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The Leopard's Tale: U.S. Weapons Makers on a Marketing Spree



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When Southcom commander Laura Richardson starts talking about sending weapons to Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, you know something's up. That something is money and new markets for U.S. arms makers. In other words, western Europe depleted its armory by shipping everything to Ukraine to get blown up by the Russians. That creates a huge market opportunity for the U.S. weapons industry, which thus also eyes potential South American customers; hence its eagerness for some nations there to send their Soviet-era tanks to Ukraine, to be replaced, of course, by American hardware. But Europe remains

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the U.S. arms corporations' prize. All they had to do, in connivance with political elites, was generate a stupendous media hullabaloo about Berlin sending Leopard tanks to Ukraine, so they can corner German weapons makers' business once the Russians destroy all the Leopards, and voila! They'll be raking in the cash for decades.

So what we have seen recently is a concerted media and political campaign, that is to say, humbug, to trap the world as a purchaser of U.S. armaments. In this regard, it is worth noting that in fiscal 2022, U.S. weapons sales increased 48.8 percent. War is good business, and blood-soaked war profiteers are making out like the bandits they are. They do not care about the risk of nuclear war from this proxy conflict that Washington provoked in line with the Rand Corporation's specifications or about the price paid in blood by Ukraine. But anyone with a brain and a heart does, which is why it's imperative to negotiate an end to a war that is already on its way to annihilating an entire generation of Ukrainian men.

Arguably, the gigantic western transfer of arms to Kiev utterly undermines any call for Russian withdrawal as a precondition for peace talks, as has been noted publicly, most recently by South African foreign minister Naledi Pandor. Indeed all those NATO weapons for Kiev that can strike deep inside Russia guarantee that Moscow will create a huge buffer that eats into Ukrainian territory. Fortress Ukraine can only shrink in size, as it fashions itself into a modern Sparta with western weapons. But that is not the only way NATO sabotages an end to the bloodletting; see for example, Johnson, Boris, former UK prime minister, and recall his April jaunt to Kiev to smother an armistice with Moscow, painstakingly midwifed by neutral countries.

But to return to the Leopard's tale. At the height of the media frenzy, January 19-24, over Germany not serving empire by hustling its Leopard tanks off to Ukraine and permitting the 15 countries that have them to do so also, commander Richardson acknowledged that Washington had requested nine Latin American countries to donate their Soviet-era Russian weapons to Kiev, so Telesur reported, January 20. Four days later, Colombia's president, Gustavo Petro, declined, explaining that his country would send no weapons to Ukraine. Other Latin American countries followed suit. Among the countries Southcom suggested this swap to were, as aforementioned, Cuba – under U.S. blockade for 60 years – Venezuela, where not too long ago Washington was involved in assassination and coup attempts against its legitimately elected leader, Nicolas Maduro, and Nicaragua, currently under U.S. sanctions.

These three nations have bought tanks, artillery and so forth from Moscow over the years and are Russian allies. Yet Richardson had the brazen nerve to go public with this U.S. “offer” for them to send their weapons to Ukraine, which the U.S. would then replace with American equipment, “if those countries want.” Want? Hello? What these countries want is for the Exceptional Empire to stop persecuting them. But Southcom apparently never got that memo. Its commander was busy pitching her great deal: New market for U.S. arms corporations, more tanks, guns and artillery for the U.S. proxy war in Ukraine – win/win for the Exceptional Empire, amirite? But alas for the Southcom chief, those three U.S. punching bags, Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, have reason to regard her offer somewhat sourly.

Meanwhile German chancellor Olaf Scholz was reluctant to eviscerate his country’s thriving arms industry by sending all its tanks to get dismantled by Russia. But U.S. weapons makers don’t give up easily. They salivate at stealing that German market. However, part of Berlin’s reticence was that it doesn’t want to deindustrialize any more than its suicidal sanctions on Moscow have already caused, with many industries closing and relocating from their Teutonic homeland to the U.S., for lower energy costs. Specifically, Germany wants to protect its armaments industry, according to an article for *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* by Marco Seliger January 22. But you couldn’t read about this in the U.S. press late last month – it was too busy vilifying Deutschland for not getting with the latest NATO program. What is that latest program? A proxy war, yes, but a proxy war that’s also very much about money, from bargain basement deals on Ukrainian land for mammoth American agricultural firms to vacuuming up every last cent in Europe – just don’t tell the rubes in the American public about that. Some quite reasonably regard Kiev as engaged in a war of self-defense. But the majority believes the blather about fighting for freedom and democracy.

On January 24, the Biden administration engineered a clever breakthrough to the tanks-for-Ukraine impasse: it said it “leaned” toward sending its Abrams M1 tanks to Ukraine. The purpose of this offer was not only to open the spigot on Berlin’s Leopard tanks, but also to get Germany to greenlight other countries emptying their arsenals of such vehicles – which U.S. weapons makers will then hurry to refill. Soon after Biden’s announcement about his leanings, Scholz took the bait. As Mexican president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said: “The German government succumbed to media pressure when, contrary to the opinion of the majority of the population, it decided to send Leopard tanks to Ukraine.” Worse, Berlin was duped by Washington, which pulled a fast one a few days

after German capitulation, by backpedaling and declaring that American tanks wouldn't be ready for Ukraine maybe until summer. A cynic might say Biden bamboozled Scholz into donating his Leopards.

For those who think that view is too harsh, look at the timeline's details. "The announcement would be part of a broader diplomatic understanding with Germany in which Berlin would agree to send a smaller number of its own Leopard 2 tanks and would approve the delivery of more of the German-made tanks by Poland and other nations," the Wall Street Journal explained January 24, when Berlin had no reason to doubt Washington keeping up its end of the bargain in a timely manner. Context here was critical: Berlin had made delivery of its tanks contingent upon the U.S. doing the same earlier in January, much to the great umbrage of Washington and Warsaw. Also, Germany could prevent other countries sending Leopards to Ukraine and its refusal to roll over on this point infuriated American and Polish war fanatics, whose views, of course, were then mightily amplified by official state propaganda, i.e., mainstream corporate news outlets. Of course, it wasn't the first time our media did the bidding of a crucial American industry, and it won't be the last. So Berlin agreed, apparently believing that it would release its tanks in lockstep with Washington. But the Exceptional Empire's rulers had other plans. And so possibly, did its rabidly pro-war East European vassals, the ones Washington has allowed to grab the NATO steering wheel to lurch toward World War III. As of February 7, they had not said any more about donating their Leopards, and Berlin was likely wondering did this silence mean it alone was expected to?

"After helicopters, fighter jets and missiles," Seliger writes, "the Ukraine war offers the USA the opportunity to gain a foothold in the European arms market with armored vehicles and to oust German competition." Kinda like what Washington did to the Moscow-Berlin natural gas business, though as I recall, that involved blowing up a pipeline, to create a "tremendous opportunity" as secretary of state Antony Blinken phrased it, for the much more expensive American liquefied natural gas (LNG), which Berlin now pays top dollar for, along with the privilege of those stratospheric prices driving its industry out of Germany and across the Atlantic. By contrast, Russian gas was cheap – a fact which, over years, enabled Germany's economic miracle.

European leaders realized, according to Seliger, that "if they are to hand over their already too few battle tanks to Ukraine, they need replacements...immediately." Seliger reports that the U.S. government "has been trying for years to intensify its sales in Europe...Representatives of defense contractors...report that the Americans offer

countries that could supply Leopard 2 to Ukraine, used tanks as replacements from their own inventory and a long-term industrial partnership.” So there you have it, again: the Ukraine war boosts weapons profits so massively that Southcom will even consider arms deals with Cuba – though one wonders how that will go down, what with the U.S. blockade. Maybe the Exceptional Empire could use China as a middle-man; ho, ho ho! Recently German politicians discussed “a pact with the arms industry” Seliger reports. “The question remains as to why, after almost a year of war...this pact has not already existed.” The answer is simple: birdbrain Eurocrats and politicians got hypnotized by the wild razzmatazz and eye-popping prevarications rivalling World War I frothings about the Huns, that is, by the most enormous anti-Russian western propaganda blitz of all time, and thus failed to notice that by jumping on the idiotic U.S. sanctions bandwagon, they crushed the value of the euro, destroyed their own economies and started a cycle of deindustrialization. Sanctions on Russian energy backfired for the U.S. too, with skyrocketing prices at the gas pump and in supermarkets last summer (grocery prices are still ridiculously inflated, what with food monopolies deciding oh no, these profits are too good to forego, regardless of Biden’s reelection needs), but Washington had achieved a major goal for American business: severing Europe-Russia economic ties to open new markets for American capital. And it didn’t hurt, at first, that U.S. monopolies raked in the profits from those inflated prices.

Absent World War III turning planet earth into a barren, radioactive rock (something the Ukraine war could yet cause), the humongous western propaganda Wurlitzer will keep spinning out tall tales, far into the future. That’s because if Ukraine loses, those lies will be essential, as the west declares victory and goes home. Which of course would be preferable to NATO panicking and committing troops. But “home” for Europe, without cheap Russian energy, with the titanic expenses of the war itself and after the assaults of rapacious American business, will be very different. It will feature much higher unemployment and much lower living standards. In short, it will be a much poorer place. Eve Ottenberg is a novelist and journalist. Her latest book is *Hope Deferred*. She can be reached at her [website](#).

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