

NATO to send over 100 heavy tanks against Russia

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In the most dangerous escalation of the war between NATO and Russia to date, the United States will provide 50 M1 Abrams main battle tanks to Ukraine, as part of a deployment of NATO tanks that could number in the hundreds, according to reports in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

Germany also plans to announce that it will send over a dozen Leopard 2 main battle tanks to Ukraine, paving the way for multiple NATO countries, including Poland and the Baltic states, to send their own German-made main battle tanks into combat. Ukrainian officials have suggested that over 100 Leopard 2 tanks will be sent by the NATO countries.

These measures make it clear that the war is not merely a proxy war, but an open conflict between NATO and Russia, threatening incalculable consequences for humanity.

The Abrams and Leopard 2, which are twice the weight of the Sherman and T34 battle tanks of World War II, are the successor to Nazi Germany's Tiger heavy tanks that were thrown against the Soviet Union during Operation Barbarossa.

Altogether, the *Telegraph* estimated that the US and its allies are "poised to send nearly 200 battle tanks to Ukraine."

These announcements follow the deployment, according to the Pentagon, of "about 900 armored personnel carriers to Ukraine," including the Bradley, Stryker, and Marder infantry fighting vehicles.

Poland formally announced that it intends to send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine on Tuesday. Formal announcements by the United States and Germany that they will send their own tanks are expected Wednesday.

In addition, the *New York Times* reported plans by the Pentagon to increase the production of artillery shells

five-fold. The report cited documents from the US army calling for "the most aggressive modernization effort in nearly 40 years."

As a result of the expansion, the US army plans to produce 90,000 artillery shells per month, up from 14,000, through the production of new factories and logistics hubs throughout the country.

The announcements follow the declaration by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley that the NATO-backed Ukrainian proxy force would "go on the offensive" in the coming period.

Milley defined the US's goal as being to "liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine" and to "liberate the occupied areas."

Amid the announcements, the actual goals of the US military are coming into clearer view. *Washington Post* reporter Max Boot, who accompanied Austin to Ramstein Air Base, reported that "Austin told me that a 'realistic goal for this year' would be for the Ukrainians to cut the 'land bridge' between Crimea and Russia that Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces occupied last year."

The realization of this military aim would require a blitzkrieg combined-arms style offensive, in which Russian forces would be pulverized and a string of cities in Southern Ukraine captured, according to US war planners quoted by the *New York Times*.

"Ukraine could use Bradleys to move forces down major roads, such as the M14, which connects Kherson, Melitopol and Mariupol," said Seth G. Jones of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, according to the *Times*.

The massive commitment of tanks and armored vehicles pledged by the NATO powers in recent weeks would be just a down payment on the level of direct

NATO involvement required to achieve the United States' sweeping war aims.

In perhaps the most troubling element of the reporting that took place Tuesday, the *Washington Post* concluded its report on the dispatch of Abrams tanks by noting the earlier statement by the Pentagon:

A senior U.S. defense official ... said that sending even one Abrams was out of the question. It is hard for the United States to maintain the Abrams tanks and their sophisticated turbine engine, the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitivity.

For the Ukrainians, the official said, it would be impossible.

Nothing has changed about the logistical requirements of fielding the M1 Abrams tank. If it is "impossible" for the Ukrainian military to operate this weapon, the dispatch of the M1 Abrams to Ukraine is merely a stepping stone to direct NATO involvement in the conflict. As the WSWS wrote following the Ramstein summit:

As the immense challenges posed by the new American strategy emerge in the coming months, and as the death toll among Ukrainian troops rises, the demand will inevitably be made for the direct deployment of NATO troops in the war. This would mean that American and Russian soldiers would be shooting at each other in the first general engagement between nuclear-armed states in history.

With apt timing, on Tuesday the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved its "Doomsday Clock" forward, declaring, "The Clock now stands at 90 seconds to midnight—the closest to global catastrophe it has ever been."

In a testament to the immense danger of the situation, Boot, in his account of Austin's trip to Ramstein Air Base, wrote: "The defense secretary and his staff left

Washington early on Wednesday morning aboard an Air Force E-4B, a.k.a. the 'doomsday plane,' a variant of the Boeing 747 built in 1973 to allow the president to run the U.S. government in the event of nuclear war."

The out-of-control escalation of the war poses the urgent necessity for the building of a mass anti-war movement based on the working class. We urge readers to carefully study the statement by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, "A call to youth throughout the world: Build a mass movement to stop the Ukraine war!" and to take up the struggle against war on the basis of a socialist program.



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