



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Zelensky's European tour - a glance at the end of the war



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's recently concluded European tour has accelerated the delivery of weapons to bolster Ukrainian forces ahead of an expected counter-offensive against Russian occupation troops.

Zelensky's visit to the four most influential European capitals was followed by confirmation that the deliveries of the promised weapons were going according to plan, the announcement of new contingents, and a significant amount of money for weapons and equipment.

Zelensky did not visit European capitals with just a shopping list. This tour also had a rather post-war tone.

He wanted Ukraine to be sufficiently equipped to ensure it is not subjected to any future Russian aggression.

"We don't know how this war will end, but what we do know is that when it ends, it is extremely important that we are able to prevent history from repeating itself", said Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg at a conference in Copenhagen, after Zelensky's tour ended.

Is the "jet coalition" feasible?

French President Emmanuel Macron made an effort to explain the effects of the conversation with the Ukrainian president after meeting his Ukrainian guest.

In an interview last Monday, Macron said that France "has opened the door" for the training of Ukrainian military pilots. He said that several other European countries are ready for this.

This is a significant shift in what Kyiv

considers most important for its future defence.

Faced with a firm "No" from the US to frequent requests for F-16 fighter jets, Kyiv has continued to campaign with European partners.

After the conversation with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Zelensky said he wanted to create a "jet coalition" with the UK, clearly alluding to the delivery of modern fighter jets to the Ukrainian army.

Prime Minister Sunak expressed the UK's readiness to train Ukrainian pilots on modern Western fighter jets "relatively soon" (probably during the summer). He also said that sending the planes to Kyiv was not a "straightforward thing".

Moscow followed the new meeting between Prime Minister Sunak and President Zelensky through its embassy in London, defending local taxpayers from the "growing appetites of the Kyiv authorities".

Whilst announcements about jet support from the UK are not surprising, given its previous leadership role in sending weapons to Ukraine and training its troops, Macron's announcement about training Ukrainian pilots has been a surprise, perhaps even a twist.

The training that the French president has been talking about seems to be an intermediate step towards the delivery of fighter jets to Ukraine, just like in the case of the UK.

The governments in Paris and London want to make this significant step. Most Western partners said it is an important, even a risky political step, where training would be only the beginning.

Zelensky can be satisfied with these first effects of his visit to the European capitals. Instead of the much sought-after F-16s, he can hope for equally good alternatives, British or French production fighter jets.

A significant German military aid package

During his stay in Rome last Saturday, where he spoke to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Zelensky said he did not come to complain, but to discuss cooperation and to thank for the help for the defence of Ukraine so far.

Despite some of its coalition partners previously maintaining close contacts with Moscow, Giorgia Meloni's government has not hesitated to send military aid to Kyiv, including anti-aircraft systems and artillery.

The Ukrainian president received the most valuable support in Berlin. Chancellor Olaf Scholz used Zelensky's visit to announce the largest package of German military aid worth 2.7 billion euros.

Zelensky received important news about the urgent needs of Ukrainian defence from Emmanuel Macron. France has already prepared new deliveries. Dozens of armoured vehicles and light tanks, including AMX-10RCs, will be delivered in the next few weeks.

Is the current support enough for a shift?

So far, the partners have delivered military support to Ukraine worth more than 150 billion euros. Support included more than 230 tanks and more than 1,550 armoured vehicles,

other equipment, and ammunition.

This was announced last April after the meeting of the Ramstein Group of 50 allies, led by the US, which is coordinating the shipment of weapons to Ukraine.

This support comes close to Kyiv's expectation from last January that it would receive slightly more than 320 tanks from the West, which is also the lower limit of its estimate of tanks necessary to push Russian troops out of occupied areas.

Volodymyr Zelensky's tour was intended to encourage major European partners to maintain and accelerate their military support for Ukraine and its plans for a counter-offensive.

But these talks were more focused on long-term military support for Kyiv so that it could regain the occupied territories and maintain its military presence there, and thus enter into negotiations in which it could achieve its goals.

They (Ukraine) should be able to carry out the "offensive with what they already have, but ~~that~~

enough to sustain it over the long term. They '

need the long term to make the Russians crack", said retired French Vice Admiral Michel Olhagaray, a former head of France's centre for higher military studies.