Amid Russian rout in Ukraine, US media demands greater NATO involvement in war

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The rout of Russian forces in Ukraine continued Monday, with Russian forces now having lost a total of 3,000 square kilometers of territory in northeastern Ukraine.

At a briefing with reporters Monday, a senior US military official stated, “On the ground in the vicinity of Kharkiv, we assess that Russian forces have largely ceded their gains to the Ukrainians and have withdrawn.”

He continued, “To the north and east many of these forces have moved over the border into Russia. We also assess that Ukrainian forces have very likely taken control of Kupiansk and Izium in addition to smaller villages.”

The official continued, “we're aware of anecdotal reports of abandoned equipment, Russian equipment, which could be indicative of Russia's disorganized command and control.”

In the face of this military disaster for Russia, the US media ran a victory lap, praising the extent to which heavy US military equipment helped turn the tide of the war and demanding the deployment of further US-NATO weapons systems to Ukraine.

The *Washington Post* concluded: “The exhilaration of recent days must be a reminder to the U.S. Congress and to Europe that a maximum effort to supply Ukraine now is an investment in a successful outcome later. Ukraine has a long wish list of needed weapons systems. At the very least, President Biden’s recent request for $13.7 billion in aid to Ukraine is sensible and deserves quick action.”

The “wish list” mentioned by the *Post* includes the Army Tactical Missile System, a long-range missile system for the HIMARS with a range of over 190 miles, as well as main battle tanks and armed drones.

The *Wall Street Journal* wrote in an editorial: “The offensive vindicates Ukraine’s assurances that with enough advanced Western weapons it could retake territory. After Ukraine’s early victory in defense of Kyiv, the U.S. and Europe let Russia gain an artillery advantage in the Donbas. But once the U.S. supplied longer-range rockets and artillery, especially precise Himars, it has become a more even fight. Ukraine’s recent advances show the U.S. should supply even more Himars platforms.”

The editorial added: “Ukraine’s advances are encouraging, but Mr. Putin’s threat to the world is far from over.”

In a deliberately vague statement, the *Journal* wrote: “A nuclear escalation can’t be accepted as normal warfare. Radiation fallout could reach NATO territory. NATO will have to increase its military aid and let Ukraine take the fight inside Russia.”

Whether framed as a response to a hypothetical nuclear attack by Russia or not, a major US newspaper has responded to the success of Ukraine’s offensive by demanding that the United States order its Ukrainian proxy forces to carry out attacks inside Russia itself.

US officials have already greenlighted Ukrainian attacks on Crimea, and Ukrainian officials have admitted that a series of explosions on the peninsula were in fact Ukrainian missile strikes.

In a background press briefing whose transcript was released by the Defense Department, senior US officials gave a sober assessment of the Ukraine offensive. “We’ve seen the Ukrainians used to great effect, the capabilities that they have across the battlefield, to change the battlefield dynamics,” a military official said.

He stressed that a major factor in Russia’s military debacle was an underestimation of the extent of US-NATO military involvement in the conflict, stating “the

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Russian leadership was political and military leadership made a number of miscalculations, really enormous miscalculations, not only about the international community's support for Ukraine."

The official continued: "if you look at the totality of the battlespace that we're talking about the operations in the Khierson region as well as Kharkiv, as well as in the central line there. The Ukrainians are conducting operations that are forcing the Russians to make decisions on the battlefield about where they're going to apply their resources, and how, and so what we've seen is the Ukrainians applying the capabilities that they have to include those that have been provided by the U.S. and our allies and partners like HIMARS, GMLRs, HARM missiles in order to again change the dynamics on the battlefield."

He added that earlier in the war: "Ukraine did not have precision strike capabilities. And so, the Russians had, you know, logistics nodes, command and control nodes, staging areas for their troops. And it was at that point that, again, with the approach where they said they needed the capability to address that. That's when we started focusing on the possibility of providing the HIMARS and GMLR system."

The official raised the prospect of sending more armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and fighter aircraft, adding: "Certainly, fighter aircraft is something to consider as part of what Ukraine's requirements would be going forward…"

The meaning of these statements is clear. The United States and its NATO allies have spent tens, or even hundreds, of billions of dollars transforming the Ukrainian army into a large, well-equipped 21st century fighting force, capable of carrying out precision strikes not only on the enemy front but far behind enemy lines and even in Russian territory itself.

The conclusion drawn by the Biden administration from the military success in the northeast of Ukraine is to redouble its involvement, hoping to push all the way to the Russian border, and even past it, with the central strategic goal of retaking Crimea in the process.

Russia, however, possesses the world's second largest nuclear arsenal, and Russia's national security doctrine permits the use of nuclear weapons in defense of Russian territory. The military breakthrough by Ukraine, in other words, portends an even bloodier and more dangerous phase of the war.

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