

## **Macron & Starmer convene another meeting of leaders of the “Coalition of the Willing,” who commit to defending Ukraine**



Leaders of the “Coalition of the Willing” at yesterday’s meeting in Paris.

On March 2, British Prime Minister Starmer, coordinating with French President Macron, hosted a summit meeting in London of European leaders and officials to discuss how to bring about an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine and guarantee Ukraine a lasting peace. The meeting was attended by President Zelenskyy and the leaders of Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, Canada, and a number of other states as well as the foreign minister of Türkiye, NATO Secretary General Rutte, European Council President Costa and European Commission President von der Leyen. Following the meeting, Starmer said, “Together, we reaffirmed our determination to work for a permanent peace in Ukraine, in partnership with the U.S.... We will work with President Trump to ensure a strong, just, and lasting peace that ensures Ukraine’s future sovereignty and security.... We have agreed that the UK, France, and others will work with Ukraine on a plan to stop the fighting which we will discuss further with the US and take forward together. We also agreed that Ukraine must have robust security arrangements in place at the time of any future peace deal so that Russia does not invade again.... In addition, many of us expressed readiness to contribute to Ukraine’s security, including through a force consisting of European and other partners, and will intensify our planning. We will continue to work closely together to drive forward next steps and will take decisions in the coming weeks.”

On March 15, the leaders of more than two dozen countries participated in a virtual follow-up meeting organized by Starmer to discuss their participation in a “Coalition of the Willing” to support and defend the 30-day ceasefire agreed by the U.S. and Ukraine in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia that would take effect if and when Russia accepted it. Among the leaders participating in the meeting, in addition to Starmer, Macron, and Zelenskyy,

were those of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. Rutte, Costa, and von der Leyen also participated in the meeting.

On March 20, senior military officers of the 31 countries that are participating in the “Coalition of the Willing” met at the Northwood military base outside London to discuss plans for an international peacekeeping force in Ukraine that would provide a security guarantee for Ukraine if and when a ceasefire was agreed and implemented. Starmer and Macron had said they would be willing to provide troops to maintain a ceasefire once one was agreed upon, and the British government said a “significant number” of other governments had said they would be willing to do the same. The military officers of the participating countries met again this week on Monday through Wednesday at the Northwood base.

Also on March 20, Macron said the leaders of the countries participating in the Coalition, who had met in person in London on March 2 and had met virtually on March 15, would meet again in person in Paris yesterday to “fine-tune” their plan for providing a “credible security guarantee” for Ukraine. At yesterday’s meeting, Starmer presented the outcomes of the planning meetings that took place at the Northwood base on Monday through Wednesday. The planning meetings, he said, had involved more than 200 military planners and had considered in detail the structure of any future force to ensure that Ukraine would be able to defend itself from future Russian aggression. He said the planning meetings had considered the full range of European military capabilities, including aircraft, tanks, troops, intelligence and logistics capabilities, and the discussions had centered on how European countries could contribute their own capabilities to support any future force. He said the discussions will continue in regard to the military planning of air, sea and land forces that would be required to support a just and lasting peace in Ukraine and reportedly told the other leaders at yesterday’s meeting that excellent progress had been made in the planning and Europe is mobilizing together in pursuit of peace but that Europe has to continue to keep up the momentum because Putin “has clearly shown his lack of commitment to the peace process” after the talks this week in Riyadh, noting that, while published readouts from both sides confirmed a naval ceasefire and prevention of use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea, Russia had “immediately backtracked and placed conditions on the agreements – despite good faith participation from Ukraine.”

Following the meeting, Macron said that France and the UK will continue with plans to deploy troops to Ukraine to defend a peace agreement if and when one is agreed. They would consist of “reassurance forces” from “several European countries” and would be based in “certain strategic locations.” But he noted that, while several leaders support the plan, support was not unanimous. On the other hand, he also noted that “We do not need unanimity to achieve it.” Starmer, who co-hosted the meeting, said, “It is now over two weeks since Ukraine agreed to an immediate 30-day ceasefire. That offer is still

unanswered. It is over a week since Putin agreed to an energy and infrastructure ceasefire. Since then, Russia has hit energy infrastructure in cities across Ukraine. They've increased their bombardment. Firing over 1,000 long-range drones at the country. Hitting homes, schools and hospitals with widespread civilian casualties. Then, this week we saw the agreement on a ceasefire in the Black Sea...But within a few minutes of the announcement, Russia set out new conditions and delays. Now President Trump has rightly called them out for dragging their feet. And we agreed here in Paris today that it's clear the Russians are filibustering. They are playing games and playing for time. It is a classic from the Putin playbook. But we can't let them drag this out while they continue prosecuting their illegal invasion. Instead, we should be setting a deadline of delivering real progress. And we should hold them to that deadline. So here in Paris we agreed that we must go further now to support the peace process. Support Ukraine and increase the pressure on Russia to get serious. That means – first – stepping up the military pressure. So the Defence Secretary will chair the next Ukraine Defence Contact Group on 11 April, to marshal more military aid and keep Ukraine in the fight. Because peace comes through strength. That was one of the main messages reasserted today and emphasized today all around the table. Second, it means increasing the economic pressure on Russia – accelerating new, tougher sanctions, bearing down on Russia's energy revenues – and working together to make this pressure count. We also discussed how we can support the implementation of a full or partial ceasefire, when it is in place, and how we can build efforts towards negotiations on a just and lasting peace. That remains our shared goal. And that is what the Coalition of the Willing is designed to support. The political will from partners here today was clear. And this week in London we hosted over 200 military planners from 30 countries. Coming forward with contributions on everything from logistics and command and control to deployments on land, air and sea. That work continues at pace. We will be ready to operationalize a peace deal whatever its precise shape turns out to be. And we will work together to ensure Ukraine's security so it can defend and deter against future attacks. This is Europe mobilizing together behind the peace process on a scale we haven't seen for decades. Backed by partners from around the world, we are determined to deliver a just and lasting peace. Because we know it is vital for Ukraine and Europe as a whole and I am clear that it is vital for Britain.”

David R. Cameron  
March 28, 2025