

Seymour Hersh's exposure of the Nord Stream bombing: A lesson and a warning

Andre Damon
10 February 2023

On Wednesday, journalist Seymour Hersh revealed that the United States Navy, at the direction of President Joe Biden, was responsible for the September 26, 2022 attacks on the Nord Stream pipelines carrying natural gas between Russia and Germany.

This article, which has been met with total silence in the major US publications, has blown apart the entire narrative of US involvement in the war as a response to “unprovoked Russian aggression.” It lifts the lid on far-reaching plans to use the escalating conflict with Russia to solidify US economic and military domination over Europe.

Hersh revealed that:

- In June 2022, under the cover of a military training exercise, the US Navy placed explosives on the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines carrying natural gas from Russia to Germany, which were then remotely detonated on September 26.

- The operation was ordered by US President Joe Biden and planned by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

- Planning for the attack began in December 2021, months before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Seymour Hersh is a journalist of the old school, representing what is now an almost non-existent type. A dogged investigative reporter, he does not submit his articles for vetting by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He has exposed or contributed to revealing some of the greatest crimes in American history, including the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal and the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib.

Based on Hersh's journalistic record, spanning decades, there is every reason to believe his account. It confirms what the WSWWS wrote at the time. Asking the question, *Cui bono?*—Who benefits?—the WSWWS noted:

Russia had no motive to destroy the Nord Stream pipeline. Russia's Gazprom conglomerate owned half of the pipeline, alongside German, French and Dutch shareholders, and the pipeline was at the heart of Moscow's plans to rebuild economic ties with Europe, if and when the war with NATO in Ukraine ended...

For Washington, the bombing presented two benefits. Firstly, coming amid the NATO military escalation against Russia in Ukraine, it would help fuel more anti-Russian war propaganda. Secondly, by making Europe more dependent on US natural gas imports to replace Russian gas, it corresponded to a major US aim in the Ukraine war from the outset: to bring Europe more firmly under US control. These aims have increasingly come into the open in recent years.

The American media, however, rushed to utilize the attack on the pipeline to promote the anti-Russia campaign. “Russia is opening a new front on its energy war against Europe,” declared the *Washington Post* on September 27, to cite just one example. “First, it weaponized gas supply, halting shipments, including via the Nord Stream pipeline. Now, it may be attacking the energy infrastructure it once used to ship its energy.”

Hersh's revelations blow apart the entire narrative of the war, repeated endlessly by the Biden administration and the entire US media. They make clear that planning for the attack on the Nord Stream pipelines began months ahead of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Russian attack was merely the pretext to put into place plans that had been developing since the 2014 coup in Ukraine, which was followed by a massive program of military armament in preparation for war.

The revelations regarding Nord Stream expose, on the one hand, the absolute criminality of American imperialism, and, on the other hand, the function of the media as an instrument of propaganda. The various “reporters” from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, CNN and other media outlets serve as little more than transcribers for the military and intelligence agencies.

The revelations are a lesson about the past and also a warning about the future.

The US and NATO powers are presently engaged in a campaign to vastly escalate the conflict with Russia. Less than a month ago, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin pledged to “go on the offensive to liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine.” In other words, he was pledging the entire prestige of the US and NATO powers on the success of an assault on fortified Russian positions, with the aim of retaking not only the areas seized by Russia since 2022 but the entire Donbass and Crimea.

In recent weeks, the Biden administration and its allies have announced the deployment of tanks, followed by plans for sending fighter jets to Ukraine. “Nothing is off the table,” said UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday.

Nothing means nothing. Ultimately, the achievement of the US goals will require the deployment of US-NATO ground troops and all that this entails. The danger that the development of the conflict could lead to the use of nuclear weapons is not solely, or even primarily, a matter of what the Putin government will do in response, but what the US will do to ensure that its aims in the war are achieved.

The problem, however, is how to sell this plan to the population. Biden’s State of the Union Address earlier this week hardly mentioned the central element of the administration’s policy, the war against Russia. This was, as the WWS noted, due to the fact that the war is not popular and because plans are in the works for a major escalation. This will require, we explained, “the deployment of NATO forces to Ukraine, including American contractors and troops, but Biden is not yet ready to reveal it. More time is needed to ratchet up the ongoing media propaganda campaign and generate an even higher level of anti-Russia hysteria.”

How will this propaganda campaign be developed? Here, the past is prologue. If the US organized the bombing of the Nord Stream pipeline to justify its escalation of the war last year, what is it planning now?

In 1898, the explosion of the battleship USS Maine in Havana harbor, portrayed as an act of war, was used to

launch the Spanish-American War and dispatch troops to Cuba and the Philippines. The 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident that prompted direct US involvement in the Vietnam War was fabricated.

There is the precedent of the September 11, 2001 attacks, which were used to justify the invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq and the whole “war on terror.” In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski noted that “the pursuit of power [i.e., US global hegemony] is not a goal that commands popular passion, except in conditions of a sudden threat or challenge to the public’s sense of domestic well-being.”

Commenting on these lines in 2006, *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board Chairman David North wrote:

The events of 9/11 provided precisely the sort of “sudden threat or challenge to the public’s sense of domestic well-being” that created, at least in the short term, a constituency for the unleashing of American military power, justified in the name of vengeance and self-defense.

The bigger the escalation, the bigger the lie. Hersh’s revelations make it clear that the White House has it entirely within its power to stage a provocation, aimed at galvanizing public support for the war, whether by provoking a Russian response or manufacturing an “attack” out of whole cloth.

The entire US media would then snap to attention. Already it is working on overdrive on claims that Russia was behind the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in 2014.

The American working class must be on its guard against any such provocation by the Biden administration. The prerequisite for the building of an antiwar movement in the working class must be the wholesale rejection of Washington’s war propaganda and the shameless apologists for US imperialism who endlessly promote it.



To contact the WWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)