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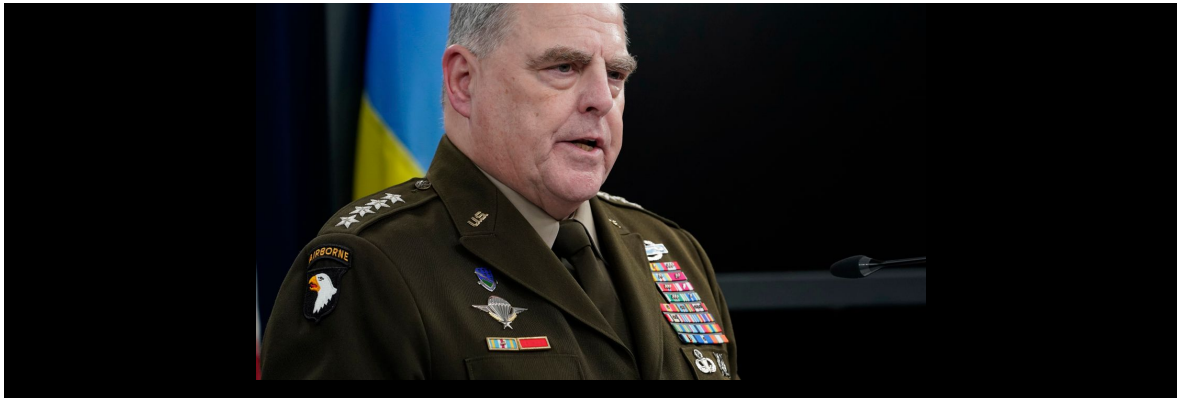
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US pledges to “go on the offensive” against Russia

On Friday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley gave a briefing at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, where they pledged the United States to the military defeat of Russia.



Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley speaks during a briefing at the Pentagon in Washington on Nov. 16, 2022. [AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File]

Milley announced the commitment of the United States and NATO to “go on the offensive to liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine.” He repeated that Ukraine would use NATO armored vehicles and tanks to go on the “tactical and operational offensive to liberate the occupied areas.”

With this declaration, the entire prestige of the NATO alliance has been staked on the reconquest of all Ukrainian territory, which, according to the United States, includes both the entire Donbas and the Crimean Peninsula.

As the immense challenges posed by the new American strategy emerge in the coming months, and as the death toll among Ukrainian troops rises, the demand will inevitably be made for the direct deployment of NATO troops in the war. This would mean that

American and Russian soldiers would be shooting at each other in the first general engagement between nuclear-armed states in history.

Milley is an active-duty military officer, and Austin is a retired four-star general who was granted a special dispensation from Congress to serve in the civilian office of defense secretary. These two four-star generals were effectively setting the foreign policy of the United States in a sweeping display of the power of the military in American society.

The explicit assertion by Milley and Austin that the weapons being provided by the US and NATO are of an offensive, not defensive, character is a 180-degree reversal of public statements by the Biden administration, which justified the escalation of US involvement in the war with the declaration that it would not provide “offensive” equipment.

“The equipment that we’ve provided is defensive, as you know, not offensive. And we see that as being a difference,” White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said at a briefing in May.

“The idea that we’re going to send in offensive equipment,” Biden said that same month, “and have planes and tanks and trains going in with American pilots and American crews, just understand—and don’t kid yourself, no matter what you all say—that’s called ‘World War III.’”

Late last month, Biden declared, “The idea we would give Ukraine material that is fundamentally different than is already going there, would have the prospect of breaking up NATO, and breaking up the European Union.” He added, “They’re not looking to go to war with Russia, they’re not looking for a third world war.”

If one accepts both the public statements of Milley and the repeated assertions of Biden, it means that the United States is in reality at “war with Russia.” This undeclared war is being waged without congressional authorization or any effort to seek the approval of the American people.

The announcement by NATO that it is sending offensive weapons to Ukraine has exposed the Biden administration’s entire narrative of US involvement in Ukraine as a fraud. It has repeatedly claimed that the US and NATO are not involved in the war. But NATO is not only a party to the conflict, it is its driving force.

As in all wars, as the fighting progresses the debate over “who fired the first shot” fades away, and the real, complex social forces driving the war come into view.

Throughout 2022, the Biden administration claimed that it was intervening in the conflict in order to save Ukrainian lives. In the year-long conflict, it has become clear that America’s only use for the Ukrainian population is as cannon fodder for a war to dominate the Eurasian landmass.

Opening the meeting, Austin declared, “As President Biden said, this is a decisive decade for the world.” This was a quotation from Biden’s introduction to the United States’ National Security Strategy, which declares that the United States “will seize this decisive decade to advance America’s vital interests, position the United States to outmaneuver our geopolitical competitors.”

Throughout the event, there was no mention of the word “ceasefire” or “peace.” Instead, Milley declared, “This war, like many wars in the past, will end at some sort of negotiating table.”

But what Milley was describing as a “negotiating table” is like the one plated aboard the USS Missouri, where Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signed the unconditional surrender of Japan, with the alternative being, in the words of the Potsdam Declaration, “prompt and utter destruction.”

Following the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japanese cities and a series of fire-bombings that killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, that war, too, ended at the negotiating table.

Even as they admitted that the United States’ intentions in the war were fundamentally offensive, the generals engaged in the obligatory lies and hypocrisy with which the gears of war are oiled.

“International aggression, where large countries use military force to attack small countries and change recognized borders, cannot be allowed to stand,” declared Austin. This comes from a country that has, in the past quarter century alone, illegally attacked or occupied Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria.

Austin continued, “It’s about the world that we want our children and grandchildren to inherit.” In fact, the catastrophe unleashed by US imperialism in its “decisive decade” will, if not stopped, leave the next generation with a charred wasteland, if there is a generation left to witness it.

Responding to NATO’s assertion that its goal is the defeat of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of Russia’s Security Council, penned a brief statement on Telegram: “The loss of a nuclear power in a conventional war can provoke the outbreak of a nuclear war. Nuclear powers do not lose major conflicts on which their fate depends.”

The position of American imperialism, however, is that the use of nuclear weapons—either by Russia or the US itself—cannot be a deterrent in the escalation of the conflict. In an editorial published Wednesday, the *Wall Street Journal* demanded strikes inside Russian territory, declaring, “Why should a dictator who rolled over a foreign border be

free to claim his territory as sacrosanct?” It concluded, “The rejoinder is that Mr. Putin might unleash a nuclear weapon, but the past months have shown that he will make that decision based on his own calculations in any case.”

This editorial reflects the utterly reckless mood that has gripped the capitalist oligarchy, which sees war as a way out of the myriad social, economic and political crises gripping the capitalist social order.

The social forces driving the war were shown at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where billionaires and the heads of major banks hobnobbed with Ukrainian oligarchs and warmongers, such as the disgraced former British Prime Minister Boris “Let the bodies pile high in their thousands” Johnson, who declared, “Give them the tanks! There’s absolutely nothing to be lost.”

But the same crisis that underlies imperialist war is propelling the growth of the class struggle throughout the world. It is the international working class, mobilized on the basis of a socialist program, that will put an end to the conspiracies of the ruling elites and the capitalist profit system.

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