

Starmer embraces role of Britain's wartime prime minister at NATO summit

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Sir Keir Starmer's first foreign trip as the UK's new prime minister solidified the Labour government's agenda for war and austerity.

Assuming the mantle of Britain's wartime prime minister, Starmer advocated for widening NATO's war against Russia and lectured other NATO members to raise military spending levels to at least 2.5 percent of GDP, as he has pledged.

In his most incendiary act, Starmer stated during the summit that Britain had allowed Ukraine to use Storm Shadow cruise missiles inside Russia.

Starmer said that he "came to this summit with a clear message. A message of enduring and unwavering commitment to the NATO alliance. To Ukraine." He declared, "We live in a new and dangerous era... One defined by volatility and insecurity. We face the generational threat of Russia... Aided by the likes of North Korea and Iran. Conflicts rage across the Middle East and North Africa," and there was "the challenge of China."

He was "proud to represent a party that was instrumental in creating NATO 75 years ago." This was led, along with the United States, "by Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee and a Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernie Bevin." Today, in confronting Russia, it was necessary "to mobilise what Bevin called our 'collective moral and material force.'"

"The alternative to Ukraine's victory is unthinkable", he insisted. "[T]hat is why we will deliver £3 billion worth of support to Ukraine each year... for as long as it takes."

Britain would "continue to put our armed forces at NATO's disposal. Maintain our presence in Estonia and Poland, lead the land arm of the Allied Response Force this year, and maintain and modernise our nuclear deterrent."

Although 23 NATO members are now spending 2 percent of their GDP on defence, "we must go further,"

said Starmer, referencing Labour's "Strategic Defence Review to strengthen our armed forces and protect our national security" and "a clear path to spending 2.5 percent of our GDP on defence."

Starmer's Washington visit was preceded by a barrage of warmongering by Labour. Installed on July 5, the government has pledged to hand over military support for Ukraine pledged by Rishi Sunak's previous Conservative government within 100 days, as well as a new package of military support announced within 24 hours of taking office.

Defence Secretary John Healey—fresh from making his first foreign trip as a government minister to the Zelensky regime in Kiev—accompanied Starmer to Washington, insisting the UK should be "the leading European nation in NATO". Sky News commented of Healey: "In an unusual signal of political continuity concerning weapons supply to Ukraine, he said: 'The Sunak pledge comes with the Starmer guarantee of delivery'".

Starmer defended US President Biden from calls that he step down as the Democratic Presidential candidate due to a series of verbal gaffes, including more made at the summit. Asked by BBC political editor Chris Mason if Biden was senile, Starmer responded that he had held a one-hour bilateral meeting with the US President on the major issues facing NATO, primarily how to expand the war against Moscow, and that Biden was "across the detail" and had shown "incredible leadership".

On the use of Storm Shadow missiles, Starmer stated, "It is for defensive purposes, but it is for Ukraine to decide how to deploy it for those defensive purposes... that is the position."

President Zelensky posted in response on X Thursday, "This morning, I learned about the permission to use Storm Shadow missiles against military targets in Russian territory. Today we had the opportunity to discuss the practical implementation of this decision."

Despite his bravura performance, Starmer is under constant pressure from his masters to do more.

On the flight to Washington, he was challenged by journalists over his “cast-iron” pledge to spend 2.5 percent annually on the military, as to why a deadline had not been set. Sky News Political Editor Beth Rigby wrote, “He refused repeatedly to commit to delivering on the commitment in his first term or offer a timeline for delivery ahead of the strategic defence review, which could take up to a year to conclude.”

Philip Ingram, a former colonel in British military intelligence, commented that Starmer was “playing with fire” in waiting on a review before setting a defence spending level. He complained, “it will take years to fix the army, our ammunition stocks, get the RAF and navy ready”.

Another critic is Lord West, a former head of the navy and security minister under the 2007 Labour government of Gordon Brown—who advocates for a military spending of at least 3 percent of GDP—and declared prior to the summit that Starmer should set a timeline as “an example to all European countries”.

The military was also concerned at how nakedly Starmer had spoken of using British missiles against Russia, and his prompting of Zelensky to reveal behind-the-scenes discussions with Ukraine, exposing the extent of NATO aggression against Russia. According to the *Telegraph*, “defence sources” briefed that he “went too far”. In a hasty retreat, Downing Street was forced to state that government policy “had not changed” regarding the deployment of the long-range missiles.

This was a restatement of the response by Sir Tony Radakin, the Chief of the Defence Staff, who earlier this year intervened after then Conservative Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron had also indicated that Kiev had a right to target locations inside Russia. Radakin stated that UK-supplied cruise missiles could only be used inside Crimea and the mainland of Ukraine.

The reality remains that the US, UK and Germany have now all made such statements on missile use on Russian territory.

The summit confirmed and deepened this escalation, establishing a NATO Command base in Germany and, most provocatively, placing NATO officers in Kiev, while agreeing to deploy long-range missiles in Germany capable of hitting major cities deep inside Russia, including Moscow.

Biden own weasel formulations were that “we’ve allowed Zelensky to use American weapons in the near

term,” but that hitting key locations inside Russia “wouldn’t be the best use of the weapons he has.”

The Socialist Equality Party described the British general election as a “war election”, demanded by the US and the sections of British imperialism closest to Washington to install a government capable of furthering war against Russia and intensifying conflict with China. On every front, Starmer’s appearance at the NATO summit confirmed that he is indeed the leader of a government of war and political and social reaction.

Among the first discussions Starmer held by phone with world leaders after being elected was with fascist Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. According to the July 5 Downing Street readout, “The leaders agreed on the importance of close collaboration on shared challenges, such as migration and support for Ukraine.”

Starmer followed through on a pledge made to meet Meloni at the NATO summit and both will meet again at the anti-Russian European Political Community summit, established by French president Emanuel Macron, on July 18.

Starmer’s banging the drums of war places his government on course for a major confrontation with the working class, who will foot the bill for war.

In a revealing statement at the summit, Starmer said in reply to a question whether he would “give the unions what they want” in relation to upcoming public sector pay talks: Having already stated that his government will not pay junior doctors an “unaffordable” 35 percent pay increase, Starmer replied, “No, is the answer ... Obviously there are a number of pay settlements to be gone through on an annual basis. But the finances are in a very poor state, I think that is obvious.” He added, “In terms of the overall audit, what I’ve done at the moment, as you’d expect, is to prioritise the most significant and the most important.”

He gave as the major example of what is “important” his commitment to ramping up military spending, and the policy of sending an open ended £3 billion annually to Ukraine, ruling out spending £2.3 billion to end the Tory-imposed welfare cap—which restricts benefits to the first two children in most households—that has driven millions of the most deprived deeper into poverty.



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