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Demands grow in Washington for US war with Russia

As the war between Russia and Ukraine entered its 10th day, the conflict is rapidly escalating. As the Russian military continues its advance toward the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, there are growing demands for direct US military intervention to target Russian forces in Ukraine.



This image shows a Russian SU-27 long-range fighter, as shown from the cockpit of UK Royal Air Force Typhoon fighter intercepting it over Estonia in 2019. The imposition of a no-fly zone over Ukraine would likely mean air-to-air combat between NATO and Russian aircraft. (Royal Air Force via AP)

On Thursday, US Senator Lindsay Graham, an influential Republican Senator, called for the assassination of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“Is there a Brutus in Russia?”, Graham asked, referring to the assassination of Roman emperor Julius Caesar by Marcus Brutus and thus advocating what is, under international law, a war crime. “The only way this ends is for somebody in Russia to take this guy out. You would be doing your country—and the world—a great service.”

Graham’s comments were only the most extreme example of a growing chorus within the American political establishment for greater military escalation. Many of these involved calls for destroying all Russian aircraft operating over Ukraine, an action termed imposing a “no-fly zone.”

“Debate over Ukraine no-fly zone heats up,” wrote the *Hill*.

“This is a good moment to renew my call for a no-fly zone, at the invitation of the Ukraine government. I fear if this continues, we will have to intervene in a bigger way,” Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.), a pilot in the Air National Guard, tweeted within hours of Graham’s call.

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), who serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee, told the Huffington Post that a no-fly zone should be “seriously considered.”

In a pre-recorded message, Ukrainian President Zelensky called NATO “weak” for not imposing the no-fly zone, asserting: “NATO knowingly approved the decision not to close the skies over Ukraine. We believe that the NATO countries themselves have created a narrative that the alleged closing of the sky over Ukraine will provoke direct Russian aggression against NATO.”

“All the people who die from this day forward will also die because of you, because of your weakness, because of your lack of unity,” Zelensky said.

For now, the White House and NATO have said they do not plan to impose a no-fly zone and thus enter a direct military conflict with Russia, a major nuclear-armed power.

“It would essentially mean the U.S. military would be shooting down planes—Russian planes. That is definitely escalatory. That would potentially put us into a place where we’re in a military conflict with Russia. That is not something the president wants to do,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki told MSNBC on Monday. “We are not going to have a military war with Russia with U.S. troops.”

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg echoed these statements, saying: “NATO is a defense alliance... NATO is not seeking a war with Russia.”

While the initial calls for a direct clash came from Republicans, they have now been taken up by members of the Democratic Party.

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, a Democrat and a key figure in the first impeachment of US President Donald Trump, approved Kinzinger’s statements, despite coming next to a CNN caption warning that the setting up of a no-fly zone could lead to a “full-fledged war.”

“He is definitely on to something,” Vindman said of Kinzinger. “There is no such thing as a risk-free option, at this point. There are only calibrated- and risk-informed options.”

Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, also a Democrat, told the *Hill* that “the option for a no-fly zone shouldn’t be taken off the table.”

“I just think it’s important to, to kind of protect all your options,” he said. “And even though they’ve gone on the record, I suspect that there have to be some people that are still giving some thought to a more limited approach if it is required.”

Retired Brig. Gen. Kevin Ryan told the *Hill* he “suggested” that “the U.S. and NATO could establish a no-fly zone over the western part of the country where Russian troops haven’t arrived.”

Over the weekend, four-star U.S. Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove, who led U.S. forces in Europe and served as NATO’s supreme allied commander from 2013 to 2016, demanded that the United States and NATO set up a no-fly zone over Ukraine. He admitted that this would be “an act of war” against Russia.

Foreign Policy asked Breedlove, “Yet, in spite of all of that, you said you would actually support the idea of a no-fly zone?”

To this, Breedlove replied, “Are we going to sit and watch while a world power invades and destroys and subjugates a sovereign nation? Are we just going to watch?”

Breedlove went on to explain exactly what this would mean:

“if you put a no-fly zone in the eastern part of Ukraine, for instance, and we’re going to fly coalition or NATO aircraft into that no-fly zone, then we have to take out all the weapons that can fire into our no-fly zone and cause harm to our aircraft. So that means bombing enemy radars and missile systems on the other side of the border. And you know what that means, right? That is tantamount to war. So, if we’re going to declare a no-fly zone, we have to take down the enemy’s capability to fire into and affect our no-fly zone.”

Further calls for military escalation came from the *Washington Post* in the form of an editorial. “Alas, the Russians are making gains in the southern part of the country, along the Black Sea coast, threatening to cut off Ukrainian forces. All the more reason for the United States and European allies,” the *Post* writes, “to speed... weapons to its military, lest Mr. Putin actually win.”

These extremely belligerent statements come amid renewed warnings of just how dangerous the situation is. “Russia’s nuclear alert means NATO must tread carefully,” noted a column in the *Financial Times*. It added that in the “current scenario, Russian leaders are most likely to use a tactical nuclear weapon to prevent or put an end to NATO intervention.”

It continued, “Russian leaders, for example, might see volunteers from NATO countries filtering into Ukraine as covert advance guards for a full-scale intervention. They might regard arms convoys coming to Ukraine from NATO states as the functional equivalent of intervention.”

The article concluded: “If it is truly not the intention of western leaders to intervene, they should make sure that their forces act in ways that will convince Russian leaders of that. The world may depend on it.”

In reality, Washington is taking extraordinarily provocative steps, seeking not a negotiated settlement to end the conflict, but to escalate and inflame it.

On Friday, Voice of America, the state-owned broadcaster of the United States, published an article entitled “American Veterans Volunteer to Fight in Ukraine,” which reported:

“A representative of the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington told VOA that 3,000 U.S. volunteers have responded to the nation’s appeal for people to serve in an international battalion that will help resist Russia’s invading forces.”

The article was subsequently deleted without explanation.

Meanwhile, US and NATO weaponry continues to pour into Ukraine’s borders, while Russia’s financial system is being largely excised from the global economy and is being subjected to a de facto economic blockade.

According to the United Nations, 331 Ukrainian civilians have been killed in the fighting so far, and 1.2 million people have fled.

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