

European states refuse to join in US blockade of Strait of Hormuz targeting Iran

Alex Lantier
15 April 2026

European governments have rejected the Trump administration's demands that they join the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz that Trump declared Sunday, after announcing a ceasefire last week in his war of aggression against Iran. A far-reaching and historic breakdown of European relations with the United States is underway.

At the same time, the European bourgeoisies' response is marked above all by cowardice and hypocrisy. Not only is a blockade itself an act of war, but closure of the Strait of Hormuz would cut off essential oil, gas and fertilizer supplies to Europe and the entire world. Yet none of the European governments have dared denounce the blockade, call to end it, call to stop the war, or end military and financial assistance to the US government.

Instead, reflecting the outlook of the corrupt capitalist oligarchies they represent, Europe's governments continue to discuss a naval intervention in the Persian Gulf—though this would face the same Iranian missile threat that have so far dissuaded the US Navy from assaulting Iran's coast. Britain and France are convening a summit meeting on Friday of an alliance of 40 countries to prepare a naval mission to the Strait of Hormuz, coordinated independently of Washington.

"This strictly defensive mission, which is separate from the belligerents, will be deployed as soon as the situation permits it," said French President Emmanuel Macron. He called for "a solid and durable solution to the Middle East conflict via the diplomatic road, a solution that would allow the region of a robust framework so everyone can live in peace and security." He went on to denounce "the nuclear and ballistic activities of Iran as well as its destabilizing actions in the region."

Macron's lies are staggering. The essential threat to

peace and security in the Middle East comes not from Iran, which did not initiate this war or any of the other wars launched against it, but from Washington and the war of extermination launched by America's fascist president. As for peace in the Middle East, Paris is complicit in undermining it, by consistently stressing Macron's friendship with the Israeli government amid its genocide in Gaza.

In Germany, Defense Minister Boris Pistorius responded, "This war is not our war, we did not start it ... What does Donald Trump want a handful of European frigates in the strait of Hormuz to accomplish, when even the powerful US Navy could not do so?" Chancellor Friedrich Merz's office issued a statement that Trump's war against Iran "has nothing to do with NATO."

Merz's statement is a pathetic dodge, in that it is clear that Trump's war with Iran and in particular his blockading of the Strait of Hormuz is cutting off key energy supplies to Europe. This follows the destruction of Germany's Nordstream pipeline to Russia after US President Joe Biden threatened that it would be destroyed. This consistent US policy, by directly threatening to cut off Europe's energy supply, most definitely "has to do with NATO."

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told BBC Radio: "We're not supporting the blockade and all of the marshalling diplomatically, politically and capability... that's all focused, from our point of view, on getting the Strait fully open." He added, "whatever the pressure—and there's been some considerable pressure—we're not getting dragged into the war. That's not in our national interest, because I'm not going to act unless there's a clear, lawful basis and a clear thought-through plan."

The two-faced position of Europe's governments

emerged in questioning of Labour Early Education minister Olivia Bailey, whom Sky News journalists asked six times whether she supported the US blockade. Bailey refused to answer yes or no, instead repeatedly answering: “We will not be taking part in the blockade and we believe in the very important principle of free navigation of the seas, and we want to see free navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.”

One basic contradiction marks the European governments’ policy. When the US government takes war measures targeting them, they retaliate not against the United States, but against Iran and the Middle East. Underlying their collaboration with Trump is not only personal cowardice but, above all, objective imperialist interests. The European powers are intervening to defend their own military bases and profits extracted from the Middle East, and to maintain financial ties to Wall Street as well as their NATO military alliance with US imperialism.

The cost of the war in lives and the catastrophic economic impact of the conflict on millions of workers’ jobs and the purchasing power of the entire population are of little concern to Macron, Starmer and the leaders of other capitalist governments across Europe. They are far more concerned with salvaging the domination of the Middle East by world imperialism, increasingly threatened by the initial failure of Trump’s war, than the well-being of the working people of Europe or the world.

Despite the European powers’ refusal to challenge the most reactionary elements of US imperialist foreign policy, the rift between Washington and its European NATO “allies” is continuing to widen and grow more explosive by the day.

One indication of this comes from the mounting financial and economic tensions between the NATO imperialist powers. As Trump threatens to cut off US liquefied natural gas exports if Europe does not bow down to Trump’s tariffs against it, powerful forces in the European class are exploring a shift against the US dollar. As the cutoff of Middle East oil and gas trade in dollars reduces the need for countries to hold dollars in order to buy energy, they are signaling an interest in alternatives to the dollar.

Earlier this month, France’s central bank liquidated its remaining gold reserves held in the United States in order to purchase gold that will be held on site, in its

reserve vault in Paris. This comes as officials in Germany, Italy and other leading European powers debate the possibility of repatriating their own gold reserves held in the United States to Europe.

The Euroclear payment-clearing system has also signaled that it is considering investing more in Chinese bonds, and diversifying away from the dollar by shifting capital from US dollar assets into Chinese renminbi-denominated assets. It issued a statement declaring: “Diversification is something that’s really coming into play in capital markets. There is an opening in trying to see how we can bridge the needs and the regulatory requirements of China with the international standards that global investors are looking for.”

While US threats of an energy cutoff visibly pose a mortal threat to Europe’s economy, such financial moves pose an equal threat to the US economy. European investors hold an estimated total of \$8 trillion in US assets—Treasury bonds, stocks and corporate bonds—equivalent to 24 percent of the US sovereign debt. If European investors dumped their US Treasury bonds, either due to increasingly low returns on US dollar assets or as retaliation for US tariff or energy threats, it could trigger a massive crisis of the \$38 trillion US sovereign debt and a surge in US interest rates.

The explosive conflicts between the NATO imperialist powers again illustrate the fundamental contradiction of the capitalist system, between world economy and the nation-state system, that the great Marxists of the 20th century identified as the source of the two world wars in that century. The critical 21st century task for the workers is to stop capitalism’s accelerating plunge into global war and genocide by developing an international movement in the working class against imperialist war, and to take power out of the hands of the capitalist oligarchy and establish socialism.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)