

The US arming of Ukraine and the danger of World War III

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The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally condemns plans being worked out by the Obama administration to arm the right-wing regime in Ukraine with billions of dollars in advanced weaponry. These moves threaten to spark a direct conflict between the US and Russia, two nuclear-armed powers, and ignite a Third World War.

Discussions over arming the Western-backed government in Kiev come amidst setbacks to the offensive against eastern Ukraine launched by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko last month. According to Monday's *New York Times*, "after a series of striking reversals that Ukraine's forces have suffered in recent weeks, the Obama administration is taking a fresh look at the question of military aid."

Washington has already sent military trainers to Ukraine and pledged \$350 million in "nonlethal" military aid to Kiev. Now, the *Times* writes, top Obama administration officials are increasingly unified around "an independent report...by eight former senior American officials, who urge the United States to send \$3 billion in defense arms and equipment to Ukraine." These funds would provide the Kiev regime with "anti-armor missiles, reconnaissance drones, armored Humvees, and radars that can determine the location of enemy rocket and artillery fire."

This reckless escalation is being plotted by a criminal cabal of government officials, military and intelligence operatives and their associated think tanks, including the Brookings Institution. It is dictated by the interests of a corporate and financial oligarchy that, in its pursuit of global hegemony, threatens the very future of human civilization.

The implications of the plans being put in place have been concealed from the people of the United States and the world. One of the few sober appraisals came

from Germany's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, which warned in an article published Monday: "US arms supplies to Ukraine would be—and that can be taken almost literally—a declaration of war against Moscow."

The newspaper cited a Russian military expert, Yevgeny Buchinsky, who warned that in response to an offensive against the Donbass by Kiev, "Russia will have to intervene and then, bluntly speaking, to take Kiev. Then NATO would be in a difficult situation. Then you would have to start World War III, which no one wants."

These statements follow warnings from Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the Soviet Union, who said recently that a European war over Ukraine would "inevitably lead to a nuclear war."

As always, the war plans of the US and its imperialist allies are couched in the language of defense—in this case, of "resisting Russian aggression." In fact, the escalating conflict over Ukraine is the product of a campaign by the US, Germany and the European Union to seize Kiev and turn Ukraine into a military outpost of the NATO alliance, pointed at the heart of European Russia.

A year ago this month, a putsch led by the fascistic Right Sector militia and backed by Washington and Berlin ousted pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. He was replaced by an unstable, unpopular coalition of right-wing parties that made no secret of their violent hostility to Russia.

The actions of the new government, including the mass killing of pro-Russian protesters, as in the May 2014 Odessa massacre, provoked armed resistance in areas of eastern Ukraine with large ethnic Russian populations. The regime responded with bloody offensives by fascist militias against cities such as Donetsk, Luhansk, Mariupol and Slavyansk. Thousands

died last year in attacks carried out in coordination with the CIA, whose director John Brennan visited Ukraine undercover.

Lacking any social base outside of a narrow layer of oligarchs and fascist thugs, the Kiev regime has failed to defeat the eastern Ukraine separatists, whom Moscow has armed and supported. Washington is responding by preparing an even greater bloodbath against the population of eastern Ukraine, directly posing the risk of full-scale war with Russia.

The international working class faces the disastrous geostrategic consequences of the Stalinist bureaucracy's dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and restoration of capitalism. This final betrayal by the Stalinists has enabled US imperialism to manipulate and inflame ethnic tensions within the former USSR.

The ultimate aim of the US and its allies is to reduce Russia to an impoverished and semi-colonial status. Such a strategy, historically associated with Carter administration National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, is again being openly promoted.

In a speech last year at the Wilson Center, Brzezinski called on Washington to provide Kiev with "weapons designed particularly to permit the Ukrainians to engage in effective urban warfare of resistance." In line with the policies now recommended in the report by the Brookings Institution and other think tanks calling for US arms to the Kiev regime, Brzezinski called for providing "anti-tank weapons...weapons capable for use in urban short-range fighting."

While the strategy outlined by Brzezinski is politically criminal—trapping Russia in an ethnic urban war in Ukraine that would threaten the deaths of millions, if not billions of people—it is fully aligned with the policies he has promoted against Russia for decades.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Washington pursued this strategy by organizing "color revolutions" to install pro-US and anti-Russian regimes in ex-Soviet republics, including Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus.

A decade later, amid a far deeper economic and geostrategic crisis of global capitalism, Washington is proceeding even more ruthlessly. The crisis in Ukraine has been utilized to massively expand US and NATO forces throughout Eastern Europe, combined with new threats and ultimatums.

The only alternative to disaster is the mobilization of the international working class in struggle against imperialism, on a socialist platform. The reactionary Russian nationalism of the Putin regime, the representative of the capitalist oligarchy that emerged from the dissolution of the USSR, is bankrupt. Incapable of making any appeal to opposition to war in the international working class, the Putin government inflames ethnic tensions within the former USSR. To the extent that it seeks to counter the aggression of NATO on the basis of Russian nationalism, it only paves the way for nuclear war.

Last July, the WSWS wrote of the intensifying aggression against Russia: "Whatever the short-term outcome, the long-term implication of the agenda being pursued by the United States and the European imperialist powers leads inexorably in the direction of war with cataclysmic consequences. The greatest danger facing the working class is that decisions are being taken behind the scenes, with masses of people largely unaware of the risks facing the world's population..."

"Anyone who believes that a nuclear war is impossible because modern governments, unlike those that were in power in 1914, would not risk catastrophe, is deluding himself. If anything, the regimes that exist today are even more reckless. Beset by mounting economic and social problems for which they have no progressive solution, they are ever more inclined to see war as a risk worth taking."

This warning is being confirmed as imperialism drives the world toward a nuclear conflagration. The building of the International Committee of the Fourth International as the leadership of a mass global antiwar, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movement of the working class is a matter of the greatest urgency.



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