



This week's big news

DID YOU KNOW?
The European Union and NATO have their headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.



Leaders who attended the meetings in Brussels

The Ukrainian flag



Ukraine's flag consists of a horizontal band of blue over a band of yellow. Together they represent clear blue skies over golden wheat fields. Ukraine is one of the world's largest growers of grain. Before Russia invaded in February, 71% of the country's land was agricultural, and it was the world's fifth-largest exporter of wheat.

World leaders meet to help Ukraine

On March 24, world leaders gathered in Brussels, Belgium, to show a united front against Russia, which continues to attack Ukraine. They attended a rare emergency summit to discuss ways to increase pressure on Russia and help the millions of Ukrainians who have fled their country.

Who attended the meetings?

US President Joe Biden called for the meetings with members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), and the Group of Seven (G7). NATO is a military alliance of 30 nations, mostly in Europe and North America. The EU is a group of 27 nations, mostly in Europe, while the G7 includes countries with the most advanced economies. The US belongs to NATO and the G7. In addition to Biden, attendees included Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, President Emmanuel Macron of France, Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the UK, and Prime Minister Kaja Kallas of Estonia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed the summit by video.



The NATO emblem

What did the leaders do?

The organizations took action on several fronts. Biden said the US would take in 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, give more than \$1 billion in humanitarian

aid, and commit more than \$11 billion over five years to help with food shortages created by the conflict. The G7 and EU announced new economic sanctions (penalties) on more than 400 Russian individuals, businesses, and government groups, including the legislature (the Duma, similar to Congress). The G7 issued a strong warning to Russia against using chemical weapons (poisonous chemicals), which are illegal. Biden joined other leaders in calling for Russia to be expelled from the Group of 20 (G20), which includes nations with the largest economies. Leaders also said they would hold Russia accountable for attacking civilians and non-military sites, which are considered war crimes.

What didn't the leaders do?

NATO nations have given billions of dollars in equipment and aid to Ukraine and said at the summit that they will continue to provide some forms of military support. But Zelensky has pleaded for the US and its allies to go beyond that and establish a "no-fly zone" to prevent Russian planes from flying over Ukraine. He has also asked for equipment such as fighter jets and tanks. Leaders at the summit declined to do either of these because they are concerned that those steps could make the tensions with Russia worse.

The EU also decided not to block Russian gas and oil imports from entering its countries, which the US has already done. EU nations are much more dependent on these energy sources from Russia than the US is.

How did people react?

Standing with Biden after the meetings, Ursula von der Leyen, head of the EU's European Commission, said, "When we act together, we're stronger and we really can make a difference." The G7 said in a statement, "We will continue to stand with the overwhelming majority of the international community in condemning Russia's military aggression." Some political experts said the show of unity sent an important message to Russia. However, a spokesperson for Zelensky said he was "very disappointed" that the meetings did not result in more military support.

What will happen next?

After the summit, Biden traveled to Poland to meet with Ukrainian refugees. The next G20 meeting will be held in October in Indonesia, and Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to attend. German leader Olaf Scholz said G20 members would decide whether to eject Russia from the group but that the priority is peace in Ukraine. When *The Week Junior* went to press, Ukraine and Russia were meeting to discuss an end to the conflict.