

US delivers 300 Javelin missiles to Ukraine as EU announces further military deployments

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A day after the US announced the extraordinarily provocative move of placing 8,500 troops on heightened alert for possible deployment to Eastern Europe, the US delivered some 300 javelin anti-tank missiles — each worth between \$600,000 and \$1.4 million — along with shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapons and bunker busters to Ukraine.

America's top diplomat in Ukraine, Kristina A. Kvien, standing beside the weapons deliveries, warned Russia that Ukrainian troops are “well equipped and they're ready.” She added that in case of war, “The losses to Russia will be heavy.”

The Kremlin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov denounced these moves, stating, “The US is escalating tensions. We are observing these actions of the United States with profound concern.” The leading Russian business daily *Kommersant* openly spoke of a “pre-war situation” on Monday.

Russia conducted a series of military drills on Tuesday that involved elite paratrooper units, warplanes, naval ships and ballistic missiles.

The drills were held across Russia's vast territory, including in Siberia, the Far East, the Baltic Sea, near Ukraine and on Crimea, a peninsula in the Black Sea. Russia has also begun joint military drills with Belarus that are set to last until mid-February.

According to the *Washington Post*, the 8,500 US forces will include elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and 101st Airborne Division and might grow. The White House has already discussed the deployment of 50,000 troops to the region.

On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden declared that the US would not send NATO troops to Ukraine as representatives of the French, German, Russian and Ukrainian governments began meeting for talks in the so called “Normandy-format” in Paris, a half-hearted effort at last-ditch diplomacy that most Russian media outlets have dismissed as meaningless.

Following several reports that pointed to serious tensions between the US and Germany, in particular, US media reports indicate that the Biden administration is now

focusing much of its energy on ensuring “a united front” by NATO against Russia. The German government has opposed US efforts to bring the Nord Stream 2 German-Russian gas pipeline project to an end. Russia delivers about 40 percent of Europe's gas. Gas prices have risen significantly in recent days because of war fears.

Other major sanctions against Russia that the US has threatened, including cutting Russia off the SWIFT financial system, would also hit Europe's economy hard, which is much more closely tied to Russia's than that of the United States. Putting aside both sanctions against SWIFT and Nord Stream 2 for the time being, the White House announced this week that it is preparing “unprecedented export control measures” against Russia.

In a long meeting with European foreign ministers Monday night, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed “preparations to impose massive consequences and severe economic costs” on Russia and a further bolstering of NATO troops in Eastern Europe. Following the meeting, Denmark announced it would dispatch a frigate to the Baltic Sea and send four F-16 fighter jets to Lithuania. Spain is sending war ships to the Black and Mediterranean seas, and the French government indicated it might send troops to Romania, a NATO member bordering the Black Sea and Ukraine.

The European Union also announced that it would grant another \$1.3 billion in funding to Ukraine. The British government, which has been most closely involved in US provocations against Russia, is revamping the Ukrainian navy with a massive \$1.5 billion loan.

In Ukraine, preparations for war are well underway. On Monday, Ukrainian President Zelensky called an urgent meeting of the country's Security Council. A closed meeting between government and parliament members on the war crisis took place on Tuesday. Kiev's mayor, Vitaly Klitchko, has announced a conference of Ukrainian mayors dedicated to a discussion of the “territorial defense” of Ukrainian cities in the event of war for January 28.

The US embassy, Australia, the UK and Germany have all

announced that they would evacuate at least some of their diplomatic personnel and their families in Kiev. Anticipating that military conflict could break out at any time, several major airlines, including Lufthansa, have canceled all overnight flights to Kiev.

Last week, speaking before the Valdai Club, an important Moscow think tank, the vice foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov said that the European security situation was now “critical.” He said that the key demands that Russia submitted in writing to NATO in December were: legal guarantees of a non-expansion of NATO, a return of NATO to its borders from 1997 and the non-stationing of missiles in Eastern Europe.

Ryabkov said, “We are not prepared to wait forever, we are not prepared to get dragged down in the usual diplomatic-bureaucratic process about optimal formats for this, we need a direct and understandable response and it must be a written response.”

NATO has announced that it would send its response to Russia’s demands along with the US later this week.

In an interview with *Russia in Global Affairs*, Russia’s leading foreign policy think tank magazine, Sergei Karaganov, the honorary chairman of the Presidium of Russia’s Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, warned that should the US and NATO not provide any guarantees and impose further sanctions on Russia, the Kremlin would respond harshly.

“All I can say is that we have developed weapons systems that could threaten the viability of the United States in an extremely tough way,” Karaganov told *Russia in Global Affairs*. “We also have such weapons as deepening [our] military-political cooperation with China, which could be a real nightmare for Washington. And if the Americans are threatening us with ‘crippling’ sanctions, which is a declaration of war, let them remember that Russia and China have the ability to break Western economies and societies [through means] like cyber warfare.”

The dangerous war crisis now unfolding in Eastern Europe is the result of decades-long policies and provocations by US imperialism. Since the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO has moved closer and closer to Russia’s borders as part of the US strategy to establish its control over the “Eurasian landmass,” that is, all of Europe and Asia. In 2004 and 2014, the US and EU staged coups in Ukraine to put pro-Western sections of the Ukrainian oligarchy in power.

Since the 2014 coup, Kiev has been instrumental to one NATO provocation against Russia after another. Over the past year, in particular, the US and EU have been ramping up military pressure on Russia, deliberately creating conditions for a military escalation.

While thousands of people are dying every day from COVID-19 in overwhelmed hospitals in the US and Europe, the imperialist powers are squandering immense social resources on preparing what would be the largest and deadliest military conflict in Europe since the end of World War II. A central motivation for this irrational policy is their desperate attempt to divert from the explosive growth of class tensions at home.

Billions of dollars have already been pumped into the Kiev regime and the fascist forces that since 2014 have played the principal role in fighting the civil war in East Ukraine, while tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers — sometimes entire units — deserted the front, refusing to engage in combat. US money has gone to fund tanks and other modern weapons for the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, which officially forms part of Ukraine’s National Guard.

The Azov Battalion and other far-right paramilitary formations have been engaged in targeted assassinations of journalists, pogroms and other horrendous crimes, while enjoying virtual legal impunity. Authorities allow them to run dozens of camps in Ukraine where children, some as young as nine years old, are trained in how to use weapons while being indoctrinated with Ukrainian nationalism and fascist ideology.

In a stark exposure of the class character of Zionism, *Haaretz* reported on Monday that the Israeli state too has for years been involved in sending weapons to fascists in Ukraine, which was one of the principal sites of the Nazi-led genocide of Europe’s Jews during World War II.

It is these neo-fascist forces that the imperialist powers and Ukrainian government will principally rely on in any war against Russia. The consequences of such a conflict for the working class would be disastrous, in Europe and beyond. It can only be prevented through an intervention of the international working class as an independent political force.



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