

UK and German foreign secretaries Cameron and Baerbock meet to plan escalated war against Russia

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UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron flew to Berlin Thursday to meet his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock. Under discussion were plans to massively upscale military aid to Ukraine.

The talks took place just days after Russia's *RT* leaked a conversation, dated February 19, between top German generals on how long range "Taurus" cruise missiles could be delivered to Ukraine and used against Russian targets. One proposal was that Germany could hand control over to Britain, which already had "people on the ground." German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had already stated earlier that Britain had troops in Ukraine.

Publishing the leak was one Russian response to French President Emmanuel Macron publicly declaring that the NATO powers had to consider not just further missile deliveries but putting troops on the ground in Ukraine to fight Russia.

Scholz had publicly opposed Macron on sending ground troops, after previously opposing sending Taurus missiles—stating that this would require German soldiers to be involved in targeting them and would mean direct conflict with Russia. Taurus has a range of 500km and could even reach Moscow from Ukraine's north-eastern border.

Macron followed up by commenting, in words clearly aimed at Scholz, that he "fully stood behind" his NATO troops on the ground call as, "We are at a time in Europe where it is fitting not to be cowardly."

Britain's media has been filled with articles denouncing Scholz and Germany, both for confirming the presence of UK troops in Ukraine and for Scholz opposing sending Taurus missiles.

Former Defence Minister Ben Wallace told *The Times* that the Taurus discussions leak shows Berlin is "neither secure nor reliable" and said of Scholz, "as far as the security of Europe goes he is the wrong man, in the wrong job at the wrong time".

The *Telegraph* editorial Tuesday proclaimed, "German

defence insecurity: Olaf Scholz must give Ukraine the Taurus long-range missiles it urgently needs". An op-ed in the same newspaper by former British army commanding officer Colonel Richard Kemp was headlined, "It was delusional to think that Germany had changed".

Cameron went to Germany to discuss with Baerbock, who he recognises as a co-thinker, with a mission to smooth relations with Berlin while making clear the UK's support for Macron's position on Taurus. His aim is to ensure that Scholz reversed himself, as he did previously when declaring a "red line" on sending Leopard tanks to Ukraine.

On that occasion, Scholz wanted, and secured, agreement that Washington would send US M1 Abrams battle tanks before committing to send Leopards. Germany under his leadership is second only to the United States in sending billions of euros in deadly weapons to fuel NATO's war against Russia.

Cameron would not say so openly but would nevertheless have stressed privately that he spoke to Baerbock with the full backing of the Biden administration. On Monday, as Scholz was maintaining his stance on Taurus, Baerbock had insisted that her Green Party coalition partners—Scholz's Social Democratic Party and the Free Democratic Party—should "intensively consider" deliveries of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine and "all materials" that the Zelensky regime requires.

After four hours of talks which covered Ukraine, Gaza and "illegal immigration", Cameron and Baerbock held a joint press conference. Cameron refused to be drawn on Wallace's attack when questioned in Berlin, stressing that whether Taurus missiles were sent was Germany's decision to make and praising the "enormous amount" Germany had done already as the second largest supplier of weapons to Ukraine after the US.

Asked whether Britain was pushing Germany to supply Ukraine with Taurus, he replied that it a "matter for the German government to decide" but then repeated almost

verbatim Macron's arguments about why NATO, especially its European members, should not hesitate to send troops because of threats from Russia of escalation.

Cameron declared, "I can only speak for Britain's experience of how effective these weapons have been at helping Ukraine to fight off this illegal aggression."

"At every stage it's been said 'if you give anti-tank weapons to the Ukraine, that's escalation'. No, it wasn't.

"If you give tanks to the Ukrainians, that's escalation'. No, it wasn't. 'If you give long-range artillery or long-range fires to the Ukrainians, it's escalation'. No, it isn't."

He added, "If what you're doing is helping a country defend itself from illegal and completely unjustified aggression, then there should be nothing to stop you helping that country to fight back to recover its territory."

Cameron said of a Ukrainian army that has suffered massive casualties and cannot operate without NATO firepower, "I don't have any doubt in their ability to fight and to resist this appalling Russian aggression."

He then insisted, "As long as we're not in a situation where a NATO soldier is killing a Russian soldier, we are not causing escalation. We're allowing Ukraine to defend itself."

He asked, "The question is for us: Are we going to see this through? Are we going to give them what they need? Are we going to back them with everything that we have? I just think this is the test for politicians of this generation, of this time."

Opening the press conference, Baerbock had already solidarized herself with Cameron's escalatory position, declaring, "This is a war of annihilation. Those who do not realise that we have to mobilise all means at our disposal in order to allow Ukraine to defend itself will be neglecting their duties... in concrete terms what is needed is more ammunition, more air defence, more long-range weapons to allow Ukraine to defend itself and make sure it survives."

As Cameron and now everyone else knows, following Scholz's statements and RT's leaks—and as Downing Street has been forced to acknowledge—Britain already has troops on the ground in Ukraine. But at this point, London's open focus is on supporting the sending of long-range missiles and stops short of openly backing Macron on sending troops.

The *Financial Times* editorialised this week on "Europe's damaging divisions over military aid to Ukraine": "Macron's underlying message—that Nato members must be ready to do more to help Ukraine against resurgent Russian forces—is well founded. But this should be by sending more arms, not troops. His public talk of boots on the ground has wrongfooted allies and laid bare strategic divisions, particularly with Germany, over military assistance to Kyiv—just when a united front is needed."

However, it insisted, "Scholz, for his part, should lift his opposition to sending Taurus missiles, which have a longer range than cruise missiles supplied by France and the UK and which Ukraine is crying out for."

Recognising the growth of anti-war sentiment, expressed in demonstrations throughout the world against Israel's decimation of Gaza, the FT also warned, "The problem is that many counterparts have legitimate concerns that even limited troop deployments would put Nato on the path to direct confrontation with Moscow. Though they have stressed the need to aid Kyiv and asked voters to bear higher energy costs, many western leaders—not just Scholz—will fear that any talk of sending soldiers could turn sentiment against the war."

Fear of public opposition should the full extent of their war plans become known is indeed a major factor in Scholz's political calculations. In a recent poll a majority of the German population (61 percent) are opposed to sending Taurus missiles to Ukraine and an even larger majority (80 percent) are against sending NATO troops.

Nevertheless, despite their tactical disagreements, it is Macron and not Scholz who has most clearly indicated the direction in which the main NATO powers, including the US, UK, France and Germany are moving.

In *The Hill* March 7, an influential Washington-based publication aligned to the Democrats, Mark Toth and former US military intelligence officer Jonathan Sweet wrote of the Macron/Scholz controversy:

"Macron is pushing buttons and making Western leaders increasingly uncomfortable. They need to be pushed in order to create a sense of urgency. The dirty little secret is now public that 'boots on the ground' may be necessary if Russia is able to threaten Kyiv... Half measures will not win the war. The West needs a plan and a message to send to Russia—that Ukraine will not fail, and that all options are on the table."



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