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NATO powers send tanks to Ukraine

The United States, France and Germany have announced that they will send over a hundred tanks and other armored, tracked vehicles to Ukraine, massively escalating NATO's proxy war with Russia.

French President Macron declared Wednesday, "Until victory, until peace returns to Europe, our support for Ukraine will not weaken. I confirmed it to President Zelensky: France will provide light combat tanks."



FILE - American soldiers drive a Bradley fighting vehicle during a joint exercise with Syrian Democratic Forces at the countryside of Deir Ezzor in northeastern Syria, Dec. 8, 2021. (AP Photo/Baderkhan Ahmad, File)

Macron announced the deployment of the AMX-10 RC tank, in what an aide to the president told France 24 was "the first time that Western-designed tanks are supplied to the Ukrainian armed forces."

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky praised France's "decision to transfer light tanks and Bastion APCs to Ukraine."

The next day, US President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that they would send the Bradley armored vehicle and the Marder armored vehicle, alongside a second Patriot missile battery. The announcement by Biden was part of a \$3 billion arms shipment, one of the largest to date in the war.

Politico commented, "At last, Ukraine gets Western tanks."

The announcements by the NATO allies make clear that Zelensky's trip to Washington last month was the prelude to a massive escalation of the war. Coinciding with Zelensky's trip, the White House announced that the US would send the Patriot missile system to Ukraine, in what was up to that point the most advanced system made available for the war with Russia.

Over the following days, Ukraine carried out a series of strikes inside Russian territory, capped with a New Year's Day strike by US-provided HIMARS missiles that Ukraine said killed hundreds of Russian soldiers.

In a backhanded admission of the massively provocative consequences of the decision to supply tanks and Patriot missiles, Ben Hodges, the former NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, declared, "This is the next step by the administration to provide something that they have been reluctant to do in the past."

In March Biden declared, "The idea that we're going to send in offensive equipment and have planes and tanks and trains going in with American pilots and American crews—just understand, don't kid yourself, no matter what y'all say, that's called World War III."

In June, Macron echoed these sentiments, declaring, "we are not entering the war... Thus, it has been agreed not to supply certain weapons—including attack aircraft or tanks—and President Zelensky is aware of this agreement."

Commenting on the announcement, the *Economist* wrote, "The French announcement also underscores how far Western red lines, including Mr. Macron's, have shifted since last spring: from warning against offensive weaponry to providing a capability that will aid Ukrainian counter-offensives."

The *Washington Post*, citing a White House official, concluded:

The United States assesses that "there will be continued fighting along that line ... for the foreseeable future," a senior administration official said, with little expectation that combat will slow during the winter months. In a shift from training only small units to

operate specific weapons systems, the allies are now pulling thousands of Ukrainian soldiers off the front lines for combined maneuver training in Europe.

Last month, the Pentagon announced that it would expand its program to train Ukrainian forces at a US base in Germany, drilling an entire battalion of 500 soldiers at a time. Critically, the soldiers will be trained in so-called “combined arms operations”—involving the simultaneous maneuvering of tanks, troops, airpower and artillery.

Hodges, speaking to Politico, continued on this theme:

“A big part of combined arms warfare is that you have protected infantry that can move alongside tanks, keep up with them, and that’s part of what combined arms is all about: infantry, armor, artillery... By having your infantry moving along with them, that makes it that much more lethal.”

Critically, it is likely that the dispatch of light tanks and infantry fighting vehicles to Ukraine will only be the prelude to the sending of main battle tanks to Ukraine. Politico, citing “two U.S. officials,” reported that the United States is considering sending Ukraine main battle tanks such as the M1 Abrams.

Hodges demanded, “Let Ukraine pick 100 tankers that are experienced tank mechanics and send them to wherever the U.S. has Abrams tanks in Poland or send them back to Fort Benning, Ga., where the armor school is, and let them start learning now.”

These remarks make clear the basic meaning of NATO’s announcements this week. The United States is building its mercenary proxy force in Ukraine into a full-scale land army, funded, armed, led and trained by the NATO alliance, and bringing to bear the most advanced weapons systems available anywhere in the world.

The aim of this massive military buildup will be not only the reconquest of the territory lost by Ukraine in the current war, but the recapture of the entire Donbas and Crimea.

These developments underscore the warnings made by the *World Socialist Web Site* in its New Year’s statement, “2023: The global capitalist crisis and the growing offensive of the international working class.” The WSWS warned, “The US-NATO war against Russia is a milestone in the progression to World War III.”

The document concluded: “Among the most reactionary consequences of the proxy war has been the normalization of nuclear weapons as a legitimate instrument of geopolitical conflict. The repeated claim that the NATO powers will not be ‘deterred’ by the possible use of nuclear weapons can only mean that they are determined to pursue their war to complete victory over Russia and, when the time comes, over China, even if that means risking the lives of billions of people.”

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