

Politics

NATO Offers Ukraine More Air Defense in New Support Pledge

- Concerns grow over future of the war and prospect for peace
- Assessments suggest Ukraine is headed toward stalemate

Tap to unmute



WATCH: NATO allies promised five long-range air-defense systems for Ukraine on Tuesday. Kriti Gupta reports. *Source: Bloomberg*

By [Jennifer Jacobs](#), [Alberto Nardelli](#), [Iain Marlow](#), and [Andrea Palasciano](#)

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NATO allies promised five long-range air-defense systems for Ukraine in a fresh show of support, even as leaders resisted offering the country a path toward membership and fresh assessments indicate the conflict with Russia is headed toward indefinite stalemate.

The announcement was intended as a display of unity in the face of a stepped-up air barrage by President Vladimir Putin's forces. It also drew attention to the challenge the allies have faced coming up with military aid: Tuesday's promise repeated some commitments that had already been made in recent weeks.

In a speech to NATO leaders on Tuesday night, President Joe Biden called the air defense systems a "historic donation," that would be accompanied by dozens of shorter-range systems and missiles. The US, Germany and

Romania will each send a Patriot system, while a fourth will be cobbled together from parts from the Netherlands and others. Italy will send a SAMP-T system.

But some of the pledges were warmed over. The Netherlands had announced its plans as far back as May, while Italy and Romania had unveiled their commitments in June. Biden already said Ukraine would get another Patriot missile battery and priority for new air defense when he met Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy last month.



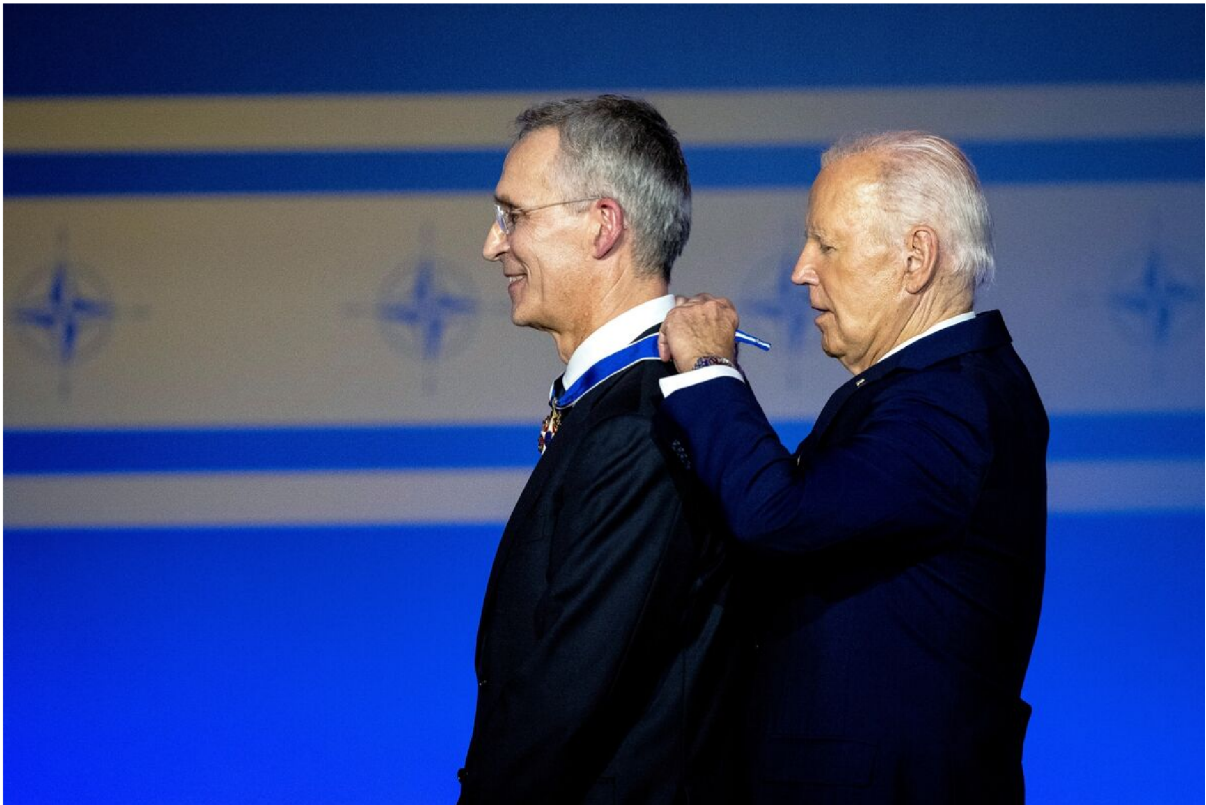
Joe Biden at the NATO 75th anniversary celebratory event during the NATO summit in Washington, DC, on July 9. *Photographer: Yuri Gripas/Abaca/Bloomberg*

