

# Finnish and Norwegian leaders speak with Putin amid escalating NATO war on Russia

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Finnish President Alexander Stubb and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre held talks by phone with Vladimir Putin on Tuesday for 90 minutes. It was the first time since July 2025 that European political leaders had publicly spoken with the Russian president.

Both Nordic leaders insisted that their call was aimed at facilitating a diplomatic solution to the war, which will reach its fifth anniversary in February and has already claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Russians and Ukrainians. A press release published on the Finnish president's website declared, "Stubb and Støre initiated the call to discuss Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the diplomatic efforts to end the war and promote peace and stability in Europe."

After Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen criticised the two countries for "going solo" and failing to coordinate with their European partners, Støre responded by stressing that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had urged them to talk to Putin. He noted that discussions were held in Oslo one week earlier involving Zelensky and representatives from the US and other NATO powers.

The sustained escalation of the war in recent weeks and months by the major European imperialist powers—including their dismissal of Moscow's threat to use nuclear weapons in the event Kaliningrad is attacked, support for indiscriminate drone attacks by Ukraine on Russian civilian targets, and continued supply of high-tech weaponry to Kiev—makes a mockery of any claim by NATO members to be pursuing peace. NATO has expanded its presence in the Black Sea region over recent weeks following a series of drone attacks on merchant shipping, while Germany announced this week that its permanent brigade stationed in Lithuania will be tasked with conducting electronic surveillance of military activity in Kaliningrad and Belarus.

The renewed engagement with Putin has much more to do with intensifying geopolitical rivalries between American and European imperialism.

US President Donald Trump's global trade war, including tariffs against the European Union (EU), and his push to cut

a deal with Putin at the expense of the European powers to secure access for American capital to the Russian market and natural resources have revealed the breakdown of the post-war transatlantic alliance. After Trump hosted Putin at a summit in Alaska in August 2025 and appeared to be moving towards some sort of agreement with Moscow, the European imperialist powers intervened to systematically sabotage it by fueling the war in Ukraine. Led by German imperialism, the EU agreed to provide €90 billion in loans so that the Zelensky regime could continue the war through 2026 and 2027 after Trump ended US financial support. This sum has proven to be a gross underestimation, as Brussels now estimates that a further €70 billion is needed to cover Kiev's financing shortfall for next year.

Divisions were compounded when, in February 2026, Trump launched his war of extermination against Iran together with Israel without consulting the European powers.

Against protests from the Democrats, who hope to escalate the war on Russia if they win next week's midterm elections, Trump is stepping up efforts to reach a rapprochement with Russia. Following the announcement of a largely symbolic agreement to buy Russian diesel and the visit of Trump's special representative, Steve Witkoff, to St Petersburg earlier this month, Trump is preparing for talks in Abu Dhabi in November with Russian and Ukrainian representatives. He also responded positively to a suggestion by Chinese President Xi Jinping that Trump sit down with him and Putin at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit on 18 and 19 November to discuss ending the war in Ukraine. At this stage, the European imperialists will not be represented at either of these meetings.

According to the *Financial Times*, the diesel deal and Witkoff's visit to Russia are aimed at laying the basis for more comprehensive economic agreements. These could include a deal to allow American passenger aircraft to transit Russian airspace, partnerships between US and Russian oil firms, and an arrangement to resume the production and export to the US of titanium, a key component for modern military equipment.

Zelensky acknowledged in remarks to the media this week following Stubb and Støre's call with Putin that Moscow is looking for "a kind of 'economic marriage'" with Washington. The Ukrainian president has accused Washington of temporarily suspending intelligence sharing earlier this month and restricting access to the Starlink satellite system.

Asked last week during a visit to Montenegro for his view of the upcoming talks, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said, "All of the participants know that Europe must have a seat at the table." Euronews reported Wednesday that the European Commission and the European Council, which represents the member states, are preparing a joint delegation to attend the talks that could be headed by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's head of cabinet, Björn Seibert.

The goals of the European powers in the talks would be to block any agreement that would exclude them from plundering the raw materials and cheap labour in Russia and Ukraine, and to ensure that they secure profits from reconstruction contracts and other investment opportunities after the war's end. Trump already compelled Ukraine to sign a bilateral critical minerals agreement with the US that grants American companies preferential access to new resource projects in the country.

From the standpoint of the European imperialists, the war on Russia must continue because it serves as their key justification for restructuring social and economic life to fund the military power they require to pursue their aggressive interests in the accelerating violent redivision of the world. The claims that Russia is preparing to attack European NATO members after Ukraine and that countries like Germany must be "war-ready" by 2029 are central to the massive propaganda campaign to legitimise the spending of trillions of euros on militarism and war, while social services, public infrastructure, and workers' rights are gutted. Equipped with military forces capable of acting independently of Washington, the European ruling classes, above all in Germany and France, hope to use the same methods deployed by their erstwhile American allies to lay hold of critical minerals, trade routes, cheap labour, and geostrategic influence in every corner of the globe.

Mass opposition in the working class and among young people to this agenda of imperialist war and capitalist austerity is growing, as shown by the protests in France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and other countries. Governments are responding with brutal state repression and a reckless escalation of the war in order to crush social opposition and divert class tensions outward against an external enemy.

To believe under these conditions that Finland and Norway are acting out of the purest motives to secure "peace" in

Ukraine would be absurd. Finland ended decades of official neutrality when it joined NATO in 2023 following Russia's NATO-provoked invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Helsinki has a 1,300-kilometre border with Russia that has been transformed into a new frontline in the war on Russia. The country now hosts a permanent NATO staff element for Forward Land Forces Finland, while the multinational battlegroup under Swedish command is based in Sweden and can deploy to Finland. More than 20,000 Finnish and allied troops are scheduled to participate in multiple exercises in the country through early December, including a manoeuvre aimed at simulating a "counter-attack" against an opponent involving around 3,500 soldiers in Helsinki and Vantaa in late November.

Norway was a founding member of NATO, but has significantly expanded its role as a frontline state in the war on Russia over recent years, especially in its Arctic north, where it has a nearly 198-kilometre border with Russia. A defence cooperation agreement with the US, which other Nordic countries took as a model, opened up several Norwegian military facilities for direct use by US troops, with Norway generally waiving its primary criminal jurisdiction over US forces while retaining the right to reclaim it in special cases. Norway's long-running biennial NATO exercise Cold Response has been dramatically expanded since neighbouring Sweden and Finland joined the alliance. Norwegian arms manufacturers are partnering with Germany and other imperialist powers to increase the production of everything from missiles to submarines.

Opposition to the escalation of the war on Russia must be led by the working class across Europe and internationally. The protests and strikes against decaying public services, declining living standards, and the growth of the far right must be developed into an international anti-war movement led by the working class and armed with a socialist programme to put an end to the capitalist profit system, from which imperialist war arises.



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