Ukraine war escalates, as Russia warns of nuclear war should peace talks fail

Andrea Peters
10 June 2025

Russia has launched a series of large-scale air attacks over the last several days, in response to Kiev's recent attempt to blow up the bridge connecting Crimea to the Russian mainland and assaults on airfields thousands of miles away from the Russian-Ukrainian border and deep in Moscow's territory.

Since Sunday night, more than 800 drones and missiles have been launched against Ukraine. While Kiev claims most were shot down, there were strikes across the country, including in the capital city and the Dubno airbase in the west, where American-made F-16 fighters are stationed. Poland reported scrambling jets in western Ukraine on Sunday night in response to the air assault.

On the ground, Russian troops have now retaken Sumy in Ukraine's northeast, reversing gains Kiev made three years ago. Moscow also reports that it has pushed into Dnipropetrovsk Oblast in central Ukraine. Kiev denies this, claiming Moscow is spreading "false information." If true, this will "create new problems for Kyiv's much-stretched forces," noted CNN in an article on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Zelensky government is continuing its onslaught. This past weekend, drones damaged a Russian airfield in Nizhniy Novgorod and a factory in Cheboksary that makes war materiel, resulting in the suspension of production at the plant. Both are located far to the east of Moscow. On Tuesday, a chemical facility in Tula Oblast caught fire after being hit for the second time. Flights at airports serving Russia's first and second largest cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, were briefly halted that day due to drone attacks. Bombings in Belgorod, a Russian oblast bordering Ukraine, occur daily.

In April, President Zelensky reported that his soldiers are operating on the ground in Belgorod, a fact acknowledged at the time by unofficial Russian sources. This is Ukraine's second incursion into Russian territory, after Kiev's now-failed attempt to seize the region of Kursk in 2024.

The escalation of the fighting, sought by NATO, instigating nuclear war. The European powers are vehemently opposed to any America-led peace deal between Ukraine and Russia, which threatens to shatter the Euro-Atlantic alliance and is likely to be made at their expense.

At the same time, the Trump administration is in no way encumbered by the president's promises to end the war "within 24 hours" of taking office. It has its own calculations as to what is profitable for US imperialism and what concessions, if any, it is willing to make on the Russian front in order that it may concentrate on the Chinese one. Despite overtures to Moscow, the White House may retreat from efforts to settle the conflict.

On June 5, after a meeting with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Trump declared that Ukraine and Russia were akin to "two young children fighting like crazy." "You're better off letting them fight for a while and then pulling them apart," he said. Delivered in his usual crude style, the White House leader made clear that he sees a strategic advantage in allowing Russia and Ukraine to exhaust themselves through war.

Trump simultaneously threatened to punish both Kiev and Moscow with sanctions. "We'll be very, very, very tough, and it could be on both countries to be honest," he said.

Shortly before Trump issued these statements, Russia and Ukraine met in Turkey for a second round of US-brokered peace talks. The discussion lasted an hour and resulted in an agreement to exchange prisoners and war dead but nothing else. After delays over the weekend, the process began on Monday.

While some news sources say that the number of people, alive or not, changing hands is unknown, the British *Guardian* reported that 1,200 members of each side's armed forces are returning home, namely those wounded and under the age of 25. Russian presidential

aide Vladimir Medinsky told the press on Monday that his country is prepared to return 6,000 soldiers' bodies to Ukraine, but that the Zelensky government is refusing to accept them because it does not want to acknowledge the scale of its losses.

With his military facing a catastrophic situation and his far-right government fearing the prospect of a peace deal worked out at their expense, Zelensky vacillates between obsequiousness before Washington and pressing it for more guns.

On June 8, he gave an interview to ABC News in which he went back and forth between implying that the White House was undermining the war effort, demanding an expansion of the conflict with American backing and declaring that Ukraine was ready to lay down its arms.

In his exchange with ABC's Martha Raddatz, Zelensky lamented that the US has reneged on its promise to send Kiev 20,000 missiles capable of taking out Russian drones. The White House sent them to the Middle East instead, he said.

Zelensky insisted that this was a mistake. "We can only counter" Russia "with force," he declared. "We can stop [Russia] in their tracks, and probably then they will be ready for some kind of diplomacy and talks. We have to prepare such plans, and we are not stopping.

"I am convinced that the president of the United States has all the powers and enough leverage to step up," he said, insisting that Trump must exert "hard pressure."

Zelensky further claimed that Kiev was prepared to lay down all its arms, if Moscow did as well. Last week's bombing run on Russian airfields makes clear, however, that Ukraine and, above all, NATO and the US are prepared to risk nuclear war should they not get what they want.

The same day that Zelensky gave his interview, several representatives of the Russian government outlined their country's position. Speaking of Moscow's recent territorial gains in central Ukraine, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said that his country's armed forces initiated their latest offensive after Ukraine refused to recognize Russian territorial control during the recent peace talks.

"Anyone who does not want to acknowledge the realities of war in negotiations will receive new realities on the ground," Medvedev threatened on the social media outlet Telegram.

At the same time, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told the press that peace depended on "practical steps aimed at eliminating the root causes of the fundamental contradictions between us in the area of security," by which he meant halting the expansion of NATO.

Without this, he said, "it is simply impossible to resolve the current conflict in the Euro-Atlantic region."

According to Reuters, Moscow is demanding a written commitment that NATO will not extend itself further east.

Identifying the United States and NATO as instigators of the war, Ryabkov said the ceasefire talks test "the seriousness of Washington's intentions to straighten out our relations." He further told TASS news agency that the war would not stop until NATO troops are pulled out of the Baltic.

In a demonstration, however, of its position, in late May, Germany deployed 4,800 soldiers to the Baltic country of Lithuania on a permanent mission, the first of its kind since the World War II.

The implications of what would happen should a peace deal fail to take into account Moscow's central demand were made clear the very same day by Vladimir Medinsky, Russia's lead negotiator in the talks with Ukraine.

"If you stop the conflict along the front line and don't agree on a real peace, just make some kind of truce, then it will be—you know, such a disputed region between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Karabakh—then this region will turn into a huge Karabakh. After some time, Ukraine together with NATO, with allies will join NATO, will try to reclaim it, and it will be the end of the planet, it will be a nuclear war," Medinsky said.

In a Kremlin briefing likewise delivered on June 9, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Russia reserves the right to deploy short- and medium-range missiles if NATO's aggression on its borders does not halt.