

US officials gave Ukraine public green light to bomb Kerch bridge

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10 October 2022

On Friday, Ukrainian special forces organized a suicide bombing on the Kerch bridge connecting Crimea and the Russian mainland, killing three people and collapsing half of one span of the bridge.

The Ukrainian special forces immediately admitted having carried out the attack to the *New York Times*. Ukrainian officials praised the terror attack, and even issued a commemorative stamp within minutes of the bombing.

Former US officials lauded the terrorist suicide bombing, with Alexander Vindman, the former director for European Affairs for the United States National Security Council, tweeting, above a photo of the burning bridge, “I’ve been dreaming of this moment.”

In an expression of the consummate cynicism that pervades all aspects of US reporting on the war in Ukraine, the media acted as though the jury was out on who carried out the attack.

News outlets said Putin “blamed” the Ukrainian military and “alleged” that the suicide bombing targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure was a “terrorist attack,” as though this was not self-evident.

Completely excluded from any account in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* or *Wall Street Journal* was the fact that senior US officials not only publicly authorized the attack, but a former US official publicly encouraged that it be carried out.

“Bomb Russia’s bridge to Crimea, Ukraine urged,” read the headline in the *Times of London* on July 7, reporting the statements of US General Philip Breedlove, NATO’s former supreme allied commander Europe.

In his interview with the newspaper, Breedlove declared that “Kerch bridge is a legitimate target.”

He said, “Several people I have spoken to say ‘dropping’ [destroying] Kerch bridge would be a huge

blow to Russia. Kerch bridge is a legitimate target.”

He continued: “I am a trained civil engineer and I know about bridge construction. All bridges have their weak points and if targeted in the right spot it could render Kerch bridge unserviceable for a period of time. But if they wanted to drop the bridge, that would require a more dedicated bombing operation.”

He added: “I hear a lot of people asking whether it is right for Ukraine to take such aggressive action and whether the West would support it, but I cannot understand that argument.”

The next day, July 8, clearly referencing Breedlove’s comments, a reporter identified only as “Howard” asked at a Pentagon background briefing: “Can you talk about any preclusions? Would the — would the Kerch Bridge be not precluded as a potential target?”

The defense official replied, “As I said, there aren’t any preclusions that I’m aware of about the Ukrainians fighting on their sovereign territory against Russia.”

Just five days before the terror attack, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Laura K. Cooper was asked whether there were “assurances provided to the US by the Ukrainians on targeting”—e.g., involving strikes inside Russian territory. Cooper replied, “We think they can reach the vast majority of targets, including Crimea. And just to be clear, Crimea is Ukraine.”

In other words, on two separate occasions, acting representatives of the White House gave a green light for Ukraine to attack targets in Crimea, including one instance in which the official was specifically asked whether the Kerch bridge was an authorized target. And these statements were made in reference to open and public calls by a former high-ranking US official for attacks to be carried out on the bridge.

Critically, the terror attack came the day after Biden

warned publicly about the risk of the Ukraine conflict triggering nuclear “Armageddon,” declaring at a fundraiser, “We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban Missile Crisis.”

Biden denied that “there’s any such thing as the ability to easily [use] a tactical nuclear weapon and not end up with Armageddon.”

Given Biden’s comment the day before, the attack was doubly significant.

In a widely read, but rarely cited, *Financial Times* column on May 15, Malcolm Chalmers, the director-general of the Royal United Services think tank, warned that an attack on the Kerch Bridge could trigger a nuclear war between the United States and Russia. He wrote:

In the absence of a ceasefire, however, Ukrainian forces will be keen to prevent Crimea becoming a sanctuary from which the Kremlin can resupply its forces in the rest of Ukraine. Supplies of longer-range weapon systems from western states are opening up new targeting possibilities. The Kerch bridge could be a tempting prize, as could Russia’s naval base in Sevastopol.

If attacks on these targets were perceived as precursors to a full-scale Crimean invasion, they could increase the risk of nuclear escalation. This is one of the most concerning scenarios. Putin was at pains to emphasise this risk in the months before the invasion.

Putin’s spurious nuclear threats of recent months have begun to lose their potency. In order to be credible, Russia would have to make explicit that an invasion of Crimea constituted a red line. Faced with losing Crimea, Putin might consider this a worthwhile gamble, believing Ukraine (with western encouragement) would blink first. This would be a moment of extreme peril.

The latest attack on Crimea comes despite Biden’s explicit public pledge that the United States would not allow its NATO proxy to attack Russian territory. “We

are not encouraging or enabling Ukraine to strike beyond its borders,” Biden wrote in May, announcing the deployment of the HIMARS system to Ukraine.

It has now emerged that this, like everything else the United States has said about limitations on its involvement in the war, was simply a lie. By pumping Ukraine full of the world’s most advanced weapons systems, backed by the full might of the NATO military-industrial complex, the US has allowed its NATO proxy to score a wave of battlefield advances that set the stage for the latest terror attack.

It is clear, in other words, that despite Biden’s warnings of nuclear “Armageddon,” the United States is on a course that threatens the disastrous escalation of the present crisis.



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