

US-NATO risks nuclear war with plans for attacks on Russia

Statement of the WSWs Editorial Board
5 March 2024

Confronted with the deterioration of Ukraine's military position and significant advances by Russian forces, the NATO powers are publicly threatening a massive escalation of the war involving the direct deployment of NATO combat troops on Ukrainian territory and attacks on Russian infrastructure and cities.

Following a retreat from Avdiivka, Ukrainian forces are once again falling back. Amid massive casualties, Ukraine's military cannot recruit replacements to the front. "Zelensky in bind over how to draft more troops as Russian forces advance," ran a headline in the *New York Times* on Sunday.

Last week, members of the governments of four NATO members—France, Canada, the Netherlands and Lithuania—stated that they were considering sending combat troops to fight Russia in Ukraine. Then, on Friday, Russian media outlets published a leaked discussion among German military leaders discussing the use of German long-range weapons to strike Crimea. In the midst of these developments, the UK government admitted to having deployed a "small number" of troops to Ukraine.

The reckless escalation of the war is being carried out without any public explanation of what NATO is planning, let alone a frank acknowledgment of the potentially catastrophic consequences of the deployment of forces in Ukraine and attacks on Russia.

Dismissing the explicit warning made by Putin during the past week that direct intervention by NATO forces into Ukraine could lead to the use of nuclear weapons, NATO leaders and the media are laughing off the danger with claims that the Russian president is merely bluffing.

There is no justification for such complacency. The Biden administration and its European allies are

engaged in a staggeringly reckless game of nuclear Russian Roulette.

Apparently forgetting their own earlier statements, made at the start of the war in February 2022, that direct intervention by NATO would mean World War III, the imperialist leaders now assert that Russia will not retaliate even if its territory is directly attacked. Moreover, even if there exists the possibility of a massive counter-attack, they insist that NATO must not be deterred by that danger.

An argument that is being made in the media and by think tanks is that it has been a mistake for NATO to indicate any concern about the Ukraine war escalating toward a nuclear exchange with Russia.

"Bowling to Putin's Nuclear Blackmail Will Make Nuclear War More Likely," Peter Dickinson of the Atlantic Council, a US-based think tank, wrote. "Ukraine has repeatedly called Putin's bluff, exposing the emptiness of the Russian dictator's nuclear bluster," he declared, adding: "While Ukraine has refused to be intimidated by Putin's nuclear blackmail, the same cannot be said for the West ... Western fear of escalation is the single biggest obstacle."

In Germany, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons "will not be realized." It continued: "Not even if, as happens regularly, American and British missiles and cruise missiles are used to attack military targets in the Ukrainian territories annexed by Russia, including Crimea."

The Lowy Institute, a pro-NATO think-tank in Australia, declared, "The key question is whether the West will call Putin's bluff or yield to his high-stakes nuclear posturing, a decision that will shape the outcome of the conflict."

By publicly claiming that Putin is only bluffing,

NATO is all but inciting him to react aggressively and expose its miscalculation.

Even as they loudly assert that Russia will not respond, US and European strategists have gamed out the possibility of an escalation to nuclear war. The *New York Times* began publishing a series of extraordinary opinion pieces Sunday under the overall headline, “At the Brink,” focused on “the threat of nuclear weapons in an unstable world.”

The project’s lead writer, W.J. Hennigan, initiated the series with a column, “The Brink,” which begins by stating:

If it seems alarmist to anticipate the horrifying aftermath of a nuclear attack, consider this: United States and Ukraine governments have been planning for this scenario for at least two years.

In the fall of 2022, Hennigan writes, “a US intelligence assessment put the odds at 50-50 that Russia would launch a nuclear strike to halt Ukrainian forces if they breached its defense of Crimea.” Hennigan adds that earlier, “the Biden administration had directed a small group of experts and strategists, a ‘Tiger Team,’ to devise a new nuclear ‘playbook’ of contingency plans and responses.”

In announcing the Socialist Equality Party presidential election campaign, SEP (US) National Chairman David North stated:

The NATO powers have repeatedly stated that they will not be deterred from pursuing the war by the threat of a nuclear exchange. The deliberate use of tactical and strategic nuclear weapons—which was rejected for decades as synonymous with madness—is now being ‘normalized’ as a legitimate component of imperialist geopolitical strategy.

The war is being driven to a much larger and bloodier scale. All of this is being done behind the backs of the population, relying on a lack of information and

disinformation. On Monday, the German state blatantly lied, stating that an emergency summons of the German ambassador to the Russian foreign ministry had nothing to do with the leaked discussions about German missiles targeting Crimea.

The ruling class is lying to the public because it wants to be free to carry out its military conspiracies unimpeded. There is already broad opposition among workers and youth to the escalation of the war. After Macron raised the possibility of sending European troops to fight Russia in Ukraine, polls found that 68 percent of the French people and 80 percent of the German people oppose it. To the extent that masses of people in the US and all of the NATO countries are aware of what is happening, this opposition will grow.

The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the conspiracy by US-NATO imperialism to drag mankind into a nuclear catastrophe. Power has to be taken out of the hands of these warmongers. Their actions are threatening human civilization with destruction.

Mass protests must be organized in every country to demand the total withdrawal of all NATO forces from Ukraine and an immediate end to the conflict. This must be connected to the development of an anti-imperialist movement in the international working class, to counter capitalist barbarism with the program of world socialist revolution.



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