

Russia vows “lightning” response to NATO as war threatens to spill beyond Ukraine

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Following the declaration by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin this week that the US is seeking to “weaken” Russia, and that the US is already in a “fight” with the country, Russian President Vladimir Putin made his most open threat to date to retaliate against NATO members for their involvement in the war.

“If someone decides to intervene into the ongoing events from the outside and create unacceptable strategic threats for us, they should know that our response to those oncoming blows will be swift, lightning-fast,” Putin told Russian lawmakers on Wednesday.

“We have all the tools for this — ones that no one can brag about. And we won’t brag. We will use them if needed. And I want everyone to know this. We have already taken all the decisions on this.”

Also on Wednesday, Russian officials said that a large batch of weapons supplied to Ukraine by NATO members were destroyed in a missile strike in Central Ukraine.

A day prior, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had warned that NATO-supplied weapons shipments inside Ukraine “will be a legitimate target for the Russian Armed Forces.”

“Warehouses, including in the west of Ukraine, have become such a target more than once. How else could it be? NATO is essentially going to war with Russia through a proxy and arming that proxy. War means war.”

On Wednesday, Russia cut off natural gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria in response to crippling economic sanctions levied by the US and European Union. The Kremlin is also threatening to end its supplies to other NATO members, including Germany, which is highly dependent on Russia for natural gas.

Also on Wednesday, fires at arms depots inside Russian territory were reported. That same day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised in a Senate briefing the prospect that “Ukrainians should take actions that go beyond their borders”—clearly referring to attacks on Russian territory.

The Russian military said in a statement that strikes inside Russia would lead to retaliatory attacks on “decision-making centers in Kiev.” Attacks on Russia “will immediately lead to our proportional response,” the Ministry of Defense said. “As we have warned, the Russian armed forces are on standby around the clock to retaliate with long-range high-precision weapons against decision-making centers in Kiev.”

Blasts were also reported in Moldova. The *Financial Times* reported, “The mysterious blasts, which targeted the state security ministry, a radio tower and military unit, happened days after a senior Russian commander claimed Russian speakers in Moldova were being oppressed.”

Russian forces are meanwhile pushing deeper into Eastern Ukraine, capturing several villages. The Russian army has been concentrating its advances on the south and east of the country after having retreated from the suburbs of the capital of Kiev.

Commenting on the widening scale of the war, *New York Times* reporters David E. Sanger and Steven Erlanger published an article headlined, “Fears Are Mounting That Ukraine War Will Spill Across Borders.” They conclude:

“For nine weeks, President Biden and the Western allies have emphasized the need to keep the war for Ukraine inside Ukraine.

Now, the fear in Washington and European

capitals is that the conflict may soon escalate into a wider war—spreading to neighboring states, to cyberspace and to NATO countries suddenly facing a Russian cutoff of gas. Over the long term, such an expansion could evolve into a more direct conflict between Washington and Moscow...”

They continue,

“Seth G. Jones, who directs the European Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said on Wednesday that ‘the risk of a widening war is serious right now.’”

“Russian casualties are continuing to mount, and the U.S. is committed to shipping more powerful weapons that are causing those casualties,” Mr. Jones said. Sooner or later, he added, Russia’s military intelligence service might begin to target those weapons shipments inside NATO’s borders.”

Sanger and Erlanger warned that while Russia “has never attacked... supply lines inside NATO territory. Now, there are signs that the restraint is fracturing.”

The US media, meanwhile, is full of increasingly open and unguarded calls for nuclear war. On Wednesday, Seth Cropsey, a former deputy undersecretary of the Navy, published an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* titled, “The U.S. Should Show It Can Win a Nuclear War.”

He writes, “The reality is that unless the U.S. prepares to win a nuclear war, it risks losing one. Robert C. O’Brien, a former White House national security adviser, proposed a series of conventional responses, which are necessary but not sufficient.”

Cropsey concludes, “The ability to win is the key. By arming surface ships with tactical nuclear weapons as well as attacking a nuclear-missile sub and thus reducing Russian second-strike ability, the U.S. undermines Russia’s ability to fight a nuclear war.”

He then declares, “Jeopardizing Russian second-strike capability would tangibly raise the military

stakes. Mr. Putin could no longer unleash his nuclear arsenal with impunity. Instead, he would need to reckon with the possibility that NATO could decapitate the Kremlin—yes, suffering casualties in the process, but still decapitate it.”

The proxy war in Ukraine is emerging increasingly openly as a war between Russia and NATO, threatening to spill over into a war throughout the European continent. The United States has worked to systematically destroy any prospect of a peaceful settlement of the war, and is instead doing everything it can to fan the flames and instigate a wider conflict.

The aims being pursued increasingly openly by the United States in this war inevitably involve the expansion of the conflict. There is nothing left of the fiction that the United States and NATO are not at war with Russia. In pursuit of regime change, the dismemberment of Russia and the plundering of its vast resources, American imperialism is risking nuclear war.



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