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'We will soon be next': German leaders sound alarm on Trump's Ukraine plan

Berlin wants more robust military spending following a bombshell move by the Trump administration to negotiate a peace deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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Scholz, whose Social Democratic Party (SPD) is in third place according to polls ahead of a Feb. 23 national election, called for more spending on Germany's defenses and military aid for Ukraine. | Joerg Carstensen/AFP via Getty Images

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BY [NETTE NÖSTLINGER](#), [LAURA HÜLSEMAN](#) AND [CHRIS LUNDAY](#)

Live coverage from Munich: POLITICO is on the ground at the Munich Security Conference, where we're having conversations with top officials, lawmakers and experts at our POLITICO Pub. [Follow our exclusive coverage here.](#)

BERLIN — German political leaders have reacted with alarm to U.S. President Donald Trump's bombshell announcement that his administration will conduct [peace negotiations](#) with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the head of European leaders.

"To be clear, peace must last over the long term. It must secure Ukraine's sovereignty," said German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Thursday. "That is why we will never support a dictated peace. Nor will we accept any solution that leads to a decoupling of European and American security. Only one person would benefit from that. President Putin."

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Scholz, whose Social Democratic Party (SPD) is in [third place](#) according to polls ahead of a Feb. 23 national election, called for more spending on Germany's defense and military aid for Ukraine, and urged conservatives to relax the country's strict spending rules — a theme he has touched on repeatedly during the election campaign — in order to do so.

"Today, we must face the reality of what the U.S. government's actions and announcements mean for Ukraine, for Europe and for the world," Scholz added. "Not to act would mean putting the security of our country and our continent at risk."

Germany's conservatives, who are leading in the polls, also called for more robust military spending while criticizing Scholz for not doing more during his tenure.

"If Ukraine is left in the lurch now, we will soon be next," Roderich Kiesewetter, a senior lawmaker with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), told POLITICO. "What is needed now is a coalition of the willing in Europe that is prepared to do everything possible to support Ukraine and invest massively in its own security."

On Wednesday, Trump's administration announced that it is willing to effectively cede Ukrainian territory to Russia as part of peace negotiations with Putin, while also insisting that Europe should provide the lion's share of military and financial aid to the embattled country.

German leaders were caught completely off guard by the Trump administration plan despite the important role Berlin has played in supplying arms and aid to Kyiv.

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Scholz appeared to be in the dark about Trump's plans, [telling](#) POLITICO in a Wednesday interview that his discussions with Trump had led him to conclude that "we can hope and assume that the U.S. will continue to support Ukraine."

Other German leaders also expressed shock.

"What is objectionable is that Ukraine has not been informed about this and neither has Europe," German liberal MEP Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann told POLITICO. She attacked Scholz for failing to bolster Germany's defenses more aggressively during his time as chancellor, saying his government had "criminally failed to implement a true turnaround. Now we are paying the price."

Other German lawmakers said they believe it is still possible to find common ground with Washington.

"We now have to wait and see what happens at the Munich Security Conference," said Falko Drossmann, a lawmaker for Scholz's center-left SPD and a former air force officer. "We have made the European position clear. We have made the German position clear, and we hope that our partner, the U.S., will take it just as seriously."

Asked whether Europe would be able to replace U.S. military aid to Ukraine, Drossmann said: "No, of course not, because a large proportion of the weapons systems — including those we have supplied — are weapons systems that have been developed jointly with the U.S."

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In Munich, members of Trump's administration are expected to present their plans to Europe's leading politicians, while several top meetings — including one among U.S. Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy — are scheduled.

Not all German politicians were disappointed by Trump's plan, however. Politicians with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which is [currently polling](#) in second place and has long been sympathetic to the Kremlin, were in a celebratory mood.

"We are, of course, pleased that peace negotiations are happening," said Gerold Otten, an AfD defense lawmaker and former colonel. "That has always been our demand."

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