

Johnson government mounts warmongering campaign of lies and threats against Russia

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24 January 2022

The UK is acting as an attack dog for the Biden administration in justifying military conflict with Russia. Its latest provocation was a transparent attempt to provide a *casus belli*, blaming Moscow for an escalating drive to war that is being provoked by the United States.

On Saturday evening, the Foreign Office issued a press release, signed by Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, claiming that Vladimir Putin's government is "looking to install a pro-Russian leader in Kyiv as it considers whether to invade and occupy Ukraine."

The former Ukrainian MP Yevhen Murayev was cited as "a potential candidate," with links to Russian intelligence, along with Serhiy Arbuzov, a former deputy prime minister and later acting prime minister of Ukraine, Andriy Kluyev, another deputy prime minister and chief of staff to former President Viktor Yanukovich, Vladimir Sivkovich, former deputy head of the Ukrainian National Security and Defence Council, and Mykola Azarov, a former prime minister.

Most of those named reside in Russia, which the *Observer* was forced to note makes "their ties to Russia's leadership less a matter of subterfuge than public record." Murayev, Moscow's putative president of Ukraine, told the newspaper, "I'm banned from Russia. Not only that but money from my father's firm there has been confiscated."

History has proved that anything that emanates from Britain's government and security services regarding the danger of war and who is responsible should be assumed to be a pack of lies.

In 2002-3, Tony Blair's Labour government provided its services to the Bush administration in preparing war against Iraq. In March 2002, Blair met with Bush in Crawford, Texas, having promised he would support war against Iraq and, according to Secretary of State Colin Powell, "suggest ideas" on how to "make a credible public case on current Iraqi threats to international peace", and "handle calls for a [United Nations Security Council] blessing that can increase support for us in the region and with UK and European audiences."

MI5 and MI6, with the support of the CIA, then

assembled evidence they knew to be false to further war aims already decided upon—the September 2002 dossier asserting that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction and the February 2003 "dodgy dossier", mostly plagiarised from a thesis by a graduate student.

Once more a monstrous lie is being crafted to justify an act of imperialist violence with potentially unimaginable consequences. The same filthy alliance is in play, with the UK seeking to reinforce the Biden administration's claim on January 20 that Russian intelligence was recruiting current and former Ukrainian government officials to take over government following an invasion.

British imperialism has consistently sought to capitalise on its relationship with the US in order to project its own interests globally. This criminal policy took on even greater importance post-Brexit, as a means of countering Britain's declining world position and meeting the challenge of its European rivals.

Today, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government, battered by a raging economic crisis, widely hated for its murderous herd immunity policy and intent on ending all measures to even ameliorate the pandemic, is seizing on a war drive as a means of rescuing itself. The aim is not to strengthen a supposedly "defensive" struggle by Ukraine, but to create the conditions for an aggressive anti-Russian offensive by the NATO powers.

To make this clear, the Foreign Office press release was accompanied by another portraying Johnson as fighting to establish a new version of Blair's "coalition of the willing", this time an anti-Russian alliance.

It was centred on criticisms of France and Germany, along with boasts of Britain's greater determination to confront Russia. Advancing Johnson as the defender of a unified NATO, the press release attacked French President Emmanuel Macron's suggestion of an independent response to the Ukraine crisis by a stronger European defence pillar as a form of appeasement. "The prime minister has been clear to counterparts in recent days that now is not the time in the face of spiralling aggression on the border to start a

conversation about Europe's strategic autonomy," it stated. Also noted was Johnson's declared opposition to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline transporting Russian gas to Germany as "a major strategic problem for European security".

"The theatrical timing and cloak-and-dagger nature of the intelligence disclosure, which came in the midst of a roiling political scandal at home, raised a more cynical question," wrote the *New York Times*, "whether some in the British government were simply eager to deflect attention from the problems that threaten to topple Prime Minister Boris Johnson... Some Conservative lawmakers warn that Britain cannot afford a messy leadership battle at a time like this. Tough talk about Russia also appeals to the Tory right, and critics say some ambitious officials are taking advantage of the tensions."

Among such ambitious officials, the Conservative chair of the Commons Defence Select Committee, Tobias Ellwood MP, told the BBC, "This is more than just about Ukraine, this is about Putin wanting to establish, absolutely, a sphere of influence way beyond Ukraine itself.... Nato needs to develop a fresh sense of purpose." Defence Secretary Ben Wallace wrote in the *Times* that Russian "aggression" in Ukraine was driven by the "ethno-nationalism at the heart of his ambitions... Not the straw man of Nato encroachment."

All efforts to portray Russia as the aggressor are disproved by an official UK government research briefing, "Military Assistance to Ukraine," issued January 18.

This noted the major extension of military relations with Kiev by the UK, the US and NATO, beginning with Operation Orbital in 2015, when the UK began training the Ukrainian Army, and now encompassing "enhanced defence cooperation", a Memorandum of Intent on developing Ukraine's naval capabilities and the release of a massive £1.7 billion of financing.

Royal Navy vessels have been regularly deployed to the Black Sea region "to conduct joint training exercises with the Ukrainian Navy, most recently in summer 2021 as part of exercise Cossack Mace and as part of NATO's annual Sea Breeze exercise"—leading in June 2021 to an altercation between HMS Defender and Russian jets.

Britain is already leading a 1,200-strong battle group in Estonia, involving 830 UK troops, alongside 300 French troops, and has 140 British soldiers in Poland as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence mission.

Britain's largesse, however, pales before the \$2.6 billion provided by Washington between 1990 and 2000, and around \$5 billion during the US orchestrated campaign to install an anti-Russian government in 2014 that precipitated Russia's defensive annexation of the strategic Black Sea peninsula of Crimea. NATO has in addition stepped-up maritime cooperation with both Ukraine and Georgia, in an

extensive list of exercises including Exercise Joint Endeavour in 2020, with British, US and Canadian troops.

This is a policy of encirclement of Russia, focused on the expansion of NATO membership and the stationing of military forces and equipment directly on Russia's borders or within striking distance.

This past week, the UK sent an additional 30 troops from the Ranger Regiment to Ukraine and delivered 2,000 anti-tank missile launchers. More broadly, the UK is considering sending hundreds more troops to Ukraine's NATO neighbours to act as a "deterrent" to Russia, according to defence sources. Other NATO member states are considering similar moves, a source told the *Times*.

This follows Sunday's report in the *New York Times* that the Biden administration has discussed deploying 1,000 to 5,000 troops to Romania and the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, with the possibility of increasing this to 50,000 troops. Yesterday 8,500 US troops were placed on standby. The US navy has sent the USS Georgia guided-missile submarine to the eastern Mediterranean, where it joins the Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier battle group. A US shipment of 90 tonnes of "lethal aid" arrived in Kiev Saturday, as part of a \$200 million security support package approved in December.

This is the massive campaign of military provocations the Tory warmongers are complicit in, and which must be resolutely opposed by workers and young people.

As always, Johnson and his criminal clique are being backed to the hilt by the Labour Party. Sir Keir Starmer wrote an opinion piece in the Tory Party's house organ, the *Telegraph*, headlined, "Britain must stand firm against Russian aggression".

"Not only does Labour understand the threat posed by Putin's Russia, we stand resolute in our support of Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity," he fulminated. "For too long the implicit message to Moscow has been that Putin can do what he likes and the West will do little to retaliate."



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