

Australian defence minister in Ukraine, backs US-NATO war against Russia

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Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles visited Ukraine on Saturday, where he pledged support for the Kiev regime until it “is able to resolve this war on its terms.” That is an open-ended and indefinite commitment to a proxy war stoked, instigated and prolonged by the US and NATO, with the aim of inflicting a major defeat on Russia.

Marles was only the second government leader to visit Ukraine since NATO provoked Russia’s reactionary invasion in February 2022. In July of that year, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese joined the lineup of US and allied leaders visiting Kiev and promoting an escalation of the conflict.

As a consequence of this militarist policy, which has included the scuttling of any negotiated end to the war, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and Russians have been killed. Multiple reports have indicated a crisis of the Ukrainian army, which includes its increasing reliance on compulsory service and its loss of substantial territory to Russia.

The US has responded by doubling down, because the war is viewed as a central component of its broader campaign to block any challenge to its hegemony, including through wars and confrontations in the Middle East, against Russia and China, aimed at dominating the Eurasian landmass.

Marles’ visit came just days after US President Joe Biden signed a bill providing over \$US60 billion in additional military aid to Ukraine. The day before he arrived, the US confirmed it would also provide Ukraine with Patriot missiles, in a major step towards direct conflict with Russia.

In addition to signaling that there will be no letup in the US escalation in Eastern Europe, the funding bill made clear this is part of a global war drive. It included more than \$US26 billion for Israel, to fund the

genocide in Gaza and military operations against Iran, and \$US8 billion towards war preparations directed at China. That includes funding for the Taiwanese military, which is being primed to play a role similar to that of Ukraine against Russia, in provoking Beijing into war.

Marles hailed the US military bill. It had begun a “moment where the world needs to stand up on behalf of Ukraine.” He continued: “[W]e’ve seen the package pass through the United States. That is huge for Ukraine, a huge boost in morale.”

An aspect of the massive US funding is undoubtedly to pressure other allies into also making substantial commitments. Marles unveiled an additional \$100 million in aid for Ukraine, taking the total Australian contribution to more than \$1 billion since the war began.

Half of the new funding is for “short-range air defence systems.” It appears that will primarily involve the provision of RBS 70s, which are a man-portable air-defense system with the capacity to shoot down aircraft. Over \$32 million is earmarked for drones and \$16 million more for other military equipment.

Previous Australian commitments have included the donation of Bushmaster army vehicles, as well as surplus rifles and ammunition. Australia previously deployed a E-7A Wedgetail surveillance aircraft to the region to aid the war effort, and has participated in a British-led program to train Ukrainian recruits.

When the war began and Australia started to announce commitments to Ukraine, these were presented as “non-lethal” and auxiliary military aid. This was an attempt to present Australia as a friendly party to Ukraine, but not an active participant in its war with Russia.

Marles’ latest announcement shows that this mask

has largely been removed. Some of the weaponry that Australia is providing is of a plainly “lethal” character, and can be used in offensive operations.

Marles also revealed that Australia has been supplying unspecified precision air-to-ground munitions to Ukraine, which are already in use on the battlefield. That shows that Australian munitions are directly being used against Russia, making the country a de facto participant in the war. This has been carried out behind the backs of the population, with no previous public discussion or announcement of the deliveries.

Marles was only in Ukraine for a couple of hours, but in that time he identified his Labor government fully with the extreme right-wing regime in Kiev and its regional partners.

En route, he held a joint press conference with Poland’s Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz. Marles hailed that country for its “work in organising Europe, but certainly in supporting Ukraine in defending against Russia’s appalling invasion of its country.” The Polish government is far-right. In addition to its virulent hostility to Russia, it openly touts its racist anti-immigrant policies and is reviving the political forces that collaborated with the Nazis in World War II.

In Ukraine, Marles visited Lviv and held a joint press conference with Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. Marles repeated the lies that the Ukrainian regime represents “democracy” and “freedom.” In fact, it is a notoriously corrupt government that has banned most opposition parties while overseeing a police-state reign of terror targeting popular disaffection with the war. With large sections of the male fighting-age population having been wiped out, Kiev is ever-more reliant on fascist militias such as the Azov Battalion.

While continuing the propaganda line, Marles hinted at the real motives for the involvement of the US, NATO and their allies such as Australia in the war. Ukraine, he said, was crucial to the “global rules-based order.” That is the stock code phrase for global order dominated by the US established in the aftermath of World War II.

Most notably, Marles drew a connection between the war in Eastern Europe and developments in the Indo-Pacific. He declared: “In a world which has become increasingly smaller and more interdependent, where

events in eastern Europe are having an impact on the way countries see events playing out in the Indo-Pacific, and visa versa, it means that, as we focus on our region, on the Indo-Pacific, of course, we can only do that by having an eye to what’s occurring everywhere in the world and particularly what’s occurring here in eastern Europe.”

This is in line with the increasing attempts of the US to draw together Washington’s confrontations with Russia and China. As Marles was making these statements in Ukraine, US Secretary of Defence Antony Blinken was in Beijing, demanding that the Chinese regime halt a wide range of exports to Russia, even though it is not supplying weaponry.

In addition to trying to ensnare China in the deepening war, the clear aim is to send a threat that a similar US and allied build-up is developing in the Indo-Pacific, as in Eastern Europe.

Australia is at the forefront. Through the AUKUS military pact with the US and Britain, it is acquiring nuclear-powered submarines, as one component of a vast militarisation. That includes the deployment of US strike forces to the north of the continent, as well as Australia’s own development of missile capabilities across all branches of the armed forces. The Labor government is also continuously campaigning throughout the region to align Asian and Pacific states with Washington’s anti-China push.

Signalling Australia’s commitment to American militarism on a global scale, Marles last week visited Australian Defence Force personnel where they are stationed at the Middle East Headquarters in the United Arab Emirates. They are aiding US operations throughout the region, including its campaign against Houthi forces from Yemen, who attempted to block shipments through the Red Sea that assist Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

In addition to backing the Zionist regime’s mass murder of the Palestinians, Labor has vocally backed the US-led moves to use this war crime as the launching pad of a regionwide offensive targeting Iran.



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