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Thousands of Ukrainian soldiers training in the UK for NATO proxy war with Russia

More than 2,300 Ukrainian soldiers have been trained in marksmanship, battlefield first aid and urban warfare at four British military bases in the last six weeks.

The operation underscores the imperialist proxy war character of the conflict in Ukraine. While the war's front is in the Donbass and along the Black Sea Coast, its rear extends across the NATO military alliance.

Over 1,000 British soldiers from the 11th Security Force Assistance Brigade are involved in training the Ukrainian troops. They are joined by over a hundred soldiers each from the Canadian Armed Forces, Swedish Armed Forces and New Zealand Defence Forces, with more pledged by Norway, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Germany and the Netherlands.



Ukrainian volunteer military recruits take part in an urban battle exercise whilst being trained by British Armed Forces at a military base in Southern England, August 15, 2022. Ministry of Defence and British Army as the UK Armed Forces continue to deliver international training of Ukrainian Armed Forces recruits in the United Kingdom. [AP Photo/Frank Augstein]

Norway, Latvia, Germany and the Netherlands announced their contingents at the Copenhagen Conference for Northern European Defence Allies co-hosted by Britain, Denmark and Ukraine last Thursday. The group of 26 countries pledged an additional 1.5 billion euros in funds, equipment and training for the Ukrainian military. According to Reuters, the Polish, Slovakian and Czech defence ministers “signalled willingness to expand production of artillery systems, munitions, and other military equipment.”

The UK gave £250 million and promised to send additional multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) and precision-guided M31A1 missiles, with a range of 80km.

A government press release explained that British funds “will ensure a steady flow of money not just for the provision of vital new weapons, but the essential maintenance and repair of existing kit, and training to maximise the Armed Forces of Ukraine’s effectiveness on the battlefield.”

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace commented, “This conference sends a clear message to Russia. We will not tire and we will stand by Ukraine today, tomorrow and in the months to come.

“The UK and partner nations have agreed to provide long-term military funding, ensuring a steady flow of finance to provide vital military equipment, essential maintenance of existing kit and maximising our UK-led international training programme for Ukraine’s Armed Forces.”

Britain and its allies are providing fodder for the bloody war with Russia, in which the Ukrainian military is reported to be losing up to 200 soldiers a day. A senior UK officer explained the training programme was designed to produce “battle casualty replacements.”

Those being trained are new civilian recruits, taken through a version of the six-month basic infantry training course in three weeks. Britain is committed to preparing 10,000 in the 120 days by October, but Wallace made clear in Copenhagen, “We’re committed now to really going beyond that. We are going to train more and for longer.”

The intensive course is intended to provide a higher level of training than the Ukrainian Armed Forces can provide, at an instructor to trainee ratio of 1:10 or 1:15, with a heavy focus on urban warfare.

Ukrainian soldiers will be schooled in the tactics learned in the imperialist invasions and brutal occupations of the Middle East. One trainee told the *New York Times*, “The British officers training us have experienced this warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan—so now it is very useful for us.” At least one of the army bases involved was used to prepare British troops to fight in Northern Ireland.

In a statement announcing the start of the programme, the British Ministry of Defence said Ukrainian Army recruits were “being given the skills needed to be effective and lethal on the frontline and defend their homeland.”

Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Patrick Sanders, the head of the British Army, visited the Kent military base in its first 10 days of providing training in mid-July, praising the “fighting spirit of the Ukrainian soldiers” and promising, “We will continue our work to scale up the ambition and pace of the training to maximise support to Ukraine.”

Weeks earlier he had told the Royal United Services Institute's (RUSI) annual Land Warfare Conference that the Russian invasion meant the UK had to be "prepared to fight ... This means focusing on winning the war, working with these allies, against this threat and in this location."

He added, "Ukraine has also shown that engaging with our adversaries and training, assisting and reassuring our partners is high payoff activity."

The British Army, too, "must be prepared to engage in warfare at its most violent."

Britain's recruit training programme is in addition to the specialist military training it is giving hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers in how to use heavy equipment.

Six days of instruction have been given in the use of the L119 light gun howitzer, with a range of 12km—Britain is sending 36 pieces to Ukraine, along with 20 M109 howitzers. Soldiers spend three weeks—the usual time is five—on the MLRS, Britain's most advanced long range artillery weapon, similar to US HIMARS launchers. London has sent three of these systems to Ukraine already and will send three more.

Ukrainian troops have also spent several weeks being trained on 120 donated British armoured vehicles, including Mastiff, Husky and Wolfhound protected mobility vehicles, Spartan combat reconnaissance vehicles, Sultan armoured command and Samson armoured recovery vehicles, and Samaritan ambulances.

Over 100 Ukrainian sailors are being trained by the Royal Navy in Scotland at its Rosyth naval base.

Outside of the UK, British forces are reportedly in Poland training Ukrainians in using the Starstreak missile air defence system and its Stormer launch vehicles. In April, it was revealed that British SAS special forces were training soldiers on the ground in Ukraine in the use of NLAW anti-tank missiles—the UK has shipped more than 5,000. The news prompted commentary in Russia that "World War Three" and a "full-scale multi-level war" had begun against the "collective West."

The US is carrying out military training as well. Over a hundred New York Army National Guard Soldiers travelled to Germany in July. Florida National Guardsmen have also been

deployed. They are training Ukrainian personnel in the use of artillery, radar and other systems. Other US soldiers are doing the same in Poland.

Leading Ukrainian Armed Forces generals—including Oleksiy Nozdrachov, its chief of coordination centre in Kyiv—have passed through the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. Ukrainian officers started attending the school in the 1990s, immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The BBC reports, “Today, experts say, the knowledge they gain there is helping Ukrainians mount a fierce defence of their country.”

NATO’s training programmes are a continuation of long-held plans to use Ukraine in a military conflict with Russia. Military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* reported Lt. Col. Todd Hopkins, deputy commander of the Florida National Guard’s 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, echoing the words of a Ukrainian officer who told US soldiers, “the biggest mistake that the Russians made was giving us eight years to prepare for this.”

Under Operation Orbital, the UK trained 22,000 Ukrainian soldiers between 2015 and the start of the war. The United States trained 23,000 through its Joint Multinational Training Group Ukraine in the same time, backed by Canada, Lithuania, Denmark, Poland, Sweden and the UK. Canada has trained 33,000 since 2015 under Operation Unifier, also with Swedish participation.

All this points to the imperialist war against Russia being extensively prepared, with massive resources and systems put in place to sustain it through to its bloody intended conclusion—the collapse and subjugation of the Russian state. As the war progresses, and the fiction that NATO is some third party in the conflict evaporates completely, the danger of a direct clash between nuclear-armed powers becomes ever more real.

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