

After Biden warns of “Armageddon,” NATO escalates war with Russia

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On Thursday, US President Joe Biden warned that the war in Ukraine could trigger “Armageddon,” i.e., a nuclear war between the United States and Russia.

But within 24 hours of Biden’s warning, the Ukrainian Special Forces, after previously getting a public green light from US officials, staged an attack on the Kerch Bridge connecting Crimea to Russia, a provocation aimed at intensifying the war and making such an “Armageddon” more likely.

In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized a series of airstrikes on civilian infrastructure throughout Ukraine Monday. Approximately 14 people were killed and 97 injured, according to Ukrainian officials, and power was disrupted in more than half the country’s regions.

The *World Socialist Web Site* condemns the actions of all parties involved in the conflict. The Putin regime is not engaged in a war to defend the Russian population but to defend the interests of the capitalist oligarchy that came to power after the dissolution of the USSR.

But ultimate responsibility for the escalation of the war lies with the United States and its imperialist allies. By encouraging Ukrainian plans to forcibly retake Crimea and join NATO, the US sought to instigate a war on Russia’s borders, first to “bleed Russia white” and ultimately to carry out a regime change operation and break up the country.

Now, with Russian forces retreating in the face of the better armed and better supplied Ukrainian military—backed by the might of the world’s imperialist powers—the US and NATO are seeking to further escalate the war. At no time has the US or any other NATO power called for a ceasefire or negotiated settlement of the conflict.

On Tuesday, NATO Secretary-General Jens

Stoltenberg announced that he would hold a summit of NATO’s nuclear planning group and that NATO would be holding a training exercise using nuclear bombers.

In the wake of Friday’s attack on the Kerch Bridge, the *New York Times* hailed the blast as a “blow to the Russian war effort in Ukraine.” Leading US officials could not contain their glee at the terror attack, with Colonel 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.”

But the cheers at Ukraine’s attack on the Kerch Bridge turned to solemn condemnation of Russia’s attack on civilian infrastructure, without skipping a beat.

Responding to the attacks, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, “The Kremlin’s strikes against Ukraine today again place the stakes of Russia’s brutal war into stark relief. ... Russia’s attacks are yet another reminder that its war against Ukraine presents a profound moral issue,” adding, “There is one aggressor in this war: Russia.”

As always, the position of American imperialism is characterized by staggering hypocrisy. No country has killed as many civilians in air raids as the United States.

During World War II, the United States killed as many as 25,000 civilians in the firebombing of Dresden and as many as 37,000 civilians in the bombing of Hamburg. This was followed by the firebombing of Tokyo, the single most destructive bombing attack in human history, which killed 130,000 men, women and children. After this came the dropping of the world’s first and only atomic bombs ever used in combat on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing up to 226,000 people.

During the Korean War, the American military completely destroyed every major city in North Korea, killing as many as 1.5 million people, or 15 percent of the country's population. The years-long strategic bombing operation during the Vietnam War, "Operation Rolling Thunder," killed between 30,000 and 182,000 civilians. More than 1 million Vietnamese were killed during the entirety of the war.

The dissolution of the USSR promoted a new outpouring of imperialist barbarism by the United States, leading to three decades of unending wars:

- In 1991, the United States launched the Gulf War, completely obliterating the Iraqi armed forces and massacring troops as they attempted to retreat. Among the numerous war crimes carried out by the US during that war was the Amiriyah shelter bombing on February 13, 1991, in which the US deliberately targeted a crowded civilian bomb shelter with two precision-guided bombs, killing over 400 people.

- In 1998, the United States bombed the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum North, Sudan, leading to "several tens of thousands of deaths" of Sudanese civilians due to medicine shortages, in the words of Germany's ambassador to Sudan.

- On March 25, 1999, the United States and NATO initiated the war against Yugoslavia, bombing Serbia and its capital Belgrade for 78 straight days. Factories, schools and hospitals were destroyed, along with bridges, roads and the electrical grid. The airstrikes killed around 2,500 people and wounded another 12,500, according to Serbian estimates.

- The second Iraq War, launched in 2003, led to the deaths of as many as 1.5 million people, according to the ORB survey of Iraq War casualties. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed in the decades-long occupation of Afghanistan, which began in 2001.

- In 2011, the United States and its NATO allies carried out a bombing campaign in Libya, which left the country in ruins and factional warfare, followed by the CIA-instigated civil war in Syria.

The US media proceeds with a form of collective amnesia about the wars of American imperialism over the past 30 years, declaring that, despite the crimes committed by the US military in the past, its motives in the current conflict are purely altruistic. But the war is a continuation of earlier conflicts, only now involving nuclear-armed powers.

The same ruthless indifference to the deaths of the peoples of the Middle East is driving the US efforts to escalate the war against Russia, using the Ukrainian population as cannon fodder and transforming the entire country into a proving ground. The US and its lackeys in NATO believe that they can achieve a military defeat of Russia which is only a prelude to the conflict with China.

The history of US imperialism reveals that it places no value on the lives of the people it wishes to subjugate and dominate through war. But the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that it also does not put any value on the lives of the American population. The American ruling class fought tooth and nail against any measures to stop the pandemic, leading to the deaths of more than 1 million people in the US alone.

The relentless escalation of the war must be stopped! On Sunday, the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a meeting to initiate a global mass movement of workers and youth against imperialist war. We urge all of those who agree with this perspective to contact us today.



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