As casualties mount in Ukraine war, US presses for major new offensive

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More than 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers have died in the war with Russia *Politico* reported Wednesday, according to statements by US officials.

Based on the precedent of other 21st-century wars, this would mean that total Ukrainian casualties (killed and injured) since the start of the war last year are half a million or more.

This figure is four times greater than earlier statements, such as the declaration in November by US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley, that over 100,000 Ukrainian troops had been killed or injured.

The latest figures would mean that Ukrainian soldiers are being killed at a rate comparable with World War I, during which 450,000 Ukrainian soldiers died over the course of four years.

But even this figure, however, is a significant underestimation.

Describing the bloody battle of Bakhmut, *Politico* wrote: "Moscow and Kyiv are continuing to throw bodies into the fight for a southeastern city the US does not consider strategically important."

Despite the tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers that died in Bakhmut, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters that the city is "more of a symbolic value than it is strategic and operational value."

In reality, the public cannot know the actual number of dead, because both the Ukrainian and Russian governments are keeping the true number of casualties hidden from their populations.

Regardless of the death toll and a significant deterioration on the ground, the United States is determined to force half-trained Ukrainian conscripts to once more go on the offensive against entrenched Russian lines.

Politico reports that:

> U.S. officials are more focused on getting Ukraine ready for a major spring offensive to retake territory, which they expect to begin by May. Hundreds of Western tanks and armored vehicles, including for the first time eight armored vehicles that can launch bridges and allow troops to cross rivers, are en route to Ukraine for the offensive…
>
> U.S. aid packages "going back four or five months have been geared toward what Ukraine needs for this counteroffensive," said one U.S. official.

While funding, arming and directing Ukrainian forces, *Politico* writes that "U.S. officials are careful not to appear to tell Kyiv how to fight the war."

If they are keen "not to appear" to be directing the bloodletting, it is because they are. While repeatedly asserting that the goals and outcome of the war are to be determined by "the Ukrainians," the United States has completely taken over the country's political structures, which have banned all anti-war parties.

Despite the massive amounts of weaponry the US and NATO are surging into the country, Ukrainian forces continue to lose ground. The Ukrainian military is throwing vast numbers of raw recruits into battle in Bakhmut, where media reports have said the average lifespan on the front is as short as four hours.

On Monday, the *Washington Post* published an interview with a Ukrainian commander who described how his entire command of 500 men had been wiped out, and that he was the only one left.

He said that even if the coming offensive turns into "a massacre and corpses ... there will be a counteroffensive either way.

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"There are only a few soldiers with combat experience," the commander told the *Post.* "Unfortunately, they are all already dead or wounded."

The commander, in the words of the *Post*, "described going to battle with newly drafted soldiers who had never thrown a grenade, who readily abandoned their positions under fire and who lacked confidence in handling firearms."

Predictably, the commander, who goes by the callsign Kupol, was relieved of command, for "disseminating inaccurate information."

A spokesperson for the Ukrainian defense ministry declared, "100% of the servicemen of the airborne assault troops, called up for mobilization, underwent basic and professional training before being appointed to positions in military units."

He continued, "Proper training of Ukrainian paratroopers and their motivation were repeatedly noted by foreign instructors"—presumably from the United States.

But even as the extent of the bloodbath is becoming clear, the US and NATO are escalating their preparations for ever more direct involvement.

On Thursday, Polish President Andrzej Duda announced that the country would be sending Mig fighter jets to Ukraine "literally in the next few days."

The Migs, which are reported to be upgraded to use NATO-standard weaponry, are a critical stepping-stone to a looming decision by the United States to send modern NATO-standard fighter jets such as the F-16.

The announcement by Poland crosses yet another threshold of what the United States and its allies pledged they would not do in Ukraine.

In March 2022, the Pentagon declared that "we assess the transfer of the MIG-29s to Ukraine to be high risk" and could "increase the prospects of a military escalation with NATO."

The announcement follows the publication of a letter Tuesday by a group of senators calling for sending F-16 fighters to Ukraine. Declaring that "we are now at a critical juncture in the conflict," the senators called on the Pentagon to "take a hard look at providing F-16 aircraft to Ukraine."

Ultimately, the achievement of the United States' sweeping war aims will not be possible without the deployment of NATO ground troops directly into the conflict.

The downing of a US reaper drone by a Russian fighter aircraft earlier this week is a testament to the extent to which, amid horrifying casualties on both sides, the conflict is emerging ever more openly into a direct clash between NATO and Russia.

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