

US media launches war propaganda campaign against Russia as CIA prepares to back an “insurgency” in Ukraine

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On Thursday and Friday, hours after a series of negotiations over Ukraine between Russia and NATO failed, the US intelligence apparatus and media have launched a massive campaign aimed at preparing public opinion for a military escalation of the conflict.

The talks had been set to fail from the beginning since both NATO and the United States made clear that Russian proposals on NATO expansion were “non-starters” after Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly begged NATO to give Russia “something, at least something.”

On Friday, CNN carried a report, based on an unnamed United States intelligence official, claiming that the US had uncovered a covert group of Russian operatives preparing to carry out a “false flag” operation in eastern Ukraine in order to justify a supposedly pending invasion.

As with all war propaganda pieces that rely on leaks from the US intelligence, the sources remained anonymous, no other evidence for the claims made was provided, and little was revealed about the exact nature of the allegedly impending attack. This allows the US to pin the blame on Russia for any escalation that may occur in eastern Ukraine in the coming weeks and months.

The *New York Times* followed up the initial CNN story with a piece by David Sanger, a longtime “insider” of the US intelligence and military apparatus and author of countless pieces of war propaganda. Sanger quoted several Biden administration officials who fully endorsed the intelligence leaks.

“Russia is laying the groundwork to have the option of fabricating a pretext for invasion,” White House Press Secretary Jan Psaki said, “including through sabotage activities and information operations, by accusing Ukraine of preparing an imminent attack against Russian forces in eastern Ukraine.”

The Kremlin has rejected the veracity of the reports with Press Secretary Dmitri Peskov stating, “So far all these statements have been unfounded and have not been

confirmed by anything.”

Over the past months, NATO, with the US taking the lead, has pushed for an escalation of tensions with Russia, including through the deployment of military ships to the Black Sea and announcements that it would provide further military assistance to Ukraine.

In response, Russia has sent tens of thousands of troops to its border with Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin recently warned that in Ukraine, Russia has “no way further to retreat.” He explicitly indicated that the Kremlin oligarchy fears a repetition of the Yugoslavia scenario on a much grander scale in Russia: that is, the disintegration of the country through a combination of bombing raids and civil war, fueled by the promotion of various nationalist, separatist and religious forces by the imperialist powers.

Within this context, the current outpouring of war propaganda reports has a highly calculated and provocative character. They are designed to enflame what is already an explosive situation.

The “false flag” reports were preceded on Thursday by a Yahoo report, which revealed that the CIA is overseeing “a secret intensive training program in the U.S. for elite Ukrainian special operations forces and other intelligence personnel.” The report was based on claims by five former intelligence and National Security officials, who again remained anonymous.

While the sources claimed the program was defensive in nature, it is clearly intended to prepare and assist Ukrainian paramilitary forces in fighting Russian troops. One former CIA official plainly stated, “The United States is training an insurgency” in order “to kill Russians.”

On Friday, the *New York Times* quoted at length James Stavridis, a retired four-star Navy admiral who previously served as the Supreme Allied Commander at NATO. Pointing to the US support for the mujahedeen in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union in the late 1970s and 1980s, Stavridis said, “The level of military support” for

Ukraine “would make our efforts in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union look puny by comparison.”

As noted by the WSWS such a campaign falls in line with a policy recently expressed by Democratic Senator Chris Murphy who stated, “Ukraine can become the next Afghanistan for Russia if it chooses to move further.”

These threats have to be taken as a serious warning by the international working class. US imperialism has a long record of “false flag” operations, which it has orchestrated and helped carry out in various parts of the globe, including in Vietnam, Iraq and Syria. The death toll of these imperialist interventions numbers in the millions.

In fact, a “false flag” operation played a role in the 2014 US- and EU-backed coup against elected Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. As has since been shown by Canadian Political Science Professor Ivan Katchanovski, US-aligned forces carried out a “false flag” operation by opening fire on Maidan protesters. The shootings, which were falsely blamed on the Yanukovich regime, were the immediate precursor for its violent overthrow.

The coup resulted in an ongoing civil war in eastern Ukraine that has killed over 14,000 people over the past eight years. Since 2014, the United States has given Ukraine another \$2.5 billion in military assistance. Far-right and neo-Nazi forces played the central role in both the coup and the ensuing civil war, enjoying the direct support and protection from the Ukrainian state.

The imperialist buildup of far-right paramilitary forces in Ukraine has a long history. German imperialism could count on the support of fascist forces during its occupation of Ukraine in World War II. In the immediate years following the world war, the CIA and other US intelligence agencies supported the remnants of the collaborationist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and its armed offshoot, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

The US Army’s Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) in Munich protected infamous OUN leader Stepan Bandera from arrest by the Soviets. That Bandera was an anti-Semite and Nazi collaborator and that the UPA carried out the massacre of Jews and Poles during World War II were of little importance to the CIA, which was hoping to employ Ukrainian nationalists in order to help them “roll back” the Soviet Union.

It is on these forces that any US-backed “insurgency” in Ukraine will primarily rely. Both the “false flag” and CIA “insurgency” reports come on the heels of another propaganda effort, designed to portray Ukrainian far-right forces as supposed freedom fighters against Russia, a trope that was pioneered by the Ukrainian far right itself during and after World War II.

Earlier in December the *New York Times* published a story

titled “Training Civilians, Ukraine Nurtures a Resistance in Waiting.” In his glowing portrayal of “volunteer brigades,” the author, Andrew E. Kramer, failed to mention the role of the country’s far-right paramilitary groups, such as the Azov Battalion and Right Sector, in leading such “volunteer” efforts in a clear attempt to conceal and whitewash their political and social background.

Meanwhile, the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky, while corroborating the “false flag” claims of the United States, has made a last-ditch effort at negotiations with Russia and the US. According to Zelensky administration head Andriy Yermak, Zelensky proposed three-way talks between himself, Biden and Putin in a telephone call with Biden.

Speaking with the Atlantic Council, a hawkish think tank in Washington D.C., Yermak acknowledged that he was not sure the United States even supported such a meeting. Russian Press Secretary Dmitri Peskov has stated Moscow had not heard anything yet from the United States regarding Zelensky’s proposed three-way party talks.

The crisis over Ukraine is a direct outcome of the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the US drive to encircle and prepare for war against Russia in the last three decades. Ridden by internal crisis and terrified by the prospect of an emerging movement of the working class against its criminal response to the pandemic, the US ruling class, in particular, is seeking to divert the enormous social tensions outward.

The Russian oligarchy has no answer to the war drive except a combination of desperate diplomatic maneuvers that are aimed at achieving a deal with the imperialist powers, on the one hand, and the promotion of nationalism and preparations for war at home, on the other. The only force capable of stopping the threat of a catastrophic war is the working class, armed with an international socialist political program and leadership.



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