

Behind CIA Director Ratcliffe's secret trip to Russia: The Ukraine war spirals out of control

Andre Damon
28 August 2026

This week, CIA Director John Ratcliffe made a secret trip to Moscow, the first known visit by a CIA director to Russia since before the outbreak of the Ukraine war.

CNN reported Thursday that Ratcliffe delivered a “warning to Russia not to stage an attack in NATO territory.” The ominous conclusion to be drawn is that Washington believes that there is an imminent danger of open warfare between NATO and Russia.

The conditions for a disastrous escalation have been created by a series of Ukrainian strikes deep inside Russia, financed and armed by the US and major European NATO powers. In one of its heaviest air raids of the war, Ukraine put roughly 600 drones over the Moscow region overnight on August 15-16, and at least six people were killed across Russia that night.

In the past week Ukraine staged drone attacks that set fire to the Lukoil refinery at Kstovo, 500 miles inside Russia, which produces up to 11 percent of the country's gasoline, and burned down a Wildberries warehouse in the Tambov region, part of a campaign against logistics hubs Ukraine says supply the war effort. The refinery strikes, the *Financial Times* reported in July, are guided by American and French targeting intelligence.

At this point the European NATO forces, with Britain, France and Germany in the lead, are hardly attempting to conceal their direct involvement in military operations against Russia.

- On August 24, British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, in Kiev, released to Ukraine the secret specifications for the British parts of the Storm Shadow, a long-range missile Ukraine has already fired into Russia, so that Ukraine and France can set up production there.

- The same day, Burnham and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed an agreement making Britain the first foreign country with access to the combat data that trains Ukraine's strike-guiding artificial intelligence, the *Financial Times* reported Monday.

- Also on August 24, the European Commission approved €6.1 billion for Ukrainian purchases of missiles and air defense systems, an installment of the €90 billion war loan it agreed in December.

- These transfers follow the decision of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in May 2025 to lift all range restrictions on German weapons supplied to Ukraine. Germany, second only to the United States in funding the war, has made available nearly €100 billion in aid, has trained more than 27,000 Ukrainian soldiers on German soil and, the German weekly *Die Zeit* reported, has supplied Kiev with satellite imagery and intercepts locating Russian troops, depots and airfields.

- On Thursday, the *Financial Times* reported that Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain and Poland asked the European Commission to restart work on using some €200 billion in frozen Russian central bank assets, held at the Euroclear depository in Brussels, to fund the war.

There are significant divisions among the European powers over this action. Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever told the other European powers at the World Economic Forum in January: “You cannot simply confiscate money. That is an act of war.” This statement reflects concerns not only over the massively provocative character of this action but also its impact on the global financial system.

Responding to such concerns within the European political establishment, Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard on Thursday called the seizure of the assets the “way to make sure that Ukraine can defend itself and all of Europe.” The claim that the increasingly provocative escalations by the NATO powers against Russia are of a “defensive” character is absurd. Russia, bogged down in eastern Ukraine for four and a half years, is in no position to overrun Eastern Europe, let alone Germany, France or Britain.

In his first address to parliament as chancellor in May

2025, German Chancellor Merz pledged to build “the strongest conventional army in Europe,” and Berlin has placed military spending beyond 1 percent of economic output outside its constitutional debt brake.

Twice in the 20th century, in the First World War and again in 1941, German imperialism drove east to seize the resources of Russia and Ukraine, and each drive came as the world order of its day was breaking apart. In 1918, Germany occupied Ukraine and ran it as a granary and a base against the young Soviet republic.

The governments of Germany, France and Britain, alongside the United States, have for years been working to instigate and escalate a conflict with Russia. The Maidan coup of February 2014, which overthrew Ukraine’s elected president with the backing of Washington and Berlin, could not be interpreted as anything other than an attempt to integrate Ukraine into a hostile base of operations against Russia. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was a desperate and reactionary gamble by Russian President Vladimir Putin, aimed at forcing his “Western partners” into a negotiated settlement of the war they had been instigating since 2014.

In assessing Russian policy, it must be understood that Putin’s hatred of the Bolshevik Revolution, and of anything that tends to legitimize its policies, is a major factor in his interpretation of events. “Imperialism” is a concept that he cannot accept either ideologically or politically, because it undermines the legitimacy of the entire post-Soviet project.

Writing in 1938, on the eve of the Second World War, Leon Trotsky observed that the bourgeoisie “toboggans with closed eyes toward an economic and military catastrophe.” The same is true today. Facing mounting social, political and economic crises at home, the European governments see in war a desperate way out. All the relationships and mechanisms that previously prevented war are breaking down, and as desperation and recklessness rise, any incident could spark a full-scale war, or even a nuclear exchange, with little warning.

Nothing can stop this except the unified struggle of the working class throughout Europe and internationally.

More than two years ago, the Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotyuk, now 27 years old and in prison, addressed the online May Day rally of the International Committee of the Fourth International with the words: “This war was unleashed by US imperialism, NATO and the Putin regime. It is an imperialist war, waged not in the interests of the proletariat of Russia, Ukraine and America but in the interests of capital in these countries.”

He added: “Is it true that all the people of Ukraine support this war? My answer is: No! The claim that all Ukrainians support this war is a brazen lie. The main prop for this war is

not the proletariat and the Ukrainian population, whose situation is appalling. The main prop for this war are the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists and those they serve.

“The working class and the revolutionary youth,” he told the rally, “can stop the impending imperialist war only by their internationalism and unity.”

On August 10, Bogdan was sentenced to 15 years in prison, with this very speech cited as evidence of his having committed “high treason.” In reality, the program articulated by Bogdan constitutes the only progressive response to the ever-expanding war. In a statement written days before his arrest, which he was never able to deliver, he called “for the unification of the Ukrainian and Russian proletariat with the proletariat of the imperialist countries to end this war!”

Since his arrest in April 2024, Bogdan has received an outpouring of support throughout the world. The petition for his freedom has drawn more than 6,700 signatures, those since the sentencing coming from more than 65 countries, prominently including Russia itself. A report on his case was shared with the 30,500 subscribers of a Telegram channel run by and for Ukrainian draft resisters, amid mounting resistance to the dragooning of Ukrainian youth into the war as cannon fodder for the imperialist powers. In Ternopil and Lutsk, crowds have in recent days fought the recruitment squads that grab men off the streets and bus them to the front, wrecking recruitment vehicles in both cities.

The mounting opposition to the war inside Ukraine, Russia, Europe and all over the world must be consciously armed with the program of international socialism. The International Committee of the Fourth International and its Socialist Equality Parties call on workers and young people everywhere to expand the campaign for Bogdan’s freedom, which must be developed as a necessary and integral component part of a mass movement of the working class against imperialist war.

Sign the petition at [wsws.org/freebogdan](https://www.wsws.org/freebogdan), and send letters demanding Bogdan’s release to the Pervomaik City District Court (inbox@pm.mk.court.gov.ua) and the Mykolaiv Court of Appeal (inbox@mka.court.gov.ua), copying freebogdan@wsws.org.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)