy capturing the German port of Rostock in an attack that would trigger NATO’s common defense clause, known as Article 5. The response will include recapturing the port and other infrastructure, as well as defending cities and moving into offensive action.

Increasingly, the war is becoming an existential question for the United States. An article in *Politico* noted, “Senior U.S. officials are convinced that future support for the Ukraine war—and President Joe Biden’s global reputation—hinges on the success of Ukraine’s counteroffensive.”

The accelerating moves for Ukraine to join NATO confirm the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* last week:

The meeting in Vilnius was conceived of as a summit of victors, in which the battlefield successes of Ukraine would serve as the basis for a whole series of ultimatums to Russia, including a full withdrawal not only from portions of Ukraine seized during the 2022 invasion but also from the Crimean Peninsula.

Should the Vilnius summit take place under conditions of major setbacks and even a breakdown of the offensive, as at this point appears more likely, it will become the occasion for a massive further escalation of US-NATO involvement in the war.



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