

EU states thrust aside Kremlin's warnings of nuclear war over Ukraine

Alex Lantier, Johannes Stern
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On Thursday, after Russian President Vladimir Putin called up 300,000 reservists and warned that he was prepared to use nuclear weapons in case of a NATO attack on Russia, European Union (EU) officials recklessly pledged to continue escalating the conflict. They announced new sanctions on Russia, which will further raise food and energy prices that are devastating workers' budgets, and continued arms deliveries to Ukraine.

"We decided to bring forward as soon as possible additional restrictive measures against Russia in coordination with partners," EU Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell said after a meeting of EU foreign ministers at the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. The EU "will study, we will adopt new restrictive measures, both personal and sectoral" targeting Russian industries, he added.

Borrell admitted that Putin's warnings that he would use "all weapons systems available to us" to defend Russian territory from NATO attack are genuine. The threat of nuclear war, Borrell said, "is a real danger to the whole world, and the international community must react." However, Borrell made clear that the EU plans to accelerate delivery of billions of euros in weapons to the far-right Ukrainian regime, which has repeatedly attacked Russian-speaking areas of the country.

Putin's "references to nuclear weapons do not shake our determination, resolve and unity to stand by Ukraine," Borrell said.

The reckless and utterly irresponsible statements of Borrell, echoed by other EU officials, are leading Europe and the world straight to nuclear war.

Washington and the EU powers have delivered tens of billions of dollars in weapons to Ukrainian army units and far-right militias to hit targets deep inside Russian-claimed territory. On Wednesday, Putin said the Kremlin has concluded that the NATO powers aim to "weaken, divide and ultimately destroy our country." He added that his threat to use Russia's full military arsenal, thus including nuclear weapons, was "no bluff."

Top Russian officials have since repeated Putin's threats

that Russia would respond to attacks on territory, including Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine it currently holds, by using nuclear weapons. Yesterday, former President Dmitri Medvedev declared: "The Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk) republics and other territories will be accepted into Russia. ... Russia has announced that not only mobilization capabilities, but also any Russian weapons, including strategic nuclear weapons and weapons based on new principles, could be used for such protection."

Already last week, Medvedev warned that NATO's "unrestrained pumping of the Kiev regime with the most dangerous types of weapons" could provoke Russian military escalation.

The firing of strategic nuclear weapons by Russia and the NATO powers would lead to hundreds of millions of deaths at the very least and possibly the destruction of humanity. A Russian RS-28 strategic nuclear missile carries 15 independently-targetable warheads, each with an explosive yield of up to 25 megatons of TNT. That is over a thousand times the power of the US nuclear bombs that annihilated the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

French media have cited Russian reports that a single RS-28 missile can destroy a territory the size of Texas or of France, which is the largest EU country by land area.

Other Russian officials also emphasized that they had nothing to propose besides military escalation, including Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who briefly appeared at the UN Security Council meeting in New York to make a statement denouncing the NATO powers before leaving, without listening to any remarks from other diplomats present.

Accusing Kiev of "brazenly trampling" the rights of Russians and Russian-speakers in Ukraine, Lavrov said this "simply confirms the decision to conduct the special military operation was inevitable." He added that "the intentional fomenting of this conflict by the collective West remained unpunished."

Both the desperate and belligerent remarks of the representatives of Russia's post-Soviet capitalist regime and

the aggressive and reckless statements of the European imperialist powers must be taken as warnings: The deep crisis of the capitalist system is threatening to lead to all-out nuclear war between the major world powers.

The bankruptcy of the Kremlin and the disastrous consequences of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 are now apparent. The NATO imperialist powers not only waged war in the Middle East and the Balkans, freed from any concern about a military and political counterweight to imperialism. They also stirred up conflicts among the former Soviet Republics that now have exploded into all-out war. The Moscow regime, no longer able to make any social appeal to workers internationally and oscillating between attempts to reach a deal with imperialism and to threaten it with its military power, is left with the choice of capitulation or nuclear escalation.

The NATO powers for their part are pouring fuel on the fire. Having provoked the conflict in Ukraine by backing a far-right, anti-Russian coup in the Ukrainian capital Kiev in 2014, they are now using the war to justify a vast expansion of military-police forces, such as the German government's drive to rearm and implement an aggressive military foreign policy.

Yesterday, German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht and her French counterpart, Sebastien Lecornu, met in Berlin to stress that the EU powers would continue to arm Ukrainian army units and far-right militias even if this risks nuclear war.

"Our response is really consistent and, most importantly, resolute and joint: there will be no deviations, we will continue to support Ukraine in its courageous struggle in the future," Lambrecht said. She boasted that "huge successes" of the Ukrainian army were in part due to military aid from Germany and France.

Lambrecht added that Berlin and Paris would continue to run roughshod over Russian warnings of nuclear escalation and support attacks on Russian-held territory. "For us, these referenda [in Donetsk and Luhansk] will be of no significance as this is the territory of Ukraine and will remain so," she said. "It's good that we are sending a clear signal: This Putin reaction to Ukraine's successes only encourages us to continue supporting Ukraine."

The warmongers in the media are overflowing with calls for a rapid escalation. One should not be "blackmailed" by "Putin's nuclear saber rattling," demands the editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Berthold Kohler in a commentary. "In the tussle with Putin, the West will only remain a credible opponent if it actually continues to stand by Ukraine, at least to the extent it has done so far." Anything else would be "appeasement" and "betrayal of its own values and interests."

Clemens Wergins, chief foreign affairs correspondent, demands in *Die Welt*: "Ukraine must now quickly get all the weapons it needs to quickly liberate the occupied territories, including, for example, modern Western tanks like the Leopard 2 or infantry fighting vehicles like the Marder." He said it is "in Germany's interest that the Russian front also collapses in other places in the coming months as it did recently in Kharkiv, when Ukraine succeeded in panic-striking Russian troops into flight and capturing vast swaths of territory in a lightning advance."

Then he adds, "Because the more clearly this war is lost for Russia when the new recruits come to the front, and the less Ukrainian land the invaders then still occupy, the sooner this war will come to an end."

This cynical reasoning corresponds to the murderous logic of German militarism in the 20th century. The leading representatives of the Kaiserreich and the Nazis also argued that the rapid and maximum mobilization of the German war machine was necessary to achieve a quick "victorious peace" (*Siegfrieden*) or "final victory" (*Endsieg*). In reality, this strategy of escalation led to total war, with tens of millions of war dead and barbaric crimes.

Behind the current imperialist warmongering is a similar toxic mix of insane geopolitical ambitions and deep internal crisis. As in the 1930s, the ruling class is responding to the collapse of capitalism and explosive opposition in the working class by turning to militarism, fascism and world war. The working class must counter the capitalist madness that threatens the survival of all humanity with its own strategy of world socialist revolution.



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