

UK government confirms regime change agenda against Russia

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On Monday, a spokesman for UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the sanctions against Russia “we are introducing, that large parts of the world are introducing, are to bring down the Putin regime.”

Questioned by journalists surprised at his moment of unguarded honesty, Johnson’s spokesman tried to reverse his comment, claiming, “We’re not seeking anything in terms of regime change.” Downing Street later insisted that the official had “misspoke”.

Whatever the denials, the UK and NATO’s ambitions in the conflict with Russia are being stated ever more openly. Writing in the *Telegraph* Saturday, Defence Minister James Heappey said the Russian people must be “empowered to see how little he [Vladimir Putin] cares for them. In showing them that, Putin’s days as President will surely be numbered.”

This aim is advanced under cover of the staggeringly hypocritical accusation that the Putin government is guilty of war crimes, a charge levelled by countries which have committed too many to list since the Russian Federation emerged from the dissolved Soviet Union in 1991.

At the United Nations on Tuesday, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss accused Putin of “violating international law, including the UN Charter and multiple commitments to peace and security.”

Speaking to the BBC earlier that morning, Conservative MP and former defence secretary Liam Fox said it “may well be too late for Putin and perhaps [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey] Lavrov in terms of committing war crimes. But we’ll be looking to see those with money, political influence and military influence in Moscow, whose side they actually take in this conflict. It’s never too late for them to try to stop what is happening. And the world will be watching their individual actions.”

Tobias Ellwood, the Tory chair of the defence committee, wrote in the *Telegraph*, “Triggering war crime investigations now will be another squeeze on Putin and his cronies. There is no statute of limitations. Putin is now 69. He will still be liable for them at 79, 89 and 99. The

calculation that advisers, generals and soldiers have to make is how long will Putin last? How stable is this regime?”

If all the major war criminals of the past 30 years were sentenced tomorrow, Putin would have to squeeze his way into a dock already packed with imperialist officials and officers, many from the UK. The Johnson government and its allies are not in the slightest interested in upholding human rights or ending the war, only in using the reactionary Russian invasion of Ukraine as excuse to pursue their long-held plans to install a puppet regime in Moscow.

As well as implementing crippling sanctions, it is stepping up its military involvement in the conflict, by means which threaten a direct confrontation between Russia and the NATO powers. On Sunday, Truss declared she would “absolutely” support people from Britain going to fight in Ukraine, “if people want to support that struggle, I would support them doing that.”

Downing Street issued only the mildest of rebukes, repeating Foreign Office guidance that British citizens are currently advised not to travel to Ukraine.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace was more gung-ho, telling the *Today* programme, “I don’t think Liz Truss said we are supporting non-trained people to go and fight … [I]f you’re going to be a fighter there, first of all please try and comply with the Foreign Office advice, because it is dangerous. But secondly, be trained, have experience, don’t be serving personnel. But fundamentally it is a dangerous situation, so if you are going to fight, be a professional, having had service.”

Scores of UK citizens, many with high-level military training and years of experience, are already making preparations to go, as breathlessly narrated by the corporate media. Mamuka Mamulashvili, commander of the volunteer Georgian National Legion, told *Sky News* he was aware of more than a hundred British volunteers, most with military backgrounds.

The *Mirror* reports on a “crack team of SAS veterans” heading to Ukraine, “funded by a country in Europe, still to be named, via a private military company.” According to the

paper, “among them there are highly-trained snipers and experts in the use of anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles.” One is quoted as saying, “A lot of ex-parachute regiment colleagues are also very keen to go. Many people are very keen to go, and it has had to be organised very quickly.”

The Times writes, “More than 150 former paratroopers who served in Afghanistan are on their way to fight on the front line with Ukraine against Russia.” One of them said Truss’s comments had “inspired” him.

British army commanders are apparently concerned about “rumblings through back channels of some soldiers considering [going to Ukraine].” According to the *Telegraph*, Sir Chris Tickell, the army’s second in command, has sent a letter to all soldiers warning them not to travel and risk “reputational and presentational” damage or a “miscalculation.”

The participation of British citizens in the war in Ukraine creates a cover for undeclared special forces operations, provides a possible pretext for intervention and is a reckless provocation of a nuclear-armed power.

Already the UK government is directly contributing substantial military equipment to the Ukrainian army. Heappey writes, “The shoulder launched anti-tank missiles that we delivered just four weeks ago are now in wide use and have become a favourite of the brave Ukrainian warriors fighting on the front line.” Johnson has “directed the Ministry of Defence to send more and so we will.”

A government source told the *Sun* that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has given the UK a “shopping list” with “specific requests for military hardware during near daily phone calls, and we are working round the clock to get them into Ukraine.”

At a press conference yesterday in the Tapa military base in Estonia, Johnson, Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg took questions while stood in front of two battle tanks, one draped in the UK’s national flag. Johnson boasted again of the 22,000 Ukrainian military personnel trained by the UK and the “further military support” it was providing.

On the economic front, UK corporations are complementing government sanctions by cutting ties with the Russian economy. Oil company Shell has pulled out of Russian projects worth \$3 billion. BP has incurred a \$25 billion write-down selling its stake in Rosneft. The UK’s biggest pension fund, the Universities Superannuation Scheme, is offloading all its Russian assets, worth £450 million, as is the Church of England, at £20 million. The *Guardian* referred to “The great decoupling: how UK-based firms are unwinding exposure to Russia.”

This is matched with a cultural blockade beyond anything seen in the Cold War, designed to whip up anti-Russian

hostility in the population. Renowned conductor Valery Gergiev has been forced to resign his position as honorary president of the Edinburgh International Festival. The Russian State Ballet of Siberia has been forced to call off its UK tour after theatres in Bristol, Wolverhampton, Northampton, Edinburgh, Bournemouth, Southend and Peterborough cancelled appearances.

The UK’s grossly misnamed culture secretary Nadine Dorries said she was “glad to see” the cancellations and called on “other venues to take action”. Many have. The Darlington Hippodrome, the Belgrave in Coventry, Blackburn’s King George’s Hall and Aldershot’s Princes Hall have all cancelled performances of the Russian State Opera.

Not even Russian alcohol is exempt. Bars and hospitality firms including Nightcap Group and Arc Inspirations are removing vodka and other Russian alcohol products from their menus. But the crown for low-rent corporate Russophobia goes to price comparison website Compare the Market, which has pulled well-known adverts featuring a cartoon meerkat with a Russian name and accent.

Yesterday, the UK’s media regulator Ofcom announced it has opened 15 investigations into the broadcaster *Russia Today*, long a target of the British political and media establishment. If the station is found to have breached impartiality standards it “could lose its licence to broadcast in the UK,” the *Guardian* salivates. The paper notes, “Although Ofcom is operationally independent from the government, its leadership is appointed by ministers, and it has come under substantial political pressure from both the Conservatives and Labour.”



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