

Pro-NATO media doubles down on propaganda narrative about Moscow terror attack

Clara Weiss
25 March 2024

As more and more information emerges implicating the US and Ukraine in Friday's terrorist attack on a Moscow concert hall, the pro-NATO media is doubling down on its propaganda narrative about the attack. According to the latest figures released by Russian authorities as of this writing, 139 people were killed in the attack; 93 are still hospitalized, and nine of them are in critical condition.

The four suspected terrorists apprehended by Russian authorities are all immigrants from Tajikistan. They were captured on their way to the Ukrainian border in the Bryansk region. Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian secret service FSB claim that they had connections on the Ukrainian side and that their border crossing had been prepared.

On Monday, Vladimir Putin declared that Russian authorities had also concluded that Islamist radicals were involved in the attack. He said, "We know by whose hands this atrocity against Russia and its people was committed. We are interested in who ordered it." He then added, "Of course, it is necessary to answer the question, why after committing the crime the terrorists tried to go to Ukraine? Who was waiting for them there?"

The Russian state outlet *Izvestiia* reported on Monday that two of the terrorists had "received instructions" while in Turkey and that all four of them had perpetrated the attack during Ramadan, a holy month for Muslims, not out of religious fundamentalism but for money. According to Russian authorities, the four men were to receive 500,000 rubles for their attack, roughly \$5,400. By Monday evening, Russian investigators also indicated that the four men had confessed for whom they were working but have not yet released the information.

Despite the strong evidence suggesting that the terrorists acted as mercenaries for an as yet unidentified third party, this has been completely ignored by the pro-NATO media. Instead, the fact that the Afghan-based Islamist terrorist organization ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for the attack

on social media in a vague statement, released a few hours after news of the attack broke, has become central to the propaganda narrative.

Thus, the *New York Times* presented the conclusion by the French government that "an Islamic State entity masterminded the attack and carried it out" as evidence that "seemed to contradict Mr. Putin's version." Without providing any evidence that disproved the connection to Ukraine other than statements by US and Ukrainian officials and the statement by ISIS-K, the *Times* denounced the Russian media for "stepping up efforts to pin the blame on Ukraine."

In a particularly aggressive piece, entitled "Putin's Ukraine obsession has blinded him to dangers at home," the *Financial Times* denounced Putin's statements about a connection to Ukraine as evidence that the Russian President was "trapped in lies and paranoia." Without even a pretense of objectivity, the FT stated, "Russia's assertions that Kyiv and, by extension, the US are the puppeteers behind the shooting spree are pure fantasy."

The author, Hanna Notte, is the head of the Eurasia program by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at Middlebury College, which is infamous for its cozy relationship with the CIA and military. The James Martin Center is headed by William Potter, who is a professor at the College's Institute of International Studies which regularly hosts CIA recruitment sessions, as well as a member of the US Council of Foreign Relations and former consultant for the RAND Corporation, a think tank with close ties to the US military.

As with all imperialist war propaganda over the war in Ukraine, the narrative spouted by the *New York Times* and the *Financial Times* relies on a complete obfuscation and distortion of facts and context. The most basic questions—such as about the timing of the attack—are not asked; essential facts—like the possible connection of the terrorists in Turkey—are simply not reported and anyone who

questions the “official line” is presented as nothing short of a lunatic. Meanwhile, any discussion of political and historical context is all but banned from the discussion.

In fact, in Germany, bourgeois journalists and representatives of think tanks that are fervently in line with the NATO war drive against Russia have pointed to evidence that completely undermines the narrative by the *New York Times* and the *Financial Times*. Tomas Avenarius, a senior foreign policy correspondent for the German *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, questioned the assertion that Kiev’s involvement in the attack was “absurd,” by noting that Islamist fundamentalists from the Caucasus had been fighting on the side of Kiev against Russia in Ukraine for years.

A former German government adviser Guido Steinberg, who now works for the think tank Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), stated in an interview with *Deutschlandfunk* on Saturday: “In recent years, Ukraine has become a small retreat for Islamist terrorists. When ISIS was on the verge of defeat in Iraq and Syria, IS functionaries were at least discussing whether or not to send personnel to Ukraine, simply because the situation was so chaotic and the authorities were so corrupt. And there are several indications that Ukraine was used as a transit country [by ISIS] in recent months and years.”

But none of them would spell out the arguably most damning and glaring fact of all: that the involvement of ISIS-K is perhaps the strongest evidence indicating direct involvement of the US in the attack.

ISIS-K, like many Islamist terrorist organizations in the Middle East, is largely the product of US imperialism. Even Hamid Karzai, the longtime head of the former US-backed puppet government in Afghanistan, stated in an interview with Voice of America in 2018, “I consider Daesh [the Arabic acronym of ISIS] a tool [of the US]. I do not differentiate at all between Daesh and America.” In 2021, shortly after the fall of the US puppet regime in Afghanistan amidst the US troop withdrawal, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that US-trained counterinsurgency units and intelligence personnel were joining ISIS-K to fight against the Taliban.

Since at least the 1980s, the US has systematically trained and armed militant Islamists, above all, in Afghanistan after its invasion by the Soviet Union. The goal of this so-called Afghan strategy, formulated by the late Zbigniew Brzezinski, was to “bleed the Soviet Union white” on the battlefield. At the same time, the build-up of Islamist fundamentalist forces with billions of dollars was aimed at destabilizing the Soviet Union, which was home to a large Muslim population, from within, to accelerate its break-up. This strategy had immense repercussions in Tajikistan, in

particular.

Here, the Stalinist destruction of the Soviet Union and restoration of capitalism resulted in a brutal civil war in which the Islamist opposition to the Kremlin-backed government was tied to the Afghan muhajeedin. The civil war, which lasted from 1992 to 1995, left tens of thousands dead and the country devastated. Tajikistan is the poorest of all former Soviet republics. Almost half of the population lack access to clean drinking water and roughly half of the country’s GDP is being derived entirely from remittances by immigrant workers, about 1 million of them in Russia. About 7 million Tajiks live in Afghanistan, compared to almost 10 million in Tajikistan itself, and it is well established that people from across the former Soviet Central Asian republics have joined ISIS and other Islamist terrorist organizations over the past decades.

As the WSWS explained, the basic facts of the attack, as well as its broader political and historical context, all indicate that it was a provocation by US imperialism and its proxies in Ukraine. Amidst a military debacle on the battlefield in Ukraine, the attack was aimed at destabilizing the Putin regime by emboldening its opposition within the oligarchy and state apparatus and fomenting nationalist and religious strife. While the *New York Times* would like to have its readers forget about the experiences of the past 40 years of US wars and the imperialist fomenting of religious and ethnic tensions in the Middle East, the terror attack in Moscow in fact demonstrates that the same strategy that has devastated the Middle East and Central Asia is now being deployed to destabilize the country with the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world.

The Putin regime, itself a product of the Stalinist reaction against the October Revolution, is highly vulnerable to these operations of imperialism and has responded to the terrorist attack by fanning anti-immigrant sentiment and Russian nationalism. This underscores that the only viable path to oppose the ever-more dangerous development of the imperialist war for a new redivision of the world is the struggle for the international unification and independent mobilization of the working class.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact