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Ukraine announces beginning of offensive to retake Kherson

On Monday, the Ukrainian government and military announced the beginning of a counter-offensive against Russian troops, focused on recapturing the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine.

Natalia Humeniuk, the spokesperson for Ukraine's southern command, declared, "Today we started offensive actions in various directions, including in the Kherson region." Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky threatened in his Monday night address, "If they want to survive, it is time for the Russian military to flee. The occupiers should know: We will oust them to the border. To our border, the line of which has not changed."

On Sunday, Zelensky had reportedly held a secret meeting with representatives of Ukraine's defense and security sectors which was attended by the heads of the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, the ministry of defence, the ministry of internal affairs and the Ukrainian security service, as well as other defence forces.

Based on an anonymous source in the Ukrainian military, CNN reported on Monday that "the operation began at night with massive shelling of Russian positions and the rear." The source also claimed that the Ukrainian military had taken four villages in the Kherson region.

Russian authorities initially dismissed these claims, arguing that what was taking place was a "virtual offensive," designed to garner more military support for Ukraine from

NATO. However, by Monday night, Russian media reported that the Ukrainian military had suffered heavy losses in its “attempted counter-offensive” in the Kherson and Nikolaev regions. Russia’s Ministry of Defense claimed that the Ukrainian army lost over 560 soldiers, 26 tanks and two SU-25 fighter jets.

The Russian press also reported that the Ukrainian army had engaged in heavy shelling of Nova Kakhovka, a city in the Kherson region that is located directly on the Dnipro River. The city has been used by the Russian army as a logistical center since almost the beginning of Russia’s invasion in February. The Ukrainian military reportedly used American-made HIMARS rocket systems to fire on the city’s electrical power plant and water station, forcing the shutdown of electrical and water supplies to the city’s almost 46,000 residents.

The current offensive was preceded by weeks in which the Ukrainian army, backed by Washington, carried out a series of strikes on military bases and ammunition depots in Crimea, a peninsula in the Black Sea that was annexed by Russia in March 2014. On August 20, Daria Dugina, the daughter of the far-right Russian ideologue and war supporter Alexander Dugin, was killed in a car bomb that was clearly designed to murder her father as well. These attacks were an attempt to provoke a military response by Russia to provide a justification for NATO’s expansion and escalation of the war. The military strikes on Crimea were also aimed at weakening Russia’s aviation and military logistics in advance of the offensive now underway.

None of the military efforts by Ukraine, which for years has ranked as the poorest country in Europe, would be possible without the arms and funding from NATO and, above all, the US. Amidst record inflation, Washington has spent some \$50 billion on weapons for Ukraine since February alone, while ceasing all COVID-19 relief funding and targeting social welfare benefits for millions of Americans. Last Wednesday, Biden pledged another \$3 billion for weapons and ammunition for at least another three years.

Predictably, the Ukrainian military is shamelessly being cheered on by the US media. In a piece that reads largely as an advertisement for US weapons manufacturers and the Ukrainian military, the *New York Times* on Sunday praised the “craftiness” and “engineering ingenuity” of Ukrainian soldiers, who have been finding ways to combine

highly sophisticated US weapons with their decades-old Soviet-era tanks and military equipment.

The reality behind this US-funded and armed “craftiness” is a horrific blood bath. The US claims that the Russian army has suffered 80,000 casualties. Estimates of Ukrainian casualties are also put in the high tens of thousands. Ukrainian officials themselves admitted in the early summer that they were losing up to 500 men *each day*. Several weeks and likely thousands of deaths ago, the *Washington Post* noted in late June that the war in Ukraine was on track to becoming one of the bloodiest in modern history. In addition to the tens of thousands of dead and wounded, over a quarter of the deeply impoverished Ukrainian population of 38 million has been displaced by the war.

US imperialism, which has laid waste to entire societies in the Middle East and North Africa, could not care less about how many tens or hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Ukrainians and Russians die in this war.

In its recent Congress resolution, “Mobilize the Working Class Against Imperialist War,” the Socialist Equality Party stressed: “The war against Russia is the continuation and intensification of the drive for US global hegemony that was initiated with the first invasion of Iraq in 1990-91 and intensified following the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. Biden’s declaration that Putin cannot remain in power revealed the basic aims of the war: The removal of the present regime in Russia, its replacement by an American-controlled puppet, and the breakup of Russia itself—in what is referred to as “decolonizing Russia”—into a dozen or more impotent statelets whose valuable resources will be owned and exploited by US and European finance capital.

“With extreme recklessness, American imperialism is risking a nuclear war that could result in the extinction of human life on the planet. The destruction of Russia and control of the Eurasian land mass, a longstanding geo-strategic goal of US imperialism, is viewed by the Pentagon and CIA as essential preparation for and part of an onslaught against China. What was referred to by Lenin during World War I as a ‘redivision of the world’ is now underway. US imperialism intends to ‘redraw the map of the globe.’”

This assessment has been borne out by the developments in the weeks that have followed the passing of this resolution. Alongside its reckless escalation of the war against Russia in

Eastern Europe, Washington has doubled down on provoking an open military conflict with China. Much like it provoked war with Russia over Ukraine, the US is seeking to provoke a war with China over Taiwan.

Following the incredibly provocative trip by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on August 2 to Taiwan, the US sent two warships through the Taiwan Strait on Sunday.

On Monday night, *Politico* reported that the Biden administration is planning to formally ask Congress to approve a \$1.1 billion arms sale to Taiwan. According to *Politico*, the package, which is still being developed, will include “60 AGM-84L Harpoon Block II missiles for \$355 million, 100 AIM-9X Block II Sidewinder tactical air-to-air missiles for \$85.6 million, and \$655.4 million for a surveillance radar contract extension.”

From September 1 through 7, Russia and China will be engaging in the joint VOSTOK-2022 military exercises in Russia’s Far East. India and several former Soviet states, as well as Nicaragua and Syria, are expected to join the military drills.

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