

Warmonger Alexander Vindman to speak at University of Michigan

**The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at UM
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The following statement is written by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the University of Michigan. To contact the IYSSE at UM, write to iysse.umich@gmail.com or follow on Twitter: twitter.com/iysseum

On Monday, the University of Michigan is hosting an event to mark the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine by holding a moderated discussion with US Army Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, former Director for European Affairs for the United States National Security Council. The organizers of the event state that the discussion will “examine the current state of the war and its impacts on the Ukrainian people; the implications for global security; and prospects for peace and rebuilding.”

The IYSSE at University of Michigan denounces Vindman’s appearance on campus. That a figure like Vindman is featured as the keynote speaker in this commemoration is an indication the university and event organizers do not actually intend to discuss the “prospects for peace and rebuilding.” Rather, the university has invited one of the central military-political figures involved in promoting, entrenching and escalating a prolonged and bloody US-NATO war with Russia in Ukraine. The war has already claimed an estimated 200,000 casualties on both sides as of November 2022, and it threatens to become a nuclear conflagration that could destroy the planet.

The IYSSE opposes the reactionary invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime from the socialist left, not from the imperialist right. While the bourgeois media claim that the war was “unprovoked,” the truth is that it has been prepared for decades, especially since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, with the NATO encirclement of Russia. One year into the war, its character has become clear: It is a war between NATO and Russia, in which the Ukrainian armed forces function as a direct proxy of the imperialist powers.

The White House has begun sending long-range missiles into Ukraine, which can strike hundreds of miles into Russia. The US, Germany and France are all now sending tanks—offensive, not defensive, weapons—into the country. Journalist Seymour Hersh revealed last week that it was the US that destroyed the German-Russian Nord Stream gas pipeline last September, having planned to do so months before the Russian invasion.

The US and NATO have already committed over \$100 billion to ensure that war, not peace, is sustained against Russia in Ukraine. And Vindman is a key figure in the effort to ensure this war continues and is escalated.

Vindman’s political career embodies the profit-driven nexus of imperialism, involving the military, the State Department, the Democratic Party, the media and elite academic think tanks.

Originally born in Kiev, he received a graduate degree from Harvard University in Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, a department heavily connected to the US State Department. He joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) in college and later became an officer in the Army, serving one year in the Iraq War. By 2008, he had become a Foreign Area Officer (FAO) with the Army, specializing in Russian-Ukrainian affairs.

In 2012, Vindman was assigned to work in the Moscow Embassy under ambassador Michael McFaul, now a fellow at the right-wing Hoover Institution at Stanford University. McFaul is best known for being an “expert” on the so-called “color revolutions” carried out with US backing to install pro-Western regimes in Georgia and Ukraine in 2003 and 2004, respectively.

In 2015, Vindman was appointed as an adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He later recalled that his role was to help in “developing the main policy towards Russia.” In 2018, he was assigned to the National Security Council. It was here that he first came to national prominence, as a key witness in the impeachment trial against Donald Trump in 2019.

From the standpoint of the Democratic Party, the impeachment was central to the preparation for a war with Russia. Instead of mobilizing opposition against Trump’s fascistic politics and attacks on democratic rights, the Democrats focused the impeachment entirely on the question of Russia and, in particular, Trump’s decision to temporarily delay a massive weapons shipment to Ukraine.

Since then, Vindman has been one of the most fervent advocates for a conflict with Russia over Ukraine. In August of 2021, he bluntly stated in an interview with the *Kyiv Post* that “In our competition with Russia, we can achieve a lot through Ukraine.”

In January 2022, one month before the Russian invasion, Vindman, speaking as a pundit on MSNBC said, “We’re about to have the largest war in Europe since World War II. There’s going to be a massive deployment of air power, long-range artillery, cruise missiles, things that we haven’t seen unfold on the European landscape for more than 80 years.”

As the disastrous and bloody war has deepened, Vindman has been a steady promoter of ever deeper and more reckless US actions. He has done so not as a mere commentator. Rather,

throughout the war, he has been in direct discussions and contact with the Biden administration and military and political officials in Ukraine.

