

Ukraine reportedly fires UK Storm Shadow missiles into Russia for the first time

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Storm Shadow missiles supplied by the UK were reported to have been used to target Russian territory for the first time on Wednesday. The strike took place just 24 hours after President Joe Biden's freeing Ukraine to use US-supplied ATACMS led to an attack on a military base in Bryansk, 110 miles inside the Russian border. It extends the UK's role as Washington's foremost ally in every act of anti-Russian aggression.

The *Guardian*, which has led calls for escalating the conflict with Russia, reported that the Storm Shadow target was not immediately made clear by "Unconfirmed images distributed via the Telegram messaging app [that] appeared to show fragments of the missile at a location in the Kursk region." Russia has reported no casualties.

Britain's Labour government, like Ukraine, has made no official statement, maintaining its position that the use of missiles is "an operational matter." But the green light for the use of Storm Shadows was given by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer at a press conference on the fringes of the G20 meeting on November 18.

Citing claims of a build-up of 5,000 North Korean troops in the Kursk region, Biden's announcement was designed to ensure that the US commitment to war in Ukraine continues under the incoming administration of Donald Trump on January 6. Neither the UK nor Ukraine can use British Storm Shadow cruise missiles without US navigation technology and data, unlike the dozen Scalp missiles donated by France or the still-withheld German Taurus missiles.

Starmer sought US permission for their use on a trip to the US in September but was told to hold off until after the presidential election. Once Biden gave the go ahead, the use of British long-range missiles was only a matter of time.

Starmer campaigned for election putting Labour forwards as the "party of NATO" and the most bloodthirsty opponent of Russia. He described President

Vladimir Putin's warning that the use of US and UK-made missiles inside Russia's borders would be tantamount to NATO engaging in direct conflict with Moscow, and signing of a revised nuclear doctrine, as "irresponsible rhetoric" that will not affect UK support for Ukraine.

Amid warnings from Russia that NATO's actions could result in World War III, Starmer declared on Tuesday that the UK would "ensure Ukraine has what is needed for as long as needed". "There is irresponsible rhetoric coming from Russia and that's not going to deter our support for Ukraine," Starmer pontificated. There had already been "1,000 days of sacrifice" and "On day 1,000 of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, I say again—end the war. Get out of Ukraine... In this moment when global challenges are affecting us at home, I take the view that British leadership matters."

A Downing Street spokesperson called Putin's announcement "the latest example of irresponsibility that we have seen from the depraved Russian government".

At the United Nations that day, Foreign Secretary David Lammy announced "fresh sanctions on Iran Air and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines" as "a direct response to Iran's ballistic missile deliveries to Russia" and "a new loan backed by profits from sanctioned Russian assets, part of a new G7 package of \$50 billion in assistance. And a commitment to \$3 billion in military aid, for as long as it takes... we know that Putin only responds to strength."

In parliament, Defence Secretary John Healey declared that "our commitment to stand with the Ukrainian people is absolute. We have stepped up with more military support, we have sped up deliveries, and we are now spending more on military aid as a country than ever before."

He boasted that "The UK has stood side by side with our Ukrainian allies since day one of Putin's illegal, full-

scale invasion—leading international support, training 50,000 recruits and supplying weapons, drones and other crucial military kit.”

The next day the Ministry of Defence confirmed that the UK will contribute £7.5 million towards new attack and surveillance drones for Ukraine, alongside £16 million in contributions from other allies, including £10 million from Germany, bringing the total coalition fund to £67 million, with the UK providing £15 million overall.

On November 19, Armed Forces minister Luke Pollard visited a British training site for Ukrainian troops, where he told the media that Putin had been making threats “since the start of the war... designed to put us off our support for Ukraine and weaken our resolve and we are showing strong resolve in return.” Starmer that same day made a call to President Zelensky stating that he wanted the UK to “double down” on support for Ukraine.

Coinciding with the reports of the first use of Storm Shadows to strike Russian territory, UK military advisor Nicholas Aucott at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) gloried in the heavy toll on Russia’s military and economy. He cited an average of 1,350 casualties a day in October—a “record high”—and insisted that ending the war could only mean Putin “withdrawing all his forces from Ukraine’s internationally recognised sovereign territory.”

The UK, like the other European powers, faces uncertainty over the extent to which the US under Trump will continue backing Ukraine militarily, and how seriously to take Trump’s declaration that he would quickly end the Ukraine war. Speculation is rife that Trump was not only informed of Biden’s move but agreed it on the basis that he would come to power demanding concessions from Putin from a position of strength.

But whatever discussions there are on such tactical considerations, the essential response of the major European powers—France, Germany and the UK included—has been to plan to step up their own military aggression against Russia and to consider what it will take to make this a European-led war.

In the words of the European Union’s head of foreign affairs and security, Josep Borrell, “I have been saying, once and again, that Ukrainians should be able to use the arms we provide to them not only to stop the arrows, but also to be able to hit the archers.” The political shift in the US has prompted endless discussion not only on using long-range missiles, but on ramping up military spending and even stationing European troops in Ukraine.

The UK remains far-and-away the most strident and unambiguous anti-Russian power in Europe, insisting on its commitment to war whatever position is taken by the US. But Starmer’s government of war criminals and Gaza genocide backers clearly hopes it can help persuade Trump to continue the war with Russia. Lammy told Conservative Shadow Foreign Secretary Priti Patel that during his and Starmer’s September 26 dinner with Trump in New York, “We did discuss Ukraine and he was seized of the important issues.”

He continued, “There’s a deep philosophical underpinning to friends in the Republican party that I’ve known for many years, thinking back to people like [former US secretary of state] Condoleezza Rice. Donald Trump has some continuity with this position, which is ‘peace through strength’. What I do know about Donald Trump is that he doesn’t like losers and he doesn’t want to lose; he wants to get the right deal for the American people. And he knows that the right deal for the American people is peace in Europe and that means a sustainable peace—not Russia achieving its aims and coming back for more in the years ahead.”

Asked by Liberal Democrat defence spokeswoman Helen Maguire whether US “wavering” meant it was “incumbent on the UK to lead within Europe now,” he replied, “This morning I was speaking to foreign ministers in a meeting; from France, Germany, Poland, Italy, Spain there is no sense of us wavering in our support for Ukraine. If anything there was a commitment to double down on that support, there was a determination to ensure that Ukraine is in the strongest possible position in 2025 and a renewed effort to ensure that we coordinate even better in the coming months.”



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