

US doubles long-range missile shipments to Ukraine in war with Russia

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The US will double the number of medium to long-range missile launchers being sent to Ukraine in the US/NATO war against Russia, the Defense Department said Thursday.

The US will send four more High Mobility Artillery Rocket (HIMAR) systems, in addition to the four that have already been deployed there, as part of yet another weapons package announced this week.

The package includes, according to the Pentagon, “four high-mobility artillery rocket systems, 36,000 rounds of 105 mm ammunition, 18 tactical vehicles to tow 155 mm artillery, 1,200 grenade launchers, 2,000 machine guns, 18 coastal and riverine patrol boats, spare parts and other equipment.”

The latest package is the thirteenth shipment of weapons to Ukraine since February. Since the outbreak of the war the US pledged \$6.1 billion in arms shipments.

The renewed escalation of US involvement in the war comes amid a series of significant military setbacks for Ukraine.

On Friday, the Ukrainian military ordered its troops to withdraw from the city of Severodonetsk (or Sievierodonetsk), the main focus of the Russian offensive in East Ukraine. The city is the capital of the Lugansk (Luhansk) region, which is already more than 90 percent under Russian control.

The nearby town of Lysychansk is the only remaining large settlement in the region not under Russian occupation. Russia is now in control of one fifth of Ukrainian territory, and Ukraine is suffering as many as 500 to 1,000 casualties per day.

“Unfortunately . . . it will be necessary to withdraw,” said Serhiy Hayday, regional governor of the eastern Lugansk region, according to the *Financial Times*.

“We now have a situation where holding on to

destroyed positions for many months just to be there makes no sense. Because with each passing day, the number of deaths in unsecured positions can grow proportionally,” Hayday added.

The *New York Times* reported that “Ukrainian soldiers have been shuttling people across the river in small boats. Some soldiers have had to swim.”

But these military setbacks have only prompted the US and its NATO allies to redouble their involvement in the war. On Thursday, the European Union made Ukraine a “candidate member.”

It will be joined by Moldova, home to a Russian-controlled breakaway enclave known as Transnistria.

Next week, US President Joe Biden will attend the NATO Summit in Madrid, Spain. At the summit, “Leaders will announce new force posture commitments to strengthen NATO’s defense and deterrent posture,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said.

“The US will announce steps to strengthen European security alongside expected major new contributions from allies,” Kirby added.

In the face of a series of disastrous setbacks in the war, the United States is planning to intensify the conflict, expanding both the scale of weapons shipments and the geographic scope of the war.

Kirby said that, for the first time, the NATO summit will include official leaders from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea. Kirby stated that “whether it’s in Europe or the Indo-Pacific region, the United States and our allies and partners will defend the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

The transformation of NATO from a European anti-Russian alliance into a full-scale fighting force operating in the Pacific as well points to the rapid acceleration of the US conflict with China, even as the

Ukraine war surges out of control.

A central aim of the summit will be to fast-track the application of Sweden and Finland, which share a vast land border with Russia, into the alliance. Noting the objections from Turkey to the countries' membership, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared, "My aim is to find a common way forward so that both countries can join our Alliance as soon as possible."

Stoltenberg said the summit would focus on expanding the share of economic output devoted to military spending by member states. "We must continue to invest more. And invest more together in NATO," he said.

Amid the relentless military escalation by the United States and its allies, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov this week issued what was perhaps the most blunt assessment by any Russian official to date of the efforts of the US and NATO to intensify the war against Russia.

Lavrov warned that the moves by the EU to accept Ukraine and by NATO to accept Finland and Sweden as members represent the formation of a "new coalition" targeting Russia.

"Hitler rallied a significant part, if not most, of the European nations under his banner for a war against the Soviet Union," Lavrov said. He continued, "now, the EU together with NATO are forming another – modern – coalition for a standoff and, ultimately, war with the Russian Federation."

Meanwhile, the economic consequences of the war continue to reverberate. The German public could face a tripling of energy prices in the coming months if Russia completely shuts off gas deliveries to the country, Klaus Müller, the head of Germany's federal network agency, said in an interview.

Russia has already slashed output from the Russian-German Nord Stream 1 gas pipeline, and there is growing speculation that it could shut off gas exports to Germany completely.

Müller warned of "enormous leaps in price," saying "a doubling or tripling is possible."

All over the world, the working class is being told to foot the bill for the rapidly spiraling war, both in surging prices and out-of-control military spending. As they enter into struggle, workers must take up the demand to end the war as a critical component of the defense of their social and economic rights.



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