Kiev kills “hundreds” of Russian recruits in strike with US-supplied missile

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In a strike at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve, between 60 and 400 Russian conscript troops were killed in an attack on a makeshift barracks inside Ukraine by missiles launched from the HIMARS weapons system.

The attack, using US-provided weapons and likely based on US-provided targeting data, sends the world a message: Washington wants the bloodbath in Eastern Europe to escalate in the new year.

In the day since the attack, the magnitude of the disaster has become clear amid recriminations within the Russian political and media establishment over who was to blame for the debacle.

The Russian Ministry of Defense claimed that 63 service members were killed in the strike, while the Ukrainian Ministry of defense claimed that four hundred were killed. Some Russian journalists reported that the casualties ranged between 200 and 600 people.

Whatever the true number, it may be the deadliest single airstrike to date in the war, which has already killed or injured 200,000 residents of the two countries that both were part of the Soviet Union only 30 years ago.

In what appeared to be a massive lapse of basic military precautions, hundreds of Russian troops were packed into the same building with an ammunition dump within range of the US-provided HIMARS missiles.

Daniil Bezsonov, a Russian-aligned regional official in Donetsk, called the attack a “massive blow” pointing to “our mistakes.”

Sergey Mironov, a prominent member of the upper house of Russia’s parliament, demanded an inquiry into the disaster, demanding criminal prosecution of those responsible, “whether they wear epaulets or not.”

The HIMARS system allows Ukrainian forces, at the direction of their US paymasters, to target any point for dozens of miles.

Michael Kofman, the director of Russian studies at the CNA research institute in Arlington, Virginia, told the *New York Times*, “The influx of mobilized personnel at the front lines has visibly made them vulnerable to strikes.”

The troops in the building were newly mobilized from the Saratov and Samara regions, Russian military blogger Anastasia Kashevarova reported.

These troops would have been part of the mobilization of approximately 300,000 troops by Russia in September.

Kofman, explaining the rationale of US war planners, said, “The first step of any Ukrainian road to victory will be the continuation of this great wasting stage we are in” and that “will rely mostly on ranged weapons to methodically dismantle the Russian forces facing them.”

“They are afraid. You can feel it,” Ukrainian President Volodomir Zelensky said of Russian forces following the attack.

The latest attack follows a series of strikes deep inside Russian territory. Over the past months, Kiev carried out three separate attacks on the Russian airbase at Engels, near Saratov, damaging strategic bombers and killing service members.

Amid reports that Russia is running low on precision missiles that have been used to target Ukrainian cities, the United States is only expanding the range of weapons it is providing for Ukraine.

The National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law late last month, doubles the US commitment to the war to date and provides Ukraine with a Patriot missile battery, the most complex US system deployed so far in the war.

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Last month, Bloomberg reported that the United States is considering providing Ukraine with the Bradley armored fighting vehicle—a tracked armored vehicle that looks like a light tank.

Meanwhile, the US and European media are full of bloodcurdling calls for the escalation of the war.

The most egregious of these came from the *Financial Times*, Britain's top business newspaper, which in an editorial condemned "ceasefires or negotiation" and demanded "More… offensive arms" be trafficked by the United States into the former Soviet republic.

On Monday, *Foreign Affairs* magazine published an article by Andrii Zahorodniuk, the former defense minister of Ukraine, advocating for the United States to openly announce the Ukrainian government's goal of reconquering Crimea, which to date the US has only endorsed under its breath.

"Russia's military footprint, for example, is actually a reason to fight for Crimea, since a battle over the territory would seriously degrade Russia's ability to wage war and terrorize Ukraine and other states," Zahorodniuk wrote. "The other concerns about Ukraine's ability to retake the peninsula and nuclear attacks are all at least somewhat overblown. After consecutive months of battlefield success, it is clear that Ukraine has the capacity to liberate Crimea."

He adds, "And Putin's nuclear threats are likely just bluster."

As the US becomes even more flagrant in funneling weapons and "financial assistance" (bribes) to the Ukrainian government, Ukrainian politicians are increasingly dropping the pretense that they are fighting for "democracy."

In a post quoting Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian parliament on Monday declared, "the complete and supreme victory of Ukrainian nationalism will be when the Russian Empire ceases to exist."

The post, praising "these instructions of Stepan Bandera," was posted to commemorate the birthday of the Nazi collaborator and war criminal.

These comments were condemned by Polish and Ukrainian politicians and journalists.

Reporting on the post, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* called Bandera "a Ukrainian ultra-nationalist and antisemite whose followers engaged in a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Jews and Poles during World War II."

"Bandera was the murderer responsible for the genocide of Poles in 1943-44, when UPA troops horribly killed about 100,000 Polish civilians," tweeted Kacper P?a?y?ski, chair of the EU Affairs Committee in the Polish parliament. The reference was to a Ukrainian paramilitary force formed to fight on the side of the Nazis.

With just days in the new year, the war is rapidly escalating, threatening to draw NATO and the Russia into a direct conflict. The rapid escalation of the war makes clear the urgent necessity of building an anti-war movement of workers, students and young people on the basis of a socialist program.

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