

European governments back use of US missiles to bomb Russia

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As Ukraine deploys US-supplied ATACMS missiles to bomb Russia, European officials are giving this policy their full support. The content of this staggeringly reckless decision—after the Kremlin warned that the use of US missiles, fired by US forces in Ukraine based on US targeting data, meant direct war between NATO and Russia—is unmistakable. The NATO alliance is, in reality, risking total war between the major nuclear powers.

European governments are imposing this policy with flagrant disregard for the will of the people. After French President Emmanuel Macron called for sending troops to Ukraine to fight Russia this winter, a Eurasia Group poll found that nine in 10 people in Western Europe rejected this policy, which other European heads of state criticized. Now, however, they are all setting into motion an escalation of the conflict with Russia that could lead to nuclear war.

On Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin enacted a tougher Russian nuclear doctrine than he had announced earlier this autumn, in response to US-UK threats to arm Ukraine with long-range missiles to bomb Russia. It states that “aggression against the Russian Federation and (or) its allies by any non-nuclear state with the participation or support of a nuclear state will be regarded as their joint attack”. That is, if Ukraine fires NATO missiles at Russia, the NATO states are legitimate targets of Russian counterattacks, including with nuclear weapons.

With monumental recklessness, European governments are indicating that they are willing to risk nuclear war in order to escalate their intervention in Ukraine.

At a meeting of European Union (EU) foreign ministers in Brussels on Monday, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock endorsed the use of US

missiles to bomb Russia. Berlin supports the “decision from the American side,” Baerbock said, stressing that this was “not a rethink ... but an intensification of what has already been delivered by other partners.”

Asked about the use of NATO missiles to bomb Russia during the Brussels summit, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said France already supported this policy: “Well, you have heard President Macron on May 25th, in Meseberg, earlier this year. We openly said that this was an option that we would consider if it was to allow to strike targets from where Russian are currently aggressing Ukrainian territory. So, nothing new on this.”

Yesterday, after Russia confirmed that Kiev and Washington had used ATACMS missiles to bomb Russia, Baerbock reiterated this position. She brushed aside Russian threats of a massive response, including the potential use of nuclear weapons, at Tuesday’s EU foreign ministers meeting in Warsaw. Asked how the German government views the change to Russia’s nuclear weapons doctrine, she dismissed it, stating: “We will not be intimidated, no matter what new things are trumpeted time and again.”

Amid the German election campaign, representatives of the governing and official opposition parties took similar positions. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann (FDP), Chair of the Defense Committee in the European Parliament, commented on X: “Better late than never. It is very good that Joe Biden is now making this important decision at the end of his term of office.”

Norbert Röttgen, a leading foreign policy strategist of Germany’s opposition Christian-Democratic Union (CDU), also wrote on X: “The USA is doing what is morally and politically right. An overdue step that will finally enable Ukraine to defend itself against Russian

weapons before they kill civilians in Ukraine.” He added, “Strengthening Ukraine’s ability to defend itself [is] permitted under international law and morally and politically necessary. It is the only language Putin understands.”

No one is asking the necessary questions to explain the staggering consequences of this policy. If the Russian military responds to NATO strikes on its soil by bombing European military bases, or European cities, what do the European powers plan to do? Do they believe that they can wage a large-scale war with Russia without triggering nuclear war? How many millions of human lives are the European powers prepared to sacrifice for their war aims?

Yesterday, at the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Macron responded to the bombing of Russia by denouncing the Kremlin for the change to its nuclear doctrine. “I want to truly call on Russia to behave responsibly. It has responsibilities as a permanent member of UN Security Council,” Macron said, complaining that Moscow now has an “escalatory” posture. He added, “Russia today is in the process of becoming a power for global destabilization.”

British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer made similar points, brushing off Putin’s change to Russian nuclear doctrine as “irresponsible rhetoric” and promising that it is “not going to deter our support from Ukraine.”

Dismissing Russian threats as just “irresponsible rhetoric” is to play Russian roulette, but with nuclear weapons. NATO officials have stated that they aim to impose a comprehensive strategic defeat on Russia, destroy the Russian state and divide up the country. Putin is no doubt under intense pressure to respond to the escalating bombing of Russia. If the Kremlin has so far decided not to respond massively to previous NATO provocations, this does not mean it can avoid doing so in the future.

It is the NATO powers, in fact, that are acting with utter recklessness, bombing Russia and stating they will not be deterred, even by the danger of nuclear Armageddon. Their arguments are torn apart by crying contradictions. On the one hand, they claim that Ukraine and Europe must wage war to protect democracy from the relentless, Hitlerian threat of Putin; on the other, they imply that Putin is so “responsible” that he will patiently allow them to bomb Russia.

This was the content of the German paper *Die Zeit*’s

coverage of the Ukraine crisis. “Strictly speaking, Russia could already start a nuclear war now according to its own doctrine,” it admits, only to add: “In reality, however, such documents have hardly any value. They are more of a threat, aggressive PR for the outside world, than an actual guideline for internal use.”

Die Zeit knows it is lying when it dismisses Russia’s nuclear doctrine as empty PR, so it contradicts itself. “The problem,” it adds, “is that Russian threats, whether in the form of a doctrine, nuclear exercises or demonstrative planning games visible to intelligence services, have consequences.” Experts “agree Vladimir Putin will not use his weapons of mass destruction, but governments in Western countries cannot ignore the risk. Not even if they are convinced that Putin is bluffing. At least as long as the technical possibility of a Russian nuclear strike remains.”

In reality, the NATO powers are effectively ignoring the risk of a nuclear holocaust to try to inflict a “strategic defeat” on Russia. The pursuit of this goal has a relentless military logic. With their Ukrainian proxy forces on the brink of defeat, and concerns that US President-elect Donald Trump might reduce US military aid to Kiev, the European powers are planning an ever stronger and more direct intervention in its war with Russia.

There is deep-rooted popular opposition to the war plan laid out by European imperialism, but the working class must be alerted to and mobilized against the danger. Workers must have no illusions. The ruling class is planning the militarization of Europe, with far-reaching consequences: the reintroduction of the draft, the deployment of combat troops to Ukraine, a massive increase in defense spending at the expense of wages and critical social programs, and the establishment of fascist police-state regimes to suppress working class opposition.



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