

# Ukraine summit underlines European powers' determination to escalate war with Russia

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Friday's meeting in Brussels of the Ukraine Contact Group saw the European imperialist powers pledge over €20 billion in additional military aid to Ukraine and issue bellicose statements against Russia. Germany, Britain, and France made clear their determination to continue the war on Russia for years to come, while at the same time appealing for the Trump administration to offer security guarantees for a potential deployment of NATO ground forces to Ukraine.

The meeting was co-chaired by German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius and Britain's Defence Minister, John Healey, both of whom made new commitments to provide weaponry to Ukraine. For the first time since the group began meeting in April 2022, a US representative did not attend in-person.

Pistorius pledged that Germany would provide a further €11 billion of military assistance by 2029 on top of the vast sums it has already committed. This will include the dispatch of 15 "Leopard" battle tanks, 25 "Marder" artillery guns, 300 surveillance drones, four IRIS T air defence systems, 100 ground surveillance radars, and 100,000 artillery shells in the course of this year. For his part, Healey announced that Britain would supply £4.5 billion in military assistance this year, the biggest annual total since the beginning of the war against Russia in Ukraine. This includes an additional £450 million for drones, anti-tank mines, and the repair of military vehicles, £100 million of which will be provided by Norway.

Pistorius and Healey left no doubt that the European imperialist powers want to intensify the conflict with Russia, raising the prospect of a direct war between nuclear-armed powers. "Given Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, we must concede peace in Ukraine appears to be out of reach in the immediate future," Pistorius told a press conference. "Russia must understand that Ukraine is able to go on fighting."

Healey insisted on the need to "pile pressure" on Russian President Vladimir Putin, adding, "Now is the critical moment...for defence industries, militaries, and governments

to step up." He co-chaired a meeting of the so-called "coalition of the willing" the previous day in Brussels with French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu, where he warned that the West must not "jeopardise the peace by forgetting about the war." The coalition was established last month by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron with the aim of coordinating the deployment of ground troops to Ukraine, ostensibly to oversee a potential ceasefire.

Friday's events underlined how the United States and its former European imperialist allies are increasingly working at cross purposes in the war against Russia in Ukraine and the drive to subjugate Eurasia to their predatory interests. While Pistorius and Healey were outlining a multi-billion-euro plan to escalate the war on Russia, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth participated in the gathering only virtually from Panama, where he was negotiating the terms for US troops to operate along the Panama Canal. No new pledges of military support were forthcoming from Washington, with Hegseth merely quoted as saying that the US appreciates what "you guys," i.e., the European powers, are doing.

Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff, landed in St. Petersburg for talks with Putin as the defence ministers' meeting got underway. It was the third time that Witkoff has visited Russia since February. His trip came a day after Russian and US teams met for talks in Istanbul aimed at further normalising diplomatic relations. A statement from the US State Department noted the "constructive approach" characterising the talks Thursday, as well as a previous round held in late February.

Trump has repeatedly stressed his support for an agreement to end fighting in Ukraine on the basis of Kiev signing on to a deal granting the US unhindered access to Ukrainian raw materials and Washington concluding an agreement with Putin that forces Russia's capitalist oligarchy to open up business opportunities for US

companies throughout Russia. These talks have nothing to do with Trump's supposed commitment to "peace," but aim at creating the best conditions for Washington to subordinate the Russian and Ukrainian oligarchies to its imperialist goals of securing access to the region's vast quantity of raw materials, cheap labour, and strategic territories. US officials have held separate talks with both sides in the conflict without any participation by representatives of the European imperialist states.

While the outcome of the US-Russia talks remains unclear, what is certain is that they mark an intensification of the conflicts between the imperialist powers as they vie for influence in the carve-up of the Eurasian landmass. Washington's shift in its Ukraine policy is bound up with the push to focus its resources on preparing for war with China, the world's second-largest economy and chief target of Trump's trade war.

Meanwhile, the European imperialists fear most of all being sidelined in the distribution of the booty if Washington concludes separate agreements with Ukraine and Russia, despite having invested vast sums in the Ukraine war. They hope that by continuing to escalate the conflict by deploying ever greater quantities of military resources and ultimately their own troops they can strengthen their position to secure the lion's share of the spoils in both Ukraine and Russia.

The sharpening of divisions between the imperialist powers arises from the deepening global crisis of capitalism, which is propelling all of them to join in a new redivision of the world. As *World Socialist Web Site* editorial board chairman David North explained at an international rally against the US/NATO war in Ukraine in late 2022:

the political aim of the war—like the two world wars of the 20th century—is a new redivision of the world among the imperialist powers. The logic of this process extends beyond even the conflict with Russia and China. The NATO alliance and the ancillary military pacts that include countries in Asia and the Asia-Pacific comprise not a "Band of Brothers" but a den of imperialist thieves and cut-throats. The logic of inter-imperialist rivalries will lead in the not too distant future to bitter conflicts among the temporary allies of today. The enmities of the past, as for example between the United States and Germany, will inevitably reemerge.

These rivalries have now reemerged, with the political establishments throughout Europe recognising that the Transatlantic alliance that dominated the post-war period has

broken down. However, the problem confronting the European powers is that they lack the military capabilities at present to back up their imperialist warmongering. Notwithstanding the vast sums pledged to Ukraine at Friday's meeting, the efforts of Starmer and Macron to cobble together a military force to perform "peacekeeping" or provide "security guarantees" have fallen flat. Only France and Britain have publicly pledged to commit troops to such an enterprise, and even these countries have refused to provide details on how many they could deploy. All of the defence ministers who spoke at Thursday's "coalition of the willing" meeting stressed that nothing would come of it without American security guarantees.

The European powers' continued dependence on the US is compelling them to pursue their rearmament drive all the more aggressively, which must involve the imposition of an onslaught on the social position of the working class that is unprecedented since World War II. To raise the funds for the trillions of euros the European imperialists have collectively pledged in recent months for war spending, the ruling elites would have to establish Trump-style regimes on this side of the Atlantic to carry through the necessary attacks on workers' social and democratic rights.

The working class is the only social force capable of stopping the further escalation of the war on Russia and the developing world war between the imperialist powers. It must be mobilised on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme that unifies the fight against war with the struggle to defend all jobs and workers' living standards.



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