

Biden claims “Putin has made the decision” to invade Ukraine as mass evacuations begin in the Donbass

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At an extraordinary press conference Friday afternoon, US President Joe Biden declared that he was “convinced” Russian President Vladimir Putin had made “the decision to invade” Ukraine and advance on the country’s capital Kiev. Biden said that the White House “expected” such a move “within the coming week, within the coming days.”

In a 10-minute speech, Biden warned that “such a decision” would mean that Russia would be “responsible” for a “catastrophic and needless war of choice.” Russia would have to pay a “steep price” for such a war, he threatened, as the US and NATO were prepared to “defend any inch of NATO territory.”

Biden blamed Russia for a “major uptick” in shelling in East Ukraine, the site of an eight-year-long civil war that erupted in the wake of the US-funded 2014 far-right coup in Kiev. The US President went on to praise Ukraine’s military, which is riddled with fascists and has been armed and trained by the US, for its “great judgement” and “restraint,” and insisted that the US would “continue to support the Ukrainian people.”

Biden claimed that Thursday’s shelling of a kindergarten in the separatist-controlled territory of Lugansk was a “false-flag operation” by Russia, “in line” with what the US had been warning about. As has been the case with all the lies and allegations of the past weeks and months, he did not even try to produce any evidence to back up his allegations.

Biden concluded his speech by stating: “There are many issues that divide our nation and our world but standing up to Russian aggression is not one of them. The American people are united. The European Union is united. The transatlantic community is united. Our political parties [in the US] are united. The entire free world is united.”

Biden’s remarks were the utterings of a ruling class that

has completely lost its head. After effectively declaring that the US is preparing for a war with nuclear-armed Russia within the next week, he left the room after a mere handful of questions by journalists, none of which challenged his baseless allegations.

When one reporter asked Biden about the major military drills involving nuclear weapons that President Putin will oversee personally this weekend, he responded, “I don’t think he’s remotely contemplating using nuclear weapons, but I do think he is focused on trying to convince the world that he has the ability to change the dynamics in Europe in a way that he cannot.” Shortly thereafter, he added, “But it’s hard to read his mind.”

In other words, the potential of Moscow using nuclear weapons in this conflict—which these drills clearly indicate is a possibility—is taken into account by the White House but does not alter its reckless push for war with Russia.

Biden’s remarks came one day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken gave a speech composed of lies at the UN that was reminiscent of Colin Powell’s notorious 2003 speech about “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq, and hours after the US announced it would send 250 tanks to Poland, which directly borders Ukraine. The US now claims that some 190,000 Russian troops have been massed near Ukraine’s borders.

For weeks, the US media has been spinning lies, fed to them by the intelligence agencies and the White House, alleging that a Russian invasion of Ukraine was supposedly imminent. Even a supposed date—Wednesday, February 16—was named. Yet no Russian invasion has taken place and the Kremlin has consistently denied it ever planned one. While NATO and the US have engaged in one reckless military provocation after another, the Kremlin so far has refused to take the bait.

But the American ruling class, overseeing never-ending mass death from COVID-19, skyrocketing inflation, and a historically unprecedented transfer of wealth to the super-rich, feels that it can wait no longer. The Biden administration is desperate to provoke a war with Russia to divert explosive class tensions outward while creating the basis for “unity” with the ever more openly fascist Republican Party.

Biden gave his speech against the backdrop of a dangerous escalation of the civil war between pro-Russian separatists and the US-funded Ukrainian army. This conflict has already claimed over 14,000 lives and displaced millions in the past eight years. OSCE observers left the conflict zone earlier this week upon the request of the US and UK, ignoring protests by Moscow.

Heavy shelling, including of residential areas, has been reported since Thursday. While the Ukrainian chief-of-staff and government deny claims by the pro-Russian separatists that Ukraine’s president Zelensky is about to give the order for a full-scale invasion, conditions are already approaching those of a full-scale military conflict.

On Friday, the car of the head of the militia of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic was blown up in a botched assassination attempt. Two blasts in the territory of the Lugansk People’s Republic in the early morning hours of Saturday have led to a major fire at a gas pipeline. Ukraine, along with Belarus, is a critical transit country for gas and oil deliveries from Russia to Europe.

The damage to energy infrastructure before open war has even been declared is a chilling indicator of what may come. Beyond critical gas and oil pipelines, Ukraine is the site of nuclear waste left behind by the horrific 1986 nuclear accident in Chernobyl. Anticipating potential military clashes in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, which is one of the most radioactive places in the world and lies on the shortest route between East Ukraine and Kiev, Ukrainian forces have staged military drills there in recent weeks.

In East Ukraine, a humanitarian disaster is already unfolding. On Friday, the separatist leaders of Donetsk and Lugansk announced the mass evacuation of women, children and elderly to Russia. The separatist leaders from the Donetsk People’s Republic alone anticipate the evacuation of 700,000 people. According to the BBC, men between the ages of 18 and 55 are not allowed to leave Donetsk.

By Friday night, thousands of people had arrived in buses in the Rostov region of southern Russia. A line of cars with refugees desperate to leave the war zone is

reportedly stretching almost 14 miles before the Russian border.

The Kremlin, which initially appeared to be taken by surprise by the decision of the separatist leaders to evacuate much of their civilian population, has promised each refugee in the Rostov region a paltry 10,000 rubles (roughly \$129) payment, and called upon other regions to be prepared to take in tens of thousands of refugees in the coming days.

Kiev’s municipal security director, Roman Tkachuk, stated on Ukrainian radio that in the event of an open war with Russia, all of Kiev’s 2.8 million people would be evacuated, without specifying where or how. EU officials had earlier warned that the European Union, which lets thousands of refugees die miserably in the Mediterranean and on its borders every year, will have to be prepared to take in “up to a million” people from Ukraine in case of war.

Writing in 1934, the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky warned that the decline of US imperialism would bring humanity “face to face with the volcanic eruption of US militarism.”

This is exactly what is now unfolding. If the political situation is left in the hands of the ruling class, the dynamics unleashed by the crisis of world capitalism will inexorably lead toward world war. The only alternative lies with the intervention of the international working class. This intervention must be prepared politically through the building of a revolutionary leadership and the fight for a socialist anti-war movement.



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