

As Russia launches offensive in eastern Ukraine

Democratic senator and Biden ally Chris Coons calls for discussion on sending US troops to fight Russian forces

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As the eight-week war in Ukraine entered a new and more explosive phase, the Biden administration announced plans for a further package of arms assistance to the Zelensky government, and Delaware Senator Chris Coons, a close ally of Biden, called for discussions on taking the “next step” of direct US military conflict with Russia.

Speaking last Thursday at an event at the University of Michigan’s Ford School of Public Policy, Coons said: “We are in a very dangerous moment where it is important that on a bipartisan and measured way we in Congress and the administration come to a common position about when we are willing to go the next step and to send not just arms, but troops to the aid in defense of Ukraine. If the answer is never, then we are inviting another level of escalation in brutality by Putin.”

Coons added that the Biden administration should consider sending in US troops if Russia uses chemical weapons or if some sort of “accident” leads to the death of US service members in the region. “There will almost certainly be an incident in which Putin goes too far,” Coons said, referring to an alleged use of chemical weapons or attacks on the pipeline of Western arms going to forces loyal to Kiev.

The Delaware senator, who holds the seat once held for 36 years by Biden, appeared on CBS News’ *Face the Nation* program on Sunday. Host Margaret Brennan asked if he was urging President Biden to “set a red line.” He responded by saying: “If Vladimir Putin ... is allowed to just continue to massacre civilians, to commit war crimes throughout Ukraine without NATO,

without the West coming more forcefully to his aid, I deeply worry that what’s going to happen next is that we will see Ukraine turn into Syria.” He added, “Putin will only stop when we stop him.”

Coons, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is the first senator to publicly urge that Congress and the president consider sending US troops into Ukraine. Given Coons’ role as a virtual proxy for Biden in the Senate—he intervened on behalf of the White House to end the Senate trial in Trump’s second impeachment without calling a single witness—his intervention must be seen as a trial balloon for a further escalation to the point of direct military conflict with Russia, carrying with it the dire threat of a nuclear world war.

On Monday, White House press secretary Jen Psaki officially distanced the Biden administration from Coons’ talk of sending US combat troops into Ukraine. “Senator Coons is a close friend of the president’s and the administration, and we must respectfully disagree with his proposal,” she said. “The president has no plans to send troops to fight a war with Russia. He doesn’t think that’s in our national security interests.”

Coons, for his part, “clarified” his remarks in a tweet. “I’m not calling for US troops to go into the war in Ukraine,” he wrote, and then implied a need to prepare to do precisely that, saying the US must be “prepared to respond if [Putin] escalates further in his war crimes against Ukraine.”

The next day, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, interviewed by the “India Today” TV channel, announced a new phase in the war in Ukraine. Russia’s

defense ministry reported that “high-precision air-based missiles” had hit 13 Ukrainian positions and other air raids “hit 60 military assets” in towns in the eastern region of the country.

The Ukrainian government reported intensified military activity in the eastern region, from the city of Kharkiv in the north to Mariupol in the south. President Zelensky said in a video message, “Russian forces have started the battle for the Donbas that they have been getting ready for a long time.”

Further stoking the war, President Biden confirmed on Tuesday that a new package of military assistance for Ukraine was being prepared, including more artillery. At a press briefing, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby declined to give details of the program, which is said to match the \$800 million in assistance provided last week.

The US aid package announced on April 13 included 18 howitzer systems, the first artillery platforms of that caliber to be provided to Ukraine. The Pentagon also provided 40,000 artillery rounds from Army and Marine stockpiles. Kirby reported that US military personnel would be training Ukrainian soldiers outside of the country on how to use the howitzers.

The comments by Senator Coons vindicate the warnings made by the WSWS that Biden’s statements accusing Russia and Vladimir Putin of war crimes and even genocide were deliberately calculated to condition public opinion for an escalation of the US-NATO military operation into a direct and open conflict with Russia. This would risk a nuclear war that could kill tens or even hundreds of millions of people.

While there are constant demands for more US military aid to Ukraine, a report on *CNN Politics* notes that the Pentagon has few ways to track the anti-tank, anti-aircraft and other weaponry once it has been handed across the border. The report says that this is “a conscious risk the Biden administration is willing to take.”

With the new round of assistance bringing US military aid to Ukraine since the start of the war to nearly \$3 billion, CNN quotes an unnamed defense official as saying that “the Biden administration factored in the risk that some of the shipments may ultimately end up in unexpected places.”

In previous proxy wars the “unexpected places” where US military hardware has ended up have

included reactionary and criminal militia groups and illegal international arms traders. According to the representative of the Pentagon, given “the nearly insatiable short-term needs of Ukrainian forces for more arms and ammunition, the long-term risk of weapons ending up on the black market or in the wrong hands was deemed acceptable.”

This aspect of the war highlights the extreme recklessness of both the desperate and bankrupt oligarchic regime in Russia, the outcome of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, and US-led imperialist NATO alliance. The latter, driven by Washington, deliberately provoked the Russian invasion with the aim of inflicting a strategic defeat and destroying Russia as an obstacle to US global hegemony.



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