

Biden arrives for Berlin summit, as NATO threatens Iran and Russia

Alex Lantier

17 October 2024

Joe Biden arrived last night in Berlin for his last trip to Europe as US president, a one-day crisis summit with German, British and French officials. He will receive a ceremonial decoration from German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier before meeting Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the afternoon. UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron will join them later.

The summit takes place as the world teeters on the brink of a catastrophic escalation of NATO wars in the Middle East and Europe, amid mounting divisions in NATO. Fear is growing in European ruling circles that a Trump victory in next month's US presidential election could shatter relations with America. And Russia and Iran are warning that they will respond to strikes on their territory by NATO-backed regimes in Ukraine and Israel with devastating counterattacks.

Last week, Biden was to come to Germany for a NATO summit at Ramstein Air Base to authorize Ukraine to use NATO missiles for long-range strikes on Russia. But this fell through after the Kremlin changed Russia's nuclear doctrine, to allow for nuclear strikes on nuclear powers arming countries like Ukraine to strike Russian territory. With the United States, Germany, Britain and France facing possible nuclear retaliation, Biden canceled the NATO summit, replacing it with a brief 24-hour, four-power working meeting in Berlin.

Amid Israel's genocide in Gaza, Tehran is warning that it is preparing "decisive" action if Israel again bombs Iran. After Iran fired a warning salvo of 200 missiles on Israel in response to Israel's invasion of Lebanon and its assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, Israel has threatened to bomb Iran's oil and nuclear industries. Iran responded by breaking off diplomatic talks with the United States in the sultanate of Oman.

"Iran, while making all-out efforts to protect the peace and security of the region, is fully prepared for a decisive and regretful response to any adventures," Iranian Foreign

Minister Abbas Araghchi told UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres Wednesday. The initial warning strike by a few hundred Iranian missiles swamped Israeli air defenses, with many hitting their targets. A full-scale strike by thousands of missiles, launched this time without warning, could devastate Israel.

NATO and EU summits yesterday showed that the imperialist powers plan to further escalate the wars, trampling public opinion underfoot. Workers overwhelmingly oppose the Gaza genocide and calls in ruling circles to deploy NATO troops to Ukraine to fight Russia. But NATO officials are discussing just such policies, though they could provoke economic collapse or nuclear war.

A two-day NATO defense ministers summit began yesterday in Brussels on Ukraine and NATO war plans against China in the Pacific. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said the European NATO powers will spend \$50 billion this year on Ukraine and called to intensify military planning in Asia.

Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea were in attendance at their first NATO summit in Brussels, and Rutte hailed their presence: "China and other authoritarian regimes continue to fuel Russia's war of aggression and challenge Euro-Atlantic security. ... The war in Ukraine has shown that instability in Europe can have far-reaching consequences across the world, and that countries thousands of miles away—as far away as Iran, China and even North Korea—can become security spoilers in our own backyard."

Rutte's remarks came amid soaring tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Both South and North Korean forces are on high alert, after the North Korean regime responded to South Korean drone flights into its territory by shutting the border and threatening nuclear retaliation against any invasion.

The European Council of EU heads of state also met

yesterday. They heard Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky again present his so-called “Victory Plan” that he had presented to the Ukrainian parliament the day before. Zelensky’s plan includes selling off trillions of dollars in Ukrainian mineral resources cheaply to the NATO countries, as well as calls for Ukraine to join NATO and launch long-range missile strikes on Russia—measures that could trigger nuclear war.

The EU Council echoed NATO’s \$50 billion pledge of further aid to Ukraine. While declaring itself “deeply alarmed by the dramatic military escalation in the Middle East,” it also “reiterated Israel’s right to defend itself,” the pretext Washington and the Israeli regime give for the Gaza genocide and aggression against Lebanon.

The global war surge, the Gaza genocide and Zelensky’s offer to loot Ukraine to benefit NATO mining companies are exposing NATO. It is not fighting for Ukrainian democracy or against Islamist terrorism. Facing the contradictions of capitalism that the great Marxists of the 20th century identified as the causes of world war—the incompatibility of world economy with the nation-state system, and socialized production with private profit—the NATO powers are responding, as in the last century, with wars of plunder and annihilation.

The wars’ roots in insoluble economic conflicts emerge in reports that next week’s Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) summit in Kazan, Russia may set up an alternative international payment system to the US dollar, possibly based on gold. This would be critical if Russia and China tried to evade US sanctions while economically helping Iran in a war with Washington. By reducing the use of the dollar in world trade, it could provoke a substantial fall in the dollar’s value.

These wars’ disastrous outcomes for NATO’s allies are pushing NATO further towards reckless, escalatory measures. Not only have Israeli forces failed to crush Hamas despite genocidal violence against Gaza, but their advance against Hezbollah is stalled barely a kilometer into Lebanon. Further Israeli escalation could provoke a catastrophic Middle East war and, by shutting off the oil trade of Iran and other Persian Gulf countries, sink oil markets and the world economy.

As for Ukraine, where mass protests have broken out in Kiev against mass casualties, its army has suffered well over a million killed or wounded and is in full retreat along the entire front. It is increasingly clear that to change this state of affairs, the NATO powers would have to commit large numbers of their own forces to the wars.

A factor destabilizing NATO plans is growing tensions

between Washington and its European allies amid the US presidential election. Trump slapped crippling tariffs on European exports to the United States during his first term as president, and there are growing fears of that Trump could escalate his tariffs if re-elected. A *Politico* article on the Berlin summit titled “Biden’s mission to soothe Germany’s Trump angst” aired some of the concerns in European ruling circles.

“For all the inevitable talk about the importance of the alliance between their two nations, Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have left the world with a frozen conflict in Ukraine,” *Politico* wrote, adding: “A victory in the US presidential election by Donald Trump, who has cast doubt on continued American support for Kyiv ... would thrust US-European relations into crisis overnight.”

Warning of an arms race inside Europe, *Politico* added: “a Trump win would prompt countries like Germany to focus more on bolstering their own security instead of continuing to aid Ukraine.” Media reports that the format of the Berlin summit was designed specifically to exclude Poland underscore these intra-European tensions.

The decisive question is alerting and mobilizing workers internationally against the imminent danger of military escalation. Capitalist governments’ plans to shed even more blood, spend more billions on these wars, build up their war machines, and attack workers’ living standards and social rights in order to finance this recklessness must be opposed. This requires building an international, socialist anti-war movement in the working class against imperialist war and the capitalist system.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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