

US puts military bases in Europe on second-highest alert ahead of Washington NATO Summit

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The United States has put its military bases at the second-highest level of alert ahead of next week's NATO summit in Washington, which is expected to see a significant escalation of direct NATO participation in the war against Russia in Ukraine.

While US officials refused to explain the heightened alert status on the record, the *New York Times* reported, citing US officials, that the move was in response to "threats from the Kremlin over Ukraine's use of long-range weapons on Russian territory."

The *Times* wrote that "Military bases, which provide training, intelligence, and other support for Ukraine, could be a logical subsequent target."

In April, the Biden administration began supplying Ukraine with long-range ATACMS missiles, which have a 300-kilometer (186-mile) range, while claiming they would not be used for strikes inside Russia itself.

Last month, US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan asserted that the US is allowing Ukraine to use US-provided weapons to strike "anywhere" inside Russian territory.

Behind the scenes, CNN reported last month that the United States is moving to lift a ban on military contractors working directly inside Ukraine on US military contracts. CNN reported that "Allowing experienced, US government-funded American contractors to maintain a presence in Ukraine means they will be able to help fix damaged, high-value equipment much faster."

The clear implication of the move, however, is that not only would American citizens be working to repair equipment inside Ukraine, but the move could open the door for mercenaries in the direct employment of the US military to be deployed to combat zones.

On Wednesday, the United States announced that it would send another \$2.3 billion in weapons to Ukraine. In a statement Wednesday, White House spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said that the package "includes missiles for Ukraine's air defense systems, ammunition for High Mobility Artillery, rocket systems, artillery rounds, and other critical capabilities."

She added, "As President Biden has been clear, we are committed to continuing to stand with Ukraine until they prevail against Russian aggression."

The Pentagon said that this is the fifth military arms package for Ukraine since Congress passed and Biden signed a \$95 billion supplemental military spending package in April, which included \$61 billion in weapons for Ukraine.

Announcing the package, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said, "Make no mistake, Ukraine is not alone, and the United States will never waver in our support. ... Alongside some 50 allies and partners, we'll continue to provide critical capabilities that Ukraine needs to push back Russian aggression today and to deter Russian aggression tomorrow."

The current defense alert, known as "Charlie," is the highest level of readiness at military bases outside of direct engagement in military conflict.

Commenting on the move, Admiral James Stavridis, the former commander of NATO, wrote on X, "I commanded dozens of major bases in Europe for 4 years as Supreme Allied Commander of NATO & Commander, US European Command. We had plenty of scares, but nothing that required this level of alert. Clearly, there is deep concern, and that is consistent with everything I can see."

The leaders of the NATO countries will be arriving in

Washington next week amid deepening political crises wracking the imperialist powers. French President Emmanuel Macron has suffered a devastating setback in last weekend's elections with a concluding round on Sunday, while UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is on track for a similar fate in the British elections Thursday. US President Joe Biden, in the wake of a disastrous debate performance last week which exposed his senility, is facing increasing calls from members of his own party and the media to step down.

Regardless, the NATO powers are committed to escalating their involvement in the war. The summit is expected to extend a "bridge" to NATO membership to Ukraine, as the US-led alliance takes an increasingly direct role in the war.

In a press briefing, Pentagon Spokesman Pat Ryder said the goals of the summit will include "ensuring the implementation of new NATO plans for credible deterrence and defense, enhancing long-term support for Ukraine, and fostering its future NATO membership."

In a discussion published by the Carnegie Endowment think tank, Eric Ciaramella, a former CIA officer and National Security Council staffer, said that the upcoming summit "institutionalizes, through NATO, some of the mechanisms of long-term support for Ukraine that Ukraine's partners, led by the United States, stood up very quickly after Russia launched its full-scale invasion."

He added, "There's been this multilateral venue called the Ramstein Group, or the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, that the United States has led. This group of NATO allies, as well as a few dozen other countries around the world, has sought to mobilize military assistance for Ukraine. That's been a mechanism to help the Ukrainians get what they need right now. There's been a shift over the past six to twelve months to start thinking about how we plan for the future. So what the allies have started to discuss is how to move some of this ad hoc planning into longer-term formats, with NATO playing a little bit more of an organizing function."



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