In a recent interview with the AP, Vindman acknowledged that he was having calls with the Biden administration every other week. He bragged that shortly after the beginning of the war, “I told the administration point blank that they will absolutely deliver what they think are red lines, and never deliver on. Whether it’s tanks or more advanced capabilities, they’ll get there.”

In September 2022, after Ukrainian and NATO-backed forces bombed the Russian-built Kerch Bridge which connects the Crimean peninsula with the Russian mainland, Vindman tweeted a photo of the burning bridge, with the comment “I’ve been dreaming of this moment.”

Most recently, in the think tank journal *Foreign Affairs*, Vindman advocated for direct US support for a Ukrainian offensive to retake the Crimean peninsula, which has been claimed by Russia since a US-backed coup in Kiev in 2014 toppled a pro-Russian government. In the piece, entitled “What Ukraine Needs to Liberate Crimea,” Vindman declared, “Washington should give Ukraine the weapons and assistance it needs to win quickly and decisively.” Russian officials have warned repeatedly that the Kremlin would be prepared to resort to nuclear weapons to defend Russian control over Crimea.

University of Michigan and the militarization of intellectual-political life on campus

That a figure like Vindman, who is directly implicated in a war that is killing hundreds each day and threatens a nuclear catastrophe, is being featured as a keynote speaker is an indication of the deep-going militarization of academic and intellectual life. The line between imperialist war planning and propaganda, on the one side, and supposed academic discussion, on the other, has been largely obliterated.

The American military apparatus, intelligence agencies and the State Department have long sought to cultivate universities as ideological and political training grounds for the interests of American imperialism and global capitalism.

The full extent of direct and indirect military funding to campuses is undoubtedly much deeper than officially reported. But even what is known makes clear that campuses are major ideological, scientific and cultural laboratories for the US military.

At University of Michigan alone, the Department of Defense provided \$82 million in research expenditures in 2022. The total was \$84 million in 2018. Nationally, the DOD allocated \$195 million in 2022 for its Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) awards, which are spread out across over 60 different campuses each year. The list of such awards and partnerships—most or all connected in some form to the war drive—at UM and campuses across the country would span hundreds of pages.

This unabashed militarism on campus and the promotion of a

war monger like Vindman beg a political explanation. The University of Michigan has long been considered a bastion of liberalism and “left” politics. However, over the past decades, layers of the upper-middle class, including in academia, have sharply lurched to the right and are now a principal bastion of support for the NATO war against Russia.

A prominent example of this arc is Juan Cole, Professor for Middle Eastern History at the University of Michigan. He came to public attention as a critic of the George Bush administration for its criminal and illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, once Obama came to power, Cole endorsed the illegal bombing and destruction of Libya in 2011, under the same fraudulent banner of “human rights” and the defense of “democracy” that the US has deployed as a cover for virtually all of its wars. Cole denounced the anti-imperialism of genuine socialists who opposed the war, which ultimately killed over 100,000 and created millions of refugees.

Today, Cole is supporting fully the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. His blog *Informed Comment* publishes material from government-funded outlets like Radio Free Europe, and Cole himself is writing his comments on international politics and the war in Ukraine entirely from the standpoint of giving political advice to the Biden administration.

The collapse of the old anti-war movement that was dominated by middle-class layers that were oriented to the Democratic Party underscores the urgent need for the building of an anti-war movement with an entirely different political perspective and social orientation.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) has initiated the building of a mass global movement of young people to demand an immediate end to the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine and the reckless escalation toward World War III. We insist that this movement must be rooted in the international working class, base itself on the lessons of history and be armed with a socialist and revolutionary program. We outlined the basis for this struggle in a comprehensive statement against war in November 2022, and we held an international online rally against war in December to initiate the fight to build this movement.

In the coming weeks, we will be organizing meetings in the US, including at the University of Michigan, and around the world to discuss the historical and political origins of the war in Ukraine and the basis for the development of a socialist anti-war movement among students and youth.

We urge students at University of Michigan to join our campaign.

To contact the IYSSE at UM, write to iysse.umich@gmail.com or follow on Twitter: twitter.com/iysseum



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