

US foreign policy**Donald Trump demands 'loyalty' from Nato allies and slams lack of support in Iran war**

US president singles out alliance members, including the UK, after meeting secretary-general Mark Rutte



Mark Rutte, Nato secretary-general, with Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Wednesday © Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Amy Mackinnon in Washington

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Donald Trump said he expected “loyalty” from Nato allies, as he railed against the military alliance for not being faster to assist in the US-Israeli war against Iran.

“I just want their loyalty,” he said on Wednesday. “We’re so loyal to them, we’re always fighting for them.”

Speaking alongside Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte at the White House, the US president said he would have skipped the upcoming Nato summit in Ankara, Turkey, if it were not for the country’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is close to Trump.

“I don’t think I would have gone to it,” he said, adding that the Turkish president had called to urge him to attend. “He said, ‘Please, I have it in Turkey, you got to be there,’” Trump said.

Trump added he was disappointed with Italy, France, Germany and the UK, and acknowledged Sir Keir Starmer's recent resignation as British prime minister. "He's now gone," Trump said.

Asked about Andy Burnham, Starmer's likely successor, the US president said he did not know him. "I hear he's extremely liberal," Trump said. "That means he probably won't open up the North Sea."

Trump has repeatedly urged the UK to expand its oil and gas drilling in the North Sea and said on Wednesday that the country was "dying" while buying oil from Norway.

His remarks come two weeks ahead of the Nato summit, which is set to be dominated by his administration's calls for allies to shoulder more of the burden of their conventional defence.

Rutte came to the Oval Office equipped with large, printed-out charts illustrating how Nato members had increased defence spending and the impact on the US jobs market.

One placard, titled "The Trump Trillion", highlighted the \$1.2tn increase in defence spending by allies in Europe and Canada since the president first took office in 2017.

Washington's Nato partners were on track to spend an additional \$250bn on defence over the first two years of Trump's second term, Rutte said.

Nato member states last year agreed to increase their defence spending to 5 per cent at their summit in The Hague. While some countries have moved rapidly to meet the commitments, others, including the UK, have been bogged down by domestic constraints, setting the stage for a potential clash with Trump.

The Nato secretary-general acknowledged Trump's frustrations with allies during the Iran war but sought to downplay them as "isolated cases", noting that 4,000 to 5,000 US planes took off from bases in Europe during the conflict.

Rutte is known in Europe as a Trump whisperer and has gone to great lengths to flatter the president and keep him engaged in Nato in the face of his persistent criticism of the alliance and threats to leave it altogether.

Nine or 10 non-Nato countries were expected to attend the leaders' summit in Ankara in addition to the 32 Nato member states, Rutte said.

"They want to hear your lead," he said to Trump. "And you will provide it, I know it."

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