

Ukraine conflict

US and Germany struggle to present united front on Nord Stream 2

Biden pledges to 'bring an end' to pipeline if Russia invades Ukraine but Scholz dodges questions



Olaf Scholz, left, refused to mention the Nord Stream 2 pipeline by name during a press conference after a meeting at the White House with Joe Biden © Anna Moneymaker/Getty

James Politi in Washington, **Erika Solomon** in Berlin, **Max Seddon** in Moscow and **Victor Mallet** in Paris YESTERDAY

US president Joe Biden and Germany’s chancellor Olaf Scholz struggled to present a united front in the stand-off over Russia’s threat to invade Ukraine after a pivotal White House meeting exposed lingering differences over the fate of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

During a joint press conference on Monday afternoon, Biden said that if Russia invaded Ukraine, the pipeline linking Russia with Germany [would not become operational](#). “There will be no longer a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it,” Biden said. “I promise you, we will be able to do that.”

Biden’s comments on Nord Stream 2, which has [strained US-German relations](#) for years, were his most forceful to date and represented a hardening of Washington’s position on one of the biggest sticking points in the transatlantic debate over [which sanctions to impose](#) against Moscow in the event of an invasion.

However, Scholz repeatedly dodged questions on the fate of the pipeline, which has been built but is not yet pumping gas, and refused to even mention it by name. Instead, he offered a generic assurance that “there won’t be any measures in which we have a differing approach” and said Russia would pay a “high price” for any attack.

Biden was forced to [jump to Scholz’s defence](#), saying Germany had the “complete

capacity to launch an attack. Biden urged about 30,000 Americans not working in the US diplomatic corps to leave Ukraine in case they were “caught in the crossfire”.

Biden and Scholz met on a frenzied day of diplomacy intended to stave off an invasion by Russia, which has amassed more than 100,000 troops at its border with Ukraine. Moscow has also started preparations for massive joint military exercises in neighbouring Belarus that western officials said could involve the deployment of an extra 30,000 soldiers later this week.

As the US president and Germany’s chancellor addressed the press, Putin and Emmanuel Macron, president of France, were [wrapping up their own meeting](#) in Moscow.

Biden did not specify how Washington planned to block the Nord Stream 2 in the event of an invasion, but the US could impose sanctions on the operator of the project. In addition, the US could put pressure on EU energy regulators to [withhold final approval](#) for the project.

On a visit to Washington on Monday, Josep Borrell, the EU’s top foreign policy official, warned that the Ukraine crisis represented “the most dangerous moment for European security since the end of the cold war”.

He was speaking after meeting Antony Blinken, US secretary of state, who dismissed criticism that Washington was too aggressive in [releasing intelligence](#) about Russia’s intentions with regards to Ukraine. “This is not alarmism. This is simply the facts. We have to deal with the facts,” he said.

Additional reporting by Polina Ivanova in Moscow

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