Beat: Politics

PRES. MACRON'S COALITION OF VOLUNTEERS AND EUROPE'S NEW ANTI?MISSILE SHIELD

FROM EVIAN G7 TO THE INVALIDES:

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USPA NEWS - On the eve of France's 14 July military parade this year held under a suffocating heatwave and with 32,000 hectares already burned by wildfires, President Emmanuel Macron has chosen to send a clear geopolitical message. At the Hôtel national des Invalides, the French president co?chaired a summit of the "Coalition of Volunteers" alongside the British prime minister and the German chancellor, with Volodymyr Zelensky in attendance, to reaffirm support for Ukraine's defence and to anchor long?term security guarantees. In parallel, Paris hosted the first meeting of a new integrated Anti?Ballistic Missile Coalition, signalling that Europe's defence architecture is being re?engineered around the missile threat revealed by Russia's war against Ukraine. Source Elysee, french Presidency)

A SUMMIT OF VOLUNTEERS ON THE EVE OF 14 JULY

The "Coalition of Volunteers" summit on 13 July 2026 is the political continuation of the Evian G7 meeting and of the Paris Declaration of 6 January 2026. France, the United Kingdom and Germany co?chaired the gathering at the Invalides, in the presence of President Zelensky, to take stock of operational planning for security guarantees meant to ensure a "robust and durable peace" in Ukraine once the current war phase ends.

Bringing together the main contributors to military and financial support for Kyiv, the summit also prepared the symbolic sequence of the 14 July parade, where leaders of the coalition are invited as guests of honour on the presidential tribune. It is in this setting a national holiday, a capital city under canicule and a country fighting megafires from the south to Fontainebleau that President Emmanuel Macron seeks to show France as both a front?line supporter of Ukraine and a framework nation for European defence.

FROM FORMAT NORMANDY TO COALITION OF VOLUNTEERS

The Paris summit also underlines a shift in diplomatic formats. The so called Normandy format which brought together France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia after 2014 to stabilise the Donbas and avoid a full scale war effectively collapsed on 24 February 2022, when Russia launched its invasion. Since then, attempts at ceasefire or peace initiatives, including recent contacts by Donald Trump with both Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky, have failed to restore a stable negotiation table.

In this vacuum, President Emmanuel Macron's "Coalition of Volunteers" offers a different logic: not a negotiation format that includes Russia, but a grouping of states committed to Ukraine's defence and to deterring future aggression, including along NATO's eastern flank in countries like Poland or in regions where Russia might test other borders, such as Georgia. This coalition is designed not only to support Ukraine during the war, but to organise the "after" in terms of border security, arms supplies and long?term commitments.

AN INTEGRATED ANTIBALLISTIC MISSILE COALITION

The most concrete outcome of the Paris sequence is the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the Integrated Anti?Ballistic Missile Coalition. Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom announced the launch of a "purely defensive" coalition focused on anti?ballistic capabilities, with a Flagship Project to develop such a capacity at pace.

The declaration states that protecting Europe requires an integrated missile defence architecture capable of deterring and defeating future missile threats, built through collective effort, technological openness and trusted industrial cooperation. The new coalition is meant to complement existing national and NATO ballistic missile defence systems, not to replace them. By pooling their defence industrial bases, R&D and operational experience and by explicitly recognising Ukraine's unique experience in defending against massive Russian missile and drone attacks the signatories aim to build a shared European antiballistic capacity. The coalition is open

to other nations that share its principles and objectives.

INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION AND UKRAINE'S EXPERIENCE

Ahead of the summit at the Invalides, the first meeting of the anti?ballistic coalition was held at the Quai d'Orsay, which Macron came to close after a bilateral with President Zelensky. This meeting focused on the concrete means needed to allow Ukraine to defend itself, on reinforcing industrial cooperation between participating countries and on pooling know?how across Europe's defence industries.

The declaration foresees common operational requirements, joint technical working groups, clear governance mechanisms and a roadmap towards initial operational capabilities, all within the constitutional and international obligations of each member state. It also mentions support for joint research and development under the Flagship Project, exploring funding options and promoting enhanced data and information sharing. In practice, this means the Paris process is as much about industry and technology as it is about politics and symbolism.

A STRATEGIC MESSAGE UNDER HEAT AND FLAMES

This entire diplomatic choreography unfolds against a background that is anything but ceremonial. France is still facing a severe heatwave, with temperatures near 40 degrees, hospitals under strain and more than 2,000 excess deaths recorded in June. Wildfires have already destroyed more than 32,000 hectares since the start of the year, and the mega?fire in the Fontainebleau forest a symbol of French heritage has yet to be fully contained despite the mobilisation of hundreds of firefighters and civilian volunteers.

In this context, the decision to maintain a large scale 14 July military parade on the Champs Elysee, with Zelensky as guest of honour, carries a double message: domestically, it is meant to show that the state remains in control despite climatic and environmental crises; internationally, it signals that France intends to keep projecting itself as a military and diplomatic power, capable of both managing internal emergencies and shaping the future of European security.

BETWEEN SYMBOLS AND ARCHITECTURE

The Coalition of Volunteers summit and the creation of an Integrated Anti Ballistic Missile Coalition show that France is using the 14 July sequence to lock in a long?term strategic role: as a guarantor of Ukraine's security, a driver of European defence integration and a host for new coalitions that go beyond the old Normandy format.

Yet these initiatives also highlight a tension. While Paris works on deterrence architectures and anti?missile shields, it must simultaneously manage the realities of a country under canicule, with forests burning at the gates of its capital and emergency services stretched thin. The question that remains is whether this double front internal resilience and external security can be held over time, or whether the heat and fires of 2026 will force France to rethink not only its diplomacy, but the very foundations of its own protection. (Source French Presidency/ELysee)

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