

French army prepares to send ground troops to Ukraine

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On Tuesday, French army chief of staff General Pierre Schill announced in a column published in *Le Monde* that France is ready to send troops to Ukraine to fight Russia.

“However the international situation evolves, the French people can be certain: their soldiers will respond to the call,” Schill declared. “To defend itself against aggression and defend its interests, the French army is preparing for the most difficult fighting, letting that fact be known, and showing it,” he added. He stressed that France can deploy “20,000 troops within 30 days.”

Schill did not explicitly mention the war in Ukraine, but there is no doubt as to what his target was. Three weeks ago, Macron said he did not “exclude” sending European troops to Ukraine. Since then, Macron made off-the-record comments that he wants to send “guys” to the strategic port of Odessa, in southern Ukraine.

These statements confirm that Macron and the French army command intend to trample underfoot deep working class opposition to war. Polls that came out after Macron threatened a ground intervention showed 68 percent of French people and 80 percent of Germans opposing escalation. However, the European imperialist powers are pressing forward, as in 1914 or 1939, along a path ending in total war.

Also on Tuesday, Sergey Naryshkin, the head of Russian military foreign intelligence, told TASS that France plans to send troops to Ukraine. “Russia has information showing that France is preparing to send a military contingent of 2,000 men to Ukraine,” TASS wrote, citing Naryshkin: “The current rulers of the country [i.e., France] are not moved by the deaths of ordinary French people or the concerns of the generals.”

Naryshkin said French generals “fear that such a large military unit could not be transferred and

stationed inside Ukraine without being detected.” This unit, he warned, “will become a high-value and legitimate target for the Russian armed forces.”

The French defense ministry replied in the *Dépêche du Midi* by denouncing Naryshkin’s warnings, calling them “irresponsible provocations” from Moscow: “The maneuvers orchestrated by Sergey Naryshkin, leader of Russian foreign intelligence, show again how Russia systematically resorts to disinformation. We consider that such provocations are irresponsible.”

The French defense ministry’s denials are a pack of lies aiming to lull the public to sleep amid the danger of nuclear war. Macron’s statement has made clear Paris is planning to dispatch considerable forces to Ukraine. Many reports, including a leaked tape of German officers recorded by Russian intelligence, show that Britain and France already have troops on the ground.

On March 14, for the 25th anniversary of Poland’s joining NATO, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski admitted that NATO already has forces in Ukraine: “Soldiers of NATO countries are already in Ukraine, and I would like to thank the ambassadors of the countries who have taken such a risk.” He did not name the countries who have sent troops to Ukraine, declaring that Ukrainians “know better than anyone else” who is involved.

Why is the defense ministry issuing these irresponsible denials against the Russian warnings? It undoubtedly fears, at home, that statements like Naryshkin’s will heighten mounting concerns and awareness in the population of the risk of total war.

The French government, with colossal recklessness, is ignoring the dangers posed by direct combat between Russian and NATO troops. In his *Le Monde* column, General Schill blithely writes that for France, “Nuclear deterrence protects its vital interests.” In reality,

everything indicates that a warmongering decision by Macron to send troops to Ukraine would lead to bloody fighting and the likely use of nuclear weapons.

No one in ruling circles is concretely answering the question: where would the escalation stop? Given the disproportion of forces between the several hundred thousand of Russian troops in Ukraine and at most a few tens of thousands of French troops, it seems inevitable that the French contingent will be located, targeted and destroyed. Would Macron then send more troops, or deploy nuclear weapons to try to stop Russian attacks on his forces?

It is in any case clear, despite the deafening anti-Russian propaganda in European media in recent years, that the war has been a disaster for the NATO-backed Ukrainian army. But despite the danger of a war that could end human civilization, the French government and its NATO allies are still tobogganing eyes closed towards catastrophe.

French threats have provoked bitter reactions from the Kremlin. The night of his massive presidential election victory, with over 87 percent of the vote, Vladimir Putin said that “many soldiers of NATO countries are already in Ukraine, including French ones.” He added, “NATO troops are in Ukraine, we know that. We hear French and English spoken there; it is not good, for them first of all, because they are getting killed, and in large numbers.”

Asked about Macron’s comments refusing to rule out deployments of ground troops to Ukraine, Putin said: “It is clear to everyone that conflict between Russia and NATO would be the last step before a Third World War. I think that virtually no one wants that.”

But the reality is that capitalist governments are all pursuing a military escalation, led not by Moscow, but by the NATO imperialist powers. The remarks last week on Europe1 television of Henri Guaino, an adviser of former right-wing French President Nicolas Sarkozy, summarized fairly well the war hysteria that has seized French ruling circles, particularly since Macron called to send troops to Ukraine.

“A crusading spirit predominates,” Guaino said: “People play around with war, with something that is terrible. It’s not just [Macron]. There are people I usually find quite intelligent playing at war in parliament, on television, on the radio. Something is going wrong, people treat war as if it were an anecdotal

issue ... but what is at stake is the life or death of nations. We are playing against a backdrop of nuclear weapons.”

Guaino stressed that his main fear is an explosion of social and political opposition to the war in Ukraine and the NATO imperialist regimes that led it.

He said, “The risk in all this is that public opinion will turn against us, people are tired and divided. Look at the state our societies are in, and look how all our previous crusades ended, where we said the exact same thing as we are saying today. We said about Vietnam, if we don’t do it, it will be an Asian Munich, then we said that about Afghanistan.”

In reality, what is occurring is a mortal crisis of the capitalist system, like the two world wars of the 20th century. The disastrous consequences of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union, which divided Russia and Ukraine and paved the way for the NATO alliance to expand across Europe, are becoming plainly evident. The way forward now is the calling of protests and meetings against the war, fighting to build an international, socialist anti-war movement in the working class.



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