

UK deepens warmongering in Ukraine with plans to supply long-range missiles

Robert Stevens
10 May 2023

The UK is again leading the way in a massive further escalation of the NATO war against Russia.

On Monday, the *Washington Post* reported that the UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) had issued a call to weapons manufacturers, on behalf of the International Fund for Ukraine (IFU), to supply missiles capable of striking Russian-annexed Crimea or cities deep inside Russia's borders. Over £300 million in funding has been made available through donations from the UK, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, plus Iceland and Lithuania.

The MoD's notice referred to "Missiles or Rockets with a range 100-300km; land, sea or air launch" and "Payload 20-490kg". Listed as "Desirable requirements" were: "Low Probability of Intercept (LPI); includes Mission Planning Capability; Assured navigation (with hardened Global Navigation Satellite System capability) in the face of advanced countermeasures and EM spectrum denial; Air defence penetration methods to increase probability of successful strike; Technical Readiness Level of at least 8".

This fits the profile of the UK's own Storm Shadow missile which has a range of in excess of 250km. Costing £2.2 million apiece, the weapon is manufactured by the UK/French/Italian arms group MBDA for the British and French armed forces. According to the *Forces* website, the Storm Shadow was "developed primarily for stealth strikes," is "capable of engaging the targets precisely in any weather conditions during day and night" and boasts "long-range low attitude paths combined with subsonic speed."

The missile was first used in the imperialist invasion of Iraq in 2003. It has since been used extensively by UK warplanes in the nearly decade-long bombing operation led by the US and Britain in Iraq.

The *Guardian* reported Wednesday, "A British official, speaking anonymously, said the tender requirements were

'rather consistent' with the Storm Shadow." An MoD spokesperson said that a final decision to supply Ukraine with long-range Ukraine would rest with the main five countries in the IFU.

This was just for public consumption. Everyone knows that it is Britain, acting in tandem with the United States, that will decide what gets sent. This was made clear by the statements cited in the *Washington Post* made by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in February in his speech to the Munich Security Conference:

He asked, "If there is a moment in this conflict we can make a difference, why not seize it? What are we waiting for... What is the purpose of these stockpiles? If the weapons are degrading Russian armed forces, that is increasing our security."

Sunak added definitively, "The United Kingdom will be the first country to provide Ukraine with longer range weapons."

His pledge was all but confirmed this week by UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, in Washington to hold talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the Atlantic Council think tank "on the United Kingdom's role in an increasingly adversarial world."

Blinken said in a press conference, "We applaud the UK's pledge to match in 2023 the \$2.3 billion in military support that it provided to Ukraine during the first year of the war."

"In addition to training of tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers, the UK is providing MRS, Challenger 2 tanks, armored vehicles, anti-air missiles, and other military aid that will help equip Ukraine's defenders as they work to retake more of their nation's territory in the weeks and months ahead."

Cleverly commented, "Air defense missile systems became increasingly important over time, and in the next stage we'll see another evolution of the support."

Asked by a reporter at the Atlantic Council about the

UK's policy on supplying fighter jets and long-range missiles to Ukraine, Cleverly said that London would "enhance and speed up the support we give to Ukraine". He added that "there is a strong argument that we shouldn't leave our respective military cupboards bare," but that "if we're saving stuff up for a rainy day, this is the rainy day."

Britain's role as chief provocateur in the lead up to and during NATO's war against Russia is a matter of record. It has also led the way in ensuring ever-more lethal military hardware has been flooded into Ukraine, with the resulting mass loss of life, both Ukrainian and Russian, not even an afterthought.

Yuriy Sak, an adviser to Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov, told *Reuters*, "We would welcome it if the UK takes on a leadership role with the long-range missiles, in the same way they did with the Challenger 2 main battle tanks."

Politico responded to the MoD's announcement with a piece declaring, "The Biden administration has no plans to follow Britain's lead in sending long-range missiles to Ukraine—with some officials saying the U.S. is now off the hook thanks to the U.K.'s planned delivery."

Its reporters "asked the U.S. officials if the administration might follow Britain's lead in sending long-range missiles. One official, who like others wasn't authorized to detail internal deliberations, said 'our policy on ATACMS [Army Tactical Missile System] has not changed.' Instead, the official said the U.S. will continue to provide air-defense capabilities like Patriots, ammunition and armored vehicles."

None of this can be believed. At every stage in the conflict, NATO has escalated the conflict with the supply of weaponry that US President Joe Biden himself and NATO officials had previously unconditionally ruled out. The *Guardian* noted, "Britain is unlikely to want to go ahead without US support, and getting to this point may have required diplomatic wrangling."

The Conservative government relies on an increasingly unhinged pro-war constituency in the affluent upper middle class. Foremost among these is the *Guardian*, which editorialised following the MoD's announcement that "Ukraine's long-prepared counteroffensive" was a "new and crucial phase of the war..." This was accompanied the following day by an op-ed from historian and columnist Timothy Garton Ash titled, "The west must be ready for this moment of opportunity and risk in Ukraine".

Garton Ash has played a major role in advocating the

dispatch of tens of billions of pounds worth of weapons to Ukraine and has met directly with the head of Ukraine's armed forces. He wrote, "Ukrainians have a theory of victory. It goes from success on the battlefield to change in Moscow. For preference, that would be a change of regime, getting rid of the war criminal in the Kremlin."

Nothing less than the retaking of Crimea will suffice, writes Garton Ash, "because Crimea is the thing that really matters to Russia." He goes on, "If the Ukrainian army can push rapidly south to the Sea of Azov, encircle a large number of demoralised Russian forces and cut the supply lines to the Crimean peninsula, there might be some non-linear collapse of Russian military morale on the ground and regime cohesion in Moscow."

Garton Ash lays out the warmongering rationale behind delivering long-range missiles—unlocking the potential of Ukraine's anticipated counteroffensive, a bloodbath in the making.

"The counteroffensive," he explains, "can deploy nine new western-equipped and trained brigades, but these have a mix-and-match zoo of different western weapons and scant experience in the complex combined arms operations needed to overcome Russia's defensive lines. Because capitals such as Washington and Berlin have been nervously pondering every item, the Ukrainians don't have the quantity and quality of western tanks, armoured vehicles, long-range missiles and fighter planes they might have had if the west had not held back for fear of escalation."

As for the consequences of yet another escalation, with the use of nuclear weapons widely discussed, Garton Ash insisted, "Don't be scared, be prepared."



To contact the WWSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wwsws.org/contact