



Ukraine

German chancellor Olaf Scholz pledges €650m in military aid to Ukraine on Kyiv visit

Scholz said Germany was ‘strongest supporter of Ukraine in Europe’ and promised speedy arms deliveries

Shaun Walker in Kyiv and Kate Connolly in Berlin

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Olaf Scholz has met the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in an unannounced visit to Kyiv that was his first since the early months of full-scale war as he sought to reassure Ukraine of German support.

The German chancellor announced a military aid package worth €650m (£540m) during the trip amid doubts over his [Ukraine](#) policy at home and uncertainty over the upcoming presidency of Donald Trump and what it may mean for the war in Ukraine.

Speaking in Kyiv, Scholz reiterated that [Russia](#) should not be allowed to “impose a dictated peace on Ukraine” in any negotiations, and said no decisions should be made without Ukraine present. He spoke of hopes for finding “a fair, just and lasting peace”.

He said that [Germany](#) would “remain the strongest supporter of Ukraine in Europe” and promised speedy arms deliveries.

Scholz arrived at Kyiv’s central station early on Monday morning, smiling and clutching a large metal briefcase as he disembarked from the train. He and Zelenskyy made a joint visit to a hospital to meet wounded war veterans, and also met drone producers.

The visit appeared designed to reassure Ukraine of German support, after Scholz faced [criticism for a recent phone call he initiated with Vladimir Putin](#), and with much of Europe braced for the return of Trump, who has claimed he could end the war in 24 hours.

Scholz also has one eye on his domestic political situation, where he faces a confidence vote in two weeks’ time and is hoping for re-election in a February ballot called after his coalition government collapsed last month. He has been criticised both by politicians who want Germany to stop sending weapons to Ukraine and by those who want him to do more, including sending long-range Taurus missiles to Kyiv, which he has so far refused to do.

“We are working to have more common ground on the Taurus issue,” Zelenskyy said during joint remarks to the press ahead of talks, while saying Ukraine was grateful for all the other help Germany has provided.

The war is high on the agenda in Germany and is expected to play a big role in the upcoming elections. It is also prominent in German people’s minds, not least as they have been urged to think about their [war-readiness](#), by building shelters or bunkers and storing provisions, amid advice from German intelligence that Russia could be capable of attacking the country within the next five years.

Scholz has attempted to present himself as a “chancellor of peace” and denied at the weekend that he was “instrumentalising” the Ukraine conflict for his own political gain. “It’s a topic whether I talk about it or not,” he told a meeting of his Social Democrats, and accused the opposition leader Friedrich Merz, who could be Germany’s next chancellor, of in effect giving Russia an ultimatum that he warned could quickly lead to escalation.

The German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, was meanwhile in Beijing on Monday, where she told her Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, that Beijing’s support for Moscow was contributing to an intensification of the war against its interests.

“The Russian president is not only destroying our European peace order through his war against Ukraine, but is now dragging Asia into it via North Korea,” she said at a press conference, in reference to the recent deployment of North Korean troops and the use of Chinese-made drones.

Scholz angered Ukraine when he called Putin last month, a conversation the German chancellor said was aimed at informing the Russian president that western support for Ukraine would not falter, and to sound out whether there was any softening of Moscow’s conditions for negotiations. It was the first time the leader of a major western country had called Putin since the end of 2022.

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“Mr Putin, do not expect us to reduce our support. You have to find a way out of this war. You must stop your attacks and withdraw your troops,” said Scholz after the call, summarising his message.

The call was roundly criticised, including by Zelenskyy, who said at the time that Scholz could open a “Pandora’s box” by speaking to Putin. “Now there may be other conversations, other calls. Just a lot of words ... And this is exactly what Putin has long wanted: it is crucial for him to weaken his isolation, Russia’s isolation,” Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine’s ambassador to Germany, Oleksiy Makeyev, also expressed anger over Scholz’s refusal to send Taurus missiles to Ukraine, arguing that this encouraged Moscow to carry out further attacks. “It is wrong to disclose what you will not do,” he said. “This is a blank cheque for the Russians.”

Trump has promised to make a swift peace in Ukraine a diplomatic priority when he takes office, previously saying he could solve the conflict “in 24 hours”, but has given few details of how he would do so. The US president-elect recently appointed the retired army general Keith Kellogg as his Ukraine and Russia envoy.

According to a Kremlin readout of last month’s conversation between Putin and Scholz, the Russian president demanded that any potential agreement on Ukraine should be based on the “new territorial realities and address the root causes of the conflict”. Putin has previously said he wants four territories claimed by Russia in 2022, as well as Crimea, and a guarantee that Ukraine would not join Nato.

Zelenskyy said on Sunday he was ready to discuss freezing the conflict along current lines as long as Ukraine received an invitation to Nato or equivalent security guarantees.

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