

Netherlands and Denmark deliver F-16 fighter jets to Kiev

Johannes Stern
22 August 2023

Last weekend, the first European deliveries of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine were announced. According to reports, the Netherlands will provide 42 and Denmark will send 19 F-16 fighter jets. Further pledges from other NATO members are to follow. The so-called fighter jet coalition, which was formed in May, officially also includes Belgium and Britain.

The deliveries are a concerted action by the leading imperialist powers—first and foremost the US—which are further escalating the confrontation with the nuclear power Russia. The Danish-Dutch push to deliver nuclear-capable fighter jets to Kiev was long prepared behind the scenes and closely coordinated with the Biden administration in Washington.

“The president has given a green light, and we will allow, permit, support, facilitate and, in fact, provide the necessary tools for Ukrainians to begin being trained on F-16s, as soon as the Europeans are prepared,” US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on CNN’s “State of the Union” program on Sunday.

Since then, there has been one announcement after another. On Monday, Greece offered to train Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets. During his visit to Athens, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Greece for the offer, which he “gladly” accepted. “We need Greece’s support in preparing our pilots to fly F-16s,” he said after a meeting with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Zelensky described the F-16 commitments as “historic.” The jets would “bring fresh confidence and motivation to the fighters and ordinary citizens,” he wrote on Twitter on Monday. He had already thanked Denmark for its F-16 pledges on Sunday in the course of a visit to that country. “I thank you, Denmark, for helping Ukraine to become invincible,” he said in a speech to the Danish parliament. “Today we are confident that Russia will lose this war.”

In fact, the current Ukrainian “counter-offensive” is a military debacle. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have reportedly lost their lives in the last three months alone, and there have been no significant territorial gains. In the face of these setbacks, the leading NATO powers are once again massively expanding their direct involvement in the war, risking the danger of nuclear war.

“The fact that Denmark has now decided to donate 19 F-16 aircraft to Ukraine leads to an escalation of the conflict,” Russian Ambassador Vladimir Barbin said in a statement. “By hiding behind a premise that Ukraine itself must determine the conditions for peace, Denmark seeks with its actions and words to leave Ukraine with no other choice but to continue the military confrontation with Russia.”

In mid-July, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that the delivery of F-16 fighter jets would be seen as a “nuclear threat.” The Russian Foreign Ministry quoted him as saying, “Russia cannot ignore the ability of these aircraft to carry nuclear weapons. No amount of assurances will help here.”

Lavrov continued: “In the course of combat operations, our servicemen are not going to sort out whether each particular aircraft of this type is equipped to deliver nuclear weapons or not.” Russia would “regard the very fact that the Ukrainian armed forces have such systems as a threat from the West in the nuclear sphere.”

The assurances of Ukraine and its supporters that F-16 fighter jets and other Western weapons systems will not be used directly on Russian territory are mendacious and provocative in every respect.

For one thing, the representatives of the imperialist powers are already cheering Kiev’s constant attacks on Russia. On Tuesday, Germany’s Green Party Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock described Ukrainian drone attacks on the Russian capital Moscow as legitimate. “Ukraine is defending itself within the framework of

international law,” Baerbock claimed at a press conference in Berlin with her Estonian counterpart Margus Tsahkna.

Secondly, the use of F-16 fighter jets against the territories occupied and annexed by Russia in eastern Ukraine would be no less incendiary. From the Russian leadership’s point of view, this is “Russian territory.” Above all, the Kremlin considers a full-scale attack on Crimea to be a “red line.”

In an interview in early February, Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman and former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned that an attempt by Ukraine to retake the peninsula would have devastating consequences. “In this case, there will be no negotiations, only retaliatory strikes,” Medvedev said. The Russian leadership was “ready to use all types of weapons,” he continued, adding, “In accordance with our doctrinal documents, including the Fundamentals of Nuclear Deterrence,” the answer would be “quick, tough and convincing.”

Despite these threats, the escalation of Western arms deliveries is aimed precisely at that—the reconquest of Crimea. “The most important goal of the Ukrainian summer offensive” is to “cut off the land bridge connecting Russia with the occupied Crimean Peninsula and thus cut off the supply routes and the deployment area of Russian troops in the south,” said a commentary in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

To achieve this, Britain and France “have already delivered cruise missiles that reach far into Crimea.” The newspaper continued: “Germany should follow suit as soon as possible; the F-16s would also be valuable here, as well as for airspace defence.” Only through the “interaction of long-range weapons against logistics and troops at the front” could “Ukraine succeed without sacrificing tens of thousands of its soldiers.”

A commentary in *Die Zeit* under the title “No peace without Crimea” is even more explicit. “The strategy of the Ukrainian military could be to turn the peninsula into a kind of island for Russia by attacking its infrastructure,” the newspaper wrote.

Should Ukraine “advance to the administrative border with Crimea in the course of the current counter-offensive in the south and finally destroy the bridge over the Kerch Strait, which has already been successfully attacked twice,” it continued, “the entire territory of Crimea ... would be within reach of those weapons systems that Ukraine is already using.”

The article quoted Ukrainian military officials openly

advocating an area bombardment of Crimea, including to break opposition from the local, majority Russian-speaking population.

It cited Oleksij Melnyk, a retired lieutenant colonel in the Ukrainian army who works in the field of international security for the Kiev think tank Zentr Razumkova, as saying, “Rationally speaking, fighting directly in Crimea must be avoided.” It would be “very bloody, especially in mountainous areas in the south of the peninsula—and realistically one would also have to reckon with some resistance from the local population.”

It is clear that the announcement of the F-16 fighter jets will be followed by the delivery of medium-range missiles with an even longer range. Military experts are “largely in agreement,” writes *Der Spiegel*. “The F-16 would give the Ukrainians advantages in air combat. However, it depends on the armament that comes with it.” Berlin is now “in demand.”

It goes on to say that Germany “does not have F-16s, but it could supply missiles.” A sensible contribution would be to “equip the Dutch and Danish F-16s for Ukraine with Taurus cruise missiles.”

With leading politicians and the media beating the drum for weeks for Taurus deliveries, an official announcement is seen as only a matter of time. Asked on Tuesday whether she would now push for a quick decision on such a delivery, Baerbock declared: “That every day counts, I believe we have had to experience in the last year-and-a-half not only impressively, but in a brutal way.”

While the ruling class in Germany, which already waged two murderous wars against Russia in the 20th century, is spearheading the war offensive, resistance is growing among the population. According to a recent survey by broadcaster ARD, 52 percent of eligible voters in Germany are against the delivery of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine, and only 36 percent are in favour. The delivery of German fighter jets is opposed by 64 percent.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact