

US gives “green light” for Poland to provide fighter jets to Ukraine

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On Sunday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that the US had given “the green light” to allow Polish fighter jets to be flown by pilots from the Ukrainian Air Force in Ukraine in order to fight against Russia’s air force. According to Blinken, the US is “in very active” discussions with Poland about the possibility of the US replacing Poland’s 28 MiG-29 warplanes, which would be given to Ukraine, with new F-16s from the US.

Poland, which shares a border with Ukraine, is a member of NATO and has been at the forefront of the military buildup and provocations by imperialism against Russia.

Blinken also announced that the US would increase its deployments to Lithuania and indicated that he had been discussing “additional sanctions” against Russia with European NATO members. Those already in place, he acknowledged, had a “devastating” impact on the Russian economy.

The moves are yet another reckless escalation by NATO in the Russia-Ukraine war. Last week, the Kremlin had put Russia’s nuclear forces on high alert after the UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss had threatened that NATO could get drawn in the war. On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned at an event with Russian female pilots and stewardesses that imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine directly was “impossible. This can only be done by a third party. But any move in that direction will be regarded by us as participation in a military conflict from the side of the country from whose territory threats for our soldiers are being created. And that very second we will regard them as a participant in the military conflict, regardless of what organizations they are a member of.”

On Sunday, Russia’s Defense Ministry also explicitly warned that if countries are hosting Ukrainian military

aircraft that would then be involved in attacking Russian forces, it “could be considered as those countries’ engagement in the military conflict.”

As heavy fighting continues in large parts of Ukraine, especially around the city of Mariupol in the south, the Ukrainian government of Volodymyr Zelensky is now issuing virtually daily demands for NATO to impose a no-fly zone over the country. One Ukrainian official justified the call for a no-fly zone on Sunday by saying that “World War III” had already started.

In the US and Europe, rallies are being held in support of this demand. In the US, prominent Democratic and Republican politicians have joined calls for a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

In a veiled threat of the deployment of nuclear weapons, Putin said that imposing a no-fly zone over Ukraine would have “colossal and catastrophic consequences not only for Europe but also the whole world.” Even the far-right Republican Marco Rubio acknowledged on Sunday, “A no-fly zone means World War III.”

Gen. Mark A. Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said on Saturday, that NATO had “no plans that I’m aware of to establish a no-fly zone” over the country, adding: “If a no-fly zone was declared, someone would have to enforce it, and that would mean someone would have to then go and fight against Russian air forces.”

While NATO is so far officially rejecting a no-fly zone, the moves it is undertaking already signify far-reaching involvement in the military conflict. Twenty members of NATO are flooding Ukraine with highly sophisticated weapons, arming far-right militias and the Ukrainian military which has publicly announced the intention to violate the Geneva Conventions for the humane treatment of prisoners of war. Tens of

thousands of volunteers from NATO are flocking to Ukraine to participate in military combat.

And more direct lethal aid is being discussed. Writing for *Foreign Affairs* magazine, the Democratic former Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman and Dominic Cruz Bustillos suggested that if a no-fly zone is considered “too provocative,” then NATO should establish “a lend-lease program” for Ukraine. This, they wrote, would “allow the alliance to loan or give aid to Ukraine at little or no cost; such aid could include medium- and long-range air defense systems, antitank weapons (beyond the Javelins that have already been provided), advanced extended-range antiarmor capabilities, coastal defense systems, high mobility artillery, and critically important UCAVs.”

Acknowledging that this move too would risk being considered a direct intervention in the military conflict by Russia and trigger a nuclear response, they wrote, “The truth is that there are no risk-free options right now, and the longer the West waits, the worse the options will become.”

Even leaving aside its ever more overt involvement in the military conflict, the unprecedented economic sanctions imposed by NATO against Russia are already seen by the Kremlin as virtually tantamount to a declaration of war. On Saturday, Putin said the sanctions could “be compared to a declaration of war,” adding: “That [a declaration of war] has, fortunately, not happened so far.”

Writing for the Kremlin-controlled *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* last week, Fyodor Lukyanov stated that the war in Ukraine had “rapidly grown into an economic war by the West against Russia. There’s no other way to call it. First, the scale of the adopted measures has no parallel in international practice. Second, the destruction of the Russian economy is the stated aim.”

He added that the conflict between Russia and the West was “highly asymmetrical” as Russia was in an extreme disadvantage on an economic and financial level. Under these conditions, the only thing that could somehow “serve as at least a relatively stable base is the classical power relation, especially enshrined in nuclear parity.”

Noting that the US had “stayed in the shadows” of the conflict, leaving much of it to European NATO states, he suggested that “Washington will take the stage before the finals. In the decisive phase. The

United States probably understands that the ultimate point of escalation will be what the Russian president recalled on Sunday: nuclear confrontation. And it will be addressed to them personally. President Biden urged Americans on Monday not to fear nuclear war. But the very fact that the topic has entered the discussion speaks for itself.”

New talks between Russia and Ukraine are scheduled for Monday. Both sides also spoke with the Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett this weekend, who is seeking to assume the role of mediator in the conflict. With Putin, Bennett reportedly discussed the Iran nuclear deal which Israel wants to see canceled on Saturday. That day, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declared that Russia would only back the Iran nuclear deal by the US if Washington gave Moscow written guarantees of exemption from further economic sanctions. Blinken rejected these demands by Moscow on Sunday.

France’s Emmanuel Macron spoke for almost two hours with Putin on Sunday. The discussion reportedly focused on the security of Ukraine’s many nuclear power plants and waste sites. Last week, Russian forces took control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the largest of its kind in Europe, after having earlier seized the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone around the site of the 1986 nuclear disaster.

This weekend, Ukraine’s security service killed one of the participants of Ukraine’s negotiating team, Denis Kireev, presumably when he was resisting his arrest on suspicion of treason. Ukraine’s security service has close ties to the country’s far right, which has long been built up by imperialism and is now receiving a substantial portion of NATO’s weapons. These forces have also been criticizing Zelensky for conducting negotiations with Russia, even as he has made every attempt to integrate them into the war effort. The Ukrainian government has reported that the president had survived three assassination attempts within the past week.



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