



United Kingdom and France Deploy 1,500 Troops in Poland: First Field Test for the Coalition of the Willing

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Approximately 1,500 British and French military personnel will be deployed in Poland in September 2026 to participate in the first major field exercise organized under the so-called “Coalition of the Willing,” the group of NATO countries supporting Ukraine and preparing potential security guarantees after a ceasefire.

Based on the information available so far, it will not be a classic offensive exercise nor a maneuver focused on airdrops, ground combat, or special forces operations. The core of the activity will be the ability to rapidly transfer men, vehicles, materials, and command structures from Western Europe to the eastern flank.

An apparently logistical test, but with much broader military and political significance.

The Coalition of the Willing moves from meetings to exercises

The decision to organize the maneuver in Poland was announced after the latest meetings between the countries that make up the Coalition of the Willing.

The group, mainly led by London and Paris, was established to strengthen European support for Ukraine and to develop a series of security guarantees to be activated in the event the conflict enters a ceasefire phase or a negotiated agreement.

The British government has described the Coalition as a grouping of over thirty countries, coordinated by the United Kingdom and France, with the aim of supporting lasting peace and the future security of Ukraine. The structure does not formally coincide with NATO and allows individual states to join with different contributions, which may include troops, aviation, naval forces, intelligence, logistics, training, or air defense.

The September exercise will therefore represent the first real attempt to transform months of political statements and military planning into a verifiable capability on the ground.

Approximately 1,500 British and French military personnel

According to Polish Deputy Defense Minister Paweł Bejda, about 1,500 soldiers from the United Kingdom and France will reach Poland to participate in the activities.

The exercise will focus mainly on the transfer and transportation of forces. The goal, in the words of the Polish representative, will be to demonstrate that the Coalition countries are truly capable of organizing large-scale military movements.

It will not be enough to simply bring some units to a training ground. The entire chain necessary to receive, move, and support a multinational contingent must be verified: ports, airports, railways, road convoys, fuel, maintenance, communications, and coordination with civil authorities.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk had already anticipated that the first exercises with British and French units would be held in Poland during the fall, as part of the preparation of the Coalition of the Willing.

Not just a simple logistical exercise

Transferring 1,500 military personnel may seem a limited objective compared to large NATO exercises involving tens of thousands of men. But the number of participants does not necessarily represent the most important aspect.

The real test will concern the ability to set a complete contingent in motion.

Each unit must be accompanied by vehicles, communication systems, fuel, ammunition, mobile workshops, spare parts, medical capabilities, command apparatus, and logistical personnel. To keep even a relatively small force operational, constant links with the starting bases and a system capable of replacing men and materials are needed.

The exercise should therefore verify:

- the reception of units at ports and airports;
- the unloading and movement of vehicles;
- the transfer by road and rail;
- the coordination between different armies;
- customs and border crossing procedures;
- fuel supply;
- maintenance and recovery of vehicles;
- protection of military columns;
- security of railway and logistical hubs;
- continuity of communications;
- coordination with Polish authorities.

In a potential real scenario, these steps should be executed quickly, under the threat of sabotage, cyberattacks, electronic interference, and hostile operations against infrastructure.

Poland as a major logistical gateway to Ukraine

The choice of Poland is not accidental.

Since the beginning of the large-scale Russian invasion, the country has become the main entry point for Western military aid destined for Ukraine. Weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and

materials from the United States and European allies largely transit through Polish territory.

Warsaw also has ports, airports, rail lines, and major road axes that connect it both to Western Europe and the Ukrainian border.

Poland therefore represents the most realistic place to verify the functioning of the logistical chain of a future multinational force. A potential European contingent intended to support Ukraine's security would almost inevitably use Polish territory as a transit, gathering, supply, and support area.

The exercise does not imply, however, that the 1,500 military personnel will enter Ukraine. For now, a deployment in Poland has been announced, not the crossing of the Ukrainian border.

The Future Multinational Force for Ukraine

The Coalition of the Willing has been working for some time on the possible establishment of a multinational force aimed at contributing to Ukraine's security after a potential ceasefire.

The concept does not necessarily involve an interposition force placed directly on the front line. Among the discussed hypotheses are training activities, infrastructure protection, logistical support, maritime security, airspace defense, and assistance in rebuilding Ukrainian military capabilities.

