

Russia and Ukraine bleed as NATO's war threatens to engulf Europe

Thomas Scripps
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This weekend, the *Sunday Times* reported that Ukraine has used drones made by two UK companies as part of its campaign of strikes on industrial targets in the Russian Federation.

A UK defence source said, “Russia has been very effective at keeping the West nervous about hitting it too hard. These attacks mean the UK is effectively signalling to Russia and our allies that we’re not [nervous] anymore.”

Russia’s embassy in London responded on Monday, stating that the report confirmed “London is deliberately opting for an escalation of the Ukraine crisis” and accusing Britain of “seeking to contain Russia and inflict maximum damage on it by proxy.”

It warned, “London’s actions will inevitably carry consequences for which it will have to answer. The deeper its involvement in the conflict and the greater its support for Kyiv’s terrorist machinery, the higher the price it will pay.”

A UK Ministry of Defence spokesperson doubled down, telling reporters Britain was “committed to providing the equipment Ukraine needs to defend itself against Putin’s illegal invasion. Russia should be in no doubt about the resolve of this government to stand against Russian aggression, in Ukraine and against the UK and our allies.”

This is only the latest such exchange. Seizures of ships carrying Russian oil and cargo by the European powers drew a warning from President Vladimir Putin that Russia would be “forced to respond in kind.”

The UK’s supply of Storm Shadow missiles to Ukraine in May 2023 and formal authorisation of their use against targets inside Russia a year later prompted Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova to state that Russia might hit British targets “on Ukraine’s territory and beyond its borders.”

What no one in the imperialist governments or media will say is that the world is teetering on the brink of one of these threats being acted upon, leading to direct conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

Underscoring the danger, *Politico* reported last week that Ukrainian arms company Fire Point would have a ballistic

missile ready this autumn (Kyiv is currently heavily outmatched in this area, with roughly 200 Russian missiles now hitting Ukraine almost at will every month). An “FP-9” variant has a planned range of 855km, enough to reach Moscow.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said this would necessarily involve “some elements from other countries,” meaning NATO intelligence and targeting systems.

The danger of escalation beyond the borders of Russia and Ukraine reflects the savage intensity of the war within them. Aerial strikes are claiming a rising toll of civilian lives. According to the *New York Times*, 327 Russian civilians were killed in the first seven months of the year, up from 145 in the same period last year. Another 2,366 were wounded—double last year’s total.

Ukraine suffered its worst month of civilian casualties since 2022 this July, according to the UN: 437 killed and 2,610 injured—a 30 percent increase compared to June and a 70 percent increase compared to July 2025.

Across the first seven months of the year, 1,830 civilians were killed—taking the war’s total to over 16,000—and 10,638 injured. The overall figure is a 44 percent increase over the same period in 2025 and more than double the same period in 2024.

Workers and their families are being killed as part of a campaign of strikes against industrial facilities, transport, energy and export infrastructure. In Ukraine, multiple ports have been hit—primarily Odessa and Izmail, major terminals for agricultural exports—as have cargo ships like the *Golden Leo* and *Venturo*.

Energy infrastructure has been a constant target, especially in the lead-up to and during the winter months, with large numbers of strikes on electricity generation, transmission and distribution facilities, plus heat and power plants, repeatedly taking chunks of power generation capacity offline. Hundreds of strikes, escalating in 2026, have been launched against rail infrastructure.

In Russia, at least two dozen large oil refineries have been hit, leading to a 33 percent month-on-month fall in Russian

seaborne oil exports in July 2026. Seven major ports have been damaged, mostly involved in the export of oil, but including the grain-exporting Novorossiysk. Ten Wildberries warehouses, Russia's Amazon equivalent, have been struck, with Ukraine claiming seven were disabled, affecting up to 20 percent of warehouse space.

Mounting drone and missile "deep strikes" are a response to the fact that the frontline has been fought to a bloody standstill—in a meatgrinder of trenches, artillery and drones. According to the Institute for the Study of War, Russian forces gained just 7.87 percent as much territory in the first half of 2026 as they did in the first half of 2025.

Each side throws tens of thousands of bodies into the maw every month. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), an imperialist think tank which has every reason to downplay these figures, roughly 125,000-150,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and up to 475,000 left wounded or missing since the war began.

The CSIS claims 400,000-450,000 Russian soldiers have been killed, out of a total 1.4 million casualties. Russian exile oppositionist news site *Mediazona*, working with the BBC's Russian service, has identified 239,000 dead Russian soldiers through relatives' social media posts, local media reports, and statements from regional officials. They estimate a real figure of 352,000 based on excess male mortality, using data from the national Probate Registry.

No figures can be entirely trusted, but it is clear the overall toll is horrific. In this brutal war of attrition, the intention is to put enough pressure on the other side's society to force a collapse. Ukraine, a client state of NATO, is pursuing regime change in Russia to the advantage of the imperialist powers. Russia is trying to break the back of Ukraine to prevent this outcome.

The strain is telling. Both sides are struggling to get enough soldiers into the army. The Ukrainian economy is shattered: a fifth smaller than before the war and requiring three times its GDP in reconstruction costs. It is utterly dependent on foreign loans and aid; the EU loaned \$105 billion in April 2026 to cover the period up to 2027, leaving \$52 billion still needed.

Russia is maintaining its war economy at the cost of everything else. Andrei Klepach, chief economist at development bank VEB, the country's second-largest, was fired this week after he warned, drawing attention to the fact that Russia is fighting NATO, not just Ukraine:

We're falling behind. We're losing both the technological and economic competition globally. And, as I've already said, we're losing not only to China and the US, but in some ways, we're losing to

Ukraine.

Ukraine's economy, of course, is partially destroyed; it's a demographic disaster. But, once again, the Ukrainian economy, despite everything, is surviving. Of course, there's enormous financial assistance there... With this assistance for military spending and their own expenses, it's roughly almost 50 percent of our budget...

I believe Russia won't collapse, but I'm almost certain we'll reach a social crisis. We won't collapse economically, but our lag will widen, with all the ensuing consequences.

With NATO foreclosing a peace deal with terms that would finish the Putin government and prepare a NATO-backed assault against Crimea, the pressure is on the Russian government to escalate its way out of the situation. Meanwhile, Ukraine continues to develop its ability to strike at Russia.

However, the intensification of the war and its costs mean strengthening opposition in the working class. Klepach warned, "No one expected the February Revolution, let me remind you. Lenin wrote in December 1916 that 'we won't live to see it,' but he did just a few months later."

This is the deathly fear of the Russian and Ukrainian oligarchies both, driving their repression of anti-war sentiment.

The most significant political prisoner of the war, because he represents what the ruling class most fears, is Bogdan Syrotiuk. Sentenced to 15 years by a Ukrainian court for six articles written for the *World Socialist Web Site*, he is a fighter for the united socialist struggle of Russian, Ukrainian and European workers against the war.

Only by taking up the revolutionary internationalist perspective fought for by Bogdan and the International Committee of the Fourth International can the working class fight its way out of the bloodbath in Russia-Ukraine and the catastrophe looming over Europe.



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