

F-16 fighters: The next stage in the relentless US military escalation against Russia

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The announcement last month that the Biden administration would send M1 Abrams main battle tanks to Ukraine has set the stage for further demands for escalation through the provision of F-16 fourth-generation fighter aircraft.

A familiar script is playing out. Months in advance of any public announcement, the Pentagon confirms it is working out plans to send a weapons system to the front. At the appropriate time, demands are placed simultaneously in the US press and by Ukrainian officials for the system in question.

The Biden administration declares it has no plans to send the weapon. Its “reluctance” is denounced in the press and by Republican and Democratic Party officials. Within a matter of weeks or months, the White House announces precisely the measure that it has previously ruled out, without any explanation of the reversal.

This exercise in kabuki theater, repeated over and over, makes clear the extent to which the US civilian political leadership has become merely a means to package decisions made by the Pentagon to the broader public.

This cycle has become a parody of itself, to the point where any statements of America’s civilian government about the limitations of military action are largely treated as meaningless.

As Yuriy Sak, an adviser for Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov, told Reuters, “They didn’t want to give us heavy artillery, then they did. They didn’t want to give us Himars systems, then they did. They didn’t want to give us tanks, now they’re giving us tanks. Apart from nuclear weapons, there is nothing left that we will not get.”

Commenting on this pattern, the *New York Times* wrote in an article published Wednesday, “If the

usual script plays out, the Biden administration’s reluctance to provide the planes could be temporary.”

The newspaper continued, “For Ukraine, the United States and its NATO allies, the playbook has now become standardized. First, Kyiv asks for an advanced weapons system. The Biden administration says no... after months of hemming and hawing, the Biden administration says yes, and the gates to more weapons open.”

An article in the *Washington Post* Tuesday made the same point: “President Biden’s brusque refusal to fulfill Ukraine’s request for F-16 jets has been greeted with skepticism at the Pentagon, where some officials, citing the administration’s pattern of reversal after first rejecting other pleas from Kyiv, foresee eventual approval or a scenario where American allies provide the aircraft with administration approval.”

In other words, despite Biden’s categorical declaration that the United States will not send F-16 fighters to Ukraine, the decision to do so has already been made. Nothing remains but the working out of the political details within NATO and the launching of the media propaganda campaign of lies to sell the decision to a skeptical public.

Plans to send advanced Western fighters have been underway for months, according to earlier statements by US officials. In July, Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., chief of staff of the US Air Force, told the *Washington Post* that “discussions are ongoing” about sending fighter jets to Ukraine.

The *Financial Times* reported that Lockheed Martin has already increased production of F-16 fighters to compensate for countries planning to transfer them to Ukraine. The company is “going to be ramping up production on F-16s in Greenville [South Carolina] to get to the place where we will be able to backfill pretty

capably,” said Frank St. John, chief operating officer of Lockheed Martin.

Last week, ArmyINFORM, an information agency for Ukraine’s Ministry of Defense, reported that Ukrainian fighter pilots have already begun training in the United States, likely on the F-16. “Our military pilots went to the United States, funds were allocated for the training of our pilots,” wrote the publication, quoting a Ukrainian official. ArmyINFORM reported that the type of aircraft the United States will send to Ukraine has already been decided.

The F-16 is the workhorse of the United States’ “nuclear sharing” program. In the event of a full-scale nuclear war, atomic bombs based in Turkey, Germany and Poland, delivered from F-16 fighters, would be among the first to explode.

Last week, leading Democratic and Republican senators called on the White House to send F-16 fourth-generation nuclear-capable fighter aircraft to Ukraine. Rhode Island Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, South Carolina Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham and Connecticut Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal demanded that the jets be provided to “erode Russia’s capability to continue fighting in Ukraine.”

To an even greater degree than the M1 Abrams battle tank, sending F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine would involve the deployment of a massive logistical infrastructure and supply lines into Ukraine from the NATO countries, likely including the deployment of American civilian contractors to help maintain these sophisticated systems.

CNN speculated that the deployment of F-16s would mean that “Western contractors could be sent to Ukraine, putting them at risk of Russian attack.”

The dispatch of such “contractors,” who would overwhelmingly be nationals of the United States and NATO countries, would provide the occasion for further demands for the creation of a no-fly zone. When these failed to have their intended effect, the ground would be set for calls for the direct deployment of US and other NATO troops.

The logic of military escalation is at work. Each step generates the necessity for further escalation, all the way to all-out war with Russia. Having tied the prestige of the US-led NATO alliance to victory over Russia, the Biden administration will escalate all the way to nuclear war, unless it is stopped. Beyond Russia,

moreover, the United States is already in the advanced stages of planning for military conflict with China.

There is a social force that can put an end to imperialist war: the international working class. This week, strikes have erupted throughout Europe in opposition to the sweeping austerity measures being implemented by governments and major corporations, whose aim is to make the working class bear the cost of the war. Millions have demonstrated in France, and half a million in the UK. This is part of a broader movement of the working class developing in the United States and throughout the world.

If the logic of military escalation is nuclear war, the logic of the escalation of the class struggle is socialist revolution. This, however, requires the building of a socialist leadership in the working class, to connect the class battles erupting throughout the world with the fight against war and the capitalist profit system.



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