

NATO launches massive war game targeting Russia

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On Monday, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched the largest airborne war game in the alliance's history, with hundreds of aircraft fighting a simulated war with Russia.

As war in Ukraine is spilling over the borders of Russia, prompting evacuations of border towns amid daily shelling and drone strikes, the NATO war games are intended as a threatening provocation, involving the possibility that the training exercise could at any point turn into an armed clash between NATO and Russian forces.

The *New York Times*, referring to comments made by Douglas Barrie of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, wrote that the games are aimed at "letting Mr. Putin know just what NATO is capable of launching against Russia, if needed."

The two-week war game, known as Air Defender 2023, involves over 250 aircraft and 10,000 personnel. It is based in Germany and led by the *Luftwaffe* (German Air Force).

In the hypothetical scenario envisioned in the exercise, a Russian invasion of the German port of Rostock triggers NATO Article 5 and a full-scale war between NATO and Russia. The war game will involve the recapture of the port, followed by what the *Wall Street Journal* called "offensive operations."

In its official statement, NATO said, "The exercise ... is based on a collective defence scenario also known as Article 5 scenario in which Allies deploy their air forces to Germany to fight against hybrid occupation forces." NATO wrote, "In coordinated combined operations, the Allied air forces demonstrate they are capable of defending NATO territory with swift decisive action."

The massive exercise will involve the closure of airspace over Germany to civilian flights and sorties

into the airspace of NATO members near the Russian border, including Lithuania, Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic.

NATO said in a statement that the missions will take place over the North Sea, the Baltic Sea and southern Germany. They will "include supporting ground troops and evacuation missions."

While the exercise is officially led by Germany, the US Air Force dominated the first day of the event, flying approximately 100 National Guard and Navy aircraft to Germany for the drills.

The exercise includes participants from 24 NATO member states, as well as military observers from Japan. Finland, the newest member of NATO, will participate, as will Sweden, which is actively moving to join the alliance.

NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu made clear that the exercise was targeting not a hypothetical adversary, but Russia. "Air Defender sends a clear message that NATO is ready to defend every inch of Allied territory," she said. "As we face the biggest security crisis in a generation, we stand united to keep our countries and our people safe."

Major Adam Casey, an American A-10 attack aircraft pilot who participated in the exercise, told the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service, "In the next conflict, where we may be called upon to defend NATO, it's not going to get a practice round. As an A-10 pilot, I don't want to be the first time I check in on station with a German JTAC [Air controller] to be when enemy tanks are crossing into NATO."

Monday's exercise involved massive formations of fighters, bombers and cargo planes flying at multiple altitudes.

Participants in the massive war game called it unprecedented. "I've never done anything quite like

today,” Flt. Lt. Mark Jenkins of the British Royal Air Force told the *New York Times*. “Having so many other aircraft working together is really unusual.”

The massive war games come amid ever more aggressive calls for military escalation by the US and NATO powers in the war with Russia over Ukraine.

On Friday, the American Enterprise Institute published an op-ed by one of its senior fellows, Michael Rubin, advocating the deployment of US nuclear weapons to Ukraine. It is titled, “Can Biden Deter a Russia Nuclear Attack on Ukraine? Yes, If He Gives Ukraine Tactical Nukes.”

Rubin noted the series of escalatory steps already taken by the Biden administration, including the sending of the “HIMARS [long-range missile system], Abrams tanks and F-16 [fighter jets].”

Rubin hails and endorses terrorist attacks carried out by Ukrainian forces, even those that the US had previously strenuously denied Ukraine was responsible for. He writes:

The war is now at the tipping point. First, there was Ukraine’s destruction of the causeway linking Russian-occupied Crimea to Russia proper. Intelligence leaks suggest Ukraine might have been behind the attack on the Nord Stream-2 pipeline. Anti-Putin Russian insurgents later raided the Russian city of Belgorod from Ukraine, and Ukrainian Special Forces were likely responsible for the brazen drone attack on the Kremlin.

Calling on the White House to threaten to provide Ukraine with nuclear weapons “without any controls on where and how Ukraine might use them,” Rubin declared that the “United States maintains nuclear weapons because they are an effective deterrent against other nuclear states. Ukraine should have the same right.”

The open advocacy of the deployment of nuclear weapons to Ukraine comes amid a massive, years-long buildup of US nuclear forces.

On Monday, the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) reported that the United States spent \$43.7 billion on

modernizing its nuclear arsenal last year, more than every country in the world combined.

The report noted that “Russia spent 22% of what the US did, at \$9.6 billion, and China spent just over a quarter of the US total, at \$11.7 billion.” The US spent \$83,143 every single minute on nuclear weapons modernization last year, ICAN said.



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