

# Amid warnings of world war, demands grow in Washington for escalation against Russia

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Despite warnings from the White House that an escalation of US involvement in the Ukraine-Russia war could rapidly trigger a third world war, there are growing calls from within both the Democratic and Republican parties for a more aggressive US military intervention.

As the war enters its third week, the fighting in Ukraine is rapidly intensifying, causing surging casualties among both military forces and civilians.

In an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, Joe Lieberman, the former Connecticut Senator and Democratic candidate for vice president, laid out “the case for a no-fly zone in Ukraine.”

“The North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s refusal to give Ukraine no-fly protection from the continuing, indiscriminate and inhumane Russian attacks from the air is strategically weak and morally wrong,” Lieberman wrote.

Responding to similar demands, White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said Tuesday setting up a no-fly zone would “require shooting down Russian planes if they fly into your no-fly zone... So that would still have—we would still have concerns about that being an escalatory action that could lead us into a war with Russia, which is not something the president intends to do.”

Responding to the White House’s warnings, Lieberman wrote, “The other argument against establishing a no-fly zone is that it might anger Mr. Putin and trigger World War III. But inaction based on fear usually causes more conflict than action based on confidence. Fearing to act not only makes it easier for Mr. Putin to win his inhumane war but also encourages such nations as China to believe they too can invade neighbors without fear of a U.S. response.”

Lieberman concluded, “Sending American or other

NATO planes into the air over Ukraine to keep Russian aircraft away would protect Ukrainian lives and freedom on the ground, making it possible to defeat Mr. Putin’s brazen and brutal attempt to rebuild the Russian empire, undercut U.S. global leadership and destroy the world order that we and our allies have built.”

Asking “Why the West needs to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine,” one op-ed in the *Washington Post* asserted: “NATO must step up to help prevent further devastation by declaring a no-fly zone over Ukraine. In the past, the West has imposed such zones over Libya, Bosnia and Iraq. Is Ukraine less deserving of its help?”

Similar calls were made by Bartosz Cichocki, Poland’s ambassador to Ukraine. “Every day of delay costs hundreds of human lives,” he told a Turkish broadcaster Thursday. “This is an extension of the conflict that could be ended much faster precisely thanks to the closure of the airspace.”

On Tuesday, Poland announced a plan to transfer all of its Soviet-era MiG-29 aircraft to the United States and fly them to Germany, from where they would be flown into Ukrainian airspace to engage Russian aircraft.

“The authorities of the Republic of Poland... are ready to deploy—immediately and free of charge—all their MIG-29 jets to the Ramstein Air Base and place them at the disposal of the Government of the United States of America,” Poland’s foreign ministry said.

For now, however, the US military has rejected this proposal. In a tersely worded statement, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said, “We do not believe Poland’s proposal is a tenable one.”

“The prospect of fighter jets ‘at the disposal of the Government of the United States of America’ departing from a U.S./NATO base in Germany to fly into airspace that is contested with Russia over Ukraine

raises serious concerns for the entire NATO alliance,” Kirby warned.

These warnings by the White House were furiously denounced in the US press. “Send Ukraine planes now,” demanded *Washington Post* columnist Marc A. Thiessen.

The *Wall Street Journal*, for its part, called the White House’s rejection of Poland’s offer a “fiasco,” declaring: “What happened between Mr. Blinken’s endorsement and the Pentagon’s rejection? It’s hard not to conclude that the White House blinked for fear of provoking Mr. Putin, who is demanding that the West stop arming Ukraine.”

“But NATO countries are already sending all sorts of weapons into Ukraine. Is a Polish MiG with a Ukrainian pilot somehow more provocative than a Turkish drone or an American antitank missile? Transferring planes isn’t the same as NATO aviators directly shooting down Russian jets.”

In a chilling statement, the *Journal* added, “As he escalates, will he use chemical weapons or tactical nukes? Will NATO refuse to respond then because it fears World War III? The MiG mistake may let Mr. Putin believe his threats will make NATO stand down.”

Russian officials are taking such statements with utmost seriousness. Earlier on Thursday, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov was asked if he believed a nuclear war between the United States and NATO is possible.

Lavrov replied: “British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said that she foresees war between Russia and the NATO powers. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that if NATO wanted, atomic weapons would be deployed on the territory of the Eastern members of the Alliance. Mr. Le Drian said that Putin should keep in mind that France also has nuclear weapons. And the French economics minister [Bruno Le Maire] said with pride that the West is declaring against Russia ‘total war.’”

Lavrov used the German translation of the term: “Totaler Krieg,” invoking the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the Second World War.

“So, of course this puts us on our guard,” Lavrov said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, for his part, said the sanctions being imposed against Russia are “absolutely unprecedented.” He concluded, “There had

never been an economic war like the one that was started against our country, so it is very difficult to predict anything.”

The intensification of the fighting comes as the campaign to demonize Russia reached a fever pitch.

On Thursday, Reuters reported that Facebook and Instagram will change their hate speech policies to allow the incitement of violence against Russian public officials and military forces.

Reuters also reported that “Emails also showed that Meta (Facebook’s parent company) would allow praise of the right-wing Azov battalion, which is normally prohibited.”



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