Ukraine “will get this assistance before anyone else gets it,” Biden said Tuesday. “All told, Ukraine will receive hundreds of additional interceptors over the next year, helping protect Ukrainian cities against Russian missiles.”

Zelenskiy has been asking for the systems for months, and leaders were anxious to respond after a Russian air barrage on Monday killed more than 40 people, including at a children’s hospital. Earlier in the day, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said NATO nations would also send Ukraine F-16 fighter jets – an idea the US has backed for more than a year.

Amid the geopolitical tumult, the three-day summit that began Tuesday has been overshadowed by concerns around Biden's fitness for office – and calls that he drop out of the presidential race – after a calamitous debate performance nearly two weeks ago. He read from a teleprompter in his speech Tuesday night, speaking clearly and rarely stumbling over his words.

Biden also cracked an impromptu joke with Jens Stoltenberg when he awarded the outgoing NATO secretary-general the US presidential medal of freedom.



Biden awards the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO 75th anniversary celebratory event on July 9. *Photographer: Graeme Sloan/Bloomberg*

“I realize – I was talking to your wife – I personally asked you to extend your service,” Biden said to laughter from the audience. “Forgive me. And you put your own plans on hold.”

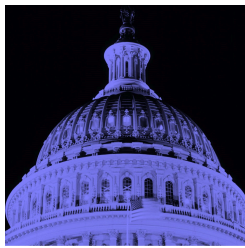
“When the Russia war on Ukraine began, you didn’t hesitate,” Biden said. “Today NATO is stronger, smarter and more energized than when you began.”

But the performance will do little to quell the debate around Biden's future, and he'll face another, more difficult test on Thursday, when he holds a press conference to mark the end of the summit.

President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, is far less isolated than the West would like. Earlier Tuesday, he welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Moscow. And he continues to forge closer ties to China, which has stepped up its support for Russia with so-called dual-use items that are used in weapons.

The Biden administration has sought to portray the summit as a success for the US president and a testament to just how much he's patched relations with allies in the four years since he replaced Donald Trump. His team wants to draw a contrast to what they say would be the chaos to come if Trump wins re-election this November.

The big question is what leaders will do next. So far, their commitments have focused on Ukraine's defense and not on giving it the ability to drive Russian forces from land they captured in the invasion more than two years ago.



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The latest assessment of the battlefield is that neither side is set to make significant gains, raising the possibility of a prolonged stalemate, according to people familiar with the situation. Ukraine has the resources to hold the line but not much more. One senior NATO official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity Tuesday, said Putin believes time is on his side and that the war will last well beyond 2025.

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Zelenskiy has pushed for a concrete and time-bound plan for Ukraine to get membership to NATO, something that President Putin is dead-set against and NATO nations have been so far unwilling to provide. In a summit statement expected this week, NATO is expected to offer Ukraine

an “irreversible” path to membership, provided it makes necessary reforms meant to clean up corruption.

One person familiar with Ukraine’s stance said Zelenskiy’s team isn’t happy with that approach, arguing that the thing the country really wants is a formal invitation to join the alliance.

Ukrainian officials have also expressed frustration with NATO’s refusal so far to let them use western-provided weapons to strike targets inside Russia. The US had previously allowed limited strikes but Zelenskiy’s government wants to go farther to neutralize the sort of attacks that have devastated the country in recent weeks.

“Ukraine needs to achieve that victory but it has to define that victory,” Latvia Foreign Minister Baiba Braze said on Bloomberg Television.

“Nobody else but Ukraine has to define what is a victory on the battlefield and we need to be there to support that.”

– *With assistance from Daryna Krasnolutska and Skylar Woodhouse*

(Updates with details of Biden speech in 10th paragraph.)

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