France has confirmed that a future multinational force should begin conducting exercises in countries bordering Ukraine, precisely to verify deployment capability in anticipation of a possible ceasefire.

The Polish maneuver thus appears as the first concrete test of this project.

This does not mean that sending troops to Ukraine has already been decided. However, it means that the United Kingdom, France, and Poland want to avoid being unprepared in case a political decision makes it necessary to quickly deploy a European force.

Why the United Kingdom and France Lead the Initiative

London and Paris are the two main military promoters of the Coalition.

Both countries possess armed forces capable of conducting operations abroad, autonomous nuclear capabilities, combat aviation, blue-water navy, airborne units, and special forces.

France and the United Kingdom have also been collaborating for years through the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, a joint force designed to be deployed quickly in crisis situations.

This experience makes the two countries the natural candidates to create the initial core of a future multinational force.

The British and French contribution could include not only combat units but also commands, strategic transport, air defense, engineering, intelligence, electronic warfare, military health, and logistical support.

This is Not a NATO Exercise

Another important element is the distinction between the Coalition of the Willing and NATO.

The United Kingdom, France, and Poland are members of the Atlantic Alliance and use interoperable doctrines, standards, and communication systems. Many other countries in the Coalition are also NATO members.

The exercise, however, has not been announced as an Alliance maneuver nor as an activity of the Allied Reaction Force.

The Coalition of the Willing represents a distinct political-military format, built to allow interested countries to make specific commitments to Ukraine without necessarily requiring a unanimous decision from all NATO allies.

This formula guarantees greater flexibility but also raises questions about command, rules of engagement, funding, and the protection of potentially deployed forces.

The Air Defense Problem

A multinational contingent sent near or within Ukraine would need much broader protection than that required during a normal training mission.

The war has demonstrated the vulnerability of bases, depots, airports, railways, and logistical columns to attacks conducted with ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and long-range drones.

A future European force should therefore be accompanied by air and missile defense systems, electronic warfare, anti-drone capabilities, and constant intelligence.

In recent Coalition meetings, the construction of a shared European program for defense against ballistic missiles has also been discussed, leveraging the experience gained by Ukraine during the conflict.

This shows how the Coalition's preparation is not only about sending troops but building an entire security architecture.

The Real Message to Moscow

The exercise will inevitably also have a deterrent function.

The United Kingdom, France, and Poland intend to demonstrate that European support for Ukraine is not limited to sending weapons and funding. The Coalition countries want to show they are capable of organizing, transporting, and sustaining a multinational force on the eastern flank.

The message to Russia is that a potential ceasefire agreement would not necessarily leave Ukraine isolated or without guarantees.

The credibility of this message will depend, however, on the actual strength of the available forces, the political will of governments, and the rules provided in case of a new Russian aggression.

A symbolic force, lacking air defense and unable to react, would indeed risk becoming more of a target than a deterrent.

A Test for Europe Too

The exercise in Poland will finally be a test of Europe's ability to act with a more limited U.S. contribution.

For decades, major Western military operations have relied on U.S. capabilities for strategic transport, intelligence, satellite communications, missile defense, and logistical support.

The Coalition of the Willing will have to demonstrate how much Europe is capable of organizing a credible and sustainable force autonomously.

The 1,500 troops expected for September do not yet represent a force sufficient to ensure Ukraine's security. However, they constitute the first concrete module through which to verify procedures, timing, and vulnerabilities.

From Political Will to Military Capability

The Coalition of the Willing thus enters a new phase.

After months of summits, statements, and operational hypotheses, the United Kingdom and France are preparing to deploy a contingent in Poland to test the ability to transfer and sustain military forces on the European eastern flank.

It is not yet the future multinational force for Ukraine, and no entry of Western troops into the country has been announced.

But it is the first necessary step to understand if such a force could indeed be constituted.

The upcoming information on the participating units will allow us to determine whether paratroopers, air-mobile units, or specialized components will also be involved.

For now, the main news is another: the Coalition of the Willing no longer wants to exist only on paper. In September, it will begin to verify if it is truly capable of moving men and equipment to the most sensitive point of European security.

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