

US to send Patriot missiles to Ukraine: The “most escalatory action to date”

Andre Damon
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This week, nearly all of the major newspapers and cable news networks in the United States have reported that the Biden administration is preparing to imminently send Ukraine at least one battery of Patriot surface-to-air missiles.

The Patriot missile system, CNN reported, is “expected to ship quickly in the coming days.”

With each battery costing over \$1 billion and requiring a crew of 90 people to operate, the Patriot would become the most expensive and complex weapons system transferred to Ukraine.

“This is a major step up in US commitment,” Sean McFate, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council told Syracuse University News. He added, “The Patriots will provoke a Russian reaction,” calling it, “the US’s most escalatory action to date.”

Commenting on the significance of the announcement, Keir Giles of the pro-war think tank Chatham House, told NBC, “We’ve seen an incremental process of the US supplying more essential capabilities to Ukraine as it becomes clear that Russia’s ‘red lines’ are no more than bluff and bluster.”

True to President Joe Biden’s declaration in December 2021 that “I don’t accept anybody’s red lines,” the US has systematically identified and carried out actions that the Kremlin previously implied would provoke military retaliation against NATO.

In April, the US assisted Ukraine in sinking the Moskva, the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet. This was followed shortly by the announcement that the American military was actively assisting Ukraine in targeting Russian generals for assassination and the admission that the Pentagon had deployed military personnel to Ukraine.

The United States has in just a matter of months provided Ukraine with many of its most advanced weapons systems, including the M777 towed Howitzer, the HIMARS long-range missile system, the M109

Paladin self-propelled armored gun, the HARM anti-radar missile, and the NASAMS air defense system.

The expected announcement that the US will now deploy the Patriot missile system to Ukraine would continue this pattern of escalation, playing a deadly game of chicken with nuclear-armed Russia.

In November, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned that if “NATO supplies Kyiv fanatics with Patriot complexes along with NATO personnel, they will immediately become a legitimate target for our armed forces.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reiterated Medvedev’s remarks on Wednesday, saying the missile system would “definitely” be a target for Russia.

Vladimir Dzhabarov, first deputy chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the Russian Federation Council, said Wednesday, “The US is provoking us into direct conflict with NATO. Especially if they supply the Patriot air defense system.”

He added that the US is “really putting the world on the brink of a third world war.”

The justification for the decision to send Patriot missiles to Ukraine is Russia’s ongoing missile strikes against Ukraine’s power infrastructure, which are having devastating consequences for broad sections of the Ukrainian population.

But in reporting the expected decision, Voice of America quoted Retired Rear Admiral Mark Montgomery, who questioned why the US was seeking to shoot down Russian drones, each costing \$5,000-\$20,000, with missiles costing millions of dollars each.

“Patriot is an extremely complex and expensive system to operate. Each round of Patriot is between \$3 [million] and \$4 million apiece. That is a very expensive system. It would use up a lot of the money being set aside for them, I think, with a very limited return on investment.” He concluded, “For me, Patriot is not a great answer” to

defending Ukrainian cities from drone attacks.

Of course, the Patriot system is not a “great answer” for the problem American imperialism claims to be interested in.

The real aim, however, is not to defend Ukraine’s population centers but to allow Ukraine to obtain air superiority in support of offensive operations. The Patriot, the American military’s most advanced and long-range surface-to-air missile, is capable of shooting down aircraft up to 100 miles away, including those potentially operating over Crimea or the Russian mainland.

The *Washington Post* commented that the move represented a major shift from Biden’s earlier position that the US would not send “advanced” weapons to Ukraine. It wrote that the administration “has steadfastly resisted sending certain advanced weaponry—including long-range missiles, fighter jets and battle tanks—on the grounds that, in Russia’s eyes, doing so would draw the United States even deeper into the war, and the maintenance and operation of such systems is complex.”

“The White House National Security Council,” NBC reported, citing an unnamed official, has “recommended reversing course.”

US pundits, meanwhile, are braying for more escalation. In an op-ed in the *Washington Post*, Max Boot demanded that the US “give Ukraine the ability to strike every inch of Russian occupied territory,” which, according to Boot, includes Crimea.

Boot wrote, “Last week, Ukraine took the war to Russia in a small but symbolic way. Ukraine reportedly used jet drones to strike two air bases deep in Russia—one of them only 100 miles from Moscow—that are used to operate the long-range bombers that launch missiles against Ukrainian cities.”

Boot noted that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken “did not condemn the attacks.” From this he concluded, “The US position seems to be that if US weapons systems aren’t employed, and the attacks are focused strictly on military targets, it doesn’t object to the attacks.”

He concluded, “Gaining access to longer-range ‘fires’ will enable the Ukrainians to more effectively strike such military targets across the width and breadth of Russian-occupied territory. That includes Crimea.”

Commenting in *Foreign Affairs*, retired Australian Army major general Mick Ryan noted, “If Ukraine can continue to win on the battlefield, Kyiv might try to isolate and possibly even seize all of the Donbas and Crimea. Retaking both areas is a stated goal of the Ukrainian government. But there is a long way to go

before Ukraine reaches the point where it can invade Crimea.”

The US is massively escalating its involvement in a war that has produced a disaster for the people of Ukraine. The country’s economy has been shattered, and the Russian military’s new strategy of degrading power and water infrastructure is having a devastating impact during the cold Ukrainian winter.

The White House is calculating that putting ever greater military and economic pressure on Russia will intensify divisions within the Russian oligarchy, with the hope that this will create the possibility of regime-change through a palace coup against the Putin government.

However, there are significant forces within the Russian political establishment that are demanding a more aggressive response to the Washington’s provocative actions.

On December 10, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality held a rally entitled “For a Mass Movement of Youth and Students to Stop the War in Ukraine!”

In concluding remarks to the rally, WSWs International Editorial Board Chairperson David North warned: “The outcome of this process, unless stopped by the working class, will be a global cataclysm on a scale that dwarfs the violence of the past. Since the outbreak of the war, the potential use of nuclear weapons has been normalized in political discourse.”

He concluded, “The struggle against war proceeds through the forging of the unity of the international working class and the ending of capitalist rule through world socialist revolution.”



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