

NATO ratchets up anti-Russian offensive in Poland and Ukraine

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12 November 2021

The UK's announcement yesterday that it has dispatched a detachment of ten troops from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers to Poland is the first deployment of boots on the ground by an allied NATO power to assist with the country's border confrontation with Belarus. Although small, the involvement of forces from Britain signals an escalation of the ongoing provocation being staged by the Polish government, ultimately targeting Russia.

Several thousand refugees are seeking entry from Belarus to the European Union (EU) via Poland and have been met with a massive deployment of military force and violence. A reported 20,000 Polish soldiers are currently stationed on the Belarussian border, overseeing illegal, brutal pushbacks of asylum seekers.

Poland has accused Belarus of "hybrid warfare" and "state terrorism," claiming government forces are ferrying people thousands of miles and helping them across the border. They have pointed the finger at Russian President Vladimir Putin as the architect of this policy.

That Poland's sabre rattling is part of a broader offensive was confirmed by statements issued this week by members of the United Nations Security Council and NATO.

On Thursday, during a meeting of the UNSC, Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway, the United States and Britain issued a statement, rejected by permanent UN member Russia. The statement read, "We condemn the orchestrated instrumentalisation of human beings whose lives and wellbeing have been put in danger for political purposes by Belarus, with the objective of destabilizing neighboring countries and the European Union's external border and diverting attention away from its own increasing human rights violations."

They called for a "strong international reaction" and pledged "to discuss further measures that we can take."

NATO's statement made clear the scope of the anti-

Russia offensive being mounted:

"The North Atlantic Council strongly condemns the continued instrumentalisation of irregular migration artificially created by Belarus as part of hybrid actions targeted against Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia for political purposes... We will remain vigilant against the risk of further escalation and provocation by Belarus at its borders with Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, and will continue to monitor the implications for the security of the Alliance."

While NATO mounts a propaganda campaign over the alleged "weaponization" of migrants in Belarus, it continues to carry out reckless military provocations in the Black Sea, on Russia's border.

Russia reported Thursday that it had scrambled a fighter jet to intercept a British Boeing RC-135 Rivet Joint spy plane, which it claimed was trying to get close to Crimea. The Russian military said four spy planes and two US warships were observed operating in the region in the same 24-hour period.

Russia's military spokesperson Major General Igor Konashenkov commented, "The Russian defence ministry treats the military activity of the US and its allies in the Black Sea region as scouting out a potential theatre of war in case Ukraine prepares a military operation to solve the crisis in eastern Ukraine."

Tensions have been mounting for the last month, following an escalation of the conflict in the east of Ukraine and renewed talk of admitting the ferociously anti-Russian Ukrainian state to NATO.

On October 26, Ukrainian forces carried out their first drone strike on pro-Russian forces in the Donbass region, using a Turkish Bayraktar TB2k—technology *Foreign Policy* described as a "game changer" in the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Libya.

The possibility of Ukraine being granted NATO membership was underscored by US Defense Secretary

Lloyd Austin's trip to Ukraine, as well as Georgia and Romania, a few days earlier. Asked during his visit about Russia's objections to Ukraine's NATO ambitions, Austin replied, "Ukraine... has a right to decide its own future foreign policy, and we expect that they will be able to do that without any outside interference."

He called on Russia to "end its occupation of Crimea" and warned, "We will continue to do everything we can to support Ukraine's efforts to develop the capability to defend itself."

Putin responded, "Formal membership [of Ukraine] in NATO may not take place, but military development of the territory is already under way... This creates a threat to the Russian Federation."

On October 30, the *Washington Post* reported a significant build-up of Russian forces near the country's Ukrainian border. *Politico* took up the story two days later, reporting that satellite images from Maxar Technologies showed "a buildup of armored units, tanks and self-propelled artillery along with ground troops massing near the Russian town of Yelnya." These included the elite 1st Guards Tank Army.

The website continued, "a new analysis by Jane's [a military intelligence company] on Monday reveals that equipment from Russia's 4th Tank Division has been moved to areas around Bryansk and Kursk close to Ukraine's northern border."

Ukraine's defence ministry claims there are some 90,000 Russian troops involved in total.

Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed *Politico*'s article as "low quality." At the same time, he insisted, "The movement of our military equipment and army units... is exclusively our business."

He said yesterday, "We take measures to ensure our security when our opponents take defiant action near our borders. We can't stay indifferent to that."

Ukraine has so far deployed 8,500 troops to its side of the border with Russia.

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken held a joint press conference in Washington with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. Blinken claimed, "Our concern is that Russia may make a serious mistake of attempting to rehash what it undertook back in 2014," referring to the annexation of Crimea following the NATO-backed coup in Ukraine.

Warning, "We're looking at this very, very closely. We're also consulting very closely with allies and partners," he concluded, "The message we're sending today that I repeated to Dmytro is that our commitment to

Ukraine's sovereignty, to its independence, to its territorial integrity is ironclad."

The secretary of state added yesterday that the US was "looking at the various tools that we have."

His threats were echoed by the French foreign and defence ministers after a meeting with their Russian counterparts. The French ministers, "warned of serious consequences related to any new harm to Ukraine's territorial integrity" and "condemned the irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour of Belarusian authorities concerning the instrumentalization of migration flows targeting several countries of the European Union," according to a joint press release.

On Friday morning, the UK's *Daily Telegraph* ran the front-page headline, "Russia may invade Ukraine, warns US." The story claimed that "senior Whitehall sources" had told the paper the UK government was "concerned" about reports of Russian troop movements near the Ukrainian border and that "there was 'twitchiness' and 'anxiety' among officials."

It continued, "They [US officials] have shared intelligence on the Russian movements with allies and briefed them on the possibility of a military operation."

These events highlight the serious danger of war breaking out in Europe.

In Poland and Ukraine, the European and NATO powers are relying on far-right proxies with major fascist constituencies to push an aggressive anti-Russian campaign involving the deployment of thousands of troops. They have their own forces positioned within striking distance of Russian territory.

The situation they have created threatens to trigger an armed confrontation. In addition to its deployment of soldiers to the border with Ukraine, Russia carried out snap paratrooper drills with Belarus on Friday, just 20 miles from the flashpoint on the Polish border. Britain claims the Royal Air Force escorted two Russian nuclear-capable bombers flying over the North Sea towards the English Channel the same day.

Seeking to deflect enormous social tensions outward and to pursue their long-held strategic goal of a dominated, subservient Russia, the imperialist powers are preparing a catastrophe.



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