

Zelensky again rejects US claims of imminent Russian invasion even as Kiev continues war preparations

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On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky again contradicted new US claims that a Russian invasion is imminent and implored Ukrainians to remain calm. Throwing doubt on the latest allegations by Washington, Zelensky stated, “Today the best friend of our enemy is panic in our country, and all this information, which only helps panic, doesn’t help us.”

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan earlier stated Russian forces were “in a clear position to be able to mount a major military action,” but admitted, “[w]e don’t know exactly what is going to happen.” The supposedly forthcoming attack, *Der Spiegel* and the *New York Times* reported, could come “as early as next Wednesday.”

Zelensky went on to state that his government had no information that an invasion would occur in the upcoming week, as claimed by the US. “We understand all the risks, we understand that there are risks. If you or anyone else has 100 percent true information regarding an invasion by the Russian Federation starting on February 16, then please give us this information.”

Later he released photos via Facebook of him doing a tour of military exercises. He again begged Ukrainians not to panic. Zelensky is aware that there is mass opposition to war in Ukraine and that the US/NATO-led provocation of a war with Russia will unleash a social and political crisis in the country.

Washington and its allies around the world, including Britain, Germany, Israel and Australia, have begun telling their citizens to leave the country, and Russia has announced that it will downsize its embassy in Ukraine.

Despite its repeated rejection of US claims about a supposedly imminent invasion, Zelensky’s government has continued its belligerent stance towards Moscow and the pro-Russian political opposition within Ukraine. Pro-

Russian television station *Nash*, which is affiliated with politician Yevheniy Murayev, was closed down. Murayev was recently identified by British intelligence as a potential replacement for Zelensky in a supposed Russian plot to overthrow the Ukrainian government. As Murayev himself pointed out, however, he is currently banned from Russia and has had his assets seized by its government.

Even as it attacks the opposition inside Ukraine, the Kiev government is continuing military drills with drones and US-supplied anti-tank Javelin missiles. Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksio Reznikov insists these are in response to Russian training exercises.

The country’s political far right, led by former President Poroshenko, has called for Zelensky to act even more aggressively towards Moscow and echoed the warnings of his US backers that an invasion is forthcoming.

“It now arises to the responsibility of politicians to take all emergency measures to protect the country and its people from the worst-case scenario,” Poroshenko said on Twitter.

Poroshenko also attempted to insert himself into the decision making, calling for “a meeting of the National Security and Defense Council with the participation of leaders of all parliamentary factions to discuss proposals and develop a common and joint action plan on how to protect the country.”

Having developed a close relationship with Joe Biden during his term as vice president in the Obama administration, Poroshenko is the preferred puppet of US policymakers. It appears Poroshenko is waiting to step forward should war start and the Zelensky government fall.

In Kiev, Mayor Vitaly Klitchko has undertaken far-reaching preparations for war. According to the Russian

online newspaper *Gazeta.ru*, Klitchko created a commission that has worked out evacuation plans for every party of the city and prepared its infrastructure for a war. The number of bomb shelters in the Ukrainian capital has been tripled and 4,500 underground parking lots and underpasses, subway stations and basements, set up as shelters. Klitchko also announced that he is deploying a brigade to defend the city.

On Friday, aides to Ukrainian President Zelensky continued to maintain a hardline stance in negotiations with Russia held on Friday in Berlin.

The talks, part of the “Normandy format” brokered by France and Germany, were intended to work out the details of full implementation of the Minsk Peace Agreement. Those accords were first agreed to by both Moscow and Kiev in 2015 in order to end the civil war between the Ukrainian government and Russian-backed separatists in the eastern Donetsk and Lugansk provinces.

Seven years later, the civil war continues and has killed approximately 14,000 Ukrainians, as successive governments in Kiev, with the backing of the United States and NATO, have refused to implement the Minsk Accords. The government has continually refused to negotiate, as called for in the agreement, with the leaders of the Lugansk and Donetsk People’s Republics, whom it labels as “terrorists.”

On Friday, Ukrainian officials maintained the same stance, once again sabotaging any chance for a negotiated settlement.

“Unfortunately, almost nine hours of talks have ended without any significant results. The Ukrainians presented a very hard position. We did not manage to overcome this,” Russian Deputy Chief of Staff Dmitry Kozak said following the meeting.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, while stating he hoped for a “diplomatic settlement of the conflict” signaled to Ukraine’s far-right militia groups that it would never cross the “red line” of direct negotiations with the pro-Russian separatists.

“The key question yesterday—was direct talks with the separatist Donetsk and Lugansk provinces. This question is well known to everyone. Russia insists that Ukraine holds a direct dialog with the so-called Lugansk and Donetsk People’s Republics. If Ukraine goes for this, then the status of Russia changes to just a negotiator in the conflict. And that is why we can’t accept this,” Kuleba stated.

All sides agreed to another round of Normandy format talks in March, with Russia calling for France and

Germany to pressure Ukraine to negotiate with the separatists. A previous round of talks was held in Paris on January 26 and likewise ended in failure.

A week before Friday’s meeting, Kuleba also ruled out a special federated status for the breakaway areas, another one of the key points that Kiev refuses to accept in the Minsk Accords.

Speaking with Poland’s *Rzeczpospolita* newspaper, Kuleba said, “No Ukrainian region will have a right for national state decisions. This is set in stone! There will be no special status, as Russia imagines it, not voting power.”

The Ukrainian government and its imperialist backers rightly fear that reintegrating the provinces without them being fully subjugated to Kiev would jeopardize the country’s chances for entry into NATO, thus limiting Ukraine’s usefulness as a proxy against Moscow.

Until the 2014 United States-backed coup of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych, NATO membership was opposed by a majority of the Ukrainian population. More recently, in December of last year, polling from the US Republican Party-affiliated International Republican Institute showed that just 58 percent of Ukrainians support a referendum to join NATO despite seven years of pro-NATO propaganda. If polling had included Crimea and the separatist-controlled Donbass regions, the number would be significantly lower.

US plans to draw Russia into a war in Ukraine are being rapidly pursued. The working class must mobilize on an international basis in a struggle against imperialism and for socialism to end the growing threat of World War III.



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