EU leaders welcome Danish presidency, meet with Zelenskyy, pledge continued support as U.S. reviews its military support.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, King Frederik X, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, and European Council President António Costa on Thursday at Marselisborg Castle in Aarhus, Denmark.

On Thursday, European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and King Frederik X in Aarhus as Denmark assumed, for the last six months of the year, the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union. Following the six-month presidencies of Hungary in the last half of 2024 and Poland in the first six months of this year, there were many in Europe who welcomed the Danish presidency after the frequent foot-dragging on important issues that occurred during those presidencies. Perhaps most importantly, and unambiguously demonstrated by the presence of President Zelenskyy in the official photos taken at Aarhus, after a year in which the presidency was held by member states whose leaders – Polish President Duda and Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS), and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán - have consistently supported Russia in its war against Ukraine, the Council presidency is now clearly in the hands of a member state whose leader is a friend and supporter of Ukraine.

European support for Ukraine is especially important in the wake of signs of decreasing support for Ukraine from the Trump administration. The first sign that American support for Ukraine was weakening in the Trump administration, compared with what it

had been in the Biden administration, came in the famous Oval Office meeting between Trump and Zelenskyy on Feb. 28. But there have been more recent signals as well – for example, when Defense Secretary Hegseth told legislators that "Europe needs to step up more for the defense of its own continent" and said the Trump administration believes "a negotiated peaceful settlement is in the best interest of both parties and our nation's interests," and when he announced he would skip the June meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group. (The Contact Group, which consists of the representatives of the 32 NATO member states and 25 other states, was created by former Defense Secretary Austin in 2022 to coordinate the supply of military assistance to Ukraine.)

On Wednesday, White House Deputy Press Secretary Anna Kelly said the Trump administration is pausing the shipment of some weapons to Ukraine while a review of military support for other countries approved by Hegseth continues. The review was undertaken, she said, "to put America's interests first. The Department of Defense continues to provide the President with robust options to continue military aid to Ukraine, consistent with his goal of bringing this tragic war to an end. At the same time, the Department is rigorously examining and adapting its approach to achieving this objective while also preserving US forces' readiness for Administration defense priorities." Russia was, of course, delighted; Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov told reporters who inquired about the decision, "As far as we understand, the reason for this decision was empty warehouses, lack of these weapons in warehouses. But in any case, the fewer weapons are supplied to Ukraine, the closer the end of the special military operation." The weapons that are most needed by Ukraine and in shortest supply are the missiles used in the Patriot air defense systems. As Mykhail Podolyak, a member of Zelenskyy's presidential office, said after the pause was announced, "It would seem very strange, it would seem inhumane, to stop supplying missiles … especially to Patriot systems, which are clearly protecting the civilian population in Ukraine on a large scale."

Speaking Thursday in Aarhus as Denmark assumed its six-month presidency of the EU, Prime Minister Frederiksen said, "Ukraine belongs in the European Union. It is in both Denmark's and Europe's interest. Therefore, the Danish EU presidency will do everything we can to help Ukraine on their way towards EU membership." Importantly, she also said, "If the U.S. decides not to provide Ukraine with what is needed, it would be serious. We must strengthen Ukraine. And we must weaken Russia. The former by increasing military support. Ukraine is essential to Europe's security. Our contribution to Ukraine is also a protection of our freedom. The latter, we will achieve with sanctions. We must increase pressure on Russia…. The war in Ukraine has never only been about Ukraine. This is a war about the future of Europe."

Speaking later at a press conference with Frederiksen and von der Leyen, Zelenskyy expressed Ukraine's gratitude for the EU's continuing support. But he also noted that Ukraine was hoping for continued American support, especially more Patriot missiles in order to protect it from Russian drones and missiles, and said he hoped to talk with

President Trump about the reported suspension of some weapons shipments: “I hope that maybe tomorrow, or close days, these days, I will speak about it with President Trump.” As if to strengthen the case for continued U.S. support, in the late evening Thursday and early hours Friday, Russia conducted the largest sustained drone and missile attack of the war on Kyiv. The attack lasted seven hours and involved 539 drones, 7 ballistic missiles, and 4 cruise missiles, even more than in Russia’s six-hour missile and drone attack the previous Saturday evening in which it fired a total of 477 drones and 60 cruise and ballistic missiles at civilian as well as military targets – an attack that, until Thursday’s, was the largest one-day missile and drone attack in the war. Although some of the incoming missiles and drones were hit and destroyed, many others got through the Ukrainian defenses and destroyed large apartment buildings and other civilian structures in Ukraine.

Whether prompted by that attack or already scheduled, on Friday Zelenskyy had what he said was a “very important” and productive phone call with Trump. Writing on X, he said, “I had a very important and fruitful conversation with @POTUS. I congratulated President Trump and the entire American people on the US Independence Day. We – in Ukraine – are grateful for all the support provided. It helps us protect lives, safeguard our freedom and independence. We have achieved a lot together with America and we support all efforts to stop the killings and restore just, lasting, and dignified peace. A noble agreement for peace is needed.” Continuing, he said, “President Trump is very well informed, and I thank him for his attention to Ukraine. We spoke about opportunities in air defense and agreed that we will work together to strengthen protection in our skies. We have also agreed to a meeting between our teams. We had a detailed conversation about defense industry capabilities and joint production. We are ready for direct projects with the United States and believe this is critically important for security, especially when it comes to drones and related technologies. We also touched on mutual procurement and investment. Finally, we exchanged views on the diplomatic situation and joint work with the U.S. and other partners.”

When asked about the call by reporters on Air Force One later that day, Trump said he and Zelenskyy had “a very good call, I think a very strategic call. We’ve been helping them, and we’ll continue to help them. It’s a pretty tough situation. We’ll see what happens. ..I was very unhappy with my call with President Putin. And it just seems like he wants to go all the way and just keep killing people. No good. It’s not good. I was unhappy with him.” When asked if the U.S. would provide Ukraine with more Patriot missiles, Trump said, “Yeah, we might. We’re looking at it. They need them for defense. I don’t want to see people killed. They’re going to need them for defense. They’re amazingly effective. They’re going to need something because they’re being hit pretty hard.” He said he had discussed Ukraine’s request with German Chancellor Merz.

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