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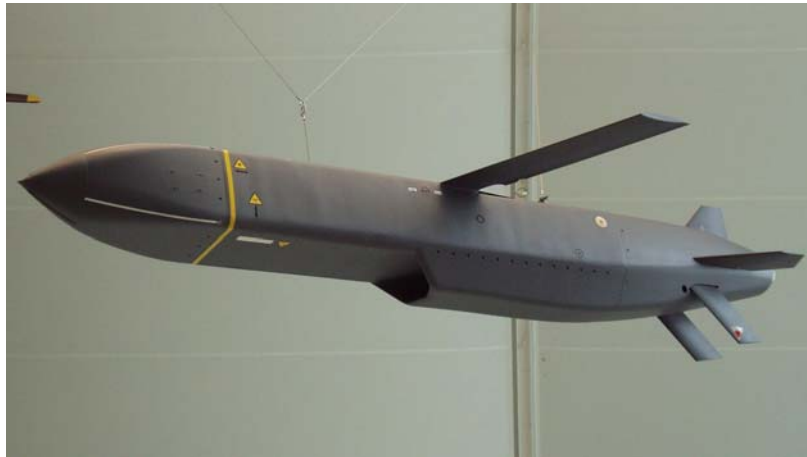
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Statement of the WSWS Editorial Board

28.09.2024

After high-ranking NATO officials publicly called

for Ukraine to use NATO weapons to attack deep inside Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin formally presented a proposed update to Russia's nuclear policy that would expand the conditions under which Moscow would use nuclear weapons.



The UK's Storm Shadow long-range missile. [Photo by Rept0n1x / [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)]

Speaking before a meeting of the Russian Security Council on Wednesday, Putin declared, “aggression against Russia by any non-nuclear-weapon state, but with the participation or support of a nuclear-weapon state, should be considered as a joint attack on the Russian Federation.”

He added, “We reserve the right to use nuclear weapons in the event of aggression against Russia and Belarus.”

This is the most blunt and concrete threat to date by Putin to use Russia's nuclear arsenal, one of the two largest in the world, to respond to ongoing and ever expanding strikes by Ukraine, with the backing of the NATO powers, on Russian cities and infrastructure.

Earlier this month, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Kiev, where he heavily implied that the US would move forward with the plan to allow Ukraine to use long-range NATO weapons against Russia. "We have adjusted and adapted as needs have changed, as the battlefield has changed," he said in response to questions about the plan, "and I have no doubt that we will continue to do so."

Following the meeting in Kiev, *The Guardian* reported that "British government sources indicated that a decision had already been made to allow Ukraine to use Storm Shadow cruise missiles on targets inside Russia." *The Economist* and the *Washington Post* have published editorials supporting strikes on Russia with NATO weapons, while former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promoted the move in an op-ed in the *Spectator*.

The campaign within the US media and political establishment calling for Ukraine to attack Russian cities with NATO weapons has been centered on the claim that Russia's stated policy of using nuclear weapons to defend its territory is a bluff.

This proposition, repeated in every single US newspaper and publicly accepted by the US political establishment as gospel, is an absurdity. In reality, those within the US and European political establishment making this claim know that it is false, and are simply lying to the public. They know that Putin is not bluffing.

This was made clear in an article published Thursday in the *New York Times*, titled, "US Intelligence Stresses Risks in Allowing Long-Range Strikes by Ukraine."

The *Times* reports:

US intelligence agencies believe that Russia is likely to retaliate with greater force against the United States and its coalition partners, possibly with lethal attacks, if they agree to give the Ukrainians permission to employ US, British and French-supplied long-range missiles for strikes deep inside Russia, US officials said.

The article continues, "The intelligence assessment describes a range of possible Russian responses to a decision to allow long-range strikes using US and European-supplied missiles," including "potentially lethal attacks on US and European military bases."

As US presidents have repeatedly declared—while NATO was expanding to include nearly every country in Eastern Europe—any Russian attack against the territory of any member country will be regarded as an attack on all of NATO. Under Article Five of the NATO charter, every member of the alliance would be obliged to go to war with Russia.

Significant sections of the US political establishment not only accept the possibility of a major Russian military response, but are actually seeking to provoke Russia into taking this course of action.

Regardless of how Russia responds to the decision, its retaliation will be seized on to massively intensify US involvement in the war. The date of Russia's response will be called "the day everything changed," in which "Putin launched his unprovoked and unjustified" attack, or "the day Putin shattered forever the taboo on using nuclear weapons."

US imperialism, seeking to intensify war all over the world, functions by means of provocation, whether in Russia, the Middle East, or in the Pacific. In his 2021 book, *The Strategy of Denial*, Elbridge Colby, author of the 2018 US National Security Strategy, explains how vital it is for US propaganda to force the targets of the US military to "fire the first shot" and thereby be seen as the aggressors:

Perhaps the clearest and sometimes the most important way of making sure [an adversary] is seen this way is simply by ensuring that it is the one to strike first. Few human moral intuitions are more deeply rooted than that the one who started it is the aggressor and accordingly the one who presumptively owns a greater share of moral responsibility.

In other words, any retaliation by Russia would be the means to orchestrate a massive escalation of the war, accompanied by sweeping attacks on democratic rights, akin to the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, but on an even greater scale.

The sections of the US and European political establishment pushing for a major escalation against Russia fear they are running out of time.

First, the Ukrainian military, having fought "to the last Ukrainian," is facing disaster. Russia appears to be on the brink of a significant military breakthrough in the Donbas. Amid mounting domestic opposition within Ukraine to the war, the entire eastern front is at risk of collapsing without a substantial intervention from NATO.

They fear that a defeat in Ukraine would be catastrophic for the position of US imperialism, with not just military, but economic consequences, significantly undermining the role of the dollar as the world's reserve currency.

Second, the election may well bring to power former president Donald Trump, and with him a section of the US political establishment that sees the Ukraine war as a distraction from what they view as US imperialism's highest priority: war with China. Trump, seeing the disastrous war in Ukraine as a liability for Vice President Harris, is also demagogically appealing to popular dissatisfaction with the war as a means to build his fascist movement, even though his administration, in providing lethal weapons to Ukraine in 2019, played a

major role in provoking the war. In order to pre-empt the foreign policy consequences of a potential Trump victory, the White House is moving to create “facts on the ground” that make an escalation of the war inevitable.

Both these elements of the objective situation are leading dominant sections of the US political establishment to push for a major and rapid escalation of the war in the next two months, with potentially catastrophic consequences for all of humanity.

It is evident that there are significant divisions within the administration and state over policy. However, the fight against war cannot be based on speculation about the divisions within the ruling class, let alone subordinating the independent action of the working class to hopes for the development of opposition to escalation by one or another section of the ruling class.

The great danger is that the vast majority of the population has no idea of the immense risks present in the current situation. It is urgently necessary to sound the alarm, to warn the working class of the far-reaching war plans of the US political establishment.

All over the world, and throughout the United States, workers are entering into struggle. Thousands of workers at Boeing, America’s largest aircraft maker and a major defense contractor, are waging a determined strike to protect their working conditions and living standards. This is part of a broader wave of working-class resistance to capitalist exploitation, which is intensified by the massive resources going toward the escalation of war.

The central strategic task is to develop within the working class a conscious understanding that the fight against the war of the capitalist oligarchs at home must be fused with fight against imperialist war, and that both are inextricably connected to the fight against the capitalist profit system and for socialism.

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