

Zelensky tours Europe for arms in Ukraine war as NATO cancels Ramstein summit

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12 October 2024

On Thursday and Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky made a whirlwind tour of London, Paris, Rome and Berlin, asking for money and weapons for war with Russia.

Zelensky visited Europe as the leader of a discredited regime, which has lost hundreds of thousands of lives, faces explosive opposition at home, and is losing ground all along the front. He was shaken by Washington's cancellation of a NATO summit at Ramstein this month slated to discuss NATO's escalation against Russia, after Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that NATO strikes across Russia would lead to nuclear war. Moreover, uncertainty is growing over the impact of next month's US elections on NATO's war plans.

NATO policy faces overwhelming working class opposition. A Eurasia Group poll this year found 91 percent in North America and 89 percent in Western Europe oppose escalating war with Russia. Nevertheless, even amid a mounting economic crisis, as mass layoffs spread across Europe, European officials pledged to keep spending billions of euros on propping up Zelensky.

Zelensky began his tour on Thursday morning in London at 10 Downing Street with Labour Party Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and former Dutch prime minister, now NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. Starmer said after the meeting that it was a chance to “go through the plan, to talk in more detail.”

Zelensky pressed for authorization to use long-range Storm Shadow missiles to escalate bombing of Russian cities, oil refineries and military bases. Afterwards, he tweeted: “During my meeting with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I outlined the details of our Victory Plan. We have agreed to work on it together with our allies. The Victory Plan aims to create the right conditions for a just end to the war. I thank the United Kingdom for its continued defense support of our country, including with long-range weapons.”

However, Starmer's official spokesman did not confirm Zelensky could use Storm Shadows to bomb Russia, instead saying: “No war has ever been won by a single weapon. ... The discussions that the UK, Ukraine and international partners are having are about all the range of support that we can provide Ukraine heading into the crucial winter months ahead.”

Rutte, who advocates long-range bombing of Russia, also rebuffed Zelensky but pledged NATO would continue the war at all costs. “First of all, that is up to the allies, the individual allies, to decide how weapons they deliver into Ukraine can be used,” he said. “The whole of the alliance is in this, and let's not focus on one system, one weapon system, it will not be one-weapon system which will make the change.”

Rutte added that whether Trump or the current Democratic administration wins the US elections, war would continue in Ukraine. About Trump, Rutte said: “I know that he understands completely and agrees with me that this fight in Ukraine is not only about Ukraine, it's also about the safety and the future security of the United States. He knows this. ... So, really, stop worrying about a Trump presidency.”

In Paris, where President Emmanuel Macron's government is training and equipping a brigade of Ukrainian troops, Zelensky was forced to deny reports that he was discussing a ceasefire with Russia. “This is not the topic of the discussions,” he replied, blaming the question on “media disinformation.” However Zelensky complained of “a difficult situation in the east” of Ukraine for his troops and of a “big deficit” in military equipment.

Meeting Zelensky in Rome, far-right Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni announced that her government plans to host a summit on Ukraine on July 10-11, 2025 and said Italy would support Ukraine “as long as is necessary.”

In a joint press conference with Zelensky in Berlin, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz similarly pledged: “Germany continues to stand fast on the side of Ukraine.” He announced that Germany and its European allies would provide Ukraine a further €1.4 billion fund and a further €600 million in weapons.

Zelensky’s tour exposes the imperviousness of European governments to deep popular opposition to NATO escalation against Russia. After Moscow changed its nuclear doctrine last month to allow nuclear strikes in response to long-range strikes by Ukraine assisted by nuclear-armed powers—like the United States, Britain or France—it has been plainly obvious that NATO is risking the eruption of nuclear war across Europe.

Over the nearly three years of the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine, the European powers have drained their economies of hundreds of billions of euros wasted on a devastating war. It is increasingly admitted even by top NATO officials that Ukraine now cannot win the war in its current form—that is, unless the NATO powers commit to a massive use of their own forces in Ukraine that would trigger an enormous escalation of the conflict.

As European ruling circles increasingly fear a Trump victory might slow the flow of arms and money to Zelensky, however, there is mounting panic and disorganization in their war policies, and certain calls to open feelers for peace talks while also escalating war and military spending.

The Kiel Institute warned, “Ukraine could face a significant shortfall in aid” if the incoming US administration next year were to cut financial support to Ukraine and press for peace talks. While the “current level of effort” would lead to spending €113 billion on the Ukraine war in 2025, the Kiel Institute called for more spending, without which this number could be halved, depending on decisions taken in Washington and Berlin:

Without new US aid packages, military aid could drop to around €34 billion, while financial aid would fall to around €46 billion. Should European donors also scale back their efforts and follow Germany’s recent announcement to halve their contributions, military aid would shrink to just €29 billion, with financial aid dropping to approximately €27 billion. Under this scenario, total aid to Ukraine could therefore be halved to around €55 billion.

In an interview with the *Financial Times* at the beginning of the month, outgoing NATO Secretary Jens Stoltenberg even floated the possibility that Ukraine could negotiate a ceasefire with Russia. “After the [US] election there will be a kind of new momentum, a new initiative to try to get some movement,” Stoltenberg said. “It may include ways to try to get movement on the battlefield combined with movement around the negotiating table.”

Calling to escalate fighting so that Zelensky’s government can “sit down down with the Russians and get something which is acceptable . . . something where they survive as an independent nation,” Stoltenberg proposed a parallel with the 1939 Soviet-Finnish war: “The war ended with [Finland] giving up 10 percent of the territory. But they got a secure border.”

This argument, it must be said, exposes the NATO powers. Shortly after the war began in 2022, Russian and Ukrainian officials negotiated a broadly similar ceasefire in Turkey. However, it was vetoed by then-British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who instructed Ukrainian officials to disavow it and to fight to seize all Russian-speaking areas of southern and eastern Ukraine. The roughly half-million Ukrainians and Russians who have died since then did not die because peace was unacceptable to the Ukrainian or Russian people but because it was unacceptable to NATO.

Enormous uncertainty remains on what type of escalation the NATO powers will try to organize against Russia in the coming weeks. But as the US-backed Israeli regime escalates its genocide in Gaza and bombs Lebanon and Syria, where Russian and Iranian troops are deployed, what is evident is that the course of NATO policy is not towards peace but towards new and even greater wars. The most urgent issue is mobilizing and unifying the working class, across Europe and internationally, to oppose this escalation and force an end to the war.



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