

NATO powers move to send long-range missiles to Ukraine

Andre Damon
9 May 2023

On Tuesday, a UK defense official confirmed to the *Washington Post* that Britain is preparing to send long-range missiles to Ukraine capable of striking Crimea.

The British official who spoke to the *Post* explained that this action would set the stage for other NATO members to provide long-range missiles of their own.

“It’s a position the United Kingdom can uniquely do... We know that if we give something it makes it slightly easier for others,” he said. “There is definitely a different risk tolerance among different countries. We’re often in an earlier place.”

The *Post* noted that “Pentagon officials expressed no concern when asked about the prospect of Britain sending long-range missiles to Ukraine.”

This announcement is meant to clear the way for the provision of the long-range ATACMS missile by the United States, as well as the announcement, long in preparation, that the United States would send F-16 fighter jets.

The move by the key US ally marks another action that NATO officials had previously unconditionally ruled out.

Last May, US President Joe Biden categorically declared, “We are not going to send to Ukraine rocket systems that strike into Russia.”

The *Post* made clear, however, that the UK’s weapons systems would be used to attack Crimea. It wrote, “The distance between Ukrainian-held territory and Sevastopol, Crimea’s largest city and the headquarters of Russia’s Black Sea fleet, is within the range” of the storm shadow long-range missile.

The announcement by the UK follows a pattern set with the decision earlier this year by the NATO powers to send over 200 main battle tanks to Ukraine. In March 2022, Biden ruled out sending tanks to Ukraine:

The idea that we’re going to send in offensive equipment, and have planes and tanks and trains going in with American pilots and American crews, just understand—and don’t kid yourself, no matter what you all say—that’s called “World War III.”

In June, French President Emmanuel Macron declared, “We are not entering the war... Thus, it has been agreed not to supply certain weapons—including attack aircraft or tanks.”

After the UK announced that it would send challenger tanks, Macron declared on Twitter, “France will provide light combat tanks” to Ukraine. Just days later, both Germany and the United States announced that they would send their own main battle tanks, the Leopard 2 and the Abrams, to Ukraine.

The United States has moved systematically toward directly endorsing and facilitating attacks on the Crimean peninsula.

Last May, Biden announced that the US would send the HIMARS long-range missile launcher, without providing the ATACMS munition capable of striking hundreds of miles deep.

In January, the US announced that it would send the Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb (GLSDB) to Ukraine, doubling the range of the munitions that had up to that point been provided for the HIMARS.

In February, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland openly endorsed Ukrainian strikes inside Crimea. “Those are legitimate targets,” Nuland said. “Ukraine is hitting them. We are supporting that.”

In February, the *New York Times* reported, “[T]he Biden administration is finally starting to concede that

Kyiv may need the power to strike the Russian sanctuary, even if such a move increases the risk of escalation.” The *Times* added, “The Biden administration is considering what would be one of its boldest moves yet, helping Ukraine to attack the peninsula.”

As it is becoming clear that the upcoming “spring offensive” will lead to only limited military gains, the US and NATO powers are moving rapidly to abandon all remaining restraints on their direct involvement in the war.

Last week, two drones exploded over the official residence of Russian President Vladimir Putin. After the drone strike, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken refused to rule out any effort to assassinate the Russian president, declaring, “We leave it to Ukraine to decide how it’s going to defend itself.”

These statements speak to the enormous recklessness and desperation gripping the US political establishment. This mood was spelled out even more explicitly by pro-war historian Timothy Snyder in what was perhaps the most open call for a NATO war with Russia to date.

In a guest opinion piece in the *Times* titled “We Forget Nuclear Powers Have Lost Wars,” Snyder concludes, “When Russians talk about nuclear war, the safest response is to ensure their very conventional defeat.” (Without explanation, the headline was changed to “Putin Is Fighting, and Losing, His Last War.”)

Snyder complains that “Americans’ fear of escalation delayed the supply of weapons that could have allowed Ukraine to win last year. One after the other, the weapons systems deemed escalatory have now been delivered, with no negative consequences.”

Demanding the “defeat” of Russia, Snyder makes the following extraordinary statement: “Russia has 11 time zones of space for retreating soldiers and plenty of practice in propaganda refashionings.”

In calling for the “defeat” of nuclear-armed Russia, Snyder declares, “No option is without hazards.” The statement is redolent of the assertion by General “Buck” Turgidson in *Dr. Strangelove* that “I’m not saying we won’t get our hair mussed” in the event of a thermonuclear war.

The same day that this rant appeared, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg gave an interview

to the *Washington Post* in which he made clear that the central aim of NATO in the conflict is recapturing the territories Ukraine lost in 2014, principally the Crimean peninsula.

Stoltenberg declared, “The war in Ukraine has fundamentally changed NATO, but then you have to remember the war didn’t start in 2022. The war started in 2014. And since then, NATO has implemented the biggest reinforcement of our collective defense since the end of the Cold War.”

Stoltenberg continued, “For the first time in our history, we have combat-ready troops in the eastern part of the alliance, the battle groups in Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic countries, actually the whole eight battle groups from the Baltic Sea down to the Black Sea. Higher readiness of our forces. And increased defense spending. Until 2014, NATO allies were reducing defense budgets. Since 2014, all allies across Europe and Canada have significantly increased their defense spending. And we have modernized our command structure, we have more exercises, we have established new military domains like cyber. So in totality, this is a huge transformation of NATO that started in 2014.”

He added, “No other major power has 30 friends and allies as the United States has in NATO. Neither Russia nor China has anything similar. And together, NATO allies represent 50 percent of the world’s military might and 50 percent of the world’s economic might.”

This passage blows apart the narrative by the NATO powers that the conflict was an “unprovoked war.” Instead, it makes clear that the NATO powers provoked and escalated the conflict with the aim of reversing the territorial losses they incurred that year.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact