

Zelensky says “a large number of soldiers will die” in new offensive

Andre Damon
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Ahead of what is promised to be a major new offensive by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky told the *Wall Street Journal* Sunday that “a large number of [Ukrainian] soldiers will die” in the coming offensive .

Hinting at the disastrous human cost of attacking entrenched Russian forces, Zelensky said, “it can go a variety of ways, completely different. But we are going to do it, and we are ready.”

As the *Journal* recounted the exchange,

Zelensky acknowledged Russian air superiority on the front lines and said a lack of protection from Russian air power means “a large number of soldiers will die” in the counteroffensive.

Typically, troops on the offensive suffer disproportionate casualties to those fighting defensive battles. Zelensky, speaking for his backers and financiers in Washington and the other imperialist capitals, is making it clear that there will be no limit to the number of Ukrainian lives expended to achieve the goal of reconquering Crimea and the Donbas.

These comments come as details are emerging about the extent of direct US/NATO involvement in the coming offensive. In an article headlined, “NATO-trained units will serve as tip of spear in Ukraine’s counteroffensive,” the *Washington Post* notes

When Ukraine’s long-awaited counteroffensive finally begins, the fight will be led by brigades armed not only with Western

weapons but also Western know-how, gleaned from months of training aimed at transforming Ukraine’s military into a modern force skilled in NATO’s most advanced warfare tactics.

It continued, “The counteroffensive will be the biggest test yet of the U.S.-led strategy of giving the Ukrainians weapons and training to fight like an American army might—but on their own.”

The United States has been training thousands of Ukrainian forces in armored warfare at its base in Bavaria, Germany, carrying out exercises with NATO armored vehicles. The tanks and their crews left Germany and entered Ukraine through Poland, after which they will be thrown against the Russian front.

In April, leaked documents revealed that three quarters of the forces being set aside for the new offensive are being trained and armed by the United States. One of the documents declares that “12 combat credible [brigades] can be generated for the spring Counteroffensive: 3 internationally by Ukraine, and 9 are US, Allied & Partner trained and equipped.”

These comments come amid a major escalation of the war. For close to a week, towns in Russia’s Belgorod region have been under daily shelling.

Over the weekend, two people were killed in the Belgorod region, while some 4,000 people have been evacuated, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Sunday.

“Overnight, it was quite restless,” Gladkov said on Telegram, adding that the Shebekino and Volokonovsky areas had seen “a lot” of damage. At least 850 mortar shells had been fired into the region over the past week, he said, and a drone strike had started a fire on “an energy infrastructure site.”

Images and video posted to Telegram showed burning buildings, looted stores, and even scenes of house-to-house fighting in the region.

On Sunday, yet another group of Ukrainian-backed Russian irregulars carried out a raid into Belgorod, seizing territory and capturing two Russian soldiers.

Gladkov reported the presence of far-right ethnic Russian militia operating in Novaya Tavolzhanka, saying, “Battles are ongoing right now.” Gladkov reported that he intended to meet the combat groups to try to negotiate an exchange of prisoners.

On Saturday, the *Washington Post* confirmed that the far-right militia soldiers who had crossed over into Ukraine from the Belgorod region were in fact using American military equipment, despite previous denials by the US media.

The *Post* reported, “The Russian fighters aligned against Moscow who launched a cross-border raid from Ukraine into the Belgorod region of Russia last week used at least four tactical vehicles originally given to Ukraine by the United States and Poland, U.S. officials said.”

It continued, “Three of the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, also known as MRAPs, taken into Russia by the fighters were provided by the United States and the fourth was from Poland, according to people familiar with the U.S. intelligence finding, which has not previously been reported. Those people spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive issue.”

In an ominous development, members of the so-called “Polish Volunteer Corps” of Polish citizens fighting on the side of Ukraine claimed to have crossed into Russian territory as part of a raid.

Late Sunday, Russian officials said Ukraine had launched a major offensive against Russian forces in the region of Donetsk. Russia claimed to have killed hundreds of Ukrainian troops. They also claimed that Ukraine had attacked with six mechanized and two tank battalions in southern Donetsk.

Meanwhile, calls within the US and NATO are growing louder for Ukraine’s admission to NATO, which would have the effect of massively expanding NATO involvement in the conflict.

Last week, Colonel Alexander S. Vindman, who had been an early advocate of sending US tanks and F-16s to Ukraine, endorsed an article in *Foreign*

Affairs headlined, “To Protect Europe, Let Ukraine Join NATO—Right Now,” by former Ukrainian defense minister Andriy P. Zagorodnyuk.

The article calls for steps to be taken to admit Ukraine to the alliance at next month’s NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. He declared, “By entering the alliance, the country will secure its future as part of the West, and it can be sure the United States and Europe will continue to help it fight against Moscow. Europe, too, will reap security benefits by allowing Ukraine to join the alliance. It is now apparent that the continent is not ready to defend itself and that its politicians have largely overestimated its security. Indeed, Europe will never be secure from Russia until it can militarily stop Moscow’s attacks. And no state is more qualified to do so than Ukraine.”

The entry of Ukraine into NATO “right now” would mean the invocation of NATO Article 5, effectively meaning a declaration of war against Russia by the NATO powers.

In April, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared, “Ukraine’s rightful place is in NATO,” adding, “All NATO Allies have agreed that Ukraine will become a member.”

Last week, French President Emmanuel Macron said he supports a “path” for Ukraine to join the NATO military alliance.

The coming together of these developments makes clear the extent to which the Ukraine war, deliberately inflamed and escalated by the NATO powers, is spiraling out of control, threatening devastating consequences for the entire world.



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