

# UK Prime Minister Starmer signs “100-year partnership treaty” with Ukraine ahead of Trump inauguration

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Just days ahead of the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer visited Ukraine to offer ongoing support in NATO’s war against Russia.

Starmer’s meeting with the head of the Ukrainian regime Volodymyr Zelensky was his seventh—including meetings held while Starmer was leader of the opposition. It was his first trip to Ukraine since taking office at the head of the Labour government last July.

Both this visit and his subsequent trip to Poland were held very much under the shadow of the incoming Trump administration, with Britain and the NATO powers unsure how fully Trump will commit to the Ukraine war and how much more he will demand the European powers contribute.

Trump has identified China as the foremost opponent of US imperialism and cast doubt on continuing US support for the war in Ukraine, upon which Britain imperialism has staked enormous geopolitical capital. This week Marco Rubio, Trump’s nominee for secretary of state, told the Senate foreign relations committee that the war in Ukraine had become a “stalemate” and “has to end” with both Russia and Ukraine having to make concessions.

The purpose of Starmer’s Kiev visits was to sign a “100-year partnership treaty”, the main aim of which was to ensure that London is able to reap its share of the spoils in Ukraine’s critical energy and mineral supplies.

A statement by Downing Street on the agreement said it would “will bolster military collaboration” and also “cements the UK as a preferred partner for Ukraine’s energy sector, critical minerals strategy and green steel production.”

The text of the agreement states: “The Parties shall seek to strengthen conditions for investment and trade in both of their nations, and cooperate across a range of sectors”. It adds that they “shall deepen their collaboration on energy... on a mutually beneficial basis, and strengthen conditions for investment in Ukraine’s energy sector.”

Ever on the lookout for a return on investment, Downing Street announced on behalf of British arms manufacturers that further profits would be reaped: “The UK will give more military support to Ukraine than ever before, with £3 billion already committed for lethal aid, and the first £1.5 billion from a £2.26 billion loan as part of the G7 Extraordinary Revenue Acceleration scheme [taken from profits on immobilised Russian sovereign assets] set to be released for major procurement projects.”

The statement included a comment from Defence Secretary John Healey who emphasised, “The UK’s loan is earmarked as budgetary support for Ukraine’s military spending, enabling them to invest in key equipment, including British equipment, to support their efforts against Russia.”

Starmer’s trip was also used to announce that the “UK will deliver a new mobile air defence capability [Gravehawk] to Ukraine this year... jointly funded by the UK and Denmark.” Confirming the extent of Britain’s role in the war, the statement revealed that “Two prototypes of the air defence capability system were tested in Ukraine in September, and a further 15 will follow this year.”

Also announced was a £61 million contract awarded to BAE Systems from the UK government. A Downing Street press release said, “With firms across the UK ramping up production to meet Ukraine’s requirements, the funding for Ukraine will directly support the UK defence industry... That includes BAE Systems and Sheffield Forgemasters, who, for the first time in almost two decades, will produce artillery barrels for artillery guns.” The “barrels will be produced in Yorkshire, before being sent to Ukraine for finishing and integration.”

Given that Trump is already on record that military spending among the NATO powers must be massively ramped up—with 5 percent of GDP to be the new benchmark—and with the expectation that much of the increase will be spent on US weapons, Starmer’s visit was

an effort to push Britain's war profiteers further up the queue.

The British Prime Minister was in Ukraine days after NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte made another push to persuade Trump that the US should continue financing the war against Russia.

Speaking on Tuesday at the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Subcommittee on Security and Defence, Rutte solidarized with Trump on the necessity to boost war spending well beyond the 2 percent of GDP that NATO members target at present. He declared, "NATO Allies have certainly increased defence spending. Two thirds are now spending at least 2% of GDP on defence, and that's good, and I very much welcome their efforts. But to be honest, 2% is not nearly enough."

Domestic budgets had to be laser focussed on war because "if you don't do it, get your Russian language courses or go to New Zealand, or decide now to spend more."

Rutte made clear that rearmament on the scale being discussed will require the slashing of public spending, stating, "I know spending more on defence means spending less on other priorities... On average, European countries easily spend up to a quarter of their national income on pensions, health and social security systems, and we need only a small fraction of that money to make defence much stronger."

The "small fraction" referred to by Rutte runs into the many billions of euros and pounds that will be siphoned from vital public services. What he is actually talking about is a doubling or more of military spending and cannot be achieved except through a war on the working class and the decimation of "pensions, health and social security systems".

The scale of the assault and its implications are indicated by the fact that the Starmer government has not yet been able to commit to a date when military spending will increase even from 2.2 to 2.5 percent of GDP—out of fear of the social backlash at the austerity it would require. Were Britain to commit to 5 percent, it would require Britain's annual spend on the military shooting up from £53 billion to £127 billion—and a corresponding evisceration of social spending without precedent in peacetime.

While in Ukraine, Starmer was asked by Politico if Trump's return meant Europe would need to deliver much more for Ukraine. He replied, "Yes, I think collectively we do need to do more. I think that is recognized across Europe." While he would not tell other countries "what they should and shouldn't do... we are living in a different context now in terms of conflicts around the world."

Regarding Britain and other countries sending "peacekeeping" troops to Ukraine as part of a future

ceasefire and peace agreement, Starmer—knowing that Trump will call the shots—could only say in the presidential palace in Kiev, "We will work with you [Ukraine] and all of our allies on steps that would be robust enough to guarantee Ukraine's security, peace and deter future aggression."

He added vaguely that Britain would play its "full part in guaranteeing Ukraine's security." The UK has handed Kiev £12.8 billion in total in the last three years, including £7.8 billion of military assistance—the second most behind Germany of the European powers. Critically, it has also authorised Ukraine's use of long range Storm Shadow missiles against targets inside the Russian Federation.

But on this occasion, with Ukraine having suffered a series of military defeats, Starmer could only offer more training of Ukrainian soldiers: "When it comes to training Ukraine's defenders, nothing is off the table."

Russia sought to demonstrate its strong military position by carrying out a drone strike in Kiev while Starmer was in the Palace—the first time Moscow had hit the Ukrainian capital during a high-level western visit.

The reasons for Starmer's relative reluctance were spelt out by the *Financial Times* in a comment on his subsequent visit to Poland. The paper noted that "the idea of a European troop deployment on a sufficient scale to deter Russia has received short shrift in some capitals, especially if done without US military support. Poland has ruled it out."

The challenges confronting British foreign policy are enormous. Having tried to curry as much favour as possible with the US by acting as its chief provocateur against Russia in Ukraine, the effort increasingly appears wasted on the incoming Trump administration.

Backed by his main supporter in the oligarchy, Elon Musk, Trump and his team have done everything to undermine Starmer in their pursuit of a far-right UK government they envisage being led by Reform UK. Inviting 12 other world leaders, Trump pointedly refused Starmer an invitation to his inauguration. Musk posted on X this week as to why no invite was forthcoming—in reference to Labour's campaigning for the Democratic Party in the election—that "He [Starmer] sent operatives to America to undermine the US election!"



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