

US and NATO ramp up anti-Russia war drive

Andrea Peters
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While the US and NATO continue their military build-up on Russia's borders, their representatives are pressing ahead with hysterical anti-Russian rhetoric and threats of war. Insisting that Moscow has massed troops and equipment on the Ukrainian border and escalated its anti-Ukrainian campaign on social media tenfold in preparation for invading its western neighbor, the secretary of the transatlantic alliance Jens Stoltenberg declared Tuesday that Russia would pay a "high price" for such an action. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken echoed his words on Wednesday, warning of "severe consequences." Both have reiterated their support for "Ukrainian sovereignty."

Moscow insists that it has every right to move troops on its territory. There has been no evidence presented that the forces positioned in Russia's west, the size of which is entirely based on Washington's claims, are preparing to invade Ukraine. While admitting that it is unclear whether Putin had determined whether or not to go ahead with an "incursion," Blinken claimed that the Kremlin is "putting in place the capacity to do so in short order."

In reality, NATO, working in alliance with the Kiev government, has been carrying out endless anti-Russian provocations, including naval exercises in the Black Sea, bomber flights within miles of Russian airspace, massive military training operations along Russia's entire western border, and troop deployments to the Baltic states.

In June, a UK warship provocatively entered Black Sea waters claimed by Russia. Over just the past month alone, the US has sent three warships to that region. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said last week that the Kremlin was "witnessing a considerable increase in the US strategic bombers' activity near the Russian borders." They were practicing, he added, how to employ "nuclear weapons against Russia simultaneously from the western and eastern

directions."

On Tuesday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Polish Minister of National Defense Mariusz Blaszczak over the phone about "ways to enhance deterrence along NATO's Eastern Flank." The US and the EU are also escalating denunciations of Russia for allegedly engaging in "hybrid warfare" on the Belarusian-Polish border. Washington just imposed new sanctions on the German-Russian gas pipeline Nord Stream 2. The British *Guardian* reported that the current crisis might result in the pipeline project, which is of major economic and geopolitical significance to the Kremlin, ending entirely.

Last Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared that Kiev had uncovered a plot by Moscow, allegedly in cahoots with Ukraine's richest oligarch, to overthrow his government this week. The Kremlin denies these claims. Western officials have also repeated unsubstantiated charges that the Kremlin, in the words of Blinken, is working "to destabilize Ukraine from within." There are continual references from both quarters about Russia's supposed "prior invasion of Ukraine in 2014"—a conscious distortion of events that followed the installation of a far-right, anti-Russian government in Kiev in a coup that was funded by Washington and Brussels.

The western media, in an effort to prepare the public for a possible mass slaughter instigated by Washington, is flooding the airwaves with reports of Moscow's allegedly demonic aims. The groundwork is being laid for the justification of war against Russia.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Zelensky, who presides over a country in the midst of a disastrous COVID-19 wave, continues to demand that his country be admitted to NATO and that the transatlantic alliance immediately step up military cooperation with his government as part of a "deterrence package" that would also include economic sanctions against

Moscow.

This week, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the deployment by NATO of offensive capabilities on Ukrainian soil is a “red line” that cannot be crossed and proposed that an agreement be reached that precluded that possibility as well the admission of Ukraine to NATO. On Thursday, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Maria Zakharova reiterated this position and warned that any deepening of the NATO-Ukraine relationship would provoke the “destabilization of the military-political situation in Europe.”

In response, NATO head Stoltenberg, speaking in Latvia early this week, said, “It’s only Ukraine and 30 NATO allies that decide when Ukraine is ready to join NATO. Russia has no veto, Russia has no say, and Russia has no right to establish a sphere of influence trying to control their neighbors.”

Speaking in Stockholm on Thursday after a meeting with Blinken in which the latter demanded that Russia drawdown its troops on the Ukrainian border, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made an impotent appeal on this very question. Russia, he insisted, does “not want any conflicts” with NATO over Ukraine, but it has the “right to choose ways to ensure its legitimate security interests.”

“Let’s not forget,” he went on, “the proclaimed principle of indivisibility and security, including in the OSCE, in the NATO Council of Russia, which says that no one has the right to strengthen their security at the expense of the security of others. And the further advance of NATO to the East will definitely affect the fundamental interests of our security.”

He added, “... if NATO still refuses to discuss this theme or the guarantees or ideas put forward by the president of Russia Vladimir Putin, of course we will take measures to ensure that our security, our sovereignty and our territorial integrity does not depend on anyone else.”

On Thursday, Lavrov and Blinken indicated that there would be a forthcoming summit meeting between their countries’ leaders.

The reckless provocations by US imperialism are in no small part driven by a profound domestic crisis. American capitalism, whose current survival is based on an overinflated stock market kept alive by the massive printing of money and forcing people to work

in the face of a deadly virus so that surplus value can be pumped out of them, must rely on military violence to secure its world domination. It sees the Russian ruling class’ control over more than 6.6 million square miles of the world’s resources and markets to be an intolerable limit on its appetites. For this, the occupants of the Kremlin and Russia’s oligarchs, whose wealth and power are entirely bound up with the global capitalist system, have no answer.



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