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## *Stop the drive to World War 3!*

Amid a pandemic that has killed nearly one million people in the US and continues to kill more than 2,300 every day, the Biden administration is focusing all attention on an increasingly hysterical campaign for war with Russia.

Late Sunday night, it was reported that US President Joe Biden had agreed “in principle” to hold a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the situation in Ukraine at an unspecified time in the future.



A Ukrainian service member listens to artillery shots standing in a trench on a position at the line of separation between Ukraine-held territory and rebel-held territory near Zolote, Ukraine, late Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022. (AP Photo/Evgeniy Maloletka)

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In its report on the planned summit, the *Washington Post* wrote, “Although senior U.S. officials say they believe that Putin has made a decision to invade, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement that U.S. officials ‘are committed to pursuing diplomacy until the moment an invasion begins.’ She confirmed that Biden accepted the invitation—‘again, if an invasion hasn’t happened.’”

This statement is absurd. If Putin had already decided to invade, as Biden claimed at his press conference on Friday, Putin would not be inviting Biden to a summit. Can one seriously believe that having given the final go-ahead to a vast military operation, Putin can simply shut it down with a wave of his hand?

In its report of the planned meeting, the *New York Times* wrote that “one senior White House official said there were no plans for either the format or timing of a meeting between the two leaders. Another official called it all completely notional, and said that all evidence suggests Russia still intends to invade Ukraine in the coming days.”

The initiative for the summit, moreover, did not come from the US, but from discussions between Putin and French President Emanuel Macron held over the weekend.

According to the *Times* account:

Mr. Macron’s outreach to Russia began with the Sunday morning telephone call with Mr. Putin, during which the two leaders agreed on “the need to prioritize a diplomatic solution to the current crisis” and to secure a cease-fire in eastern Ukraine in the coming hours, according to a statement from Mr. Macron’s office.

The statement added that, “if the conditions are met,” a diplomatic path should allow for “a meeting at the highest level in order to define a new peace and security order in Europe.”

Mr. Macron later talked to Mr. Biden by telephone.

A second statement from Mr. Macron’s office said that the French president had proposed a summit between Mr. Biden and Mr. Putin “and then with relevant stakeholders to discuss security and strategic stability in Europe.”

But by late Sunday night, it remained unclear just how significant the new efforts to avert a major war in Europe had been.

All of this makes clear that the discussions between Macron and Putin were not wanted by the United States, which is determined on provoking a conflict and preempting any effort to stop a war.

The developments Sunday night are yet another demonstration of the vast chasm that separates the war propaganda of the Biden administration, repeated endlessly in the media, from reality. They only underscore the element of recklessness and lying that has characterized the entire manufactured crisis over Ukraine.

The situation remains extremely dangerous. Even if it wanted to, the Biden administration may no longer be able to control the crisis it has instigated. The United States has led the fascist forces in the Ukraine military to believe that they have NATO support for their ongoing offensive to retake regions in East Ukraine now controlled by pro-Russian forces. Is the Biden administration in a position to renege on its promises?

The announcement of a Biden-Putin summit comes amidst hysterics in the American media that Russia is preparing an imminent “false flag” operation to justify an invasion of Ukraine. The US embassy in Moscow issued a statement on Sunday warning American nationals about “threats of attacks against shopping centers, railway and metro stations, and other public gatherings in major urban areas, including Moscow and St. Petersburg.”

In provocative remarks before the UN Security Council last week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken cited “a fabricated so-called terrorist bombing inside Russia” as a possible “false flag” operation. The statement from the US embassy raises the question: Is the US, working with fascistic organizations within Ukraine, planning on staging a terrorist attack and using any response from Russia as a justification for war?

There are two factors driving the hysterical war frenzy in the media and political establishment.

First, there are the long-standing geopolitical interests of American imperialism in confronting Russia and undermining its control of the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, as well as in the Middle East.

However, the dominant factor in determining events is the effort on the part of the American ruling class to distract from the massive internal crisis produced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In just over one week, Biden is due to deliver his State of the Union address on March 1. Biden wants to deliver his speech before Congress under conditions dominated by a hysteria that the administration has itself generated over Russia and Ukraine. Donning the mantle of a “war-time president,” Biden is seeking to unite with the extreme right of the Republican Party, which just a little over a year ago supported a fascistic coup aimed at keeping him from taking power.

During the First World War, the conditions on the battlefields of Europe contributed to the catastrophic spread of the “Spanish Flu” pandemic of 1918. Now, the catastrophic conditions produced by the COVID-19 pandemic are fueling the political crisis that is driving the entire globe toward World War III.

The official death toll from the COVID-19 pandemic in the US will pass one million within a matter of weeks. The Biden administration and the Democratic Party are now removing all restrictions on the spread of COVID-19, declaring a “new normal” in which COVID-19 is to become “endemic,” meaning that it will infect and kill potentially hundreds of thousands of people every year.

There is growing anger and opposition in the working class, fueled by the pandemic and the social and economic consequences of the ruling-class response to it, including the surge in inflation for basic goods and services.

While refusing to fight the pandemic, the American ruling class is bringing the world to the brink of a catastrophic military conflict.

Amidst the universal war hysteria that has gripped the media and political establishment, perhaps the greatest lie of all is that a conflict with Russia can be set into motion without it developing into a global catastrophe.

In its February 14 statement, “[Oppose the US-NATO drive to war with Russia in Ukraine!](#),” the International Committee of the Fourth International warned that “whatever the strategists in Washington and European capitals may imagine, the recourse to war will

solve none of their problems. The criminals who set such cataclysms into motion will discover to their discomfiture the truth of the adage that those who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind. War with Russia in Ukraine, however it begins or whatever the course of its initial stages, will not be contained.”

However the situation develops in the short term, there is no peaceful resolution to this crisis. Imperialism is tobogganing toward disaster. The only way to stop the descent into a new and more catastrophic world war is through the intervention of the working class. The fight against war must be connected to the fight against exploitation and the ruling class’s response to the pandemic.

On Saturday, February 26, the *World Socialist Web Site* is hosting an international online webinar, “Fight COVID and Save Lives! Stop the Drive to World War 3!” This meeting will be addressed by leading members of the International Committee of the Fourth International and will elaborate a political program to mobilize the working class against war and the pandemic.

We call on all our readers throughout the world to register and make plans to attend this critical international event today.

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