

EU foreign ministers pledge to train 15,000 Ukrainian troops for war with Russia

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Yesterday, European Union (EU) foreign ministers met at a summit in Luxembourg and pledged a massive escalation of their participation in the NATO war on Russia in Ukraine. This decision confirms that EU countries are at war with Russia and, by the admission of top EU officials, raises the danger of direct military conflict between EU states and Russia.

The EU Foreign Affairs Council web site reported that the EU foreign ministers “agreed to establish an EU Military Assistance Mission (MAM) to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The mission will train around 15,000 troops on EU soil. They also agreed to allocate a further €500 million under the European Peace Facility to finance deliveries for the Ukrainian defence forces, thereby bringing EU military assistance for Ukraine to a total of €3.1 billion.”

With this decision, the EU is committing itself to waging long-term, large-scale land warfare against Russia. The EU MAM to Ukraine is to last two years, after which EU authorities can renew its mandate. While the EU did not say precisely what weapons it would give the Ukrainian regime, EU officials have previously said they are providing arms up to and including heavy artillery, tanks and anti-aircraft missile batteries.

This decision came barely a week after US President Joe Biden told a meeting of private donors that the escalating war between NATO and Russia could lead to “nuclear Armageddon.” The EU’s response at the Luxembourg summit made clear that, like Washington, the European imperialist bourgeoisie intends to escalate the conflict even if it leads to all-out nuclear war.

Indeed, the EU Foreign Affairs Council emphasized that it would not be deterred by warnings from Russia that its actions are unacceptable and could trigger a Russian nuclear attack. It wrote: “The EU is

unwavering in its support to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. ... The nuclear threats made by the Kremlin, the military mobilization and the illegal annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine will not shake the EU's resolve.”

The utterly reckless, unhinged character of European foreign policy emerged in EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell’s threats last week to “annihilate” the Russian military. He made this remark after Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that Russia had “various means of destruction” available to respond to attacks on its “territorial integrity,” warning, “It’s not a bluff.”

Borrell replied: “It has to be clear that the people supporting Ukraine and the European Union and the member states, and the United States and NATO are not bluffing either. And any nuclear attack against Ukraine will create an answer—not a nuclear answer but such a powerful answer from the military side—that the Russian army will be annihilated ...”

Given the scope of the mass murder Borrell was proposing—the Russian armed forces contain an estimated one million active-duty and two million reserve personnel—it is difficult to see how such an attack could not involve the use of nuclear weapons.

In line with Borrell’s reckless tone, the Luxembourg summit also adopted aggressive positions towards several other countries, especially Iran. After widespread reports in NATO media of Russian use of Iranian Shahed drones in Ukraine, the EU denounced the “reported use by Russia in the war in Ukraine of drones allegedly supplied by Iran.”

Passing over in silence its own record of police violence against social protests, the EU cynically seized upon the mass protests in Iran over the death of Mahsa

Amini in police custody to posture as a friend of the Iranian people. It adopted financial sanctions on “11 individuals and 4 entities ... linked to the death of Mahsa Amini and to the violent repression of the peaceful protests.”

The summit identified China as “a partner with whom the EU must engage, a tough competitor, and a systemic rival,” and agreed to send 40 EU monitors to the Azeri-Armenian border. This area of the Caucasus, on Russia’s southern flank, has seen bloody conflicts in the last two years and the deployment of Russian peacekeeping troops.

It is apparent that the EU, following in the footsteps of Washington and London, is dropping any pretense of not being fully engaged in the NATO war with Russia in Ukraine.

After the announcement of the EU training mission, the German Ministry of Defence rushed to assure on Twitter: “Defence Minister Lambrecht [Christine, SPD] clarifies: With the training mission of the Ukrainian soldiers, Germany will not become a war party. Training is needed for self-defence capability with state-of-the-art equipment. We support Ukraine in protecting its sovereignty.”

This is a pack of lies. In March, an expert opinion of the Scientific Service of the Bundestag stated that the training of Ukrainian soldiers on German soil was a participation in war under international law. And obviously, the imperialist powers are not concerned with the “defence” and “protection” of a sovereign Ukraine in their war offensive. NATO is waging war and arming the Ukrainian army to the teeth in order to defeat and subjugate resource-rich Russia.

A recent commentary in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* entitled “Reality as it is” states this openly. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's claim that “NATO is not a party to this conflict” is, “with respect, factually simply wrong,” the SZ wrote. “Ukraine is only surviving militarily because the West is massively supporting it. The Ukrainian soldiers are doing the fighting—but they are doing it de facto on behalf of the rest of Europe, which is equipping them, training them and supporting the war's goal, the defeat of Russia.”

The leading EU powers, above all Germany and France, play an increasingly aggressive role in the NATO war against Russia. Berlin is flooding Ukraine with weapons and announcing new deliveries almost

daily. At the same time, the ruling class is using the war to make Germany once again a leading foreign policy and military power after the crimes of the First and Second World Wars.

On Monday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) visited a live tank combat exercise of the German Armed Forces on the troop field in Bergen. On site, he praised “special assets of the Bundeswehr,” that is, the €100 billion defence fund he had launched. With this sum, the Bundeswehr “must now be equipped in such a way that it has the weapons and ammunition, the instruments it needs to carry out its mission.” Once this had been “achieved,” however, “we must not stop, [but] permanently equip the Bundeswehr with what is necessary to fulfil its mission.”

French President Emmanuel Macron announced at the end of last week that Paris is “currently working on the delivery of Caesar howitzers: We have delivered eighteen. We are currently working on the delivery of six additional howitzers.” France would also soon deliver “air defence radar, systems and missiles,” he said. Germany already delivered the first Iris-T air defence system to Kiev last week.

If some of the weapons Kiev is demanding are being withheld, it is mainly with the argument that they weaken its own armies. Macron, for example, recently explained that Paris could not always respond to the aid Kiev requested for this reason. “When President Zelensky sometimes asks me to deliver massive amounts of equipment, I am forced to keep some for ourselves in order to protect ourselves or our eastern flank,” Macron explained.

Underlying the explosion of European militarism is a reactionary mix of geopolitical objectives and internal crisis. The ruling class is responding to the crisis of the capitalist system, growing tensions between the major powers and the explosive opposition in the working class by turning to war. The working class must counterpose to this madness that threatens the annihilation of the entire planet its own solution: the struggle for world socialist revolution.



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